

ANTONY GORMLEY

GIVE ME SHELTER

From FIRMAMENT AND OTHER FORMS, Middelheim Museum, Antwerp, Belgium, 2013

It was minus 10° C when the team put CUMULATE II on the roof of the pavilion last week. The ground was too hard to dig and when it came to putting the lying work down outside they couldn't be sure where the path was under the snow. Then the wind came and the snow blew in and the piece on the corner of the roof started trembling like somebody shivering. Within twelve hours of arriving in Ghent for an exhibition of paintings by my wife I was shivering with fever. I had intended to check the installation but ended up spending a week in hospital. All these things are connected: the uncertainty of a destination, the comfort of a shelter, the dependability of a body. We live in our bodies but perhaps most of the time we live in our minds and our minds live in our bodies and our bodies live in buildings. I suppose the porosity of this building, its openness to the elements, makes it unusual. The fact that there was a pile of snow lying by the birch tree at the north east corner was significant. The human need for shelter and the first European art arrived with the ice; our need for bodily protection and imaginative projection go hand in hand it seems. How do ideas, imaginings and feelings cohere in the body? And how does the body tell us things that we cannot know otherwise? I want to acknowledge the Earth, the familiar, vast, palpable body on which we walk and which carries us through space. I want to acknowledge the sky, the untouchable infinity of space. I want to make things as instruments that allow us to feel our place between the two. Sculpture is not about making pictures but about making a thing: an objective correlative, a thing in the world that is an equivalent to being in the world. A sculpture must displace space but it also has to call on us and invite our projection into its space. All of these made bodies are being, not doing; they are matter at rest or falling, matter released from or subject to gravity, places in space at large, here contextualized by a building that is itself a meditation on the benefit but also the limitation of architecture. Wind, rain and light pass through it. This building offers a shelter not that much more than the shelter of a neighbouring tree when in full leaf or the windbreak of an overhanging cliff. The floor can become completely wet, so it feels like a building made on water. It's the most lively room the work has ever come to rest in. I am glad that Paul Robbrecht believes that architecture has to be good: the good must be in the holes: bracing. Think about time, memory and where we belong. Is the rest place of human nature in the sky or in the compressed layers of geology? What is a habitat? What is a home? Here in these few objects the consolidation of matter found in geodes, crystals clustering together within the voids of limestone or lava, becomes the ur-form for a reflection on our place. Balanced, prone, in retreat, enfolded, exposed, these sculptures are written in the substantial mineral language of planetary time. In contrast are three 3D drawings: the shivering one seen against the sky which structures air, the turning one that hangs in the west of the pavilion catching light, and the big one in the park that hums: FIRMAMENT III. I never imagined it would find a place as good as this. I believe firmly in sculpture's ability to make a place, not simply to take it, and I feel that this clearing in the park has been waiting for the arrival of FIRMAMENT III and, now that it has arrived, its openness has become something else, catalysed by this ghost of a living room, drawn with the connective skeletons of nesting polyhedra, a memory of human shelter now made in the form of the most fugitive things of all: bubbles.
