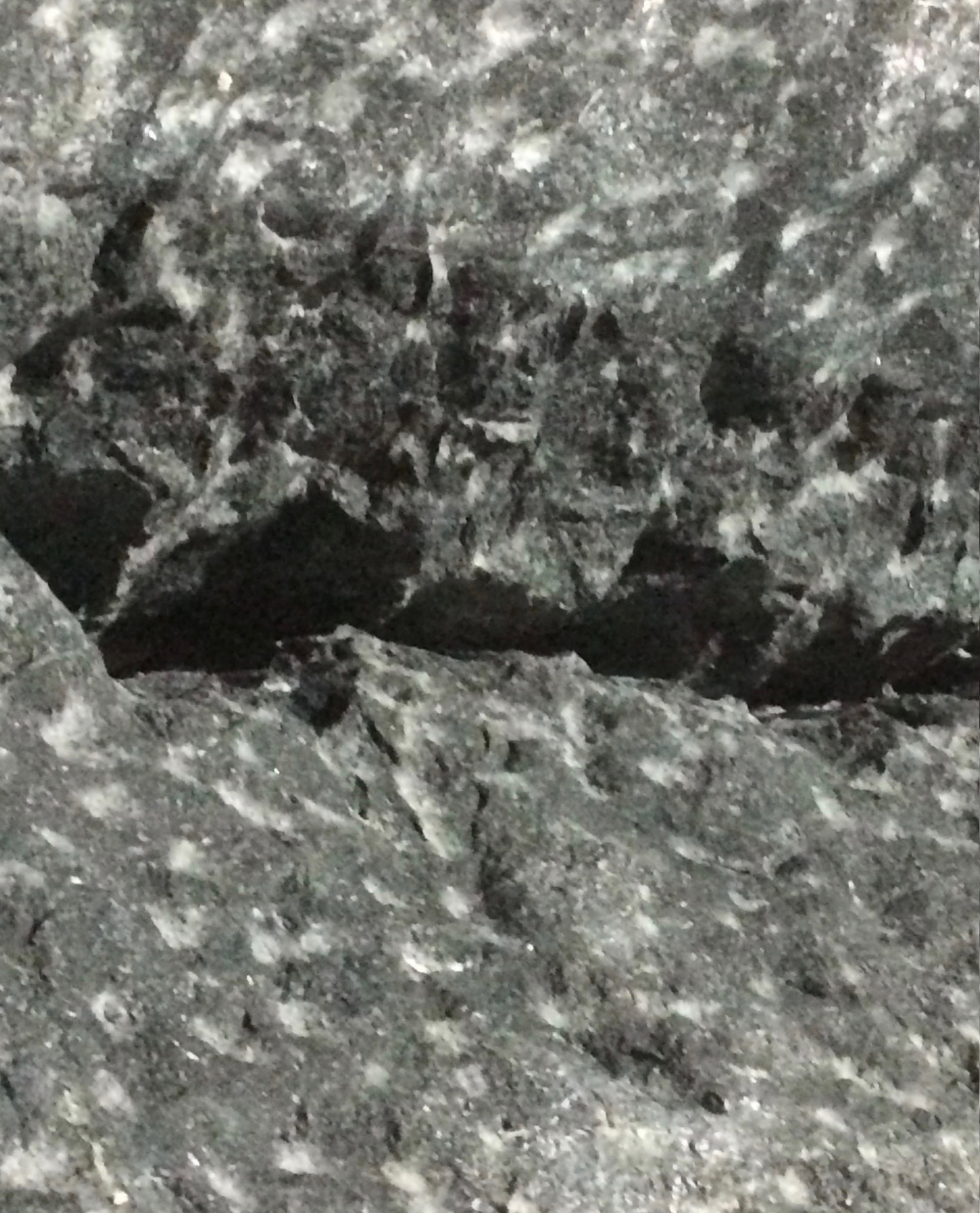


Nicolas Moreton





Making a Mark



A Retrospective Exhibition of Sculpture by
Nicolas Moreton
16th October 2021 - 8th July 2022



Night Time Stories
Kilkenny Fossil Limestone and Portuguese Marble
70cm x 20cm x 200cm Date 2021

FOREWORD

By Miles Young, Warden, New College, Oxford

Gervase Jackson-Stops first introduced me to Nicolas Moreton. I met him at The Menagerie, Gervase's fantastical home amidst the remnants of Horton House in extreme bucolic Northamptonshire. There Gervase held court to and generously entertained those whom deemed to be interesting; and Nicolas was certainly 'interesting'. The first impression was (and is) of rampant creative energy; touseledness; aggressive knees beneath the trademark shorts; an unquenchable passionate love of his work.

