

**Exploring art outside the Gallery space**

**discuss how artists have**

**developed art practice utilising space**

**and or place. Focus on more than one**

**example of**

**practitioners and or thinkers**

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This essay will be focused on artwork composed and displayed outside the gallery space, which widely ranges from ephemeral to permanent work. Otherwise known as public art, artwork outside the gallery space embraces environment. Creating art in the landscape is certainly not contemporary, dating back “roughly 2.5 million years ago to 10,000 B.C.”

(Kennedy,

2019) to the

Paleolithic

period. Where

cave men drew

onto cave walls

“Prehistoric

cave paintings

are among the



**Figure 1: Gimenez, 2018**

world's first-known and ... debating the reason for the onset of the human instinct to make art.” (Kiely, 2016). It is a primitive inclination which calls on our need to create a mark.

Forming art in the landscape returns to this fundamental yearning to leave a presence in the

Earth. Defining ourselves and where we belong, marking territory. With this historical

knowledge I will explore how we have developed from this. I will discuss how a figure can

be fabricated in the natural world “our thinking is fundamentally spatial” (Gormley, 2001,

P.69) and how it occupies space. Engaging with Antony Gormley’s figure works and how

they require the outside space. Reflecting modern, postmodern and metamodern distros,

and brushing on the spiritual aspect of the human body. Looking at deCaires Taylor’s figures

and how they visualise the theory of human actions causing climate change. The way the

artist has benefitted the environment at the source of human’s global destruction.

Artist Antony Gormley, born in 1950 in London (Kuiper, 2010). His figure works *Another Place* on Crosby beach in 2005 was exhibited previously in Germany, Norway and Belgium before finding a permanent home in Liverpool (Visit Liverpool, 2021)

To install a hundred solid cast iron bodyforms...The work will occupy an area of 1.75 square kilometres, with the pieces placed between 50 and 250 metres apart along the tideline and one kilometre out towards the horizon, to which they will all be facing. Depending on the fall of the land, the state of the tide, the weather conditions and the time of day the work will be more or less visible. (Gormley, A. 1997)



**Figure 2: Gormley, 1997.**

In this proposal (to exhibit in Germany) Gormley describes the expansive scale of the work, the domination of the beach. Perchance hinting at the way humanity controls the Earth. Gormley positioned the figures spread out as a fragmented army. Comparable to a clustered crowd. He purposefully dotted them on the shoreline to interact them with the tide. Some figures become submerged by the ocean whilst others are on land. Gormley casted 17 different positions for these sculptures (Sefton Council, 2021), allowing the viewer to associate each pose with various anthropological meanings “the hidden syntax of the human body” (Gormley, 2001, P.72). From my experience building a figure, it requires skill and patience. Especially in such vast quantity. The work focuses more on the beauty of the beach and the effect that the tide has on the individual sculptures, rather than the

collective. This could be another political stamp on our modern world. Perhaps denoting personal value, rather than following a crowd.

Gormley used his own body to cast these works “the body matter is an instrument



**Figure 3: Gormley, 1995**

completely invested in the creation process” (Orlan, 2015, P.140) reflecting on himself and expressing identity. The assemblage of sculptures is perhaps his attempt to understand the space he occupies, where he belongs in humanity.

Gormley’s main medium is sculpture “It exists in time, it resists time” (Gormley, 2016) conveying his fascination of figures in a landscape. They stand still resisting the elements surrounding them. By allowing plenty of room between the sculptures, this allows the beach to capture the

main identity from this piece. The figures blend into the shore, absorbed by it. Contriving a sombre surrender on behalf of the statues.

Another artist who follows this technique is Michael Craig-Martin. Who creates sculptures from drawings of objects “because the sculptures are transparent they take on the character of wherever you place them” (Craig-



**Figure 4: Craig-Martin, 2019**

Martin, 2019) adopting the landscape, the thin line ensures considerable space. Permitting the mood of the piece to be based on the location. It becomes site specific.

Gormley's sculptures have a natural adapting tone on the beach.

They feel less



**Figure 5: Gormley, 2013**



**Figure 6: Gormley, 1986-87**

human in a gallery, a figure in a gallery does not have the same pull on our humanity. He experiments with both he questions how humans interact with the environment and how they fit into the landscape that they inhabit. (The Art Story, 2020)

implying that his work is largely based on the relationship between humanity and the world. More specifically the figure and the landscape “The relation between body and space is a key element in modern and postmodern art.” (De

Bacco, 2020) symbolising the infinite concepts channelled through the stillness of the iron casts. Gormley's untameable urge to explore the space within the human body reflects

Postmodernism. As he is breaking down the innerworkings of a human's presence, the act of reforming it reflects a Metamodernsim.

