

SEANKELLY

“Antony Gormley.” *Sculpture Review*, Fall 2016.

SCULPTUREVIEW



the Rom Press”) by the Yiddish poet Avrom Sutzkever engraved on the surface.³ Letters are symbolic; words are symbolic; the material is symbolic, and each element carries abstract power beyond the literal meaning. In another reference to the awesome power of letters and words, Kogan recalls a World War II period during which the lead Hebrew letters used in typesetting had to be melted down to make bullets. *Yiddish* was commissioned by and installed on a specially prepared base at the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Massachusetts, in 2012.⁴

After earning her degree at the University of California, Davis, studying with Robert Arneson, Deborah Butterfield, Manuel Neri, and Wayne Thiebaud, **Babette Bloch** (b. 1956) enjoyed the spontaneity of working in clay for bronze sculptures in the early 1990s, but not the loss of control when surrendering models to the multiple stages of mold making and foundry work. In moving almost exclusively to stainless steel sheet metal, Bloch can plan and execute every phase from idea through drawings, paper models, creation of CAD programs, and collaboration with engineers and steel cutters on the way to obtaining precise laser and water jet cuts through thick plates of stainless steel to be welded into sculptures; for larger works and monuments like *Magna Steel Magnolia*, a 9-foot tall, 20-foot wide, 400-pound sculpture comprised of twelve sections installed at the Mattatuck Museum of Art in Waterbury, Connecticut.

Bloch consults structural engineers to ensure the long-term stability of her sculptures. Despite the density, hardness, and weight of stainless steel, Bloch’s cutting, shaping, burning, and grinding of the components produce a visual impression of ethereal weightlessness. The reflective properties of stainless steel allow her sculptures to interact with the changing character of light in the seasons and the times of day and night. They reflect colors and topography of their environments while the negative spaces of her cutout silhouettes become portals to the landscapes and patterns visible through



the voids. In her Vases series, Bloch creates floral arrangements in a range of scales, using industrial shaping machinery to sculpt three-dimensional works from marine-grade corrosion-resistant SAE 316 stainless steel. She paints some of them in subject-specific colors and designs others to relate arbitrarily with the colors of their environments. Other subject areas Bloch elaborates in stainless steel include liturgical and architectural themes, and representations of elements in sports and nature. Her 12-inch Babette’s *Menorah Puzzle* appeals to children and families with infinite arrangement possibilities and the congruent symbolism carried in the strength, durability, integrity, and beauty of stainless steel.

Charles Parks (1922–2012) created more than 290 sculptures in a variety of media over a long and successful career. Among his best-known works nationally and inter-

nationally are three stainless steel monuments to the Virgin Mary. In each of the three sculptures, Parks cast the head, neck, heart, and hands in stainless steel and fabricated the robes in strips of welded stainless steel. Information about why he chose stainless steel is not readily available, but it would be reasonable to suppose that he chose it for certain attributes associated with the Madonna: resistance to tarnish, the inherent radiance of stainless steel, and the ability of the colorless material to reflect the blue of the sky—a color associated with traditional depictions of her robes and symbolic of her protection.

British sculptor Sir **Antony Gormley** (b. 1950) confesses to an obsession for exploring the body as a place rather than simply an object, and for reconciling the body’s space with space at large. He has produced works in that theme in other metals and media, and in four different ferric alloys—Cor-Ten steel, stainless steel, cast iron, and mild steel. In *Construct*, Gormley’s fifth solo show at Sean Kelly Gallery in New York City, the artist introduced five new works that deconstruct and reassemble interior volumes of the human body.

