those of my childhood in the West Riding. Moreover it has supplied me with one of my greatest needs for carving: a strong sunlight and a radiance from the sea which almost surrounds this spit of land, as well as a milder climate which enables me to carve out of doors nearly the whole year round.

Eleanor Morgan
The Death Swamps (or a Pond within an Ocean)//2023

In the winter of 2018, I went on holiday to the quarries of Bavaria. The Christmas fairs were long gone. Instead, winter was marked by large wooden caskets in the market square that protected the statues inside from frostbite. One casket covered the man I had come to find, the eighteenth-century actor and playwright Alois Senefelder. He was the inventor of lithography, a process of printmaking that uses slabs of the local Solnhofen limestone as printing plates. The grain of the stone here is so fine that it can create images without any loss of detail. By the nineteenth and early twentieth century, lithography, literally 'stone writing', was adopted by most commercial printers in Europe to reproduce pictures, maps, posters and labels for beer bottles. It has since been replaced by digital and offset printing. Stone lithography, like other past printing inventions, made its way to the art school: a creative junkyard of print possibilities. Some art schools in Britain still have racks of the original Solnhofen plates, thicker than gravestones and too heavy to lift alone. These racks are libraries of images made over the decades, as each stone retains the image made by the last person to use it. A student draws onto a stone plate, seals it with gum arabic, and it can be ground down or reprinted by a student fifty years later.

I had travelled to the quarries in icy weather because the lithography stones had become increasingly more interesting to me than the prints I was making. Solnhofen limestone is a particularly romantic material, as it contains some of the finest fossils in the world, the most famous of which is the *Archaeopteryx*, the feathery link between dinosaurs and birds. The fossils in the local museum in Eichstätt are so detailed that they show not just prehistoric animals, but the final steps that these animals took before they died. During the Jurassic period, this area was an archipelago covered in lagoons. At the depths of these

was something that seems impossible: an underwater pond. The pond was made of highly salty water that collected in a crevice on the ocean floor with its own underwater surface and shoreline. It was toxic to organisms, shocking the system of any that passed too close. The fossils are a graveyard of animals that could not escape this briny pool, creatures that never met, from different times and ecosystems: an alligator, a dragonfly, a jellyfish, as if a giant press had slowly descended into the ocean, squashing space and time into a single print. One fossil in the museum captures the path of a prehistoric lobster in its final minutes. Its tracks start on the left of the stone plate where it had fallen onto the seafloor. It then walked backwards, dragging itself away from the salty pond. But halfway across the stone, it appears that it became disorientated and instead of moving away, it turned back. The shape of its body lies at the end of a curving line of marks that claw at the seabed.

When I talk to students about printmaking, I begin with the death swamp. I show a short clip from a David Attenborough documentary which shows eels attempting to escape an underwater brine pool in the ocean floor of the Orca basin. They tie themselves into knots, twitching and arching away. This, I say to the students, is what your printing plates are made from: hundreds of creatures that died millions of years ago when they were sucked into an underwater ocean pond. I am trying to add drama to the undramatic stones that are stacked under the sinks in the print workshop. But I am also falling into one of the traps of printmaking, of allowing the plates to become more interesting than the prints. A lithography plate is so smooth and flat, it is as if the print has already been pressed. The artist Vija Celmins, reflecting on the lithographs she made in the early 1970s, was asked whether she found lithography satisfying, 'Yes and no. It's a very flat kind of process. I was making pencil drawings at the time and the quality of line and the graphite sitting on the paper became a kick for me, and expressive in a way; it made the image come to life. But in lithography it seemed like you rolled a truck over it and flattened it back out again.'[1] Marks float on the surface of the stone, and the lithographic process squashes the life out of them, adding another layer of fossilised forms. Some of Celmins' lithographs are of the ocean, a landscape she has returned to repeatedly over her career using different printing processes. She says that these oceans are not the same. They are re-inscriptions; each time she draws the ocean it is for the first time, as if the number of potential ocean prints must be as infinite and changing as the ocean itself. Every view is subtly altered by the weather, the currents and the invisible creatures that pass below, so that, eventually, we might assemble these prints to create a 1:1 scale map of every possible ocean.

This is perhaps why I show the death swamp film to the students. I am trying to think about our actions on the world as insignificant in the face of the

unimaginable scale of geological time and material transformation. Yet, when we draw on lithographic plates, we are deliberately placing ourselves within a story that began millions of years ago. We can be rearrangers of stuff, shifting and assembling materials so that they might take a different path.

Like all printing plates, the images on a lithographic stone must be drawn backwards. This is the challenge of printmaking. If the portrait on your stone faces right, the portrait once you print it onto paper will face left. Alois Senefelder's contribution to printmaking is honoured in his gravestone, on which the inscription is written backwards and crouched at the base is a cherub holding a mirror up to his name. There is a link between death and printmaking which I circle around. The backwards thinking means that everything is the wrong way, like the world of the living mirrored in the world beneath.

1 Samantha Rippner, *The Prints of Vija Celmins* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art/Yale University Press, 2002) 17.

Eleanor Morgan, 'The Death Swamps (or a Pond within an Ocean)', previously unpublished, 2023.

Chus Martínez
Heidi Bucher: A Work Illuminated by the Senses//2022

[...] In January of 1832, Charles Darwin spotted a horizontal band of compressed seashells and corals thirty feet above sea level. The whole area looked as if it had once been under water. 'Why not now?' he asked himself. He thought about a recently published book he had brought along with him: the first volume of Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, in which the Scottish geologist suggested that the Earth was gradually and continuously changing, with land rising in one area, falling in another.

What Darwin saw before him seemed to be direct confirmation of Lyell's theory. In 1972, Heidi Bucher realised a series of sculptural works titled *Bodyshells*, which she activated on Venice Beach, California. She had been interested in clothes and fashion before, in movement and in how the way we dress transforms our body, both in its external perception and the way we perceive it. These shells are definitely dresses – dresses that aspire to house bodies we cannot see. The works appear to be a philosophical interpretation of a shell: a large casing, slightly bottle-shaped ... these shell-vessels, created by a human, inspired by the sea, address the same questions raised by Darwin.