Gervase became an early collector, and soon we hatched a plan to give Nicolas his exhibition in London. I had at that time had some influence with the Mall Galleries, and so it was that in 1991 we arranged an exhibition there in its very sympathetic courtyard, launched with a private view to remember. I certainly could not afford it at the time, but one of the pieces – 'Bone' – remains a prized possession today, reunited with me recently after a long absence while I travelled and it remained sensibly in England. It is still a difficult piece to explain to the primmer visitor.

There is this sense of viscosity about Nicolas's work. That is what first attracted the critic Brian Sewell, who perhaps more than anyone else brought him approbation and profile early on. Sewell wrote 'he sees within the quarried block the imaginings of his mind's eye, when to the rest of us the inert stone might as well be a mere doorstep'. It is a judgement which has stood the test of time. Nicolas remains like a steadfast stone in very shifting sands, a sometimes solitary beacon for all who relish the unyielding, uncompromising craft – and graft – of carving, as carving has been done for millennia.

But his work is hardly traditional in content. From the veins and patterns of the stone come forth shapes which are anthropomorphic, sensual, challenging. Each is unique: there is never a sense of déjà vu, or sculpting by numbers. Each sculpture has an idea within it. These works are intellectually satisfying; they never descend into ornamentality.

Thirty years on, it is for me an enormous pleasure that Nicolas's first major retrospective is taking place in the Cloister and Ante-chapel of New College, part of the range of buildings in the restrained perpendicular, described by Gervase in his section on the College history as 'as much ahead of its time in its style as in its planning'¹

How appropriate a setting in which to reflect on these works.

1

Gervase Jackson-Stops, 1937-1995, Architectural Historian; (*Contributor to New College, Oxford, 1379-1979, pub. 1879*)

Carving a Way

For many years now contemporary sculpture seems to have moved away from the nude human figure towards more conceptualized imagery. Yet there are exceptions, artists who in their own individual ways have chosen to follow the pathway of Donatello, Michelangelo, Rodin and Henry Moore, figures from the near and distant past who celebrated the beauty of the human form and imbued it with clear underlying sexual significance. Among their followers is Nicolas Moreton. But Moreton is no slave to tradition. He is a consummate craftsman with a highly developed skill in direct carving into the stone, but he uses tungsten carbide reinforced tips for his chisels and polyurethane for his mallets which gives him the advantage over Michelangelo, and his diamond sponges enable him to polish the surface of his stone carvings to a brilliance which Henry Moore would have envied.

Moreton only began stone carving during the last year of his Fine Art degree at Wolverhampton Polytechnic in 1985. His natural talent became evident in a series of standing stone story reliefs of female nudes, which followed his graduation. In *The Birds, The Fish and The Moon*, the beautiful form of the nude is counterpointed by a still life of fruit. The apple stands for temptation and the pear for affection, but together they look remarkably like the male genitals. The dark blue and grey Northampton limestone is used to maximum effect; in fact, this block was quarried for the railway in 1860, and Moreton discovered it on the farm where he had his studio. Such luck is rare, and usually he has to visit quarries to choose suitable raw materials. England suffers from a shortage of marble-rich mountains; although Moreton acknowledges the beauty of such stones and at times will use them he is a passionate advocate for British stones. So, unlike Michelangelo at Carrara, Moreton has chosen to use hard limestones such as Ancaster Weatherbed from Lincolnshire and Derbyshire Fossil, with occasional extravagances like Purbeck marble from Dorset and carboniferous stones from Cumbria. But he uses these to great advantage. *Arrows* is carved from a wonderful blue and creamy brown Ancaster Weatherbed stone, and it creates a striking image of two pairs of arms and legs around a large erect phallus. His imagery has never been limited to the female form. "I was becoming more conscious of the fact that part of me was female and part of me was male. I wanted to explore my own sexuality in a wider sense."

