

Material as a gateway to other forms of knowing - what the secrets in materials and processes can offer in the field of transformative social practice

Claudia D Schluermann (2014)

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Schluermann, Claudia D (2014)

Material as a gateway to other forms of knowing - what the secrets in materials and processes can offer in the field of transformative social practice, PhD, Oxford Brookes University

MATERIAL AS A GATEWAY TO OTHER FORMS OF KNOWING

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of transformative social practice

Claudia D. Schluermann, PHD, 2014

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PhD, Awarded by Oxford Brookes University

This commentary accompanies the practice-based research.

It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
award of Doctor of Philosophy. May 2014

Abstract

**Material as a Gateway to Other Forms of Knowing
- what the secrets in materials and processes can
offer in the field of transformative social practice.**

This practice-based PhD explores the role of physical material as used in art, in social art processes. Here the material stone is the starting point for geological studies and practical explorations such as photography and a stone-carving project. Detailed observation of the phases of work in this project then lead on to elaborate a working model for creative processes that might form the basis of participatory social art practice.

An account of my journey of practical explorations in this PhD is accompanied and supported in section 2 by studies of two sculptors. The first, K. Prantl, is rooted in a classical view of material in sculpture, whereas the other, J. Beuys, integrated the material stone into his “theory of sculptural processes”, seeking a universal application of the concept of sculpture to society as a whole.

In the main part of my thesis (3) I introduce a newly developed form of group work – *workplaces* – (see definition in 3.12) drawn from my own stone-carving practice. Here each participant becomes involved in the process of exploring the material stone, working on individual questions and issues, and at the same time engaging with social realities and universal themes in group discussions.

Between the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2013, over 120 participants took part in a total of 6 *workplaces* each several days, along with 4 one-day *workplaces* that formed part of the concluding installation. In this section, 20 illustrated work processes of individual participants – entitled *Ways* – will be presented and discussed.

This broadening of artistic practice is considered in the subsequent reflection on transformative social practice. The distinct stages of work in this methodology are clearly elaborated (in abbreviation: 1. openness, 2. warmth, 3. rhythm, 4. focus, 5. care and attentiveness, 6. mastery, and 7. breadth) and are offered as a model for certain forms of social practice as well as for further research.

Preface

This text- and image based (max.22.000 words) commentary reflects on this six-year part-time research enquiry. It accompanies the practice which consists of ten *workplace*-events that took place between 2011 and 2014 and an installation.

28.12. – 30.12.2011 Vallersund, Norway
31.01. – 03.02.2013 Bremen, Germany
14.02. – 17.02. 2013 Bremen, Germany
18.02. – 21.02. 2013 (mornings) Neustadt
a.d.Weinstrasse, Germany
18.02. – 21.02.2013 (afternoons) Neustadt
a.d. Weinstrasse, Germany
25.02. – 27.02. 2013 Frickingen, Germany

27.01. – 30.01.2014 Four one-day events as part of the installation *Ways through Stone* in the Glass Tank, Oxford Brookes University 20.01. – 03.03. 2014

– These *workplaces* are documented and reflected in section 3 of this commentary and a selection of hand-written comments, drawings and photographs from four *workplaces* is shown in the portfolio attached. (Appendix IV)

– Preliminary practice leading up to the *workplaces* is documented in three *books* namely:

Appendix I Explorations of stone

Appendix II Working Stone

Appendix III Work

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who helped make this enquiry possible, firstly all contributors and participants of the *workplaces* who willingly got involved in this extended arts research. Their interest and kindness informed the way this research developed. In particular, the trust shown by those who invited me to create a *workplace* which initiated the working process: Simone Wantz, Ulrike Panhorst, Michael Harslem, Axel Langwost, Ute and Peter Baier and Inge Schnell.

I would like to thank Oxford Brookes University for hosting this research, and in particular the Social Sculpture Research Unit, School of Arts and Jill Organ from the Post Graduate Office.

I would specially like to thank Professor Shelley Sacks, my Director of Studies for her consistent commitment, guidance and support. I would also like to thank Anke Loewensprung as a friend and special adviser for her clear insights and personal support during these years. Special thanks go to Joanna Walker for arranging the final exhibition and Dympna Irwin and her friends for their practical help.

I am very grateful to Rudolf Kaesbach, Emerson College, who faithfully supported this work and provided numerous opportunities to involve Emerson College students in this work. Thank you to all the Emerson Visual Art and Sculpture students who helped develop this work with their enthusiasm and questions.

Uta Peyrer-Prantl and Karl Prantl gave me their generous hospitality, and I am most grateful to them.

Artist friends of mine around my studio, “Kunsthalle Kleinschoenach”, helped with their interest, giving me opportunities to present and discuss this work. I particularly wish to thank Duilio da Martins for his company and assistance in the stone-carving project.

Matthew Barton helped me with the English language, and Julia Valter with the lay-out.

Last but not least I wish to thank all my friends, and my father (+ 20.09.2008) and mother, who have supported me in so many ways.

Appendices

I Explorations of stone – short texts and a photographic study

II Working stone – a close observation of a stone carving practice

III Work – My encounters with stone as a material of consciousness

IV *Workplaces* – A portfolio of handwritten comments,
drawings and images

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MATERIAL, SECRETS, SOCIAL SCULPTURE

“Research and development in techno science, art and technology, and even politics, makes us feel that reality, whatever that may be, is slipping ever further from our grasp, and cannot be directly controlled. These different fields give us a sense of ungovernable complexity.... It is as if we had placed a filter between us and things, a screen of numbers.” (Lyotard 1985, p.10f.)

This view of our contemporary relationship with reality was written by the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard in 1985. Since then, the experience of a ‘filter’ interposed “between us and things, a screen of numbers” has come to inform almost all areas of life.

In my practice-based research I try to assimilate these developments by tackling them from a diametrically opposed angle. In as simple and consistent a way as possible, I want to reconnect with a kind of primary experience of things, with the original form of matter, and gain new entry to the field of materials and their exploration.

1.1 Entering matter: a mysterious drawing

This drawing was the first entry in my PhD sketchbook. It emerged after a dream I had, and remained a mystery to me for years. If I now look carefully at it, I see the raw, primal strength of unworked lumps of stone, which are difficult to constrain and contain within confines of the cultural artefact of pre-moulded concrete walls. The concrete walls are reinforced as if scarcely coping with the pressure of the rocks. The latter have been stored here temporarily: they are pushing forward and the first lumps are rolling out already. You see these kinds of open-fronted, quickly erected walls on farms, where they are used to store silage or dung before it is spread on the fields. Storage sites for building materials can look like this as well – interim storage for materials that will only later find their future potential. Having been detached from nature but not yet worked upon, the unformed momentum of such material is apparent as excess energy. It will only regain some equilibrium by being used or further worked on.

I can see in this drawing the primal power of matter and nature, increasingly alien and alarming to us as it comes to our awareness with ever renewed power in various regions of the globe. But I can also find here an aesthetic question: energetic expression of the contrast between “stone” as raw, natural material and the refined material “concrete” as invented by human beings. Both these call for accurate perception of matter, and intensified preoccupation with it.

These stones are no longer in their natural form in the mountains but are lying there ready for use. They require a more conscious attention to matter (*mater* = ‘mother’ in Latin), to the earth as the totality of an embodied organism.

1.2

The field of study: Material, Secrets and Social Sculpture

The title of my PhD points to the three broad areas of material, secrets and social sculpture which for me are closely interrelated.

Since antiquity, matter (from the Latin, *materia* = substance, theme, construction timber) and substance, have been key to processes of origin and creation, whether of a cosmological, artistic, natural or artificial kind. But is it possible for us to approach “creation processes” through matter, material – through the world of “things” in general?

In view of the state of affairs described by Lyotard, I want to consider whether “good old matter” (Lyotard 1985, p.10) has really reached the end of its useful life in developing our human skills and capacities; or whether, in the field of art, we can set anything against this “loss of reality”. In the 60s, Lucy Lippard described the “dematerialization of the art object” (Lippard 1973) but parallel to this a kind of “reassertion” of material occurred. This new grasp of material has grown into a clearly perceptible movement amongst some notable artists and also in the study of art history.¹

In this context there is some extremely interesting recent research in the fields of anthropology and archaeology. In his study, “The Materiality of Stone” (2004), Christopher Tilley speaks of a phenomenological perspective in relation to locations, landscapes and prehistoric stone monuments, relating a bodily experience of stones and places to the world. Tim Ingold (in “Materials Against Materiality”, 2007) makes a plea for focusing attention more strongly on the substance of which things are made, rather than on ideas about materiality! He does

not describe these properties as fixed attributes but says they should be seen in terms of process and specific relationships.

In exploring the material stone and making it the starting point of my enquiries, I aim to explore that subtle level closely adjoining purely physical phenomena by actively engaging with the sphere of imagination. In addition I want to discover forms of social art work in which discussion and engagement might be possible and fruitful and might kindle questioning processes.

Even if knowledge of what constitutes the world has continually advanced, the mysterious or secret character of things has clearly not disappeared altogether. Goethe speaks of “open secrets”² in nature. My explorations of material will involve encountering the diverse types of stone in the multiplicity of their geological origins and coming closer to them through their texture, colour and weight. The concept of the secret also however inevitably points us to the realm of our own inner experience. The observer can only reflect what has previously been prepared in some form within him. Here we discover a fundamental aspect of the artist’s work, directing attention to our modes of perception, schooling of attention and the sphere in which outer and inner worlds interpenetrate.³

In the second half of the 20th century, drawing on this reciprocal relationship between inner and outer, and with a view to the whole, artist Joseph Beuys extended and broadened the concept of art. “When I thought of a sculptural shaping that not only takes hold of physical material but can also grasp the material of soul, I found myself truly driven to the idea of social sculpture.” (Beuys 2006, p.21)

Beuys spoke these words on 12.1.1986, 11 days before his death, in his acceptance speech for the “Lehmbruck Prize”. In this speech he described the development of “social sculpture” in relation to the work of the sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruck and in connection with an appeal, a petition in support of direct democracy! Three points are significant here:

- His speech was given within the same timeframe and historical context as the introduction written by J.F. Lyotard to mark the opening of the exhibition “Les immatériaux” (The Immaterials) in Paris, 1985.
- J. Beuys’s point of departure is sculptural work in the physical domain. In other words, he speaks here of “physical material” that must be grasped and shaped. The bridge or gateway through which we therefore need to pass in progressing towards “social sculpture” is material in the sense in which the sculptor knows it in his work.
- The connection Beuys establishes here with Lehmbruck is significant as W. Lehmbruck’s sculptures display the subtlest inner qualities and are works of the highest artistic calibre. Beuys here explicitly places the development towards social sculpture within a sculptural tradition. But something very notable occurs here: both artists, in ways differing according to the possibilities of their time, confronted their own inner experiences with an artistic mode of expression that was incredibly precise and disciplined. At the same time both artists were open to Rudolf Steiner’s ideas (albeit in very different ways) and placed their work within a larger dimension encompassing the whole of society. In his speech, Beuys points to the invisible connection between Rudolf Steiner’s “Appeal to the German People” (an appeal for direct democracy signed by

W. Lehmbruck shortly before his death, see Beuys 2006, p. 57) and the development of this work on direct democracy into the idea of social sculpture.

1.3. How do we approach the secret?

Attending to phenomena with alert and subtle observation so that things themselves can express their being, is the point of departure for a research method which has become known as a “phenomenological” or “Goethean” approach.⁴ Many years ago I familiarized myself with this method by studying with John Wilkes and Margaret Colquhoun; and it forms the basis of the approach I have gradually developed for schooling perception of the material stone.

This involves methods that draw on the imagination as a legitimate tool of scientific enquiry since the object observed (in this case stone) is not only present before me in its physical form but, the image in which I now perceive it, also only arises or emerges with and through my perception. Here a reciprocal interplay occurs between outer reality and my own inner experience. In the social sciences increasing account is taken of this fact, with great interest focused on creative processes. In the field of organizational development in particular, the approaches of Otto Scharmer and Alan Kaplan are gaining widespread recognition.

In the course of this study, I will describe a mode of procedure that starts with observation and evaluation of a craft and art process involved in the work of creating a stone sculpture, and develops from there into ‘step-by-step’ guidelines for group processes (see Appendix II and section 3). I will then scrutinize my working hypothesis through an expanded art practice that is similar to but neither seminar nor workshop. Since these more familiar concepts do not adequately represent my practice I have developed the term *workplace* (see def. 3.1). In these *workplaces* I will study the material stone in colla-

boration with participants. These enquiries lead participants to the space of the imagination and creative art processes.

Regarding my methodology I need to highlight a further aspect: the subject-object relationship in this research process. It is impossible for me to separate my investigations of material from myself as the investigating subject, and this will therefore necessitate methods which also encompass other participants as autonomous individuals with their own respective cosmos of experience.⁵

1.4 Containing and ordering the wealth of material

The three elements of matter, secret and social sculpture lead us into the most diverse questions and areas of life. The distinctive nature of a practice-based PhD allows for intentionally alternating between practice and reflection, based always on the art practice as research.

In the second section, “Material, the Knowledge of Stones”, I am primarily concerned with various ways of approaching stones, examining how the two renowned artists Karl Prantl (born 5.11.1923) and Joseph Beuys (born 12.5.1921) relate to and work with this material. As regards to Prantl, based on my visit to his studio and the conversation I had with him there shortly before his death, I will try to explore the effect of his lifelong engagement with stones and seek to understand these as “invocations” or “meditations”.

In the case of Beuys, basalt is the focus of processes of change and transformation; in particular I will seek to understand basalt as it figures in the installations “The End of the 20th Century”.

Some of my own explorations of the material stone, undertaken at an early stage of my PhD are leading to development of the project *Ways*. They are documented in the appendices I to III.

Section 3, “From Material to Social Substance” describes and reflects on the two components of my art practice. It documents the development and realization of the project *Ways Through Stone* (3.1-3.4) and it explores the value of the installation *Ways through Stone* in the Glass Tank at Oxford Brookes (3.5).

Section 4 is concerned with formation of substance: How can substance, which gets formed in a social art process, be characterized and how does this substance develop? What skills and capacities can be cultivated in artistic social processes, and what relevance does this have for other professions or areas of life?

Finally, section 5 imparts methodologies of “substance transformation” and explores the potential of the *work-place*-process as *Ways* in other domains.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF STONES

The work of Karl Prantl (*5.11.1923 - 8.10. 2010) and of Joseph Beuys (*12.5.1921 - 23.01.1986) attracted my interest and led to deepened questions about sculptural processes. I was especially interested in exploring how a lifelong preoccupation with certain materials works back on the artist himself. Karl Prantl sculpted stones from all over the globe, and in doing so acquired an incredibly rich knowledge of the world. I therefore asked myself what might motivate someone to undertake intensive and laborious work with stones; or, to put it the other way round, what do stones tell us, and how do they shape and change the sculptor?

Joseph Beuys was born two years before Karl Prantl and undertook a classical training in sculpture at Dueseldorf Academy. His name probably conjures up forms made of copper, felt and fat; but we can also experience his strong relationship with basalt in four related works entitled *The End of the 20th Century*, or in his *7000 Oaks*, a multi-dimensional image of tree and stone. Both point us to temporal processes at work in the solid mineral realm. In the context of Beuys's artistic development, the basalt works have a direct connection with his „Sculptural Theory“ – a theme we will return to in Section 2.2.

2.1 Stones for Meditation: Karl Prantl - master of stone sculpture

I was fortunate in visiting Karl Prantl in September 2010 just a month before his death. I arrived with the research question: Is it possible to discover a connection between a person's being and the work and material he is chiefly involved with? I soon realized that I could not approach the intimate link between medium, material and sculptor head-on in an interview. I needed to activate my own quiet observation in the hope that a careful description of my own experiences would reveal something of the essence of Prantl's work and, inseparably from this, of where he lived.

The photographs taken on this occasion form an integral part of my inquiry.

The setting

Arriving at Burgenland, the smallest and most eastern of Austria's federal states, one feels the influence of Lake Neusiedel, and of the spur of the Alps to the South. The village of Poettsching was part of the kingdom of Hungary until only two years before Karl Prantl was born, becoming part of Austria in 1923.

In the summer, when I went there, this area is full of sunflower fields, vineyards and fruit plantations. The nearby quarry of St. Margarethen, where Prantl worked, is one of the oldest active quarries in Austria, its limestone having been used for 2000 years.

In 1958 soon after marrying Uta Peyrer, a painter, Prantl was commissioned to make a large stone sculpture entitled „Border Stone“ for the border between Austria and Hungary. Today this stone is part of a large sculpture field close to the village of Poettsching where the Prantls

placed works by other sculptors participating in the St. Margarethen symposium. Just outside the village you are struck by the sudden presence of these huge standing stones – upright monuments within the horizontality of a quiet landscape.

Karl and Uta Prantl lived at his grandfather's former bakery. The house, with its courtyard, is in a quiet position, hidden behind a stone wall and set well back from the road running through the village. It was here that Prantl returned after finishing his studies at Vienna Academy, starting to sculpt his first pieces of wood from an old linden tree, and blocks of red limestone - materials he found nearby. Though his degree was in painting, he turned to the materials and techniques of sculpture. „I simply took the materials close to hand and started...“ he said.

The home that the sculptor and his wife shaped together is now just one part of a larger setting that embodies Prantl's holistic approach to working and living. In his outlook, architecture, sculpture and painting are intimately connected with the rhythms of daily life: living and creating do not occur on different planes, but form an inseparable whole. The house is filled with Prantl's sculptures. The smallest yet very powerful works are displayed in a wooden cupboard.

Moving through the rooms of the house, and through the courtyard with those early pieces - some of which have been worked on quite recently – I was touched by the sense of connection between daily life and art. Nearby, just around the corner, is the lightweight wooden studio which the Prantls built in 1990, and to which they added a concrete storage building in 2008 to house the paintings of Uta Peyrer-Prantl. This building has a sculptural quality itself, and helps structure the grounds and surrounding landscape. Behind its workshops lies the “sculpture park” with its display of large stones.



Entrance to the studio. First the rock was placed and only later the wooden construction followed (1990).

The whole location seems to embody a sense of „right proportion“ - right size within the right space. The smallest artwork is attentively reflected in the planes and position of the large sculptures, in a way that is reminiscent of a Japanese garden (Prantl travelled in Japan) but here re-interpreted and adapted to the specific situation in Burgenland.

Wandering around the place reveals an arc of experience passing from early beginnings - when Prantl started out as an autodidact, using the material he found to hand and employing the simplest and most straight-forward approach - to the culmination of his work after spending over 50 years with stone. There is a wealth of form and material, but a very simple and humble attitude expressed in the way he positioned and presented the work: a very limited range of basic forms and yet, at the same time, an exploration of all those forms' possibilities. As he expresses it himself: "The stones – a view of the life I lived".

The effect of these first impressions on the viewer could be characterized as a great sense of purity and clarity. Nothing distracts the eye or the mind from the strength and warm radiance of these stones. It seems almost as if a moral quality is evoked in the simplicity of how each piece is placed and regarded within its surroundings. This first glimpse wakens curiosity, a desire to gain deeper insights into these stones.

The stone

Walking amongst the sculptures behind Prantl's workshop, along this strip of land measuring about 500 by 25 metres within the rural landscape, you get a sense of the enormous variety of stones used over the span of his

life: amazonite with its very lively grain, granite from Brazil, the blue-grey flaky crystals of labradorite from Norway, deep red Russian porphyry, Swedish granite, different marbles from Austria including Andneter marble, and limestone from the St. Margarethen quarry nearby. Each sculpture displays its properties of grain and colour, which governed or influenced the form it was given.

A mutual relationship, one might say of respect, exists between the material and its form: the form seeks to reveal the secret of each stone; and the colour, grain or quality of the material provides the impulse for each specific shape. It feels as if Prantl is allowing each stone its intrinsic life. In a conversation, he speaks of the „humiliation“ of stones, and the importance of giving them back their dignity. Although he works with stone of huge weight, one does not see large machinery in his workshop. He says that he never liked using cranes or heavy lifting aids, but preferred to rely on old methods with wooden levers and winches. Essential aspects of Prantl's work were simple equipment, and the importance of working outside in nature under the influence of daylight ("The sun is the best teacher!" K.P.)

Prantl's language of form is a language of touch that invites the hands to explore – no sharp edge intrudes on the eye, and the quality of patina is subtle enough to invite you to enter the material rather than reflecting the viewer. Prantl's way of polishing transforms the stone surface into a skin, with breathing and permeable properties. He himself says that the stones are there to be touched primarily and that the possibilities and properties of stone have not yet been fully recognized. There seems to be a deep mystery in this connection between skin and stone, between the material's properties and the sense of touch, between the inexpressible and human development. Prantl imagined large stone sculp-

tures being placed in therapeutic environments in order to help and heal people.

Reaching back into his material's distant geological origins, Prantl seems, at the same time, to be pointing to a distant future when the secrets of stone will increasingly become apparent. As yet only a very small part of our sense perceptions are penetrated by our consciousness – our sense of touch or movement is still largely dull and unconscious. Thus the material stone might accompany our process of awakening.

The form

When he began work as a sculptor, Prantl took the material at hand; but later too, he still preferred to reuse material that had a previous history as gravestone, pavement etc.

Prantl mostly uses a handful of basic elements within the realm of form:

The stele - either of square, rectangular or circular diameter, varying in height from very low to about 10 metres, and erected or laid upon the ground to form a thin line or rod. As upright rectangular pieces, they are often called "stone for meditation". Other titles were "homage to silence" or "invocations", and invite an active relationship with the work - one could almost say directions for use.

Prantl worked small concaves or holes, "ripples" and "grooves" or "pinches" into these basic shapes and – in endless variations – small round forms often appearing like strings of pearls. He himself says that these "pearls" can be seen as "fruit", giving the tactile pleasure one associates with picking up ripe plums or apples. But they also speak of a continuum, a constant repetition of the



same element, perhaps the rosary of the Catholic Church.

The steles point up towards infinity, connecting heaven and earth, above and below, whereas the slabs or cushions work with the plane, the horizontal. The infinity of a plane indicates the second level of the dimensions of space, and leads us to the experience of connecting with the other.

Another basic shape he frequently used was the sphere or bowl, with its circular ring of regular or irregular dimensions. While the steles point towards vertical infinity, and the slabs express infinity in the realm of the horizontal, the circle embodies eternity, timelessness, by evoking the image of the snake eating its own tail, and conveys an archetypal image of oneness and wholeness.

Whereas the circle tells us about the cosmos, by contrast the cube, house or solid block conveys an experience of the earth, of matter etc. In the cubic forms, especially, one can feel an enormous tension – a variety of possible forms of density, a sort of radiating from within; or, as W. Hofmann puts it: “Stone reveals a maximum density but has no crystalline hardness.” (Hoffmann. 1990) Through all the basic and archetypal shapes, one senses a common field of energy assuming various guises.

The impact

In 1959, with Dr. F. Czagan and Heinrich Deutsch, Prantl organized the first symposium of European Sculptors, where 14 sculptors lived and worked together over a period of several weeks in the ancient quarry of St. Margarethen. The St. Margarethen Symposium continued over many years since 1967 even hosting the sculptors

in a proper building. Visiting the location, in what he called “the most beautiful Austrian quarry”, Alfred Schmelzer, an art historian, journalist and director of the 20th Century Art Museum in Vienna, called it “the most exciting experiment in contemporary art – simultaneously a workshop and exhibition.” (Sottriffer 1966, p.25)

Originating in this impulse, Prantl participated in numerous symposia all over the world over many years. He would sometimes attend up to three such symposia in a year, visiting countries such as Japan or Israel, and speaking of how much he had learned simply by experiencing sunlight in the quarries. He expressed a sense of reverence for the changing qualities of daylight, which he regarded as his teacher.

But as much as learning from nature, collaboration with fellow colleagues as equals was also something he appreciated. Later on, when the symposia – such as the Summer Academy in Salzburg – were opened to students, he treated them as partners on an equal footing. Prantl said he had never been interested in getting a professorship at a university: he disliked the hierarchies of academia, much preferring it when people just learned from each other.

The value of the symposia movement cannot be underestimated. For the first time in the western world, contemporary artists came together to shape stone in relation to landscape; and to learn from and help each other, without competitiveness.

Today, at the Salzburg Summer academy and elsewhere, something of this quality is still kept alive in an active community of stone-carving artists; and may also be found in other areas of collaborative practice not necessarily linked to quarries and landscape.

Connection between life and work

Meeting Karl Prantl in the place where he lived and worked gave me a sense of unity between his presence - the way he looked, listened, talked and moved - and his sculpted stone surroundings. His few, reticent words required a similar approach, it seemed, to the softly shimmering surfaces of his carvings.

People who knew him in his younger years speak of him as being a somewhat “earthbound” man: not tall in stature and - somehow in physical constitution even - close to the stones. Choleric at times, he would be quite resolute in defending his ideas and convictions.

He seems to mediate the qualities of his material, allowing the stone to speak and thus reveal its artistic – and not merely geological - beauty and history (Boehm 1981, p. 24). Here the very basic vocabulary of his shapes help to enhance the message conveyed by the work.

In saying that the true potential of stone has not been recognized widely enough, an active yet contemplative vision seems to shine through Prantl’s words, and likewise through the names he most often gives his works such as “Invocation” or “Stone for meditation”. He urges us to develop an active, living relationship with each individual stone.

As Gottfried Boehm, art historian and philosopher puts it, “If one learns to relate to the stones, to live with them even, they themselves will show us how to progress from aesthetics to ethics in the way that Prantl repeatedly speaks of.”(Boehm 1981, p. 19)

The field of experience embodied in the work of Prantl is one that remains largely unutterable, beyond conscious grasp, despite the tangible experience of our hands.



„Strings of pearls“ – stone underneath an apple tree









Karl Prantl in his sculpture park in
Poettsching, Austria, 10.09.2010



2.2 Stones for transformation: basalt in the work of Joseph Beuys

In my explorations of material I am not concerned with any kind of art historical classification but with small points of contact between, respectively, the *Beuys stones* (see Willis S. 2007, p.285) and the *Prantl stones*, and my project *Ways*. In relation to Prantl's work I find these points of contact in his infinitely careful and dialogic work with stone – in the meditative character he achieves in his relationship with stone. My point of contact with the Beuys stones has been, especially, the transformative element in his use of stones as witnessed very strongly in the installation *The End of the 20th Century* (1983).

Public perception of the work of J. Beuys is oriented to materials such as felt, fat and copper, to actions and performances, as well as his essays and dialogues on the development of social sculpture. But the material stone, mostly basalt, is also a theme running continually through his work.

