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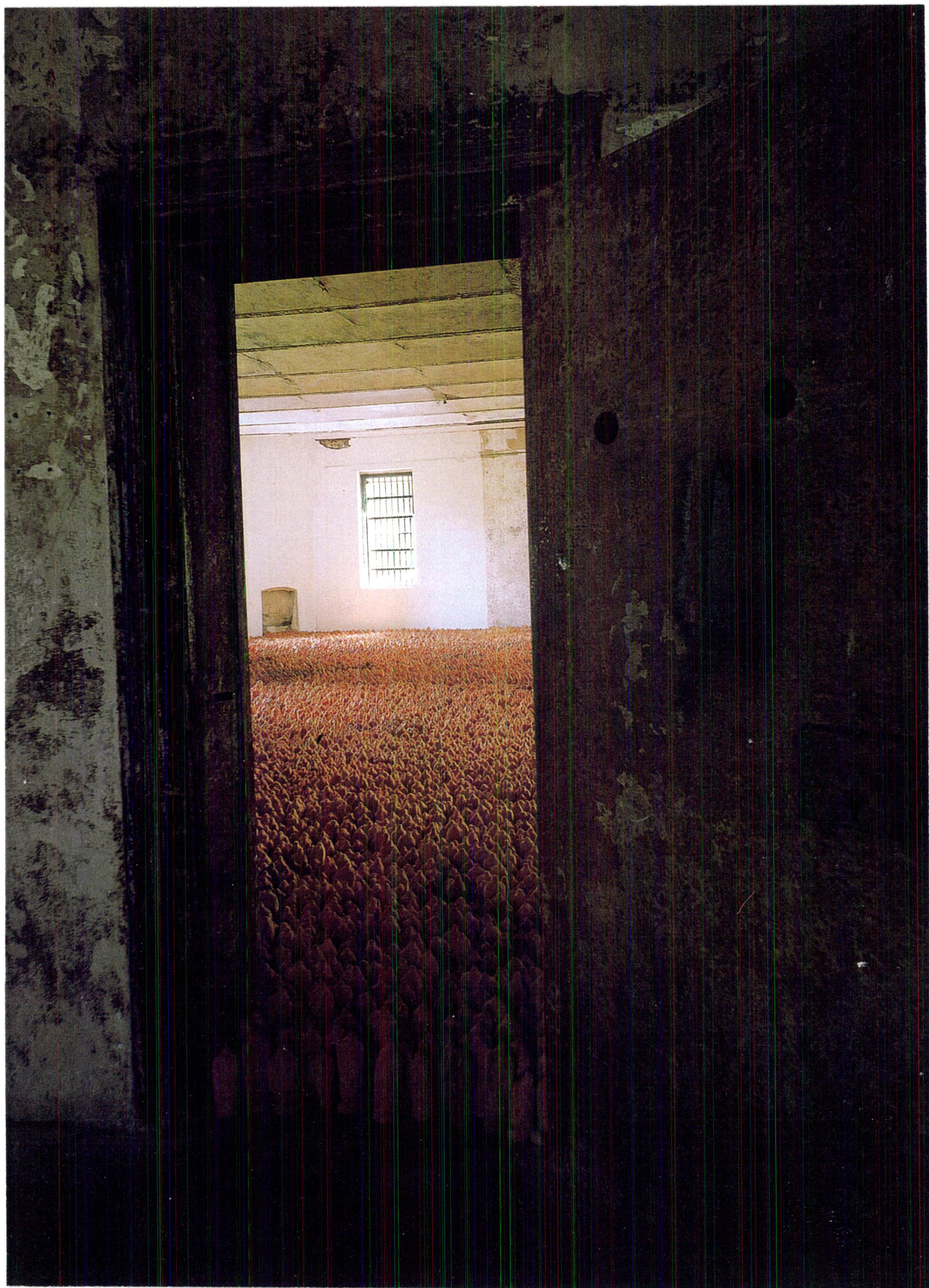


FIG. 39

Field (1991)

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
FACULTY OF CRAFT DESIGN (METALS)

OF MIND AND MATTER:

THE SCULPTURE OF ANTONY GORMLEY WITH RESPECT
TO HIS TREATMENT OF MATERIALS.

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SECTION ONE : CHAPTER ONE

"...I couldn't make a Venus from a block of marble because I'm aware the block of marble is already a sculpture. It's an object in the sense that it is the result of displacement, and my work would have to acknowledge the origin of that block and would have to deal with the hole that was made in the side of the mountain. I must take responsibility for my material - so I just can't order fifty feet of two by two!..."¹

"I must take responsibility for my material". This excerpt from the previous quotation is enough in itself as a definition of the issues which I intend to address throughout the duration of this dissertation. The excerpt sounds more akin to a repetitive lines punishment imposed on an irresponsible primary school pupil, than the essential artistic ground of one of Britain's currently leading sculptors. But this is exactly what it is. To Antony Gormley the choice of material, truth to materials and the material itself are inherent components of his sculpture. Gormley would consider it unethical to produce a piece in cast bronze if the use of bronze did not signify a specific concern of the work.

The structure of this dissertation is quite simple. Sections one and two consist of essentially introductory chapters: the first introduces the artist. Gormley's present popularity owes a great deal to a considerable number of group exhibitions in the early eighties, a time when he was considered an integral component of the then 'New Age of British Sculpture'.

In Section Two I have separated Gormleys career into two specific themes: the first being his early work, from Post Graduate work in the Slade School of Fine Art until his early pieces in 1980. During this time, Gormley appeared to be investigating the different perceptions of his environment in an attempt to understand his surrounding world. Lynne Cooke, in her essay on the artist in the catalogue of his 1984 Salvatore Ala solo exhibition, describes Gormleys concerns during this period as dealing with knowledge, as opposed to his later work post-1980 dealing with experience. This early pre-1980 stage of development however, was the birthplace of many of the artists present day concerns. Even in works as early as Bread Line (1978-79) and Fruits of the Earth (1978-79) Gormley displays careful attention to the choice of materials. He has always been acutely aware of the portholes of communication that can be created through the use of the correct material.

Chapter Two of this section catalogues Gormley's early object-based nature through to his more recent subjective approach. This chapter is important because it addresses those concerns that I wish to expand upon in Section Three. Gormley's work post 1980 addresses two main themes: man in his immediate environment and his relationship with the internal space of his body, and the relationship between man's internal space and his exterior existence. The relationship between Gormley's externalization of internal space and the materials he uses to express this; this is the main concern of this dissertation.

In Section Three, I have chosen to discuss the manner in which Gormley deals with different issues through the materials he uses. For nearly fifteen years, Gormley has persistently used lead almost as the sole material in his sculpture. As to why this is, there have been many suggestions offered by many, many critics and essayists. What I hope to present is a collection of reasons that the artist himself has provided, through his many interviews, catalogue statements and press releases. Through my research I have obtained a substantial compilation of statements made by the artist concerning his materials and what he hopes to achieve through using them. These sources stretch back as far as his first group exhibition in 1981 in whose catalogue he extensively outlines his reasons for using lead. It is interesting, with the power of hindsight, to define whether or not his reasons for using certain materials have altered over the years as he has developed artistically.

I have quoted the artist extensively throughout. I feel this is necessary as he is unique amongst his contemporaries. In interview, Gormley exudes no airs of self-righteousness nor does he appear pretentious or ego-tistical. He comes across as a man very sincere about his work and his aims, which he expresses most eloquently. This truthfulness provides an inexhaustable wealth of source material which I hope I have used to its fullest potential.

Of all the narratives written concerning Antony Gormley as their subject, few if any, have discussed solely the artists use of materials, choosing instead to catalogue his progress as an artist. I have chosen this subject because I feel it is fundamental to his art. After conceiving the initial concept of a work, it is the artists next main concern.

SECTION ONE: CHAPTER TWO

During the Sixties, sculpture was 'released' from the restraints of the craft process. The age of the traditionally respected marble and bronze seemed to be receding whilst the introduction of new materials, everyday materials, paved the way for a new art and a new understanding of art. By the end of the Sixties, almost anything, plastics, glass, fibreglass, cloth etc., were accepted into sculptural tradition.

Installations became a new art form involved with the filling of gallery spaces with art in order to create an artistic environment, art as a place rather than art as an object. The emphasis on sculptural techniques as relaxed, if not discarded, made possible a new age of intense experimentation with materials.

Emphasis was being shifted from the end product of the art to the actual process of reasoning and theoretical development, the traditional construct of art. The process of making became the subject of the work. With the finished piece becoming less and less important, artists turned their attentions to the concept of the work, with the result that the concept became the primary product of respectable, if not fashionable, art. The outcome was that the sculptor was no longer required to 'sculpt'; concepts could be realized by technicians and manufacturers. This 'new art' was categorized by the generation of Christo, Judd and Serra, and in England, by Anthony Caro.

In Britain in the early and mid Seventies, however, a number of young working artists were starting to gain attention for themselves through the intimacy of their work, a quality lost in the industrial nature of the sculpture of the Sixties. In 1981 an exhibition was held in England, in Bristol, by the Institute of Contemporary Arts at the Arnolfini Gallery. In the preface to the catalogue of the show, the exhibition selectors, Lewis Biggs, Iwona Blaszczyk and Sandy Nairne, agreed that in the work of this collection of artists;

"...Materials seem here to be open to any necessary manipulation in the working out of a particular notion or idea...this work...has associations with making by hand."²

It was on this wave that Antony Gormley entered the professional art arena, just two years after being a post - graduate at London's Slade School of Art. Co - exhibitors in Objects and Sculpture included Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Bill Woodrow, and Tony Cragg. This 'group' became known and widely accepted as the 'New Age' of British sculpture and exhibited widely together. On the surface, however, these artists seemed to have little in common, certainly too little to be perceived collectively as a "movement". Their combining factor at its most basic level, is their treatment of materials which exudes a 'hands on' approach by the artist. Cragg, the assumed protagonist of the loosely defined group, shared with Woodrow, Vilmouth, Gormley and to a certain extent Deacon, the use or the adaptation of objects into their work; however Gormleys artistic ideals sympathized most with the work of Anish Kapoor. They shared an interest in the breaking down of form. In his statement for the exhibition, Kapoor wrote:

"I have no formal concerns - I do not wish to make sculpture about form - it doesn't really interest me..."³

whilst Gormley speaks of his treatment of the objects in his work, how he has deconstructed the form of, for instance, the revolver in Fruits of the Earth (1978/79) (see fig.1):

"I've taken it to half way between still referring back to its origins as a gun and referring it forwards to it becoming an egg, this at the same time presents a paradox..."⁴

While Kapoor desired to make sculpture "about belief or passion, about experience, that is outside of material concerns..."⁵, Gormley wished to use objects to express a challenging of traditional perceptions.

Transformations - New Sculpture from Britain, was an exhibition that toured, amongst other countries Brazil, Mexico and Portugal in 1983/84. This exposition of new British work incorporated pieces from Cragg, Deacon, Kapoor, Woodrow, Alison Wilding and, of course, Antony Gormley. In the preface of the catalogue, Julian Andrews and Terese Gleadowe re-iterated what was agreed about these artists in Objects and Sculpture in 1981:

"...commentators have variously indentified certain shared characteristics: an openness, wit, humour and clarity in their approach, a direct and pragmatic attitude to materials, economy of means and elegance of execution..."⁶

In his introduction to the Transformations catalogue, Nicholas Serota (director of the Whitechapel Art Gallery at the time) traced the emergence of each of the exhibiting artists, emphasizing how their introduction of the "detrius" of an urban rather than a rural society, a theme that had preceded this work, "came as a profound shock"⁷. It is not surprising to discover that he discusses Gormley and Kapoor together, for by this time Gormley had dispensed with his earlier object-based approach (though examples of it were present at this exhibition) and had commenced with his almost total preoccupation with the figure and the body, bringing his theoretical oeuvre closer and closer to the concerns of Kapoor, in their shared engagement over the existence of man, "man as being."⁸

While in the main body of this dissertation I intend to discuss the relationship between Gormley and his materials, specifically those artistic concerns that he communicates to the viewer through his adaptation of a certain material, it is important to understand from where these concerns have been born, from where have they developed? It is for this reason that I have provided section three. In the course of these two chapters I hope to chart the development of Gormley's concerns from his early work, through to his more recent figurative peices, so that a familiarity can be laid as a foundation for the issues addressed in Section III.

SECTION TWO: CHAPTER ONE

Things already exist
Sculpture already exists

The job is to transform what already exists in the
outer world,
by uniting it with the world of sensation, imagination
and faith.

Action can be confused with life.
Much of human life is hidden.
Sculpture, in stillness can transmit what may not be
seen.

My work is to make bodies into vessels
that both contain and occupy space.

Space exists outside the door and inside the head.

My work is to make a human space in space.

Each work is a place between form and formlessness
a time between origin and becoming.

A house is the form of vulnerability,
darkness is revealed by light.

My work is to make a place free from knowledge,
free from history, free from nationality to be
experienced freely.

In art there is no progress, only art.
Art is always for the future.⁹

In discussing the artistic aims of Antony Gormley, it would be impossible to ignore this statement of 1985. In its original context it was found as an entry in one of the artists notebooks. Later it formed the supporting text in the catalogue of his Five Works show at the Serpentine Gallery, in 1987. Contained within it is the root basis of his artistic oeuvre. In this statement, the artist presents us with a key towards helping us unlock the mysteries hidden in his vast collection of work.

It is important to realize that the seeds for the more recent figurative were sown in the late Seventies and the early Eighties. His statement of 1985 is equally valuable as it is relative to this period of early exploration. Although this period of work is quite obviously object based, the figure has been alluded to in various works, and if the figure is representative of Humanity, then it is ever-present.

'Impressions' of the figure entered into Gormley's art at the very beginning of his artistic career, in 1973 at London's Central School of Art and Design. These works, known as Sleeping Place (1973) (see fig. 2), withheld the essence of his later work - the presence of the figure through its inherent absence. Gormley describes these works as being direct expressions of what he observed during his three year stay in India. People whose home were the streets covered themselves with blankets, forming what in Gormley's work seems like a human tent-like structure. This type of structure, one that plays with the viewer (we can see the figure but we know it's not there), seemed to have captured Gormley from the very start. During this period he was concerned with the re-presentation of objects:

**"...I try to re-present things in a way in which they
will become eloquent..."¹⁰**

Whilst he describes his work as simple re-presentations, the actions and techniques of sculpture were present: cutting, carving and constructing are all apparent in these works. Flat Tree (1978) (see fig.3) consists of a conifer tree cut into

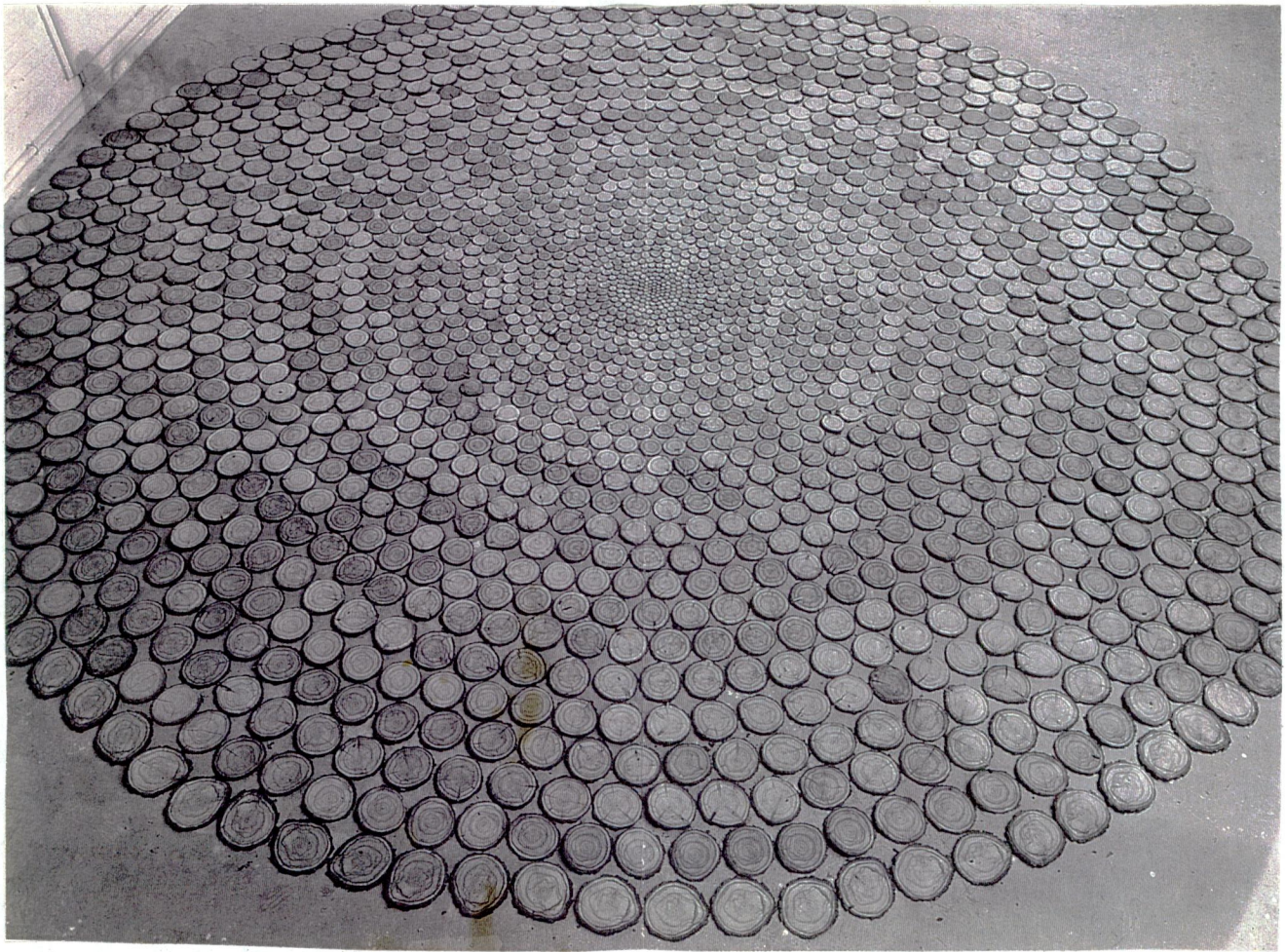


FIG. 3 Flat Tree (1978)



FIG. 4 Form and Content (1979)

sections and laid 'flat' on the ground, in a radiating circle, smallest sections in the centre, so that the end result resembles the cross section of a trunk. Gormley is showing us two trees: our normal perception of a tree, that which stretches upwards, is present for we can see it laid out before us; and we can also see the inner tree, its history, the rings that make up its life.