Moreton concentrated in his earlier work on sexual fertility, as seen in a piece called *From dawn to dusk*. This two-sided image depicts on one side a female represented by breasts and thighs against a sunrise, and on the other side a male represented by an erect phallus whose testicles mirror the female's thighs. In *Dessous la table*, a table-top metamorphoses into the hair of a female whose rounded body crouches below, like a "primitive" fertility figure. Her head is replaced with an inviting hole with sexual connotations, symbolism which he has described in terms of "a giving and receiving vessel". A small figure entitled *The Watcher* shows a crouching male with extended arms and legs. His prominent erection is crucial to the figure's vitality.

Moreton's growing strength as a sculptor was signalled in 1994 by his double success at winning two competitions for sculptures to be placed in the City Square in Milton Keynes. One is a wall relief, a triptych entitled *The Meeting*, which depicts a female and a male nude in carved panels either side of a central image of them coming together to share a cup. Hard, dark Derbyshire Fossil stone is used very effectively, the whitish texture of the carved areas contrasting with the natural darkness of the stone. The second is a large sculpture entitled *The Conversation* which continues the theme. It was the first of Moreton's major pieces to be cast in bronze. It shows a male and a female nude figure caressing each other, the female with long flowing hair and the male with a prominent penis. Their forms are simplified in Moreton's distinctive style as two series of flowing shapes. The sculpture is raised high on a carefully carved block of stone to signify how lovers often feel unaware of their surroundings. Moreton's sense of play is clearly seen in this piece make sure if you view this work you take a good look at the cup's and saucers around the figures. It was shortly after this triumph in 1995 that Moreton was elected a member of the Royal Society of Sculptors.

In 1993 Moreton had created *The Edge*, a reclining nude female in a carved standing stone panel relating to *The Meeting*, which was bought for the Burghley House sculpture park in Stamford, Lincolnshire, in 1999. In the twenty-first century as he became well established as a fresh new talent, Moreton received further commissions for outdoor work. Like Henry Moore before him, he loves to be able to site his sculptures in the open air where they can interact with nature or with buildings. In 2000, the University of Northampton commissioned *The Visionary*, an enormous natural block of Clipsham limestone with a tiny window near the top where a nude female sits and watches us or maybe tries to communicate with us. Longleat House in Warminster, Wiltshire, purchased *Genesis*, a quite extraordinary piece about the birth of his son, carved in Portland Whitebed and Roach limestone, for Lord Bath's sculpture garden in 2002. A major test of his abilities came in 2004 when he was privately commissioned to create a *Stone Circle* at Cefn Hellen in Monmouthshire. This consisted of 35 stones of Preseli Blue Granite, the tallest measuring 350 cm. He succeeded in creating his own vision for the beautiful site while not surprisingly making some reference to Stonehenge and Avebury, with its keystone set to shed its immense shadow in to the womb chamber on the summer solstice.

More recent work tends to concentrate on fertility and the wonderment of life. *Catching Nature's Gift*, 2020, shows a nude female cross-legged on a carved plinth with her hands cupped above her head. Moreton's own words give a clear explanation: "She sits, waiting, expectant. Her hands are raised ready to catch the fertile waters of life from the sky. When the rains come, they cascade down her fertile core and then into the earth beneath her. Her stone pedestal represents the earth and the rivers of our world."

Mark Upon Our Existence
Ancaster Weatherbed Limestone with Corremie Pink Granite insert
76cm x 60cm x 250cm Date 2017



Fertility is a universal theme which is at the root of much early art from many cultures. Moreton is happy to draw on a multitude of sources. *No Desert Rose Ever Bore Petals So Exquisite*, 2003, is an abstracted pregnant female form with multiple breasts recalling the Greek statue of Diana of Ephesus. *Earth*, 1999, shows a multi-breasted female with her arms raised above her head foregrounding a face with tribal references, perhaps a reference to Picasso's use of African masks. Like Henry Moore with his love of the Aztec Chacmool figures from Mexico, these inspirations are skillfully incorporated into his images.

In 2004 Moreton began to experiment with electricity and heat in his work. This introduction had been inspired by the light he saw streaming into Gloucester Cathedral whilst on his National sculpture tour "Transition". *O Joyous Light* produced at Gloucester Cathedral went on to inspire *Rock Energy*, 2007, a rough-carved egg of Kilkenny Black limestone in two parts, glowing with halogen light in between them. It contributes beautifully to the interior of a Mayfair bank in London. *Eye of the Needle* of 2010 is a large 3m ring of granite with Corten Steel crossed with LED striations lights up a rather unpromising setting in Mytholmroyd, Calderdale. *In the beginning* is a private commission consisting of an upright seed shape in Ancaster Weatherbed limestone it illuminates at night with a slash of electric light bursting through its surface, which causes the whole image to glow. And *Door of Hope*, 2012, is a commission for a Roman Catholic Church in London consisting of an enormous block of Scottish Whinstone granite with a glowing interior a truly powerful work to signify the resurrection.

