

IN THIS EDITION:

LITHIKOS GALLERY

THUNDER ROCK

MISCELLANAE

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STONEZINE 11

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editor: Tomas Lipps

BRIDGE(s) OF SIGHS

SPIRIT OF STONE

FROM THE ARCHIVES

ANNOUNCEMENTS



*stone drum, Museo Nacional Antropología
Mexico City, Mexico, photo: Tomas Lipps*

THE LITHIKOS GALLERY



Carved window lintel, somewhere in France, site unknown, photographer unknown.



Xiaoping Luo (China)

THE SPIRIT OF STONE by JAN JOHNSEN
101 PRACTICAL & CREATIVE STONE SCAPING IDEAS FOR YOUR GARDEN

Reviewed by David F. Wilson

Stone inspires love & devotion—why?

What is it about this base material that fascinates those of us reading this magazine, those of us whom I affectionately call ‘the last of the dafties?’ What fiendish allure does it possess to inspire such devotion and commitment that we endure the trials, pains and financial deprivation that it sometimes brings with it?

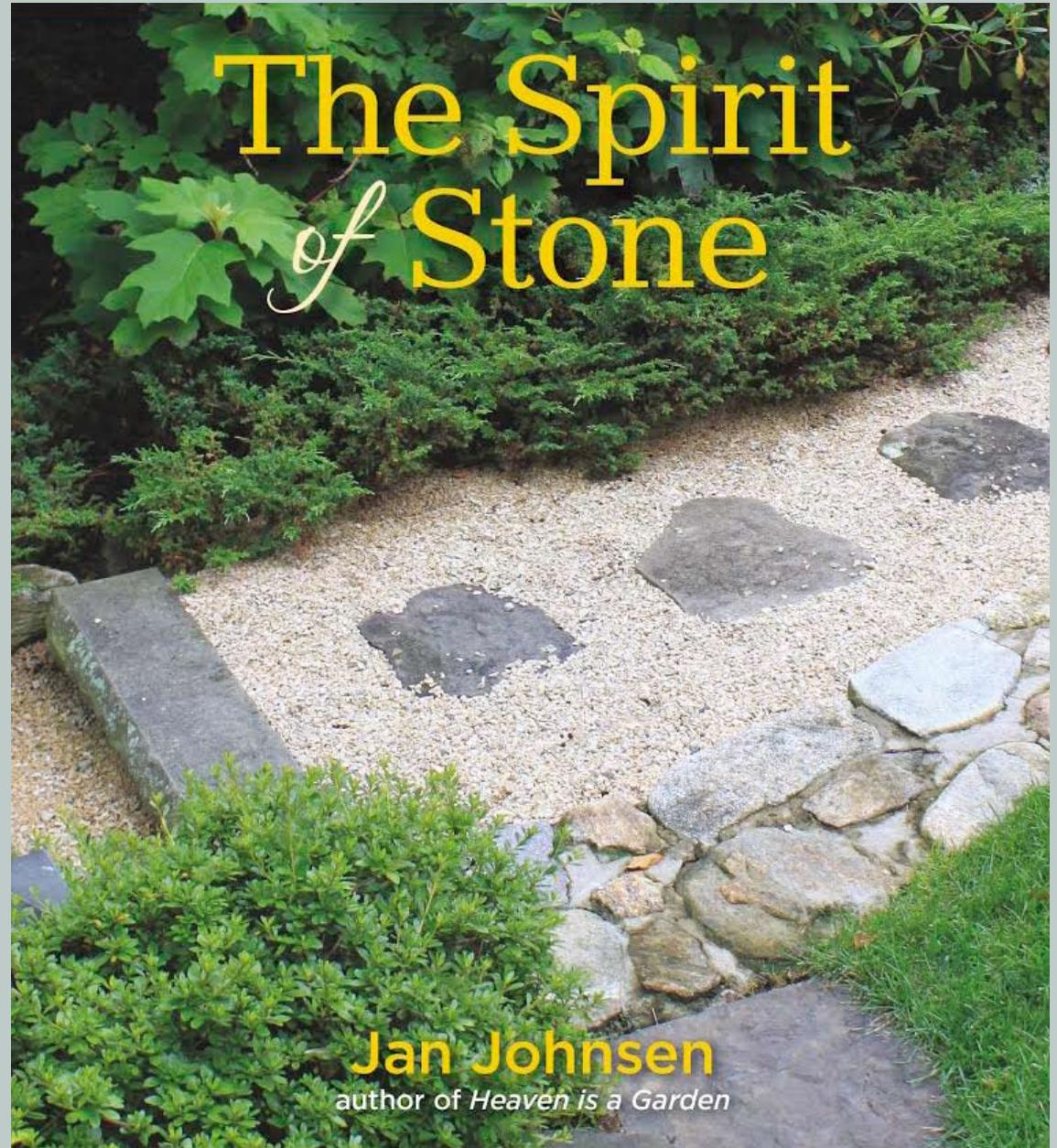
Some of these questions are answered in a welcome and timely new book to the stone canon, *The Spirit of Stone* by author Jan Johnsen, a professional landscape gardener for 40 years and an award-winning instructor at New York Botanical Gardens whose work has been featured in *Garden Design Magazine*.

