

**NEON in collaboration with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades presents:  
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 *SIGHT* an unprecedented site-specific exhibition by British artist Antony Gormley, in collaboration with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades, on the archaeological site and the Museum of Delos Island.

This project by the renowned sculptor marks the first time that an artist takes over the archaeological site of Delos since the 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.

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 archaeological 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 singular and cosmopolitan Hellenistic town.

Mythology tells us its first name was «Ἄδελος» (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.

Visitors to Delos are invited to connect with time, space and nature, which inevitably link to our shared future.

#### **Comments from the collaborators:**

'The extensive ruins within the unspoilt natural beauty of uninhabited Delos offer the visitor the unique experience of a journey through time. The installation *SIGHT*, acts as an amplifier of the personal experience of the site and as a channel facilitating diverse readings of the past. Antony Gormley's sculptures give the visitor the pleasure of wandering amid this Delian anasynthesis which is ideally suited to reflecting on our identity and exploring our cognitive and aesthetic ties with the past.

**Demetrios Athanasoulis, Director of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades**

'I have experienced once again the magic of this place; an ancient magic evoking an energy, which is especially intense now in its coexistence with modern sculpture. The exhibition *SIGHT* is a joint effort – made by the archaeologists, by the NEON team, and by the Central Archaeological Council which gave the exhibition its approval – is something that we must now continue in this land, which can no longer be just a destination for people to see our ancient glory, but a destination where our present restlessness is on display, along with our vitality and eagerness to remain topical in this world.'

**Dimitris Daskalopoulos, Founder, NEON**

'Antony Gormley unfurls a remarkable work of choreography. 29 unique figures, created over two decades, are placed to intensify the experience of this lost civilization, creating a powerful resonance between the body, ancient culture and the elements.'

**Iwona Blazwick, co-curator | Director, Whitechapel Gallery**

'Gormley proposes a radical openness: "Art is about reasserting our first-hand experience in present time." For many centuries Delos was a site of trade and multiculturalism, a topos of exchange of ideas and goods; a centre where different faiths were practiced. Today, like other archaeological spaces - it serves as a reminder of the interconnectedness of different cultures and nations; how humans can peacefully cohabit in an atmosphere of tolerance and inclusivity.

'This exhibition is an exceptional opportunity for a wide audience to engage with Gormley's work and be reminded how central art is to the human story. I hope visitors will leave Delos feeling that his contemporary sculpture and this site belong to us all.'

**Elina Kountouri, co-curator | Director, NEON**

## 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](http://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 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

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); Kunsthau 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

Exhibition dates: 2 May - 31 October 2019

## Opening Hours

Daily 8:00 - 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.

## Press Enquiries

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