The object says it all: intertexuality in artistic practice

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<https://youtu.be/Xk-58Lu-LSE>  
<https://youtu.be/CFelk3ghHB4>

‘Vermillion Glassware billows like clouds or desert storms, enclosing nothing. For in this room things are either empty or are waiting to acquire significance.’

Stuart Morgan Rites of Passage Tate Gallery Publications 1995 p. 57,

I am delighted to begin this series of performance lectures. However I am uncertain what a performance lecture is. I discovered that historically the form is characterised by the intention to blur the boundaries separating art from discourse about art. In addition the performance lecture can try to break down the boundaries between art and life. I need to remind myself frequently that the work ‘art’ is derived from artifice, a falsehood, that reveals the experience of life that an individual senses, thinks, feels, and lives.

With this in mind, my lecture examines my work and proposes that a dialogue between maker and object, and viewer and object, emerges through the process of forming ideas and emotions into objects. In my practice this is often a material, physical process, where wood, paint, and sometimes digital elements may combine in one work. The process of splitting, cutting, sawing, chiselling, gluing, and painting are important, as are the materials themselves, which are frequently difficult to shape. In contrast computer code, and hardware are relatively easy to manipulate, but I am particularly interested in the hybrid territory where both analogue and digital realms are brought together. This is the realm the human body occupies, between virtual and physical.

A personal note: On reflection, my reality is problematic. I don’t really understand it. My objects are both witnesses to this and evidence of it.

The format for the lecture. I am going to spend some time exploring and defining the word intertextuality, a term first coined by Julia Kristeva in her doctoral thesis. Then will argue that the artist and spectator generate meaning through an open dialogue with the object, which is informed by an ‘intertextual’ process, that involves an open ended dialogue between subject and object. In addition the dialogue begins a process of signification that involves the establishment of subjective status, through relationships between two seemingly irreconcilable poles, subject and object. These are posed in binary form as: ‘me and it’. When I come to discuss my own work, these concepts will be challenged and animated, through the process of establishing meaning through dialogue with the object, before, during and after the process of making.

The relationship between subject and object, and the problems that arise through the differences and similarities between these two seemingly irreconcilable opposites are of particular interest to me, and my discussion explores these contrasts in relation to my discussion of intertextuality.

Julia Kristeva’s use of the term ‘intertextuality’ proposes the presence of multiplying meanings present in a ‘text’. In this discussion, the text is the art object. Instead of possessing a static or fixed significance, the object arguably has a ‘voice’ that enters into dialogue with the subject. It is the mobility of this exchange and the open ended potential of the dialogue that fascinates me, since it implies an exciting escalation of possibilities.

The object does not say it all, but instead opens dialogue between the subject, and the object, that has implications for both.

‘For Barthes the text is:

…a new tissue of recycled citations. Fragments of codes, formulae, model rhythms, bits of social discourse pass into the text and are redistributed within it [...] The intertext is a field of anonymous formulae whose origin is rarely recoverable, of unconscious or automatic citations without speech marks. (Roland Barthes; see entry for 'Texte (théorie du)' in Encyclopédie universalis (Paris, 1973).)

Barthes negates the notion of authorial intention as a guide to the interpretation of texts, suggesting that a work can be intertextual without the writer realising.’  
http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/cambridgeauthors/byatt-intertextuality/

As I have developed this writing that seeks to define the intertextual, a challenging issue has emerged. Distinct philosophical and psychoanalytical theories postulate different arguments when discussing how significance is generated and agreed; and how that meaning is shared socially. When Kristeva states that intertextuality supplants the ‘intersubjective’, the question is raised of how a society or smaller social unit reaches agreement. I imagine there is an invisible mist that runs through us, that influences and corrals our intemperate and wayward individual impulses, and creates an intertextual fabric, that is also invisible, but nonetheless almost palpable as a process leading to a social consensus of sorts.

Twenty years have passed since an exhibition titled ‘Rites of passage: art for the end of the century’ was held at the Tate gallery in London. Describing one of Louise Bourgeois’ cells, Stuart Morgan writes, ‘Vermillion Glassware billows like clouds or desert storms, enclosing nothing. For in this room things are either empty or are waiting to acquire significance.’