In Form and Content (1979)(see fig.4) we are presented with twelve standard glass milk bottles which seem to be filled with water to varying degrees but, upon closer inspection, we find that the artist has recreated the meniscus; the visible water level, by cutting the glass. If we consider the title of this piece, we find that it offers us the subject of Gormley's preoccupation of his formative artistic years.

Of all the works of this time, the most valuable in terms of his attitude towards materials, are those which have been completed in lead, an element which he was to adopt as practically his sole material.

In Land, Sea and Air (1977/79) (see fig.5), Gormley introduces us to a number of concerns which were to prove permanent sources of inspiration. The three seed-like or fruit-like objects were made by wrapping lead sheet around a stone, removing the stone and replacing it with, in turn, water, air and finally the stone itself. What is left is three of our most basic elements protected in a casing of lead, perhaps to be discovered in another time in a transmogrified future, as evidence of our earthly existence. Their shape implies growth or rebirth, their leaden skin a protector against nuclear reduction, another preoccupation which Gormley has referred to throughout his career. Returning to his statement in 1985, Gormley claims that each piece is:

"...a time between origin and becoming..."¹¹

Essentially this is how we are to perceive Land, Sea and Air. This is a piece that concerns our present in order to give us hope for the future. Another of his works during this period



FIG. 5

Land, Sea and Air (1977-79)

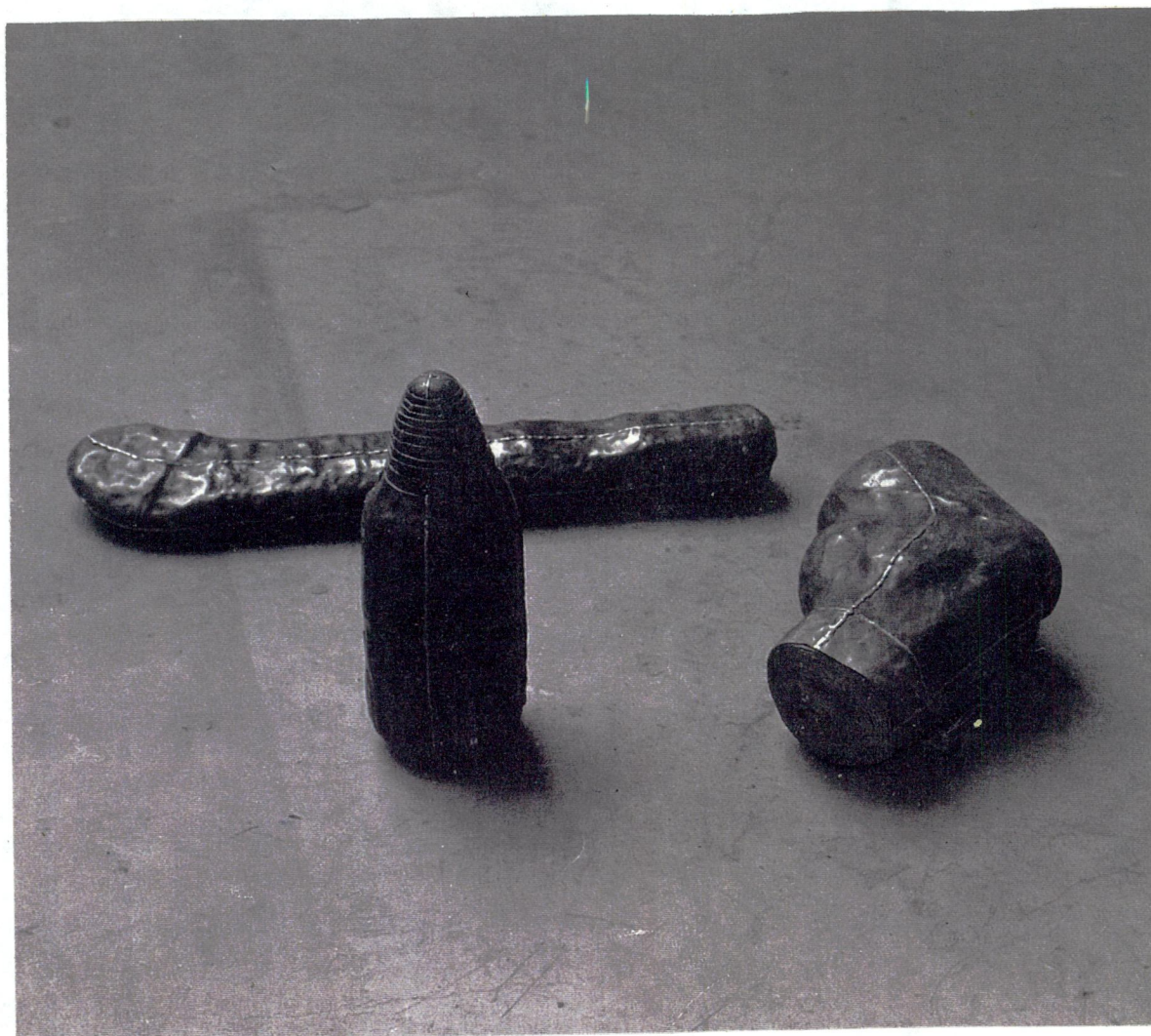


FIG. ①

Fruits of the Earth (1978-79)

is Fruits of the Earth (1978/79) (see fig.1), where again we are presented with three lead wrapped objects. We can guess at the identity of the objects are because the artist has stopped the wrapping process just before they totally lose their identifiable shape, at that point which Gormley described in 1985 as,

"...a place between form and formlessness..."¹²

In a statement for his Objects and Sculpture exhibition in 1981 he described the thinking behind Fruits of the Earth:

"...In my work I start with the premise that all things that exist are earth above ground. There is an equality about objects whether they be manufactured or natural... I am interested in the particular function of say the gun...and the piece exists within the realm of connecting the gun to an organic force. I've taken it to half way between still refering back to its origins as a gun and referring it forward to its becoming an egg..."¹³

This seeing one object in two lights is a continuation of his thoughts behind Form and Content and Flat Tree, his work in the mid Seventies, but Fruits of the Earth introduces a new factor into his work; whilst Land, Sea and Air spoke about man and his relationship with the world and his environment, Fruits of the Earth bears a juxtaposition of culture against nature. The three wrapped objects are a bottle of Chianti, a machete and a loaded revolver, yet Gormley has wrapped them to such a degree that they resemble fruit or tubers. The eloquence of this lies in Gormleys providing two interpretations of the same three objects. One as a sustaining element, that is food, and the other as a destructive force. When Gormley states that "the piece exists within the realm of connecting the gun to an organic force", he could be referring to the role alcohol plays in violence or to man, (the organic or natural element in the equation) who possesses the potential to destroy himself.

Gormley continued wrapping objects into the early Eighties with Three bodies (1981) (see fig.6) and Natural Selection(1981) (see fig. 7), progressing the thought behind Land, Sea and Air and more closely Fruits of the Earth with the nature versus culture discussion that it contains. In 1981, Gormley contributed to the Bristol exhibition already referred

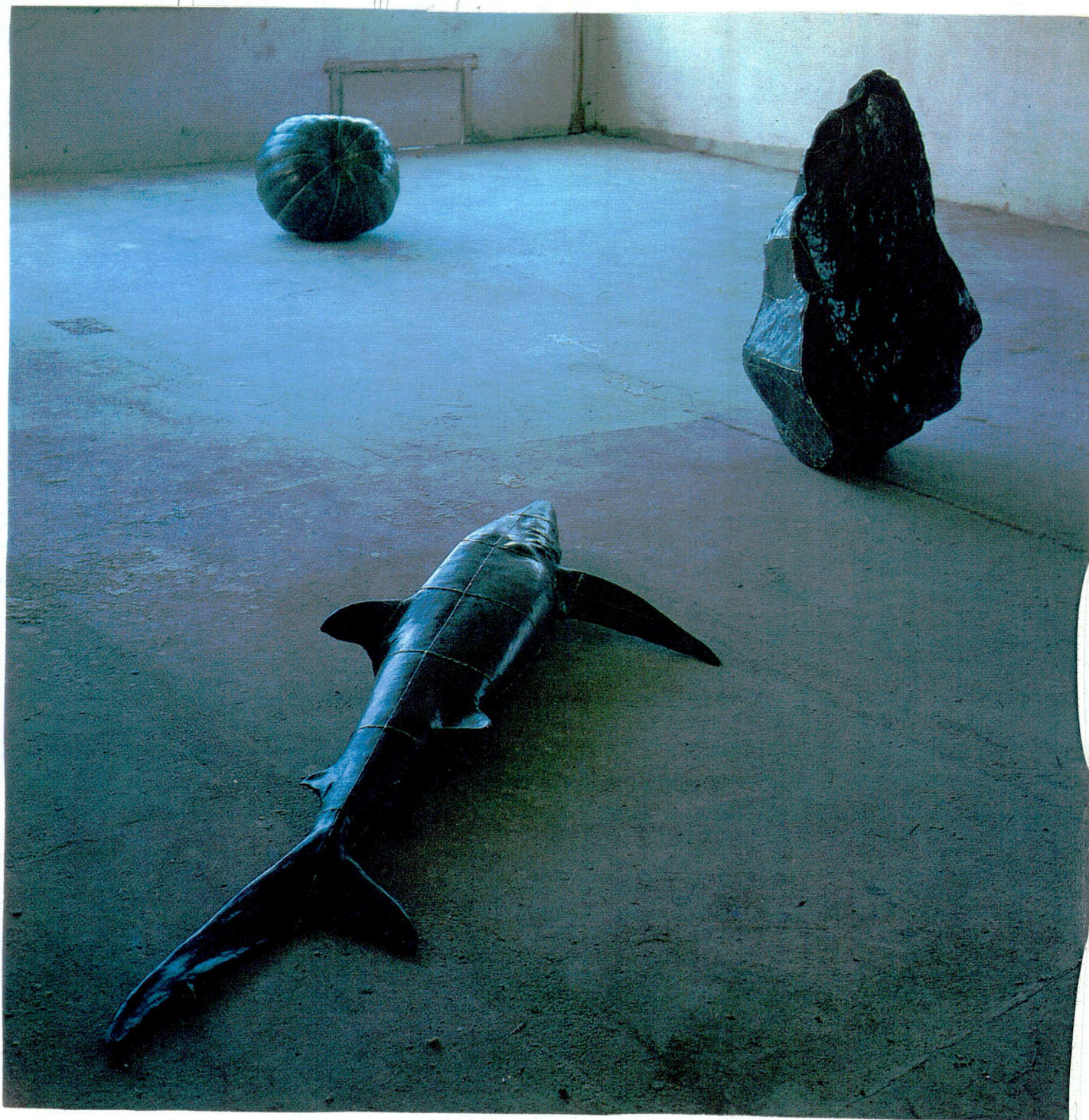


FIG. 6

Three Bodies (1981)

to, that was to bring under one roof those innovative young artists that were felt to be working along "positively shared characteristics"¹⁴ in Britain at that time. Gormley was represented by Fruits of the Earth (1978/79), Land, Sea and Air (1977/79), Last Tree (1979) and Bed (1981). In his statement Gormley divided his work into "three clear divisions": Capsules (Land, Sea and Air), lines of progression (Natural Selection)" and "...those pieces which are places such as Room (1980) and Bed" It was these two pieces that introduced the figure into Gormley's art as part of his ongoing investigation into the relationship between man and his immediate environment.

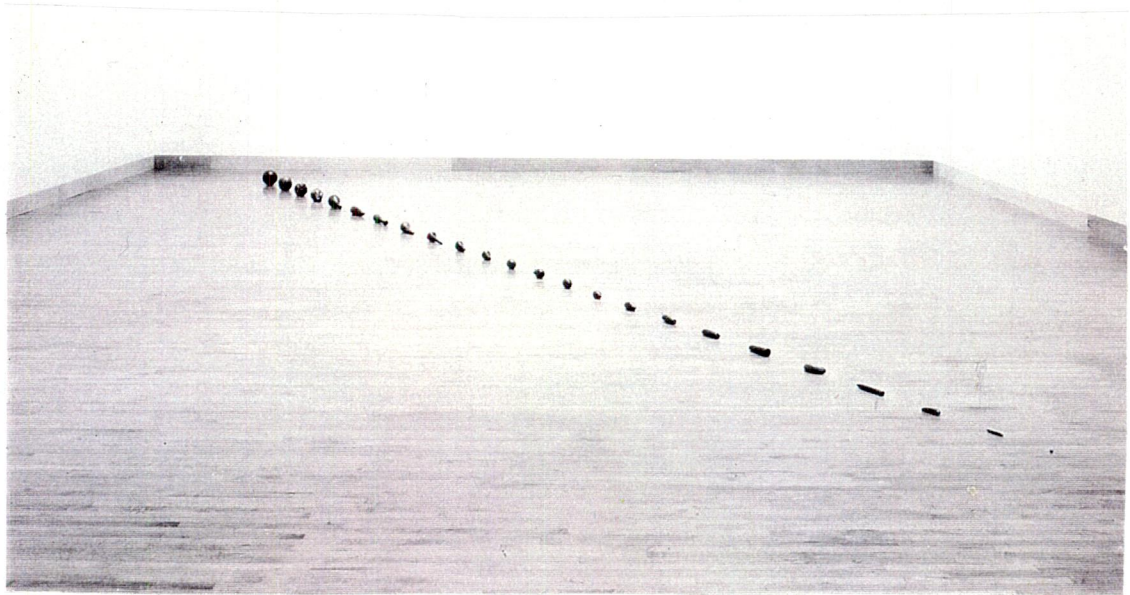
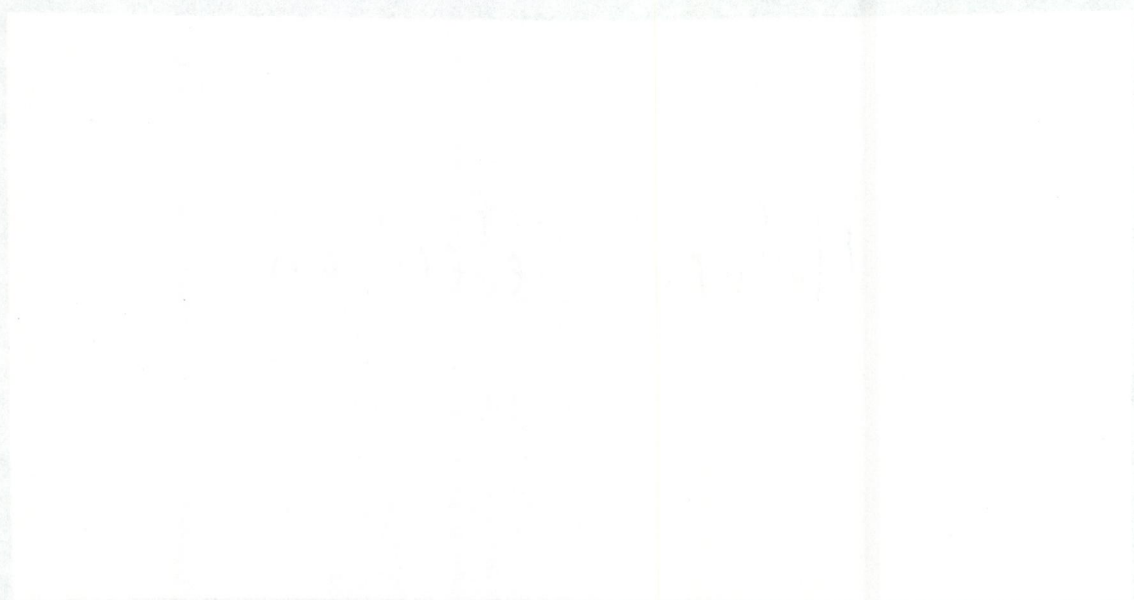


FIG. 7

Natural Selection (1981)



SECTION TWO: CHAPTER TWO

"Being is rather a vague term. What I am asking is rather than being engaged with acting in the world, is it possible to express consciousness with no object but itself?

