

## Further Information

For further information on Franko B and the Live Art Archives, if you wish to discuss anything about the contents, or, if you are interested in visiting the Theatre Collection and their archives please:

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Or visit: [www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/events.html](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/events.html)

[www.franko-b.com](http://www.franko-b.com)

You can also find the Theatre Collection on facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/University-of-Bristol-Theatre-Collection/189755747751875?fref=ts>

Reading Franko B: Moments in Love is an exhibition examining the contents of Live Art artist Franko B's archive. The exhibition is a fragmented narrative of his creative and personal histories, asking: who is Franko B? What do we perceive about his identity through the archive? What relationships does this provoke between audience, document and artist? ... Why do we fall in love with him?

Curated by PhD researcher Cara Davies, in association with the Theatre Collection, the exhibition will showcase a diverse range of the documents in Franko's archive, challenging what they embody and disseminate about his artistic practice and the contexts he works in.

Please note people may find *some* of the documents in this exhibition challenging due to their sexual content and blood-related nature. The curator, Theatre Collection and University of Bristol do not present these works of art in order to glorify the acts depicted, but, instead wish to celebrate and embrace the artistic context of Franko's artwork. For Franko, art and life is one and the same thing, and the different disciplinary approaches he adopts, from painting to installation, from to blood-letting performances to video art, are an integral part of his practice. This exhibition aims to give you a flavour of the richness, excitement, breadth and depth to Franko's archive, from an academic perspective. By investigating the contexts in which he produces, performs and disseminates work and the ways in which people perceive and receive him and his practice, the exhibition asks what do we get to know about an artist from the documents they keep in their archive, how might we read and interpret their identity ...

## Franko B: I Miss You!

*My work presents the body in its most carnal, existential and essential state, confronting the essence of the human condition in an objectified vulnerable and seductively powerful form.*

*I believe in beauty, but in a beauty that is not detached from life. My concern is to make the unbearable bearable; to provoke the viewer to reconsider their own understandings of beauty and of suffering.*

*My performance practice reduces the body to a carnal, bloody, raw and exposed state. My work is not about death; my body is not passive, not a dead body, and, in a way, it is giving life by bleeding.*

*My work is not an act of nihilism but of sharing and survival.*

*My work focuses on the visceral, where the body is a canvas but I am not trying to express what I care about in a cognitive sense – all I can do is return to this fragile connection between real life and the experience of living.*

*I believe Live Art is something you feel in the action and the reaction, but I don't separate my Live Art work from my other, object based work or visa versa.*

*All of my art embodies 'me', and my body is always present in my work whether the form is a live event, a photograph or an object.*

*You can read my performances as sculptural. I am also painting with my blood.*

(Franko B (2003) *Live Culture*, London: Tate Publishing)

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following people for all their support, advice and encouragement during the process of planning and installing the exhibition, with out your help the exhibition could not have happened! So many thanks to:

Theatre Collection: Jo Elsworth, Bex Carrington, Heather Romaine

My supervisors: Simon Jones and Paul Clarke

Friends and Colleagues: Clare Thornton, Paul Geary, Kate Holmes, Aaron James

The Photographers: Hugo Glendinning, Jamie McLeod, Manuel Vason, Nicholas Sinclair, Ravi Deepres, Niko Raez and Daniel Bolliger who have generously allowed us to use a selection of digital and paper prints in this exhibition.

Theatre Collection Management Committee and The University of Bristol Ethics Committee

And I would like to offer a special and extended thanks to Franko B for his immense generosity in letting my have free reign to explore the archive, to display what I like and how I liked. Thank you for your time and patience with my endless curiosity and questioning. It has been a pleasure to discover the rich array of items housed in the archive and I am excited to have the opportunity to share this experience through the exhibition.

## Who is Cara Davies?

Cara is a performance artist and hobbyist archivist. Activating an interdisciplinary approach to practice-led research Cara's praxis re-thinks the construction, use and dissemination of performance documentation and archives as works of live art. Artistically her practice focuses on issues of archival lacunae, re-presentation of documentation in performance, re-documentation of documents and the juxtaposition of the live and documented body. Challenging how these processes impart a fragmented understanding of identity, memory and bodily experience, Cara's work spans a range of mediums including dance, video, live art, multi-media installation, online broadcasting and social engaged itinerant performance.

Currently undertaking her PhD research at the University of Bristol, Cara maintains a professional connection between her role as a researcher with that of performer and documenter. Through her research she is considering the ways in which we can re-contextualise and re-mediate existing archive materials within new performative settings. The project is a part of Professor Simon Jones and Dr Paul Clarke's AHRC funded project *Performing Documents: modelling creative and curatorial engagements with live art and performance archives*.

