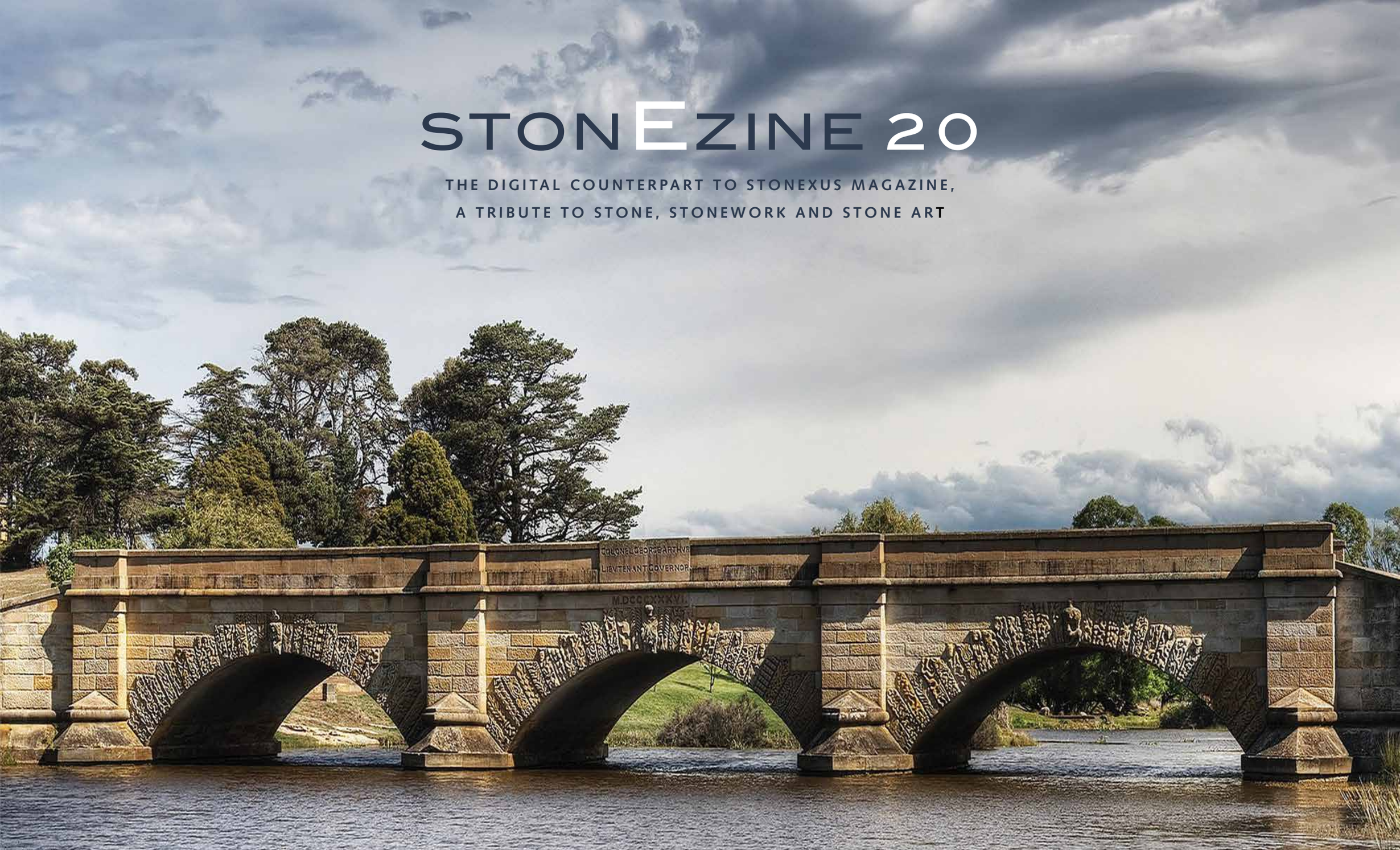
STONEZINE 20

THE DIGITAL COUNTERPART TO STONEXUS MAGAZINE,
A TRIBUTE TO STONE, STONEWORK AND STONE ART



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A TRIBUTE TO STONE, STONEWORK AND STONE ART

EDITOR: TOMAS LIPPS

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15D Clifford Street, London 13 September - 12 October, 2018

