



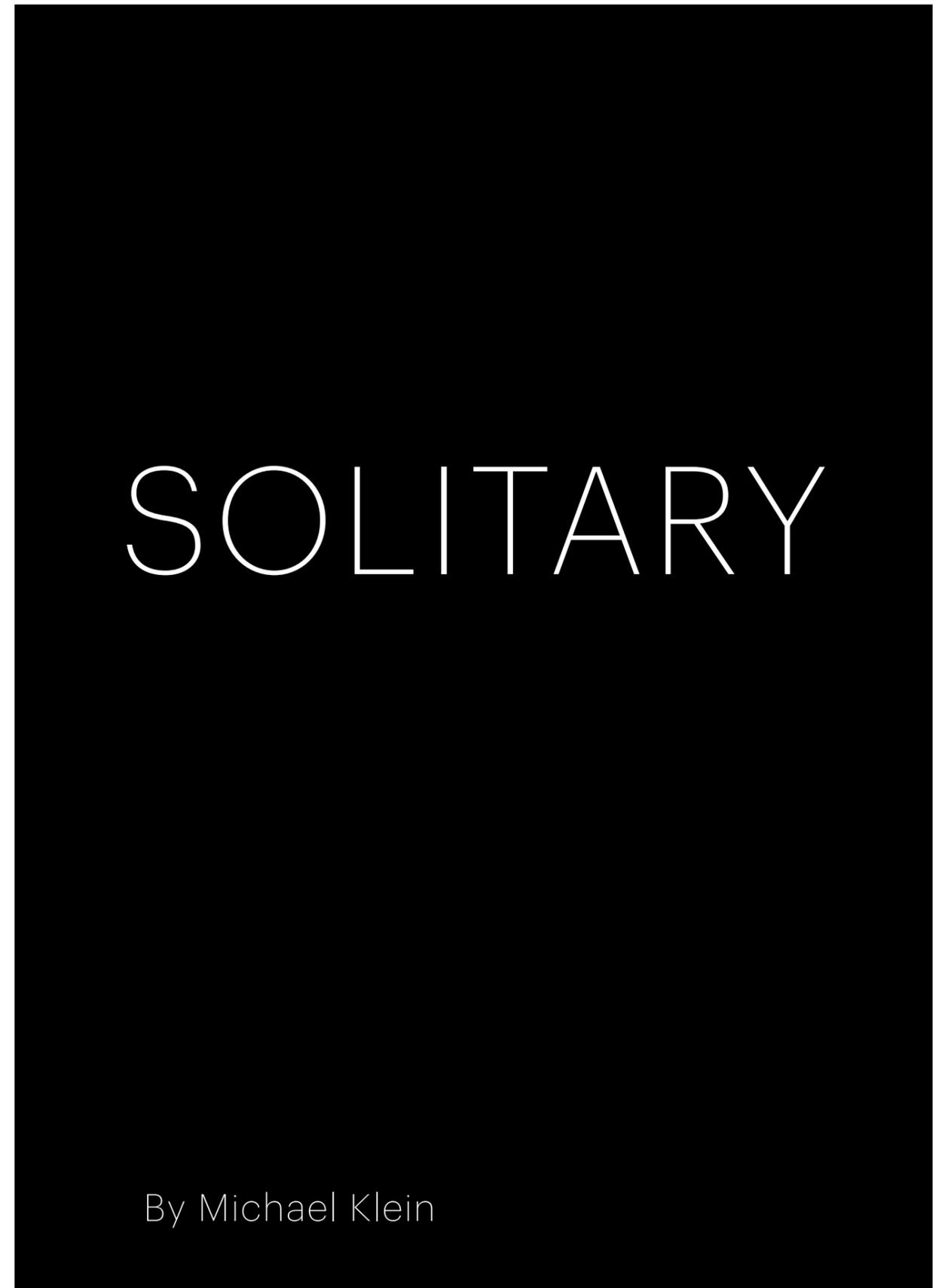
