

Barandy, Kat. "antony gormley arrays abstracted, cast-iron figures along philadelphia museum's iconic steps." *designboom*. January 26, 2019

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## antony gormley arrays abstracted, cast-iron figures along philadelphia museum's iconic steps



british sculptor antony gormley presents **STAND**, an installation of ten cast-iron blockworks, as a speculation on how public sculpture in an urban context can re-engage with the subjective feeling of the citizen. each rising ten feet high and weighing nearly three tons, the assemblage of figures is arrayed monumentally along the iconic steps of the philadelphia museum of art. while the series takes a symmetrical, forefrontal occupation along the axis of the grand neo-classical building, the figures are not traditional statues, or portraits of the moral and the great. they are not representative of a national era. rather, each abstracted figure invites the viewer to act as a 'co-producer' of the work, to both project and recognize internal affinities within the postural attitude it carries.

**designboom** was in attendance at the unveiling of **STAND** at the philadelphia museum of art and spoke with antony gormley regarding the significance of the work as an interface between the museum and urban context.

# SEANKELLY



STAND, 2018, by antony gormley

installation view, philadelphia museum of art © antony gormley

photo by [joseph hu](#), 2019 / courtesy the artist and [sean kelly gallery](#)

**antony gormley's STAND challenges the often alienating nature of large-scale public works.** the artist notes that through the 20th century, public art did little to improve the nature and quality of collective space, which was being challenged primarily by cars and advertisements. the figures, overlooking the steps of the **philadelphia museum of art**, are both 'outside' an institution and 'with' an institution. the work mediates the high cultural values represented by the historic building with the true social context of the streets of the city. regardless of their forefrontal position, the sculptures do not represent figural idealization, but self-reflection. the artist notes that the installation invites engagement from people who would perhaps never enter the museum itself.

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installation view, philadelphia museum of art © antony gormley

image by joseph hu, 2019 / courtesy the artist and sean kelly gallery

**the postures of each figure were initially developed through the influence of such words as lull, daze, prop, and ponder.** while each word served as a catalyst for formation during his creative process, gormley regards each figure as a sculptural rorschach test, inviting the viewer to generate their own translation. the works therefore have no meaning until there is a projected recognition from the viewer. the human likeness, or memetic factor of each figure is abstracted by the materiality and architectural language of the work. the installation will be on view from january 24th through june 16th, 2019 at the philadelphia museum of art, which is currently undergoing a transformative renovation by frank gehry.

# SEANKELLY



STAND, 2018, by antony gormley

installation view, philadelphia museum of art © antony gormley

image by joseph hu, 2019 / courtesy the artist and sean kelly gallery

***'I use iron because it is a mineral', gormley comments regarding the materiality. 'if you go down 2000 kilometers toward the core of the earth you'll find this material — at the same temperature. it takes it away from the association with fine art and positions it in this time. you could say that all our gains and all our problems come from the relationship between iron and coal — the industrial revolution. we may be in the information age but we are still absolutely embedded in the forms of production that are characterized by the industrial revolution. and I want to meditate on that.'***

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STAND, 2018, by antony gormley

installation view, philadelphia museum of art © antony gormley

image by joseph hu, 2019 / courtesy the artist and sean kelly gallery

**the installation offers the viewer a chance to project onto each figure their own identity in a search for personal truth.** in response to the question of his own favorite piece to which he most relates, gormley tells designboom: *'I can't have favorites, can I? they are all in a way like children. I like to think that they are the result of a process of loving. well what does that mean? I guess it means a kind of passionate relationship with making. some are more difficult than others but I wouldn't criticize them for it.'*

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STAND, 2018, by antony gormley

installation view, philadelphia museum of art © antony gormley

image by joseph hu, 2019 / courtesy the artist and sean kelly gallery

**the artist further elaborates on the collection:** *'these rough cast-iron pillars will become an open ground for psychic projection and perhaps also transmit a sense of a transitive human state. the load path of the blocks, at once stable and precarious, will evoke different states in different viewers, and—far from reinforcing hierarchies of power or mythologies of race, place, or nation—this is a form of interrogation of both individual experience and collective identity.'*