

PIERRE BIDAUD



Pierre Bidaud has been a stonemason for 30 years. After his Tour de France, he left for England in 1998, working mainly in restoration. He developed an interest in design and contemporary architecture and in 2005 began to work on new stone projects, as well as collaborations with designers for furniture.

A meeting with a structural engineer in 2009 reinforced his belief in his material as a supporting element in contemporary buildings. It is this that fuelled his motivation to embark upon research, and develop a new method of mineral construction, combining stone with steel and high-performance resins, and creating stone on steroids.

Pierre believes that the survival of the stonemasonry profession depends on re-establishing communications between professional men and women, engineers and architects. It is most important that each sector understands and questions the capacities, limits and desires of each other, to build more honestly and solidly.

For him, stone materials have an even more relevant place in modern construction, their carbon footprint is much lower than that of concrete, and the implementation of stone manufacture is now easier and faster.

For 10 years he has worked at The Stonemasonry Company with a growing team of stone enthusiasts, designing and developing stone staircases and structures using techniques such as post tensioning, and discreet steel reinforcement, to create works that appear to defy gravity whilst still being loadbearing.

For Pierre, the staircase is an object that requires a wide range of knowledge, it must be aesthetically appealing, harmonious in its set up, functional, and the ascent must be an experience of pleasure. Understanding the ergonomics of movement for each characteristic, and of course the structural complexities of stairs, requires solidity and integrity. We can thus speak of a mineral ascension.

Pierre believes, even more now, the stonemason, with their knowledge and materials, needs to again become a protagonist, a leader, and not a simple actor in modern construction. It is important that the stonemason finds its place as designer, maker and developer of stone solutions.

In 2022, along with Steve Webb of Webb Yates Engineering, Pierre and The Stonemasonry Company won The CDUK Award for Architecture at The Royal Academy of Arts. Intended to promote the use of both stone and timber as natural, low embodied carbon materials, the 'Equanimity' stone beam was designed to challenge perceptions of stone and timber as largely decorative and to demonstrate structural integrity. 'Equanimity' was deemed the work to best demonstrate the capacity of architecture to signal hope, illustrating the structural potential of materials with minimal embodied carbon.

Pierre is also a strong advocate for the pivoting of the stone industry towards the manufacturing of pre-assembled stone elements with mechanical connections, to speed up, and improve installation time of stone structure systems. Coupled with a cross laminated timber (CLT) structure and an engineered timber frame, a new generation of carbon neutral hybrid construction should be proposed to architects, engineers and clients.

Stone should again be considered as a commodity and not a luxury.