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Masterpieces of the Earth

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One of five spectacular showrooms all at one location.

Just a quick non-stop flight from LA to SeaTac Airport, just south of Seattle.

*For more information or if you'd like to arrange for a private showing of
the Masterpieces of Earth Collection in Seattle,
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*“One of the most unique and breathtaking
collections in the world!” - CNBC*



“Pretty Impressive!”

- Stephen Hawking



MASTERPIECES OF THE EARTH

CRYSTAL PALACE

Tucked away in a Seattle warehouse sits one of the most spectacular collections of crystals anywhere in the world. Richard Berger takes us on a tour of his extraordinary wonderland.

✍️ written by Holly Bieler



TRANSCENDENT OASIS

The Masterpieces of the Earth gallery is unlike anywhere else on earth. Berger has painstakingly designed the space not just to showcase his collection of rare crystals, but to allow for visitors to truly commune with them.

It was 9:30 a.m. on a Wednesday morning, and I was sure I was in the wrong place. My Uber had just stopped on the side of a busy highway in suburban Seattle, a dull stretch of road dotted with beige stucco office buildings and the occasional used car dealership. A dusty philly cheesesteak shop helmed by a yawning teenager presented the only perceptible sign of life within view.

"You're sure this is the right address?" my Uber driver asked. For about the tenth time that morning I checked my phone again. In my experience, places like the one where I was headed—places that contain some of the most beautiful things it's possible to see in this world—usually have relatively grandiose entrances. That Masterpieces of the Earth didn't even have a sign was as sure an indication as any that I was in for something I'd never experienced before. Or, it was a sign I was being scammed. As I stood on the side of the highway, the smell of day-old cheese whiz growing stronger by the second, I wasn't entirely sure which one it was. Then I remembered that I had seen Masterpieces of the Earth featured on CBS Sunday Morning program and began to settle down.

Then I saw Richard Berger. The founder of Masterpieces of the Earth, Berger is a study in contradictions. He's an old-school hippie, for one, who wears his

beard long and his Birkenstocks daily and can still recall in intimate detail that summer in 1968 he spent couch-surfing in Haight-Ashbury. But he's also a Bronx-born, straight-talking New Yorker, with little appetite for bullshit or hard R's but



an abiding one for gentle cynicism, which the fresh Seattle air has as yet been unable to stamp out.

He's an interesting guy, to say the least, and yet perhaps the most interesting thing about Richard Berger is what's sitting behind the nondescript warehouse door he's walking me towards right now; one of, if not the most, spectacular collection of giant crystals anywhere in the world. Indeed among crystal lovers and

collectors, Berger is a legend, albeit an elusive one. For over 40 years he's worked to amass a carefully-curated collection that includes some of the most exquisite, largest and rarest crystals and fossils that have ever been unearthed. He's been

