

Jimmie Durham (1940-2021)



Image courtesy of the artist.

Sculptor and poet Jimmie Durham, who parodied and challenged Native American stereotypes, died November 17, 2021, in Berlin at age eighty-one. Durham in 2019 received the Venice Biennale's prestigious Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement. The cultural and political use of material, objects, and space have been central to his practice, and his career has deftly bridged the space between art and activism.

My work might be considered 'interventionist' because it works against the two foundations of the European tradition: Belief and Architecture. My work is against the connection of art to architecture, to the 'statue,' to monumentality. I want it to be investigative, and therefore not 'impressive,' not believable.

Jimmie Durham, 2003

Jimmie Durham's Work



Jimmie Durham, *Self-Portrait Pretending to be a Stone Statue of Myself*, 2006. C-print mounted on dibond. Image courtesy of the artist.

A leading figure in contemporary rock art, Jimmie Durham is pictured here pretending to be a stone himself. For Durham, stone is not material, nor metaphor, but an anti-institutional, anti-representational, anti-monumental, and generative force. This self-portrait works against the classical notion that every stone hides a sculpture waiting for the sculptor to “discover” it, and instead is an evocation of the artist’s inner stone-ness. This image is included in *Rocks, Stones, and Dust* not only as a singular work, but as an evocation of all of Durham’s work with stone — inviting you to see the thread connecting him, the other artists, yourself, and your relations.

A letter to Jimmie



Mrs. and Mr. Durham and Soul of Nations' Director, **Ernest Hill**, at Castello di Rivoli in Turin, Italy, 2018.

Dear Mr. Durham,

You have been so inspirational to our director, staff, and the global community through your work and life philosophy. Your contributions to the integrity of Indigenous contemporary art — and art itself — will be eternal, and for this, we are grateful. Your legacy lives on and transcends borders. Your vision is undying and unwavering.

From America, to Italy, to Germany, to Heaven — your message is easily understood and respected by all souls with a conscious eye. Thank you, Jimmie, for creating an alternative pathway for tenacious outliers around the world.

Fondly,

The Soul of Nations Foundation, Inc.