Towards the end of his life, following his well-known contribution to Dokumenta 7 in 1982, *7000 Oaks*, his exhibition *The End of the 20th Century* belongs to a whole sequence of works in basalt.⁶

Stone and tree – an aesthetic process

In front of the Fredericianum in Kassel, a wedge-shaped pile of 7000 basalt steles was deposited from 15.3.1982 onwards and slowly disappeared again until Wenzel Beuys planted the last oak tree on 12.6.1987. Photos of this basalt wedge have engraved themselves into German cultural memory.

Beuys himself saw this work in the tradition, and as a consequence of his previous Dokumenta contributions, that is, the *Organization for Direct Democracy by Referendum* in 1972 and *Honey Pump* in 1977. In reply to an invitation to take part in Dokumenta 7 he wrote:

“So I said if you are in agreement that I submit a project that can improve the quality of urban life in the surroundings people live, I will do something quite straight-forward: I will plant 7.000 oaks. Beside each of these trees I will place a stone, such that forever more, or at least for the life span of the oak – and it is well known that that can be up to 800 years – the historic moment in time is captured when mankind, following *Vertotungsprozesse* (the violent “death instigating” processes) they created through their interpretation of work, of technology, their materialism, their political ideologies, their production processes, capitalism and communism – what you like to call it, to gradually bring about the *Aufrichteprozess* (“straightening process”), in other words the *Verlebendigungsprozess* (“enlivening process”) both of nature as well as in a social or ecological process, i.e., of the SOZIALER ORGANISMUS (SOCIAL ORGANISM). For this I need the stone.”⁷

Thus he uses stone to illustrate the development leading from *deadening processes* to and *enlivening processes*. Here Beuys is drawing on Rudolf Steiner's concept of evolution: highlighting what Steiner repeatedly accentuated as a need to overcome materialism in modern culture. But even without knowing of this context, we can view the basalt steles and approach them in our thinking!

What inner picture arises when, in my thoughts, I enter the quarries at Weilberg/Rhein (dark, slender columns, straight, prismatic form), at Beilstein in Westerwald (slender columns with agitated surface, white corrosion stratum) or at Landsburg quarry in the Knüllgebirge mountains near Kassel (larger steles, amorphous forms)? Here, firstly, I perceive the solidity of the basalt, that is, how the basalt pillars have hardened under very particular, shock-type geological circumstances during earth's evolution, thus forming these very distinctive columnar, polygonal structures to produce a glass-hard, almost black material, often with a fractured exterior skin that is light in colour.

And now the relatively short lifespan of an oak tree, of up to 800 years, is brought into temporal and spatial relationship with the evolutionary history of rocks! This tension launches the process of thinking that we now need to embark on:

“The extended concept of art is no theory but a way of proceeding which says that the inner eye is much more crucial than the development of external images. The precondition for good, outward pictures...is that the inner image, the form of thought, of imagination and of feeling, provide the quality which you must have of a correct and resonant picture.”⁸

Joseph Beuys, „7000 Eichen werden gepflanzt“, 1982.
Blackboard drawing executed during a television interview.

What happens to my inner image when I trace the basalt steles at the quarry back into the Tertiary period – and see the hot, fluid magma, sense the processes that led to its cooling and rigidity; and now observe the condensed and very imposing stone in its upright form (around 1,20 to 2,10 metres long) alongside the young oak tree, which has of course been growing over the past 30 years? What happens as I picture how the tree and the rock will increasingly grow together, the stone becoming smaller and less imposing, and ultimately being assimilated by the oak's root network, eroded by wind, weather and the pressure of roots, thus gradually becoming part of the soil, becoming earth of the most fertile kind?

“...plants root in the earth, and therefore, for practical purposes, in the material of which stone is composed. You see, the moment that basalt is eroded it becomes hugely fertile soil. We know this from the region around Mount Etna and all volcanic regions, also around Vesuvius: the most fertile soil originates in this primary rock.”⁹

Parallel to this, questions can now surface in me about a deeper, intrinsic experience of the basalt works. What is hardened and rigidified in myself? And how can it come back into flux and movement? Where do I experience the upraised vertical within myself? What gives rise to the sense of being enlivened?

It is interesting that the stones were planted next to the trees in an active, upraised state; in picturing and experiencing this I find I have to transform myself entirely, take new grasp of and raise myself before I am able to enter into enlivening dialogue with and alongside this “tree”.

I am giving these examples of an aesthetic process of perception because, firstly, we here gain a different access to the stones than is the case with the “Prantl stones”, and secondly because a very similar approach will emerge in the *workplaces*. There too it is always a matter of finding one's way into the specific qualities of the stones; and as soon as this really occurs with the necessary intensity, it invokes the “parallel process” of inner perception.

This process of perception and cognition involves an additional third step: that of outcome, of stepping out into the surrounding world. Beuys describes the movement from within into committed engagement with the outer world, subdivided into *nature* and the *social organism* (see quote 7).

The concept of an organism, which has given rise to numerous misunderstandings, has been worked upon by J.W. Goethe in his scientific writings,¹⁰ and elaborated by R. Steiner in his ideas of the threefold social order, divided into the three spheres of cultural life, human rights and the economy.

The partition into these three domains is really always present; it is just a matter of finding how they can be inter-related in a way that allows them to work in an inwardly coherent way within the social organism, similar to the coherence between the neuro-sensory system, the system of heart and lungs, and the system of metabolism in the human organism. (Steiner 1979, p.154)

By introducing the concept of the organism here, Beuys is at the same time highlighting a task, an orientation towards active work.

At this third stage of observing stones and trees, I

can begin to ask the following: What is hardened and rigidified in the whole of society? Where are the areas that could come back into movement, and where are rigidified structures dominant? Are there living forms of action that can be invoked?

In an essay entitled “Landscapes of Interiority”, B. v. Plato describes the aesthetic process in four stages. (v.Plato 2009 in Sacks, Zumdick [eds.]) Occurring as passive life processes, we are normally only semi-conscious of them:

- Events affect us, they come towards us and we try to understand them;
- We feel them, evaluate them, reflect upon them; and thus they become experiences for us;
- We live with them and, without our knowledge, they mature in us slowly into experiences;
- Out of the wealth of these experiences, and without our conscious awareness, we form our world and our obligations and commitments during life.

The process of internalization involved here is differentiated in to two stages as compared with the previous account. It is interesting that an aesthetic and meditative process is only initiated here through repeated practice of the process of cognition, and that this eventually enables an event we have understood to enter the domain of the imagination. Intuitive, aesthetic vision can arise.

“This is transformative consciousness because it has itself emerged from transformation. It renders visible what was invisible potential within the visible realm. It is therefore art: an aesthetic awareness that at the same time signifies a spiritual act.” (v.Plato 2009 in Sacks, Zumdick [eds.] 2009)

The End of the 20th Century **– Incisions for Transformation**

From the wedge of basalt rocks in Kassel, piled up there for the *7000 Oaks*, Beuys took the 44 stones (which were immediately replaced) for his Munich installation *The End of the 20th Century*. Three versions of this work arose almost simultaneously in May 1983 (today in Berlin, Düsseldorf and London) and are therefore directly connected with *7000 Oaks*.

The 4 versions, with differing numbers of stones, also differ in relation to whether Beuys himself installed them on only one or several occasions, and how each re-installation was undertaken. The 31-stone version in London is the only one that was not re-installed or newly installed. Instead, its stones were configured according to purely aesthetic considerations. Complex questions arising here, of the preservation of authenticity in the Beuys work *The End of the 20th Century*, and in relation to the history of the work and to ways of engaging with the different versions, cannot of course be explored here! (Where I do not specifically state otherwise, I am speaking here of the version with 44 stones in Munich.)

The 44 basalt steles in the Munich installation underwent an intervention: stonemasons bored out a blunt-ended cone-shape which was replaced after the resulting hole had been polished and smoothed. Beforehand, each cone was wrapped in a piece of felt and a small piece of clay was placed at the far end of the cavity. The original instructions were, in fact, to keep the clay moist – a life principle inside this rigidified, “cold and dead” material.

Here a memory from a trip to Iceland surfaces in me: while walking over lava fields it is moving to see how new life emerges on the older fields: first lichens and later mosses spread delicate greys and greens over the surface. After wandering through the unreality of black lava deserts, and rock debris, past hills of sand and ash, this green appeared wonderfully living and soulful to us (see also Appendix I, Explorations).

Here in the installation, in these unexpected orifices which enliven the otherwise undefined stones like organs, like eyes, one gets the utterly unexpected sense of something individualizing and awakening.

Along with the title of the installation, *The End of the 20th Century*, our attention here is drawn to the materialism that Beuys regards as indispensable for human evolution. “How can humankind attain materialism? How can human beings be induced to, as it were, come down hard on the earth?” (Beuys 1975 in Rappmann 1984, p.16/17)

Only in this “jolt”, this “nose-to-the-grindstone” of materialism, can humankind awaken to its own impulse for freedom.

Like a pack or herd, the stones roll and push towards the viewer in the random order of the Munich installation. The uncarved, unbeautified material thus aims to offer this “hard jolt” as a point of entry to the experience of matter. Cold, hard material, at its endpoint of arrival. How do we progress from here? In their uninterpreted simplicity, the stones can point the way forwards into a transforming practice. How would the process of “boring holes in stones” be realized as an image of the development of new organs of perception, with the small piece of clay as the enlivening of our concepts, and the felt wrap as the warmth process between us? Would it be possible for us to explore matter, in a new form of artistic

practice, in a way that allows us to share our skills and capacities and thus really work within living matter?

The project *Ways* developed from these initial questions, which were stimulated by *The End of the 20th Century*.



Joseph Beuys, The End of the 20th Century, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich 2011







FROM MATERIAL TO SOCIAL SUBSTANCE

3.1. The project *Ways through Stone*

In the following section I would like to outline the background to my extended art practice and then move on to document and reflect on the *workplaces*. Section 3.5 follows with the description of the installation *Ways through Stone* and its significance in relation to the whole project.

My project gradually developed into *Ways through Stone* that drew on a number of related *workplaces*. I adapted the term “*workplace*” to indicate that all related aspects are part of this productive work process: thought-processes, discussions, and individual transformations into an appropriate form. “The workplace is the physical location where someone works. Such a place can range from a home office to a large office building or factory. The workplace is one of the most important social spaces other than the home” (Wikipedia: workplace, online search 02.05.2014). I will use the term *workplace* for the workshop processes or seminars, in order to draw attention to the fact that this is a new form of art practice that places itself in the midst of daily life.

I was interested in exploring what form is needed in order to learn from materials. I decided to investigate how the material stone stimulated change in the workshop participants’ view of themselves and their questions.

I placed particular importance on keeping to a sequence or structure which I had developed in relationship to my own working methods, by actually carving stone. In addition the *workplaces* provided a space for the exploration of the social aspects of an expanded art practice. Key importance was placed on dialogue and discussion processes in the groups. Craft aspects – the know-how of creating a sculpture or an art object – withdrew entirely into the background. “Social substance” grew from developing recognition in relation to the material, and through reflection of individual experiences.

In the following documentation I have collated a selection of the participants’ work sequences and have added my observations. As the processes did not follow a simple question-and-answer principle, but took highly individual paths, I have made an effort to keep as close as possible to the spoken and written words of the participants.

The first *workplace* took place in northern Norway, during the Christmas Season 2011/12, and launched the project “*Ways through Stone*”. Another five *workplaces* were held in February and March 2013 in Germany. Around 120 people altogether participated in the sessions, each lasting several days. In January 2014 four *workplaces* formed part of my exhibition concept at Oxford Brookes University.

3.2. From Insights into Stone Carving to *Workplaces*

The *workplaces* follow a similar structure. They draw on a methodology inspired by my own methods of working with stone. Initially the idea was to take these insights from my stone-carving process in the project “Sounding stone” (see App. II Working Stone) and apply them directly to a workshop process. I needed to find out how a transfer of the ideas would work in practice, and so developed a sequence of steps for each stage of the work.

Insights drawn from the work with stone

INSIGHT 1

The first steps of a working process are crucial to the whole project, and allowing for ample time is important. This first stage can be characterized by openness and willingness for in-depth exploration of the core ideas. The material and the idea are mutually reinforcing and all possible aspects should emerge.

Based on this first insight, I designed the first session of the *workplace* to allow plenty of time at the beginning, and to nurture openness. Later I realised that the actual process had already begun as soon as I contacted the participants and they decided to attend. They were asked to choose a stone and bring it with them – and that of course already set the process in motion. The request was formulated in as open a way as possible: You can bring a stone, small enough to carry in your hand, and found wherever you like – on your windowsill or perhaps from your travels. Naturally, some of the participants had given much thought to their choice while others made a last-minute decision as they arrived at the *workplace*.

INSIGHT 2

The second step requires freshness, interest and open-mindedness; probably best characterized by: undirected attention.

The participants brought their stone to the first session. In their introductions they said their name and where they had come from, and described where the stone had come from and why they had chosen it. Then they placed it in the middle of the room. Attention to every new story brought about freshness and open-mindedness. The mood was one of actively creating space for listening and speaking.

INSIGHT 3

During the third phase, temporal processes and rhythms move into the centre of awareness. The gap between ideas and action can become frustrating or limiting.

In the third session the participants started exploratory drawing, in order to get to know their stone better. Drawing was part of an in-depth observation exercise which included writing down ideas and questions. The method suggested was for participants to let their attention circulate freely around the stone and alternate between focused observation and just letting their hand draw freely. I suggested they should avoid becoming completely absorbed only in drawing or formulating their questions, but should alternate between the two.

INSIGHT 4

The fourth phase is characterized by intimate contact with the material (getting to know the stone in great detail). Perseverance and focus are needed.

The fourth working session proved to be an “eye of the needle” kind of experience. I guided the participants by asking them to engage with a set of personal questions, such as:

- What are your thoughts about the stone?
- What are your feelings about the stone?
- What do you want to do with this stone?
- Pause for a while and look again with fresh eyes: Do you have any new insights or questions?

After working on these questions in writing, experiences and insights were shared in groups of three. Although attention was clearly focused on the stone, this session dealt with hidden aspects of thinking, feeling and will. During this step some irritation and difficulty often surfaced.

INSIGHT 5

Stage five offers an element of joy by connecting all aspects. Care and attentiveness seem to be the predominant attitude of this phase.

In the fifth phase participants were asked to take their piece of stone and to enter into a free exploration without guidelines and limitations. It was exciting to see that there were as many different approaches to this step as people. Some went outside to go for a walk on their own, others sat in contemplation; someone had the stone tell a story or inspire a poem. The corners of the room turned into a painting space, or writing and performance places...

INSIGHT 6

Finishing a piece also means letting go of it and perhaps giving it away – and this requires a different quality of openness than was experienced at the beginning of the process.

In a final session, individual pieces and findings were shared. The atmosphere changed when each person showed his or her explorations. The reactions and comments of the listeners and viewers added to the meaning of the process and created a mood of lively celebration.

INSIGHT 7

Sharing, transforming and integrating – listening to the response; letting my original idea merge with other activities; giving and receiving

This final stage rounded off all the others: participants packed their bags and their transformed stones and went home, taking the experience with them, and integrating it into their lives. I left them with three questions on a feedback sheet: Were you able to get anything from this workshop? What in particular stayed with you? Would you take any of it into other areas of your life?

The “INSIGHTS” form the backbone of all the *Ways*. At each venue they had to be adapted to a different time structure. There was not always enough time for each session but it proved possible to maintain this overall structure whilst facilitating the workshop processes.

The different insights led to distinct phases or stages of the workshop process. In the beginning I took them literally – I felt that each phase required a separate unit of one or two hours and a proper break to separate the units.

Ideally the first evening session would be step one (Insight 1) and only next morning would we start the next stage of work. After lunch break we would continue with stage three (Insight 3).

The more familiar I became with the practice and the time schedules of participants from different institutions, the more I was able to adapt my original scheme. If I was certain about the stage we were engaged with, there was no need to adhere to a rigid time schedule.

Once understood in its principles, the process guided by the above “Insights” may be flexibly adapted to different needs.

3.3.The Ways

Way One to Four –
Description of four
processes in
Neustadt a.d. Weinstrasse,
18.02.–21.02.2013

The work processes of several participants will be documented below, then discussed and summarized. Each work process involves a path of individual experience and my commentary will adhere as closely as possible to the words of the participants. I will call these accounts *Ways* and will number them.

WAY ONE

All the *workplace* participants were employees of the same therapeutic institution located in a part of Germany where the geology is predominantly of red sandstone. It is visible in the landscape, and used as building material in the town and villages.

Most participants therefore presented a piece of sandstone at the first session.

Session 1: Introducing the stones

U. didn't bring along a sandstone as expected, but a piece of granite. She picked it up on a walk in the mountains many years ago and kept it. Quartz crystals and mica plates were visible in it. "What power one can experience in a stone", U. remarked. For many years the piece of rock was a source of strength for her. In her introduction, she made a connection with her own biography, speaking about certain times when she experienced the stability of rock – "stones to hold on to".

In her analysis of the workshop, U. evaluated the significance of this session in relationship to the whole workshop as follows: "It was like a birth constellation. Indications, core ideas/feelings for the whole work process emerged". She expressed personal themes here; and when asked about the quality of the session she wrote: "It was a complex, tender beginning".

Session 2: Getting to know the stones, exploration through drawing

The atmosphere was quiet and concentrated. Carefully executed drawing helped to get closer to the stone.

U. said that she experienced a "total disconnection from my own emotions and perceptions. A pleasing clarity, wakefulness..."

In relation to the whole *workplace*, she described this session as an exercise in objectivity and wakefulness, an unfolding awareness of geological facts. An attempt to live into earth's creation and evolution. She noticed an interesting relationship between stones and time. "Stones have time – they exist and change in a different dimension of time".

Session 3: Focusing and concentrating

The stones were observed and examined in a strictly ordered manner. This exercise included observation of one's own perception and thought processes. This was reviewed in groups of three.

Now U. experienced a "turning point", "the beginning of a dynamic development by looking within and setting off on a path into the unknown."

Session 4: Active/creative transformation

Eventually things became tangible again: U. used vinegar to dissolve calcite crystals from the surface of her stone. This resulted in a process which she hadn't anticipated. The stone became dull; pyrites crystals appeared and the stone broke in two. U. described the experience and mood of this transformation with the words: "challenge, uncertainty, joy of exploration, childlike, unbiased, creation, chaos and liveliness."

Session 5: Discussion

The art work was presented to the group and discussed. U. wrote: "We have moved mountains! It was a gathering of treasures, observation, appreciation and enjoyment of originality."

U. described her own personal working process by telling the story of her stone: her use of vinegar leading to the loss of the calcite crystals, the expansion of the red areas (iron oxidation), her discovery of pyrites inside the stone when, through the loss of the calcite, cohesion was lost. The stone as "something to hold onto" had been transformed into something open-ended, unpredictable. To start with she was excited by the bright areas – now she noticed the dark parts too. For her, the exploration was both active contemplation and at the same time a form of ordinary work, for instance while scrubbing the stone with a toothbrush.

By analyzing the workshop it became clear that U. saw stones as one part of a long process, as something "hovering in between, in transit, ephemeral". In relationship to herself, the work with the stone had a quality of "moving forward" and was something that gave her "courage to take up new things" and to "open up old stuff". Would she be able to take something of this working process and apply it in her everyday life?

She answered: "I am trying to integrate objectivity, observation, a better grasp of my emotions into my life, but also to make time for stepping back and allowing events to reverberate".

It is interesting to note a relationship between the stone and the participant's inner experiences from the very start of the workshop. Often this was evoked by memories of where the stone was found. She discovered themes, motifs and key thoughts for further work. The stone served as guide for her development.





WAY TWO

Session 1: Arriving

A. brought along a stone she had found in a flowerbed at the workshop venue, right beside a snowdrop. “What power it has. It radiates beside the stone! ... And how fascinating to see the flower snake around the stone, claiming its place”.

For her, this session had real importance in that she was able to see her stone consciously in relation to the others. She began to build a sense of connection.

Session 2: Getting to know the stones, exploration through drawing

Although drawing was hard for A., she said, the observation exercise made her see even more details than before. The questions allowed her to “look behind the surface”.

Session 3: Focusing and concentration

It was not easy for A. to keep thoughts and feelings apart. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, A. developed a strong relationship with the stone. Questions around “its past and future” came up, and the connection was deepened.

Session 4: Active transformation

A. regretted that she could not devote more time to this session, as she had to deal with some urgent work-related problems. Nevertheless she made a small and sensitive composition that expressed the essence of the relationship between the mineral and the plant kingdom.

Session 5: Discussion

A. found it rewarding to see what the other participants created with their stones.

She described her own working process as follows: “I first washed the stone and it turned lighter, but I wanted it to turn darker, entirely black. (I thought of using oil.) Initially I had the feeling that the stone did not belong in this flowerbed, but later on I wanted to surround it on all sides with snowdrops. I discovered glittering parts in the stone. The contrast of the dark earth and the brightness became significant. There should be quite a lot of snowdrops around it. A conversation should take place between the plant and the stone – just as was happening when I found it originally. It took a long time for me to discover the significance of this relationship - which suddenly became obvious and spoke to me. The stone wanted something from me”.

In her responses to the *workplace*, A. mentioned that she had never previously thought about the diversity of the world of stones. She said she now saw each stone as a “personality”. The word “history” came up. She could not see a relationship with her own life, and she was not sure whether aspects of the workshop could be integrated into her life.

A. also said that the process was important to her, but she would have needed more time and less work-related stress.



WAY THREE

Session 1: Arriving

R. could not attend the first session.

Session 2: Getting to know the stones, exploration through drawing

R. concentrated on the drawing and felt himself relaxing. He was amazed at the wealth of thoughts and associations arising throughout the drawing process.

Session 3: Focusing and concentration

R. differentiated clearly between his sense perceptions, thoughts, feelings and will impulses. He experienced this session as enriching but also tiring, and when tired he felt the boundaries between “I and stone” began to blur. He experienced the discussion in groups of three as threatening. He spoke of “the danger of losing his mask”. With respect to the workshop as a whole, he felt that it opened him up.

Session 4: Active transformation

Starting from the idea of “time travel” (triggered by the stone), R. handled the transformation of his stone in a rather unexpected way. He considered its journey from the mountains, its transformation into a sedimentary

rock over millions of years, and its metamorphosis through heat and pressure within the earth into a metamorphic rock. These processes grew into an inner journey: from unity to separation, and again to unity.

R. decided to include the other participants in his creative transformation and developed a performance piece for the last session.

Session 5: Sharing

For the action/performance he asked the group to get together and to begin the piece by representing a mountain range, then to disperse and portray water, air and storms, making visible decay and disintegration into dust, and then reassembling again.

R. said about his performance:

“This was a process I have gone through myself: a huge mountain and then separation...”

Considering the whole *workplace*, he said that he had learned to look at stones in a differentiated way and now appreciated the beauty in ordinary things. To the question: Have you come closer to yourself? he replied: “Yes, it was terrifying at first but the creative process revealed a more light-hearted side of me”.



WAY FOUR

Session 1: Arriving Session 2: Getting to know the stones, exploration through drawing

In his exploratory drawing, A. tried to capture various views of his flint. Several drawings were made in which he discovered faces.

Session 3: Focusing and concentration

A. named a number of sense impressions. When thinking about the stone he came up with pairs of opposites, such as "light/dark, round/square and smooth/rough". He came to the realization that the more he looked the more he discovered. He then concluded that the stone became more interesting the more differentiated his perception grew. At an emotional level he spoke about his connection with the stone and how he valued it.

Session 4: Active transformation

A. went for long walks with his stone around the grounds. The stone seemed more and more face-like to him, and revealed many different aspects. He felt reminded of the indestructible core in everyone and wrote a poem (see below).

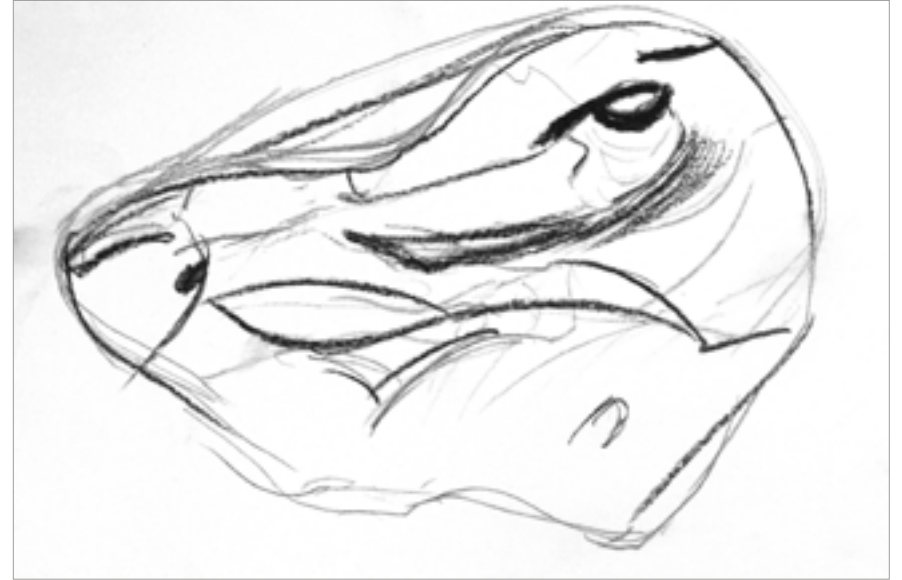
Session 5: Discussion

In this session A. recited his poem. In the subsequent dialogue and discussion in the group he said that the stone had become a projection surface for him. The whole process, said A., could be understood as getting to know another person, in a gradually increasing acquaintance with its details and surroundings.

I HAVE FIVE SIDES AND THREE FACES

*I have five sides and three faces -
And yet infinitely more.
A place, it seems, offers no more than five ways to rest
next to me,
yet as there are almost infinite places
that other observers, time and weather determine
I am never the same.
Do you still want me pressed into a mould?
Are you going to split me to look inside me.
From one to two;
from five to seven.
Two are completely different.
But I am not and never will be again.
So let it be and
let me be stone!*





Notes on FOUR WAYS

All four participants are employees of a therapeutic institution. To enable the normal working day to continue, it was necessary to divide the group – one group in the morning, the other in the afternoon.

In contrast to other *workplaces*, these participants were colleagues who wanted to work together in a group of 7 to 9 people. The extent to which they wanted and should open up to each other during the sessions became an issue for them. By the end of the *workplace* the participants had come to greatly value getting to know each other at an art-related level – and considered this quite different from a normal working relationship.

Whether the stone was found on-site or brought from further afield seemed to be irrelevant for the work. But it seemed significant that the memory of the place or the situation where the stone was found was still alive for them. This led to a real experience. “It was like a birth constellation, indications, core ideas/feelings for the whole work process emerged. Specific personal themes came to expression”. (U.)

