

Mutated Lithics

Paul Salveson

Properly grinding an alloy vibrospade requires a shard of crystallized magma at least 3 kg in mass. In an effort to locate one, today's round of petrifact deciphering will start with an inventory of a 3-foot mound of forged obsidian. But we still don't know why we couldn't tell the difference between a handful of diamonds and 1/10 of yesterday's ceramic splinter supply. Our gleaming heap of igneous fragments, then, could just as easily be deemed drill bits by late afternoon.

When recovered objects' origins and characteristics are no longer fixed concepts, their analysis necessitates continual experimentation. Isolating multiple false functions becomes a research goal. How can we hypothesize highly coiled monofilaments' feasibility as flint? Why not attempt to replicate the density of quartz in desiccated polymerized starch chips?

Adjacent to an ancient bog on a grassy slug-flecked clearing flanked by megaliths in rural Denmark, a slippage occurs between fact and artifact. "Mutated Lithics" generates biobased research to propose an atemporality of both familiar materials and the labors typically imposed on them. Willful amnesia demands a reliance on anachronistic categories of behavior and knowledge production as the ties binding the use and structure of anything recognizable begin to unravel. The sign systems governing the automatic comprehension of things rearrange themselves, taking up new logics, exchanging their natural and synthetic values.

Paul Salveson currently lives in Philadelphia and received his BA from Bard College and his MFA from the University of Southern California. His work has been exhibited at MoMA PS1, Swiss Institute, New York, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, Human Resources Los Angeles, and Actual Size, Los Angeles.

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