



■ A busy schedule awaits British sculptor Matt Franks, the inaugural Manukau Institute of Technology artist in residence. TIMES PHOTO CHRIS SKELTON 002N004

British sculptor getting inspiration Down Under

By MARTHA MCKENZIE-MINIFIE

BRITISH sculptor Matt Franks is facing challenges in what he considers the New World.

The inaugural Manukau Institute of Technology artist in residence, whose exhibition opened at Pakuranga's te tuhi – the mark on Saturday, is working in New Zealand two months.

The Master of Fine Art graduate is seeking a fresh perspective Down Under and his new experiences include ordering a short double espresso and seeing people react as if he's speaking double Dutch.

After two years working alone in his London studio, the talented sculptor is looking forward to assisting MIT students and touring art schools nationwide.

"I'm hoping to immerse myself in something completely different and come away with something new and fresh," said

the 31-year-old, who is considered a rising star on the international art scene.

"I've been looking at things with a completely London-based and Euro-centric attitude.

"Coming to New Zealand seemed like a great opportunity – it's literally on the other side of the world."

Other than being the setting for *The Lord of the Rings*, Mr Franks knew little of New Zealand before arriving eight days ago.

He relishes the sense of creative independence in this country, which, he said, is less restricted by its history than Britain.

"The space, the architecture [in New Zealand] – it's so New World," he said, comparing Auckland to Los Angeles.

"England is old, it even smells mouldy, New Zealand is fresh."

The sculptor wants to develop a closer working relationship with Kiwi artists with an eye to forming an exchange scheme.

He will be working

MIT Bachelor of Visual Arts students, some of whom will specialise in sculpture.

MIT's artist in residence programme, run in conjunction with Creative New Zealand, the British Council and te tuhi – the mark, is planned as an annual event.

"The presence of Matt Franks will be tremendous for our students and the community at large," said MIT lecturer Mark Kirby.

"The work is as energetic as it is exciting."

Mr Franks' zany, cartoon-like sculptures are made from a variety of materials including styrofoam, polystyrene and epoxy resin.

The first international artist to have a major solo exhibition at te tuhi – the mark, Mr Franks had several solo shows overseas including a commission at the prestigious Tate Modern gallery.

Matt Franks' *Late One Evening* runs until November 24, in the Iris Fisher Gallery at te tuhi – the mark, 13 Reeves Road, Pakuranga.