

DENYING GRAVITY
 Woods Davy
 and the
 Assembly
 of Stones

✦ Woods Davy (American, born 1949), *Cantamar 6/9/23*, 2023. Stone, 66 x 52 x 21 in. Courtesy of the Artist. Photo by Alan Shaffer.

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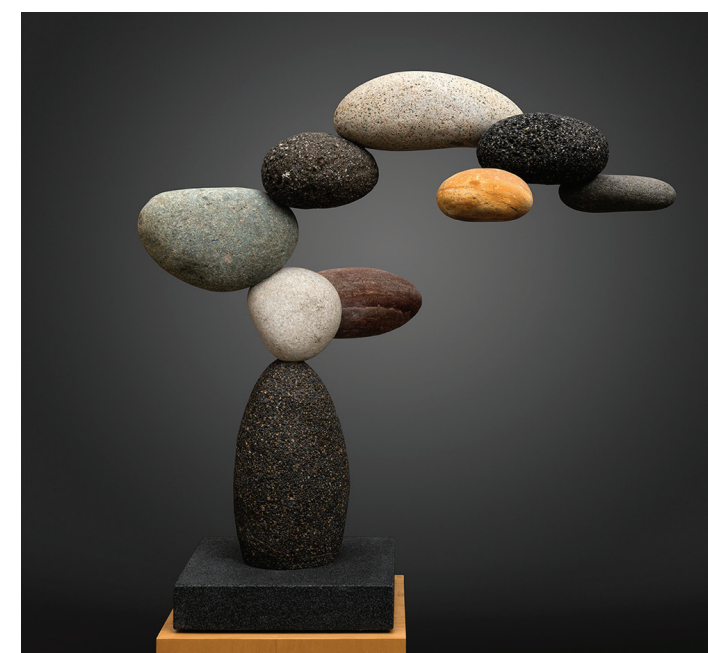
WOODS DAVY'S SCULPTURES PLAY AGAINST expectations and gravitational force as we know it. With stones—and sometimes coral—seeming to effortlessly float like clouds, the sculptures rise heavenward, the assemblies evoking a sense of serenity and eternity despite their precarious balance. Art critic Holly Meyers of the *Los Angeles Times* writes of Davy's art, "There is something thrilling about a work that appears to defy its own natural properties" and yet, at the same time, is able to communicate a sense of "meditative reverence."

Denying Gravity: Woods Davy and the Assembly of Stones features multiple examples of Davy's work in stone and coral, both media testifying to his concerns as an environmentalist and, in the case of the latter, the impact that climate change is having on the world. Displayed in the natural light of the Weborg Gallery and backed by the canopy of trees in Crocker Park, the sculptures engage in a dialogue among themselves and with the natural environment beyond gallery walls.

Born in Washington, DC, in 1949, Davy received his BFA at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and completed his MFA from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. In 1975, following graduate school, he moved to San Francisco and, a few years later, relocated to Los Angeles. His work at the time was large, linear, and composed of welded steel. He soon began adding natural elements to these industrial-looking sculptures, which humanized them and the spaces they inhabited while



† Woods Davy (American, born 1949), *Sulungu*, 2021. Coral, 31 x 30 x 38 in. Courtesy of the Artist. Photo by Alan Shaffer.



† Woods Davy (American, born 1949), *Cantamar 11/11/16*, 2016. Stone on granite base, 41 x 41 x 22 in. Courtesy of the Artist. Photo by Alan Shaffer.

simultaneously challenging expectations. He worked with this concept for many years until the stones began to take on a life of their own, his process now becoming improvisational rather than preplanned. He realized the full potential of this aesthetic in Venice, a neighborhood of Los Angeles, in 1994, when he began his *Cantamar* series of floating stones.

From his home in Venice, Davy travels the Pacific Coast and elsewhere to source his stones. As their name suggests, many of them come from Cantamar, a small town in Mexico, the translation being "song of the sea." Choosing his stones carefully, he combs the shoreline and shallow water for those that have been rounded and smoothed by the ocean's tumbling effects, aiming to find perfect sizes and shapes that can take their place among the others and become integral to the whole. In combination, the stones unfurl like the waves that shaped them, the results unfolding in a narrative that is at once natural and handwrought, ancient and new. ♦