



Andy Goldsworthy

A Collaboration with Nature

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Edited by Terry Friedman
and Andy Goldsworthy

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*“As with all my work,
whether it's a leaf
on a rock or ice on a
rock, I'm trying to get
beneath the surface
appearance of things.
Working the surface
of a stone is an at-
tempt to understand
the internal energy of
the stone.”*

Andy Goldsworthy

Andy Goldsworthy is represented by Galerie Lelong, New York, Paris, Zurich and Haines Gallery, San Francisco

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*Bright sunny morning / frozen snow /
cut slab / scraped snow away with a
stick just short of breaking through,
Izumi-Mura, Japan*

Environmental Sculptures

Andrew Causey

Andy Goldsworthy is best known for his small ephemeral works created ad hoc in the landscape and recorded as photographs. Since April 1984, however, when he made *Seven Spires* in Grizedale Forest in the Lake District, he has completed five commissions for large-scale works, and has several more at the planning stage. There have been two projects at Grizedale, another woodland sculpture at Hooke Park in Dorset, and two huge earthworks on the line of an abandoned railway at Lambton near Chester Street and Leadgate near Consett, both in County Durham. Goldsworthy has plans involving the use of stone walls in France and the United States, a series of artificial tree-clad mounds in Holland, and a set of cones made of layers of steel for a site overlooking the Tyne at Gateshead.

Understanding these projects involves both defining them as a category and distinguishing them from Goldsworthy's ephemeral works. Setting the photograph pieces against the larger more permanent projects, Goldsworthy sees himself as two different artists, but does not want the large works' growing demands on his time to draw him away from the photograph pieces, which he sees as the core of his art.¹ The distinctions between the kinds of work are most obviously the contrast of size and the quite different ways they are made. For the large projects to be properly understood, these distinctions need to be refined.



*Bright sunny morning
frozen snow, cut slab
scraped snow away with a stick just
short of breaking through
Izumi-Mura, Japan*

The small works are inspirations of the moment, made intuitively without plans or drawings, the artist's only tool being a knife. Goldsworthy is alone, he photographs the sculpture to preserve it, and a color print is then available for exhibition in an art gallery. The large works, on the other hand, are commissions, which may have been competed for. Drawings are important here to clarify the project in the artist's mind, support applications and guide fellow workers. These projects involve assistants, art students brought in to dig holes and handle manual winches at Grizedale and Hooke, and the skilled operator of a mechanical excavator, Steve Fox, at Lambton and Leadgate.² The early commissions presented financial problems, and all of them confronted the artist with organizational challenges that the small works do not. The brief lives of the photograph pieces contrast with the long ones of the large works. Permanence eliminates the need for photographs, so the large projects do not become art works for sale in a gallery.

Beyond these technical distinctions are others that help define the types of work further. The photograph pieces are rearrangements of nature in which, for example, stones, leaves or flowers of

1. Unpublished notes.
2. Parts of this essay are based on conversations with the artist at Penpont during 1988, 1989 and 1990, as well as two undated letters written in February 1990 (The Henry Moore Centre for the Study of Sculpture archives).
3. Rain 1985, p. 4.
4. 'Image is not the correct word, since, unless we are speaking of the photograph only, it is emphatically not an image of anything; but configurations, which would be more precise, I find inelegant.'

a certain color are brought together, the randomness of nature is removed, and geometrical forms are created that highlight edges, crevices and holes.³ The works are elegant, refined exhibits of a craftsmanly virtuosity that makes us look at nature more closely. But in the sense that they bring the viewer up short, and surprise with their wit and resource, they are not natural.

Their brilliance lies largely in their artifice, and the illusionism of color and scale aligns them with painting as much as sculpture. The photograph pieces often stand apart from their natural surroundings which become a form of background or context. Characterized in this way by having distinct boundaries, they work ideally as framed photographs on the wall of a gallery. Without exaggerating the distinctions between the types of project in this respect, it can be said that surprise, illusion, and other characteristics that make the small works immediately arresting and separate from their surroundings are less prominent in the large projects, where continuity with the environment is a part of their identity, and their character is partly defined by the modest, sometimes minimal, difference between the sculpture and the adjacent landscape.⁴ Although distinct objects, the environmental works differ from the small ones in that they cannot be removed from the landscape. To photograph one and place it on the wall of a gallery would simply be to document what the artist had done, rather than exhibit a work of art: the life of the large works is there in the landscape and nowhere else.

