

CAMPLE—LINE

ROWAN MACE

TIME'S LIGHT

08.07-10.09.2023

Time's light is an exhibition of 21 new and recent sculptures by Rowan Mace (b. 1961, Cornwall), opening 8 July 2023. Installed in our upstairs space, the exhibition includes a group of new work made in 2022 and 2023, which Rowan has suggested has 'become a lot more painterly, slightly less architectural, and less hard-edged, softer...' It builds upon Rowan's recent solo exhibitions at Stallan-Brand in Glasgow and Zembla near Hawick (both 2021), and reflects a remarkably sustained investigation of structure, colour and light that encompasses rigour, balance and formal language alongside playfulness, intimacy and precarity. A newly commissioned short essay by writer Rhian Williams accompanies the exhibition.

For Rowan, the exhibition's title alludes to particular qualities of light that have the power to evoke memory and transport us to other times and places. A shaft of light, for instance, falling upon a surface or wall in late afternoon can trigger myriad sensations. As Rhian Williams notes in her essay: '...Mace's pieces hold within their many planes and surfaces the mutable quality of natural light as context for human emotion, memory, sensation, affect. She tells me of lying in bed gazing at light falling on one of her works and feeling she could be in her mother's bedroom as a child.' Natural light, intense observation and the passage of time are central to Rowan's practice. She has said: 'I like that idea of being outside of time...that when you are looking at something, when you are really looking, you're outside of time, you could be anywhere, anytime.'

Rowan grew up in Cornwall and has said that the swiftly changing light and the colours there profoundly influenced the development of her work. She has described how as a child she would 'spend ages just staring at the colours in the garden.' She became acquainted with the work of artists associated with St Ives, such as Terry Frost, in her foundation year at Falmouth School of Art. Rowan established her practice in Glasgow in 1989 and following a break of over 10 years to focus on her family, she started working in the garage next to her house: 'I just had to completely change my approach, my work became more playful.' Over the last decade, Rowan has built an extensive body of work that explores colour, light, touch, materiality, shape and texture: 'I am interested in the edge of things and what can be evoked through the use of human touch, light and colour.'

Rowan has said that she was always interested in painting not having to be on canvas. She has more recently described her work as 'painting that has become sculptural,' and initially when re-establishing her practice, she would use pieces of wood, which she painted and then built with, sometimes painting and building in a single day. Now she makes the structures first before painting them. She has added: 'The sculptures vary in content from a response to the wood in front of me

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and my desire to build structures that I have some sense of needing to make.' Usually Rowan makes the structures over winter, when she is not painting - constructing bricolages of block, line, angle and plane that vary between joyous verticality and more horizontal arrangements featuring unlikely cantilevers. They can be compact, with more solid elements that interlock closely, or more open and expansive, like elements holding together in the air.

The formal considerations of painting - speed, spontaneity, focus, oiliness, immediacy and sensuality - remain integral to Rowan's work. She paints her structures 'when the weather comes back and the light comes back.' In keeping with the scale of her studio, her works have a domestic proportion that invites intimacy whether the works are hand-sized or larger; her tallest pieces can be over a metre high. Rowan uses oil paint on the structures, preferring it for its luminosity and sensuality, and she relies on bright daylight and the way it modulates colours: 'the whole excitement is in the changing light, and the fact that I can't see colour unless the light's good.' When the light is right, she says, the painting can happen quickly.

Rowan's structures vary between single colour and polychromy, encompassing pale blues or pinks alongside vivid oranges, yellows, cobalts and greens; the decision as to what colour or colours she'll use come from the available light on a given day, as well as what she might be feeling or something she has seen: 'I love working out whether...I want something to be more about colours hitting off each other, or whether I want the piece to have a harmony that is simpler. That usually becomes clear as I start painting.' The paint can be thickly applied, and the surfaces once painted retain a strong sense of immediacy, of being painted by hand; often Rowan leaves brush marks visible and the transitions between edges and planes of colour are not precise. She has said much of her focus can be on getting exactly the right brush mark and colour next to each other.

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Rowan Mace was born in Redruth, Cornwall in 1961. She undertook a foundation course at Falmouth School of Art where she discovered the work of modernist artists associated with St. Ives. She completed a degree in Fine Art at Leeds Polytechnic and moved to Glasgow in 1989.

Mace worked as an artist, exhibiting and teaching, until her first child was born in 1998. After a gap of about twelve years, she resumed her practice with her first exhibition at The Lillie Gallery in Milngavie. She since exhibited in solo and group shows, including at Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art in 2015. In 2021 she had two solo shows, *Still Orange* at Stallan-Brand, Glasgow and *Slow Yellow*, Zembla Gallery, Hawick respectively. She was nominated for the Bryan Robertson Trust Award in 2021 and in 2023, she was nominated for a Paul Hamlyn Award.