

Antony Gormley: Some of the Facts

**Tate St Ives
16 June – 2 September 2001**

Notes for Teachers

As part of the ongoing development of resources for teachers we would like to encourage you to comment on how useful you have found this information and make any suggestions/additions to be incorporated during the exhibition and shared with other educationalists.

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***Art is the means by which we communicate what it feels like to be alive....
Making beautiful things for everyday use is a wonderful thing to do – making
life flow more easily – but art confronts life, allowing it to stop and perhaps
change direction – they are completely different.***

Antony Gormley

***Things already exist.
Sculpture already exists.***

***The job is to transform what 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 experience freely.***

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

Antony Gormley, 1995

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Antony Gormley: Some of the Facts

Introduction

Some of the Facts is Tate St Ives summer 2001 exhibition. It features a group of sculptural works by Antony Gormley and it is the largest display of works by one artist ever to be shown at the gallery. The display illustrates the broader exhibition plans for the gallery to show major figures in British art alongside the artists connected with the St Ives context.

The entire gallery space will be devoted to four major installations by Gormley: *Bed* (1981); *Field for the British Isles* (1993); *Still IV* (1994) and *Critical Mass* (1995).

In the education studio there is a display entitled **Artists on Artists** for which Antony Gormley has selected works of art from the National Collection that he personally has found interesting or inspirational. He has chosen a particular group of works by Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson and Naum Gabo.

On the upper terrace of gallery two there is a display of ceramics by Martin Smith entitled **Wavelength**. Smith (b 1950) is Professor of Ceramics and Glass at the Royal College in London and one of the foremost ceramicists of his generation. For this display he had made a new ten-part work.

Why bring your students to *Some of the Facts*?

Some of the Facts is an exciting and challenging exhibition that will appeal to all ages. It touches on major themes of human experience and could provide many starting points for curriculum work. It will provide a memorable experience for first time gallery visitors and a powerful introduction to contemporary sculpture.

Antony Gormley's work is relevant to all key stages for many commonly studied topics. His art explores a range of issues that stretch across the curriculum. A visit to the exhibition could provide the starting point for a range of creative work, not just within art and design, but also within subject areas such as English, science, maths, physical education and citizenship. Make sure all your students come with a sketchbook – there are some wonderful drawing and writing opportunities.

So how do we approach and talk about the art of Antony Gormley? The aim of this pack is to provide information about the works on display, trigger questions and further points for discussion. The pack also explores key themes within Gormley's work that could be directly linked to curriculum work and some follow-up activities have been suggested. Gormley's choice of materials and techniques are also discussed.

This pack includes a biography of the artist, suggestions for further reading and a glossary of sculptural terms. Finally, the pack considers links between Gormley and other works on display at Tate St Ives. A potentially rich area of study is the links between Gormley and Barbara Hepworth. Teachers are encouraged to visit the Barbara Hepworth Museum with their groups.

Note: If you are planning to bring a group to the exhibition, please be aware that viewing spaces, particularly in relation to *Field for the British Isles* are limited. It may be necessary to split your students into smaller groups and please follow directions from the member of staff in attendance.

If you have booked a gallery talk or artist-led activity please discuss all practicalities with a member of the Tate Education team.

For further information call 01736 791114/791113 or e-mail kerry.rice@tate.org.uk

A plan of the Gallery is included in this pack to help you plan your visit.

Resources available in the Gallery

There is an Exhibition Study Point on Level 3 that has a selection of books relating to the exhibition. There are also two videos on show: *Celebration. Feat of Clay*, September 1996 and *Antony Gormley's Field for the British Isles*, 1996, BBC North. A photographic documentation of the making of *Field* can be seen in the Mall.

Antony Gormley – A brief biography

Antony Gormley was born in 1950 in London, where he continues to live and work. Since his first exhibition in 1981 at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London, he has exhibited extensively in Britain and abroad. He was awarded the Tate Gallery Turner Prize in 1994.

In the late 1960s Gormley studied archaeology, anthropology and art history as an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge. During three years in India he studied Buddhist Vipassana meditation. This is one of India's most ancient techniques of meditation, healing and a method of self-transformation focusing on the connection between mind and body. Gormley's early studies and his knowledge and interest in religions (he was brought up as a catholic), philosophy and literature underpin his work to this day.

In the late 1970s Gormley studied sculpture at the Slade School of Art and it was at this time that he first used lead as medium for his work. During the mid 1980s Gormley was using a range of materials such as concrete, iron and clay. It was his interest in clay that saw the development of his so-called *Fields*; a group of clay figures made by communities in Australia, North America, South America, Europe and Britain.

The human figure has been the dominant theme in Gormley's work since the 1980s. He has said that 'objects cannot talk of experiences'. In many of his sculptures he works directly from his own body. His best known work, the towering figure *The Angel of the North* was completed in 1998 and stands outside Gateshead on the A1. It is constructed from the dimensions of his body and mathematically enlarged to around 65 feet high with a wingspan of 177 feet.

