

I FORGOT...

Sometimes, opportunities present themselves by sheer luck or simply through some unplanned circumstances. Coming back from the seashore with a few *Gammarus* (small crustaceans loosely related to shrimps), I made a few observations and a few pictures with specimens kept in a Petri dish. Afterward, the animals were transferred to a larger container and the Petri dish was set aside and forgotten.

Normally, the proper procedure with any lab equipment is to clean it as soon as you're finished with it. Too busy with processing my pictures, I forgot to rinse, dry, and place the Petri dish in its proper place. A few weeks later, I noticed the dish still sitting on a corner of the work table. But while I had left it with some leftover sea water, now it was bone dry. And stuck to its bottom was a layer of sea salt crystals.

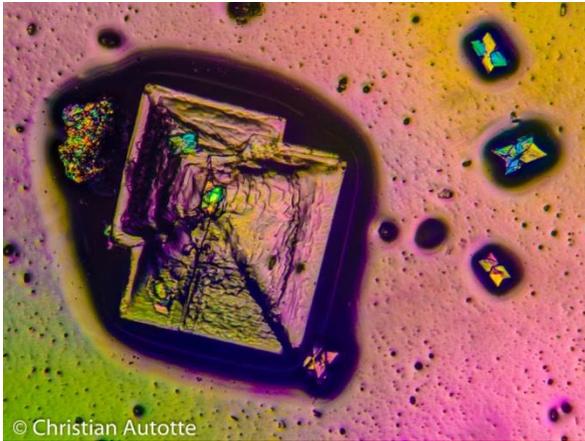
I have photographed salt crystals before. They usually came straight from the salt shaker, your common table salt which also contains calcium silicate, sodium thiosulphate, and potassium iodide, according to what's written on the box. On some occasions, the salt was first dissolved in water before being allowed to recrystallize, a standard and simple procedure taken by many amateur microscopist.

But these crystals looked slightly different. For one thing they appear to be somewhat bigger, and once under the microscope polarized light provided some very colorful images, especially when used with a simple phase plate. Most crystals were shot at 40x, but a few smaller "atypical" crystals, needed a magnification of 100x to fill the image.

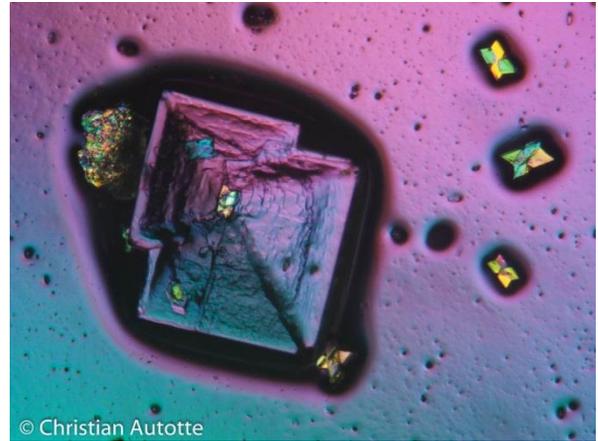
With a single crystal I was able to get very different pictures simply by playing with either the polarizer or the phase plate, a common occurrence when photographing any crystal in polarized light.

In the end, I spent a few hours playing with a dried up sample in a Petri dish, proof that being at the same time forgetful but attentive can lead to interesting discoveries...

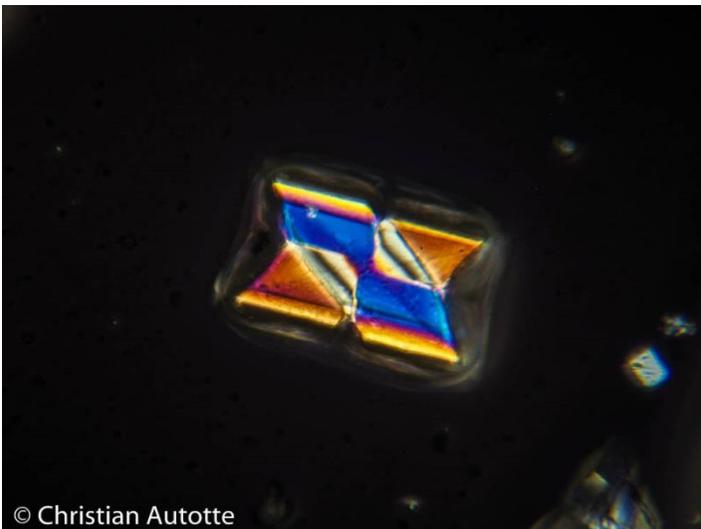
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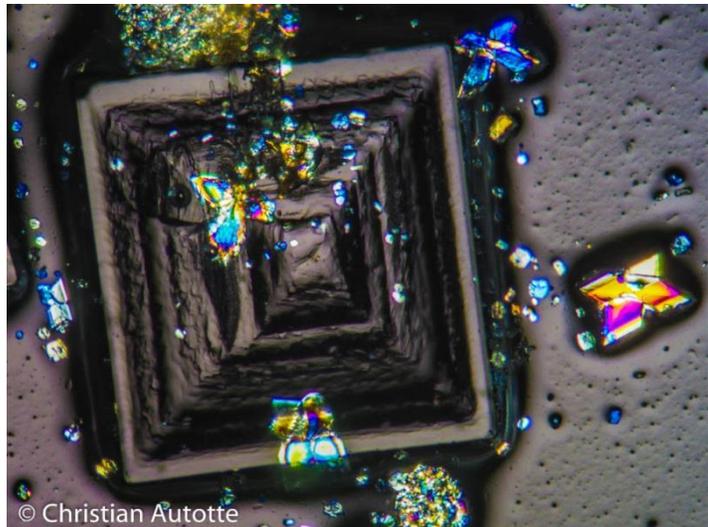


