

Jesús Moroles



Jesús Moroles (born 1950)
Photo courtesy
Jesús Moroles Studio

being stationed in Southeast Asia and around the US including Offutt Air Force Base in Bellevue, Nebraska.

Moroles received an early release from the Air Force so he could attend classes at El Centro College, Dallas, TX and upon receiving his Associate of Arts degree, he enrolled at University of North Texas, Denton, TX. It is here where he pursued sculpture; he was drawn to it because it is physical. He wanted to try all the mediums, and when he confronted the hard granite while in his cocoon of protective gear, he just felt a immediate connection to it though his struggle working it.

It is understood that a stone sculptor must make a pilgrimage to Italy, however when he graduated from college Moroles did not have the money. In fact, he was living in an old 1949 bus similar to a Bluebird. Instead he traveled to El Paso to apprentice with Luis Jiménez (and ironically, Jiménez was looking for him in Dallas). Moroles was able to observe how Jiménez created installations and presented lectures. After his one year with him, Moroles felt he was five years ahead of his peers; this experience proved to be more valuable than the money he saved for Italy, an expedition he did make.

Jesús Bautista Moroles (mor-OL-es) was born on September 22, 1950 to a Mexican immigrant, Jose, and his wife, Maria, who were both cotton pickers. His interest in art began in the 3rd grade, and to nurture his talent, Moroles' parents enrolled him in art classes at the YMCA. Moroles' art teacher appreciated his skill and offered private lessons at a much-reduced cost. Eventually through this connection, he received his first public commission as a young teen: two 45-foot murals in a Dallas public space. He also started to work with masonry tools when he became his uncle's apprentice and helped to create large-scale structures.

When he was older, Moroles attended the only High School in Dallas that offered art classes, and intrigued by the silk-screening process taught in school, he started a small silk-screening banners business, which included hiring employees. This business ended as his draft notice arrived the day of graduation. Concerned about his prospects in the Army during wartime, he approached the Air Force for enlistment instead. Working as an electronic equipment repair specialist, he was grateful to be afforded the opportunity to see the world though

When it was time to return from Pietrasanta, Michelangelo's quarries in Carra, Italy with his tools, Moroles set up his shop and home in a hundred year old monument factory in Waxahachie, TX. The poverty he endured as a young child inherently helped him to develop his strong work ethic as well as forced him to fix things that were broken. Moroles brought the machines that were inoperable and rusted back to life, and he launched into creating his first pieces. Eventually, he moved to Rockport, TX to be closer to his parents as his family plays essential roles in his studio.

Moroles rarely ever uses a plan for his artwork, rather he draws on the stone where the next cut or mark should be made, and his team of assistants understands how to alter the stone his way. As part of his process, he goes to the quarries to look at the stones searching for ones to say "take me home," and sometimes that stone dwells in his studio a year or even more before inspiration strikes. Moroles is known to have up to twenty projects going on at one time. He prefers to create whole environments when possible rather than simply individual sculptures.

Occasionally, Moroles needs to recharge his imagination and travels to accomplish this. His "Figures" series was inspired by a trip to Egypt because he wanted to create a mummy. When his destination includes China, he likes to work with native artists to create significant on-site installations. In the end, Moroles' goal of his artwork is to show man and nature working together. He has been successfully accomplishing this and working in the field for almost thirty years with more than 2000 artworks in cities across the United States and around the world.



Jesús Moroles with *Figure*, 2000, China Mauve (left) and *Figure*, 2000, Baltic Brown, at Barbara Davis Gallery, Houston, Texas. Photo: Ann Sherman.

