

Tuesday, 18 March 2014 14:19

# Passion Enclosed in Amber - an interview with Doug Lundberg

Written by [Anna Sado](#)

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Doug Lundberg in the amber mine in Dominican (March 2014) *Photo by John Fudala*

In the 80s. when he dealt with Dominican amber research, nothing seemed to indicate that two decades later he would be the owner of one of the largest private collections of fossil resins in the USA, and the largest internet shop selling literally everything that is connected to his unusual passion.

**You have been dealing with amber for over 20 years - does it still fascinate you?**

Absolutely yes! My adventure with it began back when I studied at the Adams State University in Colorado, where as a biotechnologist I was sequencing the structures of inclusion proteins in Dominican amber and compared them with the ones of contemporary species. For years I treated amber as a research material, only a few years later, when in 1993 *Jurassic Park* was released, I realised that I owned quite a large collection of amber with inclusions, of quite high market value. Not long before that I made friends with Jake Brodzinsky, an American who lives in Dominica, and we set an internet shop [americawest.com](#) together. Initially, we sold only inclusions in Dominican amber there. Currently, we offer fossil resins from all over the world. I learnt the craft from Jake, and after his death I inherited his very rich collection, including thousands of identified inclusions in Dominican amber. It was far too valuable to sell it, that is why I returned it to his daughters so as they could bestow parts of it to various museums in the world. Another important person in my "amber" life was Janusz Fudala, who encouraged me to visit the Amberif trade fair in Gdańsk, where I met many amber researchers. Thanks to those contacts my passion has in a way exploded: I finally found a higher end of in my

## Opinions

### Tomasz Mikołajczyk: Misery...

...a few reasons explaining why the directors of the Gdańsk International Fair should resign.



### Tomasz Mikołajczyk: Report from the Amber Trip Trade Fair

"The moment before detonation" – this is how I would briefly summarise the first days of the trade fair in Vilnius.



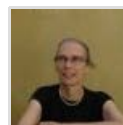
### Montserrat Lacomba: Amber in Different Aspects

The Amberif Design Award is a very interesting and well organised competition.



### Caroline Broadhead: ADA is a very good idea

I think the competition is a very good idea.



### Marcin Wesołowski: It Has Been a Good Year

The finishing year has been rich in positive events on the amber market.



[all opinions](#)

## AP Tag Cloud

ad memoriam ambassador of amber amber  
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## PRICES OF BALTIC AMBER

Approximate prices of Baltic amber (raw material)

| FRACTION / gram | PRICE USD / kg |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 2-5             | 350-500        |
| 5-10            | 600-800        |
| 10-20           | 1300-1700      |
| 20-50           | 2200-3200      |
| 50-100          | 3000-4300      |
| 100-200         | 4000-5200      |

## LINKS OF THE WEEK

Recommended by AP:  
**Amber Gems Maria Zawadzka**  
For 17 years the company has been discovering the secrets of amber, whose exceptional beauty is combined with silver, turquoise and other stones.  
**SILVAM**  
The Silvam Company has been active in jewellery business since 1997. They offer a wide range of amber products and hand made silver and amber jewellery.  
**Boruni Galleries**  
Where jewellery meets fashion.



## TOP 10

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**The Chinese will be buying amber even in**

interest and research of amber.

**You make your collection available to researchers. Your bird in Dominican amber is - according to Professor Barbara Kosmowska-Ceranowicz - the material for a few scientific works.**

Each year I make interesting pieces of my collection available for scientific research. Many of them later become gifts to museums. I was thanked for that in a wonderful way: one of the species of hemiptera that are currently at the Inclusions Museum by the University of Gdańsk, were called *thionia douglundbergi*. When it comes to the chick inclusion in Dominican amber - with preserved fragments of bones, claws, and remains of the skin, feather and egg-shell it hatched from - I would like it to remain in my collection due to its uniqueness.

**What other unique exhibits do you have in your collection?**

My biggest discovery has been the inclusion of the queen ant mating with a male in Dominican amber. We don't get the opportunity to see in nature, and suddenly it is here - in amber from 20 million years ago! I remember how I raised my eyes from the microscope and started wondering what the chances of discovering something so rare are - it was like winning a lottery. It is a shame that I hadn't bought a real ticket, as I would have probably won as well (laughs). Although this inclusion is in fact on sale, the price is so high that nobody will buy it by accident. So it actually belongs to my private collection. I also have a few exhibits of very rarely occurring solifugae in Dominican amber.

