

Press Release
2 December 2005

Tate Britain Christmas Tree by Gary Hume *Mob*

Tate Britain, Rotunda, Level 2
2 December 2005 - 3 January 2006
Open 10.00-17.50 every day except 24, 25 and 26 December
Admission free

Tate Britain has commissioned Gary Hume to create its Christmas tree for 2005, which will be on display from 2 December 2005. Hume has chosen a traditional Nordmania spruce tree decorated with a flock of hand-painted, stencil-cut blackbirds made from steel plate that perch proudly on the branches.

The blackbird remains a resident of Britain during the winter season and can be found all over the country - from suburban backyards, to city centres and farmlands. It has strong associations with Christmas through the popular carol *Twelve Days of Christmas*. The line 'four calling birds,' refers to blackbirds and may derive from the more traditional wording, 'four colly birds', since 'colly' means black and refers to the soot of coal.

Hume (born in Kent, England in 1962) is one of the generation of British artists who graduated from Goldsmiths College, London and came to prominence in the early 1990s with his series of life-sized paintings of hospital doors. These minimal and abstract works, with their high gloss paint and reflective surfaces, developed in the early 1990s into a more fluid and lyrical way of painting. Internationally recognised in both Europe and America, Hume has exhibited extensively around the world. In 1996 he was the British representative at the São Paulo Biennale and in the same year was nominated for the Turner Prize. In 1997, Hume was the winner of the Jerwood Painting Prize and in 1999 he represented Britain at the Venice Biennale. He has had solo exhibitions at the Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht; the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh; the Whitechapel Gallery, London, and Fundació "La Caixa", Barcelona.

This is the eighteenth year that Tate has marked Christmas in this way. Previously commissioned artists are: Richard Wentworth (2004), Mark Wallinger (2003), Tracey Emin (2002), Yinka Shonibare (2001), Catherine Yass (2000), Mat Collishaw (1999), Richard Wilson (1998), Michael Landy (1997), Julian Opie (1996), Cornelia Parker (1995), Cathy de Monchaux (1994), Shirazeh Houshiary (1993), Craigie Aitchison (1992), Boyd Webb (1991), Lisa Milroy (1990), Tim Head (1989) and Bill Woodrow (1988).

A new section of Tate's web site featuring images and information about all Tate's artist Christmas trees since 1988 and the artist-designed Tate Director's Christmas cards will launch on Friday 2 December 2005, www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/christmastree. In addition, Tate Online and BT have created a unique e-advent calendar, available from 1 December via Tate Online, www.tate.org.uk/adventcalendar. Behind each of the 24 online windows will be a different piece of art, including some pieces which have been recently donated to Tate, and some previously unseen works. All visitors to the Tate e-advent calendar will be given the chance to win fantastic art prizes, as on each day, BT and Tate will give one lucky web user a collection of art books and posters. On Christmas Eve, the overall winner will receive the top prize of a BT Broadband-enabled laptop PC.

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