

EXHIBITION GUIDE

CHRISTINA MACKIE

Material Reality

30 Jan — 19 Apr 2026

Material Reality is the first UK institutional solo exhibition by artist Christina Mackie (b. 1956, UK) for over a decade. The exhibition celebrates Mackie's contribution to British art, bringing new works to bear on paradigmatic pieces from the past fifteen years. Viewed collectively the exhibition highlights the dynamic interdisciplinarity, material investigations, and associative logic of her practice. Working across sculpture, painting, and installation, Mackie is attuned to geological, environmental, digital, and scientific modes of imaging, measuring and processing. Time, material, nature, and infrastructure are central, as well as grappling with virtual means of quantifying the world that have been instigated through advances in technology.

For the exhibition, Mackie has opened up the gallery spaces of the CCA for the first time in years, removing window coverings to allow in natural light and glimpses of buildings, trees, and sky that lie beyond its walls.

1. Bridget Riley Gallery

*'It is through half-formed illusions that cognition – the space of viewing, translating, reading – is continuously given room to reflect back on itself.'*¹

This gallery hosts Mackie's work *The Judges II*. The work unfolds across multiple trestle tables hosting objects that appear like evidence displayed for our judgement, including ceramics, minerals, watercolours, ink paintings, and videos playing on monitors. Their presentation provokes the question of which perceptual tools – forensic, artistic, geological, anecdotal – we use to connect them. A series of narrative possibilities are evoked through subtle decisions in sequencing and material contrasts, creating accumulative readings and sensory responses. No one reading is dictated, the work instead presents itself as an open system.

The work was inspired by a visit to the lava tubes of an extinct volcano in Australia. Mackie observed faces within its petrified folds of magma. Some of the presented objects, such as the sculptures and ceramics, can also be read as faces, reflecting our tendency to anthropomorphize – or what is termed 'paredolia'; a function of our brains' instinctive scanning for facial recognition which aids social interactions.

The Judges II has had multiple iterations, acquiring new objects and images across different exhibitions; from a police emergency light to a fake Marigold flower tinted with added paint, Indian ink drawings derived from nuclear test images, pomegranates, or copies of scientific illustrations of jellyfish from 1850 and 1950. Views of some items are not straight-forward, sometimes refracted through flecked glass, or partially concealed and stacked under the trestle legs. Rather than being shop-bought, each trestle is handmade from Tulipwood, Walnut, or Cedar, troubling the categories of found or hand-made. At many points across the installation Mackie pivots between intentional creation and contingency; in the watercolours and sculptures, pigments, inks, and clay have been manipulated rapidly to allow unforeseen possibility and mimic geological forces.

Here, and elsewhere in her practice, Mackie grapples with the representation of planetary time spans and forces of pressure. Minerals are present both in their innate form, and as pigment; slip, glaze and sand, metamorphosing across different media and forms of imaging or relating. Two video works, *Fall Force* and *Planet*, interweave ideas of landscape, the formation of crystals, and their simulation through digital imagery. *Planet* uses macro photography and computer-generated landscapes with contour map software. In *Fall Force*, Mackie dwells on the idea that subterranean pipework is all that will remain of our civilisation. She considers not just artworks, but all the paraphernalia of the studio as the fabric of life, which will eventually pass through a material cycle to become dust.

The work can be read as an extension of Mackie's studio; the tables are covered in brown paper just as those in her studio would be, stacked trays sandwich paint-stained plastic cups which have been used to mix pigments, whilst other objects reveal her collecting habits. Brought into the work these items blur the dividing line between exhibition space and studio, public presentation and private accretion.

1 Monika Szewczyk, *Christina Mackie*, ed. Rhea Dall, Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2012.

2. Daskalopolous Tank Gallery

Curious materials are piled on the floor of the gallery. Each is made up of 'tumbling media'; abrasive industrial materials used for finishing and polishing manufactured parts in a rotating machine. The different colours are used to register different grades of abrasion. Abstracted from their original function, their jewel-like shades glow invitingly. They represent in solid form the particles shown in the four procedural animations projected above; the visibility of which is contingent on the light and time of day. Called powder dynamics, these animations are used to model the behaviour of people in crowds, for example through transport networks. They encapsulate ideas of process and control, procedure and rules, and pose questions concerning the new uses of data, collection of information about individuals, and use of AI to accelerate these processes. The impact of data mining has a connection to the degradation of democracy, the consequent breakdown in trust between state and citizen, and amongst communities. People power seems an impossibly distant dream in an atomised society.

3. Clerestory Gallery

The Clerestory Gallery hosts *Dissolve*, a new installation that combines existing and commissioned works across oil, watercolour, textile, and film. These are displayed from the floor to the ceiling of the gallery, the material weight of oil paintings versus the ethereal watercolours dictates their arrangement in the space. The alchemical quality of Mackie's paintings foregrounds the materiality of mineral pigment; raw sienna, burnt umber, cobalt violet, manganese, gamboge, ultramarine, Payne's grey, indigo, viridian. The galleries top-lit windows cast light across the works depending on the time of day, dictating an ever-shifting hue and saturation. Tensions play out between intentional mark making, and the chance effect of washes of water, the natural splendour of the sea, and the infrastructures of global shipping. A long soft sculpture hangs from the ceiling, its embroidered eyes at the same level as the watercolours, an active spectator of the work, made of found homespun linen. The paintings are seascapes drawing on Mackie's view from Mayne Island, Canada, across to the distant marine port of Vancouver which bristles with cranes. They capture the immutability of the sea which wraps itself around her island cabin, through which Mackie reflects on the digital world's effect on our consciousness, forever unrestful, soothed only by constant change.

