

Karla Black constructs large-scale, site-specific sculptures using amorphous yet everyday materials—from dirt, chalk, and dough to the powders, sprays, and gooey substances we use to coat our bodies. Her work reacts to the light and space of each site with a sense of play and indeterminacy. In forms that always seem to be on the brink of collapse, the unremarkable and commonplace are rendered transcendent through size and scale, grand abstractions infused with a sense of entropy.

Black's working method is intensely physical and ideally solitary. That she is alone in the gallery for days, even weeks, to produce these sculptures is essential. Her body's connection to the work is, she says, outside of language, and although her individual labor is not explicitly evident in the finished work, the act of moving and shaping these materials herself is at the core of her practice. Citing British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein—who theorized that young children could be analyzed by engaging in play rather than conversation—Black's process celebrates the unconscious decisions and physical movements an artist makes while immersed in her chosen materials. Her hope is to elicit an equally visceral response from viewers, and the desire to touch her sculptures can often be overpowering. The materials cannot, of course, be handled, and the tension between this desire is one that Black sees as essential to experiencing her work. The intense visuality, the sheer pleasure of color and shape, and the olfactory dimension permeating the gallery produce an engulfing, multi-sensory environment that make the work, in Black's words, "almost painting, almost installation, almost performance art."

Black has responded to ICA's towering vertical space with *Practically In Shadow* (2013) a major, multi-part sculpture incorporating her largest hanging polythene object to date. Suspended among skylights, this prismatic structure will be continuously transformed through shifts in natural light, both dramatic and subtle. The floor element of the work amasses nearly 7,000 pounds of powdered plaster and paint, chunks of delicately-hued bath bombs, and a crown-like form crafted from cellophane.

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