

CATALOGUE OF CORRESPONDENCE

A COLLECTION OF ROCKS FOUND IN THE GOTHENBURG MUSEUM OF WORLD CULTURE

ALYSSA GROSSMAN AND SELENA KIMBALL



Royal Anthropological Institute

Anthropology & Art

A new open-access publication series edited by the RAI Anthropology of Art Committee. The series stems from the international conference Art, Materiality and Representation organized by the RAI in collaboration with the British Museum and the School of Oriental and African Studies in 2018. Its aims are to make available to a wide audience works that engage with the connections between visual, material, aural and other expressive human practices and the lived worlds in which they take place from an anthropologically informed perspective.

We solicit new contributions from anthropologists and others – such as archaeologists, art historians and practitioners – that will enhance and expand our collective understanding and appreciation of this important area of social life.

Guidelines for submission:

Texts should be of maximum 8,000 words (including endnotes and references). We welcome original works that explore the meaningfulness of images, artefacts, sounds and performances and engage with anthropological approaches and/or analysis. There are no restrictions regarding the emphasis on the visual and textual aspects of the contributions and authors are welcome to discuss their proposed submission with the editor (paolo.fortis@durham.ac.uk).

Authors will be responsible for clearing all image permissions and rights to publication for both their and other's images. Manuscripts should be submitted to: admin@therai.org.uk.

Editorial Committee

Editor: Paolo Fortis (Durham University)

Editorial Assistant: Amanda Vinson (Royal Anthropological Institute)

Iside Carbone (Royal Anthropological Institute)

Max Carocci (Royal Anthropological Institute)

Charles Gore (SOAS)

Ian Herbertson

Susanne Kuchler (University College London)

Sarah Walpole (Royal Anthropological Institute)

Leslie Joynes (Columbia University)

Rowland Abiodun (Amherst College)

CATALOGUE OF CORRESPONDENCE

A COLLECTION OF ROCKS FOUND IN THE GOTHENBURG MUSEUM OF WORLD CULTURE

IMAGES BY SELENA KIMBALL WORDS BY ALYSSA GROSSMAN



Royal Anthropological Institute

Anthropology & Art No. 8

First published 2023

Cover image: Inventory number 1915.02.0014p from the 'Catalogue of Correspondence'.

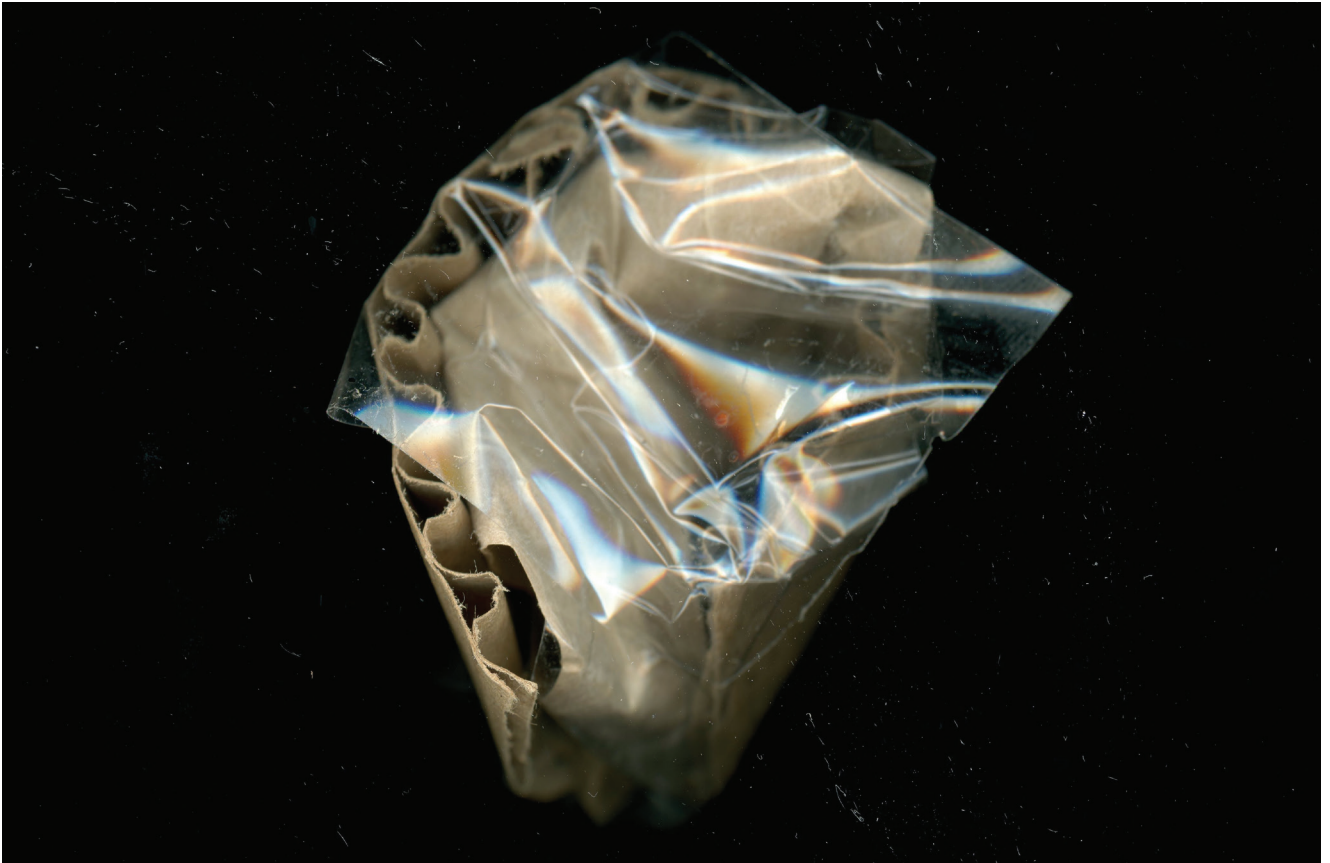
ISSN 2634-8004

ISBN 978-1-7392193-3-8

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

II - CATALOGUE OF CORRESPONDENCE

IMAGES BY SELENA KIMBALL WORDS BY ALYSSA GROSSMAN



Inventory number 1915.02.0014p

General catalogue number 15244

Search word stone; stone fragment

Material lithic; stone

Length 3 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1913–14

Provenance Chilón (17° 58' 60S; 64° 35' 60W), north-east of Pérez, Mizque Valley, south-east of Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, Bolivia (South America)

Description This rock looks like it could be made of amber or some kind of pollen-coloured resin, though I don't think it actually is. It is small, trapezoidal, with a flat bottom. If you set it down on its base, it resembles a miniature mountain, with its peak lightly squashed by a giant's thumb. The left side of the mountain is yellower and cloudier than the rest of it, with faint scrapes and scratches. It could possibly pass for a dried-out lump of rubber cement.



Inventory number 1915.02.00161

General catalogue number 15266

Search word stone

Material lithic; stone

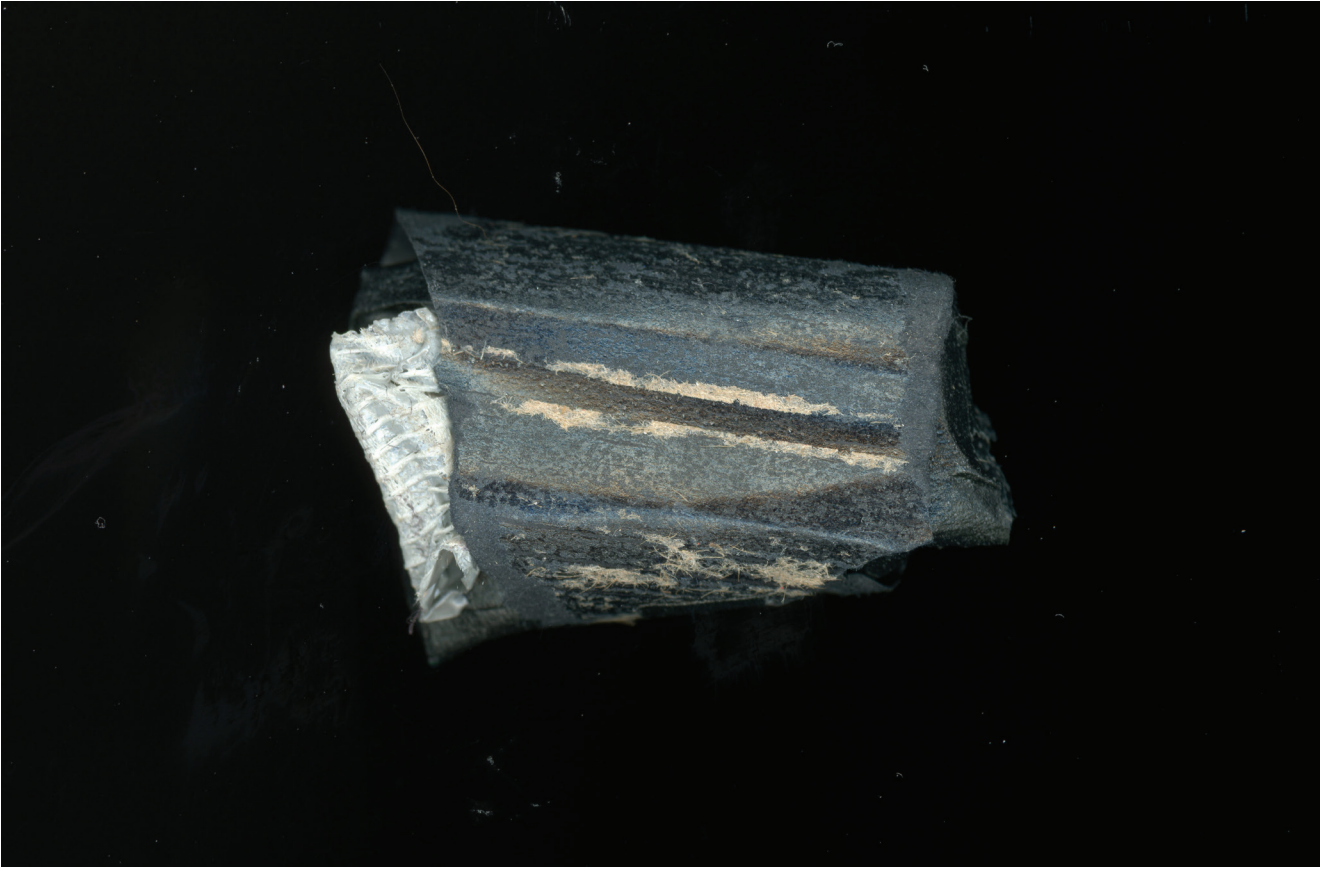
Length 4 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1913–14

