


**Please cite the Published Version**

Domingues, Patrícia  (2023) A fracturing practice. FORUM+, 30 (1/2). pp. 46-53. ISSN 0779-7397

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5117/forum2023.1/2.006.domi>

**Publisher:** Brepols Publishers NV

**Version:** Published Version

**Downloaded from:** <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/639768/>

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With a background in jewellery and the craft of stone cutting, I am interested in understanding how materials and landscapes are cut, fractured, and broken up and how the fragmentation and reconstruction of the landscape is intimately connected with human skills, techniques, craft, and technologies. Within my practice I explore the idea that matter, rather than being an inert object, is sensitive, embedded in aliveness.

### An intracorporeal relationship: Between jewellery and geology

Human development is always a response to what is already latent within materials and environments themselves. Material culture is never just based on human achievements but on the interrelation of more-than-human environments and forces. In this sense, my research speculates that, by mediating micro and macro perceptions of the landscape while relating geological phenomena to the way humans handle materials in their own bare hands, the living world forms an interconnected web of different organisms, energies and knowledge which are continually in flux.

Inspired by posthumanistic ideas, I question the humanistic notions that, as posthumanist philosopher Francesca Ferrando demonstrates, the human being is the result of several processes of separation between humans and rocks, plants, animals, and even other humans.<sup>1</sup> In this research, I look instead for an intracorporeal relationship with matter, not of exclusion but of inclusivity, in which the way landscapes are manifested is the very foundation for different forms of life to communicate, unfold, and evolve.

In the exhibition *A Fracturing Practice* presented at the M.A.D.Gallery, PXL-MAD School of Arts Hasselt, jewellery, large scale objects, digital and material artefacts catalyse ways to reflect on and relate more thoughtfully with the materiality of the landscapes that foment humans' culturally and physically constructed worlds.

Patrícia Domingues gained a Master of Arts from the University of Trier, Department of Gemstone and Jewellery Design in Idar-Oberstein, Germany (2013) and a PhD in Visual Arts from the University of Hasselt & PXL-MAD School of Arts Hasselt (2022). Since 2009 she has participated in group and solo exhibitions across Europe. Her work has received numerous prizes: New Traditional Jewellery in Amsterdam (2012), Talente Award in Munich (2014), Mari Funaki Award for Emerging Artist in Australia (2014) and the Young Talent Prize of the European World Crafts Council in Belgium (2015).

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# A FRACTURING PRACTICE

Patrícia  
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Overview of the exhibition *A Fracturing Practice* that was part of the doctoral defence *A Fracturing Practice - Mapping Phenomenological and Emergent Encounters with Landscapes, Technologies, Events, Objects and Jewellery*, M.A.D. Gallery, PXL-MAD School of Arts, 2022 © Patrícia Domingues.

## The cut and the fracture

During my doctoral research, I had the chance to participate as artist-in-residence in a workshop supported by the Salzburg Summer Academy and guided by the Greek stone sculptor, Andreas Lolis. I lived and worked at the Kiefer Quarry in Salzburg, Austria, for a period of two months. My aim was to look at things on another scale and find different ways to connect through my work with the materiality of the quarry and of the mountain. Observing the deconstruction of the mountain range there into stone fragments and dust, triggered a profound reflection on the immediate, but often dismissed relationship between material culture and extractive realities.

What specifically intrigued me was the tension between intentional acts, such as cutting into the material, and uncontrolled accidents, such as fractures. After spending a long period observing and experiencing how to cut natural stones and seeing how they break accidentally, I started provoking fragilities and tension points myself to find out how the materials would react (see image *Continuous fractured landscape*). The pieces I developed during my time at the quarry result from fractures incised into a material landscape. Through the will to control, the fractures develop and are liberated as the material inevitably cracks in release. The lines, fractures and cuts visible in my work are always the result of repetitive gestures performed on the material and its responsive language. They evoke a sort of geological archive, based on a succession of bodily actions or events.

This perspective, that craft interplays with the wilderness found in materials, clashes with classic notions which consider it to be the exercise of masterly control over materials and techniques. Whilst the cut is a premeditated decision, the fracture is partially out of my control since I can never entirely control its shape and intensity within the material. From this non-anthropocentric view, skill is being reinterpreted as a way to relate to materials and landscapes. As I metabolise the crack in my practice, I sporadically feel in tune with it. Whilst creating stages for materials to perform on, establishing a relationship of authorship, I look at myself as an intermediary, as someone who initiates actions that end up having a will of their own.







Above: Overview of the exhibition *A Fracturing Practice* that was part of the doctoral defence *A Fracturing Practice - Mapping Phenomenological and Emergent Encounters with Landscapes, Technologies, Events, Objects and Jewellery*, M.A.D. Gallery, PXL-MAD School of Arts, 2022 © Patrícia Domingues.

Left: *Continuous fractured landscape*, sculpture made of limestone from the heart of the Kiefer quarry, with the support of the Salzburg Summer Academy, 2017 © Zeb Coune.

## Reconstructing material landscapes

I have been investigating different classes of materials: natural stone and different kinds of artificial, synthetic, and reconstructed materials, such as cast stone (see image *Imagined erosion*). These materials are often a combination of resin with stone, mineral, or metal powder. They are hybrids, presenting characteristics from both the natural and industrial environments. The differences in origin and quality between natural and artificial stones have been an inspiration in my work; a natural stone is always a unique element in the sense that in nature no two are the same and once a stone is cut, this action is irreversible, whereas the reconstructed and artificial material is a massive, industrial block. In the latter, the idea of uniqueness is lost, since no matter where the material is cut, the internal result will always be the same. It functions as a blank sheet of paper, devoid of personality, where I can reinvent and reconstruct the observations I have made in the natural world.

