





1 Stone

British artist Andy Goldsworthy (born 1956) has spent nearly three decades exploring the raw materials of nature, shaping them into poetic and mysterious forms that encourage us to look at our surroundings in new ways. In January 2003, the National Gallery invited Goldsworthy to create a site-specific installation. Completed two years later, in February 2005, *Roof* runs the length of the garden area on the north side of the East Building.

For the installation at the National Gallery, Goldsworthy decided to work with one of his favorite materials: stone. He began by exploring local geology because he is interested in the history of the environments in which he works. Goldsworthy visited quarries in Virginia that once provided stone for many of the historic buildings in Washington, DC. He selected slate, a hard and sharp stone that is often used for roofing.

Goldsworthy, his assistant, and a team of five British dry-stone wallers—experts in the craft of building walls—installed *Roof* during a three-month period, working eight hours a day, six days a week.

previous page: Andy Goldsworthy building *Roof* (photo: Lee Ewing © 2004, Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art)

above: *Collecting boulders near Barre, VT, 2003*, picturing Andy Goldsworthy (photo: Jacob Ehrenberg)

right: *Roof* at the National Gallery of Art's East Building (photo: Lee Ewing © 2004, Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art)

2 How It All Stacks Up

Roof consists of nine hollow, low-profile domes of stacked slate. Each dome rises five-and-a-half feet off the ground, and together the domes weigh 550 tons.

Goldsworthy used the dry-stone construction method, which does not need mortar to bind the stones together. Weight, balance, and symmetry create the domes' shape and prevent them from collapsing. To accomplish this, the stones are carefully stacked flat; they diminish in size and are cantilevered inward toward the top. Goldsworthy and his team used hand tools and power machinery to size and shape each stone, and they inserted small stone fragments as filler.

Each dome begins with a circular base that is twenty-seven feet in diameter and ends on top with a single, final stone. A circular hole, two feet in diameter, was carved in the capstone, creating an opening called an oculus in each dome.

"There is life in a stone. Any stone that sits in a field or lies on a beach takes on the memory of that place. You can feel that stones have witnessed so many things." Andy Goldsworthy





left: Giovanni Paolo Panini, *Interior of the Pantheon, Rome*, c. 1734, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection

right: Aerial view of the National Gallery of Art with the Capitol dome in the background, 1991 (photo: © Dennis Brack / Black Star, National Gallery of Art, Gallery Archives)

3 Domes

Domes are architectural forms that function as roofs and ceilings. A feat of engineering, a dome is a curved structure with no angles and no corners. The earliest domes, Neolithic burial chambers and dwellings, were often made of stone.

One of the best-known domes covers the Pantheon in Rome. Built of bricks and concrete in the second century, this classical structure inspired the design of the domed rotunda crowning the National Gallery’s West Building. Each dome has an oculus that lets light into the building.

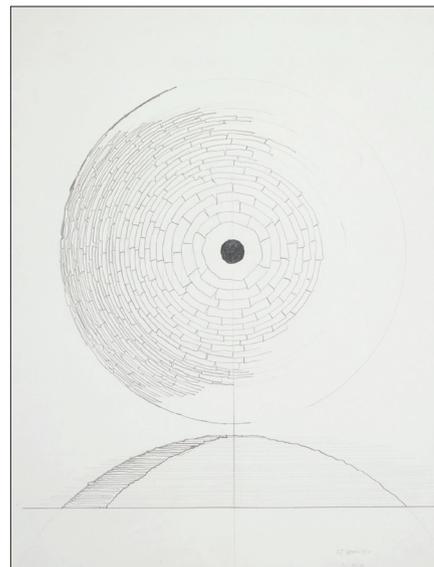
Since domes are generally roofs, we usually gaze up at them from either the inside or outside of a building. With *Roof*, Goldsworthy brings the dome to the ground. When you study the sculpture from different perspectives, the oculi look like dark black holes.

Goldsworthy has worked with the domical form since the late 1970s, creating domes out of ice, snow, branches, and leaves. With *Roof*, he salutes the long history of the dome and presents an interesting contrast with the East Building’s angular, modern architecture. The sculpture even “breaks” through the glass wall that separates the garden and the museum’s interior.

Does *Roof*'s cluster of forms remind you of things other than domes?

“Looking into a deep hole unnerves me and I am aware of all the potent energies within the earth. The black is that energy made visible.”

Andy Goldsworthy



Andy Goldsworthy, *Working Drawing for Roof*, 2004, Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Lelong

explore more

Nature Walk

Goldsworthy works only with materials he finds in nature. Some of the things he uses to create art are:

feathers

stone

ice

moss

sand

flower petals

leaves

twigs

pine cones

wood

thorns

water

snow



Roof is one of Goldsworthy's monumental public works, but some of his sculptures are never seen! Why?

He often likes to work in isolation in nature, where he can experiment with different materials and develop his ideas alone. Many of his works are ephemeral, which means they last only a short time—snow melts, leaves blow away in the wind, sand sculptures on the beach are erased by the rising tide. Goldsworthy photographs his sculptures because they last only a few days, hours, or minutes. The artist welcomes the changes that time brings.

Get closer to nature

Take a walk outdoors! You don't have to go far to discover something new. Don't forget to take an adult companion with you.

Tips for a nature walk

See what natural materials you find as you wander along the way.

Look at the colors and shapes of nature. Study patterns and designs.

Touch different materials. Compare their texture, weight, and size.

Imagine the landscape at another time of day, during another season, or during a rainstorm. What parts of the landscape might change over time?

What did you learn during your walk?

Did you see something that you've never noticed before?

Like Goldsworthy, you might be inspired to make a work of art during your walk. Take a photo to remember it.

Andy Goldsworthy, Touching north, North Pole, April 24, 1989 (photo: Julian Calder), image courtesy of University of California, San Diego

"I take the opportunities that each day offers. . . . I stop at a place or pick up a material because I feel that there is something to be discovered. Here is where I can learn." Andy Goldsworthy