Provenance purchased in Chilón, exact location unknown (17° 58' 60S; 64° 35' 60W), north-east of Pérez, Mizque Valley, south-east of Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, Bolivia (South America)

Description A very red rock. Roughly the shape of a pentagon; fits in the palm of my hand. Its sides are smooth, sloping out like a pyramid. The top consists of layers that look like a crumbling wall – red giving way to grey around the edges, a thin mustard-yellow line peeking through on one side. For some reason I take a sniff of this rock and find that it has a strong odour. I can't explain why I am tempted to smell it. None of the other rocks seem to give off any scent, but this one does. I am sitting here in the archives sniffing and sniffing this rock. What does it remind me of? A basement, maybe. Damp stairs leading down into a damp basement.



Inventory number 1915.02.0017o
General catalogue number 15286
Search word stone; stone fragment

Material lithic; stone

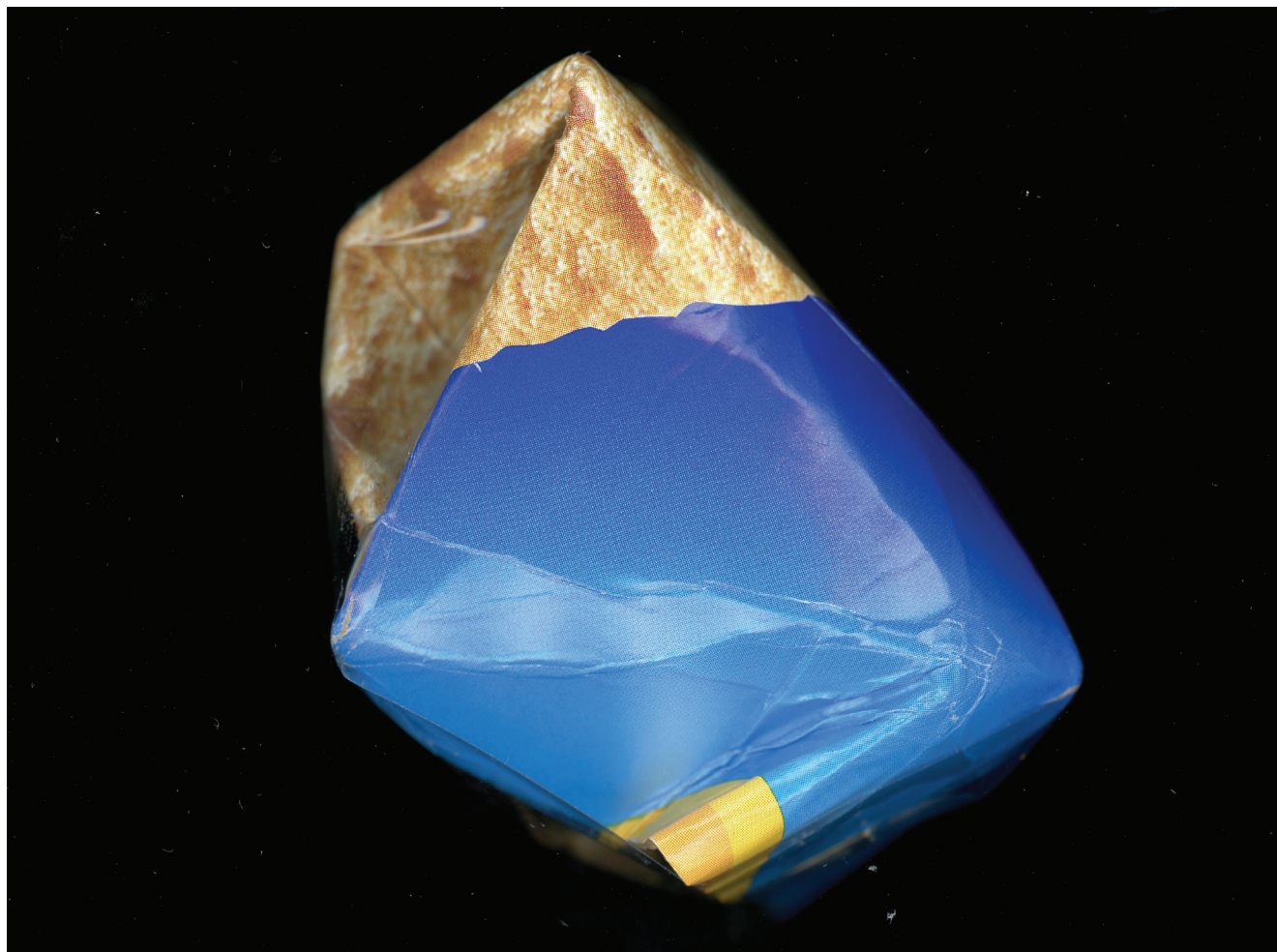
Length 2.2 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1913–14

Provenance Holguin (18° 13' 00S; 64° 10' 00W), north of Valle Grande, Mizque Valley, Santa Cruz, Bolivia (South America)

Description This rock is nearly black. It is very small; maybe it was chipped from a larger piece of stone. It has a trapezoidal shape. Its exterior has notches and abrasions; it looks as if someone has taken a miniature chisel to the top layer and marked out three separate angular gouges. The underside has thin lines cut into it that resemble cuneiform letters, but I don't think they were made intentionally.



Inventory number 1915.02.0017s

General catalogue number 15290

Search word stone

Material lithic; stone

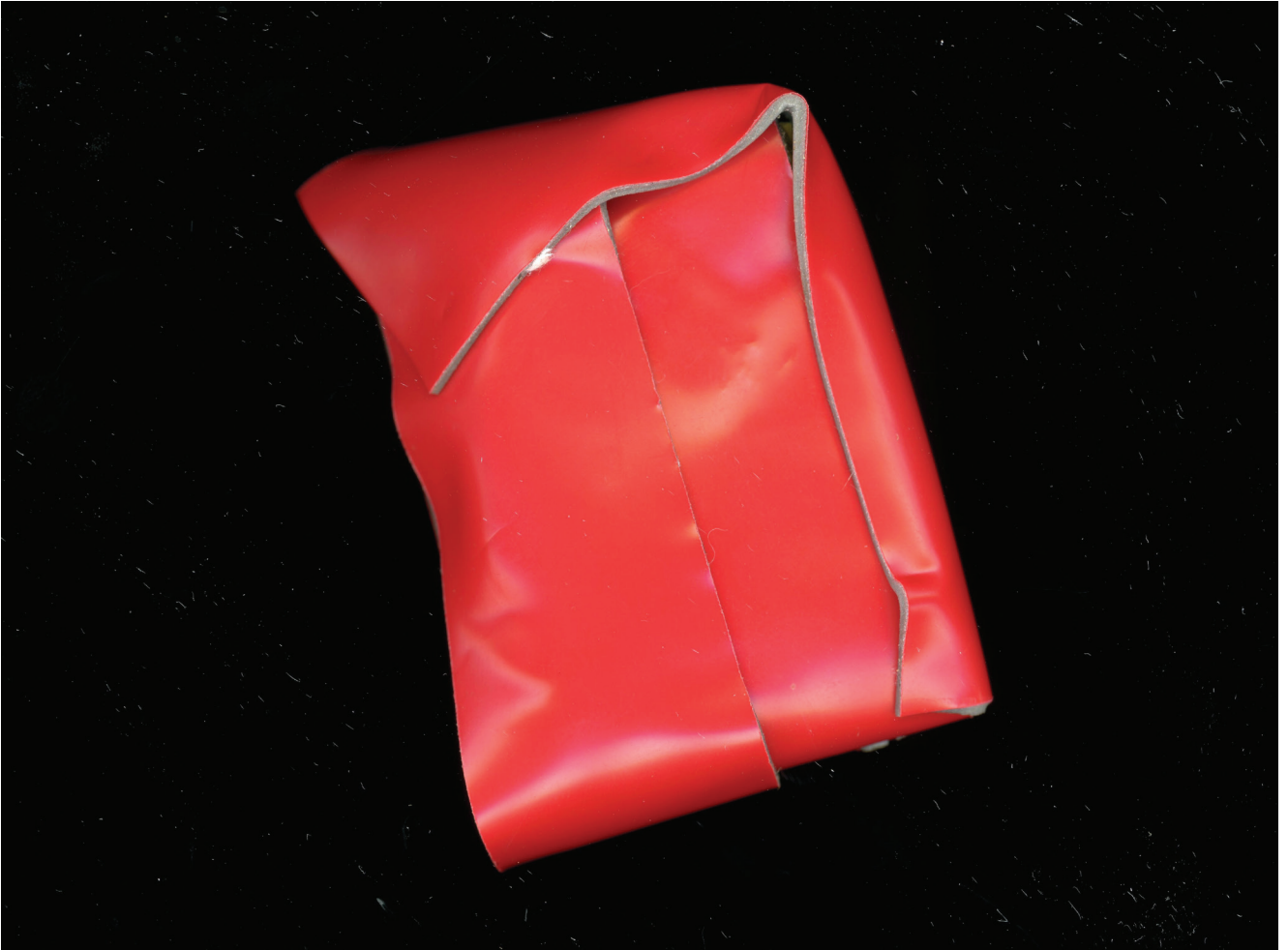
Length 5.6 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1913–14

Provenance Holguin (18° 13'00S; 64° 10'00W), north of Valle Grande, Mizque Valley, Santa Cruz, Bolivia (South America)

Description I am attracted to this rock. Its colours are subtle but rich. It has a tortoiseshell quality, with warm shades of brown that remind me of a scuffed leather shoe. It is in the shape of a raindrop, but a slightly damaged raindrop that has been flattened by someone's palm. Its base looks like it was left for too long on a fire – singed and blistered, criss-crossed with lines and scratches.



