

## GAGOSIAN

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#### Katharina Grosse's monumental artwork bathes Carriageworks in colour

Andrew Taylor



*Katharina Grosse's *The Horse Trotted Another Couple of Metres, Then it Stopped* features more than 8000 square metres of fabric draped in the foyer of Carriageworks. Photo: Louise Kennerley*

From the outside, Katharina Grosse's monumental artwork looks like a paint-splattered drop sheet that tradesmen have left hanging from the roof of Carriageworks.

But stepping inside the German artist's *The Horse Trotted Another Couple of Metres, Then it Stopped* is to enter a psychedelic world that contrasts dramatically with the industrial architecture of the former Eveleigh Rail Yards.

Great swathes and swirls of colour adorn more than 8000 square metres of fabric that swells from the floor like waves to fill the cavernous foyer.

The work, with a title evocative if obscure, wrinkles on the floor in folds and clumps that change with the feet that trample across it.

Arts patron Anna Schwartz said the work, commissioned by Carriageworks as part of the Sydney Festival 2018, had an "extraordinary" relationship with its heritage surrounds.

"The way it romanticises this brutalist, very masculine space and inhabits it in the most suggestive and, well, soft way," she said. "Soft but with very hard ideas."

Grosse is acclaimed for her boundary-defying artworks that have transformed landscapes, piles of debris and derelict beach houses into colour-saturated canvases.

She describes Carriageworks as a "place of such possibilities here, which is unusual".

"I have never, ever seen an institution like Carriageworks where all these things come together," she said. "The performative arts, the theatre, dance but also the visual arts in an old building."

With the heritage architecture off-limits to Grosse and her spray gun, she demonstrated her artistic ideas at a meeting last February with Carriageworks director Lisa Havilah.

"We had a chat and it was not longer than maybe two hours and there was the thought of this work," she said. "With little scribbles and a napkin we folded like Picasso did when he painted. Yeah, I am Pablo."

*The Horse Trotted ...* features fabric draped, knotted and hung from the ceiling to create a canvas upon which Grosse spent 10 days in December painting with a three-metre spray gun, adding layer upon layer of bright colours on the reams of fabric.

She said she was struck by the beauty of the installation before she began painting.

"The fabric was up and it looked undeniably beautiful," she said. "And I felt a little bit like an intruder into my own work and also into the site and beauty that had been created."

A small army of assistants assembled the work inside Carriageworks, sewing the fabric together and draping it around the rusted columns and rafters, while others manned the machine that armed Grosse with her colour gun.

"When I work with a little team of people, it's as if my body is being made bigger," she said. "I have people on the machine who feed it with paint continuously so I am not interrupted at all. I can paint with yellow for five minutes or two hours."

Grosse confessed she had moments of discomfort creating the artwork "on a very unruly surface where you don't really know how your painting can survive under these many different folds".

"You are pushed into a situation where you're not sure what you're going to accept as your art," she said. "You're forced into a situation where you are not comfortable with the work."

The monumental work is undoubtedly arresting, its vivid colours and setting ideal for selfies and social media. But it comes at a cost.

Havilah said the commission had a price tag of more than \$400,000, while Grosse conceded it contained abstract ideas that were not easy to measure or quantify.

"If there weren't people and institutions ready to fund and collaborate with these very difficult works, we would not be able to make these jumps in our practice," she said.