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James Scanlon and Environmental Sculpture

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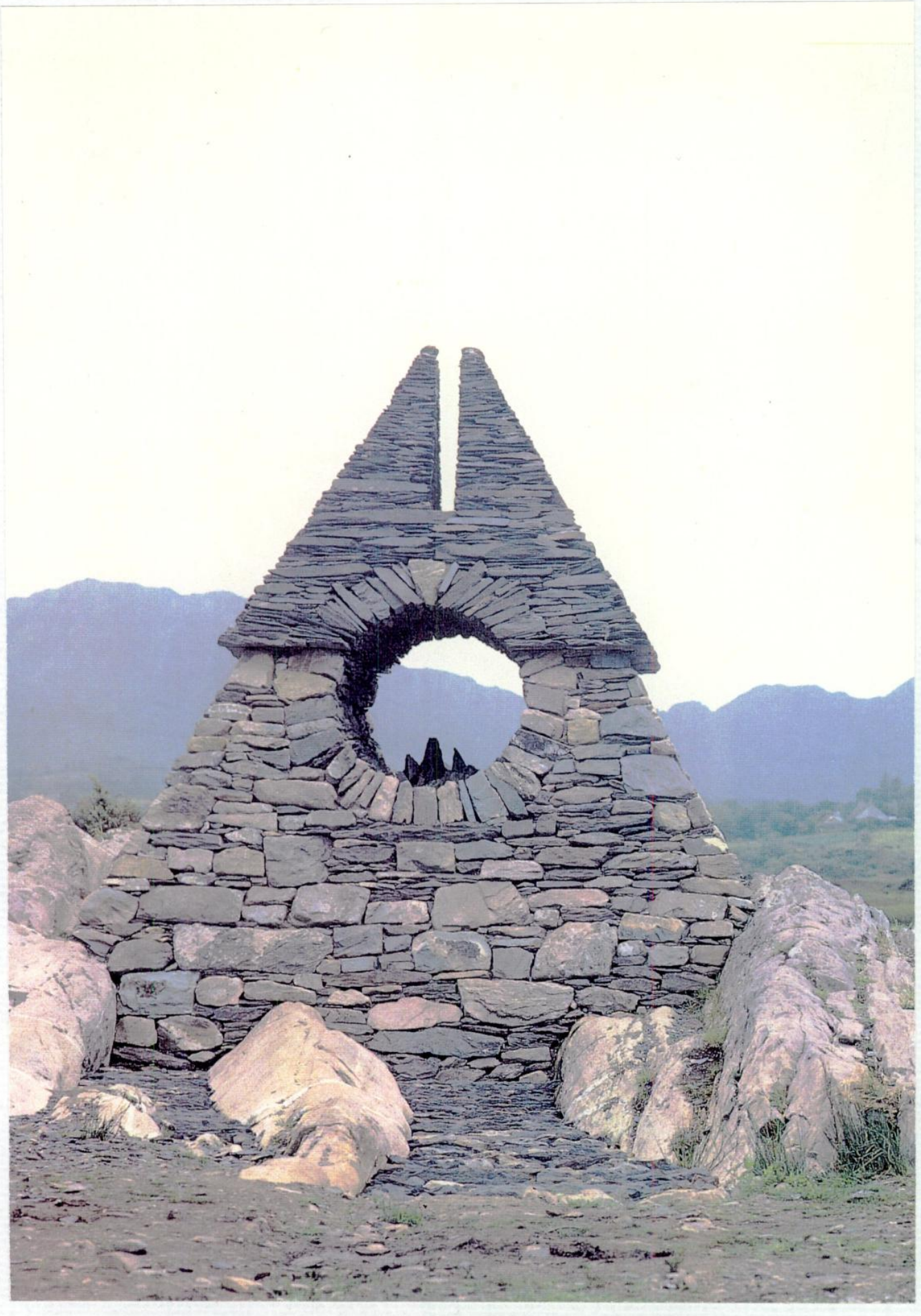

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Table of contents

List of Plates p.5

Introduction p. 9

Chapter 1 - International Artists involved in Environmental Sculpture
Robert Smithson
Andy Goldsworthy
Dani Karavan p.16

Chapter 2 - The role that Environmental Sculpture has played in Ireland over the last twenty years. p.29

Chapter 3 - James Scanlon and his Environmental Sculpture in Sneem, Co. Kerry. p.46

Conclusion p.66

Bibliography p.69

List of Plates

Fig. 1 James Scanlon's sculpture in Sneem

Fig. 2 Mary Miss, *Staged Gates*, wood, 1979.

Fig. 3 Robert Smithson, *Amarillo Ramp*, red shale and earth, 1973.

Fig. 4 Chris Drury, *Shelter for the North West Mountains*, Foinaven Sutherland.

Fig. 5 Andy Goldsworthy making stacked Snow Cone in Grise Fjord, Ellesmere Island, 1989.

Fig. 6 Richard Long, *Circle in the Andes*, 1972. Photograph of site installation.

Fig. 7 Donald Rankin, The Fort, Grizedale Forest England, 1984

Fig. 8 David Kemp, *Scale Green Birdman-or-Departure Lounge*, Grizedale Forest, England, 1981.

Fig. 9 Walter De Maria, *The Lightening Field*, 1974-1977.

Fig. 10 Denis Oppenheim, *Identity Stretch*, 1970-1975, Artpark, New York.

Fig. 11 Michael Heizer, *Complex One/City* 1972-76, Nevada, U.S.A.

Fig. 12 Robert Smithson, *The Spiral Jetty*, Northern Shore of the Great Salt Lake, 1970.

Fig. 13 Robert Smithson, *Asphalt Rundown*, Rome, 1969.

Fig. 14 Robert Smithson, Aerial map-proposal for Dallas-Fort Worth Regional Airport, 1967.

Fig. 15 Robert Smithson, *Broken Circle*, Holland, 1971.

Fig. 16 Andy Goldsworthy, *Green Sticks*, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 10th February, 1987.

Fig. 17 Andy Goldsworthy, *Sycamore*, Venice Biennale, 1988.

Fig. 18 Andy Goldsworthy, *Sycamore*, Harlemmerhout, Holland, August, 1984.

Fig. 19 Andy Goldsworthy, *Poppy Petals*, Harlemmerhout, Holland, August, 1984

Fig. 20 Andy Goldsworthy, Hooke Wood Entrance, Dorset, 1986.

Fig. 21 Andy Goldsworthy, *Seven Spires*, Grizedale Forest, England, 1984.

Fig. 22 Andy Goldsworthy, *Slate Stack*, Stone Wood, Penpont, Dumfriesshire, 1988.

Fig. 23 Dani Karavan, *City of Peace*, Jerusalem, white concrete, 1987.

Fig. 24 Dani Karavan, *Environment for peace*, Light line from Forte di Belvedere to dome

Florence, 1978.

Fig. 25 Dani Karavan, *Dialog*, Duisburg, Germany, 1989.

Fig. 26 Dani Karavan, *Axe-Majeur*, Cergy-Pontoise near Paris 1986.

Fig. 27 Michael Bulfin, *Electron Spin*, steel, 1983.

Fig. 28 Paul Verhulst, *Fisherman's Territory*, for Castlewellen Forest Park Sculpture Symposium, Co. Down, 1992.

Fig. 29 Gerrie Goosen, *Fisherman's Territory*, for Castlewellen Forest Park Sculpture Symposium, Co. Down, 1992.

Fig. 30 Aaron Fowler, *Arboreal Throne*, for Castlewellen Forest Park Sculpture Symposium, Co. Down, 1992.

Fig. 31& 32 Graeme Hall, *Sacred Grove*, for Castlewellen Forest Park Sculpture Symposium,Co. Down, 1992.

Fig. 33 Kathy Herbert, *Piece for a Maple Tree*, for Castlewellen Forest Park Sculpture Symposium, Co. Down, 1992.

Fig. 34 Kathy Herbert, *Piece for a Maple Tree* (close-up).

Fig. 35 Overview of Ahenny Slate Quarry, Co. Kilkenny.

Fig. 36 Segment of the *Miner's Egg*, by Alan Counihan, Ahenny Slate Quarry Symposium, Co. Kilkenny, 1992

Fig. 37 Michael Bulfin, *Saurian Echoes*, Ahenny Slate Quarry Symposium, Co. Kilkenny, 1992.

Fig. 38 Colm O'Culain, *Scéal an Bád*, Ahenny Slate Quarry Symposium, Co. Kilkenny, 1992

Fig. 39 Eavaun Carmody, *Stone River*, lichened slate, Ahenny Slate Quarry Symposium, Co. Kilkenny, 1992.

Fig. 40 Jane McCormick, *From the Tomb of the Womb to the Womb of the Tomb*, Fernhill, Dublin, (now the property of the A.I.B. collection,Bank Centre, Dublin).

Fig. 41 Brian King, *Sea Holes*, glass, Sligo, 1976.

Fig. 42 Brian King, *Unaltered Landscape*, 1979.

Fig. 43 Brian King, *Ghost Train*, Proposal for Cloon Project, Cloon, 1979.

Fig. 44 Brian King, *Levelled Hill*, Proposal for Cloon Project, Cloon, 1979.

Fig. 45 David Kinnane, *The Fungus* or *Mycotos Dublinensis*, as seen in its environment at Temple Bar, Dublin, 1991.

Fig. 46 David Kinnane, *The Fungus*, Temple Bar, Dublin, 1991.

Fig. 47 Rachel Joynt, *Oileán na ndaoine*, bronze, copper and aluminium, Dublin,, 1988.

Fig. 48 & 49 Rachel Joynt, *Oileán na ndaoine*, (close-up).

Fig.50 Rachel Joynt, *Solas na Glasraí*, copper, Moore St, Dublin, 1992

Fig. 51 Rachel Joynt, *Solas na Glasraí*, (close-up).

Fig. 52 Carolyn Mullholland, *Chair Tree*, bronze, Georges St, Dublin, 1991.

Fig. 53 Michael Bulfin, *A walk among stone*, stone and concrete, Ballymun, Dublin.

Fig. 54 Eilís O'Connell, monumental sculpture, corten steel, Kinsale, Co. Cork, 1988.

Fig. 55 & 56 View of the village of Sneem, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 57 Tamara Rickman, *Tree of Life*, steel, Sneem, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 58 Sculpture of a Panda Bear, a gift of the people of China to the village of Sneem, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 59 Memorial to Cearbhall O'Dálaigh by Vivienne Roche, Sneem, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 60 Staigue Fort, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 61 Gallerus Oratory, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 62 Monastery at Skelligs, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 63 Detail of Staigue Fort, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 64 Detail of stonework and underground shelter at Staigue Fort, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 65 Detail of stonework from Staigue Fort, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 66 & 67 Overview of James Scanlon's site in Sneem, Co. Kerry.

Fig.68 Boundary piece by James Scanlon, Sneem.

Fig.69 Boundary piece, (side view), by James Scanlon, Sneem, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 70 Boundary piece by James Scanlon, Sneem.

Fig. 71 Boundary piece (close-up), by James Scanlon.

Fig. 72 Path cut out of mound at site in Sneem.

Fig. 73 & 74 Paths at site in Sneem.

Fig. 75 Pyramid structure, by James Scanlon in Sneem.

Fig. 76 Pyramid structure.

Fig. 77(a) & (b) Details of stained glass in pyramid structure.

Fig. 77(c) Slate floor of pyramid.

Fig. 78 Conical structure at site in Sneem.

Fig. 79 Conical structure.

Fig. 80 Side view of conical structure.

Fig. 81 Doorwell and seam of structure.

Fig. 82 Detail of seam..

Fig. 83 Interior views of conical structure.

Fig. 84 Scarred rock running through the centre of the site at Sneem.

Fig. 85 Final boundary piece on site.

Fig. 86 & 87 Details of boundary piece.

Fig. 88 Andy Goldsworthy, Touchstone North, Dumfrisshire, England, 1990.

Fig. 89 & 90 Detail of stonework from boundary piece.

Fig. 91 & 92 Detail of stonework from conical structure.

Fig. 93 Pyramid stonework.

Fig. 94 Interior stonework of the conical structure.

Fig. 95 Interior stonework of the pyramid.

Fig. 96 & 97 Panels of stained glass by James Scanlon in the icon chapel of Glenstal Abbey, Co. Limerick.

Fig. 98 & 99 James Scanlon, details of Evangelist tondos at Glenstal Abbey, Co. LImerick.

Fig. 100 View of Icon Chapel at Glenstal Abbey, Co. Limerick.

Fig. 101 Isamu Noguchi, Red Cube, Broadway, New York, 1987.

Fig. 102 James Scanlon with some of his work in Sneem.

Introduction

> It is the space, or rather the particular place, its totality as as a meaningful environment which occupies me. A monumental sculpture might accomplish this, but my natural inclination is to shy away from this sort of assertiveness. A given space is a balance of elements, the air, the sky, the earth, people, the illusion, which together form our awareness of space. The space always dominant, the enduring background of silence.
>
> Isamu Noguchi (Threlfall, 1992, p.55)

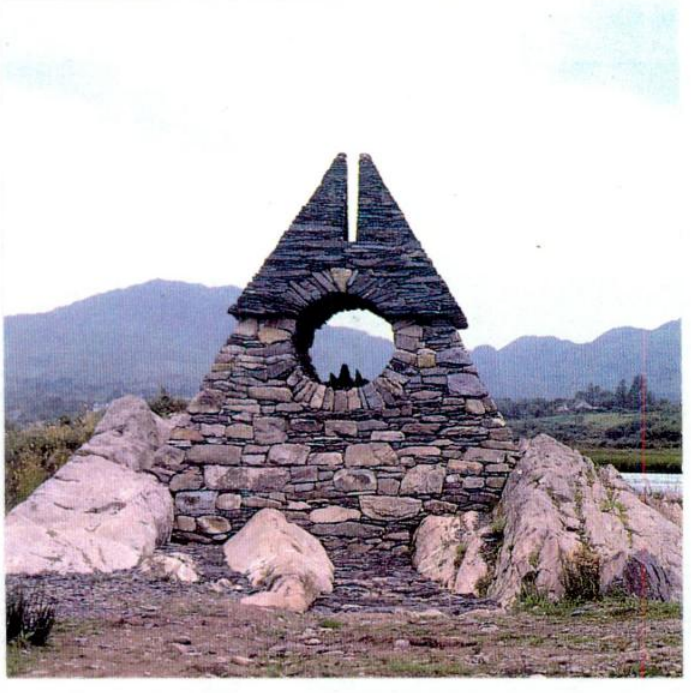
The main aim of my thesis is to analyse an environmental sculpture by an Irish artist called James Scanlon in an Irish village called Sneem in County Kerry which was started in 1989 and completed in 1990 (Fig. 1). I will analyse the work with reference to such factors as it's location, the materials used in its construction, it's inspiration, the way that the work was constructed and its integration with the local environment. I will support this analysis with interviews with some local people from Sneem so as to ascertain how the sculpture is perceived in the community.

In order to analyse the environmental sculpture in Sneem I would like to investigate the origins of this type of art and how it originated from earth art. There are elements of environmental sculpture which various artists focus on in different ways and I will discuss a few artists, like American sculptor-pioneer Isamu Noguchi, who practise different forms of environmental sculpture.

I will also discuss the role that environmental sculpture has played in Ireland over the last ten years so as to place Scanlon's work into some kind of national context. I will take into account in this discussion the formation of the Sculptor's Society of Ireland and the increasingly enthusiastic response to sculpture trails and sculpture symposia which it has organised around the country.

I will then conclude my thesis with a summary of the main points I have made and an assessment of my results. I will assess James Scanlon's work as a piece of environmental sculpture and this will include my own response and the response of the community in Sneem to the work.

Fig. 1 James Scanlon's sculpture in Sneem



The origins of environmental sculpture:

Over the last few years there has been an ever increasing concern for our environment and this concern has been manifesting itself very strongly in the artworld. Michael McDonough says that;

> Broadly defined, environmental art is equatable with the act of building. Its legacy includes the prehistoric earth mounds and cities carved from mountainsides in the Americas, the upright stone avenues and sacred rings such as Stonehenge in England, the burial monuments and cities of the dead in Egypt and, in fact, most of the built, carved, or painted evidence the world over, telling us that man recognised the spiritual and symbolic dimensions of shaping his surroundings.
>
> (McDonough, 1983, p.234)

In the twentieth century, the term environmental art generally refers to artforms that use the Earth in all its different forms including forests, rivers, deserts, mountains and fields. It also uses different elements of buildings and buildings themselves for expressive purposes. Ecological investigations on the surface of the earth is what would usually come to mind when the term "environmental art" is mentioned but there are also important cultural concerns attached to this type of art, although the approach to these concerns naturally varies from one artist to another. According to Michael McDonough, environmental art can only be successful if it deals with all the external conditions which can influence an individual or a group (McDonough, 1983, p.256). The plein air paintings of the Barbizon and the Impressionist painters now seem quaint in comparison to the projects for airports and strip mines that the environmental earth artist Robert Smithson has been involved in. An enormous comparison exists between the ideals and aspirations of nineteenth century artists and contemporary environmental artists. In an essay by Jeffrey Deitch on 'The new Economics of Environmental Art' he says that,

> the traditional economic units of art production seem anachronistic and inadequate as modes of art expression. (Deitch,1983, p.86)

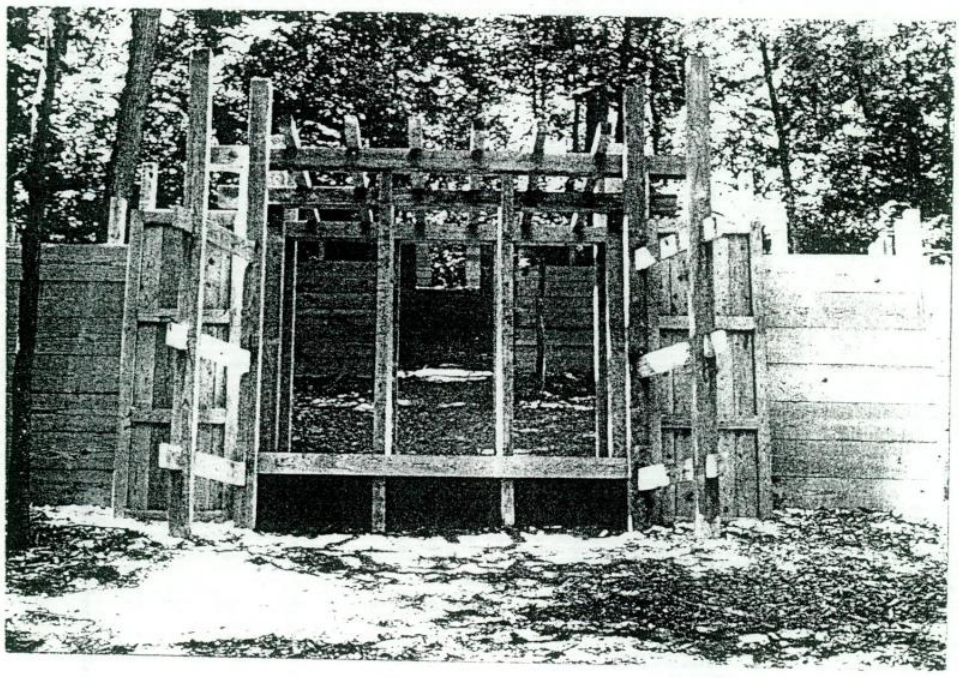


Fig. 2 Mary Miss, *Staged Gates*, wood, 1979.

Environmental art has left behind the confines of an indoor gallery space where a certain distance is always maintained between an artwork and its spectator. Robert Smithson's attitude to various works of art placed in galleries is that,

> Once the work of art is totally neutralized, ineffected, abstracted, safe, and politically lobotomized it is ready to be consumed by society.
>
> (Holt , 1979, p.132)

This is a rather extreme attitude to work being exhibited in a gallery but many artists at that time were inspired to move from the studio to the outdoors due to the confined spaces of galleries.

The move towards environmental art began in the early 1960s and it had become a recognised movement by the end of the decade as it gathered support and artists along the way. As the movement grew it developed many out-croppings and this type of art became a natural extension of many artists' work (Hall, 1983, p.8). It was approached from many different angles with various differences in ideals and aims but at some point works usually crossed a common ground.

Naturally enough, the land became a major element of the environmental sculpture, the choice of site being a crucial part of the work (Fig. 2). According to the American environmental sculptor, Mary Miss,

> Earthworks completed in the late '60s and early '70s began to develop and respond to the particular qualities of the site, incorporating that information into the sculpture. (Miss, 1984, p. 55)

The site became part of the work just as the work became part of the site. The site was chosen for specific reasons in that it had the right amount of space for the work and the presence or lack of specific natural features. Thus, the concept for the piece grew from the site for which it was intended, and Diana Schaffer says that an environmental sculpture consists of a combination of two things; the form which the artist creates and the environment in which that form is placed (Schaffer, 1983, p.174). The term "site - specific" is thus usually

Fig. 3 Robert Smithson, *Amarillo Ramp*, red shale and earth, 1973.

Fig. 4 Chris Drury, *Shelter for the North West Mountains*, Foinaven Sutherland.

used with reference to environmental sculpture because it exists as an essential part of this type of sculpture. The site has thus been given a form of identity and it often becomes a place as vivid as the work itself and similarly the work can only exist in its completed form at that site.

Environmental site-specific sculpture is integrated at various levels with its surroundings. This level of integration depends on the artist and the amount of importance he attributes to this factor. It can be integrated with its surroundings through its use of materials and their relation to the environment and through its relation to the cultural, social and historical characteristics of the site. Many artists consider it important to involve the local community in the work either at the planning and building stage or at a participatory level at the final stage.

There are many different types of environmental sculptors and Mark Rosenthal says that there are five main categories into which artists can be grouped that typify different approaches to the environment. He says that,

> certain artists mount something of an assault on nature while others merely 'touch' the landscape lightly to produce their art.
>
> (Rosenthal, 1983, p.60)

In the same essay he questions whether or not earth art, in order to be effective, should have to give heavy handed evidence of a human presence or whether the artist can allow it to make its own statement by subtly redirecting nature. In order to incise a visual statement some artists abandon their paintbrushes from the studios and use bulldozers on the land to create impact (Fig.3). Mark Rosenthal says that the sculptor Robert Smithson "notes that heavy construction has a 'primordial grandeur' and views the disruption of the earth's crust as 'compelling' ". (Rosenthal, 1983, p.64).

Artists such as Richard Long, Andy Goldsworthy, Ian Hamilton Finlay and Chris Drury are examples of artists who "touch" the landscape in a very delicate, unobtrusive manner (Figs. 4-6). Long's and Drury's work is of the utmost modesty and in some cases it may be difficult to discern the actual artwork. Ian Hamilton Finlay makes very subtle addi-

Fig. 5 Andy Goldsworthy making stacked Snow Cone in Grise Fjord, Ellesmere Island, 1989.

Fig. 6 Richard Long, *Circle in the Andes*, 1972. Photograph of site installation.

tions to the landscape while Goldsworthy is particularly noted for his witty, temporary innovative arrangements in nature when he makes sculpture from such things as leaves, twigs and rocks and preserves their memory through photography while the objects rot or collapse.

> Goldsworthy's art aims to concentrate the mind on the delicate beauty of natural processes, implying the irreplaceability of all that we stand to lose because of pollution.
>
> (Graham-Dixon, 1989,p. 124)

Thus, it can be seen that there is quite a large distinction between these two types of environmental sculpture, the former trying to seek an equality with nature and the latter submitting to nature. There is a type of environmental sculpture which lies between these two extremes and well known artists who could be included in this group would be Isamu Noguchi and Dani Karavan. The opening quote of the introduction is by Noguchi and it is a good indication of the type of work which both artists aim to produce. They are both interested in creating environments from a combination of their work with its surroundings. They have both been very successful in creating very harmonious work and their work also introduces into this discussion the concept of creating environmental sculpture in urban environments as opposed to the other artists I have mentioned who work mainly in rural environments. Most of the work of both of these artists is concentrated in urban man-made environments such as cities and city and town squares and plazas. There is no reason why environmental sculpture should only be found in rural landscapes because a piece of sculpture can be integrated into the man-made surroundings of an urban environment just as well as it can be integrated into rural surroundings.

