

National Trust Press Release

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Local volunteers welcome 40,000 clay figures as Antony Gormley's 'Field for the British Isles' arrives at Barrington Court

28 April – 27 August 2012 - Trust New Art with the Arts Council Collection

This spring and summer, three rooms at Barrington Court will be filled with Antony Gormley's acclaimed work *Field for the British Isles*, consisting of 40,000 small clay figures.

Barrington Court in Somerset is one of five National Trust properties around the country to be chosen to exhibit a special selection of works on loan from the Arts Council Collection, the largest loan collection of modern and contemporary British art in the world, as part of the Trust New Art programme.

Barrington Court is normally empty of furniture and the three ground floor rooms will be transformed by the presence of the exhibition of Antony Gormley's work.

This is the first time that *Field for the British Isles* has been spread through three rooms.

Antony Gormley is one of Britain's foremost sculptors, his most famous work being the Angel of the North in Gateshead. His work frequently uses human figures, including several involving life sized cast iron figures.

Barrington Court is no stranger to contemporary art, but *Field for the British Isles* is by far the most ambitious project to have been brought to the National Trust house.

Talking about *Field* coming to Somerset Antony Gormley said: "*Field for the British Isles* has been in the Arts Council Collection for years and has been seen in varied venues. I hope that at Barrington the impression that the work could go on forever as it reaches into inaccessible places works, so that it appears to have flooded the space. It's good that the Trust commissions and shows new art. All art was contemporary once."

Sonja Power, Barrington Court's House and Collections Manager said. "The figures won't just fill the rooms, they flow across them from wall to wall," said "The house is normally empty spaces – now it has been brought to life by thousands and thousands of tiny people. We have had contemporary art at Barrington before but this is an entirely different scale. Even with the rest of the house still empty, it will make people look at Barrington in a very different way – and respond to Gormley's installation in a new way as well."

In keeping with the artist's instructions, the installation will be set up by local people from across Somerset, who will be working with a team from the Arts Council Collection. Eight of the volunteers involved have been recruited from SCAT (Somerset College of Art and Technology). The Fine Art degree students all of them have a specific interest in installation and sculptural practice. Other volunteers work for South Somerset District Council's arts and cultural unit while others volunteer already for the Trust at Barrington Court.

"Having local community involvement is integral to this work," explained Paul Howard, who is managing in the installation for the National Trust.

"The figures were each made by the local community on Merseyside and here it is the people of Somerset who will be placing them in Barrington. Each figure is obviously hand made, very simple and yet they look back at you as you look into the rooms – and make the rooms feel so very

different. They invade the rooms with their presence but also occupy the minds of those who see the installation, often creating an unexpected reaction.”

Antony Gormley said: “*Field* was my first collaborative work. The concept was mine, but it could not have been made without the help of many people. The instructions to create the work are very simple. You sit on the floor. You take a ball of clay from a pile. With your clay, you create a “body” in the space between your hands. You allow it to stand up, and make it conscious by giving it eyes with the point of a sharpened pencil. That repeated action of taking a hand-sized ball of clay, squeezing it between your hands, standing it up and giving it consciousness becomes meditative, the repeated action becoming almost like breathing, or a heartbeat.”

The figures were made by a community of families in St Helens, Merseyside, and Gormley won the Turner Prize in 1994 for his 1993 exhibition at Tate Liverpool which included *Field*. It has taken five days to set up the installation at Barrington Court.

Caroline Douglas, Head of the Arts Council Collection, said: “The Arts Council Collection has always been committed to showing works in the widest possible range of public buildings across the UK. We are delighted to be working with Barrington Court to bring *Field for the British Isles* to a new audience as part of the Trust New Art initiative.”

In addition to hosting the exhibition, Barrington Court will be running workshops for school groups and visitors who will make their own figures at the property.

Trust New Art is the National Trust's 3-year programme in partnership with the Arts Council England to promote contemporary and modern art in its historic places. *Field for the British Isles* has been loaned by the Arts Council Collection, as part of a new collaboration with the National Trust which will see five sites in the Trust's care show modern and contemporary works from the Collection in selections that resonate with each site's history and unique character.

Field for the British Isles will be at Barrington Court from 28 April to 27 August 2012. For opening times and other information telephone 01460 241938 or visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk

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Notes to editors

About Trust New Art

Trust New Art is the National Trust's contemporary art and craft programme taking place at selected historic houses, countryside and garden properties across England. It connects more people to National Trust places through contemporary art and craft. It has been developed as part of a partnership with Arts Council England with the aim of building links between the National Trust and the contemporary arts and craft sector.

Trust New Art involves a wide programme of events, projects and products developed to make contemporary arts and crafts an integral part of the National Trust's daily offer to visitors, building new audiences and providing commission opportunities to both emerging and established artists. For more information visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk/trustnewart

The Arts Council Collection

The Arts Council Collection, which is run by Southbank Centre on behalf of Arts Council England, is one of Britain's foremost national collections of post-war British Art. As a collection 'without walls', it has no permanent gallery; it can be seen on long term loan to museums, galleries, schools, hospitals, colleges and charitable associations and in touring exhibitions and displays at home and abroad. It is also, importantly, the most widely circulated and easily accessible collection of its kind, with nearly 8000 works available for loan. Established in 1946 to promote and enrich knowledge of contemporary art, the Collection continues to acquire works by artists, many at an early stage of their career, living and working in Britain and to foster the widest possible access to modern and contemporary across the UK. For further information please visit www.artscouncilcollection.org.uk.