Inventory number 1915.02.0017t

General catalogue number 15291

Search word stone

Material lithic; stone

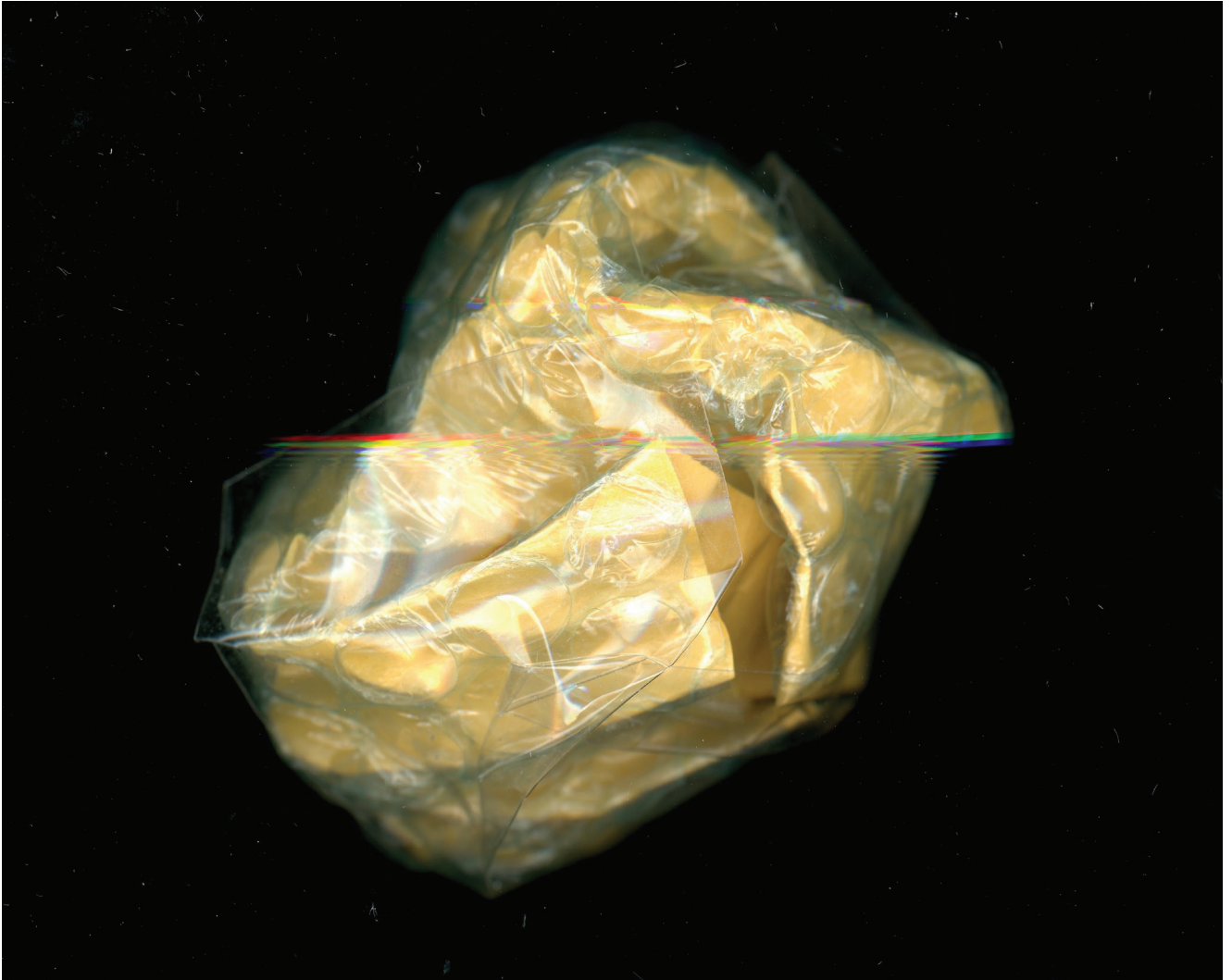
Length 3 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1913–14

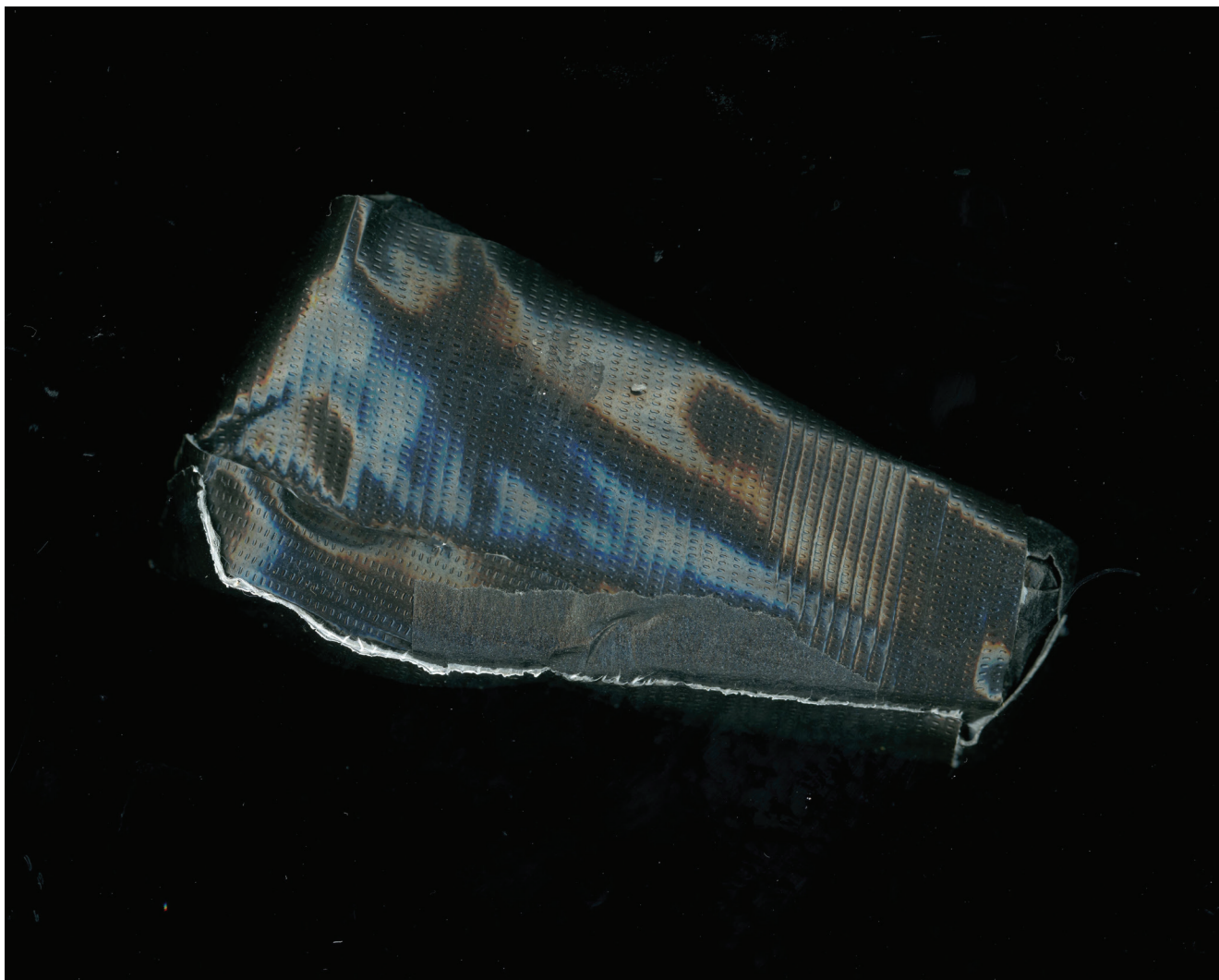
Provenance Holguin (18° 13' 00S; 64° 19' 00W), north of Valle Grande, Mizque Valley, Santa Cruz, Bolivia (South America)

Description This rock is brick-red, rectangular, small enough to completely disappear when I enclose it in my hand. It doesn't look like it's been polished, but its facade is smooth, flecked with faint scratch marks. Maybe the shape is more of a parallelogram than a rectangle. It has a slight protuberance along one of its sides. There are two minuscule sparkles on one of its faces, barely visible, embedded in the stone's outermost surface. The sparkles look like faraway stars.



