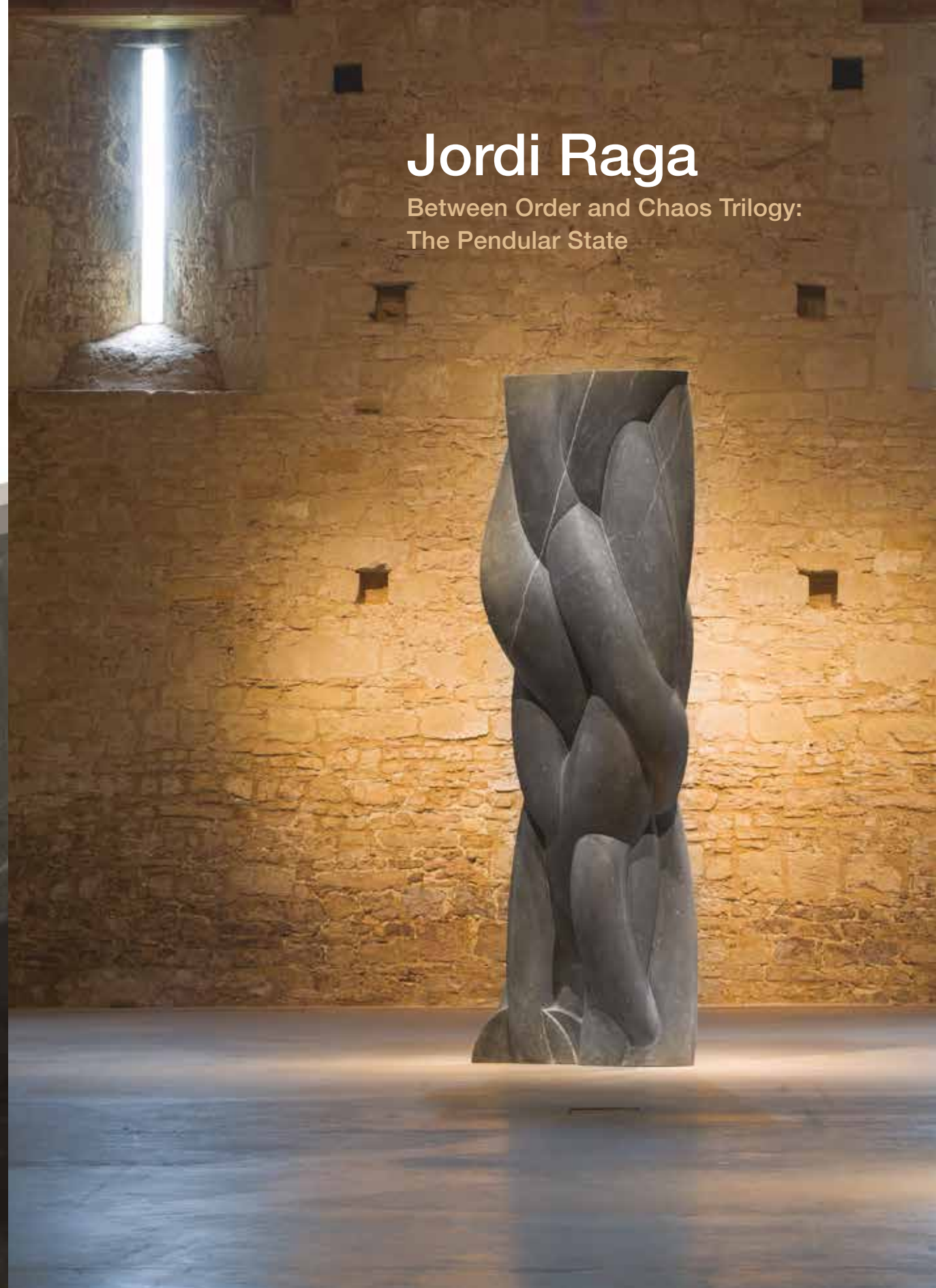


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# Jordi Raga

Between Order and Chaos Trilogy:  
The Pendular State



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**Messums Wiltshire** The Barn  
4 May - 9 June 2019

I met Jordi's sculpture before I met Jordi the person and liking one very much I was as pleased in meeting the other. There is a positive intensity to both. Also in tandem are his theoretical ideas that run in partnership with his sculptural ability. Exploring the relationship between chaos and order is a metaphor for the metaphysical, the language that underpins the work of Spanish Sculptor Jordi Raga Frances. His stone carvings communicate ideas by creating situations that embrace a strong visual statement as well as providing the basis for a more subjective interpretation. Working in stone is immediately suggestive of solidity and geological deep time.