My discussion is concerned with the moment significance is acquired, when meaning is generated in the encounter between the subject, that is, you, or I, and the object, be it a written text, a drawing, or three dimensional object. RS Thomas has written about the ‘shadows at the corners of fields’, a phrase that to me proposes meaning. The shadows could be cast by a couple seeking solitude, or a frightened creature hiding. But there is nothing explicit in Thomas’s line of poetry that identifies what it is that is casting a shadow. Consequently it could be anything, and the mind seeks to limit the myriad possibilities by conjuring significance. The moment significance is brought to light of course, other possibilities are presented, and a rolling momentum begins, meaning is made, and unmade, by ‘the shadows’. There is no fixed meaning, the statement is open.

Intertextuality

We are living in the and through the intertextual. The word ‘hypertextual’ is not too different, and it means an accelerated connection though texts, that are interconnected on the web, or the internet, by hyperlinks. The technology modernity is so familiar with exposes a coming of age of the intertextual, and the ways the technology operate have arguably impacted on the way people think and act, and the way they generate significance, through making connections, by linking multiple texts, however disparate, together.

However, the word ‘intertextuality’ coined by Julia Kristeva in her doctoral thesis titled ‘Revolution in poetic language’. It is a difficult word to define. In brief Kristeva proposes that ‘any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another’. Before continuing with the discussion of Kristeva’s intertextuality, I would like to paraphrase the last quotation, ‘any subject is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any subject is the absorption and transformation of another’. This change in reference, from text/object, to text/subject, is crucial to the discussion of the relationship between subject and object that is implicated through the meaning of intertextuality.

Continental philosophy and literary theory of the mid twentieth century is a melting pot of ideas, and Kristeva’s thesis involves semiotics (pierce and Saussure), and psychoanalysis (Freud), whilst also drawing upon Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogical principle, and Roland Barthes.

Barthes[[1]](#endnote-1)

Heteronomy ‘refers to action that is influenced by a force outside the individual’. In Freud, ‘The Freudian theory of drives may be viewed as a transition from the psychical to the somatic, as a bridge between the biological foundation of signifying functioning and its determination by the family and society.’ p. 167 RIPL

‘Drives are material, but they are not solely biological since they both connect and differentiate the biological and the symbolic within the dialectic of the signifying body invested in a practice. Neither inside nor outside, drives are neither the ideational interior of a subject of understanding, nor the exteriority of Hegelian Force. Drives are, instead, the repeated scission of matter that generates significance, the place where an always absent subject is produced.’ Ibid, p. 167

In her conclusion to RIPL Kristeva proposes that Mallarmé’s work, *Igitur’*  represents a venture by the poet into a type of madness, where the signifying process is deranged, in part through the transgression of maternal forces and prohibitions, where a quest for knowledge about death is ignored. This brings to the creative act a bridging action, connecting death with artistic practice. ?

The subject subordinate to social forces, buffeted by the pressures of environment and ‘drives’, generating a subject, through the signifying process. How can this elaboration of the constitution of the subject be compared with Delueze and Guattari’s discussion of the process of subjectification in ‘A Thousand Plateaus’, and ‘The ‘Anti-Oedipus’?

Intertextuality produces meaning and Kristeva proposes it replaces intersubjectivity.

It is not primarily concerned with influences and sources discernible in a text, or art work, but instead proposes that meaning is generated by the relationship between reader and object.

Construct the object through meaning

How meaning is established on a temporary level, and how the signifying function is related to Kristeva’s ‘subject as process’.

Not a point of meaning but an intersection of possible meanings.

Not allusion, or specific symbolic reference, but a fluid, interconnected interlayering of tissues of meaning. In this context meaning, the generation of intertextuality, is material, and the ‘material of drives’ in the Freudian sense, are the very material from which the subject is generated.

But the material is in part psychical, and in part social, making the discussion of intertextuality complex, and freighted by the psycho-linguistic baggage that Kristeva draws upon to situate her thesis.

Kristeva discusses the revolution in poetic language in relation to intertextuality, citing Mallarme, Joyce, Kafka’s work as examples of ‘texts’ that elucidate the type of subjectivity that modernity produces. This manifestation of subjectivity is unstable and prone to disintegration, or of not really being constituted at all. Kristeva does not discuss the relationship that is established between text and writer, and the creative process involved in the relationship between the thing being made, and it’s maker. In my practice anyway, the ramifications animated through making, thinking and responding to change during the production process involve the intertextual process. In the end when a new piece of work is completed, it needs to be able to generate meaning itself, and suggest new meanings, to new eyes. I am always pleased when I hear someone bring understanding to my work that is alien to mine. It is at this moment that the work comes to life, and is alive, because it is no longer static, or inert.

