



FEBRUARY 21, 2013

MIDDELHEIM MUSEUM UNVEILS A NEW ADDITION TO ITS
PERMANENT COLLECTION BY ANTONY GORMLEY AND
OPENS RELATED EXHIBITION AND COLLECTION
PRESENTATION

British artist Antony Gormley is the second guest artist to come and display his work in the renovated Middelheim Museum. The *Firmament and Other Forms* exhibition, a series of sculptures that have never been shown together to the public before, will be open from 24 February to 5 May in *Het Huis* (The House) at the Hortiflora. This exhibition was put together following the gift of the major work *Firmament III* by the artist's gallery, Xavier Hufkens. Starting on 24 February, the collection presentation *1+1=33*, with works by Vic Gentils and Rezső Berczeller, will be presented and can be viewed in the Braempaviljoen (Braem Pavilion).

Antony Gormley (1950, United Kingdom) follows Thomas Schütte as guest exhibitor in the new semi-open exhibition pavilion *Het Huis* (The House), built by Robbrecht and Daem for the renovated Middelheim Museum. The open-air museum is now organising three exhibitions each year. The Braempaviljoen

(Braem Pavilion) will feature two collection presentations each year.

Firmament III

Antony Gormley's pieces are on display in many prestigious galleries and museums around the world. Now the artist's gallery, the Brussels-based Xavier Hufkens, has made possible an important donation: *Firmament III*.

The work is displayed at a unique location in the oldest section of the Middelheim Museum next to the main entrance. The work can now be seen on a permanent basis.

Firmament III (2009) is an irregular three dimensional net surrounding a human-shaped void approximately ten times life-size. At the open-air museum this work will pick up the light of the changing seasons and be a constant invitation to the visitor to consider his or her place in the order of things.

Exhibition *Firmament and Other Forms* in *Het Huis*

To highlight this extraordinary acquisition, a series of Gormley's 'polyhedra' sculptures – never before exhibited as a collection – will be on display in Het Huis (The House), the new exhibition pavilion designed by Robbrecht and Daem, from 24 February until 5 May 2013. In the words of the artist: "This exhibition questions the human body's attachment to architecture and investigates the place of the human body within the wider frame of things and worlds. All the works are based on the 'bubble-matrix'; a random, but consistent geometry found in nature which also forms the structural syntax of *Firmament III*."

For almost forty years Antony Gormley has been exploring the relationship between the body and the space that surrounds it. Sometimes the interaction between the two is clear, as in *Another Place* or *Inside Australia*, in which figurative works are placed within a vast landscape. But sometimes the link is less obvious. Sculptures such as *Clearing* or *Blind Light* create a framework within which the viewer becomes the focus of attention.

Antony Gormley always uses his own body as a test site. This can be taken literally: he frequently casts his sculptures from his own body. What interests the artist is not only the aesthetic, but also the human aspect of the form: the person as an individual, as a member of the collective and as an object in relation to space and the natural world. Antony Gormley often engages in public art as well. A well-known example of such a participative work is *One & Other*, his interpretation of the *Fourth Plinth* art project in London's Trafalgar Square.

Along with the opening of *Firmament and Other Forms* by Antony Gormley, the Middelheim Museum is launching a brand new collection of publications that will from now on be released on the occasion of temporary exhibitions in

the open-air museum.

'Artist Talk' by Antony Gormley

An exclusive 'Artist Talk' will be given by Antony Gormley on Saturday 23 February in the morning. This is a unique opportunity to get to know the artist and his work close up.

Collection presentation 1+1=33 in the Braempaviljoen

Since May, it has been possible to (re)discover internationally important pieces from the Middelheim collection in the Braempaviljoen (Braem Pavilion). A collection is presented twice a year; sometimes this is done in association with a guest curator who makes his or her own quirky selection and sometimes the museum itself selects exceptional pieces to place in the spotlight. These are works that have been acquired specially for the Braempaviljoen or which are too fragile to be displayed outdoors. The Middelheim Museum storage, designed by Stéphane Beel, houses many gems of modern and contemporary sculpture.

Fashion designers Bernhard Willhelm (1972, Germany) and Jutta Kraus (1972, Germany) made an initial selection that produced a surprising arrangement. For the second collection, the Middelheim Museum presents *Chess Set* by Vic Gentils (1919-1997, Belgium). This monumental installation with thirty-two exceptional pieces represents a turning point in Gentils' oeuvre. With this piece, he verges extremely closely on the boundary between the non-figurative and the figurative, a boundary that he transcended shortly thereafter. The scenography will reinforce the concept of a battle or game of chess, but will also offer the physical possibility of viewing the installation from different perspectives, for a longer period and in total comfort.

Along with this piece, *Impaled* by Rezső Berczeller (1912-1992, Hungary) will also be on display. This artist, who is not as familiar to us, worked on the other side of Europe at the same time as Gentils, on a piece that at first glance appears to have a strong connection to that of the Belgian artist. The Hungarian's oeuvre is actually influenced by the Second World War and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, and is almost entirely devoted to the downfall of man. The Middelheim Museum is working on a new version of the collection catalogue for summer 2013, which will also include this piece.

Middelheim 2012

The Middelheim Museum is constantly in motion, but in 2012 the Museum and its collection underwent a major metamorphosis. The renovated Middelheim Museum reopened for the public on 26 and 27 May 2012. The metamorphosis was complete: the grounds of the museum were extended considerably and the museum infrastructure was modernised. For this, the Middelheim Museum worked in tandem with the guest curator, Paul Robbrecht (1950, Belgium).

