



CREATIVE SPACE

THE CONTEMPORARY USE OF STONE IN PUBLIC PLACES

A REPORT MADE TO THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST
BY DAVID F. WILSON

CREATIVE SPACE

STONE/WORK/ART TODAY
IN THE US, CANADA AND THE UK

*Text and photos by David F. Wilson
Adaptation by the editor*

The great Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi described working with stone as a dialogue between himself and “*the primary matter of the universe.*”

As an artist I have devoted my working career to my own dialogue with this most basic material. My practice has been dedicated to creating works of craft/art for public spaces. Through chance and happenstance stonework has become my stock and trade. In the absence of formal training in the craft I have developed my own skills through practice and experimentation—in other words, *by doing*. I feel incredibly privileged to have had opportunities to explore my own creative space. Looking forward with a nod to the past has always been my approach.

Over the years my interest in the subject of stone has grown and I have become aware of, and inspired by, other artists and artisans working with a contemporary aesthetic. This led to my recent travels. By showing examples of work produced by innovative practitioners in the USA and Canada, my hope is to demonstrate that stonework approached with creativity can be an incredibly exciting and rewarding vocation for those willing to take up the challenge.

Stonework. . .

Think of an amazing building or structure created anywhere across the globe and most likely it will have been made with stone, constructed with rock hewn directly from the earth's crust. Hardy, skillful individuals have through hand-craft transformed this raw material into amazing creations that stand as some of the pinnacle achievements of collective human endeavour.

During the 20th century the use of stone greatly diminished. From being a principal building material it has now become the exception rather than the rule. With the contraction of the industry a lot of the knowledge and skills required to work it have been lost, or are under severe pressure. The natural transfer of craft knowledge and skills from master to apprentice is all too rare now. As a widespread mode of training it is virtually broken. This loss of previously held expertise has led to the diminishment in the quality of work across many aspects of stonework practices.

With the widespread adoption of a modernist aesthetic, one that would be constructed with superior ‘new’ materials, stone went out of fashion. Modernist design is all too often watered down and done on the cheap. Combine this with poor choice of materials and shoddy implementation and the results prove detrimental to the built environment and society as a whole.

When I was undergoing my arts education these issues were at the forefront of public debate, most notably through the astounding speech given by Prince Charles to the Royal Institute of Architects at Hampton Court Palace on the occasion of its 150th year anniversary in 1984. His speech sparked a lot of controversy and can be seen as a sort of turning point in architecture and urban planning, at least in the UK. At any rate it shone a spotlight on these issues.

There was a growing body of evidence to prove direct causal links between our environment and serious problems affecting communities throughout the UK. A quote from Sir Bob Geldof in the book *Lipstick Traces* by Greil Markus outlining the emergence of punk makes the connection: “*We have architecture that is so banal and destructive to the human spirit that walking to work is in itself a depressing experience. The streets are shabby, tawdry and litter strewn. The concrete is rain-streaked and graffiti sprawled, stairwells of the social-engineering experiments are lined with filth, junkies and graffiti.*”

Lamenting the demise of stone as the backdrop to our public spaces is not simply nostalgic. Stone provides us with a strong essential sense of place. It grounds us in an environment and provides a link back to nature and landscape. As urban living has become a more prevalent condition, keeping that connection is increasingly important.

Surprise!!

One of Modernism's goals was the rejection of decoration. Too often this results in the elimination of detail as well. We are an aesthetic species of animal that craves visual stimulus and searches out detail. It's something deep within us, possibly an evolutionary throwback, an essential skill to recognise and understand subtle differences in environment that would aid our survival.

The idea of surprise has been marginalised in our built environment. Towns and cities have become homogenised and much less visually stimulating. ‘Surprise’ to me equates to human creativity, both individual and collective. It brings much needed distinctiveness to public spaces. It is, or should be, an essential quality of life and those of us that care should advocate its inclusion—because a life infused with surprise is undoubtedly better than a life that is not.

More often than not this element of surprise was carved or constructed from stone. The creators' names are long forgotten but they live on through the work they left and the joy it still provides to viewers. What we choose to offer as ‘surprise’ says something true and lasting about who we are and what we believe in now. It marks our space in time and states proudly that we were once here and we mattered.

A book I encountered not long after leaving art college was *Design and Detail of the Space Between Buildings* by Elisabeth Beazley. Within the preface is the following quote. I have adopted it as my personal manifesto: “*Cities should be built for the convenience and satisfaction of those that live in it, and to the great surprise of strangers.*” San Salvino, 14th Century.

Me. . .

I stumbled into the world of stone after leaving art college thirty years ago. Since then I have concentrated on making artworks for public spaces. Stone has become my medium of choice for a variety of reasons, it is very robust and ideal for many different situations and locations. In terms of creativity it is very flexible and offers a wide range of options to explore through shape, form, colour and texture. It provides clients with a high quality of finish and longevity that requires minimal maintenance.

Over my career I have used two distinct techniques in constructing artworks: 1) traditional dry-stone walling and 2) stone carving. Projects are completed utilising either of these techniques or, more often, a combination of the two.

Mixing craft and art is problematic for some but my work sits somewhere in the middle and I see no reason for conflict between these two fields of practice. Craft celebrates technique and finish within a recognised and traditional set of parameters. Some are of the opinion that anything more is unseemly. Art, however, believes that craft is only a starting point and places an emphasis upon an additional input of creative expression, believes in questioning, even deconstructing received traditions in the pursuit of excellence.