There is an increasing number of sculpture parks and sculpture forests being created in various countries around the world as well as a certain amount of sculpture gardens. The sculpture park and garden is not always a collection of sculpture which happens to be outdoors but it often aims to integrate art and nature. I find that this type of park or garden still seems to be an extension of a gallery whereas sculpture forests are more interesting

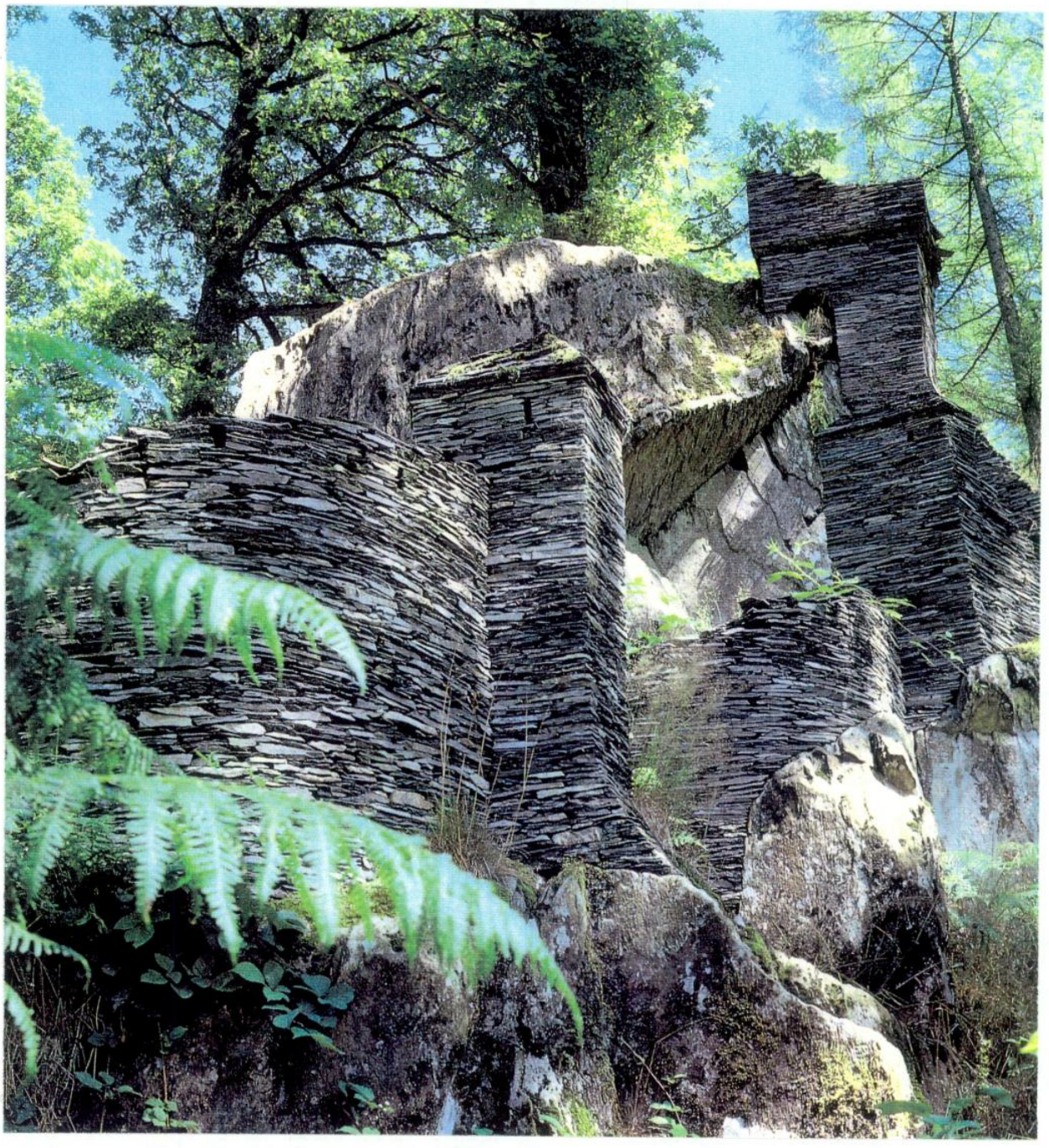


Fig. 7 Donald Rankin, The Fort, Grizedale Forest England, 1984

in that the work is site specific and thus can be called environmental scupture. Due to the nature of the materials used in sculpture forests, the works are quite often temporary as the materials decay with time. In an article called "Sculpture in the Environment" Marina Vaizey points out that sculpture forests and sometimes sculpture parks,

> are as much geared to the idea of expanding the artists' visual vocabuary, and visual experience, as to producing works of art, and the emphasis is on using materials from the site and appropriate to it.
>
> (Vaizey, l990, p. 7)

Sculpture forests such as Grizedale Forest (Figs. 7 & 8) and the Forest of Dean in England have been very successful and they contain a wonderful variety of environmental sculptures. Antony Brown aptly sums up the experience of visiting Grizedale,

> Grizedale's astonishing achievement is that it creates a world where it seems as natural for the forest to be filled with works of art as it is with trees and red deer.
>
> (Brown, 1992, p.72)

Social aspect of environmental sculpture

As I have already mentioned there is a social aspect involved in all types of environmental sculpture which some artists regard as being an important element of the work and some don't. It is important for the success of a piece of work that the artist considers this element because otherwise the addition of a piece of sculpture to any environment may cause some controversy with the people who live in that environment. For example, the artist Christo likes to involve people in his work. He creates art for the masses, the construction of his work requiring the involvement of hundreds of skilled and unskilled workers who are paid by the sale of Christo's preparatory drawings. Part of his projects are about the way that people are drawn into his work. Other artists are more concerned with creating finished sculpture which invites the spectator to enter it and become part of it by walking around, on, under or through the work. This is an important factor of work by the

Fig. 8 David Kemp, *Scale Green Birdman-or-Departure Lounge*, Grizedale Forest, England, 1981.

American sculptor, Mary Miss. She says that when she is working in a public place, she is doing only half the piece which,

> is completed by the people who are moving through it and the association they bring to the situation.
>
> (Marter, 1989, p.318)

Summary:

Environmental sculpture has evolved from an art movement which began in the early '60s. This type of sculpture is site specific in that it is made for and can only exist in its completed form at a particular chosen site. The sculpture becomes part of its surroundings in many ways, particularly in the way that the materials used in its construction usually consist of materials which are indigenous to the site. Thus it is physically related to its environment and in many cases it is also socially and culturally related. This social relationship is usually in the form of some means of community participation in the work, be it at the initial stages of the piece or at the final stage where it might perhaps include some type of seating or shelter for people.

There are many artists involved in this field of sculpture but they all have different levels of commitment to the important factors of environmental sculpture. Collective works of environmental sculpture by various artists exist at certain sculpture forests, parks and gardens and these are generally quite successful in bringing this type of art to the public.

The aim of my thesis is to analyse a piece of environmental sculpture by an Irish artist called James Scanlon in the village of Sneem in County Kerry. I will compare his work to the work of some international environmental sculptors and I will also discuss the role that this type of sculpture has played in Ireland over the last twenty years. I will assess his work in terms of how it works as a piece of environmental sculpture, how it is perceived by the community of Sneem and how I interpret it.

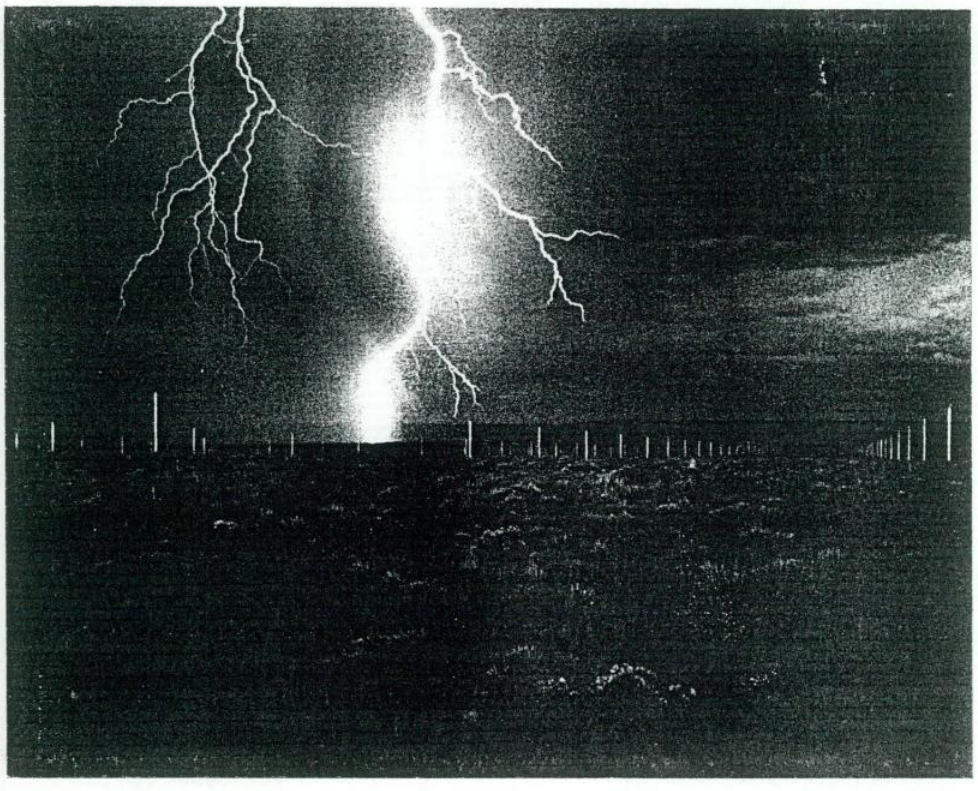


Fig. 9 Walter De Maria, *The Lightening Field*, 1974-1977.

Fig. 10 Denis Oppenheim, *Identity Stretch*, 1970-1975, Artpark, New York.

Chapter 1.

This chapter will consider the origins of environmental sculpture and the work of some well known artists practicing in this area. As I have mentioned already in the introduction, some environmental sculptors mount something of an assault on nature while others merely touch the landscape. Between these two extremes lies a group of artists whose work is a true example of environmental scupture in that it does not consist of an assault nor does it consist of a subtle touch on the landscape but instead it remains in a position between the two.

Coming under the heading of those artists who tend to interfere with nature in their work are such artists as Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer (Fig. 11), Walter De Maria (Fig. 9) and Denis Oppenheim (Fig. 10). I will discuss in some detail the work and ideas behind Robert Smithson's form of environmental sculpture.

There are many contemporary artists who belong to the group of environmental sculptors who are resolute non-interferers with the landscape. Andy Goldsworthy, Richard Harris, Ian Hamilton Finlay and Richard Long belong to this group and in a similar way to the way in which I discussed the work of Robert Smithson I would also like to focus on the work of Andy Goldsworthy.

Lying in a position between these two extremes of environmental sculpture are a few artists whose work relates very much to the type of work that James Scanlon did in Sneem, County Kerry. Dani Karavan and Isamu Noguchi are two separate environmental sculptors whose work seems to relate very directly to Scanlon's work and I will discuss the work of Dani Karavan in some detail.

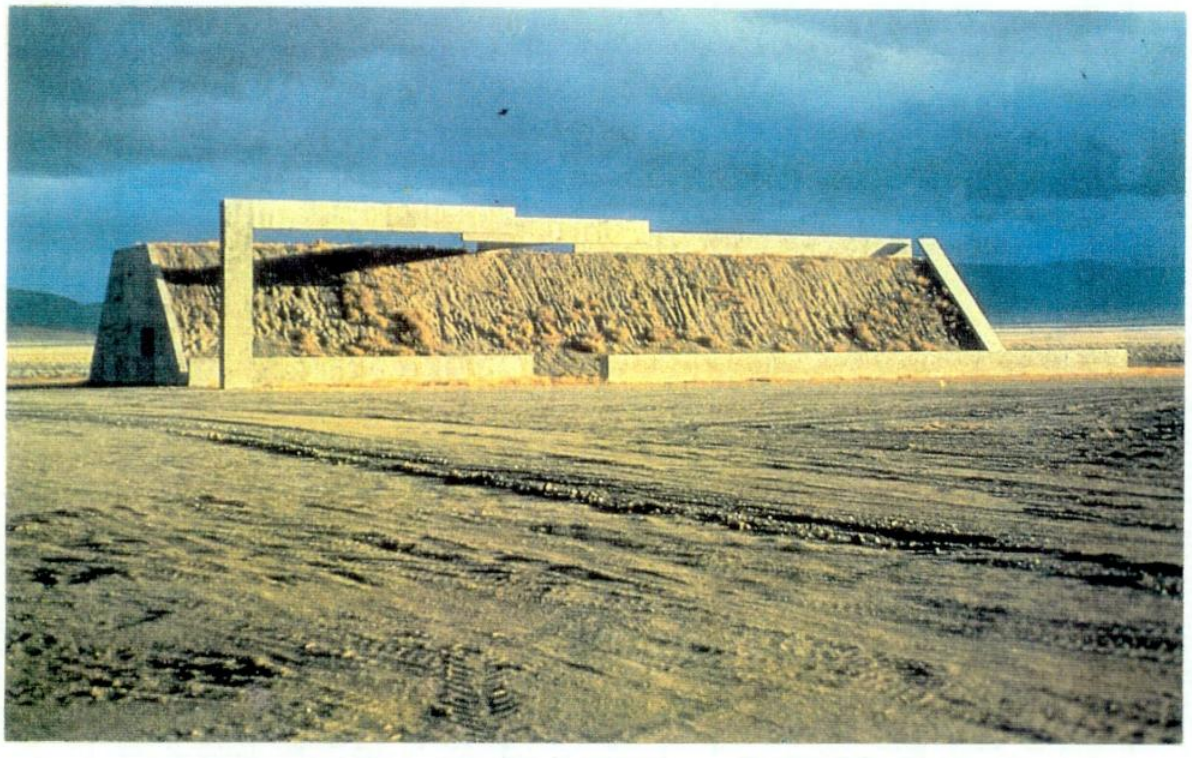


Fig. 11 Michael Heizer, *Complex One/City* 1972-76, Nevada, U.S.A.

Robert Smithson.

The American sculptor Robert Smithson was part of a group of artists who moved outside of the usual context of the gallery and museum world in the mid '60s as they began to engage the landscape in their work. Before this movement of earth artists, sculpture had basically been a gallery art or it was seen as a form of decoration for architecture.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Smithson was part of a group of artists who tended to alter the landscape in their work as opposed to the other group of earth artists who did not interfere with the landscape. Even though Smithson altered the landscape his work was still a form of environmental sculpture in that it was very site-specific. The concept of entropy which is the natural tendency toward chaos, is central to all of Smithson's work (Hall, 1983, p.50). I quote Carol Hall as saying that:

> A sense of both the creative and destructive aspects of nature informs the best of Smithson's art . . . . less common in art is a sense of the destructive potential of nature.
>
> (Hall, l983, p.50)

Smithson's work fell somewhere in between those artists whose work was concerned with saying something about the natural environment and the land artists whose work basically consisted of moving around huge quantities of earth (Hall, 1983, p.52). Smithson also did his share of earth moving but not quite as much as an artist called Michael Heizer. In choosing sites for his work Smithson usually preferred sites which had been disrupted by human or natural forces, Elizabeth Baker wrote that:

> Smithson had a propensity for 'distressed' land areas rather than unsullied virgin land.
>
> (Baker, l983, p83)

Due to his preference for this type of site for his work it meant that the places he chose were not very accessible to the public, lying in quite remote areas.

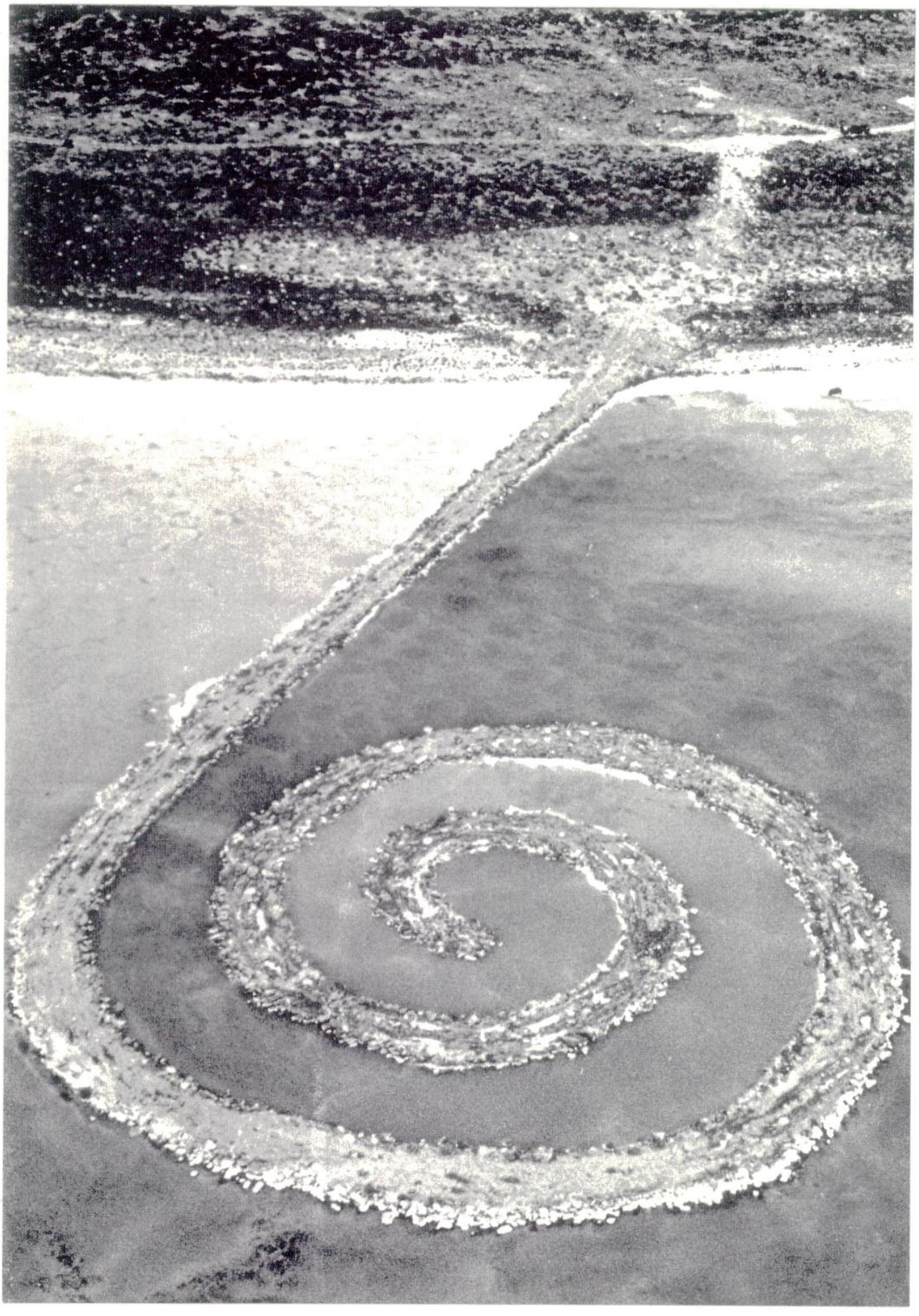


Fig. 12 Robert Smithson, *The Spiral Jetty*, Northern Shore of the Great Salt Lake, U.S.A., 1971.

Smithson's works:

'Spiral Jetty' is one of Smithson's best known works and it was begun on the north-eastern shore of the Great Salt Lake in April l970 (Fig. 12). It basically consists of a jetty protruding into the lake water which has a reddish tinge owing to the growth of algae and this jetty is in the form of a huge spiral. The jetty was originally l,500 feet long and about l5 feet wide and it is composed of black basalt, limestone and earth. The site for the piece is quite desolate and the scale of the work is comparable to the ancient monuments of past civilizations. The work is a very successful piece of environmental sculpture in the way that it is integrated with the surrounding environment and thus the spectator can experience the work and the site as a single totality. Changes in the landscape produce changes in the work and this enhances the relationship between the two.

Smithson has been influenced by the history of the locality and he has related this knowledge to his work. The salt crystals from the lake often form spiral configurations on the surface of the jetty and the artist has related his work to a local legend which claims that the Great Salt lake is connected to the ocean by a whirlpool (Beardsley, 1977, p.9).

It is an inviting piece of work for the spectator in that one can walk out along the spiral into the lake and thus experience the interaction between the work and the site. This type of participation is a wonderful element of the Spiral Jetty as it makes the whole experience much more intimate.

Smithson proposed the work 'Mudslide' in l969 and this was related to a completed work called Asphalt Rundown (Fig. 13) which was done near Rome also in l969. For this work he had a truckload of asphalt poured down the side of a quarry.

During his career Smithson was given an interesting job as an art consultant to the firms which were engaged in planning the huge Dallas-Fort Worth Regional Air Terminal. It was a wonderful opportunity for Smithson to collaborate with the architects and designers who were involved in the project. Smithson said at the initial planning stage that;

> a 'Sculpture garden' did not seem adequate in the face of runways the length of Central Park: Simply looking at art at eye level is not a solution. (Holt, l979, p.1)

Fig. 13 Robert Smithson, *Asphalt Rundown*, Rome, 1969.

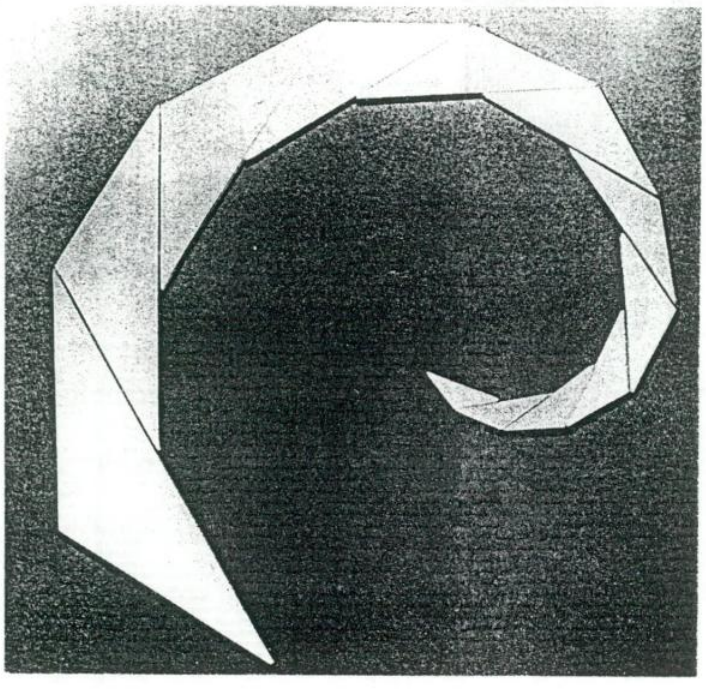


Fig. 14 Robert Smithson, Aerial map-proposal for Dallas-Fort Worth Regional Airport, 1967.

Smithson began to look at the land from the air as he decided that any work he would do would best be seen from the air. From the air, Smithson came to realise that a powerful world of perspective existed in and around the airport which could be interpreted in an abstract and illusive way. In an interview with Paul Cummings, Smithson remarked that he;

> was dealing with grids superimposed on large land masses, so that the inklings of the earthworks were there.
>
> (Holt, 1979, p.152)

Smithson submitted some proposals based on a type of aerial art, i.e. art seen from the air and the proposals consisted of earthworks on the fringes of the airfield. His main proposal entailed making a triangulated spiral out of concrete (Fig. 14). Another proposal also involved a spiral shaped reflecting pool. However, the architectural company lost it's contract with the airport and so the pieces were never actually built (Holt, 1979, p.152)

Smithson also created non-sites which were a totally new premise for contemporary sculpture. They consisted of the removal of some of the materials used to create one of his outdoor sites into a space in an art gallery or a museum.

