

Venice 2018



TIME

SPACE

EXISTENCE

Edwin Hamilton

I began working with stone thirty-four years ago, dropping out of college to apprentice myself to master masons. Later I traveled throughout Europe—studying many extraordinary architectural monuments, including England’s York Cathedral, the stone circle of Callanish, the diverse array of ruins in Sicily, and the streets of Paris. In Provence I helped rebuild a stone house and worked in a quarry. I built walls and a bridge over a stream for an innkeeper in Scotland. Finally, I returned to the US, where I have maintained both masonry and sculpture practices since the early nineties, focusing on large-scale architectural work and sculptural installations throughout the country.

In every aspect of what I do, I consider the extraordinary, universal power of the ancient craft of shaping and placing stone. The Inca stonework of Cuzco and the Urubamba Valley in the mountains of Peru has especially inspired me—in particular the walls of Sacsayhuaman, where the perfect, mortarless fit of immense boulders cut and placed together many hundreds of years ago remains a marvel of engineering and artistry. When I visited this site in 1996, I remember being literally stopped in my tracks by their magnificent presence. As I looked around I was intrigued that other visitors seemed to have a similar reaction. I began to think of constructing sculptural forms that might echo the extraordinary stonework. This moment was a milestone in my sculpture practice.

As an artist, I try to capture the resonance of the time-honored craft I have been privileged to study, keeping its traditions alive in the modern world even as I reinterpret it through my own language of forms. In both large-scale works and more intimate sculptures like the one included in this exhibition, *Untitled/ Peruvian Travertine* (2015), I strive to create a universally accessible experience with this natural material that has been shaped by man—that we may all feel its inconceivable

agelessness and silent dignity. I’m inspired by simple forms found in nature—water-worn pebbles encountered on a beach, bones, tree trunks twisted by wind and time.

Age-old architectural principles govern my sculpture on display here: two stones over one and one over two—the most basic tenet of stonemasonry. An arch creates the opening through the center of the sculpture in which a keystone spans the curve and supports the weight above it. Within this simple framework of architectural principles, a formal complexity emerges through the interlocking parts, fitted together through an unfolding, intuitive process. Stone is a very ‘slow’ material, allowing for decisions to be made with a deliberation that modern life has almost completely removed from artistic process. I want to restore that sense of making that unfolds over decades or even centuries, to invoke that sense of wonder. The finished work enters into a venerable continuum of stone work, a history that has existed almost as long as we have.

