

Angel Background

The Site

The Angel's silhouette at the head of the Team Valley now rivals that of the famous Tyne Bridge. A panoramic hilltop site was chosen where the sculpture would be clearly seen by more than 90,000 drivers a day on the A1 - more than one person every second - and by passengers on the East Coast main line from London to Edinburgh.

The site, a former colliery pithead baths synonymous with Gateshead mining history, was re-claimed as a green landscape during the early 1990s.

The Artist

The sculpture was designed by internationally renowned sculptor Antony Gormley.

Antony Gormley OBE, who was born in 1950, is at the forefront of a generation of celebrated younger British artists who emerged during the 1980s. He has exhibited work around the world and has major public works in the USA, Japan, Australia, Norway and Eire. Public work in Britain can be seen in locations as diverse as the crypt at Winchester Cathedral and Birmingham city centre. In 1994 he won the prestigious Turner Prize and in 1997 was awarded the OBE for services to sculpture.

He has exhibited in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Tate Gallery, British Museum and the Henry Moore Sculpture Gallery in Leeds.

"People are always asking, why an angel?"

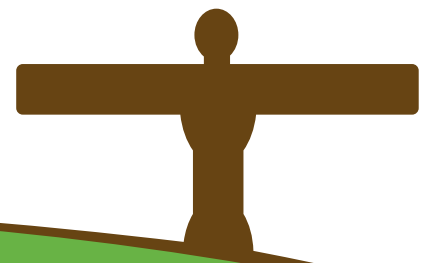
The only response I can give is that no-one has ever seen one and we need to keep imagining them. The angel has three functions - firstly a historic one to remind us that below this site coal miners worked in the dark for two hundred years, secondly to grasp hold of the future, expressing our transition from the industrial to the information age, and lastly to be a focus for our hopes and fears - a sculpture is an evolving thing."

Gormley said of the Angel:

"The hilltop site is important and has the feeling of being a megalithic mound. When you think of the mining that was done underneath the site, there is a poetic resonance. Men worked beneath the surface in the dark.

Now in the light, there is a celebration of this industry. The face will not have individual features. The effect of the piece is in the alertness, the awareness of space and the gesture of the wings - they are not flat, they're about 3.5 degrees forward and give a sense of embrace. The most important thing is that this is a collaborative venture.

We are evolving a collective work from the firms of the North East and the best engineers in the world."



History

- **1500s-1960s**
Coal mined in the area. Team Colliery worked from 1720s.
Modern baths complex built in 1939. Mining ceased on this site late 1960s.
- **1989**
Reclamation of former pit head baths site overlooking the A1.
- **July 1990**
Gateshead Council's Art in Public Places Panel decides in principle to earmark the site of the former pit head baths overlooking the A1 in Gateshead for a future landmark sculpture.
- **1992**
Landscaping of site completed.
- **December 1993**
A shortlist of international artists was drawn up and candidates invited to make proposals for the site.
- **January 1994**
Sculptor Antony Gormley selected by the panel and design proposals progressed with world renowned engineering consultants, Ove Arup & Partners.
- **February 1995**
Planning permission for the project approved by Council.
- **April 1996**
Funding of £800,000 secured for the sculpture: £584,000 from the Arts Council is Lottery Fund, £150,000 from the European Regional Development Fund, £45,000 from Northern Arts, plus private sponsorship.
- **February 1997**
Fabrication contract put out to tender.
- **March 1997**
Fabrication contractors visit Gormley's studio to see the Angel models.
- **May 1997**
Fabrication company chosen - Hartlepool Fabrications Ltd on Teesside.
- **July 1997**
Delivery of first consignment of steel for fabrication to Hartlepool.
- **September 1997**
Work began on Angel of the North foundations by Thomas Armstrong (Construction) Ltd.
- **January 1998**
Fabrication of sculpture nears completion.
- **February 1998**
Angel of the North on site.