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A New Home for the Humanities

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Sharing a Passion for Minerals

David Friend '69 funds a new gallery at the Peabody Museum

Opposite: An architect's rendering of David Friend Hall. The gallery will feature a one-of-a-kind collection of monumental crystal formations.

DAVID FRIEND '69 ATTRIBUTES HIS LIFE'S path to a discovery he made as a child. Exploring the I-95 construction site near his home in New Rochelle, New York, Friend uncovered a pocket of mica and quartz crystals in the recently blasted rock. Their brilliance and complexity sparked questions that led to his life-long interests in science and mineralogy. "My passion for minerals came from inspiration, not textbooks," said Friend. "The variety and beauty of minerals is astonishing."

Eager to share this enthusiasm, Friend has made a \$4 million gift to the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History to renovate its auditorium into a state-of-the-art mineral and gem gallery and multipurpose instructional space. He will also establish an endowment to support displays and programming that draw from Yale's collection.

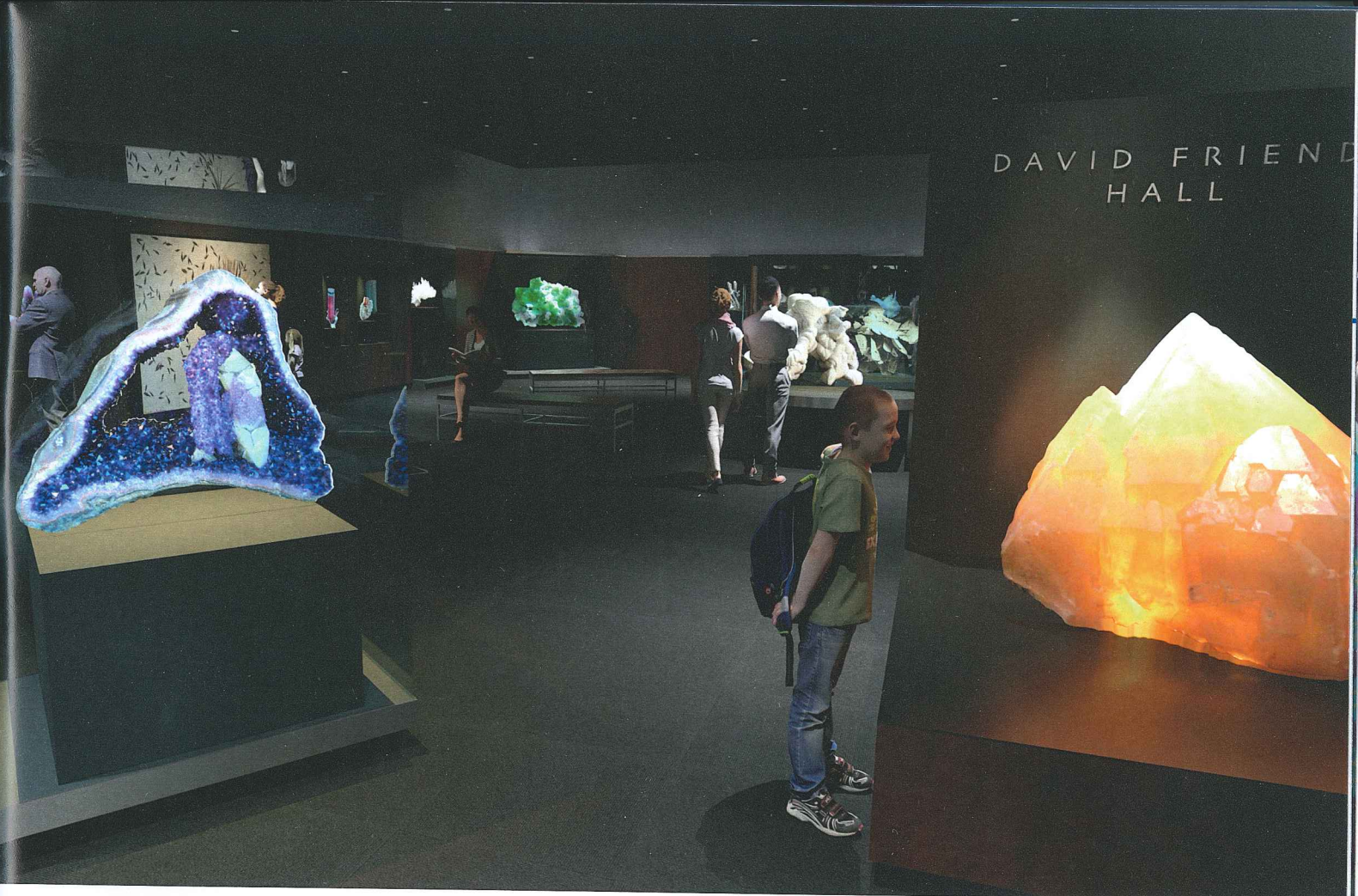
"My hope is that this new space inspires visitors to ponder how these materials are formed, where they come from, and their composition," said Friend.

