

# ON THE ROCKS

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KADER ATTIA / ALEJANDRO CAMPINS / ZHANNA KADYROVA

ORNAGHI & PRESTINARI / ARCANGELO SASSOLINO

MANUELA SEDMACH / MARTA SPAGNOLI / JOSÉ ANTONIO SUÁREZ LONDOÑO

SUN YUAN & PENG YU / PASCALE MARTHINE TAYOU

JOSÉ YAUQUE / ZHUANG HUI

07.06.2024 – 14.09.2024

GALLERIA CONTINUA is delighted to present in its Parisian space *On the rocks*, a group show bringing together sculptures, installations, paintings, and videos that explore the fascinating relationship fourteen artists have with stone and minerality.

The title plays, between sweetness and bitterness, on the double meaning of the English expression "On the rocks." On one hand, in bar jargon, it refers to a drink served with ice cubes; on the other, it describes a difficult situation, borrowing from nautical imagery, of a ship stranded on the rocks. The selection of artworks presented, both joyful and impactful, highlights the incisive perspective of the artists on today's world and on this material. Stone transcends time, evoking both the durability and continuity of nature in a world in perpetual change. Minerals, with their palettes of colors and varied textures, allow artists to explore unique aesthetic dimensions, creating a subtle dialogue between the natural and the artificial. Beyond its intrinsic beauty, stone can also suggest the weight of time, symbolize the heaviness of emotions and situations, and evoke immobility in the face of change. The polysemy of this material is reflected by the different approaches of the artists featured in this exhibition.

Upon entering, we are immediately greeted by the work *Teenager* by the artist duo Sun Yuan and Peng Yu. Hyper-realistic sculptures of people with rocks instead of heads are installed around a chaise longue and an armchair. Offering a humorous yet sinister representation of modern society, the artists investigate the nature and limits of communication among people, caught in the frenetic pace of today's world.

Behind them, Pascale Marthine Tayou's colorful granite cobblestones present another use of stone.

*Colorful Stones* refers to social unrest and moments of revolt, such as the French Revolution and the May 1968 protests, highlighting alliances and divisions within communities. The use of color, a characteristic element of the artist's work, celebrates diversity and inclusion, while the contrast between the robust materials and vibrant hues underscores the resilience and courage needed to bring some lightness to the issues of our world.

Zhanna Kadyrova's creations talk about a rawkind of beauty, shaped by nature itself. Made from stones collected along the banks of the Rika River at the onset of the Ukrainian conflict in 2022, these works carry the aura of resistance.

In a distinctly different manner, the attraction to minerals resonates magically in the paintings of Cuban artist José Yaque, by the means of colored pigments that evoke stratification and the succession of geological layers. His creative process allows the paint to unfold on the canvas by itself, turning the artist into the one who orchestrates this fortuitous and thoughtful encounter of elements.

In a captivating dialogue between material tension and conceptual demand, two distinct works propose reflections on solidity and fragility. Arcangelo Sassolino's *Geografia del conflitto* presents a precarious assembly of ten marble slabs, held together only by the grip of a vice. Here, the weight of gravity and the inherent instability of the stones create an atmosphere of palpable tension, evoking a sense of suspended danger and unpredictability. In contrast, Kader Attia's *Narciso* offers a contemplative exploration of human vanity through the juxtaposition of an industrial cinder block and a mirrored surface. The cinder block, suspended above the mirror located horizontally on the floor, appears light

and ethereal while its solidity contrasts with the ephemeral nature of its reflection. Through these divergent approaches, both works question the transient and fragile nature of human existence.

In an entirely different register, the *Carteroccia* series by Italian artist Marta Spagnoli showcases technical experiments of a process that requires letting go with the material. These paintings are created by letting the acrylic paint deposit on a special paper containing mineral powder and resin. This paper is partially water-repellent and easily modifiable, making it difficult to control. The freedom of gesture and the difficulty of control are juxtaposed to develop a reflection around materials, where the mineral's stability is balanced with the creative gesture and the fluidity of the paint.

This ensemble of works shows a marked interest in the mineral, exploring this theme through a rich variety of techniques and effects. Using the intrinsic qualities of solid materials, these works nevertheless remind us of fragility and impermanence. The use of stones by the artists featured in this exhibition thus reveals the metaphorical character of this material, its latent polysemy, and its multiple paradoxes. Indeed, the use of rocks in these works reminds us that despite apparent stability, anything seemingly permanent can be overturned or destroyed.

#### About the gallery:

Founded in 1990 in San Gimignano, Italy, GALLERIA CONTINUA has expanded its locations to Beijing, Les Moulins, Havana, São Paulo, Rome, Paris, and Dubai. GALLERIA CONTINUA represents a desire for continuity between times and a desire to write a current history. Thanks to its investment in forgotten and unconventional sites, the gallery has always chosen atypical locations, developing a strong identity and an original positioning in over thirty years of activity. In 2021, Galleria Continua opened a new space in the heart of the French capital. This space is dedicated to experimentation and the encounter between art, society and culture, in a constantly evolving setting.

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