



Antigua Colegjo De
SAN ILDEFONSO

Boletín de prensa

ANTONY GORMLEY AT SAN ILDEFONSO

- Considered one of the most important British sculptors of the last few decades, Antigua Colegjo de San Ildefonso presents for the first time in Mexico City the most complete exhibition of work by Antony Gormley.
- Firmament, a massive work made out of 2,135 steel pieces and 1,238 spheres will be installed in the main courtyard of San Ildefonso.
- Antony Gormley will be present at the opening reception on August 20th, 20:00.
- An open talk will be held for a general audience on the same day at 17:00.

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, and Gobierno del Distrito Federal present an exhibition of work by British sculptor ANTONY GORMLEY, bringing together installations, free standing sculptures, and works on paper from throughout Gormley's career in what will be the most extensive presentation to date of his work in Mexico City. The opening reception, for which the artist will be present, will be held on August 20th (Thursday) at 20:00 (Justo Sierra 16, Centro Histórico).

Over the last 25 years Antony Gormley has revitalised the human image in sculpture through a radical investigation of the body as a place of memory and transformation, using his own body as subject, tool and material. Since 1990 he has expanded his concern with the human condition to explore the collective body and the relationship between self and other in large-scale installations.

Gormley's work centres on the body as subject, object and place. In this exhibition, dramatic and enveloping installations are accompanied by earlier sculptures. Taking the body as its point of departure, the exhibition is an invitation to embark on a journey through the different kinds of space. It explores the ways in which we orient ourselves spatially; how we react when disoriented; how we relate to architecture and the built environment. It also probes the imaginative and emotional space of our inner beings. Within the exhibition, space is defined and articulated by crowds and solitary figures – steel, cast iron or lead; representational or abstract; real or imagined – and voids where bodies could be.

In encountering these presences and absences, we are asked not to be passive onlookers, but to become part of the work as we walk through or around it, navigating and negotiating our own narrative through time.

About the artist

Antony Gormley was born in London in 1950. He has created some of the most ambitious and iconic works of contemporary British sculpture, including *Field*, *Angel of the North* at Gateshead, *Quantum Cloud* on the Thames in London, and *Another Place*, now permanently sited on Crosby Beach near Liverpool, UK. His work has been exhibited extensively at major international galleries and museums including the Tate, Hayward, Whitechapel and Serpentine galleries in the UK; the Museum of Modern Art in New York; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Louisiana Museum in Humlebaek and the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin.

Exhibition layout:

The exhibition inhabits eight of the museum's exhibition rooms and the museum's courtyard with projects created by Gormley between 1981 and 2008. Key installations include *Learning to Think* (1991), *Bodies in Space/Lost Dog I* (2001), and *Breathing Room* (2006) – along with *Bread Room* and *Firmament*, both of which were created in Mexico in 2008. Other works include a series of *Blockworks*, *Insiders*, *Domains*, *Expansion* works and 152 drawings and prints.

Antony Gormley says:**Close I, 1992**

Lead, fibreglass, plaster, air

'Close tests the notion of site as a fixed place with the idea that nothing is fixed. At this latitude we are spinning at 1000 kilometers per hour through space. Through the figure you feel the tension between the force of centrifuge (that threatens to fling us out into deep space) and the forces of gravity; that sympathy between bodies that keeps us stuck down. Close is a body holding on for dear life; a fixed point in a shifting world.'

ANTONY GORMLEY, 1993

You, 2005

Cast iron

'The use of this material – iron – is associated with the deep underground that lies beneath our feet and emphasizes that our body is on temporary loan from the mass of matter constituting the planet and to which, in some way we give shape.'

ANTONY GORMLEY, 1995

You was originally made to stand on top of the Roundhouse theatre in London, peering down over the city.

Lost dog I, 2002

Forged ball bearings

Bodies in space, 2001

Forged ball bearings

'At a certain point in the late nineties I started thinking about the relationship of mass and space as dynamic, taking hand forged balls and making constellations that convey something about entropy and aggregation in a direct way. The balls on the floor can roll about anywhere, other balls are fixed in clusters like molecules. All bodies are attracted to each other and the relationship between man and dog is one of the oldest of attractions across species. This installation acknowledges that all bodies are bodies in space, whether they are the quarks and muons of the subatomic world or the planets of a solar system.'

ANTONY GORMLEY, 2008

Bread room, 2008

Bread and wax

'I wanted to make a room in which the thing that sustains life becomes the context of life, so that that which ends up inside makes an outside.'

ANTONY GORMLEY, 2008

Gormley made his first bread work in 1981, using Mother's Pride, the epitome of industrially-produced sliced white bread. Dating from the late 1970s and early 1980s, Gormley's early works were made during the Cold War when anxiety about the possibility of nuclear attack was at its height and the civil defence slogan was 'Protect and Survive.' Using materials such as bread Gormley focuses on our means of survival – food, shelter and defense – and our dependency on the material world.