Inventory number 1915.02.0021i
General catalogue number 15456
Search word stone; stone fragment
Material lithic; stone
Length 2.5 cm
Collector Erland Nordenskiöld
Date of acquisition 1913–14
Provenance Pulquina (18° 06' 00S; 64° 25' 00W), east of Pérez, La Franca, Mizque Valley, south-east of Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, Bolivia (South America)

Description This rock is in the shape of a semicircle, a setting sun. It is a translucent grey colour, scattered with shimmering flecks and dull indentations. The front side is more mottled, but the back is smooth, almost glowing. This might be because the rock has broken open and the back could actually be the inside of the rock's flesh, made visible. It feels unprotected and exposed.



Inventory number 1915.02.0021j

General catalogue number 15457

Search word stone; stone fragment

Material lithic; stone

Length 4 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1913–14

Provenance Pulquina (18° 06' 00S; 64° 25' 00W), east of Pérez, La Franca, Mizque Valley, south-east of Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, Bolivia (South America)

Description This stone is dark, the colour of polished walnut. There is a little nub on its underside, as if it were a gently squeezed piece of soft clay. If you rubbed off the outer layer of the rock, the whole thing might be a deep red underneath – there are subtle slivers of this red showing through. Its form is smooth and swollen, with some bulges. It looks remarkably fluid for something that is so solid, like it could have been underwater for a long time.



Inventory number 1915.02.0039p2

General catalogue number 16000

Search word stone; stone fragment

Material lithic; stone

Length 4 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1913–14

Provenance Incahuasi, Chuquisaca, Bolivia
(South America)

Description This rock is compact, shaped like a generous wedge of pie. It is a muddy red-brown colour, making the black handwritten catalogue number on its surface difficult to see. The rim of the wedge, where the pie's crust would be, has chipped off. There are streaks and indentations throughout. It looks as if it could use a good scrubbing.



Inventory number 1915.02.0040h1

General catalogue number 16037

Search word stone; stone fragment

Material lithic; stone

Length 3 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1913–14

Provenance Zapatera, north of Yacuiba, Tarija, Bolivia (South America)

Description This rock is really tiny. Its stratified layers resemble a diagram of the earth's crust that you might find in a geology book. The layers form wavy lines of grey, pink and lilac. In profile, it almost looks like a little pig's nose. The bottom of the rock shows similar striations, with a ridge made from a chip that covers its top half. So many details in such a small bit of stone.



Inventory number 1915.02.0040i1

General catalogue number 16038

Search word stone; stone fragment

Material lithic; stone

Length 2.8 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1913–14

Provenance Zapatera, north of Yacuiba, Tarija, Bolivia (South America)

Description This appears to be a flake from a larger stone. It is a thin oval, with a bulge on the lower right side, not unlike a cartoon speech bubble. The left part of the rock is dark tan, and then about two-thirds of the way across, it abruptly changes to reddish brown. The patterns on this rock resemble a drawing of an island on a map, with delicate contour ridges marking the changing elevations down to the coastline.



Inventory number 1915.02.0040j1

General catalogue number 16039

Search word cast-off; stone cast-off

Material lithic; stone

Length 2 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1913–14

Provenance Zapatera, north of Yacuiba, Tarija, Bolivia (South America)

Description This rock is shaped vaguely like an arrow. It could have been a chip that came off a larger piece, when the larger piece was being made into something functional. All its edges are sharp. The back surface is smooth, slightly concave, with no dents or imperfections. Aside from one striated edge, it is a nearly uniform pearly mauve colour.



Inventory number 1915.02.0089b

General catalogue number 16301

Search word stone

Material lithic; stone

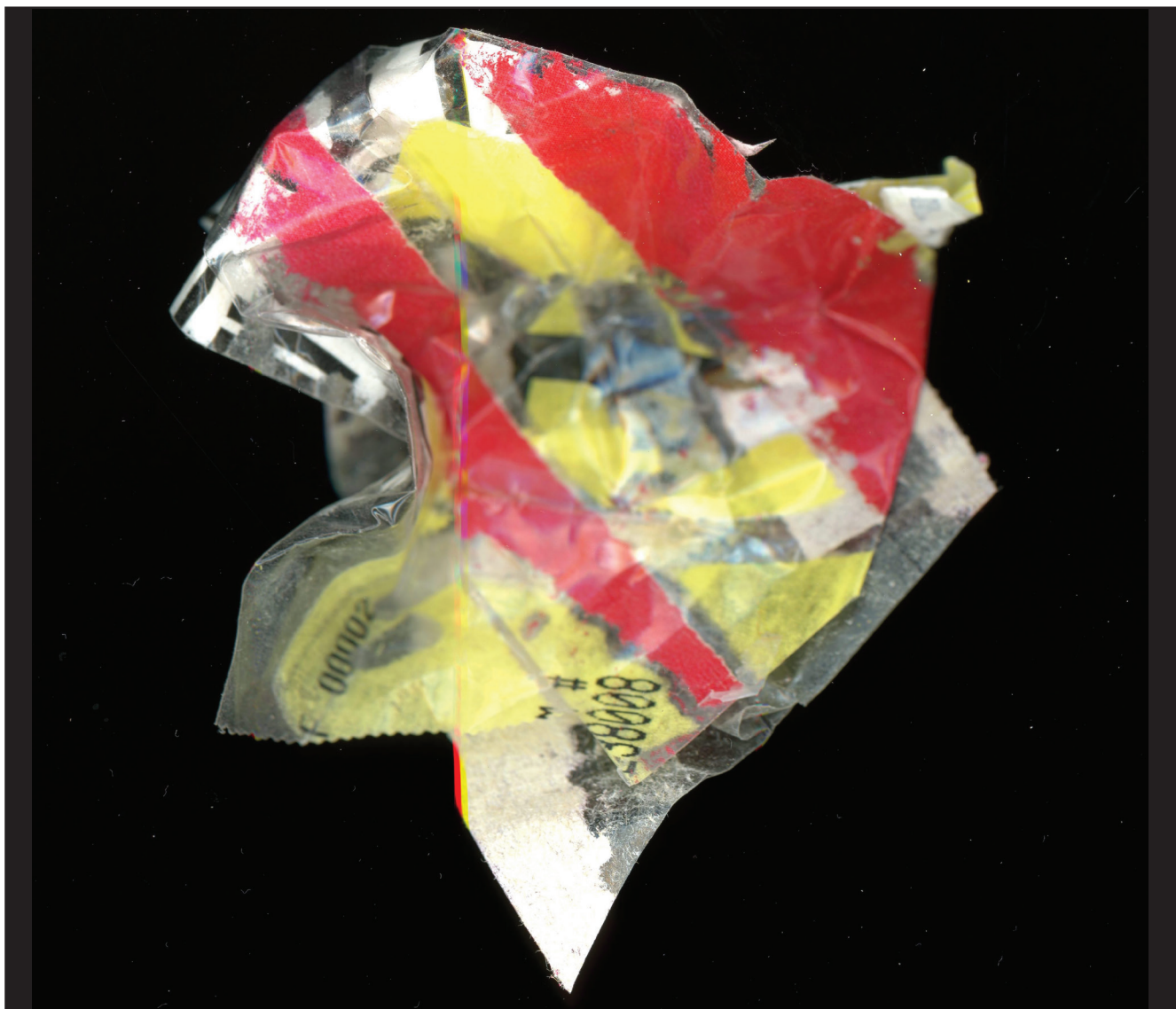
Length 8 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1913–14

Provenance Grave 1, Guaracas, Upper Parapiti River, Southern Bolivia (South America)

Description This rock has a slightly curved ridge along the top right corner, like a line traced by the arc of a compass. It is a dirty lavender colour, with a scratch on its bottom front face, and a ragged top edge. Its base is slick but not shiny, with some thin, scuffed patches in the shape of a lumpy backwards L.



Inventory number 1916.12.0020

General catalogue number 18419

Search word colour stone

Material lithic; stone

Length 4 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1908

Provenance Ihuitihuembe (Iboitihuemba – 19° 46' 60S; 63° 23' 60W), Caipipendi Valley, north-east of Camiri, Santa Cruz, Bolivia (South America)

Description I was immediately drawn to this rock when I saw it in the online catalogue because it was red and shaped like a heart. What seems to be its logical front face has a few grazes on the top left side, revealing a fierce brick colour through its chalky surface. On the back face is a patch where a distinct layer of stone has chipped off, exposing a lighter shade of red underneath. It almost seems like you could peel away the rest of the heart's outer layer, like the prickled hull of a chestnut.



