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Playing Sculpture 'I Spy' in New York's Cityscape

Over the years New Yorkers have witnessed a lot of improbable things that fall under the heading of public art: waterfalls cascading down scaffolding along the city's waterfront; 7,500 gates festooned with saffron-colored fabric panels punctuating the pathways of Central Park; a 50-foot stainless-steel tree taking root just east of the Sheep Meadow. And from March 26 through Aug. 15, naked men — or rather 31 slightly different sculptures of the same naked man — will be perched on rooftops, placed on the grounds of Madison Square Park and dotting sidewalks around the Flatiron district.

That figure is cast from the body of the British artist Antony Gormley, and his project is "Event Horizon." The exhibition will be the first time that Madison Square Park Conservancy, organizer of art projects in the park, has burst beyond its home — that swath of green space between Madison and Fifth Avenues from 23rd to 26th Streets — and into the neighborhood. It is also the first public art project in New York for the 59-year-old Mr. Gormley, winner of the 1994 Turner Prize and perhaps best known recently for his project in London this year, when he arranged for members of the public to each have an hour of fame atop a Trafalgar Square plinth.

Mr. Gormley populated London rooftops with his iron-and-fiberglass sculptures two years ago, and he is reusing them for Manhattan's geography. "I do things in multiples," Mr. Gormley said. "And this project has to do with questioning both the status of art and the nature of the built environment. It's about where the human body fits into the scheme of things."