

Oxford History of New Zealand, Melbourne, 2009, pp. 323–56.
60 Stocker, as at note 4, p. 67. See also C. Brickell, *Mates & Lovers: A History of Gay New Zealand*, Auckland, 2008, p. 15.

61 For a comparison between Gross and Kathleen Scott, see Stocker, as at note 4, pp. 58–59.

62 Tranter, as at note 57, pp. 71, 79.

sculpture existed, and his work was accordingly misunderstood and denounced.

Transformations of matter: contemporary carving in stone

Charles Gurrey

A handful of exemplary works by contemporary carvers of stone serves to demonstrate that new terms of debate have been opened up for this medium. The concerns of these carvers effectively displace the timeworn epithets attaching to early modernist work – direct carving, truth to material, undisclosed mass and the rest – and affirm the current validity of this wrought material for sculptural expression. At the outset, there is significance in the formal idea of ‘transformation within an object’.¹ While the transformation of material is an obvious condition of this medium, it is one that has come to acquire a wider significance in the context of a debate about what should constitute ‘sculptural’ practice at all.

A case can be made for saying that sculpture should be a developing language of visual *achievement*, not a visual demonstration of literary or philosophical concepts. According to the carver Glynn Williams, Professor Emeritus of the Royal College of Art, placing an object within some reinterpretative context, or setting it in some provocative juxtaposition with other imported objects, does not qualify. In order to count as sculpture, the record of what is done with an object should not consist in something quite extrinsic to the object itself. Conceptual work is frequently ambiguous and requires support, as is often given by documentation or explanation before we can see it. This, he says, can also serve to insulate the maker from critical exposure. By contrast, sculpture with a clear subject opens up the maker to comparisons within a whole history of sculpture.² Williams has acknowledged that it is

a distinct attribute of the process of carving that it forces just such a clarity of intention upon one’s work; it is difficult to carve forms that are vague. The deliberate, frequently hard-won and necessarily subtractive character of the procedure all tend to contribute to this.

Bringing these two considerations together, the resources of the history of sculpture can be seen to bring critical exposure to the sculptor’s ambitions and testify to the versatility of traditional material, its infinite transformational possibility. A case for the validity of contemporary carving – among other intrinsically transformative procedures – is thereby advanced by Williams, in terms of the resources of tradition. This history is not to be taken as authoritative, but informative. It is a detailed resource-base for tackling immediate and particular, practical, sculptural questions in what one is setting out to do. In turn, this notion of an informed and truly realized sculptural intention, rather than some more prosaic question of craft expertise, provides us with a criterion for *quality* in sculptural work.³

For this medium in particular, closely related to the formal virtue of transformation within an object, there is an identification with process, the sense of the carver ‘owning’ the whole process of making. There is no delegation. One works continually upon the actual sculpture. ‘What the sculptor does to the material is exactly what will remain [...] Carving can carry the full chronicle of its making.’⁴ Such a ‘truth to process’ characterizes much of the work we see here.

The bedding planes of the dual-coloured Ancaster Weatherbed stone in Williams’ piece *Morning Number Two* (1987–88, fig. 1), testify to the transformation of material as well as contributing to the laid-down quality in the subject image. The handling of joints and limbs in the two figures keeps the forms at some distance



1. Glynn Williams (b. 1939),
Morning Number Two, 1987–88,
 Ancaster Weatherbed, 223.5 ×
 119.3 × 38.1 cm. Tate Britain
 (photo: ?)

from naturalism. The parallelogram of limbs is blocky and robust; the woman's hair is direct evidence of material and process. A resolutely horizontal composition confounds the expectations of uprightness and columnar self-support associated with stone figurework. Facial modelling recalls pre-Columbian work. A sense of touching animates the piece: we are given a closed circuit of contact and attention that records

a universal intimacy. The complementary crossed legs bring irony, an affectionate complicity within and towards the work. Recognition requires no supporting context here.

