

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

BAZAAR

ART

WILD IN THE COUNTRY

Michael Craig-Martin brings his playful sculptures to the grounds of Chatsworth

By HELENA LEE

TALKING POINTS

Visitors to Chatsworth this spring may be pleasantly surprised to stumble across a three-metre-high upside-down purple umbrella propped up next to the Emperor Fountain; or a Schiaparelli-pink high-heel shoe towering over the pond, with a toe facing the water. These are two of a dozen giant sculptures by the artist Michael Craig-Martin springing up in unlikely places across the estate as part of a new show.

The display marks a culmination of sorts. The artist's relationship with the Devonshires, who own Chatsworth, began in 2005 when he exhibited work at Lismore Castle, in a show curated by the Duke of Devonshire's son William. Shortly afterwards, he was commissioned to create a digital portrait of William's wife Laura, which now hangs at Chatsworth. When the Duke invited Craig-Martin to exhibit again – this time in the gardens – he naturally accepted.

The 1,000-acre park is a fine setting for his sculptures, all of which are made of brightly coloured steel and forged in the shapes of everyday objects, including a spade, a light bulb and a garden gate. Each of these 'free-standing drawings' will be positioned so that they 'interact with their location, to make their setting virtually part of the work', Craig-Martin explains. A garden fork will stand beside the rose garden, and a pair of scissors next to a



*From top: Michael
Craig-Martin's 'Pitchfork
(Pink)' (2008).*



greenhouse; the oversize white garden gate will block the entrance to the woods.

The most decorative sculpture is the 'wayward' shoe, which Craig-Martin sees as a playful reflection of Chatsworth itself. 'The house is a kind of absurd extravagance: so big and so lavish,' he says. 'A glamorous shoe falls into the same category of indulgence: it's not necessary but it looks absolutely extraordinary.'



The artist in his studio. 'High Heel (Pink)' (2013), at Chatsworth House

The Dublin-born artist is also curating two exhibitions inside the house. The first is a room of drawings (all portraits) by painters such as Hans Holbein the Younger and Domenico Ghirlandaio, chosen from the Devonshire Collection and ranging in subject from 'infants to youths to ancient crones'. The second is a collection of Classical sculpture (which includes works by the Italian Antonio Canova, alongside ancient Egyptian and Roman figures); each plinth will be encased in a magenta box in an attempt to make the figures 'more visible and dominant than usual'. Craig-Martin adds: 'My intervention at Chatsworth will be very simple, but hopefully both dramatic and revealing.' □

The Michael Craig-Martin exhibition is at Chatsworth (www.chatsworth.org) from 16 March to 29 June.