

**Milky Quartz, Calcite, March 2003, Diepalgraben, Zederhaustal, Lungau, Salzburg, Austria**

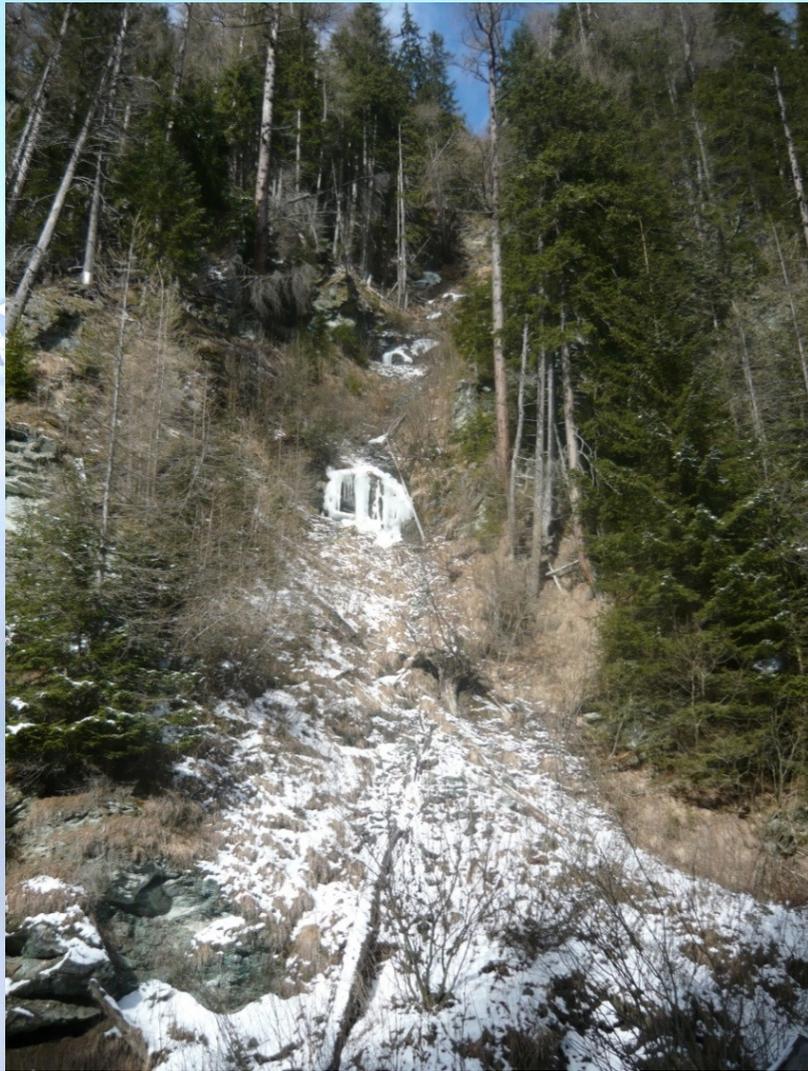


**Milky Quartz, Calcite 11 x 5,5 x 4 cm**

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In March 2003 I guided my first collecting trip in the Diepalgraben. I once more wanted to look closer to a place in the back part of the ditch. But, exactly in this area there was still snow and ice. So there was no point to scan the steep terrain. Thus I decided to proceed the search on the opposite side. There was no snow and the ground was not frozen. In the very steep wooded terrain I scanned the small rock walls. Despite intense search I could not find any suspicious signs in this area. So I started to look further outside the valley until I reached a small side valley. The sun was shining on a small flat place, directly into the ditch. A small stream runs alongside. This place was inviting me to rest and have a snack in the spring sun.



The findspot, in the upper third of the ditch (photo Reinhold Bacher)

I knew, that there have already been found rock crystals before at this place, but I had no more precise information about it. I could recognize small signs of rock crystal on the rocks while having a snack. After finishing snack I started to dig around a bit at the bottom of the rock. Also here I found small slim whitish rock crystals up to 2 cm. Because I quite liked the rock crystals, I started to chisel here. Within a short period of time I could open a little bubble, where even more of the small rock crystals were in place. The bubble of quartz was horizontal, and the direction of the cleft was absolutely not correct. But I was already happy with the small specimen I had found. By further chiseling I

followed the quartz vein, that opened and closed again and again. The character of the quartz vein and the bubbles began to change: They arranged vertically, only the direction of the cleft was still wrong. After further chiseling the quartz vein turned around 90 degrees and now the direction of the cleft was right too.

