

ANTONY GORMLEY

ESSERE, UFFIZI GALLERIES, FLORENCE, ITALY

Can an object be the catalyst for new thoughts and behaviours?'

This exhibition, showing from 26 February until 26 May 2019, brings together works of different materials and scales that explore the body in space and the body as space. There are 13 works in the expansive new ground floor gallery, where natural light will play into 12 discrete vaulted spaces defined by six stone columns and no internal walls. Two further works are placed in the context of the historic collection and another is installed on the parapet of the Loggia dei Lanzi.

At the core of the show there is a dialogue between two sculptures made 35 years apart: both deal with the space of the body. *PASSAGE* (2016) - a 12 metre-long Corten steel tunnel in human form allows viewers to enter, and *ROOM* (1980) - a set of the artist's clothes cut into a continuous 8 millimetre wide ribbon expanded into an enclosure 6 metres square, keeps them out. The show is predicated on these two works and the dialogue between stasis and movement: imaginative and actual space.

Antony Gormley states: 'I use the indexical impression of my own living body rather than mimesis to make work that both displaces and encloses, to engage and activate attention.' There are a number of specially made new works in the exhibition, including *VEER II* (2018) - a three-dimensional lifesize cast iron evocation of a tense nervous system at the core of the body, and *BREATHE* (2018) - a large lead-covered 'Expansion Work' that applies the cosmic principles of the Big Bang to the singularity of a subjective body. Examples of the 'bodyforms' *ANOTHER TIME* (2007) and *EVENT HORIZON* (2012) are in the exhibition: one is placed amongst the classical sculptures on the piano nobile and the other is installed outdoors looking out over Piazza della Signoria towards Brunelleschi's dome. A third intervention in the historic collection is a dialogue between a Roman sleeping Hermaphrodite and Antony Gormley's floor-hugging 'Blockwork', *SETTLEMENT IV* (2018), in a room all of their own.

Departing from ideas about an exhibition as a space for aesthetic contemplation or the enjoyment of narrative or representation, the show invites our active participation as connectors between defined objects and open space in which mass and void, dark and light, hard and soft, engage the viewer's presence in space.
