

*A BENCH
FOR A
TOWER*

Primeira Pedra

First Stone

**ÁLVARO
SIZA**

Curated by Guta Moura Guedes

New York — 24 September 2019

P R E S S K I T

A Bench For a Tower

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The First Stone programme is offering a bench made of Portuguese Estremoz marble, designed by Álvaro Siza, for his Tower in New York. The presentation of the bench is on the 24th of September at the sales gallery of the building in Manhattan and includes a presentation by the architect.

After several projects developed and presented in Venice, Milan, Weil am Rhein, São Paulo, London, Lisbon and New York, the First Stone programme returns to this iconic North-American city - this time to present *Hell's Kitchen Bench*, designed by the Pritzker Prize winning architect Álvaro Siza, specifically for the lobby of his new tower on the island of Manhattan.

Hell's Kitchen Bench is a large-scale streamlined bench, created for one of the most striking new residential projects in New York city: *611 West 56th Street*, the first building by Álvaro Siza, one of the greatest architects of our time, on American soil. This bench, also designed by the Architect, was commissioned within the scope of the First Stone programme, which has become a cornerstone for the promotion of Portuguese stone and its industry throughout the world.

The bench is a gift from the First Stone programme and will be permanently installed within the lobby of this skyscraper. Its presentation to the press and a select group of guests will occur in New York on Tuesday the 24th of September around 4:30 pm, and will include the participation of Álvaro Siza.

Aptly named *Hell's Kitchen Bench*, due to its close proximity to this iconic area of New York City, this original piece enters into a consummate dialogue with the sleek and refined lines of the tower. It is a striking piece of furniture, measuring almost 5 metres (16ft) in length, revealing in its design the poetic modernism that is so characteristic of Álvaro Siza.

This piece brings yet another new element, as it is the first time that a First Stone project is developed with another material, in this case wood, in combination with stone. The symbiotic relationship created between these two natural and sustainable materials illustrates how the marriage between stone and wood can be so perfectly achieved. This relationship is evidenced by the lines of the bench itself, as well as in the contrast between the pure white of the Estremoz marble and the dark tone of the African sapele wood.

Located at the junction of the Upper West Side and Midtown West, the 150-metre-high (500ft) tower that will house this bench stands as a distinguished addition to an area that already includes standout buildings by world-renowned architects including Bjarke Ingels, César Pelli, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Frank Gehry, Herzog & de Meuron, Jean Nouvel, Norman Foster, Rafael Viñoly, Renzo Piano, Richard Meier and Zaha Hadid.

Already in its final stages of construction, from the 24th of September onwards, the tower will include yet another piece by architect Álvaro Siza, the *Hell's Kitchen Bench*, comprised of Portuguese marble and offered by the First Stone programme.

The First Stone programme is designed, curated and produced by experimentadesign and promoted by Assimagra.

Opening Cocktail: 24 September 2019 4:30 pm – 7:30 pm
555 West 59th Street. Ground Floor

Álvaro Siza

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Born in Matosinhos in 1933, Álvaro Siza graduated in architecture from the University of Porto in 1955. His first project was built in 1954, and since then he has worked continuously for six decades. His career has been internationally recognized with several prizes, including the Mies van der Rohe European Architecture Award in 1988, the prestigious Pritzker Prize in 1992, the Royal Gold Medal from the Royal Institute of British Architects (2009), the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement of the 13th International Architecture Exhibition of the Venice Biennale (2012), as well as several *honoris causa* doctorates from leading universities in Spain, Switzerland, Italy, Portugal and Brazil, among others. Álvaro Siza has also been committed to teaching, working as a Professor at the Porto School of Architecture since 1976, and as a visiting Professor at several schools, including Lausanne's EPF, the University of Pennsylvania, Los Andes University of Bogotá and the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University.

www.sizavieira.pt



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“Álvaro Siza has this rare ability of relating to different architectural scales, encompassing product and industrial design, without ever deviating from the unique way in which he correlates proportion, detail and beauty. The bench in Estremoz marble that he designed for his tower in Manhattan is an example of this, as well as of his unparalleled mastery. The initiative of offering it to New York in the scope of the First Stone programme and that fact that Siza accepted the invitation makes us exceptionally happy.”

