MUSEUM
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STONE: 80 YEARS OF SCULPTURE IN STONE AT MUSEUM BEELDEN AAN ZEE

The Hague, 20 October 2026 – From January 27 to June 27, 2027, the Beelden aan Zee museum in The Hague will be presenting STONE. The exhibition shows how artists such as Barbara Hepworth, Naum Gabo, Louise Bourgeois, Richard Long, Alicja Kwade, and Navid Nuur continually reexamine and question the age-old material of stone. Stone does not readily yield to the artist's will. It has weight, resistance and its own structure. It is precisely these qualities that make it all the more fascinating. Through chiselling, polishing or even minimal interventions, a solid block can be transformed into a figure, a landscape, an abstract form or a conceptual medium. Featuring 50 sculptures, STONE is the first major Dutch exhibition to showcase eighty years of modern and contemporary stone sculpture.

While stone had long been associated with monumental and figurative sculpture, from the 1950s and 1960s onwards, sculptors began to explore the limits of the material. Stone became a medium for abstraction and conceptual thinking. Contemporary artists, too, are exploring new perspectives, in which themes such as ecology, philosophy and spirituality play a role. The exhibition is structured around four thematic strands that together reveal the versatility of stone: *The Body in Stone*, *The Landscape in Stone*, *Abstraction in Stone*, and *The Thinking Stone*. A total of 50 sculptures are on display in the Great Hall, as well as in the Gipsotheca, on the outdoor patios, and on the recently opened Sculpture Dune. The result is an exhibition in which stone is not only presented as a material, but also as a subject, a vehicle of meaning and a source of imagination.

Abstraction in Stone
Abstraction in Stone centres on the search for a new visual language. Hans (Jean) Arp drew inspiration from natural growth processes. His flowing, organic forms seem to have emerged almost spontaneously. For Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore, natural forms and materials also served as an important starting point. Using the 'direct carving' technique, they worked directly into stone. Their innovative use of openings not only makes the stone but also the space within and around the sculpture part of the composition. In *Marble with Colour (Crete)* (1964), Hepworth combined rough and polished surfaces with colour, light and open space. Eduardo Chillida also explores the relationship between stone and void. Through incisions and openings, he allows the surrounding space to penetrate the sculpture. In *Red Stone* (1964–65), Naum Gabo combined natural growth and abstract construction: the spiral form and rhythmic grooves allude to an ammonite fossil.

The Body in Stone
The body has long been an important subject: sometimes monumental and abstract, sometimes fragmentary and intimate. Louise Bourgeois abstracts and transforms the human form: *Torso/Self-Portrait* (1963) is a distinctly physical

self-portrait, while the small, headless figure in *Femme* (2005) alludes to motherhood and physical transformation. In *I.S. with Beretta 92 Semi-automatic* (2011), Thom Puckey depicts a classical nude in Carrara marble, but the weapon in his model's hand creates a bitter tension between beauty and violence. Femmy Otten highlights the vulnerability and intimacy of the female body without idealising it. For *STONE*, she has created a stone bust (2026). Tom Waugh is also presenting new work with *Fast Fashion Puffer 4-EV1* (2026). Although it lacks a body, its presence remains palpable. He challenges our consumer culture by immortalising a fast-fashion product in durable and precious marble.

The Landscape in Stone
The Landscape in Stone explores the relationship between people and their environment. In *Stone Lines* (1976), Richard Long, a pioneer of Land Art, arranges rough stones in four zigzagging lines. The simple geometric structure shows how a minimal intervention can create a new relationship with the landscape. In *The Arabescato Fire Coral (four long fingers)* (2023), Claudia Comte addresses the consequences of climate change. Her stylised, playful sculpture depicts the skeletal structure of bleached coral and combines aesthetic appeal with environmental vulnerability. Alma Allen's biomorphic sculptures are reminiscent of natural formations; in *Not Yet Titled* (2021), marble is given a soft, organic appearance through prolonged polishing, making the sculpture appear to grow from the material itself.

The Thinking Stone
Stone is often used to represent spiritual values, memory, and collective emotion. In *Know-ledge (Accounting-Geometry)* (2023), Alicja Kwade juxtaposes human knowledge with physical reality and the weight of matter: she connects sections of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* with a stone that serves as a counterweight. In *Even the Flames of Fear* (2025), Abdus Salaam balances the contrasts between body and mind, and between tradition and modernity. In *Soft Rock* (1974), Seung-taek Lee challenges conventions of power, masculinity, and monumentality with a granite block bearing the marks of a rope. Outside on the patio, visitors become part of Navid Nuur's poetic installation *For You* (2017). By giving them stones from the work, he explores where the artwork ends and the personal experience begins.

Craftsmanship and Experimentation
In a world that is becoming increasingly digital, *STONE* forms a powerful tribute to both the artisanal and experimental nature of stone sculpture. The 50 works come from the collection of the Beelden aan Zee museum and from leading international museum and private collections, including the Tate, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, the Christen Sveaas Art Foundation, the Bonnefanten Museum, the Kröller-Müller Museum, and the Museo Chillida Leku. The exhibition is curated by Brigitte Bloksma, director of Museum Beelden aan Zee.

The exhibition is accompanied by the bilingual catalogue *STONE*, featuring contributions by Brigitte Bloksma, Joost Bergman, Sandra Smets, Penelope Curtis and Navid Nuur.

36 artists from across the globe
The artists featured in *STONE* are: Alma Allen (United States), Mari Andriessen (Netherlands), Hans (Jean) Arp (France/Germany), Louise Bourgeois (France/United States), Eduardo Chillida (Spain), Claudia Comte (Switzerland), Tony Cragg (United Kingdom), Dorothy Cross (Ireland), Luciano Fabro (Italy), Barry Flanagan (United Kingdom), Naum Gabo (Russia), Henry Heerup (Denmark), Barbara Hepworth (United Kingdom), Anish Kapoor (India), Alicja Kwade (Poland), Seung-taek Lee (South Korea), Richard Long (United Kingdom), Jan Meefout (Netherlands), Igor Mitoraj (Poland), Henry Moore (United Kingdom), Jan van Munster (Netherlands), Navid Nuur (Iran/Netherlands), Isamu Noguchi (United States), Femmy Otten (Netherlands), Nicholas Pope (United Kingdom), Thom Puckey (United Kingdom), Ugo Rondinone (Switzerland), Ulrich Rückriem (Germany), Analia Saban (Argentina), Abdus Salaam (South Africa), Nobuo Sekine (Japan), Valeska Soares (Brazil), Yutaka Sone (Japan), Francien Valk (Netherlands), Leo de Vries (Netherlands) and Tom Waugh (United Kingdom).

Note to the Editor:
This press release and high-resolution images of sculptures and artists can be found at: https://www.beeldenaanzee.nl/en/press

Do you have any questions, special requests or would you like to interview the curator? Please contact museum Beelden aan Zee, Denise Hermanns, Stan Koppe, and Julija Novovic: pr@beeldenaanzee.nl / +31 (0)70 358 58 57 / +31 (0)6 12 96 93 50.