

# Reclaimed by the land: Andrew Rogers's 'Time and Space'

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A DESIRE TO ESTABLISH CONSECRATED SPACES was the genesis of 'Rhythms of Life', the monumental land art project begun by Australian sculptor Andrew Rogers in Israel's Arava Desert in 1998. Since that time forty-seven stone structures known as geoglyphs have been arrayed across natural environments in thirteen countries spanning seven continents, a practice that is overwhelming in sheer scale and ambition. 'The structures denote the separation from the ordinary and provide contemplative settings', the artist tells me. 'They address the cycle of life and the interconnection of humanity throughout time and space.'

The plan for the latest part of this grand project, 'Time and Space', was first unveiled in May 2010, and has resulted in the creation of twelve major structures, made of rock and basalt, some engraved and carved, others covered in gold leaf, across a 2.4-kilometre plateau in central Turkey. Cappadocia is remarkable for its surreal 'moonscape' of tuffs – rock-like formations that are the result of ancient volcanic eruptions – that has been sculpted by rain and wind into valleys with curvy cliff faces and pointy fairy chimneys. Local people chiselled homes in this soft rock, and during the medieval period the valleys were a refuge for Byzantine Christians who established monastic settlements.

Cast against such a backdrop, the works comprising 'Time and Space' are undoubtedly epic, commanding a certain gravitas in relation to the humble viewer and the landscape. Rogers's constructions are not always clear references to architecture – some are abstracted or metamorphosed, others stand in defiance of the fossilised status of the standard significant historical monuments and symbols. There is never a personal element in his work, and the generic words carved into some of his columns speak universally of liberty, justice, hope and so on.

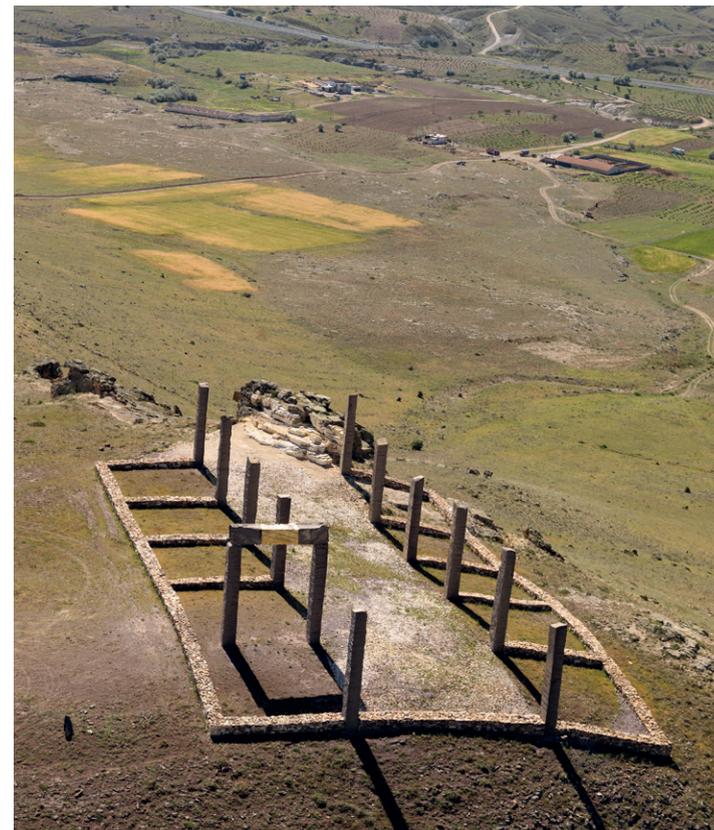
Although there is nothing playful about these constructions which sit solidly on the ground, as memorials and markers of time they are also low-key and ephemeral. Some have started to crumble

because of their exposure to the elements and the artist is content with their slow disintegration. The reality that the structures are so imposing and at the same time so fragile is one of the distinctions that can be made between traditional sculpture as a discrete object and what critic Rosalind Krauss suggested in the late 1970s as a new form of artistic creation: land art, which she called 'axiomatic structures' and 'site-constructions'.

Some of Rogers's works disappear into their surroundings, appearing two-dimensional, while others can be seen from great distances, rising many metres high to echo the extraordinary cliffs and arid hills around the town of Göreme. Rogers's sensitivity to his immediate environment and his concern with the interdependence between the natural world and the human presence are enduring themes in the artist's practice. For the past five years he has immersed himself in the rugged landscape and worked with hundreds of local labourers using found materials or basalt slabs transported from a quarry nearby.

Some of the geoglyphs, *Strength*, *Sustenance*, *Siren* and *The gift*, are inspired by designs sourced in local museums, by mythology and rock carvings, and have arrived at their form following Rogers's consultation with local historians, artists and community leaders. They may be somewhat conventional, but there is an attractive simplicity and strength to them.

These vertical structures include basalt monoliths and arches and Rogers uses mathematical formulae for their sequence and positioning. *Listen*, *Time and space*, *Predicting the past*, *Sentinels*, *A day on earth* and the most recent and final work, *Presence*, are columns and portals based on classical forms and the simple concepts of their titles. They would look unconvincing almost anywhere else, yet they are perfect in this heroic landscape. They have a monumental aesthetic, an intense spirituality and accessibility that validate them.



clockwise from top left: *A day on Earth*, 2009, basalt columns and volcanic rock, 3150 x 5100 x 900 cm; *Arch of memory*, 2011, solid basalt columns and lintel, 1950 cm high; *Sustenance*, 2009, volcanic rock, 10,000 x 10,000 x 200 cm; courtesy the artist. Photographs Andrew Rogers.