

SIMON PHILIPPO

Research Scientist & Curator

Luxembourg

What did you study?

Geology and mineralogy

Why are you passionate about science?

I like to observe the nature and particularly the structures, colour and form changes. I try to understand them... and my biggest motivation is to discover something new.

Brief description of your job/what are you working on right now:

As a curator in a museum, the job is very varied: from managing the collection to studying each piece of it. Some scientific works can be used to increase the collection and its scientific value; collections allow us to have access to some geological localities which are not open anymore; creation of exhibits allow us to use our samples and knowledge to educate visitors.

At the moment, I'm working on specimens found 40 years ago. They were placed in the collections with a first determination. After reexamination, it appeared that it is a new species for Science. We are now describing completely the species to introduce it as a valid species... Here I meet my biggest motivation: Discovering.

Have you always wanted to do the job you have now:

As a child, I was a mineral collector. During my college years, geology was one of my favourite points of interest, especially for its naturalist approach. At university, a specialization in mineralogy was my goal.

My job is a perfect match of the knowledge acquired at university and my passion as a child. I never knew before that this job was possible.

What do you wish people knew about your job?

To be a curator in a museum is not only to put sample with labels in a storage. There is a lot of scientific and historic work before and after the entry of the specimens in the museum collections. To be a scientist in a museum is to preserve specimens for the next generations in better conditions, with the best description based on scientific knowledge.

What's your favourite thing about your job:

Discover: discovering new occurrences for a site we are studying; Recovering information of



a specimen by cross cutting all the existing informations; discovering a new form or colour for a well-known species; ... and the Holy Grail is to discover new mineral species.

What inspired you?

My first inspiration was the observation of the beauty of nature. I was always attracted by its geometrical forms and colours. A scientific field which combines natural beauty, geometrical shapes and colours is Mineralogy.

Training (university/college/apprenticeship)

College at the College Notre Dame de la Tombe à Kain (Tournai, Belgium)

Bachelor of Geological Sciences at the University Notre-Dame de la Paix – Namur (Belgium)

Master of Geological Sciences at the University of Louvain - Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium)

PhD thesis in applied mineralogy at the University of Louvain - Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium) into an European project

post-doctoral works at the Natural History Museum London

What were you like at a young age?

A bad student at college: professors said to me all the time that I was a lazy student. My only interest at that period was sports and observing nature. The lessons at college did not grab my attention or interest me.

What were your favourite subjects at school?

Geography, chemistry, physics and sport.

Hobby:

Western riding

Favourite food:

Romanian food

Weird fact:

Looking like Vin Diesel but with a scientific eye of the world.

Skill/Party trick:

Amazingly intelligent with a big general knowledge.

What would your autobiography be called:

“How to scrap to find the best of my Life”