

STONE AND PUBLIC SPACE









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# Stone and water

Space for everyone is very often the space of water. A space where water is playful or magnificent, merry and always lively. That is why, today just as yesterday, there is an increasing number of fountains, ponds or other water features in urban surroundings, vying in poetry and creativity. Natural stone, precisely because it is natural, eliciting a feeling of simplicity and timelessness, has asserted its place in this scheme of things. Some stones are made to be carved, worked and lend themselves to sober and sophisticated creations. The salient feature of naturalness emerges in other stones and shapes our region, blending in wonderfully with the surroundings of traditional developments or ecodistricts.

Our contemporary perceptions of public space increasingly associate water in urban developments, echoing ideal environments: the beach, antidote to a hectic life, the big puddle of water dear to our childhood games, the fountain where the water appeases even if it often no longer quenches thirsts. The touch of natural stone, its texture and its ability to retain a certain freshness mean that stone has a great affinity with public spaces.

The projects developed in the following pages showcase natural stones quarried in Wallonia, but from other sources too. It is always possible to transpose them into settings where local materials are used. The concern uppermost in the authors' minds was to enhance a concept through the presence of stone. The diversity of the subsoil of Belgium, the closeness of production sites, the know-how of the men and women at the origin of all those products, contribute to the implementation of reliable projects, integrated into an approach moving towards greater sustainability.

# Magnified water

# ACTUALIZED WATER STAIRCASE

In the middle of a monumental staircase distinguished by its much contrasted tones, the water flows and bounces on blue limestone cubes, splashes the space and brilliantly enlivens a new heart of the city.



To the north of the Cotentin foreland, just beyond the Cherbourg built-up area, the municipality of La Glacerie derives its name from the presence of the old Manufacture royale de glaces de miroirs on its territory, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Manufacture royale would supply the mirrors of the famous Hall of Mirrors of Versailles and would later become the Saint-Gobain company.

Deprived of any "historic" centre, crossed by a very busy major road, La Glacerie recently undertook a requalification of its city centre: by bypassing that roadway, it then becomes possible to envisage the creation of a public space connecting the Town Hall to the Arts Centre and to the surrounding urban fabric. The outcome of a competition was the selection of the Folius-Écopaysage project, which was already at an advanced stage of completion. It was finalised and work was started. The original slope of the land was used to develop a reinterpretation of the water staircase, a "classical" feature of baroque parks.

The planning approach enhances two arteries : the first one connecting the crossing of La Glacerie to the Arts Centre, the second connecting the latter to the Town Hall, from a parvis overhanging the whole. On concrete superstructures, it enhances the stone, with stone playing a predominant aesthetic role. The underpinning concept of space calls for strong colour contrasts : two dark stones and one very light one exchange rejoinders and counter rejoinders; a local stone surrounding the high parvis with traditional dry stone walls. A flowered meadow, birches and lavenders soften this route designed to recreate a convivial dynamic.

LES ROUGES TERRES, LA GLACERIE (F), DESIGNED BY FOLIUS-ÉCOPAYSAGE

### STONES

Belgian blue limestone had a "cousin" in the Cotentin Peninsula. Quarrying ended a long time ago, which explains why blue limestone from Wallonia was used for this project. This very dark stone with a very beautiful shine under water is the major asset of this composition. It was associated with slate, looking almost black too, and a very light, almost white, limestone. On the parvis, dry stone walls typical of this region surround the space, like a headland above the water cascades.





### TECHNIQUE

The fountain is composed of three spillways with an overflow system made in a concrete casing covered with resin. Each spillway has its own water supply, making it possible to finely adjust and balance the flows from top to bottom. The bottom flagstones are glued and the blocks are laid on glue dots without joints; the water runs above, on the sides and underneath. The aesthetic quality of the water cascades was adjusted by carefully re-wedging each block in relation to each other.

- 1 blocks of Belgian blue limestone
- 2 blue limestone flagstones
- 3 slate used for passing over the water
- 4 concrete casing

4

# Falling in cascades

The murmuring of water leaping from step to step has the power to bring a public space softly to life and even to make people forget the clash of cacophonies. In Ans, Bernadette Royer opted for an arc of water girdling the Town Hall square, so visually separating the Rue de l'Esplanade, today paved with blue limestone. It uses the natural slope of the space to create a set of blue limestone steps about thirty centimetres high. The water, gushing from a blue limestone rock, runs down them to flow into a basin decorated with a splashing fountain.

