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With special thanks to:

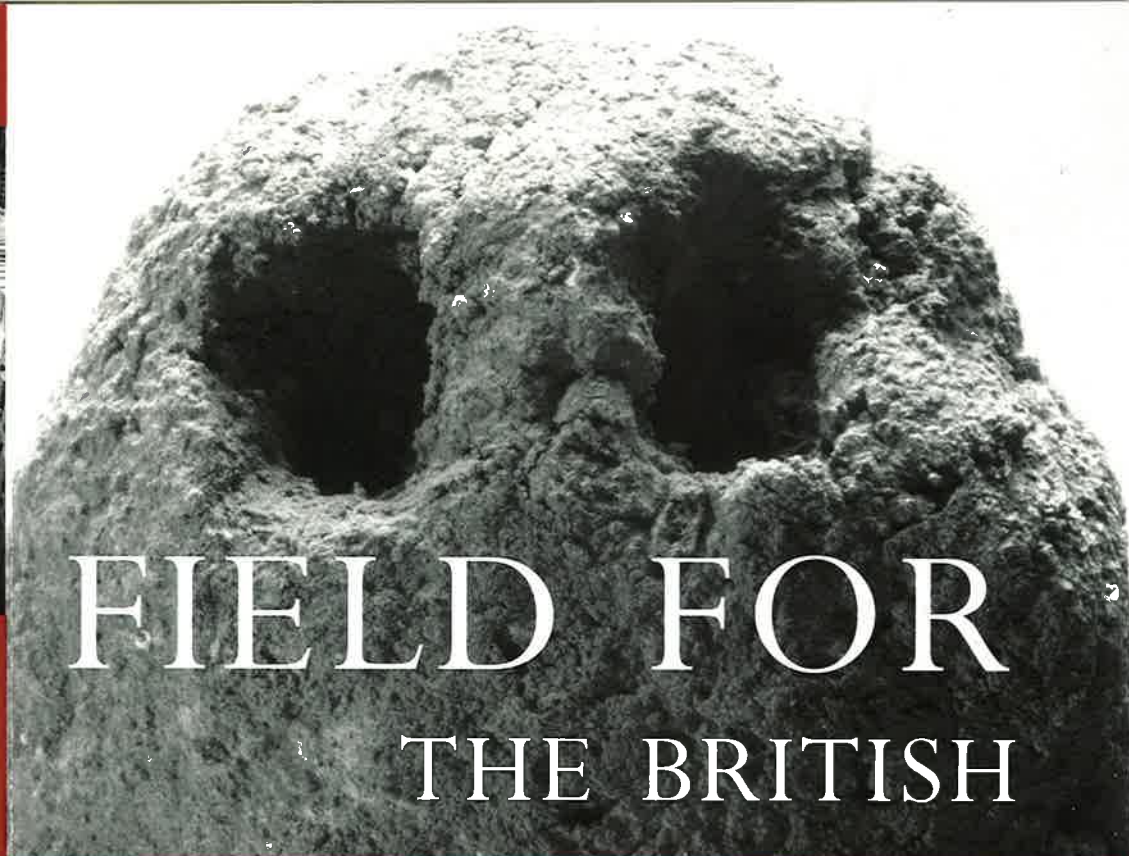
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FIELD FOR THE BRITISH

ISLES

ANTONY
GORMLEY



Field for the British Isles

Antony Gormley's

Field for the British Isles was made in September 1993 to be exhibited at the Tate Gallery Liverpool. Conceived by the artist, the sculpture was born of the labour of a particular community in St. Helens, with Tate Gallery and Ibstock Brick acting as midwife. *Field* is an extraordinary sculpture both in the manner of its making and in its physical presence. By filling entirely the viewing space, it excludes the viewer. Across the threshold, a threshold that cannot be crossed, the viewer's gaze is held and returned by 35,000 terracotta figures. The grandeur of scale and conception of *Field* provoked a passionate response from people who saw it in Liverpool and Dublin, and the initiative for a tour of this major work of art arose, literally, from popular demand. Oriel Mostyn is to be congratulated in responding so quickly and effectively to make that tour a reality.

