

ANTONY GORMLEY

STAND, PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, USA, 2019

From late January through the end of June 2019, the Philadelphia Museum of Art will present STAND, an installation across the Museum's East Terrace of ten cast iron 'Blockwork' sculptures by Antony Gormley, one of the most significant artists of our time.

The artist says: "Like standing stones, these works are markers in space, but I would also like them to engage the viewer's time. I want to use material mass and the orthogonal forms of the built environment to evoke internal states. This exhibition is incomplete without the subjective witness of the citizen: each work in its different way calls on him/her to simultaneously project and recognise internal affinities in the attitude carried by the block piles. Here is sculpture not statue, less hero or ideal, more material and real: a public declaration of subjective identity.

Ten standing works, each about ten feet high placed at regular intervals across the upper terrace where the viewer, work and Museum share a common ground. From the bottom of the stairs, the works are seen against the sky, but as you approach them, the museum itself appears and becomes their backdrop. From afar, the scale of the works is uncertain, but as you get closer their size and mass become apparent. I want the haptic experience of walking up the 72 steps to be felt.

These rough cast iron pillars will become an open ground for psychic projection and perhaps also transmit a sense of a transitive human state. The load path of the blocks, at once stable and precarious, will evoke different states in different viewers and far from reinforcing hierarchies of power or mythologies of race, place or nation, this is a form of interrogation of both individual experience and collective identity.

This is an exciting opportunity to see what sculpture can make us think and feel. What can it do to and for us? Can it have a revelatory or diagnostic function? Can it work on us to recognise our true selves and allow collective space to again be a space in which personal truth can arise?"

When Gormley visited the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2013 to deliver a public lecture at the invitation of Helen Drutt English, he was taken by the aesthetic and social significance of its setting. It was then that the artist and the Museum's Director, Timothy Rub, began to discuss the possibility of this installation.

"We are delighted to present this remarkable installation in Philadelphia," said Rub. "Antony Gormley is, simply put, an extraordinary artist whose work has reimagined social engagement, and extended and given new meaning to an age-old tradition: the representation of the human figure. This installation, in practice as well as concept, will also enable us to fulfil in a curatorial sense one of the key goals of our strategic plan-engaging visitors by moving out into the community beyond the four walls of the Museum and activating the remarkable civic spaces around it."
