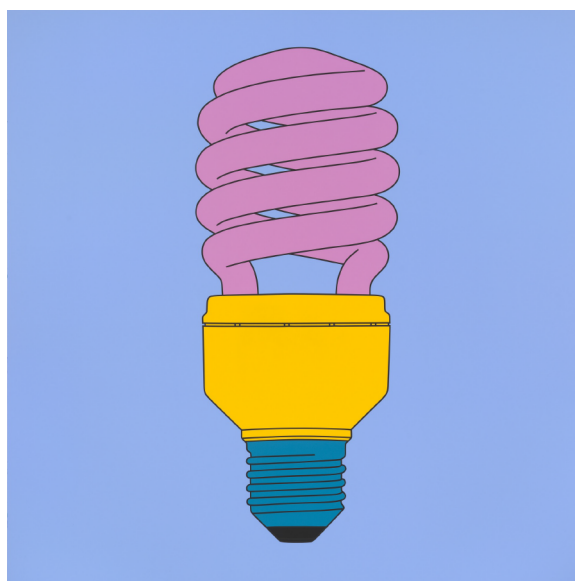


GAGOSIAN GALLERY

Forbes

Michael Craig-Martin Goes To Dallas

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© Michael Craig-Martin. Photo: Mike Bruce. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery

When Dublin-born artist Michael Craig-Martin began studying art in the '50s, the art world was a different place from today's regular celebrity-filled artist collaborations and blockbuster exhibitions. "When I started there was very little interest in contemporary art," said Craig-Martin. "It was a very quiet zone of life. It was very limited, there were not all that many participants."

Things have changed, but half-a-century later, the 73-year-old "godfather of British contemporary art" is still thriving, and this week, Craig-Martin will be in Texas for Dallas Arts Week, where he'll be busy with a number of projects. From April 9 to 12, he'll debut his memoir, *On Being an Artist* at the Dallas Art Fair, and on April 10 Craig-Martin is the honoree of MTV RE:DEFINE, an annual benefit for MTV's Staying Alive Foundation, an organization that supports programs and events that teach HIV awareness and stop the spread of the disease. A benefit auction with works by Craig-Martin, Damien Hirst, Cindy Sherman and more will take place at the event. Those who are unable to attend can bid on works on Paddle8. A citywide exhibition featuring nearly a dozen of Craig-Martin's paintings and one sculpture will be on view.

Craig-Martin is no stranger to Dallas, having been there several times. He has contributed works to the annual Two X Two function and has also had an exhibition at The Goss-Michael Foundation. His citywide exhibition, a collaboration between Gagosian Gallery and The

Symphony Hall. The Goss-Michael Foundation spans across several locations like the Dallas Museum of Art, the Goss-Michael Foundation. “Each of them is a painting of a single object — a light bulb, headphones, an ashtray...,” said Craig-Martin, who also contributed a large umbrella sculpture for the exhibition.

His memoir, *On Being an Artist* is a compendium of things he has written over the past 40 years and is aimed at a general audience. “There’s notes about art itself, things that are autobiographical, about teaching, about my time as a student, education, about the art world,” said Craig-Martin. “It’s a book that’s broken into 150 short chapters, but the idea that you could read the book from beginning to end, but it wasn’t written that way because but you can also open it anywhere and find something to read.”

The conceptual artist is known widely for his seminal 1973 piece, a work that consists of a glass of water sitting on a shelf, and an accompanying text that explains why it is actually an oak tree. “It’s a very particular work, and it’s been a very interesting thing in my career because it’s kind of had a life of its own,” said Craig-Martin. “Not many people knew about it and more people got to know about it, and over the years it’s gathered it’s own following. It even has its own Wikipedia page.”

In addition, Craig-Martin played a large role in influencing the Young British Artist movement, having taught the likes of Hirst, Sarah Lucas and Tracey Emin when they were students at Goldsmith’s in London. Craig-Martin still remains close to many of them three decades later. “They were generating a chemistry between themselves, of a competitive concern — if one did something really wonderful, the others wanted to do something as good,” said Craig-Martin. “They were very interested in each other’s work. they were highly individual, very determined, completely committed.”

Reflecting on his beginnings, Craig-Martin remembers that “we thought much more of the hope of being able to survive as an artist,” rather than a way to strike it rich. He doesn’t advise anyone to pursue an art career unless “they passionately want to and they can’t see themselves doing anything else.” “I wouldn’t advise it to people as a way of trying to get rich,” he said. “There are probably easier ways to do that.”

The art world is no longer the insular place that it was 50 years ago. According to Craig-Martin, “there’s been an explosion of interest, now the visual arts is part of contemporary life in the way that people have thought about music and the movies for years. Art seems more of a part of that general world of contemporary culture.”