The fact that you had to stand behind “your own stone” when you introduced it to the group led to a more intense relationship and kindled a process from the outset.

Way Five to Nine

Short description of five processes
in Frickingen, southern Germany
25.02. – 27.02. 2013

Below I wish to introduce more briefly some *Ways through Stone* undertaken by students at the therapeutic seminary in Frickingen, Lake Constance. The participants had all been working in social professions for some time, and had chosen to take additional in-service training. The timeframe of the project was similar to the sequence described previously, except that the five sessions were spread over three days.

I'll try to highlight and describe some key moments of insight that occurred on individual pathways.

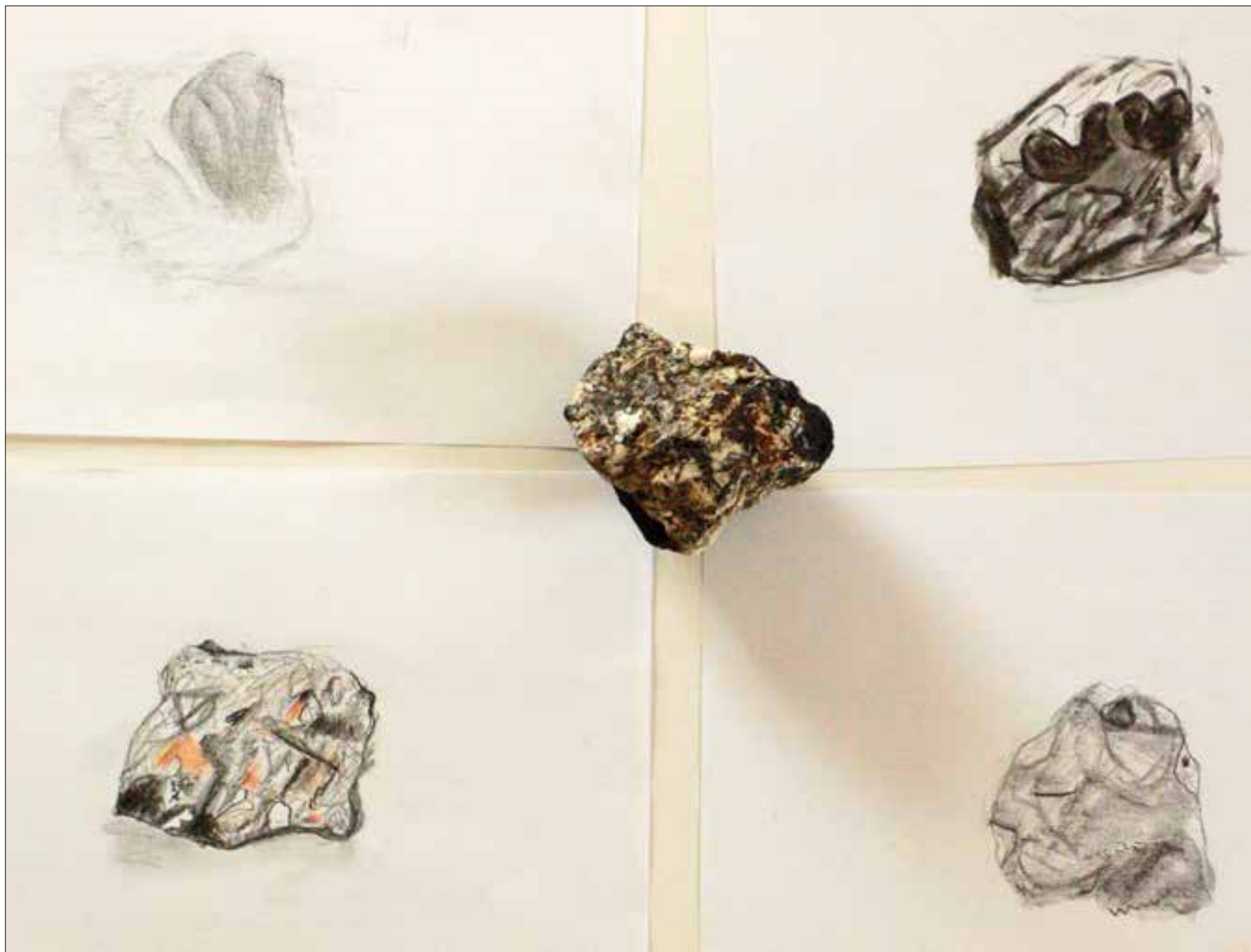
WAY FIVE

N. had found her stone in the drain by her front door. She chose it "by chance" and brought it along to the *work-place*.

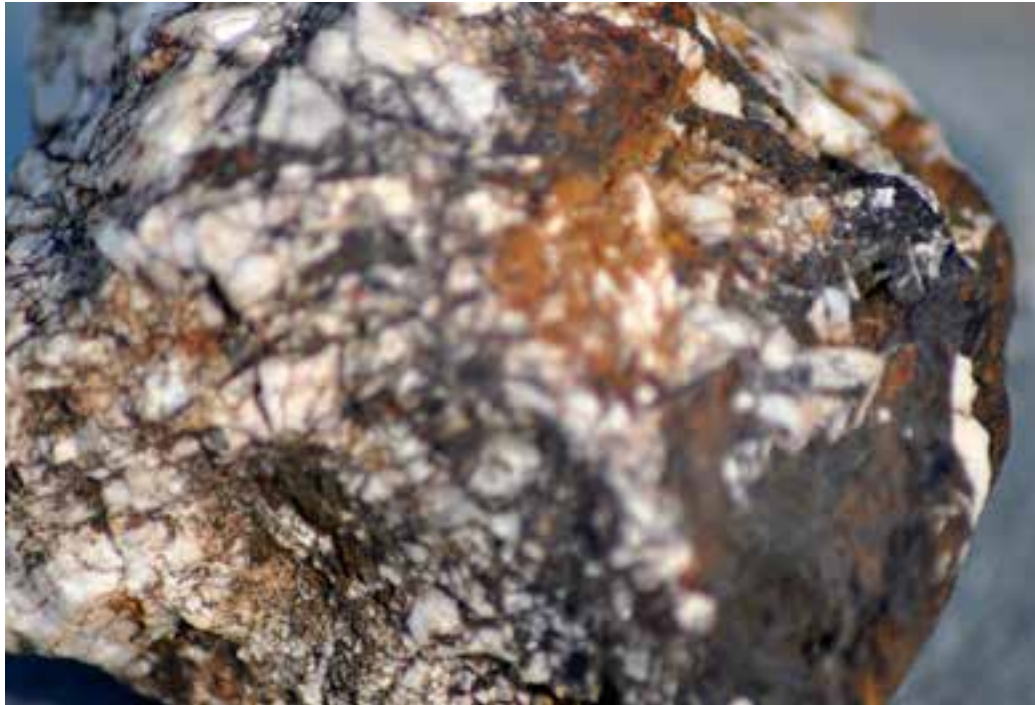
When drawing, questioning and observing the stone during the second session, her interest was caught by the boundary between its crystalline structure and igneous rock: cavities were visible between the two contrasting substances.

In the drawings she investigated the stone from different perspectives and employed different approaches to show the stone's "fragility and drama".

In session 4, that of active transformation, she made a series of photographs on the theme 'Journey of the stone'. Playfully she tried out various settings for the stone (see documentation of photographs below). Through these experiments, N. found that certain environments lent themselves to the stone, whilst others were less congenial. She figured out that her stone did not belong to water or belong with certain other stones, and she addressed its volcanic origin. Through a playful journey of trial and error, the stone's quality and origin were revealed. The theme of its volcanic origin and of 'boundary' moved into the centre of her work .







WAY SIX

Initially R. was excited about the structure, shape and colours of her stone. As she used her senses, its weight became crucial, and she experimented with various positions of the stone in relationship to her own body. “What does it feel like to carry the stone at the level of my chest, my belly or my knees? When I carry the stone with both hands I am able to centre myself. I find my centre. The weight has to do with earthing, with perseverance”.

The question came up: “Why did I get the hardest rock?” One possible answer could be: In order to take on some of these qualities and to grow through them. I will gain something and learn about hardness, strength and resilience.

She expressed these experiences in one sentence: “The stone is so heavy and hard that I can feel myself through its hardness; and it tells me that I am meant to gain something through this hardness.”

R. chose an appropriate way to embody this thought. She made imprints of her granite in soft clay and created various reliefs, thus finding strong expression for her themes of “duration and hardness”. Both the drawings and her clay reliefs were of a light and fragile quality and stood in stark contrast to the hardness of her stone.





WAY SEVEN

I. had brought her stone back from a holiday in Greece. She had found it on a beach. The little dots on its surface were as important to her, as was its round shape and light colouring, which conjured up the warmth of where it came from. In the process of examining the stone she developed a text collage, and, using an action, transformed this in turn into a poetic text.

This action was a walk in the snow with her stone.

STONE MY OWN STONE

Stone, my tracks in the snow.

The path: we roll, we jump, make quick changes.

I throw him, he leaves traces in the snow.

In the air: air moves, snow dodges.

Snow splashes make tracks in the snow.

Snow sticks to us,

to the essence of shore and away from the sun.

Is it cold? He asks, What is happening here?

What does he feel? Is he having fun with this action?

We are moving, my impulse moves him.

I move along his trail. Do I follow after him on his trail?

Direction - who defines you?

Does it exist - this direction, this dreamtime path?

The track is still visible,

Until the heat of the sun transforms it.

The stone by the tree. They touch.

Rest and movement touch.

The way - it is a way?

Do I only walk when I stand?

Do I only see when I close my eyes?

Back in the room, in a warm frame on a white background:

wet, cold, refreshing, frozen, moved, compelled, enriched.

Fun, experience, emotions leave traces in the ...

Consider: how did he like the trip in the snow?

Was it snow or did he touch water, that bore, formed, moved him

and made him what he believes himself to be. (I.)



WAY EIGHT

M.'s stone was of volcanic origin. He had found it on a holiday trip to southern Italy. Despite his difficulties with drawing he began to notice the many circular shapes and dots on its surface, its earth colour and shades of beige and red. He was moved by its volcanic history. Small concavities in the stone's surface made it appear somehow light. M. experienced the stone as both compact and light.

His artistic work consisted of a small series of photographs showing the volcano where the stone was found. These were accompanied by a series of texts.



Ansetzung

hält einfach

Fahren



HERE I AM BORN. IN A VOLCANO THAT LOOMS FAR INTO THE SKY.
GREAT AND MIGHTY IS MY MOTHER.



FROM LIQUID ROCK I AM MADE. THE FIRE I HAD TO
PASS. BEYOND NATURE'S POWER.



THROUGH MY EQUALS I HAVE FOUND A WAY



A PATH THROUGH FIELD AND FOREST WE HAVE OPENED TO LINGER AT
THE FOOT OF OUR CREATOR. TO BE FOUND AND OUR STORY TO TELL.

WAY NINE

M.K. initially found it difficult to draw his stone. He had developed a close emotional bond with it and could see eyes, ears and faces in its surface. Yet it became very exciting for him when he turned the stone around – now the drawing became easier.

By precise examination of his stone, lines and particular details in its surface became more apparent. A strong desire arose to 'dive into' the stone and see its 'inside'. The question of the relationship between the whole and the parts started to interest him. The stone's resemblance to a cross was experienced as very strong and dominant.

Thinking of the stone, the word "hand altar" emerged.





Ways Ten to Twenty -

Key moments in processes at
Bremen, northern Germany

31.01. – 03.02.2013

14.02. – 17.02. 2013

During evaluation of the process *Ways through Stone* it became increasingly clear to me that the working process of each participant had remained mostly invisible. Although parts of the work can be viewed and discussed, the point where observations and questions transformed into creative realizations eludes conscious access.

Whilst analyzing the *workplaces* I paid special attention to precise and complete documentation of every step. Below I will concentrate on key moments of each "path". The enigmatic character of the material stone will become apparent here. To emphasize this individual character of each stone I have chosen names that derive directly from the working process.

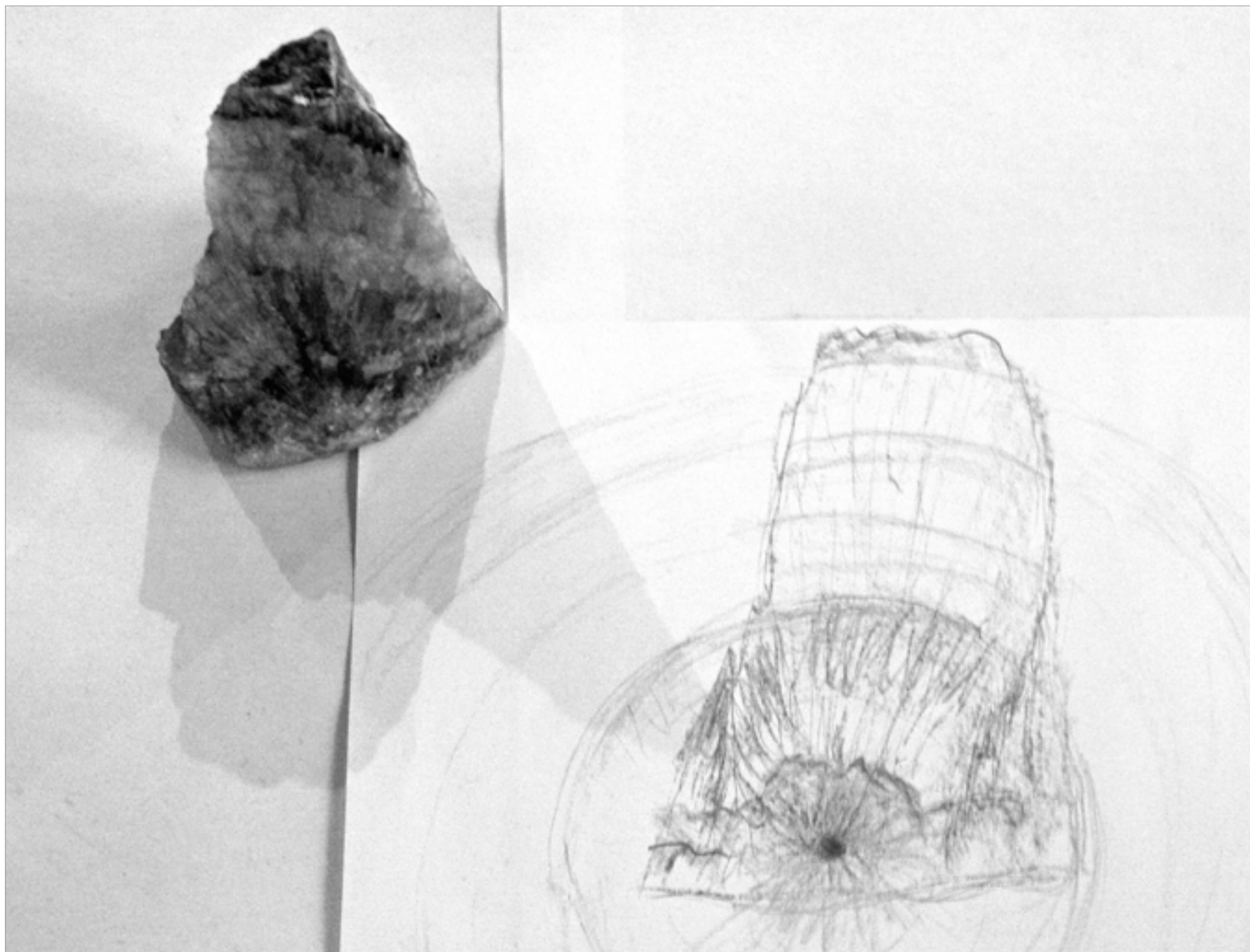
Way Ten

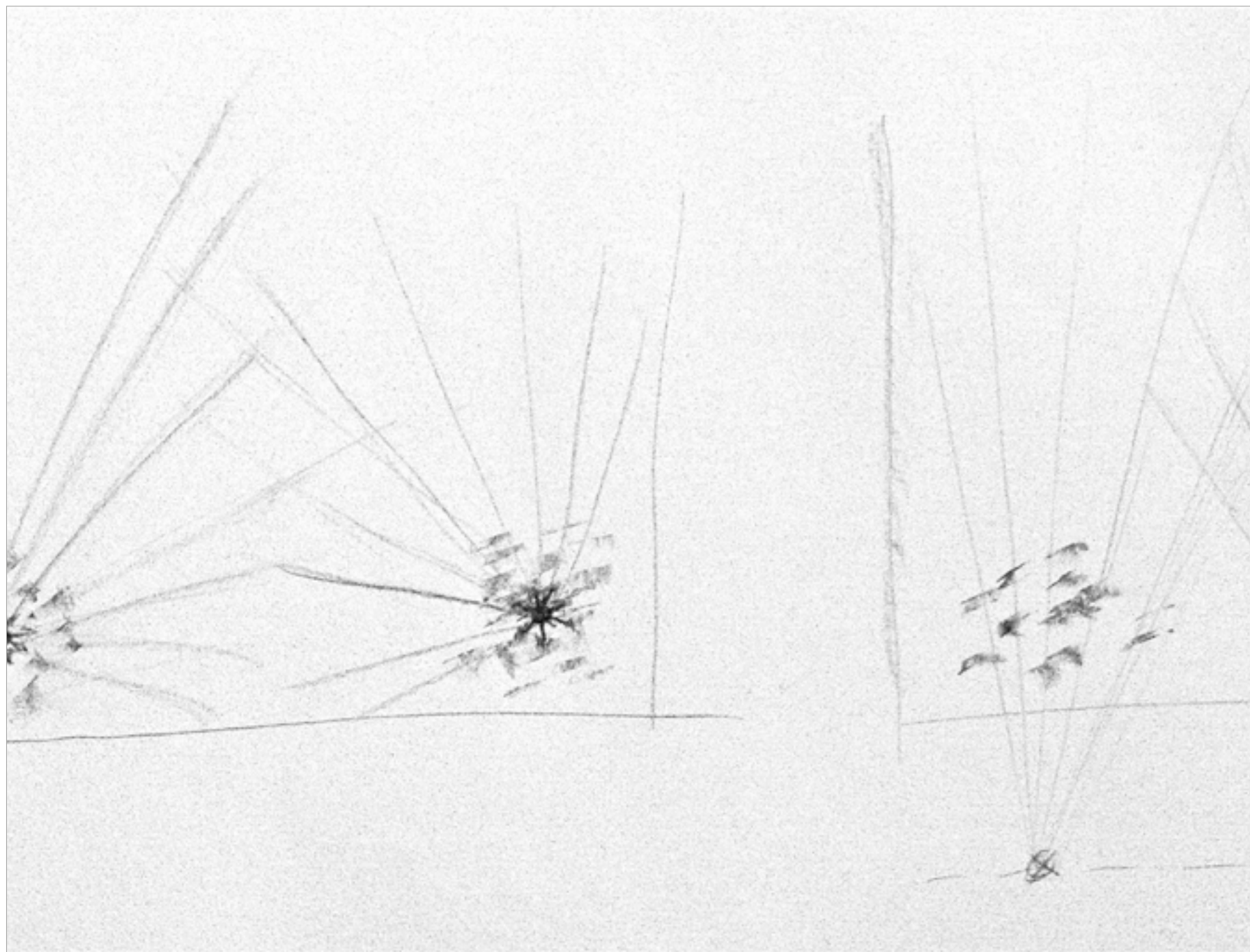
Crystal Stone

T. found his stone on the windowsill at the school where he worked. Apparently it had been part of a mineral collection given to the school. The crystalline structure had fascinated T. from the beginning. From a centre, veins of crystals radiated to the periphery. There were two crystallization centres on its reverse side. T. was particularly interested in observing the directions of the crystalline veins. He wanted to examine these movements to discover if he could gain a better understanding of the growth of the crystals and of the areas where the two directions intersected. To this end, he wanted to work on a performance piece with the other participants.

Two groups were formed. Each one was asked to “sense the centre of crystallization and to move away from it to the periphery”. Finally, an encounter took place in the middle of the room.

Both groups made two attempts at embodying something of this quality, yet the space turned out to be too small. It was crowded and caused turmoil. Despite these physical limitations, the participants experienced the crystal veins radiating out into the space.







Way Eleven

Working Stone

C. introduced her stone by saying that she always carried it around with her. It came from her garden and at some point she had decided to take it with her to work.

“The stone is a working stone”, she explained. „Water worked on its shape for centuries. Now it should continue working with strength and resilience.”

“The stone helps me find the patience to work; it gives me contentment and security.”

Originally the stone came from Sardinia.

The transformation process involved the whole group. C. boiled water and placed a large plastic tarpaulin on the floor, and a container filled with hot water and soap beside it. There was a choice of dyed wool: and now the stone was passed from one person to the next. With vigorous movements the wool was felted around the stone with the help of soap and hot water.

A cheerful working atmosphere developed; and in the end the stone was wrapped entirely in a thick layer of warm, blue wool. One could say that this process extended the natural process that had rolled and washed the stone. Everybody worked intensively on the form of the stone, shaping its surface.

In the following discussion C. said: “I have grown more certain that the work has a lot to do with consciousness. My methods have become more grounded. I have gained a feeling that things develop as they must.”







Way Twelve

Knitting Stone

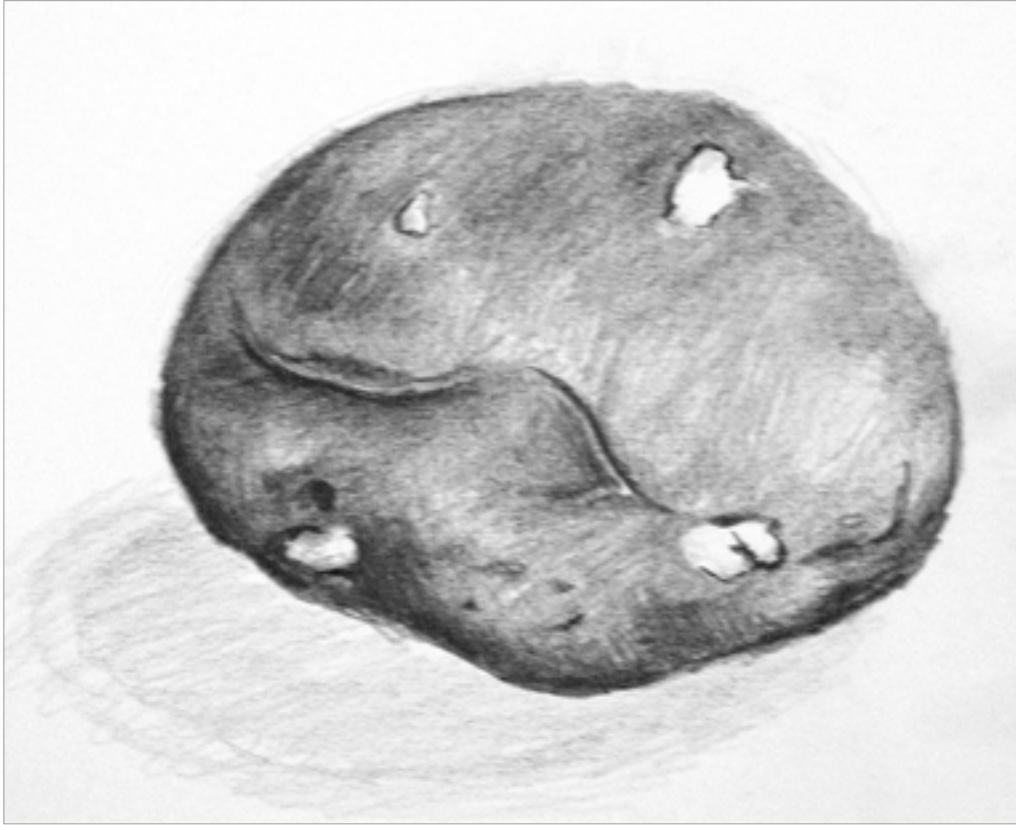
M. found her stone close to her family home about five years ago while on a walk with her children. It resembled a potato and the fact that the stone felt so pleasant in her hands particularly attracted her. But this was also the very feature that made her grow tired of it.

“Only always touching, stroking, touching, stroking – how boring! I was furious!”

She took a hammer and smashed the stone. It burst into three bits and became a sharp-edged object, revealing its interior.

“The stone is exposed now, but the damage mustn’t be seen by others – so without further ado I will crochet him a new soft shell.”



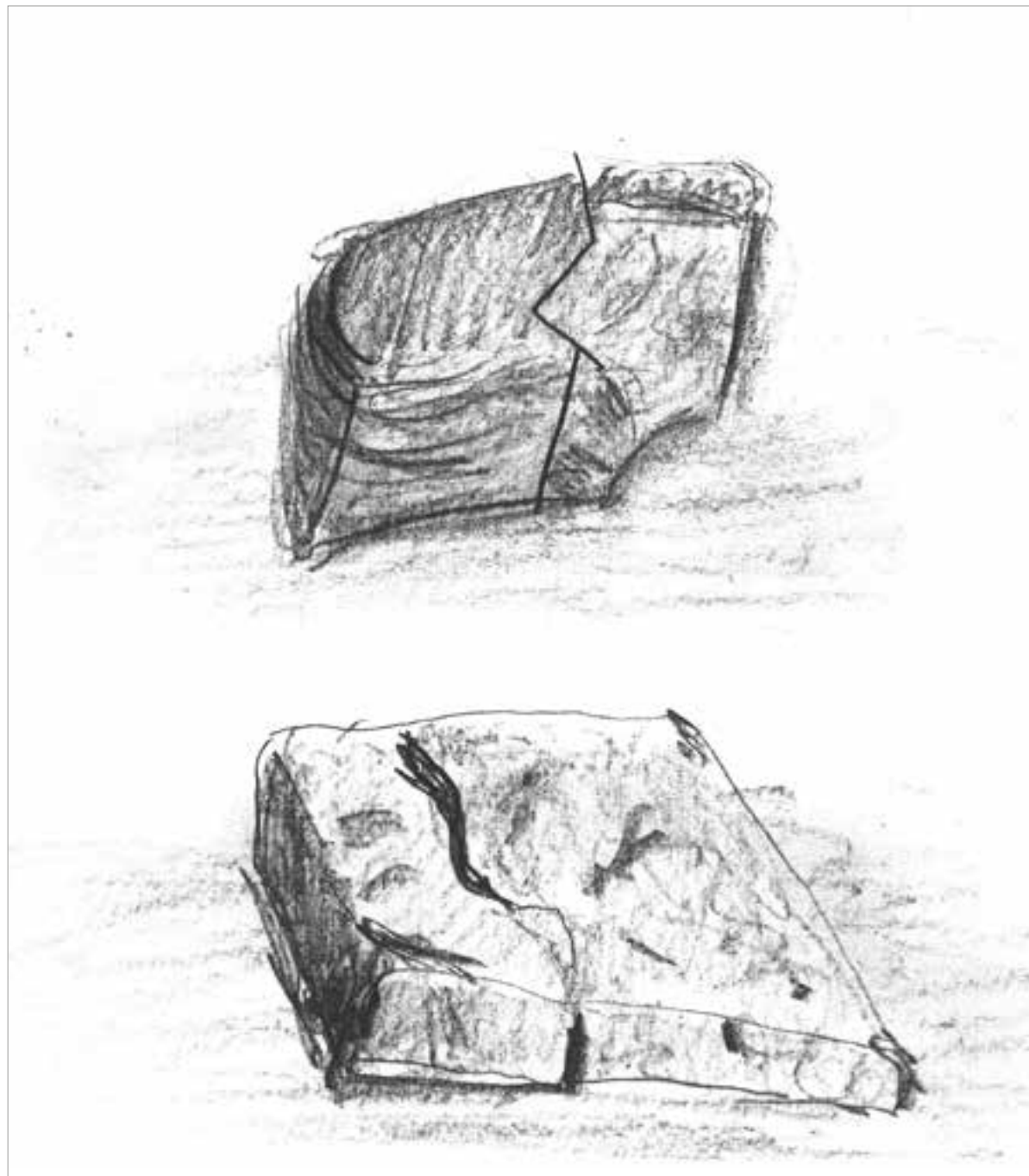


Way Thirteen

Broken Stone

A. introduced his stone as “unspectacular”. Many of these stones could be found in the fields where he lived. In winter these stones would be “frozen as anything”. When he picked one up it broke. Yet after a moment of disappointment, he decided that this split form was fully in keeping with it.

