

**NEON in collaboration with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades present:
Antony Gormley | *SIGHT*
On the sacred island of Delos, Greece
2 May – 31 October 2019**

**Curated by Iwona Blazwick OBE, Director, Whitechapel Gallery
and Elina Kountouri, Director NEON**

Organised and commissioned by NEON

NEON is proud to present an unprecedented site-specific exhibition by British artist Antony Gormley, in collaboration with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades, on the Greek archaeological island of Delos and its Museum.

This project, *SIGHT* by the renowned sculptor marks the first time that an artist will take over the archaeological site of Delos since the mythological island was inhabited over 5,000 years ago and is the first time a contemporary art installation has been unanimously approved by the Greek Archaeological Council to take place in Delos. *SIGHT* is specially conceived to resonate with the statuary, temples, squares, vistas and the topography of the island of Delos.

The island of Delos, a granite rock no more than 5km long and 1.5km wide in the middle of the Cycladic complex of islands in the Aegean, has a past filled with myths, rituals, religions, politics, multiculturalism and trade. Delos's intertwined and contrasting natures, as both holy place and commercial town, combined with its topography and geographical location, made the island a singular and cosmopolitan Hellenistic town.

Mythology tells us that the island's first name was «*Ἄδηλος*» (*A-Delos*), meaning 'the non-visible' - a floating rock with no fixed location. It became «*Δήλος*» (*Delos*), 'the visible', when Zeus arranged for Leto, his mortal lover, to find refuge there, safe from the wrath of his wife, the goddess Hera. When Leto gave birth to twins Apollo, god of light, and Artemis, goddess of the hunt, the island's destiny and future prosperity was assured. This unique character was marked on Delos's architecture, sanctuaries, houses and through rituals to celebrate the gods and protect the island.

Historical narratives record that humans occupied Delos at the highest point of the island, Mount Cythnos, during 2500-2000BC and remained through ancient and classical times up to 69BC, when inhabitants abandoned Delos as it was no longer a vital commercial port in the Mediterranean routes. Today, apart from archaeologists safeguarding the island and those undertaking scientific research, Delos is uninhabited. Its ruins stand devoid of human presence.

In this installation, including four specially commissioned new works, Antony Gormley repopulates the island with 29 life-size iron 'bodyforms' made during the last 20 years. Restoring a human presence and creating a physical path connecting to the mythology and human activity of Delos's past, he invites us to use its remains as a site for imagining a human future. Gormley's approach evokes a radical reassessment of the traditional statue or totem of the pre-modern world that once adorned public squares, temples and private dwellings but which are now absent, sequestered instead inside museums.

Since the early 1980s, Gormley's sculptures, installations and public artworks have challenged our perception of space and the human body. At the University of Cambridge, he studied archaeology, anthropology and art history, equipping him with a deep understanding of the diversity of human nature and its origins. To connect the geological environment of Delos with its human history of myths, politics, commerce and ritual, the sculptures are installed at various locations throughout the island.

The first connection between visitors and the work is established before they even set foot on Delos. The human presence on the island can be sensed and seen from the boat: approaching the rugged north-west coast, passengers will catch sight of a lone figure (from Gormley's 1998 series *Another Time*), standing sentinel in the sea at the edge of the island. Two more sculptures stand at the edge of the commercial port and on Mount Cythnos.

Further 'bodyforms' are positioned in the stadium and the theatre district, at the merchant stores and the museum, each in dialogue with the specifics of its site. Gormley is fascinated by the relationship between natural and built form: rock formations sculpted by time and the elements, and others made by human hand. Through his sculptural placements, he puts this dialectic between nature and culture - sacred built enclosures and the open horizon - to work. The language of his sculpture moves from naturalistic to abstract, evoking a conversation between open and closed forms also found in the sacred and profane architecture on the island. The works stand or lie on the ground, exposed to the elements; their stillness and silence inviting reflection on human life, past and future. Taking his cue from the island's own onomatological birth as a place of myth and reality, the relation between the visible and the invisible is evoked as the works appear and disappear.

