

# CORCORAN

GALLERY OF ART • COLLEGE of ART + DESIGN

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

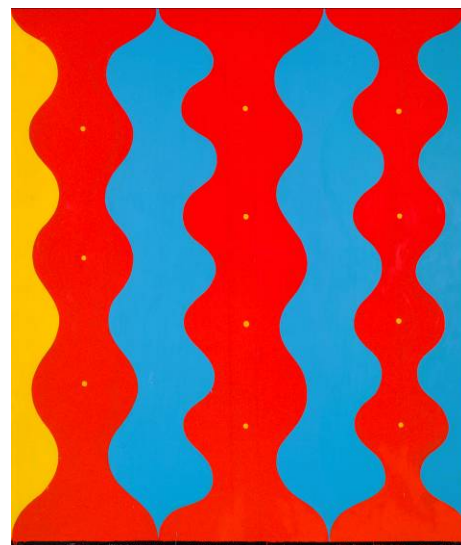
Kristin Guter, Senior Director of Communications and Marketing,  
[kguiter@corcoran.org](mailto:kguiter@corcoran.org), (202) 639-1867

Rachel Cothran, Manager of Public Relations,  
[rcothran@corcoran.org](mailto:rcothran@corcoran.org), (202) 639-1833

Media Center: [www.corcoran.org/press](http://www.corcoran.org/press)

### CORCORAN PRESENTS *CHRIS MARTIN: PAINTING BIG* June 18–October 23, 2011

WASHINGTON, D.C.—This summer, the Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design will present *Chris Martin: Painting Big*, Martin’s first one-artist museum exhibition and the first exhibition of his work in Washington, D.C. Spanning three spaces in the Gallery, the exhibition includes large-scale paintings commissioned for the Corcoran’s Atrium, a focused selection of work from the past nine years, and in the Corcoran’s Rotunda through August 28, a dense assemblage of small paintings from the last 25 years. *Chris Martin: Painting Big* is the second exhibition in the Gallery’s *NOW at the Corcoran* series, a contemporary program dedicated to showcasing the work of emerging and mid-career artists. It is curated by Sarah Newman, curator of contemporary art at the Corcoran.



*Painting Big* explores Martin’s complex insertion of everyday life into art and art into everyday life. Although abstract, Martin’s paintings are a direct response to the physical world around him. His works are tactile and stitched-together, incorporating found objects and collage into their abstract geometries and rhythmic patterns. They relate to the physical world as much as to his own internal landscape of memories and experiences, which draw from music, literature, and the human relationship to nature. In many, Martin integrates objects from his immediate environment, including kitchen utensils, records, photographs, and Persian carpets, into their colorful surfaces. According to Sarah Newman, “Martin’s paintings are often quite literally big, in the sense that many of his canvases are towering fields of color and pattern, yet they are also big in concept and in spirit, incorporating the gamut of experience, from personal memories to James Brown to the sublime. Although his paintings are lush and playful on the surface, they are embedded with traces of private stories and layers of history.”

*Painting Big* is structured in three parts: a new body of work comprised of three site-specific, monumental abstract paintings in the Corcoran central Atrium, a dense Salon-stack assemblage of small paintings in the Rotunda, and a focused selection of work in the *NOW* Gallery. Taken together, the work proposes a complex musing on the relationship between public and private experience, and the way in which these ideas find form in paint.

In the Atrium, three paintings, each 26 feet high, will be suspended from the second floor to the ground, creating a vibrant “room” of color and pattern in the public space of the Gallery. The Atrium installation dramatizes the play between art and life, serving as a monumental painted environment for the activities of Corcoran visitors. Originally from Washington, D.C., Martin grew up visiting the Corcoran.

His memories of seeing ambitious sculptural installations, including those by Tony Smith and Ronald Bladen in the Corcoran’s Atrium, have inspired his ideas for this exhibition, and his paintings directly engage the architecture and history of the museum.

In the Corcoran’s Rotunda, a salon-stack of small paintings and collages will create an intimate, almost domestic environment in the heart of the Gallery. The works demonstrate the literal incorporation of found objects into Martin’s painted surface, and they also give a sense of the range of the artist’s practice and history. “My painting practice is very diverse both in image and use of materials,” says Martin of the exhibition. “This is an opportunity to bring it all together and see what it is.”

The large-scale paintings in the Corcoran’s *NOW* Gallery focus on Martin’s playing with the language of abstraction and the ways in which the outside world becomes incorporated into paint. Focused on the subject of landscape, the works refer to Martin’s time spent in India along the Ganges River and in upstate New York in the Catskill Mountains. “Martin’s works are musings on the ways in which lived experience becomes refracted through perception and incorporated into paint. They are also ultimately about the ways in which art shapes our knowledge of place,” said Newman.