Many of Smithson's proposals for art works in the landscape were ultimately rejected by various local sponsoring institutions. Smithson felt that by reclaiming land and converting it in some way into earth art then this art could be economically and politically integrated into society. He thought that this could best be achieved by working with mining companies to reclaim devastated strip-mined land and translating this into some form of earth art. A notable success in this field was a work titled 'Broken Circle-Spiral Hill' in an abandoned quarry near Emmen in Holland (Fig.15). Thence he recycled this sand quarry into an art work. It was very successful and the local community voted to keep and maintain the work after its completion (Holt, 1979, p.6)

There have been objections to the type of work that Robert Smithson and other artists in his field are involved in and according to John Beardsley with very few exceptions earth art tends to destroy the natural environment rather than improve it (Beardsley, 1977, p.28). The artists were used to this kind of opposition from people whose concept of

nature had a religious type of undertone. Smithson reacted to this type of opposition by saying that in,

> the puritan ethic there's a tendency to put man outside nature, so that whatever he does is fundamentally unnatural.
>
> (Beardsley, 1977,p.28)

I think that Robert Smithson had a very involved attitude towards nature and his site specific works were intent on integrating with their environment. He was very aware of the forces of decay and change in nature and he incorporated this awareness into his art through the use of land which was laid waste due to previous disruption of some kind. In further recognition of this awareness he used forms such as the spiral which were open and active and implied a sort of impermanence. He had a wonderful sensitivity with the use of natural materials and his work thus consisted of a combination of natural materials, open forms and wasteland. I find his work to be a very interesting type of environmental sculpture particularly in the way that he reclaimed barren sites through the medium of his sculpture.

Even though he encountered much opposition towards his work there were also many people who appreciated his work and the positive way that he had incorporated his work into the reclamation of barren, unused sites.

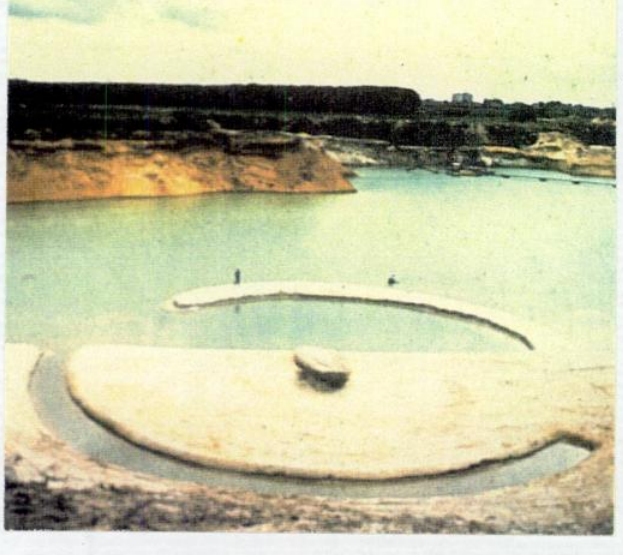


Fig. 15 Broken Circle-Spiral Hill, Emmen, Holland, 1971.

Fig. 16 Andy Goldsworthy, *Green Sticks*, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 10th February, 1987.

Andy Goldsworthy.

Andy Goldsworthy is an environmental sculptor who tends to interfere as little as possible with nature. His work can be divided into two groups: the first type being a form of very temporary work, the evidence of this work being recorded only through photography and the second type consisting of more permanent installations, these installations not being fully permanent in that the natural materials with which they are made will gradually undergo changes due to varying weather condidions etc. The temporariness or permanence of his work is not really a major concern of Goldsworthy's as he explains in this statement;

> That art should be permanent or impermanent is not the issue. Transience in my work reflects what I find in nature and should not be confused with an attitude towards art generally. I have never been against the well made or long lasting.
>
> (Goldsworthy, 1991, p.9)

Goldsworthy is best known for his small shortlived works created ad hoc in the landscape and recorded as photographs (Causey, 1990 p.125). These works are created without any plans or drawings because they are spontaneous reactions of the artist to the natural materials with which he is working. He sparks off new developments and possibilities with elemental forms of nature such as leaves and twigs which undergo rapid changes according to light and weather (Fig. 16). These pieces are not designed to last for any period of time and Goldsworthy preserves them through photographs and colour prints which are then available for exhibition in a gallery (Fig. 17).

A good example of this type of temporary work would be some work he completed for a sculpture symposium held in Haarlemmerhout, a large public park in Haarlem, Holland. The symposium was held in August, 1984 and Goldsworthy did much experimentation with leaves although due to the hot weather the dry leaves proved to be difficult to work with. He made flat patterns on the ground from horsechestnut leaves and he also made some beautiful spires and boxes from the leaves which he held together with thorns (Fig. 18). Goldsworthy does not use glue or rope as he prefers to create natural bonds. However, the pieces of work which he created in Haarlem were under constant threat from

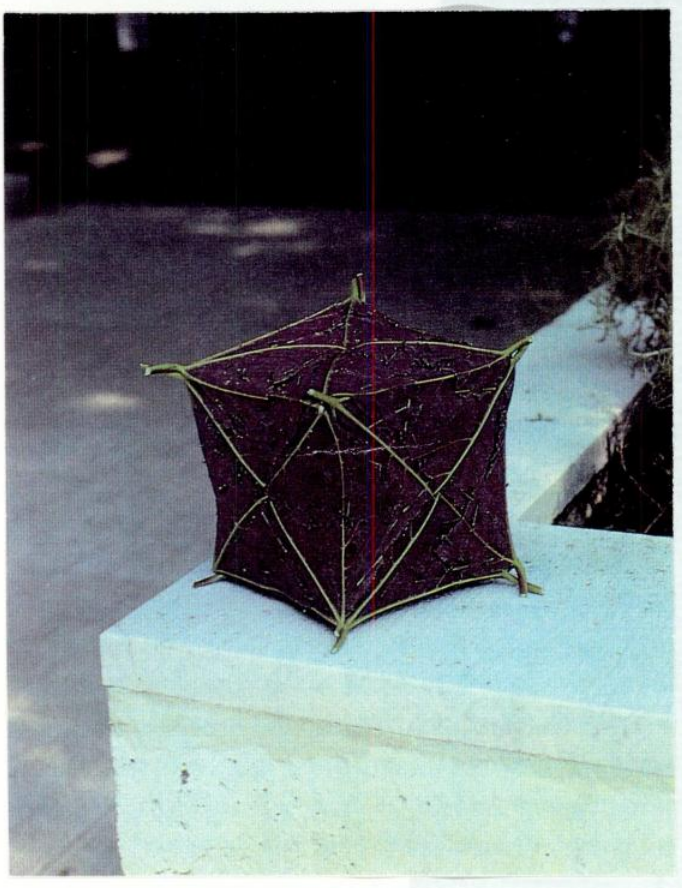


Fig. 17 Andy Goldsworthy, *Sycamore*, Venice Biennale, 1988.

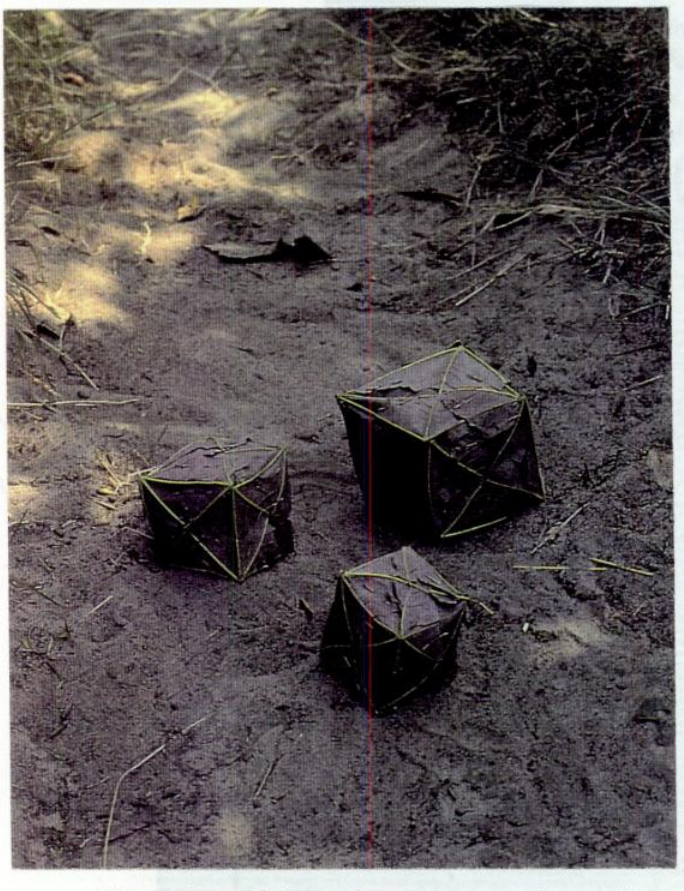


Fig. 18 Andy Goldsworthy, *Sycamore*, Harlemmerhout, Holland, August, 1984.

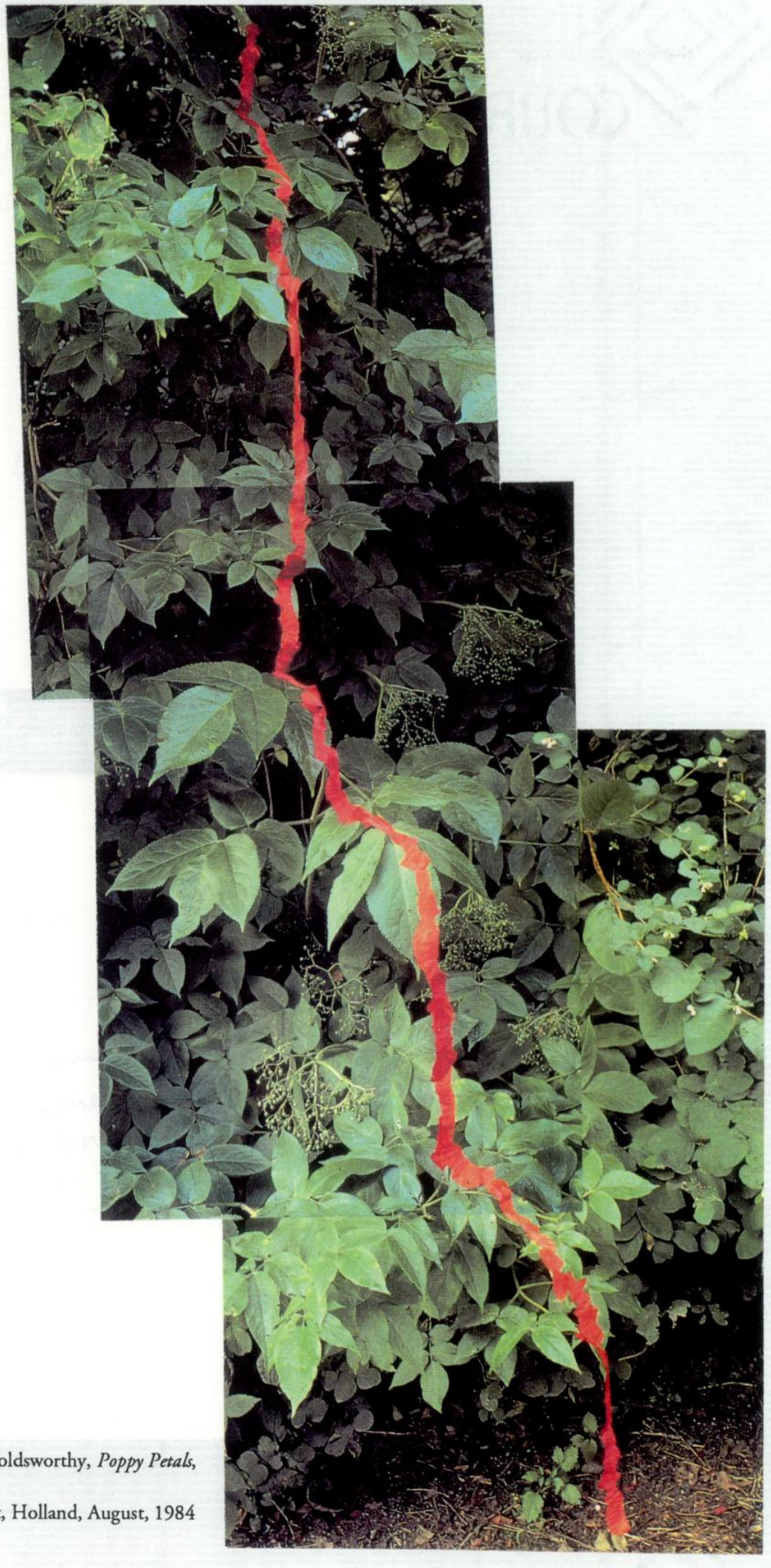


Fig. 19 Andy Goldsworthy, *Poppy Petals*,

Harlemmerhout, Holland, August, 1984

the wind and dogs and sometimes they were destroyed even before they could be photographed. On his discovery of poppy petals in the park Goldsworthy created a very poetic piece in which the bright red colour of the poppy petals contrasted strongly with the many shades of green in the park (Fig. 19). The piece consisted of a seven foot long line of poppy petals which had been stuck together with spit and it hung vertically on the branches of an elderberry. (Vogels, 1991, p.54). Due to its delicacy it did not last long and Hans Vogels points out that;

> For Goldsworthy a work made in the landscape, no matter how modest or fleeting, is a token of man's presence in nature, the equivalent to a signature.
>
> (Vogels, l99l, p.53)

Goldsworthy sees this type of temporary work as the core of his art and much of the larger more permanent work that he has done has been on a commission basis (Causey, 1990, p.125). In general, Goldsworthy's larger, more permanent works have a much greater continuity with the environment and there is often very little difference between the sculpture and the surrounding environment whereas his smaller temporary works usually seem to stand apart from their natural surroundings due in some cases to the contrast of colouring or their unusual arrangement in nature. In the way that some sculptors collaborate with architects to come to an agreeable artistic solution, Goldsworthy can be seen to collaborate with nature in the way that he is "interested in the way wind and rain form pools in the folds of his earthworks", and "the sun and shadow encourage some growth and not another".(Causey, l99l, p.l27). He is concerned with the place in which his sculpture lies because he wants his work to fit in and become part of the place, the place which has a history and character of its own.

An example of a permanent piece of work by Andy Goldsworthy would be the entrance he was commissioned to create at Hooke Wood in Dorset by an organisation called 'Common Ground' for their New Milestones Project (1986). This project;

> is about what places mean to the people who live in them, about how to express that meaning in an imaginative and accessible way through sculpture.

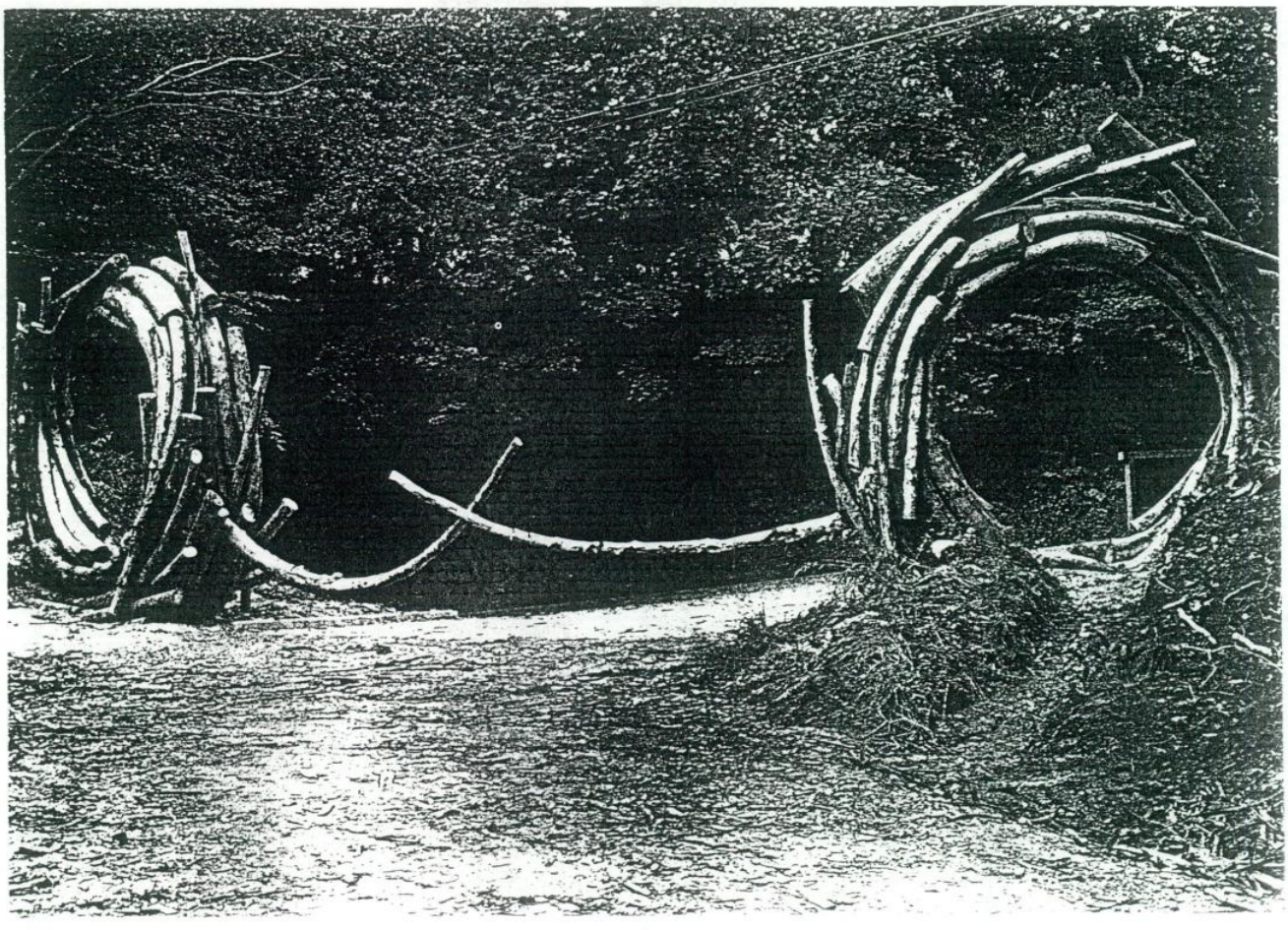


Fig. 20 Andy Goldsworthy, Hooke Wood Entrance, Dorset, 1986.

(Clifford , l990, p.40)

Goldsworthy's original proposal for the project consisted of a single circle with a fifty-foot span, made out of curved and therefore commercially low value timber which would enclose the roadway. This, however, would have been out of scale with the environment and so he opted for two smaller circles on either side of the road (Fig. 20). The timber he used was related to the principles of the School of Woodland Industry in the forest, whose aim was to develop economic uses for timber thinning in the surrounding woods. He created a device with two curved trunks which would prevent cars from entering, when the wood was closed but this device would not deter walkers. Goldsworthy aptly describes his gateway as a type of signpost or boundary marker that celebrates the beginning of the wood (King, l990, p.62). This piece of work, as do many other permanent pieces by Goldsworthy, exists as a form that the spectator can walk around or through which immediately enriches the relationship between the sculptor and the spectator, and a work titled 'Seven Spires' that the artist did for Grizedale sculpture forest also establishes this relationship (Fig. 21).

Goldsworth's environmental sculptures bear a resemblence to the work of certain American artists, one of these being Carl Andre. The similarity lies in the way both artists create work which is usually very accessible in scale and proximity to the viewer. Robert Smithson's work is on a more monumental scale than Goldsworthy's in that Smithson's work is usually viewed best from the air. However, a similarity exists between both artists in the way that Smithson was very involved with the idea of entropy and so also, Goldsworthy's work can be about the downside of things. A work related to this idea would be the steel cones that Goldsworthy created whose function was to act as a symbol of the decayed industrial environment of the Newcastle-Gateshead conurbation.

I find Andy Goldsworthy to be one of the most innovative contemporary environmental sculptors. His work is fresh and so full of energy that it almost seems to be alive. He has a wonderful ability to create art through clever arrangements of natural elements and on my discovery of his work I was immediately encouraged to go outside and experiment

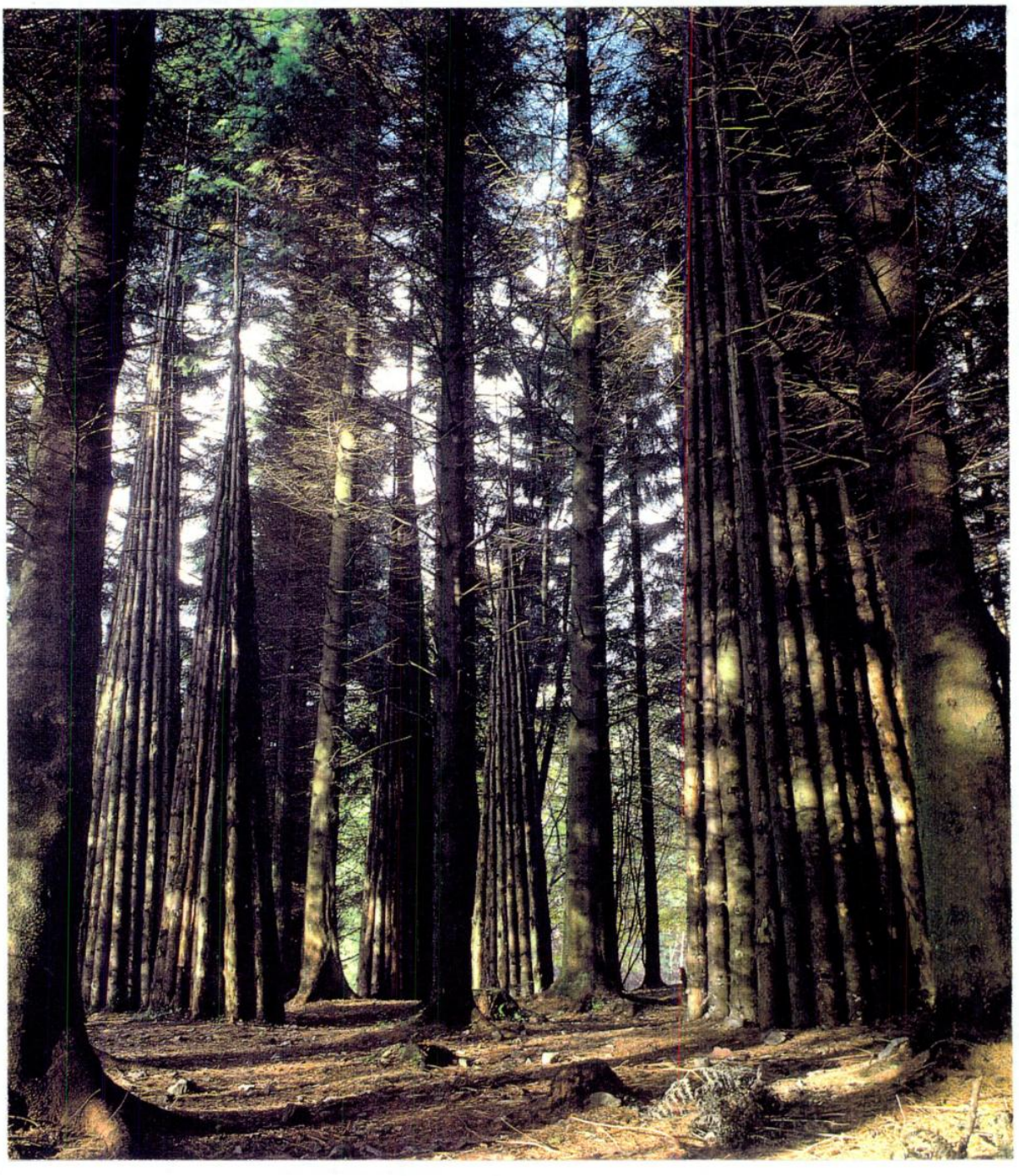


Fig. 21 Andy Goldsworthy, *Seven Spires*, Grizedale Forest, England, 1984.

