

A Cultural Interpretation of Stone

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Marta Jecu

This edited volume is the outcome of a fascination for STONE - the most persistent material in the history of humanity, the paradigmatic matter of art. This edited volume collects theoretical and historical essays on the way in which stone has been understood along the history of arts – from the point of view of its symbolic and conceptual significance.

The volume is coordinated by Marta Jecu (CeIED, Universidade Lusofona, Lisbon) and will blend visual material (contemporary art works) with textual contributions.

The book intends to re-draw some of the 'topoi' of art in relation to stone. As the oldest support of information in humanity and a primordial artistic matter, stone exercises a vivid fascination until today. In geology, stones bring a testimony of a pre-human era. They carry the memories of a time when the earth was in the process of its formation. In that sense stone reveals the cosmic heritage of our civilisation and micro-cosmos/macro-cosmos correspondences. The cultural place and time that forms the artistic object is tightly related to the history and presence of the substance it is made of. We might be inclined to consider stone as a compact, congruous being. But in fact stone is the result of a conglomerate synthesis – the product of a geologic and (more recently) technological accident.

This book sets the intention to explore stone as a matter that determines spiritual transformation through its own metamorphosis into object of contemplation. The book explores cultural references that this sensible matter carries. A cultural history of stone has always been connected to the predilection for non-representation. We can always identify in the reading of stones the effort of reintegrating the past into the present in an abstract way.

Renaissance marbles (or their painted reproductions integrated into architecture) were some of the first non-figurative autonomous paintings in Western Art. They were supposed to recuperate the information contained into the world of antiquity and translate it into an abstract pattern. The baroque practice of reading stones as abstract landscapes and painting directly on the stones – adding details to the natural landscapes and making a supposed existing 'image' more visible – was common in the 16th -17th centuries. Roger Caillois talks in his book 'L'écriture des pierres' (Skira, 1970) about this long tradition of extending the properties of natural stones through artistic intervention by adding forms, meaning and extending stone from the natural into the artificial.

The closer we zoom into the composition of a stone, with its natural forces and formations, the more abstract becomes its image. Mosaics along the history of arts, reproduced the natural cartography of stones, with the objective to reveal plural realities. Mosaics are forms of mise-en-abyme into the profundity of self-reproductive complex and innovatory universal patterns. These preoccupation for the extension of the matter to the infinite represents a principle of work-

ing with stones- that traversed the history of arts. Today, stone's production is based on artificial augmentation, derivation, virtualisation and cross-breeding of matter.

In contemporary sculpture and architecture working with stone implicitly transmit the imprints of this history of ideas into any new production. Contemporary architecture using stones implicitly brings vernacular, even ecological citations. In this sense, the book also intends to shed light on how contemporary artists working with these concrete, culturally connoted materialities, rework this heritage from the perspective of present relevance.

Stone in itself embodies allusions to different temporalities – and performs a sort of archeology that reveals imprints that transport the appearance of past civilisations. At the same time stones are far from static: they encapsulate a message oriented towards the future.

Please send abstracts (max 400 words) to zarzarii@yahoo.com; deadline for submission: 30th June 2022

Submission language for abstracts/articles: German, English, French

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