Unashamedly aimed at non-professionals exploring the options of including elements of stone within their own gardens, it is filled with practical design ideas and illustrated with exemplar projects, many from gardens she herself has designed.

This book, however, is a far deeper exploration of her subject than the merely instructional and inspirational—it possesses other qualities that I find to be its main attraction and strength. Johnsen provides a passionate summation of why stone is more, why it resonates, why it appeals, why it is far from an inert lifeless material—and, importantly, why it should still be a material of choice in our environment.

Jan’s love for stone was initiated and fostered by the period she spent in Japan as a student. Her relationship with stone intensified and deepened while seeking out the imperfections, crevices and ledges through the contact sport that is rock climbing, scrambling her way up the craggy faces of New York’s Shawangunk mountains.

Thoroughly researched and interspersed with many interesting stone-related quotes, Johnsen’s book illustrates the meaning, spiritual significance and symbolism that rocks and stones have been imbued with across many cultures. Her main assertion explores how, if we are prepared to be open to it, stone can be said to possess qualities which could be called ‘spirit.’ With many a beautiful turn of phrase she appeals to her readers to “listen to the wordless instruction of the rock.” The examples she has selected to illustrate the book effectively articulate this conversation between the human and the material.





Behold, the Feidin wall. . .

This finely crafted 'combination' dry stone wall was built by waller Eddie Farrelly in eastern County Galway, Ireland. Its location is a key factor in the choice of walling style and use of the material at hand. The wall type is known as Feidin in Ireland and Galloway in Scotland.

Smaller, more regular, stone is used to build the lower, double-sided wall and larger, sometimes much larger, irregular stones for the single wall above it. The origins of this type are uncertain but some historians believe it was developed in Scotland as a way to best utilize the available stone to create stock proof fencing that could contain the wily black faced sheep common there in the 18th century.

In Ireland there are three regions with a high concentration of these double-under-single combination walls: the Aran Islands, South Galway and East Galway. The Aran walls are distinct to the islands and differ from the walls of the Irish mainland (and the Galloway dykes of southwest Scotland) by their use of large upright slabs called 'mother stones' that stand at intervals along the length of the wall.

Eddie's wall typifies the eastern Galway style and would not be out of place in Scotland either. There are variations within the template—the use of mother stones is one; cover bands (through-stones) used between the double and single walls for stability are another.

In the Galway region walls similar to Eddie's can be found beside others which use long stones (*lachs*) laid length-wise along the face between the double and single sections. The height of these combination walls varies greatly, even within a single stretch of wall.

There is a simple reason for these variations: whatever types or sizes of stones to be found where the wall is being built—are put to use.

Ken Curran, Founding Member
Dry Stone Wall Association of Ireland
<http://www.dswai.ie/>

THUNDER ROCK

*A review by Tomas Lipps of a chapter in the book
The Bronze Horseman by Alexander M. Schenker*

Peter the Great,

Father of His Country and Emperor of All the Russias, enlarged, reformed and modernized his realm. He was the first Tsar to visit Europe and he did much to improve relations with it.

