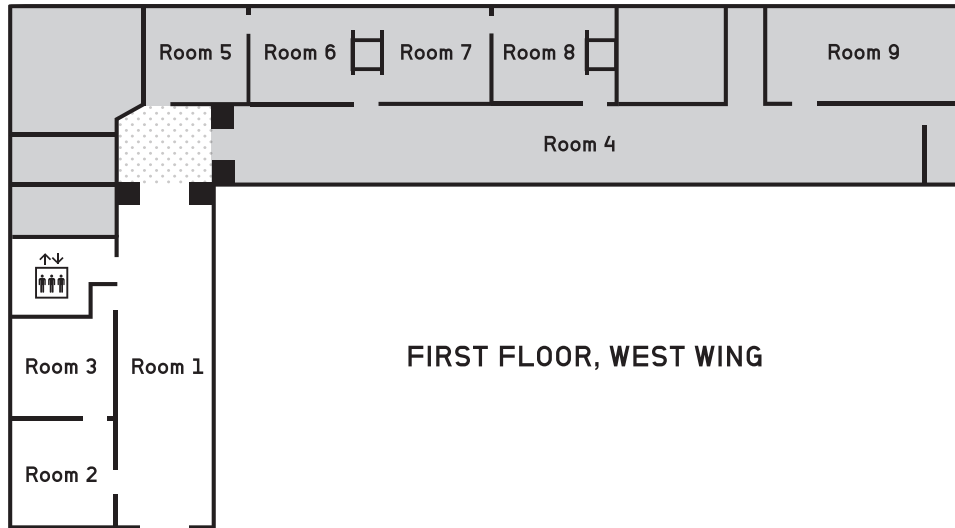


For more information on Fergus Martin's work and a full listing of IMMA talks and events programmed in association with this exhibition, please see the IMMA website [www.imma.ie](http://www.imma.ie)

IMMA wishes to express deepest thanks to Fergus Martin for his ongoing commitment and dedication to this exhibition. IMMA and Fergus Martin would like to thank Jerome O Drisceoil, Director, Green on Red Gallery; OneOff Design and CME Industrial Specialists Ltd. for their support and work on new sculptures for this exhibition. We would also like to thank our invaluable IMMA Members and Patrons.

The exhibition is co-curated by Christina Kennedy, Senior Curator; Head of Collections, Johanne Mullan, Collections Programmer and Claire Walsh, Assistant Curator, Collections: Care and Access.

Have a question about an artwork? Want to know more? Ask any member of our Visitor Engagement Team, easily identifiable through their blue lanyards.



**IMMA**  
**MAIN GALLERIES, WEST WING**  
**15 FEBRUARY – 29 SEPTEMBER 2019**

## IMMA Collection: Then and Now Fergus Martin



**Matheson**

**THE DEAN**

DUBLIN



**An Roinn Cultúir,  
Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta**  
Department of Culture,  
Heritage and the Gaeltacht

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The *Then and Now* series is a curatorial approach to exploring works in the IMMA Collection where artists are invited to place their early work among their current practice. As part of this series, IMMA presents a range of work by Fergus Martin from the 1990s to the present.

Through painting, sculpture and photography, Martin creates geometric forms that give shape to his preoccupation with space, colour, tension and materials, reflecting the world around him. At the heart of his work is an attempt to physically portray the density and weight of things, their expansion and contraction, containment and release, their different speeds, as well as their fragility and impermanence.

This exhibition includes the work *Untitled – from Six Paintings for le Confort Moderne, Poitiers* (1996) from the IMMA Collection, *Sky* (2016), and three new sculptures shown here for the first time, *Screw Protruding Tubes* (2019), *Nero Profondo* (2019) and *Barrel* (2019).

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### Room 1

As you enter the gallery, you encounter *Screw Protruding Tubes* (2019), a newly completed sculpture. The visual world the pipes appear to come from is functional and industrial, yet Martin states "These have always been 'romantic' pieces for me and they have a tension that I feel could explode at any moment."

