



To: Members of the Sponsored Research DTF  
From: R. T. Leverich, Member of the Faculty

October 20, 2010

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to make application for Sponsored Research funding for the summer of 2011. I request five weeks of paid leave at that time to support my work and research. I'm very grateful for previous Sponsored Research funding (2009) and Foundation Grant funding (2010 – just concluding) that has helped me to do the background work that has led to this proposal.

*Proposed Activity*

I propose to make at least three new sculptural works that build on my previous stone carving experience but move on to assemblages of multiple stone elements in two formats, floor works and suspended arrays. More specifically, I would like to make one large work (say 300-400 sq. ft. in area) that builds on a piece I did several years ago called *Safe as Houses*, increasing the size and number of elements and creating a large open array or alignment of them. I would like to do an initial work followed by a larger and more complex one, both making use of small (3"-6" diameter) granite cobbles suspended in arrays that are based on bird flocking patterns in space.

My prior work with stone has focused on discreet objects, that is, singular, stand alone stone pieces, that explored figurative themes, and then landscape forms as sources for formal vocabulary. These fictive landscapes evolved to become more about undulating paths over and through abstracted landscape forms rather than about the forms themselves. They referred to travel, as in Chinese landscape scrolls, where travel is a metaphor for the journey of life over time. In these new works I'd like to continue to explore themes of travel, home or refuge, solitude, and displacement.

I think working with stone is timely because it heightens awareness of an elemental and ubiquitous material and the range of possible physical and spiritual interactions with it. Deliberate care for any such natural resource, the effort to know it, shape it, and use it well, is basic to environmental awareness and responsibility.

*Purposes and Scope*

I have extensive experience as a sculptor in wood, clay and plaster, and bronze. I'm also an architect, intent on creating spatial experiences. I began carving stone again five years ago after a long hiatus. I reacquainted myself with hand and power tools, and softer stones, in pieces that were primarily figurative. I moved on to more abstract pieces in harder stones that referenced landscape forms, and I moved to a more intuitive and immediate process based in the particular stone choice (generally granite), the original shape of the block, and how that particular stone responded, or "moved" with hand and power tools. I worked with diamond cutting and grinding tools, air hammers and other pneumatic tools, and electric water-lubricated polishing systems. This past summer, with the support of Foundation funds, I began work on several larger stone pieces, acquiring equipment and learning to safely and effectively shape and move such works. I

continued to explore horizontal, landscape based forms and carved surfaces in granite, and dealt with the physical and conceptual challenges of working with these themes at a larger scale.

For this new work, I'd like to change gears and work at a still larger scale, but with more and smaller stone elements, creating environments of stones that provide the viewer with a spatial experience as well as a tactile one. As noted above, I propose to make at least three of these assemblages using granite and other hard stone cobbles typical in streams and beaches in Washington State. These works will explore the potential of multiple stone elements to activate a space and create a spatial experience for the viewer using free standing or suspended elements.

These three works will be temporary installations, and part of my work will be to find and negotiate the spaces to present the works. The *Safe as Houses* piece will begin as a reflection on home and separation. It will require gathering stones, doing some basing and carving on each one and developing a scheme for arraying them in an indoor (or possibly outdoor) space. For this work I'd like to look again at prehistoric stone alignments for ideas and inspiration.

The suspended stone works I propose will begin as reflections on flight, travel, singularity in numbers, and displacement. They will require gathering stones once again, sorting them by size, shape, and color, and developing a discreet system of cables and connectors for suspending each stone and in turn, the entire array. For this work, I'd like to study bird flight and flocking patterns and computer simulations of both, to see if the simulation software could be used to assist in designing and building the work.

#### Professional Agenda

My teaching is centered on three-dimensional art forms – sculpture, sustainable design and craft – and the work I propose to do with these Sponsored Research funds will continue to inform and enhance my teaching in all these areas. In the past half dozen years, I've taught five programs with a stone carving component, one program addressing site-specific environmental sculpture, a program on Northwest craft, and several sustainable design programs addressing material, spatial, and landscape design challenges. Last year I incorporated stone carving into two programs, *Land and Sky* (2D and 3D art forms), and *Written in Stone* (drawing, book arts, creative writing, and stone work). I've been asked to teach and lecture on my work at three stone carving symposia in the past five years. In the future I'd like to design more programs that explore stone, installation, and landscape-based art making in the context of cultural anthropology, geology, or landscape studies.

My teaching is always concerned with not only the making of objects or buildings, but also with the crafting of physical and spatial experiences. It's those kind of experiences I'd like to explore with these pieces. I envision them as works that viewers will not just look at, but also move through and engage with kinesthetically. They will be both contemplative and experiential.

