

ANTONY GORMLEY

ROOM, 2014

If this crouching body were to stand up it would be just under 22 metres high, but it is hunkered down and embeds itself into its host building. Although an addition of over two storeys, it complements the scale of the north wing and is integrated into the building line, taking its place within the fabric of London. In both its title and form, the work treats the body as habitat: our primary dwelling place, while still being a resolute object commanding space. The house-sized sculpture is made of large rectangular steel volumes that apply the syntax of architecture to the body.

Inside ROOM there is no furniture apart from the bed covered in white linen. The internal surfaces of the hollow blocks provide ledges and niches. The wood is left untreated, with finger joints at the corners left slightly proud. The walls are made of wooden planks of different widths of a dark, reddish-brown colour, with the figuring of the oak modulating the surface.

I want the room to be both in the city but absolutely removed from it, giving a feeling of enclosure within and exposure without. I want it to be a safe-haven, a retreat, a place of peace, with a feeling of being fully enclosed but not cut off from outside. The window above the bed is high, it gives a view of the sky and can be opened. At night, the shutters allow total blackout. The interior is only 4 metres square but 10 metres high, close at body level, but lofty and open above. The idea is to reveal this slowly and allow the articulation of the interior to become more than the provision of comfort and shelter but to be an interior, articulated night.

The black curtain that has to be drawn aside to enter ROOM, uncovers a threshold formed by the metallic surface of the external skin as it traverses the staircase passage. Here, all of the layers of the construction are revealed. On entering the room all you see is the lit bed. The traveller, on lying down to sleep, can switch these spotlights off and in the minutes that it takes for the eyes to readjust to the dark, discover that this darkness has form. The internal spaces of the ankles, elbows and neck have subliminal levels of light that illuminate parts of the interior that are otherwise inaccessible. This indirect, very low light provides modelling. I want to structure night as a preamble to sleeping and dreaming.

It is the first time that I have attempted to sculpt darkness itself. My ambition for this work is that it should confront the monumental with the most personal, intimate experience.