The production of this work was made possible thanks to the support from Supermercados Internacionales HEB, S.A. de C.V., with HCF (Hill Country Fare) products.

Domain LXV, LXVI, LXVII, 2008

Stainless steel

In the *Domain* series which Gormley began in 1999, the body is opened up and dispersed into the surrounding space.

'How do you evoke the body as a place rather than a thing – a place of awareness open to the changing conditions of weather? How do you express energy without illustrating muscular movement? Domain was a breakthrough, substituting space and light for mass and structure. There is no skin, each of those trajectories stops where the skin was: internal antennae charting the place where we all live – the other side of appearance.'

ANTONY GORMLEY, 2006

Drawings, 2007-2008

Carbon & casein on paper

New York drawings, 1998

Carbon, casein and oil on paper

Drawings from the series *Body & Light*, 1991-1996

Carbon & casein on paper

Drawings, 1984-1993

Carbon, oil, blood, earth

Copenhagen prints, 2007

Stone lithograph, carbon and oil on paper

Body & Soul prints, 1990

Printing ink on paper

Bearing Light prints, 1990

Woodblock print, carbon & oil on paper

'What is drawing for me? It's a kind of magic, a kind of necessity. Drawing is an attempt to fix the world, not as it is, but as it exists inside me. So the drawings are mental diagrams... Drawing is not so much a mirror, or a window, as a lens which can be looked at in either direction, either back towards the retina of the mind, or forwards towards space.'

ANTONY GORMLEY, 2001

Drawing, for Antony Gormley, is a form of physical thinking, parallel to yet independent of his sculpture. The first set of drawings from the mid 1980s use a wide range of materials including blood, oil, pigment and earth, and explores our relationship to gravity, the planet, internal and external space. In the group of intimate drawings from the early to mid 1990s, *Body & Light*, the relationship of the darkness of the body to light, the horizon and extended fields is explored. The act of drawing is 'a journey into the unnamed parts of our internal landscape, or out into the unknown,' and can take Gormley to places which are not possible in life or sculpture, from outer space to deep water. Most of the *Body & Light* drawings were made in the Lake District. 'I am attracted by the darkness of the water in Coniston Water, and feeling contained by this fluid element,' he has said. Gormley's most recent drawings no longer picture the body but are traces of its direct action.

Antony Gormley considers the nine prints that make up the portfolio *Body & Soul* as being among his key works, because in them the exterior and interior spaces of the body are unified. The prints have a sequence and can, he says, be seen as 'a meditation on twoness and oneness.' 'The body has within it unity and division, single foci like the mouth, the navel, the penis, that lie on the body's central axis; and dualities like the hands or the eyes that function in pairs.' While the white prints bear the imprints of hands, knees, forehead and spine, the five black prints each represent one of the body's main orifices, which appear as white marks on a black ground. Though made from actual impressions of the artist's body, their anatomical origin is deliberately unclear; they might be quite different natural forms such as shells, a comet, a planet or a primitive life form. The effect is of being inside the body and looking out at the universe.

Cotch IV, 2008

Mild steel blocks

Distillate II, 2003

Mild steel blocks

Sublimate III, 2004

Mild steel blocks

Grip II, 2006

Stainless steel blocks

For Gormley the *Blockwork* series started as an attempt to make a body as a building, out of welded blocks of steel. How do you make a self-supporting brick wall of blocks, while at the same time following the contours of the form? Gormley describes the works as 'an attempt to make the pixel physical: substituting the structure of a digital image for the anatomy of the body.' The sculptures depend on there being a tension between the clarity of the steel blocks and a sense of exposure at the edge of the work, light and space seem to eat away at the embodied core.

Ferment, 2007

2mm square stainless steel bar

Touch, 2007

3mm square stainless steel bar

All of Gormley's work is an investigation into the nature of the space a human being inhabits. 'I've never been interested in making statues,' he explains. 'What I try to show is the space where the body was, not to represent the body itself.' His recent matrices and expansion pieces are so open in structure as to become almost drawings in space, and each reveals an empty body-space at its core. 'Neither architecture nor anatomy,' as Gormley insists, they are 'more like the random matrices found in fractal geometry.' Although some body-shapes may be immediately apparent among the froth like polyhedrons, others will only manifest themselves slowly, over time, as we move around them.

Learning to Think, 1991

Lead, fiberglass, air

Originally conceived for the Old Jail in Charleston, USA in 1991, the hollow lead body cases of *Learning to Think* enclose a void that by implication connects to the unseen and inaccessible void above. Antony Gormley began making moulds of his own body in 1980, producing hollow lead forms in which the absent body is replaced by air. Lead has peculiar powers of protection as well as being highly toxic. It is infinitely malleable, but becomes resilient once it is formed into an enclosing shape. Lead's life-in-death properties are reflected in the process of making the body-cases, during which the artist is wrapped in cloth and plaster and concentrates on being completely still in order to hold his chosen position. Describing the mental processes involved in making the moulds for his lead bodycases, Antony Gormley says: 'I agree to become inert. I agree to go into another level of existence,' and adds: 'I want to recapture for sculpture an area of human experience which has been hidden for a while. It is to do with very simple things; what it feels like to look out and see, what it feels like to be cold or frightened, or what it feels like to be absolutely quiet and just aware of the passage of air around your body.' Besides being both memorials of a particular time and action and containers of memory, the body-cases are sites of transformation.

