

Country views reveal hidden depths

Visual arts

**ANDY
GOLDSWORTHY**
Yorkshire Sculpture Park
WAKEFIELD ★★★

The landscape of Yorkshire Sculpture Park, created in the Picturesque manner two centuries ago by the Wentworth and Beaumont families, poses a challenge to the artists whose works populate it. Do they produce art and allow their forms to create an essentially tense relationship with the land? The Moores and the Caros, set against the hillsides and the pubic bristle of copses and spinneys in the middle distance, speak in their inscrutable metallic tongues.

Andy Goldsworthy's new array of interventions, on the other hand, are concentrates of the earth itself, speaking a language of enclosure and void. There is a wonderfully crafted sublimity in these structures.

To encounter his *Outclosure* or *Wood Room* is to sense the hands of the craftsmen who made them. Goldsworthy has taken the materials of the mannerly landscape couching Bretton Hall and produced extraordinary focal-points: combinations of local stone,

oak, mud, blood, sheep's piss, whose characters manage to be simultaneously blunt and evasive. This is a show-and-tell philosophy of place, purposes, and worship.

We touch the dry-stone enclosures of his *Hanging Trees* series, and they seem modest and perfectly familiar. But when we gaze down into them, we find ourselves looking at the petrified writhe of a big oak branch, stripped of its bark, and plugged into the stone walls. We recognise the enclosures, and the branches; but arranged like this, nature and typology are fraught; they strip away the rest of our surroundings.

Goldsworthy doesn't ask us to consider anything more than one or two materials at a time. And so we concentrate on the kind of detail which, if we were out for a Sunday stroll, we might not notice. We look hard – really hard – at things that at first seem to be utterly unremarkable.

Outclosure, a beautifully made 2m-high circular wall (containing nothing) sits within a circular copse which is itself surrounded by an old circular stone wall. It speaks to the copse rather than to the observer. It is autonomous in form, and detail. And one examines it

minutely for evidence of something else. That "something else" is simply oneself, suddenly and self-consciously equally autonomous in the landscape.

The key device of Goldsworthy's work here is the frame: branches framed, space framed. His *Shadow Stone Fold* is an operative stone-walled sheep fold with an inner enclosure almost filled with an eight-ton stone slab on which people may lie during rain or snowfall to create a body-shadow.

A different kind of framing continues in the underground gallery. Here, we find a 3m-high "pinecone" made of thick branches, and four rooms dominated by single materials. The Clay and Wood rooms are simply amazing: in the former, we are enclosed by undulating, thickly cracked grey surfaces; in the latter, we are wombed in a dark tumulus made of intertwined chestnut thinnings.

An almost plasticine-like weight bears down, calling for an atavistic reaction. It doesn't come – possibly because one is wearing a pleasant sweater and a pair of polished walking boots.

JAY MERRICK

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