a biography

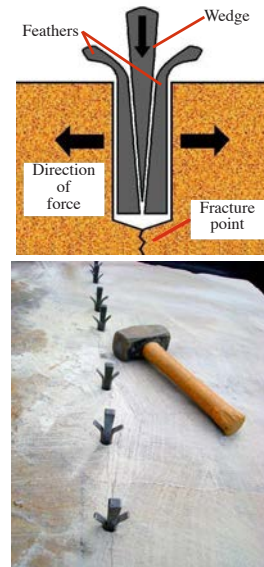
The "Tearing" Process

For the *Broken Earth* water wall and column fountains, Jesús Moroles utilized his tearing process. What does that mean? First, Moroles draws a line on the piece of granite where he would like it to tear or separate. Next, they proceed to drill holes along the line to put in feathers and wedges. Moroles and his team have been doing this so long they know how to tune them by hammering the wedge into the rock until there is a certain ring or feeling. Just as pressure was used to create granite, they continue to create it until they start to see lines or small cracks between feathers and wedges. This helps them determine where to apply more pressure before the rock tears apart. When observing this method, one is able to hear the rock ripping apart and the metal feathers and wedges clang as they hit the floor. Finally using large shims, they pull the two pieces apart to reveal the untouched and crisp granite.

Much of his inspiration comes from the stone itself as he discovers the artwork within as he begins tearing the granite. "I take a piece of earth that might otherwise go unnoticed, break and tear it to expose all of its wonderful, never-seen elements – the weight, texture, color, and reflective qualities of this living stone born of heat and pressure in the center of the earth – and then 'fix' it so it's seen now for its aesthetics, its beauty... put it together again so it will be noticed," said Moroles.



Broken Earth water wall and reflecting pool.



Feathers and wedge.
A three-piece metal tool set for splitting rock. Drawing & photo by Anna Frodesiak

Jesús Moroles American, born 1950

The Omaha Riverscape 2008-09

granite and water installation with Academy Black granite reflecting pool; three column fountains of Mountain Red, Carnelian, and Dakota Mahogany granite, and Dakota Mahogany granite water wall
Museum purchase with funds from the Patron Circle for Contemporary Art and Helen and Ted Kolderie, 2008-09

When asked about his profession, Texan and Mexican American artist, Jesús Moroles explains that he is just playing in granite. Moroles was commissioned to create a significant sculptural installation for the future sculpture garden at Joslyn Art Museum. The result is *The Omaha Riverscape* which is comprised of the *Charles and Mary Heider Reflecting Pool*, *Broken Earth* water wall, and three column fountains.

Moroles says he typically forms an idea immediately for installations when he first visits the site. His vision started with a reflecting pool that he saw in Sir Norman Foster's original design for the Museum's campus when he created the 1994 addition. Moroles' reflecting pool is oriented along the east-west axis of the Museum's atrium. While at Joslyn, he learned of the importance of the artworks and documents in the Margre Durham Center for Western Studies to Nebraska history. He became familiar with the Maximilian-Bodmer collection and had the opportunity to study old maps. He drew inspiration from the 1806 Lewis and Clark map of the confluence of the Platte and Missouri Rivers, and he recalls flying over it when he lived in Plattsmouth, NE during his time stationed at Offutt Air Force Base. He interpreted this though a landscape sculpture in the pool using 184 large slabs of Academy Black granite. The water levels will rise and fall to demonstrate the natural process in various seasons. A heating system was placed under the river so that the river would remain a river even during the winter months. His idea is that river connects the art inside the Museum to the outside.



A Sense of Place: Jesús Moroles and the Creation of The Omaha Riverscape. **Jesús Moroles** presenting his public lecture at Joslyn Art Museum, June 2009.

The *Broken Earth* water wall received its name because Moroles feels we tend to be a throw away society. He used his tearing process with the granite, ground it, drew on it, and put it back together. Moroles appreciated how the Museum connects with the community so for the east façade of the water wall he worked with students from Central High School and Kelom and Liberty Elementary Schools.

Forces of water seem to play a part in his artwork, and that notion is featured in the three column fountains. Water bubbles up from the top of the column splashing down the undulating contours of the column providing delicate ripples in the reflecting pool. The three components combine to create a symphony of sounds for the visitors to the Peter Kiewit Foundation Sculpture Garden.

Discussion Questions

What forms do you see in Moroles' *The Omaha Riverscape*?

