

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Karla Black: Materials

2016

[4:18]

Karla Black, artist:

To begin with, I work purely out of desire, or something, or just out of the unconscious. So it's like, 'I really like that, so I'm going to use it'. I don't differentiate between materials so I don't see a hierarchy, really. For me it's just like, whatever is within my own material experience, I can use.

You know, often I think people look at my work and they see the unconventional material, but actually usually that's a really small amount of the work. I use really traditional art making materials in the main so lots of plaster, lots of paint - whether that's powder paint or acrylic paint usually.

If you discount the cultural connotations, powder pigment isn't better to use than eye shadow. It's much nicer to use, eye shadow, because it has the texture that it has because it's made to be applied to skin, so it's kind of softer, it's easier to use, it goes further. So they're the kind of practical considerations that I have about materials rather than... and when you think about what an artist material is anyway, there's not much difference between Boots the Chemist and the Artstore in terms of how the materials are labelled, I suppose, in a kind of capitalist society. You can put anything on your body, and you can smear anything you want into a bit of paper, it doesn't, you know, it just kind of depends on who's the boss of that I suppose.

I like to try to sort of retard the potential within the material and not let it lose that life that it can have at a certain point. I like paint that wouldn't dry or plaster that wouldn't set, something like that. Often it's difficult for people to look at it and see why do I say that these things are sculptures, you know? When they get so close to other mediums, my artwork. It's so often like nearly a painting, it's nearly performance art, it's nearly installation but I try to get as far as I can

towards those other mediums then pull it back. It has some form and it's not on the wall. They rely on the architecture around them and they can't maybe really exist without it. I make a lot of work that's on the horizontal plain, it's on the ground. And I suppose I do have quite a lot of memories, like aesthetic sort of memories of sand and water and dirt and all that. Just think when you're that small and it's that close to you, it's a whole different aesthetic experience of it that you have as an adult, you just kind of move away.

Is this going to last for ten years, is it going to last for 500 years? I feel like that's another thing you can really do to sort of paralyse the creative process, you know, so I try to worry about that later on because I just get in among the materials and try to do what I think should be done.

With anything in life you know sometimes it's assumed that what you're doing is a choice. It's not necessarily a choice. You're working with the limits of the physical world: there's going to be things that you want to do that you can't do. Because I care so much then about aesthetics, yeah, what's really important to me about the work is that it's formal, it is that relationship between composition, form, colour, material. I suppose what I'm trying to do is have a much more direct relationship with the material sort of physical world.