

# GIORGIO PALÙ

## EARTHSIDE

### Journey to the Centre of the Earth

Concerning physical materials, the inexhaustible geological energy of our planet has generated absolute beauty far superior in every way to the beauty created by human intervention. This primeval geological energy is active today—beneath our feet as we read, write or speak these words—calling out to us daily as our history unfolds.

The starting point of Giorgio Palù's creativity is the structural consonance of this energy with the tale of Time, which scores its path through a slow, radical, yet un-resting mutability. The process can be witnessed through the nature of ineluctable lava flow, where monolithic forms appear from common stone, yet made more noble in all their eternally metamorphic, sedimentary perfection. Like imperfect pillars reflected in the sunshine, earthborn forms brought to view, clearly defining the boundary between what is mortal and what is not, reminding us that mankind is but a footnote in the history book of the Universe.

The title *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, taken from Jules Verne's famous novel, combines the latent sense of expectation and anticipation with magnificent impotence. This great spectacle of Nature with its fleeting moment magnified in the split second, or pathway which forever changes its course or direction, this is what the artist, perceiving balance and passion above the overwhelming contingent impulse of the moment, calls Idea.

Such experiential emotion reaches Palù from the elements in the depths of the Earth, yielding its long-held knowledge—from marble extracted through pain and fatigue to granite and travertine as they first emerge into daylight. And in iron, steel and glass, as they are moulded and refined by elemental fire, aided by man's hand.

EARTHSIDE *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* serves as a reflection on the common destiny binding the two eternal rivals, stone and fire. Giorgio Palù has been able to grasp the antithetical relationship of these two elements, finding a balance and constructive coexistence, promoting the weight of matter while enhancing its aesthetic purity—resulting in works that are at the same time robustly tactile and exquisitely visual.

And it is at this antithetical intersection that the artist becomes the defining and decisive protagonist. Cement reveals the most obvious traces, shaped by the power of a continuous fire that modifies surfaces, pounding, burnishing and carbonising them in search of emotional and external perfection, mirroring their inherent qualities, as one can plainly see. But there are also intellectual intentions. It is only through reasoned architectural lines, measured and symbolic fractures, and speculative analytical geometries that Palù is able to draw forth the lacerations and wounds, as well as the concreteness and severity of the majority of his more recent works.

The requirements of an idea are far greater to Palù than the banality of a signature. Preferring the cruel transparency of the will to academic or esoteric thought, Palù is attracted to his materials more as a researcher of harmonious, functional, aesthetic design than through artistic intuition of the kind perpetuated in romantic literature. He welcomes favourable but complex conditions through which he can develop the whole idea, which has become a rarity in contemporary Italian architecture, where there is a movement away from working physically.

He is aware of how the artist who becomes a slave of his own subject runs the risk of losing sight of his original goal, of falling prey to the enchantment of a power that is viscerally inscribed in the things of Nature.

Physical knowledge of the subject, rigorous design process and a certain charm are what characterise the works of Giorgio Palù, the now famous Cremonese architect, whose stated aim has always been to influence and change the world around him. In his works his absolute ideal is to voluntarily eschew cold emulation in favour of a continuous rediscovery of Nature and thereby transform creativity into genuine creation.

*Adapted and abridged by Ruth Tatlow from a text by Francesco Mutti*