

Polish specialties -2-

Amber - Gold of the Baltic Sea

Amber has always had a similar fascination for people like gemstones. The Baltic Amber is even called the Gold of the Baltic Sea. Already long time ago ancient cultures used amber for its sacred and magical properties - traces which date back up to 10 thousand years BC. People believed that amber was a product of a god with medicinal properties. And it became finally an important item of trade. Amber itself is relatively soft, so a desired shape can be easily crafted. In addition for scientists it has been a wonderful witness of the past because of its numerous inclusions.

Formation of Amber - Inclusions

Baltic Amber (succinite) is a fossil pine resin, having achieved a stable state through the sequence of different processes. About 50 millionen years ago in today's Scandinavia a large forest grew whose pine trees exuded big amounts of resin. After Secretion the resin - containing all possible inclusions like insects, bugs or other matters - began to harden (polymerisation), what means that finally all volatile oils (terpenes) dissipated. Ideal for this step were areas with sand and clay, difficult for oxygen to penetrate through. After about 20 million years the polymerisation was finished and the result was amber.

Amber Authentication

In the Polish City of Cracow amber has been traded for centuries up to today. So after having visited Cracow some tourists always want to buy amber and often ask how its authentication can be verified. Take simply the amber you would like to purchase and either throw it into salt water - amber floats - or burn it with a lighter - amber doesn't melt - or attack it with fingernail polish remover - amber hold up to solvents. For all these methods will be disliked by the respective salesperson, you should only consider one rule: Buy it in a shop of good reputation (see the Schubert store ads on the top of the page).