Late afternoon I could open one more cavity hiding two intergrown rock crystals of about 7 cm. The day slowly got to its end and my power too. I did not want to continue to work exhausted and overloaded. So I went home, but decided to come back soon.



Find situation after the first day: 2 intergrown rock crystals in greenschist (photo Reinhold Bacher)

On the second day, I brought my camera to make some pictures of the find-spot. Full of hope I worked at the same place as on the first day, but I could not salvage the rock crystals, because they were too much grown together with the greenschist. It was not possible to open one more cavity, and the quartz vein was completely vanished. The day, that started so full of hope, did not seem to correspond with my expectations.

I did not know any more where to proceed my search. Out of a gut feeling I removed a turf above the place, where I had previously worked. Looking out of the earth, there was a rough lens of calcite as big as a head of a child. I started to chisel here. After a few impacts I could salvage a 5 cm sized rock crystal that was intergrown with the calcite. Encouraged, I continued to work. After a short time my chisel fell through! A small black hole was in the lens of calcite now. I took my 50 cm long chisel, ushered it into it and could not feel any resistance! I extended the whole a bit until I could flash into it with my headlamp. It was a sight, which every collector is dreaming about: The cavity was drawn more than one meter into the mountain. In the back part the crystals grew down from the ceiling and on the ground of the cleft the tops were standing out of the rubble.

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Unexpected discovery: lens of calcite hidden under grass and earth



After a few impacts with the chisel it falls through (black spot)



Detailed view: The breach slightly enlarged  
(all photos Reinhold Bacher)



Detailed view: View into the cleft through the enlarged breach  
(all photos Reinhold Bacher)



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A spectacle: a big specimen of rock crystal is looking out of the rubble in the cleft (photo Reinhold Bacher)



The purified specimen of rock crystal, that was looking out of the rubble, size of the specimen 26 cm (photo Reinhold Bacher)

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With joy and excitement I started with the chiseling again and broadened the hole. When I finally finished, a major wedged chock inside the cleft blocked further progress. I tried to remove it with my hands. When my fingers glided over the backside, I could feel crystals. Caution was required now to not damage them. The specimen stuck in the cleft persistently. Whatever I tried to detach the specimen nothing succeeded. Whenever I got impatient, I moved over the crystals with my fingers and I remembered to calm down. Finally I succeeded to detach the specimen and took it out. The first amazing matrix-specimen was salvaged. I had to sit down and marveled at the specimen, that I was holding in my soiled hands.



The first specimen from the front area of the cleft: 29 x 13 x 14 cm (photo Reinhold Bacher)

I put the specimen carefully aside and addressed myself to the cleft. Between seam filling and loose jointed rocks there were rock crystals and tops of rock crystals visible everywhere. Carefully I reached into the jointed rock and grasped the rock crystals lying on top. The next specimen I got out of the cleft was a floater piece of about 10 cm consisting of nothing but double terminated crystals.

Again, I admired his new salvaged long masterpiece. An incredible joy came from within looking at this specimen in my hands. After a long time, I also put this specimen aside carefully. I grasped into the cleft again and got an undamaged double terminated crystal of about 20 cm length. Now again, a longer period of time passed with amazement and admiration about the recently salvaged find. After putting aside this gorgeous specimen, a grasp into the cleft followed to get out the next marvel of the

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nature. Salvaging specimen, accurate awed admiration of the specimen and the following putting carefully aside of the specimen became a ritual lasting the whole day. Eventually, I did not have any space left to put off the specimen. This got me out of a trance-like state. Only now, I noticed that it was late afternoon already. I wrapped the salvaged specimen carefully. Fortunately, I had brought along enough packaging material. My backpack was so packed, just that I could take along all the finds!