Bed, 1981, Gallery 1

Bed is constructed from over 8000 slices of bread arranged in layers within which the imprint of two bodies can be seen. It was made from 'Mother's Pride' white sliced bread that had been returned unsold to the factory.

Originally exhibited directly in the gallery space, today *Bed* is protected by a glass case (and we are protected from the smell!). The bread slices have been preserved by soaking them in wax.

What seems like the indentations of a couple in a mattress of bread is in fact based on one body and its mirror image. Gormley literally ate himself into bed creating two cavities equalling the volume of his body. Gormley ate two slices of bread at a time so that each pair of slices was then identically indented – one ended up on the left half of the body mould and the other on the right.

In 1979 Gormley created *Bread Line* where he bit a loaf of bread into pieces and then lined up bite after bite. With this work and *Bed*, Gormley said that he was trying to reconcile the idea of eating with sculpture 'focusing on the mouth as a threshold for connecting the external world with the internal conditions of the body'.

Bed provides a powerful and humorous introduction to Gormley's work. The body of the artist appears in an unusual fashion – he has used his mouth as a tool creating traces that are not representations but direct imprints of the artist's physical features. *Bed* is really Gormley's first 'mould' and soon after making this work he turned to what has become the most consistent feature of his work – the use of moulds of his own body.

Trigger questions

- Who's bed is this?
- How was it made?
- What has happened to the bread? (tooth marks, mould)
- Why does the bed have a glass case around it?
- Compare/contrast *Bed* with another work in the room.

Further points for discussion

Space. How is the place of the body indicated? Is it an enclosure, a memory, a void or an impression? Is the body absent or present? How do we respond to the space? What effect does the glass installation have? Gormley deliberately chose to position the work in the space so that the heads are facing out in contrast to the usual position of a bed set against the wall.

Life and death. Is this a marriage bed? Or is it a tomb in which the lying figures are seen in imprint rather than effigy? The connection between body and bread could also be linked to the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist. Gormley says he sees *'Bed as the initiation [within the Tate St Ives exhibition] into feeling the relationship between life and death'*.

Decay and preservation. The artist has 'eaten' into the work. The body has 'made its mark'. Bread goes mouldy. Mattresses age. A glass case preserves and protects the work for us. What does it mean to display a bed made out of impermanent material in a museum or gallery?

Stratification. The artist has cut into the bed creating an indentation or hollow, revealing the stratification as in bedrock. The bread has been stacked and layered.

Intervention in St Ives Artists display

Bed is shown as an 'intervention' within a display of paintings by Peter Lanyon, Karl Weschke, William Scott, Bryan Wynter, Sandra Blow, Roger Hilton and Wilhelmina Barns-Graham. There are no direct connections between these works and the installation. However, there are some interesting comparisons to be made and a range of ideas about texture, materials and colour could be explored.

Critical Mass, 1995, Lower Gallery 2

Critical Mass is a group of about sixty life-size figures, cast in iron from Gormley's own body. Within the group there are 12 body postures which range from crouching pieces through to seated and standing figures and finally to stargazers.

Each figure is an iron cast – three quarters of a ton of metal made from a mould that once surrounded the artist. That is, the iron is a cast from a mould taken of the outer shell, originally a casing of plaster and hessian which was itself a mould taken from the artist's body. The five identical casts of each type were mechanically mass-produced.

The installation of *Critical Mass* in the circular gallery is deliberately dramatic. The figures appear to have been dumped and strewn across the floor. Gormley says that the bodies are meant to look abandoned, rather like deposed statues.

The title comes from a term in nuclear physics. Critical mass is the point of maximum molecular density in an isotope of uranium before nuclear fission takes place. Gormley says he has 'elided this meaning with human demographic mass'. The installation literally creates a physical 'critical mass' but also metaphorically suggests a range of issues about the body in relation to history and place.

Trigger questions

- What do the figures make you think of?
- How do you think the figures got here?
- What are the figures made of (and can you tell how they were made)?
- How heavy do you think they are?
- Look at the different poses – why do you think some of them have the same pose?

Further points for discussion

Industrialisation and mass-production

The work emphasises that we live in an industrial, man-made world. Gormley says that the figures are 'industrially produced, mass-produced surrogates for the body' and he deliberately leaves evidence of their making (see section on materials and techniques and the glossary). Consider the difference between a hand-made and mass-produced sculpture. What happens when a sculpture is repeated?

Body poses

Gormley says that the range of body poses encourages us to think about 'the positions of the body between earth and sky, how the body decides it will 'fit''. How do you physically feel as you explore the installation? Why not try holding some of the poses?

Gravity

Critical Mass explores gravity in a range of ways. Compare crouching and lying figures with kneeling and leaning figures. Consider the weight of each sculpture - the iron casts weigh ten times as much as an ordinary body of that size.