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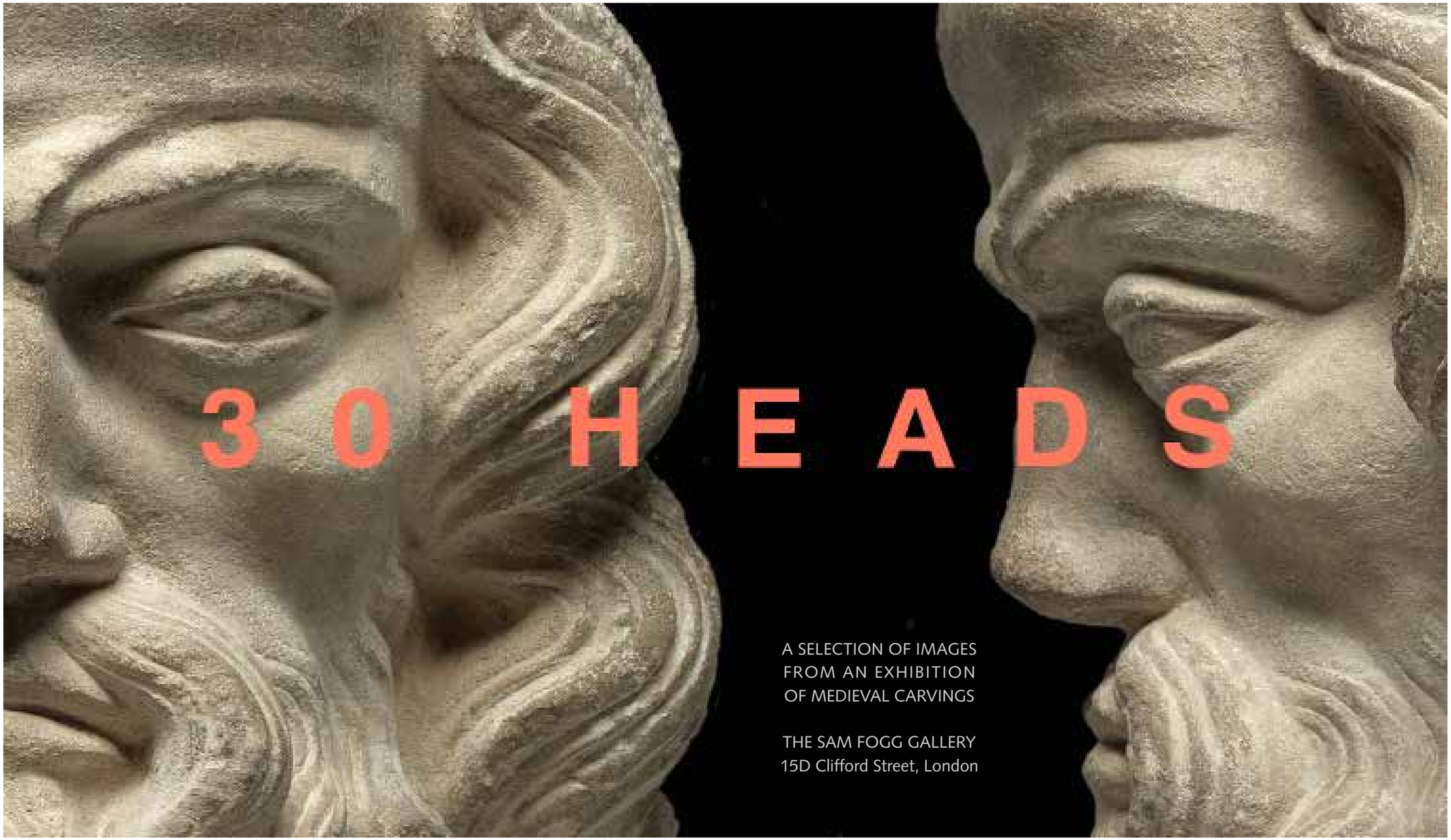
STONE FOUNDATION ON-LINE DISCUSSION GROUP

• COVER

THE ROSS BRIDGE IN CENTRAL TASMANIA
photo: J J Harrison via Creative Commons

Background photo: Detail of Limestone Wall by Scott Hawthorn of Decorah, Iowa.
(from the StoneMad Forum archives)


30 HEADS
A SELECTION OF IMAGES
FROM AN EXHIBITION
OF MEDIEVAL CARVINGS
THE SAM FOGG GALLERY
15D Clifford Street, London

Although severed from the body

and their medieval environment, the thirty stone heads in this exhibition provoke a powerful reaction as they warrant us an intimate connection with the past.

The individuality of these heads is articulated largely through expression and emotion, which in turn echo those medieval philosophies that saw the head as an indicator of rationality, intelligence and identity. The skill of medieval craftsmen is evident in the softly modelled flesh and vivid facial features, in the wild locks of hair, and in the exaggerated displays of emotion captured in stone. Originating from a variety of contexts and ranging from the 12th to the 15th century, the intrigue and beauty of these sculptures are a testament to the allure that they possess as objects - one of the reasons for their survival in museums and private collections today.

Some of the heads in this exhibition came from jamb figures that flanked portals, which would have ushered visitors into churches with their monumentality and their imposing expressions. Breaking out of their niches and communicating with one another across real space, jamb figures were able to displace viewers and draw them into their sacred dialogue.

Whether religious or royal, these large figures on the exteriors of cathedrals were created for didactic purposes. Patrons used such statues to inspire particular political or religious beliefs in their subjects by linking themselves with venerated rulers of the past and by installing images of themselves in places of importance. Statues of kings in such public settings not only enacted the presence of the king in a symbolic way but were often proxies for his presence in a physical sense – oaths were sworn and judgments were performed in front of these stone portraits.