Robbrecht and Daem built a semi-open pavilion, *Het Huis* (The House), which

was inaugurated with a prestigious exhibition of the works of Thomas Schütte (1954, Germany). The entire Middelheim collection was revisited, and renowned artists such as Ai Weiwei (1957, China), Roman Signer (1938, Switzerland) and Philippe Van Snick (1946, Belgium) created new works custom-made for the museum. In the Braempaviljoen (Braem Pavilion), fashion designers Bernhard Willhelm (1972, Germany) and Jutta Kraus (1972, Germany) put on show an initial selection of pieces of international importance from the Middelheim collection that are too fragile to be displayed outside.

The open-air museum is now organising three exhibitions each year. The epicentre of these exhibitions is *Het Huis*, though they may expand into the flower garden or even throughout the entire museum. The summer exhibition will remain the major attraction, though the spring and autumn exhibitions will also be important occasions featuring interesting projects from international contemporary artists. The Braempaviljoen will feature two collections each year. Visitors will have the opportunity to discover and rediscover pieces of international importance from the Middelheim collection. These are works that have been purchased especially for the Braempaviljoen or that are too fragile to be displayed outside.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

'Artist Talk' by Antony Gormley

- Saturday, 23 February
- 11 a.m.
- Location: Aula T.105 Groenenborger campus of Antwerp University (UA), Groenenborgerlaan 171, 2020 Antwerp
- Entrance: free of charge
- Register via middelheimmuseum@stad.antwerpen.be mentioning "registration artist talk"

Exhibition *Firmament and Other Forms* in *Het Huis*

- From 24 February to 5 May 2013
- In the pavilion Het Huis (The House) by Robbrecht and Daem
- Catalogue Antony Gormley
Bilingual Dutch/English publication
For sale as of 23 February in the museum shop at Kasteel Middelheim (the castle)
€17.50
With texts by Antony Gormley, Frank Maes and Sara Weyns
With photographs of the works in situ

Collection presentation *1+1=33* in the Braempaviljoen

- From 24 February to 1 September 2013
- In the Braempaviljoen (Braem Pavilion)

Accessibility

- Middelheim Museum
Middelheimlaan 61
2020 Antwerp – Belgium
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E-mail: middelheimmuseum@stad.antwerpen.be
www.middelheimmuseum.be

- Open from Tuesday through Sunday
- Opening hours:
October to March from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
April and September from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.
May and August from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
June and July from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- Closed on Monday, 1 November, 25 and 31 December
- Entrance: free

The Middelheim Museum:

The Middelheim Museum is a unique institution where the amazing interplay between art and nature results in exceptional experiences. The open-air museum showcases modern and contemporary art amidst a green park setting. Works by artists such as Auguste Rodin, Henry Moore, Rik Wouters, Juan Muñoz, Panamarenko, Chris Burden, Dan Graham, etc. provide a unique overview of more than a century of visual arts.

Every year the Museum sends out an invitation to renowned and promising artists. Freed from the typical “white cube” of a museum hall, the artists interact with the endless opportunities offered by the park and the existing collection. This inspires them to create new work, custom-made for the Middelheim Museum. In the past, the Museum has already collaborated with Berinde De Bruyckere, Wim Delvoye, Yoshitomo Nara, Paul McCarthy, Chris Burden, John Körmeling, etc. Erwin Wurm was the guest artist in 2011, with an exhibition featuring existing as well as new work.

With an annual average of 250,000 visitors and free entry, the Middelheim Museum provides very easy access to the world of contemporary art.

Museum and recreational functions are optimally combined and modern and contemporary art go hand-in-hand.

PRESS INFORMATION

Photographic material and extra information can be downloaded via the City of Antwerp’s FTP server:

<https://pers.antwerpen.be> (from the folder MNE/MID)

User name: ftp_pers

Password: 98BernersLee

Please note: the link, user name and password are for the press only and may not be given to third parties.

Portrait of Antony Gormley: MNE/MID/AGormley

Photographs of *Firmament III*: MNE/MID/AGormley/FirmamentIII

Photographs of the installation of *Firmament III* in the Middelheim Museum:

MNE/MID/AGormley/Installatie_FirmamentIII

Photographs and pdf of works that will be on display in *Firmament and Other Forms*:

MNE/MID/AGormley/FirmamentandotherForms

Photographs and pdf of the *Firmament and Other Forms* exhibition in the Middelheim Museum:

MNE/MID/AGormley/Opstelling_FirmamentandotherForms

Photographs of the pavilion by Robbrecht en Daem (*Het Huis*):

MNE/MID/MID2012/Paviljoen_Robbrecht_en_Daem

Photographs and pdf catalogue Antony Gormley:
MNE/MID/AGormley/Catalogus

Photographs of *Chess Set* by Vic Gentils: MNE/MID/Collectieexpo2
Photographs of the collection presentation *1+1=33*: MNE/MID/Collectieexpo2
Photographs of the Braem Pavilion: MNE/MID/MID2012/Braempaviljoen

Biography of Antony Gormley: MNE/MID/AGormley
Antony Gormley on Firmament III: MNE/MID/AGormley
Antony Gormley on Firmament and Other Forms: MNE/MID/AGormley
Public offer (visitor guide) at Antony Gormley exhibition:
MNE/MID/AGormley
New Middelheim Museum publication collection: MNE/MID/AGormley

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