

Moving through from the Galleries to the Warehouse, in *Fences Kept* (2021) Black has made marks on the glass doors and windows with paint and Vaseline, in an echo of the freestanding glass works in the lower gallery. She thinks about art as an 'animal behaviour' that is only allowed in certain, fenced-off places. *Fences Kept* acts almost as boundary wall, marking the edge of this space of permission.

Black has created entirely new work for the Warehouse: three wall-based works, and a sculpture that dominates the floor and back wall, *Waiver for Shade* (2021), which responds to the dark, industrial architecture of this space. The artist's body defines the parameters of this work, working alone as she does. The positioning of materials – earth, gold and copper leaf, Vaseline, cosmetics and body moisturisers – is defined by the artist's reach, the extent of her throw, her physical ability to lift and bend as well as her mood and desire to see what materials will do. Like much of her work over the last twenty years, this work arises from a responsive relationship between body, materials and space, which in turn, Black hopes, is reflected in the viewer's experience of it.

New publication.

A new book featuring extensive photography by the artist and writing by her, Fiona Bradley and Alison Ferris will be available soon.

Fruitmarket editions.

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Karla Black

sculptures (2001–2021)

details for a retrospective

07.07.21 – 24.10.21

Supported by



Karla Black (b.1972, Alexandria, Scotland) studied at Glasgow School of Art, graduating with a BA in 1999 and an MA in 2004. The Fruitmarket last worked with her in 2011, presenting her work for Scotland + Venice at the Venice Biennale. Black was nominated for the Turner Prize that same year.

Ten years on, we look back over the artist's career in an exhibition that takes in twenty years of her practice and includes both existing and new work. The subtitle of the exhibition, *details for a retrospective*, uses the language of the art world, the 'retrospective' being a traditional milestone in an artist's career, but this is not a classic survey exhibition. Black sees each sculpture as holding her energy through the years from the moment she made it, and a number of works have been selected that best typify this.

Black talks both of the way that her work is 'almost sculpture', and of her use of 'almost colours' – hues that are not at their full intensity. Although she uses a distinctive range of pastel colours, and materials from the chemist shop and makeup counter alongside more traditional art materials, Black uses both materials and colours for their aesthetic qualities rather than any meaning that might attach to them in the wider world.

Her work is abstract, and she notes that the marks that children first make are abstract too, saying 'the way children work when they first draw or just play around with materials is closer to what I'm doing'. And, like children's creativity, Black's sculptures are more about play and exploration than they are about meaning. While, as she says, people often seek 'to find an answer or a solution that comes through language' when looking at works of art, Black's sculptures are not so metaphorical.

The lower gallery is filled with sculptures from throughout the artist's career, made in an array of her signature materials from the everyday to the specialist. Black experiments with the

materials – seeing how she can suspend, balance and stack them in ways that keep their possibilities open. The sculptures from her early career are alive with this energetic experimentation just as much as the more recent works. Standing paper structures, such as *Division Is* (2008), seem as if they are still in the process of folding and unfolding. Glass sculptures, such as *Just Once* (2017), hold paint-like substances made with Vaseline between their panes: paints that never dry can always change.

With the cloud-like hanging works, such as *There Can Be No Arguments* (2010), Black uses polythene and powdery substances to create sculptures whose forms never quite settle. Unlike the solidity of traditional sculptures made in bronze or marble, Black's sculptures teeter on the edge of form. She wants to remind us that all sculpture, even that which appears permanent, is made of matter that will one day disintegrate. It is just a matter of time.

Black's titles often seem elusive. She considers them secondary to the works themselves, but they can hint at human behaviours and seem like snippets taken from something else. Black says, 'Perhaps for me they are a way of trying to resolve how the unconscious interaction with the physical world that appears in the sculptures can be analysed in language or become conscious.'

In the upper gallery, the whole space blushes with the pink powder of *Punctuation is pretty popular: nobody wants to admit to much* (2008/2021). A reworking of an earlier piece, the spreading colour strikes up a particular conversation with the light-filled space of the Fruitmarket. Black creates such works alone in the space, 'like an individual alone in a landscape' as she puts it, and wishes the open-ended experience of making it to be reflected in the viewer's experience too. While we know, given the context of the gallery, that we are not allowed to touch the work, Black hopes the viewer feels 'at least an impetus towards a physical response', which in turn transforms into a 'cerebral optical one'.