In the process of examining the stone its ‘break-up’ became the main theme. During its geological development it had lain in a ledge and been pressed underneath several layers of sediment. The stone, said A., is therefore still part of this ledge.





Way Fourteen

Potato Stone

W. found her rounded stone in France. It was lying in a pile of leaves and reminded her of a potato. She remembered the old folk tale "Stone Soup":

Stone Soup

A tale from Ireland

A monk went begging. He came to a farmer's door but they refused to give him anything. The friar was hungry as anything and said: "Well, then I'll just make a stone soup for myself "and he picked up a stone from the ground, wiped off the earth and started looking at it, to see if it was suitable for a soup. The people of the house could not stop laughing about the friar and his strange notion.

Now the monk said, "Have you never eaten stone soup? I can tell you, it's delicious". They replied: "Well, go ahead and show us." This was precisely what the friar wanted to hear.

After cleaning the stone, he said: "Can you perhaps lend me a pot?"

They gave him an earthenware pot, which he filled with water and put the stone in.

"If you wouldn't mind me putting the pot on the fire now..."

They let him.

As soon as the pot began to boil, he said: "With a little lard the soup would be excellent"

They brought him some lard. The soup bubbled and cooked, and the people of the house were open-mouthed in amazement. The friar tried the soup and

casually remarked, "It's a little bland. It definitely needs a pinch of salt." They brought him the salt. He tasted the soup and said: "If a few fresh cabbage leaves could be added, the soup would taste heavenly" The woman of the house went to the garden and brought him two cabbages. The friar cleaned them, picked them apart between his fingers and let the leaves fall into the pot.

When the cabbage bits were cooked, he said: "Well, all we need now is a piece of sausage to top it off nicely..." They brought him a piece of sausage, he threw it into the pot, and while it was cooking, he took bread from his backpack and prepared for a leisurely meal. The soup smelled wonderful. He ate and licked his lips, and when he had emptied the pot, the stone was still there at the bottom.

The people of the house couldn't take their eyes off him and asked: "Tell us, friar, what will you do with the stone?" He answered: "I'll wash it and take it with me for next time." And so he got his dinner, though they had wanted to give him nothing at all.

Her explorations continued in a series of drawings and photographs. Then she took the stone for a walk.







Way Fifteen

Scar Stone

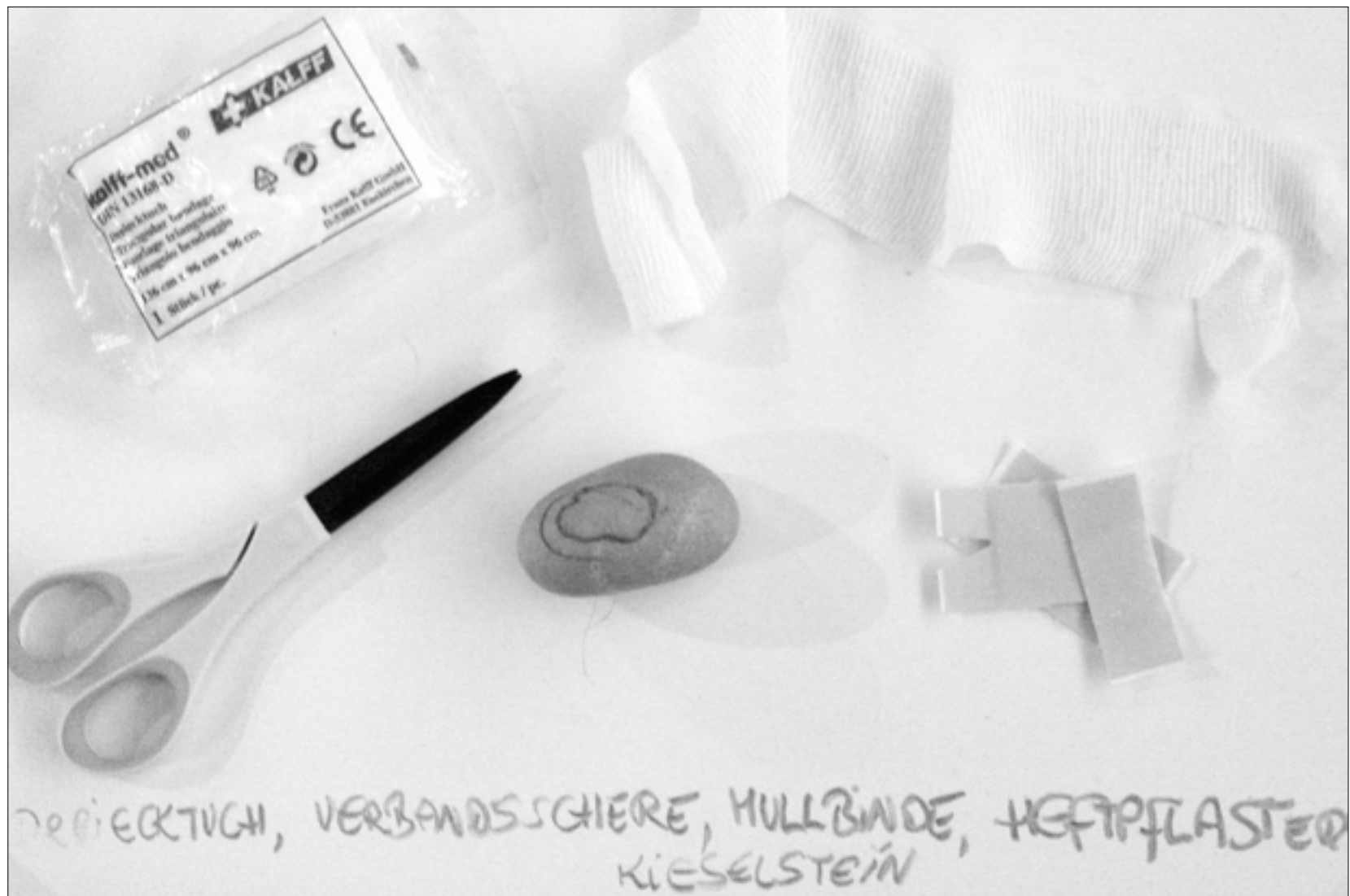
G. brought this pebble back from holidays in Brittany. During the observation exercise it became clear to him that the stone was chipped or scarred, had depressions and cracks. His questions during the drawing session and the descriptions of his sensations and thoughts were concerned with these “scars”. He created a small collage.

In the final discussion G. realized: “the stones are telling me something. I am getting to know something about myself. Everything in the world around me could become significant. If I walk carelessly past it, I shall miss something”.

He referred to the beginning of a meditation for teachers by Rudolf Steiner

*In the radiance of the sense being,
There lives the spirit's will,
Giving itself as the light of wisdom
And hiding inner strength.*

*Im Schein des Sinnewesens,
da lebt des Geistes Wille,
als Weisheitslicht sich gebend,
und innre Kraft verbergend;
(R.Steiner 30.09.1919)*





Way Sixteen

Layer Stone

This stone is from the island of Helgoland in Germany and was taken on a long journey during this process of examination.

Poetic writing by K.

*Helgoland stone,
you have been mine for so long.
Wanted to get away with me
to the other place.*

*Years went by.
You – only stood around.
Dogs, children, cat –
always you stayed in place.
I changed places.
All of your kind:
given to other people.
I've spared you and today,
see you with open eyes,
finally I do –
all my senses are only good enough
for perceiving nature.*

K. made a drawing with figures and people (see below). It showed representatives of various European states, and in her imagination she placed the stone in each country. In the *workplace* it ended up underneath a palm tree: "He is exhausted and is hiding".

Later she took the stone in one hand and said: "My stone – these are your relatives" and read some German words aloud, all beginning or ending with "stone", such as: stone crusher, stone circle ...

She used this layered sandstone, with its coloured sediments, in a way that stimulated her imagination. This strategy of "opening out" revealed many further layers. Her feelings and experiences appeared to her as sediment-type strata.

Mein Stein -
dies sind deine
Verwandten :

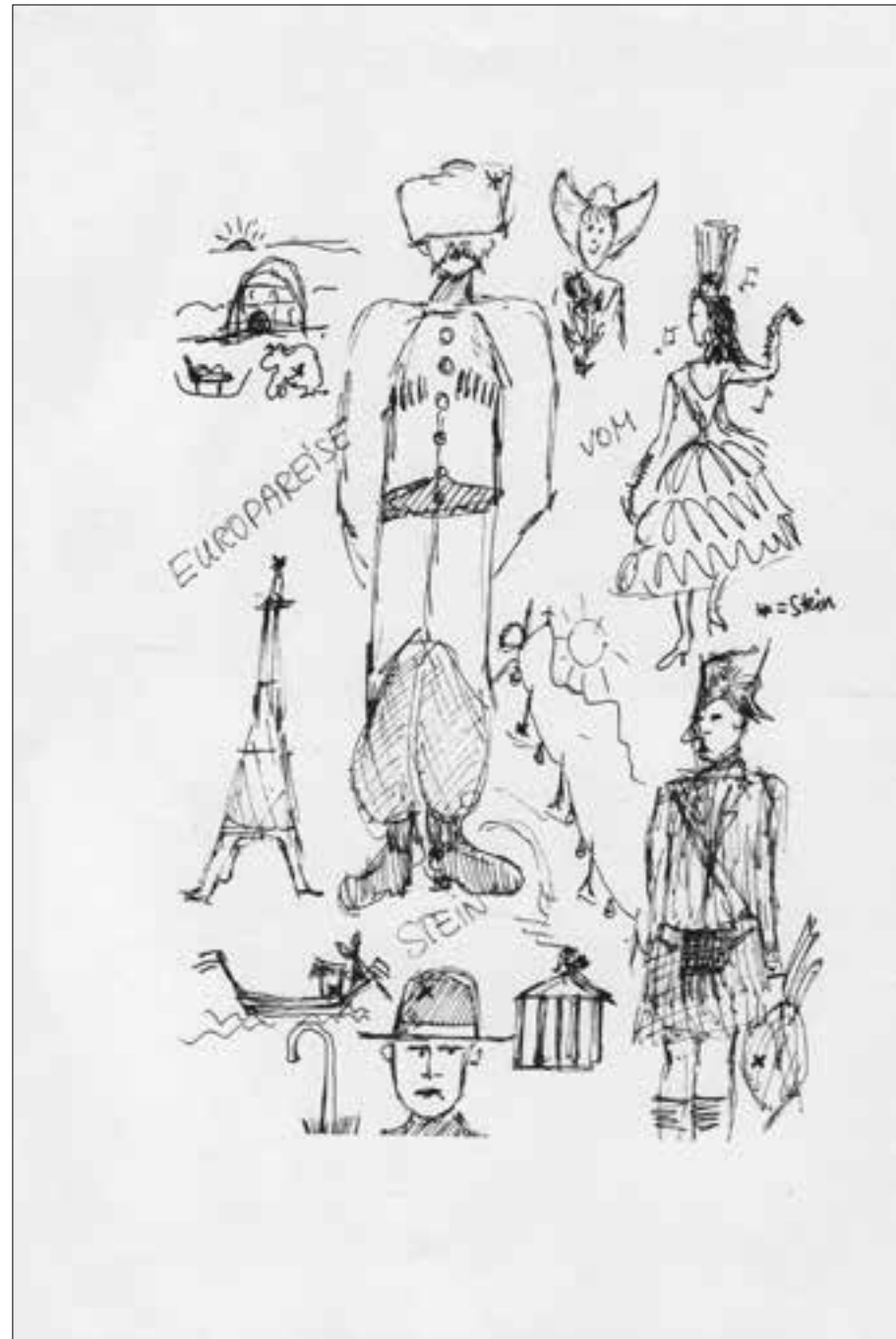
<u>Kopfstein</u>	<u>Steinhauer</u>
<u>steinreich</u>	<u>Steinschlag</u>
<u>Sandstein</u>	<u>Redestein</u>
<u>gallenstein</u>	<u>Steinsammlung</u>
<u>flintstein</u>	<u>Lechstein</u>
<u>Grobstein</u>	<u>Steinalt</u>
<u>Steinwandler</u>	<u>Steinig</u>
<u>Steinadler</u>	<u>Gestein</u>
<u>Steiner</u>	<u>Steinstaub</u>

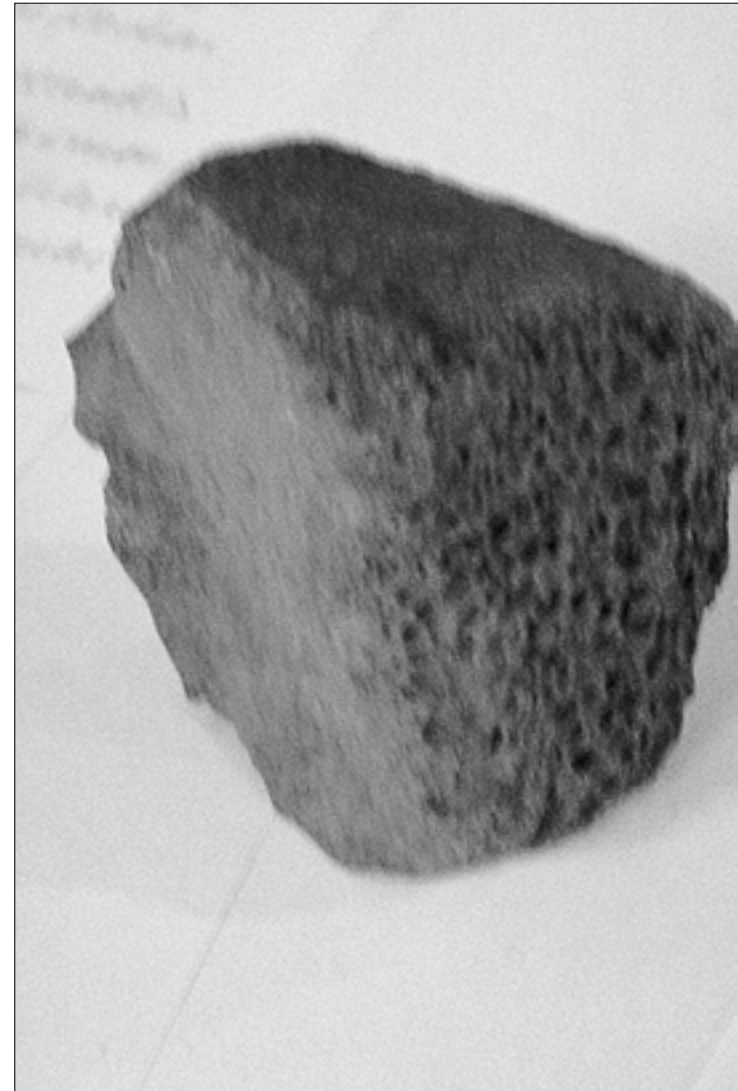
und...

<u>Salzstein</u>	<u>Randstein</u>
<u>Mauerstein</u>	<u>Steinschleuder</u>
<u>Dachstein</u>	<u>Rinnstein</u>
<u>Schlussstein</u>	<u>versteinern</u>
<u>Giechtenstein</u>	<u>edelstein</u>
<u>Steinschlag</u>	<u>Kantstein</u>
<u>Randstein</u>	<u>Steinplatte</u>
<u>Legosteine</u>	<u>Grenzstein</u>
<u>Neuschwanstein</u>	<u>Kalkstein</u>
<u>Steinschlag</u>	<u>Steintrog</u>

und...

<u>Steinwälze</u>	<u>steinigen</u>
<u>Steinhaus</u>	<u>Steinmetz</u>
<u>Hühnerstein</u>	<u>pflasterstein</u>
<u>Urinstein</u>	<u>Steinzeug</u>
<u>Steinbruch</u>	<u>Edelstein</u>
<u>steinhard</u>	<u>Meilenstein</u>
<u>Steinbeisser</u>	<u>Tropfsteinhöhle</u>
<u>Steinschleuder</u>	<u>Steinsalz</u>
<u>Steintos</u>	<u>Ramstein</u>





Way Seventeen

Image Stone

On this path there were two stones to begin with. In this very intensive work process, the stone acted as a “catalyst for discoveries”, and as a “stone for inner landscapes”. The creative transformation started with drawings in pencil, gouache and ink, and led to archaic landscapes and motifs of earth evolution.

For K. the conversation in the group of three proved particularly helpful. Here he learned, that his stone was igneous rock and heat was key to its formation.

The search for the warmth quality in the stone appeared to be a driving force behind this exploration.

K. wrote a poem alongside with his drawings:

The Grey One

*Blue-green, green-grey, dark green-grey
is his hue?*

*He is part of a larger chunk
and thus brighter in the “fresher fractures”, warmer in
tone.*

*On other, older edges, he seems covered with a fatty
crust,
which is perforated with circular holes, that seem dark.
3-6mm in diameter.*

*His outside in other places is: crust as on a loaf of bread.
Smooth but scabby.*

*In his forms, caused by breakage – strongly planar, straight
fractures,
then by bending or curving round – a cylindrical shape
and the countless circular holes
of organic origin (?)
different in size from 1-6mm diameter,
seem turned into froth.*

Solidified bubbles.

*Even with the “fresh” fractures one suspects that the
curvatures continue inwards,
as in a rolled bread dough.*

*Different forces act in the stone in his different ageing.
Pressurized forces, presumably in a liquid “dough
phase”.*

*The mass has been bent and eventually broken in his
last and harder time.*

*The crust-like “froth” could have to do with chemical pro-
cesses.*

*He appears like one body/loaf, one part of a loaf/body,
like a hunk of bread, a broken piece of baking.*

*All that I’ve described so far points to forces acting from
without.*

*Does he have internal forces and a centre of power, a
being?*

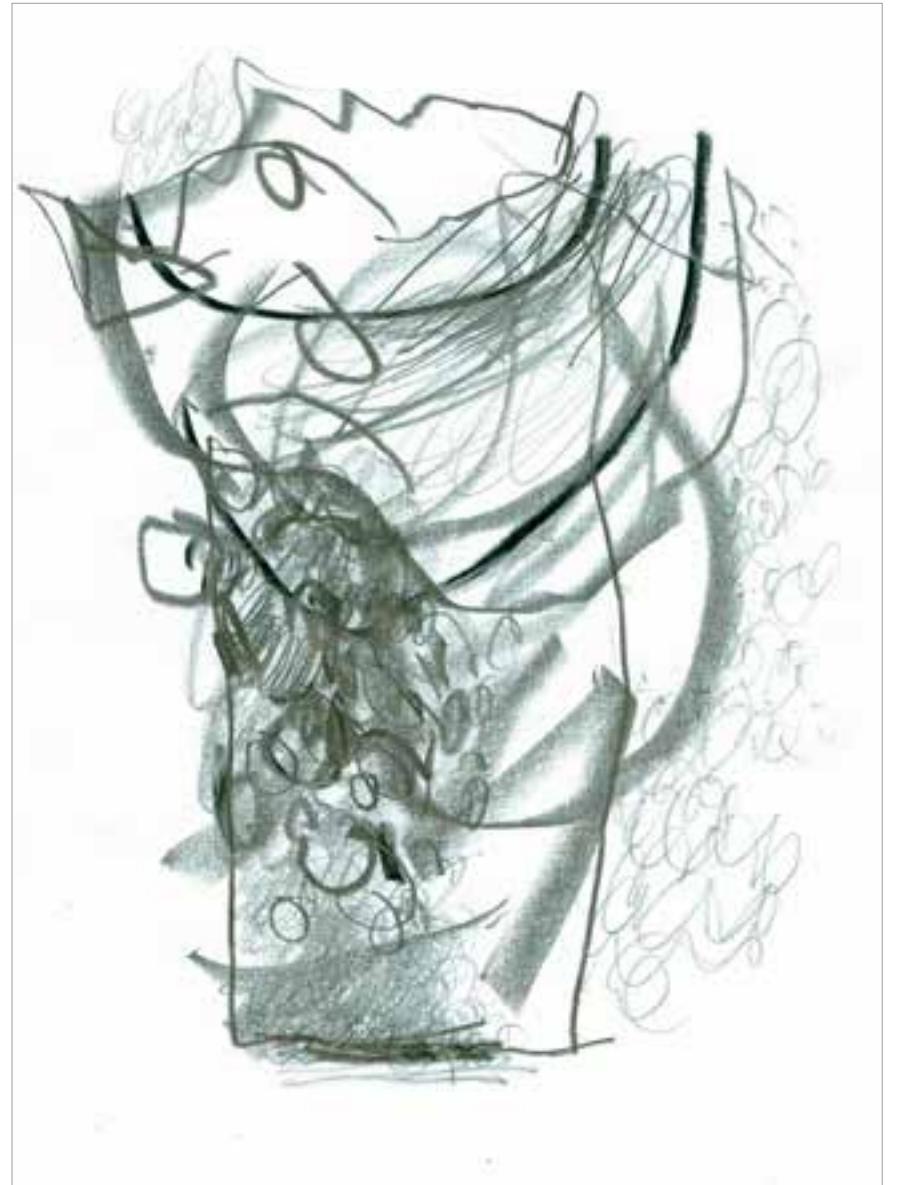
*Does he have something to say, will he speak out,
showing, conveying something?*

His language?

*Where is the place in me that resonates to this verbal
discussion, which can receive his utterance?*

*My sensation experiences quiet coolness,
my imagination?*









Way Eighteen

Surface Stone

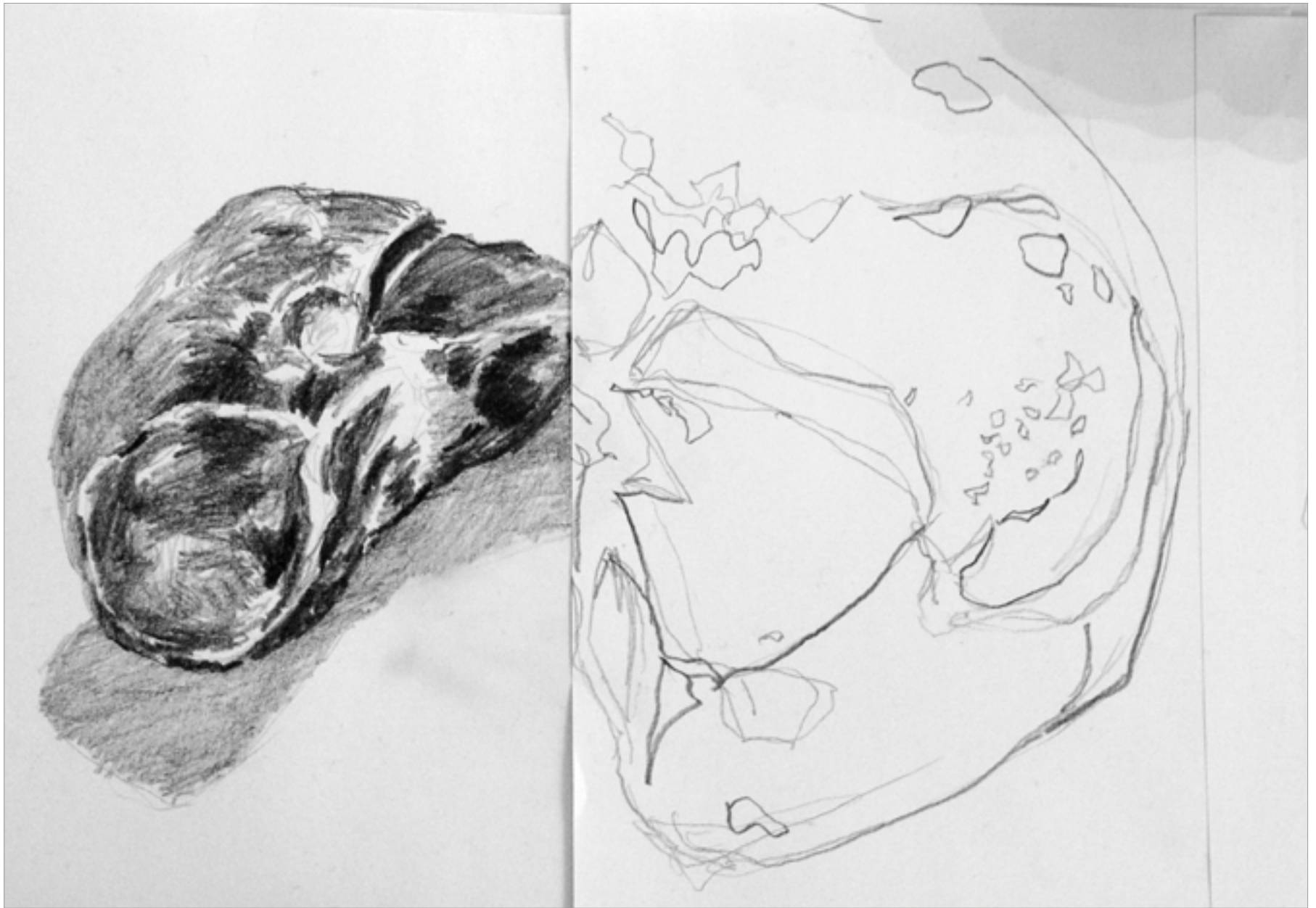


A piece of flint was the starting point for O.'s exploration. Originally he found it when he spent time with his family by the Baltic Sea. It was a hard and heavy piece of stone and had served him well as a doorstep. While drawing, the flint's surface fascinated him increasingly and reminded him of a meteorite impact on the surface of the moon. In a strange simultaneity, he noticed a newspaper headline: "Meteorite hits earth's crust".

