

TURKEY LANDSCAPE ART

Boulder & the beautiful

Gigantic in size and global in scope, the *Rhythms Of Life* art project arrives in Turkey.

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Land art by Andrew Rogers (below):
Bunjil, near Geelong, Victoria, and
Rhythms Of Life, Cappadocia (opposite)

ON A GLORIOUS LIMESTONE HILLSIDE in Turkey's Cappadocia, Andrew Rogers supervises 50 local carvers hewing the steps of an amphitheatre out of the earth, as a crane hoists a pillar of rock the height of a four-storey building off the back of a truck. These are the final stages of a vast, four-and-a-half-year artistic endeavour: 10 stone-wall and basalt sculptures using 10,500 tonnes of stone extending 2.5km down the valley, big enough to see from space.

This is *Time & Space*, a collection of geoglyphs (land art) – creativity on an epic scale. Cappadocia is the 12th location in which Melbourne-based Rogers has set his *Rhythms Of Life* series: 40 sculptures built by 5500 pairs of hands on five continents, from Iceland to Slovakia, Bolivia to the Gobi Desert, Chile to Geelong. It's the world's largest contemporary art installation.

Vision is just the start: this is also an exercise in logistics, engineering, staff management and architecture. "You can build anywhere, in the most difficult situations of terrain and labour, as long as people want it," Rogers says. "You just have to be very tenacious and driven. Fortunately, I'm both of those things."

The road to this vast undertaking in Cappadocia began more than a decade ago in Israel, where Rogers was teaching architecture. On a desert trip, his colleagues said they wanted to create something to attract tourism, and he suggested a giant sculpture. A year later, he walked back into the desert to create the first of four art works there.

"In those days I wasn't trained as an artist," he says. "I was trained as an economist." He had no techniques that would make life easier. "I didn't realise you could use surveyors. So we used to stand there in 40-degree heat for four weeks at a time and triangulate everything, making points in the sand to lay out the sculpture."

Today, the same process has been reduced to three to five days.



Next, Rogers found himself in the Atacama Desert in Chile, inspired by the Nazca Lines in Peru. "I thought, what a great idea, why not draw some things across the whole of the Earth instead of just one place? That's the idea behind the whole project: a connected series of drawings on the Earth."

Rogers first visited Cappadocia 27 years ago and was struck by its odd, spiky beauty. Everything about the place suited his purposes. "Each time, I decide there should be something of special significance inherent to the topography. Here, the limestone formations are quite remarkable and unique. And it is impregnated with thousands of years of history."

The project began in earnest when he phoned the sister of a friend in the local travel industry. "I asked who I could talk to and it went from there. Getting

the permits is always the hardest part," he says. So how do people feel when approached for something so unusual? "Most of them have never thought about it. But everybody is interested in preserving their history and heritage, and fostering memories for the next generation. You've got to find the person who's interested, or the municipal authority or the elders who believe in the project," Rogers says.

In Cappadocia, he chased two successive mayors to approve permits, as well as numerous Turkish and Western business leaders to provide funding. Rogers was impressed with one such local backer: "He thinks what I do is quite normal."

For the art itself, Rogers uses a mix of images based around a central theme. "We perceive our existence in space and time," he says. "In this world where technology is constantly advancing, human nature is not; it is often the values of the past that are most relevant today."

A Day On Earth, part of the installation, features 22 words such as memory, compassion and heritage carved in English and Turkish on basalt columns. Others take forms basic to life and culture – a ➤

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grinding wheel, a palm tree – or reflect mythical creatures such as a griffin or double-bodied lion.

Common to every installation he has completed around the world is *Rhythms Of Life*, which started out as a bronze sculpture 17 years ago and whose original now resides in Canberra's National Gallery. Rogers describes that original as “a dynamic structure in space, a series of points connected which make a line. It's like life: all the connected influences we all have: friends, family, activities. It's an optimistic symbol about life and regeneration.”

Construction began in 2007. Stone must be local and, where possible, nothing foreign is brought onto the site. “In Nepal we used mud with granite. In Chile, bird droppings with clay. Wherever we find a local technique that's successful, we use it.”

He has also always insisted on indigenous labour – a rule breached only in China, where he was given an army. “They don't normally build sculptures and I don't normally command an army,” he says.

In Cappadocia, almost 1000 local people were involved. Relatively speaking, Turkey has been an extremely smooth project, except when he insisted on paying men and women equally, which caused a minor revolt among some of the men. “They're all challenging for different reasons,” he says. “In Bolivia we worked at 4300m, gasping for oxygen all the time. In some of the deserts we've been working in 45 degrees. Then you have people issues: too many workers wanting to work in India, and stopping fights between 300 people.”

There's still a certain rustic approach to producing the art: Rogers judges levels by eye, then marks the pattern each metre with a peg in the ground.



Ballooning in Cappadocia

// It's an optimistic symbol about life and regeneration

But with the workforce engaged, the building is in some sense the easiest part. The *Rhythms Of Life* sculpture in Cappadocia – whose walls, at the highest point, are two-and-a-half metres high and hundreds of metres in length – was built in just 10 days by 380 stonemasons. The stones were picked from the ground and passed by hand along lines of people; there is no cement, no mortar, yet the dry stone walls are pristine three years later.

Why build big? “It doesn't add anything to its meaning, but scale always adds another dimension,” Rogers says. “It's more confronting for people. It's taking the ruins out of being just a material into the realms of speculation.”

“Visibility from space” isn't a casual claim, either: Rogers has satellites photograph the sculptures. To help visibility, he coats them with local materials, from cactus juice to bird droppings.

Even as Rogers opened his installation in Turkey on May 29, he was preparing the next step: Kenya. “It's all set to go,” he says. “We have 1000 Masai warriors who will camp near the site and build the structure. They don't use stone for anything so it will be very interesting. It's a totally abstract idea for them. They use only thatch.” The structures – which elders have requested include a lion's paw and traditional markings from a shield, as well as the *Rhythms Of Life* motif – will be made on a volcanic lava plain from deposits around its edges.

An installation on a sixth continent, Cappadocia completes Rogers' original objectives, but he may well continue. “I have lots of invitations and if they are interesting places and interesting people I wouldn't say no. It's about getting an idea.”

CAPPADOCIA

Cappadocia has amazing scenery, interesting history, plenty of hotels and restaurants that don't blight the landscape – and hot-air ballooning. The curious limestone conical towers are known as fairy chimneys. Many have become homes – or, more recently, hotels. Some have been used to carve churches out of the rock; they are magnificently painted inside. Cappadocia is one of the world's best places to go hot-air ballooning, blessed with good wind and flying conditions and extraordinary topography. Skilled pilots can descend to just metres from the rock formations. In Göreme, Cappadocia's main travellers' centre, is the World Heritage-listed Open-Air Museum, a clutch of rock-hewn churches and monasteries. Pay the extra TL8 (\$6) to enter the Karanlık Kilise (Dark Church), painted inside with vivid biblical scenes. Underground cities, some 85m deep, date to the seventh and eighth centuries when Christians sought to evade Arab invasions. Ten thousand people lived in one, Derinkuyu, staying there for months, their airshafts disguised as wells. Cappadocia is a place to wander, to enjoy the scenery, to eat well and sit back with a wine to watch the sunset from a hotel terrace. For many, it is the highlight of a trip to Turkey.