The stone and light works bring a new, and at night, unexpected dimension to his sculpture that intrigues and excites the senses. His sensitive usage of these materials sets him apart from others that dabble with light.

Moreton likes the tactile nature of his work to be appreciated by viewers and encourages them to touch and engage with them. Some are designed to rock about when touched. Recent works have included small stone vessels designed to be held in the hand, such as *Ritual Still Life*, 2021. As he explains, "Set on a petalled tray, the vessels are set ready as if to be used in some daily or ceremonial ritual."

Moreton's work is distinguished by sensitive carving of exceptional skill. One only has to look at *Lifeboat* or *Night Time Stories* to see how he uses, understands and imparts an inanimate piece of stone with a soul. Is direct carving in decline? Not while Nicolas Moreton is at work.

Dr Peter Webb is a lecturer, and author of various books on art.



O Joyous Light
Ancaster Weatherbed Limestone, Halogen Light
152cm x 90cm x 90cm Date 2006



Gooseberry Fool
Ancaster Hard White Limestone
46cm x 46cm x 46cm Date 1985





Pregnant Reclining Figure Turned
 Ancaster Hard White Limestone, Plaster,
 Cedar Cones
 90cm x 46cm x 49cm Date 1986





Curling Inwards
 Ancaster Weatherbed Limestone
 68.5cm x 71cm x 63.5cm Date 1991



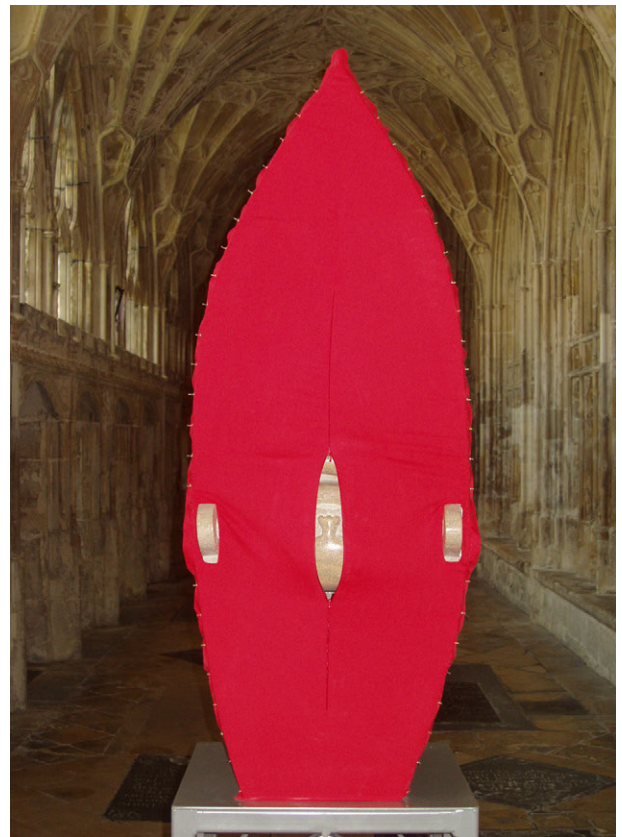
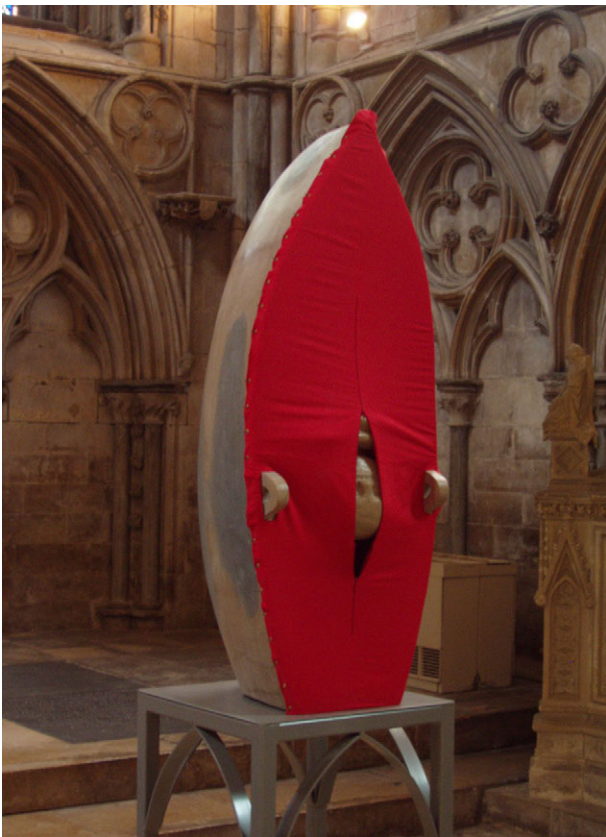


