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Capture Photography Festival Presents Jessica Eaton

A matter of perspective

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Perception is an abstract concept. The idea itself relies entirely on the individual and exists only by collective understandings. The age-old query “What if the colour I see isn’t the colour you see” exemplifies this truth aptly.

Montreal-based and Vancouver-educated photographer Jessica Eaton contemplates this question of perception continually in her work, approaching more challenging and thought-provoking questions in the process. Based in technical exploration of the camera, Eaton’s work is heavily process-based, involving tightly controlled manipulations of the medium, utilizing multiple exposures and lens filters. Her images effectively perceive what the human eye is unable to: light and colour only visible through the camera.

Her recently installed piece, DG Weave, is her largest public work to date and is presented as part of this year’s Capture Photography Festival. Located on the western face of the Dal Grauer Substation, Eaton’s exploration of light and colour in photography complement the Modernist history of the building.

“Vancouver is a lot of overcast, and I just felt like blasting colour,” says Eaton, reflecting on the specific choice of work. The buzzing and vibrating piece awakens the architecture. Eaton recalls her recent talk at Gastown’s Inform Interiors, acknowledging the similarities in aesthetic between her work and the existing building, “When Capture proposed this I clearly remembered the building, I talked a bit about the façade and the tile work, so immediately what I was doing seemed to make sense.”

While Eaton’s works are sometimes titled as references to paintings, including nods to Sol LeWitt and Joseph Albers, and her most recent work, floral arrangements reminiscent of Dutch still-lives, these historic visual references act as a detour around her more complicated technical process. “I think in terms of the technical stuff, it doesn’t matter how much I say, most people can only grasp at it. So I understand that no one is going to experience it in the way that is normalized in my mind by making it, so I actually think it’s important that there are other routes that are more accessible for people.”

Visual art is a practice of perception. While the passerby may notice hyper-real colours blur, enlivening the hazy windows and chipping tiles of Dal Grauer, others acknowledge the realization of another dimension of light and vision revealed by the artist. Both are correct. It’s all just a matter of how you look at it.

DG Weave is installed at Dal Grauer Substation and is presented in part by Capture Photography Festival and the Burrard Arts Foundation.