

SEANKELLY

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Antony Gormley's new sculpture: a £2,500-a-night pitch black hotel room, nakedness preferred

Antony Gormley's new sculpture is a hotel room that plunges guests into total darkness - and it may become 'a bonking site of choice'



Antony Gormley unveils his new inhabitable sculpture 'Room' on the facade of the Beaumont Hotel, London Photo: CHRIS TOPHER PLEDGER FOR THE TELEGRAPH

Antony Gormley has created his first inhabitable sculpture, a hotel room which plunges guests into total darkness.

From the outside, Room is a brooding, geometric giant crouched on the façade of the soon-to-open Beaumont Hotel in Mayfair.

The inside is art as immersive experience: a hotel room measuring only 4m sq but 10m high, containing nothing but a bed covered in plain white cotton. The walls are lined with dark, fumigated oak and shutters over the sole window provide total blackout.

When the lights are switched off the room is plunged into what appears to be absolute darkness.

After around 10 minutes, the eyes adjust and the corners of the work can just be made out in the space above the bed, thanks to subliminal levels of light placed in the structure's ankles, elbows and neck. It is not an experience that would suit the claustrophobic.

And the cost of this experience? Up to £2,500 per night.

“This has given me the first opportunity in my life to sculpt darkness,” Gormley said, adding that he had tried to create “the primal space of a cave” in the heart of central London, a stone’s throw from the bustle of Oxford Street.

Guests must walk through a bathroom before entering the bedroom, and Gormley suggests they disrobe there.



A general view of British Artist Anthony Gormley's new piece of work entitled 'Room' (Dan Kitwood/ Getty)

“I hope that people leave not only the world behind when they enter that bedroom but also all their clothes,” he explained.

“I imagine people entering that space naked, going through these blackout curtains and then arriving in this dark interior entirely lit by the reflected light coming off a white Egyptian cotton duvet-covered bed.

“It will be closer to the experience of being in the primal space of a cave, something that is removed from the city entirely.

“And when the time comes to sleep you will be able to simply flick a switch and those spotlights will go off and you will be immersed in darkness.

“What I’ve tried to do is make that space you experience when you close your eyes, and real space, somehow closer together.

“We could have been very banal about it and had the shower in the right knee and a library in the elbow and whatever, but I just wanted to keep it absolutely pure. It’s simply a bedroom.”

Gormley is the creator of the Angel of the North sculpture and all of his works take the human form as their starting point.

He was hired for the hotel commission by Chris Corbin and Jeremy King, the business duo who owned and managed The Ivy, Le Caprice and J Sheekey, and are now behind The Wolseley and Brasserie Zédel. The 73-room Beaumont is their first hotel and opens in the autumn.

Standard rooms will start at £395 per night and large suites – of which Room is one, when the bathroom and living space outside the installation have been added in – will be around £2,500 per night.

Gormley hopes Room will provide “an experience of the sublime”.

On the other hand: “It may just become a bonking site of choice.”



Antony Gormley's latest new work comprises of a crouching figure on the facade of the new Beaumont Hotel in Mayfair (Dan Kitwood/ Getty)