Open and Out
Ancaster Weatherbed Limestone
51cm x 46cm x 86cm Date 2002



No Desert Rose Ever Bore Petals So Exquisite
Kilkenny Limestone
76cm x 61cm x 152.5cm Date 2003





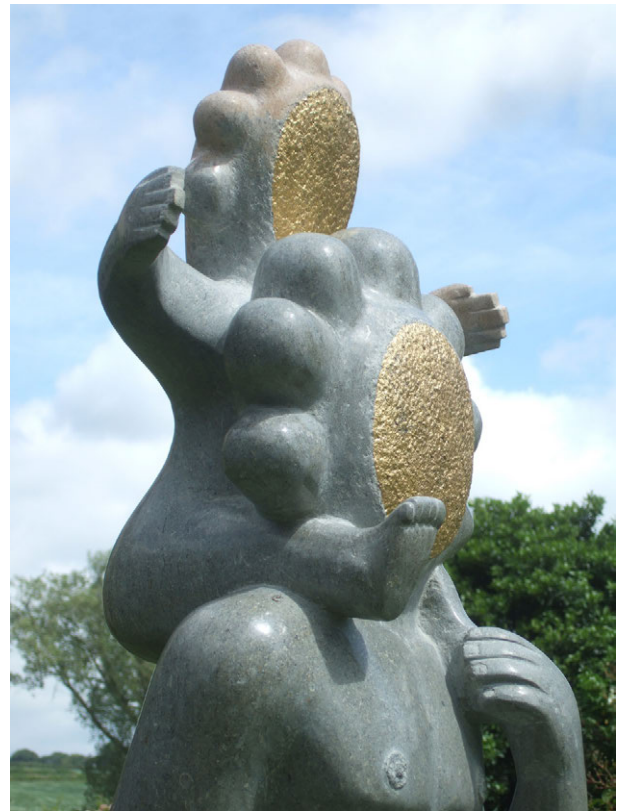
Transition
 Ancaster Weatherbed Limestone, Red Silk, Metal
 Date 2005





Sunflowers (Man and Boy)
Clipsham Blue Limestone, 24c Gold Leaf
35.5cm x 46cm x 122cm Date 2002





Rising Son
 Clipsham Blue Limestone, 24c Gold Leaf
 51cm x 61cm x 167cm Date 2005





Warm and Tender Breast
Ancaster Hard White Limestone
Date 2004



Warm and Tender Breast
Ancaster Hard White Limestone
Date 2004



Warm and Tender Breast
Ancaster Hard White Limestone
Date 2004



Lifeboat
 Anca Star Pink Limestone
 Date 2003



Breath
 Rosa de Monte Marble
 Date 2004



Catherine Wheel
Ancaster Weatherbed Limestone, LED Lights
110cm x 20cm x 190cm Date 2019