Seeds VI, 2008

Lead

'You can say that each bullet in Seeds represents a life, in the same way that every grain represents a possible plant.'

ANTONY GORMLEY, 1993

Using materials such as lead bullets, in this work Gormley focuses on our means of survival – food, shelter and defense – and our dependency on the material world. *Seeds*, a work originally conceived in 1986, consists of hundreds of lead-cast 38-calibre bullets, heaped up like a pile of grain or pods.

Firmament II, 2008

32mm square hollow mild steel section

Firmament, the ancient name for the night sky, brings to mind an assembled matrix of volumes that map a celestial constellation, while also implying the form of a body lost within it. An expanded field of nearly 2,135 steel elements and 1,238 steel balls welded together, the non regular polygonal structure of *Firmament* dissolves and resolves throughout the gallery.

Literally a drawing in space, Gormley's intention is for *Firmament* to loom over the viewer, giving a sense of both claustrophobia and landscape, testing our experience of space.

Firmament has been engineered as part of a collaboration between Antony Gormley and Tristan Simmonds.

Floor, 1981

Rubber

'The most site specific of all places is the body in stillness.'

ANTONY GORMLEY, 2008

Floor is Gormley's earliest work in this exhibition. By replicating the outline of a pair of feet inside and outside their silhouette, this work alludes to an energy field that renders the body-zone porous and open. It is also a diagram of the resolution and dissolution of form, a reoccurring theme in Gormley's work.

Insider V / VI / VII / VIII / IX

Caston iron

What is an *Insider*? An *Insider* is to the body what memory is to consciousness: a kind of residue, something that is left behind. It is a core rather than a skeleton. It is a way of allowing things that are internal to the body - attitudes and emotions embedded in posture or hidden by gesture - to become revealed. They are equally alien and intimate. The pieces carry in concentrated form the trace of the body and its passage through life. This has a direct relationship to pain. Gormley sees these reduced forms as antennae for a particular kind of resilience that exists within all of us, that allows us to bear suffering but is itself created through painful experience. There is no judgement about this. Their bareness is not the nakedness that reveals the flesh, it is the result of having had the flesh taken away, a loss which is not sentimentalised, but accepted. The *Insider* tries to up the ante between being and nothingness.

Breathing Room I

Aluminium tube, Phosphor H15 and lastic spigots

Breathing Room can be read as a three-dimensional drawing in space, hovering between being an image of architecture and being architecture itself. Changing from being an illuminated object and becoming self lit, the work assumes an unstable position between the virtual and the real, challenging the way in which space is described and contained by architecture.

Reflection II, 2008

Cast iron

Alluding to mirroring as well as the necessity of self-knowledge through reflection, the two body forms reference the tension between the palpable and the perceptual that runs throughout the exhibition, as well as engaging the building and the space it contains as part of the material of the show.

ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE

As part of the activities organized in parallel with the exhibition, Antony Gormley will give a talk on August 20th at 17:00, Thursday, for a general audience including art, design, art history, and philosophy students. Entrance is free with previous reservation at the Coordinación de Servicios Pedagógicos (Pedagogical Services Desk) Tel. 57892505, E-mail: acsiedu@yahoo.com

In addition, the special course *Museo y aula unidos por el arte contemporáneo* will be given by Minerva González, Mtra. en Ciencias de la Educación (MA. Education); plus special visits for scholars and teachers. For families, there will be the workshop *¡¡¡Opus Corpus!!!*, as well as self-guided visits and regular guided visits of the exhibition. Guided visits may also be arranged out of hours.

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HSBC strengthens its support of culture in Mexico through working with Antigua Colegio de San Ildefonso, one of the most prestigious museums in Mexico and Latin America. It is a pleasure to join efforts with the museum to make possible Antony Gormley's exhibition, an exciting presentation of one of Britain's best known sculptors, who will leave his mark in our country.

ANTONY GORMLEY'S EXHIBITION

The exhibition will be open from August 21st to January 31st, 2010.

Antigua Colegio de San Ildefonso
Justo Sierra 16, Centro Histórico

New museum hours: Open on Tuesdays from 10:00 to 19:30, entrance is free.

Wednesday to Sunday, exhibit hours run from 10:00 to 17:30.

Contact at 57 02 63 78 or at the website: www.sanildefonso.org.mx

General Admission for the temporary exhibitions is \$45.00

Students and Teachers showing ID will be \$22.50

Entrance is free for kids under 12, senior citizens and members of San Ildefonso.

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