

The Lost Exploitation Journals



That turquoise ring on your finger,
the turquoise in your ears,
where do they come from?
The crystals and diamonds, the rubies and amethysts?
Which earth are they from?
The camera that records you,
your hands as they explore the world bejewelled and adorned,
which minerals do they 'perform'?

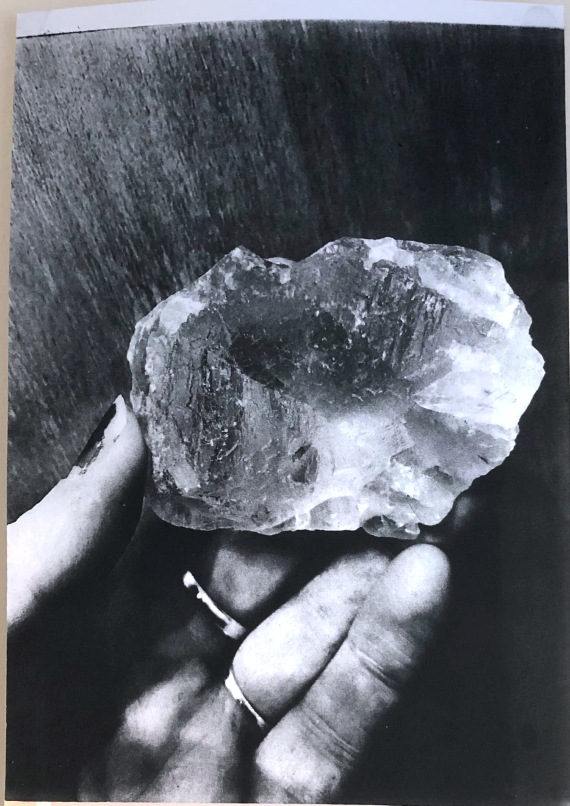
In the mountainous regions of the Southern cone in South America,
stories of mineral extraction
hold hands with the colours and histories of those landscapes.
The mountains of seven colours, as they are called,
the greens and blues,
pinks and yellows of chemical reactions,
of geological dissolution and volcanic activity.
Geysers blasting highly pressurised volumes
of boiling water up into the air,
salt plains that breathe white jagged crystals
like jewels of the earth,
while the technologies and mechanics of human endeavour
peel back,
with heavy machinery,
water, toxic chemicals and explosives,
the layers of our deepest Earth's seams.



My hand is nowhere to be seen,
Except around the other machine,
the one I hold-
the slender and discreet photographic eye-
that records the minerals and pigments
of these hot, dry landscapes I witness.
A million miles from where I live now,
millions of years from its inception,
millions of particles of earth, stone and pigment,
compressed and crunching under foot-
dehydrated from the scorching sun all day,
frozen by the freezing cold all night.
Under my feet,
the minerals slowly, invisibly,
compressed and formed, in the deep.

Sitting at home,
those colours are transported,
carried with me into new landscapes of adornment,
in my ears, on my hands, around my neck
and in my photographic markings
they start to disappear into the fabric of our accelerated viewing,
of the images of our daily lives.

Maybe,
As part of my distant DNA,
these mineral stories
have become the memories of my ancestors,
and yet, like the Incas and Aztecs,
the Apaches and Navajos,



ROSE QUARTZ

30 million years ago

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE, SELF LOVE

BRAZIL, INDIA, MADAGASCAR, URUGUAY

turquoise, a readily found stone at that time,
found in the rocky and cavernous parts of their worlds,
became a symbol of healing and protection,
of the sky and the water,
a manifestation of the sun's life-giving powers,
worn and valued beyond its colour and form.

I am lost without them,
as they remind me of my life before coming here,
a life in the vast landscapes of South America,
from where they stem.

In the high Altiplano of the Atacama Desert,
between Argentina, Peru, Bolivia and Chile,
mineral extraction of copper,
of lithium and of iron,
and other minerals
scar the high-altitude volcanic mountains and salt-lake plains.

These minerals are increasingly extracted
by ever more present human machines
to power other machines,
the machines that make machines invisible.

Lithium is used for electric batteries-
it powers our lives,
our phones, computers,
our sustainable transport
lost in our digital existence, excavated from the land
these invisible minerals are the powerhouses of
our contemporary resistance
and estrangement from the land that makes us



Turquoise extracts are now extracted by hand,
from deposits that have been exposed on the land
they are starting to falter and disappear
not infinite, yet infinitely extracted

Places where the mineral and human collide
are now zones of dissolution,
new geological holes,
where mines have left troughs and fissures in the landscape
and permanent toxic pigments colour their surface
It happened in the Atacama, it happens here

These rings I wear, these earrings,
they colour my body and adorn my fingers
They tap into deep reservoirs under the earth,
polished and honed,
The aesthetics outcome
of deep time deposits
of mining that hole.

Can they be used as living memories of that which is being lost?
of the people whose lands they displace,
whose water they soak up,
whose earth they distress,
whose bodies they intoxicate

Deep underground
Beyond the blue green rocks,



and deep into the soul of the sky
In the Atacama,
they look for our origins,
the debris of earth's first encounters in space
The ALMA light millimetre array,
looking for the depths of the universe,
the meteors on the ground,
the bones of our lost ancestors
Will these stars reveal the chapters of our demise?
Do these rocks, these alien encounters,
foretell our mineral decline?
Will our bones,
anaemic, fragile and withering
be left to remind us, buried deep inside,
of the carbon, of the iron, of the minerals we enjoyed in life

Grounded in the value we give the earth's riches
Hard, cut deep into its furrows, its strata, its coat
That turquoise ring,
tipping the end of that Navajo arrow,
adorning that necklace on a Pharaoh's tomb,
piecing together that Mayan facemask,
it sits on me now
it envelops my finger, it embellishes.
Can it also begin to heal my furrowed brow?