> PLACE NICOLAÏ, ANS, ATELIER D'ARCHITECTURE LOUIS & ROYER





# Water within hand's reach



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Even though water claims prominence as a global issue, the attraction that it arouses is perceptible in a good many contemporary projects which bring together urban space and the basic presence of a watery expanse in various degrees of proximity, calling to mind the ocean – source of all life.



The city square created by the architects of Snøhetta in front of the Oslo opera house is like an immense iceberg, with the immaculate whiteness of white marble. The ground seems to be swallowed up into the waters of the port, opposite the ferries and other merchant ships cruising a short distance away. It conjures up a vast beach to make an enjoyable walk, stroll, bask in the sun, or even dip your feet when the weather is fine.

Urban beaches are increasingly present in large metropolises. After having been simple stretches of sand spread over sunny quays, they have become real urban spaces, where stone is never totally absent, like those rocks that rise along the shores.

NEW NORWEGIAN NATIONAL OPERA AND BALLET, OSLO (N), SNØHETTA AGENCY

# STONE

As for Meuse limestone or Belgian blue limestone, the stone, in this case, received several finishes, combining the smoothness of the risers (sawn, milled) to the roughness of the flagstones on the floor (bush-hammered or closely-related finishes) The floor finishes were intended to provide greater walking comfort on slightly inclined, often wet or icy, surfaces. It is a masterpiece of architectural boldness: rougher and therefore more slip-resistant stone textures could have been preferred to the detriment of the overall rendering of the building. Several steps are sometimes cut out of a same block. The layout drawings contain either the layout theme of Roman bond or the laying of variable widths in a line.



# A beach in the city

On the shore of Lake Ontario, an urban beach has raised its sunshades in a former industrial district of Toronto, the Redpath Sugar Factory. Formerly a car park, a sliver of sand now stretches behind a plant-lined area. Water laps at its feet. In the evening, little jets of coloured water gush forth from a dark and shiny, stone maple leaf, made of local granite that looks like blue limestone or slate.





SUGAR BEACH, TORONTO (CAN), DESIGNED BY CLAUDE CORMIER ET ASSOCIÉS, IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

# Playful water

# AQUATIC FILM

Redeveloped in the context of the major renovation works undertaken in Tournai city centre, the Main Square was given a sober and intentionally mineral treatment, enhancing the architectures lining the Square.



Overlooked by the belfry and Saint Quentin's church, the triangular-shaped historic heart of the city was organised to leave as much room as possible for the social and tourist life of the urban space, for the café terraces and for the events that punctuate the city's calendar.

Faced with the need to be able to make the space of the square extremely flexible, but persuaded that the presence of water would be an interesting addition to counterbalance the rigidity of the mineral aspect, Philippe Thomas and the Paysages agency thought of a vast fountain that could nevertheless disappear temporarily.

Drawing an arc of a circle parallel to the course of the Scheldt in the middle of the chequered stone pattern of the square, the slightly depressed level of the ground, marked with two lines of jets, creates a slight puddle, a thin wet film, moving according to the wind. This very simply designed and very playful fountain can become almost invisible or, on the contrary, joyfully mark a highly symbolic area of the city.

▶ GRAND-PLACE, TOURNAI, DESIGNED BY AGENCE PHILIPPE THOMAS/ROUBAIX & PAYSAGES/LILLE



5 slotted gutter with steel rut

9 sub-foundation made of stony

6 concrete gutter

8 blinding concrete

materials

7 frost free foundation

1 blue limestone cobblestone 15x20x8 cm

90x90x8 cm with four facets

4 electrovalve control and fibre

2 blue limestone flagstone

3 spout





# TECHNIQUE

Each jet is inserted in the middle of a blue limestone flagstone with specially cut facets, so as to make it possible to recover the water in a gutter placed in a line along the circumference. It is all connected to a technical facility located in the middle of those 30 jets.