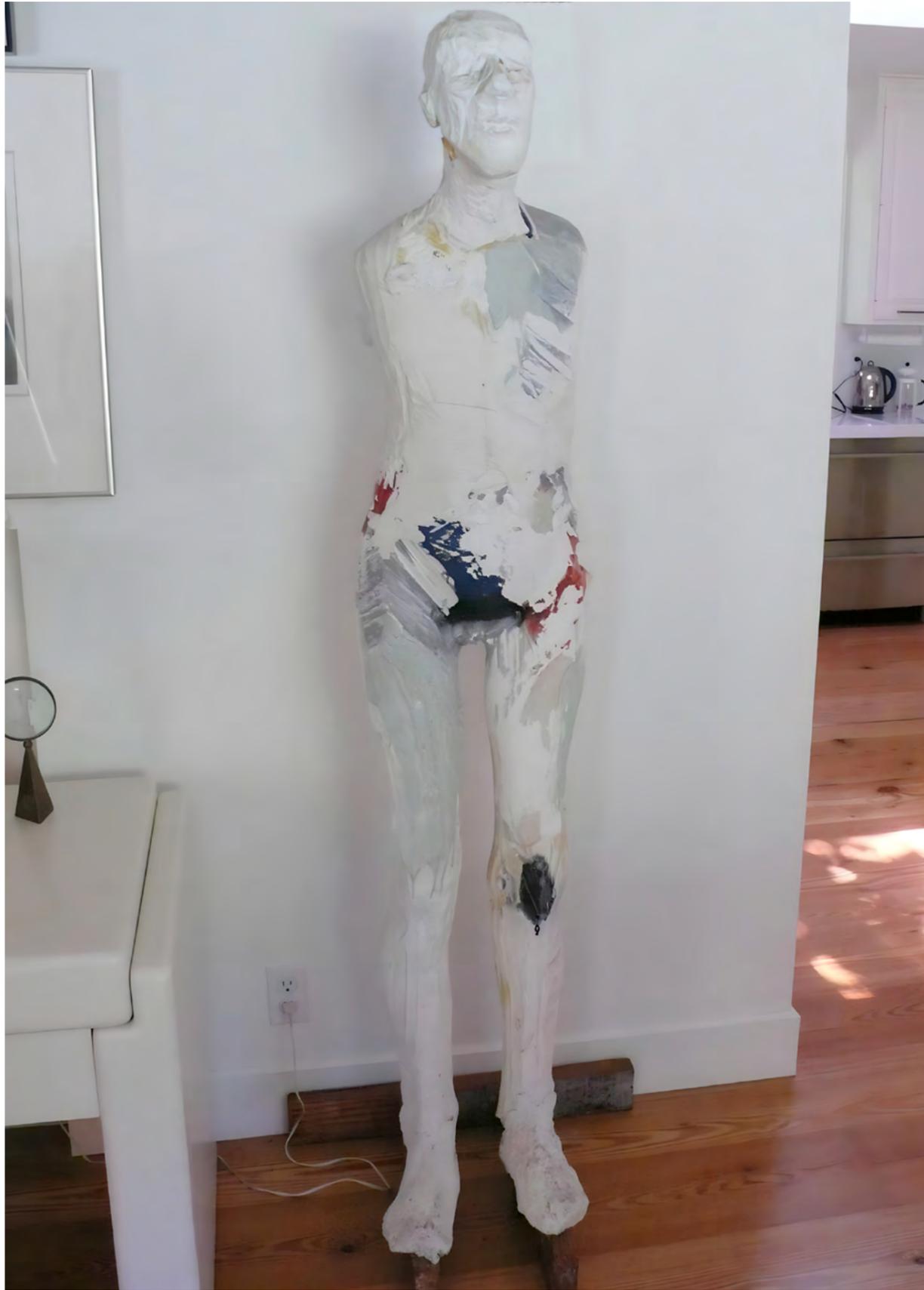
Art Talk Magazine

