

ANTONY GORMLEY: CONTEMPORIZING THE INDEX

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims to reexamine the index as a sign that generates meaning in the sculptural oeuvre of contemporary British artist Antony Gormley. The artist has consistently proclaimed his work to be indexical but has never offered clarification of the term. Rather, he adheres to the definition developed in the late nineteenth century by the term's originator, Charles Sanders Peirce. This is problematic because it gives false meaning to the indexical sign in a contemporary context. By comparing Gormley's use of the term in his sculptural practice to Peirce's theories and those of art historian Rosalind Krauss, who was the first to significantly and convincingly relate the index to art, this study will attempt to provide a contemporized definition of the index. This thesis aims to offer a clarification in the meaning of Antony Gormley's sculpture and demonstrate the index's ability to offer resolution to what is contemporary about contemporary art.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Contemporary British sculptor Antony Gormley has successfully made a career of exploring the human body in subject matter and form, while self-consciously operating apart from any particular art movement or style.<sup>1</sup> Though his sculpture takes the body – both in structure and conception – as its basis, it is not the body as an object in which the artist is interested, but rather the body as “ [...] a place; a site of transformation, and an axis of physical and spatial experience.”<sup>2</sup> In particular, Gormley aims to explore the place that is experienced when one closes their eyes, the dimensionless, infinite dark void, which exists within all conscious beings. But how does one go about creating sculpture that expresses a place so oddly familiar, and yet almost completely incorporeal?

The solution Gormley has proposed is to make physical records of the place in which he is interested through body casting, rather than attempt to create a likeness of such a place. He explains, “All of these works [body sculptures] start from a real event, they’re indexical, not symbolic, not representative, not signs. They are, in the same way that a thumb-print is, registers, traces of a lived moment.”<sup>3</sup> For Gormley to produce indexical body sculptures, he had to break away from the self-referential conventions of Modernism that attempted to be truly exclusionary of representation, narrative, and social dialogue.<sup>4</sup> He needed to separate from the Modernist practice of using art to answer

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Renton, interviewed by author, March 24, 2014, Marlborough Gallery, London.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Caiger-Smith, *Antony Gormley* (London: Tate Publishing, 2010), 23.

<sup>3</sup> Antony Gormley, “Body, Space, Time,” in *The Body and the Arts*, eds. Corinne Saunders, Ilrike Mauderm and Jane McNaughton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 211.

<sup>4</sup> See Clement Greenberg, “Towards a Newer Laocoon,” *Partisan Review* 7 (1940): 296-310. See also Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting,” *Art & Literature* 4 (1965): 193-201.

questions about the meaning and purpose of art. Instead he returned to the body, an object and form often denied by Modernism,<sup>5</sup> in order to explore in an indexical manner the unmediated experience and condition of human life.<sup>6</sup>

Since his return to the body, the artist has made sculpture that directly takes his own body's form through molding and casting processes, as in *Mould* (Fig. 1; see the Appendix for all figures), has created architectural spaces that question the viewer's relationship between their body and self, as in *Blind Light* (Fig. 2), and has produced spaces across the globe for volunteers to discover the self through experience, as in *One and Other* (Fig. 3). As records of human experience, all of these works could be considered indices. However, in order for them to be accepted as such, one must contemporize<sup>7</sup> the notion of the index and its application to today's visual arts.

The term 'index' has been defined by and applied to a variety of disciplines, but it is the explanation provided by Charles Sanders Peirce to which Gormley adheres. In an interview with art historian, Alan Macfarlane, the artist said, "[...] [my group of body sculptures do not constitute] a representation or a perfect copy, but an index; Peirce's

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<sup>5</sup> According to modernist art historians such as Clement Greenberg, the shift to non-figurative abstraction that occurred in Modernism was a result of the attempt to purify art through medium specificity. Art was no longer about creating illusions of reality, but rather an exploration of the independent inherent qualities of each type of art and its medium, such as the flatness of painting. The abandonment of the representation was necessary because of the representational sign's innate quality of creating associations between the physical object and its reproduction in art. See Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," *Art & Literature* 4 (1965): 193-201.

<sup>6</sup> Gormley, "Body, Space, Time," 209.

<sup>7</sup> I am using the term 'contemporize' in a dualistic manner. First, I mean contemporize in the sense that Antony Gormley is taking as his basis the argument Charles Peirce made for the index, but completely reworking it to be applicable to art in the present day. Second, I am implying by 'contemporize' the notion that Antony Gormley is updating the theories about the index as argued by art historian Rosalind Krauss by expanding her definition. Thus 'contemporize' refers to both a new type of index that diverges from Peirce's theory and one that is an expansion of the previous theories by Krauss.

categories are very useful for this, a symbol, an image and an index [...]”<sup>8</sup> The categories to which the artist is referring compose a triadic branch of Peirce’s complex theory of signs, which is formed between the symbol, the icon (which at times Gormley calls the image), and the index.

Peirce first published the theory of this triad in 1868 in the *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, a publication from an extant eponymous intellectual society. In his preliminary use of the terms, he defined icons, indices, and symbols through their relations with the objects<sup>9</sup> to which they refer. According to Peirce, an icon is an image of an object that through some like quality to its referent creates in the interpreter’s mind (the one perceiving the icon) an analogous idea or understanding of the original object, whether or not such an object exists. The symbol, such as written or spoken noun, is a sign that is connected to its physical object by habit or law, not by qualities of likeness. It has meaning only because the interpreter is able to connect it to general ideas or conventions already associated with the sign. The objects of symbols tend to be groups, generalities, or types, unlike an icon that can take either a specific object or a kind of object. The index, conversely, is a sign that relates to its object through contiguous means and gives facts or evidence about its object, which is not a type but a singular existent object.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “Antony Gormley interviewed by Alan Macfarlane 29<sup>th</sup>, April 2009,” by Alan Macfarlane, *Alanmacfarlane.com*, accessed April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014, [http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/DO/filmshow/gormley\\_fast.htm](http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/DO/filmshow/gormley_fast.htm).

<sup>9</sup> Peirce refers to these objects, the original thing for which a sign replaces, as *representamen*. For this thesis they will be referred to either as objects or as referents.

<sup>10</sup> Charles S. Peirce, “Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs,” in *Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology*, ed. Robert E. Innis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 9-19.

Peirce divided the contiguous relationship between the index and its object into three different types. The first division is considered *referential* because the index and its referent have a ‘perception of direct continuity,’ such as indicating a particular object through gesture or speech. Secondly, contiguity can be categorized as *causal* or *existential*, the physical cause of the object on the index, such as a thumbprint. The third type is *labeling*. This division relates primarily to language, such as proper names like Antony Gormley, which act as an index of a person.<sup>11</sup>

Though Peirce defines each sign term separately, he is aware that actual signs are not independent of each other. An index is related to an icon because the index has some quality or likeness that resembles its object. Symbols are related to indices and icons, as they are both able to be constituent elements of the former. Not every sign can be dissected and compartmentalized into all three classifications, but many contain elements from all three sign types – as does the sculpture of Antony Gormley. However, all signs have dominant qualities that associate it with one triad of the branch over another.<sup>12</sup>

Gormley did not pioneer the idea of using Peirce’s notion of the index to create something new in the history of art. Earlier in the 1970s, American art historian Rosalind Krauss wrote two seminal articles in which she used the term to connect the pluralism of artistic movements happening in the United States at the time.<sup>13</sup> Rather than focus on either the process in art or the end product like the either-or dialogues with foundations in

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<sup>11</sup> James Jakób Liszka, *A General Introduction to the Semeiotic of C.S. Peirce* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 38.

<sup>12</sup> Peirce, “Logic as Semiotic,” 9-19.

<sup>13</sup> In particular, she developed a parallel between the following contemporary arts: “video, performance, body art, conceptual art, photo-realism in painting and an associated hyper-realism in sculpture, story art, monumental sculpture (earthworks); and abstract painting.” Rosalind Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America,” *October* 3 (1977): 68.

the modern art theories of writers such as Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg, Krauss considered the entirety of art – its process and product. Her argument asserted that art in the 1970s was no longer concerned with creating likeness between an object and its image, but rather functioned as a register of the past physical presence of such objects. Krauss modernized the index by reexamining it through two interrelated concepts: the index as an ‘empty shifter’<sup>14</sup> and site specificity. Krauss upheld that indexical artworks are empty shifters that generate meaning only when they maintain a physical relationship with a singular real location that functions as the index’s referent.<sup>15</sup>

Gormley was most likely aware of Krauss’ articles on the subject, though it is unlikely that her arguments guided his art practice.<sup>16</sup> However, the lack of an explicit connection between Krauss’ argument and Gormley’s sculpture does not discredit the application of her theories to Gormley’s oeuvre, because she was the first to significantly and convincingly develop a correlation between the index and the visual arts, as the former was originally a term developed for linguistic theory.

With these basic ideas of the index from Peirce and Krauss in mind, it is arguable that Gormley misrepresents the indexical quality of his art by applying to his sculptures a theory that is both historically and contextually removed from them. Peirce wrote his theory in reference to language at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Krauss in response to

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<sup>14</sup> Krauss explains Jacobson’s theory of the term as such: empty shifters are a category of linguistic signs that have meaning only when they have a direct relationship with their referent, which is constantly changing. An example is the word ‘this.’ The word has no meaning unless it is placed in direct association with the object to which it refers, such as ‘this chair’ or ‘this day.’ With these examples in mind, it is apparent the referent of ‘this’ is always changing depending on its use and context. Other examples of empty shifters include personal pronouns, which change ownership depending on the one using them. See Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America,” 60. See also Roman Jakobson, *Shifters, Verbal Categories, and the Russian Verb* (Harvard University Press, 1957).

<sup>15</sup> For further explanation see Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America Part 2,” 63-65.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Renton, interviewed by author, March 24, 2014, Marlborough Gallery, London.

American art trends. While aspects of their arguments concerning the index as a sign are associated with Gormley's work, they cannot wholly be applied. If Gormley were to truly adhere to the criteria of the index developed by Peirce and later Krauss, his sculpture could not have any more significance than presenting visual evidence of the artist's body in a particular posture in a moment in time; they would be nothing more than an object. However, this is not the case.

The artist speaks often about his work and its signification, which extends beyond the objectness of his sculpture. In reference to this idea he has said, "Art that deals with objects is never going to use art to its full potential. Objects cannot talk about experiences – they can talk about knowledge, about ideas, about culture...but I don't think they can carry feeling."<sup>17</sup> Through this statement it is apparent that the index in Gormley's art must be explained by an expanded and contemporized definition in order to account for the metaphysical signification in his sculptures.

The majority of scholarship about Antony Gormley's sculptures accepts the indexical nature of the artist's work and his use of the term. Few, if any, have thoroughly considered its application to his art, its effect on the signification of his sculptures, or his use of the term to describe his work, and none have proposed that the index Gormley creates is different than the index as formulated by Peirce.<sup>18</sup> Martin Caiger-Smith's monograph, *Antony Gormley*, includes interviews and quotes by the artist that state his

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<sup>17</sup> Caiger-Smith, *Antony Gormley*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen Bann, author of "The Raising of Lazarus," in *Antony Gormley*, ed. Judith Nesbitt, 55-70 (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1993) is one, if not the only person to note that Gormley's sculptures are both icons and indices. He notes that Gormley's sculptures function as icons because they have qualities that resemble their object, Gormley's body. This idea directly embodies Peirce's notion of an icon. However, Bann goes no further in discussing how this affects the significance of the sculptures or Gormley's denial of his sculptures as being representational.

work to be indexical. Eckhard Schneider's essay *In and Out* notes that the artist's use of the index "[releases] his figures from the bounds of traditional sculpture."<sup>19</sup> Margaret Iversen, author of *Still Standing* affirms Gormley's sculpture as indexical traces of the artist's body.

None of these scholars are wrong *per se*, but their work is problematic in that they do not differentiate between the indexical nature of the artist's sculptures and the conventional use of the index in reference to language. Not only does this mislead the viewer in an understanding of the index, it also misrepresents its use in an era post Krauss' reformulation of the index in art. This thesis aims to offer a new definition of the index that exemplifies the inadequacies of Peirce's and Krauss' theories about the term in contemporary art. In order to achieve this, this thesis will propose an analysis of the index through Gormley's sculpture that reexamines how the term and its definition are applied to contemporary art. By no means will this argument disprove Gormley's work as having an indexical quality; rather, I am setting out to critique the vague and incomplete manner in which Gormley claims his sculpture to be indexical. In the broader context of the index in contemporary art, the reconsideration of the term in relation to artists working in a vein similar to Gormley's – the vein of art created from and about human experience – is necessary because it is the update index that makes this manner of working contemporary and separates it from earlier forms of body art. I will attempt to suggest a contemporization of the index by analyzing it through Gormley's practice vis-à-vis three common subthemes in his work: generalization, globalization, and form.

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<sup>19</sup> Eckhard Schneider, "In and Out, 2009," *Antony Gormley*, accessed April 28, 2014, <http://www.antonygormley.com/resources/essay-item/id/119>.

