

# GALERIE GISELA CAPITAIN

KARLA BLACK

January 15 – February 20, 2016

Galerie Gisela Capitain is pleased to announce its third exhibition with the Scottish artist Karla Black (b. 1972).

Sculptor Karla Black is considered to be a pioneer of her generation. Using a mix of traditional and unusual materials such as cellophane, sugar paper, plaster powder and cosmetic products she has created a unique visual language. Her sculptural works, which are often room-filling and highly colourful, operate on the border between installation, painting and performance art, while being defined quite definitely as sculptures. Inspired, among other things, by the idea of psychoanalysis and its significance for art, Black uses material experience as a possibility to learn something about the world; something that cannot be formulated linguistically.

Her exhibition at Galerie Gisela Capitain features new works, conceived to take into account the specificity of the space. As a response to the dominance of the central passageway that confronts viewers as they enter the gallery, doors and doorways have become important to the artist for this show, and the sculptural actuality of those, for her, somehow relate to how opportunities can appear in life as physical realities that require concrete action and energy. She says, "Windows of opportunity must somehow be recognised and acted upon just at the right time. Maybe it's not the movement towards them that is the difficult thing but rather just noticing that they are there in the first place - the perception that they have appeared and that now is the moment to pass through."

Immediately inside the main door to the gallery is the work *Forward In Emphasis*: torn strips of sugar paper covered in powdered, multi-coloured eye shadows that forms a kind of doorway of its own that viewers walk through in order to see the exhibition. There is another smaller version of this at the back of the gallery, framing the entrance to the largest room which contains a landscape like white plaster powder floor work – entitled *Appears Peripheral*. Its edges are defined and its central form is delineated by lines of coloured toilet roll.

Issues of peripheral vision permeate the show from the beginning. Just creeping into view from the sides of the corridor, through the doorway of the first work, rise strands of ripped sugar paper, covered again in

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coloured eye shadows, up the walls of the corridors from jigsaw-cut, flat squares of acrylic paint which mimic the plinths of traditional sculpture. The issue of modes of presentation and of the making of traditional sculpture are central to the work. More individually discovered, surprising new solutions to plinths, stability, even the most basic sculptural problem of how to make something stand up, are used.

Abstraction, up to the very edge of representation, is how the artist thinks of her particular aesthetic. She has been absorbed by the power of abstraction in its relation to human development and evolution by way of its move away from representation of the human figure in art.

She said, "This exhibition relates to more general thoughts I have had for many years to do with how, through abstraction, the human species may become 'eventually benign'. This is a title I have used a couple of times for pieces of work. It centres on ideas around the square and/or the rectangle in abstraction, and how the first emergence of philosophy, religion and law (or forums for contemplation and discussion), began with some sort of clearing in the centre of a chaos or a mass (the city square) to create a quiet place where reflection could happen, and the hope that the eventual conclusion of reflection might be some kind of peace. In the gallery, there is a sense of fragility and vulnerability through the open use of materials such as powder and paper that, hopefully, engenders a sort of careful quietness in those who encounter it."

Through the framing of doorways, and a delineation or pointing out or emphasising of the square and the rectangle, these shapes have become key to this exhibition, not just through depiction but through how they are depicted and dealt with within that depiction. Squares and rectangles are further emphasised by being 'framed' or drawn around or marked out or selected within the form by colour and by line. This can be seen – for example – in the six small hanging works made out of sugar paper, body paint, oil paint, cotton wool and cushion stuffing that are as close to paintings as the artist' sculptures ever get.

The artist thinks of the colours in the exhibition as schewed, lightened versions of the seven prismatic colours of the rainbow. This is as 'multi-coloured' as her work can actually get, within the limitations of the tonal lightness of her palette.