

IS A ROCK MADE OR BORN?

CLARICE LISPECTOR, JORAM KRAAIJEVELD AND MARCELO ZOPPI IN CONVERSATION WITH SARA PAPE GARCIA

Anybody invited to realize a project in 1646 is asked to engage in conversation with a previously unknown correspondent.

This conversation takes place via e-mail and stretches through the whole period during which the artists develop their initial idea into final results. 1646 invites the correspondent at the other end of this contact to figure his/her way through this actual process.

In trying to picture what result the artists' work is going to, such exchange can become a reflection on the amount of otherwise untraceable choices of the moment which make up to the artists' practice.

This issue is part of the exhibition by Sara Pape Garcia, *Is a Rock made or Born?*, January 24 2014 in 1646. The exhibition is part of *The Ongoing Conversation* series, a collaboration between 1646 and the Master Artistic Research, The Hague.

This artist
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Sara Pape Garcia [SPG] in conversation with writer *Clarice Lispector* (BR) [CL], art theorist *Joram Kraaijeveld* (NL) [JK] and poet *Marcelo Zoppi* (BR) [MZ]. Through *reading*, Skype chat, and *email*, respectively.

Edited and translated by Nicolette van Doorn

23.01.14

SPG: I have a question. Ever since I stopped drawing waves, I feel like a blank page.

Something that Clarice asked:

Is a rock born or made?

27.01.14

MZ:

J: *It's noise, Sara*

S: *Maybe you should walk along the quarry*

J: *Gravity*

S: *In rocks millions of years old*

J: *In other words*

S: *Stones*

24.01.14

MZ:

I'll write you, I liked the blank page Inevitably now and for ever

as if the devil didn't care

about leaving us all at the same table

I say: now

all the volumes on the same rock

a word that means space

bestows

the head conspires

grasped by strong hands

for having hidden in the darkness this rock

and inevitably stands out. A sensation

like a horse that whispers to the ear

capable of little pieces of appetizing and healthy breath

heated coming from respiration

like a trickle

20.01.14

JK: For the past two years you've been working on an artistic research project. The gravity of this research is on a special location. Could you tell me something more about this?

SPG: In the German town of Beucha there is a former quarry, situated 15 km from Leipzig, which was dug out of a hill. Here the granite was extracted for the construction of one of the largest war memorials in Europe, the Monument of Battle of Nations in Leipzig. The quarry is no longer in use for the extraction of raw materials and is now filled with water.

Imagine the water as ice pulled up from the quarry. Imagine turning it around 180° and putting it down. I have been working with this possibility the last two years. The focus of this project is the element of impossibility and of failure as soil for this utopian idea.

The negative space of the Völker- schlachtdenkmal is my field of research; the ephemeral ice monument is tangible in my artistic research, it is constantly in flux. I put myself in the arena of change.

Waiting for the lake to become a massive piece of ice is an important part of this project as well. In this space of time I make work on the site or back in my studio. I record the water transformations, visit the workers of a quarry that is still in use, and stay at the church house on top of the hill, falling asleep with the idea of having this granite under my body.

JK: What will you be showing in 1646?

SPG: Some of the art works are former projects that have in some way led to the current project in Beucha. For example, the sculptures that I'll be showing are the result of an extended research I did six years ago. You can see two replicas of geodes, filled with crystal glaze.

Crystals are not only beautiful because of their pure aesthetic, but also because they are the result of very long and slow development, revolving around transformation and becoming.

Six years ago I undertook the challenge of recreating geodes out of base materials using quartz as the main ingredient and hot air. Re-staging this piece in 1646, six years after its creation, I want to address the question of decay and its shift of aesthetic quality overtaken by the laws of nature.

I stumbled upon some recipes for crystal glaze, which was used a lot in the 70's to create a certain psychedelic effect on bathroom or kitchen tiles.

These recipes were developed to 3D formulas, which I used to make the filling of the sculptures. Some I opened afterwards, others remain closed.

JK: You also made a video. What do we see?

SPG: I'm showing a video in which I keep a paper crystal in the air using a hair drier. This process started in the quarry in Leipzig. My tent, which was near the church above the ravine, was made to float above the abyss with the use of Helium balloons. The tent flew away during the trial phase and is now on the bottom of the lake.

I wanted to re-enact this in my studio in the Netherlands, without the ravine, the church or quarry. Prior to the

actual recording I experimented extensively with the visual possibilities. The paper crystal was folded from the original scaled proportions. I'm playing with various oppositions that can also be found in the project at large, mainly that between creating- becoming. The hair drier is a light reference to Abramovic's 'Art must be beautiful.'

JK: Would you say it's a kind of expedition, in which you go out collecting objects in order to study them and gain knowledge? There is a tension between creating beautiful objects and the almost scientific investigation of a specific material. Would you say you go up the mountain to observe the workings of natural laws?

