

Press Release

November 2004



Antony Gormley's bread *Bed* goes on show at Tate Britain

A major early work by Antony Gormley, *Bed* 1980-1, goes on show as part of a new room in the BP British Art Displays at Tate Britain. *Bed* was Gormley's first work to present the trace of the body as its subject and consists of more than 8000 slices of white bread out of which Gormley ate the equivalent of his own volume. It is shown with another influential early work, *Natural Selection* 1981, a progression in shape and size of natural and artificial objects drawn from our everyday lives. The new display opens on 25 November.

Over the last twenty-five years, Antony Gormley, sculptor of *Angel of the North*, has revitalised the use of the human form in sculpture. Central to his practice is the notion that our physicality is essential to our understanding of reality. He has often used his own body as tool, material and subject. He explains: 'My body is my closest experience of matter and I use it for both convenience and precision.'

Both works in the display use ordinary objects to reveal the complexity that underlies everyday, lived experience. They also underline Gormley's interest in the natural world, and man's role within it, suggesting a concern with the way in which mankind consumes to survive and survives by destroying.

In *Bed*, the sliced white bread was stacked and layered and after it had dried and some of it had gone mouldy, it was dipped in paraffin wax for preservation. The hollows eaten out of the bread create a double mirror-image of the artist's own body.

Natural Selection consists of twenty-four objects encased in lead. Half are man-made, and half natural in origin. The natural objects alternate with man-made ones. The title is an ironic reference to Darwin's theory of evolution; in fact this is a very 'unnatural selection' which includes some 'distressingly unnatural inventions'. Part of Gormley's intention was to reconcile opposing cultural and natural objects, such as a grenade and an egg.

Bed was presented to Tate by the artist in 1995 and he has recently complemented this with the generous gift of another important work, *Testing a World View* 1993, one of a number of works given to Tate by major British artists.

The new display at Tate Britain has been devised by curator Clarrie Wallis.

BP British Art Displays 1500-2004

Antony Gormley

From 25 November 2004

Tate Britain, Level 2 Galleries

Open every day 10.00-17.50

Admission free

For further information, please contact Ben Luke

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