## Who is Franko B?

*I'm essentially a painter who also works in performance. I come from a visual art background and not "live art" or theatre, and this is very important to me as it informs the way my work is read. In the last 20 years or so I have developed ways of working to suit my need at that particular time, in terms of strategy and context, by using painting, installation, sculpture, photography, video and sound.*

(Franko B (2011) Franko B Website)

Franko B was born in 1960 in Milan, Italy, and moved to London in 1979. After having a turbulent start to life, losing his parents, growing up in an orphanage, educated by the Red Cross and then living on the streets for 2 to 3 years, Franko moved to the UK and was encouraged to go to art school. Here Franko undertook a foundation course in art at Camberwell College of Art, followed by a fine art degree at Chelsea College of Art.

Since Franko left art school in 1990, he has created work across different artistic disciplines and for exhibitions. His projects have involved video, photography, performance, painting, installation, sculpture, construction and mixed media.

Franko has performed at the ICA, The South London Gallery, Toynbee Studios and Beaconsfield. At *fierce* in collaboration with the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham. Internationally, he has presented work at events in Zagreb, Mexico City, Milan, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Copenhagen, Madrid and Vienna, to name but a few.

Franko B also lectures widely, including at St. Martins School of Art, DasArt, New York University, Accademia Di Belle Arti and the Courtauld Institute of Art. He has been the subject of two monographs, *Franko B* (Black Dog Publishing 1998) and *Oh Lover Boy* (2001) and has published a photographic project entitled *Still Life* (2003). He is an avid mentor for other artists and students, supporting young and emerging talent.

His multi-faceted and ever-evolving career is captured through his archive, which he has lovingly been developing since the early 2000s. Franko generously donated his archive to the Theatre Collection in Bristol in 2008.

## What are the Live Art Archives?

The Live Art Archives include the Record of Live Art Practice, the National Review of Live Art Archive, the Digital Performance Archive, the Arts Council England Live Art and Performance Archive, the Franko B Archive, *Performance* magazine Archive, the David Hughes Live Art Archive, the Alastair Snow Archive, the greenroom Archive and the Bodies in Flight Archive. In addition, the Archives hold the original tapes from the **queerupnorth** Video Archive, together with DVD copies for viewing.

The Archives' holdings also contain a number of smaller collections of Live Art related material in various formats, such as full sets of Hybrid, Primary Sources, and LiveArt magazine, and a complete set of DVDs by the artist Reza Abdoh. Additional Live Art resources include Liveartwork DVDs, a complete set of the 9 DVDS for Bobby Baker's *Daily Life* series, and books to support research into Live Art, which are held in the Theatre Collection library.

## What is the Theatre Collection?

The Theatre Collection is one of the world's largest archives of British Theatre and Live Art and is an accredited museum and international research facility open to all.

Founded in 1951 to serve the first UK university Drama Department, our collections cover the period from 1572 to the 21st century and our visitors include everyone from international scholars to family historians.

The holdings encompass a wide range of formats from 1572 to the present day, including documents, photographs, artwork, objects, audio-visual and digital media. The collection covers actors, actor-managers, designers, historians/scholars, photographers, theatre companies, writers, critics, producers, directors, theatre-goers, collectors, festivals and the Bristol Drama Department archives, along with a vast collection of programmes and other printed material.

Key collections include the Mander & Mitchenson Theatre Collection (containing more than half a million items), the London Old Vic archive, Bristol Old Vic archive and the Live Art Archives (including the National Review of Live Art and Franko B).

## The Franko B Archive

The Franko B archive has been housed at the Theatre Collection since 2008. The archive preserves official documentation from Franko's performances, visual artworks, and exhibitions, but it also holds documents of a bureaucratic nature, combined with those from his personal life and the wider cultural, political context of the time they were created.

Franko initially developed the archive catalogue in the early 2000s crafting a sophisticated coding system to reflect the diverse and complex nature of his practice. In the last year and a half Cara Davies has been helping the Theatre Collection decode the archive, sorting, organising and cataloguing new acquisitions.

The archive continues to grow as Franko's career does and the Theatre Collection receive regular acquisitions from Franko. The Theatre Collection endeavours to support and make accessible to researchers this wonderfully evolving archive.

