

The precious power

of stones

30 January - 15 May 2016

Marina Abramović, Michel Blazy, George Brecht, James Lee Byars, Pierre-Laurent Cassière, Marion Catusse, Marine Class, Hubert Duprat, Jean Dupuy, Paul Armand Gette, Isabelle Giovacchini, Guillaume Gouerou, Laurent Grasso, Alicja Kwade, Didier Mahieu, Aurélien Mauplot, Éric Michel, Damián Ortega, Ève Pietruschi, Emmanuel Régent, Evariste Richer, Jean-Philippe Roubaud, Bettina Samson, Valentin Souquet.

Curator: Rébecca François

Minerals inspire collective curiosity and a sense of wonder. As children and as adults, we've all embarked on treasure hunts to collect stones, selecting the most intriguing specimens to arrange in our own private collections of little gems. The appeal minerals hold ranges from the simple curiosity of casual

collectors to aesthetic meditation, from spiritual or magical belief to scientific experimentation.

Minerals have been used since Prehistory in creating paints, and were gradually collected, preserved, arranged and catalogued in private collections, cabinets of curiosities and mineralogical galleries. They were even painted and turned into portrait subjects in themselves, as seen in Leroy De Barde's sumptuous 19th century paintings of display cases and mineralogical specimens. Featuring in the poetic works of the surrealists followed by the experiments and installations of the Arte Povera, Land Art and Supports-Surfaces movements, in the hands of artists, these "involuntary masterpieces of the universe" (Roger Caillois) became works of art.

Today, artists use rough stones as up-cycled ready-made pieces, collecting them, arranging them or depicting them, while others carry out experiments on them, transform them and manufacture copies. While the history of how these minerals have been used, depicted or presented still remains to be written, contemporary artists' taste for minerals is palpable.

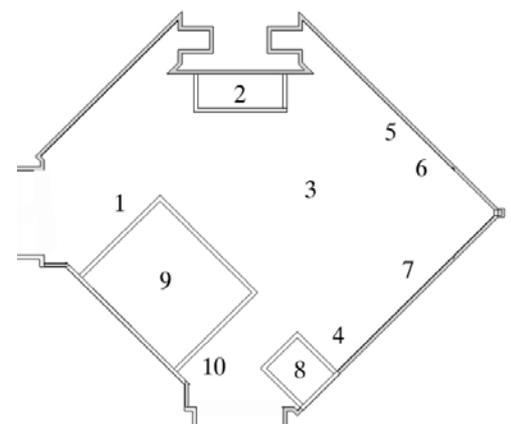
Designed as a fully immersive experience, the "Precious Power of Stones" exhibition intertwines several facets that reflect the various different unique resonances and vibrations that artists have lent these minerals. We open with an invitation to embark on a spiritual journey through time and space relativity, kicking off with the imaginary worlds and symbolism triggered

by occult phenomena and the great mysteries of nature. Next comes the time of collecting and depicting, in which the visitor is transported into a kind of mineralogical cabinet scattered with copies and vanities. This off-beat 'lithotherapy' can be summarised as follows:

nature	le spirituel	le symbolique	la mimésis
sujet	le voyage spatio-temporel	les grands mystères de la nature	le cabinet minéralogique, la vanité
objet	la méditation ou l'étude	le rituel	la collecte

"I contemplate at my leisure and manipulate as I see fit a captive, miniaturised plot, almost like a reduced model of the immensity of the universe." Roger Caillois

Stones are precious archives of the earth. In holding and reading them, Man gains access to the infinity of time, engaging in a journey through space and time and the concrete state of being in our world and the universe at large. While stones may appear to be frozen in time, their strata are illustrations of their ever-shifting nature, thus forming a kind of living autobiography of our planet. Through these stones, some artists attempt to connect Man, the Earth and the Universe in a unique physical and metaphysical experience, while others plunge the audience into a relativity and impermanence that makes us rethink our perception of the world.



Room 1

1

**Laurent Grasso (1972,
Mulhouse)**

Studies into the past

Oil on wood, 114 x 94 cm

Collection of the artist

This painting opens the exhibition, creating a kind of brief gap between time and space relativity. This faux Renaissance painting depicts the phenomenon of levitation. Using this anachronistic detail, the scene shifts to an unsettlingly strange atmosphere. This ambiguity is enhanced by the painting's lack of date. The boundaries between reality and fiction, science and belief, the visible and the invisible, the present and the future, are blurred. *Studies into the Past* inhabits a paradoxical word, a future temporality (as it depicts a phenomenon that has never yet been proven to exist) written in the past tense (through its many historical references).

2

Éric Michel (1962, Aix-en-Provence)

Fluorescences, 2015

Fluorescent pigments on canvas, black light, fluorite from Nice's Natural History Museum, varying measurements

Courtesy of the artist

Generously loaned by Nice's Natural History Museum, monochromes and fluorite specimens reveal their secrets under the effects of black light from within a screen box, a kind of ultra-sensory sounding board. The natural elements communicate in a secret form of alchemy, with the painting serving as

a paragon of human activity. Veritable blocks of light, minerals and monochromes operate as gateways to be passed through in order to gaze upon the depths of the immaterial. In doing so, the installation is an "open window" looking out into the world. The fluorescence creates a radiant, enveloping landscape where everything seems connected, and where no words are required. Everything is simultaneously spiritual and rational.