‘Intersubjectivity references an agreement between people on a given definitions for a situation or a set of meanings.’ Intersubjectivity is how a specific significance is agreed, in relation to a work of art for example.

‘…each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one

other word (text) can be read; [...] any text is constructed as a mosaic of

quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The

notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic

language is read as at least *double*.’

JULIA KRISTEVA, The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toril Moi, Basil Blackwell, Oxford

1990, p. 37 (her emphasis).

One significant change that reflects on any consideration od Kristeva’s formulation of intertextuality in the mid 1960s is the internet, characterized by *hypertextuality.* Hyper- comes form the Greek and means ‘over’ or ‘beyond’. The branching of texts, each linked by image, or textual *hyperlinks,* creates an infinite labyrinth of modernity that is all too familiar. Informed by the Borges story titled The Garden of Forking Paths, describing an unfinished text of labyrinthine and contradictory fragments, defining an actual labyrinth. The actual labyrinth is declared the text itself by Docotr Albert,

The ‘scission’. ‘In technology and politics but also in art, areas have been found in which desire is exceeded by a ‘movement’ that surpasses the states of desiring structuration and displaces the frameworks of intersubjective devices where phantasmatic identifications congeal.’ R I P L p. 146

Spectral creatures of nightmare and horror. Intextual reading as tool for revealing alternative meanings in works of art.

The surrealist object as an intertextual example. The *corps exquis* drawings produced by several artist, each following the other, with only a fragment of the previous drawn fragment visible to them from which they develop their contribution.

The artist’s intentions are only the beginning os meanings.

The word intertextuality implies cross-reference, and the role of interpretation and understanding inherent to the process of making and engaging with art. Intertextuality as a tool in literary analysis is to a large extent a familiar means of understanding the myriad possibilities of the meaning and significance of a text. In this essay the term is extended for use as a tool for analyzing art. This move is In addition the world of interpretation in relation to art is arguably engaged through subjective responses, implying that there is no ‘classical’, or ‘formal’ method for determining an absolute significance, or distinct meaning that overrides others.

Kristeva’s discussion of intertextuality examines the relationship between reader and text. I intend however to discuss in addition the relationship between author, or artist, and the text, the object.

The meaning of an art work does not reside in it, but it produced by the viewing subject, not only in relation to the object in question, but also in relation to a complex network, or interrelated ‘texts’. A related term might be ‘allusion’, where an indirect reference is called to mind without explicit reference. But this implies some planning, and what happens when the meaning and interpretation of and art work is totally at odds with those intended by the artist? I will discuss how this potential, to offer possibilities of meaning is identifiable of a trait in art practice that developed from the early twentieth modernist shift Julia Kristeva identifies in her book ‘Revolution of Poetic Language’. I will discuss Kristeva’s use of the term in the context of mid-twentieth century continental postmodernism and poststructualism.

The uncertainty of reality and the shifting movements, transient sensations, of the struggle to locate and identify the cardinal points that underpin personal experience.

How selves are constructed from experience, environment, but absence of understanding, when images are borrowed and attached, to the construct called the self.

Leon Roudiez, in his introduction to Kristeva’s English translation of R in P L refers to the common roots of the words ‘textile’, and ‘text’. ‘Here it would be helpful to keep in mind the etymology of the word and think of it as a texture, a “disposition or connection of threads, filaments, or other slender bodies, interwoven” (*Webster 2*). The analogy stops there however, for the text cannot be thought of as a finished, permanent piece of cloth; it is in a perpetual state of flux as different readers intervene, as their knowledge deepens, and as history moves on.’ P. 5

In art intertexutuality operates through the process of interpretation and assimilation. What does it (the object, be it music, painting, sculpture, performance, etc) do? How does it make me feel? What relationship does it have to my knowledge, experience, sexuality, gender? What does it remind me of, what ideas have I encountered that help me understand it? The social and cultural environment are crucially part of the three-dimensional cross-referencing implicit in the intertextual. The socialized subject references common strands and touchstones that comprise a cultural milieu in a specific time and place. This is also prone to change.

