



RHYOLITE

Lucy Bleach

LOST ROCKS

COLOPHON

Rhyolite is one of forty mineral recompositions commissioned by A Published Event for *Lost Rocks* (2017–21).

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POSTERITY, POSTERITY,
 THIS CONCERNS YOU.
 DAY SHEDS LIGHT MORE CLEARLY ON DAYS TO COME.
 TAKE HEED:
 TWENTY TIMES SINCE THE BIRTH OF THE SUN, IF HISTORY BE TRUE
 VESUVIUS HAS BEEN ON FIRE,
 ALWAYS TO THE GREAT DESTRUCTION OF THOSE DWELLING,
 (OR THOSE WHO STAY BEHIND) ON ITS SLOPES.
 I WARN YOU NOT TO LET IT CATCH YOU UNAWARE AFTER THIS,
 THIS MOUNTAIN BEARS A WOMB HEAVY
 WITH BITUMINE, ALUM, IRON, SULPHUR, SILVER,
 GOLD, NITRE, FOUNTAINS OF WATER.
 LATER OR SOONER IT WILL TAKE FIRE AND BRING THEM FORTH
 IN A FLOWING TIDE;
 BUT BEFORE IT BRINGS THEM FORTH,
 IT IS SHAKEN AND IT SHAKES THE EARTH
 IT SMOKES, GLEAMS, FLAMES, SHATTERS THE AIR,
 ROARS HORRIBLY, GROANS, THUNDERS,
 BURNS THE NEIGHBOURING INHABITANTS.
 FLEE, WHILE YOU ARE ABLE;
 IT IS NOW ALREADY IN LABOUR; IT BREAKS OUT AND VOMITS
 A LAKE OF FIRE AND WATER;
 THIS FALLS IN HEADLONG COURSE, AND FORBIDS YOU TO FLY
 IF YOU LEAVE IT TOO LATE;
 IF IT CATCHES YOU, IT IS DONE, YOU ARE LOST.
 THE YEAR OF OUR SAVIOUR 1631 1ST OF JANUARY,
 PHILIP IV KING EMMANUEL FONSIKA, AND ZUNICA,
 COMPANIONS OF THE ROYAL MOUNTAIN, FOR THE KING,
 DESPITE REVISITING THE DISASTER OF PAST YEARS,
 NOTWITHSTANDING THE ASSISTANCE FOR THE DISASTER
 BY WHICH PROTECTION WAS OFFERED
 SO HUMANELY AND GENEROUSLY
 CONTEMPT CRUSHED THE UNWARY AND GREEDY
 TO WHOM THE HOME AND ITS FURNISHINGS
 WERE DEARER THAN LIFE.
 SO, IF YOU ARE WISE, LISTEN TO THIS 'SHOUTING' STONE.
 ABANDON YOUR HOME, ABANDON YOUR POSSESSIONS,
 FLEE WITHOUT DELAY.

Antony Suares Messia, Marquis and Vice-Prefect of the Roads.
 Epitaffio di Portici, Napoli

It's around 5am as I rise from my berth and look through the porthole. The sea, horizon and sky are one opaque mass of tar. The weather is hectic and I can feel the sea rolling beneath the boat. In the gradual pre-dawn glow, I can just make out the shape of the island. It seems ragged and rock-strewn, a massive tapering form rising from the ocean. I start to make out an intermittent red flicker from the top of the mountain. Like a flame, like a flare, like a firecracker, it blazes beyond the island's peak and then utterly disappears.

As we approach the island, the boat lunges in the swell. The increasing light of the dawn reveals the island's dark rocky terrain and persistent vegetation. A village, comprising a multitude of miniature white houses, clings to the base of the immense mountainous form. The blinking red lamp can now be recognised as a volcano's crater, percolating lava outbursts approximately every ten minutes.

The sea is too rough. When the boat nears the village jetty, it has to pull back, as the force of the waves is treacherous. Despite this early hour, there are people gathering on the jetty, anticipating the boat and its cargo. As the vessel retreats, they begin to genuflect, beseeching the captain, the weather, the god to persuade it to dock. The boat

however is defeated and withdraws into the sea, circumnavigating the island in order to return to the jetty from another angle.

Another failed attempt. The anxiety on the jetty is escalating, and the bobbing and crossing becomes more frenzied and fixated.