Being contained in the body and its feelings, Being conveyed as immersion, where questions of culture become irrelevant"¹⁵

In response to Marjetica Potrc's questioning on whether or not Gormley sees himself as an artist rather than a sculptor, he states:

"...I got fed up making two dimensional equivalents of a three dimensional world or three dimensional equivalents of a four dimensional world - I want to use time like matter and I'm a sculptor"¹⁶

and in reply to the same question posed by Declan McGonagle:

"...Once you accept that painting is an object in the world and that its relationship with the viewer is more important than being a window onto another world, you are already making sculpture"¹⁷

It is clear that Gormley sees two dimensional art as some kind of an "illusion", a "window onto another world" which is an ideal that Gormley is keen to distance himself from. Three dimensional sculpture, on the other hand, is,

"...a more profound way of challenging reality."¹⁸

Whilst he is wholly emphatic that he is a sculptor - he has on a number of occasions expressed discomfort with the tradition of western figurative sculpture. The bone with which Gormley admits contention is the fact that most revered examples of the figurative tradition (he singles out Lacoon and His Sons and Bernini's David) are concerned with "dramatic muscular actions", concluding that

"...human potential can only be expressed sculpturally through the depiction of action."¹⁹

Time again to refer to Gormley's statement of 1985:

"...Action can be confused with life. Much of human life is hidden. Sculpture, in stillness, can transmit what may not be seen."²⁰

Knowing how he feels about 'action' in sculpture, it is worth noting the complete lack of it in his own work. Whilst an

Room

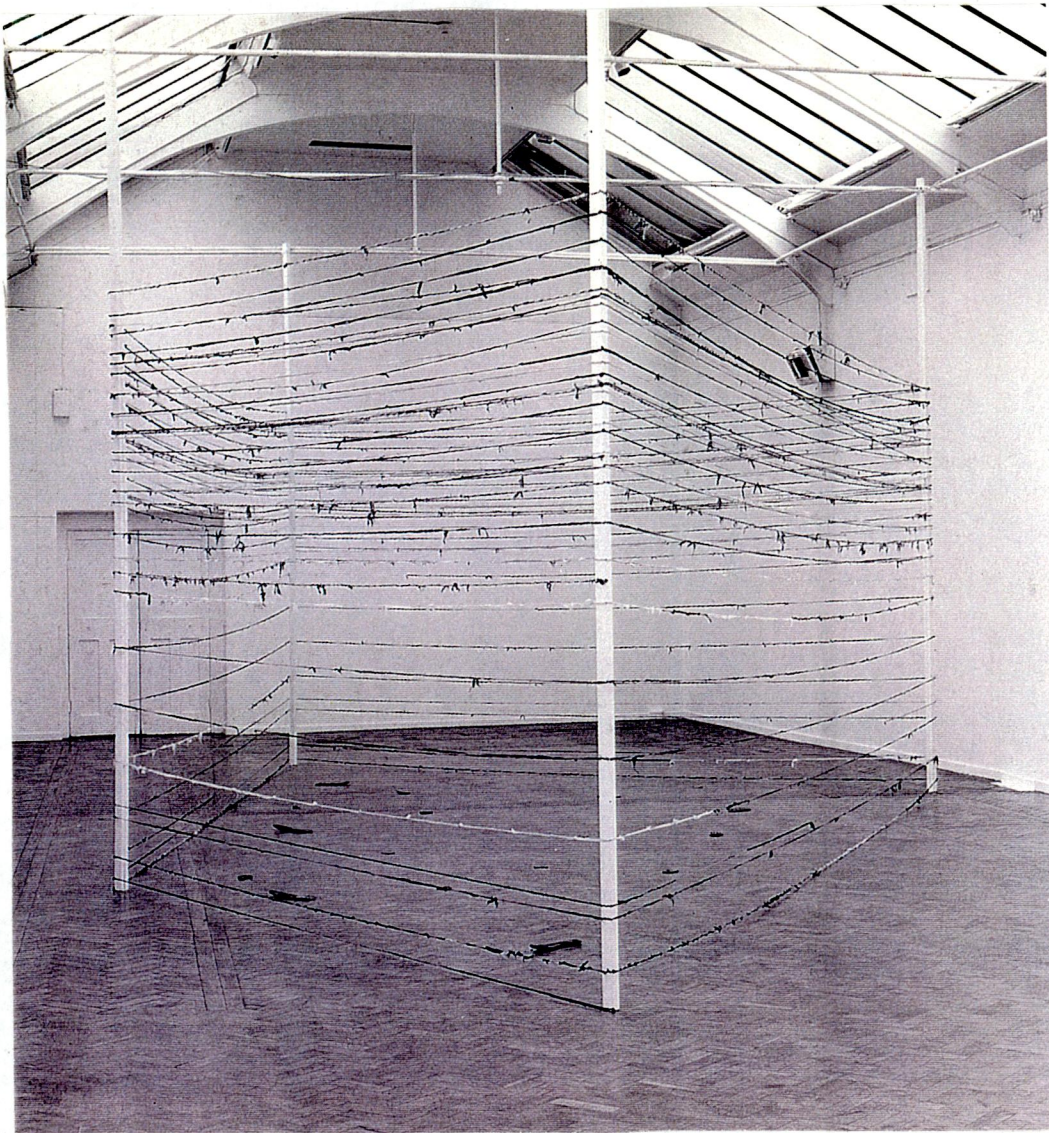


FIG. 8

Room(1980)

activity may exist, it can never be described as "active". In Gormley's work there is a feeling of the figures being frozen in time for all eternity, rather than being captured in an act of motion. There is no feeling of hurriedness or of clutter in Gormley's figures and one is left wondering whether this inherent silence in some way represents a peaceful protest against the traditions of Western Sculpture.

Gormley's departure from the 'object' nature of his work in 1981 did not represent a radical shift in his artistic intentions. Portents towards figurative sculpture or at least sculpture that concerned the body already existed in works mentioned in the previous chapter.

In Room (1980) (see fig. 8) and in Bed (1981) (see fig. 9), we can see the artist trying to break away from the restraints of the object, trying to create the object as a place, a practice that had given birth to Flat Tree earlier.

Gormley has always been interested in skin and surface. In a 1987 interview conducted by Mina Roustayi for Arts Magazine the artist confirmed this:

"I started my own museum when I was five and I was very interested in classifying things. In fact, my brother told me recently that one of my classifications in my museum was just a box marked skin and bark...I was amazed to hear that since my interest is still skin and bark..."^{2 1}

In a statement of 1981 he had earlier remarked,

"...Whilst thinking about skin in relation to carving, I started to think in terms of the human form. There has always been a fascination for me about clothes...they're like man's first container."^{2 2}

Room (1980) is the materialization of his enquires into surface and skin. Here the artist has shredded his clothes into strips, tied these shreds together and stretched them around four wooden posts to form a twenty foot square, an enclosed space. Here the body is implied, but not stated, the actual



FIG. 10

Mould (1981)

figure is still absent. What Room does is to expand the volume of space that the clothes, the skin, can contain. The space, loosely enclosed by the shreds of material, is indicative of the internal space that is our imagination, the internal cavities of the body, expressed as a place, a place to be contemplated. This work is one of his earliest investigations into the inner body and internal space, a topic he is still fascinated with. His methods have not changed, he still uses the absence of the figure to talk about its presence.

Mould (1981) (see fig.10), was Gormley's first lead 'embodiment'. We are not surprised to find that the artist describes it as a "body case", so even though we observe a figure on its back, clutching its knees to its chest, in an almost foetal position, in essence the figure, the 'real' body is absent. So why has Antony Gormley chosen the figure as his sole vehicle of expression for the past fifteen years? A simple and direct reason is supplied by Lynne Cooke in an 1984 catalogue quoting a statement by the artist:

"...Objects are good for understanding the world because they inhabit the world, body is good for making experience visible because I inhabit it..."^{2 3}

In an 1984 conversation with Paul Kopeck, Gormley presented a straightforward reasoning behind his use of the body:

"...I am now trying to deal with what it feels like to be a human being. To make an image that in some ways comes close to my states of mind. My body is my closest experience of matter and I use it for both convenience and precision. I can manipulate it both from within and from without. I want to recapture for sculpture an area of human experience which has been hidden for a while. It is to do with very simple things - What it feels like to look out and see, what it feels like to be cold or frightened, or what it feels like to be absolutely quiet and just aware of the passage of air around your body..."^{2 4}

In "trying to deal with what it feels like to be a human being", Antony Gormley has produced some of the most intriguing art of the twentieth century. The "area of human experience"

that he wishes to capture can be found in various forms of meditation. After obtaining degrees in anthropology and art history, Gormley travelled to and around India for three years, funding this trip by painting murals in nightclubs and houses all over England. This longing to explore India was instilled by previous shorter visits in 1968 and '69. Whilst in India Gormley was introduced to, and became acutely interested in Buddhism. He settled in a house in the Himalayas and in the winter travelled down to Rajasthan staying a while with the Maharaja of Jodhpur. It was during this stay in the company of the Maharaja, that he met a Burmese Buddhist teacher and "...started studying very seriously buddhist meditation."²⁵ His teacher, Goenka, taught him the yogic technique of 'Vipassana'. This strict discipline emphasizes 'bare attention' to the body. Awareness of breath is very important. Mindfulness of breathing, or 'Anapana', provides the practitioner with concentration. Gormley says of this concentration that you use it "to look at the sensation of being in the body, and that is a tool I have tried to transfer to sculpture"²⁶

Gormley has indeed transferred this technique to sculpture, it is after all the basis of his method of making, using his body as the mould from which his work is cast. His vehicles of investigation into the body are the various channels of the senses. Gormley wants his figures to be seen as places, not so much as objects, a space that cannot be inhabited physically but that can be impregnated by, or with, the imagination. He has often described his 'bodies' as places for contemplation. In an interview with Marjetica Potrc he referred to the body as "...a workshop for the spirit." Gormley is excited by the senses, seeing them as "gateways to the soul". What interests him most about the senses is that they enable us to bring what is outside, in. He refers to this as "immersion" :

"...whats wonderful about the sense of sound, or the sense of hearing or the sense of smell, is that we are within it and it is within us. It's not about distance, it's about immersion. I am interested in the senses because they are channels through which we are



rep.
^ ^

**immersed in being rather than distanced in
knowledge..."²⁷**

Most of this figurative work exudes ties with the senses, but it is perhaps one of the earlier works, a three figure ensemble, which most eloquently describes it, Land, Sea and Air II (1983). In this work, three figures exist. One stands, arms pressed against its sides, seeking out the horizon, another kneels on the ground, ear turned towards the earth as if listening for some resonance of the past or, perhaps the future, while the other kneels with a straight back, hands on its thighs with its head tilted back as if in the process of inhaling a long slow breath. This one is "Air"; holes are present where its nostrils should be. "Sea", the standing figure, has holes for eyes and "Land", has a hole in the ear turned towards the ground. Gormley creates these orifices to emphasize the ~~the~~ separate relationship each work has with its surroundings. This sculpture deals with the realms of perception, /other three figure ensembles have dealt with bodily functions, means of communication and states of consciousness.

Gormley in his previously quoted 1985 statement, mentions the 'imagination'. In conversation with Lewis Biggs he relates a recurring bed-time sensation as a child, when the space behind his closed eye-lids became a "matchbox theatre".²⁸ Later, in an interview with E. H. Gombrich, he recalls how this space behind his eyes would "...expand and expand until it was enormous".²⁹ This idea that the internal space of the body, whether it be imagination, memory or just attention to air flowing in and out of the lungs, is so much larger than the skin which contains it, has been present in Gormley's art since he first alluded to the figure in the late Seventies and early Eighties. This relationship between internal and external scale is also dealt with in later chapters concerning his concrete works and iron expansion pieces of the early Nineties.

Antony Gormley's ultimate aim in his figurative work is for the viewer to "...sense his own body through this moment of stillness...".³⁰ In a sense, his work can be described as iconic, a means by which the viewer can meditate on his own awareness of his own body. He clarifies this in conversation with Gombrich:

"...It's [his work] a kind of intimate architecture that is inviting an empathetic inhabitation of the imagination of the viewer..."³¹

SECTION THREE: INTRODUCTION

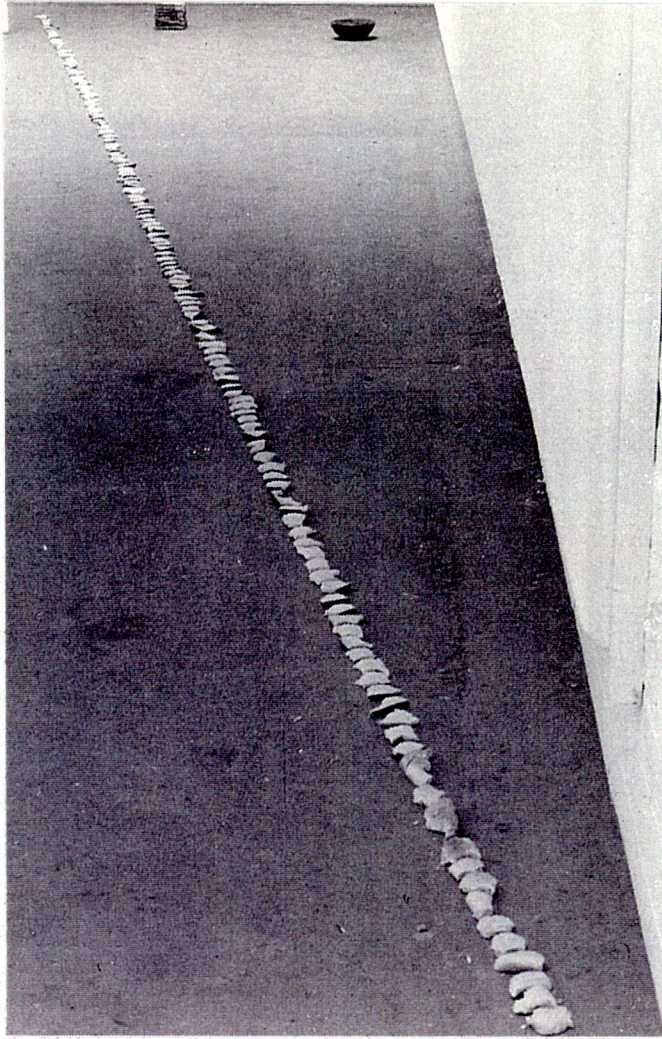


FIG. 11

Bread Line (1982)

Antony Gormley's figurative work of the Eighties and Nineties has predominantly materialized in the form of lead, life-size body casts. It is with this material more than any other, that Gormley has sustained an empathetic relationship for nearly twenty years and for the same length of time critics and essayists have been extolling various reasons and answers as to why this is the case. But over the years, Gormley has lapsed, several times, in his apparently loyal devotion to lead. It is these works, those completed in concrete, iron and clay as well as his early preoccupation with bread and clothes, that capture my particular interest. However, the presence of lead in Gormley's art is difficult to ignore and must be considered if I am to discuss how the artist chooses and uses his materials. He does this in the same way an author or writer chooses his or her adjectives. Only the material that most eloquently describes his theoretical concerns can be employed. His early concerns with bread is a prime example of such a method of working.

Between 1980 and 1982 Gormley used sliced white bread as his preferred material. A series of works emerged from this practice. These were, in order of creation, "Bed" (1980-81), "Bread Line" (1981), and "Mothers Pride" (1982). His use of bread wholly agrees with his artistic aims; after all, Gormley, through his work, tries to find a place for man in the natural order of the world. Bread is our most basic form of sustenance. It separates us from the primates in that we have invented a process to create it. In his statement for the catalogue of Objects and Sculpture (1981), the artist outlines ideas behind using bread as a material and also describes the process he went through to achieve the 'correct' treatment of it:

"I came to use bread as a material, because it is something that is with us all the time, like bottles, knives, coats, and socks. At first I used it simply as a material - I cut it with a saw and made it into compositions usually circular, but sometimes within the edge of one slice. What I like about bread is that it's one of the oldest manufactured things, it was part of the neolithic revolution and it's been with us