Drama and inertia

Why is the installation so dramatic? How does the installation relate to the space of the Gallery itself? Contrast the view out of the window with the scene within the gallery. What does the heap of bodies make you think of? Gormley says he wants the bodies to 'be acted upon'. He says the viewer is invited to work with the piece – 'to be the force'.

'What excites me is the potential of sculpture and inert material to produce energy...the degree to which the work displays inertia is the degree to which the audience is invited to interact with it. There was no 'arrangement'. Antony Gormley

Massacre and destruction

What do the heap of bodies remind you of? It's as if they have been frozen in time, caught in some terrible disaster. Or perhaps they are a newly discovered collection of fossils? Gormley clearly sees *Critical Mass* referring to human population both in terms of growth and destruction. The work evokes a range of images associated with war, massacre, violence, torture and cruelty.

Field for the British Isles, 1993, Gallery 3 & 4

Field for the British Isles, is a mesmerising work, containing 40,000 diminutive figures. It was made by a group of people in St Helens, Merseyside, who were invited by Gormley to form clay into figures that were then fired and placed as a crowd in the gallery space. Each person was invited to form the work in their hands and consequently each figure is unique, deriving its scale and shape from the hand of the person making it.

About 100 people spent one week making the figures, supported by Tate Gallery Liverpool and Ibstock Building Products, a St Helens brick-making company. More than 30 tonnes of clay was used to make *Field for the British Isles*! The instructions for each volunteer were simple; the figures had to be hand-sized and easy to hold, eyes were to be deep set and close to each other and the proportions of the head to the body were to be roughly correct.

The scale and history of *Field for the British Isles* make it a powerful and complex work (please see full history and further quotations below). Wherever it is exhibited it never fails to create a stunning experience. Here at Tate St Ives, the figures have been 'planted out' in gallery 3 and 4 to great effect.

For Gormley *Field for the British Isles* is about questions. He says the work refuses to be explained. It just goes on quietly asking, looking, waiting, '*it started with the hand of the making, trying to touch in an intimate personal way the big issues of inheritance and bequeathal, of life and death, of the self and the world. Field started just with trying to make a kind of sensitive ground or a responsive environment in which human scale would not be taken for granted*'. Antony Gormley

Trigger questions

- How do you feel when you look at *Field*?
- What does the 'field' make you think of?
- Who do you think made these figures?
- Who are the figures looking at?

Further points for discussion

Field as filled space

In contrast to much of Gormley's work, this is about filled space rather than void. It is a mass of people. The figures fill out the space – there is no room for us, the threshold cannot be crossed. The shape of the 'field' is defined by the gallery spaces – at the far end the figures appear to be coming in through the doorway. The waves of colour created by the positioning of the figures suggest 'cloud shadows' as if it is a real field outdoors.

The gaze of the figures

As we look at *Field* there is a myriad of eyes on us. The effect is quite theatrical - it is like a landscape of eyes. Gormley wants us to think about the experience of looking – who's looking at who? The gaze of the figures is quite confrontational – they can outstare us. It's almost as if we become the work.

Multiple but individual

All the figures are hand-made and so each one is individually unique (contrast to *Critical Mass*). The more you look the more you spot individual 'characters'. The work raises questions about diversity and unity – about the individual and the collective.

Creators and collaborators

Field is Antony Gormley's work yet it was made with the help of many other people. Even now it requires a group of volunteers to 'plant out' the figures when it is installed for an exhibition and there are specific guidelines which dictate the colour 'waves' and the positioning of the figures with the so-called 'stargazers' at the front. *Field* raises questions about authorship and ownership and perhaps blurs the traditional distinction between 'artist' and 'collaborator'. The series of *Fields* which have been created around the world mean that a number of different communities have been involved in its making.

Small figures

The small figures that make up *Field* are quite simple. They remind one of traditional figurines made by agricultural communities or of religious figures found, for example, in medieval Buddhist temples. Gormley himself said he saw a large collection of tiny hand made effigies known in Japanese as Mizukoyo and he recognises the 'primitive' associations the *Field* figures suggest. For him these figures are 'primitive' in the sense that they are 'fundamental' rather than 'uncivilised'.

A brief history of *Field*

1989

The first *Field*, of 150 figures, was made by Gormley and his assistants in London and exhibited in New York. Later the same year, Gormley created a second *Field* in Sydney, Australia. This comprised 1100 figures and was made with a group of seven student helpers. In both these works the figures are placed in radiating circles, facing inwards. In the Australian *Field* the viewer can walk into an open space in the centre of the work.

1990

In December, Gormley worked with brickmakers and their families in the Parish of San Matías, Cholula, Mexico. They made a *Field* of 35,000 figures that were exhibited as a solid mass, facing the viewer, to fill gallery and non-gallery spaces in America and Canada. It is this *Field*, sometimes known as *American Field*, which became the precursor for the subsequent *Fields* in Europe.

