

ANTONY GORMLEY

SECOND BODY, GALERIE THADDAEUS ROPAC, PARIS PANTIN, FRANCE, 2015

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Describing the installation, Gormley wrote:

'In *SECOND BODY*, the four main halls of the gallery become different zones of experience that relate to each other, hopefully creating an experience greater than the sum of its parts. On entering the first space, one encounters *STOP*, a work made of 14 solid lead blocks, which consciously reflects the history of the building. All of the blocks are presented in dynamic relation to one another and their combined dead load allows them to cohere into a single bodyform. *STOP* initiates the theme of the 'second body', where anatomy gives way to architecture and the body is translated into the masses and voids of the built environment.

By being so much smaller than life-size, *STOP* also sets in motion a concern with scale that runs throughout the exhibition. At the other end of this first gallery space is a much larger than life-size work of a crouching figure with a body that becomes hollow. *HOLE* is a mansion of many chambers, purposefully facing the opposite direction, encouraging the viewer to circumnavigate and view the work from the far side. What was solid, dark matter in the first work is translated here into a subtle interplay between light and shade. The side of the work first facing you as you enter, invites you to look within the square void in its back and appreciate the light running through it: a corridor to the heart of the work. *HOLE* suggests that the singular body can also be a model for the collective body, where the interlocking cells mirror the way sites within a city interpenetrate each other.

Having established this dialectic of scale and of mass and void, where architecture replaces anatomy, these themes are carried further in the galleries to the left and to the right of the entrance hall. Immediately to the left is *EXPANSION FIELD*, a work made of sixty sculptures of different sizes, which the viewer is invited to walk through. Here, differing scale is not the result of proportional enlargement of human form but of incremental expansion through applying the terms of the cosmological constant: here, the expansion of cosmic space is applied to the subjective condition of the individual. The installation celebrates the infinity of the imagination experienced in the darkness of the body and in the sky at night.

In the third and largest space, there is a relational field of dark, unstable columns. Here are 16 larger than life-size anaerobic, black oxide iron blockworks, each weighing over two tonnes. I hope that the passage of the viewer and their empathetic projection are drawn towards these stacked, propped, cantilevered masses, which may seem at first cold and forbidding but in spite of, or perhaps because of their reticence, contain feeling. This is all difficult stuff to articulate but my sense is that as the work gets more brutal in its geometry, it is able to be more telling in its emotional range.

To the right of the entrance hall is *MATRIX II*, the largest single work in the exhibition. Sixteen room-scaled volumes made in reinforced steel mesh interpenetrate, identifying a void space equivalent to two bodies. This is the materialisation of perspective, the phenomenon which, in 15th century Italy, gave rise to the pictorial control of space. In *MATRIX II*, perspective is used to destroy perspective. This materialised grid system gives a great sense of disorientation. As you are drawn by these push-pull perspectives and as you walk around the piece, the impossibility of reconciling foreground, mid-ground and background, and the absence of any figure within this ground, undermine any certainty of the stability of architecture itself.

I have attempted to use the space of the gallery as a foil against which the themes of body and architecture are played out in four distinct 'field' experiences. The exhibition becomes a test site for the auto-observation of the viewer's own sense of mass, scale and movement in time and space.'