These subthemes have been chosen to offer clarification because, in my opinion, they are the most important elements that generate meaning and significance in the artist's work, and they exemplify the greatest difference between Peirce's and Krauss' index and Gormley's. They are also common topics within contemporary art discourse, especially when attempting to answer the overarching question: what is contemporary about contemporary art?<sup>20</sup>

Chapter II will consider the index through generalization in association with Gormley's creative process and subject matter. This chapter will demonstrate disparities between Peirce's and Krauss' criteria that an index has a single referent and the artist's use of multiple referents. It will analyze the manner in which the artist alters his body molds to deemphasize gender, thereby creating a subject that is both subjective to the artist and universally objective. The multiplicity of subject matter will be used to argue that Gormley's index does not take a single specific object as its referent, but uses a typified object that has a ubiquitous quality. From this, consideration will be given to the subject matter of the artist's sculpture. In particular, the relationship between the interior space of the artist's body and the viewer's own subjective experience of it, as an index of collective experience, will exemplify the dualistic character of the sign to generate meaning.

In particular, this chapter will affirm that in contemporary art, the index does not have to be created from an objective tangible cause and can have multiple referents. Sculptures that will be considered in this chapter will primarily include Gormley's early body case works like *Sleeping Place* (1973), a loose index made from the plaster cast of a

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<sup>20</sup> See Terry Smith, *What is Contemporary Art* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009). See also Pamela M. Lee, *Forgetting the Art World* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2012).

friend's body in order to represent scenes of people sleeping in public places in India, *Land, Sea and Air I* (1977-79), an indexical tripartite sculpture of a beach stone wrapped in lead, and *Mould* (1981), the first lead sculpture made from a plaster cast of the artist's body.

Chapter III will focus on globalization within Gormley's work. Particular attention will be given to Krauss' theory of site specificity as qualitative of the index. This section will primarily argue that the contemporary index does not require singular site specificity as proposed by Krauss; instead, it has a character of dislocation in a globalized context because it can have numerous specific sites. Gormley's practice of making works in a variety of locations worldwide and using volunteers from such places will be included in this discussion of globalization. This chapter will use the 1989-2003 five-part series *Field* for support. This series was comprised of volunteers hand-molding terracotta figurines to create a multipart installation that could be remade and installed in a multitude of locations worldwide.

Chapter IV will discuss the form of Gormley's sculpture in relationship to the subject matter it attempts to index. This chapter will deconstruct the relationship between Gormley's work and a causal index in order to argue that an index can be a sign for a referent of experience. In particular, this chapter will consider his later works such as the series *Firmament* (2008-2010), which is the visualization of mathematical formulas relating to physics produced through digital and computer programming processes.

Considering Gormley's sculpture through the lens of a contemporary index is necessary because without it, the artist creates a false projection of what an index is and its application to today's art. Though this thesis is not a repudiation of the indexical

quality of Gormley's sculpture, it is a critique of the artist's misuse and neglect of explicitly defining the index. From this critique, the argument made in this thesis will construct a clear basis from which to consider the significance of Gormley's sculpture through a contemporized index. In a broader context, it will propose an expansion and contemporization of the index in comparison to Peirce and Krauss, which are necessary to reexamine recent trends in art that question human experience in a globalized society. Moreover this thesis will offer an answer to the question and challenge proposed by Gormley to the contemporary art world:

[...] the history of art [is a] succession of potential schema by which we are invited to make a picture of the world. As we evolve the visual language we continually revise the previous schema in order to find an illusion that works more and more effectively [...] The task of art now is to strip us of illusion [...] How do we stop art from descending into formlessness/shapelessness? How do we find a challenge worthy of the artist's endeavor?<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Antony Gormley, "E.H. Gombrich in Conversation with Antony Gormley," by E.H. Gombrich, in *Antony Gormley* with contributions from John Hutchinson, E.H. Gombrich, Lela B. Njatin, W.J.T. Mitchell, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Phaidon, 2000), 23.

## CHAPTER II

### GENERALIZING THE INDEX

Antony Gormley began to create significant works of sculpture as early as 1973 prior to his formal art education in London at the Central School of Art (1974-1975) and Goldsmiths College (1975-1977). He used a variety of processes, iconography, and forms during these early years of his education. Some of these works focused on the relationship between the material of an object and the process used to create it, like the ring-shaped sculpture *First Hole* from 1977 (Fig. 4), which uses the traditional process of carving marble to form the sculpture's shape. In others, Gormley let the material inform the process used to create the sculpture; *Glass Pool* from 1978 (Fig. 5) presents broken shards of glass in a circle. The process of breaking to create the form of *Glass Pool* relies on the inherent quality of glass' property of fragility. Concurrently, the artist began to explore the properties of lead, creating his first work from the material in *Land, Sea and Air I* (1977-9), which was comprised of three metal stones that were shaped by beating lead roofing sheets around a stone and soldering them together. Later in 1981, the artist used his own body as the basis to create sculpture for the first time. *Bed* (1980-1) (Fig. 6) was made from bread stacked into the form of two beds. From these stacks, the artist ate away his volume in bread from each bed, leaving behind two voids in the shape of his body.

It wasn't until after his participation in the 1981 survey exhibition, *British Sculpture in the Twentieth Century* that the artist combined the material of lead and the subject of the body. After seeing the human energy compressed in Jacop Epstein's sculpture *Elemental* from 1932 (Fig. 7), which was also included in the 1981 exhibition,

Gormley began to explore “the body as a carrier of expression and meaning.”<sup>22</sup> To do this, he used lead as his main material in a process of molding and casting to create forms that were indexical of his body. The idea of using the artist’s body as a material to create an index for experience would permeate Gormley’s entire oeuvre from this point onward. He continues to develop an expanded index that is significantly different than previous artists working from like concepts because he no longer utilizes the index as a sign for a single referent that appropriates the physical qualities of such a referent. Instead, Gormley’s index has become generalized in form and as a result of this, takes multiple referents.

### **Creating the Typified Index**

*I try to use the idea of an actual impression of a moment of being as the basis of my work.*<sup>23</sup>

Antony Gormley (2009)

Antony Gormley began his exploration of body casting in the early 1970s, and continued to use this process as his most common technique for creating body works until 1997, when he introduced mathematical and engineering processes into his practice. *Sleeping Place* (1973) (Fig. 8) is his earliest work that suggests a loose notion of the index through a type of casting. This work, which is not extant but exists in the form of a photograph, was created by molding linen wet with plaster over the body of a friend who took a recumbent fetal position. After hardening, the linen and plaster form functions as a

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<sup>22</sup> Caiger-Smith, *Antony Gormley*, 30.

<sup>23</sup> “Antony Gormley interviewed by Alan Macfarlane 29<sup>th</sup>, April 2009,” [http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/DO/filmshow/gormley\\_fast.htm](http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/DO/filmshow/gormley_fast.htm).

record of the space once occupied by a body. Possibly inspired by Joseph Beuys's works that utilized a similar enveloping process and process of bodily experience,<sup>24</sup> the form of *Sleeping Place* is a causal index according to Peirce's definition because the physical body of the artist's friend acts directly on the material of the sculpture to inform its shape.

However, the meaning of this early work as a sign is not informed by only this index, but rather chiefly by Gormley's experience while traveling in India from 1971-1973. This work was intentionally created to be iconic, referring to the commonplace scene of figures sleeping in public places covered by *dhotis* — traditionally a rectangular piece of cloth worn on the lower half of the body by men in India.<sup>25</sup> *Sleeping Place* acts as a representation of such scenes, rather than as a record of them, which is demonstrated through Gormley's use of a friend who assumed the position of one who slept in public spaces but in actuality was not such a person himself. There is not a space and time relationship between the referent and the subject of the sign, thus the work is an icon that uses an index for its form. Though it is not his first use of a true index, Gormley has said of this sculpture and another iconic linen-plaster work from the same year, *Figure*, "they carry in seed everything that has happened since."<sup>26</sup>

In particular these works carry in 'seed' the idea of wrapping the body in scrim to create a mold from which a hermetically sealed cast could be made. However, prior to

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<sup>24</sup> The work I have in mind is the performance piece by Beuys, *I Like American and America Likes Me* from 1974. The performance relied on the bodily experience of the artist, enveloped in felt, in relationship to the coyote, with which he shared the gallery space. Though not ever explicitly noted by Gormley as a source of inspiration, he has been an admirer of Beuys' from since 1974, when he saw the artist give a lecture in London. See "Transcript of audio tracks relation to Beuys' sculpture *Lightning with Stag in its Glare*," accessed May 18, 2014, <http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/19211>.

<sup>25</sup> Caiger-Smith, *Antony Gormley*, 9.

<sup>26</sup> *Antony Gormley: Making Space*, film, directed by Beeban Kidron (C4, Cross Street Films, 2007), quoted in Martin Caiger-Smith, *Antony Gormley*, (Millbank, London: Tate Publishing, 2010), 9.

making body casts from scrim molds, Gormley experimented in the late 1970s with creating lead forms from ordinary objects as exemplified by his 1977-1979 work *Land, Sea and Air I* (Fig. 9), a tripartite sculpture of an Irish beach stone wrapped in lead sheets. The beach stone was used as a base over which the artist beat metal sections. The sections were then removed from the stone and soldered together to create the three separate objects within the work. One of the lead forms was filled with water, another air, and the third contained the original stone within it. This work was formative for Gormley's later sculptural processes because it fostered the idea of "taking the 'indexical imprint' of an object from the object itself."<sup>27</sup>

Like *Sleeping Place*, the stone as a referent of the index is not the aspect that gives meaning to this work; rather, it only produces the shape of the sculpture. *Land, Sea and Air I* is a response to the nuclear threats of the Cold War and the ideological fear that humans may cause their own extinction. Rather than reproduce iconography associated with war, the stone vessels act as potential seeds for the future after the self-destruction of the human race. They carry in them the three phases of matter necessary for the potential regeneration of life after the effects of war.<sup>28</sup> Though this work is not indexical in terms of using the sign's referent to generate meaning, the use of the three phases and a title that is a labeling index suggests that Gormley was thinking early on about the idea of an indexical subject matter.

In 1981, Gormley made his first sculpture formed by casting in lead the mold of the human body, entitled *Mould* (Fig. 1). As aforementioned, this was the first work by

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<sup>27</sup> Caiger-Smith, *Antony Gormley*, 14.

<sup>28</sup> "Three Part Object Works, 1979-1991," *Antony Gormley*, accessed May 4, 2013, <http://www.antonygormley.com/sculpture/item-view/id/223>.

the artist that combined both the process and the subject matter that would dominate his oeuvre until 1997, at which point he began to expand his working processes and techniques while still working with the same subject matter. *Mould*, like Gormley's subsequent body casts, was made from a scrim-and-plaster mold of the artist's figure. In order to create the mold, the artist worked from a preconceived, possibly pre-drafted, notion of the final pose for the lead sculpture and adopted that position in the nude. Then his wife, and in later works assistants, wrapped him in cellophane to protect the skin before enveloping him in scrim, which is a light open-weave cloth made from jute that had been soaked in plaster, similar to the process and material used to make *Sleeping Place*. The artist's body was wrapped in sections because the plaster dries quickly, usually starting with the feet, then the torso, the legs, and lastly the head. The process of wrapping and drying lasts for about an hour to 90 minutes until his entire body has been mummified, after which the mold was cut from Gormley's body and reassembled. At this point he makes any desired alterations to the mold, such as posture changes or recasting certain sections. After the final form has been created, the mold is covered in a thin layer of fiberglass to strengthen it. Finally, sections of roofing lead are beaten over the mold until they contour to it, and then they are welded together to create a hollow lead body case.<sup>29</sup>

Gormley merely suggests works made by this process, like *Mould* are indexical because they are imprints, but they are more accurately double causal indices.<sup>30</sup> They are an index of a mold that is an index of the artist's body. Even in these formative years of

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<sup>29</sup> Lewis Biggs, "Learning to See: An Introduction," in *Antony Gormley*, ed. Judith Nesbitt (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1993), 19-20.

<sup>30</sup> Double causal index is my terminology.

the artist's working process the idea of the index is complicated. The final form presented to the viewer is not actually the index; rather, the external form is a case that surrounds the imprint of the body, which is subjective to the artist's decisions about the manner in which he beats the metal around the mold. The actual index is on the interior of these forms, absent from the viewer's sight. Comparatively, *Still Running* from 1990-1993 (Fig. 10) is a cast-iron sculpture that has a bulbous and unrecognizable external form, but internally has an index of the artist's body like *Mould*. In these early conceptions, Gormley is presenting a new manner through which to view the index by not actually seeing it at all. While internally these works have an index, externally their subject matter appears indexed, but not their form. These works show Gormley playing conceptually with presence and absence in relationship to subject matter, form and the work as an indexical sign.

In the late 1980s, Gormley became more conscious of his and his assistants' regular exposure to lead's toxicity. He slowly introduced cast iron as an alternate material from which he made solid body-forms, hollow body-cases, and later in the 2000s, hollow body-forms.<sup>31</sup> By 1996, Gormley had completely abandoned lead as the primary material for his sculpture. The process he used to create cast-iron forms is similar to his early lead mold body-cases in that they all originate from a scrim-and-plaster mold of the artist's body. However, unlike the early lead sculptures that were created by beating metal sheets onto the mold and then soldering them together, the cast-iron cases use a form of sand casting. In some of the early works the cast-iron sculptures would be solid body-forms, most likely made by filling the scrim-and-plaster mold with molten metal. Later,

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<sup>31</sup> Caiger-Smith, *Antony Gormley*, 35.