Guta Moura Guedes — experimentadesign

“It is with immense honour that the Cluster of Portuguese Mineral Resources offers this exquisite bench to Álvaro Siza’s tower in the city of New York. It’s design, conceived by one of the best architects of our time, is a wonderful example of the quality, versatility and beauty of Portuguese stone, as well as the exemplary craftsmanship and excellence of the Portuguese stone industry.”

Miguel Goulão — Assimagra

Hell's Kitchen Bench 2019

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"I chose the name for this bench in marble and mahogany, which will be placed in the elevator lobby of the building I designed in Manhattan: Hell's Kitchen Bench, in the hope that the experience of sitting on it is in no way a hellish one." Álvaro Siza

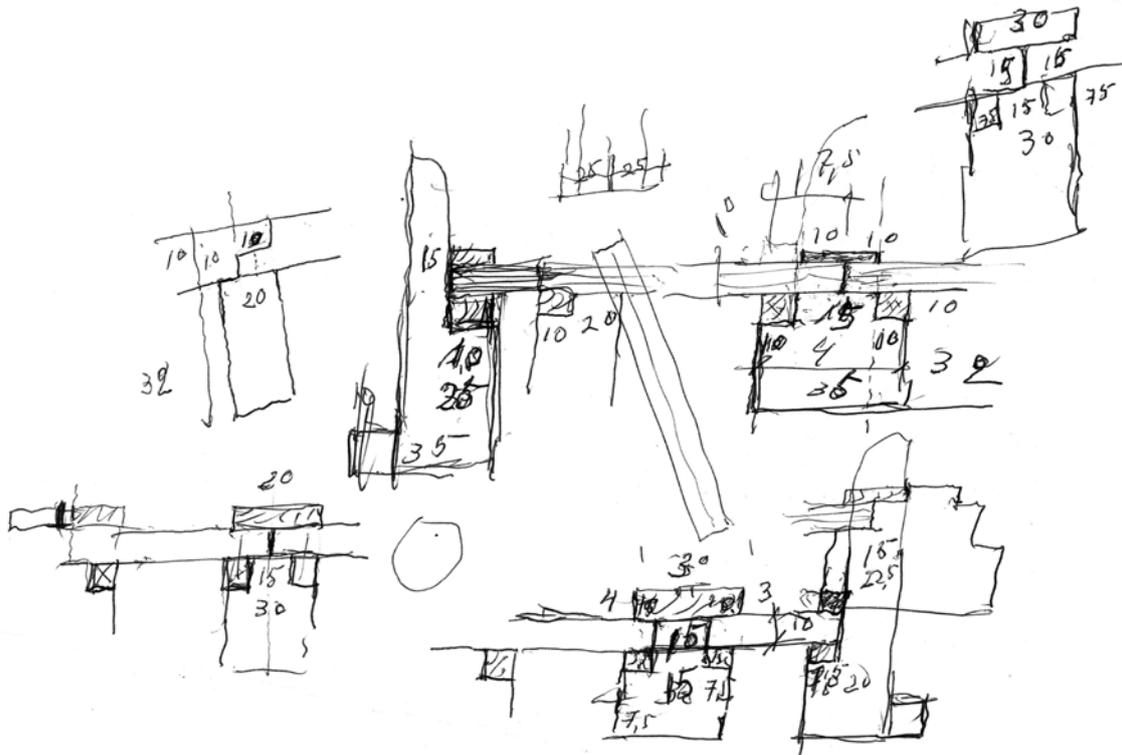
Dimensions 4600 x 450 x 720 mm

Approximate Weight 530 kg

Materials Branco Vigária Marble and Sapele Wood