**How do you acquire inclusions?**

One of the ways is visiting mines in Dominican, which I do once a year. Currently I am planning a few expeditions to the South hemisphere where I would like to visit the new amber mines. The possibility to travel to the places where amber occurs, observe the process of its mining and talk to the miners there - for me it is one of the most beautiful aspects of amber. I have always been looking for something special: be it a new inclusion, or just a unique colour - amber is simply fascinating.

**What will you show at the next Amberif trade fair?**

I will exhibit the inclusion of the queen ant mating with the male - it always creates a lot of interest. I will also show the inclusion of the chick and a lizard - both in Dominican amber, and many others. I also have amber from Dominican, including its blue variety, which is the most rarely occurring, and the most fascinating type. I think that the visitors will also find blue amber from Sumatra very interesting. Especially, taking into account the fact that for a long time, the only blue fluorescent amber came from Dominica and Mexico, and its prices have reached exorbitant level and became inaccessible for the average client. Meanwhile, in Sumatra, new deposits of blue amber have recently been discovered - I will have the pleasure of showing selected exhibits at the Amberif trade fair. I would like to invite everyone to visit the B225 stall.

**At the end of the 70s, when Dominican amber was "discovered", including its rare, blue variety, the prices ranged from over a dozen, to 80 dollars per kilogram. What is the situation like now?**

The prices of the blue fluorescent variety of Dominican amber in Dominican range from 40 and 400 USD per gram - of course, depending on the quality of the block. It is in fact higher than the price of gold. When we convert it turns out that the best quality of blue amber may cost 11,000 USD per ounce, whereas the current price of gold is 1,400 USD per ounce. Other colour varieties, including the most commonly occurring yellow, are significantly cheaper and generally below the prices of Baltic amber. The prices keep increasing, even though there is more and more Dominican amber on the market - as a result of the incredible interest of the Chinese. They like the most the fluorescent one, which constitutes barely a small fraction of the mining, though they actually buy everything, instantly. Some time ago, at a mine with a few adits worked merely over a dozen people, today it is even 1,500 people employed in over 50 adits. During my expedition this year I was surprised by to see a huge digger, electricity generators and electric hammers - earlier mining was done using primitive methods without the use of specialist equipment. It reminded me of the American Gold Rush in the 1800s. Thus, I correspondingly call this phenomenon the Blue Amber Rush.

**Do you think that the already high prices of amber will continue to increase?**

This trend must slow down, otherwise amber will be out of the financial reach of the average person. At the end of the day, an important element that determines its attractiveness is the fact that everybody can enjoy it in one form or another.

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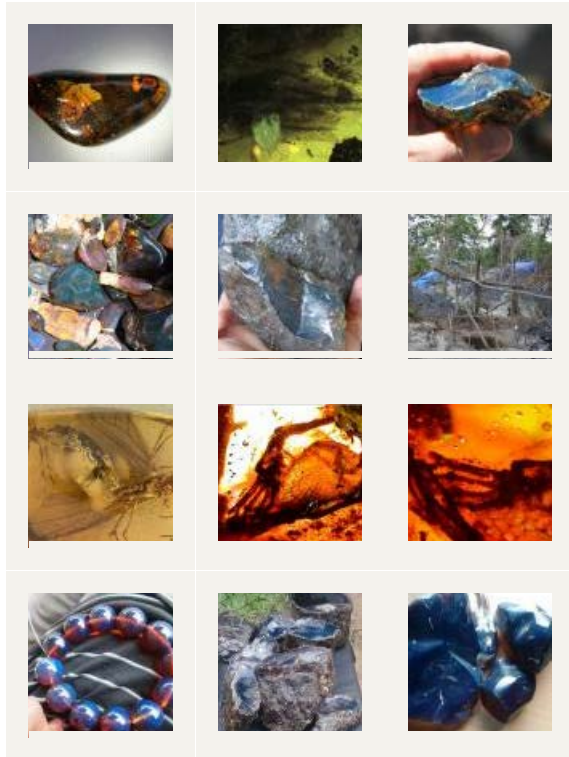
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