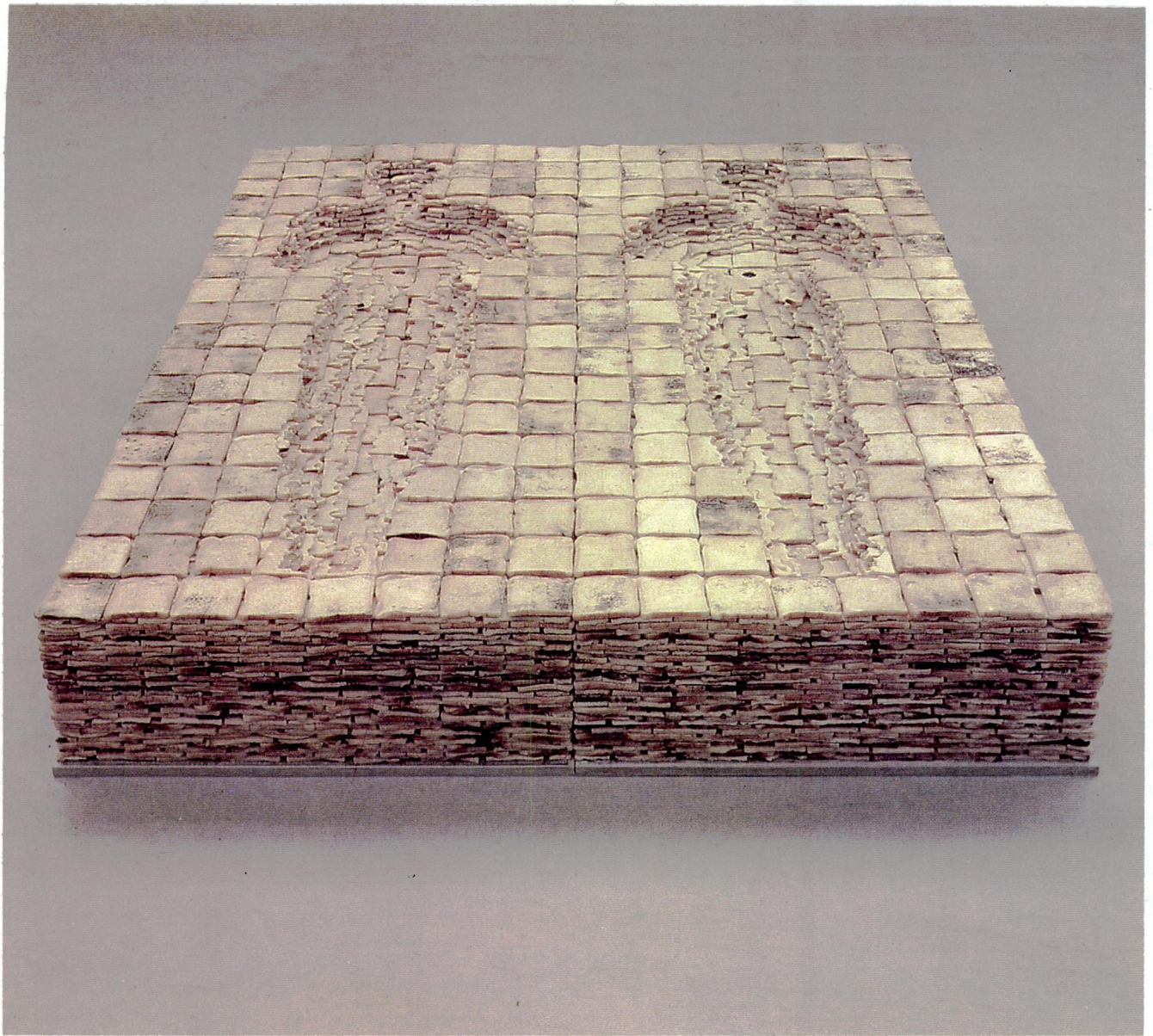


FIG. 9

Bed (1981)

ever since. White processed Mothers Pride bread indicates the distance we have run from a hunter-gather, to somebody who cooks. And in the early bread works I was concerned, as in all my works, to refer slices of white Mothers Pride bread back to its origins as a field. I was happy when the bread started to mould. I'd been working with bread for two years before it became obvious to me that it was ridiculous to treating it as if it were wood. I mean in the sense of sawing it up. So I started using my teeth, thinking much more about bread as a food substance".^{3 2}

The important issues to extract from this statement include Gormleys realization that bread is an inherent ingredient in the survival of Man and like lead, concrete, clay and iron, it has been with us all the time. Gormley's chosen materials are everyday items, elements that man has used as integral part of his existence since day one, elements that possess a latent familiarity with man. To use such material in considering man's place in the world is a natural if not logical step, as well as an admirably clever one. Through his materials, Gormley has achieved communication with the viewer on a basic level, in that they have a familiarity with it. This combined with the use of the figure or human form, creates a potent work that is on its most basic level assumes an intense empathy with its audience.

In Bed (1980/81) (see fig.9) Gormley addresses life, growth, death and religion. Here the imprint of the figure has been consumed by the artist, over a three and a half month period from what is implied as being a mattress of white sliced Mothers Pride bread, preserved by each slice being dipped in wax. The resulting image is one which comments on man's need to consume to survive as well as his survival through destruction. The negative figure in the bread was born through the act of eating, that which supports life, yet the image presented is reminiscent of medieval tomb effigies. Paradoxes of life and death, presence and absence, what is of earth and what is manufactured, are not uncommon in Gormleys art. He uses the paradox to instigate, or stimulate

contemplation. when asked why he used bread the artist replied:

"It is the substance that sustains and is common to everyone...we eat bread to feed ourselves, yet we know we will die."³³

The religious connotations of Bed are outwardly obvious; the combination of bread and body as one relates to the Catholic belief of transubstantiation by which, through the act of consecration, bread is transformed into the body of Christ, leaving only the appearance of bread behind. The religious aspect of Gormley's work is discussed later in individual sections concerning lead, concrete, iron and clay.

In Mothers Pride (1982) (see fig.11) the image of the figure is again presented in absence and through consumption, this time from a wall of bread slices, one slice thick. The figure seen here, however, is not in a reclining pose, rather it assumes an almost foetal position. Through its title and the use of that particular brand of bread, the artist expresses a tongue-in-cheek wit, the encompassed figure representing the foetus, the pride and joy of the expectant mother. "The titles...", say Gormley, "...are as much a part of the work as finding the material".³⁴

Bread is seen here clearly as an element of support and as a life-giving source in its role as the amniotic fluid in which a child exists during its nine months of gestation. Again, Gormley is conveying the very existence and growth of man through an image of consumption and destruction.

Through this preoccupation with bread, Gormley has provided us with an early insight into how he addresses the use and choice of materials. The following chapters deal individually with his use of lead, concrete, iron and clay. The use of each may seek, in some cases, to indentify shared ideals but each lends its own unique quality to the resulting work.

SECTION THREE: CHAPTER ONE

LEAD

"I use lead for the following reasons. Lead is an insulator. It's the most female metal, it's the most malleable and the densest. It has the capability of taking on a form and also to hold it; it's completely impenetrable visually and radioactively. I feel it's the best possible material and I love it!."^{3 5}



FIG. 12

Vehicle (1987)



FIG. 13

Learning To See III (1991)

The previous statement, recorded by the artist in 1981, more than likely with reference to his early object-based lead works is still relevant today in discussing the attributes of lead in his more recent figurative works. "...I feel it is the best possible material and I love it!...". What greater acclamation can an artist pay towards a chosen material? What does lead possess to invoke such an admission from Antony Gormley? For fifteen years many have tried to indentify just that, but Gormley himself speaks little on the matter, his statement of 1981 being the most comprehensive to date. He lists four main reasons in the opening paragraph of this statement, as to why he has chosen it as his primary material. First lead is an insulator, secondly it is the most malleable metal, capable of "...taking on a form and holding it...".³⁶ Thirdly it is the densest metal and last, but not least, it is "completely impenetrable visually, radioactively."³⁷ It is my intention in this chapter, to investigate and discuss these qualities in relation to Gormley's artistic intentions and with reference to particular works.

Lead, as an element and as an artistic material, evokes many connotations, not least it's relation to alchemy. But it is also perfectly suited to Gormley because of the many paradoxes it inherently possesses. The paradox, discussed in the previous chapter, in relation to Bed, is a constant in Gormleys art. He talks of lead as a protector, an "insulator". He has encased our most basic elements in lead (earth, air and water), in Land, Sea and Air(1977-79) but, while lead protects, it also poisons. Lead is visually impenetrable, yet he uses it in a sculpture called Learning To See III(1991). It is the most dense of all the metals yet he creates angel figures with enormous lead wing spans; he even presents us with gilder encased in lead, Vehicle (1987) (see fig 12). The list could go on and on encompassing all aspects of Gormley's art. In Learning To See III (see fig. 13), we the viewer, are confronted with an upright image of the naked male. It's head is slightly tilted upwards, it's arms by its sides and its feet together. Upon closer expection, we discover that the figure seems to be in the process of inhaling, its chest expanded. One also notes that the figure's eyes are closed. So what 'sight 'is the artist



FIG. 14

Case for an Angel II, III (1990)

referring to? If we also acknowledge that lead visually impenetrable, then the reasoning behind the title becomes apparent. The figure with its eyes closed is looking 'into' itself. It is contemplating the interior space of its body. The artist has constantly referred to his work as a place for contemplation, inviting the viewer to "...sense his own body through this moment of stillness..."³⁸ So although we cannot see through or beyond the carapace of this figure, we are invited to contemplate its interior and through this contemplation, meditate on our own interior space.

This exploration of internal space by Gormley owes a great deal to his close experience of eastern culture in India. Gormley is keen to imbue his work with this experience in the hope that it will act as a mediator between the viewers physicality and spirituality.

In Case For an Angel II and III (1990) (see fig, 14) the struggle between mind and body, spirituality and physicality is most eloquently presented as a leaden figure with an outstretched wingspan. The paradox present here is how can something manufactured in lead ever hope to fly? This is an image of not so much a fallen angel, rather an angel or spirit which has been forever grounded. Gormley speaks of it as:

"...an image of a being that is more at home in the air, brought down to earth. On the other hand it is also an image of some-one who is fatally handicapped, who cannot pass through any door and is desperately burdened..."³⁹

Gormley has often stated that the mind cannot be separated from the body. But it is important not to confuse mind, the imagination and memory, and spirit. Case for an Angel does not address consciousness. It is concerned with an ideal of bodily spirit, that part of us that we believe lives on after our bodily matter has perished. The 'angel' is a mediator between states of being. Lead, the material of construction of this work, through its density, weight and permanence, is indicative of our bodily state which is forever earthbound.



FIG. 16

Edge (1985)

The religious connotations inherent in Case for an Angel, both in its title and the adopted pose of the Christian symbol of resurrection and salvation, have been used by Gormley many times. He is careful to deny the pose is directly symbolic of religious iconography, but at the same time, he is quick to admit he believes that our physical presence on the earth is only one stage of a greater scheme:

"...there is a kind of a collective madness that is taking us towards a terminal point, but there is also a feeling that this bodily existence is only one level of existence. But I don't know what the next thing is, and the work doesn't pretend to know what the next thing is either. All I'm trying to do is to materialize the uncertainty, and to isolate some kind of contact between consciousness and matter..."⁴⁰

While Gormley may describe his work as a return to the body, the body itself remains secondary in importance to something greater. The body is depicted as an outer shell, a leaden carapace, a skin which insulates and protects what resides within its interior. The artist has described the body not as an object, but rather a place, he sees it primarily as a "...workshop for the spirit..."⁴¹ A Case for an Angel can be interpreted as an incarceration of the spirit, the spirit being trapped or confined, unable to attain its potential as something normally regarded as being separate from matter. But the artist has often created work in which the spirit can be seen to have overcome its leaden captor. In works like Learning to Think (1991) (see fig. 15), Edge (1985) (see fig. 16), Rise (1983/84) (see fig. 17), and Earth Above Ground (1989) (see fig18), the figures evoke a sense of transcendence. It is in these works and with respect to the artists investigation into an after-life or religion, that another quality unique to lead becomes apparent as a catalyst in Gormleys art. Lead has the lowest melting point of all the metals, a quality most important in its capacity as 'prima materia', the basic element in alchemy.

Thomas McEvilley compares the function of alchemy, or the process it infers, where

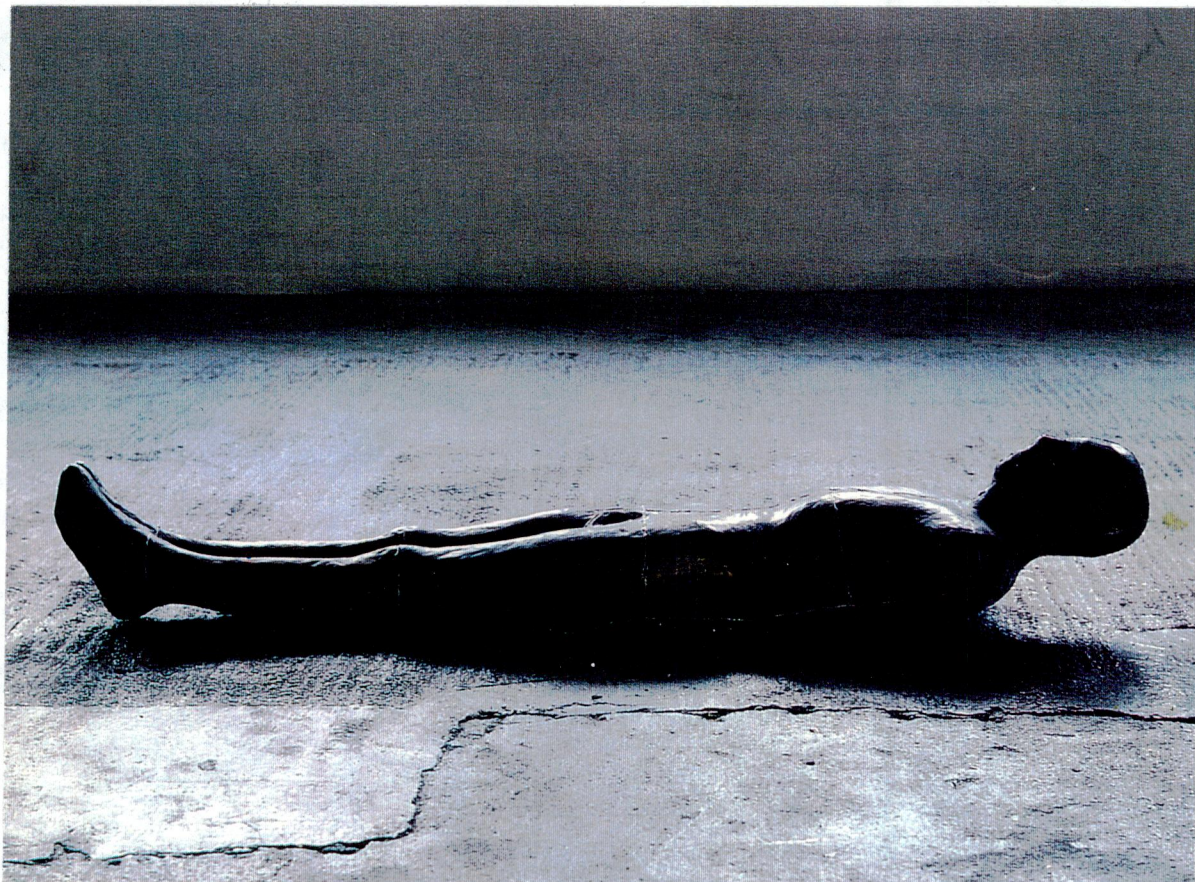


FIG. 17

Rise (1983-83)



FIG. 18

Earth Above Ground (1989)

"...a substance is stripped of its qualities by a special burning, returned to featureless prime matter and then drawn out of prime matter with new qualities - reborn in effect, as a new substance..."^{4 2}

to the process inherent in the making of art , "...in which one form of experience is transmuted into another..."⁴³ This transmutation, in a piece like Gormleys Earth Above Ground (1989) is presented as being more of a transcendence of states than a transformation of substance. Yet again Gormley toys with the viewers interpretation of the work. A lead body is presented in a paradoxical state of levitation. This use of lead as a vehicle to discuss the transcendence of the spirit is a common factor in the artists work. It alludes to some form of religion. Gormley has spoken of a need to replace a relinquished Catholic upbringing:

"...I left the sacraments, and yet up to that point, Catholicism had been the central moral and life-supporting structure and remains a vital witness, because it is something that needs replacing. I need to build something as strong as that..."^{4 4}

In a notebook entry of 1987 Gormley confirms this belief:

"...the work comes from the same source as the need for religion: wanting to face existence and discover meaning. The work attempts by starting with a real body in real time, to space and eternity. The body - or rather the place that the body occupies is seen as the locus on which those forces act..."^{4 5}

In this second quote the artist refers to the making process of his work, "...starting with a real body in real time". In using his body as the mould from which the final lead sculpture is realized, Gormley endures an exhausting ritual of first wrapping his body in cling film, secondly adopting the chosen pose, thirdly holding that pose while his wife wraps his entire body in a wet plaster scrim, and finally, after letting the scrim casing dry, being cut out of the work. It is a process in itself that alludes to rebirth. The transformation of the caterpillar to the butterfly in the cocoon is brought to mind. Gormley speaks of it as entering a

"...tomb or catatonia of death, from which I am released. I exhibit the box from which I am released in some hope that this might be an imagination catalyst for the viewer to experience the same process..."⁴⁶

No matter the concern, whether it be religious, cultural, a comment on humanity or the relationship between mind and body, Gormley has been able to adapt his material, lead, to eloquently express his mode of thought during the initial conceptualization of a piece. This ability to adapt a particular material to achieve every artistic concern is a highly admirable talent, one which Gormley has exploited to its most eloquent potential.

SECTION THREE: CHAPTER TWO

IRON

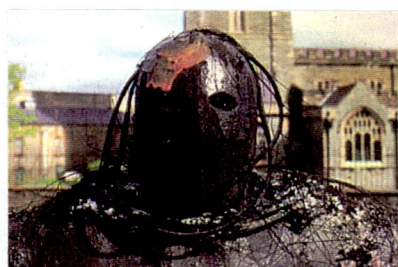
"...It was an electrifying moment when Antony Gormley's cruciform double figure sculpture was hoist over the rampart, swaying like Fellini's flying Christ, streaked with spittle, to be lowered into it's anchoring pit on the city walls above the Bogside.

The sound of bank holiday school kids smashing every pane of glass in the cranes cockpit had summoned the troops who deployed, crouched and tense, around the site. Timely intervention, sensible words and the situation was diffused; the troops withdraw, the sculpture was set in place"^{4 7}



FIG. 19

Sculpture for Derry's Walls (1987)



Not a typical review of a public sculpture installation, normally a reserved, sometimes stale affair, with a number of carefully selected guests, a few bottles of red and white and a well presented suit presenting a well rehearsed verbal appreciation of the work and its creator. But then again this was no typical sculpture created by no typical artist for a definitely atypical public. Written by Mel Gooding in 1987, the excerpt overleaf describes the scene and atmosphere present at the installation of Antony Gormleys Sculpture for Derry's Walls (1987) (see fig. 19) This work took the form of three identical sculptures, each consisting of two figures, cast in iron and welded back to back, feet together, firmly placed on the ground, with their arms outstretched in a cruciform pose. Each of the three sculptures was 'strategically placed on the seventeenth century walls of Derry city, my home town.