In addition to supporting and informing my teaching, this grant would help me to augment my portfolio with new work, and equip me for exhibition and residency opportunities, applications to environmental arts residencies, and possibly the Kobe exchange (to teach around stone and landscape, and perhaps to work with the stone carving community on nearby Shikoku).

#### Benefits

A principal benefit of these funds would be to have a period of uninterrupted studio time to develop my ideas for sculpture as spatial experience and to do the work required to realize such pieces. My thinking about sculpture, and architecture, has evolved through my teaching at Evergreen. I've had cause to reflect on how both disciplines shape materials, shape the

experience of space, and can directly foster awareness of environment and community. I encourage students to think about and to make work to address these connections, and I'd benefit from the same opportunity. My artwork, and my teaching, has benefited from research into local and regional geology and landscapes. The college would benefit by being able to see my work on display in the Evergreen Gallery and elsewhere on campus.

Working with stone has introduced me to the Northwest Stone Sculptors Association and a supportive community of artists, masons, and geologists. I've made personal and professional connections with sculptors in Canada, Japan, and Vermont, as well as Washington, Oregon, and California through the organization. I've brought five of these sculptors to campus as guest artists over the past four years, and the organization has given work-study scholarships to six Evergreen students to attend symposia over the last three years. I've made useful connections with stone suppliers and tool companies in Seattle, Portland, Vancouver and elsewhere, relying on them for information and advice as well as program supplies. This grant would allow me to continue to build these connections.

Plan

In preparation for the work of this grant, I would make exploratory drawings in winter and spring quarters and undertake background reading, research into prehistoric stone sites, and research into bird flight and flocking patterns and simulation software. I would begin collecting stones and assembling tools for the work in spring quarter, as well. I will seek out artist peers to review and discuss my ideas with me during in spring quarter as a means of keeping preparation for the work moving forward. I will treat the summer award period as a residency, working full time in studio. I envision proceeding in parallel with the floor and suspended work (that is, starting both at once), and will have at least three works substantially completed by the end of the award period.

Dates and Length of Leave

First or Second Summer Session, 2011.

Affects on Curriculum

I would not be absent from the curriculum in the regular academic year while doing Sponsored Research.

Letters of Support

Tom Johnston, Susan Aurand.

CV and Preliminary Reference List

Attached

Remuneration from Other Sources During the Requested Leave

I don't anticipate any other income during this period.

Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,

Robert T. Leverich  
Faculty Member, Visual and Environmental Arts  
The Evergreen State College

**Application for Sponsored Research, Summer 2011**  
**R.T. Leverich**

**Preliminary Reference List**

**Contemporary Sculpture and Installation Art:**

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McEvelley, Thomas. **Sculpture in the Age of Doubt**. New York: Alworth Press, 1999. 1581150237

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Buskirk, Martha. **The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art**. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005. 0262524421

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**Environmental Art:**

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Gooding, Mel. **Artists Land Nature**. New York: Cameron Books (Abrams), 2002. 0 8109 4189 9

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Boettger, Suzaan. **Earthworks: Art and Landscape of the Sixties**. Berkeley, CA: U of California Press, 2002. 0 520 22108 7

### **Prehistoric Stone Art:**

Chippindale, Christopher and Nash, George. **Pictures in Place: The Figured Landscapes of Rock Art.** Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Lippard, Lucy. **Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory.** New York: Pantheon Books, 1983.

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Cope, Julian. **The Megalithic European.** London: Routledge, 2004.

Bradley, Richard. **Rock Art and the Prehistory of Atlantic Europe.** London: Routledge, 1997.

Bradley, Richard. **An Archaeology of Natural Places.** London: Routledge, 2000.

### **Stone and Stone Sculpture:**

Paternosto, Cesar. **The Stone and the Thread: Andean Roots of Abstract Art.** Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1996. 0292765657

Burtynsky, Edward. **Quarries.** Gottingen: Steidl, 2007. 978-3 86521 456 0

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Dietrich, R.V. **Stones: Their Collection, Identification, and Uses, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.** Prescott, AZ: Geoscience Press, 1989.

Dixon, Douglas, and Bernor, Raymond, Ed. **The Practical Geologist.** New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992.

### **Bird Flight and Flocking**

Burton, Robert. **Birdflight: An Illustrated Study of Birds' Aerial Mastery.** New York: Facts of File, 1990.

Pennycuik, Colin J. **Modelling the Flying Bird.** Amsterdam; Boston: Academic Press/Elsevier, 2008.