Finishings Stone: Honed / Wood: Matte Varnish

Stone Supplier and Production Fátima Stones

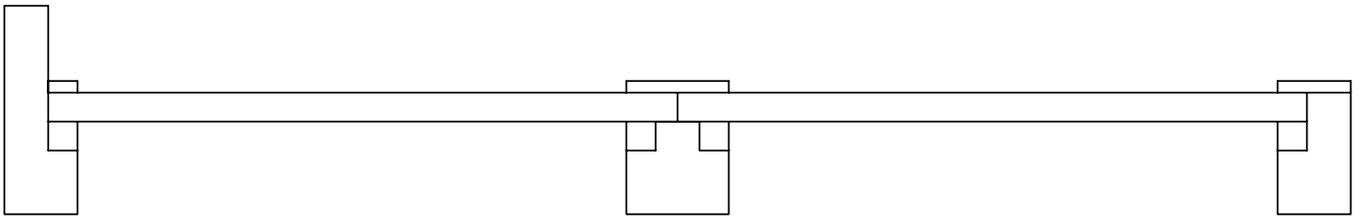


Sketch of Hell's Kitchen Bench by Álvaro Siza

Hell's Kitchen Bench 2019

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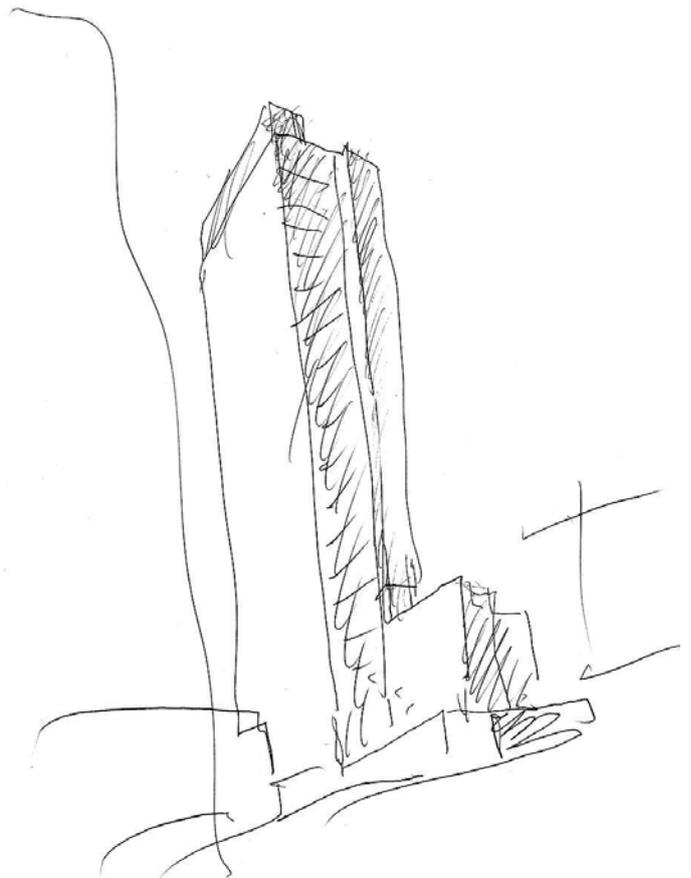
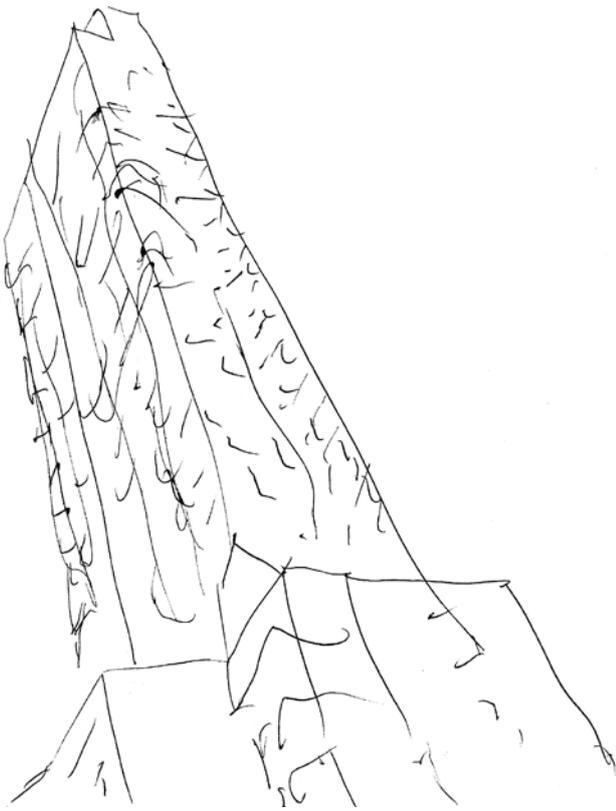
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Outline of Hell's Kitchen Bench by Álvaro Siza



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About Portuguese Stone

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First Stone



Stone has accompanied human evolution for millions of years. From the percussion tools of the Stone Age to the edification of contemporary housing, this natural resource has been used in different contexts and for various purposes throughout History. Indeed, stone can be considered a symbol of mankind's seemingly limitless progress and unwavering search for beauty, strength and resistance.