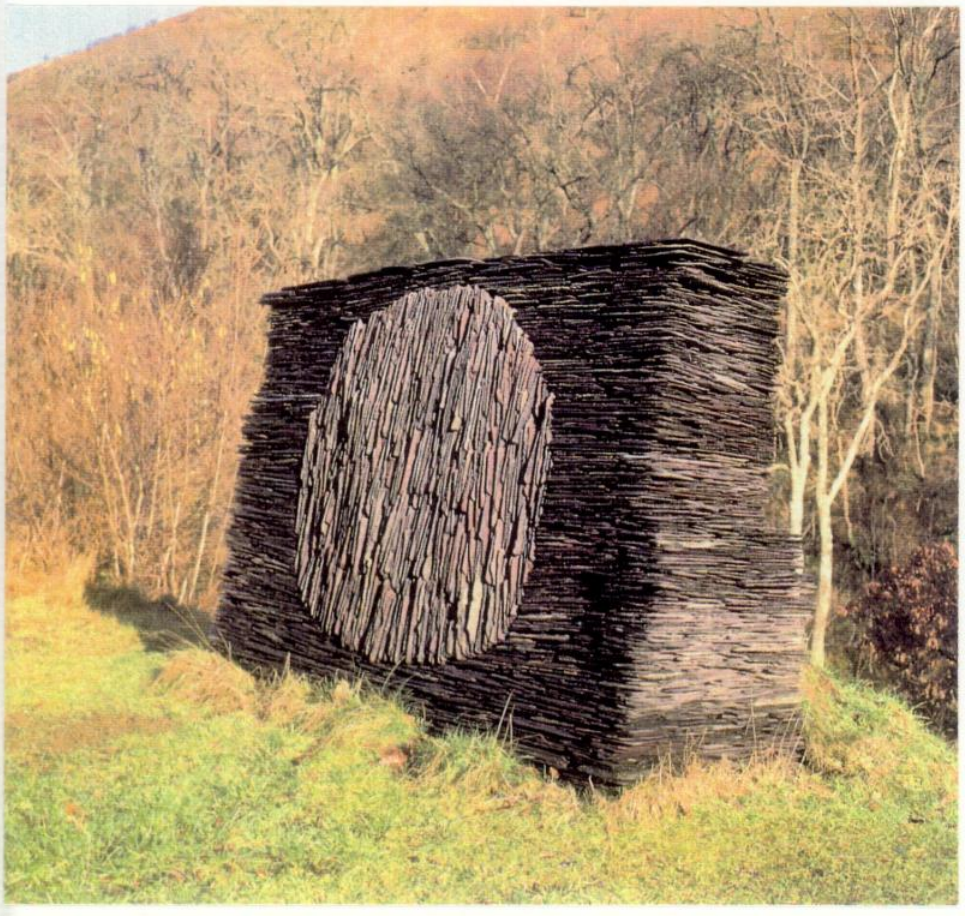


Fig. 22 Andy Goldsworthy, *Slate Stack*, Stone Wood, Penpont, Dumfriesshire, 1988.

with ordinary everyday objects.

A definite similarity also exists between the work of Goldsworthy and the work of James Scanlon. Two of Goldsworthy's pieces which bring Scanlon's work to mind are "Slate Stack" (Fig. 22) and "Touchstone North" (Fig. 88) and these similarities will be evident in my discussion of Scanlon's work in Chapter 3.

Dani Karavan.

As I have mentioned already, Dani Karavan is an environmental sculptor whose work relates very much to James Scanlon's work in Sneem and thus I would like to discuss the work and ideals of this artist.

Dani Karavan is an Israeli artist who has done much to develop a new sensitive sculptural relationship between man and his surroundings ever since the 1960s. Since this time there has been an international interest in creating a new sculptural language in terms of the relationship of sculpture to urban and landscaped spaces Karavan has an acute awareness for forms and structures and about twenty-five years ago he began to create environmental sculpture that is quite difficult to define.

The projects that Karavan usually works on are a result of a public initiative and they are realised with public funds so that the public will use them, (Karavan, 1988, p.24). He usually approaches his subject patiently over a long period of time and at the International Conference on Sculpture held in Ireland in 1988 he said that,

> a lot of importance should be attributed to the strategical planning of the work, especially when I have to work with executors who are chosen by allocation and not according to their professional abilities.
>
> (Karavan, 1988, p.24)

All the work that Dani Karavan does is site-specific and he is interested in creating an environment from a combination of his work and the site. His installations and sculptures react to the situations into which they are put while they simultanously create new relationships with their environment. His pieces cannot work as separate entities because they have been initially created as a sort of component of the environment in which they lie. Bernd Finkeldey says that the sculptural environments which Karavan creates are not self-sufficient aesthetic objects but instead,

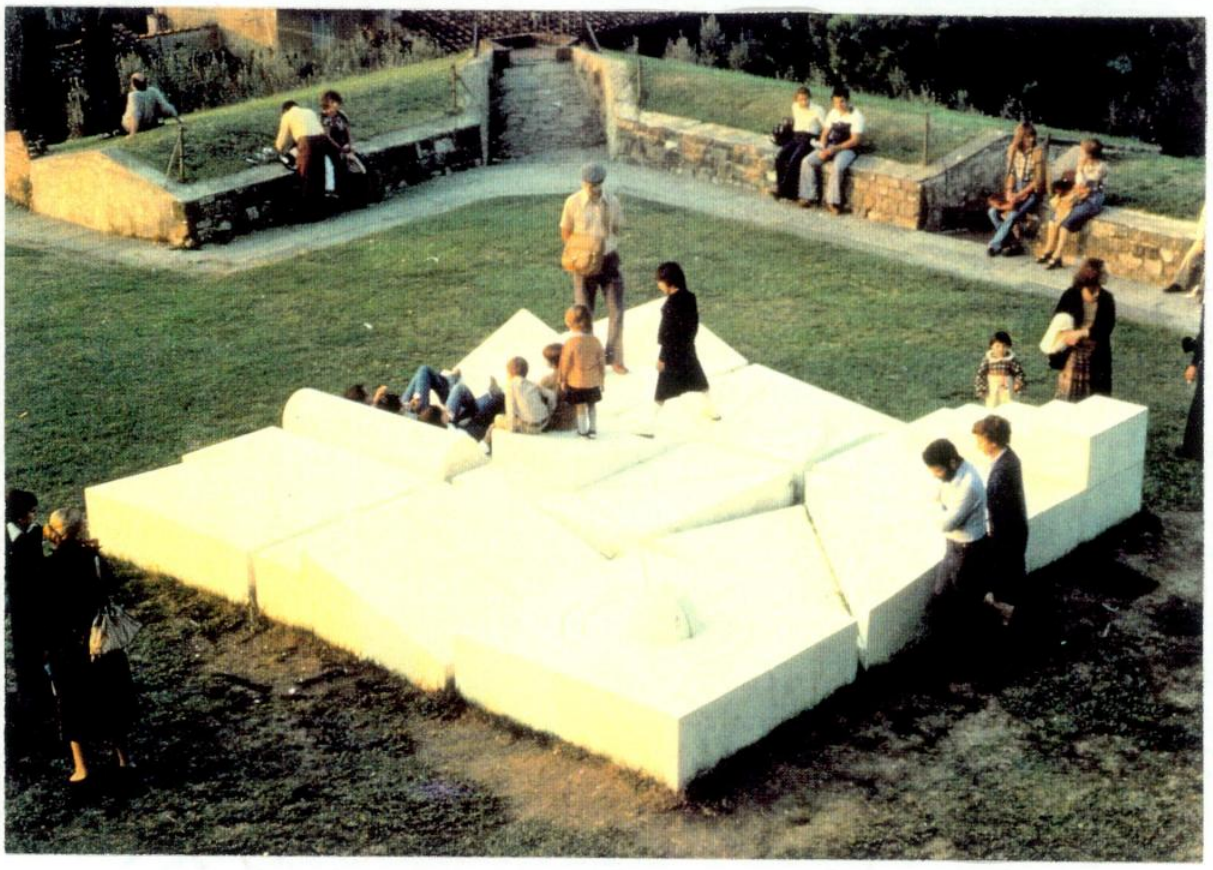


Fig. 23 Dani Karavan, *City of Peace*, Jerusalem, white concrete, 1987.

> they initiate a dialogue amongst various materials and varying special conditions, between the art work and its surroundings, between art and nature, art and every day life, and between the art work and the observer.
>
> (Finkeldey, 1989, p.25)

As I have mentioned already, Karavan spends a long time in the planning stage of his piece, taking every component of the environment into consideration, one of the most important components for him being the history of the locality and its natural and formed surroundings. He believes that without becoming familiar with this important aspect of the locality then he cannot possibly hope to create a successful artistic work, (Krempel, 1989, p.15) . I find it very interesting the way he considers the localities past use before he begins to create a new use for it. It is Karavan's firm belief that a locality can only exist as a real place in people's minds if it serves a purpose for their use (Krempel, 1989,p.16).

Due to his recognition of this need he envisions his work being put to use by man and thus most of his work invites the spectator to participate in some way either by walking around or on it, by sitting on it or by touching it (Fig. 23). In this way, Karavans work immediately encourages a response from its audience.

Karavan does not choose certain materials to the exclusion of others because according to the environment in which he is working his needs change and so also does his budget (Karavan, 1989, p.24). However, white concete is a medium which seems to appear in many of his works.

Karavan succeeds in creating a wonderful variety of environmental sculptures which are consistently indigenous with their surroundings. He works in urban and rural environments, never beginning a project with any preconceived ideas but instead letting the site dictate to him its needs. According to Karavan (1983);

> Every idea should be developed for a very specific site and in such a manner that it becomes an organic part of just this place.
>
> (Gottlieb, 1989, p.79)

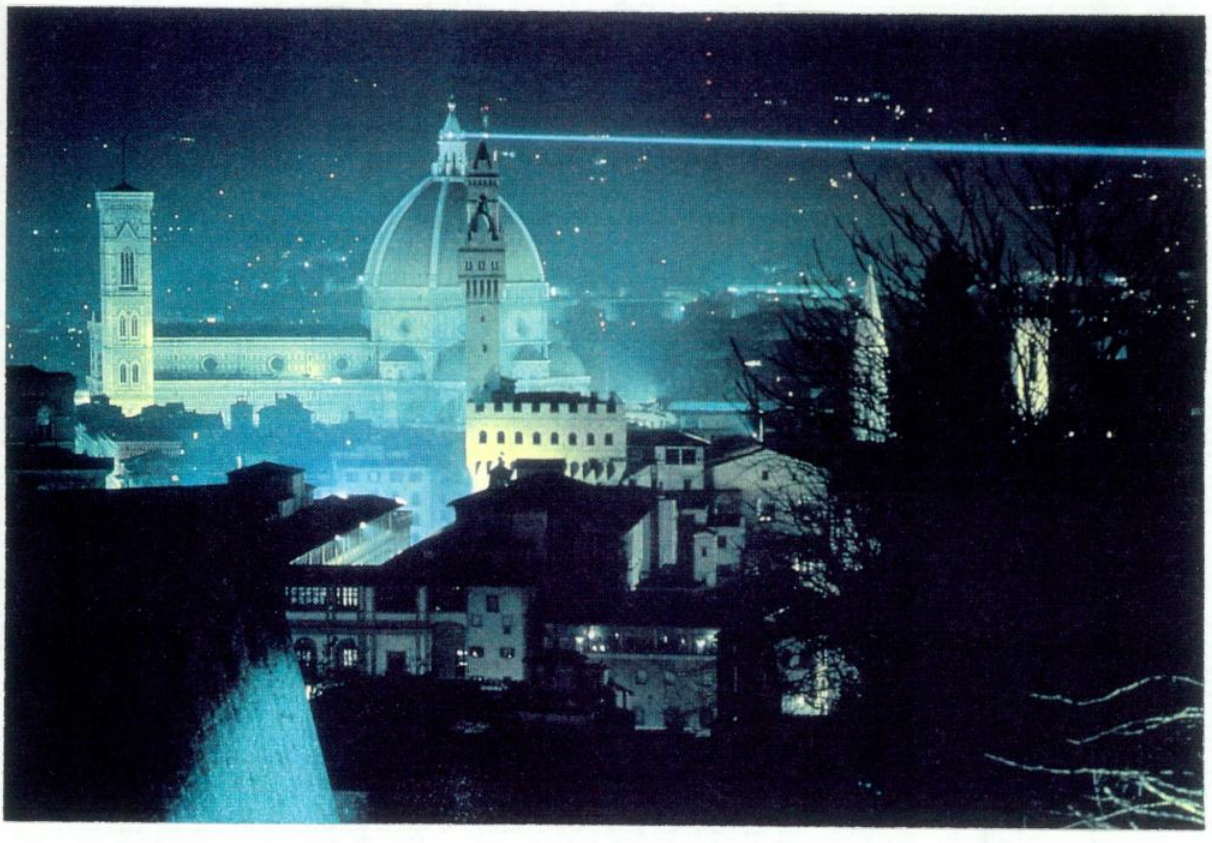


Fig. 24 Dani Karavan, *Environment for peace*, Light line from Forte di Belvedere to dome

The main motif that Karavan seems to use in his work is that of the line, this line existing in many different forms and materials (eg. a line of water, a line of light and lines of materials such as sand stone, wood, bricks, white concrete, rows of plants or earth etc.) An interesting form of line that he sometimes uses is that of a laser beam which he has used at night to bridge long distances between various architectural bodies (Fig. 24). The line is one of the main elements of a piece of work that he did in the sculpture park of the Wilhelm-Lehmbruck-Museum in Duisburg (1989). Karavan chose a concept that involved the borderline between the museum and the museum's park, thus taking both of these areas into consideration. The sculpture does not simply exist as a piece of scupture but it exists as an environment in itself, as a place in the overall space of the park (Fig.25). It consists of white concrete which works beautifully with the browns and greens of the surroundings. Its form consists of basic shapes using the line in different ways. At the base of a small hill there are three steps rising from the earth and these lead up to a solid jetty which is laid out on an axis. This jetty remains at an even level as it transverses the space and it is interrupted by a square on which lie six cubes after which it continues on until it reaches a large man-made pool of water into which it extends slightly and then comes to a halt (Brockhaus, 1989, p.62-63). This jetty creates an immediately attractive path for someone to walk along, explore, and view the surroundings from. The six cubes are a further attraction which invite one to rest and perhaps talk to a companion or simply to absorb the piece of work and the surrounding environment. The materials used in this piece echo those used in the museum's structure in a different colour and the piece seems to connect the court-yard of the museum and the surrounding Kant-Park which had previously existed as two very separate places. I think that in a way it seems to draw the sculptures in the museum courtyard across the pool of water to form a sort of harmony with the park. It is a very exciting piece of work which is attractive and inviting for passers by and I believe that it lives up to the ideals and expectations of the artist which are summed up in this statement :

> I work for people so that I can invite them to enter into a dialogue with the space, with the materials, with their memories and with themselves.
>
> (Leinz, 1989, p.77)

Fig. 25 Dani Karavan, *Dialog*, Duisburg, Germany, 1989.

Fig. 26 Dani Karavan, *Axe-Majeur*, Cergy-Pontoise near Paris 1986.

Karavan is currently, among other things, working on a project titled "Axe Majeur" which is a 3km long urban environment in a new city called Cergy-Pontoise, a sort of satellite city of Paris. The city is built in a horse-shoe form, around the Oise river that flows into the Seine and the city urbanists wanted to create an axis that would form the backbone of the city (Karavan, 1988, p.25). It is the biggest work that Karavan has ever done and from looking at the initial stages of the project it seems that he has successfully integrated his work with it's urban environment (Fig. 26).

As an environmental sculptor the work of Dani Karavan could be classified under the more general headline of Land Art/Earth Art, a category which includes the artists Robert Smithson; Richard Long, Michael Heizer and Andy Goldsworthy, (Gottlieb, 1989, p.78) . His work is quite similar to the work of some of these artists in some respects but I find that the work of Karavan is on a more human scale than the others in that it is designed to be used by ordinary people. His works are dedicated to man and are aimed towards total physical participation. In comparison to the work of all the other artists with whom I am familiar and the artists whom I have discussed, I find the work of Dani Karavan to be most closely related to James Scanlon's sculpture in Sneem. Karavan's ideals and his methods of realizing them seem to be echoed in certain ways in the sculpture in Sneem. It is very exciting to find that such a close link exists between the two artists as interesting comparisons can be made. I think Scanlon would share a similar opinion about his work as Dani Karavan does about his pieces of work;

> They are not made to look at, they are planned to be in, they try to discover the surroundings, to be connected in physical and historical ties to the place, they try to evoke memories and to serve as a stage for the human memory to play on.
>
> (Karavan, 1989, p.26)

Chapter 2

> Irish sculptural history is rising from near neglect to provide the springboard for new endeavours.
>
> (Woodworth, l990, p.1)

I think that this comment on Irish sculpture is a suitable opening for this chapter in which I will discuss the role that sculpture has played in Ireland over the last twenty years. At the moment, there are relatively few areas of the country which do not contain some type of sculpture be it in the form of a monument commemorating a local hero, a piece of public sculpture or a piece of site-specific environmental sculpture. In Paddy Woodworth's opinion, there has been a rapid increase in these areas over the last ten years, so much so that a number of people have expressed a concern that perhaps the country will soon be oversaturated with sculpture which could lead to a lack of appreciation for work (Woodworth, 1990, p.1).

The Arts Council of Ireland has played an important part in the promotion of sculpture as have the Sculptor's Society of Ireland and I will discuss the formation of this Society and its implications for Irish sculpture. I will also discuss the origin and aims of sculpture symposia drawing into this a discussion about some of the symposia which have been held in Ireland and focussing on some of the specific works which have been completed. I think it is important to mention a few contemporary Irish Sculptors whose work reflects the site specific environmental qualities of the sculpture that James Scanlon did in Sneem.

The role that sculpture has played in Ireland over the last twenty years:

Ireland is very fortunate in that it has a wonderful tradition of art going back to pieces like the spiral stone carvings at Newgrange up to the present day where there are very exciting works of art being produced. In the area of sculpture one can still see work which has been made over the last 5,000 years in various towns and rural areas of the country.

After a relatively quiet period in the field of sculpture there came a burst of sculptural activity in Ireland in the mid 1970s from a series of workshops held by the Independent Artist's Sculpture Group. Following this activity the Arts Council of Ireland funded a sculpture symposium in 1978.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter the Arts Council has played quite a large part in the promotion and encouragement of sculpture in Ireland. In 1986, the Minister for the Environment was persuaded by the Arts Council to approve a "percentage scheme for sculpture" which means that a certain percentage of the total cost of a new building or buildings must be put aside for the provision of an "appropriate artistic feature in a suitable location". (Woodworth, 1990, p. 1).

This has been an enormous encouragement for the siting of sculpture in outdoor sites. The Arts Council have also devised a scheme whereby winners of the National Tidy Towns competition are provided with grants for public art.

The Sculptor's Society of Ireland.

The sculpture symposium in 1978 triggered the formation of the Sculptor's Society by a group of people, some of whom had taken part in the symposium. They set it up with the intention of promoting contemporary sculpture in Ireland and creating opportunities for Irish sculptors (McDonough, 1988). One of the various tools the society has used in this promotion has been the holding of Symposia around the country and another idea has

been the organisation of sculpture trails which are becoming increasingly popular among the public. The whole concept of sculpture trails is very exciting in that they may be of a temporary or a permanent nature, in public and private areas which would not usually be used for the display of art such as forest walks, parks and streets. They would consist of sculpture which is site-specific and thus enhances its relationship with the environment.

The whole idea of sculpture symposia originated in Austria when an artist called Karl Prantl realised that he wanted to get out of the studio and work with a group of artists to produce pieces of sculpture in the natural environment using materials from the same environment. This gathering or symposium proved to be very successful and it became very popular all over the world (Goldberg, 1988 p.79). Since the formation of the Sculptor's Society of Ireland several symposia have been held throughout the country, some of these being more successful than others.

Any artist can apply to work on a symposium and the process of selection involves an advertisement in the sculptor's magazine which informs people of an upcoming symposium being held at some location in the country. Some of the places available are usually reserved for international sculptors and Irish participation is usually by open submission, following site visits and publication of a brief. This submission may take the form of one specific idea for the site or in some cases it can consist of a mixture of possible ideas. Thus the work produced in most of the organised symposia is site specific and the nature of the work is often environmental in that the site specific qualities of the work dictate that materials from the environment should be used in the work.

The first of these symposia was held in 1983 in a shipyard in Arklow. The symposium was subsidised by Arklow Engineering, who ensured a plentiful supply of steel, expertise, and up to the minute technology for the fourteen artists who were participating. It presented a wonderful opportunity for the artists to use the computerised steel cutting facilities available, and to create a major series of outdoor steel sculptures, without any limitations on size. It was an educational experience, not only for the sculptors, who learned many new techniques, but also for the shipbuilders in the yard. James Tyrrell from Arklow Engineering made an interesting comment about the work done in the symposium:

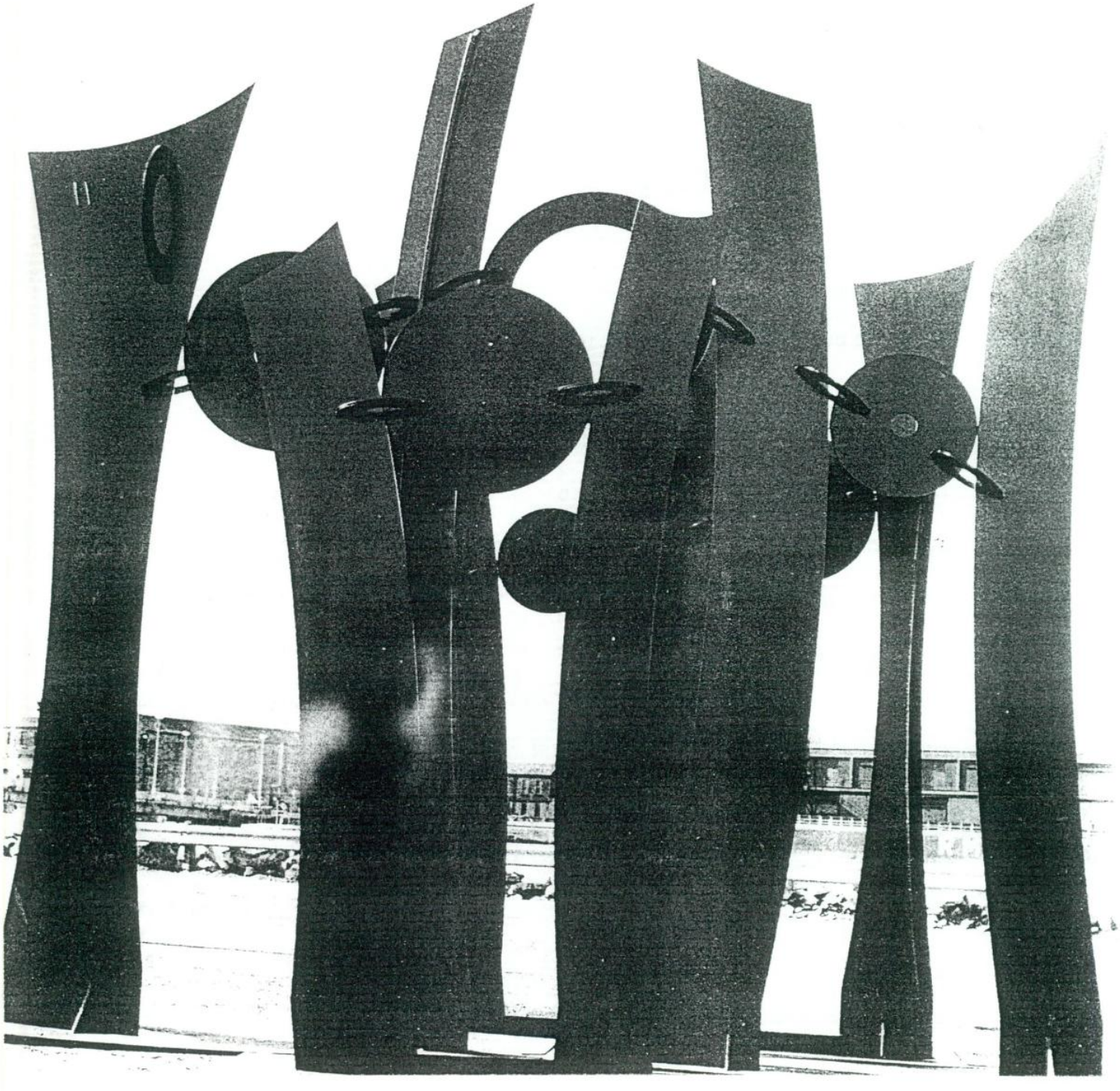


Fig. 27 Michael Bulfin, *Electron Spin*, steel, 1983.