**2011 Sponsored Research Application**  
Bob Leverich

**Supporting Images**



Ondine. Granite, 30"l x 12"w x 6"h. 2008



Traveling Over White Peaks. Onyx. 28"l x 11"h x 8"d. 2009



Untitled. Rainier Granite. 30"l x 11"h x 9"d. 2010



Safe As Houses. Granite, Gabbro. 22" l x 10" h x 12" d. 2008

Academic Grants Office  
The Evergreen State College

October 23, 2010

Dear Faculty Committee Members,

I am writing in support of Bob Leverich's application for a Sponsored Research Grant. I have been teaching in the Visual Arts area with Bob since fall '09. In addition, we were in a two-person exhibition together in 2002 so I have known his work over a period of time and see its progression.

Early this fall I had a studio visit with Bob and the opportunity to see a body of work he has been developing. He was working on individual sculptures that seem to be referring to landscapes/timescapes and also works of multiple pieces that are investigating ideas more in the line of installation. At the time he said he was interested in making two series: to continue with his *Safe As Houses* work and the second project would possibly use found stones and suspend them in order to create an environment. Formally, Bob's work is strong. All of the carved pieces including the *Safe As Houses* work look like casts when the mold is removed. They seem as if they had been existing and are suddenly exposed. They look slightly inverted; there is a connection between positive and negative form and between the ridges and the sunken reliefs. He is also concerned with changing the scale of the work in relation to a viewer or providing more of an environment. There was a collection of polished black marble or granite lengths that look like 1 x 6's standing on their side. They are striking together in the pattern they make; at first they look like steel but they were polished marble and they gave a lovely contrast of marble in its familiar form as a flat slab but in an unfamiliar presentation.

Bob is deeply exploring the slowness of stone both in its natural formation and in its carving in the context of a rapidly moving culture of technology. Stone carving is a traditional medium and shares with painting some of the burdens of its historical value with craft. As a contemporary artist, it is a challenge to work with traditional media and use the form to speak in contemporary terms. Judging by his Reference List, he is researching questions about the relationship of objects and concepts and of sculpture as installation in an environment. Thematically, he is interested in the natural environment. The research he has done for his programs seems integral to his own practice and because of that reciprocal relationship between his teaching and artwork it is important that he have time to develop his artistic projects.

Bob's proposal is clear and doable. Funding his proposal not only supports his continuing artistic research and practice, but also supports the goal of interdisciplinary scholarship in the visual arts for both faculty and students. Bob and I have had a number of meaningful conversations about teaching and art making. He is invested in both areas and this grant will support him in his efforts to keep the theory and practice vital and alive.

Sincerely,

Shaw Osha

September 24, 2010

Sponsored Research DTF  
The Evergreen State College  
Olympia, Washington

Members of the Sponsored Research DTF:

During the past several years I have become familiar with the contributions of your faculty colleague, R. T. Leverich. I have had the pleasure to interact with him as a multifaceted artist, sculptor, architect, designer, and dedicated teacher. I selected him to design my personal art studio, at which time I came to know his working method very directly. With every interaction and exposure to his ideas and work I grew more impressed. And now, having had the opportunity to work in my studio on a regular basis, my choice of architect is confirmed with each moment I am there.

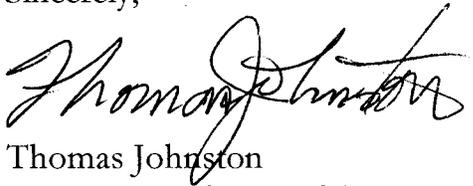
In addition to architectural design experience, I have witnessed the beauty and growth of his artwork during this time, including drawing, sculpture, and furniture design and fabrication. In all of these areas he is concerned with the beauty of the art object, and with sharing the creative experience, from initial concept, through drawing and the problem solving processes bringing the form to life, and involving students with these concerns.

I know from my own experience as an artist and educator, institutional support for periods of creative research, unencumbered by the obligations one experiences as a dedicated educator during a normal academic period, is appreciated and necessary. The benefits of creative research support the growth of the faculty member so that one may remain engaged with contemporary thought and practice beyond the campus- yet return refreshed with new ideas and discoveries to share with colleagues and students in the classroom/studio. Summer research support and professional leaves enriched

my own professional activities; with each period I returned to my teaching refreshed and eager to share, and additionally, I had new bodies of work to show in gallery and museum exhibitions. As an artist involved in higher education, these periods of creative research and activity sustained and reinforced my teaching and allowed me the opportunity to engage with professionals on an international level.