# Buy local

Just a step from Berchem station, this pedestrian area was recently completely redesigned: a fountain of jets was installed on a paved surface. The spout is set flush with the blue limestone, specially dressed for that purpose, by machine and by hand. The closeness of the quarries, where the paving stones are dressed, makes the technical adjustments on site much easier.

DRIEKONINGENSTRAAT, ANTWERP, DESIGNED BY STRAMIEN, LANDLAB, INGENIEURSBUREAU FRANCE

# Mirror of the sky and of architecture

Dark granite flagstones cover the 2,730 m<sup>2</sup> of this space that can be flooded in 3 minutes, by an artificial process. A slight wave of water, 2 cm thick, covers the entire surface and then drains away just as quickly, giving way to a refreshing mist. Stone provides the nobleness of the covering in an emblematic site surrounded by stately  $18^{th}$ -century buildings. The large  $108.5 \times 145.5 \times 10$  cm flagstones also confer an enjoyable, non-slip walking surface and are sawn with a flamed top finish. This type of result could be obtained with Meuse limestone or Belgian blue limestone.

PLACE DE LA BOURSE, BORDEAUX (F), DESIGNED BY MICHEL CORAJOUD, PIERRE GANGNET ARCHITECTURE WORKSHOP, JML CONSULTANTS FOUNTAIN AND WATER FEATURE DESIGNERS, ATELIER R LANDSCAPERS, FACHARD LIGHTING





# Water springing to life

# STONE AS A SHOWCASE

The development of a mixed development zone (ZAC), very close to the centre of Charleville-Mézières, transforms an esplanade dedicated to culture and to leisure. A fountain is the reflection of this change in the urban landscape.



On a plot of land left abandoned for a long time, on which only a defensive wall remained, a ten-screen cinema complex, a bowling alley and restaurants have just been constructed. The Althabegoity-Bayle agency stage-manages the entire layout of the square by arranging areas of social interaction, an exhibition wall, lawns and a promenade of trees around a paved esplanade, together with benches created for the site.

The whole comes together, especially at night, around a circular blue limestone fountain, covered with a thin sheet of water, illuminated by coloured spotlights. A water cloud wraps this mineral disc in mist. The dimensions of this fountain are imposing and its construction is worth an explanation.

SESPLANADE ROGER-MAS, CHARLEVILLE-MÉZIÈRES (F), DESIGNED BY ALTHABEGOITY-BAYLE

# TECHNIQUE

Designed to be constructed on a slightly sloping square, this stone disc, 11 min diameter, is composed of central cobblestones surrounding a 70 cm circle reserved for the installation of the spout, encircled by a crown of large curved elements approximately 1.50 min length. The sizes of the cobblestones (9.5 x 9.5 x 8 cm) are the results of precise calculations determined by the way they are to be laid in concentric circles around the circle of the spout; the 5 mm joints are regular and the jointing arrangement is staggered. The thickness of the water sheet needs to be slightly higher than the spout if a perfect water mirror is to be obtained. The peripheral elements curved inwards towards the centre create this volume of water, adjusted in such a way that the overflowing water wraps the stone. The entire water feature is set on a concrete foundation. The perfect horizontality of the peripheral elements was adjusted by laser. The water then flows through gratings in the ground integrated into a sloping gutter made of the same blue limestone cobbles. All the stone elements have a honed finish.















# Various associations

Combinations of stones for some fountains that make them the envy of the public space...

1 GOLFBREKER FONTEIN, VISSERSPLEIN, OSTEND

2 CANAL DES USINES, VERVIERS, DESIGNED BY ATELIER D'ARCHITECTURE ET D'URBANISME FETTWEIS ET ASSOCIÉS/DEFFET ARCHITECTES ET PARTENAIRES

- 3 PLACE DE L'ALBERTINE, BRUSSELS, DESIGNED BY ALAIN SARFATI
- 4 TRAUERORT, DÜSSELDORF (D), DESIGNED BY GARTENWERK DÜSSELDORF

**5** In Lier, a very straightforward, circular double fountain was installed in the middle of the Market Square during redevelopment work. The water gushes from two copper circles that emerge from the cobblestones. The quartzite cobbles have all been recovered.