Kristeva uses the term ‘signifying process’ to indicate that Freud’s discussion of ‘primary processes (displacement and and condensation) can connect ‘empty signifiers’ to psychosomatic functionings, or can at least link them in a sequence of metaphors and metonymies; though undecidable, such a sequence replaces “arbitrariness” with “articulation”. For the signifying process to operate, for artist and non-artist, a creative leap, between chance significance, to imaginative articulation of possible significance is engaged. Kristeva asserts that the signifying process is understood in relation to both Freudian, and later Kleinian theories that reference to the Oedipal triad of mother, father, and child. Just as the subject establishes identity, as the self is formed a a unified entity, language and the signifying process engage. Prior to this the subject is without psychosomatic wholeness, a fragmented sensational but also to the pre-Oedipal condition of the ‘substance morcelé’, the body in fragments, where

CORRECT THE ABOVE

Physical sensations, appetite for physical contact, and pre-linguistic, non-verbal crying and sound-making, are merged with sensations experienced from feeding, urinating and defecating. The signifying process can be understood as the ordering of these distinct psychosomatic pulsions (drives) into a subject who means, who understands.

Kristeva’s two modalities ‘*the semiotic’*,and *‘the symbolic’* are inextricably linked in the signifying process. Then precis end o chapter 1

Kristeva’s investiagtions in ‘psycho-linguistics’.

‘…Kristeva’s belief that art or literature, precisely because it relies on the notion of the subject, is the privileged place of transformation or change: an abstract philosophy of the signifier can only repeat the formal gestures of its literary models.’

p. 17 The Kristeva Reader

The forms generated through artistic practice can therefore be analysed as a field of change, where both subject and object are open to interpretation, and movement.

I need to apply her theory to interpretation of art objects. To investigate the ambiguities and ambivalence inherent to the stability of the thinking, feeling subject, that is counter-posed in the object too, in a peculiar and powerful balancing act.

To be ambitious for the object, to invest it with the anxieties and tensions of a contradictory, and poorly articulated subject, who is never entirely at one, but nevertheless a functioning subject. The encounter and dialogue with the object is therefore seen as a momentary recognition of the difficulty of the split subject that is paradoxically whole. For the artists and the thinking, sensing subject (viewer) alike, the object (the text-object) is both an assistant and assassin of subjective integrity.

The intertextuality operates in the art object, there is always another imminent interpretation, another nuance and angle, in the exchange between subject and object that Antonin Artaud named as a distinct thing, the subjectile. A floating and ambiguous fusion of subject and object that is as much part of an intertextual system, in this case the world of art.

A subjectivity always threatened, and unstable

In Bakhtin’s works the two axes he calls *dialogue* and *ambivalence* are not clearly distinguished. ‘Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is an absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertexuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*.’

p. 37 The Kristeva Reader, ed. Moi, T. Blackwell, 1990

‘Intertextuality (intertextualité) This French word was originally introduced by Kristeva and met with immediate success; it has since been much used and abused on both sides of the Atlantic. The concept, however, has been generally misunderstood. It has nothing to do with matters of influence by one writer upon another, or with the sources of a literary work; it does, on the other hand, involve the components of a *textual system* such as the novel, for instance. It is defined in *La Revolution du language poétique* as the transposition of one or more systems of signs into another, accompanied by a new articulation of the enunciative and denotative position. Any SIGNIFYING PRACTICE (q.v.) is a field (in the sense of space traversed by lines of force) in which various signifying systems undergo such a transposition.’

From the Introduction by Leon S. Roudiez

Desire in Language, A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art

Kristeva, J., ed. Roudiez, L., Blackwell, 1980

Just as the text is disrupted by a process of transposition, the notion of a ‘unary subject’ as a whole consciousness, defined by Freud for example in his theory of the psychic assembly, is challenged and potentially split by the divergent currents of the intertextual process. Kriteva’s elaboration of the concept of the ‘subject as process’, and the ‘split subject’ (sujet morcelé), are therefore elucidated by the principles of intertextuality.

Kristeva identifies a modern period of rupture, that is signaled by the subjective ambivalence of texts Joyce, Kafka, Mallarme.

Kristeva links intertexuality with *transposition*

Mikhail Bakhtins dialogical principle from which Kriteva borrows, proposes that a text is representation of numerous discourses.

