

## GAGOSIAN

Wallpaper\*

**Michael Craig-Martin turns Covid-era objects into icons**  
*Irish artist Michael Craig-Martin confronts a new age of consumer culture, putting his striking, bold-coloured spin on objects defining the times*

Harriet Lloyd-Smith



*Left: Untitled (mask 2), 2020, Right: Untitled (with suitcase), acrylic on aluminium. © Michael Craig-Martin. Photo: Lucy Dawkins. Courtesy of the artist, Gagosian and Reflex Amsterdam*

Over the last 60 years, Michael Craig-Martin has documented the evolution of objects that have defined our lives. The Irish-born artist, who has just turned 80, will soon unveil his first solo exhibition *The Netherlands* at Reflex Amsterdam, turning his attention to the most recent additions to our visual vocabulary.

The Dublin-born artist spent his formative years in the US. He moved to London in the 1960s and began taking the conceptual art world by storm with his majestic take on the mundane. As a tutor at Goldsmiths in the 1980s, he had a searing influence on the then-fledgling Young British Artists, including Gary Hume, Sarah Lucas, and Damien Hirst.

In the 1990s, the artist pivoted to painting, but his powder-coated steel sculptures – bold-coloured, linear structures that appear like drawings in mid-air – remain an instantly recognisable facet of his work. *Fountain Pen* (2019), recently installed outside the University of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government, imbues an object synonymous with function with a sense of regal grandeur.



*Michael Craig-Martin, Untitled (bananas), 2019, Acrylic on aluminium. © Michael Craig-Martin. Courtesy of the artist, Gagosian and Reflex Amsterdam*

‘All Things Considered’ at Reflex Amsterdam features paintings from the last six years alongside new works. Mostly in 2020, these works emphasise our new over-familiarity with our domestic spaces and the intimacy of household consumer objects. Among his subjects are a bunch of blue bananas, an Apple Watch, and a coffee cup, all reduced to bold, minimal, exacting lines and reimagined in all-consuming planes of colour.

‘I am always looking for new things to draw and several objects quickly took on a new importance: masks, bottles of sanitising gel, and our laptops’, says Craig-Martin, who created the majority of these new works in 2020. ‘Those objects, but especially the mask, will, in future, immediately recall these times for all who lived through them.’



*Michael Craig-Martin, Untitled (with glasses), 2020, Acrylic on aluminium. © Michael Craig-Martin. Courtesy of the artist, Gagosian and Reflex Amsterdam*

The paintings are not rendered on canvas, as one might readily assume, but aluminium. ‘There are many attractions about canvas, but for my work, aluminium makes obvious sense. My paintings are made using tape and small rollers, both of which require a surface that resists

(which canvas does not do)', he explains. 'Painting on aluminium allows me to see exactly what I am doing and work directly.'

'The paintings always start with drawings. I make drawings of individual objects directly on the computer with the mouse. I never make one of these drawings with a particular work in mind. I simply add it to my now vast compendium of such images for possible future use,' he says.

'Because of the precise nature of my work, changes when painting are difficult and sometimes impossible. The spontaneity in their creation takes place in the planning which again is all done on the computer. It is a wonderfully flexible tool.'

This bold replication of the 'things' that accompany our newly-altered world feels profound; yet the exhibition title, 'All Things Considered' feels optimistic. Craig-Martin has turned objects of necessity, banality and consumer culture into luscious, candy-coloured objects of desire.



*Michael Craig-Martin, Untitled (with Apple Watch), 2020. © Michael Craig-Martin. Photo: Mike Bruce. Courtesy the artist, Gagosian, and Reflex Amsterdam*



*Michael Craig-Martin, Untitled (with coffee cup), 2020, Acrylic on aluminium. © Michael Craig-Martin. Courtesy of the artist, Gagosian and Reflex Amsterdam*