Inventory number 1927.06.0161b1

General catalogue number 34219

Search word stone

Material lithic; stone

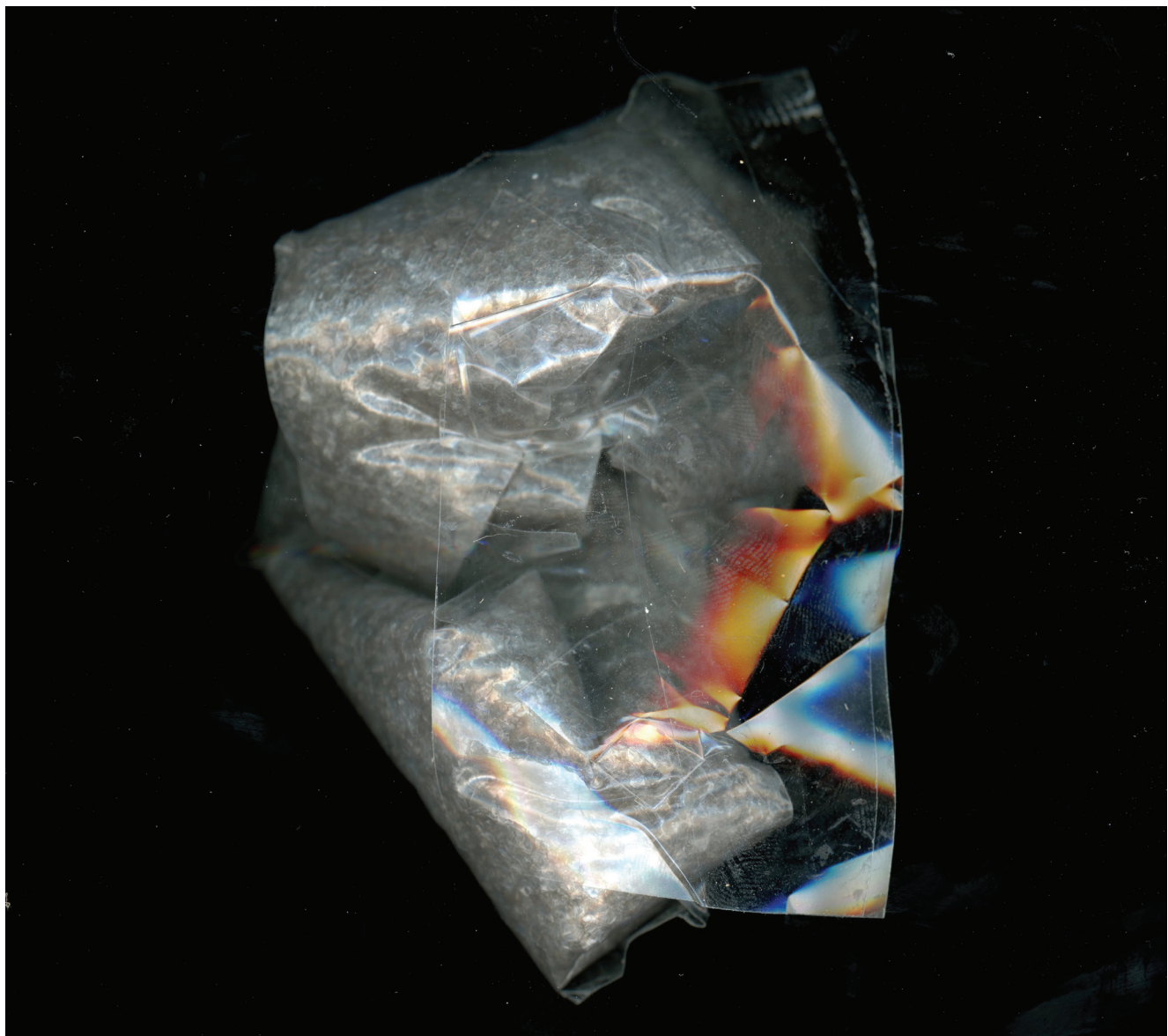
Length 5 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1927

Provenance Bruceville Mound, Cosumnes River,
Lodi, California (USA)

Description The base of this rock is in the shape of an isosceles triangle, and it rises into a softened pyramidal structure. The top layer of the pyramid has an orange tinge. The left face is chipped along one edge, which appears to be greenish underneath. There is a depression in the place where the tip of the pyramid should be. The stone has an aura of dull smoothness.



Inventory number 1927.06.0161m

General catalogue number 34202

Search word stone

Material lithic; stone

Length 7 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1927

Provenance Bruceville Mound, Cosumnes River,
Lodi, California (USA)

Description This rock is heavy and solid, small enough to fit in my hand. It has a cubic shape, though some of the faces of the cube are irregular and crumpled. The other faces are smooth planes. The rock itself is grey, with undertones of green or oxidized bronze. If its outer layer were scraped off, or if the rock were polished, you might find a pale-olive colour underneath.



Inventory number 1927.06.0161o

General catalogue number 34204

Search word cooking stone?

Material lithic; stone

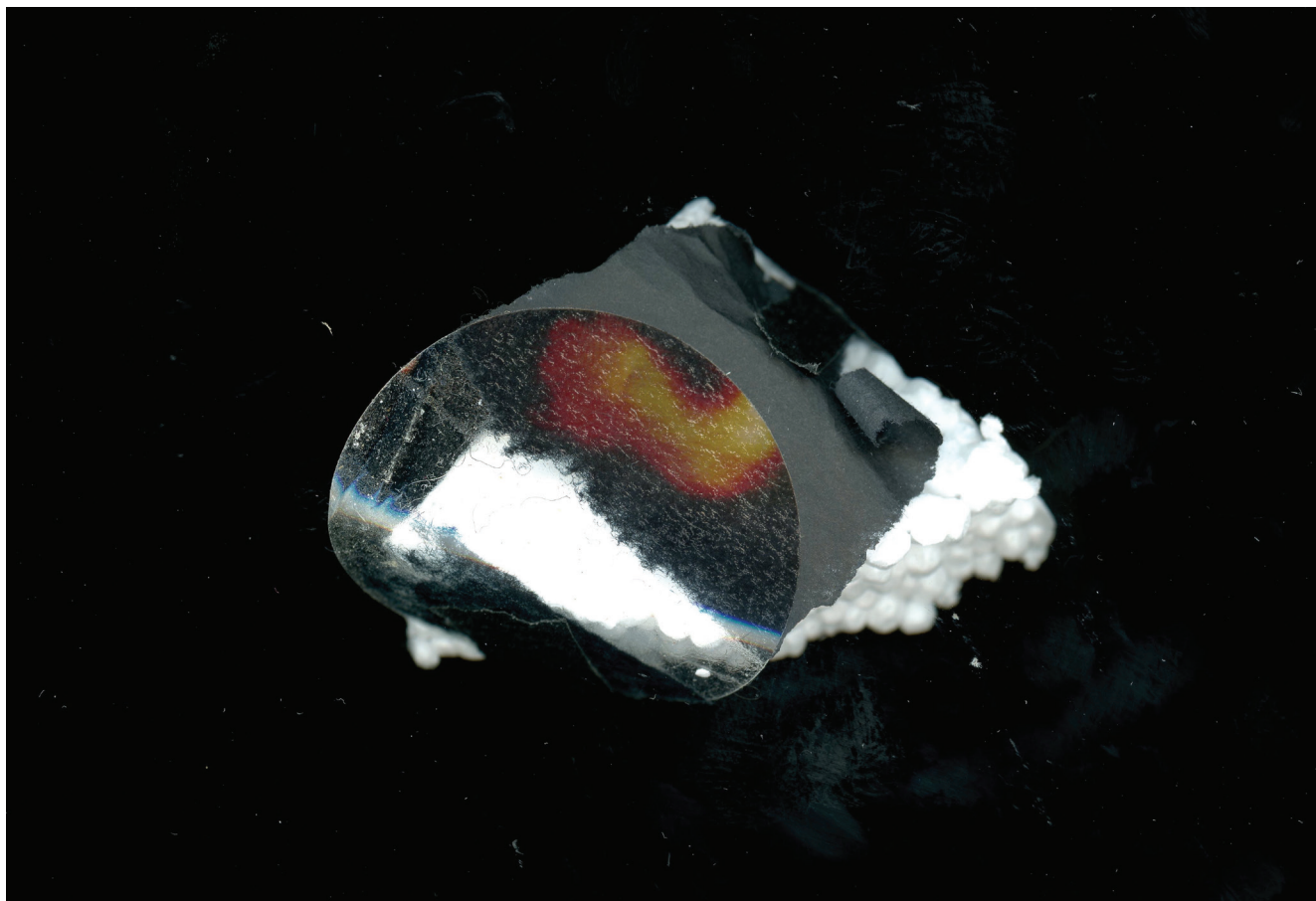
Length 6.5 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1927

Provenance general surface, Bruceville Mound,
Cosumnes River, Lodi, California (USA)

Description This rock has a slight basement smell. It is the size and shape of a lady-finger cookie. Its colour is the light brown of sun-bleached wood or dusty bark. Its texture resembles the dried-out remains of an old bar of soap. On one end, some layers have chipped off, and you can see pink strata in the stone's composition. If I were to put my fingernail underneath one of these layers, I could probably pry off a large part of the rock. I stick my left (un-gloved) thumbnail under the crack and exert some pressure. It moves. What if I were to pry it right off? What would the stone look like underneath? Would it be smooth, or show evidence of other layers? Maybe the inside of the rock has more pink in it. When I rub it, some grey powder is left behind on my gloved fingers.