> We were impressed by the individuality and creativity of the artists, who use our particular raw material in so many ways. We are convinced that the opportunity exists for other industrial processes and materials to be exploited by artists to all our mutual benefit.
>
> (Sculptor's Society of Ireland, 1985)

Some very creative work resulted from the symposium, but when the symposium was over, the artists were faced with problems of siting their work which had obviously not been site-specific. Fortunately they were given a large outdoor space, on the East Link Bridge in Dublin, thus making them very accessible to the public (Fig. 27).

The symposia can involve both urban and rural environments and an interesting urban symposium was held in Cork in 1985 as a celebration of Cork's 800th birthday. It was independent of the Sculptor's Society as it was organised by the Cork Sculpture Park Committee but it had the same basic aim as other symposia held by the Society. The work ethic of the sculptors involved seems to be summarised in the following statement by a Japanese sculptor who participated in the symposium:

> Putting sculpture into these situations should be an exciting experiment, creating a dialogue with people passing and observing, becoming an active part of the moving life of the place, integrated into the landscape.
>
> (Katagiri, 1988)

There have been many other symposia which have been very successful in the creation of environmental sculpture which is sensitive to the physical and cultural environment including the Hazelwood Symposium, Sligo (1985), Letterfrack Symposium (1986), and the Bogland Symposium, Wicklow (1990). In the Bogland Symposium, Chris Drury, an artist to whom I have referred in my introduction, made a sort of stone shelter called "Cloud Chamber", the characteristics of which are very similar to James Scanlon's work in Sneem. David Kinnane, a Dublin artist who was involved in this symposium also, interestingly observed that he started thinking in a new way because the usual resources for his work were not available. (Stuart, 1990).

Fig. 28 Paul Verhulst, *Fisherman's Territory*, for Castlewellen Forest Park Sculpture Symposium, Co. Down, 1992.

In 1992, there was much activity in the sculpture symposium movement in Ireland in that, four successful symposia were held around the country, in the following places: Annaghmakerrig, County Monaghan; Ahenny Slate Quarry, County Kilkenny; Kingscourt Brick Factory, County Cavan and Castlewellen Forest Park, County Down. I would like to briefly discuss two of these symposia, namely, Castlewellen and Ahenny.

Castlewellen Forest Park Symposium.

A symposium was held quite recently in Castlewellen Forest Park in County Down. The three week symposium resulted in Northern Ireland's first sculpture trail set along a beautiful three-mile walk around the lake of the forest park. Nine sculptors were involved in the three week project, five of them were Irish, two Greek and two Dutch. It was jointly promoted by the Sculptor's Society of Ireland and the Forestry Service of the Department of Agriculture. All the work is site-specific and thus can be considered as environmental sculpture particularly in the way that all the materials used are sympathetic to the natural materials of the park (Figs. 30-32).

The first piece I would like to discuss is a joint effort from the two Dutch sculptors, Paul Verhulst and Gerrie Goossen, called "Fisherman's Territory". Close to the lake Verhulst created a type of circular temple consisting of a waist-high stone wall acting as a base from which protrude a number of strong wooden trunks which support a roof made from a tightly arranged mass of dried branches (Fig. 28). This piece acts as a type of shelter which one can walk around and use as a vantage point to view the beautiful surroundings. It invites the spectator to explore its interior as does the other piece by Goossen which is like a nest in the lake and it can be entered by stepping stones in the water (Fig. 29). I find this piece even more inviting for the spectator as one must take a path through the lake via the stepping stones. I like the way in which the artists worked together in a type of collaboration to come up with two pieces of work which make up one exciting sculpture. Both pieces echo the beautiful beech grove in which they lie while also providing the spectator with a wonderful view of the lake, the surrounding vegetation and the Mourne mountains

Fig. 29 Gerrie Goosen, *Fisherman's Territory*, for Castlewellen Forest Park Sculpture Symposium, Co. Down, 1992.

Fig. 30 Aaron Fowler, *Arboreal Throne*, for Castlewellen Forest Park Sculpture Symposium, Co. Down, 1992.

Fig. 31 Graeme Hall, *Sacred Grove*, for Castlewellen Forest Park Sculpture Symposium,Co. Down, 1992.

Fig. 32

Fig. 33 Kathy Herbert, *Piece for a Maple Tree*, for Castlewellen Forest Park Sculpture Symposium, Co. Down, 1992.

Fig. 34 Kathy Herbert, *Piece for a Maple Tree* (close-up).

lying in the background.

I would also like to mention a piece by Kathy Herbert entitled 'Piece for a Maple Tree' (Figs. 33 & 34). It consists of six stones laid in a row in front of a maple tree. The first four and the sixth stones each contain a carving of a maple leaf while the fifth stone differs in shape from the other stones, in that it is long and jagged and it contains a carving of an outspread hand. This represents mans interference with nature. It is a very subtle, understated piece of work but, having said this, I find it the most potent work on the sculpture trail. I like the way that it is not immediately obvious because of its size and that one can just come upon it and it thus becomes a sort of discovery. I was very impressed on my visit to Castlewellen with the amount of powerful environmental sculpture present on the trail.

The Ahenny Slate Quarry Sculpture Symposium, County Kilkenny.

The work created by the seven sculptors involved in this symposium was totally site-specific and some amazing work was created using the natural slate of the Quarry (Figs. 35-38). I think that this symposium is one of the more successful ones held in Ireland last year and the results the artists produced after three weeks are wonderful examples of environmental sculpture. Local people became very involved, right from the beginning, in that they were involved in the planning of the symposium itself. I interviewed Eavaun Carmody, one of the artists involved in the symposium, a sculptor who graduated from Dun Laoghaire College of Art and Design in 1992. I found this interview very helpful in my general understanding of what it is like to participate in a symposium. The symposium provided Carmody with a great opportunity to do some sculptural work, after having left college, and to work with more experienced sculptors, who have worked on several other symposia. It was her first time to work outdoors and she considers the experience to have been a very valuable one and it would encourage her to work much more in this area. Carmody did not have a preconceived idea of what she wanted to do at Ahenny, and her work thus evolved from the site she chose in the quarry. Her work is almost hidden in a

Fig. 35 Overview of Ahenny Slate Quarry, Co. Kilkenny.

Fig. 36 Segment of the *Miner's Egg*, by Alan Counihan, Ahenny Slate Quarry Symposium, Co. Kilkenny, 1992

Fig. 37 Michael Bulfin, *Saurian Echoes*, Ahenny Slate Quarry Symposium, Co. Kilkenny, 1992.

Fig. 38 Colm O'Culain, *Scéal an Báid*, Ahenny Slate Quarry Symposium, Co. Kilkenny, 1992

Fig. 39 Eavaun Carmody, *Stone River*, lichened slate, Ahenny Slate Quarry Symposium, Co. Kilkenny, 1992.

secluded valley of the quarry, so that it remains as a sort of discovery for the spectator. She built her piece in a winding contour, down the side of a large mound of unused stone, the contour resembling the mark that a glacier would have left. This contour was accentuated in her work by the way that she packed hundreds of stones tightly together, each in a vertical position (Fig. 39). She found it very exciting working outdoors with natural materials, and she feels that the encouragement she got from the local people was very important:

> If I hadn't had the enthusiasm of the locals with me, I don't think I could have worked so well.
>
> (Carmody, Interview, 1993)

The people from the locality were very proud of the quarry, as many of them were descendents of people who used to work there when it was active, and were therefore very interested in the sculptural work taking place there.

The results of the symposium were very successful, but one disappointing factor about the work, which has been commented on by many people, is that most of the pieces are concentrated around the road which runs through the quarry. This immediately removes the element of discovery, which has been a part of most other sculpture symposia, but it must be said that the quality of the work produced in slate is fantastic. In my interview with Carmody she very interestingly described the environmental sulpture she produced during the symosium, as being very selfless in that she wasn't doing it for herself, for a museum, for her portfolio, but instead she was doing it as a sort of present for the locality, "I was doing it for the environment and for the people who live there" (Carmody, Interview, 1993). I think this can be said of most environmental sculpture which is produced today.

Symposia provide a great opportunity for sculptors to work in a type of community effort with other sculptors which can be quite healthy in that one is not isolated as in a studio but one is working with other people and getting feedback not only from artists but also from the public. As can be seen from my interview with Eavaun Carmody it is obvious that the symposia provide a great opportunity for students leaving college to become

Fig. 40 Jane McCormick, *From the Tomb of the Womb to the Womb of the Tomb*, Fernhill, Dublin, (now the property of the A.I.B. collection, Bank Centre, Dublin).

involved in the Irish sculpture scene. Seamus Dunbar, a sculptor who co-ordinated and participated in the Annamakerrig Symposium last year has a very positive response to the work produced;

> By making sympathetic but noticeable juxtapositions in nature, the environmental art was causing people to reassess the familiar, and look at their surroundings with a fresh eye.
>
> (Dunbar, l992, p.7)

However, even though I am very interested in the whole idea of sculpture symposia I think that the sculptors are sometimes working in a bit of a sheltered environment in that they are provided with everything they need, and they as individuals do not have to do a lot of the necessary public consultation which is often a major part of commissioned outdoor sculpture.

Fernhill.

Moving on from the sculpture symposia, there exists in Dublin a type of sculpture garden at Fernhill in Sandyford. Every year for the past nine years, there has been a "Sculpture in Context" exhibition at Fernhill Gardens during the Summer months (Fig.40). It was initially set up by a group of independent sculptors, for sculptors. I interviewed two sculptors from the organising committee for this years exhibition, Pauline O'Connell and Linda Brunker, who informed me of their plans for this years exhibition. They have adopted a theme for 1993 entitled 'Going with the Grain', and they will be welcoming proposals for sculptures with this theme in mind. Naturally enough it will still be sculpture in context as such, but they feel that by introducing a definite theme, this will breathe new life into the exhibition at Fernhill. Over the last couple of years, the exhibition was becoming a bit stale, as some sculptors were beginning to submit old work which had perhaps been lying around their studio, and was thus defeating the whole purpose of hav-

ing a 'Sculpture in Context' exhibition. Over the years there have been many very successful pieces of environmental sculpture on exhibit, successful in that they were created specifically for Fernhill. Pauline O'Connell says that:

> It is testiment in itself that it has survived and is in it's ninth year. It proves the need for sculptors to house their work in the environment outside of the gallery context.
>
> (O'Connell, Interview, 1993)

This years exhibition differs from previous years also by the fact that it is going to be sponsored by an international company, the Body Shop. The Body Shop is interested in the 'Sculpture in Context' theme of Fernhill and the environmental sculpture which results from such a theme. They are very interested in the implications of this type of sculpture and they intend to advertise the exhibition in the windows of their major stores. They will also be looking after the design of the brochures and application forms. Their enthusiasm for the project has been very encouraging for the organising committee, who are very excited about the forthcoming exhibition.

While looking forward to this summer's display of sculpture at Fernhill, I still remain a little sceptical of this type of exhibition. It is and always will be, I feel, an exhibition of work, an exhibition whose components can be moved to another venue and in some cases might be sold. For me, most of the work which I have seen on exhibit does not really represent environmental sculpture in its true meaning, due to its impermanence on a particular site, and the possibility of it being sold and moved elsewhere. Having said this, I am still very enthusiastic and hopeful that this years work will be more site-specific.

There are many Irish artists who are working in the area of environmental sculpture, some more than others of course and I will discuss the work of some of these sculptors. There are many lrish sculptors who have done once off environmental sculptures but who do not generally work in this area. James Scanlon does not generally work as an environmental sculptor, having only really completed two pieces of this type of sculpture, that in Sneem and Glenstal Abbey. In this discussion I will take in an artist who has done much

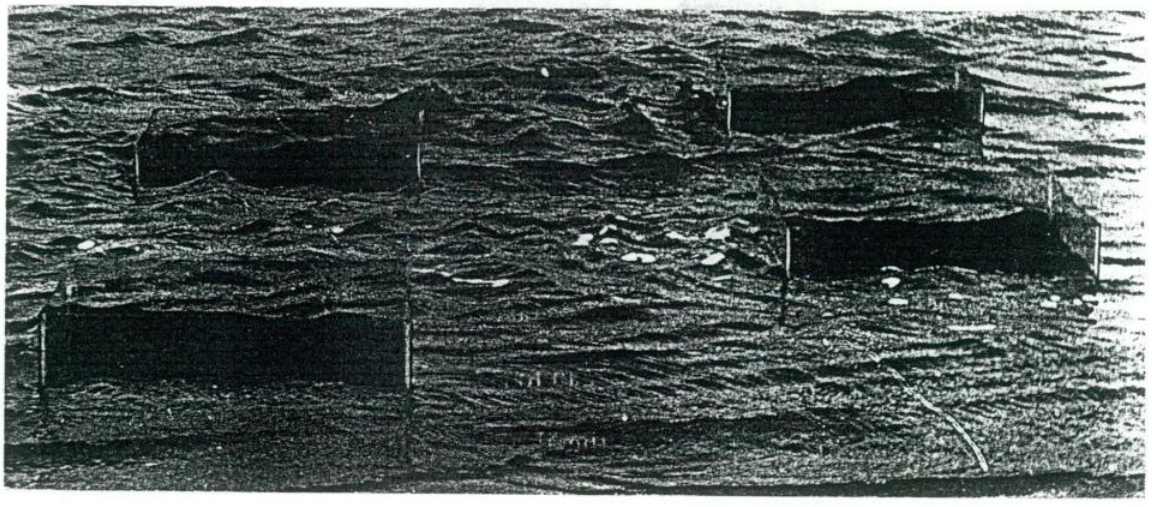


Fig. 41 Brian King, *Sea Holes,* glass, Sligo, 1976.

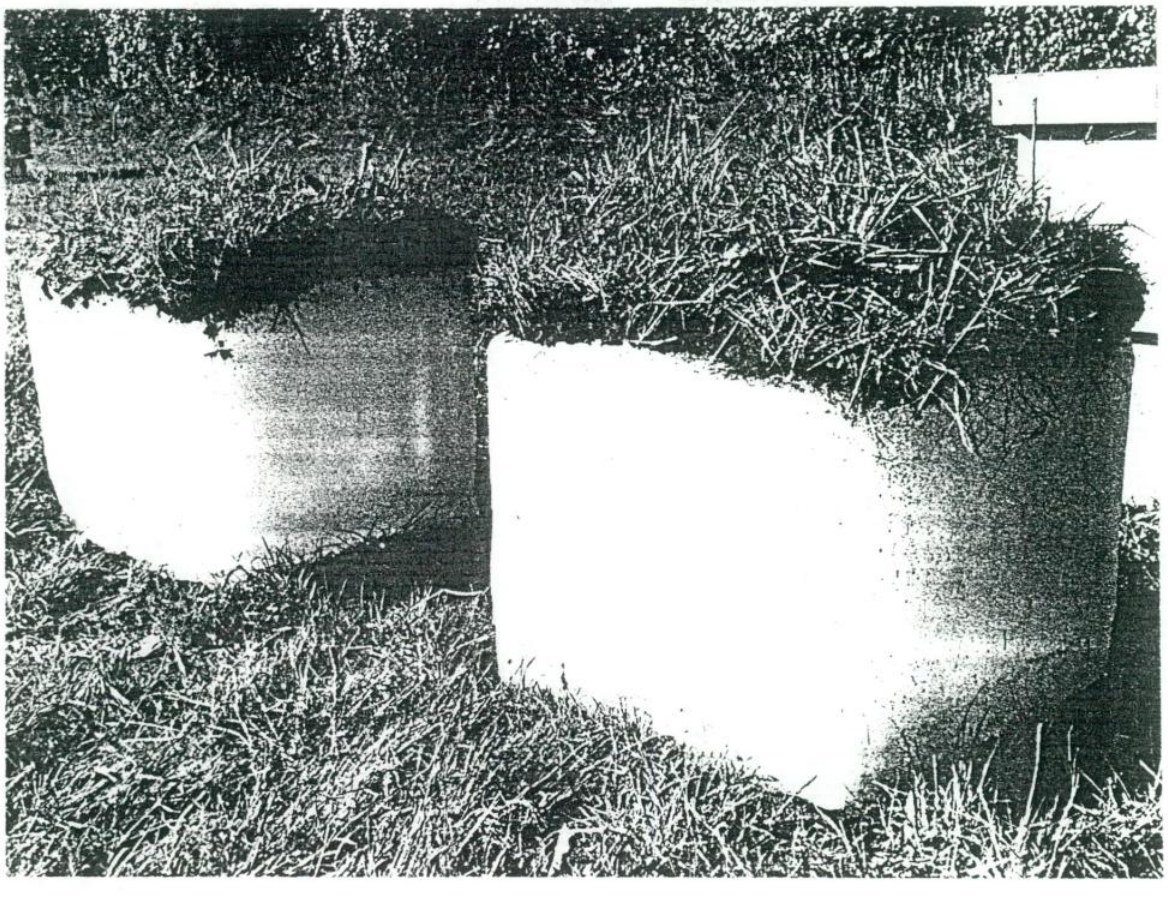


Fig. 42 Brian King, *Unaltered Landscape*, 1979.

work in the area of environmental sculpture and a few artists who have occasionally worked in this area.

An Irish artist who has worked more than others in the environmental sculpture area is Brian King. He spent much time in the 1970s doing various projects in this area. After 1973 King was involved with several commissions for major public sculpture but it was not until 1976 that he really began to explore environmental sculpture. In the Summer of 1976 he brought students from the National College of Art and Design to Cumeen Strand in County Sligo and using materials from the area they carried out environmental. works in that area. King himself created two works while he was there; 'Sea Holes' (Fig. 41) and 'Burning Spiral'. In 'Sea Holes' he planted four hollow glass pillars on the strand, so that when the level of the incoming tide rose, one was under the illusion that there were four holes in the sea. I particularly like this piece as it provokes one to look twice at such an imaginative and playful interruption with nature. When the tide receded, four pillars of sea water were left standing in the sand which was another thought-provoking set-up.

King created another extremely interesting piece of environmental sculpture, entitled "Unaltered Landscape" (Fig. 42), for the Oasis exhibition of 1979 in Dublin, (a show which encouraged environmental site sculpture). It was a kind of follow-up to 'Sea Holes' in that King froze the water from the sea pillars and cutting 9ft square, 3ft high segments from the pillars, he took them inland. He cut 2ft square sods from the grass, placed his frozen segments of ice on these locations and then remounted the sods on the top surface of the ice. As the ice slowly melted, the sods were returned to their original place on the earth and the piece thus existed as a type of "metaphor of burial, of returning dust to dust" (Walker, 1979, p.3).

King's work is strongly influenced by Ireland's ancient past, particularly by the country's megalithic tombs and ancient ritual sites. This interest can particularly be seen in the piece I have discussed. As in "Sea Holes" I also find the idea behind "Unaltered Landscape" very clever and it represents a very interesting dimension of environmental sculpture. A major environmental work which King was involved in was a commission to create a sculpture-park at a seven acre site in Cloon, Co. Wicklow in l980. The environ-

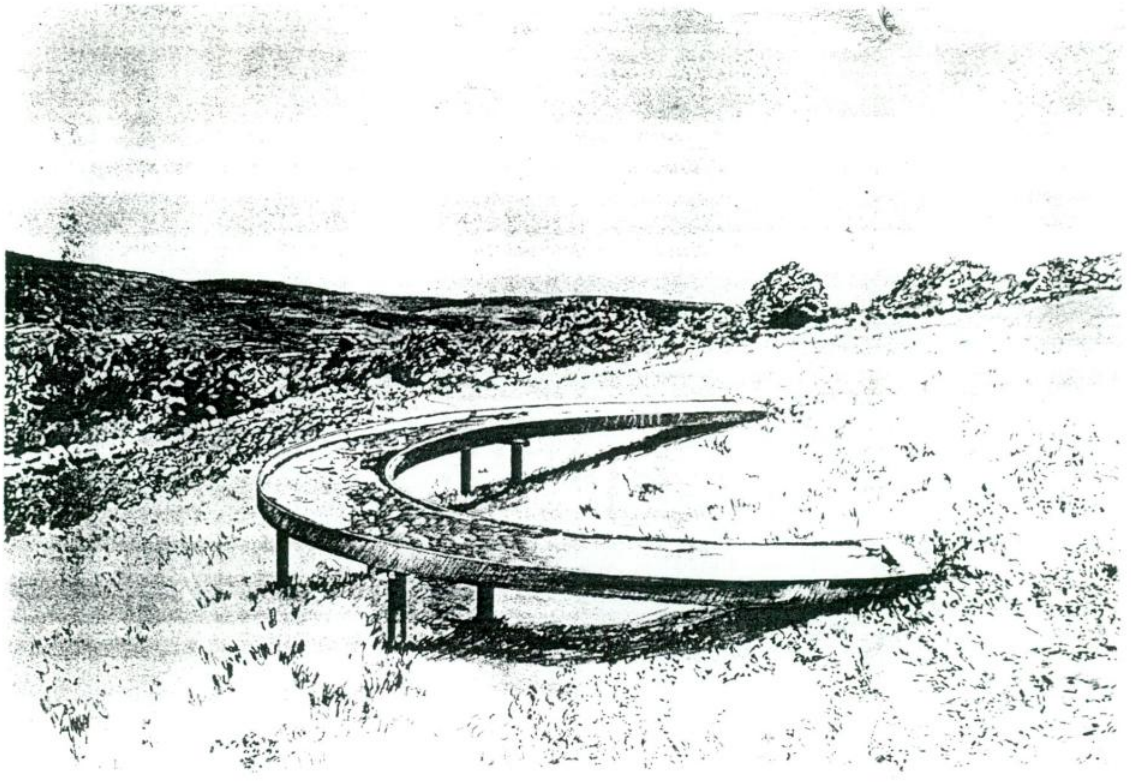


Fig. 43 Brian King, *Ghost Train*, Proposal for Cloon Project, Cloon, 1979.

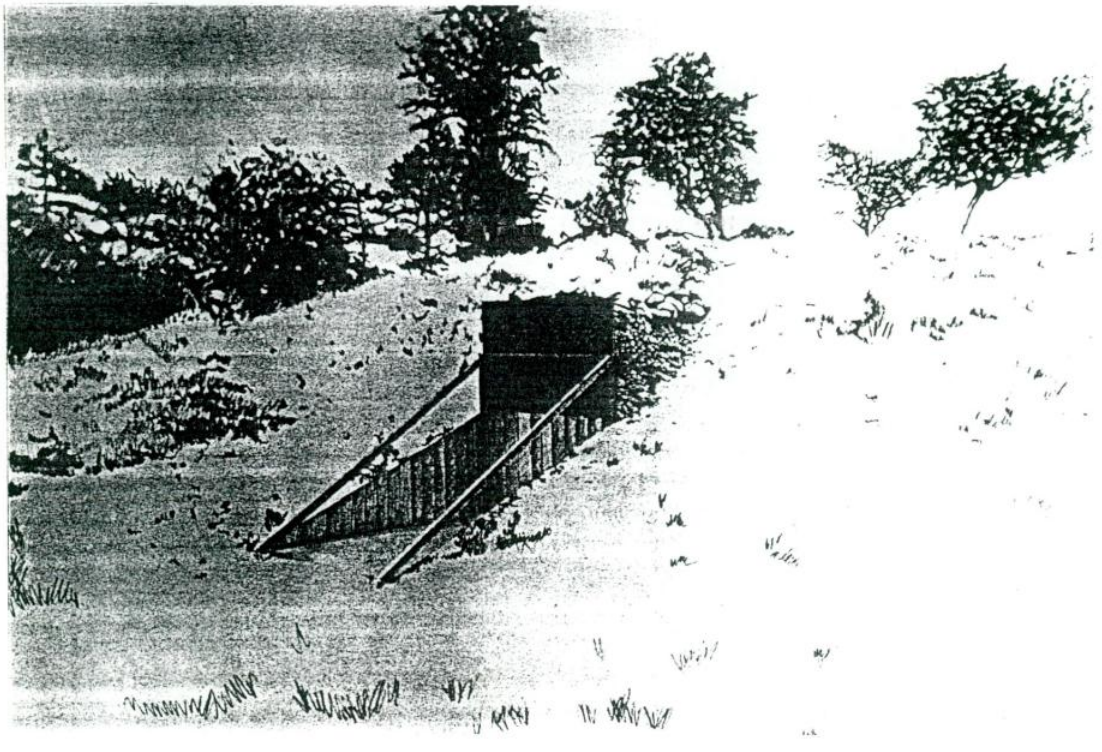


Fig. 44 Brian King, *Levelled Hill*, Proposal for Cloon Project, Cloon, 1979.

mental sculptures which King proposed for Cloon were a direct response to the surroundings and its materials but unfortunately the project was never completed (Figs. 43 & 44). It can be seen from King's proposals for Cloon that some major influences in his work were well known American land artists, such as Robert Smithson, Walter de Maria and Michael Heizer. Other influences include Richard Long and Christo.

