

ANTONY GORMLEY

STILL STANDING, WHITE CUBE HOXTON SQUARE, LONDON, ENGLAND, 2012

13 July - 15 September 2012

STILL STANDING was an exhibition of cast iron 'Blockworks' first shown in an exhibition at the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg in 2011. The show reflected a dynamic new direction in the artist's work: an attempt to describe the internal mass and inner state of the body using the language of architecture and the built environment. This was the largest group of unique 'Blockworks' to be exhibited at White Cube and formed an important precursor to the artist's first exhibition at White Cube Bermondsey in November 2012.

In the ground floor gallery was an installation of seventeen body forms, orthogonally arranged within the architecture of the gallery space. Each sculpture was built up from a series of small, rectangular iron blocks; modular architectonic forms that diagrammatically map the body's internal volume, radically departing from anatomy. The works evoke imbalance and even entropy, since key blocks in their visible support system have been removed and subtle displacements of weight mean that they are shifted from their own centre of gravity. Gormley has described these works as 'a kind of weaving of mass with void; a push and pull between blocks that are present and blocks that are absent'. Poised in a suspended state, the works could be seen to investigate the verticality of the body, both in spatial terms but also in relation to the evolutionary trajectory of humans, progressing from an animal on all fours to an upright, cognitive being.

Three of the poses in the installation represented a body at rest: standing still, lying down, or curled up in a foetal position. The remaining works described disturbed bodies in a state of tension, as if the body has been caught mid-movement in an involuntary spasm. The body-positions derive from poses for the artist's earlier series of work entitled 'Ataxia' (which began in 2007). 'Ataxia' is a Greek word that implies a state of disequilibrium and is used in medical language to describe a state of dysfunction or a progressive loss of coordination of one's body, attributed to severe dysfunction of the central nervous system. This sense of tension is confirmed by the works' titles, which all describe a physical state of being, for instance: CLASP (2010), CLUTCH VIII (2010) or STALL (2011).