Inventory number 1927.06.0161t

General catalogue number 34209

Search word stone

Material lithic; stone

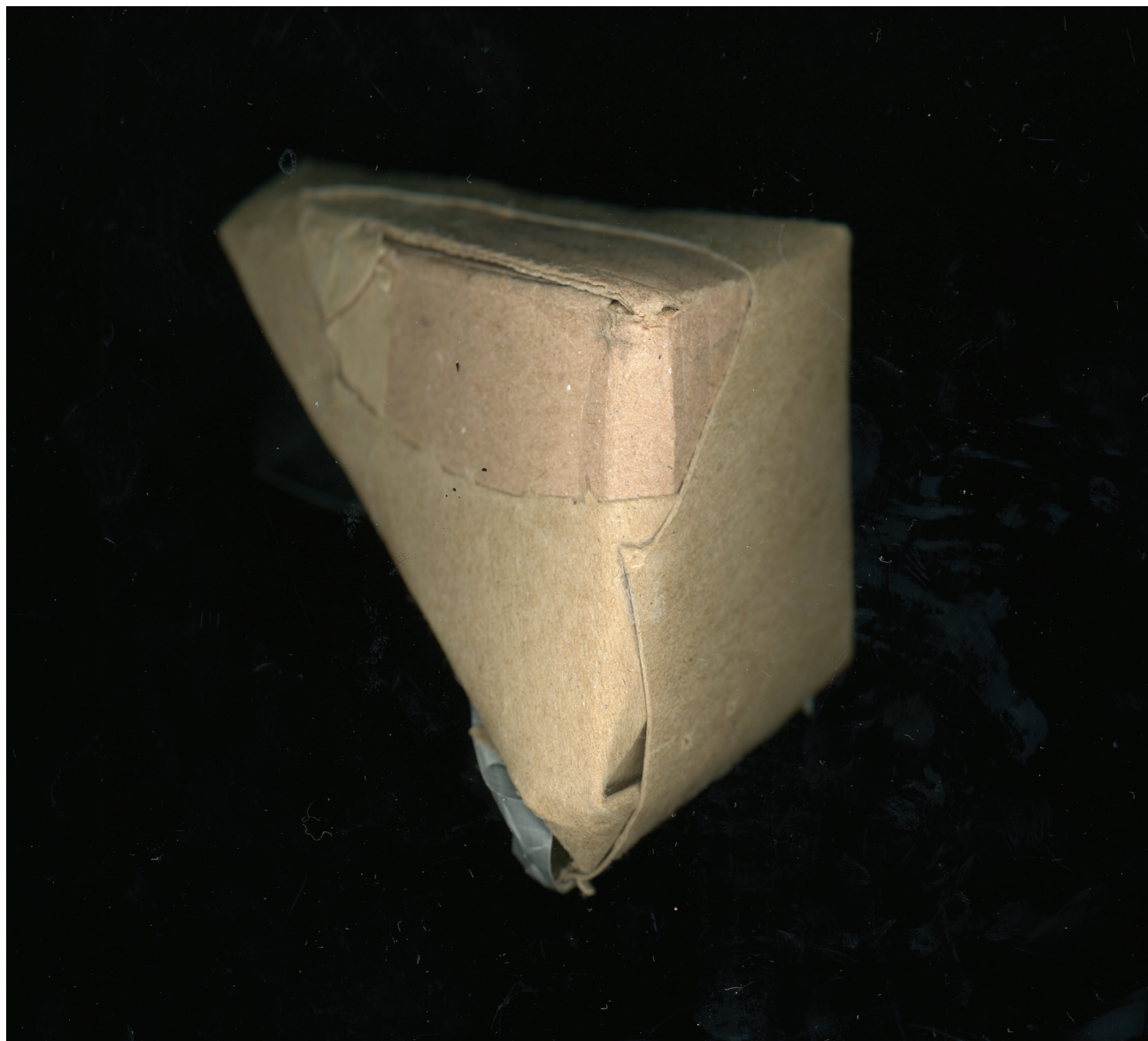
Length 6 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1927

Provenance Bruceville Mound, Cosumnes River,
Lodi, California (USA)

Description This is a tricky one to describe. It's got a flat bottom, curved into a horseshoe shape. If you were to trace its base onto a piece of paper, you would get the upper half of a rising sun. The top of the rock extends to a pointy dome, like the cupola of the Taj Mahal. Most of it is a deep and varnished orange-brown colour, like old timber, streaked with lines and wrinkles. One of its faces looks like the edge of a burnt log, rough and uneven.



Inventory number 1927.06.0161x

General catalogue number 34212

Search word mortar; mortar fragment?

Material lithic; stone

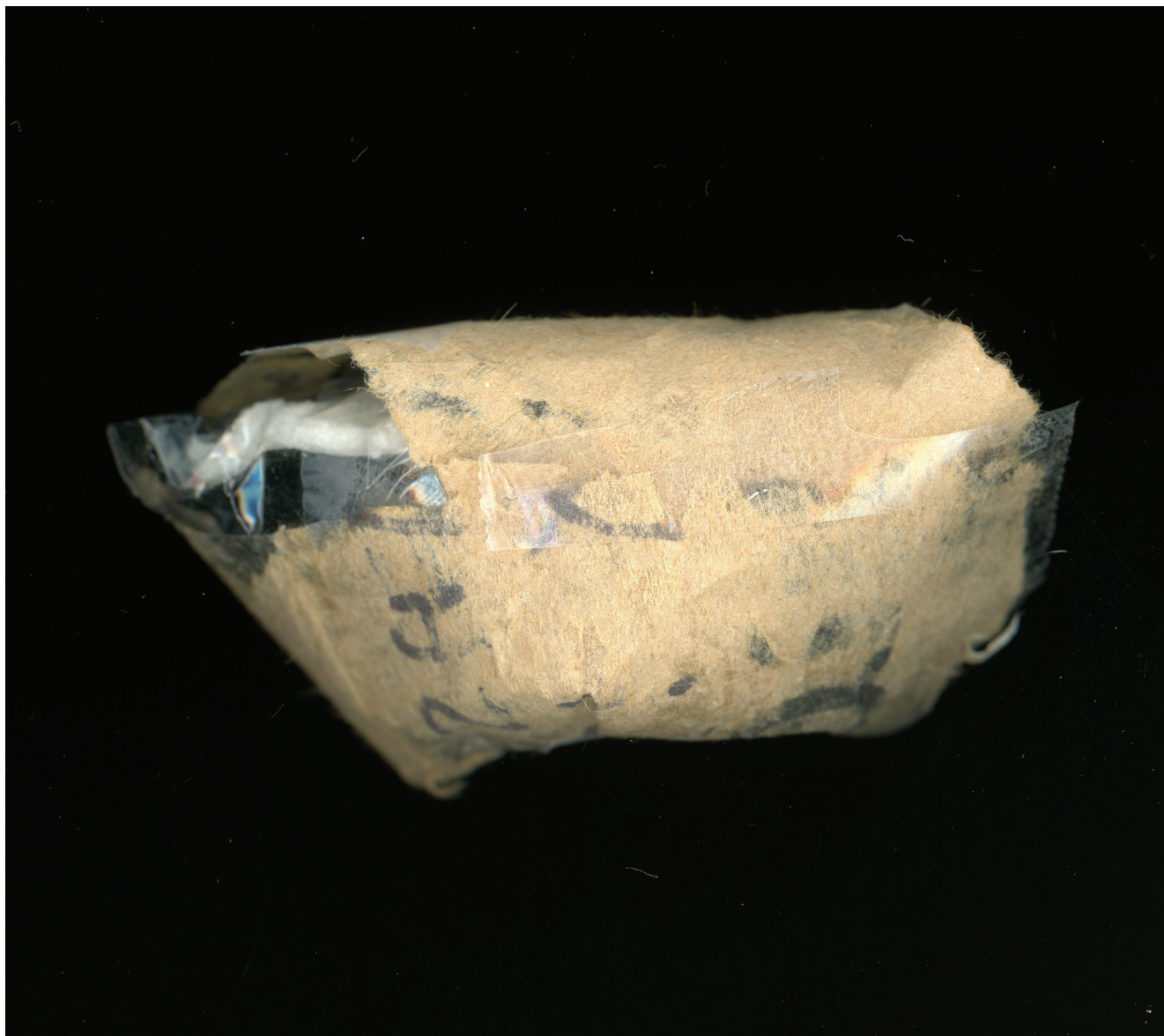
Length 6.3 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1927

Provenance Bruceville Mound, Cosumnes River,
Lodi, California (USA)

Description This rock has the colour and texture of a dirty Jerusalem artichoke. It leaves traces of brown dust on my pink glove. It looks like a cross-section of a concrete pipeline, but one that is filled with cement, not hollow. It has a fairly clean edge on one side, but on the other side there is a diagonal piece that juts out, a big fang sticking up a few centimetres from the middle.