The material is the start point for the narrative in his work and visually this is often there with geological interpretations of the shapes of stalactites, stalagmites and alluvial flow. On top of this chaos - or as Jordi would have it another example of the blend and distinction of order and chaos - is the more assertive application of geometry and mathematical pattern in modelling. Through a practice that places importance on technical accuracy, right angles and straight planes, his experimental sculptures strike a balance between tension, order and structure versus chaos, surprise and irrationality. This new body of work - his first solo exhibition in the UK - is shown against the dramatic backdrop of the thirteenth century barn here at Messums Wiltshire: a raw space whose unique dimensions and construction techniques provide an inspiring architecture within which to showcase his impressive and investigative approach to materiality.

Johnny Messum  
April 2019





# Between Order and Chaos Trilogy

## The Pendular State

**Is there a communication through matter that exceeds the parameters we abstractly or logically understand? An emotional communication? Matter has got its own character and memory, temperature, structure, etc., and has been studied by cultures across the ages for its symbolic and mystical as well as physical or technical properties. When an artist works on transforming a material, an exchange starts emerging and a communication and understanding builds up. But, transcending the purely physical and rational understanding, are there any other channels that both science or religion have yet ignored, that belong to the field of sensitivity?**

These are the questions raised in my weekly phone conversations with sculptor Jordi Raga, as we try to elucidate his creative process and the ethos shaping his practice. Jordi's first solo show - at Messums Wiltshire - was in development and his sense of playful transformation was in full flow.

We met last August during my first ever visit to the UK. On a rainy weekend in London myself and Mexican artist Katya Mora convened with Jordi to experience some of his sculptures in person. The exhibition at Messums Wiltshire was on the horizon, but first was a residency in Mexico and the conclusion of a series of large-scale commissions.

The next time we saw each other was on mobile phone screens at the end of February as we attempted to address the aforementioned questions. Although we were discussing a broad range of subjects, from art to the transformative experience of sculpting, we regularly returned to an anecdote from Jordi's youth. Travelling to Rome with his mother when he was fifteen, he had the opportunity to visit San Pietro in Vincoli. On entering the church he had the sensation that someone was staring at him. As he turned around he came face to face with Michelangelo's statue *Moses* and a wave of emotion flooded his body. Was this the corporeal reaction of his impressed mind? Could there be a living force that resided in that mineral matter? Even today the recollection gives him goose bumps. It was this early impression that has seen him explore the nature of

'inanimate' objects and reflect on his perception of them as living things. As he has honed his craft, his experience has helped shape ideas about how matter seems to remember, having a presence beyond form and structure.

I ask him about his relationship with stone. Why marble? A heavy rock, and not only due to its physical features but also its ancient cultural tradition. What thought processes occur when one stands in front of a brute block of marble, weighing several tonnes, and decides to alter its integrity so that it can embody a specific ideal? Jordi wisely explains that a crude block of marble may be considered a time capsule. In the apparent stillness of stone is printed the transformative stages of the earth's history. Marble carries millions of years of geological information, like a petrified time lapse of tectonic processes, glaciations, earthquakes, tides, establishing a concrete relation between our present and the origins of our world. Carving it to discover this secret history can be a gesture that releases its energies, setting its particles back in motion.

Jordi is emphatic here about respecting and honouring such a noble material: "By making, carving something out of a lump of stone, I observe the changes during the process, towards the object and to myself. Sometimes it is a matter of being aware and becoming open to what's happening there, the type of relation. If I stay fixed trying to obtain a premeditated objective there is no room for matter to speak; the conversation becomes bleak, monotonous, mechanical and the relation dies out. I feel excited when elements of surprise and discovery emerge and the work itself speaks out and claims its own life."

As well as the explorative relation between inner and outer space, the full-bodied physicality of such a medium is also attractive to Jordi. Though initially drawn to drafting as a student - appreciating its direct recording of reality, the value and intensity of line, and how it could convey mood - it didn't engender the same engagement that the slow conception of sculpture did. It also enabled Jordi to use his engineering brain, producing objects with material integrity as well as abstract forms that expressed the passing of time.

