

# Time, Stone and the Image

Emily Young

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I am a stone carver, making sculptures of the human figure out of stone. The story of our ancestry is signposted with artefacts in stone. The earliest traces of our antecedents are left in stone: the hematite which we scattered over our dead as they lay in their graves (bloodstone/hematite/red ochre). Then there are the tools of hunting, skinning and digging — flints and other hard stones. The earliest buildings were huge boulders, manhandled into place, to make magnificent tombs, temples and ceremonial sites. And then on through into the written history of our ancestors, the classical civilisations of Egypt, Greece, Rome and on up to the present day. In the other corners of the world, China, Africa, the Americas and Asia, the same story holds true, that stone marks most impressively, and most permanently, the greatest efforts and cultures of all mankind.

Woods, leathers and grasses were also used, but they didn't last so well at all, being soft and organic, and they disappeared back into the earth from which they came.

In the heart of each piece of stone lying by a riverbed, on a hillside, strewn about a desert, lies a geological history, a small piece of the history of our planet, showing

the enormous pressures and metamorphoses that the elements making up our universe are subject to and part of.

Each individual member of the human race, and all the other creatures and living things on Earth also carry within them their history, our history. As complex as we are now, every cell of our bodies is made of the manifest origins of our life on Earth and before, the basic elements of the universe. We are literally made of stardust.

Deep inside each human is a part, uncontactable by consciousness, autonomic functions beyond our control: the beating of our hearts; the humming of our nervous systems. It is a heart of ancient vitality: invisible; uncontrollable; what we call 'life'. Our conscious worlds form and reform endlessly over this old river, and it is here that I would like to draw a parallel with the stone story. The dark heart of any stone holds its own, much slower, river of history within it. And as I work the stone, and expose its possible faces to the air, as stoneworkers have over thousands of years before me, I am always made aware of the link between my own biological existence, primeval and influential, and the stone's: like a god, slumbering in a forest.

*Emily Young is a sculptor working mainly with stone. She lives and works in London, exhibiting regularly at the Thackeray Gallery in Kensington. Her work is in collections all over the world*