

Art Ortega's Artist Statement

What inspired the builders of Stonehenge? *Many say that they were trying to better understand nature and the cosmos, their purpose, life... and death.* My work is guided by ancients of the world like them, their quest for truth... and their mastery of stone.

Me... With Indian, Mexican, and Spanish blood lines flowing through me, I find in my work the residual influences that come with genetic memory. My father (d. 1972) was a painter and my grandfather (d. 1997) was a stone mason; therefore, my desire to work as an artist with stone is clear. In addition to being inspired by my fathers and motivated by my ancestors, I am often encouraged by an array of philosophies, cultures, science, other artists, designers... as well as nature. When these influences convene within me, a brilliant new work always comes to life – a moment of epiphany is inevitably facilitated through the piece *and life has a little more purpose than before.*

My training... After being encouraged by my high school jewelry and trigonometry teachers to go to college, I followed through and began a magnificent journey in pursuit of understanding & mastery of Fine Art. I attended Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, the Albuquerque Technical-Vocational Institute (CNM), and The University of New Mexico. Having completed a rigorous technical program in mechanical drafting (1991), finishing an amazing art studio program – *concentration in Sculpture* (1997), and securing an important art history degree – *Ancient Art of the Americas* (1998), I acquired a distinctive foundation that allows me to research, contemplate, plan... and execute sculpture that is unusual – perhaps unique.

Me and stone... Working with stone is an important and glorious connection to Mother Earth for me as her 'spirit' is in every stone. Being respectful of my medium and honoring the ancients and their methods of working with stone, I do not use tools that require electricity; but rather, I employ my own labor and ingenuity, as well as utilize ancient techniques of working with stone (using stone tools as often as I can). This unusual method of sculpting definitely enriches the experience and the final product.

My style... A number of my designs incorporate circles, holes, and spiral motifs. Each of which universally represent perpetuity, eternity and infinity – birth, life, rebirth... *time without end.* Using these motifs allows me to pay homage to the ancients of the world who used these symbols and motifs in ceremony and to describe the unknown.

With that, I am hopeful that I have provided enough information to help you better understand my work, yet allow opportunity for cerebral and sensory exploration.

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Inset – bas relief sculpture (limestone, 40" x 56" x 2") 2007-08

Watermark – contemplation stone (alabaster, 4" x 2" x .20") 2008