3

**Marina Abramović (1946,
Belgrade)**

Shoes for departure, 1991

Amethyst

2 pieces, 26 x 50 x 20 cm 10 kg each

Enrico Navarra Collection -
Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

Instructions for the Public: enter the shoes with bare feet - Eyes closed – Motionless – Depart. Time: Limitless

In the 1990s, Marina Abramović perfected interactive devices that drew on the power of amethyst, a stone renowned for its spiritual, soothing and protective qualities. The *Shoes for Departure* sculpture is made of two amethyst monoliths carved into a pair of clogs. Fragile and precious, this sculpted stone is evocative of the ruins of archaeology to come. A plate explains how to use the piece. Visualising themselves wearing these celestial, protective slippers, visitors are invited on a static journey into the heart of the precious power of stones.

4

**James Lee Byars (1932,
Detroit - 1997, Cairo)**

Thin disk with hole, 1994

Marble, Ø 40 cm

Acquired from Tagliatella Galleries in 2012

Collection MAMAC, Nice

James Lee Byars' elegant and minimal white marble sculptures rise enigmatically over visitors, inspiring ontological contemplation. The elementary *Thin disk with hole* sculpture comprises a disk with a diameter of 40 cm carved into dazzlingly flawless white marble, featuring a barely visible hole at its centre. The piece acts as a landscape, philosophical entity and gateway to the absolute. Enclosed within a display case, it is reminiscent of Neolithic China's jade *Bi* disks, whose mysterious meaning appears to link body and earth, life and death.

5

**Isabelle Giovacchini (1982,
Nice)**

Aurore 541, 2015

Positive prints of desert rose photograms, 30 x 24 cm each

Collection of the artist

HOW ONE OUGHT TO TURN TO STONE.

— Slowly, slowly to become hard like a precious stone — and at last to lie there, silent and a joy to eternity.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak. Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, 1881, aphorism 541

These strange and mysterious shapes are the result of a photographic experiment created

using photograms* of desert roses, the positive prints of which were reworked in order to capture the different facets and shadows cast by this evaporite mineral. Hovering between apparition and disappearance, the flipped photograms of these crystallised rocks mirror Nietzsche's aphorism concerning petrification and death. This strange fossilisation is evoked not only through the photographic process but through the nature of this rock itself, made from evaporated infiltrated water. The shapes that emerge on the surface of the paper are reminiscent of the inflamed tangles that occur at 451°F (temperature at which paper catches fire and burns in Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451*, 1953).

*Photogram: Images of objects placed on light-sensitive film and exposed to light.

6

George Brecht (1926, New York - 2008, Cologne)

Chair Event (mineral sample and hammer), "Footnote for volume I of The Book of the Tumbler on Fire" series, 1968

Chair painted white, mineral, hammer and associated text
81.5 x 39 x 43 cm

Reconstruction of the 1986 piece with the artist's approval for the "George Brecht" exhibition, MAC Lyon, 9 October - 25 November 1986. The original piece belongs to the Hansjörg Mayer Collection, Stuttgart.

Donated in 1986 – Collection Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon

In "Chair Events", George Brecht calls on active participation from the audience in their approach to his random and poetic combinations of

chairs and everyday objects. In *Chair with mineral specimen and equipment*, pieces of quartz and a hammer are placed on a white chair, creating a palpable sense of tension that transforms a seemingly innocuous scene into a continuously renewed and therefore unique event that speaks directly to the audience's imagination.

7

Bettina Samson (1978, Paris)

"Comment, par hasard, Henri Becquerel découvrit la radioactivité", 2009

Series of five photographs on Baryta paper, 80 x 100 cm each

Frac Ile-de-France

These black and white photographs are prints created from uraninite radiation (natural uranium oxide), with no other additional source of light. The artist recreates the conditions that led to the French physician's accidental discovery of radioactivity in 1896, when he was researching fluorescence in uranium salts. These photographic prints reveal the invisible, and in doing so, they evoke occult and supernatural phenomena. The mineral becomes a meteorite with magnetic powers, lifting itself away from the black backdrop scattered with light dust, in a symbol of the incommensurability of the universe.

8

Isabelle Giovacchini (1982, Nice)

Lames de fonds, 2015-2016

HD video projection on loop made from thin slivers of mineralogical samples taken from Nice's Museum of Natural History, 10'02".

Collection of the artist

In *Lames de fonds*, the artist photographs fine slivers of rock taken from Nice's Natural History Museum from behind a microscope. Collated in video form, these petrographic images taken for research purposes reveal the rocks' mineralogical constitutions and a slice of their history. They are displayed as a successive string of worlds to be explored, interlinking the past and the future.

9

Laurent Grasso (1972, Mulhouse)

Psychokinesis, 2008

HD video and animation, 12'30"

Collection of the artist - Courtesy of the Sean Kelly Gallery, New York and the Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong

Psychokinesis transports visitors into time and space relativity by plunging them into the heart of a surrealist René Magritte painting equipped with movement and sound. In a scorched desert landscape, a magnificent, colossal monolith towers overhead against a crystal-clear sky backdrop. Little by little, as if inhabited by supernatural powers, the rock floats off the ground with a heavy slowness. Time dilates. The deafening, serious and profound soundtrack heightens this sense of latency. Magritte's Atlantis levitates in the blue of the sky, rotating on itself, and then with the same extreme tension, drops back down into the landscape. The title of this piece refers to the power of thought and imagination.