Material transformation is evident on a miniature scale in *Harbour* (1983), by Paul Mason (fig. 2). The textures of the various processes of working this small marble fragment each contribute to the allusions



2. Paul Mason (1952–2006),
Harbour, 1983, marble, 18 × 18 cm.
 LOCATION ?
 (photo: ?)

3. John Maine (b. 1942), *Pyramid*, 1979–80, Portland stone, 3.05 × 3.05 × 3.05 m. Nene Valley Park, Peterborough
(photo: ?)



made. Mason plays upon the intersection of positive and negative volumes. The vocabulary of architectural detail, appropriate to the material itself, is recalled in the volute form and in the proportions of a metope. The topography of this miniature evokes the harbour wall, a ship's prow, the sea meeting the land.

At another extreme of scale we are taken beyond the single block to evidence of working that testifies to a collaborative execution, as well as to the internal structure of a complex form. John Maine made *Pyramid* (1979–80) for exhibition at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park when he held their inaugural Fellowship. The piece was

subsequently bought by Peterborough Development Corporation (fig. 3). This tetrahedron is a three-way intersecting form on a significant scale. Twenty tons of Portland stone comprise a work standing over three metres in height. Twenty-eight blocks of varying size and proportion each carry distinct tooling marks from the several masons who worked under the artist, along with Cecil 'Skylark' Durston, at Stone Firms, Portland. These marks of the process of making function as clues for reading the internal structure and masses of the piece, as does the complex jointing pattern that results. The use of a strong diagonal as an animating line sets up a trajectory of mass that shows Maine's admiration for the constructivist work of El Lissitzky and Malevich.

There has been a long-term progressive tendency for British carvers to move away from an assertion of mass as something undisclosed, which had been so characteristic of early modernist practitioners as they sought to affirm the object quality of stone sculpture.⁵ In contemporary work we see the mass of the block interrogated, called into question, or disclosed by way of some intuition of the logic of the form. Williams has chided much work done up to the later 1920s for betraying a timidity or undue reverence for mass. "The mass of the block [remains] unrevealed as a phenomenal presence [...] The carving runs over the surface in the manner of a continuous relief."⁶

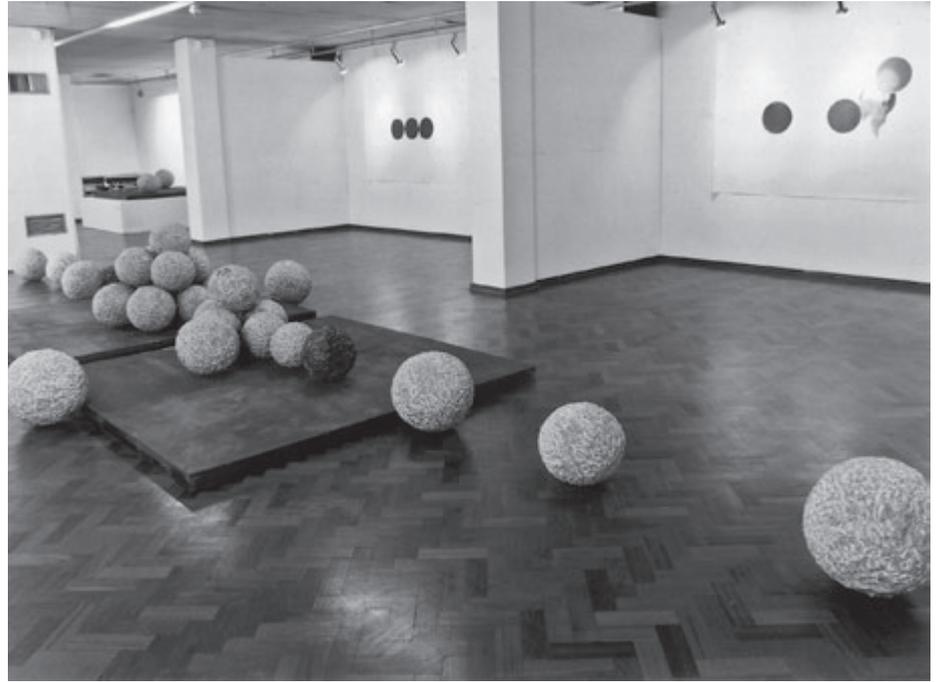
By contrast, geometry is perceived on a point of change in the large twisting tetrahedron executed by John Maine for the Royal Bank of Scotland in Edinburgh in 2004 (fig. 4). With a cumulative sense of scale set up by fifteen courses of worked pink granite standing five-and-a-half metres high, this form is nevertheless fully disclosed in a dynamic intuition and articulation of object form. This architectural sculpture is both robust and elegant, standing as an abstract yet humanizing counterpoint to the nondescript and rectilinear corporate buildings that surround it.⁷

