

Studio Anne Holtrop

ETH Zürich

design studio

HS20



Photo by Bas Princen

MATERIAL GESTURE:

STONE

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It all comes down to this: stone is a piece of rock made usable for men – a portion of rock used as building material.

During our travel in autumn 2019 to Japan's southern volcanic island Kyushu, I realised that with material gesture, we always relate to a site. Looking at any building material, 'a' site is always present, namely, the place where we source our material from. Our mines, excavations and quarries are the source for building. In order to build, we mine. Therefore, we work on at least two sites: the place of sourcing our raw material and the place of building construction. All places in between, where the material is worked on and transformed, could be considered as sites as well.

Peter Zumthor wrote in his recollections on his project for Vals, 'We walked around the village and, suddenly, everywhere there were boulders, big and small walls, loosely stacked rough plates, split material; we saw quarries of different sizes, slopes cut away, and rock formations'. In one sentence, Zumthor links the village, the building, the quarry and the landscape with its rock formations, all as sites with the same material presence. He shows the intrinsic links between the different sites of the gneiss stone.

Nowadays, in our modern and industrialised world, and also throughout history, material has been displaced and disconnected from where it is sourced. Robert Smithson began, in the sixties, exploring industrial areas around New Jersey (where he was from) and was fascinated by the sight of dumper trucks excavating tons of earth and rock that he described as the 'equivalents of the monuments of antiquity'. This resulted in a series of works titled 'Non-sites' in which rocks collected from a specific area were installed as sculptures together with maps of the sites where they were sourced from.

The key to the idea of Non-sites is the displacement; how the meaning and value of an object is changed by removal to another site. The focus of this semester is to take all sites into consideration when working with the material of stone. Stone can be understood here as a metaphor for site. We will study the traces in the material in its geological formation, traces in the ways of quarrying it, traces in the displacement and traces in its assembling and finishing. We are interested in the dialectics of change that is brought forward by the displacement of material through its different sites and how all of these 'traces' can be used and transformed in our way of working with it.

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