A lesson that has remained with me from art college: the necessity not to dismiss craft. Art can be an easy target, it is best not to provide critics with an open goal by allowing one's work to be negatively judged due to poor technique. Respect will be gained if details are correct. As my skills increase and I gain experience the craft has become more important to me; I want my stonework to be well-constructed and carved within the best traditions of the trade.

When I first began working with stone it was just another medium that I, as an artist, could use to fulfill my creative vision. I had neither great knowledge of technique or an historical understanding of the craft, just a perception that as a material it had more life and energy about it than any other. I now have a greater understanding of its properties and possibilities. Stone in its many forms is a material that offers the artist many opportunities for creative input, its use limited only by the imagination, skill and ingenuity of the maker.

Since my first fumbling efforts with the craft I have come to love the process of creating with it. Transforming a random pile of stones or a lumpy chunk of rock into something that will stand the test of time is an addictive process.

There is a marvelous joy in the act of bringing into physical form something that had previously only existed within one's own mind. The simple tasks involved have a timeless connection to a noble tradition, a shared physical experience with long departed members of the stone tribe.



The effort and agonies experienced in the process quickly dissipate when tempered with the satisfaction and knowledge summed up in a quote by the American philosopher, William James: “*The greatest use of a life is to spend it on something that will outlast it.*”

Many of my projects are created over a period of time on an actual work site and I have come to value and enjoy the interaction between myself, the site and the public. This process leads to a real sense of connection between what is being created and the community in which it is being created. People are always fascinated to see stone being worked. They appreciate the skill and effort involved. The *who, what* and *why* of the work is of genuine interest and something I really enjoy sharing. I want my projects to be as inclusive as possible.

I work in a space defined by two distinct worlds, Art and Stonework and I am just outside the norms of each. There are few within my close geographic area who share my aspirations, ideas and working practices, and like many creatives, I have become accustomed to working in isolation. With the rise of social media, however, the world has shrunk and connecting with others who create in a similar fashion has become very easy.

Over the last few years through Facebook and Twitter I have become aware that in the USA and Canada many artists and craft-workers working creatively with stone have similar sensibilities to my own. My travel across North America was aimed at connecting with this wider group, understanding what inspires and motivates them and knowing how they function creatively.

The Fellowship endowment has given me the opportunity to consider some issues around current stone practice:

. . . *How is stone used and interpreted by contemporary makers?*
. . . *Does innovative and creative practice offer lessons that could help arrest the decline in traditional skills and knowledge?*
. . . *Are there new ideas or strategies that should be passed on to a new generation of practitioners, ensuring that elements of surprise within our built environment will continue to be made with stone and made to a high level of quality?*

The World of Stone. . .

The adoption of a modernist aesthetic combined with new, cheaper industrial construction methods has resulted in the decline of the stone industry.

Across all aspects of it there has been a slow drain of knowledge. The perpetuation of hard-won and long-held skill in stonework is at a critical juncture unlike any other time in history. Many countries now recognise that keeping these skills alive is important.

The stone industry is actually a whole set of different endeavours. Quarries start the supply chain, they extract the raw material from the earth then distribute it to wholesalers and suppliers who further process and ready it for market. Along the line of production material is sorted by quality, depending on the end usage. Historically premium material would be reserved for the architectural stone carvers and artistic stone sculptors, possessors of imagination and hand skills of the highest craftsmanship capable of producing ‘life’ from this most basic substance.

Blocks for construction are produced in larger workshops by ‘banker’ masons who shape it into components devised by the setting-out mason. In the past these masons came through a rigorous apprenticeship, having mastered their trade they could create any item required by an architect's design no matter how complex. Assembling these components would be the trade of the master stone masons bringing form and order to a scheme, the final step in realising everyone's shared vision shaped and constructed from stone.

left: One of the author's creative stone/work/art projects in Perthshire, Scotland

Chip off the old block. . .

Traditional avenues for learning stone carving have declined, gone are the days when multitudes of workshops facilitated the natural progression from apprentice to master. The opportunities now for anyone interested in learning this skill are minimal across the UK. There is only one school currently dedicated to it and even art colleges no longer offer stone carving as a core component of sculpture courses.

By no measure or definition can hands-on stonework in the UK be described as being in robust health as a profession. Those currently practicing are, broadly speaking, coming toward the end of their working careers. This creates a real problem and there is concern across all areas of the stone industry about the difficulty of convincing younger people to consider stonework as a worthwhile career choice.

Current models of training and apprenticeships are focused on equipping trainees with skills that are required for the conservation and heritage side of the market. A career based on restoring the fabric of traditional stone buildings is a way to preserve traditional stone working skills.

But is this an attractive area of practice? Will conservation and heritage stonemasonry attract talented and creative minds? Clearly this area of learning is not forward-looking—it is hardly the most inspiring prospect for a young person contemplating a future in the craft.

The trade is in a difficult period; can further decline be arrested?

The present situation provides an opportunity for a period of reassessment. A time to creatively question and challenge current modes of practice, recruitment strategies and training opportunities.

Now is when those concerned with the continuation of trade skills should be exploring new methods of working that are better suited to the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century. A time for reflection, a time to contemplate change, a time that allows transition so that the craft can, like Janus, look forward to the future as well as back to tradition.

This is a moment filled with potential and vitality, a unique opportunity to imagine new modes of practice, contemplate new ideas and define high aspirations. What will inspire, engage and encourage younger generations? What will attract their participation?

Positivity. . .

In the UK, society is changing, everything is in flux. New technologies are redefining culture, posing new challenges, opening up new opportunities. Artificial Intelligence is almost upon us and the effect it will have on traditional employment models is difficult to foresee.

