

Antony Gormley

BODY FIELD

28 October

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Press Release

Antony Gormley asks how can still, silent objects cause us to move and be moved. In *BODY FIELD*, Gormley invites us to bring our own physical presence into a field of “sculpture as an instrument for awareness”.

Immediately upon entering the gallery, the artist’s proposition is clear: the open end of a 155-meter-long steel tube lies on the floor in dialogue with a dark opening in a concrete bunker. Behind it, a drawing evokes the cosmic darkness of a black hole. Taken together, these three works acknowledge the body as a place, materialise its inner tensions, and affirm its need for shelter.

The sculptural installation *RUN III* (2022) is both activating and activated: it transforms the architectural space but, at the same time, is animated by human interaction. The sculpture is a line that weaves through the gallery with horizontals at the domestic heights of chairs and tables, windowsills and ceilings, so that our familiarity with its geometry is both triggered and confused. By re-presenting our built world, *RUN III* allows us to walk through walls whilst becoming aware of how architecture encourages and enforces particular forms of bodily choreography.

CORNER (2022)—what the artist has called a concrete “bunker for one”—is the first of two works that bookend the exhibition. Like its companion piece on the gallery’s third floor, the sculpture was created from digital scans of Gormley’s body as he crouched isolated in space or was compressed into a corner, identifying a human space *in* space at large. A single square opening—almost equivalent to the size of the steel tube of *RUN III*—is the solitary clue that these structures are hollow. Like compact dwellings, these works allude to the body as a house, acknowledging its dual nature as a space of refuge and imprisonment. This is a place where the body can be bound but the mind set free.

Corresponding visually to the linear language of *RUN III* and in an extraordinary feat of casting, a group of *Knotwork* sculptures take the notion of three-dimensional mapping from building to body. Whereas *RUN III* allows us to calibrate our physical relationship to the architectural receptacle of a building or room, the tighter, denser pathways of these works chart the interior of the human body. These “maps of the interior” show evidence of internal pressure and tension in the brain, heart, stomach and knees, capturing moments of lived time *within* the body.

Throughout the exhibition, carefully placed drawings provide interpretational clues to the sculptures. They invite us to connect our proprioceptive intuition about the inner places of the body with the infinite darkness of an expanding universe or the plotted points of an oil field.

In a radical departure from Gormley’s normal practice of isolating a single body in space, the new *Double Blockworks* in the gallery’s lower level evoke mitosis, or the division and replication of cells that guarantees the continuance of life. In making this series, Gormley reflected upon Michelangelo’s final unfinished sculpture—the *Rondanini Pietà* (1552-64)—as a metaphor for the relationship between the sculptor and his material, life and death. Many of the

Xavier Hufkens

6 rue St-Georges, 1050 Brussels, Belgium
www.xavierhufkens.com +32(0)2 639 67 30

Double Blockworks are based on scans of the artist clasping a previously made blockwork: an acknowledgement of his relationship with the art of sculpture. For the artist, the doubled figures embody “matter as a continual dance of possibility between emergence and entropy, the acknowledgement of instability and inevitable jeopardy, but, at the same time, connection, the need to stand and to hold—to touch the world, the future, another body.”

The most extensive exhibition of Gormley’s work in Germany to date is currently on view at the Lehmbruck Museum in September 2022 in dialogue with the work of Wilhelm Lehmbruck. Recent solo exhibitions include Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar (2022); Schauwerk Sindelfingen, Sindelfingen, (2021); National Gallery Singapore (2021); Royal Academy, London (2019); Island of Delos, Greece (2019); Busan Museum of Art (2019); Uffizi Gallery, Florence (2019); the Philadelphia Museum of Art (2019); Kettle’s Yard, Cambridge (2018); Long Museum, Shanghai (2017); The National Portrait Gallery, London (2016). He has participated in the Venice Biennale (1982 and 1986) and Documenta 8 (1987). Permanent public works include *Angel of the North* (Gateshead, England), *Another Place* (Crosby Beach, England), *Inside Australia* (Lake Ballard, Western Australia) and *Exposure* (Lelystad, The Netherlands).

For further inquiries please contact the gallery at info@xavierhufkens.com or at +32(0)2 639 67 30. For press enquiries contact anazoe@xavierhufkens.com

#antonygormley
#xavierhufkens

Twitter: @XavierHufkens
Instagram: @xavierhufkens
Facebook: Xavier Hufkens