GROTE MARKT, LIER, DESIGNED BY ROBBRECHT & DAEM





# Urban poetry

# AQUATIC EFFECTS

Rid of their rosaries of strings of cars, the sides of the left bank of the Rhône in Lyon have given way to smooth promenades, meadows and belvederes: water is never far away and people can even venture a dive or refresh their feet.



The transformation of the old ports by the In-Situ/Jourda partnership of architects and landscapers gives way today to a combination of park and promenade in a sequence of public places and natural environments to accompany the intimate rediscovery of the river. In the place of the former stone pitching, the Bas-Ports area develops three flights of beautifully designed and planted terraces where it is enjoyable to sit down. Like an understudy of the Rhône, the longilineal pool of La Guillotière stretches at their feet, by way of a stage. On the opposite bank, the majestic façade of the Hôtel-Dieu dramatises this new landscape in a new space re-opened to the sky and to the water.

Stone was an unmissable feature in such a place and is widely used in these developments, especially for the cobblestones, terraces and coping of the pools. A few scattered blocks break the monotony of the thin sheet of water, tiny islands or vague recollections of river haulage.

The light daytime misting or the night-time lighting due to the Coup d'éclat agency, diversify the atmospheres of a constantly busy site in all seasons.

BANKS OF THE RHÔNE, LYON (F), DESIGNED BY IN-SITU/JOURDA/COUP D'ÉCLAT



# A SHEET OF WATER

The pool is simply designed. The water arrives beneath a first stainless-steel slab with stiffeners, placed at the bottom of the access ramp coming from the Quai Augagneur. This plate conceals the water tank from which the overflow supplies a thin sheet of water to the pool. The symbolisation of the river basins of the Rhône and of the Saône is engraved on the metal. The stone coping encircles this slab and continues throughout the length of the pool, where interruptions in the slope are arranged to slightly vary the thickness of the water sheet. Along the coping, just above the water level, a place is reserved for the lighting and the misting system.

A few wooden bridges cross the pool breadthwise leading to the pedestrian walks and soft modes.



# Sources of inspiration

The rivers carved our reliefs and the underlying rocks. Stone sometimes retaliates. Both these creations are testimony to that.





THE LESSE, CUT-OUT IN THE BLUE LIMESTONE, HAN-SUR-LESSE, DESIGNED BY AGUA

2 THE SEMOIS, SCULPTURE ON SLATE, BOUILLON, ARTIST JEAN-PAUL COUVERT





# LIVING WATER

In the centre of yesterday's public space, washtubs are evidence of the communal use of water which was already considered as a resource worth saving. The stone, used at that time for a practical purpose, continues to bear witness not only to ways of life but also to sustainable management of local materials.



The small town of Marville, located about six miles from the Belgian border, has the warm colour of the stones of Lorraine. Its houses form a beautiful architectural whole with some dwellings bearing testimony to the rich Spanish presence in Gaume at the Renaissance.

In the apse of the church, on a small square overlooking the valley, a fountain with a wide basin has just been restored with stores originating from Belgian Lorraine. The stonework, simply reassembled as it originally was by a firm that still had the skills and know-how of stone craftsmen, is profound in its beautiful simplicity.

In this way, the stones of each region find a way to reintegrate the public space, in a modest or more sophisticated way, especially when the centres of villages or districts are being redeveloped, as the few examples selected in these pages show.

RESTORATION OF THE CHURCH FOUNTAIN, MARVILLE (F), DESIGNED BY EMOND

# TECHNIQUE

Nothing complicated in this restoration work which is based on an existing concrete screed to put the walls and wall coping back together, install the supply pipe and the water overflow and finalise the cobblestones and the surrounding pavements. Success lies in the way in which the stones are properly laid and filled. Not enough can be said of the importance of not losing this often regional know-how, which combines with a good knowledge of natural stone.



1 cobblestones 10x10x10 cm

- 2 rubblestone wall
- 3 50 cm wall coping
- 4 overflow
- 5 spout
- 6 pre-existing concrete foundation
- 7 flagstones 20 x 20 cm

# The stones of hereabouts

Fountains and washtubs can be made, in the same way, with a lot of other stones typical of each region, which give each landscape its own colours.

Fontenoille sandy limestone **1** is the traditional stone of Belgian and French Lorraine. It is used for rubblestone and cobblestones. Its colour becomes tinted grey with time.