Mass is rendered discrete and set in overt relation one element with another in *Position and Appearance* by Hideo Furuta (fig. 5). This work comprised a series of related sculptural installations produced between 1996 and 2003.⁸ The elements for



4. John Maine, Royal Bank of Scotland sculpture, 2004, pink granite, h: 5.5 m. Drummond House, Edinburgh Park, Edinburgh
(photo: ?)

5. Hideo Furuta (1949–2007), *Position and Appearance*, 1997, white granite, 40 carved spheres and 30 carved cones with large-scale drawings. LOCATION ? (photo: ?)



the initial exhibition in 1997 consisted of over forty hand-carved granite spheres, along with over thirty tapering granite pinacles, all of which were displayed around and upon substantial iron plates or platforms. The positions of the spheres were first set by the application of transformation matrices; fine-tuning followed on site with an intuitive feel for the exact relation of the masses to one another. Huge complementary drawings stapled to the gallery wall and executed in situ further extend

the sense of the juxtaposition of wrought forms. In a later work, *Spinning Cubes* (2006, fig. 6), commissioned for the Afro-Caribbean Millennium Centre in Birmingham, Furuta exploits the tension between distinct masses and their assemblage to generate a dynamism of form. The sculptor pre-determined mathematically that five one-metre cubes of black African granite, each weighing approximately 2.8 tons, could, with small but critical hand-worked joints, be made to sit at exactly 60 degrees on one axis and 3 degrees on the other relative to each other, forming an apparently weightless twisting column six-and-a-half metres high.

In much of his work, Williams aims at a secondary principle of growth, something taut and sinewy. A dynamic principle organizes the form and undoes or counterpoints the given mass of the material. Although choosing for the most part limestones that are in practice accommodating to carve, he asserts, 'I think you should push your material until it starts to squeal, until it gives.'⁹ The sculptor refers to the compound Palm Tree Column in the Chapter House of Salisbury Cathedral as something that is 'almost anti-stone'.¹⁰ Here an architectural support is the outcome of cathedral-building expertise carried to a point where one has a sense of material vulnerability and attenuation



6. Hideo Furuta, *Spinning Cubes* (prototype), 2005, black granite, 1 × 1 × 4.5 m. Hishio Centre for Cultural Exchange, Japan (photo: ?)

7. Glynn Williams, *Stone Rise East*, 1985, Ancaster stone, 182.8 × 152.4 × 91.4 cm. Collection of the artist (photo: ?)

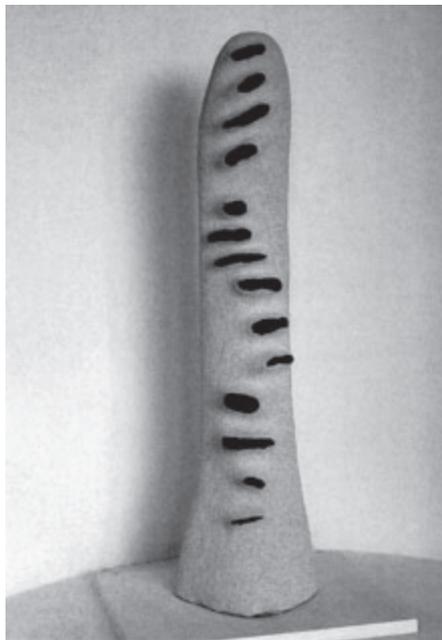


rather than assurance. With *Stone Rise East* (1985, fig. 7), the sculptor calls the mass of the material into question: a sinewy upward thrust and turn of a body is held in check by the earthbound blockiness of the head and arms of the bracing section. The genitals become a telling empirical detail counteracting the upward formal movement.