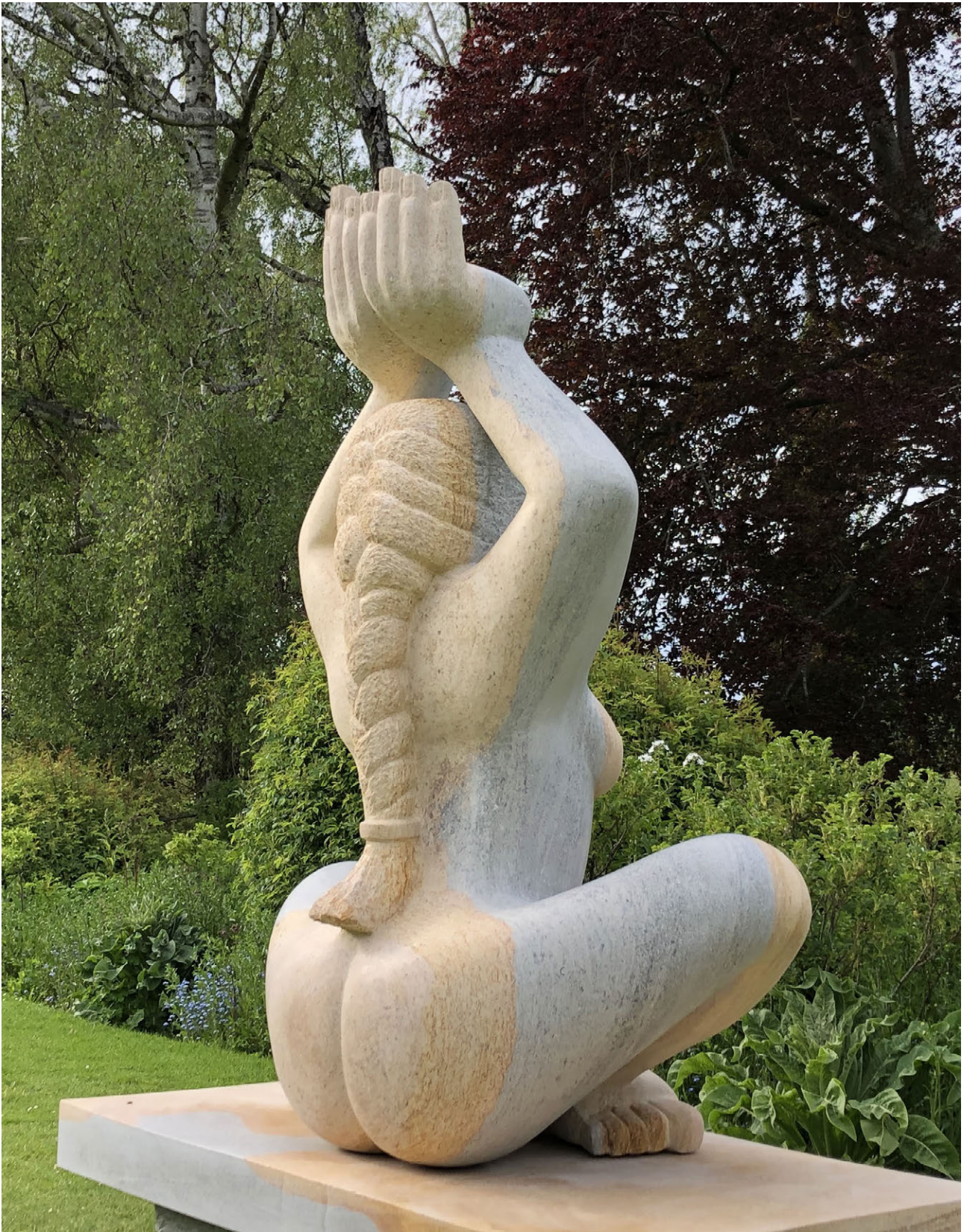
Chrysalis
Ancaster Weatherbed Limestone, Italian Marble, Halogen
201cm x 55cm x 30.5cm Date 2008





In The Beginning
Ancaster Weatherbed Limestone, LED Light
150cm x 50cm x 350cm Date 2015





Catching Natures Gift
Ancaster Weatherbed Limestone
120cm x 60cm x 165cm Date 2020



NICOLAS MORETON mrss

Selected Biography

1981 - 82 Nene College School of Art and Design. Northampton.
 1982 - 85 BA Hons in Fine Art (sculpture). Wolverhampton Polytechnic.
 1986 Became self employed fine art sculptor.
 1995 Elected member of the Royal Society of Sculptors.
 2006 Brian Mercer International Residency, Pietrasanta, Italy.
 2010 National Sculpture Prize, Bluecoat Gallery Liverpool