All stones were formed millions of years ago and are absolutely unique. Some of them are easily mouldable due to the softness of the minerals that comprise them, and others require complex technologies in order to be manipulated and shaped. Stone is a natural, entirely sustainable and recyclable material that calls for a return to a close relationship with the Earth and a simpler way of living. With a profoundly strong personality, its use generates a connection that is intrinsically different to that of materials produced or manufactured by man.

The landscape of Portugal is filled with an abundant variety of stones, incorporating marble, limestone, granite, schist and slate, which offer a wide range of resistance, composition, colour and texture. Aware of the unique physical, mechanical and aesthetic characteristics of these different types of stone, the Portuguese industry has been developing and modernising its processes of extraction and transformation for centuries.

Stone extraction in Portugal has played an important role in the field of construction and urbanization. Reaching back as far as the Roman Empire over 2000 years ago, these stones have been used to build important monuments across a territory that extends from Portugal into Spain. Today, the Portuguese stone industry, which is comprised by several companies throughout the country, possesses the latest technology and machinery and is at the forefront of all dimensions of production in stone.

Given its extraordinary diversity, resistance, beauty and sustainability, many national and international creative practitioners choose Portuguese stone as their prime material, applying it to various uses that range from design and art pieces to imposing world-renowned feats of engineering and architecture. Portugal exports both raw and transformed stones to countries all over the world, and in 2018 Portuguese stone exports reached 378 million euros (415 million US dollars).

limestone

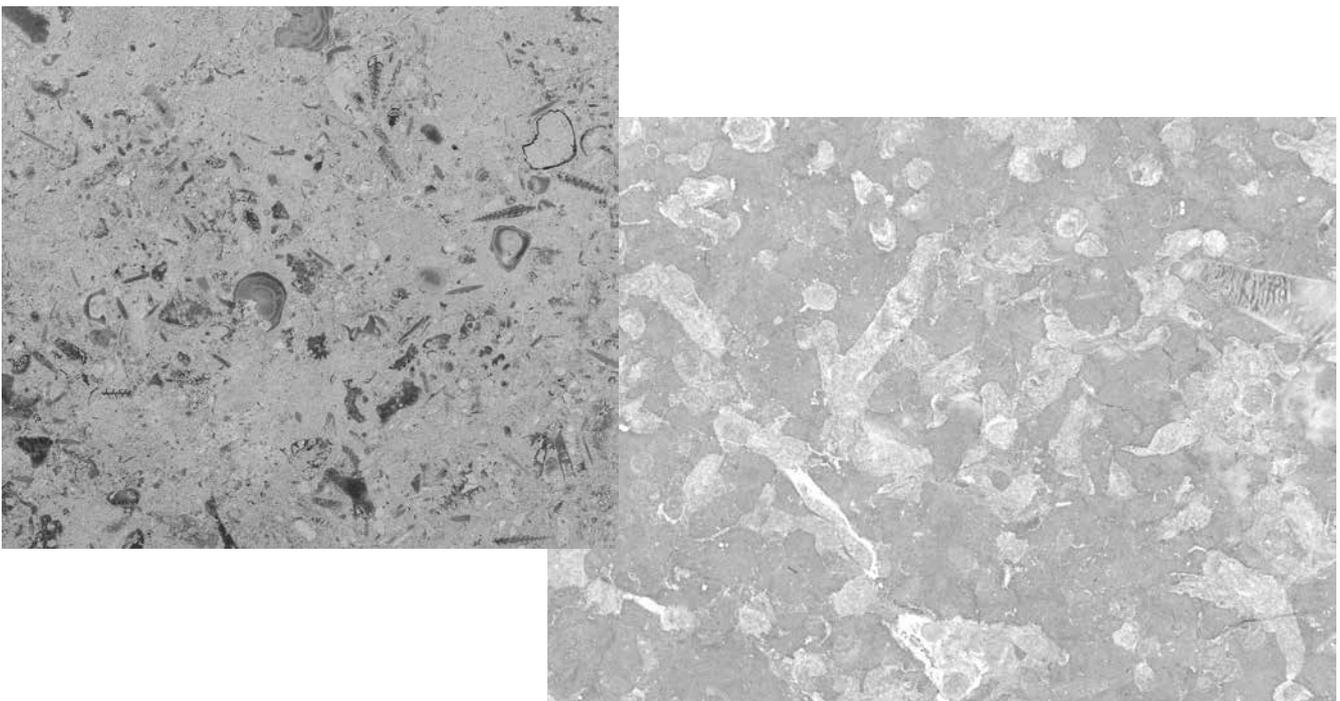
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Limestone is a sedimentary rock rich in calcium carbonate, or calcite, which sometimes also contains magnesium carbonate. Depending on its formation (whether it occurred in rivers, lakes, caves or subsoil) and associated minerals, there can be various different types of limestone.

