

SIGHT ANTONY GORMLEY ON THE SACRED ISLAND OF DELOS 02.05-31.10.2019

From May to October 2019, on the archaeological site and the Museum of Delos, the non-profit organization NEON, founded by Dimitris Daskalopoulos, and the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades present an unprecedented exhibition of contemporary sculpture by British artist Antony Gormley.

Gormley (b.1950) is one of the most renowned artists of our time. During the past 40 years, his sculptures and installations have challenged our perception of space and the human body.

As an undergraduate at Trinity College, University of Cambridge, Gormley studied archaeology, anthropology and art history, equipping him with a deep understanding of the diversity of human cultures and their origins. These interests led him to leave England in 1971 and embark on a transformational journey: hitchhiking through Europe, on to Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, arriving in India a year later where he lived for two years, studying Buddhist meditation. He returned to London in April 1974, knowing that he would dedicate his life to art. This early expedition has had a defining influence on his sculpture, which focuses on the body, its position in space and its connection to the elements and time.

‘I treat the body as a place encouraging empathic occupation of that which lies the other side of appearance: what it feels like.’

In this installation on Delos, Gormley repopulates the island with iron 'bodyforms', restoring a human presence and creating a journey of potential encounters. He has installed 29 sculptures made during the last twenty years, including 5 specially commissioned new works, both at the periphery and integrated amongst Delos's archaeological sites.

The works animate the geological and archeological features of the island: a granite rock in the middle of the Cycladic Islands in the Aegean less than 5 kilometres long and 1.5 kilometres wide, which has a past filled with myths, rituals, religions, politics, multiculturalism and trade. Its intertwined and contrasting identities, 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 its first name was «*Ἀδελος*» (*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 history is imprinted on Delos's architecture, sanctuaries and houses, and in the past was animated through rituals that celebrated the gods and protected the island. Later, sanctuaries to foreign deities, including Serapis and Isis, were built here.

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

Gormley completely reinterprets the function and purpose of sculpture, transforming the traditional statues and totems of the ancient world that once adorned public squares, temples and private dwellings into sites of empathy and imaginative projection. The first connection between visitors and the work is established before they even set foot on Delos. Approaching the rugged northwest coast, they catch sight of a lone figure (from Gormley's series *Another Time*, 1999–2013), standing sentinel on a rocky promontory at the water's edge. Two more works from the same series – also looking towards the distant horizon – stand on Plakes Peak and on Mount Kynthos, and another similar work stands in the waters of the harbour. Further sculptures are integrated with archaeological sites across the island, from the Stadium to the Theatre district and from the merchant stores to the Museum site.

Gormley has studied the temples and the sacred enclosures, the horizon and the topography created by the wind and the salt. His sculptures, taking naturalistic, cubic and more abstracted forms, either stand or lie on the ground, exposed to the elements. Interacting with the island's topography, the works appear and disappear. They activate the elemental character of the island and its human history, establishing a connection with our collective memory. Gormley respectfully engages the audience in an experience that does not compete with the space or its history, but rather, establishes a physical and intellectual connection with our collective memory. He proposes a radical openness:

‘Art is about reasserting our first-hand experience in present time.’

Visitors to Delos are invited to connect with time, space and nature, which inevitably link to our shared future. Gormley on Delos reminds us how central art is to the human story.

Elina Kountouri
Director, NEON

SIGHT OF DELOS

The mythical birthplace of Apollo and Artemis, Delos bears a historical weight disproportionate to its size. Inhabited since the Early Cycladic 3rd millennium BC, it is home to one of the most important sanctuaries of the Ancient Greek world, is fatally associated with classical Athens, and evolved into a wealthy commercial and urban centre of the Hellenistic oecumene, in the early Middle Ages, fading irreversibly, only to be rediscovered when European Modernity and the Greek state begun to shape their past, based on the findings of the large-scale 19th century excavations.