Gobertange sandy limestone 2 can be carved to include small aesthetic details.

Slate 3 can be worked into a dish shape for medium-sized receptacles.

Sandstones 4, arkose 5, quartzite 6, and schistose sandstone 7 make it possible to build walls and wall coping for basins and to integrate a spout or a sculpted feature as a complement.





# Fountains and washtubs

Washtubs in the country, fountains in the city... This traditional furniture of public spaces in former times is changing: today, the restoration of washtubs is easily integrated when village centres are being redeveloped and they are therefore given a second life. And some fountains are still being installed in towns and cities: stone always adds a pleasant freshness to water.



Washtub symbolically supplied through a sandstone and blue limestone, water channel. PLACE DU MONUMENT, TRANSINNE, DESIGNED BY AGUA

2 Washtub, slate. HUBERMONT

Blue limestone fountain. COTEAUX DE LA CITADELLE, LIÈGE, DESIGNED BY BRUNO ALBERT

4 Fountain installed in a play feature, Condroz sandstone. PLACE GAUCHERET, BRUSSELS, DESIGNED BY IBGE-BIM







# WATER ENTERTAINMENT

A small town with a lot of character standing on the banks of the Ourthe, Durbuy has completely rethought its urban layout. The town undertook major works to cope with its busy tourist trade attracted both by its site and its architecture. The works were spread over fifteen years or so and stone was an ever present feature.



The starting point was the fear of the Ourthe river flooding. To avoid the waters rising above the existing upstream wall or flowing back through the former downstream arm of the river, the stone pitching of the right bank was raised by 60 centimetres and a series of new walls was built on both sides of the current. The development was complemented by pumping stations for seepage water and a spillway for the outlet of runoff water.

This huge construction site, which puts the banks out of the water, was the opportunity for the Agua agency to create a pattern of public spaces peripheral to the tiny town centre. A new access ramp makes it possible to seal the pedestrian loop around the old town. The former arm of the Ourthe hosts a garden and an artificial lake, propitious to light effects at the foot of a cliff, a superb limestone anticline. New walks have been designed along the banks. A few landscaped car parks have been constructed in suitable places.

**P** REDEVELOPMENTS, DURBUY-OLD TOWN, DESIGNED BY AGUA/MET DGO1



# LANDSCAPE CAR PARK

The car park closest to the tourist centre has been redeveloped and subject to widespread planting to decrease its visual presence. Its new layout brings to mind the former existence of a tributary of the Ourthe and the location of a mill that has now disappeared. This evocation takes the shape of a water staircase made of blue limestone discharging its waters into a slight hollow made of reused sandstone cobbles, complemented by blocks and more or less tall grass plants. Throughout the length of the car park, this streamlet separates a pedestrian passageway from the area where cars are parked and is therefore instrumental in deflecting attention from the parked vehicles.



### STONE

In this Ardennes atmosphere, where the mineral aspect is everywhere, the use of natural stone seems selfevident here. It is used systematically: blue limestone covers the new wall built against flooding, trimmed with a few bartizans; it is used for the fountains and waterfalls of the Anticline park; sandstone paves the ground; old sandstone paving or walls of thick blocks are reused for the adjacent public spaces. Even little touches of stone add character.





# The rain tap dances

The management of runoff waters in public spaces is a major issue that municipalities have been taking into account for a long time. Today, ecodistricts also provide some sustainable solutions where stone is never far.

1 A runnel crosses the Place Vaxelaire in Bioul and ends in a blue limestone fountain. 2 Gutter made of slightly depressed paving stones, inserted simply into the centre line of a street, Ostend.



A basin calls to mind the old canals, Place du Marché-aux-Grains, Brussels.

4 In one of the ecodistricts of Tübingen (D), a runnel in paving stones is separated from the actual alley.

5 In that same ecodistrict, the runoff water from a square is directed underground through a slit delimited by irregular rubble stones.





