

RA

Royal Academy of Arts

Michael Craig-Martin

Press Release

Michael Craig-Martin

Main Galleries

21 September - 10 December 2024

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In September 2024, the Royal Academy of Arts will present the largest retrospective of Michael Craig-Martin RA's work ever to be held in the UK. A key figure in British art, Craig-Martin (b.1941) is one of the most influential artists and teachers of his generation. Curated in close collaboration with the artist, this ambitious exhibition will encompass the broad repertoire of Craig-Martin's sixty-year career. Presented across the Royal Academy's Main Galleries, it will bring together over 120 important works spanning from the 1960s through to the present day, including sculpture, installation, painting and drawing, as well as newly conceived works for the occasion.

Craig-Martin was born in Ireland and studied in America before moving to London in 1966, where he has lived ever since. Fusing elements of pop, minimalism and conceptual art, his work transforms recognisable objects – from household items to mobile devices, famous art works to modernist

buildings – with bold colours and simple uninflected lines. Combined they take on the resonance of history paintings, portraits or still-lives, a reflection of contemporary life shaped in the image of the objects that define it. His influence extends beyond his own work; as an art educator he has inspired generations of artists, in particular many of the Young British Artists (YBAs), who made a significant impact on the art scene in the 1990s, including Damien Hirst, Gary Hume RA, Sarah Lucas and Fiona Rae RA.

Works from across Craig-Martin's career will be presented chronologically through the Main Galleries. Seminal early pieces in which the artist used found objects such as buckets, milk bottles and mirrors will show the experimental origins of his practice. On display will be *On the Table*, 1970 (Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art, Purchase, 2004), in which four metal buckets of water serve as the counter-balance to the suspended table on which they stand, and *An Oak Tree*, 1973 (Courtesy the artist) comprising a glass of water on a shelf and an accompanying text in which the artist explains that, outward appearances notwithstanding, he has changed the humble object into an oak tree. Representing the culmination of his conceptual work, this now legendary piece focuses on the role of belief in shaping the dynamic between artist, artwork and viewer. Following *An Oak Tree*, Craig-Martin reached a 'full stop', after which he sought a new direction away from conceptual art.

A further section of the exhibition will reveal how a new focus on drawing gave rise to Craig-Martin's large-scale wall drawings in tape, executed with the use of projections. Tape drawings such as *Interlocked (MoMA project 1990)*, 1990 (Courtesy the artist), which will be recreated in situ on the gallery walls, give prominence to generic everyday objects, ones that might normally lie in the background yet are fundamental to our daily lives. Over time, Craig-Martin has created a thesaurus of selected motifs that he has repeated and adapted to different spaces and situations. Notably, such motifs fill the large-scale, colourful paintings that came to dominate Craig-Martin's practice in 1990s, and for which he is now best-known, such as *Eye of the Storm*, 2003 (Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art, Purchase, 2005).

The exhibition will present the many facets of Craig-Martin's painting practice, including his depictions of single objects that highlight how his motifs have changed over time; the buckets and ladders of post-industrial life in the West give way to mobile phones and iPads; the cheap and the discarded becoming luxury items around which people build identities today. These will hang alongside his word paintings such as *Untitled (Painting)*, 2010 (Gagosian, London), in which the artist explores the relationship between text and image. The following space will be dedicated to his reworkings of iconic works from art and design, such as Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) and Mies van der Rohe's *Barcelona chair* (1929).

The exhibition will conclude with works conceived specifically for the exhibition. One gallery will be dedicated to a large-scale, immersive and dynamic digital experience with floor-to-ceiling projected images, while the Central Hall will be transformed in to a site-specific, vibrantly coloured installation that engages with the architecture of the space. The exhibition will extend outside to the RA's Annenberg Courtyard, where a number of Craig-Martin's monumental and colourful line sculptures of commonplace objects will be on display.

Michael Craig-Martin follows in the RA's tradition of celebrating its Royal Academicians, continuing a strand of programming that has showcased some of the most important living artists including Marina Abramović, William Kentridge, Antony Gormley, Ai Weiwei and Anish Kapoor. Craig-Martin was elected as a Royal Academician in 2006 and became Senior Academician in 2015.

[Michael Craig-Martin Biography](#)

Organisation

The exhibition is organised by the Royal Academy of Arts, London in close collaboration with the artist. It is curated by Axel Rüger, Secretary and Chief Executive of the Royal Academy of Arts, with Sylvie Broussine, Assistant Curator of the Royal Academy of Arts.

Accompanying Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with texts by Michael Bracewell, Sylvie Broussine, Richard Cork, Carolina Grau and Axel Rüger.

Dates and Opening Hours

Press view: Tuesday 17 September 2024, 10am-2pm
Dates: Saturday 21 September – Tuesday 10 December 2024
10am – 6pm Tuesday to Sunday
10am – 9pm Friday

Admission

From £22; concessions available; under 16s go free ([T&Cs apply](#)); Friends of the RA go free.
25 & Under: 16 to 25 year olds can access a half-price ticket ([T&Cs apply](#)).

Tickets

Advance booking with pre-booked timed tickets is recommended for everyone, including Friends of the RA. Tickets can be booked in advance online (royalacademy.org.uk) or over the phone (0207 300 8090).

BNP Paribas AccessArt25

Following on from previous successful programmes around *Marina Abramović*, *Making Modernism* and *Antony Gormley*, the BNP Paribas AccessArt25 programme will offer a day of specially curated activities and workshops, as well as free access to the exhibition, for up to 2,000 young people, aged 16 to 25, in the autumn. This programme will allow participants to gain a deeper understanding of Michael Craig-Martin's practice, provide opportunities for discussion, and encourage creative responses to the exhibition.

Images

Publicity images for *Michael Craig-Martin*, can be downloaded via this [link](#). By downloading the images, you acknowledge and accept the terms and conditions. These images can only be reproduced to illustrate a review or criticism of a work or report as defined by section 30 (i) and (ii) of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

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The Blavatnik Family Foundation

The Blavatnik Family Foundation is a long-standing and generous supporter of the Royal Academy, having donated to the redevelopment of the RA in 2018 and several critically acclaimed exhibitions since then. Led by Sir Leonard Blavatnik, the Foundation promotes innovation, discovery, and the arts to benefit the whole of society. This includes significant contributions to world-renowned arts institutions.

Social Media

Join the discussion about the exhibition online at:

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#RAMichaelCraigMartin

Image Caption

Michael Craig-Martin, *Common History: Conference*, 1999. Acrylic on aluminium, 274.3 x 508 cm. Gagosian, London © Michael Craig-Martin. Image courtesy of Gagosian

About the Royal Academy of Arts

The Royal Academy of Arts was founded by King George III in 1768. It has a unique position in being an independent, privately funded institution led by eminent artists and architects whose purpose is to be a clear, strong voice for art and artists. Its public programme promotes the creation, enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education and debate.

The Royal Academy is an independent charity. It does not receive revenue funding from the government so is reliant upon the support of its visitors, donors, sponsors, patrons and loyal Friends.

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