## Object List

1. But ... is it art? National Review of Live Art Postcard, 2001.
2. Stickers from Franko B's performance *Oh Lover Boy*, 2001.
3. Invitation to the preview of Franko B's exhibition *Love in Times of Pain*, 2009.
4. Set of Badges from Franko B's performance *Oh Lover Boy*, 2001.
5. Production flyer for Franko B and Kamal Ackarie's performance *Don't Leave Me This Way*, 2007.
6. Tickets for Franko B's performance of *Still Life*, 2002.
7. Ticket for Franko B's performance *I'm Thinking of You*, 2009.
8. Promotional card to advertise Franko B's participation in Routledge's publication of *Fully Exposed: The Male Nude in Photography*, 1990.
9. Flyer from Franko B's performance *I Miss You* and door handle sign *Please Disturb Me* from the installation *I Feel Lonely* at the Great Eastern Hotel, 2004.
10. *Bleeding Kit*, object work, 2002.

## Video Screen

A selection of digital images taken from various performances, exhibitions and installations by Franko B, photographed by Manuel Vason, Hugo Glendinning, Jamie McLeod, Ravi Deepres and Daniel Bolliger, alongside personal images taken by Franko. All images are sourced from the Franko B archive.

## Resource Pack

The resource pack is a selection of magazine articles, academic papers and news reports about Franko B. The pack aims to offer an incite into the contexts through which his work is being discussed and critiqued. The pack also includes a series of audience responses to highlight how his specific audiences receive and interpret his work.

## Comments Cards

The comments cards are a chance for you to have your own say. Echoing Franko's own practice of giving comments cards to the audience members, we invite you to take one of the red cards on the table and to write down what you feel about Franko B and his work from experiencing this exhibition.

Here is a few potential prompt questions to get you thinking ...

*Who is Franko B?*

*What do we perceive about his identity through the archive?*

*What relationships does this provoke between audience, document and artist?*

*Why do we fall in love with him?*

8. Contact sheet of performance documentation for *This is You*, nd.  
Image credit: Hugo Glendinning.
9. Prints *miscellaneous* and *Sink with Image* by Franko B, nd.
10. Print *miscellaneous* from the folder Franko B in other peoples work Visual Arts '86-2000.
11. Print *miscellaneous* from the folder Franko B in other peoples work Visual Arts '86-2000.
12. Print *miscellaneous* from the folder Prints of Franko Visual Arts '86-2000.
11. Performance documentation of Franko B's performance *I Miss You*, photo credit unknown but image was taken after the performance to indicate the effect this performance had on Franko's body, circa 2002.
12. *Blood Transfusion Bag*, object work, and relic from *Mamma I Can't Sing*, nd.
13. Medical Appointment Card for Franko B, 1999.
14. Various documents from Franko B's performance *Aktion 398*, dog collar, ticket dispenser, photographic documentation by Manuel Vason, 2001.
15. Various objects from Marina Abramovic's *Cleaning the House* residency that Franko took part in, 1996.
16. Line drawing by Franko B as part of the planning process for the performance *Don't Leave Me This Way*, 2007.
17. Untitled resin work, circa 1990.
18. Various documents from Franko B's performance *I Miss You*, floor plan, photographic documentation by Niko Raez, 2002.
19. *Helmet, Coat Hanger*, object works, nd.
20. Performance documentation from a film work by Franko B and Kris Canavan at the Great Eastern Hotel, during Franko's installation *I Feel Lonely*, 2001.

21. *Flags*, nd.

22. Performance at Fist – image credit: Jamie McLeod, nd.

23. Various publications showing articles on Franko's work, 1998 -2003.

24. Mixed media of collaborations and mentoring work, circa 1990s-2000.

25. Image unknown.

26. Random objects found in the archive: Marshmallow, Wham Bar, Happy Birthday Confetti, Black Marker Pen, Safety Pin and Money Saving expert.com, nd.

27. Archive instructions, 2007.

28. Apple iMac Computer and various uncatalogued Slides.

29. *Haute Corture*, dress designed by Anne So, made from recycled canvas from Franko B's performance *I Miss You*, 2001.

## Pictures - Downstairs

1-7. Franko B *Mamma I Can't Sing*, performance, 1995.  
Image Credit: Nicholas Sinclair

9-11. Franko B *I Miss You*, performance, 2002.  
Image Credit: Niko Raez

## Pictures - Upstairs

1. Print *miscellaneous* from the folder Franko B in Other Peoples Work Visual Arts '86-2000.
2. Print *miscellaneous* from the folder Prints of Franko Visual Arts '86-2000.
3. Print *miscellaneous portrait of Franko*, image credit: ©Ashley.
4. Prints *Sink with Image* and *miscellaneous* by Franko B nd.
5. Print, *miscellaneous* from the folder Prints of Franko Visual Arts '86-2000.
6. Postcards, *various*.
7. Contact sheet of performance documentation for *This is You*, nd.  
Image credit: Hugo Glendinning.