The sparse appearance and direct focus of these wall sculptures is echoed in his photographic work, where the artist captures everyday objects, such as a chair, a table, and as seen here, the headlamps of a car and a tree. These might appear to be random encounters; however, each object has been meticulously selected or placed by the artist. *Tree* (2014) could be mistaken for a photo of a landscape, or as a direct representation of a tree. However, the work is as much about the colour of the tree as it is about the tree itself.

The image is worked on in post-production and is essentially painted with digital colour. The artist selected this specific tree to photograph from a row of ash trees. The leaves display a greenness that is almost beyond-credible, a green that emerges from digital painting. By manipulating the real, Martin achieves a re-presentation of the tree in a landscape that becomes iconic, that is, at once familiar and seasonal yet ethereal and everlasting.

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### Room 2

In this room the pairing of *Sky* (2016) and *Barrel* (2019) demonstrates Martin's interest in space and light. In 2016, searching for a more rigid surface for his paintings, Martin began to paint on aluminium. In this process, he further embraces manufacturing techniques, commercial materials and industrial fabrication, allowing for an alternative representation of order, simplicity and harmony.

*Barrel* interacts with the surroundings of the gallery, while also involving the viewer in a physical way. The painting, *Sky*, points to the heavens, while *Barrel*, for Martin, could be a lake or a pool sprung from the ground. "Their relation gives me feelings of water, air and light."

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### Room 3

Martin's obsession with colour is clearly evident throughout his work, but is arguably most evident in his paintings. In this room, colour is used effectively to define space. Martin varies both the size and shape of the canvas and stated, "Looking at them, I feel that the ones with rectangles force more energy into less space. So there's a greater sense of compression. There's more movement. I think of the paintings with squares as being slower - their presence, or inner movement, more brooding. There's a rhythm between all the paintings. They're moving at different speeds, but they're speeds of slowness."

Martin refers to the heat and density of the colour brown and favours dense colour. To achieve this density he applies layers of paint to the surface, depending on the desired colour "The number of the layers of paint is important: it can be ten coats, it can be three - you do it till it's right."

Martin uses a one-inch brush to apply layers of paint to the surface rather than rolling the paint. He describes the purpose of this process: "I began to want to have surfaces that were flatter. There is still texture through the brushstrokes as they are painted with a one-inch head brush, so I can get up close to the painting. The surfaces can appear dead flat from a distance but up close you can see the marks of the brush. I'm not at all interested in a surface that is dead flat. Also, I was beginning, instead of rolling out a ground and painting over it, to create a shape and mask that shape off, and the shape always left a white area on the canvas." Martin describes this as "the sensation of filling something with colour. It's like filling a tank of water... I love walking along the river Liffey when the water's high - that's the same feeling."

### Artist Biography

Fergus Martin was born in Cork, Ireland. He studied painting at Dun Laoghaire School of Art (now IADT) from 1972 - 1976. He then lived and worked in Italy from 1979 - 1988, where he lectured in English Language at The University of Milan. In 1988, he returned to painting and had his first solo exhibition in 1990 at the Oliver Dowling Gallery, Dublin. Since then, Martin has shown widely in Ireland and internationally and his work is included in many private and public collections, including those of IMMA and Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane.

Sculpture commissions include *Steel*, 2008 by OPW for East Gate entrance to IMMA, displayed 2008 - 2011; *Lincoln Place*, 2010, Dublin Dental Hospital and the forthcoming work entitled *Oak*, 2019, commissioned by the Department of Foreign Affairs for the International Criminal Court, The Hague.

During 2013, as part of collaborative duo Fergus Martin & Anthony Hobbs, the artist exhibited *Frieze* (2003), IMMA Collection,

in *Changing States: Contemporary Irish Art and Francis Bacon's Studio*, at BOZAR Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels, an exhibition to mark Ireland's EU presidency; in 2008, *Frieze*, was installed in the IMMA courtyard and in 2013 the work was presented at the 6th Biennale of Contemporary Art in Melle, France.

An essay by Caoimhin Mac Giolla Léith, written to accompany the exhibition, can be found on the IMMA website.

Image credit:  
Fergus Martin,  
*Oedipus*, 2008,  
Archival pigment print, 96.5 x 104.5 cm,  
Loan, the artist and  
Green on Red Gallery, Dublin