



Submitted photo

This extraterrestrial meteorite was found in Aouinet Legraa, Algeria. It came from the Asteroid Belt in our solar system and is classified as a eucrite. Such classifications mean that certain asteroids came from the same parent body after it broke up. Meteorites are evidence that at one time there were likely more planets in the solar system, but they collided and broke into pieces.

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After that project, Irving sent Buckland a thin sliver of rock to shoot for a conference. Buckland is a landscape photographer who applies what he knows to photographing paper-thin — to the point of being translucent — meteorites using the special microscope and camera system he devised, and glass microscope slides made by Spectrum Petrographics, a specialty lab in Vancouver, Washington. Special filters bring out magnificent, vibrant colors — the word “kaleidoscopic” was used during the interview — blown up on large panels up to 8 feet high by 17.5 feet wide.

The seed for “Cosmic Microscapes” was planted after the two men stopped by the museum on their way back to Washington from Review Santa Fe, a juried portfolio review event in New Mexico. There, someone recommended they speak to Christina Cid, director of programs at the High Desert Museum.

“On the way back from that, we stopped by here and spoke to her, showed her some

of the prints of the thin section,” Irving said. “It was (then) that she said, ‘Well, is there any way that you can make the connection between these extraterrestrial rocks and the igneous rocks on our end?’”

“Our association from the beginning has been meteorites,” Buckland explained. “When we met with Christina, we tied in the Oregon geology by basically saying, ‘There’s lava all over the solar system. Let’s bring that in and tie it in to Oregon.’”

“So this exhibit is a melding of those together,” Irving said. “It has local terrestrial stuff, and (we) sort of compare and contrast with sort of similar, but different in detail, rocks on the moon and Mars.”

Most of his career, Irving has had a particular research focus on igneous rock. When he began studying meteorites 20 years ago, he gravitated toward meteorites that were created through volcanic forces similar to those that create igneous rock on Earth.

“Igneous rocks are ones that crystallize from molten rock that’s formed inside a

planet,” he explained. “The process ... happens on the Earth, it happens on Mars and it happens on the moon.”

“There are other types of meteorites that we’re not dealing with at all in this exhibit,” Irving said.

“But we are dealing with the ones that are

like the igneous rocks on Earth. ... Many of the molten rocks that are formed deep inside the Earth, and are buoyant and come to the surface, through these lava flows or explosive eruptions, that happens on other planets too.”

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