Most of the limestones we know are formed by the accumulation of skeletal organisms, as well as the chemical precipitation of calcium carbonate in the form of bicarbonates – which occurs mainly in marine environments. It is not uncommon for limestone to incorporate small, visible fossils that offer a unique visual element, as well as a strong historical value to the surfaces to which it is applied.

In Portugal, limestone occurs in several colours, ranging from beige to blue, and sometimes also presenting in shades of pink – as is the case of the famous Lioz Limestone, with its heterogeneous stains outlined in dark pink. Portuguese limestone is more frequently found in the central part of the country and is particularly easy to work with. It is extremely attractive as a decorative stone due to its crystallinity, depth and the especially strong presence of fossils that produce unique and impressive patterns.



marble

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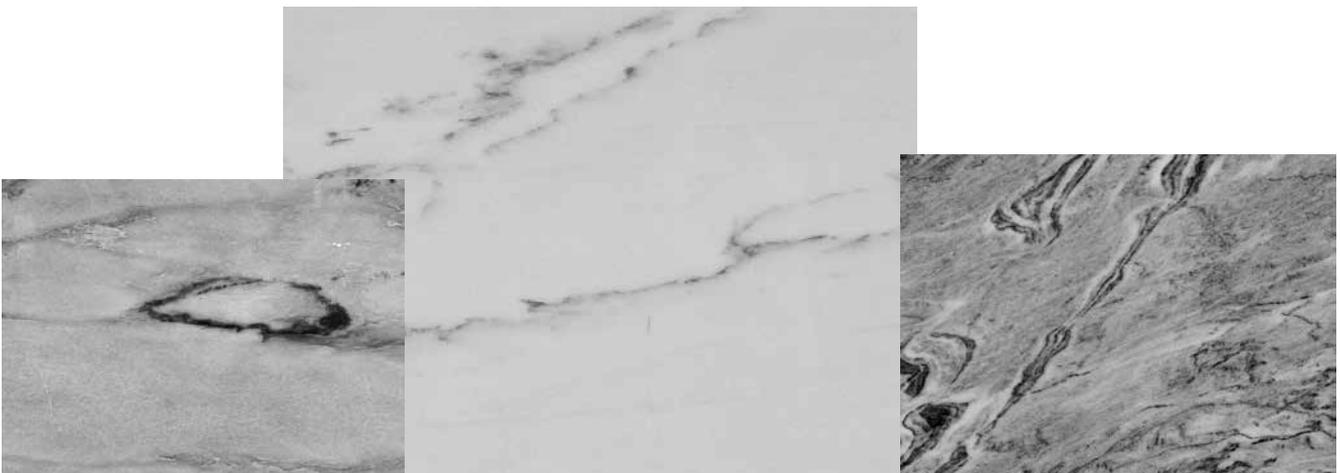
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Marble is a metamorphic rock composed of carbonate minerals. It is formed by limestone that has been exposed to high temperatures and pressure, leading to a metamorphosis that originates calcitic marble. Thus, it is created after the recrystallization of pre-existing and mostly sedimentary limestone or dolostone rock.

It is calculated that marble stones were formed through sediment deposition (fragments of other rocks transported through watercourses or wind) and materials from ancient volcanoes, which then accumulated in a sedimentary basin in mostly horizontal strata. Through the action of tectonic forces, these sediments were then transformed and deformed, creating metamorphic rocks and folds in the Earth's crust, forcing the rocks that were once on top of each other to be placed side by side. This behaviour accounts for the curvilinear patterns frequently presented by these stones.