A video depicts this same scene, capturing light on water, a far distant horizon that eludes the long-range lens of the camera, and the port's ceaseless activity. The image constitutes itself and breaks down. As Mackie describes, 'A long lens brings far things near, making everything flat on the picture plane. Ships travel where and why, thoughts and people pass. The past recedes exponentially condensing into a field of light.'

BIOGRAPHY

Christina Mackie's (b. 1956, UK) solo exhibitions include Herald St, London (2023); *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*, Kunstewerke, 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.

SUPPORTED BY

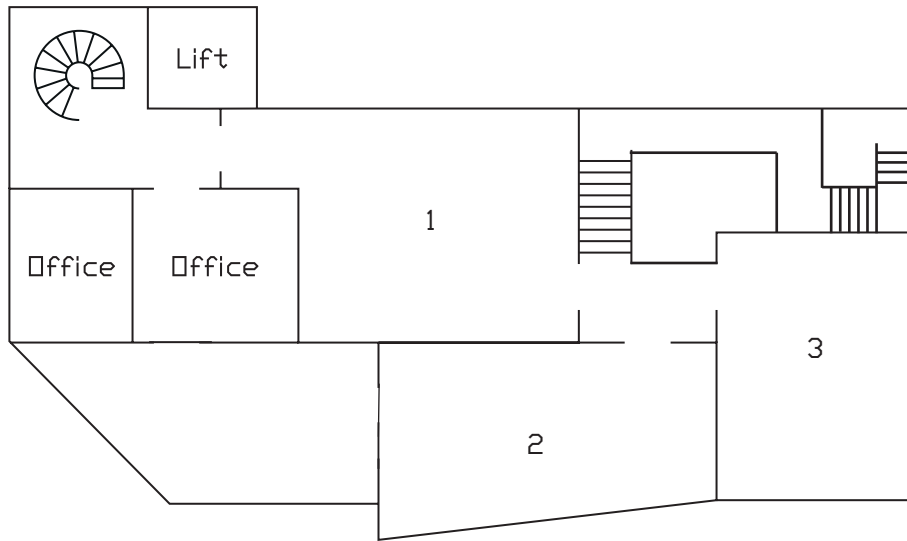
The Freelands Foundation
Henry Moore Foundation
Herald St



Herald St

FLOORPLAN

First Floor



1. Bridget Riley Gallery

The Judges II

2011–2012

Watercolours, ceramics, inkjet prints, minerals, Red Cedar, Tulipwood, Walnut, drawers with tissue and watercolour paper, Polyurethane, Perspex, 6 Indian ink paintings, Hantarax monitors, Mahogany, glass jar, videos

Fall Force duration: 4 mins

Planet duration: 12 mins

Courtesy of the Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London.

2. Daskalopoulos Tank Gallery

Powder People

2018–2026

Four animations, polyester tumbling media

Courtesy of the artist, Herald St, London, Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver and Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como. Comissioned by Goldsmiths CCA.

3. Clerestory Gallery

Dissolve

1985–2025

Watercolour on paper, oil on canvas, video

Duration: 48 mins

Courtesy of the artist, Herald St, London and Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver

EVENTS

Thu 9 Feb, 7–8pm TOUR:

WITH DR PIA GOTTSCHALLER

Technical Art Historian Dr Pia Gottschaller gives an evening tour of Christina Mackie's exhibition, offering a perspective that resonates closely with Mackie's material-led practice. Working across sculpture and painting, Mackie approaches materiality in ways that are at once instinctive and rigorously scientific, attentive to process, transformation, and physical properties. Drawing on her deep knowledge of material histories and artistic processes, Gottschaller will illuminate how Mackie's works engage with matter as both substance and concept.

Sun 8 Mar, 1–2pm TALK:

*MATERIALISMS: CONTEMPORARY
SCULPTURE*

This panel discussion, led by Chris Fite-Wassilak, takes *Material Reality* as its point of departure. Invited artists Emii Alrai and Sophie Mei Birkin will share their sculptural practices, in which materials are transformed into forms that engage planetary processes, human time, and natural cycles. The discussion will also consider how artists draw on intersecting disciplines, including history, archaeology, and science, to shape their approaches and expand the critical and conceptual possibilities of sculpture today.

Sun 8 Mar, 1–2pm TOUR:

BSL TOUR WITH MARTIN GLOVER

Join Martin Glover for a British Sign Language tour of Christina Mackie's *Material Reality*. The tour will feature a session in the CCA cafe, where attendees can get a hot drink and discuss the exhibition together.

Events are free, but booking is essential.

For more information on upcoming events visit
goldsmithscca.art

For access requirements please consult the 'visit' section of our website. If you have additional enquiries please contact goldsmithscca@gold.ac.uk