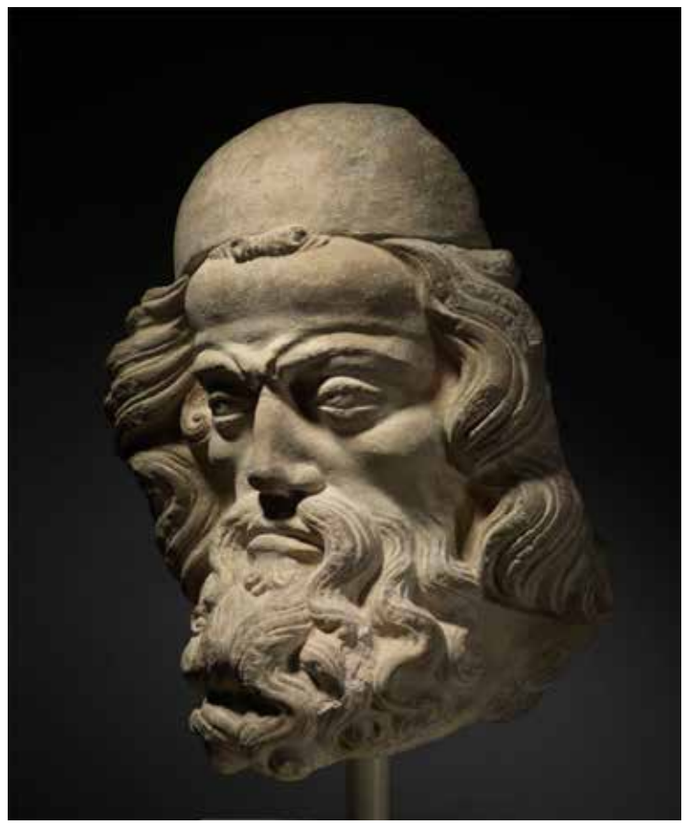
During various waves of iconoclasm or revolutionary destruction, however, these sculpted heads began to be understood as a threat. Such sentiment was subsequently coupled with the beheading of statues as symbols of monarchy—at the height of the French Revolution, for example, Louis XVI was decapitated on the same day as the statue of the Carolingian King Lothair which once decorated the church of Saint-Remi in Reims. Defacing and decapitating these figures meant removing the power to remember them and taking away their authority – it was destructive as much as it was symbolic. This act crucially anonymised the body because with the absence of the head, the figure lost its identity. Apart from the heads of kings and saints, other sculptures in this exhibition would have been found in the marginal, shadowy spaces of churches and abbeys, surprising the wondering eyes of the churchgoers with foolish sneers, pained screams and animalistic physiognomies. To the distress of reformers, such as Bernard of Clairvaux, these sculpted heads were not only disturbing but also highly entertaining.

These fantastic figures would have appeared out of the darkness, from corners and crevices in the cathedral, their grimacing faces demonstrating their absurdity while entertaining their viewers. Sculptures such as these would have enlivened the stone, yet they themselves were trapped within it – forever supporting the weight of the building on their heads and reminding the viewer of their fate, should their mind wander further.

The stylistic evolution in the 12th and 13th centuries from abstraction to naturalism was thought to have been practiced in these margins, where sculptors had more freedom to experiment with forms. Idealism gave way to disfigured bodies and dramatic expressions in order to create figures with a heightened presence and the power to move.

This commanding presence was revered but also feared—although the sculpted head was created to be looked at, it had the unnerving ability to look back. With the absence of their original context, the stone heads in this exhibition stand as a testament to the damage that has occurred to medieval monuments over the centuries. More importantly, however, they affirm our persistent fascination with the sculpted head as an object.