Gormley's figures, over his career, have altered from perfect casts of himself to a series of 3D boxes creating an abstract form. I believe Gormley often likes to play with the idea of identity in the human form. It's a captivating angle to consider, the more identifiable the



**Figure 7: Gormley, 2020**

figure is, the more it represents a specific individual. As the figures in *Another Place* become less recognizable as time goes on. The coral and the sea creatures synthesize with the figures deeming progressively generalized "The rawness and simplicity" (Neave, 2012). Following this concept that would mean that the figures aren't the artist anymore. They represent all of humanity. The decaying of the figures is slow and calm. Nature pacifically taking its course.

By employing the sea to alter one's perspective of the shore. The installation does not have to be monitored or even watched. The earth does the journey itself. The idea that at some points there is no

audience, its permanence has allowed occasional freedom from humanities gaze. Ironically, as the figures themselves feel like a human presence. The idea that the work is constantly on show allows the figures to become the norm, a part of the landscape. When creating work within an outside landscape, it creates an overlap between the elements and the concept. An ingenious method to create an immersive piece. Bringing to light the opportunity for artists to explore how they can work alongside nature. Gormley encourages the viewer to connect to the earth spiritually “an area’s level of natural amenities may shape how its population structures itself religiously” (Ferguson, and Tamburello, 2016, P.296)



**Figure 8: Gormley, 1997**

Light is another interactive aspect of this landscape installation

For me sculpture uses physical means to talk about the spirit, weight to talk about weightlessness, light to refer to darkness - a visual means to refer to things that cannot be seen. (Gormley, 1985)

His work has a meditative effect, conveying a sense of spirituality. Gormley has considered each component, which personifies a deeper meaning

This work's natural element is tantalising. Despite the vulnerable surrender of the naked sculptures. Gormley has captured the forgotten desire of humans. We crave views such as the shore to remind us of the earth, to remind us of how small we are “the relationship between the sacred and nature may be seen on a larger scale.” (Ferguson, and Tamburello, 2016, P.296). By placing these sculptures on the shoreline, the artist gives the viewer an opportunity to reflect on this. To understand our own connection to nature, to the bigger picture. This helps us see the powers at bay in a very different light. Suddenly society couldn't seem more pointless.

I wonder the effect of the figures in the night-time. Do they bring a completely different feel to the work? Do they become triggering and anxiety inducing for women? As a woman I

understand

the fear of

walking

alone at

night “I am

always

frightened

walking

alone at

night... I'm

very aware

of every

person, movement” (Obordo, and Otte, 2021) these figures could easily cause discomfort towards women who are new to the area.



**Figure 9: Gormley, 2017**

There were other concerns surrounding the works “There were also concerns that the public might mistake the sculptures for drowning people” (Veasey, 2015) these fears were overruled.

The endless connotations that surface with a figure, the undeniable inheritance. Our human instinct triggered. How we react to the presence of our kind “I'm overwhelmed by their sheer presence” (Bedworth, 2019). I find that a figure can be unnerving for many people. An empty shell. A similar sense to a dead body, except there was no life there at all. A figure has the power to trigger fear, comfort or even work through loss. Despite the understanding of the figures being cast iron, our natural animalistic instinct treats the figure with concern or empathy. We feel for the body

To see a partly submerged figure in water brings an immediate and very human response - the urge to check them out, to assist, to save - it's uncanny. (Bedworth, C. 2019)



**Figure 10: Gormley, 2015**

the effect this can have on people is extremely deep rooted in our survival instincts. Especially in the outside space. The relevance of creating art within the natural world is undoubtedly highlighted when discussing the human presence. We feel a presence from a

fake version of our human outline, portraying human connection. We are more Intune with each other than we would be led to believe.

There is a conceptual link between human nature and nature itself. Karl Marx had his own understanding of human instinct ““Human nature” ought to be defined as an attribute of the human species that is uniquely/distinctly human.” (Byron, 2016, P.377) – A summary of his many writings on human instinct. Marx comes to understand humans instinctual desire for objects, he believes that creating an object which society deems essential “I had objectified human nature.” (Marx, 1844, 277–8.) is an objectification. In relation to Gormley’s figure works, you can argue that he has literally objectified humanity. By summarising a complex human body, desires and space. By simply casting his body, reducing it to an object. Not reduction in size, but reduction in complexity and value.