Given this particular set of features, marble is a stone with great colour uniformity. Its characteristic veins, in contrasting tonalities, offer great complexity to its surface. Depending on the amount and the direction of the veins, they can create patterns with a highly valuable ornamental quality. Another impressive characteristic of marble is its transparency: when used in thin layers, it allows for some light to pass through, creating a stunning visual effect.

Portuguese marble is available in various tonalities, ranging between white, black, pink and yellow. It is extremely sought-after. Most Portuguese marble comes from the Estremoz anticline, which has been increasingly and uninterruptedly explored for the past sixty years. Its excellence is demonstrated through its chromatic diversity and physical and mechanical properties, established by the progressively specific demands of international markets, which place Estremoz marble among the best in the world.



granite

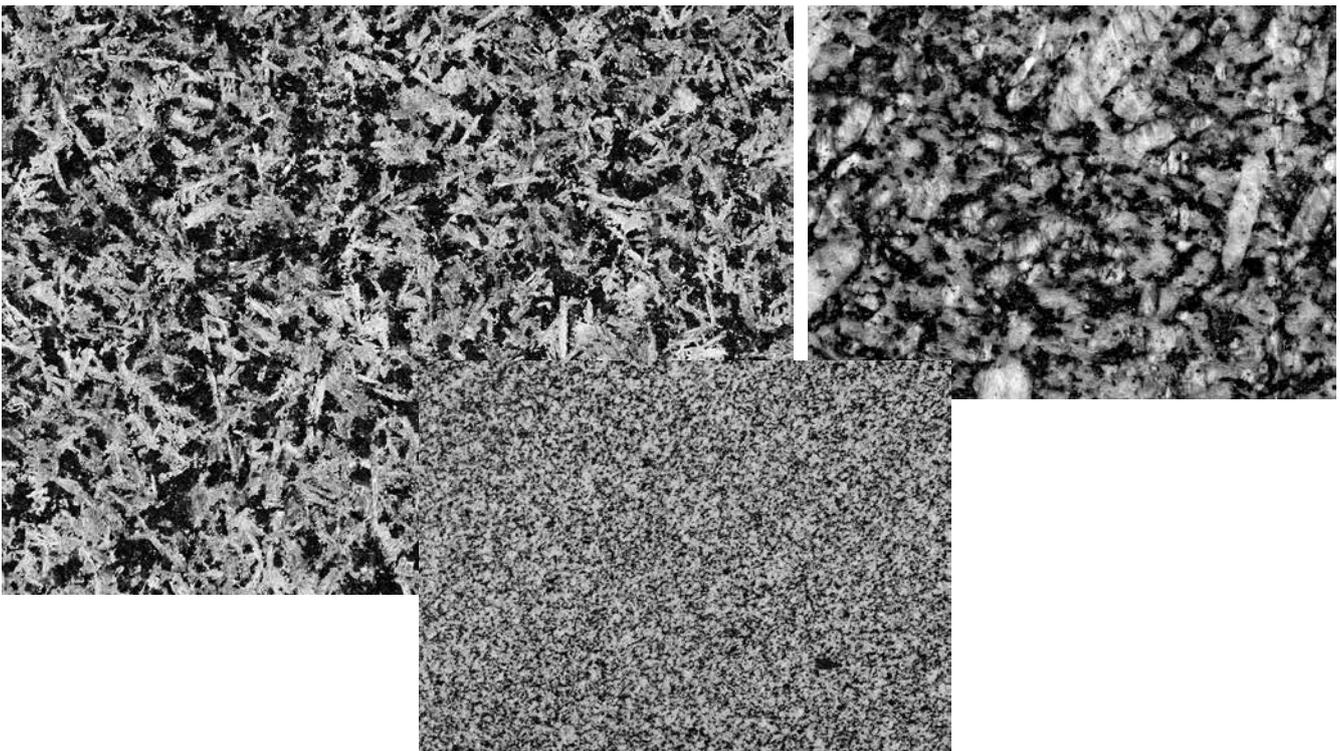
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Granite is an igneous rock: it is formed by the cooling of molten magma and its subsequent solidification, which usually occurs at great depths. Its designation comes from the Latin word granum (grain), a name that truly expresses the stone's abrasive texture.