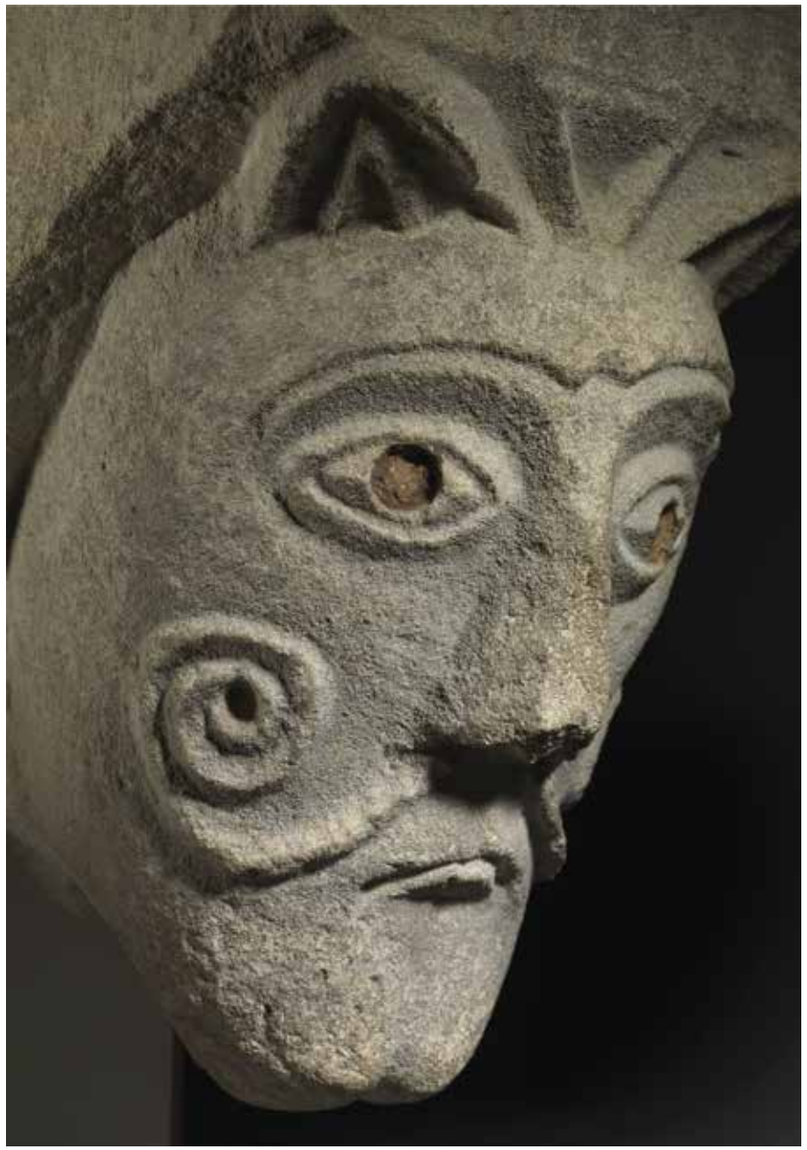
Jana Gajdošová



***Head of a prophet**, Limestone; 13.4 x 10 x 8,5 inches*
Germany, Rheinland-Pfalzc. 1340-1350

***Grimacing Stone Head**;*
10.5 x 16.5 x 8.3 inches, limestone; England,14th century.
Forceful and expressive carving delineates the deep wrinkles of the forehead and eye sockets, while the nose and mouth are contorted into a grimace, exposing a row of regular teeth framed by full, ovoid lips. Although deliberately abstracted, the sculptor of the head clearly demonstrates a knowledge of human physiognomy. Visually arresting and forcefully immediate expressions of the medieval carver's art, figurative grotesques of this type can be found scattered over the surfaces of many English churches. The emphatic grimace and the presence of drill holes symmetrically spaced in the mouth are aspects of English grotesque carving influenced by the earlier Celtic history of the country.

***Corbel of a Man with a Moustache**;*
10 x 6.5 x 14.5 inches, limestone; southwestern France, 12th century.
The head of a man with cat-like features and a long curling moustache, the figure has an oval face with a cleft chin, pointed ears and wide oval eyes whose pupils were once filled with lead. The long thin moustache scrolling at the end is part whisker and part foliage (reminiscent of a Green Man?) emerging as it does right out of the nostrils.