The installation was realized as part of a national sculptural project, 'T.W.S.A. 3D.' Through this project, the organizers, Television South West and South West Arts hoped to provide for artists work sites that

"...were already meaningful, already alive with the associations of history (cultural, industrial and political) and memory, but also places whose stature or symbolic status, whose very lack of neutrality, may have discouraged the idea that they were available for art. We categorically did not want or need the public plaza or the sculpture park..."^{4 8}

By participating in such a project, Gormley had to take responsibility for the site in the same way he does for his materials. The chosen sites, Tyne Bridge, Newcastle; Calton Hill, Edinburgh; a forest in Dartmoor; St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church in Trafalgar Square and of course Derry's Walls, are all embedded with their own histories and in some cases, as in Derry, that history belongs as much to the present day as it did to the seventeenth century.

"...any attempt to ignore these historical dimensions, and produce a work arrogantly dismissive of their resonance, would end up flouting the true significance of the place..."^{4 9}

On the other hand, if the artist were to treat the site and commemorate its importance, in a respectful, docile manner, the power of the work might be overwhelmingly diluted and possibly compromised.

It was not by chance that Antony Gormley chose the walls of Derry as a place for a site-specific work; his family has roots here. He is well aware of the situation in Northern Ireland and at that time (1987), Derry was one of the region most violent hot-spots. Even so, for an outsider, a British one at that, to have installed a work that so comprehensively narrated, if not dictated, the situation and its futility, took a great deal of bravery.

As a fourteen year-old looking at these works I was probably too interested in the burning tyre around its neck to fully appreciate the strength of this work, that strength which provoked such a violent response towards an inanimate object.

Sculpture fo Derry's Walls is perhaps one of the artists best examples of his figurative investigation into the metaphysics of man/humanity in its relationship with its immediate environment. It depicts two communities crucified against one another, back to back, eternally unable to look in the same direction, see the same view. What we, the viewer, see is a futile relationship, no potential for communication; the figures have only eyes, no mouth, ears or nose. The eye-holes connect so that the viewer can look into and through the sculpture. Gormley himself admitted that:

"...this is probably my strongest piece about what I feel the potential of art is, in terms of not only creating the future but healing the past. It should be a kind of focus for the tensions that exist... within the community there..."⁵⁰

In this interview the artist goes on to explain how he sees (the way in which) the work will function in "creating the future" and "healing the past", stating that it should act as a

kind of sculptural counsellor, by drawing off "some of the negative feelings and resolve them in some way"⁵¹. This is another concern essential to Gormley and his work. He is adamant that the work possesses a specific function, whether it be on a one-to-one scale with the lead works or as a kind of artistic accupuncture as in the public works.

But in this chapter I am supposed to be concentrating on the use and choice of material in which this work is constructed. It is, however, important to have discussed the context in which the work was created because of the nature of the project and because the material and the site share a specific relationship.

The sculptures are made from ductile iron, which is a bulletproof form of the material, the figures being three quarters of an inch thick. The same material is used in the construction of the military observation posts situated at various points along the walls. This is where the power of the work becomes apparent. The anonymity of the figures resembles that of the balaclava-clad terrorist, their material of construction the same as that used in the conflict, while the pose of the figures alludes to the root cause of the conflict. But Gormley's art, while it shares all these characteristics of the conflict in Northern Ireland, uses them as a means of negotiating a path towards an opposite agenda.

"...it nevertheless represents the conflict, but gives it unity by reaffirming, I think, a basically Christian image, which is redemption through sacrifice or through suffering. In a way that is the symbol of the community itself, a community in conflict...Art will be next to military and Police installations, next to barbed wire, next to armed bunkers, and in a way the sculptures use some of the materials and the language, but to totally opposite ends..."⁵²

In this project Gormley has expressed an empathy of immense proportions with his choice of materials and the site which the work inhabits. It was the honesty of the work that provoked the reaction it was subjected to, Mel Gooding, on the

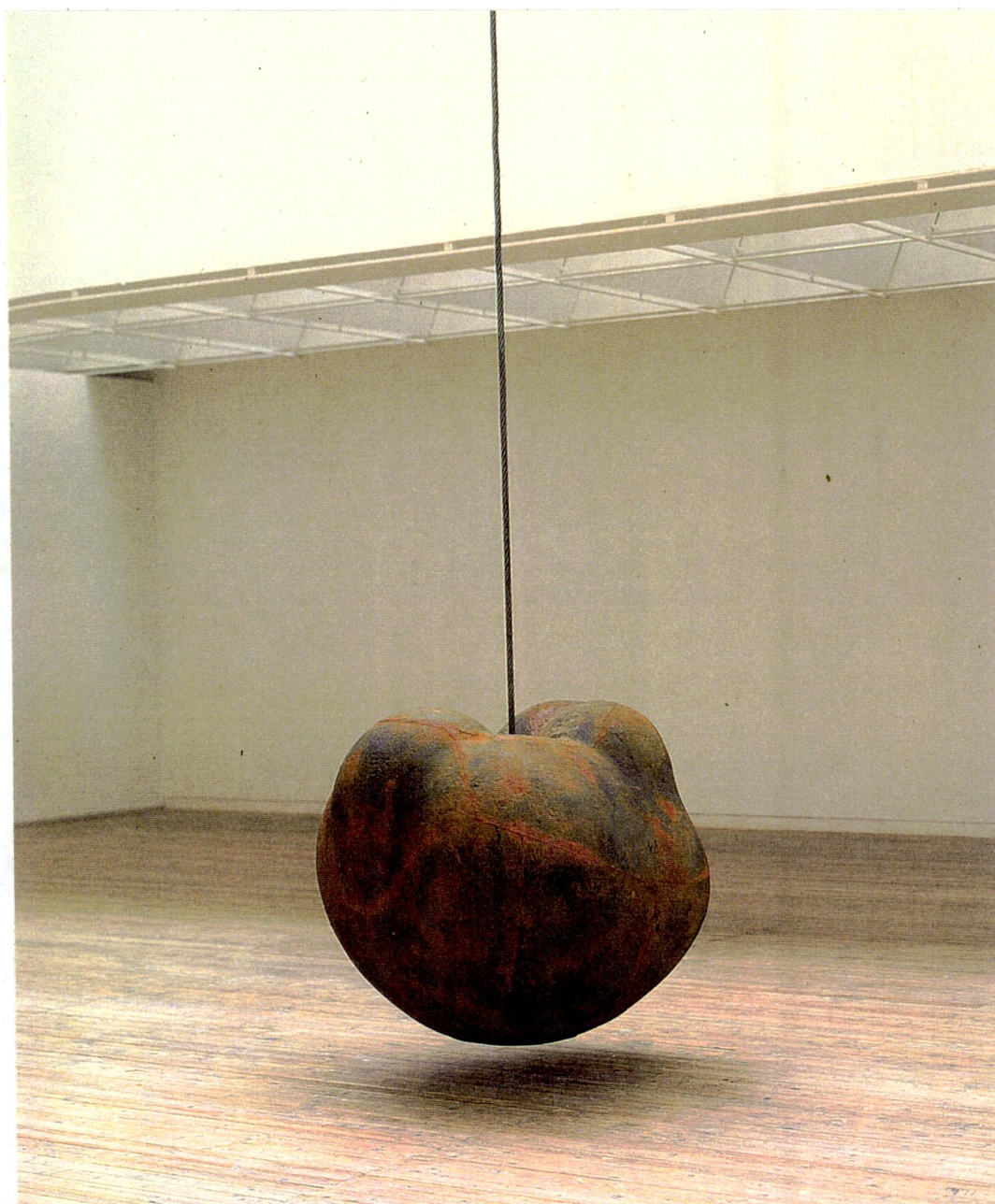


FIG. 20

Fruit (1991)

other hand, refers to "...the featureless neutrality of the figures and their direct accessibility...", when discussing the vandalism the work endured, from people Gormley refers to as 'co-artists'. The pieces themselves have since been removed from the walls. Two of the cruciform figures have been bought by private American collectors, while the third remaining piece lies in storage in a Derry City Council warehouse, despite efforts to get it re-installed on its intended site on the city walls.

These works were not to be the last that Gormley executed in iron. Between 1989 and 1993 Gormley produced a series of iron works, the most distinctive of these being his large expanded body cases of 1991-93.

In these works lies a hidden figure. It resides within the work much in the same way as the stone exists within a plum or a peach. Indeed, the titles of the works refer to the organic world, for example Fruit and Matter (1991-93) (see figs. 20-21). The work is evocative of an early drawing by Gormley in 1978/81. "Exercise Between Blood and Earth" depicts a running figure in outline. The artist has expanded this outline, following the contours of the figure so that the end result, the last outline, is almost a circle. The drawing is reminiscent of the rings of a tree or the lines of a thumb-print. This journey from the particular to the general is a process which the artist is keen to emphasize in his sculptures. It has a distancing effect, removing his identity from the figures in order to create a more universal motif - a "standard body".

Iron is more organic than lead in that it responds more dramatically to the passage of time. Iron rusts if left untreated; it eventually corrodes to a reddish brown dust, to be absorbed back into the earth from whence it came. In this respect the work assumes the character of 'fruit' which, essentially, provides the first seed bed, the matter for the potential for growth.

Iron has been with man since the 'Iron Age'. We have used it to make tools and more recently for the framework or structure within architecture. It is this atavistic quality of iron that comes to the fore when studying these expanded body cases; primal images of humanity, perhaps portents of future potentiality. These works are most eloquently:

**"...a place between form and formlessness, a time
between origin and becoming..."⁵³**

SECTION THREE: CHAPTER THREE

CONCRETE

"...The work has always identified the minimum space necessary for a man to occupy, but I think the concrete peices do it in a more intimate, open and direct way. There is a real point of contact with the particularity of my body - slipped from life into art, with every wrinkle of the knuckles embedded in the concrete. Maybe the concrete works have found a new way of engaging with the central premises of Western Sculpture - the relationship of idea to raw materials, image to block..."^{5 4}

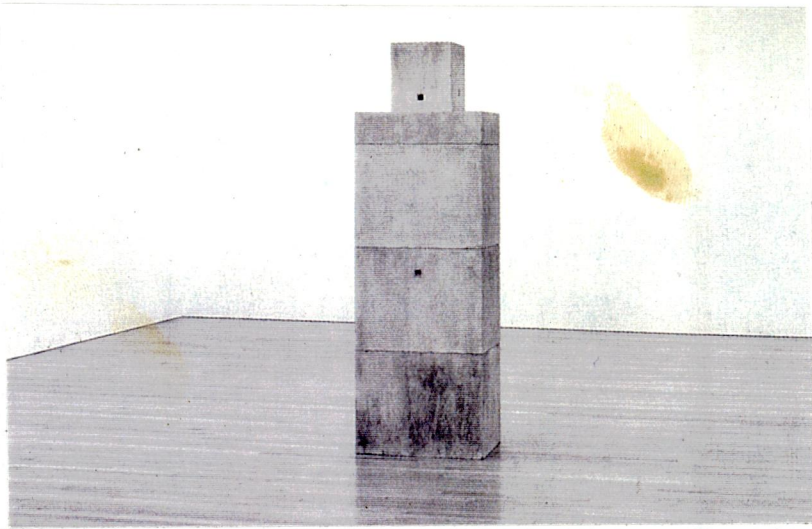


FIG. 22

Room (1987)

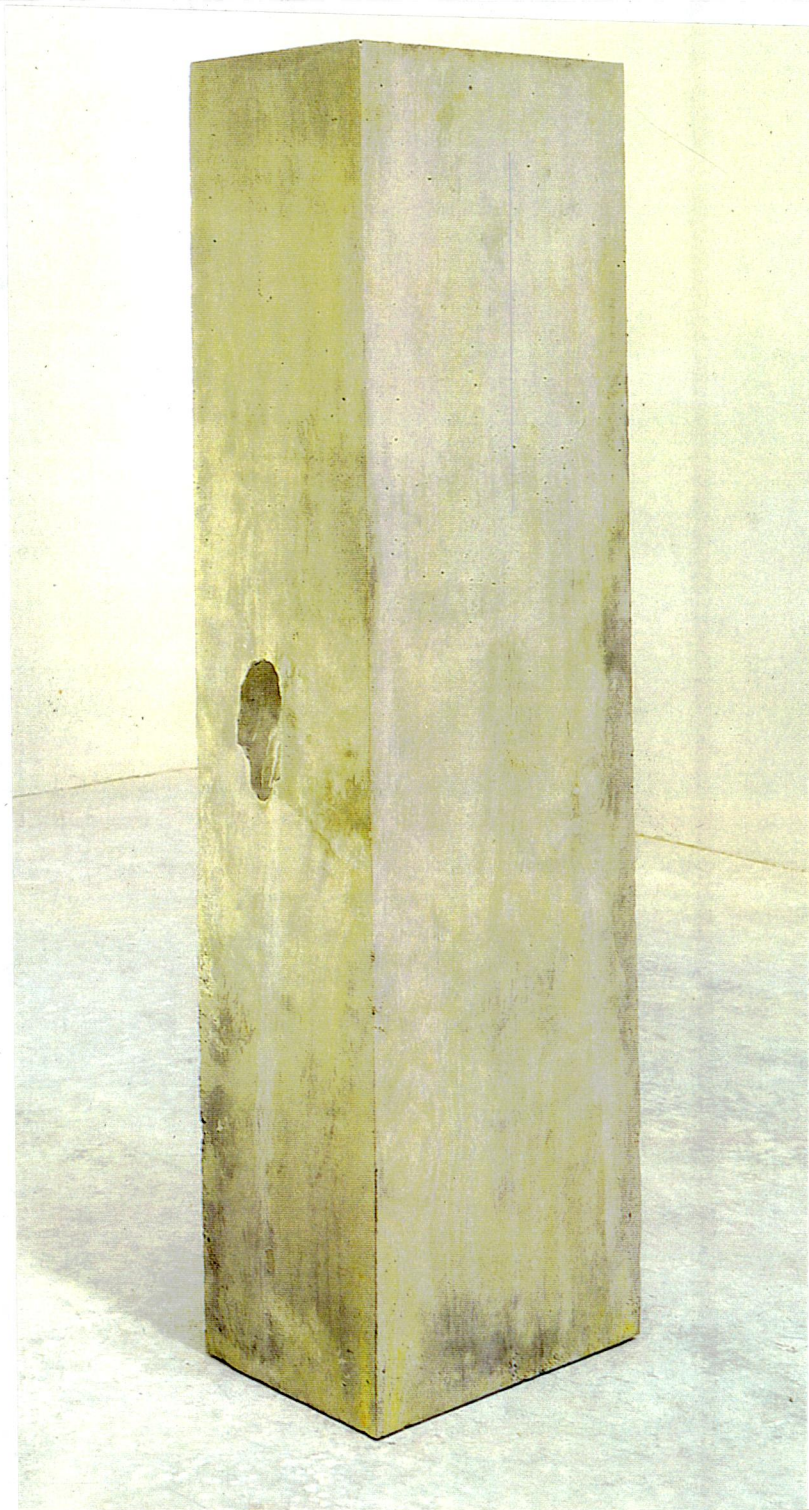


FIG. 25

Immersion (1991)

Towards the ends of the Eighties, Antony Gormley created a number of works in concrete. These were Room II (1987) (see fig.22), and Room for the Great Australian Desert (1989) (see fig.23). Later between 1990 and 1993, Gormley returned to the material to complete a series of six works; Flesh (1990), Immersion(1991), Sense (1991) and Home For The Heart I,II,III (1993) (see figs. 24-29).

Room II (1987), by way of its title, seemingly harks back to an earlier work Room (1980), in which the artist shredded one layer of his clothing into ribbons, tied all the ribbons together to form one long shred, and stretched this shred between four wooden posts. The result was a large box-like enclosure, a void corrale. What Gormley successfully created was the body as a place rather than an object, a constant concern of his. What he also alluded to in this work is the materialization of the body's inner space, that which is created through imagination or consciousness, the inner space being much larger than that which the physical body, the skin, can contain.

What Room II (see fig.22) does, is to present a reciprocal approach from the artist. Instead of expanding the body to express its spiritual space, Gormley has incarcerated the body, condensing its immediate environment, in the form of a stack of concrete cubes, leaving only holes for the mouth, ears, anus and penis. This highly condensed form of architecture, is a realization of the space which a body inhabits. Again Gormley seems to be trying to express the body as a place, but with concrete, our primary material in modern architecture he seems to have had the most success.

Gormley has often stated that life exists in the body in the same way a body exists in a building:

"...On one level, life is immersed in the body as the body is immersed in architecture..."^{5 5}



FIG. 23

Room for the Great Australian Desert (1989)

Because of the almost total enclosure of the body in Room II and Room for the Great Australian Desert, these works have a certain distancing effect, much in the same vein that which the lead works exude. The viewer feels very much apart from the work as opposed to being a part of it. The challenge for the viewer is to "leap over this distance".