There is growing recognition that current educational models have created gaps in vocational and practical skills, a fact that is contributing to some of the stress factors within communities across the western world.

This situation is not a wholly negative one, as old ways of working disappear new possibilities develop. There is a resurgence in interest across all aspects of craft, a purely human endeavour that will never be threatened by mechanism and one that can provide a rewarding and satisfying life journey.

As old methodologies decline, artists and makers are exploiting the creative space that results, exploring the potential for innovative practice. Combining modern aesthetics with traditional craft techniques they are developing their own ways of working and ideas of what can be achieved.

As new ideas emerge within the stone trade, divisions have become apparent between traditionalists who favour craft as it has been defined by the last 250 years of practice and those that are using these traditional skills only as a starting point for their creative expression.

This tension between art and craft has generated negative noise around the trade over the last few years. Traditionalists are uncomfortable with anything outside their norms. Quick to criticise and point out errors, they defend the trade from what they see as compromise and wish to preserve its highest standards. The way they express their stance is intimidating and has created an atmosphere that inhibits innovation, a situation that undermines any development of the craft.

If the trade is to thrive it needs to be more open to new ideas, varieties of approach and experimentation. Only by close questioning and analysis of current practice, teaching, and thinking around stonework can we protect it from becoming stagnant. It should be allowed to develop and not be simply what traditionalists in their knowledge and experience deem it to be.

Whether they like it or not, change in the stone world is underway. Exploring new solutions offers a way forward for the craft. Showing the possibilities provided by exceptional work and informing a wider audience of the benefits of the craft will lead to a realization of what it is and what it can become.

The aim must be to inspire movers and shakers, the commissioners, to consider stone as a contemporary design solution—to illustrate to influential parties its continuing potential as a material.

Increasing the use of stone in modern schemes and developments is what will ensure that the trade and its skill set continue in the long term to the positive benefit of us all.

Foundations and Connections. . .

The internet changed everything.

I became aware of an organisation in the USA called The Stone Foundation by stumbling across their website. Beginning in 1986, stonemason Tomas Lipps organized a series of workshops in dry stone walling and stonemasonry that he and a few friends and fellow stonemasons conducted as instructors, a four man 'foundation.' Then, in 2000, Tomas organized *The First Stonework Symposium* in Santa Fe, New Mexico. More than 70 stonemasons and others showed up and the Stone Foundation was launched.

Nothing existed in the USA at that time for those with an affinity for stonework to engage with each other. Tomas' vision was to create a venue for this to occur. The core message engaged me: *"The Stone Foundation is more than an organisation. We are a society, a community, a tribe. Our core constituency may be artisans, artists and contractors, but anyone involved with and/or interested in stone, stonework and stone art is invited to join us."*

Since that first Symposium, the Stone Foundation has successfully put on seventeen such annual gatherings in the USA and one in Mallorca, Spain. (And one is planned for October 2020.)

These events are both educational and social occasions. Stone artisans, artists and aficionados from all over the country and abroad come together in an atmosphere of camaraderie to celebrate stonework with presentations and discourse, workshops, communal project, demonstrations and games.

Communities hosting Symposiums inherit legacy projects, stone structures created in a public space by Stone Foundation members, displaying the skills of the craft to a wider audience.

The Stone Foundation publishes STONEXUS Magazine, a high-quality glossy print publication and the STONEZINE, its digital counterpart, both edited by Tomas and devoted to all things stone.

I was invited to give a presentation at the Stone Foundation's Stonework Symposium 2017 in Cottonwood Falls, Kansas in May of that year. I also participated as a dry stone waller in a communal stonework project that resulted in a walled courtyard park in downtown Cottonwood Falls, a gift to the community.

I enjoyed the society of like-minded folks there, made several friends and a wealth of contacts for my future Fellowship travels.

Go West, Young Man. . .

Those contacts transformed my Fellowship travels; a crazy itinerary evolved to connect them via a massive road trip across the States from East to West and back again via Canada—see the map below. I must admit I had serious doubts that it was achievable. Sharing my route with my proposed contacts I sensed that I wasn't the only one who thought so. Tomas, however, encouraged me.

To meet up with everyone on my itinerary, flying and driving was the only option that fitted my budget. This would mean lots of time 'in the saddle' transiting between destinations, lost time that I feared should have been put to better use.

This caused me a lot of consternation and soul searching prior to setting off but it turned out to be anything but dead time. Driving long distances can be tedious, but traveling through the ever-changing landscapes of the USA was anything but boring. It was an immersive and profoundly visceral experience, the journey was always engaging. Clocking up close to 10,000 miles across 23 US States and Ontario, Canada, we literally skimmed over the country like a smooth pebble skipping across still water.

As my trip progressed, and I experienced more stunningly different landscapes, and met more stone artists, and saw more stonework, I became aware of a strong fundamental connection between the artists and the landscape surrounding them. What they created was in direct response to and a reflection of the natural environment where they live and work.

This to me was one of the major revelations of my trip. I am convinced that had I traveled by a different method, airport hopping between locations for instance, I would not have had the same understanding or made the same connections. Speed of travel, movement through landscape, meeting stone workers, viewing stonework, all merged into one powerful experience. All were inter-linked, each a vital, equally important part of the whole. In hindsight my crazy itinerary and mode of travel enhanced my appreciation of stone practice in the USA.

A lot of the work I saw used stone and rock in a much more natural raw state than in the UK. I'm convinced that landscape and environment are a major influence on this; it is the backdrop to their lives and manifests naturally into their work.

