

GALERIE GISELA CAPITAIN

KARLA BLACK

February 7 – April 5, 2025

Galerie Gisela Capitaïn is pleased to announce its fifth solo exhibition of new works by Scottish artist Karla Black (*1972, Alexandria).

The story of the mirror begins with copper. Long before glass allowed us to gaze at our own reflection, polished copper surfaces were the ones that reflected faces - fleeting, imprecise, marked by light and oxidation. Venus, the goddess of beauty, holds it in countless depictions, the round mirror with a handle that later came to symbolise ♀ for femininity and alchemy.

Karla Black paints mirrors. Large formats whose silhouettes recall the Baroque and Rococo, the opulent splendour of Versailles, and mirrored walls where infinity breaks through. But where there would be reflections, there is only colour. Pale, heavy, delicate, fleeting traces that settle on the glass and seal its surface. The reflection of oneself? Locked away. A space without a self, a mirror without a gaze.

And yet the desire remains - the inescapable gesture of looking for one's own image, knowing that it will not appear. What is left of a mirror when it loses its function? Karla Black would say it becomes sculpture. Because everything she does is sculpture. Colour is not painting, but material that claims space, that accumulates, that changes. Marks, layers, surfaces that elude the quick glance.

"I smear paint on glass mirrors to break the spell of the frozen". In these words, Karla Black expresses a desire for freedom, for the dissolution of rigid concepts of identity and self-awareness. By removing the image, the face, the figure, the paint connects us directly to materiality—to sculpture. The mirrors no longer serve as tools of reflection but instead absorb us back into the physical world, into our own bodies, into the tangible reality of experience. In doing so, they resist the optical detachment of the reflection, the image, the screen. The glass mirror marks a profound rupture, a cultural turning point that has profoundly shaped Western society—a moment when humanity began to define itself more and more inwardly. But Black's work seeks to reserve that trajectory, to reconnect identity to the material world, to physical, to the earth itself.

In addition to these mirror works, the exhibition also includes a large paper sculpture that bridges the ornamental excesses of the Baroque and Rococo periods. Delicate, almost floating paper spheres hang from the ceiling like clouds, their shape and colour reminiscent of sweet, sticky cotton candy. They evoke the playful, exuberant nature of these periods. In their apparent lightness and frivolity, there is also a fragility - an excess that cannot be sustained. These delicate forms elude the grasp of solid form, shimmering in space as if they were both the abundance and the transience of a bygone era - a transience that, like the flickering glance in a mirror, constantly reshapes our self-representation and perception, shifting and dissipating, never fully graspable.

Karla Black has an upcoming solo exhibition at Kunstraum Dornbirn in June 2025. Institutional solo exhibitions include Bechtler Stiftung, Uster 2024, The New Art Gallery Walsall, 2023, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh 2021, Des Moines Art Centre 2020, The Power Plant, Toronto 2018, Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle 2017, Scottish National Galleries of Modern Art, Edinburgh 2016, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin 2015, Kestnergesellschaft, Hannover 2013, Dallas Museum of Art, Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, both 2011, among others. In 2011 she was nominated for the Turner Prize and represented Scotland at the 54th Venice Biennale.