Another outside space which is rarely considered in art, is the ocean. An artist named Jason deCaires Taylor constructs

underwater figure installations and sculptures. The work *Crossing the Rubicon* in Lanzarote 2016 is a piece including a crowd of figures, heading towards a barrier (Anstey, 2016). The line in which humanity crosses signifying no returning



**Figure 11: deCaires Taylor, 2018**

from climate change. The work is

one of 12 installations in the same stretch of water, crafted to highlight the issue of climate change (Art for Culture Change, 2018).

deCaires Taylor exhibits underwater “35 figures walking towards a gateway in a 30-metre-long, 100-tonne wall.” (The Guardian, 2017) arguably there are more man-made elements within this work compared to Gormley’s *Another Place*. The space has been used applying



**Figure 12: deCaires Taylor, 2018**

scale to create atmosphere. The daunting cement structure is grand, dynamic and plain. Except from the shapes that appear to be representing trees’ branches. His depiction of nature using man made materials, forms the idea that we cannot rebuild nature. Once we cross the line there’s no going back. “Dialogues between artists and places, between publics and exhibitions, can be thrillingly catalysed by the forces of globalization.” (Ulrich Obrist, 2015, P.24) I like the artists literalism the wall we cross within the Sea. The direct gesture, placing the work at the source.

The figures assemble shaping a powerful metaphor. Each figure holding or symbolising a distraction from climate change. For example, starring at a screen. Unified in a negative light

representing the theory of human based climate change “the theory that human activity is responsible for changes in the climate.” (Ballotpedia, 2021) deCaires Taylor has a direct approach to highlighting humanities responsibility. The mesmerizing robotic way the figures are simultaneously walking, forges the sense of hypnosis. Feasibly, this is how humans must appear when following social norms. The Bandwagon effect is also known as, group thinking, a social phenomenon where people do what others are doing even if its against their beliefs (The Investopedia Team, 2020).

The figures walk on what appears to be rock. Assuming this is the weight to keep the works tied to the seabed. The rocky platforms appear as steppingstones, slightly damaging the illusion of these figures being real people. Reminding the viewer that they are seeing the combination of a natural landscape and an art installation.

The artist makes a point to not harm the Ocean in any way with his sculptures. He uses a pH neutral cement causing no further pollution (Art Works for Change, 2017). Many of his



works  
have  
gathered  
coral and  
return an  
ecosystem  
to certain  
parts of  
the waters

**Figure 13: deCaires Taylor, 2016**

Sited away from natural healthy reefs systems on barren stretches of sea beds they provide a crucial role in drawing visitors away from natural areas allowing them space and time to recover (Taylor, 2010)

When considering the outside space, the figures would not have the same impact on land.

The artist tackles the looming of climate change, through placing this political opinion in an unseen space “a place we consider out of bounds, far from the human sphere, and yet in our times so affected by human intervention” (Grande, 2021) adding an intense reality shock.

Like, Antony Gormley’s works, these pieces encourage the public to investigate the wildlife and regain a connection with our beautiful ocean. There is an immersive texture that water brings, ripples and currents conceiving interesting pattern. The coral floating from the sculptures furthers this aesthetic. There is also a very interesting dynamic when putting still walking figures in the ocean, when anyone viewing the art would need to be swimming. They feel less human than Gormley’s figures. Yet next to a diver they almost seem more human. Permitting the chance to see how humanity must look from an outsider’s perspective. Which

is key, in *Crossing the Rubicon* as the artist wants us to see humanities effect from an outsider’s view. To see the physicality of the line, the point in time which we



Figure 14: deCaires Taylor, 2017

cannot return. The artist includes a figure on the opposite side looking through the bars of the wall, already regretting crossing the climate change line.