In such a process time is key, fostering a deeper, more reciprocal relationship between the artist and the object. As Milan Kundera details in his novel *La Lenteur* (Slowness): "There is a secret bond between slowness and memory, between speed and forgetting... the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting." The extended process of carving plays an integral part in Jordi's appropriation of the object's innate qualities. It encourages receptivity between his works as they evolve and his impressions as they arise, with both the artist and object transformed in the exchange.

Rather than execute a predetermined vision, Jordi explores the tensions between order and chaos as they arise during the creative process. On this, his first solo show, Jordi says, "*Between Order and Chaos Trilogy* is a project that emerged with the intention of exploring the relationship between the artist and their work during the creative process; investigating ideas such as purpose or will, departure point and objective, control and flexibility, structure and accident, and materiality versus virtuality, to understand how they alter the emotional relationship between the creator and the object created during their interactive encounter."

To explore this Jordi has transformed different materials using three individual approaches: Rendered from black marble one piece is unmediated in conception and implementation, while a white marble sculpture was conceived using 3D modelling software but manually executed. The largest work is almost completely 'virtual' - designed with 3D software and formed using robotics but necessitating large amounts of manual force. All three processes involved different degrees of human intervention - opening the works up to an element of chance - with the final outcome dependent on the varying tension between automated and intuitive processes.

The first piece has been created from a block of black marble on which Jordi drew lines as suggested to him by the shapes and limits of the stone, before undertaking the subtractive process. Meanwhile the other black, eight-tonne block awaited its robot with pre-programmed instructions to bring it to life. Without the tactile immediacy of his

hands and trying to decipher the 3D modelling software, Jordi waited for the white marble to "say something" to him. Instead time passed and it sat speechless in the cold outside his studio. While Jordi had finished the first piece according to his intuitive lines, the future of the other two pieces remained uncertain. He couldn't envision a sculpture from behind his laptop screen, nor establish a dialogue with the marble block before him.