MARIA SUKKAR

**“INSECURITIES OF
EXISTENCE”**

When Art Looks for Answers
Around Us and Within Us

DECEMBER 2022





SOLITARY : Five Sculptors

Seems fitting that the isolated male figure is both a theme in art and also a symbol of the crisis now facing us all worldwide. While it of course has its roots in antiquity now to see it and to think about it as the new role we all must play in order to stay alive? Social distance is to 2020 what Windows 98 was to the world three decades ago: it marks the time ; it is the phrase that will bring back memories and events years from now. These artists touched on something when they envisioned the lone figure.

We once called them statues, single figures on horseback or carrying a flag or a statesman at his podium. that notion gave way to the of s figure as a representation less of a specific being or task than a mood, a notion, a memory or an ideal. Many were made to commemorate an event or a person fashioned in a very academic conservative style with an eye to detail and symbol.

By the 19th century the nature of such works gave way to the more emotional and psychologically reasoned works of Degas and Rodin. The sculptural figure was to be interpreted not simply copied or re-formed in stone or bronze.

Today the figurative nature of the work is foremost only seconded with the materials used to express the artist's idea: plaster, wood even cloth. Each work suggests a narrative or exists as part of a larger narrative that either is suggested or interpreted by the artist or is interpreted by the audience. These figures don't generally suggest anyone in particular they are general observations about man. The focus can be on the male form itself , character or style. Man in the 20th and 21st century is defined by

action and deed and not word or decree. Solitary : A man made condition exemplified by these five sculptors. Each an interpretation of that sense of singleness and individuality. Each made in a specific way that augments the idea of who the figure is.

These five figures made over a period of some 60 years represent a common theme, the free standing man. Each comes as a finished work in plaster as is the untitled figure by Neri , or the metal skin of Antony Gormley's work Men welded sewn or cast into being and each being describes a different mood and sentiment . King's man looks like someone at the office party ; while Munoz figure are actually two carrying the oversized head as if acting in a play. Simon on the other hand draws his Headstand carving from two important sources Caravaggio and Max Beckmann. How timely these figures appear in a world in which for our own safety and protection we must remain in solitude.

Manuel Neri (Cover Image, 1964) is an American artist best known for his uniquely painterly figurative sculpture. A member of the "second generation" of Bay Area Figurative Movement, Neri was a prominent figure in the San Francisco art scene for many years' initially working with junk materials such as wire and cardboard, Neri moved towards figurative sculpture crafted mainly in plaster. His primary subjects are life-sized women applied with brightly-colored paint, often texturing the surfaces of his sculptures with scratches and gouge.

Juan Munoz (Image opposite page, 1993) Although he was influenced by, respectively, the drama of American minimalism and the poetry of Italian Arte Povera, Muñoz consistently went his own way,

at a tangent to fashionable movements. How unlikely it was that a young Spanish artist in the early 1980s would announce himself with a sculpture of a minaret, placed temporarily in the Plaza de Toros in Malaga.

