A statement of place. Walking in and out of Trinity daily, across the backs and the bridge, I see Gormley’s sculpture twice. Once leaving. Once returning. It is the first thing I see outside of my room in the morning, and the last thing I see in the already dark, or lingering amber, of the evening. Initially, I was bewildered. Gormley belongs to concrete jungles and motorways; where park railings rust. I come from Gormley’s places. Everyone does. Not Trinity. Trinity was supposed to be a magical academic fun fair, where Newton still sat under apple trees, and Byron’s bear juggled with heavy bound philosophical treatises to Wittgenstein’s amusement. To me, Trinity was a place outside of time. Undoubtedly, it was a surprise to cross over the river, one morning, and see hard-hatted, hi-vis workmen altering a riverscape, on which, I imagined, scarcely a blade of grass had moved since the beginning of time.

Of course, the view of the sculpture I see most often is the photograph on the Trinity College home page. Articles advertise the sculpture’s arrival and this competition: the sculpture looms impressively large, set against the parallel lines and clockwork geometry of the Wren Library. This is what I see coming home. Lines on architectural lines make for a static regularity, which allows the form of the sculpture’s composite cuboids to far overwhelm the fluidity of the overall shape. Against the pale beige of the Library, the rust looks redder. It seems to represent the attachment to Logic, with a capital L, for which Trinity is not only famous but infamous. Yet, if I force myself to glance up from my determined march towards the Sidgwick site in the morning, the object apparent is different. Backed up by rows of lean trees, and the lawn’s promise of summer days, the sculpture is infinitely more forgiving. Rust somehow muted by the brown of the trees, and form elongated, it no longer seems like a top-heavy crescendo. It is not a natural looking object, but it finds greater elegance – the form appears freer – in the view less seen.

What I have come to admire Gormley’s sculpture for is an incredible dynamic that negotiates both these interpretations. From different perspectives, at opposite ends of my day, the sculpture represents both rigorous geometry and liberated artistic line. These two states cannot contradict each other, because they are at one in the same three dimensions. Rather than an oppositional binary, then, the sculpture presents flux between two poles, two ideas and two sides of the bridge. In this respect, it opens up the opportunity for subjective re-evaluation and change, within a structure that seems to adhere to objective and unchanging principles. It is simultaneously static and fluid, bound to and unbound from its own physicality by its surroundings. Rightly or wrongly, I interpret an optimism from this sculpture, that does not speak to an immortal institution, but rather one conscious of its own necessarily mobile and developing nature.

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