Lewis Biggs Curator, Tate Gallery, Liverpool

When Antony Gormley proposed to us that a local community make *Field for the British Isles* for his exhibitions in Liverpool and Dublin, it seemed a rare and exciting opportunity. It was also a natural development of the way in which Tate Gallery Liverpool works with its local communities.

In order to make *Field for the British Isles* we needed the raw materials, which included an estimated 30 tonnes of clay. Ibstock, a St Helens brick-making company, were approached and asked to provide the clay. They had never before had such a request, but showed imagination in generously offering to provide not only the clay, but also the use of their kilns and expertise.

Once we had identified the raw materials, we needed the human labour and creative energy necessary to make around 40,000 figures. We looked to the community who live in the area around the Ibstock factory, and contacted families through two local schools, Sutton Community High and Sherdley County Primary. From the beginning Antony had stressed that an important dimension to the making of *Field* was that children, parents and grandparents work together, side by side.

The two head teachers took a leap of faith and gave their immediate support to the idea. Letters were sent to parents and a date arranged for those interested to meet with Antony to find out what was involved. In the meantime we had to consider the logistics of the project – finding a suitable venue in which to work, matters of safety and security and, not least, feeding the group!

When Antony came to Merseyside in July, we knew that Sutton Community High School's Robins Lane annexe could be used as a venue for making the work. At a lunchtime meeting, Antony talked in detail about the ideas behind *Field* and his experience of making it in other

parts of the world. We discussed the real human commitment the project required. At the end of the meeting, Antony asked for a show of hands. Everyone present offered themselves, and from that group others followed.

Field for the British Isles was made by about one hundred people during one working week in September 1993. On any one day, there were between fifty and sixty people, the majority of



whom had committed themselves for the full five days. When this was not possible, the minimum involvement was two full days. The Robins Lane annexe consisted of a gymnasium three science laboratories and a workshop which, together with a kitchen and dining room, provided perfect facilities. Our working procedure was simple:

we each needed a board on which to place our lump of clay; a small pot of water and a pencil to make the eye holes; a foam cushion to sit on and enough floor-space to be able to 'plant' out our figures in rows of ten (for ease of counting). This way we could see our own distinctive, growing 'field' of figures. Everyone was encouraged to find their own way of making, following these guidelines: the pieces were to be hand-sized and easy to hold, the



eyes were to be deep and close, and the proportions of the head to the body roughly correct.

The working day was 9.00 until 5.00. As people arrived each morning, Paul and Aiden, our two main labourers, began cutting and distributing large lumps of clay, using wheel – barrows, trolleys and helpers to

meet demand. Once started, people quickly settled into their own rhythm of working, which gradually became more familiar. With every additional row of figures our confidence grew. At the end of each day, a 'census' was taken, to total the number of figures made.

There were short tea-breaks each morning and afternoon, and hot lunches provided by the School Meals Service which the group greatly appreciated (the



physical work produced healthy appetites). These communal intervals were an important part of the day. They brought everyone together, provided an opportunity to compare experiences, and so forged the relationships within the group. Antony would sometimes say a few words, encouraging us to maintain our concentration,

reminding us to keep looking at our figures as they evolved and to make sure that their eyes attentively returned our gaze!

