

Frank Moore

Curated by Hilton Als

Frank Moore (1953–2002) was an American surrealist whose great subject was the natural world and all that one can find there, including death. Raised on Long Island near the start of the Cold War, Moore spent his childhood summers with his family in the Adirondacks, where he developed a particular fascination with nature and the gentle and sometimes violent interplay between subterranean insect life, dirt, water, and plants. As a young artist, Moore, who majored in art and psychology at Yale, was initially attracted to abstraction, but by the 1980s, after he'd studied the decorative arts both here and abroad, he was working in a different way, going on to create his now signature highly detailed, brightly colored, and elaborately designed and framed representational works, which not only visualized the universe he'd fallen in love with as a child, but also the disintegration of gay bodies because of AIDS. (Moore himself was diagnosed with the disease in 1987.) The interplay between irrepressible life and loss is everywhere in Moore's work, as is his spirit of collaboration. In 1991, working with Visual AIDS, Moore—who described his paintings as a kind of journal about his long battle with HIV—was instrumental in conceiving the red ribbon that became a worldwide symbol of AIDS awareness. Moore died in Manhattan in April 2002, just as the earth was coming alive upstate, in his beloved garden.

*This text was produced on the occasion of the exhibition More Life: Frank Moore, curated by Hilton Als, at David Zwirner, 525 West 19th Street, New York, September 14–October 23, 2021.*