1992

Gormley worked with Children from Porto Vehlo in the Amazon Basin, to revive a brick factory and produce a *Field* of 25,000 figures for the exhibition 'Arte Amazonas' held at the Museu de Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, at the time of the Earth Summit and Global Forum. The figures were arranged in a circle, facing outwards, with an open space at the centre.

1993

In the Spring, Gormley worked with local families and students at Ostra Grevie in Sweden to make *European Field*. The 35,000 figures, arranged as a forward-facing mass, filled a gallery space at Malmo Konsthall and subsequently toured to Warsaw, Ljubljana, Zagreb and Budapest in 1994, to Prague, Bucharest and Vilnius in 1995, and to Riga, Tallinn and Stockholm in 1996.

In September, *Field for the British Isles* was made with a local community in St Helens, Merseyside. *Field for the British Isles* was first exhibited at Tate Gallery Liverpool and then at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin. It then toured to Llandudno, Edinburgh, Derry, Birmingham and Cardiff.

1995

Field for the British Isles was purchased for the Arts Council Collection. The purchase was achieved with the support of the Henry Moore Foundation and the National Art Collections Fund, and remains the most ambitious acquisition ever made for the Collection.

Statements about *Field for the British Isles*

I hope that this work makes the viewers' experience its subject; the experience of looking. There is also a way in which the work appropriates memory. This invasion of physical space, which you could also think of as a kind of infection, is a physical metaphor for personal space. It's a kind of physical equivalent of consciousness. The '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.
Antony Gormley

The feeling of peace and calm that descended on the hall when everyone was working quietly was, for me, a highlight of the project. The concentration of thought became a kind of meditation. Apart from the rapport within the group, I also felt a rapport growing with the clay itself. After the initial unsureness my confidence grew as I found I could fashion the clay into figures which evolved throughout the week. I also felt incredibly protective towards my field. I never felt though that I had complete control of the clay. I always had the feeling that it was in charge.
Sue Morris, maker of figures for *Field*

Initially I did not believe that *Field* could evoke such emotion or be regarded as a deep and thoughtful piece, but the more I became involved the more I began to understand about the power of the piece and its meaning.
Field shows the feelings and emotions of the people involved. The sheer amount of figures produced represents the hard work and individuality of all those who gave up their time to make it possible, but most of all *Field* brought the community spirit of St Helens alive.
Abbey Jones, maker of figures for *Field*

It is a kind of harvesting – it's about tilling the earth with your hands but instead of making something grow it is the earth you are forming directly. The harvest comes from within the people, or the thing that is growing comes out of the people. Everyone has their own row and throughout the project they continue to do row after row on the same strip like the old medieval strip field and they build up a very strong relationship with that patch of earth. Those gazes that they are seeding in the clay look back at them as they are working, suggesting consciousness is not only inside.
Antony Gormley

*For me the extraordinary thing about the genesis of form of the individual figures in *Field* is that it isn't about visual appearances at all. What I've encouraged people to do is to treat the clay almost as an extension of their own bodies. And this takes some time. This repeated act of taking a ball of clay, and using the space between the hands as a kind of matrix, as a kind of mould out of which the form arises.*
Antony Gormley

Still IV, 1994, Gallery 5

Still IV is a single lead body case cast from a carving of the artist's daughter at six days old. It is shown in isolation in the double height of gallery 5. Gormley sees this work as crucial to the whole display at Tate St Ives, he states, '*...this is the future, it is like a bomb, it asks what we feel about new life. It's like a fulcrum for the whole thing. It's a vulnerable child, aged six days, taken from its natural place, from the breast of the mother and placed on the earth. This is a sensitising thing where you become aware of how big you are and how responsive you can be to an inanimate object*'.

As a cast based on the body of a tiny baby, in contrast, to the artist's own body, *Still IV* evokes a different set of issues. Isolating it within the high gallery space reinforces its sense of vulnerability. The natural shape of the baby is in stark contrast to the crude modelling of the *Field* figures. With *Still IV* the physical shape of the new born baby – the curve of the spine, the position of the head and sucking thumb, seem very real.

Trigger questions

- What is this?
- Why do you think it is here?
- How do you feel standing in this space?
- What material is it made of (and why does it have lines around its body)?

Further points for discussion

Space and scale

Consider the scale of the installation. The infant has been 'deserted' within a huge space. It is directly on the floor without a base or stand. How does that make you feel in relation to the sculpture? Contrast this installation with *Field for the British Isles* or *Critical Mass*. Make sure you also view *Still IV* from the round window above by the coffee shop.

Fragility

Gormley emphasises the vulnerability of the child. A six-day-old child would be close to its mother and carefully wrapped. Here it is exposed and isolated.

