

BODY BUILDINGS

14.11.2024 – 14.04.2025

Galleria Continua is pleased to present 'Body Buildings', Antony Gormley's third solo exhibition at the 798 Art District in Beijing following 'Another Singularity' (2009) and 'Host' (2016). 'Body Buildings' interrogates our species' relationship to the built environment, an increasingly high-rise world we rarely escape. In a significant group of recent sculptures and drawings, Gormley uses clay and iron, two ubiquitous materials of the built world, 'to think and feel the body in this condition'.

The central work in the exhibition, *Resting Place II*, conjures a dense labyrinthine terrain that viewers are invited to enter and navigate. This field of 132 life-size bodies, each built from fired clay bricks stacked atop one another, investigates the body at rest as our primary dwelling place. For the artist, the brick is a 'physical pixel' that plays an important role in Chinese culture.

Constructed in different orthogonal yet precarious positions, the bodies evoke a range of conditions, from splayed relaxation to foetal self-protection. When viewed from the gallery's first and second-floor balconies, the interplay between moving visitors and horizontal clay bodies creates a dynamic field in which the particularity of subjective experience is at work.

As Gormley has said: '*Resting Place II* evokes the human body's relationship to the ground, the surface of the earth. It refers to two very different kinds of abandonment: the relaxed abandonment of the body on the beach, the place to which we return in childhood play and

relaxation, and another, that of the migrant who has either forcibly or freely sought a new home. What at first looks like a chaotic display of building materials might resolve into the model of a city and further resolve into the invitation to empathise with the body as a place of indwelling, some evoking states of deep relaxation and contentment, others of retreat and defence.'

Accompanying *Resting Place II* are sculptures cast in iron, such as *Circuit* and *Ally*, which explore parallels between urban infrastructure—roads, electrical circuits, plumbing—and human relationships. *Circuit* transforms these networks into a circulatory system shared by two bodies, while *Ally* uses stacks of massive cast iron blocks to test how two bodies can find mutual stability through a shared centre of gravity. These explorations of proximity and intimacy ask to what extent the urban environment shapes and mirrors human connections.

On either side of *Circuit* are *Short* and *Shame*, two works that treat the body as an independent energy field in which the body veers from its centre of gravity, purposefully avoiding the stability associated with statues of power. In a series of tight knots, *Shame* identifies places of tension within the body—ankles, knees, pelvis, head and hands—while *Short* escapes the bounding condition of the skin as the iron lines move from inside the body to beyond its apparent surface.

On the gallery's top floor, *Rule III* and *Buttress* transform body space into latticed scaffolding, familiar to us in the skeletons of

contemporary high-rise architecture. In doing so, the works materialise the way that having made a world, it now makes us. The two rusting bodies are placed directly against the walls, implicating the architectural context and making visitors aware of their relationship to the built environment.

The sculptures are accompanied by a series of drawings. *Singularity X* and *Event VII* evoke the luminous beginnings of astral matter. They are complemented by a series of layered 'Lux' drawings that refer to apertures or sources of light glimpsed from within interiors. Other drawings made using inkcap mushroom ink as well as carbon and casein examine darkness as experienced inside the body and in proximity to another.

'Body Buildings' is an interrogation of the state of our species. Gormley offers these sculptures as diagnostic tools to examine our present condition.

About the artist:

Antony Gormley is widely acclaimed for his sculptures, installations and public artworks that investigate the relationship between the human body and 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, confronting fundamental questions about where human beings stand in relation to nature and the cosmos. Gormley continually seeks to identify the space of art as a place of becoming, where new behaviours, thoughts and feelings can arise.

Gormley's work has been widely exhibited throughout the UK and internationally with exhibitions at Musée Rodin, Paris (2023); TAG Art Museum, Qingdao (2023); Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg (2022); Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar (2022); National Gallery Singapore, Singapore (2021); Schauwerk Sindelfingen, Germany (2021); Royal Academy of Arts, London (2019); Delos, Greece (2019); Uffizi Gallery, Florence (2019); Philadelphia Museum of Art, USA (2019); 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 Brasília (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 (1989). 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), *Chord* (MIT - Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, USA) and *Alert* (Imperial College London, England).

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.

About the gallery:

Founded in 1990 in San Gimignano, Italy, GALLERIA CONTINUA has expanded its locations to Beijing, Les Moulins, Havana, São Paulo, Rome, Paris and Dubai. GALLERIA CONTINUA represents a desire for continuity between times and a desire to write a current history. Thanks to its investment in forgotten and unconventional sites, the gallery has always chosen atypical locations, developing a strong identity and an original positioning in over thirty years of activity. In 2004, Galleria Continua has been one of the first foreign art galleries to reach China, opening the second gallery space in Beijing's 798 Art District. Since then, Galleria Continua has endorsed an important role of cultural mediator on that side of the world, offering Chinese art-lovers a chance to enjoy exhibitions created specifically for this space by internationally acclaimed artists.

Galleria Continua / Beijing

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