

Life at the BSR

The blog of the British School at Rome

June Mostra 2016 / Meet the artists ...

Rachel Adams

Posted on [June 17, 2016](#)

June Mostra opens tonight at 18.30. We chatted to Rachel Adams to hear about her work process and inspirations from being in Rome.



Rachel Adams' practice draws on a wide array of influences ranging from 1930s interior design to neolithic tools, classical sculpture and science fiction props.

Her objects combine a variety of DIY methods, such as tie-dye and macramé, with contemporary techniques like laser cutting and digital printing. These works aim to highlight contradictions in both our perceived notions of history

and the hierarchical structures of art and design.

For the *mostra* you have made two large wall pieces and a small sculpture. Do you want to talk through your process and how you came up with these ideas?

The pieces I have made for this *mostra* are more related to work I made last year for an exhibition called *Open Studios* in Japan. I was looking at the idea of what it was like to be in the studio as a weird creative space that overlapped with your everyday life, the idea of it being 'work'. Also since being here I have been very interested in textile technology and a lot of those influences have come in as well. I have been using laser cutting techniques that I have used before, but this time with acrylic to make things that are reminiscent of the shuttles used in weaving on looms and also some saws. I have used them along with a lot of dying and fabric painting techniques that have been influenced by the patterns within the stone you see on plinths and within the churches around Rome. The black and white splattered fabric that I use on the plinth under my sculpture came from the stone we saw within Etruscan tombs. I took a lot of photos of the way that the stone had this flecked appearance, and tried to replicate that in fabric. The symmetrical large tie dyed panel was made using a book-fold tie dye technique which I was very interested in trying to replicate.

For you and Ross [Taylor, Abbey Scholar] this is your third *mostra* at the BSR. Can you look back and see a progression within the work you have exhibited?

There have definitely been different stages; I have used tie dye in all the pieces I have made here, which is something I really wanted to concentrate on as it has been in my work since 2012, and it has been really nice to have more time for me to experiment with it, I definitely hope to continue that! Seeing the marble in particular really influenced my work but the longer I have been here and the more I have seen how, particularly Baroque churches, display the marble where it is really over the top and contrasting with the bright colours, it has given me the confidence to actually push the tie dye towards somewhere that might be more 'hippyish' but it has actually come from that historical influence. You can definitely see the shift in dyeing and the different textures has been influenced by being in Rome and has built up as I have been here.

The work for your first *mostra*, the curtain hanging, has a very immediately obvious influence from the city of Rome. It seems that as your work progresses the obvious influences have become more subtle and you have brought in these other aspects; the loom parts and the saws in this case. Was this what you intended to do?

I have previously used saws, and I am particularly interested in looking at the technological shift in the tools and what it means to display a tool as an art object, this dichotomy between the functional and the non-functional has always been present in my work since art school. It is almost like how the things you are interested in get influenced by other bits of history along the way, it's like a melting pot and it is hard to pin down when those changes actually happened. I didn't want all the work here to look quite as obviously influenced by Rome and be out with my normal practice. I wanted to bring in those influences from the first three months and filter them through something that makes it more contemporary again or connected back to your previous practice.

Do you think that because your Rome influences have merged with other aspects of your practice that it will mean an easier transfer of ideas when you return to making art in Scotland?

I would think so. When you first get here it is so overwhelming; the quality and variety of what you see that you feel like you ought to make work about it in a very direct way but perhaps then the work only makes sense if you've been in Rome – it will be interesting to see the curtain piece out of context in another show in the UK. I also always want my work to be relevant to the contemporary, I want it to tell you something about what life is like now, as well as having historical influences.

How do you feel the *mostra* show comes together as a complete exhibition with all seven artists' work?

I think it has worked really well as we have a lovely mix of painting and sculpture, as well as the installation pieces so there is a lovely mix. The flow of the show has come together very well but there is also this mix of singularity and object making which works well in a group show.

The other resident artists are all leaving before the end of the month but you are here until September. Do you have ideas of what you want to work on between now and then?

I am going to be working a lot more on drawing, I spent one morning after seeing the MAXXI show *SuperStudio* where I realised how much I loved collages and I started working on some basic drawings. Normally I do work on the computer so these were different for me, but I want to create one really strong portfolio. Within that I am going to try and do some marbling to try and build up a repertoire that can be brought into my studio.

Rachel's work will be exhibited alongside the other six resident artists in the June Mostra opening on Friday 17 June 18.30-21.00. Opening hours: 16.30-19.00, Saturday 18 June until Saturday 25 June 2016, closed Sundays.

Photo by Antonio Palmieri, interview conducted by Katherine Paines.