



DEVON KNOWLES

Q: You have a material centred practice that considers various methods of production. What lead to you working in glass?

A: This came about while doing my MFA. In making work I consistently maintain as much of a direct hand in the process as I can, but at that time I was continually removing it by using shop tools, buffing, sanding, etc, really mimicking industrial processes and finishes. I was challenged as to how much it actually mattered to me since most of the work appeared essentially machine made. So, I took a look my basic interests and tendencies in using colour, materials and form as they cross into the "optical". It was here that I realized that glass and its many histories was a way to formalize my relationship without having to make marks that are "factory" produced or overly expressive to prove my point.

Q: How do you source the glass for your works? Do you utilize different types of glass to achieve different effects?

A: For now, it is mostly off the shelf from standard specialty glass suppliers, but I do occasionally co-opt glass from pre-existing objects.

I use different types of glass because of their specific qualities. Texture, colour, their source and the small variations in their physical dimensions are all important. Optically, some surfaces

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allow physical light to twist, skim, pass through or stop on the texture. Texture can also blow out the colour as the physical light glares on its surface making it impenetrable from certain points of view.

It is here, where it is all surface and you cannot see beyond the glare of external light bouncing (whether on textured or opaque glass), what's evidenced at that moment is a temporary boundary. When the optical boundary falls away, then the sourced glass can also be read using the knowledge of things we know in the world – that is stained glass, that is red glass, that is a red straw, that is a red glow on the wall caused by light passing through the red glass.

Q: Your work utilizes found objects such as flagging tape, paper cup, and iPod glass. How do you select the found materials for each work? And, how do you decide where to place these objects within your work?

A: Objects and materials are either gathered from the original site I reference in the work or materials are introduced in response to what is happening in the work itself, usually a result of the palette.

If the objects are in the same palette and similar material category then I will use that material, I don't discern between orange flagging tape and orange construction fencing if it works. For example, if there are large swaths of orange in the work itself, that notes a large presence of that color on the site I have chosen. A lot of orange on a city site usually means some type of visual marker that comes with a message of KEEP OUT but at times it can be a field of California poppies that determines a color...

Placement of materials and objects are aligned with colours, but there has to be an intentional opening left in the plane of glass. I leave these around in the compositions to allow for the option to use it, but also because of how the negative space operates next to a perceived one, empty space versus one filled with clear window glass. These spaces also make you want to poke at them to see if they are real or not.

In the liminal spaces of a city such as "empty" lots - a space to be demolished or to be constructed - as that space transitions from being something to nothing to something again - people, plants and things occupy these spaces when given a chance and it is that evidence I find fascinating and useful for the work.

Q: You work in both traditional and contemporary fabrication methods, would you consider your work to be stained glass?

A: Let's call it experimental stained glass.

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Q: In developing this work you go on walks in various neighbourhoods. How do these walks transform into an abstraction? Or rephrased, how do you begin to arrange your compositions?

A: I started using walking as a way to work shortly after becoming a mother. Prior to this, I had worked with glass in many capacities that included different types of movement, but what I had more of during this point in my life was time outside of the studio, really looking and thinking but in a new “time” structure. I saw the city moving and changing more acutely as I spent more time walking.

This was not only measured in the cycle of urban updating through construction and our reaction to it, but also how it measured against the seasons and how people work with “materials” when they spend time waiting in and near these spaces. How a hole in a fence is filled by a used paper coffee cup, or a crack in concrete is stuffed with a folded plastic straw for instance. I’d say that the restructuring of my time allowed me to pay attention and see differently than before, time itself became an abstraction compared to how I saw it previously.

Arranging is a nice word. It is sculpture and a sort of music together, there’s a dimensionality to it, a volume that can be somewhat endlessly composed or occupied. For these works, I use a set of tools and rules. I bring a camera and document while on walks without too many parameters, those come later. I gather materials that feel relevant. From there it is a fairly complex and lengthy digital and analogue studio process before the final work itself. But really, for me, these windows record a moment of the city - one becomes abstracted through time, the seasons and ourselves.

BIOGRAPHY

In sculpture, drawing, site-specific and public art projects Devon Knowles investigates the histories, economies and social meanings of diverse materials – from denim fabric and aluminum to coloured glass and concrete. In moving such substances from their everyday context to a new environment, our appreciation of their properties and capacities becomes heightened. In working and reworking material, using traditional and contemporary fabrication methods, a rich language of the interplay of material and method emerges. As she engages with theories of perception, optical effects and tactility, alongside the direct act of making, Knowles encourages the viewer to access her work from a shared intimacy and sympathetic attentiveness.

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Knowles has exhibited her work in solo exhibitions in Berlin, Toronto, Brooklyn and Vancouver. Group exhibitions include such venues as Vancouver Art Gallery; Night Gallery, Los Angeles, and SFU Gallery, Charles H. Scott Gallery, the Western Front, Or Gallery and Unit Pitt, Vancouver. Knowles has participated in residency programs in Europe and she has received grants from the Toronto Arts Council, the Ontario Arts Council, British Columbia Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts and most recently she was awarded the Mayor's Arts Award as an Emerging Artist in Public Art. She has taught at Emily Carr University of Art and Design, Simon Fraser University and the University of Victoria and her works have been included in numerous private collections.



For a full list of available works or to schedule an appointment to view, please contact the gallery at info@equinoxgallery.com