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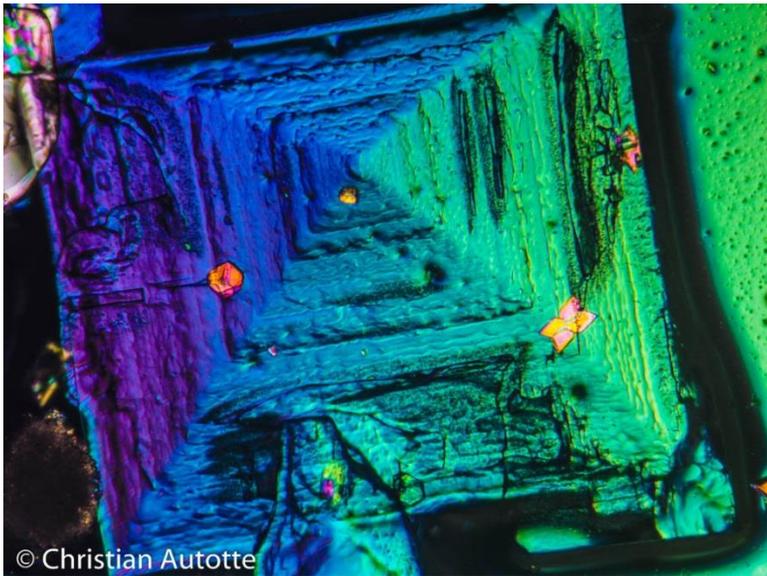


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This crystal was very different from the others found in the Petri dish. It required a 100x magnification to get a proper picture.

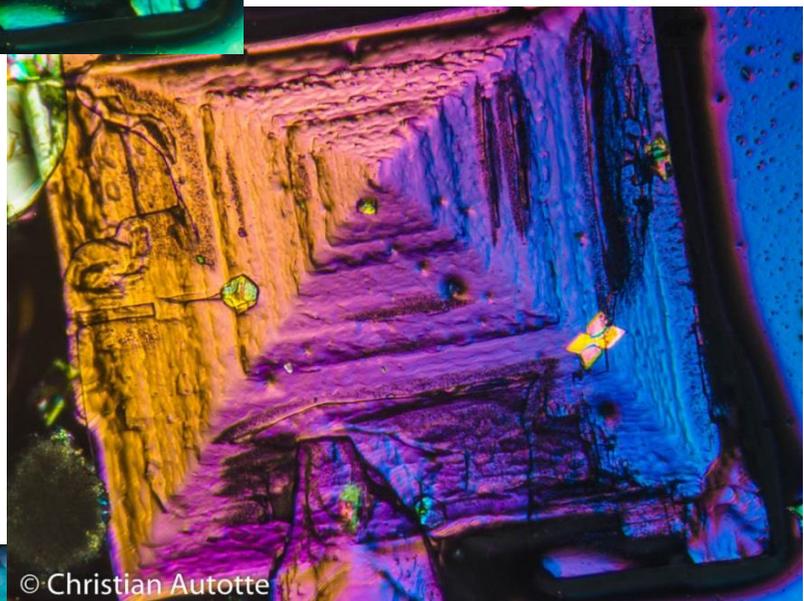


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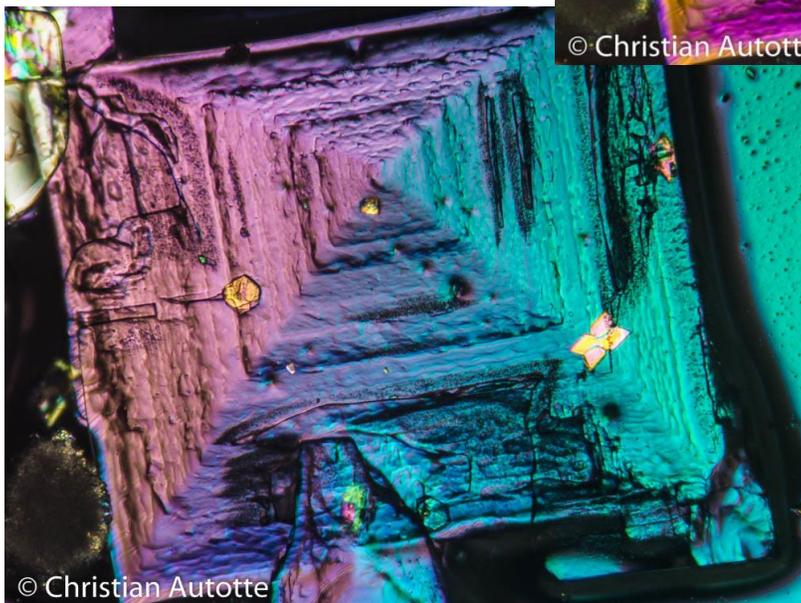


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One crystal with three different colorations, thanks to slight adjustments of the polarization. On top of the larger crystal is one of those “atypical” seen earlier.



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