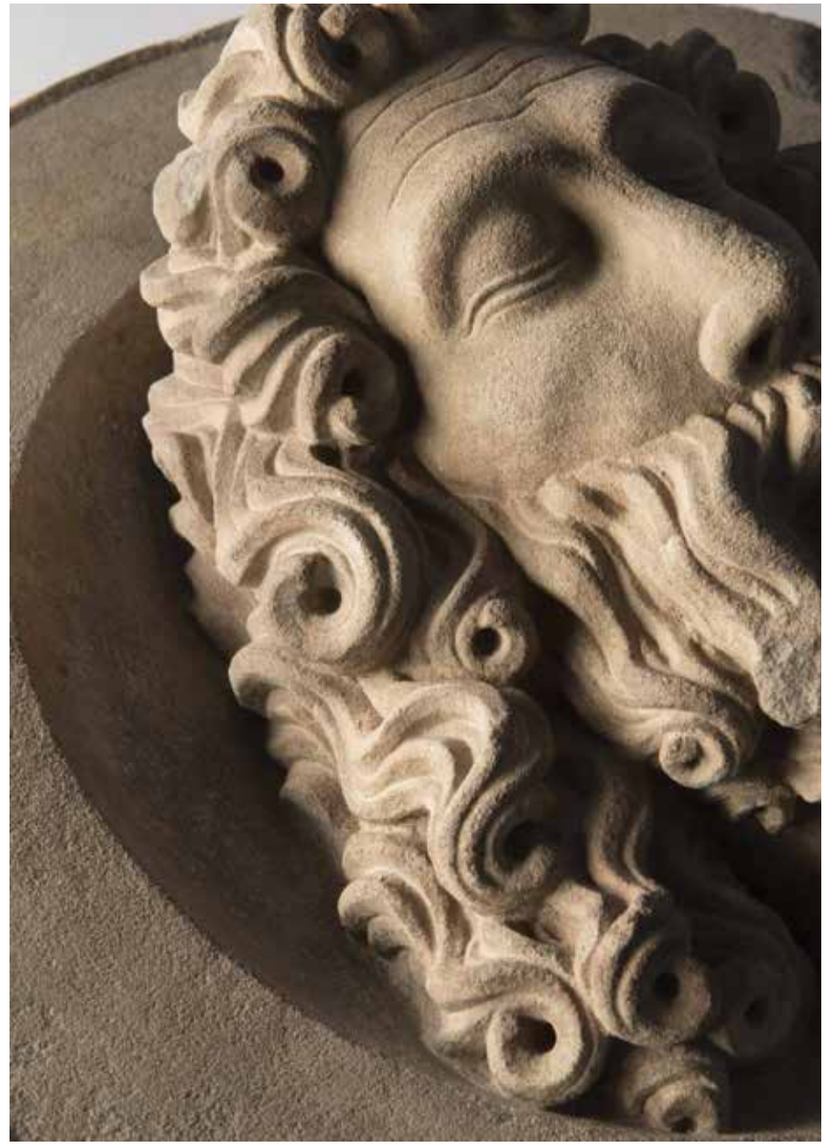


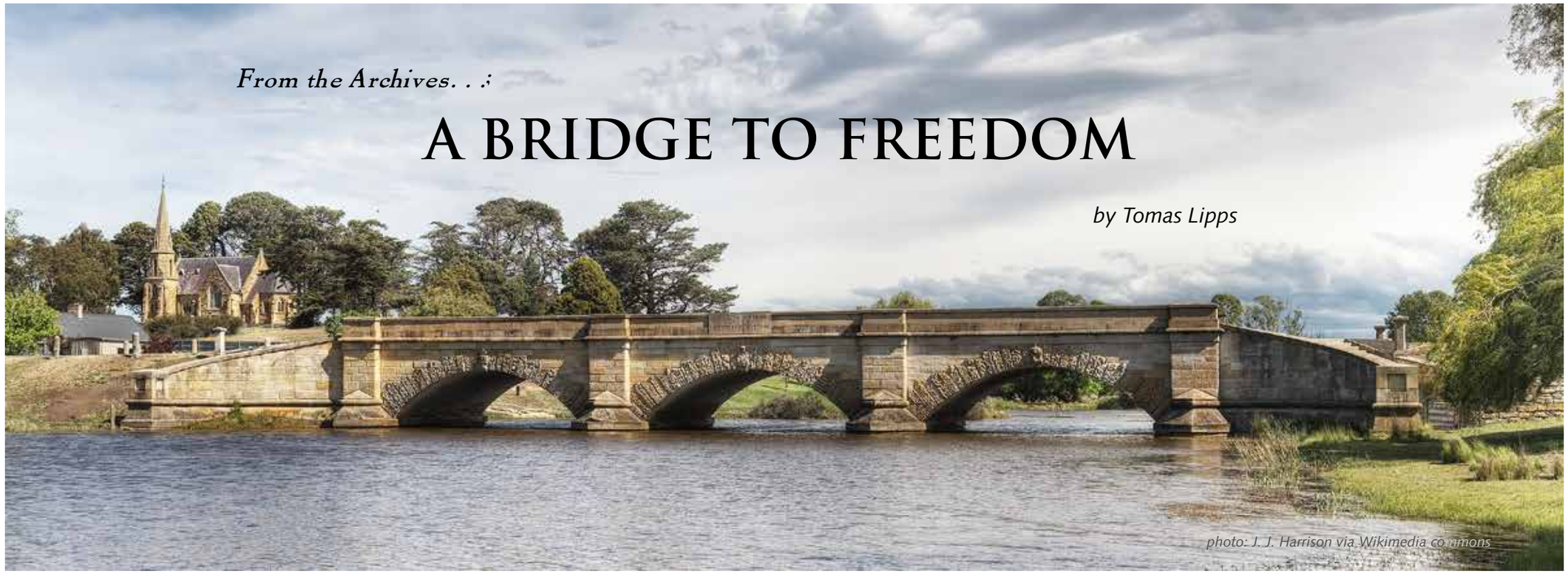
***Peeping Man**; 5 x 21 x 9 inches; limestone; England,14th century.*
A sculpture with a man emerging out of the stone using his small arms to push his body out. The bends of his arms suggest that the positioning of his body is such because he is looking down at the crowd below him. His body positioning and facial expression, with an open mouth and staring eyes, suggest curiosity but also naivety.

This little man (or woman?) would probably have been positioned high up on the interior of a church, watching the masses below and hardly ever being noticed. On account of the simplicity of the carving, it is equally possible that he was, in fact, beyond the range of human sight.