Gormley proposes a radical openness: 'Art is about reasserting our first-hand experience in present time.' He sees the installation as a form of acupuncture, a way of catalysing what is already there, allowing it to be reflexive and present in the viewer's experience. This interaction can lead to an intense physical and mental connection with time, space and nature.

Demetrios Athanasoulis, Director of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades, says 'Delos, the birthplace of Apollo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's foremost and most popular archaeological sites, will for the first time host an expansive contemporary art installation. With this aim, the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades has collaborated with NEON in organising Antony Gormley's installation. The unique natural and archaeological landscape of Delos will be illuminated by the vision of a great contemporary creator, offering a truly unique experience to the visitor.'

Gormley's figures on the Island of Delos reminds us how central art is to the human story.

Notes to Editors

NEON is a nonprofit organization that works to bring contemporary culture closer to everyone. It is committed to broadening the appreciation, understanding, and creation of contemporary art in Greece and to the firm belief that this is a key tool for growth and development. NEON, founded in 2013 by collector and entrepreneur Dimitris Daskalopoulos, breaks with the convention that limits the contemporary art foundation of a collector to a single place.

NEON's space is the city. It acts on a multitude of initiatives, spaces, and civic and social contexts. It seeks to expose the ability contemporary art has to stimulate, inspire, and affect the individual and society at large. NEON constructively collaborates with cultural institutions and supports the programs of public and private institutions to enhance increased access and inventive interaction with contemporary art. www.neon.org.gr

The **Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades** constitutes a Directorate of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports. It is responsible for all the material remains that have been brought to light or are preserved in the territory of the island complex of the Cyclades. These evidences of human presence date back to Early Prehistory and continue until the establishment of the Modern Greek State, in AD 1830. Such a broad chronological context incorporates many different expressions of the cultural heritage of the area: archaeological sites, monuments, castles, traditional settlements and of course a whole world of movable finds and relics that are selectively presented in the Ephorate's museums and collections.

During the recent years, the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades has developed an extensive action plan aiming to manage the voluminous cultural capital under its responsibility. The protection and the thorough documentation of the archaeological, architectural, and historical data of the monuments are the primary, essential act of this initiative. Having successfully attracted important donations and funding through competitive European Programs, the Ephorate is working towards the conservation, restoration, and promotion of important archaeological sites and monuments. The work of the Ephorate is also focused on communicating its work, engaging with the local community, keeping an active presence in international scientific and museological fora, and implementing new ways of expression. In line with these efforts, this summer the Ephorate opens up towards the world of contemporary art, wishing to underline the revitalizing force of the form and timeless inspiration, and the need for a dialogue between the “established” past and contemporary artistic expression.

Antony Gormley

Born in London in 1950, Antony Gormley has had a number of solo shows at venues including Kettle’s Yard, Cambridge (2018); the Long Museum, Shanghai (2017); National Portrait Gallery, London (2016); Forte di Belvedere, Florence (2015); Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern (2014); Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (2012); Deichtorhallen Hamburg; State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg (2011); Kunsthaus Bregenz (2010); Hayward Gallery, London (2007); Kunsthalle zu Kiel; Malmö Konsthall (1993); and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen (1989). A major solo exhibition of his work will be presented at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, in September 2019. Permanent public works include the *Angel of the North* (Gateshead, England), *Another Place* (Crosby Beach, England), *Exposure* (Lelystad, The Netherlands), *Chord* (MIT – Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, USA). He has also participated in major group shows such as the Venice Biennale and Documenta 8, Kassel, Germany. Gormley won the Turner Prize in 1994 and has been a member of the Royal Academy since 2003. He was made an Officer of the British Empire in 1997 and knighted in 2014.

Exhibition information / opening hours:

The island of Delos is accessible by boat from Mykonos, Tinos and Naxos Islands.
Opening hours may vary depending on the month.

Press Enquiries

Melissa Emery | SUTTON

E: melissa@suttonpr.com | T: +44 (0)20 7183 3577