Talking to the stone artists about this aspect of their work I also came to understand that it comes about as a consequence of how they source material. Stone in the UK is brought to market primarily through stone merchants that act as go-betweens connecting quarries and stone workers.

In the UK, the majority of material wanted for traditional building is provided in units and sizes geared towards the job requirements e.g., the client wants a traditional wall; the supplier delivers stones sourced and sized to achieve that goal.

In the USA as in the UK there are 'stone yards,' suppliers which market a variety of types of stone from elsewhere around the country but our American and Canadian cousins tend to be a bit more resourceful and creative than us in gathering material for a project and this has a bearing on what they do.

Many stonemasons go directly to the quarry or take stone from wherever it might be found. Every stone worker I met spoke about the process of stone 'harvesting,' a term I'd never before heard in reference to gathering stone. Most of them have developed a keen eye for searching out likely stone piles as they travel about the country. These can be old quarries, collapsed buildings or walls, stone outcrops or rock piles from land clearances or roadsides (everyone assured me that permission was sought and compensation paid to the landowners prior to collecting the material).

This approach for sourcing material provides the artist access to stone and rock in a more 'unfiltered' natural way than through a supplier. In reality this results in a greater variety of stone types, sizes, colours and textures being used on a specific project.

The act of direct collecting gives space for creative contemplation of the stone, allowing the artist time to respond to the qualities inherent in the material found. Everyone I met has a passion for stone, they see wonder in it and are inspired by what nature provides. These artists react to their material, working with what they find, allowing the stone to retain its natural qualities. Their approach can be viewed as a collaboration between maker and material. Their work respects and celebrates stone in its unworked state and this influences the forms they create. Paul Lindhard of Art City in Ventura put this most eloquently, saying: "I work for the stone."

This was a bit of a personal epiphany. Stepping away from the UK I see that my own practice there is carried out within a different tradition, one defined by the history and standards of the Enclosures. Not being so restrained by tradition, the makers in the USA and Canada do not work within an atmosphere of entrenched attitudes to stone and how it should be used. They are not as bound by perceived convention. This lack of a traditional imperative frees the USA and Canadian artists to express their personality, allowing them greater creative freedom.



Discussing his working method, Paul explained that being surrounded by a plentiful supply of material was central to his design process. His approach is intuitive. Sometimes he responds quite quickly to what a specific stone suggests to him, other stones take more time to get to know. Only by living with them, walking by them everyday, occasionally having to move them out of the way, can he get to the point where imagination and inspiration came into focus. Easy access to material allied to the time and freedom to respond is crucial to what he produces as an artist.

His approach is totally different from my own way of working. Not having access to such a wide range of stone my approach is much tighter and design-based, emerging from ideas explored in the pages of my sketchbook. I then attempt to find material to manifest those ideas. Paul's more direct relationship and connection with his material combined with his contemporary artistic sensibility produces wonderful results that could be viewed as a collaboration between him and the material—an approach that I found totally inspiring. Being able to work with that sensibility depends on having material to respond to and an open mind-set that can hear what the stone is 'saying to you.' Not everyone is lucky enough to have that ability, or the opportunity to approach work in that way.

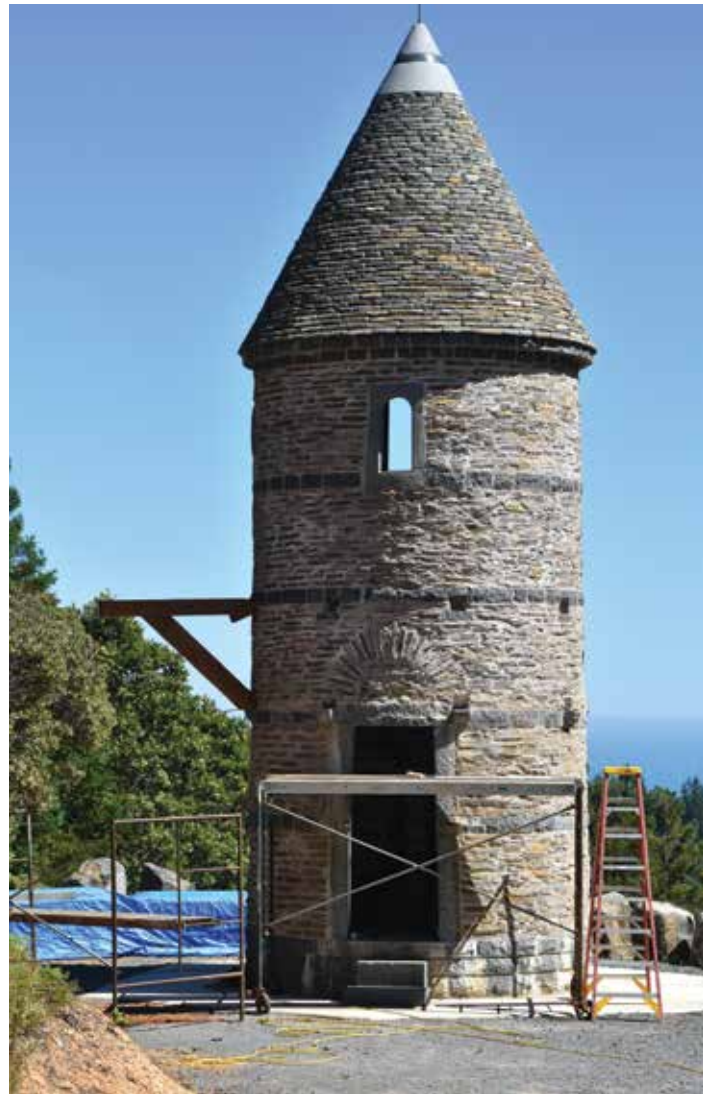
Through Art City Studios Paul has provided the an environment for creative magic to happen for him and others.