Head of John the Baptist;
diameter: 14.5 inches, depth: 7 inches, Grey sandstone; Silesia/Bohemia (western Poland), c. 1480.
The saint's head, windpipe and esophagus protruding from its severed neck, lies in the bowl of a wide-rimmed dish. Saint John's actual (?) skull was stolen by crusaders and brought to Europe. The relic's reputed healing powers led to widespread devotion and images of the saint's severed head on a platter became popular, particularly in Eastern Europe where they were known by the German term *Johannesschüsseln (Saint John dishes).*

Note: This head is actually from a different exhibition at the Sam Fogg gallery: Medieval Faces*, July 3-10, 2020*
Visit: https://www.samfogg.com/usr/documents/exhibitions/list_of_works_url/24/medieval-faces-low-res.pdf.





From the Archives. . .:

A BRIDGE TO FREEDOM

by Tomas Lipps

photo: J. J. Harrison via Wikimedia commons

A version of this article was originally published in STONEXUS VIII.

England, in the first half of the 19th century, was in a state of severe economic distress. Work was scarce, particularly in the building trades. Sir John Summerson, notable English architectural historian, said, "State expenditure on buildings was absolutely withdrawn, except for those of military or naval purpose."

Private enterprise was similarly affected. It is reported that one stonemason/artist at that time, walking the roads through thirty four counties for six months, managed to find employment for only three weeks.

In desperation, many people resorted to criminal acts, from petty theft to highway robbery. There were more convicted criminals than the prisons could contain and sailing ships that were no longer seaworthy were refitted as floating gaols. The need for labor in the new colonies and the lack of space in the prisons resulted in thousands of criminals being transported to Australia and the neighboring islands. For stealing an overcoat or a piece of lace a man or woman could be imprisoned and transported to a life of servitude in the new colonies.

In the British penal colony of Van Damien's Land (later named Tasmania after the Dutch sea captain, Abel Tasman, who first encountered it in 1642) the most important road was the Midland Highway, connecting the administrative center in Hobart Town in the south and Launceston, the island's second largest municipality, in the north. The road crossed the Macquarie River at the township of Ross. It was necessary to ford the river there until 1822 when the first bridge was built, a rough affair comprised of dry stone piers spanned by logs on which dirt was piled.

Six years later,

it was in such a ruinous state that, in response to the entreaties of townspeople and settlers living in and around Ross, Lieutenant Governor, George Arthur directed the Royal Staff Corps to commence repair of the bridge. A party of six convict laborers in the charge of an army lieutenant was dispatched to Ross, but because the winter of 1829 was just beginning there was little that they could do. They were but loosely supervised and left largely to their own devices.

"*They rose in the morning and went openly to work for the settlers like any free men, and spent their evenings at the Angel or the Sherwood Castle (pubs) more freely than most men. They were, in many ways, model citizens; they earned their money and spent it promptly on the spot. But they did not repair the bridge, which became more dilapidated each week."*[1] Finally, on the 20th of March 1831, it collapsed.

Response was immediate, or nearly so. In May a contractor was dispatched from Hobart with a crew of forty men. Within two days the bridge was repaired enough to use again and the men were put to work setting up a brick kiln, transporting wood to fire it and cutting stone from the quarries close to the town for a new bridge—a bridge about which no decision had yet been made—either where it would be constructed, or what material would be used.

In November it was determined that the new bridge would be built with the local sandstone. Engineer John Lee Archer's design featured five arches; it was later reduced to three. Seven months later, however, because the inspector of roads and the engineer could not agree on the best site, not a single stone had been laid. Finally, in June 1832 the inspector conceded that the engineer's choice of sites, which was near both the quarry and the old bridge which could be used for scaffolding, was superior, but by now the winter was on and excavating for the foundations during conditions of high water was not feasible. So, until Spring arrived the men continued to quarry stone and prepare timbers. Enough stone and timber had been cut to build two bridges but, though the hewing and sawing went on without stop, the stockpiles grew no larger.

What did grow were a number of stone houses in the neighborhood, more fine stone houses than anywhere else on the island. Brick houses were built also; although the bridge was to be built of stone, the kilns continued to be fired. The local gentry took advantage of the opportune availability of both material and labor to provide themselves with quite respectable accommodations.

The work party included a skilled stonemason, James Colbeck. He had worked for three years on the King's palace in London, a building designed by the esteemed architect John Nash, but back home in Yorkshire he found himself without work and was unable to provide for his family. With a few other men in a similar state of need he broke into a house. He and his friends were caught, convicted of burglary and sentenced to 'transportation'—penal servitude—for life. In Ross, Colbeck found a patron, William Kermode, a well-to-do merchant and settler who raised sheep and horses.

By grace of arrangements made between the settler and the contractor/overseer, Colbeck was able to spend time building Kermode's house, which was to be the grandest in the neighborhood. Kermode's son, who was bound for England, was charged to arrange for Colbeck's wife and young son to travel to Van Damien's Land and join him.