Inventory number 1927.06.0161z

General catalogue number 34214

Search word cast-off; obsidian cast-off

Material lithic; stone

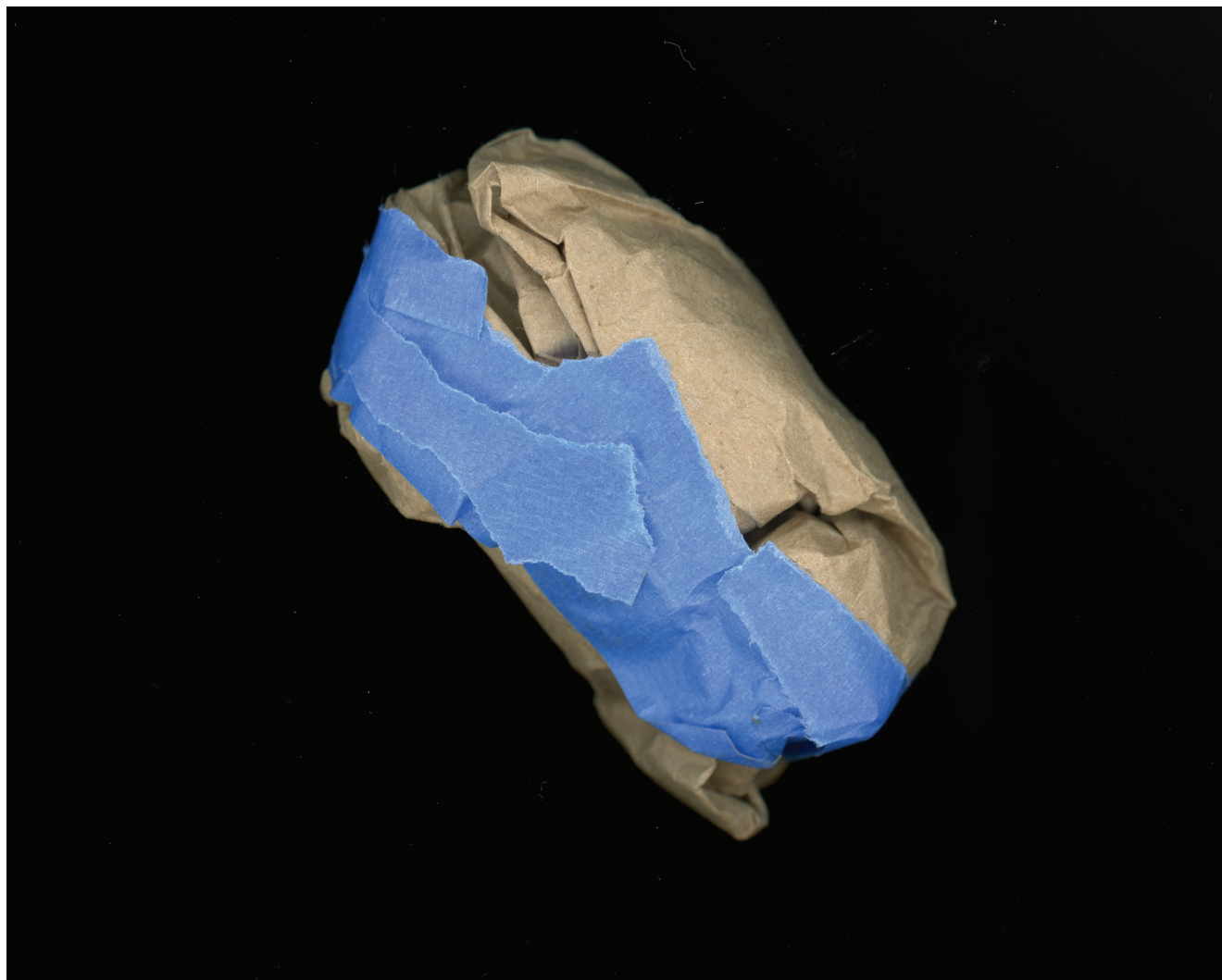
Length 6 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1927

Provenance general surface, Bruceville Mound,
Cosumnes River, Lodi, California (USA)

Description One side of this rock is a matt greyish brown, but the other is an unexpectedly beautiful shiny black obsidian, like an antique ceramic tile. It almost looks like it could be black glaze on top of clay. If you set it down with the shiny side face up, it resembles an ankle sock, with the toes pointing towards the right. The composition of this black substance is remarkable.



Inventory number 1927.06.0216

General catalogue number 34465

Search word stone

Material lithic; stone

Length 7.5 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1927

Provenance Bruceville Mound, Cosumnes River,
Lodi, California (USA)

Description This rock could easily be mistaken for a potato. It is the size, shape and colour of a small baking potato. It is heavy when I pick it up. It has one flattish surface that it naturally sits on. The top is curved like the back of a cat resting on its haunches, slightly wider where the cat's rump would be. Its surface is rough (potato-like) and leaves traces of dirt on my blue glove as I roll it around in my hand. I am holding it in my right hand as I am using my left to write these notes. It really does look like a potato that has just been dug out of the earth.



Inventory number 1927.06.0252

General catalogue number 34539

Search word crystal; rock crystal

Material lithic; stone

Length 5 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1927

Provenance Bruceville Mound, Cosumnes River,
Lodi, California (USA)

Description This is definitely a crystal. It is transparent and colourless, packed with thin shards of what look like icicles or broken glass or firecrackers. The shards catch the light like a prism, showing flashes of pink and green and yellow from certain angles. The crystal is a six-sided cylinder, whose sides come together at an angled point on one end, and a blunter point on the other. The blunt end looks like the crumpled edge of a stubbed-out cigarette; it is grubby and opaque and kind of wrinkled.



Inventory number 1927.06.0333

General catalogue number 34793

Search word stone

Material lithic; stone

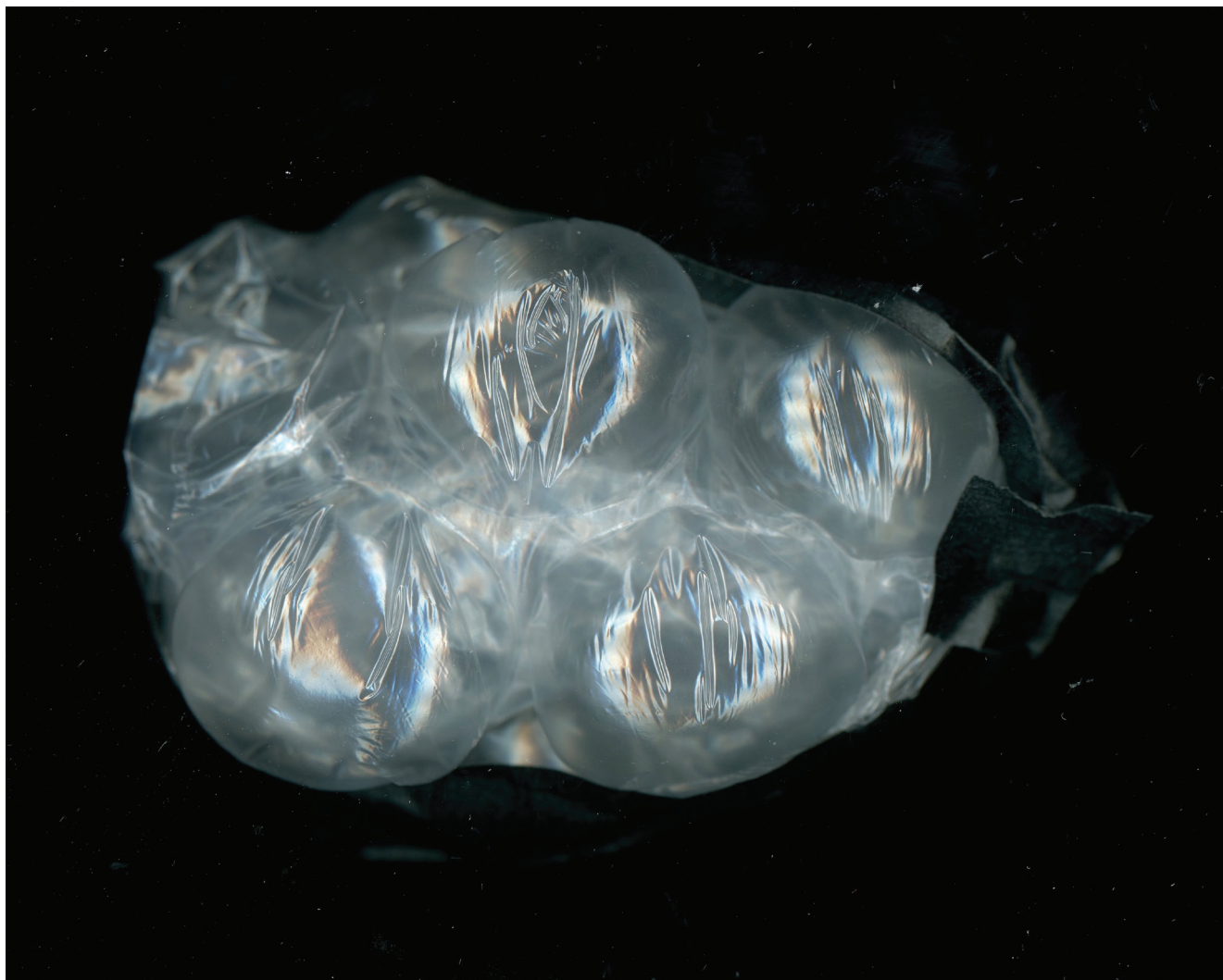
Length 10 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1927

Provenance Bruceville Mound, Consumnes River, Lodi, California (USA)

Description This stone is oblong, like a thin candy bar with rounded edges. When I hold it in my fist, its ends poke out from either side of my palm. The rock is medium grey, smooth but not lustrous, uniform in texture. The contrast between its colour and my pink gloves is striking. On one side of the rock is a barely perceptible horizontal line, darker in colour, crossing its length. I wonder if this line originally could have been a ridge that over time has worn smooth. When I trace it with my finger, it doesn't seem to be raised at all.