What or how do you feel when you view *The Omaha Riverscape*?

Moroles travels to recharge his imagination. What do you do?

What do you think Moroles means when he says he plays in granite?

How does sculpture influence the sense of place? The sense of space?

Why is scale important in installation art?

Timeline

Featuring Jesús Moroles

1950

1950 Jesús Bautista Moroles is born on September 22 in Corpus Christi, TX.



Jesús Moroles conducted a workshop with students from Liberty Elementary School, 2008.

1955

1959 Alaska and Hawaii become the 49th and 50th states respectively.

1960

1960 John F. Kennedy is elected president and serves until his assassination by Lee Harvey Oswald in 1963.

1965

1968 Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. is murdered in Memphis, Tennessee.

1969 Graduates high school and enters into the Air Force.

1969 Apollo 11 is launched and Neil Armstrong becomes the first man to walk on the moon.

1970

1973 Gets out of the Air Force and starts college at El Centro College, Dallas, TX.

1975 Receives his Associate of Arts degree from El Centro College.

1975

1978 Receives his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of North Texas, Denton, TX.

1979-80 Travels to Italy to work in Pietrasanta.

1980

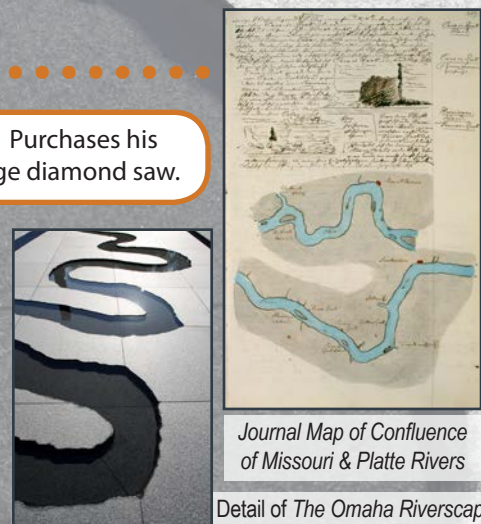
1980 Sets up a shop in Waxahachie, TX, in an old monument factory.

1981 Purchases his first large diamond saw.

1985

1983 Moves back to Rockport, TX, next to his parents and establishes his studio.

1988 Isamu Noguchi, Moroles' aesthetic mentor, dies on December 30 in New York.



Detail of *The Omaha Riverscape*.

1990

1990 Iraq invades Kuwait prompting the first Gulf War and U.S. Operation Desert Storm in 1991.

1992 Moroles' largest scale single work, *Houston Police Officers Memorial*, is dedicated.

1995

1995 The Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City is bombed.

1996 Appointed to the board of commissioners of the Smithsonian Institution's National American Art Museum (until 2008).

1996 Creates *Granite Sculpture Plaza* at Edwin A. Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita, KS.

2000

2001 Terrorists hijack four passenger planes and deliberately crash into the World Trade Center Towers, the Pentagon and an open field in Pennsylvania on September 11. The War on Terrorism begins.

2005

2005 Hurricane Katrina hits the Gulf Coast.

2008 Awarded the National Medal of Arts.

2008 Commissioned by Joslyn Art Museum to create a large-scale installation as a focal point of a new sculpture garden.

2008 Barack Obama is elected president making him the first African American president.

2009 Joslyn's Peter Kiewit Foundation Sculpture Garden opens to the public.



JESÚS MORALES
AMERICAN, BORN 1950

THE OMAHA RIVERSCAPE
2008-09, GRANITE AND WATER INSTALLATION WITH ACADEMY BLACK GRANITE REFLECTING POOL; THREE COLUMN FOUNTAINS OF MOUNTAIN RED, CARNELIAN, AND DAKOTA MAHOGANY GRANITE; AND DAKOTA MAHOGANY GRANITE WATER WALL



JOSLYN ART MUSEUM OMAHA, NEBRASKA
MUSEUM PURCHASE WITH FUNDS FROM PATRON CIRCLE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART AND HELEN & TED KOLDERIE, 2008-09
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