

# SEANKELLY

Yerebakan, Osman Can. "In Collaboration With K-pop Sensation BTS, Artist Antony Gormley Installs Gigantic Sculpture in New York." *Architectural Digest*. February 7, 2020.

**AD**  
ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST



*New York Clearing*, 2020. Installation view, Brooklyn Bridge Park, Pier 3, New York City. Photo by Christopher Burke. © the artist.

"Is this a nest or a trap?" asks artist Antony Gormley, standing by the first public staging of his immersive aluminum work *New York Clearing*, on a recent gray February morning in [Brooklyn Bridge Park](#). The renowned British artist formerly exhibited his energetic sculpture (which he considers a "drawing" due to its scribble-like quality in space), at Sean Kelly's Chelsea gallery in 2005, and more recently at the Royal Academy of Art in [London](#) as part of a mid-career survey. However, it was an invite from K-pop sensation BTS that led to the installment of the 50-foot-tall medley of tangled aluminum tubing on Pier 3.

# SEANKELLY



*Workers installing New York Clearing. To adapt the piece from its gallery installation, where it hung with architectural support, to exist freely at Pier 3, Gormley relied upon a team of 25 to help anchor the work on the ground. Photo by Scott Rudd. © the ground. Photo by Scott Rudd. © the artist.*

How did a 70-year-old Turner Prize–winning artist and a coterie of seven 20-something Korean superstars come to collaborate? With a mission to expand its global reach of music and fandom, BTS recently launched a global contemporary art initiative, "[Connect, BTS](#)," commissioning public projects from established artists in five cities: New York, Seoul, Buenos Aires, London, and Berlin. The organization's goal is to tap into art's potential for public engagement, inclusion, and solidarity. Gormley found the messages in BTS's lyrics intriguing and joined an international roster of multimedia artists working with the band, including Tomás Saraceno, Jakob Kudsk Steensen, Ann Veronica Janssens, and Yiyun Kang. Akin to the Connect, BTS mission, Gormley sought to liberate his artwork and "give it back to people."

# SEANKELLY



The band at the January launch announcement of Connect, BTS. Photo by Taeseong Kim. Image courtesy of Big Hit Entertainment.

This isn't the London-based artist's first appearance in New York. In 1984, he had his first solo gallery exhibition in the city, and a decade ago he installed the public art exhibition *Event Horizon*, a series of 27 life-size human forms placed at the edges of rooftops in Madison Square Park. The forms' precarious positions, understandably, sparked some [controversy](#)).

In Brooklyn, however, he wanted to achieve something different. "Manhattan is the longest-standing social experiment in which coexistence somewhat manages to operate," the 70-year-old artist ruminates, peering across the East River to the skyscrapers of lower Manhattan. *New York Clearing*, then, is a madcap homage to that.



# SEANKELLY



New York Clearing during installation. Photo by Scott Rudd. © the artist.

Stretching across a concrete boardwalk, *New York Clearing* absorbs passersby into a serpentine maze, in which stepping over and ducking under aluminum tubings are the only ways through. Monumental in scale, the snarled aluminum hoops—which, when unraveled, span 11 miles—now freed from the constraints of gallery walls resemble the frenetic orbitals of an atom, or a painfully tangled necklace.

“This is an opportunity for people to get to know themselves through an invitation to move through space and time, which may be awkward and rewarding,” the artist says. Indeed, on the first day the sculpture was open to the public, Brooklyn Heights residents were rerouting their morning runs to examine their strange new neighbor while tourists snuck inside the labyrinth for classic Big Apple selfies.

Though the sculpture might spark joy (and social media love), the artist hopes to convey a more nuanced message, especially when it comes to climate change and other issues. “We’ve clearly poisoned our nest, and whether we will make it much longer is unclear,” says Gormley, who has witnessed alarming natural and social transformations firsthand through his extensive global travels. Inviting the public into this “paradoxical combination,” per Gormley, prompts visitors to navigate the boundaries between safety and entrapment—opposites you can choose to ignore, or confront.