



MUSÉE BARBIER-MUELLER
GENÈVE

GROUND FLOOR

SLATES

A mineral memory, a family history.

Free expansion, Inclusion, Expansion in the mould

“Provide the right conditions for a memory, and it will be able to express itself.”

There is a mineral family that goes from granite to clay to slate. Sometimes, at a certain temperature, the latter expands, revealing its stratification, and its memory.

This mineral family includes a primary rock, granite, which is formed from the slow cooling of the Earth's crust and composed of three crystals: quartz, mica, feldspar. Granite is the main bedrock, giving rise to the formation of clays.

With time – in this case deep time, millions of years – but also very often shifts, a lot of water, repeated cycles of freezing and thawing, as well as acid agents, the primary material degrades, transforms, and from hard and solid becomes an avatar, a “second” rock, known as detrital or sedimentary, which is called clay, whose mineral intimacy preserves the memory of its origin, but whose tactile, physical and structural properties are radically different. Depending on its age and sedimentation conditions, each clay has different characteristics.



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But the cycle of transformation does not stop there.

When clay, subjected to tectonic movements, finds itself compressed in the Earth's crust, the pressure and temperature combine to form a metamorphic rock, which retains the memory of its genesis and therefore of its "ancestors", granite and clay. This is slate, whose metamorphic history is rooted in the detrital and sedimentary origin of clay and continues its transformation cycle. Formed by the compression and heating of clayey silt in the Earth's crust, it retains the physical and visible trace of its origin in the form of tiny and innumerable strata, like a compressed lithic memory. Slate is an old clay, and, since two clays cannot be identical, two slates can only ever be different.

It's around this "old clay" that my work is organized. To begin with, I respond intuitively to the kinship that connects these materials to one another. If I can fire clay, what will happen when I fire the material that derives from it?

We know that fire allows the material to regain lost space. The slate opens up, releasing energy from the more or less homogeneous sediments that have been accumulating within it for a long time. This transformation generates a set of ideas. As if in fast motion, a potential new stage in the mineral's cycle is brought about: the intervention of a cultural act that gives it meaning.

Jacques Kaufman