

Press release

Antony Gormley

Umwelt

1 April—20 May 2023
Opening Saturday 1 April 2023, 11am—1pm

Thaddaeus Ropac
Salzburg Villa Kast
Mirabellplatz 2, 5020 Salzburg



Antony Gormley, *Implicate III*, 2022. 6 mm Corten steel.
188.3 x 261.7 x 272.8 cm

This exhibition brings together my most recent attempts to reconcile the first and the second body; if the first body, our material, biological body, is our first dwelling, then the second is our built environment, which we have become part of and largely dependent upon. These works attempt to map and materialise the interactions between these two bodies.—Antony Gormley

Conceived for Villa Kast and responding to the context of this former family home, the exhibition *Umwelt* comprises sculptures from Antony Gormley's

recent investigations in living space where the body is seen as a place rather than an object. As the title indicates, the works on view explore in drawing and sculpture the dynamics between the internal condition of the human body and its environment ('Umwelt'), testing its boundaries and permeability. 'On one level, the human body can be understood as a closed system,' states the artist, 'but on another level, it is open to all the variables of its context. The question of where our bodies end and surroundings begin is an open question and leads to open work.'



Antony Gormley, *Tip*, 2021 (detail). 8 mm Corten steel.
168 x 68 x 43 cm

As this exhibition's immediate context, Villa Kast has been useful to Gormley's purpose: here is a 19th-century house that has been abstracted and, since 1989, transformed into a space for art. The surrounding architecture still bears faint traces of its familial past. The villa's rooms are now uncannily re-inhabited by Gormley's sculptures, which activate the house and allow it to become a zone for reflexive thinking and feeling. While mapping the human body, the works on display simultaneously highlight the symbiotic relationship between bodies and their surrounding environments.

This exhibition presents for the first time a group of 'Extended Strapworks' that Gormley has developed over the last two and a half years. Linear and open, these sculptures comprise two or four circuits of rusted ribbon steel in the form of Möbius strips that pass around the space surrounding a single body. Sculptures such as *Dwell* (2022) and *Implicate III* (2022) break the body-boundary and reach out towards the edges of the spaces they inhabit, recognising how a room's orthogonality affects our internal perception of space. Seen through the villa's many doorways and apertures, the sculptures seem to extend out infinitely, stretching beyond the confines of the rooms. For the artist, the lack of a definable body-boundary poses the question of 'where the body begins and ends and to what extent we, having made the world, are then made by it.' In the exhibition, Gormley has also included earlier works, such as two 'Blockworks' downstairs and an 'Open Blockwork' in the library upstairs, to share the origin of the 'Extended Strapworks' orthogonality.

While the sculptures on the ground floor focus on individual bodies in space, the exhibition continues upstairs with two 'double' works that explore human connections within shared environments and which show one body osmosing into another. The artist explains that *Circuit* (2022) and *Tangle* (2022) are 'a realisation of lockdown; when you're not always in a rush, suddenly you become aware that the people you live with are also part of your dwelling. These works are about closeness and what it means to share. How, in other words, we are social beings defined by our intimate relations.' Here is the promise of bodies in space that is carried on into bodies as space.

Outside, behind the villa and facing the Mirabell Gardens, is *Run* (2016). This large-scale work materialises the volume of a small room in a single, endless, massive cast line. Mapping the space of a human habitat, *Run* delineates but also confuses the surfaces and apertures of our built world by making them porous. If the works inside the villa test the bounding condition of the 'first body' as well as the confines of the 'second body', then *Run* challenges the viewer to consider how architecture both encourages and enforces certain forms of bodily choreography.



Antony Gormley, *Run*, 2016. Cast iron.
277.5 x 318.6 x 421.8 cm

Carefully positioned throughout *Umwelt* are a number of Gormley's drawings. *Fold IV* (2018) invokes the body as a field of dispersed energy seen against a grid, whilst *Systole/Diastole XII* (2008) meditates on 'one and twoness'. Drawn with burins in the artist's hands and utilising the full sweep of his arms, *Systole/Diastole XII* describes a moment of registered being, a kind of choreography for the hand-arm-brain. The most recent drawings in the exhibition are made with

deliquescing inkcap mushrooms and show bodies caught as if in a web. As the writer and art historian Rye Dag Holmboe has written in the catalogue that will accompany the exhibition, the inkcap drawings ‘can be seen as attempts to modify the relationship between the human and its environment-world. To draw with mushroom is not to master nature but to collaborate with it. It is to acknowledge our implication in an unseen world, to recognise that we form part of life when often we feel that we stand apart from it, or above it.’

In questioning the fundamental spaces of human habitation, both bodily and environmental, the exhibition addresses conditions of vulnerability and our instinctive desire for protection: ‘I use sculpture to re-examine, for myself, what it means to inhabit this bit of matter that is the body, hoping that this might be of use to others. I want to use the instrumental potential of sculpture, through which you might sense an extended field of perception.’



Antony Gormley, *Hold I*, 2022.
Inkcap on paper.
38.7 x 28 cm

About the artist

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



Portrait by John O'Rourke

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 venues including the Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg (2022); SCHAUWERK Sindelfingen, Sindelfingen (2021); Royal Academy of Arts, London (2019); Delos, Greece (2019); Uffizi Gallery, Florence (2019); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia (2019); Long Museum, Shanghai (2017); 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, Saint Petersburg (2011); Kunsthaus Bregenz, Bregenz (2010); Hayward Gallery, London (2007); Malmö Konsthall, Malmö (1993); and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk (1989). Permanent public works include the *Angel of the North* (Gateshead, UK); *Another Place* (Crosby Beach, UK); *Inside Australia* (Lake Ballard, Western Australia); *Exposure* (Lelystad, Netherlands); and *Chord* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, USA).

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. He was made an Officer of the British Empire (OBE) in 1997 and was knighted 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.

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