Granite is composed mainly of quartz (a colourless mineral), mica (which gives it brightness) and feldspat (the mineral responsible for colour variations). Due to its low porosity, it is an extremely resistant rock. There are several variations of granite, ranging from textures that are fine, medium or rough. In terms of colouring, there also exist numerous tonalities, including variations of grey, blue, orange, and beige.

Portuguese granite is truly diverse, being available in tones of pink, blue, grey and yellow. The country's granite landscape is comprised of broad elevations and mountain ranges that are mainly spread throughout the Beiras (central-northern region), as well as some mountainous locations further North. Portuguese granite can also be found further South, both in the Alentejo region and in the Monchique mountain range, in the Algarve. There is also a small granite depository located within the Sintra mountain range, near Lisbon.



schist & slate

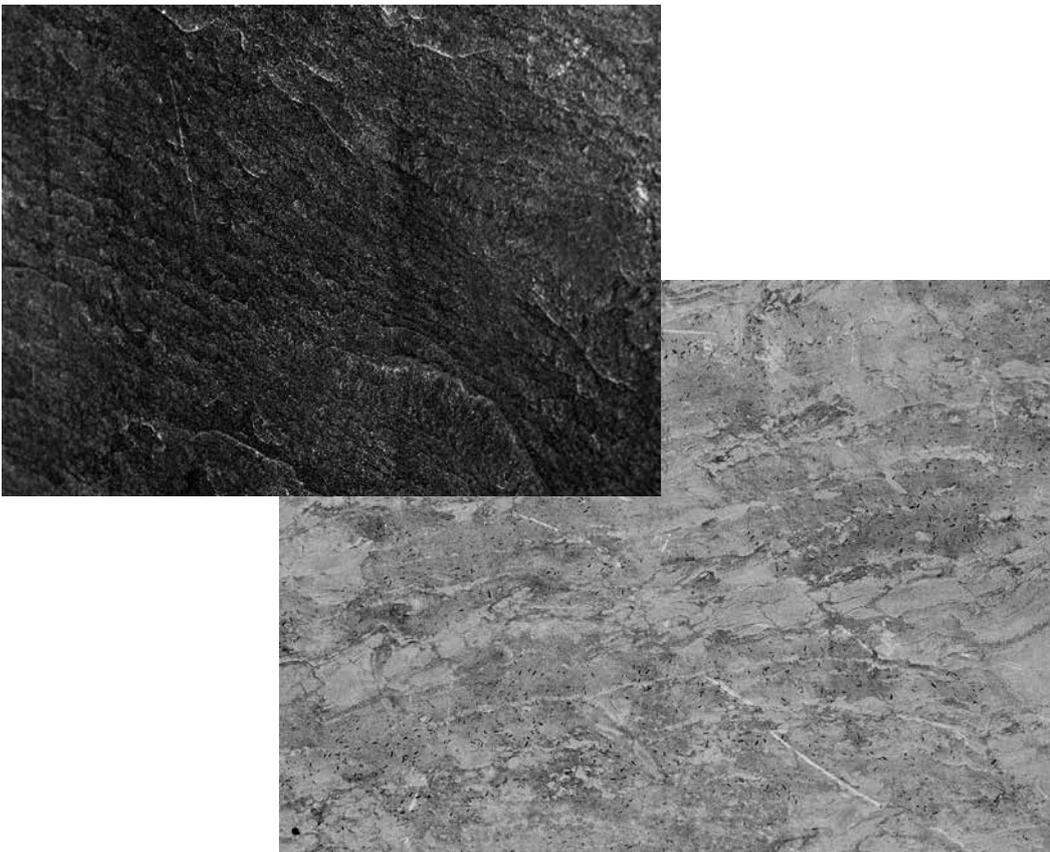
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Schist and slate are also metamorphic rocks. They are formed from clay that is exposed to increased pressure and temperature over time, turning first into a clay-like schist, then into slate, followed by phyllite and finally into schist.

These rocks are very homogenous and usually present a laminated structure. They can be easily exfoliated, due to their fine grain, and are used in many different sectors, ranging from traditional street pavements and houses, blackboard production for schools and high-end contemporary architecture.