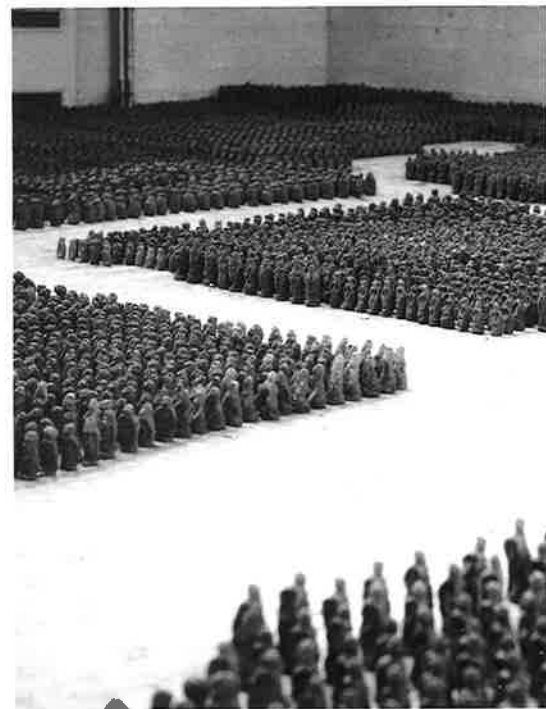
For the first two days we worked together in the gym, the largest single space. By Wednesday the group began to spread out and 'colonise' other parts of the building. Despite the aches and pains of repetitive, physical labour, no-one gave up. As the days passed it became clearer to all of us what the process was about. By Friday, the school was populated by some 40,000 figures, and we were left with a feeling of immense satisfaction, at the achievement itself, and quality of the experience.

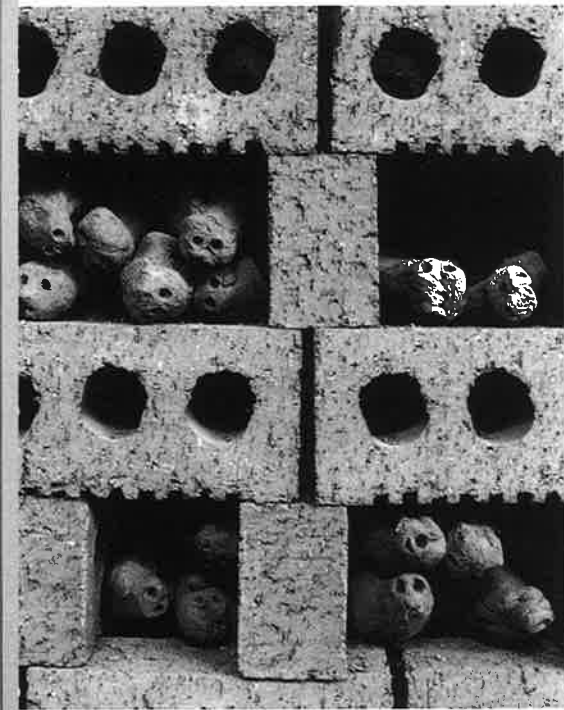
Before the figures could be fired, they had to dry for two weeks. If more than 1% moisture remained, they would explode in the heat of the kilns. When Ibstock employees pronounced the figures ready for firing, a team of packers loaded them into 120 pallets for transporting, in five lorry loads, to the brick factory.

For Ibstock, their job was just beginning. The 40,000 figures (all irregular shapes and sizes) were not easily stacked in the kilns. The timetable allowed for no mistakes. Ibstock intended to fire them all in their small kilns (used for special products) but took the plunge and used their main kiln for most of the firing. Using different kilns increased the range of colours and textures. All 40,000 figures then made the journey from St. Helens to Liverpool, in two lorry loads, ready for 'planting out' in the gallery.

Everyone involved in the many different stages of making Field for the British Isles — children, parents, teachers, staff at the brick factory and at the Gallery — share a real sense of personal and collective satisfaction. We know we have created something which has a powerful, tangible energy of its own. **Adrian Plant, Tate Gallery Liverpool.**

Antony Gormley says of Field: 'It is a kind of harvesting — it's about tilling the earth with your hands but





instead of making something grow, it is the earth you are forming directly. The harvest comes from within the people, or the thing that is growing comes out of the people. Everyone has their own row and throughout the project they continue to do row after row on the same strip like the old medieval strip field and they build up a very strong relationship with that patch of earth. Those gazes that they are seeding in the clay look back at them as they are working, suggesting consciousness is not only inside.'

