

There is no death of the book. The book, spiritual instrument (“le livre, instrument spirituel”): This is the title of a chapter of “Quant au livre” (Concerning the Book). This poetic homage to the book comes from the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé. The unusual formulation reflects the special charisma and significance of this object. For a book is not merely dead matter!

In occidental philosophy, the book is also a symbol of the world. According to Jewish tradition, for example, we are inscribed anew in the Book of Life every New Year. However, it is up to us what is written in it; thus we become quasi co-authors of our own book of life. This means that the book not only represents the world, but also creates it! This creative aspect informs the book beyond its content. Indeed, books are fascinating objects in their own right; they are not simply containers for meaning-laden accumulations of letters and punctuation. We may notice this when we deal with the question of how and where to keep them in our domestic environment. This can be just as significant as the books themselves.

As a rule, books go on a shelf. And there, their placement follows a certain organizational pattern. But how do we go about it? Do we arrange this pattern according to the content of the books, do we follow their appearance or do we leave the “order” to chance? Each book has a certain weight and dimension; it has a particular color and materiality. This variety calls for a certain order. How we order something also reflects our way of thinking, which, in return, is often guided by social norms or established concepts. It is precisely in our dealings with the simple world of things that a spark

2



3



4



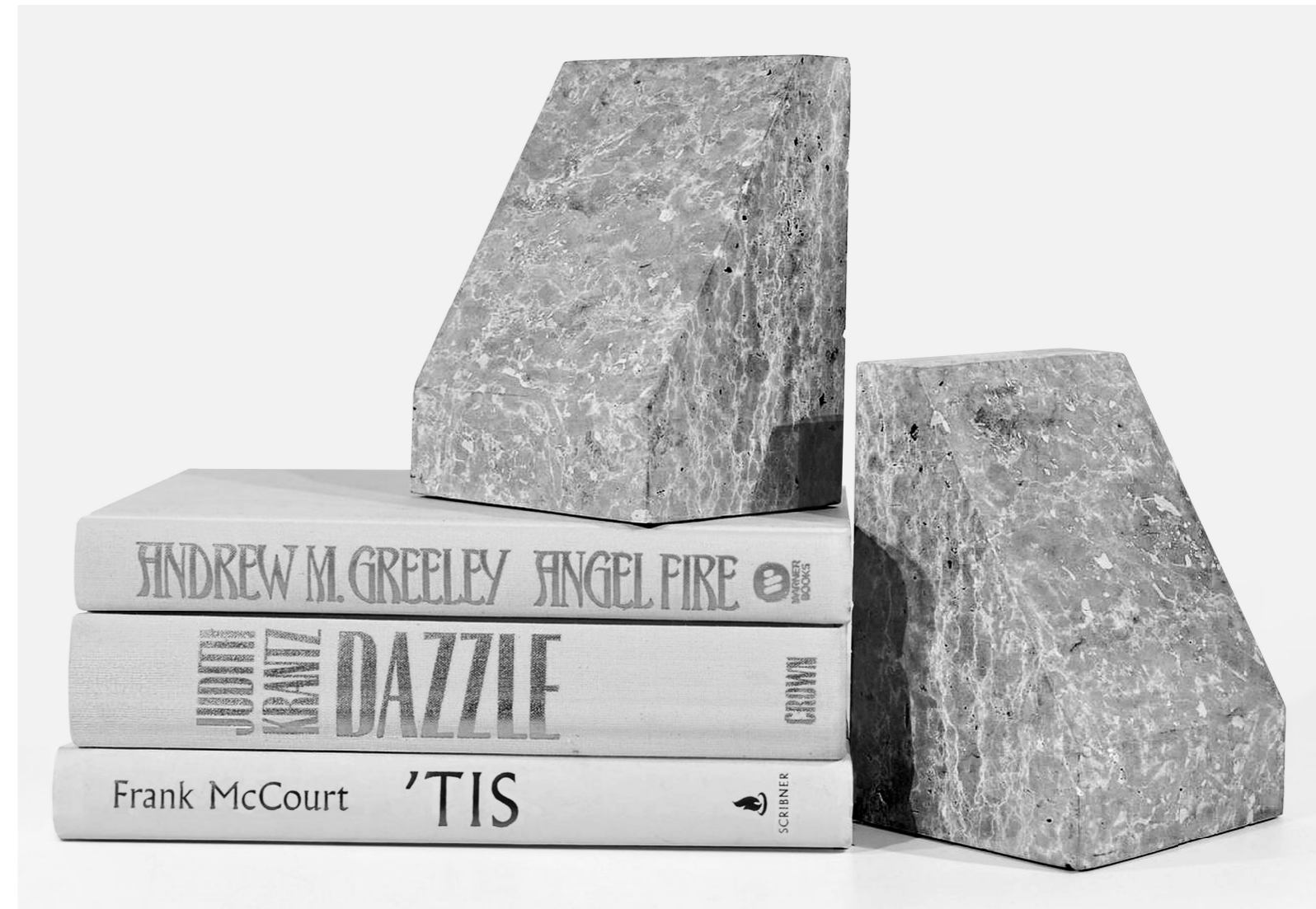
5



6



7



of our primordial creativity shimmers through. This is also true for the way we present books.

For example, we make bookends by converting other objects into them. Or we use artistic-looking everyday sculptures for this purpose. Like books, bookends have a character of their own. More than that, they also enter into a dialogue with the books they support. Just as books reflect the infinite diversity of the world, so do the different appearances of the bookends. It can be said that book and bookend react to each other in a mimetic way.

The collection of bookends depicted in this book reflects not only the versatility through which these objects may begin to take on a life of their own in our homes, but also the diversity of their users. The “ends” can equally be read as the beginnings of a new social order. “There is no death of the book, but rather a new way of reading,” state the two philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their text “Rhizome”<sup>1</sup>.

For every book invites us to appropriate what we have read in an individual way. In doing so, we multiply our view of our existence; we liberate thinking from conventions. This does not necessarily mean that we have to understand a text, rather that the book is a tool of our perception of the world. It is, just as Mallarmé notes, also a spiritual instrument. Bookends reflect exactly this special characteristic.

by Susanna Koeberle

<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Rhizom*, Berlin 1977, p. 40

8



9