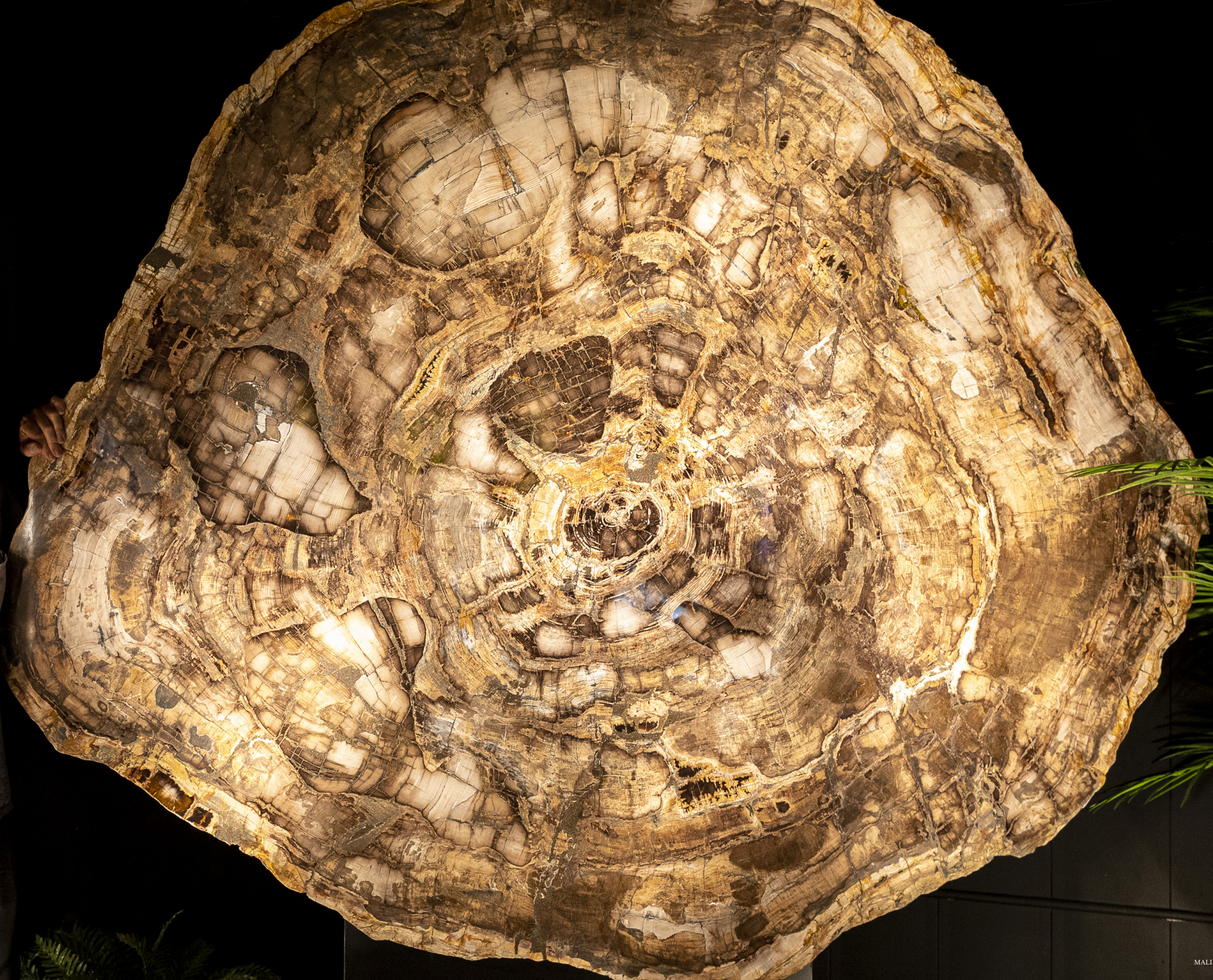
profiled on everything from NBC Evening Program in Seattle, which proclaimed that "Richard Berger has what is considered the most spectacular private collection of giant natural crystals and fossils in the world," to NPR, and CBS Sunday Morning, which described Masterpieces of the Earth as "Mother Nature's private museum." His crystals also line the gallery walls of some of the most prominent museums in the world.

And yet it's a rarefied few who have had the opportunity to see his legendary collection up-close in person; multi-millionaires and acclaimed artists and some of the most influential people in the world, from Andy Warhol to Stephen Hawking. That is, until now. For the first time in twenty years, Berger

is opening up his world-class gallery not just to top crystal and fossil collectors and major natural history museums throughout the world—including the Smithsonian where three giant crystals from Richard's collection surround the Hope Diamond—but also to new crystal and fossil lovers and collectors. All of the amazing pieces in the collection are now available for sale and you can schedule your own private showing.

ANCIENT ART

A huge fossilized sequoia which was fully transformed into microscopic crystals of quartz and was then cut and polished to a brilliant luster. It's spectacular patterns inscribe the story of the tree's time on earth 38 million years ago.



**FONTAINEBLEAU
CONCRETIONS**

An exquisite, two million year old natural sculpture, created by super-heated water dancing and swirling over itself through powder fine sand that in the process of setting captured these deliciously sensuous forms for eternity. Berger has the largest collection of these incredibly rare Fontainebleau concretions in the world, having acquired the entire discovery back in the early 1990s.



And today, I'm getting a first look. I'd cautioned Berger beforehand that I might not be the best person for the job; crystals, decidedly, have never really been my thing.

"Well," he said, "These aren't like crystals you've seen before."