'Initially I did not believe that Field could evoke such emotion or be regarded as a deep and thoughtful piece, but the more I became involved the more I began to understand about the power of the piece and its meaning. Field shows the feelings and emotions of the people involved. The sheer amount of figures produced represents the hard work and individuality of all those who gave up their time to make it possible, but most of all Field brought the community spirit of St. Helens alive.'
Abby Jones.

'The feeling of peace and calm that descended on the hall when everyone was working quietly was, for me, a highlight of the project. The concentration of thought became a kind of meditation. Apart from the rapport within the group, I also felt a rapport growing with the clay itself. After the initial unsureness my confidence grew as I found I could fashion the clay into figures which evolved throughout the week. I also felt incredibly protective towards my field. I never felt though that I had complete control of the clay. I always had the feeling that it was in charge.

At the end of the week I was filled with a real sense of achievement and elation at having reached our goal but also sadness that the week was at an end. One final look in the hall before I left, left me with the memory of the powerful presence that Field projected. An energy that was almost tangible.'
Sue Morris.

Antony Gormley first made Field in 1989 exhibited in New York as a radiating circle of 150 figures. Later the same year he made a second Field in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, comprising 1,100 figures, with a group of 7 student helpers. In December 1990, Gormley worked with brickmakers and their families in the parish of San Matais, Cholula, Mexico. They made a Field of 35,000 figures which were exhibited as a solid mass to fill gallery and non-gallery spaces in America and Canada, including the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. In 1992 Gormley worked with children from Porto Velho in the Amazon basin, to revive a brick factory and produce Field for the exhibition Arte Amazonas held at the Museu de Rio de Janeiro, Brasil at the time of the Earth Summit and Global Forum. The 25,000 figures were shown as a circle, with the figures facing outwards, and an open space at the centre. European Field was made with local families and students at Ostra Grevia in Sweden in the Spring of 1993. The 35,000 figures filled a gallery space at Malmö Konstall and subsequently embarked on a central European tour, including Warsaw, Budapest, Prague and Ljubljana. Field for the British Isles was made in St. Helens, England, in September 1993, and the 40,000 figures exhibited in a solid mass at the Tate Gallery Liverpool 20 November - 6 February 1994 and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin 14 April -19 June, 1994.

Oriel Mostyn, North Wales' premier centre for the visual arts, is the coordinator of the 1994-95 UK tour of Field for the British Isles. As the leading gallery for contemporary art in Gwynedd, North Wales, Oriel Mostyn is proud to be associated with Antony Gormley's Field for the British Isles and to enable many more viewing experiences of this unique, important and profound work of art. Susan Daniel, Director.

For those who would read more about the ideas which formed Antony Gormley's Field for the British Isles, there is a fully illustrated artist's book available, which includes an essay: A Place Where A Thought Might Grow by Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith and an interview with the artist by Marjetica Potrč. Casebound and 96 pages long, it retails at £9.95 and is available either from Oriel Mostyn, 12 Vaughan Street, Llandudno, Gwynedd, LL30 1AB, or from each venue where Field for the British Isles is exhibited. Please add £1.50 for postage and packing if ordering from Oriel Mostyn and make your cheque payable to Oriel Mostyn.

Ibstock Building Products Ltd., have made this UK tour of Field for the British Isles, possible by sponsoring this project for a second year. As a result, Ibstock Building Products Ltd., is an award winner for the second time, under the Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme for its continued support of the arts. The BSIS is a Government Scheme administered by ABSA (Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts).

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Ibstock Building Products Limited are proud to continue their association with Antony Gormley and Field. As brickmakers, we supplied prepared clay and fired the figures as well as sponsoring its first exhibition. Our continued sponsorship reflects our belief in the importance of Field for all of us.

Oriel Mostyn is supported by the Arts Council of Wales, Gwynedd County Council Department of Culture and Leisure, Aberconwy Borough Council and Llandudno Town Council.