

## Glissando

Text written by Antonia Shaw

Seeking chains of coincidences and patterns of recurrence, Candida Powell-Williams interrogates characters and events that have shaped our cultural history in order to investigate the mutable nature of subject and object (inter)relations, and how these impact on, and are inflected by, our reading and navigation of the world. Decidedly subjective and idiosyncratic in her selection of material, the artist manipulates her chosen narratives as though they were physical matter - puckishly plucking mythological, art historical and pop-culture references from disparate eras and folding these moments from the past into the present. Overlaying and interlacing the tales until they are reconfigured through amalgamation and regurgitation, Powell-Williams collapses them into one knotty, multi-layered narrative.

*Glissando* deconstructs the stories of four protagonists: Elimer, an eleventh century monk who made himself wings; the dog Laika, who was the first animal in space; Christina the Astonishing, a thirteenth century woman with supernatural powers and the loaded legend of Wonder Woman. The tales of these individuals are connected by their associations with belief systems, veracity and mankind's innate desire to fly, yet this subject matter is almost a secondary concern for Powell-Williams. What is really at stake is an investigation into the consequences of retelling, repetition and reformulation, and *Glissando* is itself a self-serialising work, a re-staging of an earlier event which borrows elements from its first iteration in 2012 whilst assimilating new heroines and emblems.

Much like her strategy of manipulating narratives, Powell-Williams gives form to the immaterial tales of *Glissando* through strategies of recurrence and layering, creating a visual cacophony where works seem to restlessly spawn new connections between each other, loop back in on themselves and exploit the mutability of objects and their narratives. Abstracted emblematic sculptures and two-dimensional works are caricaturised through overabundance, scale and suped-up saccharine colour, and so trouble clear allegorical readings in favour of the carnivalesque. Propped up or prepared to tumble over, the placement of the works is precariously playful and highly choreographed, offering a confused set of coordinates for physical and conceptual navigation. Geometric shapes reverberate around the space and there is an air

of action, exaggerated by the rough and ready, tactile surfaces of the sculptures, which emphasise their materiality and objecthood.

In this way Powell-Williams manufactures a complex, expansive and highly active viewing encounter where agency shifts between subjects and objects as true fictions are told. Yet, for all its performance and theatricality, it would be a mistake to perceive *Glissando* as a set of utopian (or dystopian) fantasies. Instead the installation places our fantastic lived reality centre-stage, exposing our absurd relationship with the myths and realities that make up our material world.