

Deborah Poe

Phosphorus (video)

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“Rock box” (object & poem)



*Rock Box*

1.

what covers the face  
above naked collarbone  
at first favors jagged bruise—  
cuts severs bites or blisters—  
but it's gems that burst forth  
fracture and extend from face's side  
like open amethyst  
elements minerals layers  
contain multitudes  
figures on a face this geometry  
spatial arrangements along the skin

\*

solid inner and liquid outer cores viscous mantle silicate crust

\*

Quartz Porphyry Sulphur Biotite-  
Granite Phosphorite Quartz  
Magnetite Lignite (Brown Coal) Clay  
Slate

Graphite Flourite Bauxite Albite  
Dolomite Chromite Galena Biotite  
Limonite (Brown) Agate Zinblend

Stibnite Jasper Pumice Malachite  
Marble Anthracite Lava Garnet  
Calcite Argentite Two Mica Granite  
Gold Ore Basalt Sandstone Alabaster  
Quartz Manzanite Hornblende  
Granite

\*

plane the thickness of space  
elements in concert

\*

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Granite

\*

your albite spectra  
your sulphur cellspark  
your graphite tongue  
your alabaster hands  
your marble shoulders  
me

\*

what richness friends

stewards in the dearth

\*

house or hall  
ward  
bodies  
arrangements  
voices that fill

\*

*material transforms  
becomes language*

\*

legible passages

\*

in my mouth  
the taste of earth

\*

less a comportment  
than bearing  
less a burdening  
than scaffolding

\*

continental and oceanic crust  
bodies extended across this skin  
permeability harmonics  
those cores exist to outlast  
components on the edge  
a gathering a part  
apart from me  
the high wind the highways  
the landscapes you traverse

\*

weather marks time in unregistered heavens  
hives

\*

subject to the weather  
subject to their footprints  
subject to their trash  
subject to their natural gas  
subject to their ignorance  
subject to their levees  
subject to your solace  
something solid

2.

Texas 1969, New York 2014  
a geologist minds her mineral samples.

steam rises from a twice-cracked teacup;

the Sahara is Earth's mineral dust major source (millions of tons per year);

42 in Stillaguamish Valley flattened by a mudslide;

the smell of this old library book, Creeley's *For Love*;

Armstrong and Aldrin step to moon's surface in 100 languages

and on common igneous rock—basalt, anorthosites, and breccias;

only 100 of the world's people study dinosaurs;

a single hand draws a bison 14,000 years ago—  
this new relationship with stone pulls language to throat;

the volume of new hydraulic fracturing wells,  
the number of strokes from this ancestor's hand;

respite in shelter from the rain;

a jack rabbit bursts across the scene;

an eight-year-old child breaks open rock with rock on grandmother's porch;

she recognizes nature's canvas, pauses  
*milky quartz* and *chalcedony*;  
draws the relationship between human and stone.

Note: When I was in Texas in March 2014, I found this treasure I called “The Rock Box” at my favorite antique shop in Gonzales, Texas—the town where my grandmother lives. The box was missing nine rocks, and I decided that I would ask the following beloved and admired artists and writers to contribute something inspired by each of those missing rocks to fill those empty compartments: Quartz Porphyry—Melanie Noel; Sulphur—Claire Hero; Phosphorite—Julie Joosten; Graphite—Lee Gough; Albite—Brenda Iijima; Biotite—Kate Schapira; Two Mica Granite—Meredith Stricker; Alabaster—Hassen Saker. Stone did not compel Layli LongSoldier, so the grasses of her home and her poetry grace the front of the *Rock Box*. Behind my poem, draped over the front of the box, is a “wall” of hand-crushed native New York rock as well a piece of wood suspended by copper. *Rock Box* is on exhibit at Casper College in Wyoming, August 25<sup>rd</sup>-October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014 in the Goodstein Visual Arts Center.

Deborah Poe is the author of the poetry collections *the last will be stone, too* (Stockport Flats), *Elements* (Stockport Flats), and *Our Parenthetical Ontology* (CustomWords), as well as a novella in verse, *Hélène* (Furniture Press). In addition, Deborah co-edited *Between Worlds: An Anthology of Fiction and Criticism* (Peter Lang). Her visual work—including video and handmade books—has appeared with *Handmade/Homemade Sister Exhibit* (Casper, Wyoming), *Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here* (New York City), University of Arizona Poetry Center’s *Poetry Off the Page Symposium* (Tucson), the *Handmade/Homemade Sister Exhibit* at Brodsky Gallery (Philadelphia), and ONN/OF “a light festival” (Seattle). Online exhibits of her visual and text work include *Lex-ICON*, *Yew Journal*, *PEEP/SHOW*, *Elective Affinities*, *The Volta’s Medium*, and *Trickhouse*. Deborah Poe is associate professor of English at Pace University in Pleasantville, where she directs the creative writing program and founded and curates the annual *Handmade/Homemade Exhibit*.