The 2nd specimen from the new cleft, intergrown double terminated as floater piece, with a 2nd generation and partly powdered with chlorite, 9 x 5 x 3,5 cm (photos Reinhold Bacher)

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Back home, I told my wife Maria about this extraordinary find. We started to unwrap the finds together and to wash them. Finds often look better on the mountain and disappoint when washed, but in this case it was the other way round: Due to washing the rock crystals got even more beautiful and started to sparkle through the many small crystals. Maria was delighted about this exceptional find. The whole evening we both looked at one find after the other.



The 3rd specimen of this day: double terminated with the 2nd generation of rock crystals, and calcite, 21,5 x 7 x 6,5 cm

(photo Martin Grüll)

All specimen have the same characteristics: The rock crystals show razor-sharp edges, the side surfaces show a snowy layer, intergrown with the top layer. This layer reaches to the edges of the prisms ending there as if cut off. The tops are highly lustrous and also inside clear like water. In many specimens one can see inside through the top of the crystals. The rock crystals are partly set on the green matrix and often associated with calcite. This mainly shows a brownish color and creates a three-colored shape with outstanding structure and fantastic contrast.



Rock crystal with exceptional habit, 9,5 x 7 x 5,5 cm (photo: Martin Grüll)

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The next days weather was bad and a further inspection did not make sense at that time. When the weather got better, it has slightly snowed in Zederhaus. I chose a complicated detour to not lay tracks directly to the find-spot. The find-spot was still undiscovered and untouched. I had brought a roll mat. Now, I kneeled down in front of the cleft and the salvage of amazing specimen started again. But this time the cleft was not as dry as the first time. Water has collected in the cleft and it was a chilly day in March. My hands got cold fast. Again and again I had to stand up and move to warm up. Nevertheless I stayed the whole day. Until my way home I had filled my backpack with beautiful specimen and double terminated crystals.



1. photo: Freshly salvaged double terminated crystal from the cleft (photos Reinhold Bacher)





Photo 2 and 3 show the cleansed double terminated crystal, 18,5 x 7,5 x 16,5 cm (photo Reinhold Bacher)

Back home, I took a quick hot bath, because I was quite chilled. A bad cold could not be avoided though. I had to take a break to recover. Impatience speeded up my recovery. A few days later I headed to the cleft for the third time. This time weather was fine and my wife Maria came with me to see the cleft with her own eyes. In front of the cleft I arranged it as comfortable as possible for Maria. Then finally the great moment came: She lay down in front of the cleft and looked inside. It did not take a long time and she unerringly reached into it and put out her first double terminated crystal. It was the same for her than it has been for me already on the very first day. She sat down and with delight she looked at the art piece she was holding in her hands. Also for her it took a while until she remembered the cleft again, and she lay down again to see what else was there to salvage. Whenever she put a new specimen out, we both looked at it and examined every single specialty of the specimen. This amazing day passed quickly. Richly rewarded we went home. In the evening, after having a snack, we cleansed the salvaged specimen together.

During the fourth on-site visit all loose specimen were salvaged. Now, the chisel was used more intense to detach intergrown specimen from the rock. While working I got frightened by a loud noise: A big block of ice has detached in the ditch and plunged two meters next to me. Slightly shocked I started with my work again. Until the evening I had filled my backpack, but the cleft now seemed to have come to an end.



Specimen detached from the cleft wall, 9,5 x 7 x 5,5 cm (photo Martin Grüll)

The next on-site visit provided few specimen and during the sixth tour I accepted, that is was finally over now. Yet, I picked on the cleft floor. There, a larger plate of greenschist attracted my attention. I tried to detach it by hooking into a plateau with my cleft hook. And really: After a few attempts it gave way. When I stretched myself into the cleft to pick up the plate, I could already feel first crystals on the underside. Carefully I crawled back from the cleft. Outdoors I turned around the specimen. Another top-specimen glistened against me. The find of this specimen was completely unexpected. But best of all was, it was a second cleft lit and now the cleft continued again. Especially in the second part of the cleft I could salvage a few beautiful double terminated crystals. The largest double terminated crystal comes from this area and measures 33 cm in length.



The second cleft lit: 35 x 20 x 9,5 cm (photo Reinhold Bacher)

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Altogether I visited the cleft eleven times, until it was finally depleted.



A very beautiful specimen: 22 x 16 x 9 cm (photo Reinhold Bacher)