"Mapping surfaces" was a theme that appeared to be important in this context. So O. commented on his intuitively drawn triptych:

"I have talked quite a lot about what I have done but basically I can't tell you anything about this process."

Again, as in the work of others, surprise became an important factor. No one was quite sure where their associations and images had come from. Often they pointed to important aspects of the stones - in this case to surfaces, to surveying, measuring, geological events and influences from the cosmos.







Way Nineteen

Buddha Stone

This stone was brought back from Tuscany. When M. was visiting Etruscan towns he spotted it near a Baroque monastery in a heap that appeared to be different from its surroundings. The stones appeared to have melted. Perhaps these were remnants of an ancient smelting furnace.

M. reported that the stone had prompted him to go wandering. “We met the bark of a tree, and after various encounters ended up in the room. In this room there was a very small Zen garden with a small Buddha figure. The stone guided me to this place. – I added a piece of bark and a small candle too”.

“Between the Buddha and the light there is the stone – a riddle. It might grow or shrivel, it might change – anything can happen.”



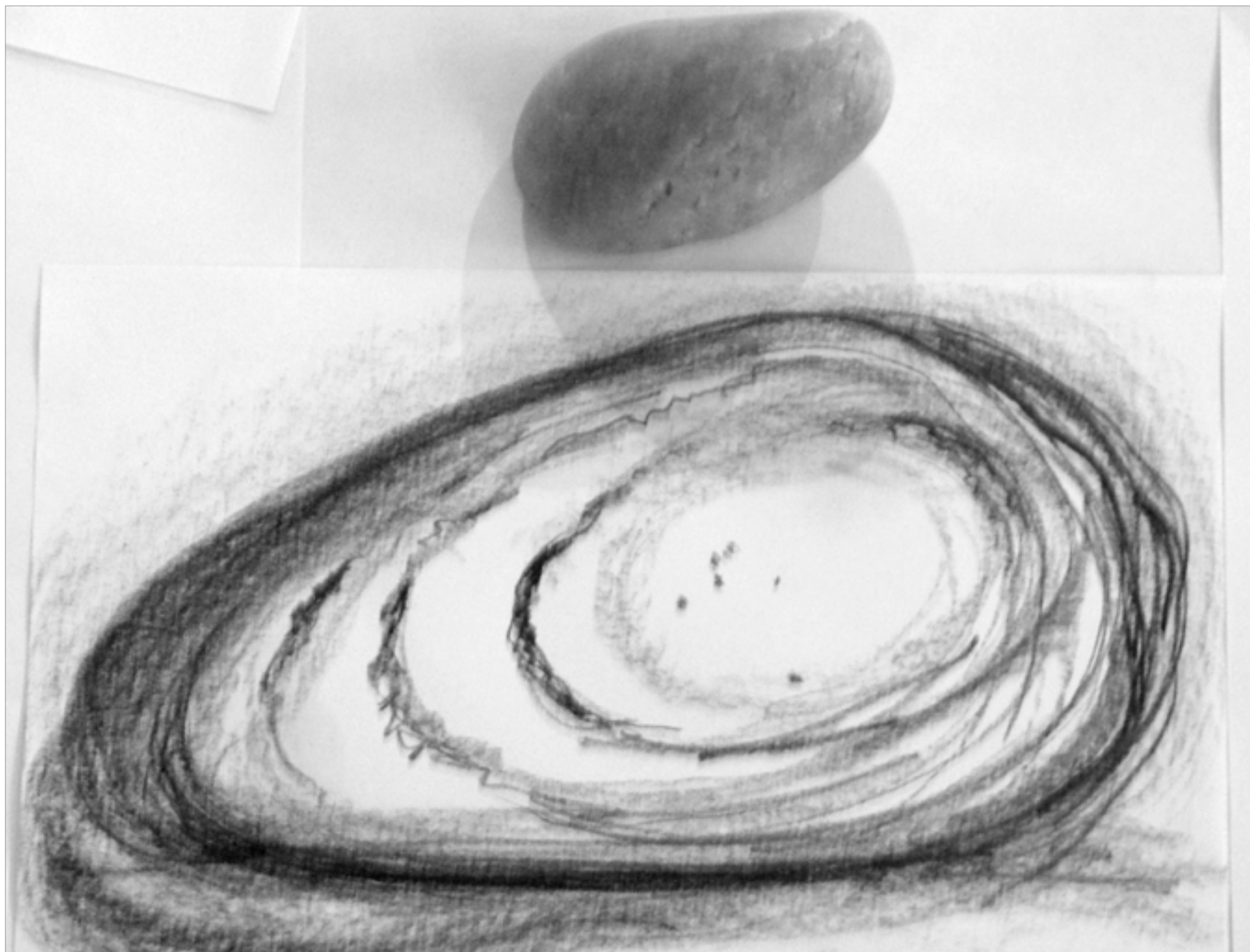
Way Twenty

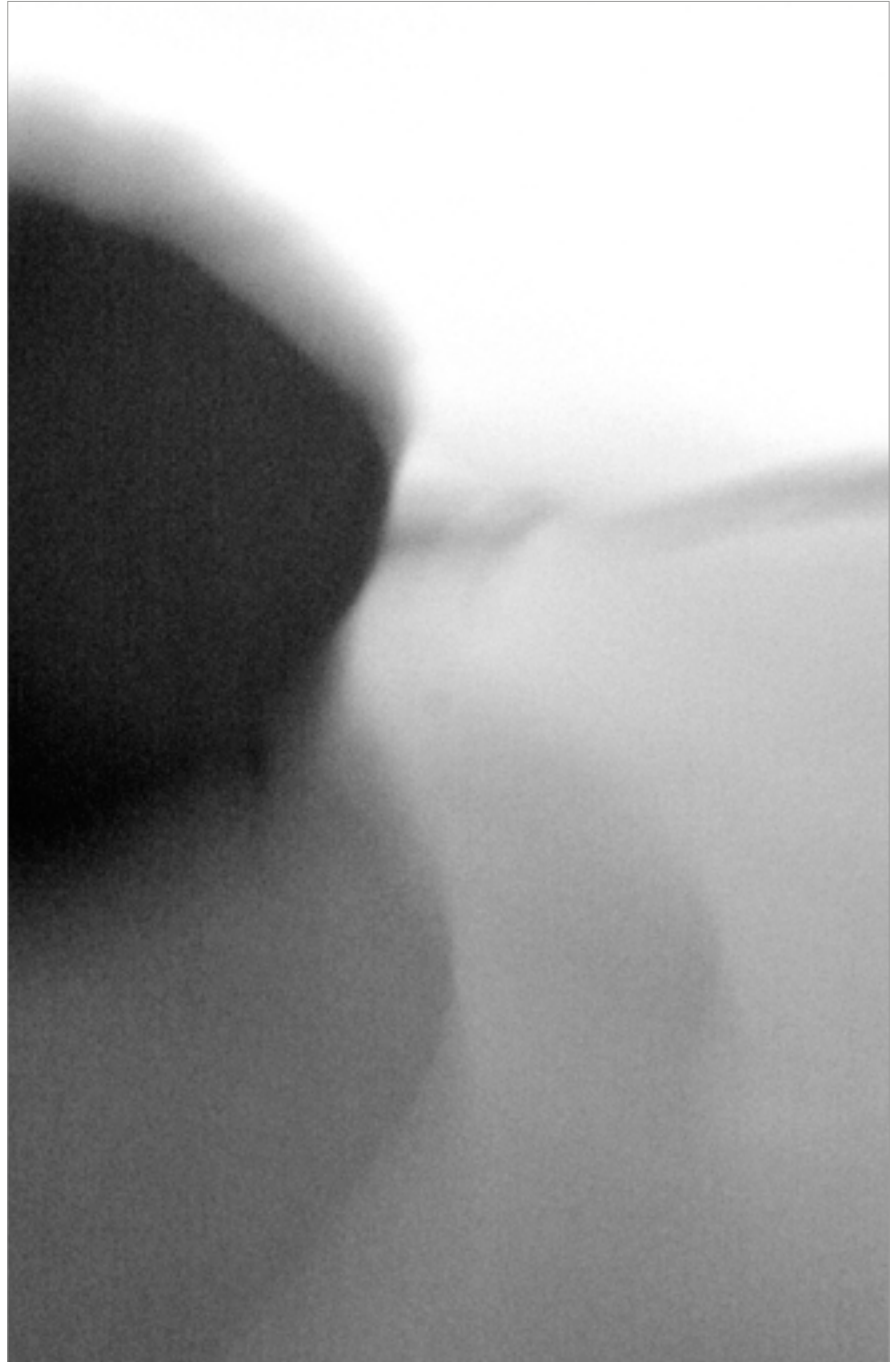
Unveiling stone

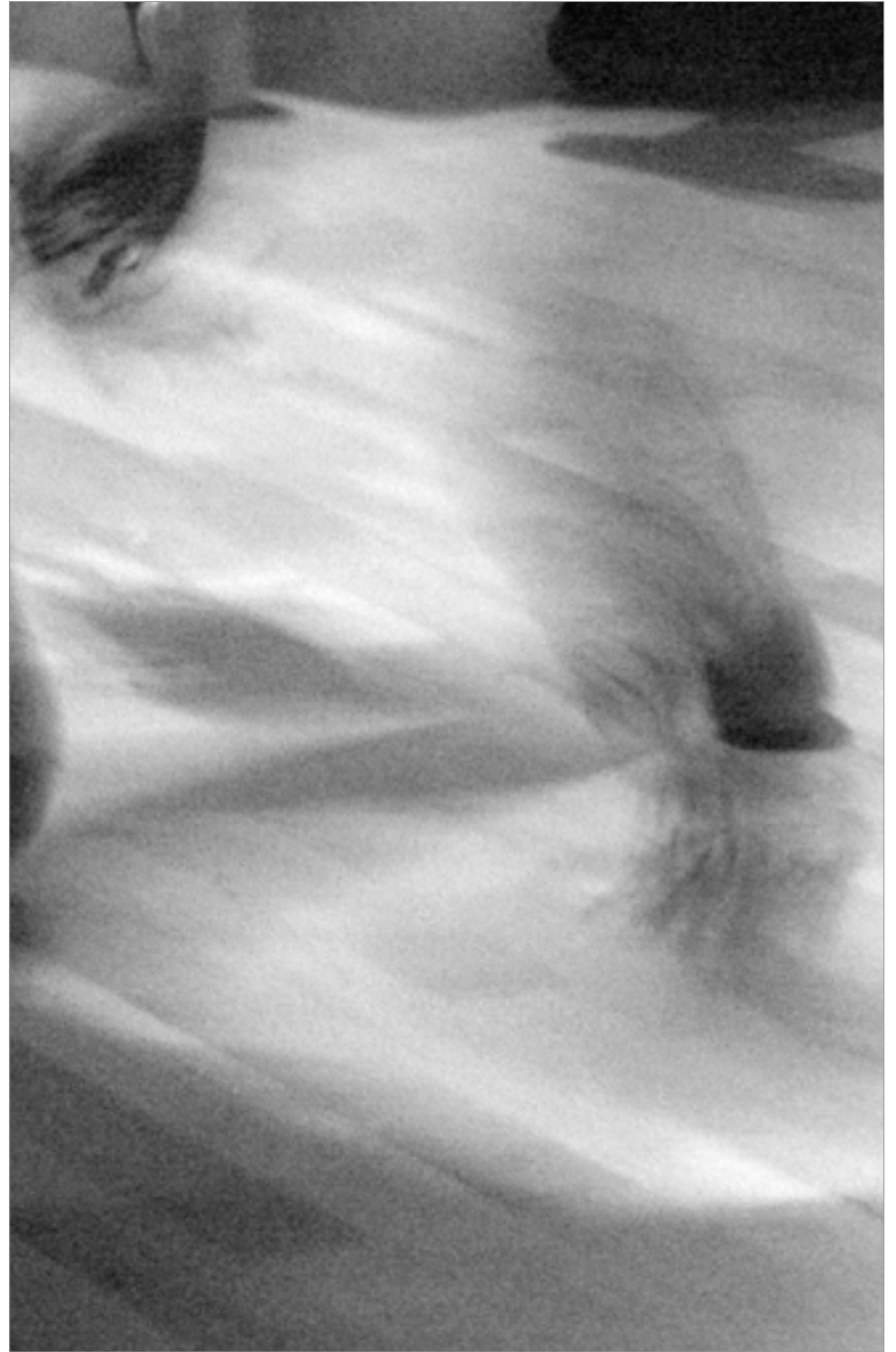
D.'s drawing and poem inspired a performance: her little stone had been hidden, wrapped and covered by different layers, and gradually she freed it from fabric and paper layers. In the end she made the stone fly across the room.

*Uncovering
For so long the earth carries you,
has formed you and lets you
pass away to recreate
you again.
She has pressed you into your form,
pushed, made you heavy
and heated you with embers.
She has ground you
and has taken the cutting edge away from sharp edges.
Covered you lie before us,
hidden is the core of your being
deep inside you.
You are wearing many covers:
grey mice covers like these
woolly warm covers,
hard shell,
holed cover
and hanging on thin thread,
silky covers.
However, now, now is the moment –
you may discard the first cover.*

*And you roll,
you are standing,
you break away from the earth,
you fly, fly, fly.
The time will come,
when the stones
discard their weight
and
dance.*







3.4. Insights drawn from the Ways – a summary

Both in discussions following each *workplace* and in written evaluations by participants, most findings focused on four thematic areas: stone, the individual, the group and the world.

Participants commented on different aspects of acquiring “knowledge”. To their surprise they succeeded in drawing conclusions about their stones without access to geological facts. (This will be discussed in section 4.) They observed a multitude of qualities through sensory perception - such as sight, smell and touch; or in cognitive processes and through hands-on approaches. The simple and unassuming object opened up a wealth of experiences at multiple levels.

The observation practices led to a specific and entirely individual experience that allowed participants to connect their inner images with their outer perception. The stone acted as the catalyst and amplifier of experience and understanding.

During their individual explorations participants became aware of the transformative potential of the methods used. They also described that working in a mutually supportive group and in a conscious and imaginative way flagged up a method for positive social change. The sessions with stone had become a mediating principle of listening and mutual inspiration, replacing antagonism and competition.

On the whole the methods were considered useful tools for further practice. Some participants made valuable suggestions for the transfer of their insights gained during the *workplaces* to other areas of their life. The concept of stone as a mediator or amplifier of change figured strongly in their experiences, following which they may see different objects or other situations differently. New eyes may open.

The selection of these *Ways* did not follow any specific order. For further material see Appendix IV: *Workplaces* – a portfolio of handwritten comments, poems and drawings.

3.5 Installation *Ways through Stone* in the Glass Tank, Oxford

3.5.1 Description of the Installation *Ways through Stone*

The rough outline of the exhibition concept had to be submitted by the end of May 2013, following which an intensive process of concept elaboration took place, and detailed development of the exhibition *Ways through Stone*.

The installation consists of a strand of Cotswold limestone that precisely follows the geological formations deep below our feet, running diagonally to the gallery's floor plan. The Oolite limestone comes from the Roll-right quarry close to the market town of Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire, about 16 miles north of Oxford.

The orientation of the geological formations was calibrated within the gallery building and marked in the installation by a north-pointing compass arrow on one of the boards located beneath the stones. Five boards, each measuring 1,12 x 2,40 m, form the underlay for the stones. Footprints drawn in chalk at the narrowest point of the formation indicate the possibility of crossing the stones (see photos).

The boards thus become a medium on which directions can be given. At the same time they lift the stones from direct contact with the floor, raising them just a little into "thinking space". This thinking space is intensified by the element of wooden stools: sixteen simple wooden stools invite visitors to sit down either within or by the side of the field of stones. Their modest shape encourages an upright sitting position – an

alert, conscious stance that supports the human thinking process. In this way the stools indicate the necessary presence of the human being, also introducing an element of movement into the otherwise quiet, resting mood of the room. They are faintly reminiscent of a flock of animals, such as sheep.

A series of stepping-stones, no longer oriented to the underlying geological formation, leads to a enclosed space whose walls are hung with carded wool. A small, worked piece of limestone lies on the floor here, protected by a broad strip of felt. This "wool space" is a mysterious place: isolated from the larger space it is situated at the rear end of the gallery. The delicate web of white wool makes an almost unearthly impression and yet creates a warming mantle as background to the worked stone. Here the material stone appears as if transformed: its organic, undefined form invites one to bend down and touch it, and sit down beside it on the strip of felt. It prompts us to discover the material stone in a quite new way.

On the table at the opposite end of the protected space lie three books with the titles, EXPLORATIONS, WORK and WAYS, which illumine various aspects of working with the material stone. One of the books describes the "*workplace* processes". If one sits down on one of the three stools in front of the table, turning one's back to the exhibition space, one can study these books undisturbed.

The whole gallery space is thus divided into three areas: the reading and study space with the table, which is also the area one first encounters when entering from the café in the atrium. By reading the explanatory posters and the three books one gains an overview of the whole project.

The central area is given over to the stone formation with the stools. Here there is movement, both in one's active engagement with the material and in dialogue with each other (and this is also where the *workplace* discussions took place). But in a very outward way too one has to move actively through the stone field or balance on stepping-stones. Thus this central or middle area is devoted to movement and activity involving an active grasp of the material.

The rear part of the exhibition is in the quiet, intimate space of wool and the carved stone – the only place where one is surrounded by walls, in contrast to the glass windows that open out the gallery space on both sides: outwards into the interior courtyard and inwards towards the atrium. In this small interior space an entirely individual, feeling connection with the stone can unfold.

3.5.2 Conception and Development of the Installation

The division of the space into three areas, as described above, only dawned on me towards the end of the work at the Glass Tank, as the exhibition was developing. Prior to this I was engaged in an intensive and extended process of continual reconfiguration and elaboration of the idea.

I am used to working outside with materials available in the locality. Wherever possible I try to employ stone that originates in the region where I'm working. In relation to the Glass Tank in the new University building, this "localization" via the material seemed of still more vital importance. The materials used in this building, such as glass, steel, concrete and corian (a very tough plastic) and the basalt floor with its very refined finish, are modern, "cool", universally employable materials that have no relation at all to the local area.

In my study of the geology of Great Britain I had come upon the sweeping diagonal of Jurassic stone formation that crosses from the Yorkshire coast southwards to the coastline at Dorset, and passes through Oxfordshire. Its golden or cream-coloured limestone gives the landscape and little villages around Oxford their characteristic feel: dry-stone walls, houses, churches and the old buildings of the city of Oxford itself are of Cotswold stone.

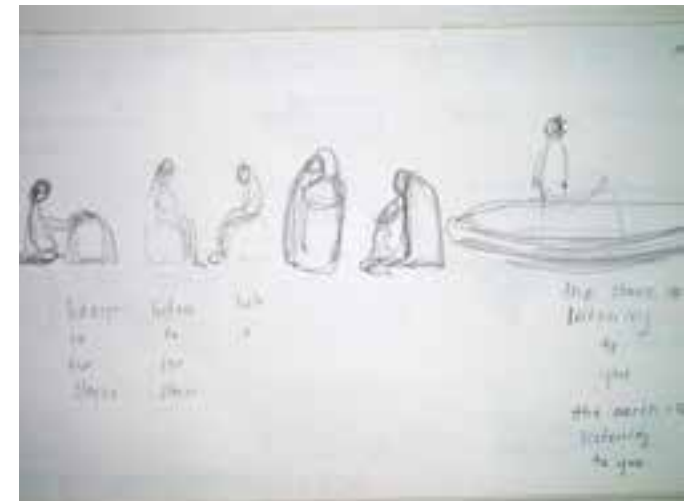
I soon discovered a suitable quarry that could supply the necessary material.



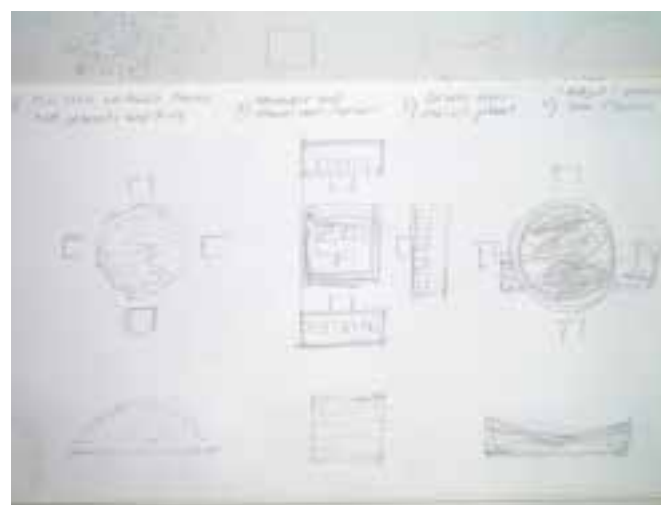
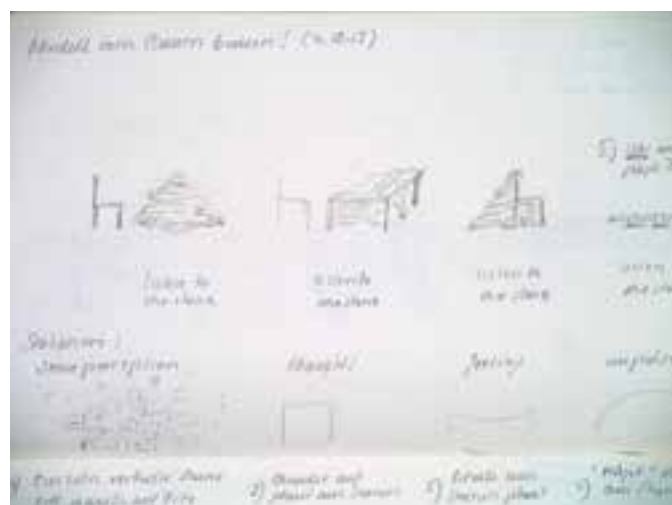
Jurassic formation curving southwards
from the coast of Yorkshire to Dorset

To begin with I worked with the idea of creating a path, a way, a sequence of forms that would lead through the space (see sketchbook drawings).

Here I was concerned to find suitable forms that would invite people to engage with the material stone. I wanted to stimulate a deeper conversation with the material (listening to the stone). But the problem of form immediately arose: as soon as I organized the stones in a particular way, I was forming them either through layering, piling or carving and thus creating a specific context of meaning that could easily divert people from a more primary engagement with the material. One morning, therefore, it suddenly became clear to me that I should return to the actual geological situation: the course of this strip of stone on the floor of the Glass Tank should make visible the precise orientation of the layers of stone below ground!



4 drawings from my sketchbook: 2.10.- 20.10. 2013



In the meantime, a second material, wool, had come ever more clearly to the fore as a companion for the material stone. Was this due to my travels in the Cotswolds and the shepherding and wool-working traditions I had seen there? Or was it more to do with my own inner experiences of connecting with the warmth character of wool as a creative, configuring element?

Since December 2011 a phrase very mysterious to me kept coming into my mind. It was from a Buddhist text that a participant at one of the very first *workplaces* had given me: "The blue mountains move continually." (Master Fuyo Do Kai, 1043-1118).

In chapter 14 of the Shobogenzo, a collection of Japanese texts, the properties of the mountains are described: "...they always rest in tranquillity and are (at the same time) in motion."

Questions of movement and stillness, of change and endurance surfaced in me in relation to stones: the relationship between hard and soft, hardened structures within me that are asking to be dissolved; the male and female qualities: all these themes came alive in me. Not only had they preoccupied participants in the project *Ways through Stone* but they had been a concern of mine for many years and connected me with stones. Slowly, therefore, the image of a secluded "Wool Room" formed in me as an experiential space which I can work with, and move towards.

Ultimately I myself had pursued the path of material transformation in the creative shaping of this exhibition, taking the step, in the context of this installation, which participants in the *workplaces* had individually accomplished in the most diverse ways (see photos, *Wool Room*).

One person who attended a *workplace* at the Glass Tank told me: "Now I understand what this Wool Room is about after I myself had my experience with stone!"





Ways through Stone, Glass Tank,
Oxford Brookes University 21.01 – 03.03.2014

3.5.3 Significance of the Installation to the whole Project

My initial question for the concept of the exhibition was how to present my practical research work and bring the presentation into a form that also enabled people to have their own experiences with stone in the exhibition. I wished to create an experiential field that responds to the given space as site-specific installation, intervening creatively in it and at the same time offering an opportunity for further *workplaces*.

New questions and thoughts arose from this:

Is it helpful for the work in the *workplaces* if their surroundings are configured as installation, as exhibition? In previous *workplaces* I always had to focus a great deal of attention on ensuring that the space where the work took place felt clear and tidy, and that a place arose at the centre of it where participants could deposit the stones they had brought with them. In bringing with me a series of photographs (see Appendix I: Explorations) I had given a first stimulus, at least, for work within the space.

In the context of the installation I had now created, every person who entered the gallery would inevitably feel that he or she was part of the installation, of this situation distinct from daily life that can offer them an opportunity for experiencing something out of the ordinary. As soon as people entered the exhibition space, and then also as they leafed through the books, went into the Wool Room or crossed the stone field, they were stimulated to engage creatively with the material stone, and supported in doing so. The difference with previous *workplaces* might consist in this: an invitation to

participate in the latter always went hand-in-hand with the request to bring a stone, and this already initiated a preparatory phase of attunement to the work. Here in the exhibition, this step was facilitated by the more concretized form of the room's design, as well as temporal compression: the *workplaces* at the exhibition took place on a single day only.

What effect will it have on the *workplace* if all participants work with the same Cotswold stone, rather than bringing their own stone with them as previously? An unexpected outcome of the exhibition and the *workplaces* here was the discovery that it was still possible for people to work in fully individual ways, to make their own personal connections with the material, and arrive at different statements about it, which, taken altogether, still said a great deal about the material used!

Can the installation provide enough space for the form of the *workplaces* and yet at other times, when no seminars are taking place, avoid looking empty or unused? How do the gallery installation and seminars relate to one another?

I found this challenge especially stimulating since I regard it as a task for future exhibition concepts. The Glass Tank offered enough space to plan use by *workplace* participants. The diagonal positioning of the stones gave rise on the one hand to a composition that made good use of the whole room but at the same time left enough free space. The way that the *workplace* activities were described on a poster made clear that the space was an arena for social art processes.

