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LAND

The prospect of making five works for five very distinct locations around the British Isles to celebrate the 50th anniversary of The Landmark Trust is an intriguing one. I am always interested in how a work might affect a given environment and possibly add a dimension, a point of focus, in a landscape or room. The challenge posed by the Trust's invitation was not simply to offer some form of decoration for the range of historical layers that their buildings embody. The Trust saves buildings that would otherwise disappear and allows us to live within their history. Many of these buildings are detached from their original context of use and social matrix, and are sometimes remote. Some of these buildings were built as follies and towers, made to stand apart, using their isolation as a point of punctuation in the landscape, making a landmark or a point from which to look out at the world at large. This isolation promotes thinking about human history and power relations and wonder at the very variety of habitats that the human species has created for itself. This 'being in the world but not exactly of it', through distance in time or isolation in space, is precisely the position that I aspire to occupy in my work. A certain distance is necessary in order for sculpture to encourage or evoke contemplation. It was important to find sites in which the work would not simply become an unnecessary addition but where it could be a catalyst and take on a richer or deeper engagement with the site.

Each of the five works made for this commission tries to identify a human space in space at large. Where do we live primarily? We live in a body. The body is enclosed by a skin, which is our first limit. Then there is clothing, that intimate architecture of the body that protects us from the inclemency of the weather. But beyond a set of clothes are fixed shelters. We live in a set of rooms. A room coheres into a building and buildings cohere into villages, towns and cities. But, finally, the limit of our bodies is the perceptual limit of the horizon, the edge of a world that moves with us.

In searching for positions to site the five body-form sculptures, I have looked for locations that are not simply conventional places for sculpture (the grotto, the glade, the lawn, the niche or on the axis of an avenue of trees). I have found the most potent places to be where the horizon is clearly visible and that has often meant the coast. So, I have been drawn to places where the vertical nature of the sculpture can act against the relatively constant horizon of the sea: the promontory on Saddell Beach near Saddell Castle in Argyll; Clavell Tower, the folly on the South Dorset coast; the promontory above Devil's Limekiln, Lundy; and the Martello Tower near Aldeburgh in Suffolk.

The work is a register for our experience of our own relative positions in space and time, which has led me to choose positions on the edge; the liminal state of the shoreline.

Of course, all of this relates to our identity. The buildings of The Landmark Trust are detached from their original function and, mostly, from the city. I think that they connect with the characteristics and psychology of the British as an island people. The British Isles are set somewhat adrift from the great Eurasian continent, with our various associations with the Norse and Scandinavian countries, the Baltic and indeed our friends across the Atlantic. Despite being very aware of our own insularity and separation from the rest of the world, we have developed trading relationships with distant lands and that relationship with the sea, with self and other, with home and the world, has led us to water. Our identity as an island nation is moulded by our relationship with the sea.

I have selected four coastal sites that are countered by the siting of a fifth body-form that will look down into the lock next to Lengthsman's Cottage in Warwickshire, in the centre of England. The towers and defensive sites on the coastline are here, inland, parried by a state of intimate, domestic exploitation of water as a containable means of transport. I have tried to associate all five works with their sites using the language of architecture and geology, while acknowledging the skin as a 'weathered edge'.

The challenge was to make every work distinct, to allow its verticality to be a focus, as a kind of rod or conductor for thoughts and feelings that might arise at a place. They are not representations. They are simply displacements, identifying the place where a particular human body once stood and anyone could stand. In that respect they are open spaces, void of ideological or narrative content but waiting for your attention. The works are made of iron: the material that gives this planet its magnetic field, its density and that maintains it in its particular course through the heavens. Although these works are temporary placements, I would like them to act as catalysts for a reflexive engagement with site: both body and space. In the context of The Landmark Trust's 50th anniversary, it is an occasion to think and feel the nature of our species, its history and future, and its relationship to the huge biodiversity of living beings that exist on the surface of this extraordinary blue planet.