The StoneZone. . .

The other creative hub I visited was 500 miles north of Ventura, up California's Highway 1, a stunning drive along the Pacific Coast through some of the most beautiful countryside in the USA. Set amongst a redwood forest in the hills above the small town of Gualala (pronounced gwa-la-la) is Peter Mullins' StoneZone, a wonderland for stone enthusiasts.

After retiring from industry Peter moved out of San Francisco to establish his own little corner of Mendocino County. Since then he has busied himself clearing the underbrush beneath the redwood trees that tower over his property. This cleared space has given him the opportunity to indulge his passion for stone.

Peter is not a mason or artist himself, but has always had a more than casual interest in stone that has developed into a full-on obsession with it. He has attended many of the Stone Foundation's Symposia and at the Japanese Dry Stone Walling Workshop in Ventura in 2010, he donated a piece of hoisting equipment and operated it himself, helping to put huge stones in place.



above: THE IRISH TOWER, designed by Irish stonemason Patrick McAfee and built intermittently by rotating crews over a three year period.

below: the WING WALL, built along the Fish Rock Road opposite the entrance to the StoneZone.

At that Symposium and others Peter became acquainted with some of the finest stonemason/wallers from the USA, Canada, Ireland and the UK. Over the past several years he has invited a lively crew of Stone Foundation artists and artisans to create stone/work/art on his property.

By providing them with space, time, creative freedom, food, lodging, wages—and, of course, stone—the StoneZone has developed into an extraordinary experimental laboratory for the art and techniques of stoneworking. Walking through his densely wooded property is an exploration through the imagination and creativity of those whose work sits so naturally within this place. It also constitutes a paean to Peter's love for stone in all its forms.

Works created specifically for the site are the result of a collaborative process between owner, site and artisans. Peter will identify a space that he feels offers potential as a possible location of a work that will enhance that space and the surrounding land. Discussions about the space and what to be put into it are an important element in the process of designing the work.

This results in an eclectic mix of projects being created, some are seating areas for communal gatherings, others enhance the transition from one space to another. Stand-alone sculptural works inhabit the park-like space. To journey through this space is inspiring, at every turn there is something new and interesting to discover.

The works display a wide variety of approaches, techniques and stone types and illustrate the individuality and personality of the makers. The creativity and high level of craftsmanship is a powerful refutation to the traditionalists who hold that playing about with technique diminishes the craft.

What Peter has achieved with his StoneZone is unique within the world of stonework. He has created the opportunity for some of the world's best stone artists and artisans to explore the potential of stone and creative stonework.

By providing an environment that places skill and imagination at the heart of practice his StoneZone taps into those two human motivational factors: competition and inspiration. The results are a source of great enjoyment and satisfaction to Peter personally and an inspiration to the wider stone tribe.

It proves that creativity begets creativity and quality need not suffer as a result.

Traditionalists hate change, they fear that diluting tested and proven methods diminishes craft. There is evidence that skills have been lost, but not due to anyone experimenting with technique.

My belief is that there is a powerful counter argument, that when traditional methodologies are approached with creative and imaginative input, standards are actually raised. Creative results encourage and inspire other artists and craftworkers to stretch their own abilities. Emulation leads to innovation, a path that leads directly toward excellence.



above: Dry-stone wall, certification project by Jared Flynn

I was lucky on my travels to spend some time in the company of master dry-stone waller Dan Snow. We enjoyed a meal and a glass or two of wine with him and a few other guests. One of these was Jared Flynn, a fellow board member of the Vermont-based Stone Trust, another creative hub. Jared was passionate about the work and aims of the Trust, in particular the preservation of the craft of dry-stone walling.

He was especially insistent about technicalities and believed that everything about the craft revolved around the importance of structural integrity. I was therefore a bit nervous when I asked for his opinion on the debate between art and craft, but he responded with a statement I wish I had thought of first—despite his emphasis on fundamentals, he recognized that "Art saved the Craft."

A beautifully simple assessment of where we are at now. A flag to follow for the future?



Such a book could be an ideal promotional tool around which to develop a new narrative about creative stonework and if published would be influential in promoting it.

Parallel to a book project, turning the concept of creative stonework into a television programme could and should be explored. BBC 4 or Sky Arts are two institutions that are always on the look out for strong, innovative suggestions to investigate.

Artists and artisans need no convincing of the merits of stone craft. The group that needs to be persuaded and will most influence change are the 'movers and shakers' of the world, clients, commissioning bodies and the stakeholders of projects.

Gaining support for these projects is something I hope to achieve through the WCMT Fellowship. It would provide an opportunity to spread the word that stone is no longer associated only with the past.

Training. . .

Change within the market place is possible, if encouraged. Future makers and craft-workers need to be equipped with the skills to react to opportunities. As pointed out earlier, the systemic passing of knowledge from master to apprentice is for all intents and purposes broken; it still occurs but most often informally.

This skills deficit has been addressed by various schemes across the country but these schemes are generally focused towards the heritage and conservation market.

Sculpture courses have also shifted any emphasis away from providing students with the practical stone working skills.

Dry-stone walling continues to be taught through the auspices of the DSWA which offers a highly regarded 'certification' training programme aimed at professional development towards becoming a Master Craftsman. Their principles, however, are very specific and traditionally focused

Progressing through art school during the 80s as I did, there was often frustration expressed by the lack of formal lessons or teaching given by the lecturers, who at times seemed to be mythical figures glimpsed or encountered only fleetingly. Now that my student days have receded into distant memory, I have a better understanding of the true worth of the lessons gained from this system and the essential qualities it provided. I've come to acknowledge and ultimately to see how very privileged we were to have been able to develop through that process.