In the context of art history this relates to installations by J. Beuys such as the *Honey Pump at the Work Place* at *Dokumenta 6*, in Kassel in 1977. In one of the *Dokumenta* rooms, through which the honey pump's tube

passed with the honey unceasingly circulating inside it, a permanent discussion forum took place about ideas of direct democracy, and social sculpture in relation to the newly founded *Free International University*. What was the significance here of the physical installation of the honey pump if the conversations and discussions in an adjoining room were what really mattered? Was it a metaphor, a symbol, an intensifier? In an interview, Beuys himself calls the *honey pump* a "physical signal for the FIU, which lies behind the hole (in the wall)".¹¹ He says that both aspects of the work should be seen as intrinsically connected parts of processes at work in transforming society and the individual.

Ways through Stone increasingly developed into a coherent unity: the gallery installation as physical expression accompanied by documentation of past seminars and current work happening at *workplaces* during the exhibition. The seminars can stand alone and take place at diverse locations. But when the gallery installation is added, this provides a marvellous opportunity to concentrate and stimulate the work. The *workplaces* during the exhibition seemed to have been raised to a new level of energy, and thus became visible in a different way: the scope broadens and the work's relevance is carried out into the public domain.

The installation acts as a measuring tool or a view through a magnifying glass: does the work hold up? Does it have sufficient depth and carrying power to assert itself in a somewhat difficult environment? The installation thus intensified the whole project, and allowed certain questions to become fully tangible for the first time: What is the relevance and the future area of application of this particular form of social-art practice that I have developed?



Workplace, Glass Tank,
Oxford Brookes 30.01.2014

4

THE FORMATION OF SUBSTANCE

In this section, keeping the whole *Ways* project in view, I want to examine the field of “transformative social practice”. Having described my practice in the last section, I will now concern myself with the “social substance” we worked with in various *workplaces*, and explore their connection with methodologies in art. Besides physically perceptible substance and its material properties, in the *workplaces* we also worked with immaterial substance that first formed within each participant and then also became perceptible in the space between us, and was shaped in discussion and conversation.

4.1. Extracts from the *Ways*

Excerpts given here from concluding discussions during the first and last *workplaces* are indicative of the insights gained during the *Ways* project (see section 3). Though statements below are freely quoted from participants at these two *workplaces*, they are also relevant to the whole practice.

From the concluding discussion at the first *workplace* in Vallersund, Norway, 28-30.12.2011:

“What is the relationship between mineral, plant, animal and human being? If we understand the way in which these four realms interpenetrate, we will understand the nature and structure of the whole world.”

Many participants raised the theme of how stone relates to other kingdoms of nature: sometimes, after long wanderings, a stone ends up beside a plant or a tree in the landscape; elsewhere, organic material was brought into the *workplace* from outside and used as part of a collage or installation. For instance moss, tree bark, or leaves were added (see Way Nineteen). Here the stone was placed in relationship to living surroundings (Way Fourteen), thus working on and overcoming the one-sidedness of stones, an experience of *dead* matter, to *enliven* stone.

“How did the stone originate? What has it “seen” in the course of its development?”

The origin of stone raises the question of geological periods; and here a relationship was often made with human timescales. A common theme involved recognition of our responsibility for the earth on which we live or even reverence for cosmic dimensions. Participants reflected on the cycle of stones and expressed astonishment at the huge span of evolutionary cycles (Way Three).

“How can life penetrate this dense material? Stones are not the skeleton of the earth, really, but its flesh.”

Compared to the idea of earth's bones or skeleton, the metaphor of stone in relation to the human organism, as the *flesh of the earth*, only came up once. This thought accords with scientific insights into the conductivity and absorption of rocks. What is dense, impermeable matter,

and what kind of energy penetrates it? What processes of synthesis are at work in human beings, and how can I picture such processes in the earth's organism?

“How much life is concealed within stone?”

Questions of whether things were living or dead kept recurring. Is crystalline substance really dead: does it store a memory of life or does it have the potential to becoming a living form once more? What is the relationship between minerals and salts in crystalline form and their occurrence in the human body? Must I face up to the death in stones, in matter? What do death and life have to do with each other?

“Our work led me to ask what the nature of knowledge is. What is true and what is false? What can I rely on?”

Other participants were also concerned with this theme (see 3.4). For instance, some asked how it can be possible to make statements about stones at practical work with them without having prior geological/scientific insights. In fact it was astonishing to discover how people could grasp volcanic processes in rock formation through the medium of drawing (Way Seventeen) or how the principle of sedimentation of the most diverse strata could be evoked in artistic work (Way Sixteen). Here we can find a principle of artistic activity: we enter the space of the imagination, that is, we take a first step towards pictorial, living thinking, and as soon as we do so (if schooled appropriately) we become able to sense within us the processes in which stones originated. Arthur Zajonc describes how contemplative research, like conventional scientific enquiry, seeks objectivity but that in the former case this is achieved through what Goethe called “delicate empiricism” (Zajonc 2010, p. 46f.)

“Is this tiny piece of stone an embodiment of the whole?”

Many participants’ work was concerned with complex interrelations between the microcosm and the macrocosm, or between the whole and its parts. If people knew where their stone had come from, this originating location - a mountain or volcano for example - was often included in their work (Way Eight). The aspect of whole and parts, however, frequently also involved them further dividing and fragmenting the stone (Way Nine or Way Twelve)

“This heart-shaped stone reminds me of my sister’s pain.”

Some participants found their first way into the work through an emotional connection (Way Seven). Emotional involvement created an initial, direct contact with the material, and as they worked further, universal themes often surfaced, or the stone became the means to “objectify” personal themes. There was a certain “risk” apparent in remaining stuck in personal, emotional aspects, but the group has a very strong corrective influence here; and the discussion leader requires much presence of mind to pick up on higher or universal themes contained within personal matters. The rigorous structure at the start of the *workplaces* also counteracts this danger of work remaining stuck in merely personal self-development issues. Instead I would accentuate the importance of personal connection! Only through my own individual relationship and connection, which I alone can create with this stone I have chosen, can I gain insights not dependent on a sundering of subject and object.

The phrase quoted above came from an account of a participant’s sister’s story, and led to an intensification

of the atmosphere in discussion. Further work, involving objectification of this connection (pain=stone), took place in later *workplaces* through individual artistic work (a further development that did not as yet occur during the first *workplace* in Norway!).

The space in which substance can be formed must first be created, and this is facilitated sometimes by contributions that may only indirectly lead us to the theme of stone. These allow an atmosphere of unprejudiced listening to arise, in which every comment is acknowledged however simplistic or apparently unrelated it may be. Such comments often in fact contain small hidden pearls of wisdom or concealed connections.

The comments below come from the concluding discussion during the last *workplace* at the Glass Tank, Oxford Brookes, recorded on 30.1.2014:

“Irrespective of our various cultural backgrounds, we drew on the ground with the limestone, and this transported us back to our childhood – hopscotch; and this helped us to create a connection with the past. The stone acted as a gateway.”

“It was so interesting to discover how the stone, so boring to begin with, became so alive and interesting.”

“The stone appears to influence and transform us; but can we also change the stone?”

“After all, we can see how animals are changed on a farm for instance, how the work of the farmer changes them; and also how plants change under human influence. Therefore the stone must change depending on how human beings relate to it. It is just more apparent with animals and plants.”

“It seems that some people are able to influence or alter the earth’s energy structure. The work of Marco Poggacnic and others is heading in that direction. There are places on earth where one feels better than at others – places of healing energy. Surely this indicates that it is possible to alter physical matter?”

This conversation at the end of the last workplace shows the far-reaching scope of substance formation in unexpected ways.

One of them was the awareness of the fact that with our day- to- day consciousness we do not fully grasp reality as a whole and that a “boring piece of stone” could open up a cosmos of wisdom. The other highlighted the immaterial aspects of the material stone only after an intense phase of exploration.

Depending on the composition of the group and the atmosphere these findings led to an ever richer and more complex field of insights. The experience of a new invisible substance has come about by focusing on those simple objects, the stones. This substance became increasingly palpable and tangible.

4.2. Art provides the medium

Art was the means for identifying creative processes that could than be taken in more expanded social art forms.

Sculpture here did not require hammer and chisel, nor weeks or months of carving and tapping. It was not accompanied by toxic dust in a lonely workshop nor the heat and cold of a quarry. Rather, it involved creating conditions under which a complex working process became possible for a group of people: a concentrated but relaxed working atmosphere which facilitated both mutual openness and a focused engagement with and trust in one's own intuition. People used metaphorical hammers and chisels to work on their own inner images. They required patience and endurance in creating order and overview in observation of their own inner activity, and really staying true to their own working process. The middle phase of activity in the *workplaces*, the 'eye-of-the-needle' experience occurred when we worked on our own capacities of perception. This demanded precision of inner observation: what are the old thoughts in me, which I have thought so often before, what *is* a feeling, how am I emotionally tangled up? And what impulses do I want to activate and put into practice? Clear-sightedness and accuracy is as important here as it is when creating a sculpture, an image, or choreography.

A further experience drawn from artistic activity, also accentuated by Prantl in the symposium movement, involves non-competitive collaboration and research. My expanded artistic practice was concerned with creating the 'structure' of the *workplaces*, their organization and realization etc. But the participants also became partners or collaborators, which is why I have used both

terms in this study. The moment the sequential process in the *workplace* became clearer, and was actively engaged with by participants, my role became that of a joint partner in our enquiries. Naturally, my experience gave me a head start as far as working with stone was concerned, yet others may well have brought with them a knowledge of materials drawn from other fields. We were united in a willingness to engage with a method of research which, as well as encompassing people's own internal processes, also promised to have an application in other areas of life.

Here, by way of example, I will focus on only a few aspects of contemporary art, drawn from sculpture in particular, that one can recognize as integral to any work in the social realm.

*"All art is proportion, one proportion versus another, that is all"*¹² I intentionally quote this here to recall the sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruck, mentioned at the beginning. In discussion work, as one listens out for questions and practises reticence with answers, a continual balancing and pondering is needed – a weighing up of the balance between rapid conclusions and too hesitant participation. This balancing stance, apparent in the sculptures of W. Lehmbruck, provides a good guideline for social-artistic work.

In the work of Karl Prantl we can get a sense of reverence with which he approached every stone. In his comment about the "humiliated stones" we can call to mind moments in a discussion process where, perhaps, we pass too quickly over apparently small and insignificant things.

The directness in his approach is also directly applicable to our work: "I simply took the material that was around and started...."(see 2.1)

Henry Moore expresses this stance in a still more pragmatic way: "I think a sculptor has to be a practical person. He can't be a dreamer. If you want to make a sculpture out of a lump of stone, you have to wield hammer and chisel...you have to be a labourer; someone with both feet on the ground."¹³

Joseph Beuys radically reworked the concept of sculpture by reinvesting it with process character. He describes what a sculpture is: "It is composed of forces... there is one entirely undefined pole; and then another that is highly determined or even over-determined... here you have the right angle, representative of our culture today...everything is cruciform, and so there you have the crystalline principle...and between them is the movement principle. And thus: Defined – movement – undefined...a simple matter you see, but in my view a very decisive one."¹⁴

This sculptural principle that Beuys articulates is central to his theory of social sculpture and shapes the *workplace* work. It is expressed too in the sequential process of the *workplace* practice, the methodology and in the culture of discussion.

As I demonstrated in section 3, the structure underlying the *workplaces* arose from a precise observation of the sequences involved in artistic work and the conditions affecting it. In the assumption that laws underlying creative processes must be universally transferable, that is, transferable to creative processes in other fields, I developed a form that works stone in an entirely new way. The underlying structure involves a sequence of seven stages. I drew on understandings gained from the seven evolutionary cycles of earth and humanity described by Rudolf Steiner, which have been further elaborated in many practical fields. Research into the seven stages of development was undertaken by

Bernard Lievegoed¹⁵ and others. Friedrich Glasl¹⁶ also drew on these insights in this research into conflict management. In his “U Theory”, Otto Scharmer¹⁷ has developed a model of organizational consultancy based on such an archetypal sevenfold rhythm.

In the *workplaces*, a key characteristic of art - that of dwelling in processes - is introduced into a space of social activity, and can lead to new insights and modes of working in each individual collaborator and in the group as a whole. In doing so it may lead to the *aesthetic condition* described by Friedrich Schiller as the only space where we are fully human.¹⁸

5

BROADENING SUBSTANCE

First I want to refer back to the drawing mentioned at the outset, which appeared on the first page of my sketchbook: an image from a dream. It had emerged from an immaterial inner space to be translated into the visibility of the drawing. During the six years of my part-time PHD, this drawing stayed with me as a creative raw material. It remained alive in my mind and in continual change. The research began by observing and documenting my stone-carving practice and by taking photographs of rock formations and landscapes (see Appendices I and III). Then I gathered more insights during conversations with the sculptor Karl Prantl about his relationship to working with stone and by investigating how Joseph Beuys used basalt in his major work *The End of the 20th Century*. During this time I have repeatedly swung back and forth between the immaterial realm – from which the drawing emerged – and specific embodied forms. This process of emergence and translation into various media formed the basis of the *Ways project*.

In retrospect I can see how the core of my practice has passed through a process of “substance formation” and “substance transformation”. In the *workplaces* the concept of transformation of matter has given an impetus for the inner transformation within each participant and in turn this stimulates the “warmth substance” of social processes.

By engaging with the hard materiality of solid stone, I have immersed others and myself in “slowing down” processes. These slow times allowed “substance formation” to become more conscious and usable as a tool for personal and social change. (See *Ways*, section 3 and Appendix IV)

A range of fundamental philosophical questions about the relationship between substance and ideas or spirit and matter are lying at the root of this study but I have attempted to explore them through the practice-based research. Only at the end of these processes have I come to the conclusion that “substance transformation” is the main key. It leads into the centre of the methodology that encompasses my new extended practice namely the *workplaces*. It is my guideline for future work and represents the leading qualities of my working process within the field of Social Art Practice. To summarize I have condensed my findings into seven points:

- The first step in the process is decisive. Relatively unrestricted time is needed. **Inner connection with an idea** and **openness** are required. A wealth of aspects should be able to emerge.
- The second step requires **interest and warmth**. Un-directed attention encircles the object.
- In the third step **rhythm** and structured **time** processes are the focus.
- Fourth step. Intensified engagement with the material. **Strength, endurance and focus** on the work process. Perseverance is a key element. Resistance and unknown or painful aspects can surface.
- Fifth step: Gaining an Overview. **Connection of random aspects**. Oscillating between immaterial and material substances. **Attentiveness**.
- Sixth step: Openness and pleasure in **showing, sharing** and **exchange**. Learning from others. Positive criticism. Stepping back.
- Seventh step: **Transference of the insights** to another field or setting. Breadth of vision.

Depending on each situation, the framework of the guidelines once internalized can be adapted to other circumstances very flexibly. During the *workplaces* Stone has proven to be exactly the right material. It can serve as catalyst, as mediator and instigator of processes of perception. Not only external material qualities can be explored and come to expression, but deeper issues that lie within an individual are more likely to be seen or heard, understood, reshaped and transformed. Unexpectedly a small “piece of material reality” will become a facilitator that can turn hidden, secret qualities into visible transformative forces.

“Something can be done with sculpture. Everything is sculpture.” (Beuys, p. 11)

With my research “Material as a Gateway to other Forms of Knowing – what the secrets in materials and processes can offer in the field of transformative social practice” I am offering a contribution in the field of Social Sculpture. It is my ongoing aim to extend the conventional understanding of material substances and to highlight their potential for the development of new art practices and methods of social change in individuals and groups.

Wherever people work together and have the need to overcome conflicts or want to enliven co-operation, I see a great potential for this kind of social-art process. In contrast to linear methods of organisational development, mediation, or solution-oriented consultancy - the primary focus described here lies in a method, which places art practice in the centre.

In my guidelines I can see potential for further research. Plans are already underway for Summer 2014 to continue disseminating this approach in organisations that are engaged with socially relevant issues. In the fields of contemporary art practice, adult education and professional training I see further possibilities for research with a number of different materials.

With my research project on material and alternative forms of knowing, I hope to offer a contribution to other research efforts, which are exploring the relationship between our perception and our action in the world.

Notes

1 See: Exhibition NGCA, Sunderland 1.03.–17.05 2014 The Festival group exhibition at NGCA in Sunderland focuses on the raw material of stone, and how it has been directly shaped by the human hand and culture. The exhibition includes historic and contemporary work by Dennis Oppenheim, Gabriel Orozco, Harun Farocki, and Yuri Ancarani amongst others.

Also see the fundamental work of Monica Wager, Hamburg and others on materials in art.

2 “He to whom nature begins to reveal its manifest secret feels an irresistible longing for her most worthy interpreter, art.” J. W. Goethe (1823) Maxims and reflections.

3 Compare for this section: Sacks S., Kurt H. (2013) and Zajonc, A. (2009)

4 “Goethe as the Father of a New Aesthetics” is the title of a lecture Rudolf Steiner gave in 1899. Scientists who employ a “Goethean” approach include Bockemühl, J. and Suchantke, A. In the English-speaking world, special mention should be given to Bortoft, H., Colquhoun M., Brook I. and Wahl, D.C.

5 Here I draw on the concept of “participant observation” developed in the field of cultural anthropology and social sciences.

6 The first such work was a cross of basalt, a four-metre-high early work, followed by other works such as A Street Action, Cologne 1971 - an action that took place in the city centre in relation to direct democracy issues - Paving Stone, Bibliographia agraria, 1975, and PICTISH (1981), a lead mould formed of basalt. In Willisich (2007)

7 Beuys in Altenberg and Oberhuber (ed.), in Willisich (2007), p.312

8 Beuys in Mennekes 1996, p.75, cited in Willisich (2007), p.54

9 Beuys (1982) videointerview with Altenberg in Loers & Witzmann eds.1993, p.254

10 “...We refer here...to a higher order of the organism, which we express as follows: Everything living does not live in isolation but is part of a multiplicity... The more imperfect a creature is, the more its different parts resemble each other, and the more they resemble the whole organism. The more perfect a creature becomes, the more dissimilar its parts become from one another...Subordination of diverse parts indicates a perfected creature.” J.W. Goethe: Schriften zur Naturwissenschaft, Stuttgart 1977, p. 48f.

11 www.youtube.com/watch?v=acHt6zxO74Y.Beuys' description of the „Honeypump“ in this video and the explanatory commentary by Johannes Stüttgen stem from a discussion (complete version on CD, FIU-Verlag <http://www.fiu-verlag.com>).

12 Hoff, A. (1933): Wilhem Lehmbruck. Berlin, p.20 quoted in: Trier, E. (1984): Bildhauertheorien im 20. Jahrhundert, Berlin, p.212

13 Moore,H. (1954) The Sculptor in Modern Society. p.97; cited in: Trier, E. (1984) p.223

14 Harlan,V. (1986) Was ist Kunst? Stuttgart, p.58f.

15 Lievegoed, B. (1994) Der Mensch an der Schwelle: biographische Krisen und Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten.

16 Glasl, F. (1994) Das Unternehmen der Zukunft – Moralische Intuition in der Gestaltung von Organisationen.

17 Scharmer, O. (2009) Leading from the Future as it emerges.

18 Schiller,F. (1801): Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen. (1987) Dürna

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Drawing on p.116: Jackson,A.A. (2008) Bedrock Geology UK South. An explanation of the bedrock geology map of England and Wales – 1:625 000 fifth edition. Nottingham

p.29

Beuys, J. „7000 Eichen werden gepflanzt“, 1982.

Blackboard drawing executed during an television interview (in: Loers, V.& Witzmann, P. 1993)

S.31 Joseph Beuys

gepflanzt“, 1982.

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APPENDICES I, II, III

I Explorations of stone

short texts and a photographic study

II Working stone

a close observation of a stone carving practice

III Work

My Encounters With stone as a Material of
consciousness

PREFACE

This is a compilation of three Appendices to the thesis „Material as a Gateway to other Forms of Knowing – what the secrets in materials and processes can offer in the field of transformative social practice“. These three “books” document preliminary art practice from earlier phases of this research.

As they do not form part of the written commentary, page numbers only remain sequential within each Appendix. The three books can be looked at separately.

Appendix I and III have been specially designed and edited for the concluding exhibition *Ways through Stone* in the Glass Tank of Oxford Brookes University.

Appendix II “Working stone – a close observation of a stone carving practice” presents a step-by-step documentation of stone carving during a commissioned sculpture project. It will add to the understanding of the extended art practice discussed in the written commentary of this thesis, namely of the project *Ways through Stone*.

Claudia D. Schlürmann, May 2014

I EXPLORATIONS OF STONE

short texts and a photographic study

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Triangular shapes of mountains –
Rooted beyond knowledge.



The old and brittle surface of the earth is cracking apart
Showing veins of different colour and material –
Allowing glimpses into those millions of years.



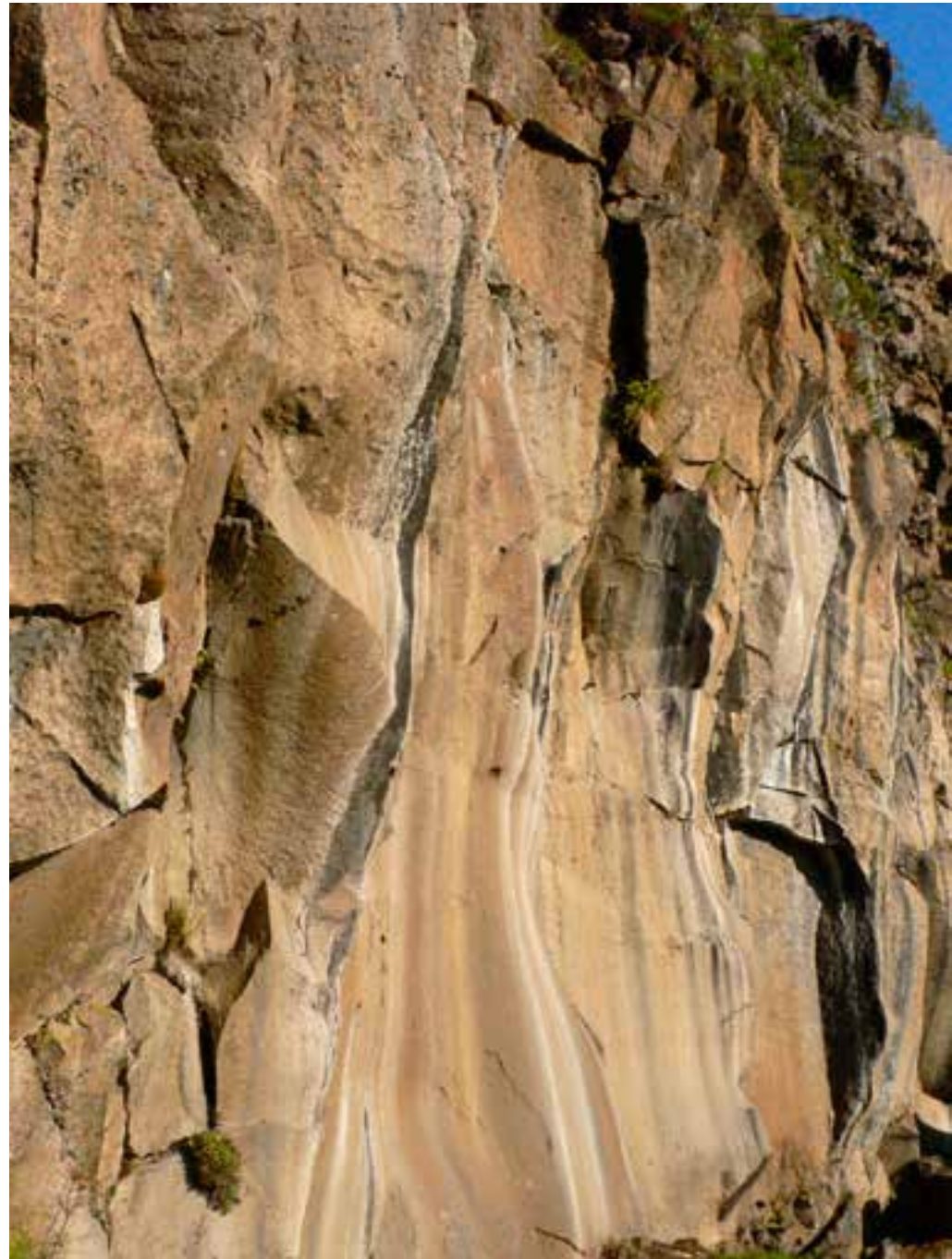
Openings –

Insights through hard and straight divisions, lines and sharp edges –

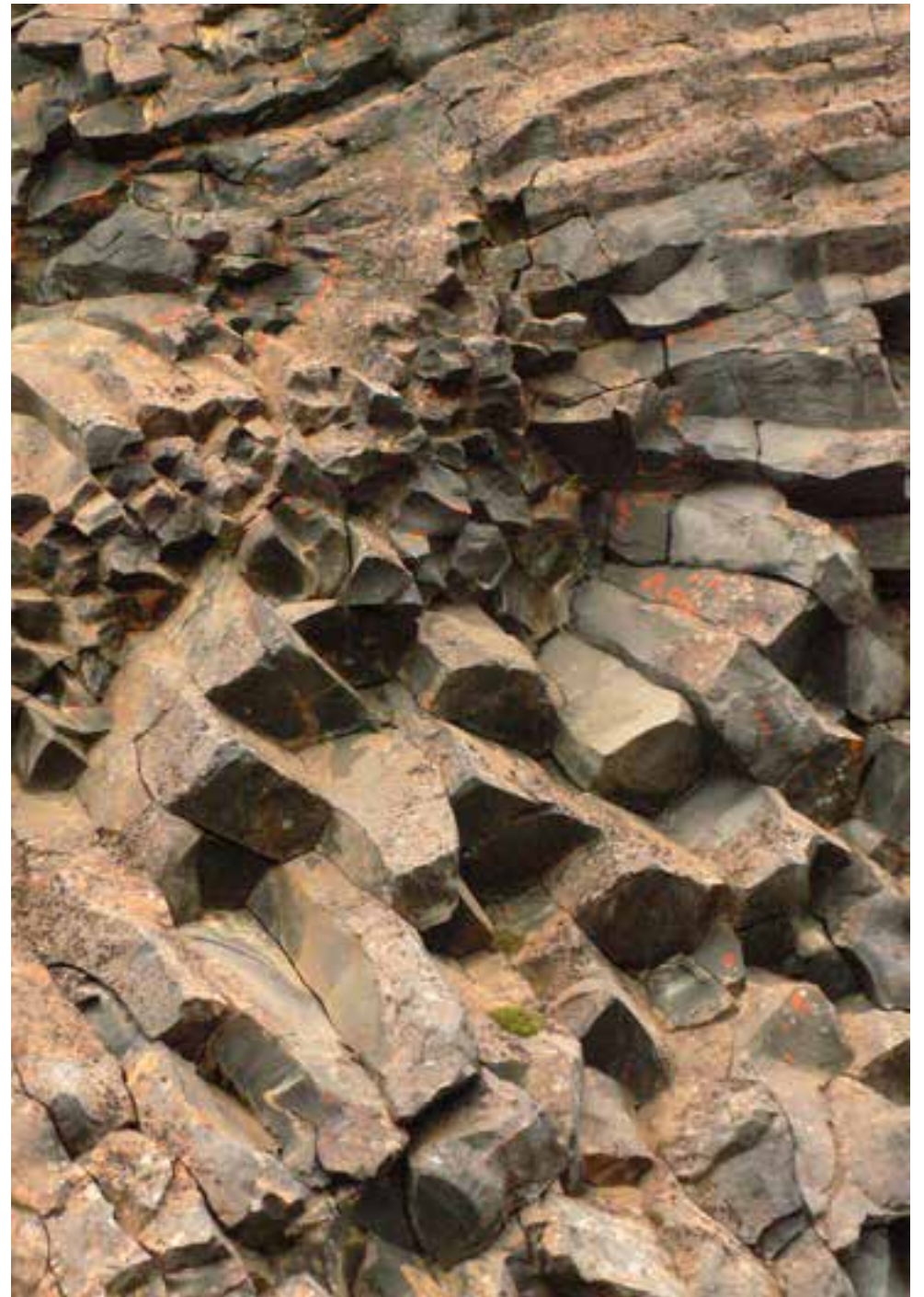
Our earth is getting old.



