

Press Release

14 May 2020

Sainsbury Centre acquires a group of 29 major works by Elisabeth Frink



Mirage I and Mirage II, 1969. Photo: Andy Crouch.

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The Sainsbury Centre is delighted to announce the acquisition of a significant group of works by Elisabeth Frink made possible in accordance with the wishes of the artist's late son, Lin Jammet.

This acquisition follows the highly celebrated exhibition, *Elisabeth Frink: Humans and Other Animals*, held at the Centre in 2018. The works consist of 29 sculptures and drawings, by one of the most important British sculptors of the twentieth century. They will be displayed at the Sainsbury Centre art museum and its Sculpture Park at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, UK. This acquisition was initiated in collaboration with the artist's son, Lin Jammet, who sadly died in 2017. However, it was his wish that a group of his mother's works should remain after the exhibition and become part of the permanent holdings in the region of the Suffolk-born artist's birth. The acquisition includes powerful examples of work from all periods of Frink's artistic practice.

Frink was known for depicting the relationship between humans and animals and this was a theme she returned to throughout her life. Whilst offering exciting contemporary possibilities both metaphorically and directly, she was conscious of the fact that animals appear in art from the very earliest times and that their relationship with humans is interdependent.

Frink rose to prominence while still a student at Chelsea College of Art in 1952, when she had her first major gallery exhibition and won a prize in an international competition for the *Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner*. She created a series of expressionist bird sculptures which, for her, evoked 'strong feelings of panic, tension, aggression and predatoriness'. Frink was associated with the Geometry of Fear group of British sculptors and created one of the most succinct responses to the Second World War and to the climate of fear generated by the encroaching Cold War. In the 1950s, her falling and spinning men, and associated drawings, echo images of early cosmonauts such as Yuri Gagarin, the first human in outer space.

Frink's most famous and unique theme is a series of heads, the *Goggle Heads* (1967-69) and *Tribute Heads* (1970s-80s), which explore the contradictory forces of masculinity and vulnerability. The acquisition includes examples of both series. Like other great twentieth century artists including Bacon and Picasso, Frink explores the binary attributes of human behaviour, representing man as both aggressor and brutalised victim. This theme is also illustrated in the representation of the warrior figure (*Soldier* 1963).

The *Mirage Birds*, (*Mirage I* and *Mirage II*, 1969) illustrate her work in large scale bronze and take up residency in the Sainsbury Centre's 350-acre Sculpture Park at the University of East Anglia. They represent a more playful and abstracted form of depiction set against the watery backdrop of a Norfolk Broad.

Frink was one of the twentieth century's great draughtsmen with the ability to convey sculptural form on paper. The acquisition of 9 drawings and 4 prints includes her *Green Man* series, which was made when Frink knew that she was likely to die whilst only in her 60s. Frink found solace in the popular medieval symbol of rebirth and new life, resulting in works as fresh and invigorating as anything she had ever produced.

Sainsbury Centre Head of Collections and curator of *Elizabeth Frink: Humans and Other Animals*, Calvin Winner says:

"We are delighted that a significant body of work is held in a public collection in the region of Frink's birth. The Sainsbury Centre is perhaps best known for its holdings of sculpture from ancient times to the present day. Frink's work will now be seen alongside some of the greatest sculpture ever made. This is a fitting tribute to one of the most important British sculptors of the twentieth century."

The Sculpture Park is supported by Hudson Architects

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Notes to Editors

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Sculpture Park Information

Sculpture Park Map: <https://bit.ly/2sb7DLK>

Sainsbury Centre
University of East Anglia
Norwich NR4 7TJ

Admission to the Sculpture Park is free and un-ticketed.

About Elisabeth Frink

Frink was born in Thurlow in Suffolk and spent her formative years in war-time East Anglia. She studied at the Guildford School of Art (1946–49) and at the Chelsea School of Art (1949–53) and remained resolutely an expressionist figurative artist against the prevailing trends of her time. She died prematurely in 1993 at the young age of 62 and was widely admired in her lifetime, a Royal Academician, a Dame and a Companion of Honour.

There was a major exhibition at the Royal Academy in London in 1983 and a posthumous show at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in 1994. More recent exhibitions include the Lightbox in Woking (2013) and at the Djanogly Gallery in Nottingham (2015), which focused on her public commissions. In 2016 Hauser & Wirth Somerset presented a selection of her work to great acclaim. Frink is represented in the Sainsbury Centre collection as well as other collections in the UK, notably a substantial collection at Tate who purchased a work from her first exhibition in 1952. Her work is also represented in international collections, in particular the USA, Australia, South Africa and Canada.

About the Sainsbury Centre

The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts is one of the most important public university art galleries in Britain. It was founded in 1973 at the University of East Anglia (UEA) with the support of one of the nation's great philanthropic families, Sir Robert and Lady Sainsbury who donated their extraordinary art collection which includes works dating from prehistory to the late twentieth century from across the globe. A radical new building by Norman Foster was designed to house the collection and was his first public work.

The Sainsbury Centre holds one of the most impressive art collections outside of the national institutions. It includes a significant number of works by modern masters of European art such as Pablo Picasso, Edgar Degas, Alberto Giacometti, Henry Moore, Francis Bacon, Jacob Epstein, Jean Arp, Chaïm Soutine and Amedeo Modigliani. There is also a remarkable collection of art and antiquities dating from prehistory to the late twentieth century from across the globe. There are major holdings from Oceania, Africa, the Americas, Asia, the ancient Mediterranean cultures of Egypt, Greece and Rome, as well as Medieval Europe. Alongside these permanent collections, it hosts a range of exhibitions in the largest suite of temporary exhibitions galleries in Eastern England.

sainsburycentre.ac.uk

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Hudson Architects is one of the UK's leading contemporary architecture practices, with a worldwide reputation for innovative and exciting design. The practice has achieved award success across the commercial, homes, arts and heritage sectors. It is celebrated for addressing each project with an open mind: responding to context with a flexible and imaginative approach to create high-performing, beautiful buildings for people to inhabit.

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