As I generate fractures in this industrial material, unique new features are created, giving rise to a new sense of individuality. With a chisel and a hammer, I specifically concentrate on fragmenting and then reconstructing a piece of reconstructed material. It's a conscious tautological gesture to reconstruct what has already been fragmented and reconstructed by mining and industrial processes. In this way, I mimic the imaginary relationship between the movements, patterns, and rhythms found in my surroundings. On a small, controlled scale, blocks of artificial nature are broken down and reunited, with the idea of recreating an image of a landscape. I like to think the pieces of jewellery form a link between the immense and the detailed, and present a way to bring a grand-scale aspect of natural and industrial environments into the intimate realm of the human body.







Above: *Many deliberated*, necuron, aluminium powder, steel, brooch. 60 x 60 x 35 mm, 2014 © Patrícia Domingues.

Left: *Imagined erosion*, reconstructed lapis-lazuli, steel, brooch, 75 x 50 x 30 mm, 2018 © Patrícia Domingues.

## Modern Animism

In an installation titled *Modern Animism*, my aspiration was to connect the digital and material worlds. In collaboration with V-A Studio (a collective of graphic designers based in Lisbon) and with the help of artificial intelligence, we created an algorithm that captures virtual doubles of natural, artificial, and synthetic stone fragments. During the exhibition, visitors were invited to choose their favourite stone and carry it away with them like an amulet. As a form of exchange, all participants were asked to take a picture of the stone and upload it to the digital platform [www.modernanimism.com](http://www.modernanimism.com). With the participation of the audience, a landscape of materials was physically fragmented, while simultaneously being digitally reconstructed.

In my research, I don't consider animism to be the attribution of a living soul to plants, rocks, and inanimate objects, but rather the attribution of a fundamental bodily relationship to things and the world. This relationship, argues anthropologist Tim Ingold, enables the possibility of life 'as the potential of the circulations of materials and currents of energy that course through the world to bring forms into being and hold them in place for their allotted span. It is not, then, that life is in stones. Rather, stones are in life.'<sup>2</sup> Things are alive then, not because humans have projected ideas upon a static surface but because they are continually forming new ecologies within the earth's environment. In my work, I recognise how technologies also belong to a wider state of interdependence, of things continuously participating<sup>3</sup> in each other's existences. As the British archaeologist Christopher Tilley states, westerners too demonstrate a kind of animism in their ways of living: instead of relating to a non-human world of stone, we relate animistically to the world of digital devices.<sup>4</sup>

The installation deals with animistic, metaphorical thinking that, as Tilley suggests, relates parts and wholes, allowing us to see similarities in differences and understand and experience one kind of thing in terms of another.<sup>5</sup> Since we cannot experience the mountain all at once, we instead take a fragment of it in a mapping process, connecting our body with the mountain's body. We have a sympathetic relationship of kinship with our surroundings, and this awareness is further enhanced as we surround ourselves with fragments of nature: minerals, stones, plants, bits of metal, pieces of wood, or even images of our own surroundings. Fragments, jewellery, and portable objects are a sort of 'sympathetic technology'. By this I mean that artefacts bring us closer to the world as sympathy generates closeness. Within this relationship, they perhaps have an empathic function, intervening animistically in our relationships with the material and digital worlds.

With the development of this project, I gained a sense of Australian writer and composer Kate Crawford's suggestion, that we should think of media not as extensions of the human senses (as Marshall McLuhan argues) but rather as extensions of the earth.<sup>6</sup> Digital technologies straddle the human and the natural and although digital networks may seem immaterial, they are in fact physical extracts from the earth. In returning to materials that are increasingly mined to sustain modern societies, such as marble, silicon, and gold, my aspiration was that the installation should highlight and call attention to our ever-larger consumption of the mineral world.

- 1 Ferrando, Francesca. *Philosophical Posthumanism*. Bloomsbury, 2019, pp. 87–89.
- 2 Ingold, Tim. *Anthropology – Why It Matters*. Polity Press, 2018, p. 15.
- 3 See participation mode in Christopher Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone – Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. Berg, 2014, pp. 19–22. 'Merleau-Ponty's work suggests that participation is a fundamental process of perception, an active interplay between the body and that which it perceives. In our sensorial engagement with the world, we engage with it, flesh to flesh.'
- 4 Tilley, p. 21.
- 5 Tilley, p. 22.
- 6 Crawford, Kate. *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*. Yale University Press, 2021, p. 40.





***Modern Animism***, installation by Patrícia Domingues in collaboration with V-A Studio, composed of natural and man-made stones such as marble, turritella agate, silicon, howlite, chrysocolla and artificial red-carnelian with gold veins. Created for *Kleureyck*, curated by Siegrid Demyttenaere, an initiative by the Modern Design Museum of Ghent and Lille Tripostal in 2019-2020. Created for *Cold Sweat*, curated by Cristina Filipe and João Norton de Matos SJ, an initiative by Lisbon Jewellery Biennial in 2021. © Patrícia Domingues and Zeb Coune.