

ANTONY GORMLEY FIELD AND OTHER FIGURES

September 22 - December 1, 1991

Statements by Antony Gormley

The Making of *Field*

These photographs are a record of the Texca family with whom I worked during the first three weeks of December 1990, in the Parish of San Matias, Cholula. Without their energy and generosity, this exhibition would not have happened. There are large numbers of brick-makers in the area of Mexico (population 100,000) working in family units out-of-doors and in open-walled buildings called *gallerias*. They understood working in large numbers of units, but this project was not such mechanical labor. Each person found his or her own way of working and their own form for the work. There were few instructions — to make the pieces hand-sized and easy to hold — to make sure the eyes were deep and close — and to try to get the proportions of the head to the body as it should be (in general there was a tendency to make the heads larger).

It was extraordinary how confidence grew from tentative and primitive beginnings to a growing familiarity in the rhythms of this work. The procedure was kneading a ball of clay that felt good in the hand, moulding the body quickly between the palms, pulling up the head, pushing in a sharp point to form the eyes (at first with a nail, then as days passed a wetted, sharpened ice-lolly stick seemed preferable). The pieces were allowed to dry a while on their backs

and finally stood up, checking that the heads looked up. The process of finding a way of working was not without tension. I had wanted us to work together but because of the geography and the independence of parts of the family it became easier to work in two places — a certain rivalry came into it, a certain pride in having made “better” or more work than the cousins. There were some who rejected the idea that the figures should be laid down for a while and stood them up straight away, which means they are either more portly or thinner in sections. There were others who liked their figures to be taller and would leave them laying overnight to stand them the next day. The rhythm of work went through good and bad days — sometimes when the feeling was there, it was wonderful — with everyone enjoying being and working together and the children reluctant to go to school. Sometimes it was difficult — like after the fiesta of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12th, when the family was reluctant to shed the holiday atmosphere and go on with the work.

There was some interest in the growing field of figures outside the *galleria* and some speculation as to what it was. I explained that what I hoped for was to make an image of the people yet to be born — of a future made of the earth. I think they liked this idea of the men and women of the future.

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Don Marcelino Texca

Dona Pascuala Sanchez de Texca





Outside the galleria below Don Isaac's. Don Pascual preparing clay.

The pieces were oil-fired in three kilns — by interweaving them with layers of bricks and tiles. The firing lasted 24 hours. The color of the individual pieces reflects their position in the kiln — the ones nearer the flame being darker — those to the top and sides being lighter — the majority being a rich red. The clay comes from the valley floor a few miles to the southwest of San Matias.

I went to Mexico hoping to find people who would work with clay in a natural way — I found that and much more. The work conveys this better than words.

I would like to thank Don Marcelino Texca, Dona Pascuala Sanchez de Texca, Don Isaac Texca Sanchez, Matias Texca Sanchez, Gabriella Texca Sanchez, Don Pascual Martinez Rojas, Lidia Texca de Martinez and all their families and friends that helped with the project. Special thanks should also go to Marcella Ramirez of the British Council and Gabriel Orozoo, sculptor, without whose unflinching support this work would never have seen the light of day. The sponsorship of the Calli Quesacoatl Hotel, Cholula is gratefully acknowledged.

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Field in the Context of My Work As a Whole

A lot of my work is completed by others, part of its potential comes “through” people — in this work in particular. Of course there was a vast range of response — for some of the collaborators, the whole thing was a game, for others like Santiago and Tomas, it was something else. The work became a kind of pool which could contain boredom and inspiration. What started as labor turned quite quickly into a kind of self-generating energy in which people could celebrate their differences. For some it was difficult at first to accept that differences were tolerable — a brick is judged by its conformity to a standard and what we were doing was each finding our own way of making a hand-sized equivalent for the individual body as fast as possible, but at the same time we were contributing to this image of the collective body.

It has taken me a while to realize that life itself can be the subject *and* generating principle of art. I feel now that the rational mind, mine included, has evolved into an instrument of abuse and control. The return to the body is a necessary realignment — the return to the earth as material comes from the same impulse. The rational mind seems to

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Don Pascual, Matias and Santiago loading the kiln.

First piece out of the kiln.





Tomas and Pascuala mending boxes.

edit and put a use value on the totality of the psyche. The relations between the “developed” and the “other” world mirror this. I am sure that art can recover a feeling of the wholeness of consciousness. The self-referential ideal for Art was a mistake as was the post-modernist obsession with language. Art can be common, recognizable and human but by also being iconic and synthetic, catalyze an inner reflective response, Art has to deal with human situations — personal, political and social — within them it can open up a space for re-orientation. The political potential of art is that it recognizes the value of individual growth — what Beuys called “creative capital” — *and this has nothing to do with economics*. The only revolution that is going to work is an interior one.

India helped me value “being” itself — not thinking and doing, just being. By focusing the attention on the body through vipassana meditation (which I practiced on and off for two or three years), I experienced consciousness as a matter of a transitive field of energy in which the “me” of the ordering mind was dispelled.

In the lead work I have concentrated on the skin — the surface where substance gives way to appearance. The lead acts as a transforming membrane that dematerializes the body. The potential within this place of the body is ex-

pressed sometimes as visible darkness, sometimes as pressure, sometimes as emanation or extension.

The lead works are all concerned with dematerialization, now I want to work with the earth to create places of feeling. I would like the work to grow rather than be made — sometimes I lose faith and will intervene. The female aspect of the work is where the faith in growth comes in. I would like the work to make silence eloquent and help us make contact with our whole selves so that we can take our place within the persistent phenomena of light, space and nature.

This statement is excerpted from an interview with Jane Hart in a forthcoming issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Art*. Reprinted with permission.