Gormley developed a method that allowed him to cast the exterior of the scrim-and-plaster mold, thereby creating hollow body-cases. Though the material of the sculptural form changed, the final forms were still similar to the early lead works, like *Offering* (1992) (Fig. 11). Unlike the lead works that were created from the subjective beating of the artist, the cast iron sculptures are completely informed by the properties of the molten metal. In these works the index is wholly supported by form and subject matter. However, the problem of presenting a form that internalizes the index still applies to these works.

Gormley's cast works are most often made from molds of his body, but the final form of his sculptures is generalized rather than individualized. Before beating or casting the end form in metal, the artist adds layers, or as he says 'skins,' of scrim and plaster to the mold in order to create a body that deemphasizes the specific gender of Gormley's body mold but does not fully neutralize it. The artist does not completely deny gender specificity because he acknowledges that the sculptures' forms are highly personal and indexical of his own. For this reason, the genitalia of his sculptures still reference the artist's sex by loosely molding the form of the penis and testes. This subtle generalization of form is the artist's attempt to balance his subjective experience of being molded as a male body with an objective form that allows all viewers, regardless of sex, to embody the space of the sculpture as their own.<sup>32</sup> When asked by an interviewer if the body cast always had to be from his own body, Gormley answered:

I want to confront existence. It is obviously going to mean more if I use my own body. The optical and the conceptual have dominated in the art of the twentieth century and I turn to the body in an attempt to find a language that will transcend the limitation of race, creed and language, but which will still be about the

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<sup>32</sup> Gormley, "E.H. Gombrich in Conversation with Antony Gormley," 19-23.

rootedness of identity. It isn't just an idea about finding an idiom that could be universal, in a way that Modernism failed to do, it is an invitation to recognize a place and a base of consciousness [...] I want the body to be a sensing mechanism, so your response to the work does not have to be pre-informed and does not necessarily encourage discourse.<sup>33</sup>

The use of the artist's own body is important to create a form that is the direct experience of existence, not a representation of such a form. Representing the body through icons and symbols requires the viewer to have pre-informed ideas about how to read the signification of such signs. Gormley does not want to do this. He does not want to make sculpture that carries with it already existent conventions. In order to counteract the notion of convention, the artist needed to subvert gender because so many ideas and theories already exist about it. Gormley is not interested in adding to a discourse about gender, but rather is looking for a way to make sculpture that both recognizes the trace of the artist, and allows viewers of any gender to embody them. The base of Gormley's work is not about whether it is male or female, but rather that it is a site for the conscious viewer to investigate the self, whatever that may mean to them.

The fusion of an individualistic imprint and a generalization of form in Gormley's sculptures problematizes the notion of Peirce's index. Peirce's separation of the index from the other types of signs relies on the singularity of their referents, like the unique relationship between Gormley's body and the molds made from it. In a strictly Peircean sense of the index, the typified form created from the mold, which is altered in order to be typified, would be better classified as an icon because the previously singular referent becomes universalized through its typification. Even though Gormley has stated his adherence to the parameters of Peirce's sign theory, it becomes apparent in his

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<sup>33</sup> Antony Gormley, "Antony Gormley: Interview with Declan McGonagle," by Declan McGonagle, in *Antony Gormley*, ed. Judith Nesbitt (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1993), 49.

generalization of form that the artist is working from a more contemporary understanding and application of the index.

Returning to the artist's working process, he begins with a mold of his body that he alters and then casts. The final form is an imprint of the original mold, which technically is an index that aligns with Peirce's definition. The extension of the index occurs when one considers that the final form of Gormley's sculptures is not in fact a cast of his body, but a cast of an altered mold made from his body. No longer is the relationship between index and referent a single step. Instead it is a two-step process that complicates the viewer's understanding of the index-object relationship. Before this relationship can be considered in association with the idea of a contemporary index, it must be asked, exactly what is Gormley imprinting and why?

### **Subject of the Index**

*I have a subject, which is life...*<sup>34</sup>  
Antony Gormley (2000)

Every statement Gormley gives about his subject matter is worded differently, but they all take human experience as a foundation. In an interview in 1984 the artist stated, "I am now trying to deal with what it feels like to be a human being. To make an image that in some way comes close to my states of mind."<sup>35</sup> In a 1993 interview with art historian and curator Declan McGonagle, Gormley expressed his interest in the body as space; "I am [much more] interested in the space that the body is. What is the space that

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<sup>34</sup> Gormley, "E.H. Gombrich in Conversation with Antony Gormley," 10.

<sup>35</sup> "Antony Gormley Talking to Paul Kopecek," *Antony Gormley*, accessed May 25, 2014, <http://www.antonygormley.com/resources/interview-item/id/127>.

you inhabit when you close your eyes?”<sup>36</sup> In 2002, the artist said of his oeuvre and subject matter, “My project is more to do with enquiring into being - what does it mean to be in a human body?”<sup>37</sup> And again in 2008 the artist stated, “What I try to give form to is the subjective experience of living behind our faces.”<sup>38</sup>

These quotes from the artist all suggest that his sculptures are informed by and contribute to the trans-historical and trans-contextual dialog of the body and its inherent conditions. He uses the body as material to explore an issue that has been continuously asked throughout history and is central to a variety of disciplines: what are the implications of life? Rather than ask the purpose of life, a question often associated with religious contexts, Gormley interrogates the meaning of being, the relationship between being, experience, and the body, and how one embodies these factors in art. His approach is empirically philosophical rather than religiously philosophical. Though the artist does not completely deny a religious understanding of art – he was in fact raised a devout Catholic and later studied Buddhism in India – this is not the purpose of his work. Rather, he explores the body as “a place; a site of transformation, and an axis of physical and spatial experience.”<sup>39</sup> In order to do this he does not view the body as an object, but rather a vessel that contains feeling and experience.

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<sup>36</sup> Gormley, “Antony Gormley: Interview with Declan McGonagle,” 45.

<sup>37</sup> Antony Gormley, “Silence and Stillness: Antony Gormley Interview by Enrique Juncosa, 2002,” *Antony Gormley*, accessed May 4, 2014, <http://www.antonygormley.com/resources/interview-item/id/137>.

<sup>38</sup> Antony Gormley, “Interview with Pierre Tillet,” by Pierre Tillet, in *Antony Gormley: Between You and Me*, eds. Alessandra Bellavita, Jill Silverman van Coenegrachts, Lisa Maddigan, and Isabel de Vasconcellos (Paris: Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, 2008), 49.

<sup>39</sup> “Antony Gormley Talking to Paul Kopecek,” <http://www.antonygormley.com/resources/interview-item/id/127>.

The subject that Gormley uses for his sculptures is almost intangible, almost incorporeal. The space he speaks of exists within everyone, and yet it is oddly unfamiliar. Perhaps the reason for this is because the place of our consciousness is not like any other place; it does not have landmarks or definitive factors like a physical site. Instead, one can only relate to this place through experience, through feeling. While one's place of the body is highly individual and subjective, the artist proposes that his work is also reflexive for the viewer because every human being universally has such a place. His work allows the viewer to contemplate the experience of the artist's body while he was making the sculpture, and yet the subject of the work also allows the viewer to consider his or her own present individual experience of existence in relationship to his sculpture. The artist proposes the notion, "[My sculpture is] a meeting of the expressiveness of me, the artist, and the expressiveness of you, the viewer. And for me the charge comes from that confrontation. It can be a confrontation between the movement of the viewer and the stillness of the object, which in some way is an irreconcilable difference, but also an invitation for the viewer to sense his own body through this moment of stillness."<sup>40</sup> He is able to make his subject both personal and collective because he uses a form that has been generalized in such a way that embodies the potential of it to be anyone's body.

As a sculptor, Gormley is taking on an arduous challenge: he is attempting to create a form for feeling, but a form that is not a metaphor, mimesis, or symbol for feeling. Instead, he attempts to materialize with the index the experience of embodying an internal space. When Peirce developed his triadic theory of signs, he was basing it on tangible things- nouns and spoken words accepted in language, diagrams, gestures,

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<sup>40</sup> Gormley, "E.H. Gombrich in Conversation with Antony Gormley," 12.

common objects, etc. His theory does not account for subjective feeling or experience in the way that Gormley is using it. Applying Peirce's definition of the index – a sign created as the result of a single referent's physical cause – to Gormley's sculpture would be inappropriate. Not only is Peirce's theory of signs historically removed from the artist's use of it, it is also contextually dislocated. Utilizing a theory of signs based on language develops hypotheses and associations that are forced and baseless. Instead, while the basic idea of Peirce's index may be the notion that Gormley uses as his definition, it is more appropriate to look at the index in an expanded sense. How does the idea of the index transform when applied to the visual arts to record a subject matter that is characterized by multiplicity and that has no particular trace?

Krauss proposed a theory to counteract this exact problem, which expanded the idea about signs for objects that don't have traces. Her thoughts were in response to dance and movement, but they are applicable to Gormley's sculpture as well. She stated, "Once movement is understood as something the body does not produce and is, instead, a circumstance that is registered on it (or, invisibly, within it), there is a fundamental alteration in the nature of the sign. Movement ceases to function symbolically, and takes on the character of an index."<sup>41</sup> It is through this argument that it can be contended that Gormley's sculptures, with their universalized form and pluralized referents, contemporize the index in a manner similar to the way movement does.

Krauss contested that once one abandons the idea that movement is an end product of one's will or control, and instead is a trace of such will or control; movement becomes an index for the circumstances that produced it rather than a symbol of them. In

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<sup>41</sup> Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America Part 2," *October* 4 (1977): 59.

relation to Gormley's sculptures that involve any form of molding to create the work, such as *Moment* from 1985 (Fig. 12), the performance of his inaction is not to be considered a symbol of stillness but an index of a particular moment of the body in a state of inertia between past and future movement. Typifying the gender of the mold's subject does not in fact alter any record of this moment or make it symbolic. Instead, in the same manner that Krauss argued movement to be an index, the generalization is not a product of the mold but rather a circumstance registered on it. The layers of scrim and plaster added to the mold are a continuation of the index. In *Moment*, the initial mold of the artist's singular body is used to index his experience in a particular place and moment in time. The adding of scrim and plaster to the mold to deemphasize genitalia creates a second index in the final form of the sculpture. While the mold still functions as an index of the artist, it now takes on the character of becoming a referent itself for the sculpture's final form. The generalization of form does not function as a sign because of this; rather, the form is itself a referent. When the mold is taken and cast, or has lead beat over it, the final form is therefore a double index. It is the index of the artist's body and an index of the generalized mold; the form is a doubled self. It is the indexical self of the artist, and because in final form it has the potential to be anyone, it acts as an unrealized index of all potential viewers who choose to embody the sculpture through their consciousness.

To further complicate this idea of the double index is this use of a reversed index. Traditionally in a Peircean and Kraussian sense the index is a sign for a referent that has already existed. This idea is reversed in Gormley's sculpture because he makes an index for future referents. His sculpture acts as an index for a viewer yet to come; it isn't until the viewer embodies the sculpture that the work is an index of them. His sculpture

contemporizes contentions that the index's referent exists in the past, and creates an index for referents that have yet to be.

The two-part index advances Peirce's theories about the sign and expands the theories of Krauss. The index is no longer restricted to functioning in a unilateral manner for past referents. One index can have multiple referents and thus pluralized subject matter. In contemporary art, the use of a generalized index allows art to be embodied by the global population, rather than a specific group of people. Art is no longer limited by the conventions determined by local institutions of language, politics, religion, gender, etc. Instead, the index allows artists to create artworks with a depth of meaning that is not pre-informed but can be subjectively prescribed by the potential viewer. The index is used not to universalize meaning, but rather permits signification derived from subjective bodily experience.

CHAPTER III  
GLOBALIZING THE INDEX

In 1989 Gormley began the five part series *Field*, which challenges Peirce's and Krauss' notion of an index and offers revised parameters for the term that are not based on particularities and exactitude, but on a transformation of the index's referents. Neither Peirce nor Krauss considered the index in a global context, because both regarded the sign as the physical cause of a singular referent with which the index shared a temporal and spatial moment. As proven in the previous chapter, this idea of singularity needs to be updated within a contemporized index to include multiple referents in order to account for globalization and to be considered on a global scale.

Over fourteen years Gormley, with the help of volunteers, created five separate installations of thousands of hand-sized terracotta figurines. Each series of the project was made in a different part of the world: Mexico, Brazil, Sweden, England and China. The lofty goal of this series is to question humanity's responsibility for a collective future; however, it also introduces what I am calling 'the globalized index' through its use of form and site specificity.<sup>42</sup> Rather than create distinguishable installations for each facet of this project, all of the figurines produced in each country were generalized in form in order to evoke a collective global identity regardless of the location where they were created or installed. With regards to site specificity, *Field* denies the traditional idea upheld by Krauss that indexical artworks are 'empty shifters,'<sup>43</sup> which generate meaning only when they maintain a physical relationship with a singular specific site that

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<sup>42</sup> "Field," *Antony Gormley*, accessed May 11, 2014, <http://www.antonygormley.com/sculpture/item-view/id/245#p0>.

<sup>43</sup> Please see footnote 13 to review Krauss' definition of this term.

functions as the index's referent.<sup>44</sup> Rather, *Field* pluralizes the notion of site specificity because the series can transform any locale of creation or installation into a viable referent for the site that it then indexes.