Emmanuel Régent (1974,
Nice)

Pierre (7 février), 2008

Natural stone with silver
metallisation
27 x 13 x 16 cm

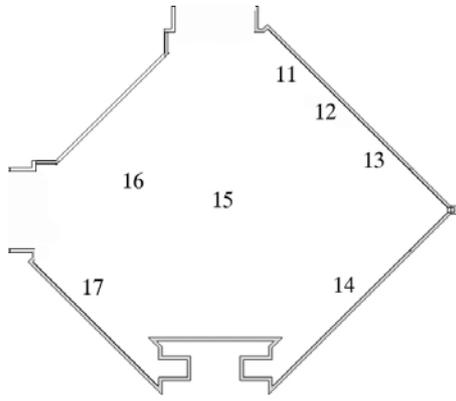
Collection of the artist - Courtesy of
the Caroline Smulders Gallery, Paris
and Analix Forever, Geneva

Left on the floor, almost forgotten, a
single stone narrates an unexpected
trajectory that connects the ordinary
to a poetic, ambivalent appearance.
The stone has been gleaned by the
artist on the trip he daily borrows
between his studio and his home, in a
surveying process. Metallised with
silver, the stone instils a sense of
unsettling weirdness. A far cry from
alchemical sublimation, this
archaeological vestige from the future
seems contaminated in some way. An
unrelenting truth reigns supreme.

*

"The vision that the eye
records is always poor and
uncertain. The imagination
enriches and adds to this
vision with the treasures of
memory, of knowledge, and
with everything that
experience, culture and history
contributes, not to mention
everything the imagination
invents or dreams, as it sees
fit." (Roger Caillois)

The supposed power of stones is
sometimes diverted, as illustrated
by inexplicable phenomena and
phantasmagoria that combine
magic, reality, fiction, belief and
myth. Stones therefore become
ritual objects that convey Man's
quest to understand and master the
great mysteries of nature.



Room 2

11

Valentin Souquet (1978,
Rouen)

Amethyst Island, 2011

Wood, resin, mirror, carafe,
amethyst
75 x 95 x 40 cm

Collection of the artist

Amethyst Island is displayed in
suspension like a console or altar. At
the frontier between decorative
element and ritual object, this
sculpture depicts a black island that
is evocative of the ruins and caverns
of Romantic paintings. In this
volcanic and dream-like landscape,
an absinthe carafe is placed on an
amethyst, a powerful stone
renowned for its protective effects
against intoxication and
drunkenness, and against the
psychoactive properties of this
mythical and cursed liqueur. On the
other side of the mirror, beneath the
melancholic island, crystals made
from raw wood, uncontaminated by
the black platform, flourish. The
philosopher's stone evokes the
Wormwood star which, in the
Apocalypse Of Saint John, crashes
to Earth, polluting streams and
rivers, where "many people died
from the waters that had become
bitter".

Evariste Richer (1969,
Montpellier)

*Masque à faire tomber la neige
#1, 2010*

Calcite 37 x 31 cm

Amarante/Hellier du Verneuil
Collection - Courtesy of the artist
and Meessen De Clercq, Brussels

This sculpture lends a piece of
natural calcite the ritual function of
a mask. The white stone is roughly
textured and dotted with impurities,
reminiscent of snow, and pierced
with two small holes. Presented in a
display case like an ethnographic
object, this anthropomorphic mask
is transformed into a sacred object
that conveys Man's desire to
understand and master natural
phenomena.

13

Paul Armand Gette (1927,
Lyon)

*Offrande à Aphrodite
(L'Apothéose des fraises ou
Les Menstrues de la
déesse), 2009*

Aphrodite à l'Ailante, inkjet PVC,
260 x 200 cm
Quenast dacite, 32 x 40 x 21 cm
Three glasses in crystal and bronze, 11 x 18
cm
Strawberries, rose petals and
strawberry coulis

Collection of the artist - Courtesy of
the Jean Brolly gallery, Paris

In a series of fully demystified
metaphors and mythologies, Paul
Armand Gette weaves nudes and
female genitals in with natural
elements (stones, flowers, fruits and
water). *Offrande à Aphrodite
(L'Apothéose des fraises ou Les*

Menstrues de la déesse) invokes the divine aspect of love and sexuality. In front of a large-scale print on tarpaulin of a mould of *Aphrodite of Cnidus**, a paradigm of the eroticism of the naked female form, and assisted by young women**, the artist engages in a celebration that involves crushing red berries and flowers arranged in crystal glasses on to Quenastvieille dacite aged 200 to 300 million years old. The running liquid evokes the loss of virginity and menstruation as well as pagan sacrifices and rituals. This celebration can be interpreted as both an ode to womanhood and freedom. This pairing of the cryptic powers of the stone and sexuality is an irrevocable reference to the origins of Man and the world.