# IN THE OPEN AIR



The closing of the production site and then the implementation of the municipality's remediation plan, with the moving of a big sewer, had two fortunate outcomes: on the one hand, it improved the quality of the river water and, on the other hand, it made

Channelled some years ago in Genval town centre when it used to receive the much polluted waters of the nearby paper mills, the Lasne

A river

rediscovered

In the middle of new buildings dedicated to shops and housing, the Agua agency opted for the creation of a new bed for the river, so recreating the old course. Made of gabions in which sandstone rubble is arranged like a dry stone wall, this bed and the few terraces overhanging it conjure up a slight valley softly meandering before crossing the new square. Here and there, blocks are laid on the bottom : in this way, the earth carried along can gradually vegetate the course of the Lasne as time goes by.

ZAC LES PAPETERIES DE GENVAL, RIXENSART, DESIGNED BY AGUA

it possible to give some thought to a new layout for this vast urban space.

had disappeared from the urban space.



# Glossary

# Ajutage (spout)

Piece of equipment placed at the end of a pipe or of a conduit altering the flow of water

# Basin

Pool, pond or similar structure collecting water, usually comprising a water inlet and overflow.

# Bonding

Way in which rough or hewn stones are arranged.

# (Wall) coping

arranged at the top of a wall to protect the inside from rainwater.

# Crust

Natural weathered surface of a layer of rock.

# Drain/water grill

Opening made to enable water to flow towards underground piping, with the grill preventing the passing of objects.\*

# Drip (stone)

A hollow grooved projection at the front lower edge of a sill or cornice designed to throw water clear of the wall below

### Flagstone

A slab of stone that has been split up for paving a surface. Flagstones are elements whose horizontal dimensions are more than double the thickness, with a minimum width of 15 cm

# Fountain / monumental fountain/nympheum

Architectural treatment of a water inlet. The console fountain is fixed to a wall. It comprises or is part of a basin.\*

# Gabion

A metal wire container filled with heavy stones that do not deteriorate. A gabion is used to stabilise.

# Gutter / runnel

A structure intended to collect the water flowing from the roadway, generally placed parallel to its centre line, on one or both sides, separating it from the pavement.\*

### Mister

A device that makes or sprays mist.\*

# Roman bond (opus romano)

Bonding of flagstones of different geometrical shapes and dimensions.

# **Rough block**

from the bed or mass. The mass density of the stones of Wallonia is approximately between 2,600 and 2,750 kg/m<sup>3</sup>.

# **Rough slabs**

Stones cleaved or split at the quarry.

# Ruisseau

A gutter placed in the middle of the roadway.\*

# Stone pitching/quay wall

Stone masonry or facing that protects the approaches to a bridge or a bank and prevents water from deteriorating them.

# Washtub

Covered or open-air basin originally used for washing linen, sometimes associated with a fountain or a drinking

# Waterproof

Material that repels water and is not penetrable, therefore making a surface covering watertight and impervious.

# Water jet

A decorative fountain formed of a vertical jet of water.\*

# Water mirror

A stretch of water in front of the buildings lining the edge of it.\*

Taken from 'Espace urbain, vocabulaire et morphologie' Monum, Éditions du Patrimoine 2003

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# Dominique Guerrier Dubarle is an

agricultural engineer, specialising in the history of gardens and landscape. Sensitive to the constantly renewed work of yesterday's and today's designers, she shares her personal way of seeing recent achievements that highlight stone, her favourite material.

### Cristina Marchi is a building

archaeologist, specialising in heritage, its know-how and in heightening awareness about history and architecture. She is attentive to the "stone people" revealed through words and pictures to create wanted or unexpected links.

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For 20 years, **PIERRES et MARBRES de WALLONIE** has been disseminating accurate and detailed information about all the facets of natural stone in Wallonia : history, products, traditional and contemporary uses, technical expertise, documentation,

The **STONE AND PUBLIC SPACE** notebooks are intended to be practical discovery tools for architects, town planners and landscape designers but also for the general public. Many and varied ways of incorporating natural stone into our surroundings, drawing on recent projects implemented in Belgium or abroad, are thus presented in a detailed manner to designers.

This notebook is devoted to the use of natural stone in public spaces highlighting **WATER**. It presents achievements chosen for their originality, their simplicity or a specific construction detail.

### THE STONE NOTEBOOKS

This collection includes notebooks devoted to the garden, to public space and to architecture drawing on specific transversal themes.

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