We try again, yet once more we fail to get close; the boat can't quite get the right angle and the waves in the full dawn light are gaining in pitch. There is a swelling number of villagers on the jetty now, their genuflecting is becoming almost hysterical.

And all the while, perhaps impervious to the localised drama at its shore, the volcano continues its steady boom.

One last attempt and somehow the captain manages to hone the boat's position and rides the surge into dock. Everyone is elated, prayers have been answered and there is much hugging and back slapping as the crew and goods are helped onto the jetty.

The journey from within the flat tray of a little Ape three-wheeler truck is speedy and perilous. In Italian 'ape' means 'bee', and these vehicles industriously colonise the tiny roads that interlace the village. The ascent from sea-level is frenetic. The roads are not much wider than the vehicle, and the journey amongst the congestion of houses switches directions with dramatic energy, narrowly missing front doors, shop corners, improvised fences and semi-curious dogs, and there are gouges carved into the rendered walls where drivers have misjudged their speed or distance, hastily swerving away from dog and/or villager. The camber of the road is constantly shifting, and the little Ape is frequently airborne as it negotiates the uneven terrain at unrecommended speed. As the route gains altitude, the integrity of the road's surface diminishes; cracks reveal substrate, edges soften into the landscape and the village dissolves into a relaxed form of agriculture, then a feral fusion of native plants and weeds. The ascent becomes so acute that the Ape struggles to maintain its speed and, suddenly spent, spontaneously gives up, making a sound similar to a baby releasing a slow-motion raspberry from its wet lips.

The climb from here is by foot. The path is now a bitter-chocolate earth, granular and soft, with thinning patches of tussock grass, increasingly

replaced by rocks, boulders and lava bombs. The incline becomes vertical, so that climbing elicits a perpendicular relationship to the ground. Looking up, it's hard to make out the peak; looking down reveals a sheer drop to the village and rocky shoreline. In approaching the summit, gale force winds blast from nowhere, whipping everything that stands proud of the rock profile.

At the summit the sound of the wind is overwhelming. It is so loud that it almost becomes silent with the roar of its own white noise. And then the volcano silently sends up enormous amounts of condensed steam, which rises from somewhere below, filling the space between the ground and the clouds above. The late afternoon winter sun turns the clouds and steam pale gold, pale pink and pearl grey. It's hard to tell where land and sky meet, and the whole landscape becomes a moment of sfumato. The steam lifts, and as the volcano re-emerges, it lets out one massive explosion which fractures the sky, and a shower of glowing projectiles can be seen in the air and then falling to the slopes.

Stromboli Volcano – named in local dialect *iddu*, or simply 'him' – shudders and purges scorching volumes from his insides. The lava flows are highly viscous, slow moving and capture gas bubbles,

known as gas slugs. This characteristic eruptive activity associated with Stromboli Volcano occurs when the rapid rise of gas slugs originating from the deep magma mingles with shallow magma at the point of eruption, all the while hissing a continuous swirl of mushrooming steam that consumes him and everything around.

The window of the room in the little white house
I am staying in looks up towards the volcano.
Near the window is a small kitchenette, and every
morning I place the coffee pot on the gas stove
top to incite the day. As I wait for the coffee to
brew, my attention is pulled back out the window
and up to the volcano; I watch it in its silence,
anticipating its own percolation. I recall a scene
from a film where one of the characters states that
things which are alike in their nature, grow to look
alike in their form. I reflect on how in my home
in Hobart I have watched my coffee pot percolate
and imagined it being a little volcano in our house.
And I wonder if this 'growing alike' is as much
anticipation and desire, as it is natural disposition
or force.

Invented by Luigi De Ponti, and patented by Alfonso Bialetti in 1933, the Bialetti Moka Express coffee pot is a stove-top coffee maker that brews coffee by sending boiling water pressurized by steam through ground coffee beans. When the lower chamber of the pot is almost empty, bubbles of steam mix with the upstreaming water, producing a signature gurgling noise, referred to as the 'Strombolian phase'. The Strombolian phase of the coffee making process enables a mixture of super-heated steam and water to pass through the already brewed coffee, producing a bitter, burnt flavour. Consequently, brewing should be ceased by removing the pot from the stove as soon as this stage is reached.²