### *Field*

The *Field* series was Gormley's largest work with the greatest global impact. This project, which was created from 1989-2003, marked a cardinal divergence in the artist's oeuvre. Prior to this project, Gormley had worked in a self-conscious state of isolation, making sculpture that often used a limited number of lead casts in installation.<sup>45</sup> He worked primarily in his home country, using molds and casts of his body to index the subjectivity of his existence and experience in his body. Even though the artist generalized his sculptural form to create a life-size universal body, the strong personal nature of Gormley's sculptures was undeniable. Gormley subverted these personal qualities dominant in his cast sculpture in *Field* by producing, in different worldwide locations, five separate installations of large quantities of hand-sized figurines made from clay and earth indigenous to each area of creation. In order to make such prodigious installations the artist relied on volunteers, who worked as a collective, to form the figurines.

The first experimental sculptures which evidence Gormley beginning to develop the concept for *Field* were a departure from his previous work. *Man Asleep* (Fig. 13) combined a cast lead form posed recumbent on his side with small terracotta figurines

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<sup>44</sup> For further explanation see Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America Part 2," 63-65.

<sup>45</sup> Antony Gormley, "Interview: Eugene Tan in conversation with Antony Gormley," by Eugene Tan, in *Antony Gormley: Asian Field* (Singapore: Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, 2006), 50.

that surround him in various standing and walking positions. This work was inspired by a low relief scene of Eve rising out of Adam's ribs on the façade of the Orvieto Cathedral in Italy (Fig. 14). Gormley interpreted this scene as "man's unconsciousness and feeling of a lack of responsibility for his own destiny. This is the mythical moment when duality and the possibility of evil comes into the world, and Adam is asleep."<sup>46</sup> Disinterested in making a scene representing such a narrative or recreating the original relief on the Orvieto Cathedral, Gormley created *Man Asleep* in order to translate the theological themes of creation, temptation, evil and sin into a contemporary context. The result was a sleeping body case unaware of the silent, and yet menacing, figures behind him, "as if a dream of history is passing behind an unconscious body."<sup>47</sup>

The progression from *Man Asleep* to *Field* relies on the idea of creating a work that woke up 'Adam,' the body case figure in *Man Asleep*. Rather than continue to combine lead cases and terracotta figurines, Gormley removed the lead figure, thereby allowing the viewer to take the place of Adam, or the one who needed to be woken up and made aware of 'time's gaze.'<sup>48</sup> Prior to creating the expansive space-invading installations composed of thousands of terracotta figurines, Gormley experimented with a few eponymous smaller ones. The first, which was later titled *Field II*, was installed at the Salvatore Ala Gallery in New York in 1989 (Fig. 15). It was comprised of approximately 150 figurines that Gormley made from clay coated in black slip and

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<sup>46</sup> "Terracotta and Lead Works, 1983-1988," *Antony Gormley*, accessed April 30, 2014, <http://www.antonygormley.com/sculpture/item-view/id/228>.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

arranged in “[radiating] straight lines to form a circle.”<sup>49</sup> The figurines were similar in shape and size to those in *Man Asleep*, but were unlike their predecessors because they lacked separation between the legs. Instead, their legs were conjoined to create a columnar base for the rest of the body. The figures face inward toward the circle’s center, preventing the viewer from ever penetrating the circle’s circumference. Instead, the viewer can only circumambulate around the installation in order to see all of the figurines. Less metaphorical than *Man Asleep*, these indistinguishable figurines began to embody the idea of a human population.<sup>50</sup> Though Gormley was not yet working with the notion of site specificity and the index, this work does exhibit the early use of an indexical form in the *Field* series, one made by molding the clay by hand to create objects that are evidential imprints of the space and shape between the artist’s hands and registrations of touch.<sup>51</sup> Like the body cast figures, these works record a particular spatial and temporal existence and personal experience of the artist.

Less than a year later Gormley again made handmade clay figurines with columnar bases for the Australian work *Field for the Art Gallery of New South Wales* (Fig. 16). This second experiment with a *Field* implemented new strategies for approaching the project that would be used in the subsequent recreations. Though the figurines were similar in shape and size, they were no longer coated with black slip. Instead, they were raw terracotta forms that were fired in a kiln without any added coloration. For the first time, Gormley invited volunteers to help him create the 1,100

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<sup>49</sup> Caiger-Smith, *Antony Gormley*, 49.

<sup>50</sup> “Terracotta and Lead Works,” <http://www.antonygormley.com/sculpture/item-view/id/228a>.

<sup>51</sup> Gormley, “Interview: Eugene Tan,” 48.

figurines for this installation. Though the artist had used assistants when creating his body cases, this was a significant shift in his process, and would be repeated in all subsequent series of *Field*. Rather than having an authoritative role in the final form of the sculptures, Gormley prescribed loose guidelines for the student volunteers, who were then able to work autonomously from them to decide the final shape of the figurines. The three parameters for making the figures were simple: they needed to be hand-sized, freestanding figures with eyes. Though the students were the creators of the figurines' forms, in this early instance Gormley still played a significant role; he was the one who poked the eyes into all the figurines, thus performing the role as giver of consciousness. Gormley has yet to abandon the traditional notion of the artist as the main creator by performing the most symbolic task of creating the figurines, but this will eventually subside in later reproductions of the series.

Once made and installed, the figurines were arranged in concentric semicircles, facing inward as in *Field II*, but this time leaving a path open for the viewer to enter the circle's center. Once inside, the viewer becomes the object of the figurines' gaze, and is comparatively alienated in size and dislocated. This was the earliest success the artist had with "[putting] the viewer in the position of the sleeping body case, and [waking] him or her up and not [allowing] the work to be some kind of tableau – not a picture about history passing us by as a memory – but to make it present – make it now – make the present."<sup>52</sup> The viewer was no longer a passive audience attempting to create a narrative about the figures. Instead, the work required the presence of the viewer to become a second subject matter. The figurines were the objects of the viewer, but the viewer was in

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<sup>52</sup> Gormley, "Interview: Eugene Tan," 48-49.

turn the object of the figurines. By positioning the viewer as the object of the figurine's gaze, they acutely became aware of the present and their position in such a state.

The use of volunteer-made figurines that isolated the viewer in the manner of their presentation culminated in the first large-scale creation of *Field* in Mexico, later titled *Field III*, or alternatively *American Field*<sup>53</sup> (Fig. 17-18). Begun in December 1990, Gormley worked over a three-week period with approximately 60 extended members of the Texca family in the Parish of San Matias, Cholula, Mexico. The family, brick-makers chosen for their inherent ability to “work with clay in a natural way,”<sup>54</sup> quickly settled into forming about 35,000 hand-built figurines made from clay indigenous to the southwest of San Matías, Mexico. Gormley's parameters that guided the Australian students a year before still applied; however, they were modified to restrict the shape of the figures and the placement of the eyes. The tendency among the volunteers was to make the heads of the figurines larger than the bodies. In order to counteract this, the artist insisted that the size of the body and the head of each figure had to be proportional to that of the human body.<sup>55</sup> Secondly, Gormley abandoned his role of poking all the eyes in the figures, as he soon realized such a task would be nearly impossible because of the quantity of figurines. Instead, he allowed each maker to perform this task, simply requiring the eyes to be deep and close together. The rest of the series also shows the

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<sup>53</sup> The title *American Field* was assigned to this series after subsequent series in this project had been completed. All of the series' titles of *Field* indicate where they were made, where they were installed, or both. It is my assumption that *American Field* was chosen to represent that it was made in Mexico and exhibited in the United States, Mexico and Canada. *American Field* as a title encompasses the series' relationship to all three countries, using the term 'America' not in the conventional sense as an appellation for the United States of America, but rather as a term to refer to the entirety of North America.

<sup>54</sup> Antony Gormley, “Making *Field*,” in *Field* (Montreal: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1993), 21.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

artist's discontinuation of the traditional idea of the artist as sole author, allowing the collective volunteers to wholly be the works' creators in both form and consciousness.<sup>56</sup>

Once the figures were sun-dried in a supine position, they were oil-fired in three kilns for 24 hours. Though the figures were not glazed or dipped in black slip, there was a great degree of color variation which depended on a piece's location in the kiln; those positioned in the kiln's hottest areas were darker than those in cooler areas because of the clay's reductive properties. Upon completion, the work was first exhibited in the Salvatore Ala Gallery in 1991, the same exhibition location as *Field II*. Unlike *Field II*, which arranged the figures in a circle, *American Field* was installed so that the 35,000 figurines, facing outward toward a single available viewpoint, wholly occupied the space of the gallery room and restricted the viewer from entering into or sharing their space (Fig. 18). Physically isolated from the work, the viewer's role transitioned from being the observer to becoming the observed of the armless, legless figurines. When considered individually, the figurines are small and unthreatening, but when aligned together and unified into a single mass of inanimate static forms and eyes, their ability to disarm the viewer as a dominant collective was astonishing. Even when viewing photographic reproductions, which are removed from the work by space and time, the observer can still feel the powerful sense of alienation affected by such a gaze.

After its installation in the Salvatore Gallery, *American Field* then toured for two years from 1991-1993. It was exhibited in The Old City Jail in Charleston, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, the Centro Cultural Arte Contemporáneo in Mexico City, the

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<sup>56</sup> Gormley has said of this idea of globalizing and democratizing the role of creator, "*Field* puts in the place of the original makers; we are the makers of the future." Antony Gormley, "Interview between Antony Gormley and Sui Jianguo for *Asian Field*, January 2003," by Sui Jianguo, in *Asian Field*, ed. Richard Riley (London: The British Council, 2003), 214.

Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.<sup>57</sup>

While *American Field* was being exhibited, *Amazonian Field* was being created for the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. As part of this event held to discuss and raise awareness about environmental issues, the Summit's organizers invited numerous contemporary artists from Brazil and around the world to submit works that were in dialog with its theme. Gormley's work was made from local clay in the Amazonian rain forest with the help of 100 volunteers from Porto Velho, Rondônia, in the west of Brazil. This work had the same premise and guidelines for creation as its predecessor; however, it was slightly smaller than *American Field*, with 24,000 figurines. Upon completion, the work was then installed in the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro in the same manner as *American Field*, again denying the viewer access to the space. The work returned to the country in 2012 when it was exhibited in São Paulo; later, it was shown again in Rio de Janeiro and Brasília.

As the 1992 exhibition of *Amazonian Field* was concluding, work on *European Field* (Fig. 19) was commencing. This production was funded by the Malmö Konsthall, an exhibition hall for contemporary art in Malmö, Sweden, as part of a solo exhibition for the artist. *European Field* was made by Swedish volunteers in Malmö and comprised of

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<sup>57</sup> All of the *Field* productions have been exhibited in a variety of venues, some of which are associated with institutions of art and others that are traditionally sites not commonly used to display art. In some cases, the exhibition location is determined because of the amount of space required to install all of the figures. At other times, specific sites have been chosen for their historical context. Regardless, Gormley does not value one site location over another, because the work was created in a manner that allowed it to transform and embody a multitude of spaces while still being an index. This notion will be elaborated on in the subsequent section of this chapter, "Globalizing Site Specificity."

40,000 figurines. It again replicated the two previous productions of *Field* in its manner of creation and installation.<sup>58</sup>

As *European Field* was touring, *Field for the British Isles* (Fig. 20) was being made. This project was produced in the town of St. Helens in Merseyside, England, by 100 volunteers of all ages who followed the same guidelines for their *Field*, which by now were well established. Begun in September 1993, it took the volunteers one week to make approximately 35,000 figures that were later fired in a brickmaking kiln in St. Helens. *Field for the British Isles* was sponsored by the Tate Gallery and Istock Brick, a prominent brick manufacturing company in the United Kingdom. Once again, the project was installed in the same manner as *American Field* and *European Field*, with the figures filling the entire exhibition space, denying the viewer entry and allowing only one point of view. *Field for the British Isles* toured for one year around England, in part because of popular demand.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> After its initial installation in the Malmö Konsthall in 1993, it toured throughout Europe until 1996. Exhibition sites included the Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej in Warsaw, Poland, the Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana, Slovenia, the Muzej Suvremene Umjetnosti in Zagreb, Croatia, the Ludwig Muzeum in Budapest, Hungary, the Prague Castle in the Czech Republic, the National Theatre in Bucharest, Romania, Arsenals in Riga, Latvia, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Vilnius, Lithuania, the Art Hall in Tallinn, Estonia, and Magasin 3 in Stockholm, Sweden.

<sup>59</sup> Installation venues for *Field for the British Isles* included the Oriel Mostyn in Gwynedd, Wales, the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh, the Orchard Gallery in Derry, Northern Ireland, the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham, England, and the National Gallery of Wales in Cardiff.

After *Field for the British Isles* and *European Field*, further productions in the *Field* project ceased until 2003, when the artist was commissioned by the British government to recreate the project in China as part of its branding campaign *Think UK*.<sup>60</sup> Begun on January 18, 2003, the approximately 190,000 hand-sized, handmade figurines of *Asian Field* (Fig. 21) were formed over five consecutive days. 350 volunteers of all ages from Xiangshan village, which is located to the northeast of Guangzhou in the Huadu District, worked alongside Gormley to create the figurines from approximately 100 tons of red clay from the Guangdong Province. Later they were fired in a local brickmaker's kiln.

