



Tim de Christopher  
*The Fruit of Our Labors*

June 28—November 2, 2014

**“The work is about our lives and the results of that ‘experiment’—everything in the work can be seen metaphorically, I believe. ...it's a mystery full of meaning.”**

-Tim de Christopher

Tim de Christopher's *The Fruit of Our Labors* (*FOOL*) is an ever-evolving work that explores the labors of one man over the course of a lifetime. Synthesizing the traditional practice of stone carving with more contemporary modes of sculpture making, the most recent iteration of this installation at deCordova consists of a large, timber-framed structure housing stone sculptures and weathered found objects. The items that comprise *FOOL* are deeply personal to the artist yet also relate to common experience.

The grandson of a stonemason and son of a toy designer, de Christopher began his art education at Cooper Union in New York City with the intent to study sculpture and graphic design. Soon after, an interest in architecture led him to Columbia University's School of Architecture, and to work creating architectural models for firms in New York City. Seeking a less tedious and more creative endeavor, de Christopher then spent two years working as an architect, designer, and carver at the famed Gothic Revival-style Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. For the last twenty years, de Christopher has lived and worked in western Massachusetts, developing a style of sculpture making that emphasizes figuration and narration using traditional stone carving techniques enhanced by elements of design and architecture.

De Christopher's early work on the Cathedral of St. John the Divine is evoked throughout the structure and sculptures in *FOOL*. Constructed of rough-hewn timbers, the architectural foundation of the installation recalls the nave of a Gothic cathedral, while also yielding multiple references to Greco-Roman temples, barns, farm stands, and common domestic structures. Fittingly, the sculptures and objects de Christopher has arranged within the structure largely relate to the themes of spirituality, agriculture, and domesticity.

The sculptures that populate the interior of this open-air construction also bear resemblance to pre-modern forms. Admittedly more influenced by medieval art than by his contemporaries, de Christopher creates figural and narrative stonework that is aesthetically and at times thematically akin to that which could be found in the churches of the Romanesque and Gothic eras. Indeed, religious symbolism is present in *FOOL*, namely in sculptures of Adam and Eve and the portrait head of a bearded monk. The latter was actually one of the first sculptures de Christopher ever carved, under the tutelage of his college professor, the renowned sculptor Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010). The inclusion of this seminal object in *FOOL* is a testament to the artist's openness to sharing important personal objects and stories through his work.

Prominent among the carved stone sculptures in *FOOL* are references to the two main impetuses for the work's conception. The first was an encounter with ancient stone weights in the galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, objects that despite their age still convey their intended function as tools of measurement. Carved by the artist and strung across a metal rod, these doughnut-shaped forms recall ancient abaci. The second inspiration for *FOOL* was the artist's encounter with 'mutant' carrots while working on a local farm. Fascinated by their unique forms, which are caused by the plant's adaptation to rocky soil, the artist began to ruminate on the shapes and carve them in stone. These two experiences, which related to the life and labors of man in different ways, led the artist to think about the phrase "the fruits of our labor." He further considered that these fruits were the product of our collective labors, hence the inversion of the plural to become *The Fruit of Our Labors*.

*FOOL* can be viewed metaphorically as a monument to a life lived, as the mind's containment of memories, or perhaps even as an existential 'cabinet of curiosities'. De Christopher connects these objects visually through a system of lines in space—ropes strung through pulleys, wood beams and shelving, and metal rods—affirming the interrelatedness of all things. De Christopher cites a passage by the Romantic poet and artist William Blake (1757-1827) as an important influence for his consideration of the work's overall structure: *Unless the eye catch fire/The God will not be seen/Unless the ear catch fire/The God will not be heard/Unless the tongue catch fire/The God will not be named /Unless the heart catch fire/The God will not be loved/Unless the mind catch fire/The God will not be known* (William Blake, *Pentecost*). Here, Blake reacted against the literal, reductive thinking of the Enlightenment era, influenced in large part by the scientific philosophies of Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727). De Christopher shares the view that nothing can be fully understood or appreciated through a single-minded, rationalized consideration. He explains, "Part of what the [poem] is about is the interconnectedness of things and *FOOL* is, in essence, an attempt to illustrate that."

Ultimately, *FOOL* itself cannot and should not be experienced as a cohesive, linear narration of the artist's life, nor does it espouse an entirely cogent meaning to each and every individual viewer. Rather, through his composition of accumulated elements the artist comments on the manner in which we collect things throughout our lives, be they physical objects or intangible memories, prompting questions about what we choose to keep, what we leave behind, and why.

-Samantha Cataldo, Koch Curatorial Fellow, 2014



**Tim de Christopher** (b. 1954, Kentfield, CA) is a sculptor living and working in the village of Turners Falls in the town of Montague, Massachusetts. De Christopher studied at The Cooper Union School of Art and Columbia University School of Architecture. He has had numerous public and private commissions, including at The Cathedral of St. John the Divine and The Jewish Museum, both in New York City. In addition, he has had fellowships at The Virginia Center for Creative Arts and The Vermont Studio Center, and has received grants from Artist's Resource Trust, LEF Foundation, Massachusetts Culture Council, and Northampton Arts Council. De Christopher is represented by William Baczek Fine Arts, Northampton, MA.

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## Programming:

Artist Talk

Saturday June 28 at 2pm in The Square gallery



**deCordova**  
Sculpture Park and Museum