Solo Exhibitions

2021 Making A Mark. New College Oxford
 2018 Towards Totality. Messum's Fine Art, London
 2017 Messums Fine Art, Marlow and London
 2014 - 17 RHS Chelsea Flower Show, London
 2004 - 06 National Stone Carving Touring exhibition around English Cathedrals. Commencing July 2004, Southwell Minster, Gloucester, Lincoln and Manchester Cathedral
 2004 Touch Stones" Hutson Gallery. London.
 2002 "Passages" The Formal Gardens, Longleat House, Wiltshire
 2001 "New Bronzes" Peter Gwyther Gallery, London
 1999 "Elements" Goldmark Gallery, Uppingham, Rutland, Leicestershire.
 1997 "Pregnant Stone" Goldmark gallery, Rutland, Leicestershire.
 1996 "The Passion of Life" Lamont Gallery, London.
 1995 Stonecarving ". Goldmark Gallery, Uppingham, Rutland, Leicestershire
 1993 Sense of stone" Hunt Jennings Gallery London
 1991 Mall Galleries, London. Invited artist.

Commissions.

1987 "25th Jubilee sculpture" Weston Favell Upper School. Northampton.
 1995 "The Conversation" Milton Keynes City Square, Buckinghamshire.
 1995 "The Meeting". Milton Keynes City Square, Buckinghamshire.
 1998-2000 Abington Street Project. Worked with Northampton Town Centre
 Visit www.rpmtouring.com/northampton
 2000 Visionary, Millennium sculpture, University College Northampton
 2005 Cefn Hellen Stone Circle Project. Monmouthshire.
 2007 Shortlisted for Millfield School Commission, Somerset.

Shortlisted for a Gateway Commission for Northampton.

Rock International Bank, Mayfair, London. Commissioned by Kelly Hoppen Interiors.

2008 Four sculptures for Northampton Central Museum, Northamptonshire

2009 Dominicans Private commission. London

2010 Public Commission at Mytholmroyd, Yorkshire

2011 Memorial Commission London

2011- -12 Church Green, London Commissioned by the Roman Catholic Church

2012 Commission for The Stone Roses.

2015 In the Beginning, UK Private Commission.

2016 Connecting forces. USA Private Commission

2018 - 19 "Pinnacle" Clonkeen College, Blackrock, Co.Dublin Ireland

Awards

1993 Shortlisted for Henry Moore Fellowship, University of Kent

1995 1st Prize Northamptonshire Contemporary Open

Shortlisted for Henry Moore Fellowship, John Moores University

Southern Arts Regional Arts Lottery Grant for Sculptor in Residence

2004 East Midlands Arts Council grant for Sculptor in Residence at Southwell Minster, Southwell

2005 New Partnership, Art and Business Award. Arts Council grant for Artist In Residence at Gloucester Cathedral

2005 Arts Council grant for Artist in Residence at Manchester Cathedral

2006 Brian Mercer International Residency, Pietrasanta, Italy

2007 Community Champion Award, East Midlands.

2010 People's Choice Award, National Sculpture Prize, Liverpool

Selected Exhibitions from 2005-2021

2021 onform "unlocked", Asthall, Oxfordshire Sculpture at Kingham. Kingham Lodge, Oxfordshire

Summer Exhibition. Moncreiff Bray Gallery, Surrey

Altered Images. Shaw House, Newbury Sculpture at Marlow. Messum's Fine Art. Marlow, Buckinghamshire

RHS Chelsea Flower Show. London

Windsor Contemporary ArtFair, Windsor

"Botanicals" Leeds Castle, Kent

2020 On Form 20, Asthall, Oxfordshire (virtual Exhibition)

ING Discerning Eye. The Mall Galleries, London. (virtual exhibition)