* *The Aphrodite of Cnidus* was the first depiction of a nude female form in Greek sculpture. It is said that the sculptor Praxiteles used his mistress as a model, the famous courtesan Phryne, getting out of a bath taken in honour of Demeter. Praxiteles is thought to have made two sculptures, one clothed and the other nude, with the right hand covering the genitals and a robe held in the left hand. This sculpture was sold to the citizens of Cnidus and was hugely popular. A number of anecdotes, moulds and interpretations stemmed from its erotic power. Paul Armand Gette's photograph was taken in 1999, based on a mould housed in the Villa Médicis named *Aphrodite Ailanthus*, after the leaf chosen to hide her genitals.

** Anna Balkin, Morgane Lepechoux and Elisabeth Verrat, students at Nice's art school.

14

Paul Armand Gette (1927, Lyon)

Solidifications devant la brûlante humidité des Nymphes, 2013

Video, 14'00"

Puy de la Vache basalt, Hurbache keratophyre, Quenast dacite, yellow rose petals, varying measurements

Collection of the artist - Courtesy of the Jean Brolly gallery, Paris

The phallic, volcanic rocks form mysterious altars that intensify the seemingly timeless erotic charge of the installation. The image of dew-

drenched yellow roses interacts with these volcanic stones erected like lingams.

* Phallic symbol of the god Shiva. Shiva worship is linked to the idea of fertility and creative power.

15

Damián Ortega (1967, Mexico)

Cinco anillos, 2011

Metallic frame and suspended objects: fragments of coloured glass, alloy (Zamak), metallic cable, sandpaper and red tezontle (volcanic rock used in construction in Mexico)

254 x 240 x 240 cm

ISelf Collection, London - Courtesy of the artist and Kurimanzutto, Mexico City

In his *Cinco anillos* [5 rings] piece, Damián Ortega assembles fragments of coloured glass, alloy (Zamak), metallic cable, sandpaper and tezontle (red volcanic rock used in construction in Mexico) in a suspended cosmic sphere.

Simultaneously poor and precious, delicate and unchanging, these samples transform into an expanding world in which everything is separate and yet connected, too. The dynamics between the colours and the emptiness, the suspension of the elements and the cut and stratigraphic composition create optical illusions that rely on the audience's movement. The visual trick played here refers back to the magnetosphere and the rings of Uranus. This sort of dream-catcher or Shamanic object made from little bits of suspended nothingness reinjects wonderment, magic and fantasy into the banality of everyday life.

16

Damián Ortega (1967, Mexico)

Sol, 2015

Card, Kraft paper, Indian paper, newspaper, bamboo, Polyurethane foam, acid-free PVA glue 83 x 86 cm (closed)

Collection of the artist - Courtesy of the artist and Kurimanzutto, Mexico City

In this evocation of the concept of a microcosm and macrocosm, *Sol* [Sun] serves as a refocussed version created in a simple sphere made from card, Kraft paper, Indian paper, newspaper, bamboo, Polyurethane foam and glue, laid out on the floor with a quarter cut away and opened like a fruit, revealing what is habitually concealed.

17

Aurélien Mauplot (1983, Vincennes)

Sculptures découvertes sur l'île de Moana fa 'a' aro, 2015

Trees, basalt, screws, photographs, minerals, varying measurements

Collection of the artist

Aurélien Mauplot leads visitors into the tale of an isolated forest deep in the Pacific, where basalt rock is encrusted inside splintered tree trunks. Documentation from a variety of different fields, eras and lands (map, photography, writings and vegetable, mineral and animal specimens) describe a Tahitian practice that aims to heal trees and reconcile volcanoes with the Earth. Making up the oceanic crust, basalt is a magmatic rock used for its protective, fluidifying and soothing properties and benefits. This tale

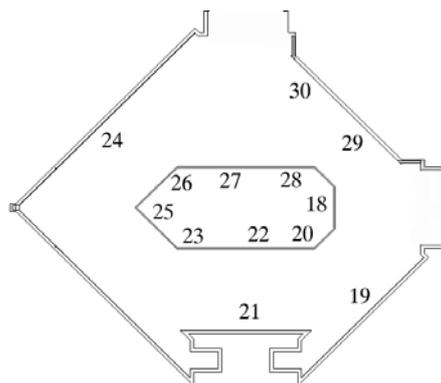
draws inspiration from personal and collective imagination fuelled by myths and legends as well as great discoveries and the mysteries of nature. This enchanted or cursed forest radiates a kind of magic as it questions Man's capacity to believe and experience wonderment.

*

"If I endure their witchery, it is no doubt because they draw on some other ascendant to take effect on me. For months before I took on the challenge of describing them, I was fascinated by them. Ever since I have known of their existence, I have been unable to resist the call of acquiring more. My apartment is full of them."
Roger Caillois

Dream stones, ruin marbles, septarians, jaspers, agates, sandstones and dendrites are renowned for their abilities to connect the inert with the organic, and through "stabilised miracles" (Roger Caillois), giving birth to representations of the world, mountains, forests and landscapes, and even human or animal silhouettes. These *acheiropoieta* (meaning not made by Man, but by the miracles of nature) rival the finest artistic creations. They are feats of mimesis, simulacrum, appearance. While some sought dream stones, like the 19th century Chinese painter K'iao Chan who put his name to one of his natural paintings as one might produce a piece of ready-made jewellery, others looked for and collected little rocks and stones for their intriguing beauty, such as Jean Dupuy, Ève Pietruschi or Marine Class. Others still, like Michel Blazy, Emmanuel Régent or Alicja Kwade, played on the theme and created their very own stones. Cabinets of curiosities

are stages on which Man's memory of the world are played out, a space where the categories separating the natural and the artificial, the organic and the inorganic, are choreographed into aesthetic arrangements. These compositions describe our relationship to the world - relations that are ever-shifting, and are put to the test through the artistic creativity of Jean-Philippe Roubaud, Hubert Duprat or Marion Catusse.