Growth

The baby's body has been described as rather like a bulb or seed. It represents potential growth – soon its limbs will push away from its expanding body. Gormley is interested in the way a body case can represent energy and force of its own. It is interesting to contrast *Still IV* with *Bed* or *Critical Mass* and to explore the theme of the cycle of life in Gormley's work. Consider how the title of the exhibition **Some of the Facts** might relate to this theme.

Themes, issues and curriculum links

In addition to the points raised in relation to the individual works, you might like to consider some of the following themes and issues. You could choose to focus your visit on one theme which could link directly to curriculum work but which could be explored throughout the exhibition.

The senses

The feeling of the mud squeezing up between your toes. Antony Gormley

I think I am a sculptor. I think I deal with matter. I think I deal with first hand experience. I think I deal with stuff. Antony Gormley

Gormley's sculptures encourage us to think about real physical experience and to think beyond just visual sensation. His work explores all the senses and we are encouraged to think about sound, touch, smell, density, weight, mass, inside and outside.

I think the tension in my work is in a sense between wanting to reinforce primary physical experience, just sensing the weight of your own body, the pressure of the earth pushing up against your feet, the passage of air around your body, those sort of things... Antony Gormley

Silence and stillness

Gormley says that sculpture can provide a point of silence and stillness that can return us to ourselves as physical beings. His knowledge and interest in Buddhist meditation likewise emphasises the importance of direct bodily experience.

Consider how a work like *Field* creates such a quiet atmosphere? Why does *Critical Mass* force us to think about the contrasts between stillness and movement? What happens to us when we are still within an installation?

Scale

Gormley uses scale to heighten our physical experience. Consider how Gormley plays with scale within this exhibition. He changes the scale of his works in relation to the scale of the gallery space and our experience of it.

The Body

Gormley is interested in the human figure and much of his work explores the body. The fact that he often starts with a cast from his own body is significant. He sees this starting point at a lived moment – a real body in real time.

I want to deal with existence and I want to use my own existence, in a sense, as the raw material. It is important to me that each of these works comes from a lived moment. It isn't an invention; it's not an attempt to make a significant abstract form; it is a testament to a lived moment that has been transformed from flesh and its mortality into another zone of time. Antony Gormley

They [the body casts] are about the widest evocation of sense, that being a union of sensation and intelligence, they accept the condition of being in the body as a point of potential, a point of power...Now as soon as I say that, of course, I am aware of the paradox because the body is not actually there in these works, but you know where it was or should be. They are perfect housings for the body. Antony Gormley

Space

Gormley's sculptures are about space. His 'installations' establish an interaction between the physical space, the space created by the sculpture and the experience of the viewer. Consider what an **installation** is (see glossary). How do we participate in an installation? How do our bodies react? Consider also the relationship between **sculpture and architecture** - how do they interact?

Physical space

Gormley is interested in the space in which his sculptures are exhibited (and he has exhibited in some very different places). In each location the work creates a new context and a new narrative – often developing contrasting experiences within one building. His work explores and interacts with the architecture or landscape as he tries to set up 'different energies or different kinds of vibration in every space'.

'...there has to be a relationship with the space in which they are shown. There's a sense in which the object either displaces the space as with the new solid iron works, or contains the space which has been true of all the body cases. There has to be a tension between the two.' Antony Gormley

Body as space

Gormley is also interested in the space created by the sculpture. He does not see a sculpture so much as an object but rather as a container providing space for other issues. He is not interested in the figure as a carrier of messages; by making copies of himself he has overcome the problem of subject. For Gormley a mould is a magical empty space.

I'm interested in the body as a place, as a space of becoming, in other words I'm interested in the body as a possible space where something that we might call identity or we might call meaning can arise... Antony Gormley

Gormley is not only interested the external but also the internal space of body and mind. He has recounted a recurrent childhood experience before sleep in which 'a matchbox theatre space behind the eyes became an infinite wide extension of space in front of me'.

The viewer's space

Finally it is the imagination of the viewer that is the ultimate space. By activating the physical space and opening up the space of the object, Gormley creates a situation for the viewer. Our own experiences, memories and ideas that we bring to the installation provide the full context for the work.

I want the work to activate the space around it and to engender a psycho-physical response, allowing those in its field of influence to be more aware of their bodies and surroundings. Antony Gormley

Time

Gormley is interested in how sculpture can make us more aware of time. For example, by simply being still a sculpture will make you more aware of your own movement (and breathing). In a similar way Gormley uses scale to make people more aware of their own perception of scale and sense of space.

Sculpture is a direct way of allowing mind to dwell in matter. It is a means of becoming aware of the connections between matter, space, and time in a way that complements (but is completely different from) the connections that science has demonstrated. I firmly believe that we are part of a chain of being and that sculpture is a way of providing instruments in which our place within it can be tested, made manifest and perhaps transformed. Antony Gormley

Consider some of the ways the sculptures on display explore the concept of time. For example, *Bed* suggests the process of decay and death whereas *Still IV* points toward growth and development. Consider also how the body casts, whether solid or hollow, (in *Critical Mass* or *Still IV*) conceal or freeze time by containing the shape of the body.