Room for the Great Australian Desert, (see fig. 23) however evolved as one component of a two part piece. The concrete block situated in the desert, somewhere near the centre of Australia, worked in conjunction with an installation of about one thousand, one hundred small, roughly formed, clay figurines in the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The two works combined to present a cultural statement:

"...the clay figures are a kind of infection of space. They are much more organic - biological infection of crystalline space. To me, 'Room' is a crystalline imposition into organic space, whereas 'Field' is an organic infection of crystalline space..."^{5 6}

This cultural invasion - the concrete cube representing Western or first world man and the clay figures representing a more atavistic quality, the aboriginal culture, is expanded upon later in the final chapter of this section concerning the artists use of clay. Room for the Great Australian Desert can be seen as challenging 'civilized' man's need to possess or charter land. The Aboriginal culture is similar to that of the Native American Indian with respect to ownership of land. According to these traditions man cannot own land; we came from the ground, when we die the earth will reclaim our bodies. To witness this small concrete symbol of architecture in such a vast expanse of desert must verge on appearing comical. There is an air of futility about this work. The concrete room is just large enough to accomodate one man crouching on the ground clutching his knees to his chest. Man has confined himself to this tiny, claustrophobic state in the middle of such a vast expanse of land that is the desert, so that the piece exudes an air of unrealized , or self deprived ⁵⁷potential.

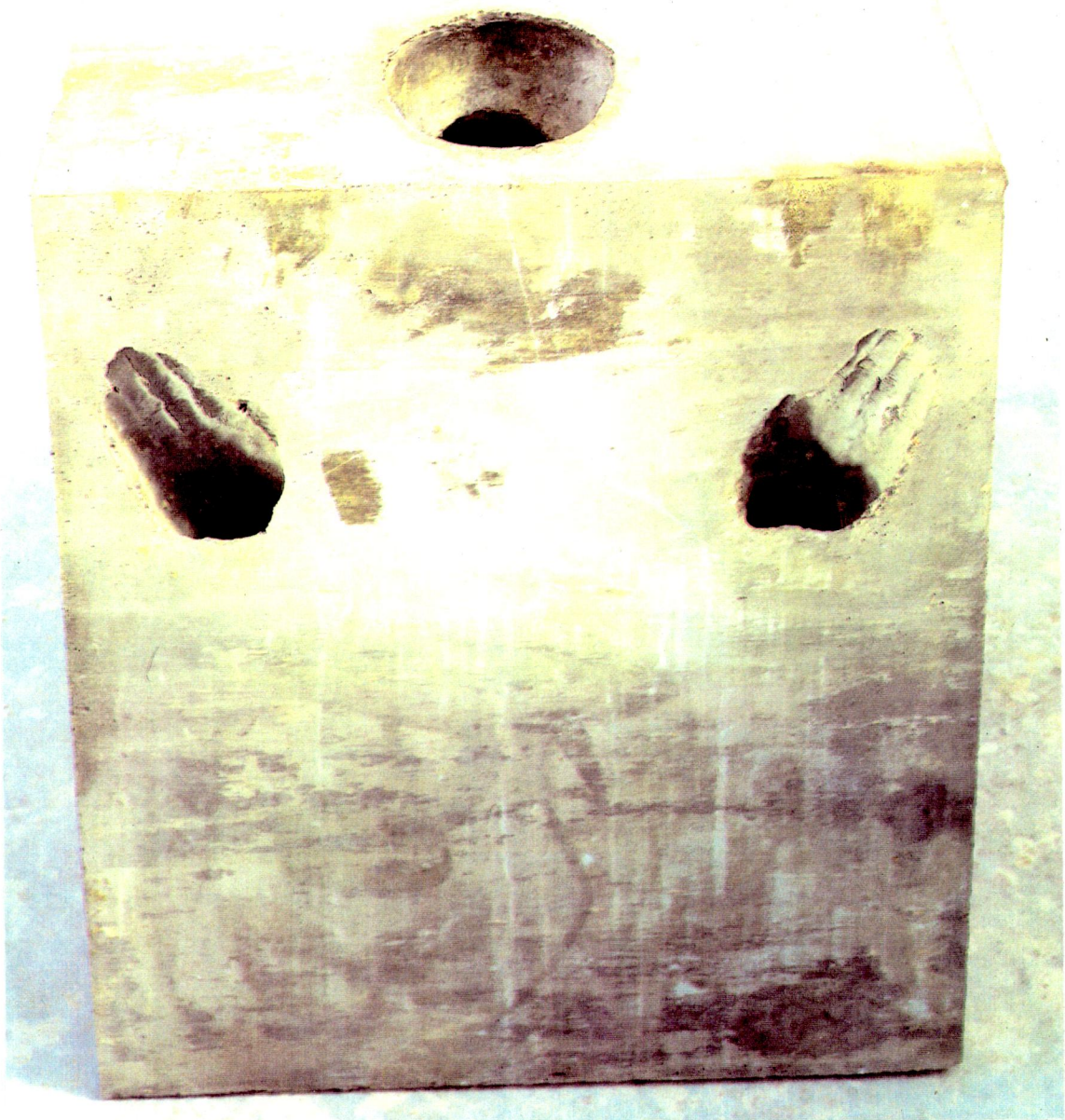


FIG. 26

Sense (1991)

The later concrete works are not so much concerned with issues of culture. The Australian work was site specific, similar to the work in Derry. Gormley had to treat the Australian work with the same responsibility for the site and materials; to ignore this aspect of the work would compromise or go against the artists principles.

Unlike Room II and Room for the Great Australian Desert, works like Sense (1991) and the Home for the Heart series of 1993 reveal more clearly the figure within the concrete, breaking down the distancing effect of the previous works, with the result that this concrete work is more intellectually accessible than its predecessors. These works materialize or embody the point of contact between air and the body, presenting the space that the body is by solidifying the air around it. Here the artist has clearly created the body as a place. Its 'placeness' is emphasized by the visible absence of the body. Sense (1991) adopts the same technique as found in Bed ten years prior.

The space within Sense is relative to the space within a building - this work, after-all, is a concentrated architecture for the body. The title 'Sense' is indicative of the thought behind the work. Sense wants us to acknowledge our metaphysical existence; the artist explains it as

"...trying to instigate an awareness of being and an awareness of being in space..."⁵⁸

He goes on to talk about space, expressing his belief that space "...is not about measurement or geometry..."⁵⁹, explaining that these are western ways of interpreting and making 'conscious' space.

What these later concrete works evoke is the feeling or experience that can be made apparent to us through meditative techniques. They are almost a material embodiment of our field of sense. The use of concrete to express architecture, comes from the artist's wanting us to experience or be aware of how we exist within a space.

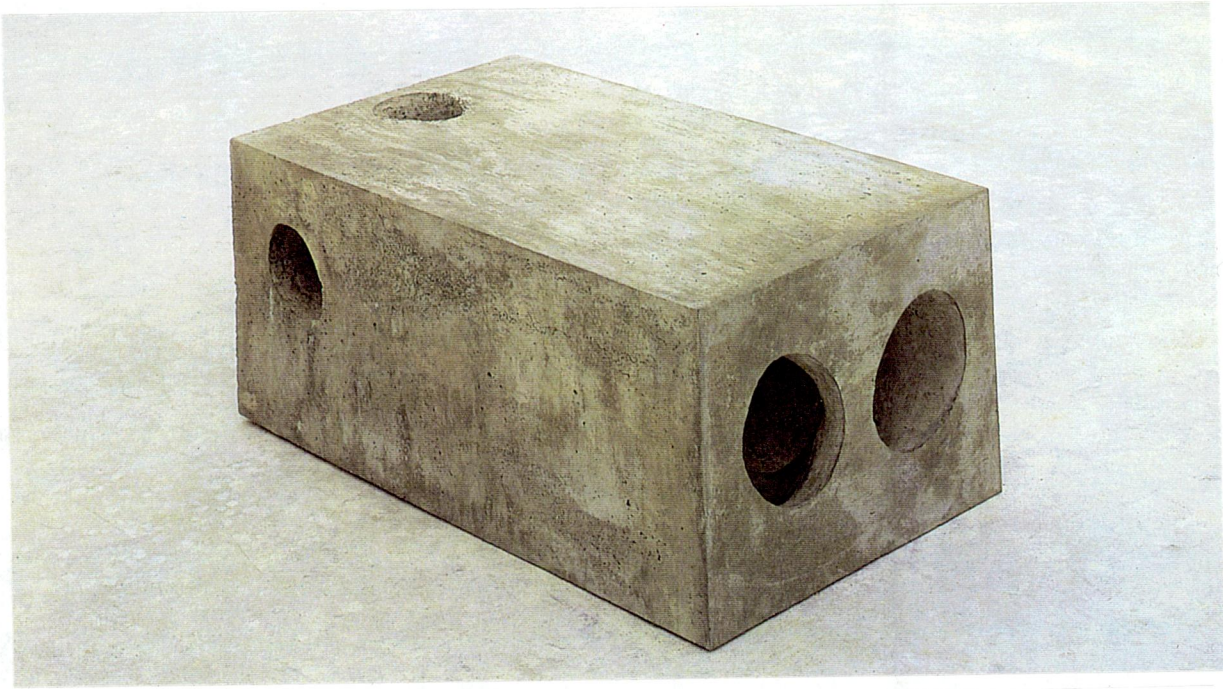


FIG. 27

Home for the Heart (1993)

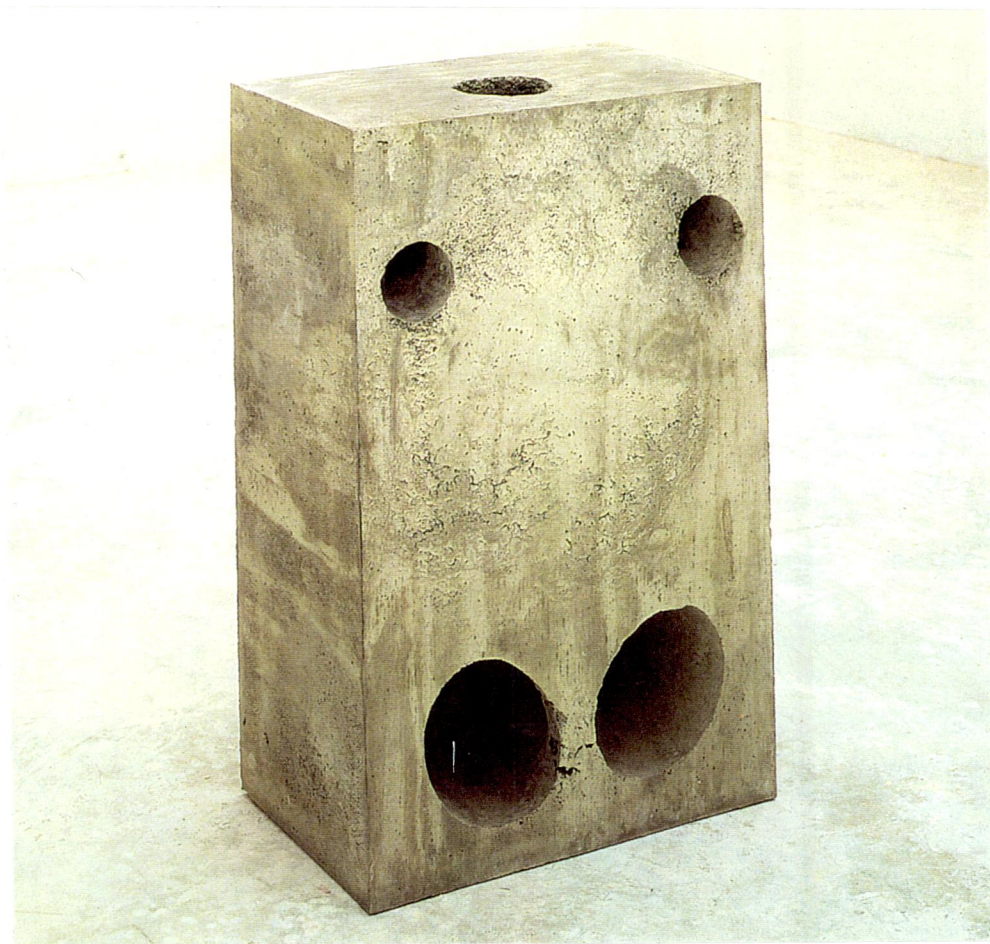


FIG. 29

Home for the Heart III (1993)

Architecture is an eloquent medium or vehicle for such an expression; after all:

"...a house is inhabited by a body as a body is inhabited by life..."⁶⁰

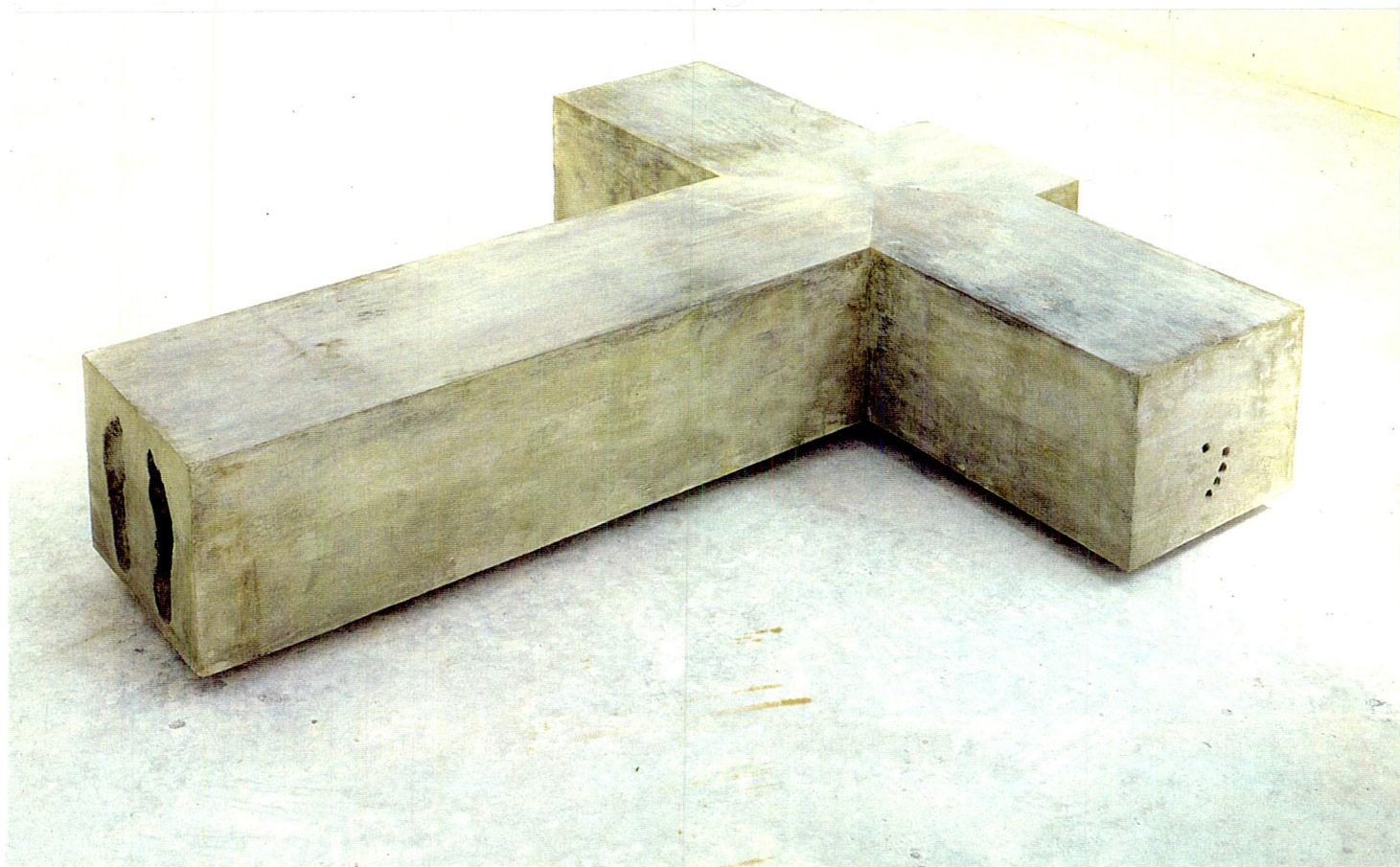


FIG. 24

Flesh (1990)

SECTION THREE: CHAPTER FOUR.

CLAY

"...I have taken a primal substance and evolved a form that is stylistically free to convey an urgency about life. Its 'primitivism' rests in the atavistic qualities of the material.

