

Christina Mackie

28th June - 16th September 2023

Herald St is delighted to announce an exhibition of works by Christina Mackie, taking place in the gallery's East London premises. The presentation features a continuation of Mackie's ceramic wall sculptures titled *Tokens*, as well as a new series of watercolours inspired by modern container terminals, titled *Seaports*. These distinct bodies of work demonstrate the artist's multidisciplinary engagement with colour and material, which began over four decades ago. Through pigments, earthenware, slips, glazes, and an array of fabrics, she investigates the physical and chemical properties of her mediums, and simultaneously exposes their arresting emotive impact.

The exhibition debuts Mackie's new paintings, her largest watercolours to date. In these tableaux, inky swathes of deep colour envelope delicate structures which emerge in ghostly white. Straddling the line between visual likeness and abstraction, the opalescent shapes capture the essence of loading cranes viewed from the artist's home by the river deltas of Vancouver. Within this scene, the sharp geometries of electric machinery and yellow goods rise against misty wetland fogs, embodying a dichotomy of artifice and nature inherent in her practice. Born in England, Mackie was raised in Canada in a family of marine biologists, and her early exposure to scientific methodology has informed her artistic output. In describing the compositions of her *Seaports*, she meticulously lists their chroma and nomenclature: raw sienna, burnt umber, cobalt violet, manganese, gamboge, ultramarine, Payne's grey, indigo, viridian. She draws attention to the physicality of colour within her work, with pigments mostly derived from earthy and mineral compounds – as notably explored in her monumental installation for Tate Britain's Duveen Galleries in 2015. At the same time, the watercolours are borne from intuitive gesture open to uncontrollable puddles and splashes of wet paint. Mackie's *Seaports* also nod to their canonical genre, a contemporary answer to Dutch marine paintings of the seventeenth century. Loaded with nostalgia, her renderings continue the endlessly captivating tensions between human innovations and the majesty of nature.

Mackie's *Tokens* are vibrant and haptic ceramics mounted on the wall or gently suspended on thick loops of velvet, cotton, and other materials. In conceiving these sculptures, the artist looked to objects and concepts which stand in for an outside idea, emotion, or relationship – a symbolic emblem often belying insincerity. Her inspirations ranged from the aesthetics of seals, badges, and medals to markers and behaviours in contemporary society: social media 'likes', endorsements, and virtue signalling. As with the watercolour pigments, the clay and glazes are extracted from the earth and inextricably linked to a particular geography, and these elemental mediums are juxtaposed with manmade fabrics which act as embellishments and hanging mechanisms. Fired to alchemical effect, her process is at once reminiscent of laboratory procedures and left to the fortuitous effects of the material's crystallisation in the kiln. The sculptures recall Mackie's series of *Judges*, anchored by clay shapes formed by chance which took on anthropomorphic and oppressive qualities. Her statement at the time of creating this seminal earlier work, over ten years ago, could still apply for the *Tokens*: 'I do use materials that I consider to be beautiful or elegant but the work is dark. The real shape of the world we're living in is what a lot of the work is about.'

Mackie's *Seaports* and *Tokens* are immediately beguiling, executed in jewel tones, calligraphic washes, and glistening glazes. Both series are built on layers: physical stacks of thin plates of clay and pools of pigments, and conceptual interplays of motives and histories. The artist compares such complexities in her works to the layers found in other mediums such as softwares and films, as well as the inevitable layers of existence. The *Seaports* and *Tokens* carry microcosms of gestures from life, filled with the tensions of nature against artifice, intention against chance, and the scientific-objective against sentimental intuition.

Text by Émilie Streiff

Christina Mackie (b. 1956, Oxford) lives and works in London. Her solo exhibitions include *The Judges III*, Hospitalfield, Arbroath (2021); *People Powder, XXIV CSAV - Artists Research Laboratory*, Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como (2018); *Tate Britain Duveen Commission*, Tate Britain, London (2015); *Drop/And Bird/Frog And*, Praxes, Berlin (2014); *Colour Drop*, The Renaissance Society, Chicago (2014); *Judges III*, Nottingham Castle Museum, Nottingham (2013); *Painting the Weights*, Chisenhale Gallery, London and Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2012); *The Judges*, Jerwood Room, Oxford (2010); and *Art Now Sculpture Court*, Tate Britain, London (2007). She has also participated in group exhibitions such as *Now for Tomorrow II*, Nottingham Castle Museum, Nottingham (2016); *DLA Piper Series: Constellations*, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool (2015); *BP Walk Through British Art*, Tate Britain, London (2015); *Molecular Etwas*, Kunstwerke, Berlin (2010); and *Real World*, Modern Art Oxford, Oxford (2004). Mackie's work is in the institutional collections of Tate, London; the Arts Council, London; the British Council, UK; Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds; Nottingham Castle Museum, Nottingham; Nomas Foundation, Rome; the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; and Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, among others.

