

High-Tech Displays Ensure Museum's New Mining Exhibition Success



By J. Lynn Fraser

It is a challenge for traditional museums to remain relevant to the general public in an age of social networking and the Internet. Canada's [Royal Ontario Museum](#) (ROM), located in [Toronto, Ontario](#), has established a new suite of galleries devoted not only to minerals, gems, gold and mining, but also to reminding the public that mining and [minerals](#) affect their daily lives.

The re-branding of the ROM included renovation of the ROM's many galleries and the addition of the [Michael Lee-Chin Crystal](#), built by renowned architect [Daniel Libeskind](#), which mimics a gigantic outcropping of crystal. [William Thorsell](#), the ROM's CEO and Director, is the impetus behind the ROM's re-branding.

One of the key messages of the new [Teck Suite of Galleries](#), which includes the Vale Inco Limited Gallery of Minerals, the [Canadian Mining Hall of Fame](#) and the

[Gallery of Gems and Gold](#), is that mining affects everyone's lives on a daily basis. The various exhibits, throughout the 6,900 sq. ft. gallery space, directly and indirectly reinforce this message.

The [Teck Suite of Galleries: Earth's Treasures](#) makes conspicuous use of the latest in technology and exhibition design to capture the imagination of the public. Inside the Teck Suite of Galleries, dynamic videos and dramatic displays capture the visitor's attention immediately. In taking this approach to displays, the ROM is ensuring that it can compete with other media for the public's attention.

In the Vale Inco Limited Gallery, which is part of the Teck Suite of Galleries, there is a dramatic display of 2,300 examples of minerals, gems, meteorites and rocks organized following the [Strunz Classification System](#). This display, according to Dr. Kim Tate, Associate Curator of Mineralogy at the ROM, represents only 4% of the museum's collection of 50,000 specimens.

The collection is the best in Canada and among the top five in North America.

Beyond our Planet

Also included in the exhibition are Lunar and Martian meteorites such as the [NWA 5000](#) meteorite found in [Morocco](#), which is the largest lunar highland meteorite to go on public display.

This extensive specimen collection is exhibited behind several large glass cases that are each coupled with touch screen computers called, by the ROM, e-labeling terminals. The public can "call out" a specimen from the directory of images shown at each computer. Each image - of a mineral, for example - is accompanied by information about the mineral's name, its local name, where it is from, its chemical formula, the date when it was acquired by the Museum and its acquisition number.

"There is potential for outstanding teaching opportunities when the terminals are connected to the Internet in the future," says Vincent Vertolli, an Assistant Curator of Geology at the ROM. "They could be used to teach a basic course in mineralogy."

Vertolli notes that several specimens on display are so rare that many professionals will not have seen them before. One of his favourite specimens is a sample of pink, twinned, crystallized [Serandite](#) from [Mount Saint Hilaire, Québec](#). He admits that the public might be attracted to more colourful but common specimens in the gallery, such as bright yellow [Sulphur](#).

Throughout the Teck Suite Galleries are stunning displays of gems, metals, minerals and ores that are shown in the context of how they are used and where they were discovered, such as opals from the [Coober Pedy opal](#) mines in Australia and [quartz](#), in its various forms, from around the world.

Accompanying the permanent ROM displays is [Light & Stone](#): Gems from the Collection of [Michael Scott](#), the first CEO of [Apple Computers](#). This collection is one of the best, not including those of royal families.

A \$10 million donation from [Teck](#), the largest corporate donation in the ROM's history, has made the new Teck Suite of Galleries possible. Additionally a Chair in mineralogy has been endowed, funds have been made available for the digital gallery and the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame has found a new home at the ROM.

"This exhibit gives a first-hand look [at] mining and the leading players. These pioneers seized upon the opportunities before them and the country is better for

them," observes [Ted Yates](#), Chair of the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame. "It's a great way to educate the public about mining."

The section devoted to the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame contains a map of Canada showing famous [mining camps](#) and important areas of exploration and touch screen computers that give the backgrounds of the over 140 inductees who blazed trails through vast and unexplored sections of Canada. Each year new inductees will be added.

The diversity of the collections on display at the ROM's new Teck Suite of Galleries demonstrates the ROM's commitment to making the traditionally passive museum-going experience into a personal event that engages not just the mind but also the senses. The ROM has brought mining, collecting and museum-going into the 21st century. ■



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- [Coober Pedy, South Australia](#)
- [Daniel Libeskind](#)
- [Gallery of Gems and Gold](#)
- [Light & Stone: Gems from the Collection of Michael Scott](#)
- [Meteorite Identification](#)
- [Meteorite Falls in Canada](#)
- [Michael Lee-Chin Crystal, Royal Ontario Museum](#)
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- [Mining Camps Canada](#)
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- [William Thorsell, Director and CEO, Royal Ontario Museum](#)

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