Indeed I had no idea what I was about to witness as Berger opened the doors to his warehouse. As I walked inside, I couldn't see anything at first, my eyes adjusting from the overcast Seattle light. And then, slowly, an astonishing new world came into view. Berger's gallery is a massive space, filled with lush trees and plants and rays of brilliant white museum lights centered upon glittering crystal behemoths

that are almost too much to take in. Every which way I looked, it seemed, I found myself staring at something truly unlike anything I've ever seen before. I was hard-pressed to remember the last time I'd felt this way about anything, let alone dozens of things, all in one room. And this was just the first room — to my astonishment, there were four more to go.

To my right sat the largest quartz I'd ever seen, nearly 5 feet in width and diameter, a sparkling harmony of small and large jutting stones, each clear as water, a show of their molecular perfection. To my left was a massive crystal that looked more like a magical cave, filled with craggy, glistening forms of exquisite baby blues and pinks

so richly-pigmented they took my breath away. It felt, as I walked through the labyrinthine gallery, like I was at the show of the world's greatest artist. And yet, at the same time, it didn't feel that way at all. The symmetry and grandeur and hues of the stones, and indeed the wildness of their creativity, were very clearly not of a human maker. This, Berger explained to me, is kind of the point.

"Crystals are one of the most perfect forms in nature," he said. "Being next to them gives us a template for our own perfection."

Richard Berger got into crystals accidentally. The year was 1968 and Berger, then a second-year medical school stu-

dent in Philadelphia, was on a summer cross-country road trip when he happened upon a small rock shop in Wyoming. He'd never had an affinity for crystals before, but something drew him to the little shop, and to a small, pedestrian crystal he bought there on a whim. He was fascinated by the form. And more than that, it seemed to help him understand the world in a way he never had before.

Most of Berger's extended family was lost in World War II. "I have no history beyond my grandparents. It's like you could have dropped me here from Pluto," he said. "So this became my history. It was replaced by geological magnificence. It became a path for understanding myself."

Berger soon dropped out of medical school, and within a few years had opened up his own shop, Crystal Resources Gallery, on the upper east side of Manhattan. Within only a few months, he had gained a worldwide reputation for his exquisite pieces. The most influential New York guide book at the time, Gerry Frank's *Where to Find It, Buy It, Eat It in New York*, anointed his space "the finest crystal gallery in the world."

It was there, on a summer afternoon in 1982, that Berger met Miriam Dyak. A creativity teacher and poet by way of Maine. Dyak had been living in New York City for only a few months when she took a trip to Crystal Resources Gallery on the recommendation of a friend. Debate lingers as to whether she actually bought anything — Berger swears he gave her a crystal for free — but either way, Dyak left that day with a crystal and Berger's number. What resulted was an everlasting connection.

By 1985 they were married, and within a few years, tired of the grind of the city and craving the natural earth, decided to pick up shop and move to Seattle. For a while they ran one of the most successful and acclaimed crystal stores in the world, but as their collection grew even larger as did the size of the crystals they were acquiring, they realized they would have to decamp for a larger space.



YALE PEABODY MUSEUM Berger and his wife, Miriam, at the grand opening dinner for the new David Friend Hall of Gems and Minerals.

In 2011, Berger moved everything to a remote warehouse, and began painstakingly crafting a space he hoped would not just showcase the magnificence of his pieces, but allow for a place where people could truly commune with them.

"I wanted a place where you had permission to take a deep breath and feel at peace with yourself," he says. "And maybe even feel optimistic about the future for this world."

As we neared the end of our tour, we stopped in one of the most beautiful rooms in the gallery. It was almost like an oasis within the universe, with floors of glistening black sand, thickets of tropical green trees and a babbling rock fountain in the middle. At the top of the fountain sat a massive, jaw-dropping amethyst, with jewel-encrusted forms that looked

almost like palm trees sprouting out of the middle, each casting brilliant sparkles of dark purple and lilac light across the room. As we walked closer to it, the amethyst's beguiling artistry was thrown into stark relief; it was almost too exuberant, too beautiful, to look at. I was moved, suddenly, though I couldn't exactly say why. Berger knew the feeling.

"This happened when nobody was looking," he said. "If this is what the earth is creating beneath our feet, it makes you think; maybe humans can get it together, have a bit more compassion and learn how to work with each other and the earth."

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