

## IMPORTANCE OF SHOW CASE DISPLAY

Every LGMC member will attest to the basic importance of having the very best show case display possible. But do we give the time necessary to really create a top-notch show case display?

Many rockhounds through habit evidently "throw" their show cases in the same way for every show. The result of this display pattern is a dull, uninteresting array of rocks and not a display of gems and minerals.

Your case display plays a tremendously important role in the success of your hobby. If every LGMC member realizes just how case(s) can be and does something about it, our club certainly will find its way into the 1974 show as "experts" in show case display.

Looking at the importance of show case display from a dollars-and-cents standpoint, how much money do you pay for your gem or mineral hobby? Your show case should represent all your efforts and monies put into your hobby.

The first-hand experience of successful competitors gives a clearer perspective of the importance of this topic.

"It's the case that the judges see. That's the level of your hobby--it projects your personality."

"We don't actually figure a particular amount of money that we spend on the show cases but I feel they are so extremely important that I almost invariably will spend any amount of money necessary to keep them first class. If you don't keep after them and keep them in high quality and attractive, you're really cheating yourself."

## PURPOSES OF SHOW CASE DISPLAY

What basic function does your show case perform? In other words, how do you use your show cases(s)? What's its purpose? What does it do for your hobby?

Obviously, different rockhounds use their cases different ways and for different basic purposes, so there may very well be several different answers.

"I use my cases to attract people to my display rather than somebody else's."

"To create an image."

"We try to project ourselves and our hobby through our show cases. We feel it's important to portray a warm, soft atmosphere."

"I think there is only one function of a gem and mineral show case and that's to show and present gems. The case might reflect your individuality, but basically it is to show gems and minerals.

"I would consider it the best way of showing my hobby to the people. I think it's very effective letting people know what you have."

Let's now summarize the basic importance and purposes of show case display.

1. To attract hobbyists
2. To create an image of natural beauty
3. To present gems and minerals

We think the hobbyists who are getting the full investment from his show case are accomplishing each of these three conclusions.

#### THE ELEMENTS OF GOOD SHOW CASE DISPLAY

We feel there are five or six key elements which if followed properly will insure a good case display.

First, and overall, of course, there's planning.

Then the major elements are: determining a theme, formulating a message, illustrating the message, selecting proper lighting (color), and finally, grouping gems, minerals, rocks, etc.

#### Need for Planning

This might seem very obvious. The fact that it is so "obvious" possibly attests to the fact that "planning" is overlooked by the majority of displayers.

Planning seems to take many courses. Some hobbyists plan their case displays based only around their collection of rocks. This is fine, but if they don't get an interesting display, the show suffers. This is what you might call "grab-bag display."

Others "plan" their cases the day before the show. It's a "little of this and a little of that." "Last year I had agates, and this time I should put in opal." This group falls into the 90% who fail to really take an interest in display. The "day before" decision is not planning.

Based on past experience and advance information from club calendars and federation dates you could "plan ahead" your case displays several months in advance, giving yourself plenty of lead time to get the right elements for your show cases.

## Determining the Theme

The focal point of a "professional" case display is the theme created to catch the eye of the casual passerby. Successful case displays are built around a "central idea" or theme which has a specific appeal.

This appeal induces the viewer to relate himself to the theme. This point becomes even more important if you consider a rather interesting statistic. The average "walker-by" takes only five seconds to pass your case.

If a hobbyist with a normal, rather broad assortment, exhibits representative samples of all the types of gems and minerals he owns, there will be a puzzling array in which nothing stands out. Passers-by will hardly stop to search for the few items among the many which might be of interest to them.

Winners of several display contests, gave their ideas when asked about the elements of a good case.

"One important thing is the theme. You have to have one theme and not several in one case."

"Case displays we feel should tell a story to the person who's viewing the case and it should incite his interest so that he wants to come to you to find out more about the displayed items."

"We find that to give the viewer a story and to back it up with some kind of item is the thing that creates the greatest interest in displays. A prime example of that is a theme 'Gold Discovered' in which drawings of gold miners' pans and gold ingot bricks and all kinds of mining equipment were used with gold nuggets on display."

In order to establish your display theme, consider these points:

1. What gems or minerals do you want to feature?
2. Who are the particular viewers?
3. To what use will the items be put?

If you'll consider each of the three points as you plan your show case display, your theme will follow as a matter of course.