SPG: I'd like to see it as an exchange. Many historical events coincide in this place. This is both tangible and visible, creating an area of tension, which I find very stimulating. I try to absorb all of these elements and express them in my work. I'm fascinated with the tension between natural laws and linear human history.

CL: I was now so much bigger that I could not see myself anymore. As big as a landscape in the distance. I was in the distance. More perceptible in my ultimate mountains and in my most remote rivers.

(...) [H]ow can I say it, if not timidly like this: life is it self my self. Life is it self my self, and I don't understand what I say. And then I adore.¹

JK: Could you explain this a little more? How do you make this tension between natural laws and linear history visible in your work?

SPG: The ravine, which used to be a quarry, was built in order to eternalize an ideology. This was back in 1913, a few years before WWI started. With the rock that was extracted, Emperor William II, commemorated the Battle of Leipzig of 1813 and had the Monument of the Battle of nations built. Later it became a stage for the Soviets and also Hitler addressed his audience there. Today it carries the slogan "Imagine Europe".

This quarry is like the residue or the negative image of this monument, that has had so many different meanings and functions over the course of history. When you pass the quarry today, nature has taken over once more. The building blocks that were extracted have outlived many generations.

There is no doubt that the meaning of material is in constant flux. For instance, the context of the buildings, monuments or soil we live on, changes through time. Much faster than the development of crystals, leaving the stones fiercely unbreakable, doing their job: being immortal for each generation's truth.

27.01.14

MZ:

J : Would you say it's a kind of science?

S : *The changes, yes.*

20.01.14

JK: And when do these natural laws come into play? Will you be bringing the stones to the isolated space of a laboratory, in order to test them?

Creating a blueprint of these million year old rocks is like approaching immortality. For a human being, it's quite hard to grasp 200 billion years of age. I will not bring the stones; the quarry is filled with water, of which I will be taking a sample to 1646.

*CL: Around him, an emptiness blew, in which a man finds himself when he is going to create. Desolated, he provoked the great solitude. (...) And, like an old man who has not learned to read, he measured the distance that separated him from the word.*²

JK: But this dimension of time can only be shown through science, for example through carbon dating?

SPG: I'm not seeking to show these natural laws or extract facts from them. What fascinates and moves me about this place is accessible and has to do with natural creation, the distance between time visualized in the formation of rock, the existence of our ideologies and the life span of the individual.

"She did not come to reveal the mystery, she came to reaffirm it."³

27.01.14

MZ:

A kind of science?

In the lunar calendar, maybe, where one can create the stains and features of deception of the self and then you can turn 12 and be 12 times the word and rarely mirror to reflect the sun light during Eros' five senses

Prey to a violent emotion

*I felt the beating of the waves
ten thousand years on the table
up to half of the body
with extravagant insults
and nothing else*

*I even desired death in the name of the soldier
of the chronic illness, or the toxic composition
and I remember a friend who died in coherence
to this same deception of the self.*

20.01.14

JK: And what will you do with the water?

Water is such changeable material, as opposed to Beuchaer granitpyrophir, the granite. I will be showing microscopic images of the water, digitally projected in the 1646 space.

JK: So would you say it is the material or the poetic

quality of water that most interested you.

SPG: I think both are inseparable, but I'd say closer to the poetic value. The different shapes and transitions of water possess an unequalled expressiveness. As an amateur chemist I do refer to alchemy, mother of science. CL: I know what I'm doing here: I count the instants that drop and are thick with blood. (...) I am a concomitant being: in myself, I gather the time past, the present and the future, the time that pounds in the tick-tack of the clocks.⁴

JK: In what other ways will you express this?

SPG: By keeping paper crystals floating in the air, while wearing my overalls. By recording the sound of ice. By showing everything, the hair dryer, the failing and the impossible. Daily life as a laboratory. Next to the geodes I will also present the recipes containing the ingredients as chemical formulas.

*CL: Everything in the world began with a yes. One molecule said yes to another molecule and life was born. But before prehistory there was the prehistory of prehistory and there was the never and there was the yes. It was ever so. I do not know why, but I do know that the universe never began.*⁵

24.01.14:

MZ:

*they are born
and with their eyes unfolded in different directions
robust and large, not unlike a dead fish that gets
thrown back into the water.
that's it
despite the heroic behavior of the opposite
(seeing that the battle ended in a bloodbath)*

*"Clarice scrawled, 'A question from when I was a little girl that I can answer only now: are rocks made, or are they born? Answer: rocks are.'"*⁶

¹ Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*

² Clarice Lispector, *The Apple in the Dark.*

³ Ester Schwartz, *The Kabbalistic Ethics of Clarice Lispector.*

⁴ Clarice Lispector, *Live Water.*

⁵ Clarice Lispector, *The hour of the Star.*

⁶ Benjamin Moser, *Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector.*