The first exhibition of *Asian Field* opened in March 2003 in Guangzhou. After its installation in Guangzhou, it was also exhibited in Beijing, Shanghai, and Chongqing. The cities chosen for installation were predetermined based on the target cities of the *Think UK* initiative. However, Antony Gormley was allowed to select the specific locales for *Asian Field* within these cities. This resulted in the artist choosing the following locations:

[...] a vast underground car park located in a new development of houses and apartments in the rapidly expanding city of Guangzhou; the main hall of the National Museum of Modern Chinese History on Tiananmen Square in the heart of Beijing; an upper floor in a riverside warehouse providing grain and rice to

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<sup>60</sup> *Think UK* was a 2.7 million dollar exchange initiative that in its essence was implemented to increase the positive recognition of the United Kingdom in China as a high-profile source of innovation that could meet the needs of globalizing China in a variety of areas like politics, economics, technology, the environment, and education. In order to achieve its desired high-profile status and create a strong partnership between the countries, the campaign designed a variety of programs in all disciplines that exemplified the UK's ability to meet China's needs. These included computer games that taught the English language, televised climate change debates involving both British and Chinese experts, televised interviews with CEO's of British companies, "Hometime" a British exhibition of contemporary domestic architecture and design, and Antony Gormley's *Asian Field*. See House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2003: Twelfth Report of Session 2002-03*. HC 859. London: The Stationary Office of Order of the House, 2003.

feed the people of Shanghai; and a cavernous former underground air-raid shelter in central Chongqing.<sup>61</sup>

Many aspects influenced the selection of these specific locations, but the strongest deciding factor was the size of the installation that limited where it could be exhibited. All of the venues required a minimum of 2,000 square meters to display the 190,000 figurines. Accompanying the installation of figurines were individual black-and-white headshots of each volunteer, next to which was placed a photograph of one figurine they had made. Lastly, there was also an area where visitors could write down their comments about the exhibition and pin them to a wall for others to see. Some of these comments included personal interpretations of the installation, others emotional reactions, and still others small sketches, such as pictures of the figurines.

The commonalities between all five productions of *Field*, like material, manner of creation and presentation, and multiple installation sites all support the argument that in this series, the index is effectively globalized. The remainder of this chapter will analyze the globalization of the index through the series' formal qualities and site specificity.

### **Globalizing the Indexical Form**

In an interview with Marjetica Potrc, a Slovenian artist, Gormley suggested that the basic premise of the *Field* series was to make the public aware of “the most important condition of today [...] the globalization of culture.”<sup>62</sup> This usage of globalization is not to be confused with a pluralism of culture or transculturalism, which is the notion of

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<sup>61</sup> “*Asian Field* tour 2003-2004,” Antony Gormley, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.antonygormley.com/show/item-view/id/2276>.

<sup>62</sup> Marjetica Potrc, “Antony Gormley,” in *Utopias*, ed. Richard Noble (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009), 142.

“seeing oneself in the other.”<sup>63</sup> Rather, Gormley uses the term ‘globalization’ to imply the “primitivization of culture,”<sup>64</sup> or the return to the essence of culture in a contemporary context.<sup>65</sup> Through this, he suggests that in contemporary society, culture can no longer be viewed as the division of mankind, that ‘streams’ do not exist to separate humanity. There is no mainstream, or groups outside of the mainstream; instead he metaphorically considers culture to be an ocean, or in reference to the project at hand, a field. In this sense globalization is used as a term akin to the entirety of humanity. Thus, Gormley uses this term to open up a dialogue for the isolated viewer of *Field* about the relationship between the singular self and the pervasive state and future of humanity as a global collective, regardless of differences and geographical boundaries. According to scholar Richard Noble, this notion of globalizing, or the primitivization of culture, is an invitation to reconsider our future – the future of humanity because of “the increasing irrelevance of the old binaries defining western conceptions of the self and its relation to culture:

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<sup>63</sup> Donald Cuccioletta, “Multiculturalism or Transculturalism: Towards a Cosmopolitan Citizenship,” *London Journal of Canadian Studies* 17 (2001/2002): 1, <http://www.londoncanadianstudies.org/Journal/17/17-1.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> Potrc, “Antony Gormley,” 142.

<sup>65</sup> Gormley’s use of the word primitive is problematic because he does not define the term as conventionally understood. He does not use the term in association with ideas of barbarism or simplicity, nor does he use it to imply geographical areas considered to be Third World or underdeveloped. Rather, primitive is used here as a synonym for foundational, to open a discourse about humanity and culture based on our sameness as a single collective. The artist is attempting to develop a dialog about culture that subverts the theories of structural linguistics, and reexamines culture as a condition of being rather than a condition of language. The artist reformulates culture through notions of being and primitivization to decentralize the importance of the origin and place of culture, in order to develop a comparative reconsideration of culture as an inherent aspect of humanity. See Potrc, “Antony Gormley.” See also Arjun Appadurai, “Theory in Anthropology: Center and Periphery,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28 (1968): 356-361.

between self and other, developed and undeveloped, so-called First and Third World ways of thinking.”<sup>66</sup>

In order to utilize this notion of globalization in *Field*, each series of the project was made from natural, indigenous materials. Clay, the stuff of earth, is one of the fundamental materials that unites humanity and functions as a primary energy source that supports our existence. The clay bodies of the figurines act as an index of the earth, because they are vestiges of its physicality and vitality. Though one could argue that the clay used to create the index is particular to the area of production and so is a site specific index, the notion that the material index is instead globalized can be argued because by “...transforming this earth into the image of a mass of humanity, Gormley immediately taps into the literal truth and phenomenological mystery of consciousness arising from the earth itself.”<sup>67</sup> In this sense, the earth is not defined by geographical boundaries that are determined and recognized by men; instead earth is a foundational global substance.

Globalization is also exemplified in the basic shape of the figurines. The figures index the consciousness of being in the most elemental and iconic manner understood worldwide: a body with eyes. The figurines are not representations or metaphors of being, but rather a trace of such. They are the earthen imprints of the physical space between their makers’ hands, but more importantly they are registers of touch produced from a particular corporeal experience in a particular space and time.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Richard Noble, “An Anthropoetics of Space: Antony Gormley’s *Field*, 2003,” in *Asian Field*, ed. Richard Riley (London: The British Council, 2003), 200.

<sup>67</sup> Anthony Bond, “Antony Gormley,” in *Zones of Contact: 2006 Biennale of Sydney*, ed. Charles Merewether (Sydney, Australia: Biennale of Sydney Ltd, 2006), 118.

<sup>68</sup> Gormley, “Interview: Eugene Tan,” 48.

Most important to this idea of globalizing the indexical form is the idea that all of the figurines ever created for the *Field* series are basically tantamount to each other in final form. Though the makers were all working from the same guidelines prescribed by Gormley, when their figures are juxtaposed together there are no identifying variations among each production to confidently indicate where or when the figures were made. Instead, they comprise a unified global collective, a terracotta representation of humanity if you will. Even though they are indices of a particular maker's touch and a particular region of the earth in terms of the clay used, they generate meaning as a globalized index in a manner similar to the generalization of Gormley's body cases – they take as a referent not only the experience of their makers but additionally the not-yet realized experience of their viewers and of humanity as a whole. Though they are made in separate geographical areas of the world, their form is not an index of any particular culture. The figurines of Mexico are not traces of an inherent Mexican quality, nor do the figurines from China embody any sense of Chinese-ness. Their form deconstructs notions of an authentic cultural quality, in order to be globalized index of referents common to all of humanity.

However, critic Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith would disagree with the aforementioned argument concerning the indistinguishable globalized form of *Field*. He suggests that each recreation of *Field* has a distinctive cultural identity, but this analysis is antithetical to Gormley's statement about his work, which supports the globalization of culture. Regardless, Léith suggests that the *American Field* figures are “smoother, more rounded and stable, their ‘necks’ (when they have them) shorter and thicker, their center

of gravity lower...”<sup>69</sup> Of *Field for the British Isles* he states, “[the figurines] are probably the most amorphous and unformed of the three.”<sup>70</sup> He also proposes, “*European Field*, by way of contrast, shows that here the figures seem awkward and misshapen, anxiously gouged lumps of clay...”<sup>71</sup> At the time he wrote this, *Amazonian Field* and *Asian Field* had yet to be created, but it can be assumed that he would have similarly analyzed the disparities between these two recreations and the earlier productions of *Field*.

Léith’s separatist approach denies the globalization of the index in this project and attempts to compartmentalize each occurrence in the series as distinct from the others based on the visual stereotyping of the figures. This approach indirectly suggests that the visual differences in each production can be accounted for because they were made by geographically separate groups of people, thus the figurines’ forms represent culturally imbedded disparities among the groups of makers. It would not be unwarranted to suggest that Mac Giolla Léith’s analysis of form is associated with the notion of cultural distinction, which is contradictory to the aims of the project. Though there may be formal differences in the shapes of the figurines from each series of this project due to their being handmade, the same differences exist among figurines that are part of a single series. The variability among the figurines’ forms should not be considered as a basis for separating the project, but rather as a support for the idea that each figurine helps to develop a global index that registers the individuality existent in humanity.

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<sup>69</sup> Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith, “A Place Where A Thought Might Grow,” in *Antony Gormley: Field for the British Isles* (Llandudno, Wales: Oriol Mostyn, 1994), 42.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

My suggestion of the globalization of form as an index for earth and humanity in *Field* is an ingress into the globalization of the index in relation to site specificity. Before discussing locale in relationship to Gormley's work, however, it is necessary to examine Krauss' argument about the index and site specificity in order to highlight to what degree Gormley globalizes this understanding.

### **Krauss' Site Specific Index**

In "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America Part 2," Krauss developed her argument for the relationship between site specificity and the index. The crux of her reasoning suggested that any work without a specific locale, whether visually or conceptually, must rely on a system of internal logic to generate meaning, thus causing it to be self-referential and not indexical. In order to expand on this idea, Krauss used the paintings of Ellsworth Kelly to antithetically exemplify her ideas about the index.

Ellsworth Kelly's paintings, such as *Dark Gray with White Rectangle II* (1978) (Fig. 22), focus on breaking down the conventional understanding of paintings "as a continuous, bounded, detachable, flat surface"<sup>72</sup> by depicting a separation of color that is both visual and physical, as each color is painted on a separate panel that is then joined to create a whole. The message or significance of this work is based on discontinuity. In particular, it is the paradox of making a painting that is discontinuous with the conventional understanding of painting as a single flat surface. For viewers to garner this meaning from Kelly's painting, it must be read against the viewer's acknowledgement that the logic of painting is predetermined, and correctly so, "as a continuous, bounded,

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<sup>72</sup> Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America Part 2," 63.

detachable, flat surface.”<sup>73</sup> It is only when the viewer accepts this conventional definition of painting that Kelly’s work is able to act as a sign for the arbitrariness of such logic. Thus in order to generate a meaning that exemplifies this paradox of the pictorial code, Kelly relies on the internal logic of painting to create a work that is self-referential and takes “the process of pictorial meaning” for its subject.<sup>74</sup> The work does not rely on the external context of a specific locale to generate meaning; instead, *Dark Gray with White Rectangle II* is autonomous of any context other than painting itself.<sup>75</sup>

A counterpoint to Kelly’s work is the painting by Lucio Pozzi *P.S.1 Paint* (1976) (Fig. 23), which Krauss uses to support her notion of the index and site specificity. In this work, Pozzi painted a canvas that directly engaged with the institutional site where the work was exhibited, P.S.1 a Long Island City public school used as an exhibition site, by copying on the canvas the color changes of the wall below it. Unlike Kelly’s work that relies on an internal referent to generate meaning, Pozzi’s work is informed by an external referent, the wall. The division of color in *P.S.1 Paint* is an index of the wall’s color shift underneath the painting; it is in no way self-referential but is rather a trace of the continuum of colors on the wall below. In this sense, the painting functions as an empty shifter that only has significance when it is in a specific locale, physically juxtaposed with the wall it traces.

This idea of site specificity, or “specific locale” in Krauss’ words, was a determining factor when classifying a work, both two and three-dimensional, as

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 64-5.

<sup>75</sup> See Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in American Part 2,” 63-65.

indexical. However, her argument concerns single works of art installed in particular locations. This notion is globalized in indexical installations such as the *Field* project, because they dislocate the idea of having a single referent by having the ability to be re-created and exhibited in multiple locations across the world while remaining indexical.

### **Globalizing Site Specificity**

Around the publication time of Krauss' article, artists began to reconsider the relationship between an artwork and its location of exhibition. Some, like Daniel Buren, made statements consistent with Krauss' and suggested that artworks which do not acknowledge the effect of an installation site's ideological framework on them relied on "the illusion of self-sufficiency – or idealism."<sup>76</sup> However, even a mere decade after Krauss' article that affirmed the ineffectiveness of reproducing site-oriented art outside of its original context, installations of 1970s site specific art began to be duplicated in multiple locations. Krauss' idea that site-oriented art needs to be directed and informed by its specific environmental context was too limiting to explain this shift beginning in the late 1970s, which continues today.

For this reason, art historian Miwon Kwon expanded Krauss' notion in 2004 to suggest an 'unhinging' of site specificity, which is reflected in the travelling artist who creates, often with the help of others, works that can be refabricated and installed in a multitude of venues.<sup>77</sup> Gormley's *Field* project aligns with Kwon's notion of

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<sup>76</sup> Daniel Buren, "The function of the Museum," in *Theories in Contemporary Art*, ed. Richard Hertz (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1985), 192. See also Miwon Kwon, "Genealogy of Site Specificity," in *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 11-31.

