

Andrew Chadwick

'Shelter' adapts the modular geometry of Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome to create a space for one. The work is a retreat from the world in which an individual is able to feel cocooned and protected. 'Shelter' is a space which offers a temporary freedom from productive activity, where we are able to expand our imagination. For Chadwick, it should be viewed as a mental laboratory space for an individual to generate ideas. Whilst appearing functionless (in the artist's words, it is "a sculpture, not a 'useful' space") 'Shelter' is a room clearly set aside for contemplation. Chadwick's central aim is "to build a private thinking space: an empty space in which to focus". His title directs us towards generic ideas of dwelling: it leaves open the range of associations we are able to bring.

Rather than taking the same starting points as artists like Liam Gillick, Chadwick adopts an alternative tack. Both artists adapt modernist structures to examine the ideologies that underpin them. Both twist their modernist predecessors' logic, to create new ideas by re-using or quoting existing forms. Both combine architecture and installation. But whereas Gillick adapts the cubic geometry and manufactured materials of minimal art, Chadwick's aesthetic is twisted, lo-fi, home-made. Gillick's works frequently have titles such as 'Discussion Island': each work is a 'forum' – a place for public debate – alighting on the Socratic idea that public good arises from dialogue. Chadwick's works by contrast are spaces for solitude; they are 'temples' for reflection rather than fora. They invite contemplation rather than exchange. The artist cites Buckminster Fuller's 1969 book 'Utopia or Oblivion' as inspiration: "the least favorable environment for study is a school... Einstein didn't sit in Grand Central Station to study math: he went into seclusion to study, as does any logical human, in his private study or laboratory." In part, 'Shelter' arose from the lack of private space in any densely populated city; it is intended to be endlessly adaptable and a problematically 'democratic' form of art. Chadwick believes that artists should generate ideas which are like 'open source' software, online, free for all. Accordingly, 'Shelter' is crafted from cheap, easily sourced and functional materials which are strong and durable. Its' idiosyncratic form is intended to signify a homemade, "semi-naïve approach" to design, highlighting it can be remade by each viewer. The triangular geometry certainly recalls Buckminster Fuller at first glance, though the irregular overall shape is akin to a distorted, lumpen igloo or shed rather than a dome, which would have spiritual overtones. Both Chadwick's distortion of Buckminster Fuller's 'pure' geometry and his low-tech, provisional materials are crucial: they represent the twisting of modernist ideals after Fuller into other forms, other directions. Indeed, 'Shelter's closest cousins are the low-tech, semi-disposable homes constructed by the failed artists' commune 'Drop City' in the 1970s, rather than the utopian, universal solutions often imagined as the future during the 1960s.