

Of(f) stone: learning deep collaboration

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Catalysts / Mineral friends:

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This interdisciplinary group came together because of a shared interest in how we address stones, rocks and minerals discursively and materially, across different scales of time and space, with different purposes, and with different yet responsive and resonant methods. Our approaches range from how miners and mining companies address lithic bodies, to how a sculptor, designer, or performer can relate to earth with care, through listening and speculation, as a collaborator rather than considering ready-made material as passive. All of us agree that we are all earthly creatures, made OF mineral inside, and living OFF them through architecture, design and technology. Grounded in this mutual understanding, we share a purpose of questioning linear temporalities of modernity and material flows of technocapitalism with its mode of orchestrating agencies - foregrounding some while erasing/expelling many. Furthermore, we critically examine top-down knowledge production about lithic actors and how these epistemic practices weigh upon minoritised agencies. We are drawn to the urgency and comfort of anti-and post-human(ist) visions, such as future-making scenarios in the lifeworlds of post-mining communities and pre- and non-modern histories of conviviality and commoning, and queer understandings of agency that these different practices invoke. Thus, we want to propagate a shared and inclusive knowledge production which dialogues with communities of agencies, becoming deeply involved in their interdependencies, and learning from companions in feminist posthumanities, queer ecology, ecocriticism, how they variously transverse the power-laden binaries between human and nature, living and nonliving, mind and matter. We cannot forget that these creative endeavors, including ours, are taking place at the time in which the extractivist paradigm - an

entanglement of coloniality, racism, sexism and classism - is reaching unprecedented intensity. It should be pointed out that knowledge as well as aesthetic productions share some methodologies as well as material flows with extractivist world-view and narratives, therefore here and now we find it pertinent to seek alternative ways of inhabiting arts and academia, and everyday life at large.

We will invite the audience to different sites: quarries, places of extraction and first encounters of human and nonhuman agencies, and into dialogue with large and small lithic bodies of different agencies or agencies they allow for. Aiming at embodying an understanding of our common ground, “the petric in the human and the anthropomorphic in the stone” (Cohen 2015) providing a new time and space of meeting, perhaps halfway, across a seemingly abyssal difference but also undeniable intimacy all the same.

Core questions of the session:

How could a non-hierarchical collaboration with mineral 'earth others' take shape and come into being? On that account, how can we understand materials in other ways than resources for exploitation? What is the common ground (language) between ourselves as human actors and other-than-humans like rocks, stones and minerals? How can a practice of design actively give space and time to agencies of matter, as opposed to the historical agency given to cultural representation taking shape as conventional design (exhibitions, products, etc.)? How can a research practice contribute to the empowerment of nonhuman actors and to collaborative creativity in non-hierarchical knowledge production? How can the practice of a sculptor relate, and by that care or act responsible, for matter operating with deep time? How to understand the one-way action such as cutting into billions of years of compressed matter, so that what is cut open is not to be closed or merged together again by the same human force?

We see our shared contribution to knowledge production and sharing of knowledge as a diffraction of / resistance to a phallogocentric capitalist mining discourse to create a platform for networking of agents and agencies often left out from decision-making processes, but also in our daily narratives. Through processes of weekly gatherings via zoom and reporting on dialogues with individual sites of extraction and mediation, writing about and with the agencies of the specific sites, the group has explored the lithic, shared different perspectives, encounters and positions, over the last months. This process will provide the foundation for a

performance at the Symposium followed by a discussion with the audience where we would like to invite the participants to share their stories of relations with stone, opening to a larger dialogue of geographies and histories. We believe that most, if not all of us, have meaningful relationships with the lithic, and sharing them communally may be one of practices of unforgetting earth.

Karin works with two mountains of large-scale ore extraction, Malmberget in Sàpmi and Erzberg in Austria, both names literally mean “ore mountains”. To counteract the hegemonic male mining narratives, she will speak from the blasting field of the open pit of the ore mining sites. Postcolonial, pre- and posthuman views as well as nonhuman and (intersectionally) feminist encounters will include agencies and practices of healing /repairing – discursively, culturally and environmentally to create a piece of a resilient framework for inclusive ecologies during and after exploitation.

Petra explores ways to critically examine the role of the designer and the connections between design and global extractivism. She is researching the common ground between ourselves as multispecies beings and lithic bodies of rocks, stones and minerals, with the aim to collapse boundaries between human and nature, living and nonliving. Through design, curation and site-writing, she is exploring different mineral sites where archives of nonhuman knowledge are vibrant.

Emma works with stone both as the material body of her sculptures and as a thought-shaper of her writings. She will share moments of working with the stone inside the Untersberg Quarry. There she will search for a resonating piece of limestone, examine its cracks and begin a dynamic and close relationship, where she shapes it and it shapes her in return.

Mirko will speak from and with the Balkan mountain rivers, whose surroundings are exposed to a relentless wave of accumulation of minerals, especially for the so-called “green technologies.” Along with toxicities past and future, these waters are being dried up by dubious hydropower projects which are branded as renewable energy. Instead of reductive “community consultation” processes and environmental permit applications, aero-bio-geo-hydro-philic bodies seek an affirmation of earth justice.