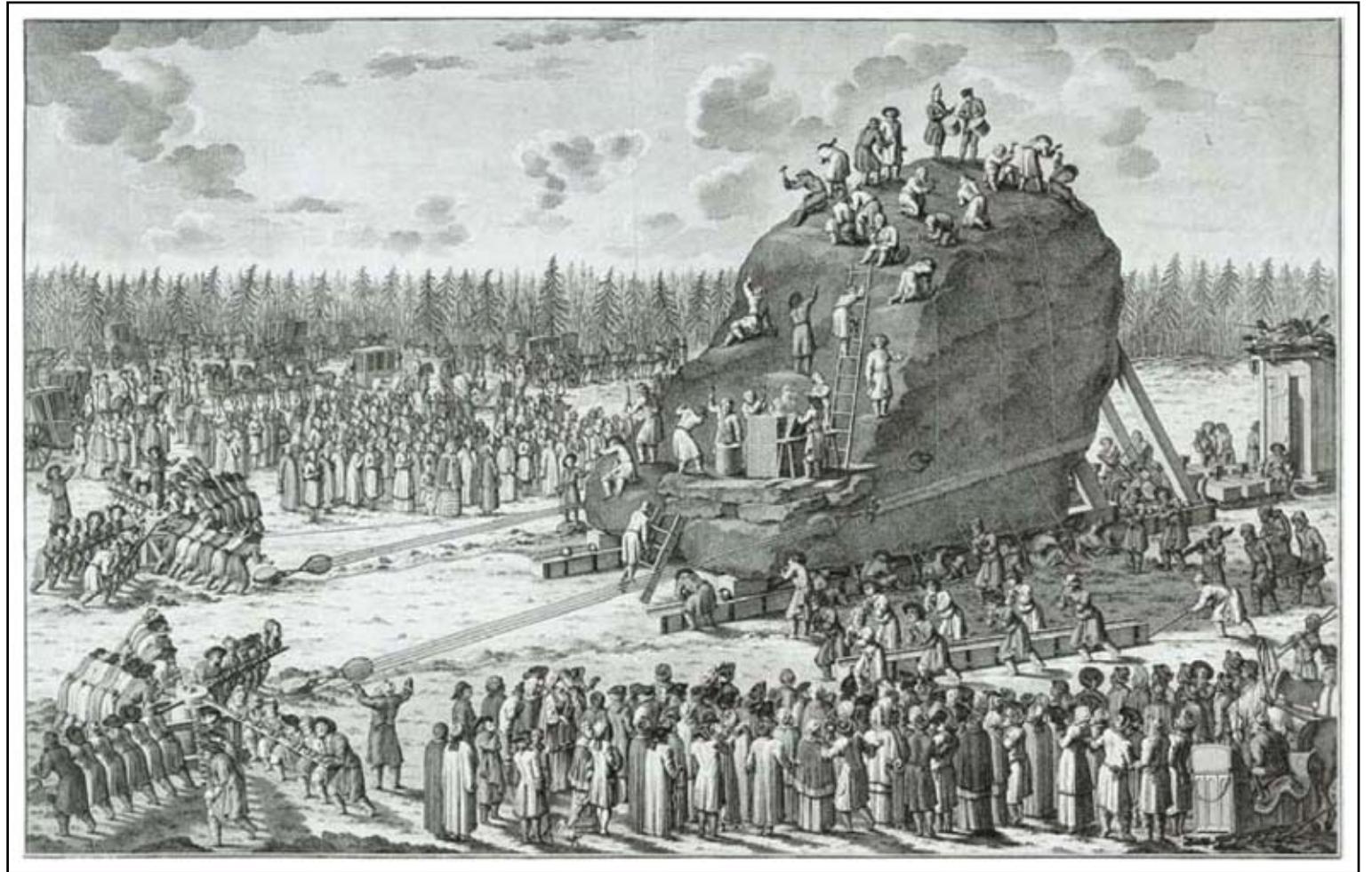
He was loved by his people, unlike his grandson Peter III who was born and raised in Germany and felt little affinity for Russia or its people. He was widely disliked by Russian society, the church, the army and state officials. Just six months after ascending the throne he was removed in a coup organized by his wife, the Empress Catherine. He was forced to abdicate, then imprisoned and, shortly thereafter, assassinated.

The nobility supported Catherine and the army, the Senate and the Synod pledged fealty to her. On June 28, 1762 she was pronounced the new Empress of Russia. She, however, had married into the royal line and was Prussian, not Russian, although she had made a great effort to assimilate. She felt it politically wise to make a gesture that would endear her to her subjects and to that end she conceived of a grand monument to Peter the Great and commissioned the eminent French sculptor Etienne Maurice Falconet to create a large equestrian statue that would stand upon an huge natural stone monolith. For such a pedestal a singular boulder was envisioned—and sought after.

Falconet would have been content with an assemblage of smaller boulders held together with metal 'clamps' but at the insistence of the Empress the search for the monolith continued, announcements were posted and rewards were offered. Captain Marinos Carburi, an enterprising young Greek engineer in the service of the Russian military, came to be in control of the search.

A prospect was eventually discovered not far north of St. Petersburg in the forest near the coastal village of Lakhta, about 4 miles inland from the Gulf of Finland. It was a massive piece of red granite known locally as the 'Thunder Stone' because it was believed that a peal of thunder/lightning had cracked it.

Excavation proved that the rock was a detached boulder and could be removed. Falconet and Carburi, the artist and the engineer, had a good working relationship but they differed with regard to procedure. Falconet imagined splitting it into 5 or 6 pieces, transporting and reassembling them in St. Petersburg;



Carburi thought it was possible to move it in one piece. The Empress and Carburi were in accord.

