

RA

Royal Academy of Arts

Antony Gormley

Antony Gormley

Main Galleries

21 September – 3 December 2019

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In September 2019, the Royal Academy of Arts will present a solo exhibition of the internationally acclaimed British sculptor Antony Gormley (b. 1950), the most significant in the UK for over a decade. The exhibition will bring together both existing and especially conceived new works for the occasion, from drawings and sculptures to experiential environments, that will take on the RA's Main Galleries across all 13 rooms.

Gormley sees the exhibition as a 'test site'; engaging the senses, employing scale, darkness and light, and using elemental, organic and industrial materials. The works will interact with the Beaux-Arts galleries, creating a series of distinct encounters that will come together as a collective experience. It will be a summation of Gormley's enduring concern with the inner dark space of the body itself and the body's relation to its surroundings: the body *as* space and the body *in* space. Gormley said, "there is no subject until the viewer arrives and begins to engage."

The first work, *Iron Baby*, 1999, will be encountered in the Annenberg Courtyard. This life-size form of a new-born baby in cast iron will be tiny within the scale of the courtyard, suggesting human vulnerability but also the vigour of life.

In the galleries, early, rarely-exhibited works from the late 1970s and early 1980s will show the experimental origins of Gormley's practice, with links to Land Art, Performance and Minimalism. Works featured will include *Land, Sea and Air*, 1977-79 and *Fruits of the Earth*, 1978-79 in which natural and man-made objects are wrapped in lead. This process of encasing objects in lead evolved into Gormley's well-known 'body case' sculptures, from the 1980s onwards, which use the artist's own body as a tool, material and subject. There will be a series of concrete works from the 1990s including *Flesh*, 1990 (Duerckheim Collection). Each volume contains the body form as a void in a position that tests the enclosing mass. The interior is only visible through the hands, feet or head that break the surface of the block.

The exhibition will draw the visitor into a series of whole-room installations, some reconfigured especially for the RA's galleries, and invite them to actively engage with their bodies as they navigate

the space. *Lost Horizon I*, 2008 (PinchukArtCentre, Kiev, Ukraine) will feature 24 cast iron figures set in different orientations on every wall, floor and ceiling, challenging the perception of which way is up. *Clearing VII*, 2019 will consist of kilometres of coiled, flexible aluminium tubing arcing from floor to ceiling and wall to wall; a 'drawing in space' which encircles the visitor. *Matrix III*, 2019 will take over the largest gallery: a cloud of intersecting rectangular dark steel mesh suspended above head height, each encasing a space equivalent to the average size of a European bedroom. For Gormley, it is "the ghost of the environment that we've all chosen to accept as our primary habitat" and a work that continues critical dialogue with perception, "by constructing an optical maze in which it is impossible to reconcile foreground, mid-ground and background."

Host, 2019 will fill an entire gallery to a depth of 23cm with a vast expanse of seawater and clay, evoking the depths from which life emerged, it offers a confrontation with elemental substance, an experience that changes as the hours of autumn daylight diminish. Since the work was conceived in 1997 it has only been exhibited three times and this is the first time it will be shown in the UK. At the centre of the exhibition in the Central Hall will be two of Gormley's early 'expansion' works; *Body* and *Fruit*, both from 1991-3. These imposing hollow pieces expand the form of the body to create objects that have the characteristics of both bomb and fruit. Each weighing several tonnes, the works will hover centimetres from the floor.

Alongside sculpture, there will be a rich selection of works on paper, many of them using unusual materials such as crude oil, earth and blood. For Gormley, drawing is a core, everyday activity that runs parallel to his sculpture, exploring the same concerns through different means. This is a rare opportunity to see significant early drawings such as *Mould*, 1981 (Private Collection). Other key series represented include the *Body and Light* drawings made with carbon and casein, the *Linseed Oil Works* (1985-1990) such as *Double Moment*, 1987, and the *Red Earth* drawings (1987-1998). An accompanying display of Gormley's workbooks will reveal the artist's continual investigation of ideas that lead to the sculptural works.

Antony Gormley will follow in the Royal Academy's tradition of celebrating its Royal Academicians, continuing a strand of programming that showcases some of the most important living artists in the world including David Hockney, Anselm Kiefer, Ai Weiwei and the forthcoming exhibition of Marina Abramović.