Traditional craft teaching is based upon the apprentice slowly gaining knowledge from the master. A natural consequence of this method is that the ego of the teacher inhibits the persona of the student. Craft celebrates technique and finish within a recognised and traditional set of parameters. Students learn what the teacher knows and work towards perfecting transmitted skills.

By a process of osmosis the apprentice is moulded into a version of the master.

Art education is the antithesis of craft training. It provides students 'free space' to play, experiment and explore. Art is human expression, everyone is unique and individual experience shared through creative thought is the goal.

Everything about art education is geared towards encouraging individuality and personality, putting the students into a position where they have to discover and draw out of themselves the potential they each have within them. By being forced to develop their own methodologies, they develop a flexibility of thought that is actively discouraged within those participating in the more structured craft training. By learning through doing art college students have time to grow. Self motivation is an essential discipline for any kind of progress to be made; one alone ultimately decides whether one has failed or succeeded. This free approach is the ultimate gift students are given through an arts degree, something I have come to value enormously.

A downside to this free approach is that there can be a perceptible and unacceptable lack of craftsmanship. Boundaries between the two are always murky. Some craft-workers are just as much artists as those with more formal artistic training; equally some artists are tremendously gifted in their craft.

As tradition fades in the stone world, craft and art seem to be in conflict. As we imagine a brighter future for the trade, can the dichotomy between the two be addressed?

Can we develop policies that will enable future practitioners to focus on fundamental issues?

How best to maintain standards of workmanship and encourage the continuing development of the craft and future practitioners?

This interlude between an outdated past and an uncertain future is the perfect time for us to contemplate these issues. We need to be imaginative and creative in our thinking. Exploration and debate should be applied toward developing a strategic plan of how stone training will look in the next 50 years.

I propose to advocate for a new type of training course, one that combines the best aspects of craft and art training methods. A university standard course that develops the intellectual, creative and practical qualities of the trainees within a contemporary design framework. Such a course would be unique. Central to its mission should be bringing the most talented and creative youths to consider building a career around an aspect of stone practice. Focused recruitment through inspirational examples will lead to higher quality candidates getting involved.

Better people in, better results out.

Quality leads to Quality. . .

The apprentice, in theory, should evolve to be better than the master, because he or she benefits from all that the Master has learned through experience. The apprentice is the latest recipient of a long lineage of such experience.

It is a curious quirk of human development then that knowledge and skills in the working of stone have actually regressed in recent history.

The trade and craft of stonework are not what they once were. There is a shift away from the traditional roles. Training should better reflect current sensibilities and modern market requirements than it now does. Stone artisans working at a high level have a lot of different demands placed upon them as they negotiate their way through the delivery of a project. They need to display an adaptability of skills to the ever-changing scenarios they face in their day-to-day work. Most will develop these skills through the natural learning cycle of success and failure.

Developing a course around the different skillsets a student may require could produce candidates who are capable of contributing great things to society. Current stone practice is segueing into many different disciplines. It is rare today to find an artisan who only works within one specific area of production. Most remain flexible and responsive to the needs of any given project, this can involve them in a whole range of tasks: conceptual design, art, sculpture, urban design, landscaping design and plant selection, structural and statuary issues, client/stakeholder professional liaisons, etc.

These skills are often hard-won but they could and should be taught.

As they prepare for their professional careers, students should be cognizant and equipped for the challenges they will face. Spanning the gap between learning and practice, the technicalities of craft and business should be understood if not entirely mastered. Creative, innovative individuals capable of producing quality results will always be in demand, getting them prepared as well and as quickly as possible will best set them up for a long, interesting and fulfilling career. Not only allowing but encouraging them to discover their own creativity should be the course's *raison d'etre*.

An Immodest Proposal. . .

I have one final recommendation that could, if realised, manifest the ideas I've expressed within this report:

In the UK there is currently no entity dedicated to contemporary stone practice. Peter Mullins' StoneZone in northern California and Paul Lindhard's Art City Studios offer a teasing glimpse of what that could look like and what benefits could be realised.

I recommend the establishment of a National Centre for Stone-work—the sole focus of which would be to provide a space for stone artists and craft workers to work, play, experiment and explore the creative possibilities of the material.

Is that not exciting to contemplate?

It could become the base for a prospective UK branch of the Stone Foundation and the location of a stonework training centre, a research and information hub, open air gallery and visitor centre all rolled into one central facility.

It would be a veritable *Creative Space* focused on the best innovative practices available, where designers, makers, technicians and suppliers could interact, share and learn at the forefront of contemporary design. This would be a facility where the creative possibilities of combining new technologies, digital software and human hand-skills could be investigated, explored and promoted. Making connections with industry and other design disciplines would open up the prospect of new professional opportunities and new ideas being implemented.

As a centre of excellence, a repository of knowledge, a hub for learning and a space for professional networking, such an institution could have a lasting and continuing legacy that would help restore stone to its rightful place as the most appropriate material for our shared, built environment.

Ambitious though this idea may be, dreaming big and imagining new realities is exactly what the Winston Churchill Fellowship is about.

We find ourselves in curiously uncertain times. Brexit is the future. It is a divisive reality and all aspects of UK Society will feel its effects. Only time will tell if these effects are negative or positive.