In March of 1833 the situation was much the same as it had been twelve months earlier (although the contractor/overseer had been dismissed and his illicit brick trade halted.) Work on the bridge had not commenced, but stone continued to be quarried and used for other purposes. Finally, however, the clandestine building operations and purloining of materials came to the attention of His Excellency, the Lieutenant-Governor himself and a special order was issued that prohibited, *"...convicts employed on the roads and in the Public Works from labouring under any pretence for private individuals or the advantage of those in charge of them."* Furthermore, H. E. appointed a special agent to investigate, *"...improper conduct between convicts and settlers."*

But the entire township, convicts and freemen, settlers and magistrates alike were involved, directly or indirectly, in the forbidden practices and the investigator's efforts were frustrated. He and his wife, ostracized by the local populace, found solace in drink and behaved scandalously. They had arrived in the middle of summer, 1833 and by November were gone.

Time passed, and the status quo endured, but on Christmas Day 1834, the convicts rioted when they were ordered by local constables to leave the pub where, as in years past, they were celebrating the holiday. Soldiers were called to intervene and although no one was hurt there were repercussions. Twenty-three prisoners were sent down to Hobart town and put on trial, several were sentenced to three years in the penitentiary and one was given a hundred lashes. James Colbeck was not among the accused, but, like them, he was removed from Ross.

By March 1835, it was realized that his absence had caused the bridge building, such as it had been, to come to a halt. In May the engineer wrote to request that Colbeck and another stonemason, Daniel Herbert, be sent to Ross to resume the work. This letter was followed by another to the Lieutenant-Governor proposing that Colbeck and Herbert be pardoned and receive emancipation upon completion of the bridge. His Excellency, doubtlessly realizing the effect this would have on the progress of the work, agreed. The stonemasons were also to receive a shilling a day for their labors.

James Colbeck and Daniel Herbert commenced work in the charge of a military officer, Captain William Turner of the 50th Queen's Own Regiment of Foot. Turner knew nothing of bridge construction, but he had confidence in the skills of the two stonemasons and left them to get on with the work as they saw fit (much to the consternation of the architect then in charge of building a church in Ross, whose expert advice was ignored). Turner was a plain, honest soldier who treated the stonemasons with respect (in contrast to the condescension shown by the architect).

The two stonemasons took up the work with enthusiasm and a pride of achievement that was transmitted to the rest of the work party. Much progress had already been made by the time the foundation stone was laid by the Lieutenant-Governor on October the 8th, 1835 and less than a year later (!) the bridge was finished.

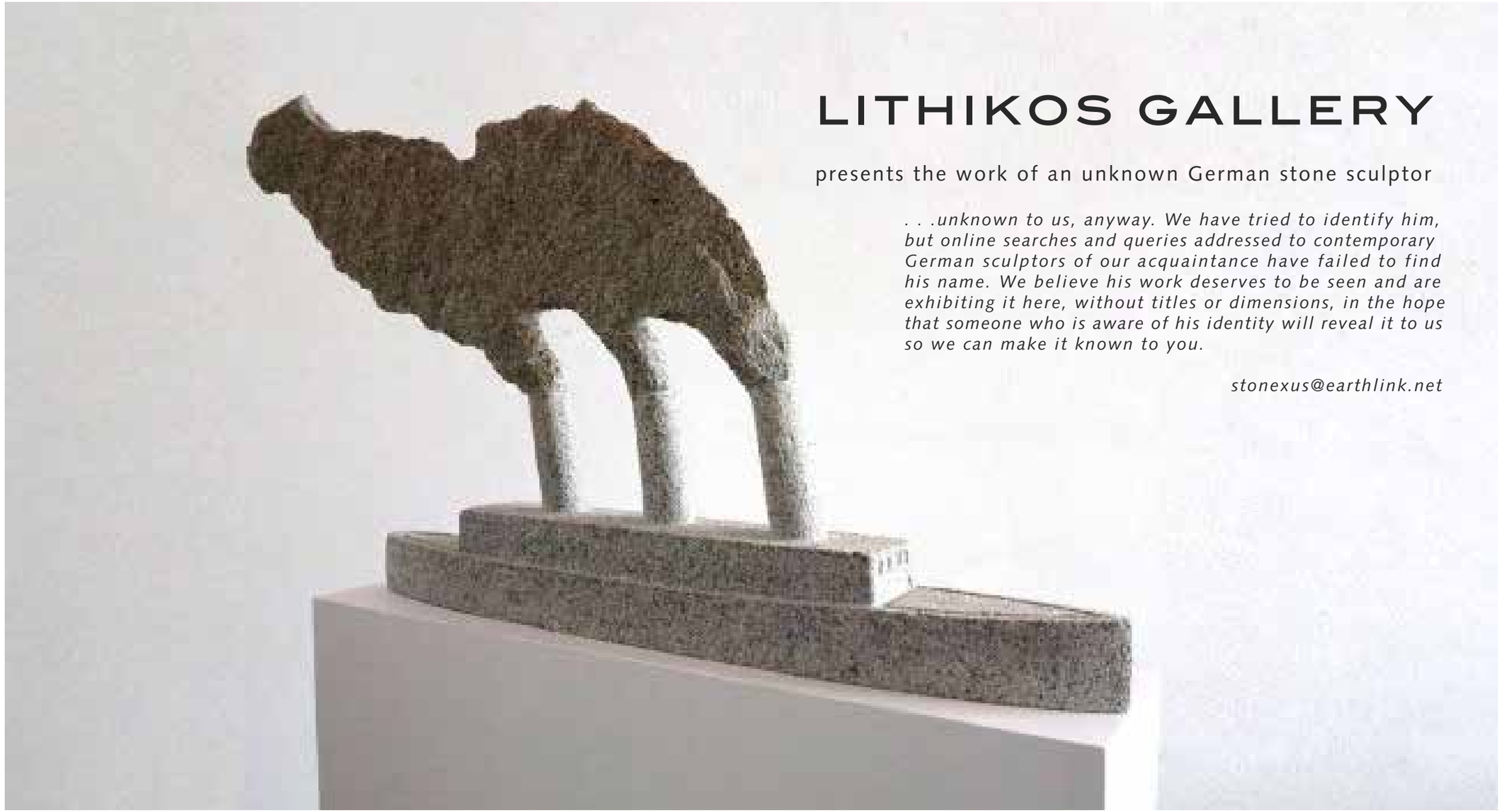
On July the 14th, 1836 Captain Turner sent notification to the engineer, *"Sir, I have the honor to report to you that the New Bridge was completed this day."*