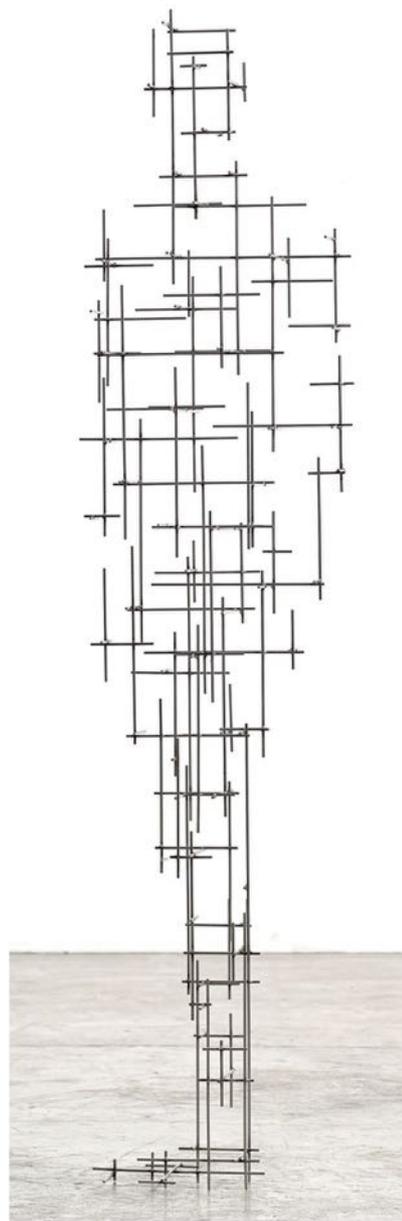
Made in his London studio at 1.5



times life size, the new sculptures are constructed of mild steel bar, weighing in at 8 tons each. Gormley reconfigures the human body in architectural idiom, breaking anatomy down into a complex system of interlocking beams and investigating the relationship between man and the man-made environment. Gormley has posed the figures in unstable moments of repose. *Big Yield* is a standing figure, bent forward at the waist and elbows, with hands on head, looking ready to tip forward. *Big Skew* is a figure with head and back on the floor; hips, legs, and feet raised upward and a little forward in a modified headstand. Mild steel has a light-absorbing quality similar to Cor-Ten, giving the five sculptures a dark countenance despite the playfulness of their unstable poses. For *Scaffold*, Gormley chose 1/64th-inch square-section stainless steel bar to construct a nearly transparent figure composed of thin, delicate-looking, but strong components, achieving a barely there apparition of a man standing in restful motionlessness.

Gormley used Cor-Ten steel for his 1998 monument, *Angel of the North*, a permanent installation near Gateshead, England. Standing 65-feet tall with a wingspan of 177 feet, the 200-ton ANGEL is mounted on 500 tons of concrete foundations in a mound made from destroyed remains of the Lower Tyne Colliery, the now-closed coal mine, which for three hundred years previously had supported the region.

Adi Yogi: The Abode of Yoga, a two-level, 30,000 square-foot, dome-shaped structure was built for meditation at the Isha Institute of Inner Sciences on the Cumberland Plateau near McMinnville, Tennessee. Consecrated by Sadhguru, a realized yogi, mystic, and founder of the Isha Foundation, it is a powerful energy source open to all who seek to elevate their consciousness and know yoga as an inner experience beyond knowledge, philosophy, or technique. The most prominent feature of the Abode is a 21-foot-tall steel sculp-



ture depicting the visage of Adi Yogi, the first yogi, who offered the science of yoga to the world more than 5,000 years ago. Conceptualized by Sadhguru, the statue was fabricated by a team of volunteer engineers and sculptors in India. The face and ears are sand-cast steel; all the other elements are fabricated from steel plate segments. Three-dimensional modeling software was used to create the overall form; the neck, shoulders, and chest were made by dividing the figure's outer profile into two-dimensional strips using a laser-cutting system. Cladding was accomplished by heating the plate to 1632 degrees F, positioning it on the two-dimensional grid, and hammering it into shape. The plates were welded from the inside and outside, then chased by grinding. A pattern for the face was made with a 4-axis milling machine. Twelve thousand pounds of molten steel were poured into the mold to achieve a 2-inch thickness. The mask and hair were fixed with bilateral welding and grinding. The earrings were cast in copper; the snake and crescent moon were die-cut and fabricated from 1/16th inch copper sheet. The same Indian team that was responsible for this 21-foot tall statue is currently creating the first of four 112-foot tall portrait heads of Adi Yogi, which will be consecrated in February of 2017. Steel has been chosen over bronze as the primary medium for the monument for technical, financial, and aesthetic reasons.

Opposite page, top: *Big Pluck 2* by Antony Gormley (2016) mild steel bar, 9-1/2 feet high; **bottom:** *Big Skew* by Antony Gormley (2015) mild steel bar, 85 inches high. **On this page, top:** *Scaffold* by Antony Gormley (2015), 5/32 inch square section stainless steel bar, 78 inches high; **bottom:** *Big Yield* by Antony Gormley (2015), mild steel bar, 86-1/4 inches high.