## Formulate a Message

How many salesmen come into your home, open up their cases, show you their merchandise, but don't say a word? If a salesman ever did that to you, you wouldn't let him come around a second time. There's an analogy between this and the show case display that doesn't have any signs or any copy to explain the display.

The case should have a written message. That message should immediately give the viewer the basic information of the item displayed. (By information, we mean the scientific name, location of find and any other pertinent information, history, lore, etc. Competition display? Be sure to check the rule book before including too much.)

Don't let the gems or minerals talk for themselves. In today's shows there are many inexpensive stones which by their outright appearance look almost as good as more expensive stones. You need some copy, a written message to tell the passer-by why your stone is what it is.

In formulating the message, remember that it takes very few seconds for a person to walk past your display and your case(s). The message has to be short; it has to be explicit; it has to be striking, and to the point. The right message should stop a passer-by.

You can go to any stationery store, buy lettered decals and pressure-applied type numbers and letters, and then put these on cardboards in an attractive manner.

There are art schools with many young students who are always looking for an opportunity to pick up some extra cash. You can make arrangements with them to do all the necessary lettering for you at a reasonable price.

Amateurish signs, crudely lettered, don't do justice to the items and to the general effect of the display itself. Any signs that a hobbyist uses should look professional. By framing these signs, the message -- and the gems and minerals -- assume more importance.

Never fail, too, to put your name in a display. Don't leave it anonymous. Your name should be lettered on a card and used in each case. NOTE, however, that competition cases cannot bear names of owners or displayers until after the judges have completed the official judging.

### Illustrating the Message

Once you've formulated the message, the next major step is illustrating it. Lester Gaba, in his book, "The Art of Window Display", describes the necessity for proper illustration.

"Have something new", he says. Many displaymen do excellent work, but always in the established patterns of display. They have an intriguing idea occasionally, but they quickly discard it -- afraid it's too extravagant, too funny, too much over the public's head."

"Their windows are always safe, always conventional. And for that reason, they often intrigue nobody. Every displayman ought to take a flyer, now and then. The daring departure will be the windows people will remember, and the windows that will build his reputation."

An expensive array of display props doesn't insure a good display. Inexpensive materials used creatively can produce attractive displays for you. It's the investment of ideas that go into your display that make it good or 'also-rah'. An expensive display can be most attractive, but attractiveness is only one step in the process of designing a "selling" show case display.

In our analysis of show cases we find that successful displays can be created for budgets of \$5-\$10. This calls for the use of photographs obtained from newspapers, mounting manufacturers advertisements, using birthday cards as props for themes, and using props borrowed from neighborhood stores, such as women's hats, mannequins, sports equipment and fashioning items.

Don't overlook miniature models. Their size lets them fit easily into your show case.

We can't overemphasize the importance of display props which dramatize your stones by adding visual interest and emphasizing your theme.

For example, to feature jade, props could include color postcards of resort areas, travel folders, etc. from the location find area. Just a few of these items spotted among selected stones will be enough to tell the hobby benefit story and help create real interest in your show case.

Props to promote finished jewelry can include evening gloves, theatre programs, theatre tickets, opera glasses, champagne glasses, etc. Spotting these items around the jewelry display will set the mood and add that extra touch of glamour.

(Idea to stimulate your thinking of creative displays) Lester Gaba in his book, "The Art of Window Display", says, "Pick up an odd assortment of picture frames at any secondhand store, paint them white, gold, or any color, and suspend them from the ceiling of your display area. Place a stand on the back of each frame for a display of jewelry. Or make shadowboxes (with a wood base and taped cardboard sides and top) behind the frames."

Unusual items sometime come in handy as attention-getters. Don't overlook the possibility of borrowing from local antique dealers. (When you borrow material, of course, put a card in your display giving credit to the supplier. Hobbyists who have done this, say that it cost them nothing except the promotional exposure which they gave to the cooperating local merchant.)

If your antique dealer has one of those old bird cages, what better way for you to display a unique specimen. An antique mirror also presents the same opportunity. An item that should be seen both from the front and back would then be positioned in front of the mirror.

Sand as a floor covering prop makes an intriguing display. The neutral color is ideal for displaying colorful items. National Jewelers says the best fabrics to be used to cover floors and props are plain cottons, brocades and, of course, velvets and satins. Felt is also an ideal material.