In my Strombolian room, the wall in which the window sits butts up against the stovetop. Hung on the wall above the stove is a calendar made from heavy rag paper. Each month has an image that captures the volcano: photos taken at night with the erupting magma in full glow; the volcano viewed from the sea surrounded by glorious sunny skies; maps of Stromboli in the Aeolian Sea; scientific diagrams sourced from the EMSC that convey distinct volcanic activity. January shows a cropped view of the volcano's summit and crater immersed in billowing steam. As the steam from the coffee pot gathers, it rises up and onto the calendar, its heat and moisture curling January's page upwards, slowly revealing February. February is dedicated to a cross-section diagram of the volcano, illustrating the lower magma chamber, the central and side vents, the alternating layers of ash, pyroclastic materials and solidified lava. As the coffee reaches its Strombolian phase, I take the pot from the stove top, and the removal of steam makes January uncurl, and I am back in the present, simultaneously on the surface, at the peak and at the base.

Two weeks later, at 7am on 24th January 2014, the ferry in which I have just woken docks into the port at Naples. It is a cold but bright winter day, and after a relatively smooth crossing I arrive back in the city after my time with *iddu*.

I am keen to explore the region's super-caldera; the excavated ruins of Herculaneum, Solfatara crater, the bubbling sulphur fields of Campi Flegrei, and the ominously smoking Vesuvius. I am curious to see what residue I might find; either explicitly framed within an archaeological lens, or tacitly experienced as a force that permeates the contemporary occupation of a landscape, which has endured Vesuvius's violent eruptions throughout history.

I meet up with a local historian, who is a friend of the volcanologist I climbed with on Stromboli. The historian comes from an old Neapolitan family and is deeply connected to the architectural, cultural and geological history of the region. Throughout my time in Naples he shares with me the complex strata of the city, which is at once archived and precariously alive.

On one of our trips travelling to the Solfatara crater, we enter the town of Portici, which lies at the foot of Vesuvius, and is located near Ercolano, a contemporary city that inhabits the site of ancient Herculaneum.

As we drive through the main street of the town, we come across an old marble stele, a street monument with an inscription written by the Marquis and Vice-Prefect of the roads in Latin, which the historian explains was erected in 1632, after the eruption of Vesuvius in 1631.

POSTERI POSTERI
 VESTRA RES AGITVR
 DIES PACEM PRÆFERT DIEI NVDIVS PERENDINO
 ADVORTITE
 VICIES AB SATV SOLIS IN FABVLATVR HISTORIA
 ARSIT VESÆVVS
 IMMANI SEMPER CLADE HÆSITANTIVM
 NE POSTHAC INCERTOS OCCVRET MONEO
 VTERVM GERIT MONS HIC
 BITVMINE ALVMINE FERRO SVLPHVRE AVRO ARGENTO
 NITRO AQVARVM FONTIBVS GRAVEM
 SERIVS OCYVS IGNE SCET PELAGOQ INFLVENTE PARIET
 SED ANTE PARTVRIT
 CONCVTITVR CONCVTIT Q SOLVM
 FVMIGAT CORVSCAT FLAMMIGERAT
 QVATIT AEREM
 HORRENDVM IMMVGIT BOAT TONAT ARCET FINIBVS ACCOLAS
 EMICA DVM LICET
 IAM IAM ENITITVR ERVMPIT MIXTVM IGNE LACVM EVOMIT
 PRÆCIPITI RVIT ILLE LAPSV SERAMO FVGAM PRÆVERTIT
 SI CORRIPIT ACTVM EST PERIISTI
 ANN. SAL. CID. DC. XXXI. XVI. KAL. IAN.
 PHILIPPO IV. REGE
 EMMANVELE FONSECA ET ZVNICA COMITE MONTIS REGII
 PRO REGE
 REPETITA SVFERIO VM TEMPORVM CALAMITATE SVBSIDIQ CALAMITATIS
 HVMANIVS QVO MVNIFICENTIVS
 FORMIDATVS SERVAVIT SPRETVS OPPRESSIT INCVRTOS ET AVIDOS
 QVIBVS LAR ET SVPPHELLEX VITA POTIOE
 TVM TV SI SAPHIS AVDI CLAMANTEM LAPIDEM
 SPERRE LA REM SPERRE SARCINVLAS MORA NVLLA FVGE
 ANTONIO SVARES MESSIA MARCHIONE VICI
 PRÆFECTO VIARVM