Room 3

18

Michel Blazy (1966, Monaco)

"Pierres qui sèchent", 2015

Wallpaper paste, food colouring, varying measurements

Collection of the artist

Michel Blazy creates his own agates and septarians using wallpaper paste drenched in water and food colouring. These 'drying stones' evolve over time, mirroring the effects of crystallisation and reminding visitors that seemingly inert stones remain in a constant state of change, recording the pulsations of our planet like a seismograph. Through these low-tech experiments and effects, Michel Blazy links the lifeless to the living and affords us a glimpse into the future.

Jean Dupuy (1925, Moulins)

"Polype-loupe", 1999-2013

Magnifying glasses and stones on painted wood, watercolours and graphite, varying measurements

Collection of the artist - Courtesy of the Loevenbruck gallery, Paris

Jean Dupuy collects the weirdest and most wonderful stones. When placed under a biconvex lens, these 'freaks of nature' take on a life all of their own. Slow and prolonged observation of the stones triggers the imagination. A self-proclaimed 'lazy artist', Jean Dupuy retaliates to the fixed nature of stone with the lightness of mental effervescence.

In an ode to the "queen of faculties*" that is the human imagination, the artist applies Baudelaire's "moral of the toy*" to these flayed pebbles, in which children are introduced to artistic beauty through their ability to experience wonderment and inventiveness. This piece demonstrates the artist's beloved 'DIY' aesthetic.

* Charles Baudelaire, "Salon de 1859: La Reine des facultés" and "La morale du joujou", 1853 in Charles Baudelaire, *Écrits sur l'art*, Le livre de Poche, 1999, Paris, p.243-250.

20

Alicja Kwade (1979, Katowice)

412 leere liter bis zum Anfang, 2008

555 kg of empty labelled champagne bottles, ground 70 x 110 cm

Collection of the artist - Courtesy of the König gallery, Berlin

A spectacular pile of scintillating green and grey particles forms a mysterious mineral landscape using champagne bottles ground down to a powder. The effect is a dazzling, shimmery creation that contrasts with the trivial nature of the materials used while nevertheless evoking glamour and luxury. This pile of broken champagne bottles symbolises the vacuity of human existence and shattered dreams.

21

Jean-Philippe Roubaud
(1973, Cannes)

"Souvenir du monde flottant, *autoportrait*", 2015

120 x 180 cm

"Souvenir du monde flottant, *bézoard*", 2015

120 x 90 cm

"Souvenir du monde flottant, *opus magnum*", 2015

29 x 29 cm (x4)

"Souvenir du monde flottant, *cristal 2*", 2015

120 x 90 cm

"Souvenir du monde flottant, *cristal 1*", 2015

120 x 90 cm

Graphite on Canson paper

Collection of the artist

This series was created using graphite, a native element mineral present in the earth's crust or in meteorites, and used as paint since the prehistoric era. As if taken

directly from an imaginary cabinet of curiosities, these drawings of mineralogical display cases are packed full of iconographic and symbolic detail. Crystals* and bezoars* abound, evoking the cabinet of curiosities' narrative value as well as the relativity of human awareness. The title of this series (ukiyo-e) refers to Japanese prints used to describe the impermanence and relativity of everything. In a world of appearances in which all is but smoke and mirrors, the dark and metallic value

of the graphite stirs melancholic feeling. This series is therefore a contemporary take on the concept of *memento mori*, serving as a reminder of the ephemeral, fragile and transient nature of the human condition.

*Initially considered curiosities, crystals helped define atomic composition thanks to studies carried out on their structure.

** These foreign bodies found in the stomachs of some mammals were considered curiosities and were highly prized for their alchemical and healing properties until the mid-18th century.

22

Marion Catusse (1991,
Paris)

Sans titre, "Les Quartz" series,
2014

Quartz, nasal wall, ink and glue
4.5 x 9 x 4.5 cm

Collection of the artist

Sans titre, "Les Micas" series,
2014

Mica, ink and glue
2.5 x 16 x 5.5 cm

Collection of the artist

Marion Catusse embellishes quartz and mica with a blue element which, when combined with glue and ink, mimics human stem cells, thus blurring the boundaries between naturalist categories. The splendour of a dash of gold deposited on the

quartz transforms the stone into something resembling an animal's skull, and the work of art into a spectacular vanity.