Portuguese schist has a crystalline appearance. Its colouration tends to be dark and varies between black, grey, brown, blue and green, depending on the presence of specific minerals. It is among the finest in the world and is most predominant in the Northern part of the country, namely in the Valongo anticline, in Trás-os-Montes, and in the Beiras region.



first *stone*

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First Stone (Primeira Pedra) is an experimental international research programme that explores the potential of Portuguese Stone. Centred on the unique physical and visual characteristics of the various types of stone found across Portugal's landscape, First Stone intersects production and design through the development of innovative applications for this exceptional material, highlighting its quality as well as the vast industry that is connected to its extraction and transformation.

Over 2016 and 2017, First Stone accomplished three central research and development projects – Resistance, Still Motion and Common Sense – which were materialised through exhibitions and presentations in Venice, Milan, Weil am Rhein, São Paulo, London and New York. Inviting some of the most resounding names from the fields of design and architecture, these projects are a tribute to the extraordinary versatility of this ageless resource.

Remaining true to its objective of revealing the possibilities of Portuguese Stone as well as the sociocultural context that it encapsulates, First Stone has developed new projects for 2019 and 2020 with architects and designers, broadening its scope into the visual arts with the contributions of prominent contemporary artists. Focussing on all stages and dimensions of this material, as well as its impact on the environment, these new projects also explore unconventional approaches, reinventing stone through the use of other materials and alternative concepts.

The next projects will be presented in Venice, New York and Paris, as well as in a formative exhibition in Lisbon, showcasing all of the projects and pieces developed so far. First Stone is also complemented by a comprehensive website, a series of documentaries about the fruition of the several projects and three apps for mobile platforms.

www.primeirapedra.com

experimentadesign

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experimentadesign is a Portugal-based and internationally recognized knowledge production unit acting as an active communication platform for design, architecture and design culture.

experimentadesign's field of action is contemporary cultural production, practiced from an inclusive, multidisciplinary and transversal perspective.

experimentadesign's activity combines critical thinking, concept development and contemporary creativity, resulting in a consistent and incisive intervention in the social, cultural and economic contexts it engages. Better known for its flagship project—the EXD Biennale, which held its 9th edition in 2015—experimentadesign has built an important network of national and international renowned creative practitioners as well an indisputable know-how in strategic design.

Strongly committed to innovation and open to new challenges and contributions, it is an enterprising work and discussion platform that views culture as a key element for sustainable development in contemporary society.

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Assimagra

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ASSIMAGRA, established in 1964, is a Portuguese association that represents the mineral resources of Portugal. Focusing on the promotion of Portuguese mineral resources with a view to broadening its economic, social and cultural recognition, the values and principles of this association are to always promote the sustainability and balance in the areas in which the resources are located.

Besides being influential and leading the activities intended to defend the industrialists in the mineral resource sector, the core duties of Assimagra since it was established are as follows:

- Contribute to the technological and economic development of the sector;
- Represent the sector in collective employment negotiations;
- Represent Portugal in international institutions;
- Promote, defend and disseminate mineral resources and the Portuguese industry.

The practices and specific competences of Assimagra include: encouraging innovation and the qualifications of companies, providing support in external markets, land use planning policies, improving skills and labour conditions, valuing good job practices, the self-regulation of the sector, and promoting Portuguese stones in Portugal and abroad. These competences have been strengthened year-on-year throughout its 50 years of existence. The association currently has 200 associated SMEs.

Assimagra

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Sumaida + Khurana

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Sumaida + Khurana, a New York-based development firm founded by Saif Sumaida and Amit Khurana, is establishing a new paradigm in global real estate development. The firm's core objective is developing seminal buildings through an uncompromising dedication to architecture and craft. With this purity of vision in mind, Sumaida + Khurana seeks to develop an elegant and timeless body of work by profoundly improving upon the built environment.

The firm's technical capabilities in architecture, planning, and construction management enable it to build projects of exceptional quality and design while mitigating risk due to its extensive experience in cost and schedule management. The firm's depth of expertise allows it to deliver excellent returns to investors and partners while contributing to cities in a thoughtful manner.

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(experimentadesign)

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**First Stone would like to extend a very special thank you to its partner
for this presentation, Sumaida + Khurana**

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**With the High Patronage of His Excellency the President
of the Portuguese Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa**



O Presidente da República

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