<sup>77</sup> See Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002).

contemporizing the scope of site-oriented art. However, Gormley's work globalizes the idea of site specificity even further by using this earth as *Field's* primary locale. In her argument, Kwon suggested that artists are using a contemporized idea of site specificity to "fulfill institutional/cultural critique projects in situ."<sup>78</sup> As aforementioned, Gormley is not concerned with fulfilling these types of critiques proposed by Kwon, and is attempting instead to use an expanded notion of site-orientation to create a globalized index of humanity that subverts notions of cultural critique.

The globalization that occurs in Gormley's indexical terracotta figurines allows the *Field* project to be created and installed in virtually any location, and appropriate that new locale as its referent. *Field* is the physical result of human beings working as a collective in a specific location to create its form. However, like the generalization of Gormley's body case forms, the true subject of the project must be considered through a contemporized idea of site specificity. Gormley did not conceptualize the project as a representation of different global locales that are individual indices of its makers and their cultures. Instead, the project integrates the notion of the individual working in a particular space and time with the idea of humanity's commonality of purpose.<sup>79</sup>

On one level, the figurines are subjective indices of their makers in a particular geographical location, but in their final manner of presentation they become an objective index of humanity as a whole, suggesting that all its members make up a single collective rather than their being divided into separate groups.<sup>80</sup> Rather than generalizing one

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<sup>78</sup> Kwon, *One Place After Another*, 31.

<sup>79</sup> Gormley, "Interview between Antony Gormley and Sui Jianguo for *Asian Field*, January 2003," 211.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

person's form to reference humanity, *Field* uses a global notion of humanity to create a work that is self-referential. For this reason, the *Field* projects all elementally take a singular referent: earth as a material from which they were made and earth as a site where the figures were made.

The idea of earth as a connecting factor of humanity could be considered romantic because of its universal, and almost utopian implications. However, it is an idea that the artist openly discusses and adheres to, stating, "The earth supports us, and provides us with common ground. It is the earth which makes communication possible, and the earth seems to reoccur in my work as a first principle."<sup>81</sup> When combined with the artist's ideas of developing a dialog about culture as a state of being, rather than a construction of language, the notion of earth as a connection between humanity is not idyllic for the artist but rather a practical foundation from which to start such a conversation. So while conventions about earth as a connective factor are often romanticized, Gormley's use of the earth as material and site is not an attempt to support such notions, but use the most basic commonality that all can relate to and experience. It is the notion of earth as a primary ubiquitous referent that allows the work to be an index for secondary referents, their installation sites.

Part of *Field's* ability to transform and adapt to its changing sites is because it functions less as an object and more as a place.<sup>82</sup> Each installation filled an entire space of an architectural setting, denying the viewer entry. The field of figurines is no longer an object but the place of the room or site it occupies. It causes the dislocation of the space

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<sup>81</sup> Caiger-Smith, *Antony Gormley*, 47.

<sup>82</sup> Noble, "Anthropoetics of Space: Antony Gormley's *Field*," 199.

within its locale, and by embodying this space and the form of the site the *Field* projects become an index of such sites. Not dissimilar from Krauss' argument, these figurines are empty shifters until juxtaposed with a physical referent. However unlike Krauss' argument, the *Field* projects are able to have a multitude of referents because they are not an index for any singular space of an installation site, but the potential index for all global spaces.

A specific example of this is *Asian Field*, which was installed in five different locations throughout China and later in Sydney, Australia, as part of that city's Biennale in 2006. At each of its exhibition sites, the project appropriated its respective space as its referent, and became a sign for both its locale and the commonality of humanity. The best example of this comes from its installation in Chongqing at an air raid shelter, which was most likely built for protection from the Japanese Army in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. This site was chosen by Gormley "to enhance people's awareness of the importance of the relation between defense and subsistence."<sup>83</sup> Though it was in a location literally used for physical defense against violent acts, this site in a contemporary context questioned the future of humanity. Of this idea Gormley said, "We are all conscious in this globalized world that in some way human beings are affecting natural systems that have never been affected by one species... We have the ability to foul the nest for ourselves and every other species, or do something about it."<sup>84</sup> Thus the air raid location was chosen to make the viewer self-aware of their relationship to the continuation of humanity and other

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Sunanda Creagh, "Making 180,000 Figure is One Big Deal," modified June 7, 2006, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/arts/making-180000-figures-from-25-tonnes-of-clay-is-one-big-deal2006/06/06/1149359745033.html>.

natural systems. In this particular venue, the alienation of the viewer by the field of figures was the strongest of any *Field* installation, for the feeling of being alone and singled out from the collective of figures forced the viewer to associate such feelings with the future extinction of humanity.

In relation to the globalized index, the figures are a three-part index. On the one hand they were an index for the space and form of the shelter, like Pozzi's work. Unlike Pozzi's painting, they were also an index for the historical context of the air raid shelter. While specifically the history of the site belongs to the wartime conditions and events of China, it is not unwarranted to suggest that the consciousness of this history, much like the consciousness of the earth, is one that belongs to and affects the entirety of humanity. As previously suggested by the artist, cultural division is an antiquated idea. If humanity wants to prolong its eminent extinction, it cannot divide itself based on histories or arbitrary qualities. Instead, like the makers of *Field*, we must acknowledge the individual, but ultimately work together to preserve our potential future.

The globalized index in *Field* in reference to site specificity is not a complete subversion of Krauss' index, but rather an expansion on the idea of an artwork being an empty shifter that must have a physical relationship with a singular locale, in order to use such a locale as a referent and generate meaning. *Field* represents the ability of the contemporized index to transform its referents based on its locale and still have significance that affirms the globalization of the index. *Field* also exemplifies the inaccuracy by Gormley when he states that his work adheres to the index as defined by Peirce, particularly because Peirce's theory does not account for a site specific index. As introduced earlier in reference to the index's globalized form, the next chapter will

expand on the argument that the index is contemporized in Gormley's work because he uses space as his primary locale, rather than a particular or singular existing place.

## CHAPTER IV

### FORMING THE CONTEMPORIZED INDEX IN A DIGITAL AGE

When re-examining Gormley's indexical oeuvre through an updated definition it is apparent that his sculpture offers resolution to the ideas of a contemporary index, an index for a generalized form, an index that can be globally made and located, an index for collective humanity, and an index for the intangible entity of internal body space. The questions that remain to be asked are: What does the contemporized index look like? And, how does it differ from the forms referenced by Peirce and Krauss? This thesis has already exposed the generalization of closed or hermetically sealed forms as one way to grapple with many aspects of the contemporized index. It has also suggested the globalization of site specificity. Rather than reiterate these arguments, I would like to analyze Gormley's more recent sculpture in order to examine his current approach to the indexical form. Even within his own body of work, the artist has progressed from literal, directly physical indices made from imprinting, casting, and molding, to constructing indexical sculptures informed by the space and time continuum and techniques derived from mathematics, digital programming, and computer engineering. However, before approaching this topic, we must return once again to Peirce and Krauss in order to determine the manner through which the index's form is advanced in Gormley's sculpture by using contemporary processes.

## Peirce's Index

*It is a nice problem to say to what class a given sign belongs; since all the circumstances of the case have to be considered. But it is seldom requisite to be very accurate; for if one does not locate the sign precisely, one will easily come near enough to its character for any ordinary purpose of logic.*<sup>85</sup>

Charles Sanders Peirce

As Peirce's theory of the index advanced from his original publication in 1868, he developed two arguments that are key to understanding the manner through which his theories are contemporized in today's art. The first is Peirce's differentiation between two types of objects: the dynamic object and the immediate object. The second is his classification of four different types of indices, other than the ones mentioned in the introduction.<sup>86</sup>

Peirce's formulation of two different kinds of objects is not a separation of objects into two types, but rather a separation of the two stages of the viewer's understanding of the same object through the semiotic process of gathering information from a sign.<sup>87</sup> The immediate object is the incomplete understanding of a sign, a general idea of what the object of a particular sign could be. As suggested, it is immediate in the sense that it is the first referent for which the viewer thinks the sign stands. The dynamic object is then the full understanding of a sign's object. Returning to Gormley's early body case sculpture such as *Moment*, the immediate object may be the viewer's first idea that the sculpture is a sign for a human body. The dynamic object is the complete

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<sup>85</sup> Liszka, *A General Introduction to the Semeiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce*, 47.

<sup>86</sup> These four indices, which will be properly defined later, are: the rhematic indexical sinsign, the dicentric indexical sinsign, the rhematic indexical legisign, and the dicentric indexical legisign.

<sup>87</sup> Though Peirce calls these 'objects,' the immediate and dynamic objects are not physical things. Instead, the term 'object' in this case is synonym for idea. However, for consistency I will continue to use Peirce's terms.

comprehension that the case is not just a physical object that imprints the form of the body, but is a doubled indexical sign for the internal space of the body, which is presented to the viewer through its visual absence.<sup>88</sup>

From Peirce's original conception of the three classes of signs, icons, indices, and symbols, he went on to develop ten different classifications of signs, four of which involve the index. The first, rhematic indexical sinsigns, are causes of their objects but don't provide any significant amount of reliable information about them. An example of this is a spontaneous cry that does not provide the listener with why or how such a cry was made, but acts to guide the listener's attention in a particular direction. Dicent indexical sinsigns are causes of their objects that do provide evidential information about their object, such as Gormley's body mold that gives proof of his body in a certain state. A rhematic indexical legisign is similar to a rhematic indexical sinsign, but provides more information about its object. These signs still point or direct one's attention to their objects, but are not a direct cause of their object. The best example of this is the empty shifter discussed earlier. The word 'this' is a rhematic indexical legisign as it gives direction to its object but provides minimum information about said object. The fourth type of sign, the dicent indexical legisign, is like the rhematic indexical sinsign but gives information about its referent. An example of this would be a street vendor yelling "hot dogs for sale." This yell is related to the rhematic indexical sinsign because it is a

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<sup>88</sup> Albert Atkin, "Peirce's Theory of Signs," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, modified November 15, 2010, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/peirce-semiotics/>.

spontaneous cry, but it provides information to its listeners about what is being sold by using the hotdog's conventional English pronoun.<sup>89</sup>

The immediate and dynamic objects and the four different types of indices are introduced here because the form of Gormley's sculpture problematizes these concepts. Though Peirce suggests in his aforementioned quote that the classification of a sign is not inherently crucial in order to use it in logic, Gormley's most recent sculpture, such as *Quantum Cloud V* (1999) (Fig. 24) does not rightly fit into any of the categories, even though the artist suggests his work references Peirce's theory of signs. This is because the artist is using advanced technological processes to create a sign for an immaterial referent, the conditions of the body as they relate to theories based in math and physics. The artist's work advances Peirce's indices to create an entirely new type, the contemporary index, which collapses the idea of having the immediate and the dynamic object. However before thoroughly comparing Gormley's index to Peirce's classifications of the sign, it is necessary to review Krauss' argument considering the index in art in order to affirm that Gormley's contemporary indexical sculptures advance the theories of both Peirce and Krauss.

### **Krauss' Index**

Krauss' articles, published in 1977, were in response to the pluralism of American art movements occurring simultaneously in the 1970s. The purpose of her articles was to propose a commonality between all of these movements. It was apparent

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<sup>89</sup> For further explanation about the four different types of indices and the other six classifications of signs see Liska, "Semeiotic Grammar," in *A General Introduction to the Semeiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce*, 18-52.

to Krauss that the prevalent affinity among the different artworks produced during this time was not one based on stylistic similarity. Instead, as mentioned, she recognized the unifying factor of this artistic era to be the repudiation of symbolism and iconicity in favor of a rather direct approach based on creating indexical works of art.

In support of her argument she uses the empty shifter, which is similar to Peirce's rhematic indexical legisign. In particular she argued,

It is about the physical transposition of an object from the continuum of reality into the fixed condition of the art-image by a moment of isolation, or selection. And in this process, it also recalls the function of the shifter. It is a sign which is inherently 'empty,' its signification a function of only this one instance, guaranteed by the existential presence of just this object. It is the meaningless meaning that is instituted through the terms of the index.<sup>90</sup>

Krauss is concerned with works of art that are documents of presence. Their significance only exists because they isolate their referent in a particular time and space to act as an index of the referent's existence. It isn't until the artist isolates objects from the 'continuum of reality,' which is presumably the physical reality lived and experienced by both the artist and the object, that they have meaning as an index; prior to this, these objects or referents are meaningless and empty.<sup>91</sup>

The examples Krauss gave in her two articles included two-dimensional pieces like paintings and photographs, the combination of movement and speech in performance pieces, and three-dimensional works. The commonality between her examples was that they all functioned as an index for palpable objects such as cast shadows, personal pronouns, language, and physical objects like dust, walls, fingerprints, architecture, and body movement. Though her development of the index's relationship to art in the 1970s

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<sup>90</sup> Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America," 78.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 80.

was crucial for connecting the art of a time marked by pluralism, it is erroneous to attempt to apply her argument to the forms of Gormley's sculptures because he utilizes as a referent objects that lack the physicality or common conventions of Krauss' examples. Rather, Krauss' idea of the isolation to produce sculptural forms can be applied to Gormley's most recent sculptures; however, rather than create works that are a fixed moment selected from the continuum of reality as Krauss suggested, Gormley's sculptures represent the isolation of mathematical possibility in a digital reality.

