

## Roger Cox

🐦 @outdoorscots

Where you see a pile of rocks by the water, others discern a balance between art and spirituality



Dietmar Voorwold's rock creation *AmMeer 473*, inset

For years now, I've been dimly aware of people creating towers of rocks, precariously and often ingeniously balanced, at various locations around the country. I've seen these gravity-defying sculptures on the beach at Gullane in East Lothian, incorporating smooth, rounded stones in a surprising array of colours, and I've seen them on the Waternish Peninsular on the Isle of Skye, made out of dark, angular slabs of slate. It never occurred to me until recently that Scotland might be a better place for "rock-balancing" (as it is known to seasoned practitioners) than anywhere else in the world, but thanks to its gnarly geology, it turns out that this country is pretty much rock-balancing heaven.

The artist and art therapist Dietmar Voorwold started making land art of all kinds, including rock balance sculptures, in his native Germany, after studying graphics and photography in Dusseldorf. When he visited Scotland for the first time, however, he was blown away by the possibilities.

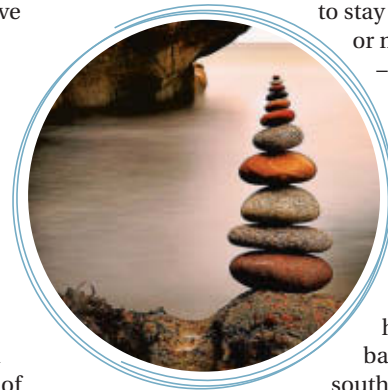
"When I came to Scotland I found it quite spectacular because of the stones and the rocks," he says. "The ocean, the dynamics of the tide, too, and all the different colours along the coasts – all this was fascinating."

Voorwold is now based in the north-east of Scotland, and has two exhibitions coming up soon. Until 29 August, photographs of some of his creations will be on display at Elgin Library, and from 24 September until 4 October he will be exhibiting a larger body of work at the Moray Art Centre in Findhorn, as part of the all-new Findhorn Bay Arts Festival.

The second show will include images of a range of different kinds of land art by Voorwold, including

mosaics, and he stresses that rock-balance sculptures are only a part of his artistic practice. For others, though, who don't necessarily think of themselves as artists, rock balancing can be an all-consuming passion. Nothing demonstrates this better than the gravityglue.com website, which includes a handy interactive map showing a large, thriving international community of balancers from as far afield as Brazil, Japan, Martinique, South Korea and Sweden.

Gravity Glue is run by Michael Grab, something of a superstar of the rock balance scene who travels all over the world creating elaborate sculptures and documenting them in stunning photographs and videos. Tellingly, perhaps, the image he's



*Center of Gravity*, it's a practical guide with a little rock balance theory thrown in as well.

"People often come up to me and say, ooh, you're building a cairn, but I always say, well, this is a little different," he says. "Cairns are supposed to be somewhat permanent – they're meant to stay there for weeks or months or years – but what I do is not meant to stay. In fact, its beauty is that it's ephemeral. I guess that's really the difference." Juhl is based in Minneapolis, and his favourite rock balancing site is on the southern shore of Lake Michigan.

"It's about a five hour drive for me," he says, "but I have a little cabin near the shore so I go up there and stay and balance. I usually go by myself so I don't have distractions

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chosen to display on his homepage was taken in Scotland – a dramatic, misty view beside Loch Ness, in which a series of human-like rock towers appear to be making their way down to the water's edge in an eerie procession.

The question many Scots will probably want an answer to at this point is: what's the difference between a rock balance sculpture and a common or garden cairn? The man to ask is Peter Juhl, an American who has literally written the book on rock balancing. Entitled

and spend a whole weekend balancing and photographing.

"A lot of people I know recognise a spiritual element to it. I recognise that too, but for me it's more about the physical feel – that moment when you feel those rocks suddenly go from wanting to fall down to wanting to stand up."

For more on Dietmar Voorwold, see [www.creations-in-nature.com](http://www.creations-in-nature.com); for more on Peter Juhl, see <http://temporarysculpture.squarespace.com/>

## HOROSCOPES Your life in the stars

CASSANDRA NYE

### ♈ ARIES 21 Mar - 20 Apr

There's every chance of romance. New meetings in strange places fire your imagination and show many possibilities.

### ♉ TAURUS 21 Apr - 20 May

Are you making the most of your talents? I hope so because this is a week in which you can truly shine.

### ♊ GEMINI 21 May - 20 Jun

Going with the flow takes on a special meaning at work where it is hard to be patient with colleagues.

### ♋ CANCER 21 Jun - 22 Jul

At work, if colleagues seem unhelpful, don't take it personally. It is likely that they have issues of their own.

### ♌ LEO 23 Jul - 22 Aug

Being aware of all possibilities keeps you in charge. This also goes for your love life, where someone may need encouragement.

### ♍ VIRGO 23 Aug - 21 Sep

There is clearly something on the horizon. Don't be concerned. When the time is right, you'll know the questions to ask.

### ♎ LIBRA 22 Sep - 22 Oct

With so much going on, you are unlikely to slip back into the mundane. Be sure of it by extending a new interest.

### ♏ SCORPIO 23 Oct - 21 Nov

Some relationships naturally come to an end. Putting on a false face won't bring contentment or satisfaction.

### ♐ SAGITTARIUS 22 Nov - 21 Dec

A little restlessness can be a good thing when it comes to your career as it triggers new growth and ideas.

### ♑ CAPRICORN 22 Dec - 20 Jan

Taking on more responsibility may not be on your agenda right now, but making others feel good certainly is.

### ♒ AQUARIUS 21 Jan - 18 Feb

Love and the feel-good factor could lead to lots of fun. The only fly in the ointment is the niggling lack of finance.

### ♓ PISCES 19 Feb - 20 Mar

With some time on your hands, bring a loved one to a quieter place. Maybe you need to spend some quality time together.