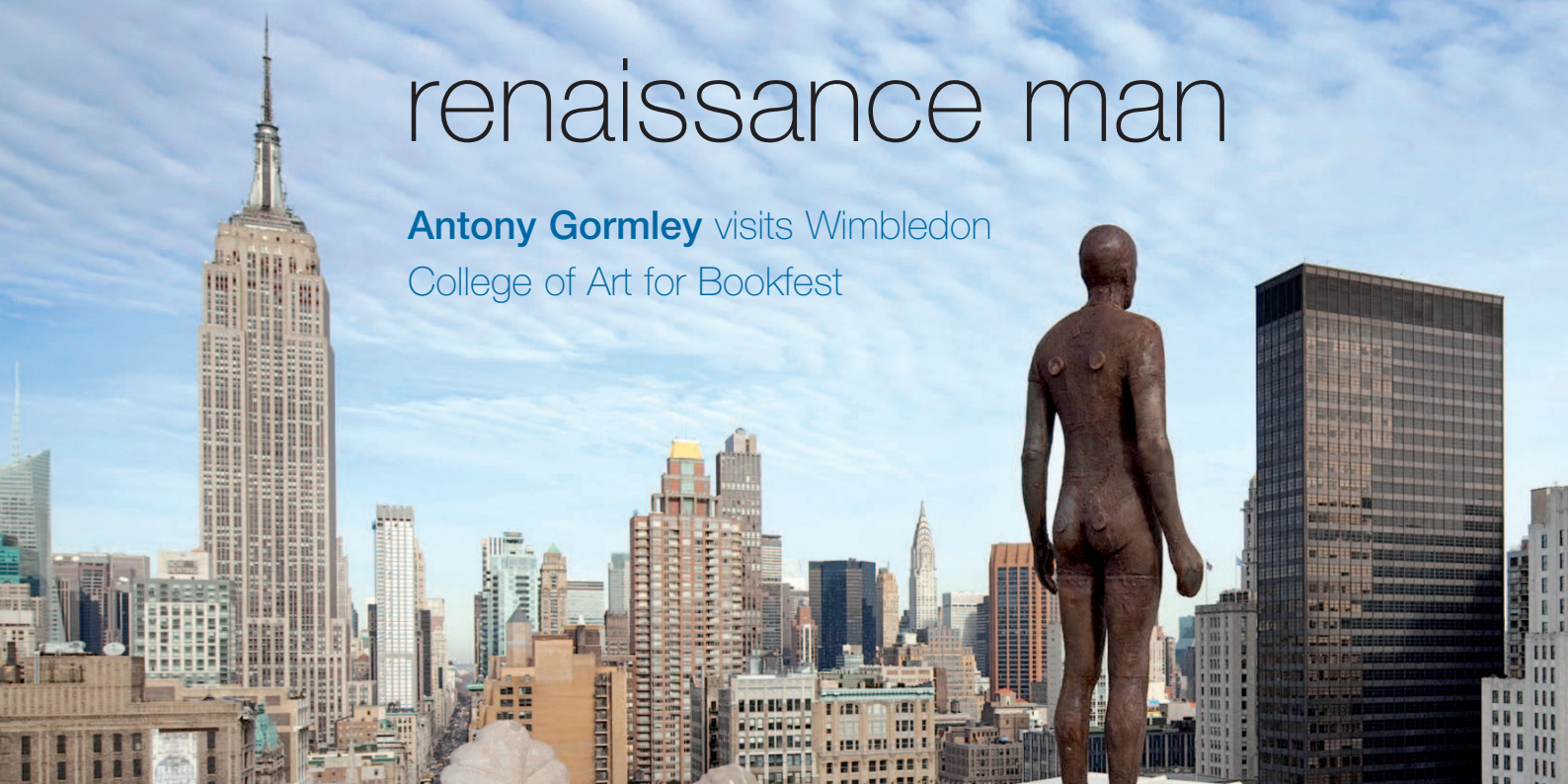


# renaissance man

Antony Gormley visits Wimbledon  
College of Art for Bookfest



Antony Gormley is a phenomenon of the art world. His most recent project *One & Other* captured the imagination (and collaboration) of a huge number of the public. A plinth in Trafalgar square became available and Gormley was asked to 'do something for it'. Most artists would have set to and produced a piece of sculpture in their favourite medium to occupy this prestigious spot, but Gormley took a totally original approach and decided to involve the general public. So publicity was arranged asking any member of the public who wished to occupy the plinth for an hour to contact him. A rota was set up and a variety of groups - from the Women's Institute to local art schools - sent people who posed on the plinth or simply used it as an opportunity to have a nap in a public place.