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Front Space

(Clockwise from left)

Seaport 11
2023
Watercolour on paper
115 x 93 x 5 cm / 45.3 x 36.6 x 2 in, framed
HS19-CM8376P

Seaport 10
2023
Watercolour on paper
115 x 97 x 5 cm / 45.3 x 38.2 x 2 in, framed
HS19-CM8372P

Seaport 15
2023
Watercolour on paper
115 x 96.5 x 5 cm / 45.3 x 38 x 2 in, framed
HS19-CM8385P

Token 23
2020
Earthenware, silk
49 x 28 x 9 cm / 19.3 x 11 x 3.5 in
HS15-CM7220S

Token 41
2020
Earthenware, rope, cable ties, leather
45 x 41 x 10 cm / 17.7 x 16.1 x 3.9 in
HS16-CM7362S

Token 25
2020
Earthenware, silk
29.5 x 25 x 8 cm / 11.6 x 9.8 x 3.5 in
HS15-CM7222S

Token 45
2022
Earthenware, plastics, pigments, silk, paper
75.5 x 33 x 8.5 cm / 29.7 x 13 x 3.3 in
HS18-CM8051S

Token 44
2020
Earthenware, Egyptian paste, seeds, silk, glass
83 x 25 x 4.3 cm / 32.7 x 9.8 x 1.7 in
HS18-CM8230S

Token AR
2020
Earthenware, silk
28 x 32 x 7.5 cm / 11 x 12.6 x 3 in
HS19-CM8386S

Token 29
2020
Earthenware, rag rope
72 x 24.5 x 4.5 cm / 28.3 x 9.6 x 1.8 in
HS18-CM8234S

Token 24
2020
Earthenware, silk
30 x 37 x 5.5 cm / 11.8 x 14.6 x 2.2 in
HS15-CM7221S

Back Space

(Clockwise from left)

Seaport 12
2023
Watercolour on paper
115 x 100.5 x 5 cm / 45.3 x 39.6 x 2 in, framed
HS19-CM8377P

Token 34
2019
Earthenware, resin, fabrics
39 x 24 x 8 cm / 15.4 x 9.4 x 3.1 in
HS18-CM8225S

Token 33
2019
Earthenware, resin, silk
34 x 25.5 x 4.3 cm / 13.4 x 10 x 1.7 in
HS18-CM8232S

Token 38
2020
Earthenware, resin
26 x 27 x 6 cm / 10.2 x 10.6 x 2.4 in
HS18-CM8233S

Token 37
2020
Earthenware, silk
32 x 33 x 8 cm / 12.6 x 13 x 3.1 in
HS18-CM8257S

Token 26
2020
Earthenware, silk
26 x 27 x 6 cm / 10.2 x 10.6 x 2.4 in
HS15-CM7223S

Token 36
2020
Earthenware, resin, plastic
81 x 31 x 6.5 cm / 31.9 x 12.2 x 2.6 in
HS18-CM8236S

Token 32
2020
Earthenware, wheat, silk
37.5 x 25 x 10.5 cm / 14.8 x 9.8 x 4.1 in
HS18-CM8224S

Token 39
2020
Earthenware, silk
23.5 x 24.5 x 4 cm / 9.3 x 9.6 x 1.6 in
HS18-CM8235S

Token 31
2020
Earthenware, fabric, wheat
59 x 30 x 8.2 cm / 23.2 x 11.8 x 3.2 in
HS18-CM8223S

Token 30
2020
Earthenware, fabric, barley
58 x 32 x 5.8 cm / 22.8 x 12.6 x 2.3 in
HS18-CM8222S

Token 46
2020
Earthenware, silk
52 x 29 x 9 cm / 20.5 x 11.4 x 3.5 in
HS18-CM8227S

Token 40
2019
Earthenware, rope
28 x 51 x 6 cm / 11 x 20.1 x 2.4 in
HS18-CM8226S

Token 47
2020
Earthenware, silk
28.5 x 41.7 x 10 cm / 11.2 x 16.4 x 3.9 in
HS18-CM8228S

Token 42
2020
Earthenware and silk
53.5 x 30 x 9 cm / 21.1 x 11.8 x 3.5 in
HS16-CM7365S

Token 28
2020
Earthenware, silk
72 x 31 x 8.5 cm / 28.3 x 12.2 x 3.5 in
HS15-CM7219S

Seaport 14
2023
Watercolour on paper
117 x 100.5 x 5 cm / 46.1 x 39.6 x 2 in, framed
HS19-CM8379P

Seaport 13
2023
Watercolour on paper
117 x 99.5 x 5 cm / 46.1 x 39.2 x 2 in, framed
HS19-CM8378P