For the indigenous stone industry, breaking away from Europe could have a positive effect. Commissioned by Historic Environment Scotland in 2016, the British Geological Survey, *Scotland's Building Stone Industry*, makes fascinating reading. One pertinent commentary it makes on the current state of stone as a commercial commodity in Scotland is this: 85% of stone used in the country is currently imported.

There are many contributing factors to this situation but one worthy of contemplation is the previous negative impact of the European Union Procurement Directive, '2014/24/EU, On Public Contracts. This policy, intended to ensure fair competition within EU member States, precludes and makes it illegal during the procurement phase of a project to actively specify "local or indigenous stone." The result of which is that Scottish stone is virtually never specified for new public construction projects!

If leaving the EU allows the stone industry to claw back some percentage of market share, it will provide some hope for the future. A healthier stone industry will lead to more favourable conditions for the continuation of the craft and the trade.

An uncertain future, perhaps, but possibly some cause for optimism regarding the use of indigenous stone.

Gaining the WCMT Fellowship has provided me the time to step away from my own practice and an opportunity to raise my head from the stones to look around at the work of others—to speak directly with them, to learn from them, to view their work *in situ* and explore the space between art and craft. This was my chance to explore, to assess, to determine and understand what motivates us artists and artisans to create and communicate through the medium of stone.

It has inspired me to attempt to transform this opportunity into a tangible contribution that will help to develop and ensure the continuation of the skills, craft and material for present and future generations. That is my passion now.

Travel to Learn, Return to Inspire. . .

That is my mandate from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. My belief is this: if others see the amazing results that practitioners working with stone achieve with a creative and open approach, they will be inspired to create their own works from the material that still has so much potential, the very ground on which we stand—STONE.■



Enormous thanks are due everyone who helped me and gave their time to make my Fellowship a success, especially to those that opened up their homes to two travelers who arrived as strangers but left as friends.

The WCMT, The Stone Foundation, Tomas Lipps & Mimi, Zach Johnson, Pieter & Keith Schaffsma, Dan Snow, Paul Lindhard, Peter Mullins, Edwin Hamilton, John & Mary Shaw-Rimington, John Scott, Suminori Awata, The DSWA, Brian Post, Eric Landman, Doug Bell, Jan Johnsen & Rafael Algarin, Andy Dufford; David Kemley, John Engelland & Sherri, Greg Tonzzi, Kevin Carman, The Staff at Willow Bend Environmental Centre, Topher Delaney, John Gray, Neil Kilpatrick, Chuck Eblacker, Jared Flynn, Tad Richards and others whom I may have forgotten.

David F. Wilson

The following pages contain a small album of photographs of public art projects selected from the hundreds that David took on his North American expedition.



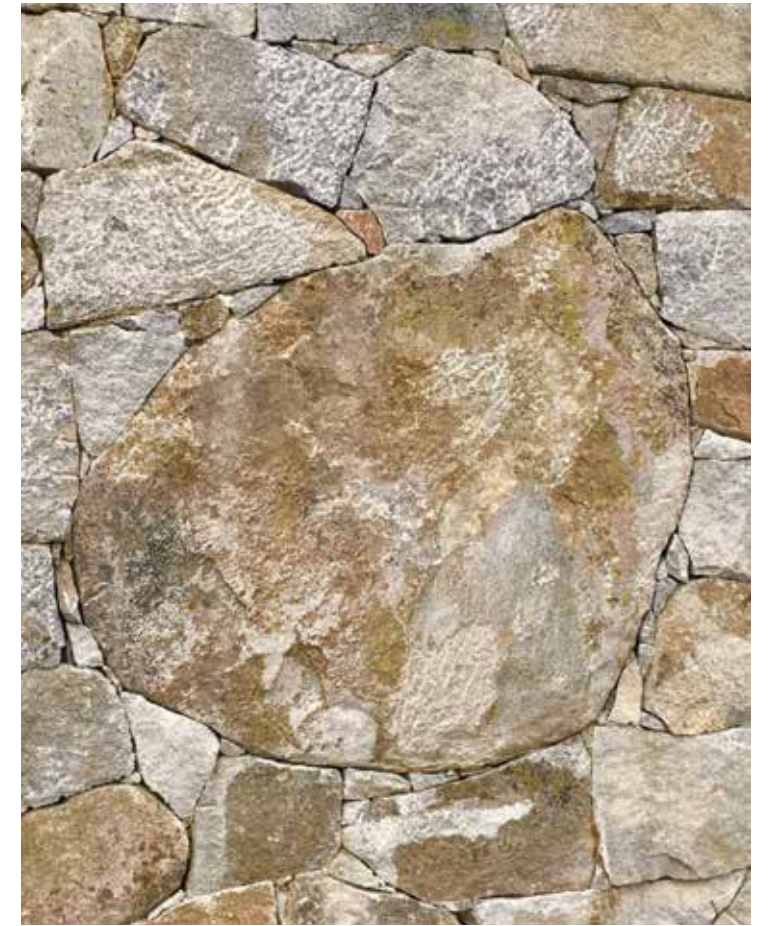
*LITTLE BUG BRIDGE in Boulder, Colorado
Artist: Julie Maren. These are three of four pedestrian bridge ends in the Pearl Street Mall in Boulder. Her bas-relief carvings feature local flora and fauna.*

*below: SIMPSON MINE PARK, Lafayette, Colorado
Design by Andy Dufford's Chevo Studios, stonework by John Merrims.
Winner of the ASLA 2009 President's Award for a Children's Playpark.*



*above: Stone Mosaic paving detail in the Gualala StoneZone.
Artist: Julien Carmellino.*

*right: Detail of street-level Japanese castle rampart cladding of the Rolex Headquarters' Building in Dallas, Texas. 2018
Designer/supervisor: Suminori Awata, lead stonemason: Kyle Schlagenhauf.*



*below: Wall piece in a passageway under a bridge in Boulder, CO.
This consists of 5 sandstone shapes that form an extendable tessellated pattern. Designed in a CAD program and cut by water jet.
Done by Artscapes LLC in 2003. Lead artist: Jessica Sauther.*





The WAVE ORGAN, San Francisco. In the 1950's a cemetery in the city was eradicated. Graves and headstones were relocated elsewhere but mortuary architecture, crypts, tombs, etc, were bull-dozed, trucked away and dumped along the breakwater of a jetty that was being extended in the Marina District.