Martin’s interest in bringing painting into the realm of lived experience and his own history of performance are essential elements of his work. In the 1970s and 1980s, he created collaborative paintings during Happenings with other artists and musicians. He has placed works in bus stops, on the sides of buildings, and in nightclubs, fabricating them with phosphorescent paint to respond to the lighting and conditions of the location. He has taken large-scale paintings for “walks” around the block, involving his neighbors and local shopkeepers in creating the meaning and experience of his work. In more traditional gallery spaces, Martin has blurred the distinction between the art object and everyday life, placing paintings on floors, ceilings, and displayed among household objects.

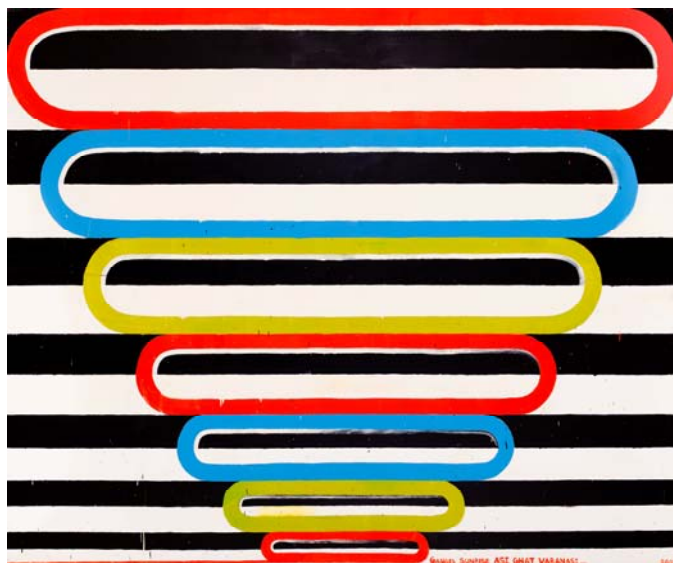


Growing up in Washington, Martin recalls visiting the Corcoran as a teenager, finding inspiration in masterworks such as George Inness' *Harvest Moon*, as well as the avant-garde, large-scale sculptural installations that inspired his own work in the Corcoran's Atrium. Martin's exhibition at the Corcoran represents a coming home for the artist and celebrates the history as well as the future of both the artist and the Corcoran. For more, please visit [www.corcoran.org/now](http://www.corcoran.org/now).

*Chris Martin: Painting Big* is made possible through the support of the Women's Committee of the Corcoran and Steven M. Sumberg.

### ABOUT CHRIS MARTIN

Chris Martin was born in Washington D.C. in 1954. From 1972–75 he attended Yale University, and in 1992 attained a BFA, Certificate of Art Therapy from the School of Visual Arts, New York. Martin has lived and worked in New York City since 1976 and has been exhibiting actively in the United States since the early 1980s. Recent projects include a one-artist exhibition of paintings at the Jaffe-Friede Gallery at Dartmouth University, 2011; *Joe Bradley & Chris Martin* at Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York, 2010; and an exhibition of large-scale paintings and drawings at KOW Berlin, Germany, 2009. Martin's works have also been included in many group exhibitions including *Abstract America* at the Saatchi Gallery, London, 2009; *Shape Shifters* at the University of North Carolina, Pembroke, NC, 2008; *The Painted World* at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, NY, 2005; and *Current Undercurrents: Working in Brooklyn* at the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY, 1997. Martin has been the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships including the *John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship*, 2002, and the *Pollock-Krasner Foundation Award*, 1999.



### PRESS PREVIEW

Media are invited to a press preview and meet-and-greet with the artist for *Chris Martin: Painting Big* on June 16 from 6–8 p.m. at the Corcoran, 500 Seventeenth St. N.W., Washington, DC. RSVP to [pr@corcoran.org](mailto:pr@corcoran.org) by June 13.

### EXHIBITION PROGRAMMING

Cultural and educational programs inspired by *Chris Martin: Painting Big* will begin this summer. A number of events are planned as part of FREE Summer Saturdays at the Corcoran; visit [www.corcoran.org/freesummersaturdays](http://www.corcoran.org/freesummersaturdays) for updated listings.

On Saturday, July 2 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., the public is invited to attend **Take Your Painting on a Walk Day**. Participants will gather for this community painting workshop, and then take their paintings on a sunny walk around the nearby White House in mobile public-art homage to artist Chris Martin, who often enlists the participation of friends, neighbors, and the occasional pet chicken for his vibrant works (\$15 Public; \$12 Members). From 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., the Corcoran's Interim Chair of Arts and Humanities Casey Smith and Latin American Youth Media House's Howard Soloman lead **Say It Big**, a FREE contemporary poetry lecture and presentation in the Atrium, among Chris Martin's oversize canvases.