23

Guillaume Guerou (1987)

MW 6400, "Metatron Project" series, 2013-2016

Oven, 120 x 120 x 120 cm

Control panel, 160 x 70 x 70 cm

Co-production Villa Arson, Nice

Collection of the artist

Fulgurites, "Metatron Project" series, 2013-2016

Carved stones, varying measurements

With the support of jeweller Lola Miche, La Station, Nice and, 40mcube, Rennes

Collection of the artist

Guillaume Guerou is fascinated by mineralogy and exact and inexact sciences. "Metatron Project" refers to a divine power, positioning this experience within a semi-alchemical or demiurgical quest. A complex geometric shape, a metal rhombicuboctahedron, provides the armour within which a *MW 6400* oven built by the artist to melt minerals and reshape new ones is contained. Using stones sourced here and there, the artist forges his own stones which he calls *Fulgurites*, evaporite rocks born from a meeting of lightening and desert soil rich in silicon, highlighting the artist's ability to create using fire. Reworked into classical faceted form by a jeweller, the artist's works of art take on the appearance of precious stones.

Evariste Richer (1969, Montpellier)

"Les Micachromes", 2012

Series of 11 ilfochromes
162 x 120 cm each
Collection of the artist - Courtesy of
UntilThen, Paris

Micachrome #3, 2012

Private collection, Paris

Micachrome #5, 2012

Collection MAC VAL, Musée d'art
contemporain du Val-de-Marne

Evariste Richer captures the shiny, friable texture of mica via the photographic process of ilfochrome*. Sheets of mica are placed one at a time in the photographic magnifier before being directly revealed on ilfochrome paper. These fossilised "Micachromes" whisk visitors away on a journey through the strata of time.

*an ancient positive-to-positive photographic development technique

Alicja Kwade (1979, Katowice)

Lucy, 2004-2006

Compressed black charcoal and
adhesive
14 x 14 x 18 cm

Collection of the artist - Courtesy of
the König gallery, Berlin

Lucy is a black diamond made from compressed charcoal and adhesive. Placed under a cloche, the sculpture is as stunning as the most highly sought after diamonds. As with the fossil named Lucy*, which

revolutionised our knowledge of the origins of humankind, this black crystal operates like an illusion.

* First relatively intact fossil dating back around 3 million years, discovered in Ethiopia in 1974 and initially considered to be the species responsible for the origins of humanity before being categorised in the bipedal hominid family.

Ève Pietruschi (1982, Nice)

"Récoltes", 2015

Collection of drawings, cotton paper
tracings, varying measurements

Collection of the artist

In her work on memory of elusive or forgotten space and time, throughout her travels Ève Pietruschi collects unusual and ordinary stones which she reworks through photographic transfer techniques. These drawings of gleaned stones and rocks outline a dual movement, that of evanescent memory and of projection into the potential future. Brought together in a collection, these 'Récoltes' ['Harvests'] are both sketches and ruins that hint at the vestiges of things to come.

Hubert Duprat (1957, Nérac)

Sans titre, 2008

Pile comprised of polished
magnetite
80 x 280 x 280 cm

Acquired from the artist in 2009 –
Collection Centre National des Arts
Plastiques - On loan at the Frac
Languedoc-Roussillon since
07/12/2009

Courtesy of the artist and Art : Concept,
Paris

A pile of several tonnes of
magnetite is spread across the floor

like a minimalist conceptual sculpture. Naturally magnetic and cabochon-like in appearance, these stones take their name from the Greek mountain Magnetos, and cut a strange figure oscillating between the mineral and the organic. From a heap of glistening jewels to a concentration of necrophagous flies, this sculpture leans in to the visitor, whispering in their ear a precious warning: "Remember that you will die".

Marine Class (1983, Chambray-Les-Tours)

Pierres de rêve, 2013

Painted wood, enamelled ceramic,
marbled paper, leather, stones,
coloured crayon on paper, brass, 40
x 34 x 35 cm

Drawing of a mountain, 24 x 30 cm

Collection of the artist

Marine Class turns a toolbox into a mineral box. This is where she keeps her collection of stones and rocks, most of which were collected on the Greek island of Tinos. In a mimesis that plays on the ambiguity between presentation and representation, reality and illusion, this miniature, mobile and practical compilation can be read as a contemporary interpretation of dream stone collections. The entire world seems to be contained within this box. Arranged inside it, the specimens are enclosed within mouldings that follow their every curve. Removed, they are presented on pedestals made by the artist against a backdrop reminiscent of the trompe l'œil of coloured marble. This microcosm then takes life, with anthropomorphic forms or natural décors emerging on these little stones, combining to create a world of their own that can be contained in a handkerchief. As a counterpoint, a drawing of a mountain evokes a quote from Roger Caillois on the powers of the imagination: "All

stones are mountains in their strength."

29

**Emmanuel Régent (1974,
Nice)**

"Mes naufrages", 2005-2015

Pieces of shipwrecks, varying measurements

Sandra Hegedüs Mulliez Collection - Courtesy of the artist and Caroline Smulders, Paris and Analix Forever, Geneva

Emmanuel Régent collects pieces of boat hulls of all sizes as others would precious stones. These underwater archaeological ruins are collected by the artist during free diving and exploration in the harbor of. Suspended against the wall, the "Mes Naufrages" series constitutes a floating horizon. As with 'landscape stones', these scattered fragments operate like pieces of a painting - the Mediterranean's accidental masterpieces.

