

American Museum of Natural History

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The American Museum of Natural History Presents *Ice Cold: An Exhibition of Hip-Hop Jewelry*

Opening May 9, Exhibition Features Iconic Jewelry from Hip-Hop's Megastars



PHOTOS AND B-ROLL AVAILABLE [HERE](#)

On May 9, the American Museum of Natural History will open [Ice Cold: An Exhibition of Hip-Hop Jewelry](#), a special exhibition that celebrates hip-hop's cultural influence through spectacular custom-made jewelry from its biggest stars, including Slick Rick, A\$AP Rocky, Nicki Minaj, The Notorious B.I.G., Bad Bunny, Erykah Badu, and many more.

Highlighting works of jewelry as enduring statements of individuality, empowerment, and resilience in the hip-hop community with an influence on the worlds of fashion, style, and culture at large, *Ice Cold* builds on New York City's celebration of the 50th anniversary of hip-hop as a global phenomenon. The exhibition will be on view in the Melissa and Keith Meister Gallery within the Museum's [Allison and Roberto Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals](#), which feature exhibits that tell the story of how the vast diversity of mineral types formed on Earth, and how they have been used for personal adornment, tools, and technology. *Ice Cold* is included with general admission, which is "pay what you wish" for residents of the New York tristate area.

"Throughout the Museum, you'll see objects that open a window onto our shared past or our current world, whether that's nature, science, or culture. In *Ice Cold*, the objects are magnificent jewelry pieces and the window opens into one of the most powerful social and cultural forces of the past 50 years, Hip Hop," said Sean M. Decatur, President of the American Museum of Natural History. "We're pleased to showcase these iconic pieces and the cultural phenomenon of Hip Hop, thereby reminding our visitors

that culture is not just long ago or far away, but a part of all of our lives that we can reflect on and celebrate.”

"Bringing the *Ice Cold* exhibit to the American Museum of Natural History is a testament to the cultural significance of this art form and culture," said *Ice Cold* guest curator Vikki Tobak. "It's time to celebrate the artists, jewelers, craftsmen, and everyday people who contributed to the storied history of hip-hop jewelry. This exhibit not only pays homage to hip-hop's roots with pieces from Biz Markie and Jam Master Jay for example but also highlights its enduring impact on style and society with pieces from contemporary artists like Tyler, the Creator, A\$AP Rocky, and FERG."

Ice Cold chronicles the evolution of jewelry in hip-hop over the past five decades, starting with the oversized gold chains that were embraced by rap's pioneers in the late-1970s and moving through the 1990s, when hip-hop's popularity exploded and artists sported record-label pendants sparkling with diamonds and platinum. With hip-hop's exponential growth in the new millennium, the genre's most influential artists turned to multi-colored jewelry with inventive designs that reference high fashion, pop culture, rap history, and more. *Ice Cold* showcases jewelry from all eras of hip-hop and demonstrates how the decorative art-form has served as a canvas for stories of resilience, rebellion, and creative self-expression.

The World of Hip-Hop Jewelry

The introductory case in *Ice Cold* features emblematic jewelry from some of hip-hop's most legendary artists, including a **glittering crown, eye-patch, and a 5-foot-long chain from Slick Rick**, a senior advisor for the exhibition, who pioneered the royal motif in hip-hop. Other pieces in this case demonstrate how artists of different eras shaped hip-hop's visual identity through jewelry styles signifying authenticity and success, including an **Adidas necklace from Jam Master Jay of Run D.M.C.**, made in honor of the hit 1986 song "My Adidas," which led to an historic endorsement deal between the group and the athletic company; **Nas' diamond-encrusted 'QB' pendant**, which pays homage to the Queensbridge Houses in Queens, New York, where he grew up; and a **multi-colored, fully-articulated LEGO minifigure pendant commissioned by A\$AP Rocky**, one of the younger generation of artists moving hip-hop jewelry in new directions.

"*Ice Cold* will truly spark a sense of excitement and curiosity into our world of jewelry and baubles as an extended form of hip-hop culture, which has inspired the global stage as an extension of our art," said hip-hop icon and *Ice Cold* senior advisor Ricky "Slick Rick" Waters. "This collaboration with the American Museum of Natural History is a harmonious blend of creativity and cultural significance. I'm very honored to be a part of creating a unique and immersive experience for the Museum's visitors in such a renowned space in the mecca of New York City."

The Rise of Hip-Hop

Ice Cold presents a number of pieces from the 1980s, a time when rappers worked with local jewelers to create one-of-a kind accessories that proclaimed their individuality and announced themselves to the world. Featured jewelry includes rapper and beatboxer **Biz Markie's brushed gold nameplate**, made by K & I jewelers in Brooklyn's Albee Square Mall, a **crown-shaped 'Drama King' pendant** crafted in Harlem for **DJ Kay Slay**, and a **large plastic clock worn by Public Enemy rapper and hype man Flavor Flav**, one of his many signature clock pendants that became his calling card.

Moving into the 1990s, hip-hop expanded as an industry, empowering artists and entrepreneurs to become moguls of business empires. Jewelry trends kept apace, with larger pieces created for artists by a generation of jewelers like Tito Caciado of Manny's New York and Jacob Arabo of Jacob & Co., who came to be superstars in their own right. *Ice Cold* features jewelry from the biggest names of 1990s rap, including **the artist's proof for The Notorious B.I.G.'s legendary gold "Jesus piece,"** an iconic symbol that came to represent faith, struggle, and success, as well as **Ghostface Killah's massive, 5-pound Eagle arm band**, which remains one of hip-hop's most recognizable accessories.