Biography

Antony Gormley is widely acclaimed for his sculptures, installations and public artworks that investigate the relationship of the human body to space. His work has developed the potential opened up by sculpture since the 1960s through a critical engagement with both his own body and those of others in a way that confronts fundamental questions of where human beings stand in relation to nature and the cosmos. Gormley continually tries to identify the space of art as a place of becoming in which new behaviours, thoughts and feelings can arise. Gormley's work has been widely exhibited throughout the UK and internationally with exhibitions at Uffizi Gallery, Florence (2019); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia (2019); Kettle's Yard, Cambridge (2018); Long Museum, Shanghai (2017); National Portrait Gallery, London (2016); Forte di Belvedere, Florence (2015); Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern (2014); Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia (2012); Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (2012); The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg

(2011); Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria (2010); Hayward Gallery, London (2007); Malmö Konsthall, Sweden (1993) and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark (1989). He has also participated in major group shows such as the Venice Biennale (1982 and 1986) and Documenta 8, Kassel, Germany (1987). Permanent public works include the *Angel of the North* (Gateshead, England), *Another Place* (Crosby Beach, England), *Inside Australia* (Lake Ballard, Western Australia), *Exposure* (Lelystad, The Netherlands) and *Chord* (MIT – Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, USA.) Gormley was awarded the Turner Prize in 1994, the South Bank Prize for Visual Art in 1999, the Bernhard Heiliger Award for Sculpture in 2007, the Obayashi Prize in 2012 and the Praemium Imperiale in 2013. In 1997 he was made an Officer of the British Empire (OBE) and was made a knight in the New Year's Honours list in 2014. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, an Honorary Doctor of the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Trinity and Jesus Colleges, Cambridge. Gormley has been a Royal Academician since 2003. Antony Gormley was born in London in 1950.

Organisation

The exhibition is organised by the Royal Academy of Arts, London. It is curated by Martin Caiger-Smith, Head of the *MA Curating the Art Museum* at the Courtauld Institute, London and author of major monograph *Antony Gormley* (Rizzoli, 2017) with Sarah Lea, Curator at the Royal Academy of Arts.

Catalogue

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, published by the Royal Academy, with contributions from Martin Caiger-Smith, Priyamvada Natarajan, Michael Newman and Jeanette Winterson.

Dates and Opening Hours

Press View: Tuesday 17 September 2019, 10am-2pm
Open to public: Saturday 21 September – Tuesday 3 December 2019
10am – 6pm daily (last admission 5.30pm)
Late night opening: Fridays until 10pm (last admission 9.30pm)

Admission

Prices will range from £18 - £22 (£20 - 24.50 including Gift Aid donation). Concessions available; under 16s go free; Friends of the RA go free.

BNP Paribas AccessArt25

The BNP Paribas AccessArt25 programme will offer 3,000 young people, aged 17 to 25, free access over the course of three specially-curated evenings: Monday 14 October, Monday 18 November and Monday 25 November 2019, 6.30-9.30pm.

Tickets

Tickets are available daily at the RA or by visiting www.royalacademy.org.uk.

Group bookings: Groups of 10+ are asked to book in advance. Telephone 020 7300 8027 or email adultgroups@royalacademy.org.uk.

For further information on all ticket options visit: roy.ac/gormley-tickets

Images

Publicity images for *Antony Gormley* can be obtained from Picselect, the Press Association's image service for press use. Please register at www.picselect.com and once registered go to the Royal Academy folder in the Arts section of Picselect.

BNP Paribas

As the bank for a changing world, BNP Paribas advocates the important role that the arts play in shaping how we interpret society. We are therefore proud to support *Antony Gormley* at the Royal Academy of Arts, the most significant exhibition of his work in the UK for more than a decade.

"As we approach our 20th year of support for the Royal Academy of Arts, we believe it is more important than ever that great contemporary art should be accessible for all. That is why we launched the BNP Paribas *AccessArt25* programme. We look forward to welcoming thousands of young people through the doors of this incredible institution, free of charge, to experience an exhibition by one of Britain's foremost contemporary artists." Anne Marie Verstraeten, UK Country Head, BNP Paribas.

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Web: www.bnpparibas.com; www.bnpparibas.co.uk

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About the Royal Academy of Arts

The Royal Academy of Arts was founded by King George III in 1768. It has a unique position in being an independent, privately funded institution led by eminent artists and architects whose purpose is to be a clear, strong voice for art and artists. Its public programme promotes the creation, enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education and debate.

The Royal Academy launched a new campus as part of the celebrations of its 250th anniversary year in 2018. Following a transformative redevelopment, designed by the internationally-acclaimed architect Sir David Chipperfield RA and supported by the National Lottery, the new Royal Academy of Arts reveals more of the elements that make the RA unique – sharing with the public historic treasures from its Collection, the work of its Royal Academicians and the Royal Academy Schools, and its role as a centre for learning and debate about art and architecture – alongside its world-class exhibitions programme. Royalacademy.org.uk

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