Ourselves

*I've always wanted the work to be more reflective. I've always wanted the audience to kind of participate in that way... the figures [in *Critical Mass*] are strewn around waiting for people to use them and feel something about their own lives. That is the invitation of the work.*

Antony Gormley

We are essential to Gormley's work. As the artist says there is 'the work, the space and the viewer'. For Gormley it is the activity of looking and feeling that's important, he wants us to create a context or meaning with 'this raw material'. He talks about the work being a catalyst or waiting 'like a trap' for the life of the viewer to come and fill it.

So how do we respond to Gormley's work? Consider how your experiences and ideas change with each installation. Contrast the immediate theatricality of *Field for the British Isles* with *Still IV*, for example. What ideas and memories do the works trigger for you?

Are their shared memories and experiences that we can talk about? Gormley's work raises some interesting questions about individual and collective experience, about the idea of community, about growth and development, about life and death, and about materials and technology.

Gormley at Tate St Ives

Why is it interesting to view Gormley's work at Tate St Ives? What does this specific context mean for the work?

Although Gormley has exhibited widely both nationally and internationally his work has never been seen in Cornwall before. The decision to show not only *Field for the British Isles* but also *Critical Mass*, *Bed* and *Still IV* establishes an interesting dynamic. These works have never been shown in this grouping before.

First of all, we have a contemporary British sculptor exhibiting within the historical context of St Ives. How will his work react to the rural land and seascape of St Ives? What connections can be made between Gormley and sculptors associated with St Ives such as Barbara Hepworth or Naum Gabo (see section on Barbara Hepworth)?

Secondly, we have a very specific selection of work that interacts with the character and spaces of the gallery itself. Gormley says with the choice of works the visitor will experience an incredible shift in scale and density and their own relationship to the work will keep changing.

Firstly, I have emptied a gallery and put a very vulnerable object in this large double height space. Secondly, I have filled two galleries completely with Field to the exclusion of the body of the viewer, putting the viewer in a gallery on his own, and then thirdly the gallery with Critical Mass in it, just dumped on the floor as if it was something that has come off a wreck...Antony Gormley

Gormley makes the point that at the centre of Tate St Ives 'is an eye' which invites visitors to make comparisons between the works on display and the view of Porthmeor Beach. It will be interesting to contrast *Critical Mass* with summertime on the beach. You will see sculpture in a place where things are conserved and protected; turn your back and you can watch the 'body at play'.

In the Studio visitors will be able to see the **Artists on Artists** display, a selection of work that Gormley has chosen from the National Collection. Gormley has chosen works by Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson and Naum Gabo which he has found interesting. The display provides the opportunity to think about a wider historical context for Gormley's work and to see how these artists explored some of the same issues. Gormley's selection highlights ideas about abstraction, space and time. Don't miss Gabo's rarely exhibited small acrylic maquettes.

Some of the same preoccupations can be found in Martin Smith's ceramic display on the upper terrace of gallery two. **Wavelength** is a context specific multiple work that raised questions about surface and light, internal and external space, scale and architecture.

Suggestions for follow-up activities

Writing

Gormley's work provokes a range of feelings and reactions. Encourage students to write about their ideas and views both during their visit and back at school. Students could develop a narrative about one of the works or about the relationship between works in the exhibition.

Drawing

The exhibition provides some wonderful opportunities for drawing. Why not continue this back at school. Consider drawing direct from the life model or from individuals and groups of students holding different poses. Explore some of the poses found in Gormley's work.

Students could draw the figures on card or thick paper and then cut them out and build up a 'pyramid' of forms.

Another idea would be to lay a large sheet of paper on the floor and draw around students lying on it in different poses. Students could then cut out the figures and add in the features. A range of materials could be used to build up different layers.

Exploring different spaces

How do we react? What physical sensation do we experience? Experiment by visiting different places or by changing round or emptying your classroom to experience a different sense of scale or atmosphere.

The figure in sculpture

Gormley is not interested in the figure as a carrier of messages. Contrast his use of the figure with, for example heroic, religious or symbolic public sculpture. Compare Gormley's work to a local public sculpture.

Carving and modelling

Explore the differences between modelling and carving. Simple carvings can be made using soap or wax. Use plasticine, salt dough or clay to model. You could also experiment with Soff-Mo (suitable for young children), Fimo or Cernit, available through any art resources catalogue, and all of which can be hardened in a conventional oven.

Consider using a range of materials to model or construct figures.

- ◆ Newspaper and masking tape
- ◆ Gummed paper torn into strips, moulded and shaped
- ◆ Tissue paper and PVA (papiér mâché)
- ◆ Cotton or muslin coated in PVA
- ◆ Plaster bandages (Mod Roc) over a wire or wood armature
- ◆ Cardboard, polysterine and wire.

