

Concept text

GEOLOGY

Marie Julia Bollansée

a global joint performance

GEOLOGY (as it is defined on Wikipedia): 'is an earth science concerned with the solid Earth, the rocks of which it is composed, and the processes by which they change over time...'

Starting point:

Stones belong to specific places (as this definition says).

People don't. As history evolves and the world changes, fewer and fewer people make their living at the place where they are born, amongst their clans or families. People (in most cases) are not rooted anymore at the place they are living. Nowadays most people go through serial nomadic periods in their life.

These movements are of various qualities:

On the one hand you have people on the run from dangerous and inhuman living situations. Can be war situations, political regimes, economical situations, natural (and climate) disasters... These ones we call 'refugees' try to migrate to a better homeland. In former times they were called 'Displaced people'. They are forced to abandon their roots and adapt themselves to whatever new place they escape to.

On the other extreme end of the scale are the wealthy tourists who travel for pleasure. Here you have all gradations: luxury beach resorts in poor countries, adventurous trips, sports-holidays, cultural travels, exotic tourism....

In between these extremes there are all kinds of reasons people travel and migrate for. In this work, I want to speak about migration and travelling, the limitations, difficulties and problems connected to it. **Seen broader**, the work is about uprooting and connection.

In the end

the performance will connect with the weaving that occurs around the globe, wherein all these different voyages cross each other. The confrontation of all these travels, and so many motives why people travel, and less explicit the ways people travel ranging from luxuriously to extremely precariously, will be brought into the light.

Collective participation: stones from all over the world

I ask the audience to bring stones from their travels. Can be from the country they live(d) in, from the place they have their roots, from the place they are born, or from their holiday spot...

Every stone-bringer makes a photograph at the place of origin of the stone.

I ask for '*a solid stone, with a certain weight (1 à 2,5 kgs, 2 to 5 pounds). A stone from the place you have a (temporary) connection/history with. It also can be a flagstone (floor tile) or a wreckage from a beloved building.*'

I am aware that this can be a less easy task than it looks like. Every stone has to pass borders and security checkpoints. It has to deal with the suspicion of guardians and civil servants, and they all do their job very seriously. Probably they will interrogate the stone-carrier, and she/he has to explain why this stone is into her/his luggage.

Although a stone is harmless, without commercial or historical value, it is not a neutral object. Physically it is more or less radio-active (as I learned from Marie Curie). It is petrified matter and it bears spiritual meanings that are related to all our collective memories, to human history and to what actually happens all around the world. So it awakens reactions that are related to the specific situations.

A stone from Ethiopia got blocked, it was confiscated at the airport in Addis Ababa. One from Iran was confiscated at the airport of Teheran. *'No, you cannot take this, impossible'*. Many of these stories will occur, all of these stories are part of the project! I will represent the stones that didn't get through the checkpoints, by 'Absent Stones', being cobblestones that are painted in my Tarpaulin blue.

One stone from Rome came by train, and one from Kathmandu by airplane without any trouble. The political situation of the countries is mirrored in the behaviour of officers and how they deal with stone-carriers. Each stone also tells the story of the travel, and why this travel was made. And more, each stone also shows the erosion on the life of the human being that carried it.

Can be I will also have to refuse some stones, because they don't fit in the concept of the project. I was thinking what to do with those 'pebbles'.

I released a call via my Absent Audience network, to bring stones from travels. These ones are 'easy stones', but meaningful ones into this concept.

For the more 'difficult stones', the 'refugee stones', the 'displaced stones', I ask around more directly.

Felt-factory

If the social weaving can be represented by a tissue, it surely best is so by a felt blanket! Felt, being the most basic fabric, one gets by manoeuvring a heap of chaotically (non)ordered fibres into a tissue. The resource is pure sheep's wool, the mediators are motion, warmth, water and soap.

So I learned myself to manufacture little blankets by felting black sheep's wool, the way shepherds do it from cold Nordic countries, in the Andes, in the Himalayas, up to New Zealand; the ancient craft of felting is worldwide practised. After some practice I learned to make little capsules, huts. For each stone arriving, I prepare a wool felt capsule. Also the performer's dress I create it with the same felt.

In the performance I will wrap up the rocks and stones into these capsules. This way every stone will get a solid soft skin. And all stones become incognito and in a way equal, wherever they come from, and what the reason of the trip of the stone-carrier was.

