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Blind light dazzles London

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— PHOTO: AP



ART AS EXPERIENCE: A gallery worker inside the 'Blind Light', a reinforced glass box that is part of an art installation by Antony Gormley, in London, ahead of the start of the show. The installation invites visitors into the box and then surrounds them in a cloud of bright, white thick fog. The fog is created from eight overhead ultrasonic humidifiers, fuelled by 140 litres of water each hour.

For design enthusiasts passing through London this summer, the Antony Gormley Blind Light exhibit is a must-not-miss activity. An artist and sculptor, Gormley predominantly focusses on the "body" as an object, subject and also, interestingly, as space.

His floor-to-ceiling sculpture comprised of dizzying cuboids with slanting lines is reminiscent of an MC Escher painting while the prostrate figures that adorn the floor and ceiling represent torture and execution, using the body as an object. Visitors can wander through a man-size concrete jungle, derived from the vital statistics of real people aged between 18 months and 80 years.

Big attraction

There is plenty more to see, but undoubtedly the biggest attraction of the exhibit is the massive glass-walled cube filled with white fog.

Thick, humid air swirls in an enclosed space where visibility is less than one foot. Inside, all one can see is white. This exhibit offers visitors the experience of losing themselves in light and

vapour.

According to Gormley, "The blinding light is part of an experience of disorientation." The words "help" scribbled on the glass by someone with a good sense of humour doesn't scare visitors off. The queue to enter the cube is far from short and people plunge into the blind fog with enthusiasm.

Navigation

The less adventurous navigate their way through the humidity by holding onto the wall all the way round the cube, while the more daring wander into the centre.

Not recommended for claustrophobics and asthma sufferers (as the heavy air can set off bouts of coughing) the experience is both scary and wild.

Adding to the mystery surrounding the show, outdoor project Event Horizon has installed prominent life size figures on pavements and rooftops surrounding The Hayward Gallery.

The whole exhibition has an exploratory feel to it, aimed at challenging the way we perceive and move in the space that we occupy. At only £8 a head, the show is certainly an afternoon well spent.

Catch Antony Gormley's Blind Light exhibition at The Hayward Gallery in London's South Bank from May 17 to August 19. For more information on the event, log on to www.southbankcentre.co.uk/gormley

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