

News Release from Milton Keynes Gallery

MARK FRANCIS: Elements

15 Jan – 12 March 2000

Admission free

Press View: Friday 14 January 16.00 – 18.00

Mark Francis (b.1962) is one of the young British artists who came to prominence in the early 1990s, and his work is held in many public and private collections, including the Tate Gallery, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Saatchi Collection, London. This is his first major solo exhibition in a public gallery in the U.K.

Visitors to MK G will find a somewhat surprising and intriguing mixture of exhibits. Francis's abstract paintings will be shown alongside antiquarian prints of birds eggs, shells, insects, fungi, medical dissections, diseases and natural history. There will also be maps, models of fungi and medical ephemera drawn from his extensive personal collection. This is the first time that his paintings and private collections will have been brought together, and will provide visitors with a unique opportunity to consider the influences and contexts for his abstract work.

Paintings made over the last seven years will be shown in the largest of MK G's three distinct gallery spaces. The walls of the middle gallery will be painted in imitation of the artist's London sitting room, and densely packed with framed prints and other selected items which will evoke the order in which Francis normally displays his collections. Also, four entirely new paintings will be shown in the distinctive 'Cube' Gallery, (sponsored by Denton Hall, Solicitors). These previously unseen paintings suggest a new direction in the artist's work.

Mark Francis has said of his collecting:

"Collecting has been a hobby since childhood, from football cards to model soldiers. For me it feels like some kind of impulsive ordering. By this I mean gathering information which seems to be intuitive but might not have a structured order at the time. It's only through the accumulation of objects / prints that some sort of understanding and placement takes place. In my case the interest is natural history, medical images and astronomy, amongst other things. The way that I have presented the framed prints at home and at MK G is to place them side by side so that they make some kind of grid-like amorphous form. Each print tends to lose its own identity and you start to look at the constructed surface as a whole. This tends to echo elements within my paintings such as the "Compression" or "Growth" series."

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Francis's mesmerising paintings are derived from microbiological photography of bacteria, cells and chromosomes. These are abstracted in rhythmic patterns, graceful loops and grids or pulsating compressed clusters; meditations on the body's inner landscape. His work in the 1990s has evolved in terms of a steady and gradual progression in a sequence of subtle changes of form and colour.

In speaking about the body Francis says:

"Most of the paintings that I have worked on in the last seven years certainly pool manipulated imagery from the microscopic world. At the same time I see the work in a macroscopic way. The imagery refers to an internal landscape and its mechanisms. The body is trying to keep itself in a constant state of equilibrium. It's only when we feel ill that there is an imbalance. Cells, bacteria, viruses are all battling it out to win their space and it is this internal struggle that also shows itself outside of the body in society as in conflicts, natural disasters and so forth."

Mark Francis is represented by Maureen Paley, Interim Art, London.

Exhibition Open Tues – Sat 11.00 – 18.00; Sundays 12.00 – 16.00
Closed Mondays. Easter: Closed 21, 23 & 24 April, open 22 April (Easter Saturday)

Catalogue

Price £14.95 mail order plus £1.50 p&p (inland UK). Special price at the exhibition £7.50. Texts by Andrew Cross and Stephen Snoddy. 72 pages, 30 colour plates.

Mark Francis in Conversation with Tim Marlow

On 10 February the artist will be at MK G in conversation with Tim Marlow, broadcaster and Editor of Tate magazine. Seats limited. Tickets £5 (£3.50 Concessions) to include a glass of wine. The exhibition will be supported by a range of other educational events, including guided tours and workshops.

Limited Edition Print

Mark Francis has produced an exclusive, signed, limited edition silkscreen print to accompany the exhibition at MK G. Price £150, unframed, inc. VAT.

Milton Keynes Gallery

MK G is next to the new Theatre in the city centre. There are good local transport links and the Gallery is 5 minutes by taxi from MK central rail station, which is c.40 minutes from London Euston station.

Press Information/ Photographs

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