

The Good Weekend

SEVERAL tonnes of freshly quarried stones were assembled in a rectangle on the floor of the Art Gallery of New South Wales this week by Richard Long.

He is a tall, 32-year-old English artist, an intense person whose creative path has landed him on his feet in such varied places as Kenya, Peru, Tanzania, Bolivia, Nepal, Japan and Alaska.

And now Australia, sponsored by John Kaldor, with assistance from the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council.

His Sydney work is only one facet — but a representative one — of his way of art. This includes laying down sticks, piling up, turning or displacing stones, walking over open country and cycling on roads.

The stone sculpture or painting (he uses both terms) in Sydney is styled in that it is set within the formal frame of a gallery and spiders following the lines of the floor tiles. He has arranged stones like this in the natural grandeur of the Himalayas and they looked quite

The Arts The rocky road

different. "Each of my works," he says, "is made for the place and each is appropriate to it."

There is a freshness about doing them that appeals to me. If this painting was picked up and done again, all the stones would be the same but they would be in different places, so it would be different.

"I think it is a piece to be looked at and contemplated like a sand, painting or a Japanese garden." Time is a key element in his work. The fact that he uses "old" materials such as stones makes off with the next one, but it will be repeated by nature as it has been in ages past.

But time catches up with him in other ways: for instance, in the life of any piece he has created. "If I do a piece on the bank of a shallow river, it will last only until the next spring flood, until it is washed away. I am very interested in natural time patterns as distinct from man-made historical patterns."

Sometimes a piece can have a very short life and yet the idea can last for ever. He gave as an example a pattern made with seaweed in a garden. It existed for a few days but it is repeated by nature as it has been in ages past.

Although Long is interested in man's arrangements of natural objects, such as rocks, going back into history, he does not associate his own efforts with them. They began soon after he left the art school he attended in England — an unusual vocational school that was outside the art system. His teens aroused the interest of a young art gallery in Germany and he had his first one-man show in Düsseldorf in 1968, the first of a continuous trail of projects. He walked from coast to coast at a point in Ireland — a country he feels very close to — and placed a stone at the end of each

mile of his journey. He called that 164 Stones 164 Miles. His father, a school-teacher, used to take him to England's West Country as a child, and he has since done many of his "walking works" there.

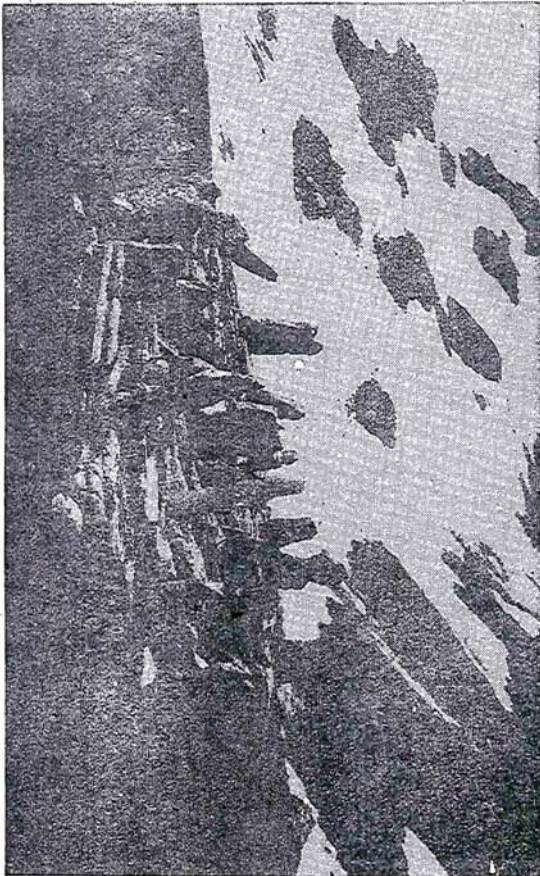
One of these works was called A Walk of Four Hours and Four Circles. Time came into that one, in that the circumference of each circle had to take an hour to complete — the smallest at a very slow pace, the largest very fast. "In other words, the walk was about pace."

"I am very interested in different ways you can walk, not only to make a journey, but defining a particular place. In a six-mile wide circle in Devon, I walked down all the lanes..."

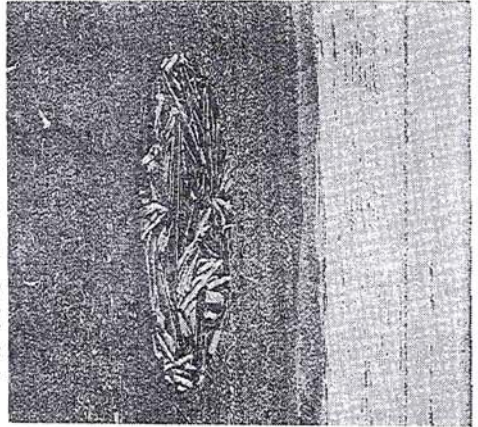
Long takes photographs and draws maps of these private, rather remote works to make them accessible to the public. Some have been published in books, for which he has 1000 pieces of a walking stick and 1000

force he went on to Melbourne to arrange a circle of sticks and came on to Sydney to put together his rectangle of stones.

— JILL SYKES



Two of Richard Long's art works in natural settings: stones in Switzerland . . .



. . . and driftwood from the Bering Strait in Alaska.