The return to the earth is also a strong feeling in the work. It is an attempt to make matter conscious, to indentify a ground in which matter and mind come into real tension. That response may start off being physical and somatic, but ends up being imaginative and internal. It has to do with reverence..."⁶¹

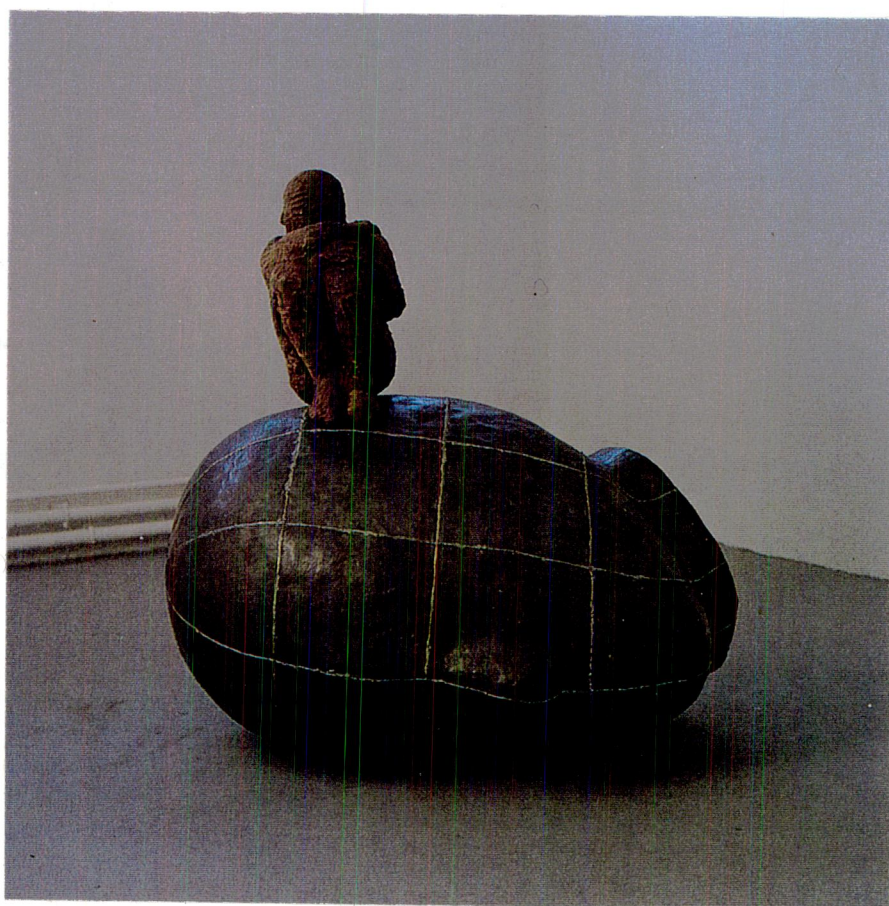


FIG. 31

Out of This World (1984)



FIG. 30

The Beginning, the Middle and the End
(1984)



FIG. 32

Work (1984)

Antony Gormley firmly states that in his work "...there has always been an exploration of the relationship between earth and the body. I've always felt we are earth above ground, that's where we come from..."⁶² The emergence of clay in the work of Antony Gormley was not sudden, rather it entered the work in an experimental fashion. The artist seemed unsure of how he should treat the material, but one thing is certain, it was inevitable that Gormley would eventually turn to clay as a means or vehicle of expression.

The mid-Eighties saw the first introduction of the material as a secondary component in a number of lead his works. In these works, The Beginning, the Middle and the End (1983/4) (see fig. 30), Out of this World (1983/4) (see fig.31), Work (1984) (see fig. 32), Matter (1985) (see fig. 33) and Man Asleep (1985) (see fig. 34), the terracotta excretion evokes a sense of imagination, consciousness or inded the product of the dream state. In pieces The Beginning, the Middle and the End, Out of This World, Idea, and Man Asleep, the clay form seems to represent transcendance from the conscious state, a materialization of thought. While the lead figures from which these clay seeds or foetuses emanate are bound inextricably to the ground or the earth by the cartographers grid imposed upon them in the form of silvery solder seams, the clay form is roughly hewn or modelled. The earth excretion possesses and exudes an inherent sense of freedom, a liberation of thought.

Connotations alluding to spirituality also exist in this work. In The Beginning, the Middle and the End the artist presents three states of being: First, the primal ooze or matter, depicted as a lead puddle stretching to the feet of a lead figure (the middle). This body, in turn, supports a crouched terracotta figure on its head. Here is life, from its initial formless state, through our mature bodily form, to the terracotta materialization of the soul or spirituality.

This expression of clay as a means to present an unfettered, free form or state of being is seen most clearly in Man Asleep. In this work the leaden figure of a sleeping man is presented



FIG. 34 Man Asleep (1985)

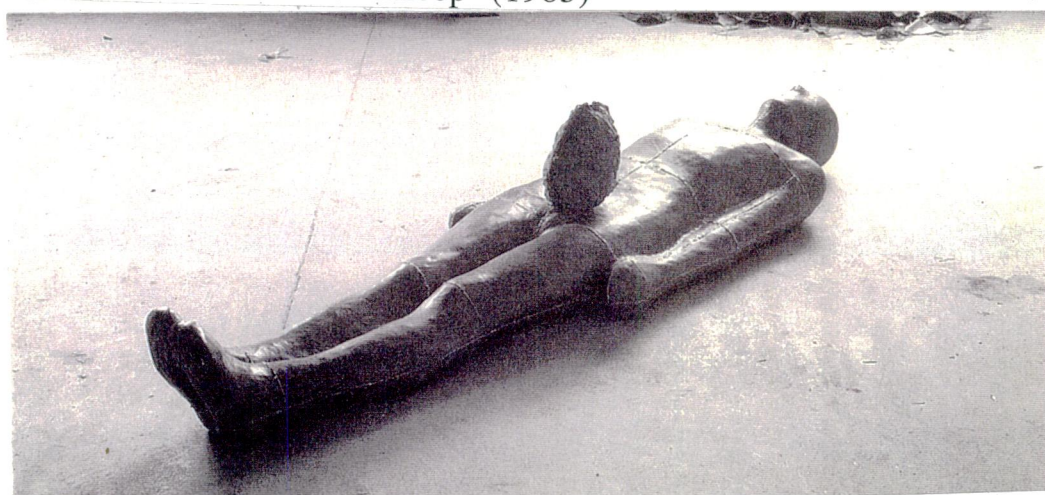


FIG. 21 Matter (1991)

lying on the ground, whilst from above his head emanates a progression or even procession of tiny terracotta figures, each preoccupied with the different stages of their journey. It has been likened by Thomas Mc Evilly (amongst others) to the Hindu creation myth of Vishnu Anantasayin, in which "...the god lies asleep on the ocean and dreams the world, which emerges from his sleeping mind..."⁶³ When speaking of his intentions for clay in his work, Gormley says:

"...It took a while to realize what I wanted from the abstraction of the clay, I started off with things that looked too wilfully primitive and ended up with something simple. It has to do with the coming together of the two hands which links up with the idea of the two sides of the brain..."⁶⁴

In this quote the figures of Man Asleep and the other works of the mid-Eighties are referred to as being to "wilfully primitive". It is only when the artist frees himself from the constraints of the traditional figure that he becomes satisfied with the work. Again, the presence of clay is connected with the mind; "...it has to do with the coming together of the two hands, which links up with the idea of the two sides of the brain..."

The "something simple" that Gormley "ended up with", were the figures of the first 'Field', exhibited in New York in 1989. Man Asleep and the other mixed lead and terracotta works were to be forerunners, the genesis of Gormley's largest undertaking in the span of his artistic career. Field (1989) (see fig. 35-37) is a reworking of a namesake of 1983/84. This lead work presented a standing male figure, its arms outstretched, spanning ridiculous proportions. Speaking of this work, Gormley states that, "...to make concrete the life that goes on inside the head, one can't stay within classic proportions..."⁶⁵

Gormley was soon to create a work which would annihilate all classical proportions and boundaries with a work that would form the culmination of all his previous artistic concerns to date. All of his aims and manifestoes were to be realized in



FIGS. 35-37 Field (1989)

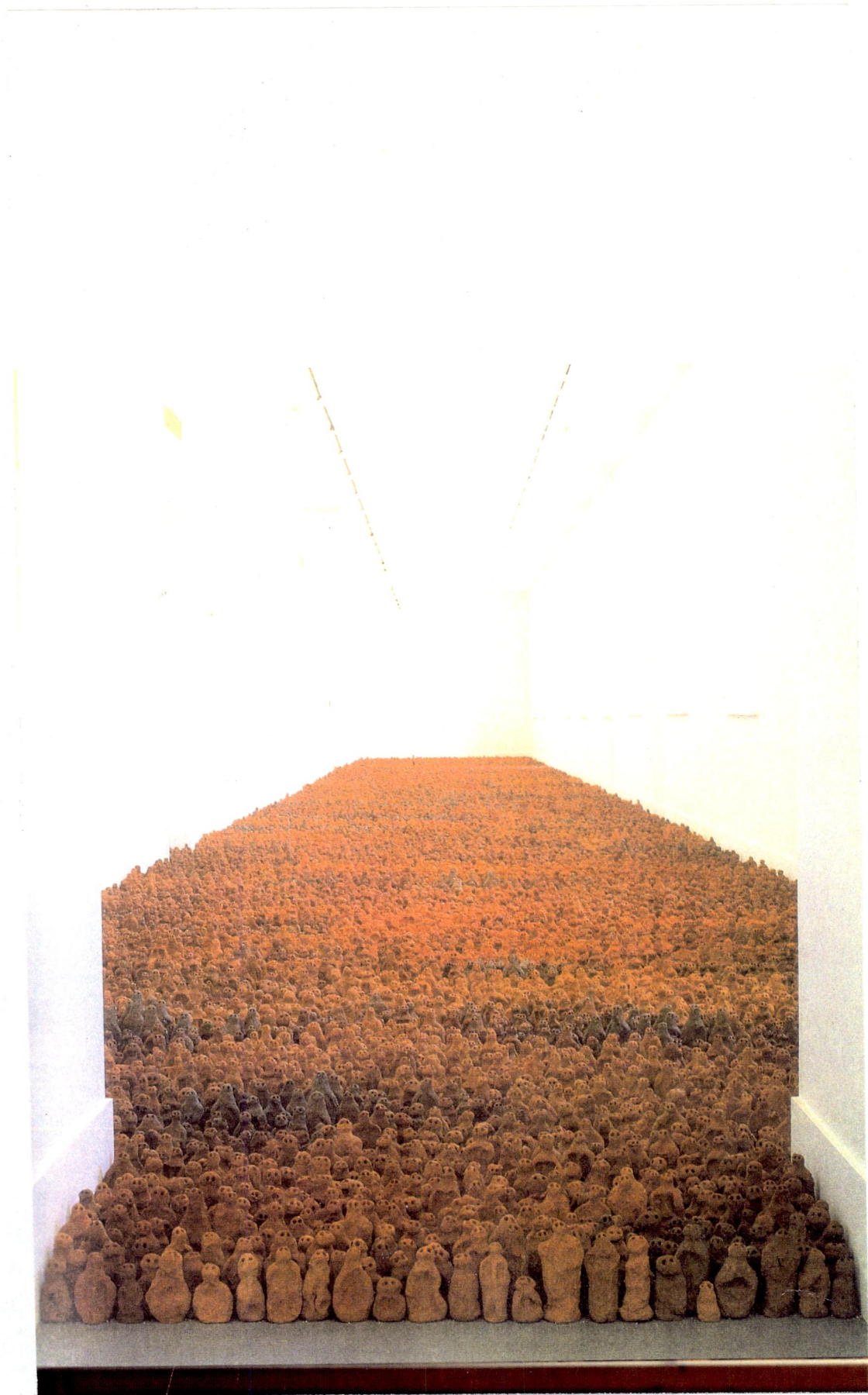
the form of thousands upon thousands of tiny terracotta figures. Ideas of cultural parameters, the investigation into personal space, conscious and the creation of the complete mental participation of the viewer are all expressed in the different forms that Field has adopted over the years.

The first terracotta Field of 1989 consisted of one hundred and fifty clay figurines, exhibited in New York as a radiating circle although Gormley generally seems to credit the American Field of December 1990 as the birth of the concept, even though he had made two previous variations of the work, Field (1989) and Field for the Art Gallery of New South Wales (1989). In 1992 Gormley worked alongside children from Porto Vehlo in the Amazon Basin, to revive a brick factory; it's worth mentioning that this Field was exhibited at the Musee de Rio de Janero, Brasil, at the time of the Earth Summit and Global Forum. In the spring of 1993, forty thousand figures were made by local families at Ostra Grieve in Sweden. This work was completed in September as the European Field. It was this work that fully brought my attention to the artist when shown as part of a retrospective exhibition of Gormleys work at the Irish Museum Of Modern Art.

But what is Field? The title, if we are to consider it at face value, suggests a place of growth, a place for potential. A field is a place where seeds grow, where growth itself is nurtured. What does Gormleys Field nurture?

When asked about the genesis of Field the artist has spoken of a visit in 1986 to a shrine for the Buddha of Compassion in Japan. Under the shrine, in three caves were found thousands of tiny inch-high wooden effigies similar to old wooden clothes pegs. Upon enquiry, the artist was informed that these were "unborn infants who had died in the womb or had been aborted, placed there by their mothers"⁶⁶

Before making the American Field with an extended family of brick makers in Choula, Mexico, Gormley told them that he wished to make an image of people "yet to be born"⁶⁷. This



quotation presents a strong sense of potential. To be faced with an image of people "yet to be born" is to be confronted with the future, confronted with the realization that we have a responsibility to nurture the field for the survival of those who are to replace us on this world. These figures stare at us with anxiety and apprehension as if waiting instruction.

In interview with Marjetica Potrc, the artist explains that Field,

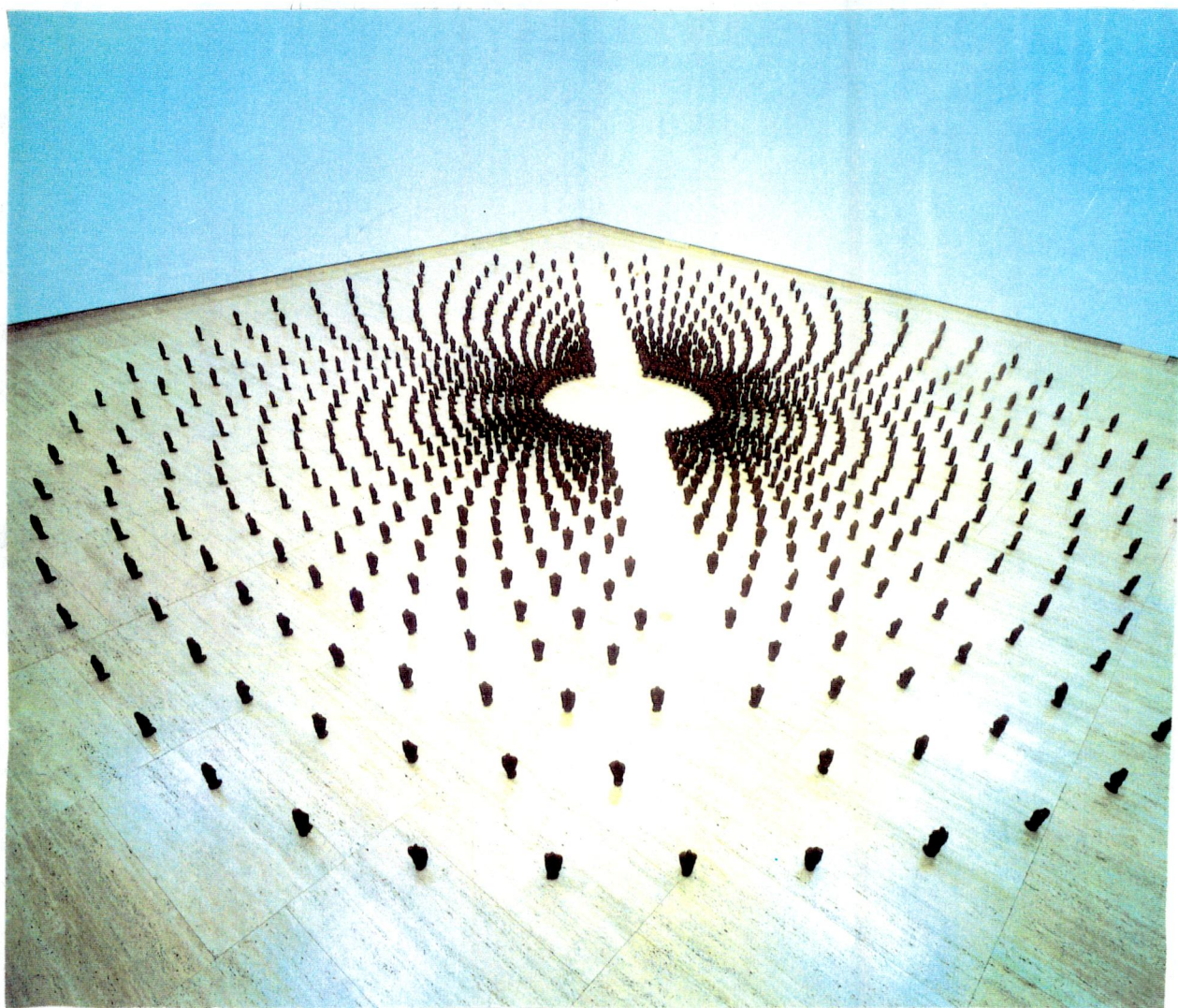
"...becomes a field of conscience. It negotiates two factors: the spirit of the ancestors, the primal population made of the earth where mud takes on the attributes of sentience and the evocation of the unborn, those who are yet to come"⁶⁸

Gormley wants the viewer to be affected by this work as he does through all his work, but Field is such a powerful invasion of one's visual perception that it just doesn't invite empathy; it demands reflection, it demands that we, the viewer, take account for ourselves.

"...We are made the object of the art's scrutiny. These gazes look at us to find their place; they have a place, but its a place that we can't enter and they are looking to the space of consciousness inside us as their rightful promised land and that's a strange feeling..."⁶⁹

The clay figurines in this work are reminiscent of the Jewish clay Golem which can be summoned to life or "awakened into consciousness" by the incantation of a divine incantation. But Gormley's creation, while seen on one hand as an infection, an invasion of a Western space, is also confined within the quadrant of the gallery space.

This idea of an invasion was first felt in the Field for the Art Gallery of New South Wales, in which the artist brought the "white cube" of western architecture to the desert and infected the sterile space of the gallery with one thousand, one hundred terracotta figurines. He speaks of the strength of the work, in cultural terms:



1 rel. 1

"...Part of the potency of the work comes from the infection of the white cube by earth: by this invasion, or migration, of a body that we would prefer to forget, and I think the whiter the cube the better for the power of this invasion is felt..."⁷⁰

and again:

"...when the first Field was seen in New York, having been made in Mexico, there was a very clear feeling of invasion of a Northern culture by something foreign to it from the South..."⁷¹

It is interesting to read that different audiences have expressed a different atmosphere of response to the work upon viewing it. For example, in New York the feeling of threat, the artist used words like "invasion" or "infection" of the gallery space, but when the work was exhibited in Mexico City, the place of its birth, it was recieved with an atmosphere of celebration.