In addition to formal aspects of the medium, substantive properties of stone

are also a key to subject matter as well as to a certain approachability or mediation of the image, in ways that are distinctly contemporary. Paul Mason developed a pre-occupation with a narrative of surface in which mass is just not at issue at all. Through carvings in relief and in simple modest forms with considered surface working, the material is brought to evoke a range of implicit narratives as some text or physical record of larger processes and developments. *Internal Sea* (1996, fig. 8), is an extended conical form with a clawed or pointed surface breaking out into dark extruded vents painted deep aquamarine on their outer surfaces. Processes of formation and accretion characteristic of geological and marine life are registered. The discreet and unassuming quality of this piece was characteristic of the sculptor's work, where carvings often seemed like things found as much as things wrought. *Wrapped Earth* (1996, fig. 9) recalls root systems and core samples with the counterpoint of drapery, a cultural allusion to emblems of protection and fecundity. Here, carving seeks to elaborate and disclose the internal connections that stone has with its own and other associated cultural processes of evolution. These small-scale, unassertive pieces operate like freeze-frames: carving becomes a further and, by implication, not necessarily final intervention in some open-ended continuum of material transformation.

8. Paul Mason, *Internal Sea*, 1996, limestone. LOCATION? (photo: ?)



9. Paul Mason, *Wrapped Earth*, 1996, marble. LOCATION? (photo: ?)



10. Peter Randall-Page (b. 1954), *Beneath the Skin*, 1991, Kilkenny limestone, 85 × 158 × 77 cm. BUPA Headquarters, Bloomsbury, London (photo: ?)



The sense of a continuum is also relevant for Peter Randall-Page. For him stone has intrinsic importance as a material that has been there as part of the world before humanity. But he also takes sculpture to be a very particular way to communicate. Making and showing an object, he feels, is the most powerful medium for exploring the experience that we have of *inhabiting* a physical body. In addition there was from the outset an attraction to the making of simple, solid objects that could concentrate or congeal expression and feeling into a ‘nugget’. The internal dynamics of the best of this work are conducive to the sense of some dark interior space. A charge of undisclosed mass is then an abiding theme for Randall-Page, but the tension set up between the outer surface and the interior mass does not here belie any timidity in the disclosure of form. Rather it is a metaphorical threshold for this sense of embodiment.

This and the larger sense of a continuum inform Randall-Page’s belief that sculpture can play an important part in assisting a recognition of ourselves as part of a common biological system. ‘The whole enterprise is not to feel like a disembodied consciousness wandering through the world [...] The illusion of being separate and being lonely isn’t the real state of affairs.’¹¹ As such he seeks to ‘lose a sense of alienation from the rest of the natural world and experience the reality of its intimacy’. Two

dark pieces illustrate these ambitions. *Beneath the Skin* (1991, fig. 10) and *Mother Tongue* (1998, fig. 11) are both carved in Kilkenny limestone worked to a taut, palpable surface by fine abrasion. They are viscid and visceral things. They provoke a disquieting sense of the viewer’s own organic and animal condition. ‘I’m trying to make certain forbidden areas of privacy eautiful, closer to rightness [...] Reconciliation is one of the important functions of art.’¹² In pieces such as these a case is made for the communicative strength of a material that can serve to marry a seductive and natural surface with a disturbing image. A metaphorical distance is then set up by the stone itself that can encourage a sense of intimacy and ownership of ‘difficult’ things.

