

ANTONY GORMLEY

HOST, 1991 - 2016

HOST was begun in the same year as FIELD (1991) and was first shown in the exhibition Places with a Past, inside the Old City Jail in Charleston, South Carolina. FIELD was in one collective prison room and HOST was in the one opposite. On that occasion, HOST was mud and sea water from Charleston harbour, pumped in through the open windows. There was a clear dialogue between the touched, fired, and fixed clay of FIELD, and the uninscribed, unformed clay of HOST.

HOST has always been about bringing the outside in, bringing nature into the frame of culture, bringing dirt into the domestic. In Germany in 1997, 5,000 litres of mud from inland Saxony and 5,000 litres of water from Kiel harbour were introduced into the contemporary exhibition wing of the Kiel Kunsthalle. Within the first 48 hours of installation the mud went from black to orange, a result of the anaerobic ferrous oxide coming into contact with salt water, and the activation of methane-producing bacterial and biological processes. This infection of the museum with the elemental conditions of the 'outside' made raw material the object of contemplation; an experience which was not only visual, but olfactory and sensate - affected by the increased humidity in the space, the smell of methane and salt in the air, and the acoustic effect of the presence of water.

The work was re-presented at Galleria Continua, Beijing in 2016 when HOST flooded the central spaces of the gallery to a depth of 23 centimetres. Approximately 95 cubic metres of red clay and sea water from the nearby Tianjin Coast was mixed at a ratio of 50:50. The experience of the work is not only visual, but sensate: the viewer is invited to stand at one of the three thresholds leading into the space and to sense the relationship between the built world and un-inscribed nature. HOST is a potent environment for proprioception, allowing art to become an instrument through which the viewer becomes the viewed.

This is the elemental world, a primal soup brought within the frame of a museum as a changing painting that you can sense, as well as see. The point is to heal the division between inside and outside, and bring the elemental world into a cultural frame. Here is a materialised landscape not pictured, formulated or interpreted.