Making casts

Experiment making casts. This can be done very simply with plasticine and Plaster-of-Paris. Make casts of small found objects. You could also make masks using a balloon and papier mâché mould.

Make direct casts of your hands or feet using cling film around your skin before applying the plaster bandages (Mod Roc) or Plaster-of-Paris. If you make casts of larger objects you could experiment by building up the shape in sections.

Wrapping and containing the body

Explore ways to wrap the body – experiment using a range of materials and fabric. During the *Standing Stones* exhibition at Tate St Ives a life-model wrapped in a 'body stocking' posed for students to draw from at various points in the building. This work continued in the classroom with more in-depth drawing and three-dimensional work stemming from this experience.

Movement and Stillness

Contrast movement and stillness by developing a physical movement/dramatic piece with your students. Encourage students to think about pose and setting. Students could develop a 'living sculpture' work exploring different places and spaces around the school. This could then provide the basis for some drawing, painting or photographic work.

Empty spaces

Explore the idea of hollow and empty spaces. Contrast this with relief and 3-D work. You could develop work based on negative space, indentations and imprints (see making casts above). Consider examples such as footprints and marks in the sand. Some of these ideas could be explored on Porthmeor Beach during your visit to St Ives.

Materials and techniques

Some of the Facts provide the opportunity to explore Gormley's materials and techniques. During his career, Gormley has used a wide range of materials including concrete, iron, lead and clay. The human figure has been the dominant theme in his art and in many of his sculptures he works directly from his body. Within the exhibition materials range from bread and clay to iron and lead. Techniques range from the hand-made to the mass-produced.

Bread

Bed is made out of layers of white bread. It is a surprising and quite shocking material to use to make a piece of sculpture. By choosing an ephemeral material Gormley seems to be challenging the accepted hierarchy of sculptural materials such as bronze and stone. Just how long will this sculpture last?

Clay

It was Gormley's interest in clay that saw the development of his so-called *Fields*. In *Field for the British Isles* some 40,000 figures have been modelled in clay and then fired in a kiln. Each figure was hand-made, without the use of tools, and bears the direct imprint of the hand that made it. The fact that so many figures were not mechanically reproduced but individually created is in direct contrast to other work by Gormley.

Iron

Gormley has often chosen to make work in cast iron. In 1990 he began a group of cast iron sculptures known as 'expansions' where a mould made of the artist was used to make a second mould measuring out a fixed distance from all points of the skin. The results were a set of strange generalised shapes that had lost all human appearance. *Critical Mass* is a group of solid iron figures taken from the artist's own body.

Lead

Still IV is one of a number of works that Gormley has made in lead. Gormley says he likes to work in lead because it is an ordinary, malleable, dense and permanent material. Lead allows for the creation of surfaces which subtly reflects light while absorbing it (especially if the surface is prevented from oxidising).

Lead is known for its protective qualities – it is impenetrable visually and radioactively. Yet lead is also poisonous and very heavy. Its chemical irreducibility has meant it has been identified with primordial matter and it has also traditionally been associated with saturnine melancholy. Gormley seems to play with these contradictory qualities of lead. He uses it to make body casts - to create shells that conceal and protect an inner space.

The mould

Gormley is interested in the mould. Sometimes the mould is a skin (*Still IV*), sometimes it is an expanded hollow form, sometimes it is a solid block (*Critical Mass*). For many of his sculptures, the mould is based on his own body. To make a body mould Gormley is wrapped in clingfilm and then hessian scrim and plaster are applied. Once set the mould is removed in sections.

I get out of the mould, I re-assemble it and then I re-appraise the thing I have been, or the place that I have been and see how much potency it has...The potency depends on the internal pressure being registered. Antony Gormley

Traditionally direct modelling or casting of the body has been associated with death (as in death masks). Interestingly, for Gormley the body cast is all about creating a sense of internal pressure and life. Gormley said that he had been very impressed by the life mask of William Blake in the National Portrait Gallery that he had seen as a child.

There is a sense in which there is this pressure inside the dome of the scalp and then also this pressure behind the eyes which gives that work a kind of potency. It was as if something was trying to come through the surface of the skin. Antony Gormley

I want to re-capture that sense of imaginative space inside the body. I want there to be an internal pressure in the work, that has a relationship with the atmosphere which we sense with our bodies through the skin of the work. Antony Gormley

The actual technicalities of Gormley's mould-making can often be seen. Look closely at *Critical Mass* and you can see traces of the hessian scrim that formed the mould from which the iron figures were made. You can also see the welded seams of iron pieces that allude to the seams of the mould. Interestingly these seams, which can be seen in the lead piece *Still IV*, seem to take on a life of their own as a co-ordinate system describing the inner space of the sculpture.

In *Critical Mass*, where identical casts were mechanically produced of each 'type', you can also see the roundels that are the sawn-off 'risers' or channels made to allow air and gases to escape when the mould was filled with molten metal.