Basalt-walls washed by storms:
Brittle and soft – Order and disorder.
I am facing a wall of untamed power.



The mysterious world of the basalts
Formed structure in movement.



Basalt columns as architectural elements,
As the formative principle.



Folded layers of blue-grey and brown-grey material shifted –
That what has been resting as horizontal sheets has been lifted up into
verticality.



Continuous movement of waves and storms –
Stone reflecting the softness of water and wind
Stone bearing the strength of the elements.



Skin of granite mammals,
Softened gently,
Softened by the mighty power of glaciers.





Rhythm appears – meandering signs of flow and movement



Round and soft forms appearing in granite,
Gentle curves, hollows and troughs –
As if they were just drawn in sand by the last tides.



A rock – rounded and moulded by the continuous stream.
The rock – a clearly defined entity itself,
The rock – eternal stillness.



Stone manifests undulations



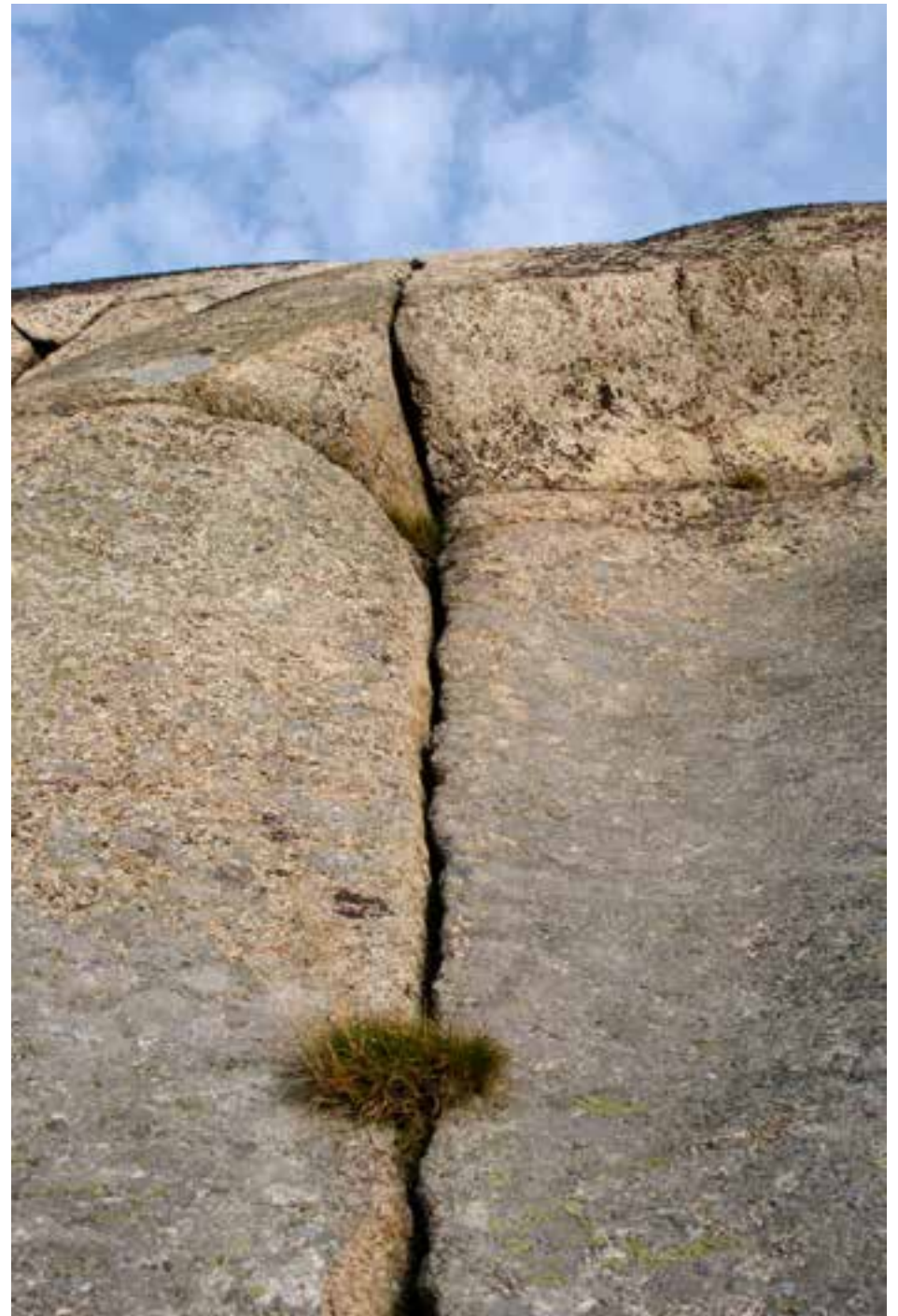
Calcite veins

Forming patterns against the gesture of the form –
Drawn lines of an unknown language.





A gap and a tuft of grass –
Brittleness is giving space for new life.



The crack: Division.

The old solidity starts to break off –

The oneness is breaking apart.



Grass and moss
Lichen and berries
Red, grey and green—
Within those northern colours of old granite landscapes:
discover sculptures of separation.



Fresh greens on top of old lava –
Mosses of various kinds covering the withering stone
Preparing for new forms of life.



II WORKING STONE

a close observation
of a stone carving practice

Contents

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Project “Sounding Stone”

Documentation and commentary on the working process involved in a commissioned project in stone for a school playground in Ravensburg, Germany, August 2010

1

Conditions and methods

Detailed observation of my own stone-carving practice forms part of my explorations of the material stone. Complementing the diverse approaches used, this observation seeks to encompass the distinctive role of this material within art making and beyond.

Several circumstances helped to single out this specific project as a model for exploring work processes in general.

The project had a distinct beginning and end; it had to be executed within a certain timeframe. In this case it took a month from first contact with the landscape architect at the building site to the placing of the stone on 26 August 2010.

It was not too sophisticated or ambitious in terms of its design or artistic qualities. Its use was limited to that of a “sounding stone” in a school playground.

In general, the fact that working stone is a slow process helps to slow down our thinking and thus to become more aware of the creative process itself.

The properties of the material stone always reflect an element of earth's evolution. (see diagram in Appendix I, Work)

In this particular case, limestone has a high percentage of quartzite, dating back to its origin as an igneous rock, transformed during the earth's evolution into a sedimentary rock. By using this material and encountering its hardness and brittleness, we enter the evolutionary cycle of the stone's development.

As stone in a sense embodies a primeval material of sculpture, here we are also tracing back the work of the artist to its origin in a more primordial, elemental work situation.

On the one hand these qualities facilitate a process of self-awareness and on the other they enable us to gain insight into the creative process itself.

This commissioned work, "Sounding stone", realized during August 2010, lent itself to detailed reflection on and observation of my own stone-carving practice. It was extended by a series of reflective conversations with my assistant, the sculptor Duilio da Martins.

These conversations helped to generalize and objectify my personal impressions and work experience.

The method we were using was influenced by "Goethean observation" practice, a methodology we are both familiar with. It meant paying equal attention to inner and outer factors.

At first we would gather all sense perceptions from that specific day: noting our physical and mental state, the weather, the exigencies of the work in terms of the tools we were using.

We would then try to extend our perceptions, sharing our experiences of working rhythms and trying to agree how the work should proceed; for instance, gauging whether our ideas were far apart or close together etc. H. Bortoft describes this stage as "exact sensorial imagination", which

in our case - examining a working process - meant we also focused attention on the work's growing potential and development.

It became important for us that our focus had already shifted from describing a piece of stone to the process of shaping and creating that stone, seeing ourselves both as "agents" in this process and as "observers".

In this sense we increasingly became the helpers or mediators of this process.

2

The working process

2.1

Preparing and planning the work

The project “Sounding stone” was a commissioned work for the playground of a school for children with learning and speech difficulties. The landscape architect in charge had designed a new school playground with various features that aimed to train the children’s senses: there were fallen trees to practise their sense of balance, a hidden sandpit for quiet play, communicating tubes, a small herb garden, different ground-coverings such as grass, sand, gravel. The “singing stone” was intended as a sculptural statement and focal point for the whole garden. It was envisaged as standing alone to provide a quiet area for the children to practise speaking/humming. “Humming” inside a stone is an ancient practice

with healing properties, and dates back to megalithic culture. Sound vibrations stimulate the brain and enhance the capacity of speech.

Knowing how important the first step of a working process is, I took great care in finding out about possible sources of material, undertaking investigations with different stone-dealers and quarries. The stone for this project had to be hard enough and with a high percentage of quartz in its grain in order to carry sound. I wanted the colour of the stone to be in keeping with the play-ground environment. The costs of transport had to be kept quite low because the budget was limited. Also, the pedagogical and artistic concept required the material to be of reasonably local provenance.

After some research, I was lucky to find a stone trader who had just bought most of a limestone deposit near Stuttgart in southern Germany, where quarrying for a tunnel project is underway.

The actual choice had to be made fairly quickly on the day I drove with a trailer to the stone yard, a trip of one-and-a-half hours. Various kinds of limestone had to be tested and different rocks had to be measured and tested for cracks and weaknesses.

Although I was already under time constraints, I did not wish to compromise on the material, and was keen to keep my options open.

Having looked for a different type of limestone, by chance we discovered a huge bed of “angulate sandstone”, a rare type of stone quarried only recently due to the nearby tunnel project.

The warm colour of the stone was perfect, and the grey pattern in the middle already suggested a kind of human shape. Size and consistency were fine, so the choice was made!

(Now the transport had to be organized which turned out to be quite an adventure since the block weighed over two tons – the trailer’s full capacity....)

STEP 1 OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS

The first steps of a working process are absolutely crucial to the whole project. Enough time has to be taken for outlining the idea, as well as for the practical steps needed.

The choice of the material helps to clarify the idea – even though the idea is not yet completely evident, the available material suggests certain forms etc.







2.2

First day of work

My assistant, Duilio, a young sculptor, had arrived in the evening. We took a first look at the workshop as soon as he arrived.

With the help of another friend we had already lifted the block the previous day, so it was standing upright, and measured 165x 90x 60 cm, around 2.5 tons.

The first day of work involves getting to know the stone, chiselling off rough and loose material. Working with two people at the same block is a new experience.

We decide where the hole should be by drawing a circle.

EXPERIENCES

The size is much bigger than I imagined; Duilio's comment: "Suddenly there is a presence!"

The stone is becoming a being.

We discover that the back of the block is very fragile and open: the surface is layered and cracked, which could become a problem for water penetrating the stone from above.

The volume and weight are forcing us to a very thoughtful and planned way of working (otherwise it will be dangerous to move or turn the block).

STEP 2 OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS

The first experiences are important. They are fresh and can indicate a lot about the working process. Our inner ability to "take a fresh look" makes it possible for the material to "speak". Only through this open-mindedness can we enable the material to unfold its qualities.

Growing familiar with the material seems to imply a phase of *unintentional attention*.



2.3

Second day of Work

The stone is resting; we had to lay it flat to be able to work.

The main aim is now to widen the concave opening in order to get a resonant space. It is very difficult to widen the opening.

When trying out the sound within that hole, for the first time there is a very powerful tone, a vibrancy that will disappear as we continue working.

Why? How much space is needed?

EXPERIENCES

It is a Saturday. The mood today is completely different.

The work is very slow.

Stone dust, noise and dust again – getting used to the physical work. (We are struggling with our aching backs.)

STEP 3 OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS

The speed of the work seems to alter; whereas we took big steps during the first few hours, things slow down on the first day and following days

Getting used to a new rhythm of work takes time and energy

There is a big difference between our thoughts and ideas before starting the work, compared with “doing” it (widening the concave opening turned out to be very difficult)

Surprises are vital for the work, they kindle questions and give energy for the flow of the work.



2.4

Working process continued

During the following week, work mostly had to concentrate on different parts of the surface even when the assistant came back the next weekend. Although the form was roughly apparent, it took quite some time to keep adapting it. It was a matter of continually testing and trying. The volume and size of the block meant it was very time-consuming to lift it up or put it down.

The inside of the hollow circle had to gain a smooth surface. The edges and transition into the hole had to be reworked with great care because they would determine the circle.

EXPERIENCES

One day did not show much result, and it took a long time to work out details. Working on details was the main experience. Checking the sound, testing out the form, often not seeing much progress.

Experiencing very different aspects of the material: the weight, the size. In order to find the right position to work, we were forced to sit, lie or kneel on the stone, fetch a ladder or wooden boxes to reach the chiselling area. The stone reveals its secrets whilst we are working: there are harder or softer areas, parts that crumble easily, and unexpected ways in which the colour and the grain change.

STEP 4 OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS

Patience and perseverance are needed during this middle phase of work

An intimate experience of the material happens almost without noticing it –

you become one with your material; but immediately noticing this you have to detach again in order to observe and find the next step to reach closer to the idea of your form

Working in great detail seems to be another quality of this phase, merging with the details of the material or task.



2.5

Finishing off the work

During the third week of the project I had to plan and coordinate the transport and the placing of the stone with the workmen at the building site. Once that date was set, the time left to finish the stone properly seemed too short.

The base and the position of the block had to be adjusted, the surface had to be treated against rainwater, and the outer shape had to be defined and worked.

EXPERIENCES

After the last stage of intense work, where we were always in danger of getting stuck in one small detail, we now had to encompass the whole process in our attention. The stone had to be seen as a whole piece, and every detail was now serving a whole form. Different things had to be done and organized, and despite time pressures the atmosphere became much lighter. It was important for me to converse with my assistant ("What do you think...?")

There was also a certain feeling of relief – (we will make it in time!).

STEP 5 OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS

There is almost a sense of joy when it comes to the stage of putting everything together

The lonely phase of the previous stage of the work now transforms into a more open and social attitude, as if the exigencies of the work would now turn towards their surroundings

The main attitude towards the material at this stage is care.



2.6

Transport and placing the stone

The evening before the transport, we loaded the trailer: amazing how much of the weight we had been chiselling away - but it was still at the limit of my car and trailer's capacity.

Early next morning I started to drive to the building site, about an hour away, where the landscape gardener had organized a crane. They had already prepared the concrete foundation at the spot we had agreed. It took the whole morning to unload because the digger they had planned to use was too weak. With the bigger machine there was no problem and by lunchtime the stone stood firmly in its place.

EXPERIENCES

At this final stage of the work I could plan things myself to a certain extent but was also reliant on others: how would this landscape gardener work? Would he have the right machinery?

The excitement whilst placing the stone: only now can we see if it really "works" in situ.

STEP 6 OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS

Even more than the vivid mood of finishing the piece in the workshop, the act of finally placing it has a strong sense of opening and giving to the world.



2.7

The sounding stone in place

Because the school is not too far from where I live I was lucky to come back later and see the playground in use.

One day when I had things to do in the area I dropped by; and luckily I had my camera with me. It was break time, and soon after I had arrived young children were invading the place, running, jumping, shouting, playing, eating...

The “sounding stone” was very popular. First some children were trying to get their heads in and were humming and making some sound. Others were trying to climb the stone until one boy succeeded. He managed to climb on top and once up there he would not leave his privileged spot until break time was over. Others were trying to get on top as well; some were just waiting in case he came down, and some were running away and looking for other places to play. I was fascinated; and because they were so busy

they did not take much notice of the observer. I learned a lot from this scene; apparently the “proper use” of the stone was not possible with too many children around; a more quiet and concentrated mood would be needed to produce sounds and listen to their own humming.

In this situation, probably the children’s first break of the morning, they wanted to run, climb and play. The “sounding stone” as a stone for climbing: I would not have thought of such a possibility!

STEP 7 OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS

This phase is taken out of my hands and control although I laid the basis for it!

It is the response of “the world” and if it works well something more than what I had intended comes about

It is the merging of “my idea” and the activity of others: a picture of giving and receiving.







3

Distilling insights

The reflective observation of my own stone-carving practice allows insights into the creative process itself and the unfolding of an idea through a medium.

Within this practice-based PhD, I assume these insights may form the basis for designing a structured approach to an art process; that is to say, a creative process.

The insights gained from this documentation will form the basis for the structure of my project *Ways through Stone*, a participatory project in the field of social sculpture. Drawing on the above documentation I would like to distil the findings of this exploration into “insights” or “stages”, and take them as a starting point for further work with *Ways through stone* (Material as a Gateway to other Forms of Knowing – what the secrets in materials and processes can offer in the field of transformative social practice“ C.D. Schlürmann, section 3.)

INSIGHTS DRAWN FROM THIS WORK WITH STONE

– The first steps of a working process are crucial to the whole project, and allowing for ample time is important

This first stage is characterized by an inspiring openness and willingness for in-depth exploration of the core ideas

The material and idea are mutually reinforcing.

– There is an element of freshness and open-mindedness about the second stage

It is probably characterized best by using the paradox: unintentional attention.

– During the third phase one becomes aware of time processes and rhythm.

The gap between ideas and action can become frustrating or limiting.

– The fourth phase is characterized by an intimate contact with the material (getting to know the stone in great detail).

Perseverance and strength are needed.

– Stage five offers an element of joy whilst connecting all aspects that have been worked on separately.

Care seems to be the predominant attitude of this phase.

– Finishing a piece also means letting go of it and perhaps giving it away - and this requires a different quality of openness than in the beginning.

– Sharing, transforming and integrating – listening to the response; letting my original idea merge with other activities; giving and receiving.

III WORK

My Encounters with stone
as a Material of Consciousness

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INTRODUCTION

This study and some photographs will show my path through stone in relationship to my biography. In Part 1 I describe different layers of awareness: one is my actual work with stone, the other the geology on which I have lived – the bedrock structure of the earth itself. The text will look at how these layers have developed and integrated from around 1960 to 1999.

In Part 2 I will show how three different cultures and several geological landscapes have inspired me, and how I became aware of the cultural and geological aspects of stone. Here again I will trace my biographical pathway.

In Part 3 some of my commissions for public spaces will be described briefly and a summary will conclude this text.

1

MAPPING MY LIFE AND THE GROUND ON WHICH I LIVED

In writing about the material “stone”, it seems important to me to look at some of the situations where I have actually experienced and handled stone. The localities where I have encountered this material, and my questions arising in these places, both play an important role in my research. I have noted significant differences depending on the reference point: my work with young people, commissions for villages and towns, or my ongoing explorations and sculpture research.

I will begin by revisiting the geological environments where I lived during my life, and thus gather new awareness of my own journey through stones. While this approach appears to consider only external facts, on reflection I have found that each new geological place, and each new rock type,

opened up a new field of consciousness for me. Alongside learning to sculpt and shape different rock types - harder or softer, heavier or lighter - I also realized that each type also embodied a living principle; and the distinctive characteristics of each gave me insight into its history and, more than that, into the earth’s dynamics. Each type of rock seemed to have a determining effect on the landscape, on the society of plants in the area, and last but not least on the wildlife and people of a particular landscape. With every rock and every stone I connect myself to the earth – but differently each time. And so my main question is how to bring about and to maintain this powerful and fragile earth connection

SAUERLAND, GERMANY

IRON, LIMESTONE AND CAVES

The city of Iserlohn in the Sauerland region was my place of birth and there I grew up. The name Iserlohn is derived from the old German words for iron and forest. The Sauerland is part of the Rhenish Slate Mountains and not only iron ore but also various non-ferrous metals such as lead, zinc and copper have been mined there for centuries. Iron ore processing began in the Carolingian period and in the 60's and 70's of the 20th century medium sized enterprises of brass and iron works still add to the economic activity of the region. Here, during the Middle Devonian (385–378 million years ago) massive limestone deposits created special geological features: dripstone caves. *The Dechenhöhle* is a well known attraction.

Landmarks like *Pater und Nonne, Priest and Nun* in Iserlohn or the *Felsenmeer, the Rock Sea* in Hemer belong as much to my childhood experiences as the grey slate roofs of the houses in our neighborhood. (see **Photo Rock Sea**)

Limestone consists only of a single mineral: calcite. Its place of origin is the sea. In seawater, the calcium is dissolved into microscopic particles; plants and animals produce lime too. "Lime always begins with moisture, it is mobile, but always has the urges to dry and harden". (*Dahl 2000,p.13*)

Both transformation and disintegration are dominant gestures of limestone. The outer signs are cave formations, the karst landscape, and inside the caves the astonishing feature: the dripstones with stalactite and stalagmite growing towards each other from above and below.



ENGLAND

PORTLAND STONE, LIMESTONE

Near the end of my training in sculpture, in England, when I was working with Portland stone, I had a powerful experience: as I moved and touched the hard and heavy stone, the cold stone became softer and warmer through my activity. As I carved the surfaces I did not need many tools, only a chisel and a hammer made of hand-forged iron. The thought thrilled me that I was working in the same way as sculptors did in ancient Greece to carve fluted temple columns or freestanding sculptures of their gods. This way of working had not changed in well over two millennia, and connected me to a consciousness that was close to the life of stone. I entered into the stream of archetypal sculptural activity and into its rhythm. The patient hammering and knocking called on my body – on its physical endurance and mental alertness – until there was nothing but mindfulness in the present moment.

From this experience I concluded much later that stone is a vibrant, strong adversary. It spurs us on to explore our own limits, it offers resistance and challenges our ingrained impatience. Stone slows down labour and cognitive processes, thus revealing the fluid meanings of form and pointing to a conscious experience of the stone body or the stone mantle of our world (see photo “first stone sculpture”)





CARRARA, ITALY

MARBLE

The next step in my explorations occurred during a six-month study period in the marble quarries of Carrara. In the face of brutal exploitation – the removal of entire mountains with huge machines – I faced a paradox whilst standing in a small workshop to carve a piece of marble by hand. The buildings of the sculpture workshop cowered under a viaduct near the exit road where, day-in day-out, huge blocks of the white rock were transported by lorry towards the harbour.

The strange thing about marble, a metamorphic rock, is that it arose millennia ago when limestone was changed and compacted under tremendous heat and pressure. During this earth-shaking process a new type of rock was formed: granular and crystalline in structure, and so soft that it can be polished to show anything from a silky transparent surface to a high-gloss shine. There are coloured marbles, greys, even blacks, and of

course the radiant white marble, the “statuario” which is so eminently suitable for making statues. This rock fascinates. In Greece, in the heyday of classical antiquity, master sculptors produced their figures in marble of course. Later this material was used to build the grand City of Rome and eventually it was immortalized by Michelangelo’s statues during the Italian Renaissance. And today? Well, it is certainly used for windowsills, bathroom fittings and facades of high-rise buildings (see photos: marble quarry, Carrara; „relating figures“, Carrara-marble).

In the following years, teaching secondary students or adults, I used marble from Carrara and the Tessin/Switzerland, as well as sandstone from Lake Constance and the Black Forest.



LAKE CONSTANCE REGION

SANDSTONE AND MOLASSES

Since 1989 I have lived near Lake Constance in southern Germany, not far from the borders of Austria and Switzerland. Lake Constance is embedded in the pre-Alpine hills, and from my village the craggy row of the Alps is usually visible, drawing incredibly close when the Foehn wind blows. The landscape has developed in different phases of glacial activity and is characterized by soft sandstone rock, the so-called 'sweet-water molasses'. It is covered by a more or less thick layer of moraines and glacial deposits. The grey-green sandstone from Rorschach on the Swiss side is the most suitable stone for sculpting in the area. This sedimentary rock was formed in the course of millions of years of deposition processes. Eroded by wind, water, heat and cold, the sand par-

ticles would have been washed from the mountains, down the rivers, onto the plains and into the depths of the oceans, from where they emerged millennia later after being stored and compressed (see diagram "cycle of rocks", photo of Rorschach Quarry).

