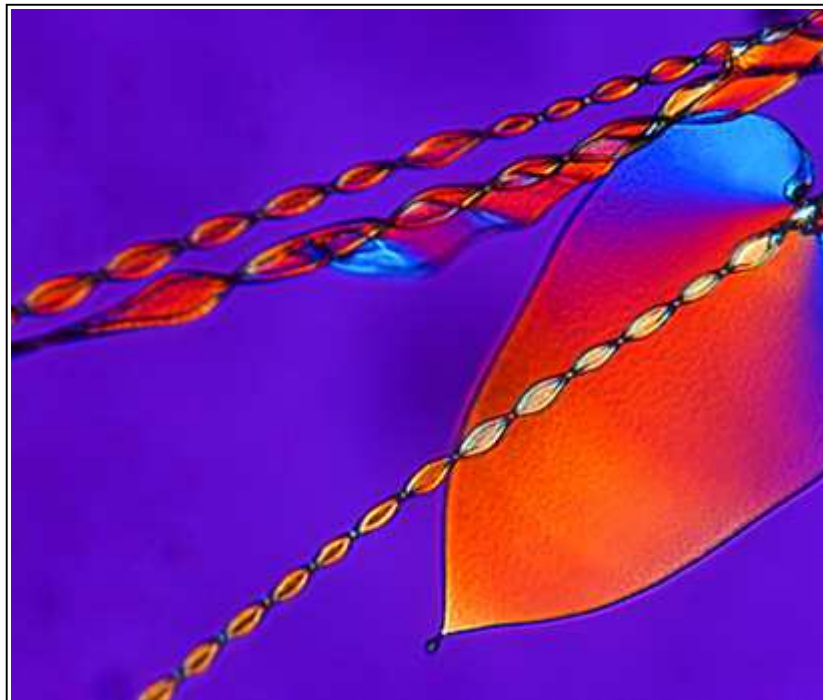



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## PHOTOS: Lab-Made Curvy Crystals Mimic Nature


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**January 15, 2009**--Like delicate strands of glass jewelry, nano-sized ropes of silica twist into graceful crystalline shapes. These and other curvy crystals are the first to be created in a lab without biological agents driving their formation, according to a study in this week's issue of the journal *Science*.

Until now scientists had thought rounded crystals, such as those found in seashells and bones, could only be made by living

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organisms. In such a case, fossilized curves in rocks from early Earth or even other planets would seem to be sure signs of life.

But Juan Manuel Garcia-Ruiz, of the University of Granada in Spain, and his colleagues found that some minerals can self-assemble into structures that mimic those found in nature.

The finding throws a wrench in the search for alien life, but it could help researchers better understand how animals create parts of their bodies out of minerals.

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—Image courtesy Emilio Melero and Juan Manuel Garcia-Ruiz/Laboratorio de Estudios Cristalograficos (CSIC-Universidad de Granada)

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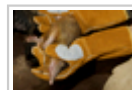
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