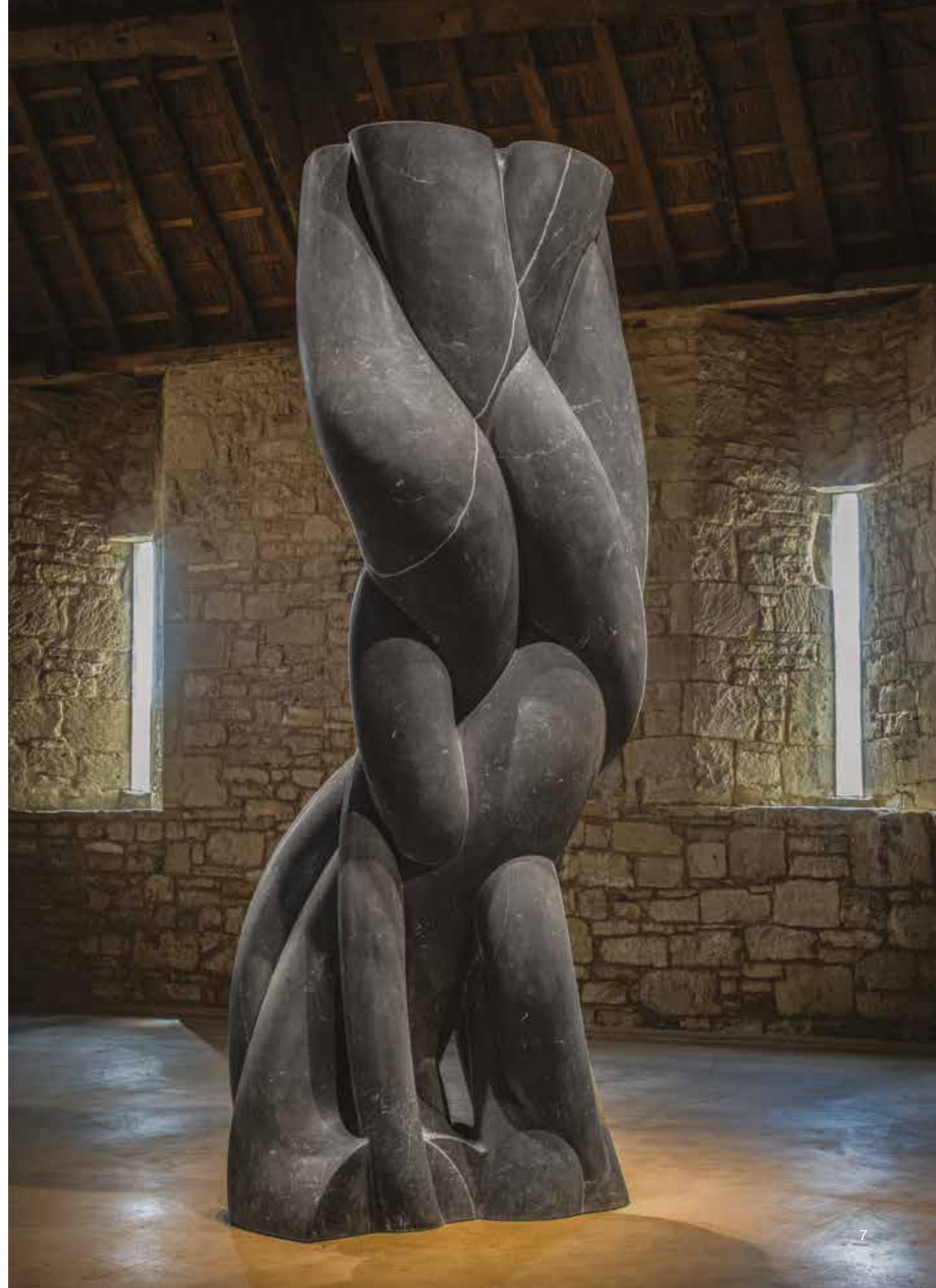
*Between Order and Chaos Trilogy* came to define an oscillation between confidence and uncertainty, enthusiasm and frustration, expectation and anxiety. One might ask, "Why take great creative risks before a momentous opportunity? What is it that makes artists expose themselves to uncertainty?" According to the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, artists always "[paint] the beginning of the world". In the act of creation, they depart from chaos and necessarily go through a catastrophe since, "It is a mistake to think that the painter works on a white surface [...] The painter has many things in his head, or around him, in his studio [...]. They are all present in the canvas as so many images, actual or virtual, so that the painter does not have to cover a blank surface but rather would have to empty it out, clear it, clean it." The artist's own clichés - previously formed ideas, images, habits - fill the canvas and the mind, so that an instance of chaos is required to incite their collapse, facilitating the emergence of something new. But this is not without its risks - because if chaos reigns, nothing emerges.

Fernando Aita

Contributors:  
Daniel Pateman  
Katya Mora  
Jordi Raga



**Ascension, 2019**  
(Between Order and Chaos Trilogy)  
Marquina marble  
290 x 120 x 80cm



**Contention, 2019**  
(Between Order and Chaos Trilogy)  
White Portuguese marble  
230 x 90 x 60cm





**Liberation, 2019**  
(Between Order and Chaos Trilogy)  
Marquina marble  
240 x 80 x 45cm







1730





**The Cliché, 2019**  
White Portuguese marble  
82 x 27 x 20cm



**The Sound of Water, 2018**  
Ivory cream marble and flint pebble  
65 x 35 x 30cm



**The Genesis of Gaia, 2013**  
Roman travertine  
84 x 29 x 40cm



**Paradise Lost, 2017**  
Portuguese marble  
164 x 46 x 46cm



**Achilles Heel, 2016**  
Portuguese marble  
199 x 87 x 74cm





**Rosa Ventorum, 2016**  
Sienna marble and Sequoia wood base  
86 x 84 x 57cm



**The Hint, 2014**  
Pink Portuguese marble  
48.2 x 31.2 x 19.2cm



**Raising Organism, 2019**  
Carrara marble  
36 x 18 x 18cm



**The Spawning, 2014**  
Onyx  
47 x 24 x 21cm



**Siamese Beings, 2018**  
White Portuguese marble  
8 x 40 x 12cm





# CURRICULUM VITAE

## ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

Athens School of Fine Arts, Sculpture Department. Guest student tutored by Nikos Paraskevas. Athens, Greece 2006-07.