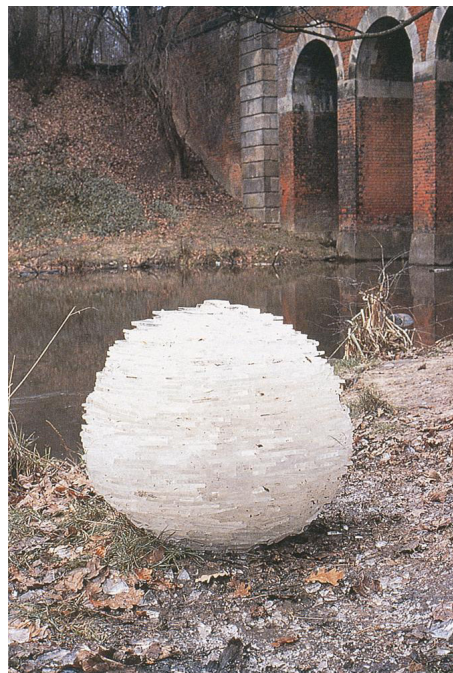
*Touching north
North Pole*



These points lead back to the question of what sculpture is. Goldsworthy did a sculpture course at Preston Polytechnic, and is called a sculptor. But what is sculpture if, within the work of a single artist, it is a photograph one moment and an earth work the next? Understanding Goldsworthy means taking into account the way sculpture has expanded its field in the last twenty-five years, and distinguishing between something that was traditionally to be looked *at* is now, thinking of the earthworks, something to be walked *over* or cycled *through*. How sculpture related to a particular place was a minor issue when that place was an art gallery; the concern then was the space it needed rather than the place it was in. But for Goldsworthy the character of the place is the core of the brief he gives himself. How then, the issue becomes, can sculpture relate to forestry, or to archaeology? Tying these questions together is another, the relationship of the sculptor today to landscape, which has traditionally been much more the concern of painters than sculptors.

While sculpture has been thought of as permanent and outside time, Goldsworthy's works change: the forest projects gradually decay, while the earthworks will, initially at least, grow, as weeds and undergrowth cover them. Sculpture traditionally represents the imposed will of the maker, but Goldsworthy is a collaborator with nature, interested in the way wind and rain form

Stacked ice
sound of cracking
Hampstead Heath, London



pools in the folds of his earthworks, the sun and shadow encourage some growth and not other.⁵ He is concerned with the way people respond to his sculpture, without trying to influence them. Place is crucial to his art: a work must fit, must draw on its environment and become part of it. But place is distinct from mere space. Places have history and character and exist in time, and Goldsworthy's sculptures, which gather meaning and character from places also exist in time, being subject to natural change and any other changes—of land use, for example—that affect public places as opposed to the protected space of an art gallery.

Grizedale is a working woodland run by the Forestry Commission, and finance for sculptors to work there using its timber has been available since 1977. It is open to the public and a leaflet locates each sculpture on the many miles of forest track. But Grizedale is not a conventional sculpture park, because its main purpose is to grow timber rather than provide the opportunity to view art in the open air. Goldsworthy's first

5. The formidable role of light in Goldsworthy's outdoor sculptures is evident from the following entry: Bright, cold, sunny. A jewel of a day. Bitterly disappointed at ice ball being smashed overnight by some body. I don't mind things going once they have reached their peak but today's atmosphere and light would have turned a good work into a fantastic one. (Hampstead Heath, Sketchbook 13: 29 December 1985).
6. See H. Moore, "Sculpture in the Open Air," 1955, in P. James, ed., *Henry Moore on Sculpture*, 1966, p.99.

commission, *Seven Spires*, takes this into account, not just because the seven sets of clustered pine trunks grouped in tall pyramid forms are made from the forest's surplus timber. *Seven Spires* is part of the forest and not, like most sculpture, either distinct from its surroundings or to be looked at only from outside.⁶ One spire is easily visible from the track and its prominence signals the presence of the whole work. But to find the other spires and experience the sculpture in its entirety the viewer must leave the track and walk in among the trees.