30

Pierre-Laurent Cassière (1982, Clermont-Ferrand)

Concretus Lamento, 2015

Black and white HD video, stereo sound, 11'30"

Collection of the artist

In this sound and video installation, Pierre-Laurent Cassière plays with the sounds created by lithophonic stalactites (ringing rocks). In a cave aged several millions of years old, the surveyor films himself in close-up as he taps these calcareous concretions with his bare hand. In doing so, he awakens echoes that are picked up by microphones placed on the surface of the stone. The recording of the action undergoes a dual inversion: that of

time and that of space. Rotating the image by 180° turns stalagmites into stalactites, while watching the video the wrong way around (as if rewound) reverses the soundtrack. This piece calls on body, earth and memory in a listening experience. The bass continues on, echoing through the exhibition space and transporting visitors into a strange place in space and time where memories mingle with the world's concrete forms. The black and white image reveals folds in these calcareous cones, formed drop by drop like tears made of stone. The piece's title is a reference to songs designed to conjure up sadness and grief, while enhancing the overall Baroque effect.

31

**Didier Mahieu (1961,
Jemappes)**

Oversoul Undersoul, 2015

Mixed media, meteorite dust, varying measurements

Collection of the artist

Acknowledgements: Corentin Mahieu, Maud Barral, Isabelle Pellegrini, Francis Siméoni, Antonio Brusadelli, Jonathan Puit, Éric Haubruge at the Université de Gembloux (ULG) and Gilbert Perlein

In a mountain landscape drawn with graphite, one rock seems to stand out on its way to landing inside the exhibition space. The scope and attention paid to the drawing are reminiscent of Romantic paintings as well as 19th century photography, in which the viewer is taken on a journey through space and time. This drawing raises an unanswered question, too - where might this extraordinary rock made from meteorite dust have come from? Split in two, within the sculpture is a man in the foetal position covered with a survival blanket. Could he be a fossilised time traveller from a

previous future? A nomad? A refugee? Everything is hypothetical here in this reminder of the fragile condition of mankind and the world. Observing the scene from behind the mist of dirty, old glass, the viewer/explorer is plunged into a world beyond time. Echoing Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* or *Life in the Woods* (1854)*, *Oversoul Undersoul* invites the viewer into a melancholic reflection on the world via nature observation.

* A travel journal and reflection of nature and society written by Thoreau during a retreat to a cabin built on the edge of Walden Pond.

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Through their spontaneous beauty, stones seem to contain both our original past and our future, perpetual movement and the transient, science and the great mysteries of nature. Whether spiritual, symbolic or mimetic, these stones illustrate the relativity and impermanence of all things and the world itself. They cast doubt over the principle of reality and realism, and call into question our methods of understanding, perceiving and believing. As living memories of the planet and universe, they invite us to reflect on the past, present and future.

Living in an atmosphere of stagnation, these artists chose to leave behind the criticism and disillusionment of the failings of a modern utopia. In an age of dematerialisation and nanny states, relativity and wonderment are returned to the spotlight. In a temporality one might qualify as the "future anterior*", so inextricably intertwined are the temporalities in question, the artists reassess the power of the imagination. They distil a concept in which dreaming and projection into the future are still possible. Because thanks to the power of imagination, "every stone is a mountain of power" (Roger Caillois), every man and woman a grain of sand, a resistant force.

Glossary

By Alain Dody, Conservation Attaché and Head of visitor experience, documentary and heritage research at Nice's Natural History Museum.

Amethyst: Owes its colour, which can range from light to dark purple, to manganese and iron impurities. It is mainly found in Siberia and Brazil, and in the Massif Central in France. It takes its name from the Greek *amethystos*, and protects from drunkenness thanks to its colour which is reminiscent of wine cut with water.

Silver: This metal has been highly prized since Antiquity, and can be found in sheet, sliver, nugget or filament form. Silver crystals are rare and are cubic or octahedron-shaped. The best silver comes from Norway, Mexico or South America.

Basalt: Igneous rock with a dark, black, microlithic structure characterised by the presence of large feldspar crystals, etc. Volcanoes on the islands of Hawaii and Réunion emit basaltic lava. Dating back to tertiary era lava flows, basalt is abundant in the Massif Central in France.

Bezoar: A concretion that forms in the digestive system of humans and other mammals, this "bile stone" was a source of beliefs and superstitions for centuries. It was considered to possess thousands of medical and supernatural powers. A legendary stone that still sparks the imagination today!

Calcite: Chemical limestone. Crystallisation and deposition in calcite form occur following

dissolution by infiltrating waters and a long journey down the walls of caves.

Coal: Rock derived from vegetal matter. Black and compact, some parts of it are dull, soft and leave traces on fingers, while others are shiny and harder. Coal is made from decomposing vegetal matter and wood debris sheltered from the air and transformed by bacteria.

Crystal: A homogeneous solid mass in which the atoms are structured in space, defining what is known as the unit cell. The word 'crystal' comes from the Greek *kryos*, meaning 'glacial cold'. It was long believed that rock crystal (a variety of quartz) was ice that was so hard it never melted.

Diamond: The hardest natural material (maximum hardness of 10 according to the Mohs scale). This 'simple' carbon, considered the most noble of precious stones, has long caught the eye of many...

Fluorite: Mineral formed of cubic aggregates of various different colours (green, purple, sometimes yellow). The mineral form of calcium fluoride with traces of organic compounds. It is characterised by phenomena such as fluorescence and thermoluminescence.