After these projects King gradually moved back to working indoors, a similar move to many of the American Land artists. One of the reasons for this move is the lack of finance for outdoor work. In an interview with Brian King, I asked him his opinion of the role that environmental sculpture has played in Ireland over the last twenty years. His response to this question was that this type of sculpture, which encompasses Land art, has never really taken off in Ireland, the main reason being that there has been no money to fund major pieces of outdoor work.

However, I believe that over the last couple of years in Ireland, quite a few artists have become involved in environmental sculpture although maybe not on quite as grand a scale as say King's proposals for Cloon, but still very significant in their own right. Alannah O'Kelly is an Irish sculptor who became involved in environmental sculpture about the same time as Brian King. I would like to discuss briefly her work of this time along with a few other Irish artists, who have produced some recent environmental sculpture, namely: David Kinnane, Rachel Joynt, Carolyn Mulholland and Michael Bulfin.

Alannah O'Kelly created some interesting structures at the Oasis Group Show of 1977, these structures consisting of mounds made from woven natural materials, such as sally rods, flax, wood and stones. She believed that:

> These materials that I bring together, take their energy from the earth and that they dictate how the sculpture is, its possibilities and its limits.
>
> (Arts Council, 1980)

O'Kelly is considered to have been one of the first Irish artists to have moved away from the gallery and to have realised the potentials of working in an outdoor environment and being inspired by its landscape and it's people , (Rolfe, 1981). Opening an exhibition by

Fig. 45 David Kinnane, *The Fungus* or *Mycotos Dublinensis*, as seen in its environment at Temple Bar, Dublin, 1991.

O'Kelly titled 'Barriers' in 1981, the well known artist Nigel Rolfe said:

> Alannah's work is at the forefront of this movement away from gallery artifacts to objects in and out of the land.
>
> (Rolfe, 1981)

David Kinane is a Dublin born and based artist. His work first came to my attention during the 1991 Sculpture trail in Dublin. For this event he created a piece entitled "The Fungus" or "Mycotos Dublinensis" which consisted of a huge broken globe made out of waste drink cans (Figs.45 & 46). It has been erected on a height amidst some scaffolding on a derelict site in Temple Bar, and it represents a fungus growing in a decayed part of the city. Kinnane has said that "the fungus, consisting of over 2,000 recycled aluminium cans, takes shape from the very waste matter of our over-consumptive culture" (Project Arts Centre, 1992). I think it is an absolutely wonderful piece of work which is totally site-specific and whose materials consist of common objects found on pavements and streets all over the city. The idea of a huge fungus of used cans growing in the corner of this derelict space is quite frightening in a way because it just highlights the decay that is slowly enveloping the city. The concept and execution of this piece is excellent and after seeing this piece of environmental sculpture in 1991, I was encouraged to investigate other work that David Kinnane has done.

It was due to Kinnane's participation in the Bogland Symposium that he developed a fascination with natural and urban environments and the threats which they constantly undergo. This fascination thus became a major theme of Kinnane's first solo exhibition in May 1992 at the Project Arts Centre in Dublin. The exhibition proved that Kinnane is capable of producing powerful visual statements, through the medium of his work. He has also participated in the 1989 'Sculpture in Context' exhibition at Fernhill and his piece consisted of a sort of 'wooden fungus'. I think David Kinnane is one of a few contemporary artists who seems to be totally visually aware of what is happening around him and who is able to translate his imaginative ideas into an amazing type of environmental sculpture.

Fig. 46 David Kinnane, *The Fungus*, Temple Bar, Dublin, 1991.

Fig. 47 Rachel Joynt, *Oileán na ndaoine,* bronze, copper and aluminium, Dublin,, 1988.

Fig. 48 Rachel Joynt, *Oileán na ndaoine,* (close-up).

Rachel Joynt, is another Irish artist who has recently completed a few pieces of work around Dublin, which come under the heading of environmental sculpture. She is probably best known for the work she did in 1988 on a traffic island between Westmoreland and D'olier Streets, which consists of a series of bird, dog, foot and hand prints, all heading in different directions on the paving stones of the island (Figs. 47-49). The work is titled "Oilean na ndaoine" and the prints are executed in bronze, copper and aluminium. They lie below the surface of the paving, which is quite unusual and most definitely a positive point as they can only be discovered by walking across them. I think that it is a wonderful interpretation of the business of a city centre pavement, in the way that the artist has not interfered with this activity, but has complemented it by adding such a subtle piece of environmental sculpture to bring a touch of gaiety to the place.

Joynt's most recent and in my opinion most successful work was completed in March 1992 and it consists of a lamp-post erected at the end of Moore Street. She was commissioned by Dublin Corporation to do a piece for this site, and keeping the site's original function in mind, she came up with a lamp-post with a difference entitled 'Solas na Glasraí'. The columns shape reflects the purple fruit packaging used in Moore Street market and other traces of the market can be found in the casts of fish hanging from the post which is in turn decorated with fruit casts (Fig. 50 & 51). Some cast fruit and banana skins lie on the circular platform underneath the post, this platform also functioning as a seat for passers-by. In my opinion it is a very well thought out piece and is very much in context with its surroundings. It provides a focal point for this area, which echoes the everyday activities of Moore Street. I think this piece, which has been cast in copper is a faboulous example of environmental sculpture, in an urban environment, in this case, the city centre of Dublin. Before she commenced the piece, Joynt showed her design to many of the traders on Moore Street and Parnell Street and she got a very positive response from them, "very good, a symbol for the marketplace" (Trader). This was very encouraging for the artist and it is obvious from the work that there was some rapport between the artist and the community. It is a good example I think, of a successful collaboration between both of these parties, to produce a beautiful piece of site-specific sculpture, which adds a touch of

Fig. 49 Rachel Joynt, *Oileán na ndaoine*, (close-up).

Fig.50 Rachel Joynt, *Solas na Glasraí*, copper, Moore St, Dublin,

1992.

Fig. 51 Rachel Joynt, *Solas na Glasraí*, (close-up).

Fig. 52 Carolyn Mullholland, *Chair Tree*, bronze, Georges St, Dublin, 1991.

Fig. 53 Michael Bulfin, *A walk among stone*, stone and concrete, Ballymun, Dublin.

life and humour to this often dreary place.

There are two other environmental sculptures produced by Irish artists for the Dublin Millenium Sculpture Symposium in 1991(sponsored by A.I.B. plc., Irish Cement Ltd,and Roadstone), which I would also like to mention. The first of these is the "Chair tree" by Carolyn Mullholland, a seven foot high bronze sculpture, where a chair turns into a tree, thus shading the sitters with a canopy of leaves (Fig. 52). It is a functional piece of environmental sculpture, which is ideally located in a small green area at the corner of South Great Georges Street and Dame Street. Michael Bulfin also did an interesting site-specific piece in Ballymun titled, "a walk among stone" which consists of a long pathway between alternating stone and concrete elements (Fig. 53). I think it speaks very strongly about the daunting elements of the well known high rise flats.

As I have mentioned already, symposia often exist in a type of sheltered environment which provides a contrast to the difficulties which often crop up in commissioned outdoor work. It is the ambition of many sculptors working in a public domain to create environmental sculpture, but the problem is that sometimes an artist's idea of what an environmental sculpture is differs from what the public perceives it to be. There have been occasional controversies over the last few years about various pieces of sculpture which have been placed in public areas around the country, the biggest controversy surrounding a sculpture by Eilis O'Connell in Kinsale (Fig. 54). It was commissioned by the Arts Council to celebrate the town's triumph in the Tidy Towns Competition. The structure was made from corten steel and many locals protested against it on the grounds that it was a rusty eyesore on the pier, as a result of weathering and also that it presented dangers to children playing in the area. The 179 foot long abstract sculpture is supposed to depict the waves of the sea and as the corten steel used in its construction weathers, the brownish tinge on its surface becomes blue. It is an environmental sculpture which;

> satisfies the sense of touch, sight and (with it's fountain bubbling) hearing; it expands one's idea of what public art can do and makes art a part of local environment. (Dunne, 1989, see footnote.)

A comment by Aidan Dunne quoted in a letter by Aidan Higgins to The Cork Examiner and published on April 11, 1989.

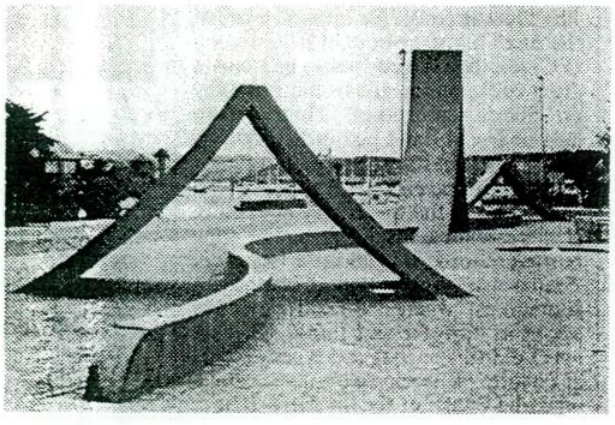


Fig. 54 Eilís O'Connell, monumental sculpture, corten steel, Kinsale, Co. Cork, 1988.

However not many people saw it as a positive asset to the environment and many efforts were made to demolish it. It is still standing but it just highlights the difficulties that can be encountered in such public work.

Having briefly explored the role that environmental sculpture has played in Ireland, over the last twenty years, it can be seen that there was a burst of activity in the mid '70s as Brian King and Alannah O'Kelly became involved in this type of work. However, by the early 80's, this activity came to a halt and the only environmental sculpture that was being produced during this decade was the site-specific work of the sculpture symposia being held around the country. As I have mentioned already, I don't think that the work produced during the symposia can really represent environmental sculpture in its truest form, as the artists are working, in many cases, in such a sheltered environment. I think that there have been some exceptions, particularly in the case of the Slate Quarry symposium where the local community were very much involved from the planning stages, and right throughout the project. I also believe that the Dublin Millenium Sculpture Symposium in 1991, produced some very successful pieces of environmental sculpture where the artists were very conscious of the context and meaning of their work. Over the last five years or so a few artists have been getting involved in the area of environmental sculpture by creating environments which encompass their work. In his work, James Scanlon has created a total environment from a combination of his work and the site on which it lies. I feel that David Kinnane's and Rachel Joynt's work is making a definite move towards trying to create miniature environments for their work. The difference really between the work of the artists I have just mentioned and the work done in most of the sculpture symposia is that these artists are working independently, creating environments for their sculptures and so far, they have been very successful at doing this. However, the environmental sculpture which I have discussed in this chapter, apart from King's proposals for Clune, is on a very

small scale and as far as I am aware, James Scanlon's work in Sneem is the largest piece of environmental sculpture to have been produced in Ireland. Of course I realise that quality is more important than quantity, but I think it is a pity that work on a comparable scale to the piece in Sneem, has not been produced anywhere else in the country. The reason for this lack of activity in the area of environmental sculpture can without any doubt be attributed to a lack of finances for this type of work. This stands in the way of any progressive work taking place in this type of sculpture, but Ireland is not the only country experiencing this difficulty as many of the major American environmental sculptors have moved back indoors due to a similar lack of funding.

In Ireland today, there is much more public sculpture to be found than environmental. Problems can arise with public sculpture, in that the work is mostly non site-specific and the context in which the work is placed can often cause much controversy. In the introduction to this Chapter I made a reference to a statement by Paddy Woodworth highlighting the concern expressed by many people about a possible over-saturation of sculpture in this country (Woodworth, 1990, p.1) . He says that they regard the spread of public sculpture as carrying "the risk of plague as well as the promise of pleasure" (Woodworth, l990, p.l). I think the reason for this in most cases, is that they don't find the work aesthetically pleasing, due sometimes to a lack of understanding or appreciation for this type of art. This problem is heightened when sculpture is imposed on the public, without any prior consultation with the local community who will have to live with it and thus this type of action will automatically imbue resentment. Of course, occasionally people are justified in being concerned about sculpture placed in the environment, when the sculpture is quite poor. One can see from the controversy which still surrounds the Eilis O'Connell piece in Kinsale that a major factor of public sculpture is the people who will have to live with it, and who will object if they do not see it as fitting into the environment.

However, at this time, I feel that there is an increasing awareness of and encouragement for environmental sculpture in Ireland and this can be seen in the work of artists like David Kinnane, Rachel Joynt and James Scanlon. This is a minority group, but I think that as the Irish population in general is becoming more environmentally aware, then this num-

ber will increase in the future. It is vital that the artist consults with the community about a forthcoming sculpture so that the final piece will be accepted in its environment and it will exist as a piece of sculpture which is sensitive to its surroundings and to it's social context. In my opinion the way to go is to establish a type of collaboration between the artist, the community and the environment. This type of collaboration could also be applied to sculpture symposia and this opinion is reflected in a statement made by the sculptor, Jim Buckley:

> The time has come for the Sculptor's Society of Ireland and the Arts Council to get together with possible host communities, City corporations and parks, County Councils, Industries etc., so that symposia of sculpture in Ireland becomes part of the community and the sculpture becomes part of our heritage.
>
> (Sculptor's Society of Ireland, 1985)

Thus, overall I believe that environmental sculpture will gradually become much more recognised and appreciated in Ireland, over the next few years, and I hope that the sculpture symposia will also reflect this optimism for environmental sculpture.

Chapter 3.

James Scanlon and the environmental sculpture he created in Sneem, Co. Kerry.

> I wanted to try to familiarise myself with the place and then find something that would suit it - that's the most important thing in public work, its a different thing to private work or gallery work. I wanted to make something that would epitomise the magic in the area".
>
> (James Scanlon, Interview on Radio Kerry, 1991)

This quote sums up very well the ambitions of the artist James Scanlon when he was commissioned by the Arts Council to create a piece of outdoor sculpture for the village of Sneem in Co. Kerry, as a result of the village winning the Tidy Towns Competition. The work that Scanlon produced is a wonderful example of environmental sculpture and in this Chapter I shall analyse the work in terms of how and why it came about, how it was put together and finally, the end product and its implications for the community of Sneem and for environmental sculpture in general. I also think that it is important to compare this work with another work of Scanlon's which may help in giving insights into Scanlon's general approach. An obvious example for this is an examination of the work that he did in the icon chapel of Glenstal Abbey. The village of Sneem is also quite fortunate in that it contains quite a few other sculptures which are scattered around the village and by comparing Scanlon's work to these, one will get a better idea of how Scanlon's work is perceived in Sneem. I shall also put Scanlon's work into context with contemporary environmental sculpture by comparing his work to similar work by some well known international artists. I will conclude this chapter by discussing the implications of such work as James Scanlon did in Sneem with relation to contemporary art in Ireland. I would like to mention the fact that part of my research was to conduct interviews with a few people who were involved in the project in Sneem namely: Fr. Murphy (Parish Priest in Sneem while work was in progress), Batt Burns (Principal of local school) and Danny Breen (Stonemason). I also interviewed a few people from Sneem who were not actively involved in the project but

Fig. 55 View of the village of Sneem, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 56 View of the village of Sneem, Co. Kerry.

whose opinions were very relevant in the context of the work, namely: John Harrington (Tourist Officer) and Mrs. Mary Egan (local).

How the piece was initiated

When Sneem won the National Tidy Towns Award in 1987, the Arts Council of Ireland gave a commitment to sponsor an art piece, which would commemorate Sneem's historic win. After various suggestions were considered it was decided that one of Kerry's leading artists, James Scanlon, from Brosna, would be commissioned to do the work.

Scanlon was born in 1952 and he studied miming for about a year before he studied sculpture, in the Crawford College of Art in Cork. When he left college he then studied traditional glass techniques for three years after which he set up his own stained glass studio in 1982. Since then he has been building up his reputation as a leading internationally renowned stained glass artist. He has completed several very successful commissions for various pieces of work in different parts of this country and in such distant places as Japan. He has been widely acclaimed for the scheme of windows that he designed and made in 1988 for the Share Housing Complex in Cork, a refuge for the homeless of the city. Another very successful work was a commission to complete the interior of an Icon Chapel for the Monks of Glenstal Abbey, County Limerick, in 1987. This included seven panels of glass, a steel and concrete floor, a hanging and lighting system for the Icons, an altar and seating. Thus, his reputation went before him, and the Parish Priest of Sneem, Fr. Murphy, who was deeply involved in the project, recalls his delight on hearing of the Arts Council's choice of artist. It is important to note here that Scanlon did not have a reputation for sculpture because even though he had studied it in college he branched off into working with stained glass when he left. Thus the type of environmental sculpture that he did first in Glenstal and then in Sneem was quite unique for this artist and this factor can be compared to artists like Andy Goldsworthy who continuously work in the area of environmental sculpture.

Fig. 57 Tamara Rickman, *Tree of Life*, steel, Sneem, Co. Kerry.

On receiving the commission, Scanlon arrived down in Sneem with a preconceived idea of what he wanted to do. He had intended to make large stainless steel columns with corten pyramid bases and slits of polished glass inside in them, angled to the sun, to throw prisms on bits of lawn and water, and then support them with high-tensile wire. But this idea was discarded after he had a good look around the village, and discovered that Sneem already had three sculptures by contemporary artists; a memorial to Cearbhall ODalaigh, a late President of Ireland who spent a lot of time in Sneem, by Vivienne Roche (Fig. 59); a representation of a panda bear, which was a gift of the people of China to the village (Fig. 58); and an abstract steel 'Tree of life', presented to Sneem from the people of Israel (Fig. 57). The Cearbhall O'Dalaigh memorial is also made from steel and since it was erected in 1983 it has not received a very positive response from the villagers. The reason for this lies in the fact that no effective public consultation took place and it is referred to by many locals, among other things, as "the plane crash". It is obvious from looking at this work that it is not site-specific and the artist does not seem to have considered its integration with the surroundings at all. What I found particularly strange about this piece of work is the way in which there is a lengthy explanation of what the work is about on a plaque in front of it. I have never before seen a work of art that has required such an explanation of its concept. The village seemed to be saturated with sculptures and although the other two sculptures did not meet with the same hostility as the Vivienne Roche piece they cannot be said to have captured the imagination of the community either. The abstract 'Tree of life' has received a more positive response and this is probaby due to the fact that the artist, Tamara Rikman, discussed her plans with the community before the work was constructed. As Paddy Woodworth points out in an article in The Irish Times:

> Compared to similar villages, or even much bigger towns, Sneem would seem to have an embarrassment of riches in the public sculpture department, and the riches have caused considerable embarrassment in the past.
>
> (Woodworth, 1990, p.1)

Fig. 58 Sculpture of a Panda Bear, a gift of the people of China to the village of Sneem, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 59 Memorial to Cearbhall O'Dálaigh by Vivienne Roche, Sneem, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 60 Staigue Fort, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 61 Gallerus Oratory, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 62 Monastery at Skelligs, Co. Kerry.

On seeing the two village greens containing these pieces of sculpture Scanlon thought that:

> they looked a little like a mantelpiece that was already full, that didn't need any more ornamentation on it.
>
> (Scanlon, l99l, p.13)

He was faced with a difficult task and he realised that he would have to create a piece that was indigenous to the area as a contrast to the pieces which were not very thoughtfully sighted in the village greens. Scanlon decided after some thought that he wanted to enhance the tranquillity of the village which lies in a beautiful place on the western side of Moll's Gap, a dangerous pass through the mountains of Kerry as they stagger downward toward the Atlantic ocean (Fig. 55 & 56). In order to do this he wanted to do something that would integrate so well with the surrounding environment, that it would seem that an artist had never been there.(Scanlon, 1991, p.13) .

Scanlon thus spent much time walking around the village and its surroundings searching for ideas and for a location for his piece. He came across a waste piece of land lying below the church and beside the river, which was ribbed with great scarred rocks running up from the water. Scanlon was delighted with this place, as it presented so many possibilities for a sculpture. As he considered the difficulties of creating a public work, he continued to search for inspiration which finally came when he discovered that an old pre-Christian fortress called Staigue Fort lay about seven miles outside Sneem (Figs. 60 & 63-65) This was a total revelation for Scanlon who decided to try and inject important elements of Staigue Fort into his work (Scanlon, 1991, p.14).

Scanlon's final work showed influences not only from Staigue Fort but also from the old structures at Skelligs and Gallarus Oratory, a twelfth century church in the Dingle peninsula. Gallarus is a wonderful example of an early Christian church, in the way that it is boat-shaped and it also has a very interesting corbelled roof (Fig. 61). The Skelligs consist of two isolated rocks off the south west coast of Kerry, and the jagged Atlantic rocks are visible all along the coast from the Bere to the Dingle Peninsula. In the sixth century, a community of monks sttled on the larger of the two rocks called Skellig Michael and they

Fig. 63 Detail of Staigue Fort, Co. Kerry.

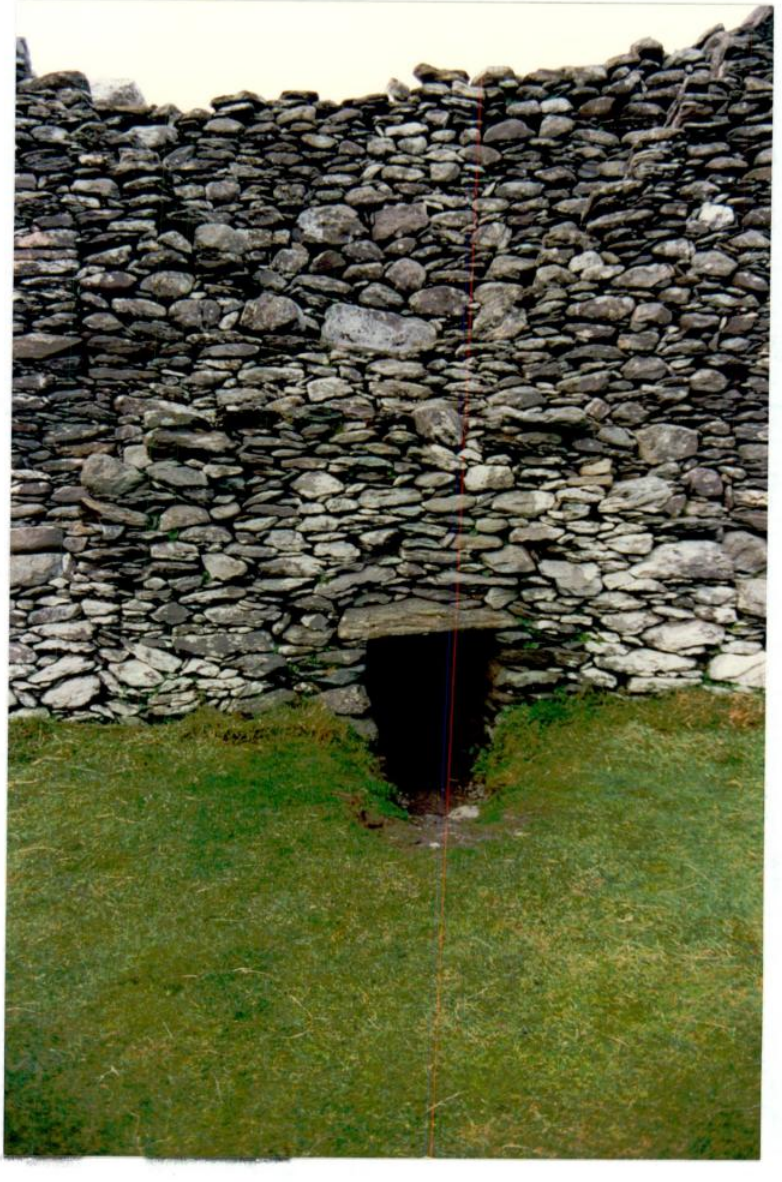


Fig. 64 Detail of stonework and underground shelter at Staigue Fort, Co. Kerry.

built a monastery there, which consisted of simple Beehive huts (Fig.62). Kevin Mills wrote in an article in The Cork Examiner stating that:

> Today the monastery survives as one of the finest European testimonies to the architecture of the founders of the early Christian Church.
>
> (Mills, l992, p.12)

Staigue Fort lies quite close to both Gallerus and Skelligs, and it is strategically located in a picturesque valley commanding a distant view of the sea. There are a few similar ring forts to be found along the west coast, including Grianán of Aileach and Doon Fort in County Donegal. Scanlon hoped to translate the symbolic associations of these ancient buildings into a contemporary context in his work. Thus, it was with these historical mystical sites in mind that James Scanlon set about creating sculpture in the boggy, rocky wasteland that he had selected as his site in Sneem.