I have reviewed the proposal submitted by your faculty colleague, R.T. Leverich, and having observed the growth in his creative work during the past few years, I am pleased to offer my support of his ongoing creative activity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Johnston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "T".

Thomas Johnston  
Emeritus Professor of Art



To: Don Bantz, Provost  
John McLain, Academic Grants Manager

From: Bob Leverich, Faculty, Visual and Environmental Arts

December 30, 2009

Dear Don and John:

I'd like to thank the College for the generous award of Sponsored Research funds in 2009. I am writing to report on the work I was able to do with the help of those funds.

I proposed to use the Sponsored Research fund awarded to afford me time and resources to make a series of stone sculptures and graphic works continuing my exploration of landscape and geomorphology as sources of inspiration and formal vocabulary for sculptural expression. I set out to do expanded reading and research in landscape studies, site based sculpture and installation, environmental art, and geology, as well, to support my work and my teaching.

In July of 2009, I purchased a new(er) truck to replace my aging one and to facilitate transporting stone, tools, and sculpture. I attended the eleven-day Northwest Stone Sculpture Association's Carving Symposium outside of Arlington, north of Seattle. I began two new pieces, one in Rainier Granite and one in Paros marble. I finished shaping two other granite pieces and completed several small works in granite. I was able to gather information from tool vendors at the retreat as well as other sculptors in preparation for purchasing a pneumatic air hammer, carbide chisels, and a water-polishing set-up to make possible further work with harder stones. I was also able to purchase several large stones for carving – a unique piece of Turkish onyx – white with a thick travertine-like crust, and a large piece of a very hard, Basalt-like igneous stone, with leopard-like pattern of darker inclusions throughout it. I ended the summer three granite pieces shaped and ready for final polishing, drawings for new work, and a piece carved from the Turkish onyx and entitled *Traveling Over White Peaks*, that was included in the *Landscape Visions* show at the Evergreen Gallery in the fall.

I had an opportunity to spend time in Quebec last summer, so I researched stone, stone sculptors, and carving opportunities there. I traveled to Quebec in August, where I visited the *Maison du Granit*, a museum and art center in one of the principle granite quarrying and working regions of Quebec, about two hours south of Quebec City. The fine gray granite quarried there, similar in appearance to the Rainier granite found in Washington, was used extensively for churches and government buildings throughout Quebec and Eastern Ontario. The museum addresses the technology and culture generated by the granite industry in southern Quebec, as well as the geology of the region. It has links to local stone companies, whose business has shifted away from cut or carved building stone to production of stone veneers, cladding, and countertops, using granite from across Canada and abroad – samples and sources of these were available in the museum. The *Maison du Granit* has a reasonably equipped carving studio and an outdoor sculpture garden, and a summer artist residency opportunity that I'm continuing to explore, along with other carving opportunities in Quebec and Canada. Also while in Quebec, I had a chance to

try my hand at dry stone walling, building a 20-foot retaining wall for my host, and I made several outdoor installations of found stone and discarded stone slabs. I also photographed and drew stone in the environment – boulders, stone till, cliffs, riverbeds, quarry walls, building stone, attending to how it was shaped and weathered.

I was able to cover in more detail many of the readings I listed in my proposal, addressing basic geology and geomorphology, the geology of Washington and the Northwest, environmental art, stone working, and contemporary stone sculptors, including Lika Mutal, Isamu Noguchi, Maya Lin, Stephen Cox, Richard Long, and others. Of particular interest to me were readings on stone working methods, including those of the Inca, and prehistoric Europeans. I researched websites dealing with stone sculpture – [aboutstone.com](http://aboutstone.com) has become an especially useful resource. I was also able to explore resources and choose texts for my current program *Studio Projects: Land and Sky*, an all-level 2D/3D studio arts program focused on landscape and art, and for *Written in Stone*, my spring quarter CORE program.

As I suggested in my proposal, the principle benefits of this stipend were time to reflect on and make new work, time to learn more about the craft of stone carving, and opportunities to build connections with artists, teachers, and organizations with an interest in stone and its relationship to landscapes and communities. I generated a number of pieces, but I feel I'm just getting started with this theme of landscape-inspired works, and I'm excited to continue. I still haven't made the jump up in scale that I'd like to give the work more presence, but I have the first large stone in the studio! I definitely have new ideas, information and connections to bring to the classroom. Thanks for helping me to move forward with my creative work and my teaching.

Sincerely,

Robert T. Leverich  
Faculty Member, Visual and Environmental Arts  
The Evergreen State College