



THE TIMES

Beauty carved from the earth has power to replenish the soul

Visual Art

Andy Goldsworthy
Yorkshire Sculpture Park

★★★★☆

Joanna Pitman

Andy Goldsworthy's books, containing exquisite photographs of his art in nature, are reported to be the biggest selling art books in the country. These photographs, showing his stone and ice arches, his rings, circles, holes and nests, all his interpretations of landscape and memory, make for

comforting reading as we sit shrivelling in our centrally heated offices. His work whispers to us of winds streaming off mountains, of shoots and branches, the transience of beauty in nature. They give us a pride in our Earth, assuaging the anxieties of urban existence. They replenish our souls.

If you are after intense replenishment, though, head off to Yorkshire Sculpture Park, one mile off the M1 (J38), where a big exhibition of new work by Goldsworthy opens on Saturday (March 31). The land is still the seal of Britain's glory, and here in the 500-acre Bretton Estate Goldsworthy's works can be found in ditches, hollows, coppices and the open green spaces of this richly green patch of Yorkshire.

There is a working sheep fold containing his *Rainshadow* piece — a slab of sandstone on which visitors are invited to lie in rain or snow to create their body shadow. There is a grander, more operatic piece called *Hanging Trees*, in which three trees are imprisoned horizontally, deep inside stone enclosures and sunk in an excavated ha-ha.

But interestingly, it is in the five main indoor works that Goldsworthy really demonstrates that he still has the ability to fuse strong emotion with abstraction, and spirituality with strict artistic discipline and technical precision.

The first room contains a huge cairn made out of twisted logs of oak, clinging together with their own sylvan energy in this 20ft high egg-shaped sculpture. In the second room is a series of smoothly layered sandstone domes, built up to a black hole in each centre, which sits like a valve over these erupting bubbles of stone.

The third room has had its four walls lined with a thick

layer of clay mixed with human hair, which has cracked as it dried leaving a strong crackled pattern. Next comes a coppiced dome of chestnut branches filling the fourth room, dark and mysterious and sweet smelling. Walking into it feels like walking into the womb of a tree.

The final room contains a beautiful filigreed curtain, 50 square metres in size, made of the stalks of chestnut leaves held together with thorns. Lit only with natural light from behind, the delicate stalks hang together like the rapid licks of a fine Japanese calligraphic brush. You will desperately want to touch it, knowing that one small tug could bring the whole thing down.

Goldsworthy's work still encodes a 19th-century idea about the land — the sense of deep spiritual communion with nature — in a distinctly contemporary idiom of graphic boldness. The scale of his work has expanded but this has not eroded its complexities. This new show is likely to attract many visitors, and will be a fitting tribute to one of Britain's cleverest contemporary artists. *Andy Goldsworthy at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park* (www.ysp.co.uk)
March 31 - January 6, 2008



Stacked Oak, from local trees