On Saturday, July 30 from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m., local dance performers will bring street dancing – break dancing – to the Corcoran Atrium for **Break It Down Like James Brown**. During this free event, groove to the same soul tunes that served as inspiration for many of Chris Martin's larger-than-life canvases, and watch the performers pop and twist against the backdrop of three monumental paintings commissioned just for *Painting Big*.

**A personal appearance by artist Chris Martin** is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Thursday, September 8 at the Frances and Armand Hammer Auditorium. Martin will speak about his artistic process, myriad inspirations, and preparations leading up to the exhibition, *Chris Martin: Painting Big* at the Corcoran. Following his talk, Martin will be available to answer questions and discuss his works in the galleries. Tickets are \$15 for members of the public, \$12 for Corcoran Members, and \$10 for Corcoran Contemporaries members.

On Friday, October 21, the Corcoran Contemporaries and host Chris Martin will present **NOW at Night** at the Corcoran from 8 p.m. to midnight. This fall fundraiser and last-chance viewing brings together contemporary art lovers for an evening of fun and art to benefit the Corcoran's contemporary art series, *NOW at the Corcoran*.

In addition to FREE Highlights Tours available to visitors to the Gallery, Corcoran College of Art + Design undergraduate and graduate docents will lead tours of *Chris Martin: Painting Big* on Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. and Saturdays at 2 p.m. For more information about exhibition-related programs and events, visit [www.corcoran.org/now](http://www.corcoran.org/now).

### **ABOUT NOW AT THE CORCORAN**

*NOW at the Corcoran* is the Gallery's contemporary art program dedicated to exhibitions of work by emerging and mid-career artists, highlighting work that addresses issues central to local, national, and global communities while simultaneously responding to the collections, history, and architecture of the museum. *NOW* programming has a dynamic and integrated relationship with the Corcoran College of Art + Design. As the only visual arts college in Washington, D.C., the Corcoran College of Art + Design's active base of practicing art students and faculty make it a natural center for creating, displaying, and thinking about contemporary art. The inaugural exhibition, *Spencer Finch: My Business, with the Cloud* (September 11, 2010–January 23, 2011) featured a commissioned, site-specific installation in the Corcoran Rotunda. To view the exhibition video, visit [www.corcoran.org/finch](http://www.corcoran.org/finch).

## VISITOR INFORMATION

The Corcoran's hours of operation are as follows: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; closed Monday and Tuesday. Admission to *Chris Martin: Painting Big* is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors (62+) and students (with valid ID), children 12 and under, military (with valid ID) and Members enter for free. From Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend (May 28—September 3, 2011), admission to the museum will be FREE, as part of Free Summer Saturdays. For more information, including special Gallery tours, workshops, demonstrations, and performances, visit [www.corcoran.org/freesummersaturdays](http://www.corcoran.org/freesummersaturdays).

## ABOUT THE CORCORAN

**The Corcoran Gallery of Art**, a privately funded institution, was founded in 1869 as America's first dedicated art museum and Washington's first and largest nonfederal museum of art. It is known internationally for its distinguished collection of historical and modern American art as well as contemporary art, photography, European painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts. In addition, a dynamic schedule of special exhibitions is complemented and enhanced by a range of educational programming, which together seek to enrich perspectives, support the local arts community, and encourage interpretation. **The Corcoran College of Art + Design** was founded in 1890 and stands as Washington's only four-year college of art and design, offering BFA degrees in Digital Media Design, Fine Art, Fine Art Photography, Graphic Design, Interior Design, and Photojournalism; a BA in Art Studies; a five-year Bachelor of Fine Arts/Master of Arts in Teaching (BFA/MAT); an AFA in Digital Media Design, Fine Art, Graphic Design, and Photography; and MA degrees in Art and the Book, Art Education, Exhibition Design, Interior Design, Master of Arts in Teaching, and New Media Photojournalism. The College's Continuing Education program offers part-time credit and non-credit classes for children and adults and draws more than 2,500 participants each year. For more information about the **Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design**, visit [www.corcoran.org](http://www.corcoran.org).

### Images:

Page one: Chris Martin, *Here Comes the Sun...*, 2004-2007. Oil on canvas, 143 x 129 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York. Photo: Jason Mandella.

Page two: Chris Martin, plan for large-scale paintings to be installed in the atrium of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, 2010-11. Courtesy of the artist.

Page three: Chris Martin, *Ganges Sunrise Asi Ghat Varanasi...*, 2002. Oil on canvas, 129 x 143 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York. Photo: Jason Mandella.