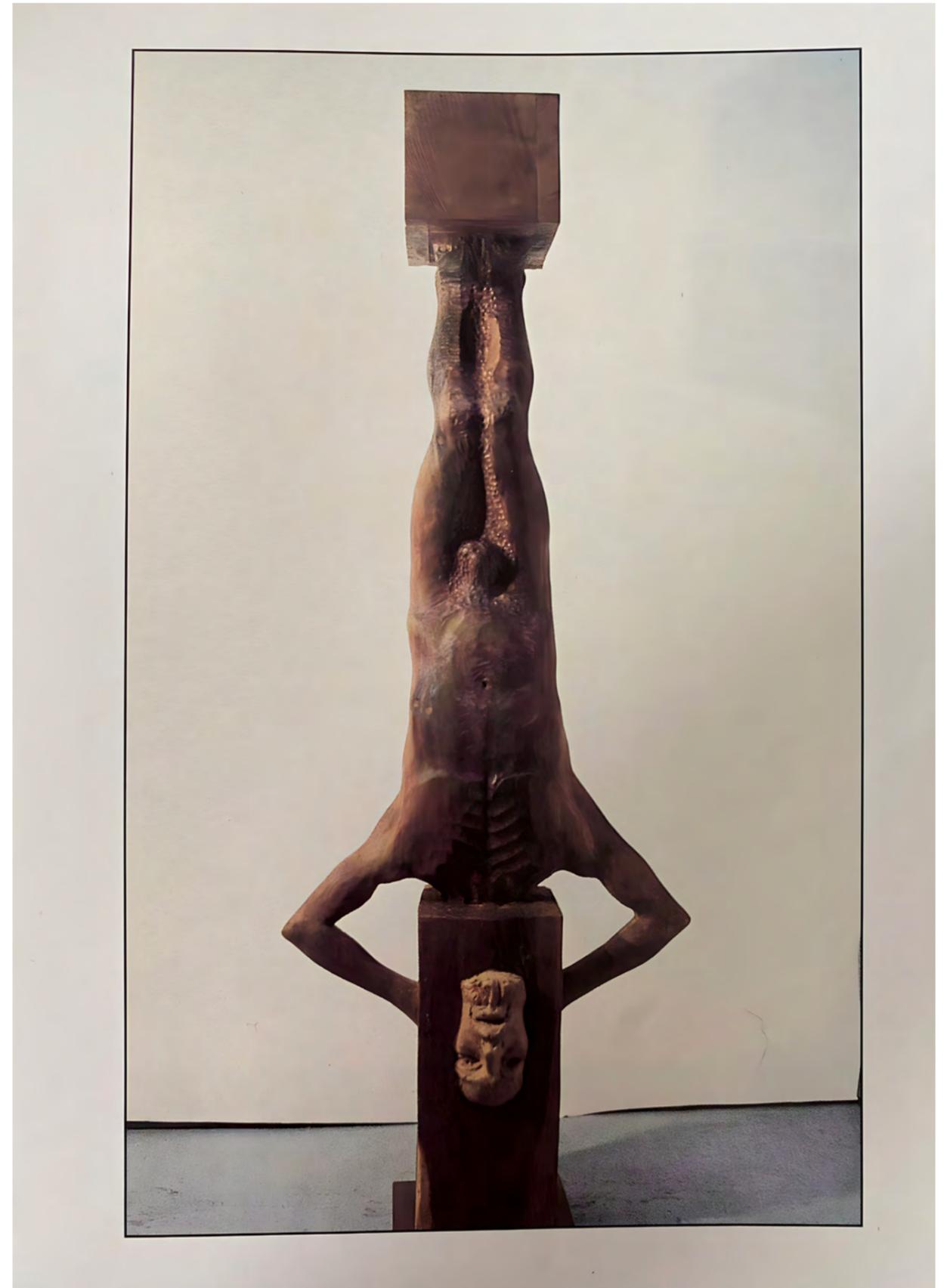
With Muñoz, even a walk down the street became a performance, a game. He understood that sculpture, far from standing alone or aloof, only made sense in human terms. Or rather, that what made sculpture interesting was its relation to the world about it, the lives we lead. He understood the potential, and the enigma, of the simplest human gesture. In many ways, much of his work looked old fashioned in its concentration on the human form, and in the use of such motifs as the ballerina, the dwarf - simple human presences.

Adrian Searle, The Guardian August 30th

Sidney Simon (Opposite page: Headstand)

Sculptor Sidney Simon, founding member of Skohegan, is a man of many mediums. Carves wood, casts bronze, shapes terra, builds mixed media constructions and does large commission works for public spaces. Simon is a thinker. His art is both abstract and figurative but there seems to be always a story.

Debbie Forman, Capeweek, Cape Cod



William King (Image: below)

King arrived in New York from Florida in the '40s, when his contemporaries were expressionistically splattering, streaking, and staining enormous abstractions. Figurative painting and sculpture were much out of favor. Nevertheless, King—who studied at Cooper Union and in

Rome as a Fulbright Scholar—had his work acquired early on by the Guggenheim, Hirshhorn, Metropolitan, and Whitney museums. Clearly they recognized his unflinching, Daumier-like eye for the vagaries of human behavior and his rogue to romantic sensibilities. The Brooklyn Rail Feb, 2014



Antony Gormley (Image below)

Throughout his career Gormley's work has been intimately concerned with the human body in general and his own in particular. He is a trim 6'4" tall and in his new, purpose-built King's Cross studio, he is surrounded by dozens of similarly sized versions of himself. There are heavy casts of his body in various poses, pixelated versions comprised of hundreds of blocks of metal and violent

swirls of steel rods, at the heart of which is a body-shaped void...."I've never been interested in making statues," he says. "But I have been interested in asking what is the nature of the space a human being inhabits. What I try to show is the space where the body was, not to represent the body itself." Nicholas Wroe., The Guardian ,June 2005

