



British artist in residence Matt Franks

## THE BRITISH ARE COMING

Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) has introduced an artist in residence programme to give students exposure to established and emerging British artists. London-based sculptor Matt Franks is the inaugural artist in residence at MIT's Manukau School of Visual Arts.

Franks is known for his brightly coloured, morphed shapes, which are created from blocks of polystyrene and styrofoam and influenced by Italian Baroque sculptors, Greek statuary and cartoon characters. Thirty-two-year-old Franks has exhibited widely in London and currently has work on display at the Tate Gallery. Four of his pieces travelled with him from Britain and have been exhibited at te tuhi – the mark, in Pakuranga, Manukau City.

Franks has been working with students in the University of Auckland Bachelor of Visual Arts programme, offered at MIT, and says travelling to New Zealand has given him the opportunity to explore new ideas and techniques.

"I'm exploring more drawing and looking at making smaller objects out of different materials."

Franks is also interested in exploring contextual issues of art in New Zealand. "I'm very aware that British art is recognisably British, but what makes art here particularly New Zealand? There must be some-

thing tied up with the whole New Zealand identity?"

While working at the Manukau School of Visual Arts, Franks is also in regular contact with students. He conducts seminars, sits in on group critiques and talks to students about their work. He has also spoken to art students at Auckland University of Technology, Unitec, Northland Polytechnic, Waikato University, Otago Polytechnic and Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology. Manukau School of Visual Arts programme leader, Mark Kirby, says Franks' presence at the school has provided additional inspiration for students.

"His work is as energetic as it is exciting and Matt himself is extremely personable and interesting."

Kirby says the artist in residence programme at MIT is expected to be ongoing and is supported by the British Council and Creative New Zealand.

Matt Franks' exhibition *Late One Evening* is at te tuhi-the mark, Pakuranga, Manukau City, until 24 November.

/Sally Woodfield

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