Inventory number 1927.27.0476

General catalogue number 41457

Search word stone

Material lithic; stone

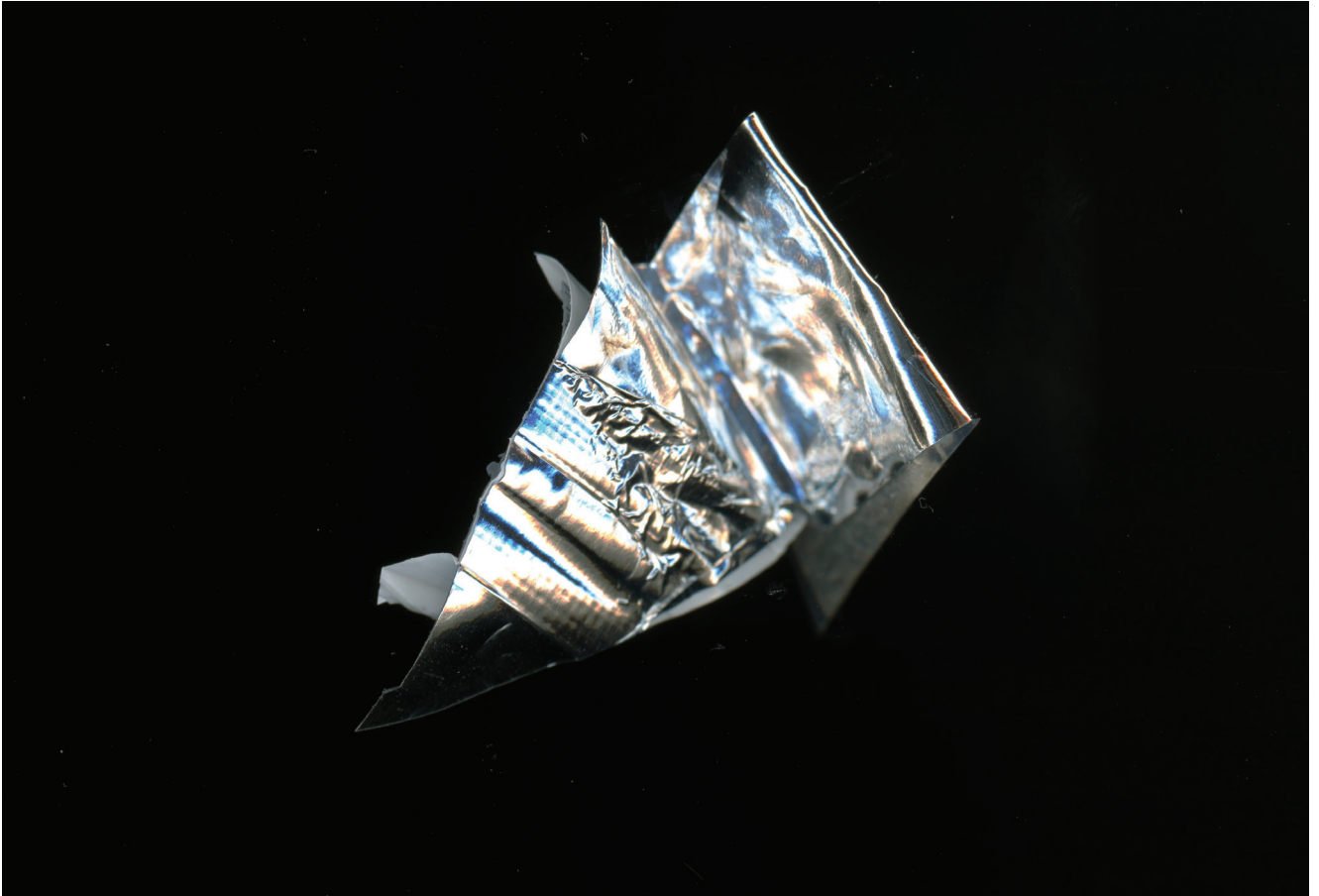
Length 5.2 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1927

Provenance Baudó River, Chocó (Colombia)

Description This rock looks like it could be the inside of a geode. It is a creamy amber colour, made of tiny, compressed crystals. It's shaped like an almond or a human eye. One of its faces is sparkly and radiant. When you flip it over, it looks more three-dimensional and rises into a mound with a circular indentation in the middle, like the iris of an eye. From a bird's-eye view, with the iris facing you, it resembles a cross-section of a volcano, severed close to its base. The rock is a strange combination of something that is both muted and nearly glowing.



Inventory number 1927.27.0477

General catalogue number 41458

Search word stone

Material lithic; stone

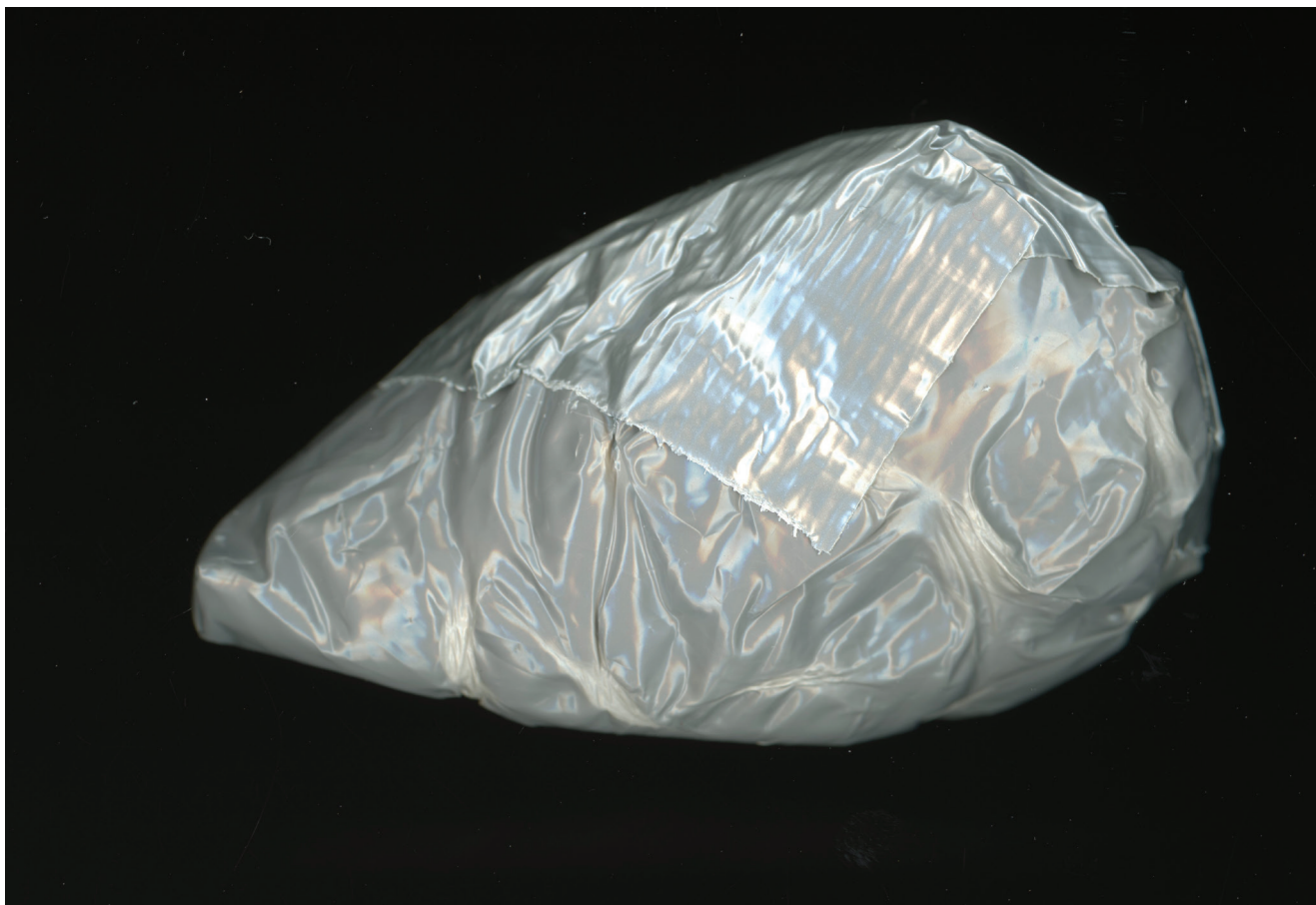
Length 5.5 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1927

Provenance Docordó River, tributary of the Docamparó River, south-east of Pizarro, Chocó (Colombia)

Description This rock is dense and rugged but luminous. It might have some obsidian in it. It fits perfectly in my palm. The outline of the rock looks like the silhouette of a mountain. The top part is craggy and rises into a ridge. It has smooth, multicoloured stripes: dusky grey, then light grey, then a slightly darker stripe, then one that is even darker. The back face of this rock is incredibly complex.



Inventory number 1938.45.0227

General catalogue number 60715

Search word stone

Material lithic; stone

Length 6.5 cm

Collector Erland Nordenskiöld

Date of acquisition 1938

Provenance Pisco or Ica, Peru (South America)

Note Archaeological tool. Unknown use. Artefact acquired by the museum from Erland Nordenskiöld's estate, distributed in September 1938.

Description This rock is gorgeous. It is shaped like an elongated teardrop. The surface appears to have been polished, and it is mottled like the fur of a calico cat, with small brown patches alternating with lighter whitish-blue patches that look like you could dive into them. The bottom part of the teardrop leads to a rounded point with a crack at the tip. Along one side is an indentation about the length of a thumb. It looks as if the side of the stone has buckled from the pressure of being held too hard. This stone was meant to be held. It's not heavy but it has heft. It feels special.

Anthropology & Art

A new open-access publication series edited by the RAI Anthropology of Art Committee. The series stems from the international conference Art, Materiality and Representation organized by the RAI in collaboration with the British Museum and the School of Oriental and African Studies in 2018. Its aims are to make available to a wide audience works that engage with the connections between visual, material, aural and other expressive human practices and the lived worlds in which they take place from an anthropologically informed perspective.

- Volume 1** *Stories in the making: What artists made of the 2018 RAI Art, Materiality and Representation conference*
Angela Brew and Gemma Aallah
- Volume 2** *Moulding Quilombola identities and ethnic politics: understandings and practices around 'Quilombo heritage' in Brazil*
Katerina Hatzikidi
- Volume 3** *Animism and the Mbya-Guarani cinema*
Rodrigo Lacerda
- Volume 4** *'Such intimate relations': on the process of collecting string figures and the paradigm of participant observation fieldwork*
Robyn McKenzie
- Volume 5** *Some ethical implications of re-materializing taonga pūoro*
Jennifer Cattermole, Michael Findlay, Rachel Wesley & Matthew Paris
- Volume 6** *Socio-creativity and the neolithic*
Eloise Govier
- Volume 7** *Redefining curatorship as skilled practice*
Carine Ayélé Durand
- Volume 8** *Catalogue of Correspondence*
A collection of rocks found in the Gothenburg Museum of World Culture
Alyssa Grossman and Selena Kimball

ISSN 2634-8004

ISBN 978-1-7392193-2-1

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.