



Rude forms among us

Over a span of several decades, the 19th-century photographer Eugène Trutat documented the Dolmen de Vaour. The photographic emulsion deposited on the glass plates reveals the particular beauty of this rude stone monument. Three stones form the perimeter of a nearly rectangular interior; they are called orthostates. One orthostate is long, presenting a sort-of wall, while the other two are chunky and can be read as truncated columns. All three are set in from the perimeter, allowing a rather peculiar capstone to appear to float above them. The capstone's form has been broken by time, by giants, by chance, no one knows for sure. In one photograph, Trutat captures a man miming the megalithic monument's posture with one arm bent, the other extended, in a triumphant jump. We can only imagine the abrupt sound of the camera's shutter, as the flash diffused a cloud of smoke into the air, producing a special effect for his momentary flight.

In collaboration with the Natural History Museum in Toulouse, the exhibition *Rude forms among us* brings a

small selection of Trutat's photographs into focus. Two of his negative prints depict iconic sides of the dolmen as landscape scenes. But it would be more accurate to think of these photographs as portraits. Perhaps Trutat, who served as Director of the Museum between 1890–1900, would have agreed: the dolmen was a portrait of our place in natural history. It therefore fit both categories in parallel; it was at once nature and history. If we take it to be a natural landmark, the stone stack suits the Tarn landscape, blending with its background. But as a prehistoric monument, it stands as an object apart, pushing into the foreground. In labeling his pictures, Trutat referred to the dolmen by her proper name, Vaour, marking “en profil” and “en face” in the margins. If these documents are portraits, they present a somewhat familiar creature striking a recognizably melancholy pose.

In the gallery, beyond the photographs, looms a large structure. Its capstone is similarly broken; its legs are also slightly set in. But this dolmen is blank and glossy. It is bigger, darker, greyer,

quieter. If only for a moment, the fleeting present and the infinite past sync up. Here, without too many explanations, we happen upon a *rude form* that brings us to a time that is at some remove from our own. Its resolution is low, not high. Its joints are butted, not mitered. Its gaps are shimmed, not sculpted. It alludes to the architecture of forgotten narratives, eroded tectonics, and muddled grammar. The spaces formed within follow an ordinary plan. For now, the blocks are laid out as place holders, soon to be filled up with stuff: running water, electrical conduit, copper flashing, domestic appliances. Whether the megaliths enter our contemporary consciousness, or we move closer to the Stone Age, is not all that important. What is important is to feel a slight release from the present, to feel at ease and at home here and then.

Image Credit: Eugène Trutat, Dolmen of Vaour, Tarn, France, circa 1880. Muséum d'histoire naturelle de Toulouse.

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OPENING RECEPTION

January 31, 2020 at 7pm

SCI-ARC GALLERY

January 31 – March 15, 2020

PRESENTED BY

Anna Neimark

Design Faculty at SCI-Arc

Partner of *First Office*, Los Angeles, CA

IN COLLABORATION WITH

Frédérique Gaillard, PhD

Curatorial Assistant, Head of the Photo Library
Natural History Museum, Toulouse, France

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Muséum d'histoire naturelle de Toulouse
The Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies
in the Fine Arts

Alliance Française de Los Angeles

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RUDE FORMS AMONG US

EXHIBITION
JAN 31 - MAR 15

PRIVATE TOUR OF THE EXHIBITION
IN FRENCH + TALK "EUGENE
TRUTAT: FROM SCIENCE TO
PHOTOGRAPHIC ADVENTURE IN
THE 19TH CENTURY"

BY FREDERIQUE GAILLARD, PHD,
CURATORIAL ASSISTANT, HEAD OF THE
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MUSÉUM DE TOULOUSE, FRANCE
AND
ANNA NEIMARK
DESIGN FACULTY A
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AND THE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE DE LOS ANGELES



Eugène Trutat (1840-1910)
Circa 1858
By Amédée Trantoul, Muséum de Toulouse

PRIVATE TOUR
JANUARY 31
10:30AM TO
12:30PM

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Dolmen of Vaour, Tarn, France.
Later 19th century.
By Eugène Trutat, Muséum de Toulouse



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JANUARY 31
7PM

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