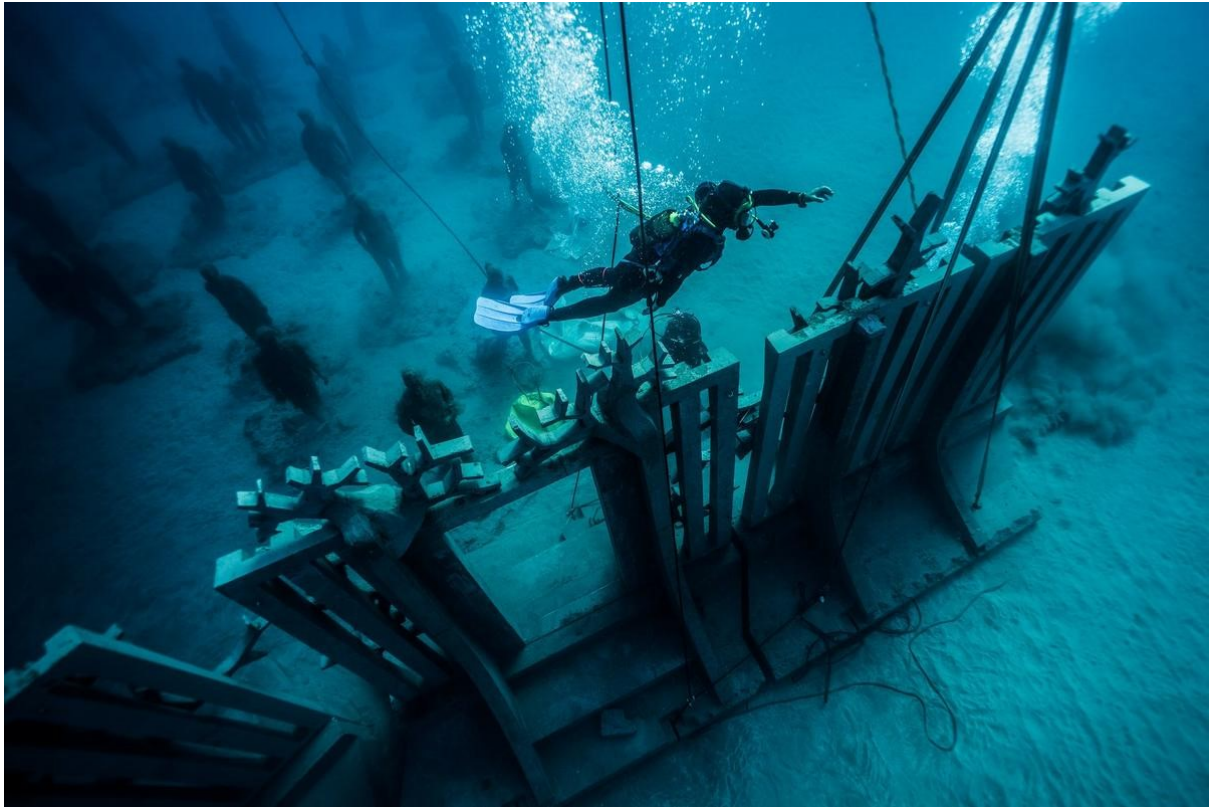


**Figure 15: deCaires Taylor, 2016**

The effect that the figure has underwater has a very different feel to when on land. It creates a more ghost like haunted effect. The lesser transparency, the muggy green and blue colours. The lighting underwater is translucent and hazy. Furthering this magical other worldly atmosphere. The movement of the waves and how it swishes the coral attached to the figures. Despite the works being underwater weather does still slightly have an impact. For example, if there is a storm or harsh weather conditions the water will have a much more rapid movement compared to a still day. All these elements create a painterly effect “painted images are two-dimensional, it’s potential of illusionism is far greater than that of sculpture” (Berger, 1972, P.89) which is relatively true, the option of the seabed changes

this sculptural limitation. Due to all these textural elements that belong to water that air does not inhabit.

An installation space but underwater feels like a new world. Allows us to see art in a new perspective, in a new light. As humans we are very drawn to the ocean despite not being aquatic animals. Water is commonly needed to live, but there is also a spiritual connection that humans feel with the ocean. This mysterious connection adds to the intrigue of deCaires Taylor's installation.

All things considered, Gormley and deCaires Taylor present two varied methods of signifying the figure in a natural landscape. Both are innovative ways of harmonising with the Earth and our Oceans. Gormley uses a much more conceptual composition and aims to connect the viewer to the Earth spiritually. Whereas deCaires Taylor tackles the topic of climate change from an activist standpoint, placing his figures like actors in a performance. creates a scene like visual and encourages to focus more on the climate change aspect. Through studying the human presence within a natural environment, I now wish to explore the physical possibilities from my own body, and my understanding of the world. I feel encouraged to explore the outside space, the aspects of the natural world that I am drawn to. Connecting to the ocean and embracing my spirituality.

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