### **Gormley's Index**

Until 1997, the majority of Gormley's sculptures were based on a combination of molding and casting processes, in order to record bodily experience and space. His forms were often hermetically sealed cases or mostly solid structures with limited orifices. Though these early works, like *Moment* and *Field*, contemporized the index in terms of generalization and at times globalization, they are in essence, to use Peirce's term, dicent indexical sinsigns.

They can be classified as such because they are the result of a physical cause of the referent on the sign, and they provide the viewer with factual information about their objects. As a sign they also utilize both immediate and dynamic objects. A sculpture like *Moment* provides the information for the immediate and dynamic objects through the use of presence and absence. The immediate object of *Moment*, the acceptance of the sculpture's form as a human body, is presently visible to the viewer. The form of the body is indisputable because of its indexical likeness to its referent. The dynamic object,

the indexed internal space of the body and the body as site of ‘energy transfer,’<sup>92</sup> is absent to the viewer. It is not visually present but rather embodied on the interior of the closed sculpture. In order for the viewer to interpret the indexical sign through the dynamic object, other information is necessary, which can be provided through the generalization of gender, accompanying wall text, and subsequent writings and interviews by the artist about this piece.

By 1997, the notion of dicent indexical signs in Gormley’s work became less apparent and the relationship between the immediate object and the dynamic object began to collapse. The reason for this is because of the change of working process and final form in Gormley’s sculpture. As Gormley began to consider the body less metaphysically and more scientifically, like in *Quantum Cloud V*, he introduced into his artistic practice mathematical formulas, digital programs, and computer engineering to determine the form of his sculptures. Though the artist still employed aspects of the empty shifter – in particular the viewer’s embodiment of the sculpture to generate its complete meaning – his use of referents like space and energy, which are physically immaterial, advances Krauss’ ideas about the index because there is no longer a tangible object to direct the form of the index.

Gormley’s recent works have increasingly incorporated the sciences into how the artist considers the body. In his earlier sculptures, the artist was primarily offering resolutions to questions about how to embody the interior place of the body. His indices of this place almost approached an abstract quality, but remained corporeal and tangible to the viewer because the place of the body can be experienced, felt and explored just by

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<sup>92</sup> Caiger-Smith, *Antony Gormley*, 23.

closing one's eyes in a conscious state. Post 1997, the artist introduced more scientific approaches in considering the body, space and energy. In particular, he began to explore the ideas of relativity and quantum theory proposed by physicist David Bohm, notions of time and space as suggested by Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose, and some aspects of astrophysicist Martin Rees' theories on nuclear fusion.<sup>93</sup> Of this interweaving of artistic form and scientific theory the artist has said,

There is a duty for the contemporary artist to acknowledge that our understanding of matter has shifted so radically from a belief in absolute laws of mass or light to a recognition of the mutability of appearances and substances [...] From my point of view the artist is less divinely inspired and more driven by curiosity to look more closely at our material condition and to discover, with the help of science, how to look at it differently.<sup>94</sup>

From this quote it is apparent that the artist is concerned with creating forms that use scientific principles as the basis for proposing answers to the question that has prevailed throughout the artist's oeuvre: "who are we?"<sup>95</sup> This more analytical and less philosophical approach to the body has led the artist away from making sculptures created solely from casts or imprints of the body and towards ones that rely more on computer and engineering technologies to produce final forms which are informed by numerical formulations.

One of the artist's projects that relied on technological innovation to create the final form was *Firmament* (Fig. 25), a series of four figures created between 2008-2010.

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<sup>93</sup> For more information concerning the artist's use of David Bohm's theories see Caiger-Smith, *Gormley*, 96-106. For more information concerning the artist's use of Stephen Hawking, Roger Penrose, and Martin Rees' theories see Antony Gormley, "God's Body: Dimitri Ozerkov interviews Antony Gormley," by Dimitri Ozerkov, in *Still Standing*, ed. by Frank Althaus and Mark Sutcliffe (London: Fontanka Publications, 2011).

<sup>94</sup> Antony Gormley, "God's Body: Dimitri Ozerkov interviews Antony Gormley," by Dimitri Ozerkov, in *Still Standing*, ed. by Frank Althaus and Mark Sutcliffe (London: Fontanka Publications, 2011), 60-61.

<sup>95</sup> Gormley, "E.H. Gombrich in Conversation with Antony Gormley," 25.

The parts of this series were created from the collaboration between Gormley and structural engineer Tristan Simmonds. For this series Simmonds “invented an innovative process, developed software and carried out the digital sculpting of polyhedral geometries to 3D body scans. The process [incorporated] sculpting through to structural analysis, construction sequencing and fabrication data production ensuring the sculptures are viable and quickly and easily built exactly to design.”<sup>96</sup> The use of a process that is based in technology complicates any notion of the index because the object of the final form – the digital plan – only exists in a technological dimension. The index is no longer the cause of an object in space and time that can be physically experienced, but rather is the cause of an infinite space and time composed of numbers and codes. It would be naïve to suggest that this space and time isn’t real, or that because it is manmade it doesn’t apply to the theory of the index, but it nevertheless problematizes Peirce’s notion of the sign.

The form of *Firmament*, a trace of computer generated space and time, is not accounted for in Peirce’s classification of the index, most obviously because such a space and time did not exist when he developed his theories about semiotics in the 1860s. That being said, *Firmament* could technically be considered a form of dicent indexical sinsign, like *Moment*, because it does provide a certain depth of information about its multiple referents. *Firmament* starts from a three-dimensional scan of the body – the first indexical sign. The scan is then digitally sculpted on computer software – the second index. The form created from the digital sculpting process is then created from steel by a team of assistants – the third indexical sign. The idea of the index is complicated and contemporized by the use of computer technology not because of the pluralization of

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<sup>96</sup> “Firmament Series,” *Simmonds Studio*, accessed May 17, 2014, <http://www.simmondsstudio.com/ss.php?pageID=project&projectID=16>.

referents, but because Peirce would argue that *Firmament* is not actually an index but an icon.

One of Peirce's ten classes of signs is the rhematic iconic legisign. This type of sign accounts for diagrams, maps, and graphs which use a quality of likeness to represent their object in a conventional manner, often through numbers, points, coordinates, and lines.<sup>97</sup> It can be suggested that Peirce would consider *Firmament* a three-dimensional rhematic iconic legisign because the work is a digital map of the body. Though this is not a false reclassification of indexical sign that is Gormley's sculpture, it does not account for the indexical process used to create the body in *Firmament*. Before arguing this point, it is necessary to understand the subject matter of the sculpture in order to acknowledge the artistic process as truly indexical.

*Firmament* is a polyhedral<sup>98</sup> form made from a body scan that is informed by mathematical topology and inspired by the 'cell structure of bubbles and foam' that naturally occurs in physics.<sup>99</sup> Topology is best described by mathematician Roger Penrose as, "[...] a kind of geometry where one is not interested in actual distances between things, but only with relational notions which are not affected by continuous transformations [...]"<sup>100</sup> He means by this that the fixed dimensions of the polyhedrons of mathematical topology are not of importance. Rather, topology considers the ability of

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<sup>97</sup> See Liska, *A General Introduction to the Semeiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce*, 50-51.

<sup>98</sup> According the online Oxford Dictionary, a polyhedron is a three dimensional solid figure typically formed from six or more planar faces.

<sup>99</sup> Frank Maes, "A Body in Space," *Aperture*, eds. Shela Sheikh and Simon Devolder, trans. Elise Reynolds, 68-79 (Brussels: Xavier Hufkens, 2010), 70.

<sup>100</sup> Roger Penrose, "The Beauty of Geometry," in *Aperture*, eds. Shela Sheikh and Simon Devolder, trans. Elise Reynolds, 4-17 (Brussels: Xavier Hufkens, 2010), 15.

polyhedrons to continuously morph and transform in shape from a set of fixed vertexes. The example Penrose gives is the comparison between drawing a geometric shape, say a pentagon, on a solid block of wood, and drawing the same shape on a piece of rubber. The pentagon on the solid block of wood is fixed; it can never grow, twist, bend, or break. Its spatial and temporal dimensions are permanent. The same shape drawn on a piece of rubber, on the other hand, can be transformed by bending and twisting the rubber. The rubber pentagon can change shape, size, and orientation because while its vertexes are fixed in space, the dimensions of the pentagon are not; thus the shape is flexible.

Gormley used this type of topological polyhedron to create sculptures of shapes commonly found in physics and other sciences, like bubble matrices, carbon atoms, and particle clouds.<sup>101</sup> He uses these shapes to open up *Firmament*, which is the dematerialization of form into empty voids that suggest, but do not bound form, through a matrix of steel bars. There is a total cohesion of the body and space in these works; it is an attempt to frame the space of the body without the use of presence and absence in the previously hermetically sealed body cases. This idea of cohesion can be found in the theories of David Bohm, who suggested in 1980 that nothing in existence is autonomous; the universe and its elements can be considered an undivided whole.<sup>102</sup>

The process of using computer technology to create forms derived from physics, which questions theories related to the interconnectedness of the body and space, results in the creation of a contemporized index. In order to understand the manner through

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<sup>101</sup> Maes, "A Body in Space," 70.

<sup>102</sup> See David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (New York: Routledge, 1980).

which Gormley's sculptures – in particular his sculptures after 1997 – are a new form of index, let's return to the Peirce's and Krauss' arguments.

As previously mentioned, *Firmament* would be most appropriately classified in Peircean terms as a rhematic iconic legisign because it is a form of mapping based on the mathematical expansion of the body's form. The digital sculpting developed by Simmonds allows the body to be mapped in terms of vertexes and polyhedral shapes, which then become the final form of the sculpture. Rather than reproduce an iconic likeness to the body, much like the literal way the kinds of diagrams and maps Peirce has in mind refer to their objects, Gormley's sculptures are actually an index of the body's shape as an isolated possibility in mathematical topology suggested by Penrose.

The initial form of *Firmament* was determined by three-dimensional body scans of Gormley's body. This step in the working process is no different than taking a physical imprint, but rather than creating a tangible object from this imprint, the index of the artist's body exists in the space of time used by the computer program. Though the notion of using digital technology that has a space and time parallel to our physical universe is contemporary in itself, it is not ultimately the strongest argument for why Gormley's sculpture exemplifies the contemporized index. The second step in the working process involves expanding the figure's form. The increase in size of the index does not alter the sign in such a manner that it declassifies it as such, just the same as increasing a thumbprint in scale would make it no less the trace of a person's thumb. The form of *Firmament* is still caused by the digital trace of the artist's body, regardless of its magnification. The final step before constructing the sculpture is to develop the polyhedral form of the sculpture; it is in this step that the index is contemporized.

*Firmament* creates an index for the mathematical formula  $V-E+F-C=0$ .<sup>103</sup> It uses the formula, which is technically considered a symbol because letters and numbers are a conventionally accepted representation of their objects, in order to create relationships between its polyhedral parts. *Firmament* is the physical trace of the above formula in three-dimensional form. It is not a representation of the formula, but rather is the direct result of inputting informational data into a computer program that generates an object, rather than a numerical value, as a solution. The artist then isolates the form of *Firmament* from the numerous possibilities of solutions for the formula. This advances Peirce's ideas about the rhematic iconic legisign because the polyhedral mapping of the body is not an iconic representation of its referents, but is both an index of the artist's physical body and the artist's body as recorded through a mathematical formula. Thus it is a contemporized diagrammatic index.

Finally, assistants construct *Firmament* in steel from the digital form developed by Gormley and Simmonds. The sculpture embodies all of the notions of a contemporized index used in the processes to develop its form, and culminates them into an index of the digitalized version of *Firmament*. The physical sculpture is thus an index of multiple referents that exist in varying forms of space and time. It has a physical referent, Gormley's body that exists within perceivable space and time, the mathematical referent of *Euler's* generalized formula, and the polyhedral referent that exists only in the intangible space and time of digital technology. This expansion to include referents that

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<sup>103</sup> In this formula "V" is the number of vertexes, "E" the number of edges, "F" the number of faces and "C" number of polyhedral cells that compose one of Gormley's bubble matrix sculptures. This formula is a generalization of *Euler's formula*, a formula used in mathematical topology to determine the relationship between the aforementioned units. For further explanation see Roger Penrose, "The Beauty of Geometry," in *Aperture*, ed. Shela Sheikh and Simon Devolder, translated by Elise Reynolds, 4-17 (Brussels: Xavier Hufkens, 2010).

exist in dual spaces and times advances Peirce's classification of signs as mentioned, and also contemporizes Krauss' argument to include the isolation of referents in a space-time continuum not perceived by the human body.