As record labels and music collectives grew, they presented their artists with pieces that signified loyalty, allegiance, and shared success. *Ice Cold* features a number of 'label chains,' including a **diamond-studded Roc-A-Fella medallion made in honor of the record label co-founded by Jay-Z**, as well as a **necklace owned by Eve representing Ruff Ryders**, a label that launched her career and that of other hip-hop greats, including DMX. Also on display is a **ring belonging to Roxanne Shanté** that honors her status as the only female rapper of the influential Juice Crew collective and a **white gold and diamond "QC" necklace** from the collection of *Ice Cold* guest co-curator **Kevin "Coach K" Lee**, created for the Atlanta-based powerhouse Quality Control Music that Lee co-founded, which pioneered the careers of Migos, Lil Baby, City Girls, and Lil Yachty.

Pushing Creative Boundaries

Today, the art of jewelry in hip-hop is entering a bold new phase of expression. Artists are remixing styles, playing with new materials, and commissioning extravagant works inspired by their own personal experiences and interests. *Ice Cold* features items including **T-Pain's "Big Ass Chain"**—an ostentatious piece that weighs in at over 10 pounds and is flooded with nearly 200 carats of diamonds—and one of **Nicki Minaj's "Barbie" pendants**, which features gold, diamonds, and Barbie-pink enamel.

An 18-foot-long display showcases jewelry from today's most creative and influential artists, including pieces designed by *Ice Cold* advisory committee member and jeweler Alex Moss: **Drake's "Crown Jewel of Toronto" pendant**, a nod to the rapper's hometown that features multi-colored diamonds and a pair of ruby-studded sports mascots—a raptor and a blue jay—climbing the Toronto CN Tower; and a **dazzling necklace designed for Tyler, the Creator**, to mark his "CALL ME IF YOU GET LOST" album that incorporates over 23,000 hand-set stones and a bell-hop-shaped pendant. Other items on view in this case include a **white gold and diamond grill set designed for Bad Bunny**, a gold **"We The Best" necklace owned by DJ Khaled**, and a **opal and white-gold grill set made for Erykah Badu**, showcasing the range of artistry, inventive design, and visual innovation that continues to evolve in hip-hop jewelry today.

"This moment celebrates the creativity and innovation of hip-hop," said *Ice Cold* guest co-curator Karam Gill, creative director and filmmaker behind the 2021 documentary series [ICE COLD](#). "From the docuseries to the book, the Ice Cold project has shed light on larger conversations around societal perception and the American Dream. This exhibition pushes that further in a powerful way."

Ice Cold Curatorial Team and Advisory Board

Ice Cold was developed by a curatorial team and advisory board that includes artists, industry professionals, jewelers, and academics. The exhibition is curated by guest curator Vikki Tobak, journalist and author of [Ice Cold: A Hip-Hop Jewelry History](#), published by Taschen, and guest co-curators Kevin "Coach K" Lee, founder and COO of Quality Control Music, and Karam Gill, creative director and filmmaker behind the 2021 documentary series [ICE COLD](#).

The curator of the Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals is Kate Kiseeva, assistant curator in the Division of Physical Sciences at the Museum. The exhibition is designed by the Museum's award-winning Exhibition department.

The advisory board for *Ice Cold* includes Slick Rick as senior advisor; LENNY S., Roc Nation executive, culture curator, and photographer; Mandy Aragones, co-founder, Victory Patch Foundation; Timothy Anne Burnside, museum specialist in Curatorial Affairs, National Museum of African American History and Culture; Tanisha Ford, author and professor in the History Department at the Graduate Center at The City University of New York; Alex Moss, jewelry designer and founder, Alex Moss New York; Peter Nice, curator, The Hip Hop Museum and member of Def Jam's 3rd Bass; and Bevy Smith, author and television and radio host.

Allison and Roberto Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals

Ice Cold is presented in the Melissa and Keith Meister Gallery, a space for rotating exhibitions within the Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals. The Mignone Halls feature specimens from the Museum’s world-renowned mineral and gem collection, including two of the largest amethyst geodes on public display, the legendary 563-carat “Star of India” sapphire, the 9-pound almandine Subway Garnet, and the 632-carat Patricia Emerald, among others.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY (AMNH)

The American Museum of Natural History, founded in 1869 with a dual mission of scientific research and science education, is one of the world’s preeminent scientific, educational, and cultural institutions. The Museum encompasses more than 40 permanent exhibition halls, galleries for temporary exhibitions, the Rose Center for Earth and Space including the Hayden Planetarium, and the Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation. The Museum’s scientists draw on a world-class permanent collection of more than 30 million specimens and artifacts, some of which are billions of years old, and on one of the largest natural history libraries in the world. Through its Richard Gilder Graduate School, the Museum offers two of the only free-standing, degree-granting programs of their kind at any museum in the U.S.: the Ph.D. program in Comparative Biology and the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Earth Science residency program. Visit amnh.org for more information.

Photos (left to right): A\$AP Rocky Lego Pendant, Slick Rick, Crown and Eye Patch, Nicki Minaj, Barbie Pendant (Credit AMNH/A. Keding)

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