

Jesús Moroles  
*Granite Landscape, 2011*  
Fredricksburg granite

The serenity of Vail's Ford Park serves as the new home for the timeless sculptural art installation *Granite Landscape* by internationally renowned artist Jesús Moroles. With the Gore Creek and Vail Mountain as a backdrop, there is a harmonious connection between the sculptural elements and the nature that it represents. The relation between the art and earth is achieved.

With the amphitheater-like setting and a few granite benches, it serves as the perfect gathering place for people to enjoy community activities, peaceful intents, or a simple game of hide and seek. Its non-obstructive design engages this natural setting for interaction and appreciation. Created from red granite, the material and vertical elements echo the mountains that embrace it from all directions.

Moroles creates a sense of atmosphere and space with *Granite Landscape*. One can wander through the installation and peer through the pillars to the Gore Creek or likewise sit upon a bench and gaze at the majestic Gore range. "I really like the new placement of the granite plaza, the setting in nature, river and mountains is a perfect surrounding. It captures a feeling that the granite landscape has always belonged there," Jesús Moroles.

The three free-standing sculptures are titled *Strata*, *The Fang*, and *Gore Creek*. The tallest sculptural element standing at nine feet, *Strata* represents the valley's geological rock formations in its roughly hewn horizontally patterned texture and uppermost section. *The Fang*, an East Vail winter ice climbing attraction and a popular summer waterfall, is represented in the contrasting highly polished arc versus the natural rocky texture on the sculptures opposite side. Finally, an interactive wedge-shaped bench portraying a fish is symbolic of the Gore Creek to which *Granite Landscape* is now adjacent.

Combining both the polished and coarse textures of granite, the beauty of this robust material is revealed. Showing the pristine elegance as represented in the *Gore Creek's* highly polished finish or the rugged permanence in the rougher textures, there is a direct hands-on approach by Moroles. With state-of-the-art tools, and his bare hands, Moroles can transform this hardest natural stone. Every mark is thoughtful and intentional.

The son of Mexican immigrants, Moroles was born in Corpus Christi, Texas in 1950. He was enrolled in art classes as a young boy and received his first commissions by the time he was 13 years old. After enlisting in the Air Force for four years of service, Moroles graduated from North Texas State University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1978. He apprenticed for a year with the sculptor Luis Jimenez and the following year he spent working in Carrara, Italy. In 1981, Moroles opened his studio in Rockport, Texas where he presently resides. The massive working studio encompasses three city blocks of this Gulf Coast town and is truly a family run operation.

Moroles' achievement and recognition in the arts is immense. He has continued to garner major recognition for his work since *Granite Landscape* was originally acquired by the Town of Vail in 1998 for placement at the top of Bridge Street. Most notably in 2008, he was selected by the National

Endowment for the Arts to be a recipient of the National Medal of Arts Award which was presented to him by the President of the United States. This is the highest award given to artists and arts patrons by the United States Government. He now joins the ranks of Georgia O'Keefe, Willem de Kooning, Jasper Johns, and Andrew Wyeth to mention only a few of the other visual artists who have received this honor. In 2011, he was the recipient of the Texas State Visual Artist 3D of the Year.

His work is included in many major private, corporate, public, and museum collections throughout the world. Over 300 of his works have been celebrated in museum and gallery exhibitions also worldwide and 2,000 are in collections throughout Asia, Europe, Middle East, Mexico, North America, and the Middle East. Moroles recently completed his largest granite plaza to date in China at the Shanghai Zizhu Science-based Industrial Park.

- Molly Eppard, Art in Public Places Coordinator