Fulgurite: This stone is quite literally born of a bolt of lightning. Electric and thermal shock (bolt of lightning of several thousand degrees) results in quartz fusing in the sand. A kind of boiling process then occurs which, after cooling, results in a natural, impure and non-transparent glass.

Graphite: Extremely pure carbon. This is the softest form of carbon, while diamonds, another form of highly pure carbon, is the hardest form.

Magnetite: An excellent oxide of iron. Characterised by a metallic

black to blackish brown shade that varies from shiny to dull. It is magnetic and makes for a good electrical conductor. Deposits are found within igneous or metamorphic rock.

Marble: Marble (from the Greek *marmoros*, meaning 'shiny') comes from limestone that has been subjected to metamorphic pressure. A number of different varieties exist, which owe their beauty to their range of colours and veins - the latter caused by organic impurities.

Minerals: The word 'mineral' is used in opposition to 'vegetable', 'animal' and 'fungal' (relating to mushrooms). Two types of minerals exist: amorphous minerals (from the Greek *a*, meaning 'without', and *morphe*, meaning 'shape'), the constitutive atoms of which are not structured in a homogeneous network, and crystalline minerals, in which the atoms are arranged in a regular and repetitive pattern in space.

Meteorite: Earth is continuously bombarded with fragments of rock from out of space. In most cases, little fragments break off and dissipate in the atmosphere. The resulting trail of light is called a meteor or shooting star. The largest among them reach Earth, causing significant sound and light phenomena.

Mica: Metamorphic and igneous rock characterised by large hexagonal sheets. Mica is reflective and can be easily split with a nail or pocket knife. There are two varieties: white, which contains aluminium and potassium, and black, which contains iron and magnesium.

Uraninite: Made from uranium dioxide, it is the primary uranium mineral. Formerly known as pitchblende, Marie Curie used this mineral to discover polonium and radium.

The mineralogist's workshop

Use your imagination to colour in and interpret this fine sliver of rock.



Complete these English expressions

To have a heart of

Get blood from a

Between a _____ and a hard place

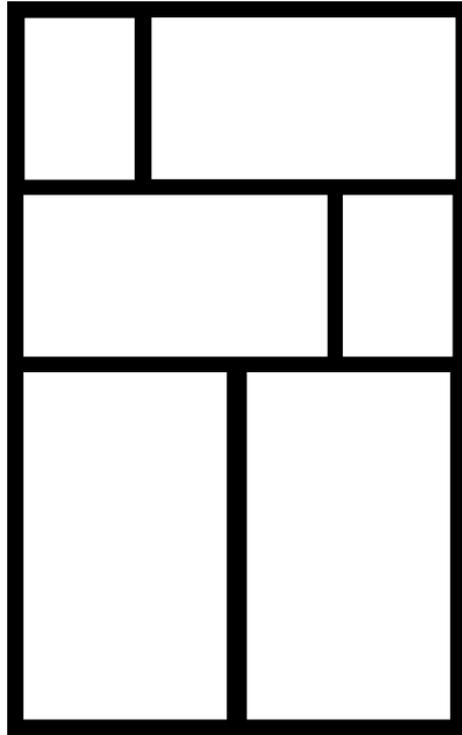
To be carved in

A _____'s throw away

To be as solid as a

Work your way through the exhibition and draw a fluorite, a diamond, a piece of magnetite in cabochon form and a crystal. Next, circle those considered to be precious stones.

Draw your own collection of stones



gold

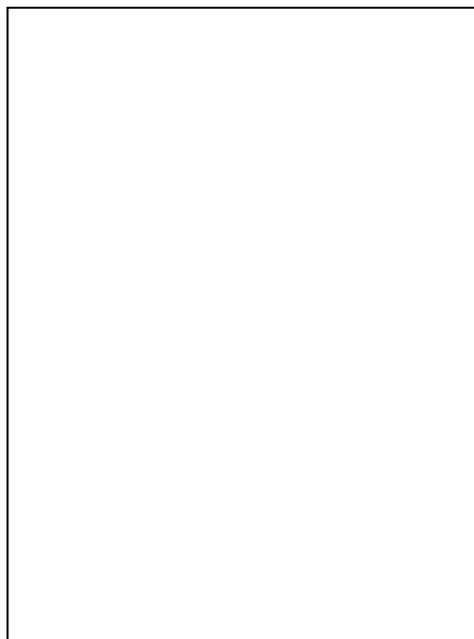
diamond

crystal

marble

stone

rock



Post-exhibition activities

Collect your own stones made from paper, plastic, foil, soap, buttons, pebbles... Let your imagination run wild!

Keep your treasures in a box.

At home...

Make your very own surprise stones for your friends.

Mix together:

- a cup of flour,
- a cup of used and dried coffee grounds,
- ½ cup of salt and sand.

Add around a ¾ cup of warm water and mix to form a dough.

Divide the dough into 4 balls. Use your finger to make a hole in the middle. Place a marble in the hole, then cover it up.

Place your stones on a baking tray and put in the oven at 170°C for 35 to 40 minutes.

Once baked and cooled, you can give these surprise stones to your loved ones: all they have to do is break through the shell to discover the gems within.