



Bronze Age technology spread across Europe with the help of abundant veins of chalcopyrite (the chief source of copper worldwide). Chalcopyrite deposits lay under much of the Grisons and the broader landscape of the Swiss Plateau. This enabled early cultures to cut into the landscape and extract ore in much the same way that ice age glacial forces cut into the landscape after the Alpine Orogeny, scouring the terrain and depositing erratics along the way.

I want to employ myth making and stage craft in the Swiss landscape to draw formal comparisons between the economics of resource extraction and the geologic systems of glacial erratics, as both systems have left shaping marks on Swiss geography.

Chalcopyrite is an ideal site of comparison to connect human systems to the landscape. Not only did this stone usher in the Bronze Age in what is now present day Switzerland with the Urnfield Culture in 1200 BC, but it continues to power contemporary life world-wide on a copper-dependent electrical grid. Technology is often pitted as “secular” against a “sacred” natural landscape, and in contrast, the Alps exist as a stable emblem of near sacred purity. These two representations easily lend themselves to a new narrative in a contemporary myth.

Industrial metals (like the copper produced from chalcopyrite) are traded on massive scales through the futures market, and these investment metals are physical objects that investors can accumulate and store in reserves. The financial elite know this full well. In fact, Metal Depot in Zurich offers private investors space in a vault-like controlled warehouse to stockpile physical industrial metals (including copper), promising “real values safely stored in Switzerland” (c.f. metaldepot.ch).

Chalcopyrite is often mistaken for gold. As a sort of Fool’s Gold, chalcopyrite can expose the foolishness of denuding pristine landscapes in resource extraction for the unbridled pursuit of wealth. One mystic website characterizes the “power” of the stone this way: “If you have lost something, it is known to help you find it, and it may even get lost to you as well.” This brings to mind the legend of the mythical city of El Dorado deep in the Amazon which led people like Aguirre and his crew deeper into the heart of the jungle. Explorers always came up empty handed, often never turning back, inevitably being lost in the jungle to greed.

I propose to fabricate a myth of a copper sculpture in the shape of a glacial erratic “released” into and lost in the Swiss Alps (in contrast to “containment” at Metal Depot), inviting greedy “Davos Man” to move up and down the mountainside in search of physical material wealth to hoard; a kind of Alpine El Dorado.

To build and disseminate the myth I will construct a full scale physical model of the sculpture (1m x 1m x 1m) in carved foam, coated in copper colored resin, and placed and documented at multiple sites around Tenna with emphasis on sites with strong verticality. The text of the myth will draw on story language anchored in the conceptual metaphor schema UP IS GOOD / DOWN IS BAD (the semantic basis of phrases like “stocks are rising”, “an upstanding citizen,” etc), and I will produce a print catalog of the myth with snapshots of the sculpture and rough directions to sites where it has been “spotted,” a kind of treasure map to distribute across Switzerland. The tale will remain a myth as I intend to dismantle the sculpture and leave only rumors and stories in the quiet mountains.