PROJECT REPORT:

In the Spring of 2018 I received an Otis Faculty Grant to develop and build stainless steel bases for new sculptures. These bases are both visual and physical anchors allowing the sculptures to cantilever into the space of the viewer. The bases, although visually simple are physically the fulcrum which allows the sculpture to function in a dramatic way in space, interacting with the viewer. The faculty grant allowed me to work with a fabricator to build simple looking yet complex to fabricate stainless steel bases for two new sculptures.

My current body of work includes, among other more abstract geologic forms, sculptures that are portraits of waterfalls from Southern and Central California. These are large forms, 6-7 feet in height that cantilever into the viewers space. The weight of the bases (approx. 100 lbs) anchor the sculptures and allow them to move into and inhabit space independent of the support of the rocks and mountains from which they flow, opening this mountain space to the viewer.

“Pfieffer Falls, Big Sur” is a sculpture of a waterfall of about human scale as a portal, an arched form as an entryway leading into the rock that supports it minus the rock. The rock is present by indication of the form that the waterfall takes but is physically removed, present by virtue of its absence. The absence of rock/mountain allows the viewers body to inhabit the space of the mountain while moving around the form, turning the sculpture of water into an architectonic form and the viewer metaphorically into mineral earth (stone). Our own human vital materiality, the minera lity of our bones, the metal of our blood, the electricity of our neurons are also those that compose the actual water and (missing) stone of which this sculpture is a portrait. Waterfall and human are more like than unlike, intimately related.

Gaston Bachelard, in “Water and Dreams: The Imagination of Matter” describes the waterfall as “a down rushing over a precipice, an ever widening stream that defies capture, cannot be contained, is eternal movement, change, generating life and death”.

The waterfall sculptures, as portraits of waterfalls from Southern and Central California, may appear familiar to the day hiker but in reality depict a thing that doesn’t exist as form. They reflect my ongoing interest in sculpting the ephemeral. This has long been my fascination in making sculptures of landscapes. In previous work this led to the building of sculptures of weather conditions, temperature, the shift of seasons, recurring movement of the tide to the shore; those present yet elusive elements of landscape that comprise a full experience of space.
I have taken cues from the history of landscape painting, including the Hudson River School painters, American Scene painting and Hokusai’s “Tour of The Waterfalls of The Provinces”. My work is also grounded in my studies of Chinese and Japanese garden design and their philosophical engagement with Taoism and Buddhism as well as kitsch landscapes, the artificial and the distinctly Southern California recreations of Disney or the Caverne du Pont du Arc of Southern France. I think all are sublime.

I am very grateful to Otis for this faculty grant and I look forward to sharing this work with students and colleagues in future exhibitions.

Following are images of current work.
“Pfieffer Falls, Big Sur”
“Millard Falls”
“Nojoqui Falls”
"Nojoqui Falls", side view
“Holy Jim Falls”