National School of Plastic Arts of Mexico (ENAP), Sculpture Department. Guest student tutored by Kioto Ota. Mexico, December 2004.

Erasmus Scholarship in the Academy of Fine Arts of Carrara, Italy 2001-02.

Technical School of Marble Pietro Tacca of Carrara, Italy 2001-02.

Bachelors Degree in Fine Arts (Polytechnic University of Valencia, UPV). Spain, 1997-2003.

## EXHIBITIONS

On Form 18, Sculpture Garden Gallery, Oxford UK, 2018

Art Rooms 18, London, Melia Plaza Hotel, Regents Park, London UK, 2018

Borde Hill, Sculpture Garden Gallery, West Sussex UK, 2017

On Form 16, Sculpture Garden Gallery, Oxford UK, 2016

The Garden Gallery, Hampshire, UK, 2015

On Form 14, Sculpture Garden Gallery, Oxford UK, 2014

Crucible II, Pangolin Editions partnership with the Gloucester Cathedral, UK, 2014

On Form London, The Crypt Gallery at St. Pancras Church, London UK, 2013

La Huella de Vicente Ortí, Museum City of Valencia, Spain, 2013

On Form 12, Sculpture Garden Gallery, Oxford UK, 2012

Woburn Art-Beat, Sculpture Garden Exhibition, UK, 2012

XIII Sculpture Exhibition, Jose Lapayese, Spain, 2011

Dollar Street Gallery, Sculpture exhibition, Cirencester, UK, 2011

Sculpture installation, Gloucester Cathedral Cloisters, UK, 2011

Crucible, Crucible in Gloucester Cathedral, Gloucester UK, 2010

Gloucester City Arts Festival, Sculpture group exhibition, UK, 2009

Skedio Polis, Group exhibition, Athens, Greece, 2007

VII Sculpture Biennale of Quart de Poblet, Spain, 2004

II Sculpture Biennale of Benetuser, Spain, 2003

Exco Fair of Stone, Sculpture Exhibition, Valencia, Spain, 2003

VII Sculpture Bienal of Mediana, Valencia Spain, 2002

## COMMISSIONS AND PRIZES

Monumental water-feature commission Historic Manor-house, Cotswolds, UK, 2018

Monumental sculpture-architectural space commission, London, 2016-18

Monumental sculpture in Marble for commission for Galaxia-TV, Spain, 2008

Awarded 1st prize in the Prizes of Artistic Creation City of Palencia, Spain, 2007

Monumental Sculpture, commission for City of Buñol, Spain, 2004

Water-feature commission, for private residency, Valencia, Spain, 2003

Monumental Sculpture, commission for Canal 7 Tele-Valencia, Spain, 2002

## RESIDENCIES & SYMPOSIUMS

Galeria del Agua, Mexico, 2018

Taller 30 SMA, Mexico, 2018

International Sculpture Symposiums

Energetikas Sculpture Symposium, Lithuania, 2015

Hotikita International Sculpture Symposium, New Zealand, 2014

II Sculpture Symposium of Caransebes, Romania, 2011

IV Sculpture Symposium Form-Aragon, Spain, 2007

I Sculpture Symposium of Buñol, Spain, 2004

III Sculpture Symposium of Salazar, Burgos, Spain, 2004

## COLLABORATIONS

Sculptor Katusha Bull, Fluorite project management/assistance, UK, 2016

"Workingstone" production of monumental commission, UK, 2014

Sculptor Paul Vangstone, work assistance, London UK, 2013-15

"The Big Carve 2009" Technical assistance, Edinburgh, UK 2009

Monumental sculpture commission work for sculptor Sebastian Miralles, Spain, 2003

Worked for sculptor Jose Ballester, Spain, 2001

## HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL WORK

Gloucester Cathedral-Lady Chapel pinnacle reproductions commission, UK, 2016

Asthall Manor, Gable poppy-heads restoration/reproductions, Oxfordshire, UK, 2015

Canterbury Cathedral, Journeyman-stonemason. UK, 2011

Gloucester Cathedral, Stonemason, UK, 2008-10

Acropolis of Athens, Voluntary stonemason at the Propylaea building Greece, 2006-07

Private commission, traditional wall lying project, Ikaria, Greece, 2006

Heritage Restoration stonemason at "Goavec-Pitrey". Brittany, France, 2005-06

