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Gormley's works fuel new thoughts



Antony Gormley's exhibition at Long Museum shows sculptures, installations and drawings. [Photo provided to China Daily]

Internationally acclaimed artist Antony Gormley says his ongoing solo exhibition at Shanghai's Long Museum is in a way not his show or has nothing to do with him. He says it is an empty and open space for "new thoughts and new feelings to arise".

The London-born artist is known for his sculptures, installations and public art projects, which feature human body molds being chiefly cast from his own body. His distinctive approach invites people to investigate the possibilities of their own bodies as a space and their relationship with their surroundings.

"There are many levels at this exhibition (in Shanghai) but the real subject of it is you: Each and every visitor will make his own journey at this exhibition," says the 67-year-old.

"Their experiences, thoughts and feelings are really the subjects of the show."

Antony Gormley: Still Moving is the second show in China by the British artist, who won the Turner Prize in 1994 and has been a member of the Royal Academy of Arts since 2003.

The previous exhibition, titled Host, was held at Galleria Continua's space in Beijing.

The Shanghai exhibition has more of Gormley's works and for the first time, his drawings and lithographs created since 1981, providing an alternative perspective to understand his views of the human body and space.

Gormley is the latest addition to a star-studded lineup of foreign artists who have exhibited solo or in a group at the West Bund space of Long Museum, founded by the billionaire-turned-collector couple Liu Yiqian and Wang Wei.

Previous exhibitors include James Turrell, the American artist who primarily works with light and space, and the Danish-Icelandic artist, Olafur Eliasson.



Antony Gormley, British artist. [Photo provided to China Daily]

Gormley's current exhibition includes *Critical Mass II*, a seminal body of works created in 1995 that are making their Asian debut.

It includes 60 life-size cast iron human bodies: Some of them are installed in a line in the poses from the foetal positions to stargazing, reminding one of the ascent of humans, and others are suspended in midair or scattered around on the ground.

Through these works, Gormley hopes to touch upon the audience's hopes and fears.

"For me this isn't about occupying a room, or colonizing a space," he says. "But I am activating it, making the space somehow come alive."

He says whether people like it or not, they are there at the exhibition as part of an experiment: "We are to see what art can do."

He says art by its nature is transformative, and wants to empower every person who engages in it and to give them a possibility of having their unique individual experiences.

"I really don't know what will happen.

"But I'm really excited about it. And I'm also excited about what the creative potential of China will be."

Gormley says the exhibition is also an experiment about what a museum can be, how it works, how it can engage people.

And he also expresses his hope for transformative art forces in China like the Long Museum.

He says that as a young museum, a bigger job for Long, besides exhibiting international artists of note, is "what kind of institution it will be, what kind of value it will have in terms of involving people in culture, and what will be the role of art in the emergence of China as a world power."