The local wallpaper dealer can offer you a tremendous array of background materials. Visit his store and take a look at what he has available.

"Display World Magazine", published in Cincinnati, is excellent if you're looking for ideas on display supplies.

Visit your local florist, too. Ask him to show you what he has available in artificial flowers. The obviously artificial flowers of years ago are no more. With today's plastics, you can hardly tell the difference. A flower display in your display gives a refreshing atmosphere, plus charm and sentiment. Flowers have for centuries been unsurpassed as a method of expressing beauty, elegance and appreciation. Artificial plants also can give an attractive greenery feeling to the display. This is an ideal way to introduce a "Rock Hunting Vacation" theme.

In developing any display, keep in mind that it should have one center of attraction, one highlight in each case or section.

### Lighting

There are three very important factors in achieving proper lighting in display areas. These three factors are the three A's of lighting; namely, Attraction, Atmosphere, and Appraisal.

Attraction may be attained by means of proper high intensity display lighting and sign lighting for identification.

Atmosphere may be created by using good quality and properly shielded lighting equipment coordinated with case design and decor.

Appraisal lighting is perhaps the most important of the three. This lighting is point of interest lighting and should be designed to emphasize the appeal features of the display items.

In brief, lighting embodying these factors is a most potent selling tool.

The type and size of display may greatly influence the lighting plan. Whether the lighting is to be designed in a high or low key may depend on the style and class of gems and/or minerals to be displayed. In some displays, a quiet atmosphere may be desired with moderate general illumination, while in many the need may be for the lively, stimulating atmosphere that a higher illumination level will help create. The lighting should fit in well with the display's architecture and decoration. The lighting should also be comfortable for the viewers.

Lighting which fails to show the items about as they will appear where they are to be used is often responsible for the viewer's dissatisfaction and the rejection of the display. It is generally advisable to use incandescent lighting on jewelry which is usually seen under such lighting. However, the availability today of fluorescent lamps of colors that approximate the incandescent color range is changing the designer's approach somewhat.

Color is often the determining factor in selecting the lamp type to use. The following effects should be considered in making a choice:

Incandescent filament lamps produce a warm atmosphere in the display and emphasize reds, oranges, and yellows.

Fluorescent lamps have varying effects, depending upon lamp color. Improved color-rendition cool-white lamps make colors in displays appear almost as they would under daylight, and also create a neutral or cool atmosphere in the store. Improved-color-rendition warm-white lamps give an effect on colors similar to that of incandescent lamps, and create a warmer atmosphere in the display. Standard cool-white and standard warm-white lamps do not provide as good color-rendition, although they are considerably more efficient.

White, daylight, and soft-white lamps are not usually recommended for general lighting.

Lighting levels for various seeing tasks are measured in footcandles. The scale of footcandles in everyday seeing covers a range from 1 to 10,000. Research has clearly shown that there is a direct relation between level of illumination and how well one can see. Starting with darkness and a task of given size and contrast, as the illumination is increased, the task first will become barely visible, if enough time is allowed. As the illumination is increased further, the task will be seen faster, with greater accuracy and with less effort. Furthermore, small changes in contrast require large differences in illumination. For instance, research indicates that with printed price tags with good, bold-black contrast, a level of only 7 footcandles is needed, but with pencil notations, 70 is needed.

However, levels of illumination relate only to the viewer's eyes and the seeing tasks involved in appraising jewelry. This is a key consideration, but the design of the display lighting must also consider minimum distraction from the merchandise. In general as levels of illumination are increased, more attention needs to be given to luminaire brightness and its relation to the environment.

Regarding control or use of lighting heat. Lighting heat is an asset in cold weather, and can be partially disposed of in warm weather through a ventilation plan as part of the cooling system.

The relationship between displaying and lighting is difficult to establish, since appeal depends on so many other factors. However, it can be established that improved lighting offers a reasonable expectation of more viewers of the display. Adequate lighting of show case displays has these objectives:

1. Attract attention
2. Hold attention despite competing distractions.
3. Leave a favorable, lasting, and accurate impression of the display.

## Color

Here are comments from displayers on the subject of color in a show case.

"We play very highly on color tones. We use very bright colors, getting away from the old light blues or grays and go in for more modern, more brilliant colors."

"We try to trim our cases in such a fashion using background colors and that sort of thing so that they are attractive, so people will stop.

We stress strongly that color plays a vital part in the preparation of a successful show case display.

