Art

Exhibition of the week **Antony Gormley**

Royal Academy, London W1 (020-7300 8027, royalacademy.org.uk). Until 3 December

Antony Gormley is probably "Britain's most popular sculptor", celebrated for his trademark casts of his own body – most famously, the Angel of the North – and his spectacular, immersive installations, said Rachel Campbell-Johnston in The Times. Gormley's new show at the Royal Academy is the biggest UK exhibition of his work in a decade, and though it brings together art created throughout his near-50-year career, it is emphatically not your standard retrospective. Indeed, it can seem more like a "fairground" than an art exhibition: in its course, you will find yourself having to "duck, weave and high step" through the "rattling metal loops" of an enormous metal sculpture; blundering around a "maze of steel caverns"; and even taking care not to fall into the ankle-deep artificial lake with which he has filled an entire gallery, complete with "gloopy red mud" and a population of "tiny, translucent shrimps". It's all tremendous "fun" – but can Gormley's art offer anything more than "mere entertainment"?

At his best, Gormley uses "simple concepts" to evoke "deep rooted human emotions and instincts", said Tabish Khan on Londonist.com. At one end of the scale, there is a tiny sculpture of a newborn baby placed face-down on the courtyard floor that

"Room after room of Gormley, Gormley, Gormley"

projects genuine pathos and vulnerability; at the other end is *Cave*, a giant sculpture of a "figure in the foetal position". Visitors are invited to clamber inside it, entering a cramped, pitch-black space that eventually opens up and lets in a beam of light. It's a "powerful" work, said Eddy Frankel in Time Out. But the show gets tiresome pretty quickly. Too many sculptures here are "weak" and the drawings on display are "dull at best". Then there are the endless casts of the artist: "room after room of Gormley, Gormley, Gormley". I left feeling that "the Gorminator" might be "the most one-note artist ever".

That's not entirely fair, said Lucy Davies in The Daily Telegraph. Gormley's abstract work can be "captivating": *Matrix III* (2019), for instance, is "a monstrous, impenetrable grid of steel mesh" suspended from the ceiling of the RA's largest gallery; standing directly beneath this six-tonne behemoth is a truly stimulating experience. When it comes to the figurative sculpture for which he is best known, however, Gormley is indeed on shakier ground. *Subject II* – a depiction of a bowed figure made of "intercrossed steel bars" – makes little impression, while a room full of his "signature life casts" is just "bland". For a show with some awe-inspiring moments, it is "strangely disappointing".

Where to buy…

The Week reviews an exhibition in a private gallery

Catherine Story

at Cooke Latham Gallery

The British artist Catherine Story has called her new exhibition Pasquino, after the first and most famous of Rome's "talking statues" – so known because for centuries, citizens of the city have affixed anonymous criticisms to its base. It's one of a number of works of public art that have inspired her; others include the 1920s bas reliefs on the front of the Bonwit Teller department store on Fifth Avenue in New York – which were destroyed to make way for Donald Trump's eponymous skyscraper, despite his earlier promises to save them for posterity – and the art deco friezes of cinemas in London's West End. Her small paintings and sculptures are rather haunting: the former category consists of de Chirico-like images of ruined or decaying monuments, while

Pasquina (2019) 76cm x 60cm

the latter works are delicate effigies incorporating found materials, art deco jewellery motifs and hints of pagan symbolism. It's a quiet but powerful show. Prices start from £1,000.

41 Parkgate Road, London SW11 (0780-288 4525). Until 1 November.

Finding *La Femme Perdue*

It has long been noted that a ghostly image of a woman lies beneath the surface of *The Old Guitarist* (1903), one of the most famous paintings of Picasso's blue period. In 1998, conservators used X-rays to reveal more clearly what Picasso had painted over: a picture of a seated woman holding out her left arm. It came to be known as *La Femme Perdue*. Now computer scientists at University College London have gone one better, says the MIT Technology Review. Using new imaging technology, they have recreated the lost painting in something like its original glory. The technique, called neural style transfer, uses advanced machine learning to distinguish paintings by different artists, and to convert any image into a distinct style: Leonardo da Vinci, say, or late Vincent van Gogh. In this case, researchers trained the programme in the style of Picasso's blue period, and recreated the picture accordingly: it is, they say, a "novel method of reconstructing lost artwork".