Fig. 65 Staigue Fort, Detail of stonework.

How the sculpture was constructed:

At the beginning of the project Scanlon was faced with a massive problem of scale. There was a big difference between the size of work that he was used to doing in his studio and the work which would be required in Sneem to create some visual impact. While Scanlon was in the process of working out his designs, the local Fás scheme had offered twenty local men to help Scanlon, and these immediately set to work clearing the area. Scanlon decided that he wanted to use a traditional building material such as stone, in his sculpture, so that he could introduce the ancient and still popular craft of stonemasonry into his work. In the West of Ireland stone is a traditional building material which can be seen not only in various houses and monuments but also in the miles of stone walls which create such a distinctive pattern in that part of the country. He was delighted to discover that several of the men on the Fás Scheme were stonemasons and it also presented a wonderful opportunity for these local men to be involved in the making of the work.

Scanlon had an idea that he wanted to create some kind of physical or spiritual refuge in a form similar to that of the Beehive huts, a type of meditation cell. Combining this with the influences of the ancient sites in the area, he made up clay models of a series of pyramidal shapes to be integrated in certain ways with the rock on the site. By creating architectural forms he found that he could overcome the problems of scale which he was initially faced with on beginning the project. It was with these basic ideas that the foundations were laid and the stonemasons thus began to show off their skills. For the form of each pyramid Scanlon simply took the natural angles of the area, for example; the angles at which the rocks meet the sea all along the coast and translated these into his structures. Batt Burns, a local storyteller who I interviewed told me that the artist was doing a bit of research into the many fairy forts or lioses of the area and he developed an idea about the fairies moving from one side of the parish to the other, building the pyramids enroute and then disappearing through a hole in one of them (Burns, interview). He was very taken with this theme, a magical theme which is a popular element of the folklore of that area, and I quote him as saying that:

> That's the stuff that the people down there are made of and that's what makes them what they are, so why not look to our own wonderful rich cultural heritage, and draw from that, draw from the people who were there.
>
> (Scanlon, Interview on Radio Kerry, 1991)

Once he had established the basic forms his four separate structures were to take, he then worked in collaboration with the stonemasons to work out the details of each construction. The stonemasons were highly skilled, and a very obvious difference in style existed between them, and four different styles of building emerged in the final work. Even though it was very difficult to get two stonemasons to work together whose styles didn't go together, Scanlon persisted in trying to get a few stonemasons to work on one piece, purely for compositional reasons. He wanted to put bits and pieces of building together in an effort to understand the material with which he was working. Scanlon compares the skill of stonemasonry to that of handwriting, everybody has a different syle and he says:

> I don't think you can learn stonework its an innate thing that you are able to do.
>
> (Scanlon, Interview on Radio Kerry)

He found it difficult to get stonemasons who were different in personality and with a different style of laying stones to work on the same piece as everybody developed a great pride in their work. In an interview I did with one of the stonemasons, Danny Breen, he made an interesting comment about the skill of his trade, saying that on observing a piece of stonework he can tell, "if a piece of stone is upside down or not." He also pointed out that in his work he doesn't believe in interfering with the face of the stone. He has an interesting way of working in that he never stands back from his work, something that most artists are trained to do in college. When working on a stone construction, he finds that he knows instinctively what stone he needs next.

In co-operating and collaborating with the stoneworkers, Scanlon learned a lot from their methods of working and they in turn learned much from the artist. The only way that the sculptures could be created was through a symbiotic relationship between the artist and the workers, and this successful partnership is aptly described by Danny Breen,

who said that Scanlon would bring the stonemasons into the community centre to show them the models and get their opinion of what would and wouldn't work. He valued their opinion and he was willing to change his plans, if the stonemasons doubted their construction, (Scanlon, Interview on Radio Kerry,1991). The parish priest of Sneem at the time, Fr Murphy, became very involved in the piece. I interviewed him about his involvement and he told me that he sometimes acted as a sort of mediator between the artist and the people, communicating the artist's ideas to the workers and the local community when required and also helping in other ways by using the contacts he had in the community. He recalled appealing to the congregation at mass one day for stones needed on the site. I think that this type of collaboration was one of the reasons for the remarkable success of the sculpture. The fact that members of the community were just as much involved in the work as the artist himself, was a very positive point for the work on the site and Medb Ruane highlights the importance of this involvement in the following comment:

> This grounds the place more firmly within the local community by presenting that community, not as an undifferentiated mass but as a grouping of individuals.
>
> (Ruane, l991, p.28)

It was the people who created the work that became the core of the work in reality. All their different personalities came through in the various styles of stonemasonry. I find it quite strange actually that there were about twenty people working on the project altogether and the result of their work is a fluid combination of all these differences in style and personality to produce a piece of work which seems to have been done by one thought.

Fig. 66 Overview of James Scanlon's site in Sneem, Co. Kerry.

Fig. 67 Overview of James Scanlon's site in Sneem, Co. Kerry.

Analysis of the work:

Four pieces now exist on the site and these pieces which are popularily known as 'the pyramids' are placed carefully throughout the site, resting on reinforced concrete foundations and varying in height from 6 - 6.5 metres (Figs. 66-67). Scanlon's passionate interest in architecture is very obvious in the architectural forms that he has created, and these forms help to establish scale within the landscape. Even though the pieces are known as the pyramids, only one of the structures is an actual pyramid and the others are variations of this form. Scanlon has managed to create an environment, a place so that they do not exist as four separate pieces of sculpture lying on site but as one piece of environmental sculpture, encompassing the pieces with the site. He has succeeded in integrating his pieces with the scarred rock, which cuts through the site, by using stone in his work and by creating a system of pathways which lead one in various directions around the site, over and through the mounds in some cases. I will now analyse each structure with reference to its form, style, materials used and its location.

The first piece that one encounters on entering the site acts as a sort of boundary between Scanlon's site and a piece of land which is used as a camping site in the summer months. This immediately conjures up images in my mind of a wonderful contrast created between the colourful tents in the summer and the stone pyramids. I can imagine the extraordinary relationship between the triangular and dome shaped modern tents with the pyramidal, triangular, circular and conical forms of Scanlon's work. It seems that not only do the stone structures relate to ancient influences, but so also do the tents, not only being similar in form but also in function, that of serving as a shelter for its occupants. The thought of this surreal modern translation of ancient places like Gallerus in tent forms is something which had never occurred to me until I came to this site.

The boundary piece of this site is a solid, three-sided form, dissected by a vertical slice starting at its foundation and rising to its apex (Figs. 68-71). The stone is thus separated into two distinct pieces which are bordered by spaced wooden uprights. Even though it

Fig.68 Boundary piece by James Scanlon, Sneem.

Fig.69 Boundary piece, (side view).

Fig. 70 Boundary piece by James Scanlon, Sneem.

Fig. 71 Boundary piece (close-up).

is a solid form, I found, as a spectator, that it was very inviting to look through the vertical opening and ascertain how much of the actual site I could see through this slit (Fig. 71). It created an immediate point of interest for me in the work. After squinting through this slit, my attention was then drawn to the wonderful variety of size and colour in the stones in the work which results in a very striking harmonious arrangement. Locally quarried blocks were used in this amazing display of stonemasonry by local men. My usual perception of stone is that of a grey material, but the skillful stonemasons have magically combined the stones to produce an arrangement of colour which creates a very warm feeling. This warm feeling is evoked by the oranges, yellows and purples which are cooled down slightly by the blues, greens, turquoise and deep moss colours. A lighter feeling is created towards the top of the piece, as the sturdiness of the stone gradually merges into the more delicate properties of slate. I found that I noticed the craftsmanship of this work much more so than in the other structures which I think is due to the simplicity of its design.

On leaving this piece, I followed a path, one of a few around the site, which had been cut out of a mound of landscaped earth (Figs. 72-74). It is quite a narrow path, which is lined on either side by stone walls, which merge into the mound of earth, and the ground underfoot is made sturdy by the laying down of stone and slate. I discovered that it was impossible to walk quickly through this path, which led to my realisation that the artist probably intended to slow people down so as to be able to observe, and take in the surroundings. I think that this is an extremely clever device which further enriched the whole experience of my visit to the site.

This path led me to the next structure: the pyramid. This is a perfect equilateral triangl and it is broken at intervals by a doorwell and a few windows (Figs. 75-77). These windows are made from solid pieces of blue and red stained glass which creates a certain atmosphere in the interior of the pyramid (Figs. 77(a) & (b)). Valentia slate is used on the floor and its arrangement is echoed in some of the pathways on the site. In the middle of the floor lies a pool of water, whose bed is lined with flat slates and stones. The doorwell which leads one into this piece is very small and it becomes narrower in width as it nears the ground. I found that this aspect seemed to tease me in a way, teasing me to fit through

Fig. 72 Path cut out of mound at site in Sneem.

Fig. 73 Paths at site in Sneem.

Fig. 74 Paths at site in Sneem.

Fig. 75 Pyramid structure, by James Scanlon in Sneem.

Fig. 76 Pyramid structure.

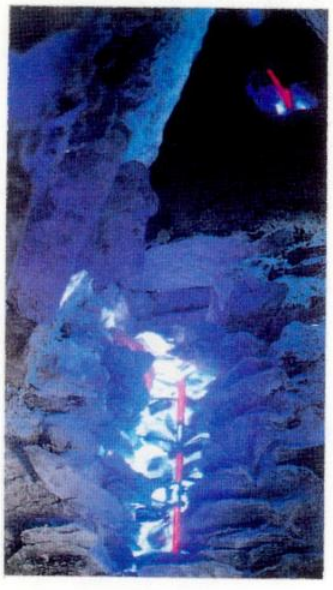


Fig. 77(a)

Fig. 77(b)

Fig. 77(c) Slate floor of pyramid.

this little doorwell and discover the structure's hidden treasures. With the light coming through the stained glass, the interior was a feast for my eye and my mind, particularly in the subtle interplay of light on the surface of the water in the pool (Fig. 77(c)). The interior evokes a feeling of peace and spirituality, a place where it is possible to meditate in the secure midst of the elements of nature, including light, water and stone. I felt that the pyramid offered me a wonderful opportunity of participating and becoming part of the work rather than being just an onlooker. This forms a new relationship between the spectator and the sculptor, because the viewer is inside the sculpture, experiencing it. This brings to mind an element of Andy Goldsworthy's sculpture which Andrew Causey makes an interesting comment about:

> 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. Goldsworthy's sculptures do not forego grandeur.
>
> (Causey, 1991, p.127)

The feeling evoked in the pyramid is similar to the feeling one has when standing in such a silent prayerful place as Gallerus Oratory, and I feel that Scanlon has succeeded in evoking the same kind of extraordinary atmosphere in a contemporary context..

Lying quite close to the pyramid and separated from it by vast lengths of scarred rock lies the conical shaped structure which is also related to an ancient form (Figs. 78-82). This piece reminds me very much of one of the stone huts on Skellig in the way that there is a haphazard arrangement of angular stones protruding from the rounded conical shape (Fig. 80). Similar to the first piece I discussed, this is also capped by slices of Valentia slate. Due to the rounded conical shape, the stones seem to have a different appearance in this piece and thus a stark contrast is created between this rounded arrangement of stones and the angular stones which are protruding from it. The surface of the shape is also broken in places by the presence of tiny windows and a doorwell. There has been much more attention given to the doorwell of this piece than that given to the pyramid (Fig. 81). The surface of the conical shape seems to open out to reveal the doorwell which is set back from

Fig. 78 Conical structure at site in Sneem.

Fig. 79 Conical structure.

Fig. 80 Side view of conical structure.

Fig. 81 Doorwell and seam of structure.

Fig. 82 Detail of seam..

the outer surface of stone, and is part of a seam, which is threaded from the ground to the top of the conical shape. This inserted seam is made from an arrangement of slate which provides an interesting contrast to the surrounding stone. The shape of the doorwell is similar to that of the pyramid in that the base of it becomes quite narrow in width. Three large sturdy rocks lie at the top of the doorwell and seem to bridge the gap between the outer layers of stone (Fig. 82). I think the interior of this shape creates a similar feeling to that which is evoked in the pyramid. The windows which are more like slits in the wall in some cases, are also made from hand-made yellow and green stained glass. The interior of this piece is much brighter than the pyramid due to the lighter colours of the stained glass and the open spaces, where the stones protrude outwards from the piece which thus allow more light into the interior. I find this atmosphere more appealing, as it does not share the same feeling of being in another world as one experiences in the pyramid. I prefer the interior of this piece, as the stone seems to have been handled more delicately than in the pyramid. As the conical shape reaches its apex, a wonderful feeling of lightness is created in the circular arrangement of stone and slate which gradually meet at the top (Fig. 83). An almost swirling pattern of stone and slate is created as the piece soars upwards towards the apex, where it is met with a profusion of light. It reminded me of being in a church on a sunny morning, with the light streaming in from windows, which stretch to almost the height of the building. I really like the way that Scanlon has used his talents as a stained glass artist in the work in Sneem. They act as another surprise to be discovered within the stonework of the structures. He makes an interesting comment about his use of glass,

> Glass, to me, is a very potent sort of medium. Things that are most precious to me are done in that medium. The bits of glass that are in it, you don't expect to find them, and they set up a fluidity that works against the dryness and precision of the stonework. (Scanlon, 1991, pp.24-25)

This piece is very well sited, as lying very close to its front is a marshy pool of water containing an attractive arrangement of reeds, and it is bordered on one side by part of the seam of scarred rock, running through the centre of the site. I think that the conical shaped

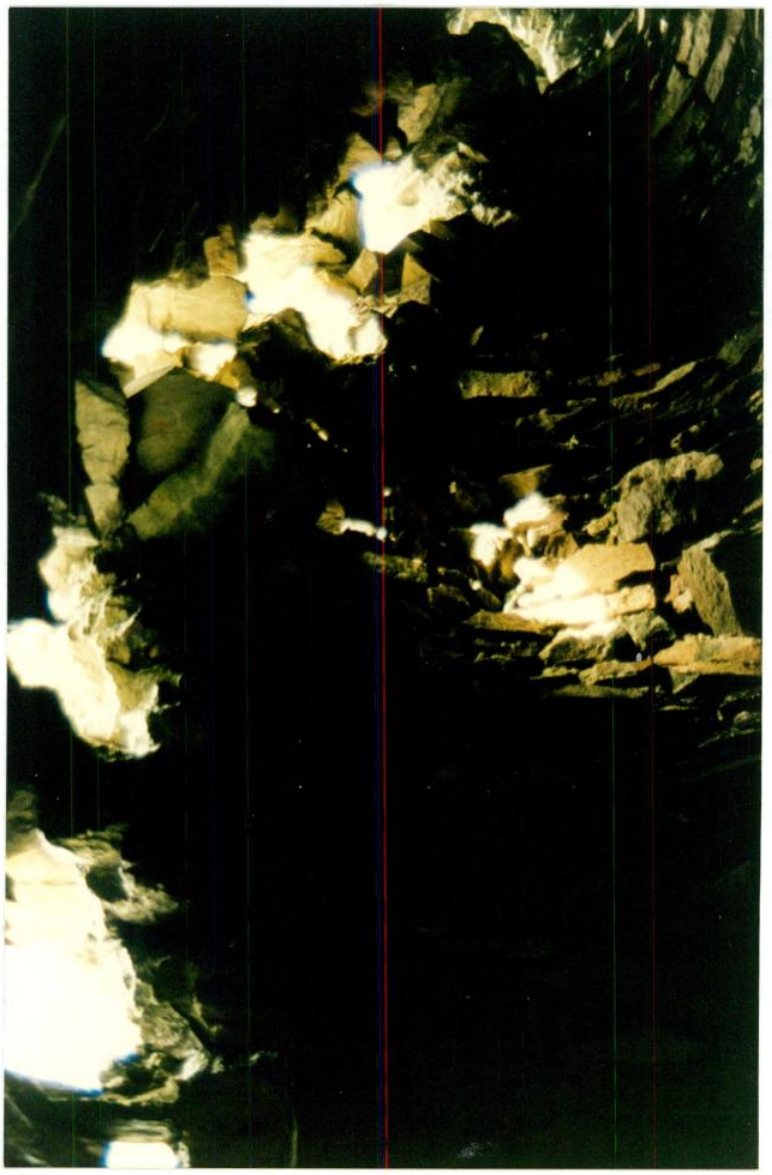


Fig. 83 Interior views of conical structure.

Fig.84 Scarred rock.

piece seems to fit in magnificently with this inspiring natural landscape.

The scarred rock points one in the direction of the fourth piece of work and one is lead down via this rock, whose hollows have been filled with an arrangement of slate, or via the many paths leading in its direction (Fig. 84).

The fourth piece appears to me to be a wonderful conclusion to the site and I call it a conclusion, because it stands at the farthest end of the site, acting as a boundary between the site and the wasteland beyond. Similar to the boundary piece, on the other end of the site, I find that this is also quite a contemporary form and it consists of a slate capped triangle, which is broken by a stone stitched circle and it has a vertical slice at its apex (Figs. 85-87). On looking through the stone circle, the landscape beyond this site was revealed within a circular frame to me and thus it provides a sort of opening into the world beyond. It acts as a boundary, but while fulfilling this function it simultaneously functions as a link with the site's surroundings.

I found that the stonemasonry of this work was quite similar to the style of the other boundary piece I discussed in that, the colourful arrangement of stone is equally as eye catching. Apart from the attractive open circle of the piece, I found that the most significant aspect of it is in the way its base has been integrated with the naturally protruding rock. The base has been laid in and around the rock on which it lies, in such a way that the man-made piece of work seems to be a natural progression from the rocky ground. Similar to the way in which the pieces of slate have been inserted into the hollows of the main band of scarred rock, in the centre of the site, the same has been done between the rocks lying under this piece (Fig. 85). This further completes the integration of the piece with its immediate surroundings, as it echoes the slate used in the cap of the triangle.

I was immediately drawn to climbing up the rock on which the structure stands, so as to gain an almost stately position, overlooking the site. I was able to walk around the structure by mounting the jagged ribs of rock. Unfortunately I found that the stone circle was out of bounds, as its size only permits children to sit in its confines. I can see a similarity between the sculptures in stone of the artist Andy Goldsworthy, who I have discussed in Chapter one, and this particular stone sculpture in Sneem. I am particulary referring to a

Fig. 85 Final boundary piece on site.

Fig. 86 Details of boundary piece.

Fig. 87 Details of boundary piece.

Fig. 88 Andy Goldsworthy, *Touchstone North*, Dumfriesshire, England, 1990.

piece by Goldsworthy called 'Touchstone North' (Fig.88), which has a stone circle, through which the landscape beyond can be viewed. The works differ in scale and other details, but I find it interesting to note this link between the two artists. A similarity also exists between the arrangement of slate used in the slate-capped triangle of this piece by Scanlon and the arrangement of the same medium in a piece called "Slate Stack" by Andy Goldsworthy (Fig. 22).

Differences in styles of stonemasonry

The main differences in stonemasonry which I noticed on observing the finished pieces of work was that there was an obvious difference in the pattern in which the stone was laid down. As far as I could discern there are four distinct styles. The style used in the first boundary piece consists of a very sturdy looking, well thought out method of laying down the stones (Figs. 89 & 90). The arrangement includes the use of very large and very small rectangular shaped stones put together in a consistent pattern. It is very blocky looking and I find the inclusion of the larger rocks to be a bit distracting to the overall harmony of the arrangement. The size of stone used goes from one extreme to the other; there seems to be no happy medium in size. It is also worth noting that the faces of all the stones are very flat, so flat that they have obviously been worked on by the stonemasons. I think that the actual shape has also been worked on because of their unnaturally regular rectangular shapes.

The style I have just discussed differs very much to the style present in the conical-shaped structure which consists of a much rougher type of arrangement of stone (Figs. 91 & 92). The shape of the stones used doesn't seem to have been altered in any way and the faces have been left as rough as they were found. It makes for a more interesting pattern containing a mixture of all sizes of stone from very large right down to bits of slate and pebbles. It seems to me to be a more organic style of stonemasonry where the mason remains true to his medium, interfering with its form as little as possible. The haphazard

Fig. 89 Detail of stonework from boundary piece.

Fig. 90 Detail of stonework from boundary piece.

Fig. 91 Detail of stonework from conical structure.

Fig. 92 Detail of stonework from conical structure.

Fig. 93 Pyramid stonework.

arrangement of stones of various shapes and sizes seems to have a more friendly appearance which compares to the 'colder', more clinically organised arrangement of the boundary piece.

The pyramid structure uses a style of stonemasonry which appears to be a mixture of the two styles used in the other pieces I have discussed. The faces of the stones are flatter than those used in the conical structure but they are not quite as flat as those used in the boundary triangular structure (Fig. 93). The shape and form of the stones used is not as haphazard as the conical structure in that it consists mainly of either large, medium sized or small stones creating continuity within the arrangement compared to the abruptness of the two sizes of stones used in the boundary structure. In comparison to the other pieces a happy medium exists in this structure's style of stonemasonry.

The boundary structure at the far end of the site does not really have it's own distinct style of building in that I find the arrangement of stone in this piece to be almost identical to the style used in the outer boundary piece. It is obvious that the same stonemason was involved in both pieces.

I think it is important to note also that the interior walls of both the pyramid and the conical structure differ very much in appearance. I was somewhat disappointed by the amount of cement to be seen holding the stones together in the interior of the pyramid (Fig. 95). There seems to be an unusually large amount of cement plastered on the walls which takes away from the other attractive features present within this interior. This compares to the interior walls of the conical structure where the cement can barely be seen (Fig. 94). However, I think the reason for the abundance of cement within the pyramid is due to the difficulties of building a pyramid with a hole at it's apex (the reasons for this hole are related to the theme of this work; the fairies are supposed to have gone through the hole). The gable had to be split in the pyramid also which threw the weight to both sides of the structure, meaning that if the structure in the middle wasn't good, then the whole thing would fall apart.

I have already mentioned that four styles of building emerged in the work in Sneem and the fourth one can be seen in the way in which the slate was laid down in a similar

Fig. 94 Interior stonework of the conical structure.

Fig. 95 Interior stonework of the pyramid.

manner in each of the structures.

It can thus be seen that Scanlon has created sculpture which is beautifully integrated with its surroundings and the importance of the series of pathways, which lead one through mounds and rock around the site, cannot be emphasised enough. These pathways brought me, the viewer, to the work and into the work, by inviting me to participate in the site. Instead of viewing a work of art from a distance, I was enticed to approach and explore this splendid space. To be able to do this is a wonderful discovery for the viewer. As I mentioned in my Introduction, Mary Miss is an American sculptor, who has a keen interest in involving spectators in her work, and I quote her as saying:

> I try to take visual, physical, or emotional experiences of some potency and make them accessible to the viewer. What is absolutely essential to me is the involvement of the viewer with the work.
>
> (Marter, 1989, p. 318)

Siah Armagani, Richard Fleischner and Robert Irwin are well known international artists, who are also interested in creating entire environments and of inviting people to participate in their work by the use in many cases of functional components, such as paths, shelters or seating. With regards to Scanlon's work, even the natural rock strata on the site is quite inviting to sit on and take in the surroundings.

Fig. 96 & 97 Panels of stained glass by James Scanlon in the icon chapel of Glenstal Abbey, Co. Limerick.

Scanlon's work in the icon chapel in Glenstall Abbey.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I think it is important to compare the work that Scanlon did in Sneem to another work which is similar in ideal and a work which I also consider to be an environmental sculpture is the underground Russian Byzantine chapel at Glenstal Abbey. In 1987, Scanlon was commissioned to complete the interior of the chapel by the monks of the Abbey and in doing this, he has transformed the chapel into an environment of its own. It is comparable to the environmental sculpture in Sneem which is vast and outdoor compared to the environmental sculpture of the icon chapel which is tiny and indoor.

