

Tacita Dean

Kodak, 2006

Throughout her oeuvre, Tacita Dean has investigated our culture of obsolescence, exploring such themes as architectural relics, portraiture, history, and memory. But it is perhaps her compelling 16mm films for which the artist is best known. Dean's *Kodak* and *Noir et Blanc* (both 2006) address the approaching obsolescence of celluloid film, a format that is becoming increasingly scarce as it is replaced by digital alternatives. Dean became acutely aware of the threat to her chosen medium when she was unable to obtain standard 16mm black-and-white film for her camera. Upon discovering that the Kodak factory in Chalon-sur-Saône, France, was closing its film production facility, Dean obtained permission to document the manufacture of film at the factory, where cameras had never before been allowed. The resulting works, *Noir et Blanc* and *Kodak*, turn the medium on itself and constitute a contemplative elegy for the approaching demise of a medium. Both films follow the production of celluloid as it runs through several miles of machinery. *Noir et Blanc* was filmed on the final five rolls of 16mm black-and-white Kodak film that Dean had acquired, while *Kodak* captures the vivid luminosity of the material.

From a viscous blue solid to an evanescent transparency, the manufacture of film is a journey of sublime beauty, and one I would never have known were it not for its incipient obsolescence. Film is drawn as a line in endless circuits around this immense factory, pulled at great speed up and down and across rollers, outlining and defining a building and a process of immeasurable sophistication and scientific splendour.

(*Tacita Dean: Analogue*, exhibition catalogue, Schaulager Basel 2006, pp.8–9.)