Database: Geology Archive

A magazine-like publication, an artist's edition, is the database of the performance. I make it in advance and it will be available for free.

The magazine has different chapters:

- The Travellers: list of names of all the stone-carriers
 - Journeys: the stories of people (I mention no names), where they come from, where they travelled to, why they made the travel.
 - Places of origin: Photographs of the stones in their habitat, taken by the audience, on the place where they brought the stone from. (I mention the place, not the stone carrier)
- Absent stones are present in this magazine, because photographs easily cross borders.

- Menhirs, Misfits: close-ups, portraits in a way, of the stones. Big stones are named 'menhirs' and pebbles I call 'misfits'.
- Absent Stones: Tarpaulin blue stones that replace the stones that did not come through + list of the places they do (not) come from.
- all places of origin get a (Latin) number, and that number corresponds with the portrait of the stone (that gets the same number).

PERFORMANCE

at S.M.A.K. Ghent , May 19 2019 and August 15 2021

set up

creation takes a day long marathon performance

with: 1 blue tarpaulin, 10 m x 8 m (size depending on the space)

Stones from all over the world (weight: 1 to 2,5 kg)/ the number of its place of origin is painted on them in Tarpaulin blue letters

capsules in black sheep's wool felt

performer's garb in black sheep's wool felt

magazine-like publication, that contains photographs of the places of origin of the stones, the stories why people travel made incognito and this way universal.

The magazine is available for free to the audience.

A big blue tarpaulin, spread onto the floor is the zone wherein the performance happens.

The stones (the ones that could make it to Belgium, and the 'Absent Stones') are placed on the edge the tarpaulin.

A big pile of sheep's wool black felt capsules is in the middle of the tarpaulin.

The costume I wear is made out of similar black sheep's wool felt.

Script

I walk in circles, clockwise, slowly, barefoot

I take one stone.

I pick up one felt capsule from the pile in the middle.

I wrap up the stone in the felt capsule.

The form and the weight of the stone remains, but the identity vanishes because the felt hut covers it.

I give incognito rock in its felt house a position onto the Tarpaulin blue zone.

-Repeat-

Slowly a composition of incognito black felt rocks aligns on the big blue tarpaulin.

The performance ends when all the stones are wrapped up and placed onto the blue tarpaulin.

-Misfits, little stones, too small and mundane to get a 'house' and a place to settle on their own are offered to the audience for adoption.

- as all original misfits are given away in the performance in 2019, I make a new edition of 'Misfits' for this iteration of Geology. They are white pebbles in Carrara marble numbered from 1 until 49.

Remaining installation

@ S.M.A.K. : A big blue ocean (10mx 8m), and dark soft rocks drifting in it, one can perceive the sculpture that will remain after the performance is created. The installation will look that peaceful. The genesis of the installation is traceable in 'Geology Archive',

the free magazine. But in the remaining installation every stone is equal and incognito. There is no distinction between Absent stones and the ones that arrived. Menhirs found an autonomous place in the Tarpaulin blue zone. Misfits hopefully found guardians that save them amongst the audience.

The installation functions as a map of all the crossing voyages and quests of people around the globe. This installation, with the documentary video of the performance, the performance-costume and the magazine-database becomes a work of art that also can be shown in future exhibitions.

Marie Julia Bollansée, September 2018/ August 2021



the first stone, coming from Ethiopia, was taken on Addis Abeba Bole International Airport at the security control. It will be represented by a blue absent stone.



Try out picture. Felt rocks on blue tarpaulin.

Dear Traveller, bring along a stone for

GEOLOGY

a performance by Marie Julia Bollansée
at SMAK, Stedelijk Museum voor Aktuele Kunst, Ghent in spring 2019

Bring a big STONE home with you, when you go on a travel to a far away country this summer. And take a PHOTOGRAPH of the stone in its natural habitat, where you pick it up. You should look for a stone with a mass between 3,3 lb and 6,6 lb so it must be a rock rather than a pebble. The stone will weigh on your trip. You will have to pass security-checkposts, identity-verifications and luggage-checks so it is possible that you lose your stone somewhere along the way. But even then your effort is not lost. I would love to get your photograph anyway. I will use your contributions of stones, photograph's and efforts in a double-performance at SMAK and in the public space of Ghent, in the spring of 2019.

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photo © Dirk Pauwels, Kathmandu, Himalais 2017, performance M.J. Bollansée

First call, summer 2018