The extensive ruins within the unspoilt natural beauty of the Cycladic landscape of uninhabited Delos offer the visitor the unique experience of a journey through time. But this experience cannot necessarily be limited to the academic reading of the island's historical significance. At a time when the past is not read unambiguously, and our acquaintance with it, through its registration in our personal memory, passes through our personal – quasi-unmediated – experience, we urge visitors to discover their own path; to connect with the space on an individual basis; to take away their own personal historical, aesthetic, environmental and even emotional experience. However, new readings of the past require new, powerful synapses with the present.

One of these synapses is Antony Gormley's installation *SIGHT*. The artist, who is constantly exploring the relationship between the human body and the environment, installs his anthropomorphic iron sculptures on Delos, redefining space and offering new sensory stimuli to the visitor. Whether as shadows of people that haunted the once bustling historic harbour, or as dark reminders of the ancient statues that adorned the houses and the sanctuaries of Delos, Gormley's sculptures are in dynamic context with with the island's antiquities and are absorbed, almost organically, by the ancient landscape.

The pleasure of wandering amid this Delian anasynthesis is ideally suited to reflecting on our identity, cognitive and aesthetic ties with the past.

Dr. Demetrios Athanasoulis
Director of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades

ANTONY GORMLEY

Born in London in 1950, Antony Gormley has had a number of solo shows at venues including Uffizi Gallery, Florence (2019); the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia (2019); 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.

NEON

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.

EPHORATE OF ANTIQUITIES OF CYCLADES

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 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 programmes, 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 SIGHT

ΔΗΛΟΣ 02.05 —
DELOS 31.10.2019

CURATED BY
IWONA BLAZWICK OBE, DIRECTOR, WHITECHAPEL GALLERY
AND ELINA KOUNTOURI, DIRECTOR, NEON

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#DELOS

SIGHT IS ORGANIZED AND
COMMISSIONED BY NEON
AND PRESENTED IN
COLLABORATION WITH THE
EPHORATE OF ANTIQUITIES
OF CYCLADES

OPENING HOURS:
DAILY 08:00 - 20:00

Opening hours may vary depending on the month. The island of Delos is accessible by boat mainly from Mykonos as well as Paros and Naxos Islands.

There is no extra charge for entrance to the exhibition.

I. KYNTHOS

In Kynthos of myth, according to ancient writers, Leto found a welcoming place to bring her twin children, Apollo and Artemis, into the world. From the horns of the goats hunted by his sister on the slopes of the mountain, the four-year-old Apollo built the Keraton, the ancient altar of his sanctuary. On the naturally fortified granite peak of Kynthos, the oldest known human traces on the island are also found: the fragments of the early Cycladic settlement dating back to the third millennium BC. Later, in historical times, a sanctuary was founded in the same place, in honour of Zeus Kynthios, Athena Kynthia and Zeus Hypsistos, which operated for centuries. If one stands today on the mountain's peak, one will see the reason and the way in which the islands of the archipelago formed a circular dance around it.

II. NEW, FOREIGN DEITIES ON DELOS

During historical times, the Aegean Ionians came to the Panionian Sanctuary to take part in the feasts of the Greek pantheon, with an emphasis on the Delian triad – Apollo, Artemis and their mother Leto. During the Hellenistic era, in the years of the port's tax exemption, merchants from all corners of the known world flocked to Delos, transforming it into the largest centre of transit trade in the Eastern Mediterranean. But these merchants also brought with them the need for their own gods. On the banks of the Inopos, which in Egyptian lore was considered to be a tributary of the Nile, the sanctuaries of Isis and Serapis were built together with those of other deities,

such as the Syrian gods Adado and Atagartis. In other parts of the island, sanctuaries appeared in honour of the Philistine god Baal-Zebul and the Roman Lares, as did a Jewish synagogue. In the cosmopolitan society of Delos, the various cults came in close contact, exchanging attributes and creating new deities, in the context of the spontaneous process known as *syncretism*.