So the work of excavation and construction—directed by Carburi—began immediately. *“The first order of business was to assemble carpenters to construct housing for the work force of four hundred hired hands and five hundred soldiers. They cleared trees and shrubs, excavated around the boulder to a depth of 14 feet and a radius of about 100 feet and built a road all the way to the gulf. . .70 feet wide. The bared boulder turned out to be 42 feet long, 27 feet wide and 21 feet high. Assuming that one cubic foot of granite weighs approximately 175 pounds, the weight of the rock was calculated to be about 4 million pounds or 1,800 metric tons.”*

With the boulder completely exposed Falconet was inspired to rotate it 90 degrees on its long axis so that the sides became the top and bottom. The sculptor directed a team of stonecutters to flatten the side that would become the bottom thereby removing 600 tons, almost a third of the original mass. He would have completely shaped the rock in Lakhta had Catherine not insisted that it be kept as large as possible in order to dramatize its transport to the capital—in one piece. She was well aware that this was an opportunity to demonstrate Russian ingenuity and technological prowess to the world.

above: The Thunder Rock in transit, January 20, 1770, an engraving by Jakob van der Schley from a drawing by Iury Fel'ten. Note the drummers atop the rock, the stonecutters at work on it, the smiths sharpening tools and the onlookers, including the Empress who was visiting that day.



BRIDGE(S) OF SIGHS

by Tomas Lipps

*“I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs,
A palace and a prison on each hand. . .”*

These lines from Lord Byron's poem *Childe Harold*, were inspired by a bridge built in Venice on the cusp of the 17th century, the *Ponte de Sospiri*, and they imbued that structure with a romantic identity.

He did not, as some believe, give the bridge its name, he merely translated it, but its mention in his poem made the name widely known and the bridge would be the model for similar structures in other countries, or at least they would wear that name.

This bridge, the only covered bridge in Venice, was built in 1600 over the *Rio di Palazzo* (Palace River). It connected the Old Prison and interrogation rooms in the Doge's Palace to the New Prison directly across the river.

The legend was that prisoners being taken to their cells would sigh as they had their last glimpse of the city and the skies over it through the spaces in the stone grill. The most famous of these prisoners was Giacomo Casanova (he managed to escape after only 15 months incarceration).

Others were not so fortunate. “Many an innocent man to walk the Bridge of Sighs and descend into the dungeon which none entered and hoped to see the sun again.” (*Innocents Abroad* by Mark Twain)

photo: Bianca Reyes, travelforrookies.com

Next page: photo of the Ponte de Sospiri by Bridget Marie Birdie, <https://myesterdaygirl.wordpress.com/>



BARCELONA, SPAIN

Barcelona's Bridge of Sighs, known here as the *Pont dels Sospirs* seems as old as its namesake in Venice, or older.

Its character relates to its environs—the *Barri Gòtic* or Gothic Barrio. The barrio, indeed the entire city, underwent a major transformation prior to the great International Exhibition of 1929. This bridge over the *Carrer del Bisbe* (Bishop Street) was one of many edifices that came into being during the fervent build-up to that event.

In his dissertation entitled *The Gothic Quarter of Barcelona: Planning the Past and Brand Image*, Agustín Cócola asserts that the transformation of this area and others prior to, and after, the World Fair was an invention intended “to promote a sense of national identity of Catalan Art and Culture.” They certainly succeeded.

Catalan architect Joan Rubio, who collaborated with Antoni Gaudí on several of his notable commissions, including the *Sagrada Família* and the *Parque Güell*, was known as a *modernista* but he showed his versatility here in designing a classical neo-Gothic structure in keeping with the buildings it connects. Though derided as an architectural *pastiche* by purists, it is greatly admired.

photo: Tomas Lipps



from the archives. .

WAVE ROCK

Located near the town of Hyden in Southwestern Australia, Wave Rock is one of the continent's several amazing land forms.

It is a granitic monadnock or *iselberg*. The latter term is German and means 'island mountain' and refers (as does monadnock) to an isolated hill, mountain or outcropping rising above a surrounding plain. Ayers Rock, a sandstone formation is a better known example of an *iselberg*.

Measured at 47 feet high and about 350 feet long, Wave Rock is what geomorphologists call a 'flared slope' formed, it is believed, from chemical erosion effected by groundwater. When the land surface around the *iselberg* was lowered by erosion, the pocket of deeply weathered, chemically disaggregated bedrock was also removed producing the flared slope.

The streaking is due to chemical deposits (carbonates and iron oxide) that wash down the sloping face of the wave leaving vertical stripes of greys, reds and yellows. The appearance varies throughout the day as the light conditions change. The photos shown here were selected from hundreds posted to the internet.

TL