But Gormley is not restricted to conceptual art. His art can be totally concrete or totally figurative. His recent exhibition at the Hayward Gallery showed his figurative work - based largely on himself. Many of the pieces were dotted around the buildings at the South Bank and looked down on the traffic, office workers and tourists who inhabit that part of London.

I met Gormley at his most recent exhibition at White Cube after he had just returned from an extensive tour of America. He rattled off the towns and galleries that he visited with an impressive attention to detail. I raised the point that the Americans had been freaked out by his sculptures situated high up on buildings in The Big Apple and

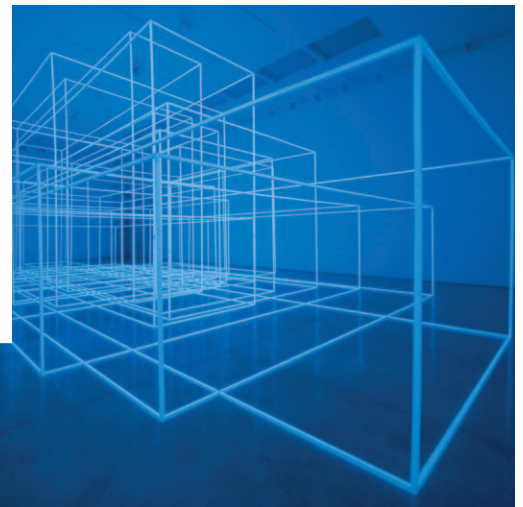
kept phoning the fire brigade and the police because they assumed that it was a person about to commit suicide. 'Yes,' he said. 'The Americans got totally neurotic about them. But I suppose that's Americans for you.'

The exhibition at White Cube Gallery, situated in Masons Yard, a slightly inaccessible square off Piccadilly, was thronging with people. The entrance queue stretched round the building and the atmosphere was more like a pop concert, featuring people of all ages, than a London exhibition. I located the artist in the basement as he stood in the centre of his sculpture. I say sculpture because as you can see from the illustration on the opposite page the construction has a rather spaced out feel about it. He explained that it had been constructed in aluminium and painted with phosphorescent paint to give it the other world impression. He stood in the middle, dressed totally in white, which gave the sculpture a human context and himself a slightly supernatural look. I asked him how he came to arrive at this particular structure. He immediately gave the mathematical formula he had used, in great detail - all based on the human figure.

Gormley's art, unlike some modern artists, is accessible to all. He takes his art beyond the gallery but at the same time he is respected by the art world for its intellectual concepts and breadth of vision. He was the winner of the Turner Prize in 1994 and the Bernard Heiliger Award for sculpture in 2007. He is the darling of many



An example of a figure on the plinth at Trafalgar Square from his book *One and Other*.



☯ The Americans got totally neurotic about them. But I suppose that's Americans for you ☯

architects and is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects. George Blacklock, Dean of Wimbledon College of Art, who will be interviewing Gormley at Wimbledon Bookfest on Monday 4 October, recently described him as 'a truly Renaissance man'.

His Angel of the North situated in Gateshead dominates the area with its monumental structure; according to all reports, the sculpture is loved by the hardy people of the north and is known locally as rusty flasher. Gormley recently took a break from his rather urban structures in his new work Horizon Field which covers 150 square kilometres in Austria. The figures perch on cliff tops, rusty-coloured bodies etched against a brilliant blue sky. While the odd lonely goatherd may stumble across them, most of the figures are only accessible with the use of a good map, a 30-minute cable car ride and a demanding hike. To reach others, you'll need skis. Most of his figures are based on himself and are often casts, so now that he has

turned 60 in August, he feels the need to keep his own body in trim for the making and casting of his work so he has hired a personal trainer named Julian - a dancer. 'The sculptures have got fatter recently,' he comments, 'as is the way of bodies. I suppose there is always some vanity in these things.'

In a career spanning nearly forty years, Gormley never seems to have lost his early enthusiasm and love of finding new and novel approaches to his art while at the same time keeping his feet on the ground and his link with the broad public.

*(Words by Tony Kane) George Blacklock, Dean of Wimbledon College of Art will be interviewing Antony Gormley at Wimbledon Bookfest on Monday 4 October at 6.30pm. One and Other will be obtainable at the event ([www.wimbledonbookfest.org](http://www.wimbledonbookfest.org))*

*Main Image: Antony Gormley EVENT HORIZON, 2007. 27 fibreglass and 4 cast iron figures. 189 x 53 x 29 cm. A Hayward Gallery Commission. Presented by Madison Square Park Conservancy, New York, 2010. Photograph by James Ewing. Courtesy Sean Kelly Gallery, New York and White Cube, London. © the artist*