III. THE THEATRE QUARTER

During the time when the port was declared tax exempt, in the mid-2nd century BC, a multicultural society of merchants hailing from Mainland Greece, the Aegean, the Near East, North Africa, the Italian Peninsula and the shores of the Black Sea, emerged on Delos. On both sides of the paved road which led from the ancient harbour to the 6,500-seat Theatre, the oldest district of the city developed. The residents were mainly descendants of Athenian *cleruchs*, an “aristocratic” class that tried to keep pace with the new cosmopolitan economic oligarchy. The quarter was characterised by irregular urban planning, small plots of land and houses that tried to take advantage of all available space. High- and mid-value homes were rebuilt over the centuries and were adorned with beautiful mosaics and sculptures. On their facade, one-room shops sought customers among the passers-by to purchase their home-made products.

IV. THE STADIUM QUARTER

The urban tissue of Delos developed around the sanctuary, leaving southern Delos free for agricultural crops and the two major peninsulas in the north for pastures. The few excavated houses of the quarter located on the east coast of Delos operated alongside

their owners' workshops, some of which are recognised as perfumeries and dye shops. However, the quarter is characterised by at least two large public buildings. The Gymnasium, in which children, adolescents and young men, under the supervision of the Gymnasiarch and his assistants, exercised, making up a diverse group, representative of the cosmopolitan society of Hellenistic Delos. The ancient Stadium, which communicated directly with the Gymnasium, had an *exedra*, a stone platform for spectators; a *xystos* – a covered running track for the training of athletes in case of bad weather – also gave it the conventional name of ‘Quarter’.