Goldsworthy's sculpture helps to form a new relationship between spectator and sculptor, because the viewer is inside the sculpture, among the spires and trees. Experienced from the inside, sculpture loses its character as monument, something external to the spectator and claiming a kind of superiority because it is special and outside the flow of time. In avoiding monumentality, however, Goldsworthy's sculptures do not forego grandeur.

From the time of the eighteenth-century contemplative garden, furnished with sculpted busts and figures, to the Battersea Park sculpture exhibitions of the 1950's, and the installation in the same decade of the *Kind and Queen* and other sculptures of Henry Moore on Scottish moors, there has been a tradition in England of using nature as sympathetic background for sculpture. Goldsworthy goes beyond this. When selecting the site for *Seven Spires*,

he avoided working in a clearing, which would have been the obvious choice if he had wanted to follow the tradition of giving sculpture its own space within a picturesque context. Goldsworthy, by contrast, needed *Seven Spires* to work with nature to the extent of becoming all but part of it. He wanted the pine trees to dictate the idea, scale and form of the sculpture, and in this has added a new dimension to the idea of what sculpture can be. With *Seven Spires* there is only modest difference between the trunks that form the spires and those of the live trees. Goldsworthy is interested in what is like nature yet different.

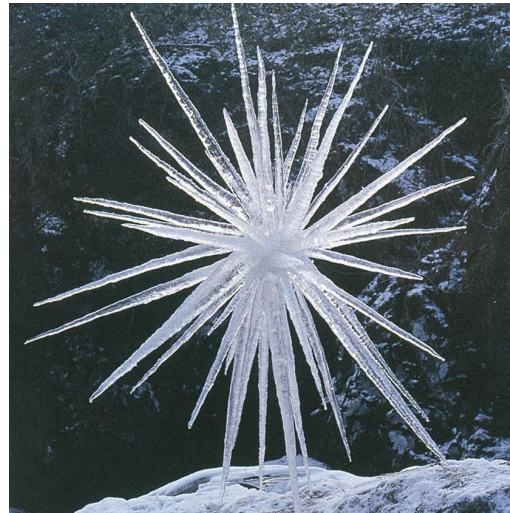
The relation of the sculpture to its surroundings is not a stable one, because, as time passes, living trees grow and are ultimately felled, while dead ones slowly decay away. Most of *Seven Spires* can be seen properly only close-to, inside the wood, and a possible view is to look up the spires from close to the base, from where one can share Goldsworthy's sense that there exists 'within a pine wood... and almost desperate growth and energy driving upward'. He makes an analogy with



Stacked stone
Blaenau Ffestiniog, Wales

Gothic architecture, the surge of energy through columns and the convergence and resolution at the point of the vault, in the way D. H. Lawrence describes his feeling for the inside of Lincoln cathedral in *The Rainbow* ('Here the stone leapt up from the plain of earth, leapt up in a manifold clustered desire each time, up, away from the horizontal earth').⁷ Romanticism has commonly associated the Gothic with the forest, and Goldsworthy is in this sense Romantic. He is not, however, a nature mystic searching for some vaguely conceived pannish spirit of the woods, nor a Symbolist in the sense that he sees an image, such as a spire, as the fixed expression of an idea, such as religion.

Richard Long has commented on the way art's changing role in society has made direct comparisons between his own interest in stone circles and ostensibly similar manifestations in the past dangerous: 'Stonehenge and all the circles in Britain... came about from a completely different culture... They were social, religious art. I make my work as an individual.' If art is now a matter



Icicles
thick ends dipped in snow then water
held until frozen together
Scour Water, Dumfriesshire

of individual expression, it cannot be assumed that forms will have the same meaning as in the past, or that a common understanding of forms will exist. Goldsworthy's reactions are instinctive, his sculpture has meaning for him, which may or may not be widely shared; what matters is that such analogies should be felt and not imposed.⁸