Thetic break: ‘a break in the signifying process’

“all enunciation, whether a word or a sentence, is thetic. It requires an identification; in other words, the subject must separate from and through his image, from and through his objects. This image and objects must first be posited in a space that becomes symbolic because it connects the two separated positions, recording them or redistributing them in an open combinatorial system.’

p.43 Revolution in Poetic language, Kristeva, J., 1984, Trans. Waller, M., with introduction by Leon S. Roudiez

The art object can be regarded as a ‘text’, that can be understood as potentially understood as have intertextual properties. There would be no fixed significance in such an object, it would be prone to change in significance, as simultaneously the ‘break’, in the signifying process.

Significance is about positioning.

The ‘thetic event’ the ‘act of murder’ that religion specialises in, according to Kristeva, and which art and artists also engage with, ‘Opposite the religious, or alongside it, “art” takes on murder and moves through it. It assumes murder insofar as artistic practice considers death the inner boundary of the signifying process. Crossing the boundary is precisely what constitutes “art”.’’ p. 70 Revolution on Poetic language

Kristeva proposes that the artist engaged with artistic practice, in traversing the event of death, is enacting the role of a sacrificial victim in religious ritual, similar to the scapegoat. However the artist, in the process, ‘sketches out a kind of second birth.’ P.70

Instead of icons in churches and temples, the object produced is presented in the gallery, ‘…giving rise to the aesthetic fetishism and narcissism supplanting theology.’ P. 70

Kristeva charts the transition of the object from a religious symbolic identification, to its location in a secular context, as an aestheticized celebration of symbolic attributes of the subject.

The object assumes symbolic functions that re-present fragments of subjectivity. Akin to a barely legible text, whose significance is mutable, and prone to multiple interpretations, the art object offers possible meaning to the subject whose appetite is for discovering meaning, for the purpose of completeness, wholeness.

In the context of my own working practice, I am puzzled by the dialogues that enters into the making process, at a point where to object enters into a dialogue with me. This moment, or movement, is on reflection, is distinguished by the object’s potential to speak. It speaks about the falsity, the artificiality of art, and its trickery. It also speaks through its presence – the volumes, forms, materials, masses, of the object. Its role

Identification with the object

The head and the face

The object as a dialogue with history and the contemporary sculpture

The object as an inert and dead thing that means nothing - nihilism

The object that is a dialogue with other artists and art.

Statement of rejection – the object is inert, dead, yet is still ‘says’ something, it still speaks, signifies.

Camera to projector

First proposal The individual artists expresses an idea, and expands themselves into the world through the manipulation of ‘material’, in the broadest sense. The manipulation of material can be seen as a means for this expansion of the self, into an object. The object is linked, but also separate from the subject.

Second proposal. The artist and the spectator engage with the resultant object, and the dialogue begins, generating significance. This process of signification is intertextual, and social. (is the subject also a ‘text’?)

Discussion will focus on how cultural art historical influences combine with personal sensations to infuse my works, in ways that are only partially deliberate. Through the reflection on my own works I will propose that the art object is freighted with potential meanings.

Gormley’s ‘Allotment’ as an intertextual project

‘This was the first time that I had really tried to engage with a whole community. The idea was to tailor-make the smallest space capable of sheltering the human body; to construct an architecture that was a perfect fit, but that translated the intimate zone of the body into an absolute, orthogonal [right angles] protected space. The rooms were then brought together to form a virtual city with avenues and cross streets. The grid was a determining compositional strategy, but within the viewer could make his or her own path, through dense and less dense areas, some that were open and some closed.

A steel measuring box, a number of volunteers,

ALLOTMENT, 1995 - 2008

Proposal to Malmö Konsthall, Sweden, 1996

I propose to ask 300 local people - men, women and children of all ages - to cooperate with me in making a work. The participants will be asked to have themselves measured standing. The following measurements will be taken:

In front

1. The total height from the top of the head to the ground.

2. From the shoulder to the ground.

3. From the shoulder to the top of the head.

4. The width of the head.

5. The height of the top of the ear from the top of the head.

6. The length of the ear.

7. The height of the mouth from the division of the lips.

8. The width of the mouth.

9. From side to side at the widest.

10. The height of the anus from the floor.

In profile

11. From the back to the front at the deepest (i.e. from the buttocks to the toes).

12. The lateral distance from the tip of the toes to the back of the head.

13. From the tip of the nose to the back of the head.

14. The distance from the back of the head to the back of the ear.

15. The distance from the side of the head to the side of the body.

These measurements should then be used to construct 300 five-centimetre-thick rectangular concrete body cases, with integrated rectangular head cases, and apertures at the mouth, ears, anus and genitals. The dimensions of the apertures will be taken from the ear and mouth measurements, as will the placement. The anus and genital apertures will be proportional to the volume of the piece (1.2 square centimetres to a cubic metre). The outside of the ear apertures will be a square based on the length of the ear. The apertures will be angled to an internal opening of six square millimetres.