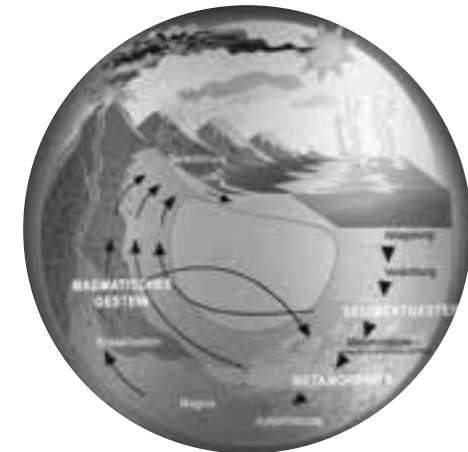


image: Granitzentrum
Hauzenberg, Germany



ALPS AND PORTUGAL

IGNEOUS ROCK

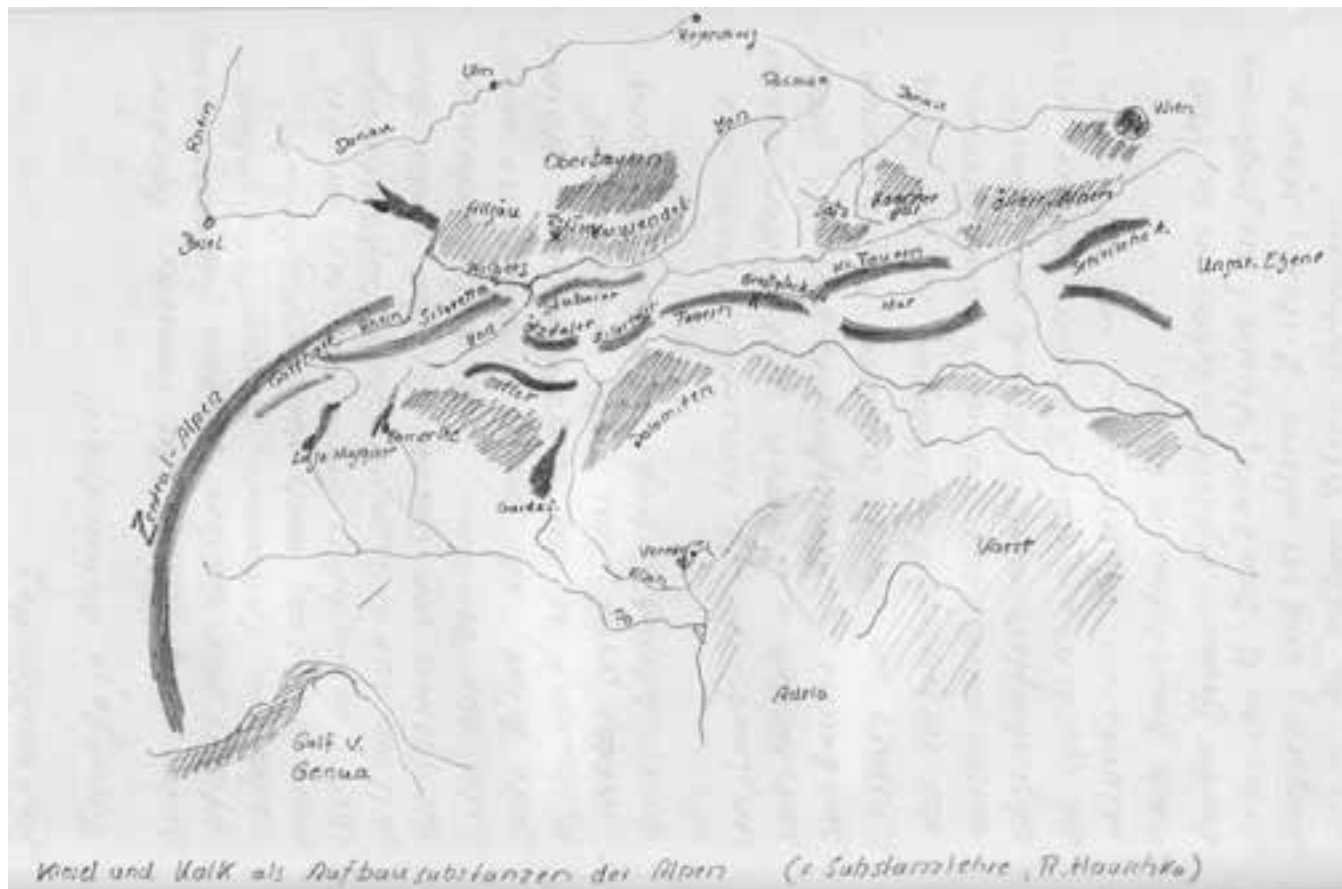
From Lake Constance, many of my excursions led up into the mountains. Coming from the west across the Arlberg pass you encounter lime and silica rocks with almost the opposite qualities. The northern mountains, the Allgaeu, the Lech Valley Alps and the Karwendel mountains are extremely rugged, only the valleys are wooded and otherwise there is nothing but bare rock: lime, Karwendel limestone, crystalline calcite or marble are the prevailing types. Lime, of course, is extremely porous and allows water to drain away quickly, so that the lands seem parched and bleached like a skeleton. The dryness seems compensated for by interesting formations and rock bulges, which are perforated by holes and dips.

On the other side (coming from Arlberg to the right and turning south) the mountain slopes are fertile and moist. The Verwall group of mountains,

the Silvretta group, Oetztal, Stubai and Ziller Valley Alps are fairly rich in water and wooded, green pastures, that reach up well above the tree line (cf. Hauschka 2007, p.156 f.). All these mountains are siliceous by nature, consisting of bedrock or granite with its components of mica, feldspar and quartz. This bedrock is the oldest mineral material on earth and forms the Central Alps, the "Alpine Arc" stretching from the Mediterranean to the Hungarian plain (see drawing of the Alpine Arc).

On long walks across these high regions I became aware and awake to the rock under my mountain boots.

In 1999, I stayed in the north of Portugal for an artist's residency. Here I learned to work with granite. The house was located not far away from a small granite quarry and near the Atlantic Ocean, where the same granite composed the beach. As the tides washed gullies and deep trenches into the hard rock, I was reminded of my fascination



with the principle of “Opposites”. This life principle had prompted me, years back, to take up sculpture in the first place.

Once under the spell of “stone work”, I experienced how opposites appeared in many different forms. I saw them everywhere and marvelled how water washed and licked the hardest rock into the softest shapes. It struck me that hardness and softness are not irreconcilable, and living into the force of the waves, their mutability, their possibilities for transformation could be conceived of much more easily. No doubt hard forms could be dissolved again, plunged into chaos and transformed by outer movement and perhaps a less visible inner mobility. Here in Portugal, I started to think about how form evolved and I looked for answers by specifically working with stone.

Which processes are involved in the genesis of volcanic and igneous rock?

Is a stone formed from the outside in or from the inside out? What happens inside stones?

Rock is formed and transformed continuously. Processes within the earth and on the earth’s sur-

face drive a geological cycle. “It’s like a gigantic cooking or baking process: kneading without rest, layering, pressing, grinding, sprinkling, swirling, folding under, pounding, melting, compressing, baking, cooling...” (Granite Centre, Hauzenberg)

Ever-changing processes in the rock mantle around the earth made me increasingly aware of the fact that continuity and duration could be found nowhere in nature, but that everywhere almost imperceptible change took place in dialogue with the environment. Change by dialogue, this was important for me, as I had to make both inner and professional adjustments during this time (see photos, Portuguese granite).

Since the 1960s, our geological picture of the world includes plate tectonics.

Scientists conduct research on the changes and movements of the earth. Thus, different phenomena such as the formation of mountains, the timing of earthquakes, magnetism, continental drift and the formation and destruction of ocean basins have been brought together in a multidisciplinary field of study (cf. Labhart 2009).

By now, without consciously setting out to do so, the context of my work had shifted from limestone and marble to sedimentary rocks and finally to igneous rocks, the prehistoric rocks, and thus had come closer to an understanding of the dynamic cycle of rocks.







A BRIEF HALF-WAY SUMMARY

—The seemingly hard mantle of the earth is mobile and in constant change. The continental plates are still moving, the formation of the Alps is not yet complete; the distortions determine events on earth and are often the cause of natural disasters.

—The processes of rock formation include ongoing changes: water, wind and tides lead to weathering and mountains are gradually eroded. Ever smaller particles become deposited in rivers and oceans and there densify into rock again: sedimentary rock.

Through pressure and heat these layers become metamorphic rock and through melting and crystallization partly turn into igneous rocks. Naturally, these transformations take millions of years.

—Igneous rocks are evidence of volcano-eruptive developments through fire and heat, while the sedimentary rocks are based on deposition and erosion processes.

—Some of the rock types appear as polar opposites:

—Limestone tends to dry, skeletal forms, to cave formation, to constant change and dispersion. Opposed to this, granite attracts water through its siliceous elements and the quartz in it tends to clarity and density, its transparent qualities and pure form can be studied in rock crystals.

—Lime and silica are the main building materials of the earth.

—Stone work requires steadiness, consistency and rhythm. Physical and mental activity has to slow down and become more grounded and hence this kind of activity acts as an antidote to speedy, erratic or purely intellectual processes.

2

NEW INSIGHTS BY WAY OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL FORMS

WALES – PEMAENMAWR

*Early cultivation of landscape: Stone-age settings
as an orientation and settling aid*

In 1999, I was invited to a field trip for sculptors to visit the megalithic stone circles above the village of Pemaenmawr in Wales. I found here, and in similar ancient places, a powerful experience of the unity of land design and natural landscape. However, the strong presence of the standing stones and their immediacy can only be absorbed if one moves physically: by walking rather than by adopting a static point of view.

Up and down hills. Only when in motion will I meet the stones. Observing a standing stone in relation to its surroundings. Awareness of the

markers in front of the terrain. First focusing on a part of the landscape behind the stone, then again shifting concentration to its relationship with an adjacent stone. Now slowly moving out to the horizon stretching behind a hill, or perhaps to a rock or a small island in the sea. Is this island a focal point to guide the eye up the hill to the standing stone next to me?

The weather was changeable and played with the land. It threw shafts of light across the stones, casting long shadows. Then cloud towers built on the horizon and shrouded the hills with sudden downpours – all part of one great composition. And finally, after wandering and circling again, one point in time stood out clearly: the eyes focused, an image showed where the front, the middle ground and the background merged into one clear idea: These stone circles, I thought, serve as guides. They gather connecting lines from across the land and must be markers and notice signs along pathways. They create scenic balances, and this balancing act was perhaps their most important task.

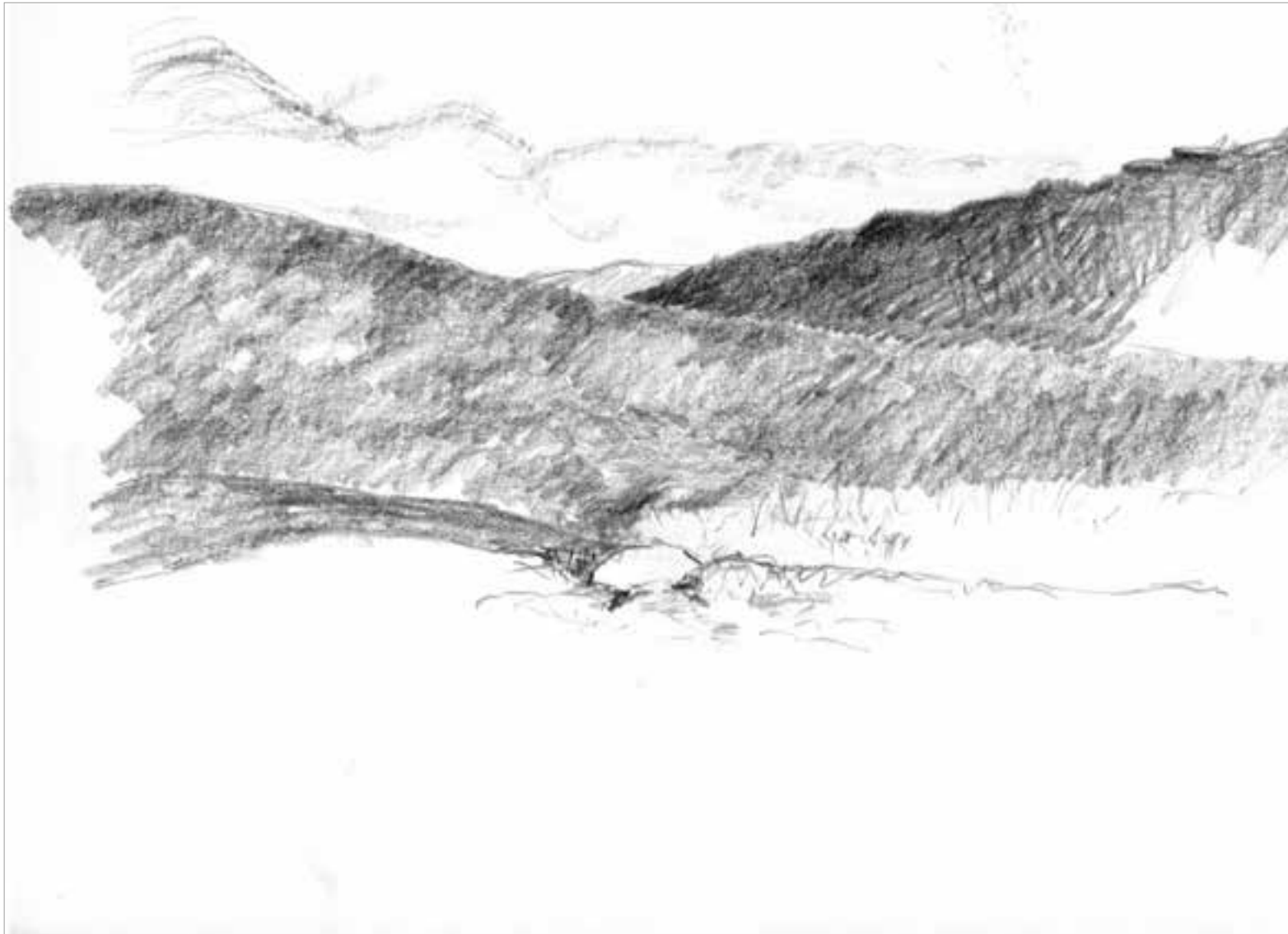
All over Europe such markers can be found in infinite variations. At the root of our culture, megalithic stones continue to engage in a most intimate exchange with their environments, seeking conversation in every gesture. It seems that despite noise and traffic, their scenic design principle is of give and take. The stones still support and serve. It is no longer so clear, but once they were built by small communities and offered guidance to earthly humanity. Perhaps they served as orientation, helping to map out the earth.

In Penmaemawr and other places, great megalithic systems have been created that were associated with cosmic conditions. Much of our knowledge about the astronomical relationships of the standing stones and about the rituals in these places will remain speculative, as, obviously, our consciousness today differs from the consciousness of humanity around 2000–5000 years BC.

But again and again, when moving from place to place and observing with heightened awareness, I came closer to a reality, to a “realness” behind the bare physical appearance of single elements of this landscape. The attitude turns into the mood of observing a masterpiece of art, a painting, where every detail helps to support the unspeakable breadth underlying a composition. When I stepped out of the position of an external observer and placed myself directly into the relationship between a standing stone, the sky and the land, the delicacy and power of its form could speak and be heard (see photo, stone circle at Penmaemawr and drawings, sketchbook 1999).







JAPAN – ROCK GARDENS

ISHI WO TATEN KOTO – THE ART OF SETTING STONES

In the early summer of 2000, one year after my visit to Wales, I embarked on a study trip to Japan. I had to familiarize myself with the issues of “dry water courses” for a project in Germany (see project, residential area, Herdecke) and travelled by plane across the globe to study the design of Zen gardens as well as landscape gardens.

Staying in Japan was a fascinating but also an exhausting endeavour. I did not understand Japanese, the road signs and announcements on public transport were incomprehensible to me, and the Japanese friends with whom I lived could only communicate in the simplest English; and so I spent much time in silence. Being quiet enhanced my alertness and concentration and I was overwhelmed by the abundance and diversity of the rock gardens. My days were filled with sitting and looking, with drawing, photographing and ta-

king in what I saw. Intense observation became my main activity.

I saw that the rocks were unprocessed. They had been carefully selected from a river, from the mountains or from the sea and transported to the gardens. On closer inspection, many of them showed traces of weathering, a patina. Mosses and lichens reinforced the natural stone character and showed the process of time passing and of aging.

I visited gardens with just two rocks: the A-UN garden with an Exhalation Rock and an Inhalation Stone, a small rock garden in Ryogen within the famous Daitokuji Temple District. There were also compositions with three stones, triads, which perhaps symbolize heaven, earth and humans – pivotal points of the cosmos?

The finely tuned precision in the composition of the elements captivated me. A reduction to only very few stones, their asymmetry and the simplicity of the whole had a calming effect. The rocks, so it seemed, were the most defining elements in

addition to raked gravel, trimmed azalea bushes, a water basin or moss-covered areas.

“Ishi wo taten koto – the art of setting stones”. This is the first chapter in the oldest text on the construction of gardens in Japan the “Sakuteiki – Records of Garden Making”. Possibly it is the oldest treatise on garden design altogether. It is believed that the document originated in the late eleventh century, in the Heian period (794 – 1184). Its first words stress the central role of rocks and the principles of selecting and placing them in a garden. Even the term “stone-setting priests” (referring to garden designers in the 12th century) points to the great importance of the rocks (Teiji Ito 1999).

In the Zen gardens and in the dry landscape gardens, the individual rock moves into the centre of contemplation. Left in its natural state, every rock speaks through its position in the overall composition. The relation to the earth is particularly important, and precise rules indicate how deep a rock should be dug into the ground and how much of it should remain visible. “Stones must be

set powerfully and the roots of the stone must be set deeply” (Takei; Keane 2001, p.188).

For centuries, rules and taboos of garden construction have been passed from generation to generation of Japanese garden designers. They had no doubt: a reclining stone was more advantageous than a standing stone, which should be used only in exceptional situations. And they knew for certain that it was extremely important how a rock “lived” in its environment. A special rock should best be placed at the foot of a hill, next to a waterfall or on the edge of an island; and none higher than the width of a tatami mat should ever be placed in the vicinity of buildings (cf. Takei; Keane 2001, p.161 f.).

Behind all these rules lie the aesthetic principles which all traditional arts have adopted in Japan: the tea ceremony, ceramics, brush painting, calligraphy, food preparation or wrapping of objects. These art forms imply a unique sense of harmony founded on muted quietness, imbalance, asymmetry juxtaposed with emptiness and simplicity,

and are meant to be viewed or contemplated in solitude. This aesthetic has its origin in Zen philosophy, “the One in diversity and diversity in One; or better: the one that remains one within diversity in every single thing and in the totality of all individual things” (Suzuki 1994, p.32).

In contrast to megalithic culture – where, under wide open skies only an observer in motion was granted the experience of the stones’ vast relationships – in Japanese temples you could sit, protected by a wide roof, on the wooden floor of a walkway and become all eyes. And there, by the rock gardens, I became a silent observer too (see photos Isshidan, Ryogen-in, Daitoku-ji temple garden).







NORWAY – GLACIERS MOULDED THE LANDSCAPE

Some time later, in 2001, I participated in a symposium on stone, in Norway. In the vicinity of the town of Larvik I discovered “Larvikite”, an igneous rock, and was inspired once more by an entirely different quality of rock material. This intrusion rock from the Oslo rift consists mainly of feldspar, a shimmering blue-grey substance.

Strangely enough, when I began to carve a piece of Larvikite with hammer and chisel, questions about its interior composition arose for me and I noticed how the surface was almost asking for a skin-like protection, which could certainly be achieved by grinding the coarse crystalline structure down to make it smooth and almost transparent.

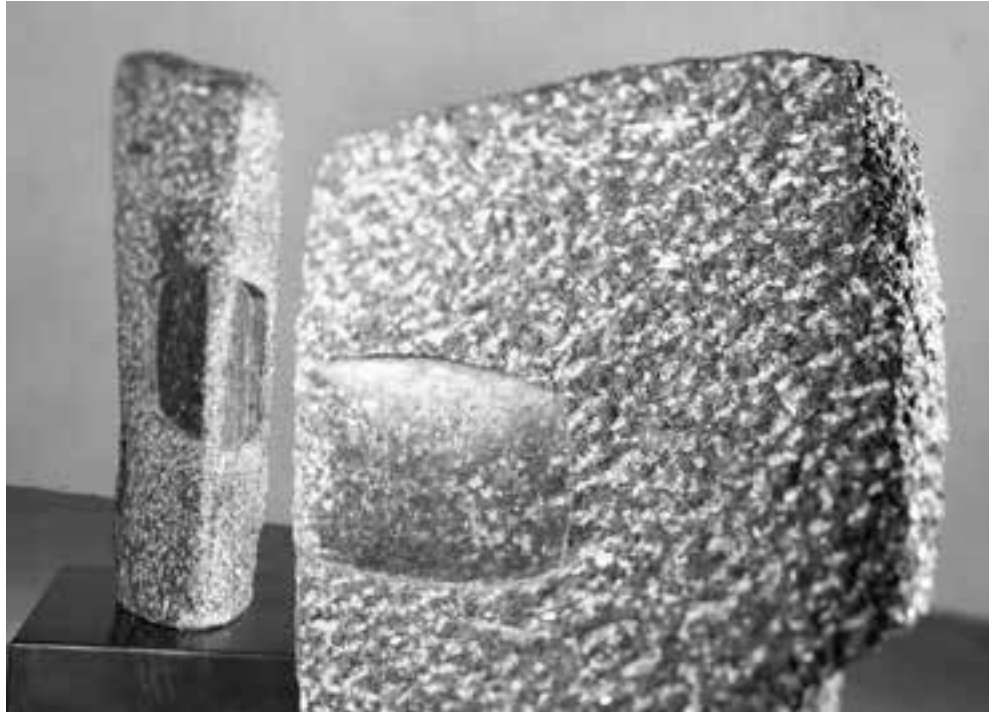
Here in the far north of Europe we lived and worked on one and the same kind of rock. We walked on it and hammered and sanded a piece of it. As we made our way across polished hills or lay down on giant, mammal-like stones by the shore, we were transported into the stream of “earth time”, and earth formation. Were those mobile forces that had worked on a gigantic scale in the shaping of the landscape, the same forces we encountered when working sculpturally?

As Scandinavia was unknown to me, I decided to travel on, further north – by myself. There, during long days, time and space changed and expanded. When I walked through the emptiness and vastness of the hills shaven by glaciers – and across the rounded and smooth shapes of the mountains, it was hardly conceivable how long ago these landscapes had emerged. The oldest types of gneiss in the far north, for example, are known to be between 2.5 and 3.5 billion years old. Here, you can discover an unusual quality in the

landscape relief: a thin humus crust overlaying the granite flooring, and visible traces of glacial movements of several ice ages. The Scandinavian bedrock provides the largest continuous area of igneous and metamorphic rock in Europe (see photos, Norway: landscape moulded by nearby glaciers; drawings: sketchbook 2001; sculptures: 3 forms, Larvikite.)

In Norway I experienced the formative sculptural activity of nature as parallel to my own sculptural work. As I became familiar with my environment, the forms which emerged under my chisel gained in precision and power as soon as I saw them projected into the moulded landscape of rocks on a vast scale. Then the flow of activity – outer as well as inner – became a steady breathing process.





3

GERMANY – OPEN SPACE DESIGN TACKLING URBAN SPACES AND SQUARES

Since 2000, I have taken on a series of commissioned works for public and private spaces. Over the years my design sense had developed through my experiences with landscape, and with shaping and placing stones. Mostly the contracts were related to architectural specifications. The work provided an opportunity to visit different quarries, to explore more rock types and to work in different landscapes, as I preferred to use regional stone. All my work relies on building a strong relationship with the site as an anchor for the works.

Depending on the commission, I have either based my ideas on existing forms and materials on site, or I have chosen to use strong contrasts, such as the block-like rawness of quarried rocks as a counterforce to sophisticated architecture. For example when I designed a fountain for a village environment, I decided to adopt the material of existing paving and steps, and integrated the new objects sensitively into the **existing style of the village**

HERDECKE RESIDENTIAL AREA

The plan for the central part of a newly build residential area (consisting of 45 housing units) has been laid out as three trapezoidal surfaces. My design has the integrated element of a coarse sandstone bed that runs through all three areas. A stylized “watercourse” collects the water from an open stormwater drain, and discharges it into two sandstone basins. During dry periods, water can be pumped up with the help of an iron pump. There are sandy places around the lower basin, and here children enjoy building, digging and making lovely mud pies.





UEBERLINGEN

WATERHOLE, PLAYGROUND DESIGN FOR A SCHOOL

Three different sizes of sandstone blocks were carved with the help of pupils. The results were three basins, which the schoolchildren can fill with water from a hand pump, when they are not naturally filled with rain. The rough-hewn blocks are suitable for climbing and playing.





LAKE CONSTANCE

TRAFFIC ISLAND IN UEBERLINGEN

The traffic island in the middle of a busy bypass I designed with the surrounding terrain in mind – sloping to the southeast. Two highly visible limestone blocks stand there and form a kind of gateway. A generous curve of limestone chippings leads towards it. When driving around the island a constantly changing picture presents itself and marks the transition from the rural to the urban area.



HERDWANGEN

FOUNTAIN, TOWN HALL FORECOURT

For the redesign of the Town Hall forecourt in front of the city hall, I installed a newly carved well. Its shape picks up on the layout of the square. The upper stone adopts the horizontal form of the big Town Hall, and the watercourse running in the lower stone is extended to allow the water to ripple on into a straight channel that crosses the square. The traditional village environment suggested to me the archetype of the drinking trough. Quartz sandstone, used for the existing stone paving and stairs, offered a good choice.





MUELHEIM RUHR RESIDENTIAL AREA

The development plan for a newly created housing estate called for the provision of a 12 m-wide access road. The subdivision of the road into a traffic area and a pedestrian area provided an opportunity to create a pedestrian area using raw stone blocks. This created a lively axis in the centre of the housing estate. The natural blocks from the sandstone quarry nearby were placed on lentil-shaped planting islands and alternated with trees. Groups of two, three and four stones form a playful composition next to a number of single stones.

These examples of my design work in public spaces round off my encounters and stages of working with stone.







Granite sculpture
Hauzenberger granite,
Dortmund, Germany, 2003



Marble sculpture
Laas marble,
Saint Prex, Switzerland, 2004

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In summary, I would again like to identify a few of the insights I have gained by living and working with stone.

“Stones are silent teachers; the observer falls silent before them, and the best we can learn from them cannot be communicated”.(Goethe 1981, p.460)

— I see rock and individual stones as intermediaries between the cosmos and the earth. Goethe called those taciturn friends and companions our “silent teachers”.

— What are they teaching us about?

— Limestone stimulates transformation and resolution, marble dazzles, is changeable and radiant, granite is resistant, sandstone dormant.

— Stone represents permanence and change alike. Its dramatic evolution testifies to ongoing fluctuation between extremes: absolute form and knife-sharp hardness in basalt, obsidian coagulated with boiling-hot magma and flowing lava’s shapeless mass.

— Laws and design principles can be gleaned from the resting, layered, even leafy or crystalline, rayed or grainy qualities and their endlessly varied manifestations.

— Minerals and earth substances make up part of our bodies and connect us with the earth and our immediate environment.

— By moving across the world, we are travelling on top of the stones.

— I go to the stones. Their time scales and their rhythms become my guide for working with them and for entering into their essence.

— My activity slows down and deepens through the stones and – hammer blow by blow – connects me to the presence and to each moment.

— Stone leads to concentration, to consolidation and deepening.

— My path is aimed at the centre of the earth within my own centre.

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Photos Appendix II: C. D. Schlürmann

All Photos and drawings Appendix III:

by C. D. Schlürmann, except page 221: Lucarelli;

page 222: Granitzentrum Hauzenberg;

page 255: Cornelia Suhan

Imprint

Text: C.D. Schluermann

Book Design: Julia Valter

