Since prehistoric times man has been fascinated by the treasures in the earth beneath his feet and has been constantly delving for stones in varying shapes and forms. And some of these, like our multifaceted crystal, have aroused his curiosity.

A multitude of shapes and colours
Some of these stones resemble plants or animals, others mimic stands of blocks, trunks, branches of grapevines, bubbles... Others are even more surprising. Their surfaces are flat. These angular shapes are natural. They can be found in the lining of underground cavities called geodes, crypts or kilns.

Transparent angular rocks
It took man ages before he was able to create anything similar. Man-made glass remained opaque until well into the Middle Ages. Transparent stone was considered particularly precious as a material for making a sculpture. In particular, it was interesting for its relative abundance, scarcity and solidity.

The use of quartz in early manufacturing
Prehistoric man used the rocks he found around him to make tools. This was especially the case with quartz and the more abundant flint.

Crystal, an object of desire
Calcite crystals in a cave on the Causses in France © Institut Néel CNRS
Are they crystals? Crystals do not all have facets. This is the case, for example, if they grow relatively fast or in a confined space. It’s the case of the quartz found in the clefts of the rock face in Brittany.

Bubbling over? In some materials crystals can take on blister shapes. A ragged stone? In Rectorine, crystals can even resemble dried skin.

Fluorite on quartz, Yaogangxian mine, China © Coll. Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de Grenoble
Rectorite or « montain's skin » La Rochette, Savoie, France, Aragonite, Dulong mine, China. © Coll. Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de Grenoble