2019	Messum's Fine Art, The Studio, Marlow, Buckinghamshire. Sculpture in the Garden, Borde Hill Gardens Sussex The Sculpture Garden Odney Club, Cookham, Berkshire Conversations in Sculpture. Huddersfield Art Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture at The Studio. Messum's Fine Art Marlow Buckinghamshire	2010 2009	National Sculpture Prize Liverpool onForm 2010 Asthall, Oxfordshire Thompson's Gallery, London The Garden Gallery, Hampshire Art de Jarden, Oakham, Rutland Goldmark Gallery, Uppingham, Rutland. London Art Fair (Robert Bowman Gallery) Art Contact, Limberhurst, Cambridge Art de Jarden, Oakham Rutland Goldmark Gallery Uppingham, Rutland Sculpture show, Thompson Gallery, London
2018	Messum's Fine Art, London onform18, Asthall Manor, Asthall, Oxfordshire Summer Exhibition, Moncrieff Gallery, Surrey Sculpture at Kingham Lodge, Oxfordshire Hannah Peschar Sculpture Gallery, Ockley, Surrey Henley Art Week	2008	London Art Fair (Robert Bowman Gallery) onForm 2008, Asthall, Oxfordshire Chelsea Flower show (Robert Bowman Gallery) Touching Art Touching You. Royal Cornwall Museum
2017	RHS Chelsea Flower Show (solo tradestand) Sculpture at Messums, Messums Gallery, London	2007	Art London, London Goldmark Gallery, Uppingham, Rutland Royal Academy Summer Exhibition Robert Bowman Gallery, London.
2016	Goldmark Gallery, Uppingham, Rutland. Sculpture at Lord's Wood, Messum's, Marlow RHS Chelsea Flower show (solo Tradesstand) Flora and Fauna, Mount Pleasant Gardens, Cheshire Doddington Hall, Lincolnshire	2006	Goldmark Gallery, Uppingham. Spectrum, Abbey House, Wiltshire. Sculpture in the Garden, Leicester University Festival of Sculpture, Guernsey "Stone", Royal Society of Sculptors, London.
2015	Sculpture at Kingham Lodge, Oxon Moncrieff Gallery, Surrey Alfred East Gallery, Kettering, Northamptonshire St Marks Hall, Coggeshall, Essex RHS Chelsea Flower Show (solo tradestand) GROW, Hampstead, London	2005	Cadogan Contemporary, London Goldmark Gallery, Rutland, Leicestershire RHS Show, Tatton, Manchester Sense and Sensuality, Bankside Gallery, London "The Kiss" Spectrum Gallery. London "Art4Life" Christies, London
2014	RHS Chelsea Flower Show (solo tradestand) Doddington Hall, Lincolnshire GROW, Hampstead, London Parallex Art Fair, London		Pride of the Valley Sculpture Park, Surrey. "Sculpture in the planning" Millfield School, Somerset.
2013	RHS Chelsea Flower Show Pride of the Valley Sculpture Park Cookham Arts Festival Moncrieff Gallery Surrey Coughton House and Gardens, Warwickshire Landscape Show 2013, Battersea, London	Collections	Sir and Lady Alment Lord Archer George Melly Brian Sewell. Northampton Museum and Art Gallery University of Northampton Burghley Sculpture Collection Longleat House collection.
2012	onForm 2012, Asthall, Oxfordshire 20/21 st Century Artfair. RCA, London The Jose Art Fair, London Artspace, Henley Artbeat 2012 Woburn Abbey, Buckinghamshire Doddington Hall, Lincolnshire Moncreiff Gallery, Surrey		Stone Roses Calderdale Council Hermes Properties Clonkeen College Work can be found in many other private collections worldwide
2011	International Sculpture, Pietrasanta, Italy FreshAir 2011, Quenington Gloucestershire The Grove, Watford, Hertfordshire Moncreiff Gallery, Surrey ING Discerning Eye, Mall Galleries, London		Australia, Belgium, France, Ireland, Germany, Hong Kong, Switzerland, South Africa New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States of America

Acknowledgements

The Artist would like to thank the following people for their help in putting this exhibition together, and to all his friends who have helped over the past years.

Miles Young, Warden, New College

Jacqui Julier

Simon Marsh

Gary Woods

Jason Lowe

Brendon Holmes

Misha Brazier Tope

Peter Webb

With Special thanks to my wife Julie for her Continued support and encouragement.

Photo Credits

Nicolas Moreton	4,9,21,26,27,36,37
Nicky Callis	12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
Tony Rundle	32,33,34,35,41
Steve Russell	30,31
Richard Adams	11,22,23,24,25,28,29
Jacob Moreton	2

Front Cover "Catching Natures Gift"

Back Cover "Exotic Fruit"

Inside Front Cover "Pinnacle"

For further information about the artist or to talk about commissioning a work please contact :

www.nicolasmoreton.com

Email. moreton.nicolas@gmail.com

Catalogue Design by Nicolas Moreton

Printed by Blackmore Limited

Printed in a limited Edition of 250 Copies

ISBN: 978-1-3999-0371-4

Works copyright the Artist

All rights reserved.

The Artist gratefully acknowledges the financial support from New College Oxford and Harrowden Turf







ISBN 978-1-3999-0371-4



9 781399 903714

www.nicolasmoreton.com
moreton.nicolas@gmail.com