



Irene Sieberger **The body as a site of personal experience: 'Bearing II' at the intersection of the self and the other**

The work of Antony Gormley occupies a singular position within contemporary sculpture, centred on the human body as both subject and site of experience. Since the late 1970s, Gormley has consistently redefined the role of sculpture, shifting its focus from representation towards an exploration of embodiment, perception and space. His works do not depict the body in a traditional sense but rather use it as a means to investigate the conditions of being, often engaging directly with the surrounding environment and the viewer's own physical presence.

For Antony Gormley, the body is a place of experience, memory, emotion and consciousness. He suggests that we are all living in a body always on the threshold of the unknown.

*Bearing II* celebrates the fact that bodies come out of other bodies. It has a sarcophagus-like lower body, and its stretching neck and head have disappeared inside a body that is crouching on the lower body's shoulders, looking up into the place of reproduction.

The sculpture prompts us to reflect on the relationship between original and copy, self and other, image and referent – explorations that extend beyond the artwork itself to broader processes of reproduction found in the biological world.

Gormley has said of the work, 'The history of the body in sculpture has always been from the outside, using it as a protagonist in a narrative. I want to make work starting from the inside, and so my sculptures all start from the subjective, first-hand experience of being within the body.' This inward perspective distinguishes his practice from traditional figurative sculpture and aligns it more closely with phenomenological inquiry.

Formally, *Bearing II* exemplifies Gormley's ability to translate complex conceptual concerns into a powerful sculptural language. The interlocking bodies create a structure that is at once grounded and unstable, evoking themes of dependence, transformation and continuity. The compressed and upward-reaching forms introduce a sense of tension between weight and aspiration, reinforcing the work's exploration of physical and psychological thresholds.

Another version of this work, *BEARING III*, was exhibited on the island of Delos in 2019, situating the series within a broader dialogue between sculpture, landscape and ancient history. Installed within a site of significant archaeological resonance, the work entered into a compelling conversation with questions of origin, ritual and human presence across time.

*Bearing II* stands as a compelling example of the artist's ongoing engagement with the body as a place, material and metaphor, offering a profound meditation on identity, relation and existence.

## 42 Antony Gormley

London 1950 – lives in London

"Bearing II". 1995

Cast iron. 230 × 95 × 73 cm (90 ½ × 37 ¾ × 28 ¾ in.).

Unique work. [3047]

Provenance

Private Collection, North Rhine-Westphalia  
(acquired in 1997 at White Cube Gallery, London)

EUR 250,000–350,000

USD 294,000–412,000

Exhibition

BODY. Sydney, The Art Gallery of New South Wales,  
1997, cat. no. 60, ill. p. 75

We would like to thank the Studio Antony Gormley, London,  
for kindly providing additional information.



Antony Gormley. "Bearing III". 1997. Installation view from the exhibition "Sight".  
Delos, Greece. 2019

