

# ANTONY GORMLEY HUMAN

Florence, Forte di Belvedere  
26 April 2015 – 27 September 2015

Exhibition promoted by the Comune di Firenze

Organised by Mus.e  
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Artistic Supervision by Sergio Risaliti  
Curated by Arabella Natalini and Sergio Risaliti

From 26 April, Florence will host the work of Antony Gormley, one of the most acclaimed sculptors working today. The exhibition *Human* follows on from the success of exhibitions by Zhang Huan, which marked the reopening of the Forte di Belvedere in 2013 and Giuseppe Penone in 2014. Curated by Sergio Risaliti and Arabella Natalini, *Human* brings together over one hundred works by Gormley in the inner rooms of the villa, the bastions, the staircases and the terraces, to occupy every side of the 16<sup>th</sup> century fortress with its extraordinary views over the city and the surrounding hills.

The exhibition includes the artist's seminal installation *Critical Mass*, an "anti-monument evoking all the victims of the 20<sup>th</sup> century". The work was originally conceived for a disused tram depot in Vienna in 1995, to "activate the whole building and make it a site of reflection on the dark side of German history". On view on the lower terrace of the Forte, *Critical Mass* acquires a new potency in relation to a renaissance city, the history of humanism and the continuing and ever-present relationship between money, militarism and power. Gormley states:

*"On the lower terrace, twelve body forms are installed in a linear progression, from foetal to stargazing positions, recalling the 'ascent of man'. Opposite, on the western side is a jumbled pile of the same bodies. Here, abandoned manufactured iron objects, each ten times the specific gravity of a living human body, reflect the shadow side of any idea of human progress, confronting the viewer with an image redolent of the conflict of the past century. This dialectic between aspirational and abject is the tension that runs throughout the exhibition."*

The more naturalistic figures of *Critical Mass*, derived from moulds taken directly from the artist's body, are in dialogue with recent works collectively known as 'Blockworks', which reveal human anatomy through architectural volumes. Each sculpture is positioned to resonate with the scale and mass of the Forte. In the artist's own words:

*"The Forte is an extraordinary example of terraforming: a natural hill transformed by Ferdinando de' Medici into an artefact. It has a long association with contemporary art and has often been used as a monumental context for monumental works. Rather than attempt to insert works that try to match the scale of the site, I have chosen to exhibit works that are life-size and will allow the mass and form of this remarkable construction to speak... Human opens up the Forte through sculptural acupuncture: the works are widely dispersed to catalyse the inherent masses, constrictions and panoramas that the site affords. In finding the right places to make these confrontations and allusions, to create stumbling blocks and opportunities to stop the viewer in their tracks, I want to encourage the viewer to think again about who they are and how they negotiate the spaces around them".*

This major exhibition, in which the human figure is redefined, finds a "natural" home in Florence, the city in which, in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, artists such as Donatello, Michelangelo, Baccio Bandinelli and Cellini devoted their energies to studying the depiction of the "ideal" man in relation to architecture. *Human* renews and confirms the city's determination to embrace the present, seeking a crucial interaction between the Florence of the Renaissance and the city of today, in a close dialogue between sculpture and new ways of conceiving man's environment.

## 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 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) and *Exposure* (Lelystad, The Netherlands).

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 and a British Museum Trustee since 2007.

Antony Gormley was born in London in 1950.

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