The use of clay brings to the fore certain religious concerns of the artist. We are reminded that in the Book of Genisis man was created by God from the earth. In his essay "The raising of Lazarus" in the Irish Museum of Modern Art's cataogue of Gormleys 1994 exhibition, Stephen Bann is reminded of images of the Last Judgement. The artist enjoys this interpretation of the work and in response to it, poses the question "...who is being judged..?"

The most powerful aspect of this work goes beyond religious and cultural concerns. It is with the one-to-one relationship between the viewer and the art that the work fully expresses its potential to communicate. Standing on the threshold of forty thousand helpless gazes one can only become intensely aware of the self and the fact that we are, "...just a small sandwich in the stratification of life, and curiously that makes you feel more free..."⁷²

EPILOGUE

I have decided that a conclusion is not what this dissertation requires. I have not presented an argument, rather I have assembled references to the artists perceptions and use of materials that he has supplied in interviews and statements. To study each chapter and summarize its contents would simply be a reiteration of what has preceded. So I would like to comment on the importance of siting which is vital to the work of Antony Gormley and in most cases has been the key factor in the conception of each work. In doing so I am not so much concluding or summarizing, but rather continuing my discussion of why the artist chooses the materials he does to express his artistic concerns.

For Gormley 'siting', rather than being the final stage of the work, is often the initial step in the evolution of piece. He is extremely conscious of the environment in which his work exists. Because he sees art as having a particular function, mostly a healing one, it is important for people to see the work. The gallery situation is not therefore the ideal site for work that aspires to capture the imagination of a wider public.

"...These public works relate to what I like about Coomaraswamy. He sees the function of art as cohesive, as providing a necessary point of reflection in an otherwise functional world, wherein perhaps human beings can see other aspects of their potential. I am very committed to that idea of putting works in the real world, which can become part of peoples lives..."⁷³

This is the sentiment behind the sculptures placed on Derry's Walls and Room for the Great Australian Desert, in fact all the public works the artist has installed:

"...I want the art to work as a way of refocussing the place in which they are found, so there is a kind of dialogue between the object and the place..."⁷⁴

I have referred to the importance of siting a work in a public place in a previous chapter concerning the artists use of iron in his work. But there is one project in which Gormley



FIG. 38

Host (1991)



participated in 1991 that is a culmination of all his beliefs in the function of art.

Charleston's Spoleto Festival, conceived initially as a method of boosting the tourist influx to the city, in Americas South, was to be one of the largest projects of its kind, inviting twenty two artists to contribute towards the exposition. Artists paid regular visits to the town over the course of a year, seeking out possible sites and forming concepts of ways in which they could interpret these sites. It is extremely interesting that Gormley should have chosen the city's Old Jail as the ground for his work. The confinement of the figure in the early concrete pieces immediatly springs to mind, but this work did not serve to express confinement, the original function of the building, rather it exudes liberation, a freeing of the body.

The jail is set in the old black quarter of the city. Gormley speaks of the work as being "...the liberation of a building about which the black people around it say "thats where they used to lynch us"⁷⁵. Gormley even stated that the building looks like a body with its original rectangular structure serving as a torso and its later octagonal extension a head. Throughout the rooms of the building Gormley installed six works, Host (1991) (see fig.38), Field (1991) (see fig.39), Three Bodies (1991) (see fig.40), Learning To Think (1991) (see fig.15), Fruit (1991) (see fig.42) and Cord (1991) (see fig.43). Before installing the works Gormley, first removed all the glass and boards from the windows, allowing the building to breathe.

This work uses a building to describe the states of mans being and the life within his being. Host is a room filled two feet deep with river mud and sea water;"...primal ouse..."⁷⁶. the idea being that this 'place' has the potential for life. Directly below this room was Field, mud is used here again but this this time it has undergone the process of firing. Directly opposite Field lay a vast room housing Three Bodies, three

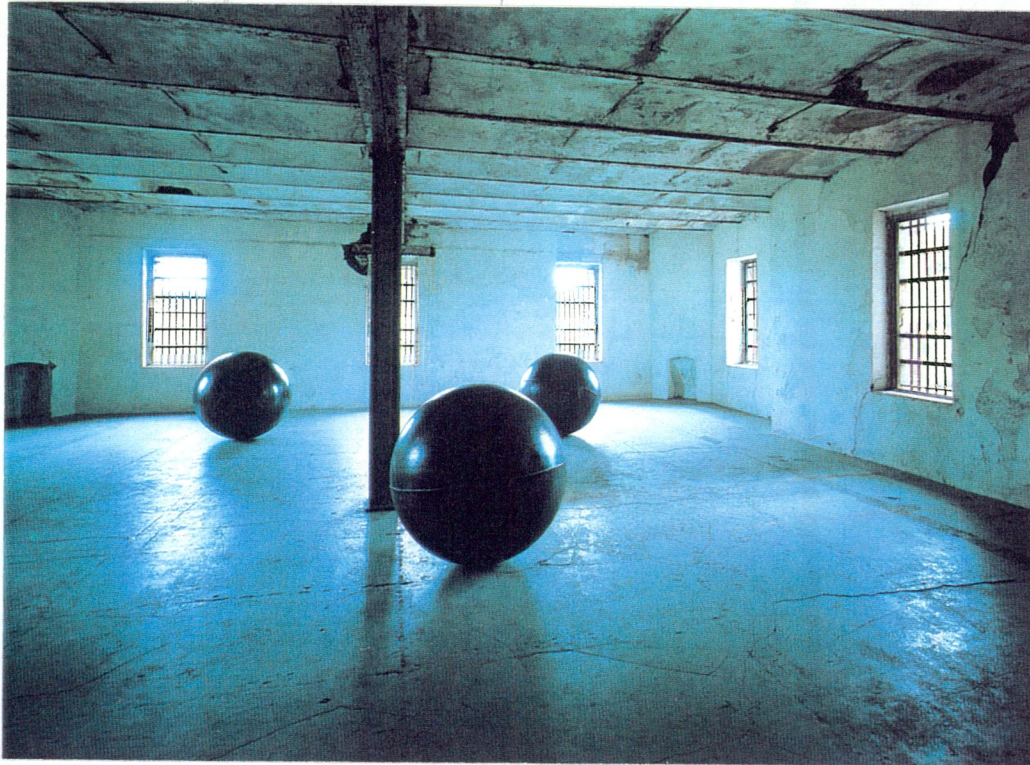


FIG. 40 Three Bodies (1991)

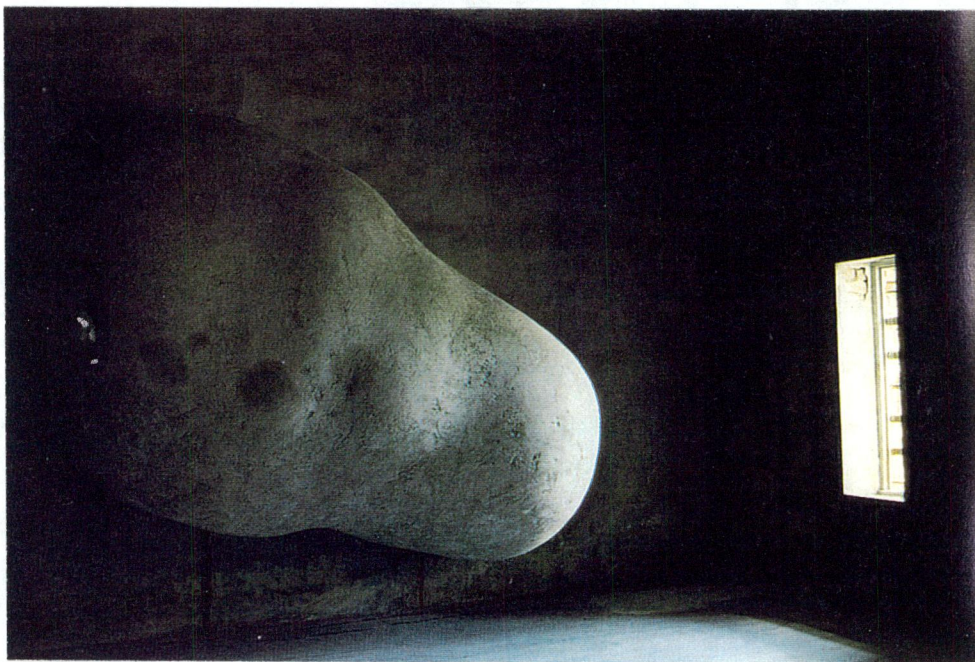


FIG. 41 Fruit (1991)

identical spun steel spheres representing the "...celestial body brought into our realm ...". Situated above this room Learning to Think was installed. It consists of five lead body cases in what seems an elevated state, their heads incorporated into the ceiling, balancing on the line that divides floating and hanging. In the head of the building Fruit and Cord were installed. Fruit, reminiscent of the expanded iron body cases of 1991/93, consisted of two "fungal brain"- like plaster forms, each containing a figure, connected to each other via the mouth and the genitals through a partitioning wall. The last room contained Cord, a bent copper pipe hanging from the ceiling like "...a kind of umbilicus connecting us to somewhere else...". ⁷⁷

These six works combine to effect a powerful work addressing such issues as incarceration and liberation, within and beyond, conception and ascension, birth and death. Charleston, for Gormley was an opportunity to reflect upon his work and use the building to "set up energies of freedom and containment..."⁷⁸ He used his site as he does his materials, carefully taking into consideration the qualities and connotations that it possesses with respect to its historical context, the surrounding community and the work within it.

What I have tried to do in this dissertation is to emphasize the importance of materials in Antony Gormley's art. The extent to which the artist strives to accommodate and take account for every aspect of his artistic intentions through the use of a certain material results in a complete and overwhelmingly honest art. This honesty can be absorbed by the viewer, turned inwards and used to reflect upon his or her own state of being. Gormley's sculptures are the embodiment of meditational aspirations. They act as material mediators between our conscious and our unconscious, our physicality and our spirituality, our mind and our body.



FIG. 42 Cord (1991)

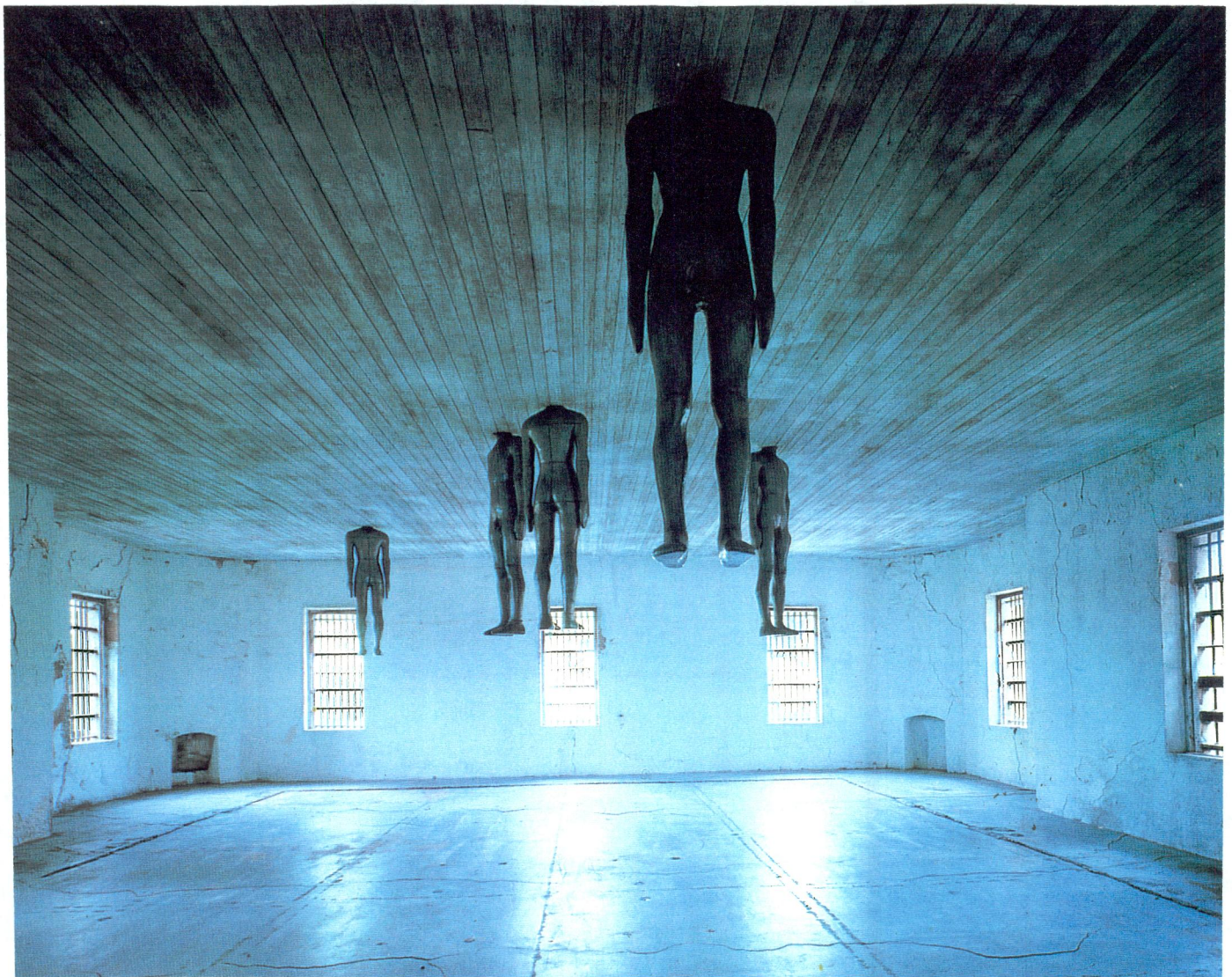


FIG. 15 Learning To Think (1991)

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- ² Lewis Biggs, Iwona Blaszczyk and Sandy Nairne, Objects and Sculpture, 1981, Preface.
- ³ Anish Kapoor, in Objects and Sculpture, 1981. p. 20
- ⁴ Gormley, in Objects and Sculpture, 1981, p. 17
- ⁵ Kapoor, in Objects and Sculpture, 1981, p. 22
- ⁶ Julian Andrews, Teresa Gleadowe, in Transformations - New Sculpture from Britain, 1983, preface.
- ⁷ Nicholas Serota, in Transformations - New Sculpture from Britain, introduction.
- ⁸ *ibid.*
- ⁹ Gormley, October 1985, Five Works, Serpentine Gallery, 1987. p. 13
- ¹⁰ Gormley, in Objects and Sculpture, 1981, p. 17
- ¹¹ Gormley, October 1985, Five Works, Serpentine Gallery, 1987, p. 13.
- ¹² *ibid.*
- ¹³ *ibid*
- ¹⁴ Objects and Sculpture, I.C.A. and Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol, 1981.
- ¹⁵ Gormley "Learning to See" in Body and Soul cat. Found in 'ANTONY GORMLEY' Phaidon Press, 1995
- ¹⁶ Gormley, interview with Marjética Portc, Field for the British Isles, Oriel Mostyn, 1994, p. 61.
- ¹⁷ Gormley in interview with Declan McGonagle, ANTONY GORMLEY, Tate Gallery, Liverpool, 1994, p. 35.

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- 18 *ibid.*
- 19 The artist in conversation with Declan Mc Gonagle, ANTONY GORMLEY Tate Gallery Liverpool, 1994, p.49/50.
- 20 Gormley, Five Works , Serpentine Gallery, London.
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- 22 Gormley, in Objects and Sculpture , I.C.A. and Arnolfini Gallery, 1981, p. 17.
- 23 As quoted by Lynne Cooke in a 1984 solo exhibition catalogue at the Salvatore Ala Gallery, New York.
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- 27 The artist in conversation with Marjetica Potrc, "Field for the British Isles" Oriol Mostyn, 1994. p. 81.
- 28 The artist in conversation with Lewis Biggs, ANTONY GORMLEY, Tate Gallery, Liverpool, 1994, p. 27.
- 29 ANTONY GORMLEY, Phaidon Press, 1995, p. 10
- 30 The artist in conversation with E. H. Gombrich, ANTONY GORMLEY, Phaidon Press, 1995, p. 12
- 31 *ibid.*
- 32 Gormley, in Objects and Sculpture, I.C.A. and Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol, 1981, p. 19.
- 33 *ibid.*
- 34 *ibid.*
- 35 *ibid.*
- 36 *ibid.*
- 37 *ibid.*
- 38 The artist in conversation with E. H. Gombrich, Phaidon Press, 1995, p.12

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- 39 The artist in conversation with Declan Mc Gonagle, Tate Gallery, Liverpool, 1994, p.41
- 40 *ibid*, p. 44
- 41 The artist in conversation with Marjetica Potrc, "Field for the British Isles", Oriel Mostyn, 1994, p. 80/81.
- 42 Thomas Mc Evilly, "Seeds of the Future, The Art of Antony Gormley", FIELD, Monreal Museum Of Modern Art, 1993.
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- 46 *ibid*
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- 51 *ibid*.
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- 56 The artist in conversation with Victoria Lynn, EARTH ABOVE GROUND, "FLESHING OUT" ANTONY GORMLEY, Art and Text, 1990, Summer, p.57.
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- 58 See ref. 55.
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- 60 See ref. 56.
- 61 The artist in conversation with Lynne Cooke, ART AND TEXT, summer 1990.

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