A few years ago, James Scanlon and an architect called Jeremy Williams were commissioned by the monks to draw up a plan to build a small icon chapel to hold the icons which had been presented to the Abbey by the Grattan Esmonde family in the 1940's. The chapel area consisted of three small dome areas, the centre one being the nave which then lead into the sanctuary (Fig. 100). The way that Scanlon has presented the icons is very impressive and it is this presentation rather than the individual icons which creates such an impact in the chapel. As part of my research, I visited this chapel and experienced the potent atmosphere within it. Scanlon and Williams worked on a theme of imprisonment and torture, because the icon chapel is supposed to be a reminder of hell. They did this by mounting the icons on blue steel gates, and the interesting arrangement of the icons was added to by the atmospheric dim lighting of the panels and gives one the feeling of being in a candlelit chapel. The chapel includes seven panels of stained glass, whose colours add to the uneasy atmosphere (Figs. 96-99). Scanlon also created a steel and concrete floor which consists of a spilled pattern of green and blue concrete with a terracotta coloured border, which when viewed from above, represents an image of the earth. Into the floor, Scanlon has inserted steel shapes representing such things as the nails from the crucifixion of Christ and various other symbols. He has also included seating in the santuary where one can sit around the small concrete altar, which supports the book icon.

I think that this icon chapel is an absolutely wonderful example of environmental

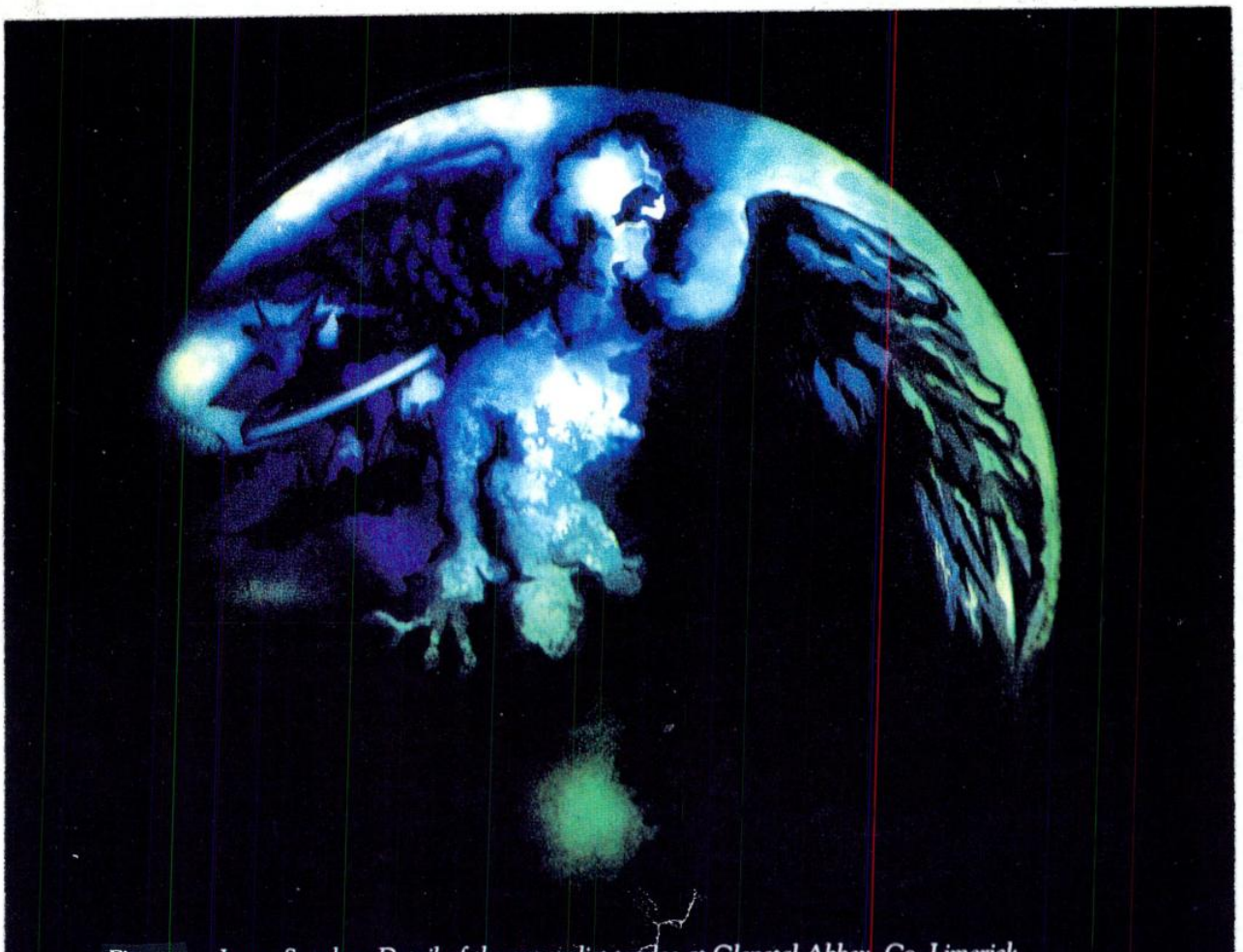


Fig. 98 *James Scanlon, Detail of the evangelist tondos at Glenstal Abbey, Co. Limerick.*

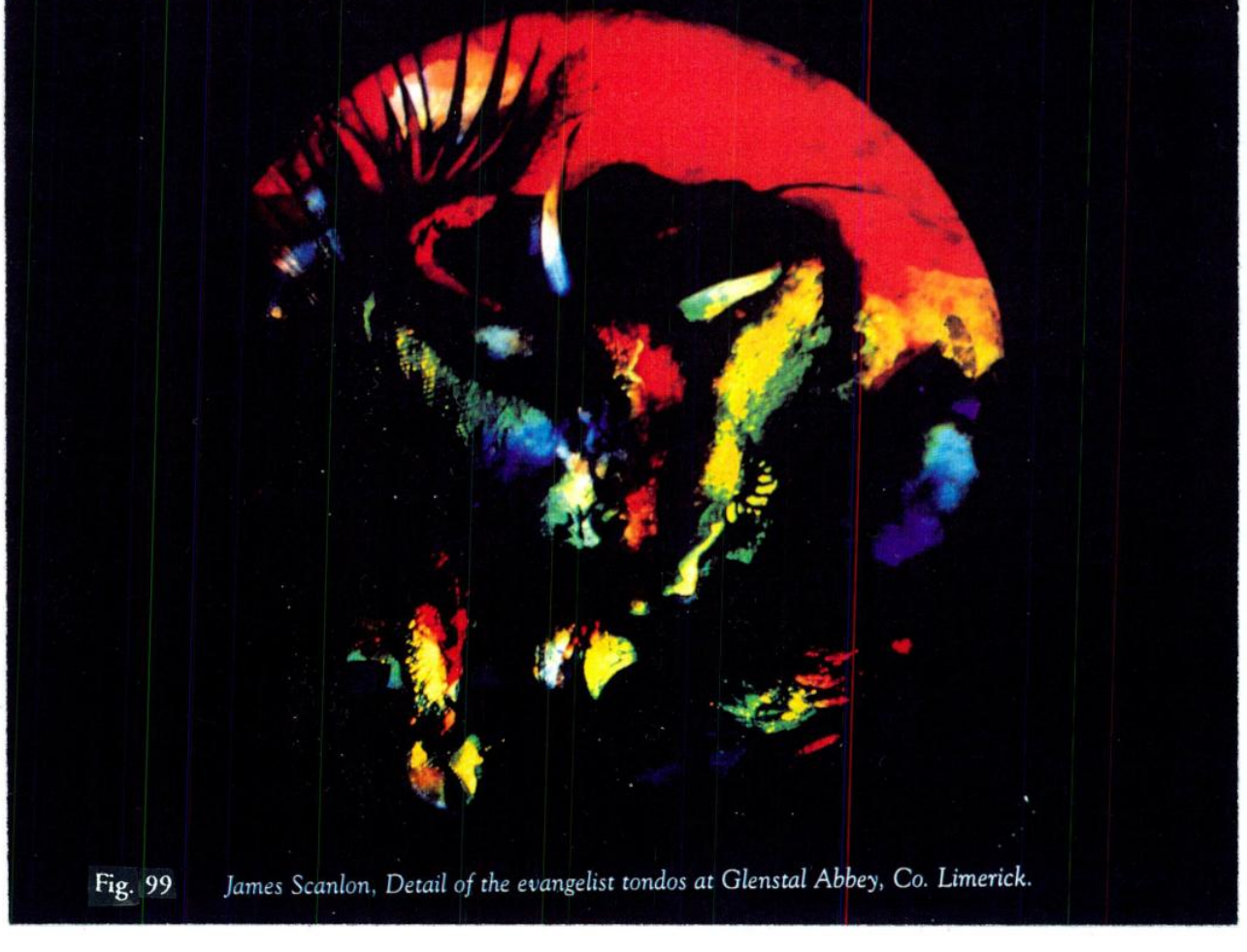


Fig. 99 *James Scanlon, Detail of the evangelist tondos at Glenstal Abbey, Co. Limerick.*

sculpture, in the way that Scanlon has collaborated with the architect to create a specific place where everything works in harmony with another, and the spectator is not only invited to look, but also to walk around, to walk on and to sit down and take in the environment. It is an amazing place in the way that the artists have worked together to create such an intense environment in such a small place.

Fig. 100 View of Icon Chapel at Glenstal Abbey, Co. Limerick.

Comparison of Scanlon's work to international environmental sculpture.

I think it is important to put the work that James Scanlon did in Sneem into some kind of international context by mentioning briefly the work of other environmental sculptors.

Robert Smithson is an artist who I have discussed in Chapter One and even though he is an environmental sculptor, there are not very many similarities between his work and Scanlon's work. His work is on a much grander scale than Scanlon's, and it can be viewed as a whole, much more easily from the air than from the ground. However, similar to the Irish artist, he uses natural materials, which are related to the environment in which he is working, and the participation of his audience is an important element of his work. He also reclaims land as part of his work and Scanlon has done this in Sneem.

The permanent work of Andy Goldsworthy and Dani Karavan is very directly related to Scanlon's work in that both of these artists interests lie in the creation of a place, a specific locality, an environment within an environment, through the combination of their work and its surroundings.

An environmental sculptor whose work I have not really discussed is that of the Japanese/American Isamu Noguchi, whose extensive landscape gardens such as "Mono Taro" at the Storm King Arts Centre in New York, are very closely related to Dani Karavan's and James Scanlon's work. His garden home in Japan can only be described as a truly environmental sculpture and Tim Threlfall made an interesting comment about the garden:

> The garden is a responsive love and recognition of the continuity of natural existence and man's part upon the canvas of nature.
>
> (Threlfall, l990, p.42)

Noguchi works mostly in urban environments and a few well known urban sculptural environments that he has created, include his work at the Japanese/ American Cultural Centre in Southern California (l980-83), the Hart Plaza in Detroit (l972-79) and

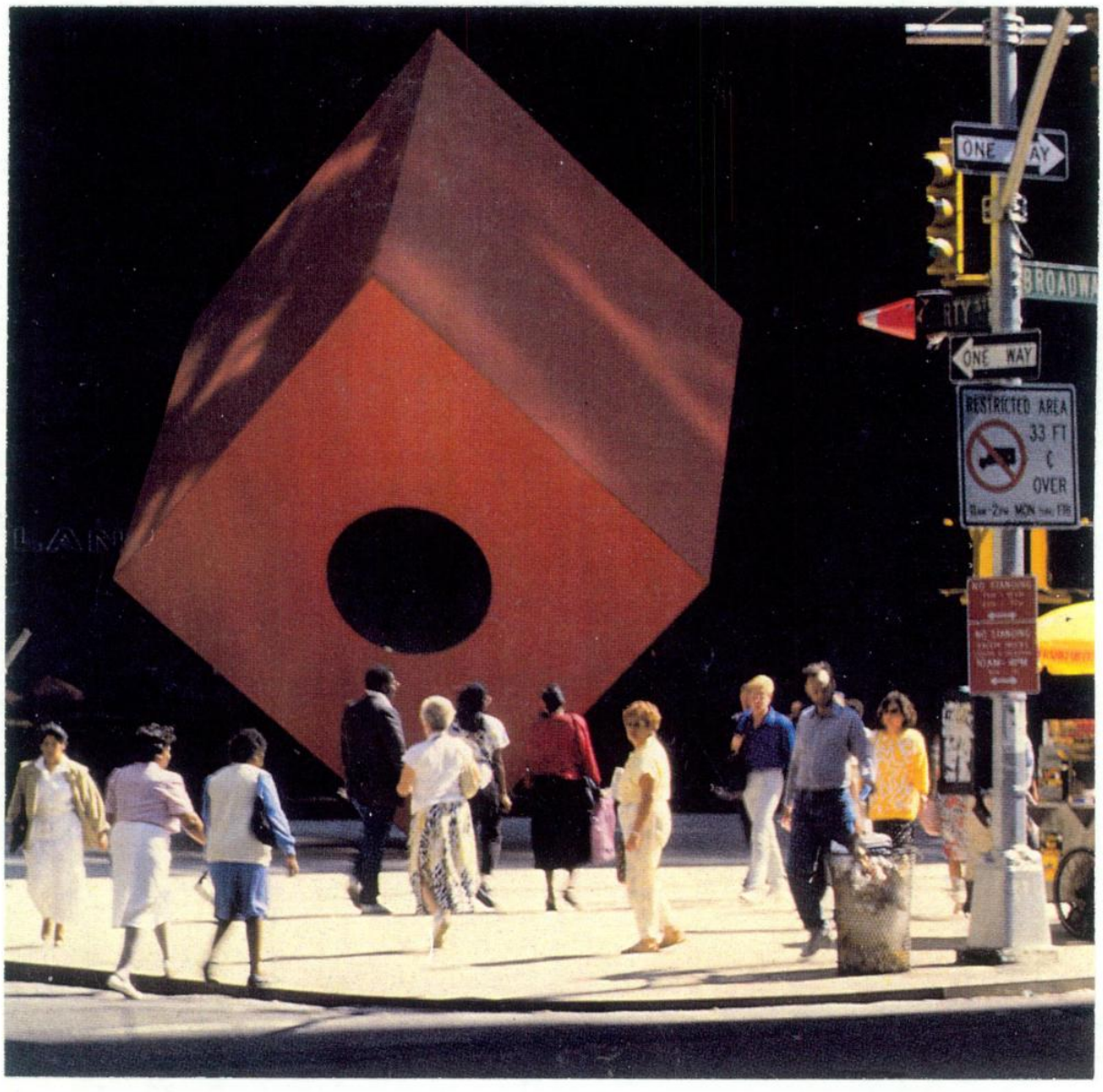


Fig. 101 Isamu Noguchi, Red Cube, Broadway, New York, 1987.

the California Scenario(l98l). A noteworthy indoor piece that he has done is the interior of a Flower Arranging School in Tokyo(l977-78) . A very well known work is a piece titled 'Red Cube', which is on Broadway in New York (Fig. 101). It was made in l968 from red painted steel. Noguchi accepts materials for what they are and he allows the materials to express themselves in his work.

Thus, it can be seen that Noguchi shares a similar concern to Scanlon in the integration of their work with the surroundings, and his aspirations are summed up in the folowing statement;

> It is the space, or rather the particular place, its totality as a meaningful environment that occupies me.
>
> (Threfall, 1990, p.42)

I have quoted the sculptor Mary Miss on a few occasions already in relation to the way that she likes to involve her audience in her work. For example, with her work called 'Staged Gates' in Dayton, Ohio, she became very aware of how her work was perceived by the people. She found that people enjoyed walking through the work, climbing its towers and sitting on its platforms. The integration of the work with the site and the possible physical involvement in the work meant that it did not scare people off because it was a 'sculpture' or an 'art work' but instead it had developed an increased sense of accessibility. The artist said that;

> There is a chance for the first time in years for art to be part of people's lives; some thing they walk through, or by, or stop and sit on while on the way to work. And so it's on the margin of a strange area between art and architecture and landscape architecture.
>
> (Nevins, 1985)

James Scanlon's 'Pyramids' is thus quite similar to Mary Miss' work in that the involvement of the audience is a major part of his work.

Conclusion.

It can be seen from this analysis that Scanlon's work is a very successful piece of site-specific environmental sculpture. It was created for this particular site and its surroundngs, and taking both of these elements into consideration, Scanlon produced a work that is beautifully integrated with its environment in every way. Eduardo Chillido Juantegui, a famous Spanish sculptor, believes that "works conceived a priori are born dead" (Juantegui, 1988, p.9). This in a way applies to Scanlon who originally approached this project with a preconceived idea which he had to discard when he realised the importance of creating a site-specific work in Sneem.

Scanlon was faced initially with a very difficult task and he overcame the difficulties of working in such a natural landscape by reclaiming the marshy land that he was going to use as his site and developing it through the integration of his stone structures with the site and its surrounds thus recycling the land into a living landscape. His work was influenced by many factors, including the ancient ring fort and churches in the locality, local folklore, the adjacent river and church, the rock formations of the area, the stream flowing through the site, the natural vegetation and the surrounding landscape. The sculptor Mary Miss believes very much in integrating influences of the surroundings into her work;

> The raw material is to be found in existing structures and situations and systems of our environment . . . . If we can turn to a direct perusal of our immediate environment, the creation of a present tense of great richness may be possible.
>
> (Miss, 1991, p.22)

Scanlon has integrated two pools of water and three mounds of earth into the site along with his four stone structures. In order to echo the running water of the river, he has diverted a stream, so that water flows through some of the pyramids. The rock strata on the site, has become part of his work, and there are traces of the stone structures to be seen in the fissures of the rock into which he has inserted vertically laid slate.

The local community was actively involved in Scanlon's project from start to fin-

ish. The fact that twenty local men helped him to build the structures, meant that there was a continued interest in the work and thence a continual feedback for the artist. The enthusiasm of the local community for the work could be clearly seen in June 1990 when there was a huge turn-out of people for the official opening of the site by Denis Brosnan, chief executive of the Kerry Group. Scanlon has successfully created a place from a combination of his sculpture and the site. From the very beginning the site was an integral part of the content of the work and this environment thence becomes a part of the overall environment. A direct comparison can be made to the other sculptures in the village, which are a total contrast to Scanlon's work in that they are not site-specific works, and they bear very little relation to their surroundings. Scanlon has created sculpture which is very approachable and does not turn people off by existing as a 'work of art'. The Israeli artist Dani Karavan shows an interest in the whole idea of creating an environment as opposed to a work of art in most of his work,

> However, there is no doubt that the resultant art work is not simply landscape art or architectonic art, nor is it exclusively a sculpture. My environments unite all these aspects even if the sculptural and conceptual aspects have priority.
>
> (Leinz, l989, p.77)

Nowadays in modern Ireland, I think that many artists are slightly apprehensive about using Irish historical influences in their work. It can be either be very successful in that the artist has reached a happy medium between tradition and modernity or it can be quiter disastrous and it just becomes another type of Irish souvenir. Scanlon's work was very successful in combining the old with the new i.e. the combination of the ancient structures with his new contemporary forms. It is a very harmonious solution to the problem of incorporating past and present. The two boundary pieces are symbols of the present whereas the conical structure and the pyramid are based on ancient forms, having a timeless existence. Scanlon would have considered the site to be a failure if it had become a sort of heritage park and this is echoed in a statement he made in a conversation with Shane O' Toole, "I don't want it to be a heritage park, or a monument to the dead." (Scanlon,1991, p.22)

The work in Sneem has brought Scanlon much positive publicity and proves his powerful talents in creating such a successful piece of work in a public context. In January 1991, Scanlon received an R.T.E./ Bank of Ireland Arts Show Award in recognition of the work that he did in Sneem. "The way the fairies went" (more commonly known as "the pyramids") has proved to be a popular tourist attraction in the village and the admiration of the work from many different sources proves that this work now holds an important position under the heading of contemporary environmental sculpture in Ireland. I think it proves really how a collaboration between the artist and the local community can produce such a successful piece of environmental sculpture. As Hilary Pyle put it,

> In the present climate of conceptual collage sculpture this is the most exciting and adventurous work to emerge for a long time, fantastical but immensely deep.
>
> (Pyle, 1990)

Scanlon sums up his achievement in the following statement,

> I have eased a transition, made a natural progression between the structures themselves and the ground. That is not everything, but at least it is a start.
>
> (Scanlon, 1991, p.25)

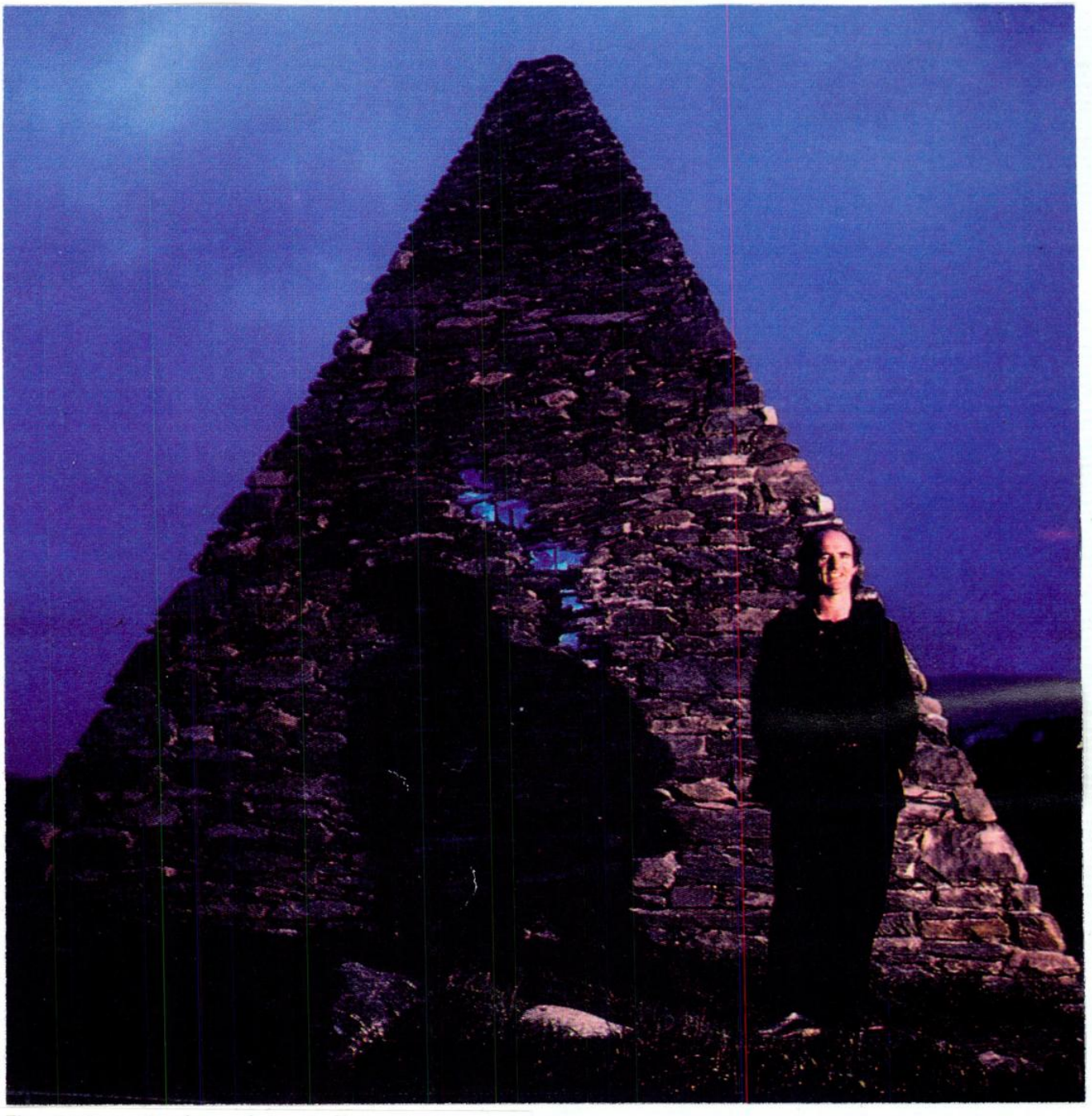


Fig. 102 James Scanlon with some of his work in Sneem.

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