Lastly, Peirce's notion of the immediate and dynamic object is collapsed in the contemporized index, exemplified in *Firmament*. The reason for this is because the primary referent of *Firmament* is space: space embodied by the artist, digital space, and space framed by the visualization of a mathematic equation. Though space is the primary referent, there is a process of pluralization that results in multiple secondary referents, as mentioned here and above. However, all of these primary and secondary referents are based on space, which can be argued to also be the material of *Firmament*. The form of the sculpture is as much the interconnection of the steel bars used to create a polyhedral structure, as it is the space that is and surrounds the sculpture. Because space is both the referent of the sculpture and an integral part of its material, the issue of the immediate and dynamic object based on absence and presence, as presented in Gormley's earlier body case sculptures, is no longer relevant. Rather, the entire index – space – is instantly available to the viewer, collapsing Peirce's division. Viewers are presented with the dynamic object as soon as they embody the shared open space of *Firmament*. There is no longer the contemplation of interior and exterior because Gormley has created a sculpture that refers to Bohm's idea that nothing is separate; there is a continuous flow between all parts of existence. The pluralization of referents allows this collapse to happen, because the signification of the index is presented to the viewer all at once; nothing is hidden or absent. Instead the entire dynamic object is immediately presented to the viewer.

Though Gormley explicitly states his alignment with Peirce's sign theory, it is apparent in the artist's most recent sculpture that their indexical form is not classifiable through Peirce's definitions. Gormley's work indexes intangible entities, referents that don't leave a physical trace. His sculptures like *Firmament* are a new form of index, an index for the theoretical and mathematic notions of space and existence created by the most technologically updated artistic process possible. He advances Krauss' theories by forming an index in a space and time that is no longer physically tangible by the human, but only exists due to manmade digital technologies. His sculptures are advantageously innovative because they offer viewers and fellow artists the opportunity to reconsider the purpose and form of art in a contemporary context. This is a context marked by coding, social networking that easily allows global exchanges, digital avatars, and many more capabilities resulting from the introduction of the computer and the world-wide web. Gormley is successfully able to combine the possibilities of artistic process offered by this contemporary digital context with a physical indexical art form that is palpable to a global audience.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Antony Gormley's sculptural oeuvre is not a representation of an index as defined by Peirce, and later Krauss, but is prominent example of a contemporized index. Through the reexamination of his work it is apparent that he has evolved Peirce's idea concerning the singularity of the sign by creating sculptures that are indexical of multiple referents, which are immediately offered to the viewer without a hidden agenda. It is also obvious he has advanced Krauss' argument concerning the empty shifter and site specificity to develop sculptures that generate meaning in a multitude of venues, while concurrently being specific to each one of them. He has gone beyond both the theories of Peirce and Krauss to create artworks that index referents not tangible in our present space and time. He has done all of this with the most basic and common material, the human body.

It was necessary reconsider the index in Gormley's sculpture in order to suggest that his works are more than mere records. If one accepts that his use of the index is defined by Peirce's terms, as suggested by the artist himself, then there is a great amount of significance in his work left unaccounted for – and indeed, this has been left unaccounted for in the majority of Gormley scholarship. The need for a contemporized definition of the index is crucial because without it, Gormley's body sculptures are only registers of his body in space and time, nothing more. However, as shown, it is obvious that the sculptor's works have more significance than just being evidential traces of a lived moment. They are records *for* everyone and records *of* everyone. They have the ability to both trace the artist's own subjective experiences and humanity's. They are able to do this because in his work the index has progressed from a sign limited to a single

specific referent, to a sign that holds the potential for all referents. His work is a record of us all, if we so choose to embody it. This is the first reason that it is necessary to reexamine the index – to offer viewers a clearer understanding of the potential for engaging with the artist’s work.

The second and more important purpose of developing a discourse about the contemporized index is to update Krauss’ ideas about the sign, and to determine what sort of resolution it offers in contemporary art, and what questions it resolves. The trend when analyzing contemporary art has been to try and determine what it is, who makes it, and how it is different than previous types of art. These methods of inquiry are not new to our current time; they have reigned in the discipline of art history since its inception. Unique to contemporary art is the idea that art has the responsibility to respond to the needs and issues of a global audience, of which we are all part. With the interconnectedness of humanity being promoted by technological innovation, art can no longer exist in streams; separation is an idea of the past. We are now in an era where the art object is not a modernist critique of itself. Instead, we need art to reexamine humanity, to reconsider what it means to exist, which is a task that the icon or the symbol is not able to take on because these signs rely on conventions. In order to understand these signs one must be able to make associations between them and their referents based on ideas that are socially and culturally specific. This is why Gormley returns to the index, because it is a type of sign that does not require convention but can be understood through experience, through embodiment.

The index offers contemporary art a way for all viewers to experience and derive meaning from art. It does not require predetermined knowledge, but rather an

engagement with the self. To return to the statement by Gormley quoted in the introduction of this thesis:

[...] the history of art as a succession of potential schema by which we are invited to make a picture of the world. As we evolve the visual language we continually revise the previous schema in order to find an illusion that works more and more effectively. I feel that I have left the whole issue behind in a sense, as one that has had its story. We have to find a new relationship between art and life. The task of art now is to strip us of illusion [...] How do we stop art from descending into formlessness/shapelessness? How do we find a challenge worthy of the artist's endeavor? My reply to that is, we have somehow to acknowledge the liberty of creativity in our own time which has to abandon tradition as a principle of validation, to abandon the tradition of mainstream Western art history and open itself up: **any piece of work in the late twentieth century has to speak to the whole world.**<sup>104</sup>

Gormley has abandoned illusion because it cannot offer resolution to the global problems we face today, both in life and art. In order to stop the progression of contemporary art towards the inevitable point of purely formless illusions, Gormley has returned to the physical body to make sculptures that are objects capable of embodying experience. The challenge worthy of Gormley's endeavor is the contemporization of the index through generalization, globalization, and the utilization of digital processes to create a new form of the index for a referent without a physical trace. He does this in order to offer viewers a resolution to the question "what does it mean to be in a human body?"<sup>105</sup> The meaning of existence may not be the same for every person in humanity, and it may not represent itself in the same way, but Gormley has offered to the field of contemporary art and to us a way to reconsider the body not as an object, but as a place. By doing so, he has

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<sup>104</sup> I have added the bolding for emphasis. Gormley, "Interview: E.H. Gombrich in Conversation with Antony Gormley," 23.

<sup>105</sup> Gormley, "Silence and Stillness: Antony Gormley Interview by Enrique Juncosa, 2002," <http://www.antonygormley.com/resources/interview-item/id/137>.

achieved the unique quality that makes art in a globalized context contemporary. His sculptures speak to the whole world.

APPENDIX

FIGURES



Figure 1  
Antony Gormley  
*Mould*, 1981  
Lead, fiberglass and plaster  
Image from artist's website

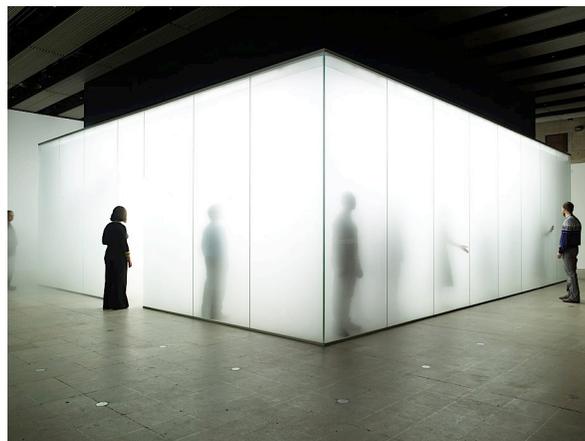


Figure 2  
Antony Gormley  
*Blind Light*, 2007  
Fluorescent light, water, ultrasonic humidifiers,  
toughened low iron glass, aluminium  
Image from artist's website



Figure 3  
Antony Gormley  
*One and Other*, 2009  
Volunteers on the Fourth Plinth  
Trafalgar Square, London  
Image from artist's website



Figure 4  
Antony Gormley  
*First Hole*, 1977  
Marble  
Image from artist's website



Figure 5  
Antony Gormley  
*Glass Pool*, 1978  
Glass  
Image from artist's website



Figure 6  
Antony Gormley  
*Bed*, 1980-1981  
Bread and wax  
Image from artist's website



Figure 7  
Jacob Epstein  
*Elemental*, 1932  
Alabaster  
Image from artstor.org



Figure 8  
Antony Gormley  
*Sleeping Place*, 1973  
Plaster and linen  
Image from artist's website



Figure 9  
Antony Gormley  
*Land, Sea and Air I*, 1977-1979  
Lead, stone, water and air  
Image from artist's website



Figure 10  
Antony Gormley  
*Still Running*, 1990  
Cast iron and air  
Image from artist's website



Figure 11  
Antony Gormley  
*Offering*, 1992  
Iron and air  
Image from artist's website



Figure 12  
Antony Gormley  
*Moment*, 1985  
Lead, fiberglass, plaster and air  
Image from artist's website



Figure 13  
Antony Gormley  
*Man Asleep*, 1985  
Lead, plaster, fiberglass, air and terracotta  
Image from artist's website



Figure 14  
Lorenzo da Maitani  
*Creation of Eve*, ca. 1310-1316  
Duomo di Orvieto, Orvieto, Italy  
Image from artstor.org



Figure 15  
Antony Gormley  
*Field II*, 1989  
Terracotta  
Image from artist's website

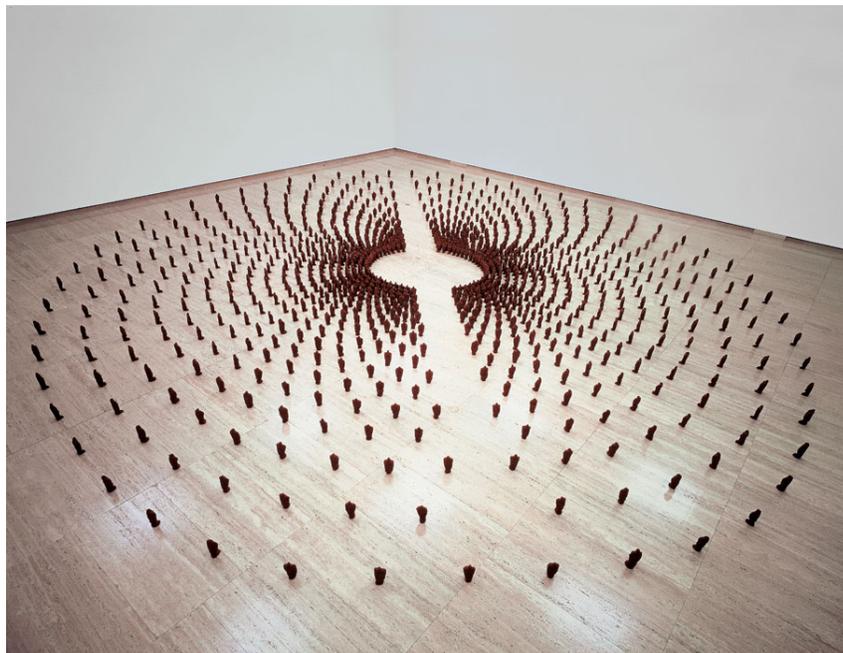


Figure 16  
Antony Gormley  
*Field for the Art Gallery of New South Wales*, 1989  
Terracotta  
Image from artist's website



Figure 17  
Antony Gormley  
*American Field*, 1991  
Terracotta  
Installation view, Centro Cultural Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City  
Image from artist's website



Figure 18  
Antony Gormley  
*American Field*, 1991  
Terracotta  
Installation view, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego  
Image from artist's website



Figure 19  
Antony Gormley  
*European Field*, 1993  
Terracotta  
Installation view, Kunsthalle zu Kiel, Kiel, Germany  
Image from artist's website



Figure 20  
Antony Gormley  
*Field for the British Isles*, 1993  
Terracotta  
Installation view, Oriel Mostyn, Gwynedd, Wales  
Image from artist's website



Figure 21  
Antony Gormley  
*Asian Field*, 2003  
Terracotta  
Installation view, warehouse, Shanghai, China  
Image from artist's website



Figure 22  
Ellsworth Kelly  
*Dark Gray with White Rectangle II*, 1978  
Oil on canvas  
Image by Peter Schibli for the Fondation Beyeler, Switzerland

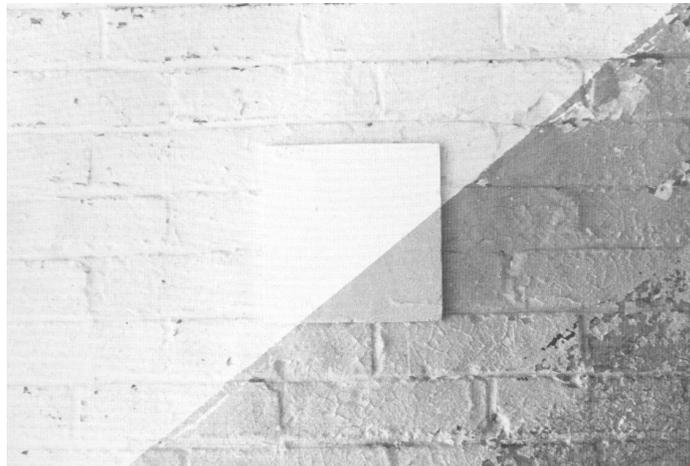


Figure 23  
Lucio Pozzi  
*P.S. 1 Paint*, 1976  
Acrylic on wood panel  
Image from "Rooms P.S. 1" exhibition catalog, pg. 38



Figure 24  
Antony Gormley  
*Quantum Cloud V*, 1999  
Mild steel bar, 4 mm x 4 mm  
Image from artist's website



Figure 25  
Antony Gormley  
*Firmament*, 2008  
30 mm square section mild steel tube  
Image from artist's website

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