Links to the Barbara Hepworth Museum

A rich area of study would be to make links between Gormley's work and that of Barbara Hepworth. You might like to consider planning your day to include a visit to the Barbara Hepworth Museum and also a walk around St Ives to see some of Hepworth's sculptures sited in the town. When comparing the two artist's work consider the following points:

Techniques and materials

Compare and contrast Gormley and Hepworth's techniques and materials. Hepworth was primarily a carver, subtracting space from a block of stone or wood. Whereas Gormley tends to build up space either by modelling or casting. Hepworth did, however, especially toward the end of her life, model work in plaster and cast it into bronze. You can look at Hepworth's plaster and stone-carving workshops and see some of the tools and materials she used.

The human figure

Consider the ways both artists explore the human figure. For Gormley the human figure, usually based on his own body, becomes a space for ideas and feelings. Hepworth was deeply interested in the human figure and also about the balance and movement of the body and physical space. Compare Gormley's sculptures with Hepworth works such as *Torso*, 1928, *Infant*, 1929, *Seated Figure*, 1932-3 or *Figure for Lanscape*, 1960. What has happened to the figure in Hepworth's sculptures? Contrast the way each artist 'simplifies' or abstracts from the human figure.

Consider making a direct comparison between Hepworth's *Infant*, 1929 and Gormley's *Still IV. Infant*, carved in dark Burmese wood, was inspired by Hepworth's first son, Paul Skeating, who was born in 1929. It is not a portrait but rather a 'generalisation' as the title suggests. The contrast in poses of each sculpture is quite dramatic. Hepworth's baby, placed high on a plinth, is thrust into an upright position with arms above its head, turning a natural sleeping pose into vertical position. With *Still IV* the baby is lying huddled directly on the floor.

Space and scale

Compare and contrast Hepworth and Gormley's treatment of space and scale. Primarily a carver, much of Hepworth's work is about opening up the space within a piece of wood or stone. In some sculptures she introduced string or paint to further explore and describe space.

Like Gormley, Hepworth was interested in our response to sculpture. Talking about her monumental piece *Four Square (Walk Through)* 1966 she said, 'I wanted to involve people, make them react to the surfaces and size.'

It is difficult to describe in words the meaning of forms because it is precisely this emotion which is conveyed by sculpture alone. Our sense of touch is a fundamental sensibility which comes into action at birth – our stereognostic sense – the ability to feel weight and form and to assess its significance...the translation of what one feels about man and nature must be conveyed by the sculptor in terms of mass, inner tensions and rhythm, scale in relation to our human size and the quality of surface which speaks through our hands and eyes. Barbara Hepworth

Further Reading

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Glossary

Cast

To reproduce an object, such as a piece of sculpture, by means of a mould; also a copy so produced. The original piece is usually of a less durable material than the cast.

Carving

In sculpture, the act of cutting or incising wood, stone or another material. The usual tools for carving include knives, chisels, gouges, points, adzes and hammers. Traditionally sculptors have been divided between carvers (subtracting space from a block) and modellers (who expand and build up space).

Figurative

This is a word that is sometimes used in contradictory ways. Traditionally it has been applied to art works that are representational rather than completely abstract. Figurative also means more directly to be about the human figure.

Installation

Mixed-media, multi-dimensional works that are created temporarily for a specific space or site, either outdoors or indoors. Installations only exist as long as they are installed, but they can be recreated for different sites. The works are perceived in time as they cannot be looked at like traditional art objects, but are experienced in time and space, and are interactive with the viewer.

Modelling

In sculpture the technique of manipulating a plastic substance such as clay; especially the technique of building up a form in clay by an additive process of shaping and enlarging, as distinguished from carving or cutting away.

Mould

A hollow, or negative, container that gives its form to a substance placed within it and allowed to harden in the process of casting. Since the ancient Greeks the use of the mould (which turns positive space into negative space and back again), perfected within the bronze casting technique, provided the opportunity for the cast or 'reproduction'.

A typical mould is made by coating an original piece of sculpture with Plaster-of-Paris and removing it when the plaster sets. A plaster cast that is a duplicate of the original may then be made by pouring liquid plaster into the cavity of the plaster mould and allowing it to harden. A mould consisting of two or more separable pieces is called a piece mould.

Monumental

On a grand scale. A work that is usually large in size and gives the impression of grandeur of form or is of enduring significance.

Riser or vent

An opening or channel in a mould, made to allow air and gases to escape easily when the mould is filled with molten metal or another liquid substance; also known as an air jet or air drain.

Sculpture

A three-dimensional artwork, in which the materials have been largely shaped by the artist and which is usually a single unitary whole, as opposed to an installation. Sculpture can also be a relief.

Seam line

A line or fold found where two pieces of something have been joined together. In cast sculpture, seam lines indicate where parts of the mould were fitted together.