

ANTONY GORMLEY

CLAY AND THE COLLECTIVE BODY, 2009

One hundred tonnes of soft clay in the form of a gigantic cube was presented in an inflatable dome in the middle of Helsinki in 2009, to be worked with and transformed, at the artist's invitation, over a period of ten days by hundreds of the city's inhabitants. The rules of engagement were deliberately set open, with no definite end in mind. People worked individually or together, down on the ground for hours or even days, removed from the noise and diversions of the outside world, sheltered and fed and cocooned in a huge, luminous pneumatic building. It was cold, dry and dark on the outside and warm, wet and light on the inside.

For the artist, CLAY AND THE COLLECTIVE BODY proposed a challenge to the very notion of the artwork as a finished object, a commodity with an exchange value: "it wasn't necessary to have the whole system of galleries and exhibitions to connect with a general public - you could do something for its own sake and the makers themselves were the audience. The process of the arising of these forms, the sense of having the time to allow people to be together and communicate through the work, was the revelation. This was transformational and seemed to be getting back to an idea about art as a common platform of shared experience, in much the same way as dancing and singing."

CLAY AND THE COLLECTIVE BODY was the inaugural IHME Project for the Pro Arte Foundation, Helsinki, Finland.