In Mason’s work, substantive meanings are disclosed, as carvings assume a concreteness of sense. With Randall-Page, stone works in both a substantive and pragmatic way to help to promote our acceptance of our embodied condition. On another level we have already looked at figure work by Glynn Williams that conveys an affection and optimism towards his subject matter. The medium may not be incidental in this. *Morning Number Two* is tactile and about touching. Stone may not be uniquely appropriate as a medium here, but it can act as the material condition for a certain assurance in the image, not unrelated to that mediating function relevant to

For Paul Mason and Hideo Furuta

1 G. Williams, ‘Sculpture: an endangered species’, *Sculpture*, July–August 1994, pp. ??.

2 G. Williams, ‘Looking at sculpture’, *Artscribe*, 42, 1983, pp. ??.

3 S. Morley, ‘Wimbledon sculpture’, *Modern Painters*, autumn 1988, pp. ??

4 G. Williams, *Contemporary Carving* (exh. cat.), Plymouth Arts Centre, 1984, pp. ??.

11. Peter Randall-Page, *Mother Tongue*, 1998, Kilkenny limestone, 1.15 × 1.9 × 1.11 m. Collection of the artist (photo: ?)



5 See P. Curtis, *Barbara Hepworth*, London, Tate Gallery, 1998, p. 24. Also, Moore speaking about his developing response to material in terms of a move from an 'Egyptian' domination by material to a Gothic opening-out of form, c. 1951; see Henry Moore Foundation Archive, published in A. Wilkinson (ed.), *H. Moore: Writings and Conversations*, Aldershot, 2002, pp. ??.

6 G. Williams, on Frank Dobson (exh. review), *Modern Painters*, winter 1994, pp. ??; G. Portelli, *Modern British Sculpture*, 2005, pp. ??.

7 Royal Bank of Scotland, Drummond House, Edinburgh Park. An earlier small-scale version, *Escarpment*, was exhibited at the Royal West of England Academy Triennial in Bristol in 1999.

8 Including the New Art Centre Sculpture Park and Gallery, Roche Court, Salisbury; *Juxtapositions*, Regents Park, 2001; Ardrossan Harbour installation, North Ayrshire, 2003.

9 T. Marlow, *Modern Painters*, summer 1992, pp. ??.

10 Ibid.

11 M. Warner, 'Desire Paths', *Granite Song*, Common Ground, Devon 1999, pp. ??.

12 Peter Randall-Page in an interview with the author, September 2005.

13 For example, *Woman with a Child* (Ancaster stone, 1984), in which

12. Glynn Williams, *Sophie Sitting*, 1990, Hoptonwood limestone, 152.4 × 91.4 × 60.9 cm. Collection of the artist (photo: ?)

Randall-Page's work. This is not to deny that Williams can register tragedy and anger in a Pietà, as in *Shout* (1982). But in relation to the same sculptor's pursuit of a demotic but dignified figurative idiom, stone can be benign.¹³ In a lyrical, fully convincing portrait of one of his daughters, *Sophie Sitting* (1990, fig. 12), some of the warmth in the subject derives from the medium itself. This is not the stony



authority felt in so many austere and primal figures of early modernism. It is an affirmation of the immediate and everyday.

These sculptors vary in their understanding of what it means to carve stone. Williams takes 'material transformation' to be the realization of sculptural meaning by way of an intentional process, the outcome of which will be open to assessment in terms of a whole tradition of sculptural work. The pursuit of figurative themes in this sculptor's work is relevant to this emphasis placed upon a consciousness of working within a tradition. By contrast, for Mason, transformation of material has to do with the disclosure of meanings implicit in the stone by way of a working procedure that can serve to directly register one's curiosity about it. Discrete interventions are, for him, a further contribution to the natural and cultural history of a material worked into metaphors for processes of change on a number of levels.

Williams' critique of Duchampian and conceptualist approaches to sculpture is consistent with the pursuit of an implicit sense of the rightness of form that characterizes the work of Maine, Furuta and Randall-Page. There is a confidence in these artists that the sculptural object will be recognizable for what it is, quite apart from any supportive institutional context. Furuta's application to the working of granite saw him execute much work on site for

attenuations of form are allied to a knowing humanism; *Woman with a Plait* (Hoptonwood stone, 1988), in which, with pre-Columbian accents and a nod to Epstein, the tense, alert and outward-looking quality (as of others, e.g. *Sitting Still* [1983]) provides an immediate presence, not some remote or elevated being.

