

Press Release

Exhibition

STORIES OF STONES

After Roger Caillois

From 13 October 2023 to 14 January 2024
Curators: Jean de Loisy & Sam Stourdzé

Makapansgat pebble, reddish-brown jasperite (ca. 3-million-year-old)
Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand
Photographed by Pieter Hugo



Companions of our daydreams, stones, older than life, have exerted on humans a fascination of which each of us shares the experience: a collection, a launch, an admiring contemplation. Poets and artists of all periods of art have testified to the profound inflections that these silent presences have had on their creations.

The great surrealist writer Roger Caillois, some remarkable examples from whose collection of minerals constitute the prologue of this exhibition, was able to describe this insistent relationship: 'more

than once, I have thought that it was appropriate to look at stones as a kind of poem.' Accompanied by the writer's prose, the exhibition is the novel of this continuous frequentation that reveals how these minerals occupy a decisive position between the caprice of nature and the work of art.

The *Stories of stones* exhibition presented at the Villa Medici has benefited from loans from more than 70 institutions and brings together nearly 200 works, from the oldest terrestrial mineral dating back 4.4 billion years to the latest mineral created, *Sentimentite*, by the contemporary artist Agnieszka Kurant. The route unfolds in ten exhibition rooms and continues in the ancient reservoir of the Villa Medici, in the apartments of Cardinal Ferdinand de Medici and in the Balthus workshop.

The suggestions that stones made to artists of all ages make it possible to measure how much our thought, our myths, our protests, and even sometimes our worries, have benefited from their proximity. There, dialogue gathered, beyond the contingencies of history, stones of the roadside and coveted crystals, votive stones, simple ruins or weapons of the weak to defend themselves from the powerful, objects of scientific study and romantic contemplation. And among humanity, from megalithic societies to the great names of modernity, Auguste Rodin or Giuseppe Penone, Charlotte Perriand or Antonio Tempesta, Tatiana Trouvé or the Facteur Cheval; all inspired by their sedimented mysteries, are the heralds of this vast narrative.

VILLA MÉDICIS

The exhibition has been organised thanks to the exceptional support of **VAN CLEEF & ARPELS**.

The scenography of the exhibition was created by **Piovenefabi**.

The catalogue was published by **Delpire & Co**.

Extract from the catalogue:

"It is these indifferent and rough pebbles that hallucinated devotees and inspired artists celebrate with stories. It is these rocks that the staggering reason of the Renaissance analyses, as half-science and half-magic; it is these stones that Chinese scholars collect, looking in crevices, caves, the folds of material of the escaped, doors for the spirit; it is through them that we guess the austere geometries that freeze the mechanics of the world." Introduction to the catalogue, Jean de Loisy and Sam Stourdzé.

Authors of the catalogue:

François Farges, mineralogist; Anne-James Chaton, writer; Maria; Stavrinaki, art historian; Olivier Schefer, writer and philosopher; Violaine Sautter, planetary geology researcher; Jean-Michel Geneste, Paleolithic archaeologist; Riccardo Venturi, art historian; Leonor de Recondo, writer; Jérémie Koering, art historian; Neville Rowley, art historian; Ariane Varela Braga, art historian; Kathryn Weir & Elizabeth A. Povinelli, curator & philosopher.

Artists exhibiting:

Juliette Agnel, Jean-Michel Alberola, Dove Allouche, Gioacchino Assereto, Hans Baldung Grien, Théodora Barat, Domenico Beccafumi, Abdelkader Benchamma, Constantin Brancusi, Andrea Branzi, Victor Brauner, Brassai, André Breton, Frédéric Bruly Bouabré, Roger Caillois, Gilles Caron, Carl Gustav Carus, Vija Celmins, Étienne Chambaud, Julian Charrière, Anne-James Chaton, Le Facteur Cheval, Pierre-Luc-Charles Ciceri, Pascal Convert, Louis Daguerre, Erik Dietman, Gino De Dominicis, Jean Dubuffet, Jimmie Durham, Albrecht Dürer, Esther Ferrer, Lyonel Feininger, Éric Feferberg, Robert Filliou, Francesco Francia, Aurélien Froment, Laura Grisi, Jacques Grison, Wenzel Hablik, René-Just Haüy, Damien Hirst, Jean-Pierre Houël, Pieter Hugo, Juva, Parviz Kimiavi, Kapwani Kiwanga, Agnieszka Kurant, Alicja Kwade, Fernand Léger, Alexandre Isidore Leroy de Barde, Richard Long, Wolfgang Mattheuer, Ana Mendieta, Théo Mercier, Sabine Mirlesse, Henry Moore, Gabriel Orozco, Joachim Patinier, Lucien Pelen, Giuseppe Penone, Charlotte Perriand, Pablo Picasso, Domenico Piola, Lodewijk Toepet detto Il Pozzoserrato, Albert Renger-Patzsch, Hugues Reip, Guido Reni, Évariste Richer, Édouard Riou, Auguste Rodin, Jean-Baptiste Romé de l'Isle, Ugo Rondinone, Jean-Claude Ruggirello, John Ruskin, Rose Salane, George Sand, Jean-Michel Sanejouand, Andrea Schiavone, Hercules Seghers, Luca Signorelli, Joseph Sima, Carl Spitzweg, Robert Smithson, Antonio Tempesta, Stéphane Thidet, Toyen, Tatiana Trouvé, Giorgio Vasari, Edward Weston, Sim Chi Yin.

Curators:

Jean de Loisy © Adrien Thibault



Jean de Loisy is an art historian and independent curator. He has, among others, been Inspector for Creation at the Ministry of Culture and curator at the Fondation Cartier and at the Centre Georges Pompidou. He has directed and co-directed various art venues in France, including the Palais de Tokyo from 2011 to 2017 and the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris from 2018 to 2022. From 2011 to 2022, he was a producer at France Culture of the programmes *Les Regardeurs* then *L'Art est la matière*.

Sam Stourdzé © Daniele Melajoli



Sam Stourdzé is an exhibition curator specialising in contemporary image and the relationship between art, photography and cinema. Since 2020, he has been director of the French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici, of which he is a former fellow (2007, film section). Previously, he was director of the Musée de l'Élysée in Lausanne, Switzerland (2010–2014) and of the Rencontres d'Arles (2014–2020).

About the French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici

Founded in 1666 by Louis XIV, the French Academy in Rome - Villa Medici is a French institution that has been housed since 1803 at the Villa Médicis, a 16th century villa surrounded by a seven-hectare park and located on Mount Pincio in the heart of Rome.

A national public institution under the authority of the Ministry of Culture, the French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici today fulfils three complementary missions: to welcome high-level artists, creators and art historians in residence for long stays of one year or shorter periods; to set up a cultural and artistic programme that integrates all the fields of the arts and creation and that is aimed at a wide audience; to conserve, restore, study and make known to the public its built and landscape heritage as well as its collections.

The French Academy in Rome - Villa Medici is directed by [Sam Stourdzé](#)

VILLA MÉDICIS

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