Goldsworthy's second Grizedale project, *Sidewinder*, made in May 1985, and conceived as a contrast to *Seven Spires*, is a horizontal 'serpent'. From being a single log at one end, the body of the sculpture was built up by butting together an increasing number of sections of wood side by side, so that it grows in width down the length of the body. By contrast with *Seven Spires*, *Sidewinder* is close to the ground, and, as against the calm grandeur of the previous work, the rapid succession of arches that form the body of the new one is tense with energy. It has some resemblance to the rise and fall of the old stone walls left from when the forest was moorland and still to be seen among the trees. But individual imaginations, searching for associations, may prefer to see it as serpent, the emblem of the dark energy of the forest encountered in the more remote part of Grizedale that Goldsworthy chose for *Sidewinder*.

Goldsworthy's third large scale project, the two wood circles at the entrance to Hooke

7. Artist's statement, March 1987.
8. This image was published as a card by Common Ground to record his residency there.
9. Quoted in Davies 1984, p. 151.
10. Andy Goldsworthy, unpublished notes, December 1988.
11. Evident in photographs taken during construction (Nesbitt 1989, p. 55).

Park Wood in Dorset, made in September 1986, arose from an approach to the furniture maker John Makepeace from Common Ground, a group dedicated to heightening awareness of landscape and encouraging local initiatives to commission sculpture in rural places. Makepeace was starting up a School of Woodland Industry there, one of its purposes being to develop economic uses for timber thinnings in the surrounding woods, which had been taken over from the Forestry Commission. Sue Clifford and Angela King of Common Ground describe the project in detail in this book, but something needs to be said about the place of Hooke in Goldsworthy's work as a whole.

Grizedale offers public access, but an element of secrecy surrounds the sculptures there, which are often remote and have to be searched for.⁹ The entrance to Hooke Park, from an unclassified road away from the village, is also off the beaten track, but it is a public place and the sculptures are markers, registering passage from one kind of land, a public road, to another, a wood which is privately owned but with public right of access. Entrances and thresholds have symbolic value, acting as focal points and introducing what is beyond. Making the circles out of curved, and therefore commercially low-value, timber, was a reference to the school inside, part of whose function was to find new ways of using low-grade wood.

Goldsworthy's original proposal, for a single circle enclosing the roadway, involved a fifty-foot

Pebbles around a hole
Kinagashima-Cho, Japan



span, which would have been out of scale, and would have made the work too dominant over its environment for the sculptor who had brought art and nature into such close liaison at Grizedale. As an artist who, in the course of the eighties, made sculpture varying in length from two feet to a quarter of a mile, Goldsworthy has become aware of problems of size in relation to scale. He has successfully created sculptures of large size by keeping them in scale with people and with their environments. The problem was acute at Hooke where the large span would have created something like a twentieth-century triumphal arch, and Goldsworthy opted for two smaller circles on either side of the road entrance.

Goldsworthy's next public commission, the *Lambton Earthwork* near Chester Street in County Durham, made in December 1988, faced him with a different type of location and size of project. He was commissioned jointly by Northern Arts and Sustrans, a company specializing in finding new uses for abandoned railway tracks, to build an earthwork on a section of the disused line between Consett and Sunderland. His new site was in an area scarred by the decline of heavy indus-



*Slate arch
made over two days
fourth attempt
Blaenau Ffestiniog, Wales*

I have lived for most of the time within sight of the Lake District, although this is due more to circumstances than any great wish to be there. The mountains have become important to me not only to visit and work but as a place by which I orientate myself. It has taken on the significance that all mountains, hills, mounds and single trees have to people living nearby. It has become a landmark which creates a sense of presence and location, defining the surrounding landscape.

Many of the early works on Morecambe Bay were made in response to the space over the bay and the distant mountains which enclosed that space. I often made holes in rocks, ice, snow which usually opened out into and examined that space. The mountains were bait for the eye.

When I first visited the Lake District I was impressed by the mass and space—and the things that made that space active. It offered new experiences on a massive scale, being able to walk up into

the clouds and touching snow when I thought winter was over. If there is such a thing in my work as a range of locations that have influenced the scale of my work the Lake District must rate as the place most instrumental in causing the largest things I have made.