Friend's gift has also allowed the museum to purchase additional specimens for display, and he has generously loaned some from his personal collection.

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The completion of the new gallery—renamed David Friend Hall—is timed to coincide with the Peabody's 150th anniversary in 2016; it is one part of an extensive renovation and expansion planned for the museum. Once fully funded, the renovation will update the entire Peabody to reflect a modern understanding of the earth's history, its life, and its cultures, while incorporating new ways for visitors to interact with the exhibits.

"We are very grateful for the incredible generosity of David Friend," said David Skelly, the Oastler Professor of Forestry & Environmental Studies and director of the Peabody. "This renovation project will reimagine our auditorium as both an exhibit space and a



room in which groups can gather together for teaching and learning. The remarkable specimens will complement our displays in the adjacent Hall of Minerals, Earth, and Space and advance the museum's mission to communicate understanding of earth's history to a wide audience."

A STATE-OF-THE-ART GALLERY

David Friend Hall will occupy a large room on the Peabody's third-floor. For decades, this hall had been home to a scientifically and historically important collection of gems and minerals, but in 1963 it was outfitted as an auditorium to allow for the showing of nature films. The renovation will reclaim this space for the Peabody's Division of Mineralogy and Meteoritics, which oversees holdings that include more than 40,000 mineral specimens and 400 meteorites. The state-of-the-art gallery will open onto the recently renovated Hall of Minerals, Earth, and Space, creating a unique destination for scholars, students, and the public.

"I envision a spectacular space focused on the beauty and wonder of nature that features some of the world's most beautiful and awe-inspiring

minerals," said Friend. "It will possess the visual power to inspire among visitors a new level of interest in earth science. Anchoring the space will be monumental crystals formed before the first dinosaurs walked the earth," he added.

Exhibit cases will line the perimeter of Friend Hall, while freestanding pedestals will showcase rare, large-scale specimens from the mineral and gem collections. Curators will change out the exhibits frequently, allowing the Peabody to share a greater number of objects over time. (Currently, only 1 percent of the collection is on display.) The hall will also feature removable, amphitheater-style seating positioned around a stage and large projection screen, which will be used for faculty- and student-led lectures, presentations, and special events.

Notably absent from the hall will be the text-heavy, static signs often associated with traditional museum exhibits. Instead, Friend Hall will engage Bluetooth low-energy transmitters, or "beacons," inconspicuously installed in each of the display cases. As visitors progress through the hall, the beacons will broadcast detailed, interactive content to visitors' smartphones or tablets, tailored to meet the needs of individual



David Friend '69



An architect's rendering. Friend Hall will use Bluetooth technology to broadcast interactive content to visitors' hand-held devices.

"As renovations move forward, we hope to transform the museum into a place that is even more accessible to student experiences and to teaching."

visitors or tour groups. This technology will be incorporated into additional galleries as the museum-wide renovation progresses.

