

Stitch-split: The breath of the geologic

*David A Paton*

This paper attends to recent new materialist thinking around the agency of matter. Through performance, text and film, I will direct attention to the stitch-splitting of granite block. This is a process by which the Great Cornubian Batholith, in the South West of England, has been disassembled over several hundred years. My presentation unpacks the delicate relationships between material and person, evidenced through the incremental development of skilled labour. Drawing from my experience as a sawman and granite mason in Trenoweth Dimension Granite Quarry in Cornwall, the harsh synthesis of a stone-metal-flesh dialogue is presented as a poetic constellation of material relations. The reverberations of material knowledge echo through the habitable natures of a building, becoming embedded in its matrix and registering a more-than-human agency in its fabric. The splitting of granite for a lintel is both profoundly mundane yet, in the moment of separation, exquisitely exhales the rationale for a monadic existence.

Biography:

David A Paton is a visual artist with a specialism in stone working. His PhD is titled 'The quarry as sculpture: the place of making'. His research investigates the everyday practices of labour and skill development, from which deeper material and human interactions inform his sculpture and modes of making.