The anus and genital holes will be angled at 45 degrees. The mouth aperture will be square and based on the width of the mouth. The top of the ear holes will be at the position of the top of the ears. The mouth hole will be centred on the line of the lips. The anus and genital holes will be at the anus level on the internal wall of the case.

The pieces will be of poured concrete, using standard wooden shuttering ply for both the internal void and the external surface, with five millimetre galvanised steel reinforcing on a 10-centimetre grid. The pieces will be poured upside down, the head sections poured first, then the body section. The pieces will be cured over a ten-day period. The concrete will be constituted from seven parts white cement and one part grey cement, four parts silver sand and eight parts four-millimetre white quartz chippings.

The composite work will evoke a surrogate cityscape, with the pieces laid on a grid path system wide enough for a viewer to pass through. Some will be closely packed next to each other, some less so. They will face all directions. The viewer, having apprehended the work initially as a whole, will then be able to make his/ her way through the composition, engaging with pieces intimately.

<http://www.antonygormley.com/projects/item-view/id/242>

The title of the work references the volume of space taken up by or allotted to an individual at the moment they are measured. A census of sorts, the resulting works have been exhibited in grid form, and latterly in rows, as an avenue, or separate rows, ordered like rows of tombstones in a cemetery. The written instructions for the measuring, construction and exhibition are set out in a logical and rational way. The artist also offers an interpretation, ‘The composite work will evoke a surrogate cityscape…

The work, when considered in it s original display, is disconcerting and claustrophobic. I viewed it when it was included in Gormley’s 2007 *Blind Light* exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London. The largest portion of Gormley’s work uses his own vital statistics as source material. ‘Alotment’ is in different ways from ‘Field’, a socially mediated work. Filed comprises thousands of hand made clay figures created by volunteers following Gormley’s instructions. AEch small figure, displayed en masse at the British Museum in 2002 eyes apparently created by sticking a pencil into the pliable clay.

Alotment is a collection of coffins, through which the living can weave a path, amongst the dead, in a type of mausoleum. The work draws from the sepulchral images of monumental burials in the Valley of the Kings, or the Chinese Terracotta Army.

Interpretation of ‘Alotment’ when considered as starting point for possible signification, is from a subjective point of view, at odds with the artist’s ostensible intentions. I do not think it is possible to interpret art from a purely objective viewpoint, unless a factual description of scale, colour, location, subject matter, etc., are itemized. The description would be similar to that offered by Gormley himself on his website: a manifest for construction, display and meaning. But a subjective interpretation proposes an alarming scenario, of premature incarceration, burial alive, under the guise of an inquiry into the measurements of volunteers from a village in Sweden.

Exhibited in Denmark Freddskulptur, Hvide Sande, Denmark, 1995

The repetitive motif of the erect male figure in Gormley’s art could superficially be analyzed as indicating the dominant alpha male, the alha male, and male

In response to a question that in part asks the sculptor ‘How do you see the evolving role of the male figure in today’s world?’

‘I am trying to work in the space between the standing of a statue and the object-nature of a sculpture asking what kind of job it can do. I’m interested in how we might project exactly those qualities of maleness and find them confounded. Speaking personally, I think that gender is something that is made, not given, and I think we are exploring what we mean by the various textures and complexions of masculinity.

I am attracted by the notion of the male who goes out against all odds and gets the bacon. As a model it doesn’t quite work any more, even though there are plenty of so-called alpha males out there. I think my nakedness, or the nakedness of my sculpture, is more to do with exposure than to do with sexuality, more about vulnerability than dominance.’

Arguably Gormley is proposing that his work is an examination of the masculine cliché of the dominant male who ‘gets the bacon’.

See more at: <http://newint.org/features/web-exclusive/2011/11/17/antony-gormley-interview/#sthash.snTdlNbX.dpuf>

<http://newint.org/features/web-exclusive/2011/11/17/antony-gormley-interview/>

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1. See ROLAND BARTHES, *Image Music Text,* trans. STEPHEN HEATH, Fontana Press, London 1977, p. 160 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)