



In the last two years Andy Goldsworthy's work has turned increasingly to mixing well-known nature based pieces made in and for the moment, with other media: dance, video, film and new media. Among other issues, this interview-essay explores these works' relation to land art, from his *Time* exhibition in London, to current work in the wilds of west Sussex

Downloading a path by the light of a silver moon

Part One of an interview essay on Andy Goldsworthy

An age ago, in 1975, Andy Goldsworthy used to catch the train from Lancaster along the Lune river to the great stretch of sandy shoreline which sits out on the north-west promontory of the Lancashire coastline, Morecambe Bay. There, he would pass his days messing around with the sand and stones and the other found materials, making pieces in the instant before an incoming tide would wash away those early fragments in his making life.

Over a quarter of a century later, in the summer of the millennium year, 2000, Goldsworthy published his third large-scale book, *Time*. In it, on the first page, he writes a simple though pleasingly effective line drawn from those experiences: 'the beach is a great teacher'. Which of course it is.

'I would get off the train every day and there was this huge space compared to these tiny cubicles that were in art college, where the making of art seemed pointless. Every day I went out and worked on the beach, and each day's work was washed away and replaced by another. There was this sense of rhythm. Within that are so many, many lessons ... a sense of the tide coming in, and that you have in front of you the material, and the sense of time that you have to make the work. There has to be a balance and a compromise between what you may want to do, and the material you have, and the time you have to do it in. I was putting myself in a context and straightaway I had to think differently to what I would have possibly done otherwise. And I apply that to my life, not being one who believes in perfection. I like to pitch my life to that. You have a certain amount of years to try and pace your life and work, to fit it in. It's a big risk, and to a smaller degree on the beach everyday, was this risk.

There's a certain dynamism to having to work quickly, to a deadline, that makes very creative situations. These are not exhibition deadlines, this is the

tide! – which brings a real deadline. There's no choice. As artists, we have deadlines of the exhibition opening and if we don't make the opening we can do it the next day, the work's going to be all right. But outside that's it, it's finished, gone, and I need that.'

From those times on the beach, Goldsworthy has developed a way of working that continues to put much of his artwork at the mercy of the natural world. It has meant he has built a reputation on a collection of work, which, in the main, has disappeared, been washed away, and decomposed back into the underwood and mulch of leaf fall, the downstream and the tidal flow. Despite this, and also because he photographically records each work before it is consigned to the elements, Andy Goldsworthy has become one of the better known artists of our time. Such an unprecious approach to the life of the artwork is common to the small group of British artists who mainly began work in the mid to late sixties, and have become associated with Land Art, among whom Goldsworthy is by far the most visible. Around half a dozen years younger than those others – Richard Long, David Nash, Hamish Fulton, Chris Drury – who have found a receptive public, Goldsworthy stands out. His very popular books touch a chord with the public that reaches out beyond the confines of the art world. It has made him an icon of contemporary environmental art. These recent books, over the last decade, include *Stone*, *Wood* and 2000's aforementioned *Time*.

In the last decade and with the success of those books, the range of his influence has spread far and wide. Down the road from where I live a small school's open day shows off the class projects, among them land art play in the Goldsworthy mould. That school is only one among many. Inclusion in the National Curriculum is one of a stream of consequences that have flowed from success: receiving a CBE another ('don't you dare