

ANTONY GORMLEY

BBC FORUM QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Series of questions from the public following the opening of Tate Modern, London, 2002

Greg Turner, UK: There was an incident last year when a top young rock climber decided to climb the Angel of the North. He was arrested because of this, though not prosecuted. What are your thoughts on this? Do you consider this to be perhaps disrespectful or justifiably illegal or is this kind of interaction with your work a positive thing?

Antony Gormley: Anything climbable will be climbed. I was impressed but would not advise anyone to try. The photo of him stretching with his arms out while standing on the head was beautiful.

Graham Bell, Brazil: I feel that you and me are on different wavelengths. Therefore please explain to me your understanding of the word "art", and also if "modern art" has a separate definition.

Antony Gormley: Art is the means by which we communicate what it feels like to be alive - in the past that was mixed up with other illustrative duties but that was still its central function that has been liberated in the art called modern. Art is not necessarily good for you or about communicating "good things".

Paul Hurst, UK: Do you think today's "modern" art will ever command the same admiration as the classics or is it too obscure to appeal to the masses. If so, what is the point in promoting art if only the "educated" few can appreciate it?

Antony Gormley: Of course it will. Look at how many people now visit contemporary and modern museums. Three times more in the last ten years. With Tate Modern contemporary and modern visual art is now rightfully at the centre of our lives.

Neill, Sweden: If you have creative talent, why waste your time pampering your own ego as a modern artist when you can change the world as a commercial designer?

Antony Gormley: Making beautiful things for everyday use is a wonderful thing to do - making life flow more easily - but art confronts life, allowing it to stop and perhaps change direction - they are completely different.

Neil Coupland, UK: In a work such as Field where you might not make any of the figures: what is it that makes it your work of art?

Antony Gormley: I always make some. Along with everybody, I like the picnic feel, shared space and doing-things-together atmosphere.

Sally, UK: Your Iron Man in Birmingham has had a lot of mixed reaction, including a lot of negative comments from the local media. Do you despair at the negative publicity it generated? Are we a nation of philistines who don't deserve such fantastic works?

Antony Gormley: Art has to change things, and if it was immediately acceptable it would not be doing the job. The press are the most cynical and re-enforce an outdated attitude that is not actually the way people think. People enjoy challenges, find visual art exciting and do not think all artists are trying to pull a fast one.

Howard Wheeldon, USA: There seems to be so little skill or talent applied to modern art - it seems pretty much anyone could do it?

Antony Gormley: They can, but they don't.

Mark Silver, UK: Why did the plans for the Brick Man in Leeds fail? Was it a problem with planning permission? I feel it is such a shame that it never went ahead.

Antony Gormley: Lack of nerve - I think of it still as my best attempt to allude to the collective body.

Ben Pickard, UK: Do you think that (good) art has to survive the test of time?

Antony Gormley: Yes.

Amy Sheppard, England: There has been much discussion about an "Angel of the South" do you think that this would be a good way forward in landscape art or should we look for a new original idea, if at all?

Antony Gormley: Always look for an original idea.

Michael Caulfield, England: Do you think public art will become the predominant art form in the UK in the 21st century?

Antony Gormley: There is only one art and it is becoming more and more known either by being more in collective space or by being well-known.

Dan Peters, UK: Would you accept that art, modern or otherwise, should never receive any form of public subsidy as public servants have no place in prescribing "good taste" to the public?

Antony Gormley: Public money should be spent on art but through individuals not committees.

Tracey Richardson, UK: Did you have any influence on the eventual location that was chosen for the Angel of the North? Were any other locations considered?

Antony Gormley: The place made the piece.

Huw Pagler, Norway: Re: Another Place: Did you have a specific "other place" in mind? And what criteria did you apply to the siting of individual figures? How many original casts were used for making the figures? I'm a fan of open-air sculpture, thanks for a thought provoking piece.

Antony Gormley: The place we imagine when we want to escape. Each body form had to have its own "arena" - be alone and be together.
