

"Digital Stone" as a concept is based on the fusion of CAD technologies with traditional stone carving.

All sculptures in this exhibition were designed and developed first in virtual space of software programs. Physical models were printed by rapid prototype machines which became a metaphorical "hand" of the computer to produce an actual sculpture from the virtual sculpture.

Although it is possible to carve stone directly via CNC milling machines these machines are still unable to carve sculptures that have complex shapes and/or interior forms. In the current age of expanding digital technologies, when the machine often excels over many factors of human endeavor, this is one of the few examples such as carving stone sculptures, when the hand of man is still superior to the machine. For thousands of years Chinese stone carvers have created some of the world's finest stone carving and this continues today.

To quote art critic, Robert Morgan: "...in reflecting on the concept of (Digital Stone Exhibition), I think it is original and the idea attractive. It reverses the predictable paradigm of taking a drawing, idea, or model that is hand-wrought and transforming it by way of digital programs into a monument. (Digital Stone) goes from the digital inception to the hand-wrought Monument (so to speak) by way of traditional artisans who carve Bodhisattvas".

Only during the past several years have some contemporary Western artists become aware of the new possibilities of having sculptures carved in China. This process highlights the optimization of global communications engendered by digital technologies that have been pertinent to the expansion of Digital Sculpture for the past decade.

This is significant to understanding the concept of "Digital Stone" as an extension of the globalization of the Digital Age. This also explains the rational choice not only to produce the "Digital Stone" sculptures in China but also to initiate the exhibition throughout China.

Digital Stone Exhibition featured four digital sculptors: Bruce Beasley, Jon Isherwood, Robert Michael Smith and Kenneth Snelson, who designed five sculptures each utilizing CAD technologies. These virtual designs were then 3D printed via rapid prototype technology. The RP models were sent to China to be enlarged in granite at Dingli Stone Carving Company in Fujian Province.

An accompanying indoor exhibition of smaller artworks, "e-form", educated viewers to the various steps of computer design, rapid prototype manufacture, and the relationship of 3D visualization/animation to the development of "Digital Stone". This exhibition included a documentary film, digital prints, rapid prototype models and animation clips produced by more than thirty international digital sculptors.

Autodesk was the sponsor for Digital Stone Exhibition. Autodesk is a 30-year-old software company, based in California with over 5,000 employees, offices in 106 countries, and \$2 Billion in revenue. Autodesk develops software that helps architects, designers, artists and engineers design much of the world that we live in – from roads and bridges, cars and skyscrapers, to video games and film. Because of this, there is an innate appreciation of design and innovation at Autodesk that extends to the top.

Autodesk's CEO, Carl Bass, happens to also be an accomplished furniture designer, has continued a strong relationship with the artists, and was personally involved in the Digital Stone Exhibition project.

With a commitment to the China market (Autodesk has significant offices in both Beijing and Shanghai), and a desire to enable more people to push the bounds of their designs, Autodesk was a unique partner to these artists to present this important and compelling exhibition first to China.

Autodesk sponsored the production of the bi-lingual (English and Mandarin) video documentary “Digital Stone Exhibition: The Intersection of Art & Technology” that accompanied the traveling exhibition and now to be presented at this conference.

Digital Stone Exhibition venues:

Beijing Today Art Museum during October 2008

Shanghai Duolun Museum of Modern Art during November 2008

Jinse Gallery at Chongqing during mid-December 2008 through January 2009

Art Map Gallery at Wenzhou during February through March 2009