There seems to be a very definite color preference among the public. Most persons prefer light colors over dark colors, white colors over grayish colors, primary colors over intermediate hues.

One authority on the subject of colors, Bissen, in his book, "Selling Color to People", says:

"The taste of the average person is frank, honest, unpretentious. He prefers simple colors such as red, yellow, green and blue. He wants to impress others with colors that are obvious enough not to be missed and are not always harmonious. As the social ladder is climbed, taste grows more conservative and more consistent: soft and more subdued hues are preferred, carefully put together."

Bissen makes a breakdown between traditional styles and contemporary styles. Traditional styles, he says, go with soft colors, brown, rose, soft green and soft blue. Contemporary styles are more acceptable in yellow, red, chartreuse, and turquoise.

It's interesting to note that color can be a tip-off to personality... and to product preferences. Here's how the experts classify personality by color choice...

### EXTROVERTED -- social active

Red	hot, passionate, aggressive
Orange	very warm, ardent
Yellow	warm, friendly, alert

### INTROVERTED -- detached introspective

Green	fresh, balanced, tranquil
Blue	cool, subdued, sedate
Purple	stately, melancholic, pompous



The old theory of color usage was that it's not wise to use very large amounts of intense colors. Rather, tints, shades or grayed tones should be used in the largest areas, with smaller areas of brilliant color. Bright colors used in smaller areas add interest and accent to the display. The amounts of colors should be varied, but one color should predominate. All other colors used with the predominating color should harmonize by contrasting or blending with it.

But the new theory says, "Don't be afraid of deep, intense colors. They're interesting and form a dramatic background for light-and-medium-colored items." You therefore have to decide, depending upon the tastes of your community, just which colors to use.

No more than three colors should be used in any one show case theme. If you use several colors, they should be separated by neutral colors -- gray, white or black. When you use black, it will make other colors lighter. If you use white, it will make other colors darker. If you use a combination of light and dark, use the dark colors below the lighter ones.

Jewelry should be displayed on dark or rich colored material for maximum contrast. If you're showing a gay colored pin, for example, you should be careful not to have contrasting colors in your platform material. There are seasonal colors, colors for special holidays, in fact, colors for each month of the year. If you want to be completely up to date with your display, you can use these colors during the appropriate periods.

#### Displaying Gems and/or Minerals

One of the cardinal rules obvious to all is that display items and the glass must be immaculately clean. To the casual passer-by your image is created at first glance. If he notices a dirty glass, dust on the stone, worn coverings or drapes, then no matter what your theme or how well you have illustrated your message, you've made a negative impression.

Beverly Pick, in her book "Display Presentation", says:

"The widely held idea that it is necessary to crowd a show case in order to convince the viewer that a large collection of gems or minerals is owned is not always sound thinking. An article elegantly displayed in a setting more typical of the professional conceptions of leading metropolitan stores is likely to appear to the customer as a better bargain than the identical product, at the same price, buried in a heterogenous collection of anybody's goods cramming the window of the shopkeeper a few feet down the street."

We've found that the higher the quality image to be projected, the fewer items are displayed. The so-called "top of the ladder," Tiffany's Jewelry Store usually shows one piece of merchandise set in a beautiful surrounding background. The theme, of course, is to say "exquisite" and "one of a kind." Remember, exclusiveness can be a judge's motivating factor.

You can display a number of varieties (i.e., quartz-topaz, amethyst, crystal) in your case without confusing the viewer if you separate them into their special categories. Be careful not to get too many groups. This can make a case look untidy. Ideally each group should contain between 3 and 5 specimens.

It's advisable to prepare the selections of models beforehand, on trays. The selection should match the "message" of the display. And the selection should include a certain proportion of prestige models, with the featured specimen given the prime position. Once a collection has been classified in "families," the principal group, the one featured in the theme message, should be placed in the center of the display.

To the viewer, the importance of the specimens depends on where it's located in the case. The front center section is the ideal location. Items here attract the most attention. If the item is stuck in a corner it may go unnoticed. It will also assume less importance, since it's not being featured.

Even a large display can appear crowded unless space is handled properly. A little "air" between species or groups of varieties makes a display more interesting, and individual items can be identified. And don't forget the message. Each displayed group should be accompanied by a small card describing the characteristics and information of the category. To avoid monotony, the formation of each group should be different or at least appear to be. Placing the specimens in varying positions can do it.