

## PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

**TANIA KOVATS**

***Watermark***

**27 February – 11 April 2015**



Tania Kovats, *Arctic Circle Islands*, 2014, ink on layered matte acetate, 2 parts, framed, 42 x 30 cm, 16.5 x 11.75 in each

*I can't draw the sea but I can make a mark to hang the sea on.*

- Tania Kovats

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is delighted to present a solo show of recent drawings by British artist Tania Kovats, her first commercial show in London in 15 years. Entitled *Watermark*, the exhibition will continue the artist's ongoing exploration into the relationship between water and drawing. These are drawings that are made not drawn, underlying the significance of drawing within Kovats' sculptural practice.

Kovats is renowned for producing sculptures, large-scale installations and temporal works which explore our experience and understanding of landscape. Her work was recently the subject of a major solo exhibition at The Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh, *Oceans*, encompassing sculptures and drawings which explored Kovats' preoccupation with the sea.

For her solo show at Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, Kovats will present a large-scale drawing entitled *Sea Mark* (2014). Spanning the back wall of the gallery, *Seamark* is a vast seascape constructed from hand-painted, ceramic tiles. Standing in front of the work, the viewer is immersed as if looking directly out to sea. The sense of infinity generated by the piece is further emphasised by the recurring nature of the mark making and the multitude of tiles that constitute the grid. By firing and glazing the tiles, Kovats retains the glossy, liquid-like quality of the original brushstrokes, serving to emphasise the fluidity of the waves as they ripple on the surface. This piece is mirrored by a sister work on the adjacent wall entitled *Sea Mark (Blue)* (2013), which is instead constructed out of panels of paper. In both *Sea Marks*, the repetitive nature of Kovats' mark making is meditative, as if the artist is using the process to ground her thoughts.

Using evaporation, other drawings in the exhibition are dry. First, Kovats saturates the paper with ink, salt and water. The paper dries, leaving a crust of glistening sediment on the surface. Lunar in appearance, the drawings are characterised by craters and gorges where the crystals have accumulated once the water has evaporated. Playing with micro/macro, the resultant landscapes manifest Kovats' interest in geological processes by accounting for the significance of water in forming the shape of the earth.

Describing these works, the artist recalls: 'I have travelled to several dead seas with blindingly white shores made up of the bleached bones of fish; anything that doesn't move acquires a crust of salt. I have stood on blistered ghost seas, vast salt flats left over from long disappeared oceans, with shimmering unbroken horizons that stretch out all around as far as you can see in a way I had only ever previously seen from a boat. These are some of the landscapes that live on in my imagination. In some way I revisit them in these drawings.'

For Kovats, water also registers the passing of time; sea levels constantly fluctuate, whilst rivers perpetually flow. Reassured by the constancy which water provides, several of the artist's evaporation works register the ebb and flow of the tide; juxtaposed side by side, the sequential display of *Evaporation (Black)* 20, 22, 21 and 9 (2014-15) alludes to the change in water levels.

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Several of the drawings featured in the show explore notions of displacement. In *Arctic Circle Islands* (2014), the artist traces the outline of all the islands of the Arctic Circle featured in the Times Atlas. Laying the drawings on top of one another, Kovats releases the islands from their cartographic fixity, subsequently creating her own imaginary archipelago. In other works, the artist redacts information in order to highlight the presence of the sea. For instance, in *Only Blue (British Isles)* (2015), Kovats uses obsolete atlases of the UK, blotting out the land in each of the maps using white gesso so that only the sea is left behind.

Tania Kovats (b. 1966) first came to prominence when she won the Barclays Young Artist Award at the Serpentine Gallery, London in 1991. Better known for her large-scale works in the public realm, she has recently produced *Tree* (2009), a permanent installation for the Natural History Museum; and *Rivers* (2012), installed in the landscape of Jupiter Artland outside Edinburgh, in which Kovats collected water from one hundred rivers around the British Isles and housed the collection in a specially constructed boathouse.

Kovats has recently completed a residency in the Astronomy Department at the University of Cambridge, for which she built a site-specific commission. She is Course Director for MA Drawing at Wimbledon College of Art, London. She was awarded the Henry Moore Drawing Fellowship in 2004 to 2005 and was Visiting Fellow at the School of Archaeology, Oxford University in 2006.

Kovats has shown extensively in the UK and abroad, with solo shows including those at The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh; Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield; Peer Arts, London and Newlyn Art Gallery, Cornwall. Group shows include those at BALTIC, Gateshead; Hayward Gallery, London; Tate Liverpool; V&A, London; Museum Of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Kettle's Yard, Cambridge; Kunstraum Innsbruck and ICA, London, amongst many others. Her sculptures and drawings feature in numerous public and private collections including the Arts Council, The British Council, Government Art Collection and the V&A.

In 2005, together with Charles Darwent, Katharine Stout and Katharine MacFarlane, Kovats edited *The Drawing Book: A Survey of Drawing – The Primary Means of Expression*. In 2010, her work was the subject of a monograph, *Tania Kovats*, by Jeremy Millar and Philip Hoare, published by Lund Humphries and the Ruskin School of Drawing. Her recent solo show at The Fruitmarket Gallery was accompanied by a new publication by the artist called *Drawing Water*.

Marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Trust's campaign to acquire and care for coastal land in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Kovats has been commissioned by the NT to create a digital artwork which will respond to the coastal landscape in the UK. This is scheduled to go live in November 2015. Kovats has also been awarded the Cape Farewell Lovelock Art Commission for 2015.

Kovats will also be on show during the Venice Biennale 2015 as part of the group exhibition *VITA VITALE* at the Palazzo Garzoni.