

Christina Mackie. Tate Britain Commission 2015

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On an annual basis, the Tate Britain becomes patron of Contemporary Arts, selecting and commissioning a British artist of a site-specific art-work in dialogue with the Millbank museum. Courty and modern at the same time, following the recent museographic intervention by Caruso St. John, the exhibition is presented as the ideal context to merge historical references and artistic practices of the present.

To Christina Mackie, born in 1956 in Oxford, and soon moved to London, the task of rethinking classical and dramatic architecture of the halls, focusing on topics such as light and color which seem to characterize the more recent curatorial choices at the Tate Britain, such as for the successful exhibitions *Late Turner* and *Olaffur Eliasson – Turner Colour Experiments*. In the words of Penelope Curtis, director: “Christina Mackie has long been interested in the exchange between the natural and man-made worlds as exemplified in pigment and paint; the rich historic collections surrounding the Duveen galleries have been magically reconfigured by her highly individual installation”. Cheyenne Westphal, Co-Head of Sotheby’s, project sponsors of Tate Britain Commission, declares in addition: “Year after year, the Tate Britain Commission continues to captivate and surprise the audiences. The ambitious installation by Christina Mackie will carry forward this tradition and we are delighted to be able to provide support for the seventh year”.

Always interested in the perceptual phenomena triggered by the flow of color-matter – such as for the exhibitions *Colour Drop*, The Renaissance Society, Chicago, 2014, *PRAXES*, Berlin, 2014, *Painting the Weight*, Chisenhale Gallery, London, 2012 – in this occasion, Christina Mackie measures her practice with a large-scale installation, divided into three sculptural moments, paying attention to the fascinating contrast between the physical presence of mass-light and the lightness of the materials: *Filters*, 2015. The aerial installation which occupies the southern space of the Duveen Galleries, emerges consisting of ropes and silk threads of 12 m. length, on top of which find crystallized color cells, anchored to the floor by a series of circular casts, similar to large-format colors in vitro.

Referring to the tradition of aerial and intangible sculptures initiated by Duchamp with *55 cc Air de Paris*, 1919, the artist permeates the entire space of color filters throughout a fusion of pigments, architecture and natural light. Overall, this is a complex of classical harmony and calm grandeur, where the viewer is invited to investigate all the different elements that animate the installation. At the main roundabout, a curious mechanism follows with references to scientific laboratories and industrial factories; more widely, it seems to represent an invitation to play within the gallery-space. The circle ends in the Octagon niche, where Christina Mackie presents plinth of colored, row glasses resourced from a foundry: an ensemble where to observe the procedure of formation and crystallization of the pigments. It is a chemical approach the one of Christina Mackie, who, through experimentation and scientific research, investigates the potentialities of pigments and their specific properties, focusing on fluidity and nature of physical components. According to this perspective, the artist adheres to the theories and philosophies of color which support the scientific method, such as historically for the English-born, Isaac Newton (1643-1727). Christina Mackie renews the artistic language through dynamic and interactive dimensions to re-think the chromatic matter in artistic practices.

Tate Britain Commission 2015: Christina Mackie

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