A week later the applications for the emancipation of James Colbeck and Daniel Herbert were submitted and approved. The bridge they built over the River Macquarie was for them a bridge from captivity and disgrace to freedom and dignity.

Daniel Herbert and Mary, the woman he married on July 1st, immediately upon arriving in Ross to commence work, remained in Ross where he pursued his craft until his death in 1868. Mary Herbert lived on until her death in 1890 at the age of 85. Daniel Herbert carved the edifice beneath which they both are buried.

There is no record of James Colbeck's life subsequent to his emancipation, but it is likely that he continued working for William Kermode building his manor house, Mona Vale, and was reunited with his family.

The Ross Bridge is still in use today, carrying traffic its builders could never have imagined.



LITHIKOS GALLERY

presents the work of an unknown German stone sculptor

. . .unknown to us, anyway. We have tried to identify him, but online searches and queries addressed to contemporary German sculptors of our acquaintance have failed to find his name. We believe his work deserves to be seen and are exhibiting it here, without titles or dimensions, in the hope that someone who is aware of his identity will reveal it to us so we can make it known to you.

stonexus@earthlink.net

(This might have been the cover photo.)

StoneMad,

the online forum of the Stone Foundation,

was just that, a members-only online forum (though guests were welcomed).

It began at STONEWORK SYMPOSIUM 2008 in Barre, Vermont when Karl Kaufmann suggested to Stone Foundation Director Tomas Lipps that an online forum would be a good idea. "It *is* a good idea" said Tomas, "please start one." And Karl did.

It quickly became a venue characterized by lively discussion and, over time, more than 8,000 photos and a large number of videos were posted and commented upon.

It was very popular until the rise of the even more popular (and more populated) free Facebook groups. Sadly, Stone Foundation members (and guests) gravitated towards those and away from STONEMAD.

The cost of maintaining something so seldom visited has led led us to consider closing it. But many of the photos deserve to be seen. Therefore, this and future editions of STONEZINE will include a selection of photos from STONEMAD.

The STONEMAD website has not been dismantled yet and it can still be visited and perused. **If you wish to visit, you may do so** *via*: *http://thestonefoundation.ning.com.*

This first photo, shown on the facsimile page at left is of Suomenlinna, the island fortress off the coast of Helsinki. It was chosen to honor the memory of a dear friend, Stone Foundation member Charlie Hazard, a Scottish stonemason and active StoneMad man who lived and worked in Finland and travelled widely in the Baltic and eastern European regions. He passed away a few years ago and we miss him.

T L

left:
Kohala Coast, Hawaii, balanced coral stone spire by Zach Pine of Berkeley, California.

right: Sheepherder/stonemason with a tall cairn built by an unknown predecessor. These is one of several such cairns built for line-of-sight navigation across the top of a very wide mesa. There are 10-15 of them spread over several miles in alignments that converge on a particular point—the one and only trail off a huge cliff to the valley below. . .and its creek.
photo: Todd Campbell

Delphi, Greece; perimeter wall.
In the background is the mountain
from which its stones were taken.
photo: Tomas Lipps

Artful, precisely fitted retaining wall by Jonathan Courtland, Durham, North Carolina.

A handsome stone wall by Karl Kaufmann, Ivoryton, Connecticut.