14 For example, *To the North*, Oxpens College of Higher Education, Oxford, 1990; *Breathing*, Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, 1992–94; *Unity*, Holts Village, Oldham, 1993–95; *Quiescence*, Bottisham Village College, Cambridge, 1994–95.

15 For example, *Aston Stones*, Aston University, Birmingham, 1978–79; *Arena*, South Bank, London, 1983–86; *Entrance Works*, Standard Life House, Edinburgh, 1996–97; the 2000 Project, Lewisham, south London.

16 For example, the New Milestones Project, Common Ground, 1988; *Beside the Still Waters*, Castle Park, Bristol, 1993; *Anatomies of Thought*, Prittlewell High School, Essex, 1994; *Inner Compulsion*, Millennium Seed Bank Project, 2000.

17 C. Harrison, *English Art and Modernism 1900–1939*, London, 1981, p. 223.

schools, colleges and hospitals.¹⁴ Maine's elegant work frequently balances intelligible form and sensuous object in relation to some given architectural context, and may also be executed on site.¹⁵ With the confidence that sculpture can go as far as serving to fulfil some restorative function for us, jolting us into a more wholesome recognition of our physical condition, Randall-Page nonetheless makes work for civic spaces, school grounds, architectural façades and, rural and urban public thoroughfares.¹⁶

Early modernist carvers wanted to abolish the distance between the image and the object. In pursuit of this, they eschewed the Classical, the Renaissance and the literary, found common cause with so-called primitive work, and sought to reinvigorate and expand a concept of the sculptural to include types of natural and geometric form. Perhaps Charles Harrison is correct to say that this was achieved at the price of

a certain vague pantheism, 'inclining as it does towards an all-pervading sentimentality and a chronic disregard for history'.¹⁷ In contrast to modernism, the recent work seen here shifts the balance away from archetypes towards the circumstantial. Ambition acquires focus, as mathematical forms get interrogated, identities are documented and conditions investigated. Yet the work retains formal immediacy: meaning is still something to be grasped very much by way of a response to the worked object. This work makes the case for a renewal of the critical vocabulary for carved stone.

The author gratefully acknowledges the support of a Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship in 2005 which made possible the research and conducting of interviews for this article. Paul Mason died in 2006, and Hideo Furuta in 2007. This article is written with respect for the memory of these two artists.

Obituary: Professor George Thomas Noszlopy (1932–2011)

George Noszlopy was born on 29 November 1932 in Budapest, where his father and grandfather ran a family business as master bakers. He was educated at first under the very right-wing regime of Admiral Horthy and later under the Stalinist rule of Mátyás Rákosi and of the rather milder Imre Nagy. He became very hostile to the dominant Stalinist orthodoxy and served in the Hungarian army with the writer and political activist, István Eörsi, a disciple of George Lukács. Lukács was briefly minister of culture during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and Eörsi was jailed for three-and-a-half years after its collapse. In that year Noszlopy completed his first degree in museology (art history and subsidiary subjects) at the Eötvös Lóránd University in Budapest and, together with many other Hungarians, escaped to the west after the failure of the Revolution. After a spell in Vienna and Paris, Noszlopy came to London in December 1956 to study the history of art at the Courtauld Institute. He joined the expatriate circle

around the Hungarian Writers' Union in exile and contributed regularly to their journal.

Taking up a full-time lectureship at Coventry School of Art in 1963, Noszlopy established and developed the study of art history there, moving shortly afterwards to perform a similar function at Birmingham College of Art and Design (later part of Birmingham Polytechnic, later still becoming the University of Central England, and finally Birmingham City University) where he remained for the rest of his career. In the 1970s he developed a very successful postgraduate course in the History of Art and Design. This was then a very unusual initiative in art colleges, which later proved influential in many polytechnics and universities. His publications included *The Primitive Art of Bryan Pearce* in 1964, an essay on the Hungarian artist Tivadar Csontvary, and monographs on the painter György Gordon in 1989, and on Gordon's first wife the caricaturist Edma (Marta Edinger) in 1998.

Meanwhile between 1983 and 1985 he and Evelyn Silber, then Deputy Director of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery,