

ANTONY GORMLEY

INSIDERS, 1997 - 2005

What is an INSIDER? An INSIDER is to the body what memory is to consciousness: a kind of residue, something that is left behind. It is a core rather than a skeleton. It is a way of allowing things that are internal to the body - attitudes and emotions embedded in posture or hidden by gesture - to become revealed. They are equally alien and intimate.

The idea is that the pieces carry, in concentrated form, the trace of the body and its passage through life. This has a direct relationship to pain. I see these reduced forms as antennae for a particular kind of resilience that exists within all of us, that allows us to bear suffering but is itself created through painful experience. There is no judgment about this. Their bareness is not the nakedness that reveals the flesh; it is the result of having had the flesh taken away: a loss which is not sentimentalised, but accepted. The INSIDER tries to up the ante between being and nothingness.

I want the INSIDERS to endure in time and to concentrate space. They are made in a durable and relatively permanent base element: iron. The earth has iron at its core, and these are like the cooled and revealed magnetic load cores of the body.

The INSIDERS started as an experimentation into a reduction or concentration of the body. It was a reverse procedure from the expansion of the body that had concerned me in the late 1980s and early 90s. It resulted initially from the reduction of the body that was necessary in the production of the ANGEL OF THE NORTH, where the bodyform had to be reduced all over by 12.5 mm in order for the 20 radial ribs to exist half within and half without the original body skin.

The first work that dealt with the INSIDER theme was a piece called UNDER MY SKIN (1997), in which a relatively relaxed bodyform was reduced all over by 12.5mm. This surface was replaced by the ends of about 3,070 12.5mm long pins that were nailed into the surface. This work led me to experimenting with proportional reduction, culminating in INSIDER I; a work in which all the limbs were taken separately and reduced by 60 per cent on a longitudinal axis, leaving the body the same height but diminishing its cross-section.

The INSIDER series continued from 2 to 14 and has occupied me for 3 years, from 1996 to 1999. They are all 2/3 reductions of my body, apart from the last 4 in which I used the bodies of 3 female models, and a work based on my first child when just able to stand.

The reductions are achieved by hand, by cutting around 130 cross-sections through the body mould, reducing all of the through measurement, and then replacing the reduced cross-sections with the mould and welding them together so that they keep their place precisely at the centre of the form. The only designed parts are the bridges between the torso, links at the hips and shoulders, and between the chest and the breasts, or the hips and the penis.

This process of objective mathematical reduction leads to a particular form of abstraction; a found object never revealed before and certainly not invented. It's a body that lies within all of us. In INTIMATE RELATIONS, the 3 female forms test the universality of the INSIDER across sex and the body of the 'other', and are joined by the INSIDER of a baby boy at that stage in his development when he is just able to stand. He looks up to us to be recognised in an arena constituted by the archetypes of mother, sister and lover. The INSIDER suggests also that the most intimate is the most strange, that inside each of us is a self that we would maybe rather not recognise and constitutes a kind of 'third man' - the INSIDER as alien witness.
