

In 2003 a documentary film exploring Goldsworthy's work, *Rivers and Tides*, was shown in art cinemas across the Western world. To some surprise it drew full houses and went on to receive several awards. In the first part of this issue's two part Goldsworthy themed section **Thomas Riedelsheimer**, the film's director, talks about the making of *Rivers and Tides*.



On the ice in Nova Scotia

all photos: Thomas Riedelsheimer

In the summer of 2003 art cinemas throughout Europe and North America showed a film which offered an up-close view of the way Andy Goldsworthy works and creates his ephemeral art. Titled *Rivers and Tides*, the film, essentially a long documentary, surprised many people in the industry by not only being commercially successful, but winning a garland of prizes and awards around the planet. Directed by a German film-maker, Thomas Riedelsheimer, the film was made over a three-year period, of which the first was devoted to fund-raising, the second to the actual filming and the third to editing and other post-production work.

The film is lyrical and evocative, Goldsworthy's working process becoming much clearer as you see it unfolding on screen. Indeed, seeing the process in filmic motion doesn't detract from the work, if anything it makes it considerably more comprehensible. Goldsworthy explains his working method live, in front of the camera, while he works away at a stone boulder on a Nova Scotia beach against an incoming tide. There are moments of humorous pathos, such as when the stone boulder repeatedly collapses on Goldsworthy, but there is also much where the beauty of what Goldsworthy's art amounts to is transmitted evocatively and movingly. With a music score by Fred Frith

the film follows Goldsworthy to some half-dozen locations around the world, showing different signature elements of Goldsworthy's work in the act of making. The interesting question, to my mind, is whether seeing the work in motion and in time adds another dimension to the genre, something quite different from the still, captured quality of the photographic record which is archived in Goldsworthy's books, or whether it is primarily a continuation on the same spectrum as the photography. Riedelsheimer sidestepped this question in the interview below, having already stated that he likes to think he works from the gut rather than the head. Be this as it may, *Rivers and Tides* opens up an understanding of Goldsworthy for those interested in his work, the processes of this work, and the aesthetic quality of the work itself, which was much less easily accessible hitherto. The interview was carried out by email.

What was the impetus for approaching Andy Goldsworthy to make a film about him and his work?

Years ago I read about him in a magazine called GEO. I found his work amazing but – even more important – I became interested in this man. The author wrote about a somehow strange person walking around in the forests trying to 'understand a stone'. That raised my

interest. The kind of enthusiasm that became obvious between the lines of the article – the tunnel vision of an artist.

Was Goldsworthy enthusiastic/cautious/uninterested at the beginning? How did the relationship, where you were going to spend a significant part of a year together, develop? Goldsworthy had been interested in film at college. Was he involved in the creative side of the making? And did the original idea change much once you started making the film?

Once we had exchanged the first letters (real letters in the beginning, not even fax messages!), I decided to visit him in Dumfriesshire (there was no money and no project at this point – just the intention). I think that was the moment when he realised that this German director also had a kind of enthusiasm himself. I guess he appreciated that. According to my experience Andy was cautious and maybe even suspicious, but also intrigued by the idea of a feature-length film shot on celluloid. So far he had only experience with (British) TV crews. I also sent him some of my former films. From the moment he decided to go for the project, a year passed finding the financing for the whole thing, before we began shooting. During this year we met occasionally, and confidence in the project grew. After we started shooting in autumn 1998 I immediately showed him the rushes. I think he really was quite pleased to see the result and, towards the end of the shooting a year later, I think he had absolutely no reservations. It was a great year and I learned a lot from Goldsworthy. I think what also made our team special was our willingness to help him with carrying stones or collecting wood. He'd never experienced a film team doing that before.

Concerning the creative work: In the beginning of the project we discussed the idea of time and he came up with some ideas especially for the film (like the red sandstone cone in his fields that gets grown over by bracken. We left a BOLEX S-16 camera with Andy's assistant, to show how the year passed on the cone). Obviously the film draws mainly from the things Andy did, and all his artwork was his ideas (apart from some pieces that I suggested to have in the film because I loved them). So he's part of the creative process – and also my ideas and my work changed after spending time with him and filming. So this was a fluid work with not much of a concept while shooting. The narrative line of the film (using the symbol of river and tide) was then



worked out by myself and the producers. Andy did not have much influence in the editing process, although I showed him the rough cuts occasionally.

Are you primarily an eco or nature or art film maker, or much more general?

I am interested in 'special' people. It sounds strange but I am not drawn to the actual work or art that is done, but to the person behind the work. Why are we doing the things we do, what are we longing or searching for? Just these – kind of very general – questions about life. I've made films about basic training in the