

Associated Talks and Events

For a full programme of IMMA talks and events programmed in association with this exhibition please see the IMMA website. www.imma.ie

Exhibition curated by Rachael Thomas, Senior Curator: Head of Exhibitions.

IMMA would like to thank Frank Bowling for his commitment and dedication to this exhibition. Thanks to Hales Gallery, London and New York, for their support and also to Rose Jones at the Frank Bowling Archive.

We are grateful to the lenders, both private and public who have generously agreed to loan works: Hales Gallery, Michael Rosenfeld, Debbie and Eric Green, Timothy C Headington, Sheldon Inwentash and Lynn Factor, Michael Nesbitt, Mikael Lövgren, The Rennie Collection, The Royal Academy, London, and to those individuals who wish to remain anonymous.

This exhibition was produced in partnership with Haus der Kunst, Munich and Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah. At Haus der Kunst, our thanks go to Tina Kohler, Exhibitions Coordinator, Anna Schneider, Assistant Curator, and Okwui Enwezor, Director. At Sharjah Art Foundation, our thanks go to Judith Greer, Director of International Programmes and to Hoor Al Qasimi, Director.

IMMA would also like to thank Matheson for their ongoing and visionary support of new work at IMMA, our hospitality partner The Dean Dublin and our invaluable IMMA Members and Patrons all of whom have made this exhibition possible.

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

Front Cover
Moby Dick, 1981
Acrylic on canvas
258 x 190cm

Exhibition kindly supported by:

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IMMA
MAIN GALLERIES - WEST WING
24 MARCH – 08 JULY 2018

Frank Bowling Mappa Mundi



IMMA is pleased to present *Mappa Mundi*, a wide-ranging retrospective of the work of seminal British artist Frank Bowling. Named for one of Bowling's celebrated 'map' paintings, *Mappa Mundi* encapsulates major developments in Bowling's work, which can be seen as a reflection of the evolution that took place in abstract and expressionist painting throughout the latter half of the 20th century. Spanning the last fifty years, *Mappa Mundi* highlights exceptional works from throughout Bowling's career.

Having graduated from the Royal College of Art, London, in the mid-1960s Bowling, along with contemporaries like David Hockney and Ron Kitaj, exhibited widely in London and the UK, garnering early acclaim for ambitious, large-scale works influenced by these contemporaries as well as Francis Bacon. Though previously not as widely celebrated as some friends and contemporaries, Bowling is now considered an essential figure, through his art, curation and writing, in the discourse around art, identity and post-colonialism.

The exhibition proceeds broadly chronologically, covering significant milestones in Bowling's artistic development, beginning with his move to New York in 1966. This move was a catalyst for a major shift in Bowling's way of approaching painting, moving away from relatively straightforward figurative representation into more abstract work concerned with questions of form and colour. This change in approach was influenced by Bowling's exposure in New York to new debate and theories surrounding painting. Especially significant was his friendship with the influential art critic Clement Greenberg. The size of Bowling's New York studio also allowed him to work on a larger, often monumental scale, seen in the works in the corridor.

Corridors and Rooms 1 and 2

In the 'map' paintings Bowling addresses issues of history and migration, both his own as a Commonwealth immigrant to the UK and latterly the United States, and broader mass movements of people. These include colonial slaves brought through the 'Middle Passage' from Africa to South America, to socio-economic motivated migration.

Rooms 3 and 4

The paintings seen here concern themselves with broader and more abstract concepts than Bowling's main canon. Primarily focused on the visceral experience of nature, these works evoke a mythic - and perhaps apocalyptic - experience of the natural world. With distinct and jarring contrasts of colour and texture, these works belie the violence and confusion of creation, whether artistic or from nature.

A natural aesthetic continuation of the works in the preceding room, the two works *Towards Crab Island* continue the exploration into texture and form. They blur the lines between painting and another, less easily definable form of art object. These works are also a conceptual continuation, moving from depictions of natural, seismic formations into the changes human industry has wrought upon the landscape.

Rooms 5 and 6

Named for the artist's father, Richard Sheridan Bowling (Room 5) and Frank Bowling's wife, Rachel Scott Bowling (Room 6), the paintings in these two rooms are visually and thematically consistent with other work by Bowling from this period, while addressing more personal themes and relationships. Bowling, an emigrant at an early age from his home country, has often addressed personal questions of family, biography and belonging within a wider context of work concerned with shifting geographical and national boundaries. These invoke a sense of memory

of Bowling's family and his home country of British Guiana.

Room 7

This room holds a series of works primarily influenced by bodies of water. The colour and application of paint evoke the play of light and shadow on moving water, the impression of which Bowling has recalled flooding through his studio windows in both London and New York. The works are also conceptually concerned with what these bodies of water, in Europe and South America, represent in a historical and political sense, and relate to Bowling's broader themes of geographic and human movement.

In conversation with IMMA's Head of Exhibitions, Rachael Thomas, Bowling commented; "My whole life has been dedicated to paint," and indeed any reading of conceptual or critical concerns in Bowling's work must be considered alongside the artist's clear love for the form and the process of painting.

Room 8

Included in *Mappa Mundi* are highlights from Bowling's personal archive. This presents a valuable insight into the artist's own personal history and work, but also into the fertile and dynamic art scenes in London and New York that he helped shape and was shaped by. The archive includes material on Bowling's writing, curating, and art practice, along with his significant correspondence with Clement Greenberg, amongst others.

This exhibition rightly identifies Bowling as a major figure in painting of the last 50 years. Alongside such milestones as being the first black artist elected to the Royal Academy (2005), the first black British artist to have work acquired by the Tate (*Spreadout Ron Kitaj*, 1984-86, acquired 1987), and being appointed an Officer of the British Empire (2008), Bowling continues to produce ambitious and complex work today.

Frank Bowling, *Mappa Mundi* is organised by Haus der Kunst, Munich in association with IMMA and Sharjah Art Foundation.

Artist Biography

Frank Bowling (b. British Guiana, 1934), lives and works in London and New York. Upon graduating from the Royal College of Art, London, 1962 he was awarded the silver medal for painting. Bowling has exhibited widely and consistently over the last 60 years. Selected solo shows include Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1971); Serpentine Gallery, London (1986); a UK touring retrospective (2003); Royal Academy of Arts, London (2011); Spritmuseum, Stockholm (2014-15); Dallas Museum of Art (2015). Selected awards included multiple Guggenheim Fellowships and Pollock-Krasner awards. Bowling is a Royal Academician and an Officer of the British Empire. He is represented by Hales Gallery, London and New York.

Catalogue

Mappa Mundi is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with a foreword by Okwui Enwezor, Director, Haus der Kunst and Sarah Glennie, Director, National College of Art and Design, and texts by Okwui Enwezor, Kobena Mercer, Zoe Whitley, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Frank Bowling, Rose Jones and Anna Schneider. Available from the IMMA shop for €49.95

Edition

Mappa Mundi is accompanied by a limited edition of *IMMA VISIT* by Frank Bowling. Edition of 75, 600 x 827cm, printed on rag paper. Available framed or unframed from the IMMA shop from €200.