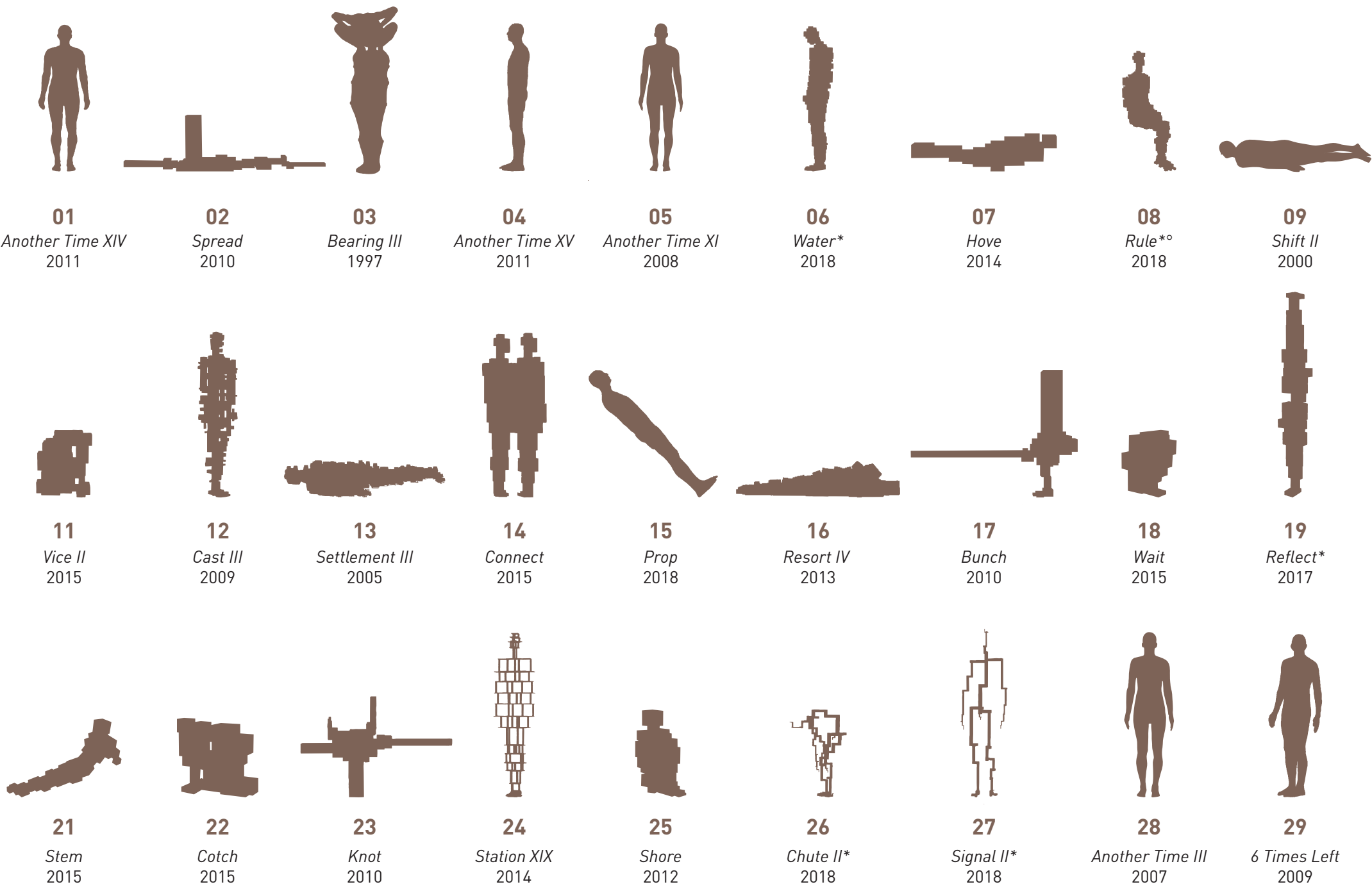
V. TRADE ON DELOS

Delos, a small island with limited living spaces and natural resources, had to import most of the goods that would preserve the lives of its inhabitants and the activity of the Sanctuary from the islands of Rhenia and Mykonos, and other distant places. Since Independence (314–167BC), when Delos became the capital of the Commonwealth of the Islands, commerce had received a boost and the first markets had been established. However, by introducing the port's tax exemption in 167 BC, the establishment of new merchants and commercial activity boomed and the Holy Harbour was no longer sufficient. On the western coast of Delos, new extensive port facilities were built, which received about 7,500 ship arrivals per year. Shops were established on the new piers. Strabo delivers for Delos the most eloquent adage: ‘Trader, come to the harbour, unload, and everything is sold.’ In the new markets and shops, it is estimated that 750,000 tons of merchandise were traded and 250,000 slaves changed owner.

VI. THE SANCTUARY OF APOLLO

During the Early Iron Age, the Dark Centuries that followed the decline of the Mycenaean world, the societies of the Greek peninsula organised into political entities – city-states. At the same time, pan-Hellenic sanctuaries were established with feasts that drew believers according to the old customary, ideological and religious criteria. Delos became home to the sanctuary that affected the Ionians in the Eastern Mediterranean basin. The missions of the Ionian cities arrived for centuries at the Holy Harbour of Delos to take part in the feasts in honour of Apollo, Artemis and Leto. The political and military developments in the Aegean determined the fate of the island. As early as the Archaic period, Naxians, Parians, the tyrant Peisistratos, Athens of the 5th century BC and the Hellenistic period, and the Romans, who aspired to dominate the Aegean both politically and economically, proceeded to assume control, directly or indirectly, of the Panionian sanctuary and assigned temples, buildings, sculptures and gifts to Apollo. At one point, control of the island and the sanctuary became extreme and went as far as exiling the inhabitants of Delos. Only during the period of Macedonian supremacy in the Aegean did Delos become independent and was made the capital of the Commonwealth of the Islands.

Dr. Themistoklis Vakoulis
Archaeologist, Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades



* New site-specific commission

° The sculpture *Rule*, installed in the west side of the Archaeological Museum of Delos, is mounted on an exact replica of the ancient column and capital fragment.

