

PRACTICE: ACTIONS

The artist uses many layers to produce *Cabinet of Natural Curiosities*. He uses a coloured first layer, then paints over the top of this the lines and shapes that form the plan of his composition. He often changes his mind as he works, and you can see this in the artwork, where he has erased paint or left expressive drips, smears, scratches and line variations over the painting. These disruptions to the creation of his artworks are deliberate, reflecting the random disruptions that occur in nature itself. Dunlop sometimes applies oil paint to look like watercolour and uses both the transparent and semi-transparent qualities of oil paint to build up rich layers of colour. His depiction of leaves is based on years of observation of nature, but his painted plants are invented forms painted from memory and his imagination.

AUDIENCE

Dunlop engages the interest of his audience with expressive patches of luminous colour, movement and lively paint that comes to life beside the more precise and detailed plants and other natural forms in this work.

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In-depth study

Mark Dixon

CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS



Mark Dixon, *Untitled*, 2005. Acrylic on canvas, 60 × 60 cm. © Mark Dixon. 1971–, Canada



Mark Dixon, *Untitled*, 2005. Acrylic on board, 20 × 20 cm. © Mark Dixon.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: WORLD

Mark Dixon's world is that of contemporary art in Canada, and increasingly he is becoming part of the international art world. Although he lives in the urban world of a city, he also sees himself as part of the natural world, especially the world of plants, and this is what he paints.

ARTIST FRAMES: STRUCTURAL

Dixon is an artist who works in the Structural Frame. He observes plants closely but is not interested in depicting them in realistic detail. Instead he uses paint to suggest the essence of the plants he paints. He plans each composition carefully and uses visual qualities that suggest nature.

ARTWORK FRAMES: STRUCTURAL

In both the paintings shown on page 84 the artist depicts the realistic shapes of clumps of plants. The edges of the plant forms are sometimes sharp and sometimes blurred. Within them there is expressive brushwork, colours suggesting the particular plants and patches of light and shade, but no detail. He uses one flat colour in the background so the plant forms are like silhouettes.

PRACTICE: IDEAS

Dixon's idea is to suggest the beauty of the plants he paints through his choice of paint, his methods of applying it and the visual qualities he uses.

PRACTICE: ACTIONS

Dixon makes drawings of plants, noting their colours, textures and tones. He paints the surface of his canvas or board in broad brushstrokes covering it with these colours, textures and tones. Referring to his drawings, he then cuts a **stencil** that blocks out the plant forms and paints in his background colour.

stencil: pattern with a cut-out design

AUDIENCE

Mark Dixon uses striking images of plants and vivid colours to communicate his interest in nature to an audience.

www.markdixon.ca