In 1985-86 these hand-carved blocks, their broken edges softened by the sea, were collected and reassembled to create a 'listening station' for sounds made by waves washing into and out of pipes. Conceived of and facilitated by Peter Richards, designed and built by George Gonzalez and Tomas Lipps. Sadly, it has been defaced by graffiti



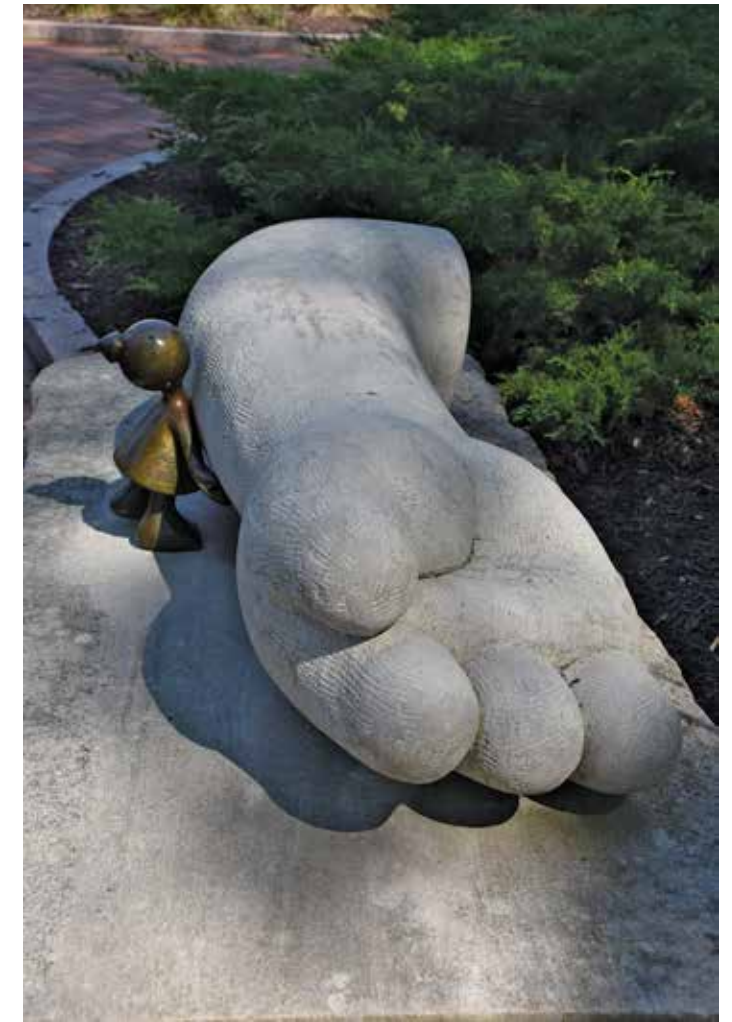
FOUNTAINHEAD ROCK PLACE
Santa Fe, New Mexico 1987-88.

By Tomas Lipps, with Tomas Romero, George Gonzalez and Michel Giannesini. A demonstration of the artistic potential of stonework and a geological sampler of the multifarious stone types found within an 60 mile radius of Santa Fe. The sole exception is the central feature, a rhyolite boulder, the key, final piece of the puzzle which Lipps only discovered after a wide-ranging search through New Mexico, southern Colorado and southwestern Arizona.



In 2010 the city gave permission for a monument, *The Multilingual Cornerstone of the Lithosphere*, to be erected on an adjacent site to commemorate the founding of the Stone Foundation in Santa Fe in 2000. The base was built and the words for stone in many of the languages of the world were carved into the marble cube by volunteer Stone Foundation members.





CREATION MYTH
by Tom Otterness, 2012.
Centennial Sculpture Park,
University of Rochester,
Memorial Art Gallery,

The myth of Pygmalion as narrated by the Roman poet Ovid involves an artist who carves the face and figure of a woman, creating a statue so beautiful that he falls in love with it. During the festival of Venus he makes offerings at the temple of Aphrodite and expresses a wish to have a bride as beautiful as his statue. His wish is granted when, touched and kissed by him, the remarkable carving comes to life.

Otterness exercises role reversal in this witty sculptural installation; the sculptor is a sculptress, a woman. And this spot in the park is her workshop/studio where she and her many multiple selves strive to create the ideal man. It's not an easy task, parts of imperfect and abandoned attempts lie about.

Eventually the ideal man is successfully configured in stone and love is requited. At the entrance to the park large carved stone images of the sculptress and the sculpture confront each other in a replicated moment of the work in progress—and the magical kiss is enacted in the foreground by small bronze figurines of the artist and her creation.

Creation Myth is engaging because it is more than a sculpture, it is a fable, new take on an old tale, a story that resonates through time. Otterness' figures, or figurines, resemble 3D cartoons but the tableau assembled in the park has philosophical depth.