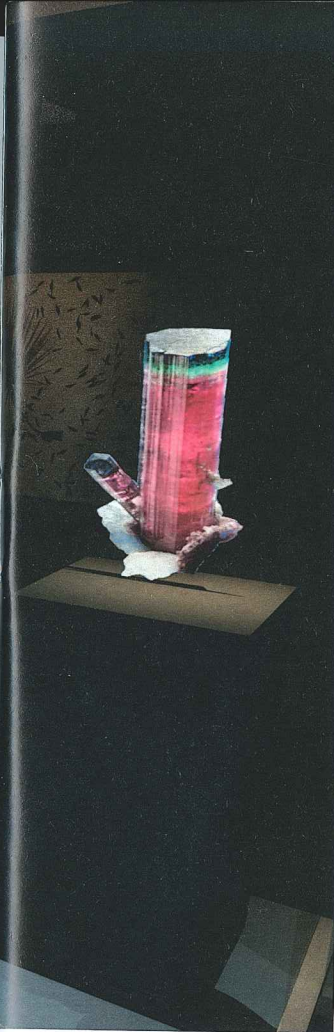
AN OPEN DOOR FOR STUDENTS

For Skelly, one of the most exciting parts of the Friend Hall project is its potential to reach Yale students: "The gallery will be a backdrop for many types of student activities," he said. "We envision presentations and special events that will welcome students, but there will also be student-led tours." Equally important, a cadre of graduate and undergraduate students will take part in planning and mounting the exhibits.

"In any semester, we have about seventy undergraduates actively engaged with the Peabody," Skelly said, "doing their own research, volunteering in the collections, or volunteering

with public outreach. As renovations move forward, we hope to transform the museum into a place that is even more accessible to student experiences and to teaching."

Jay Ague, the Henry Barnard Davis Professor and Chair of Geology & Geophysics and curator of mineralogy and meteoritics, notes that students played an important part in developing the existing Hall of Minerals, Earth, and Space, which was funded by contributions and in-kind gifts from gem collectors Benjamin Zucker '62 and C.R. "Cap" Beesley. In the coming year, he plans to recruit a student team to assist with the new exhibition hall. "There's always work done behind the scenes, but contributing to the creation of a public space is very attractive and a wonderful opportunity for undergraduates," Ague said. ■



(From left): Charlotte Padden, Angeliki Manthou, David Rafael McCormick '20 MA, Isabel Singer MC '16, and Moira Frazier '16 pose with a Mayan censer from the late

classic period, 650–900 A.D. The artifact is one of several that students are considering for their exhibit marking the museum's 150th anniversary.



Enhancing opportunities for Yale students

A course co-taught by Anne Underhill, professor of anthropology and curator of anthropology at the Peabody, and Cyra Levenson, associate curator of education and academic outreach at the Yale Center for British Art, is offering students the opportunity to design and curate exhibits for the Peabody. In *Landscapes of Meaning: Museums and Their Objects*, two student teams have been selected to work with the museum's collections to curate two independent exhibits—one highlighting the importance of cultural property preservation and the other complementing the larger museum-wide exhibits created for the museum's 150th anniversary celebration.

"These will be high-quality exhibits that during the process of their creation will challenge students to think about the science communication aspect of museums," said Skelly. "For example, how do you use inanimate objects to tell a compelling message? The aim of this project is to help students understand their audience, specifically what stories and messages move people and how to best communicate science-heavy stories."

A range of opportunities for Yale's undergraduate and graduate students to engage with the museum's vast collections is currently under development, according to Skelly. Spearheading these efforts will be the holder of a new staff

position—the director of student programs—charged with increasing the engagement of both Yale faculty members and students with the museum's collections. A contribution from an anonymous donor has helped to fund the position.

The director will facilitate student-led collection tours, student-focused events and lectures, and additional undergraduate internships, all aimed at connecting the museum more closely with the teaching mission of the university. Skelly is also working with faculty members to incorporate more of the Peabody's specimens into their teaching, whether in special object classrooms or their own teaching spaces.