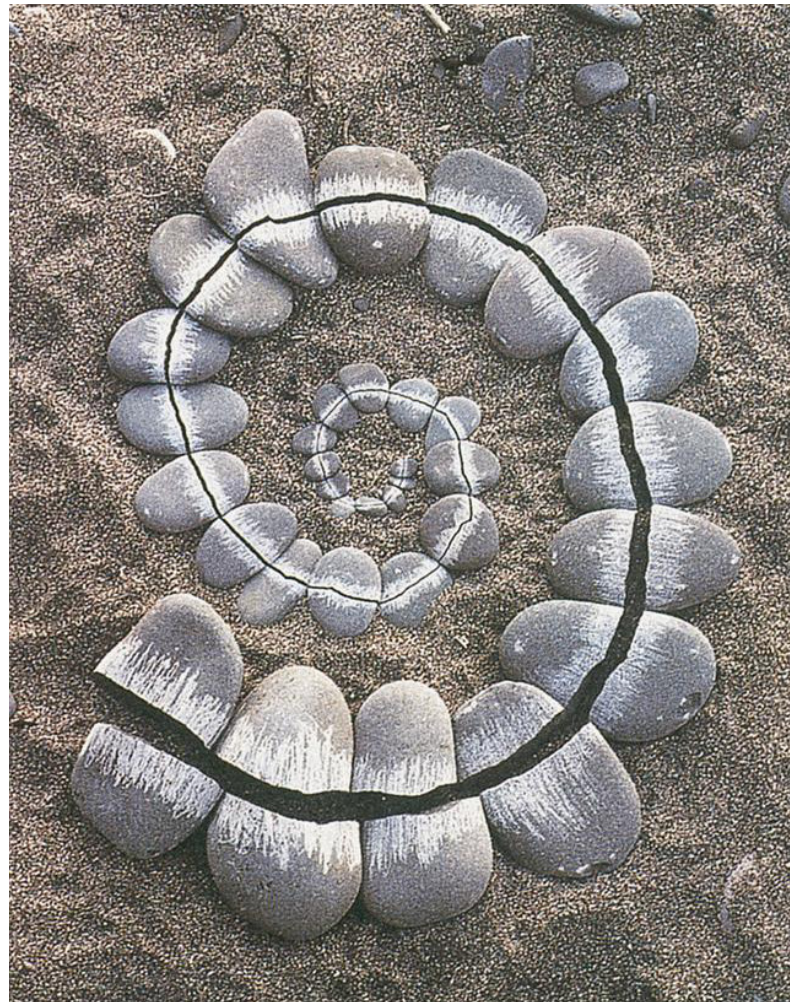
I think the Lake District is a place where some of my basic interests were formed—a love of the last remaining patch of snow, becoming aware of the mass of energy of a mountain culminating at the peak manifesting itself in many of my works with tapered rocks, icicles and most recently seven 35-47' tall pine spires at Grizedale Forest in the Lake District—my first permanent work.

Having said all this I have to add that I am still very committed to the common place. My way of working developed in small works on the outskirts of Leeds. I have worked in ever smaller woods since and for a time worked under the Big dipper at Morecambe. I can work anywhere there is growth and I enjoy adapting to different environments—the Lake District is one of several places that are of special importance to me.

The Lake District

1988

*Broken pebbles
scratched white with another stone
St. Abbs, The Scottish Borders*



*Leaves polished, creased
made in shadow of tree which they fell
pinned to the ground by thorns
Le Jardin Massey, France*





*Dandelions
newly flowered
none as yet turned to seed
undamaged by wind or rain
a grass verge...
Yorkshire Sculpture Park*



*Rhododendron leaves
creased to catch
the hazy to bright light
held to the ground with thorns
Yorkshire Sculpture Park*



*Japanese maple
leaves stiched together
to make a floating chain
the next day it became a hole
supported underneath
by a woven briar ring
Ochiyama-Mura, Japan*

*Thin covering of snow melting
rolled a snowball quickly...*
Yorkshire Sculpture Park



*Broken Ice
remains of several failed works
laid in sun and shadow
quickly melting*
Yorkshire Sculpture Park



*Calm overcast
laid iris blades on pond
pinned together with thorns
filled in five sections*
Yorkshire Sculpture Park



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