

botanicals

Curator GARY SANGSTER

ACKROYD & HARVEY
BENJAMIN JONES
EAMON O'KANE
DEIRDRE O'MAHONY
ROSEMARY LAING
WENDY MCMURDO

VISION
LONDON

botanica1s

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Vision Art Platform, which has built bridges between artists and art lovers with its out-of-the-box approach since the day it stepped into the art scene, continues its works in the field of contemporary art in its place in Akaretler.

In addition to art and artist talks and various activities, there will also be programs where art lovers can improve themselves on different topics about art. Artists, curators, academics and art professionals, who are well-versed in many subjects such as collecting, reading, art history, curatorial approaches, will share their experiences with the participants.

So far, hosting the projects and works of artists Vision Art Platform continues its preparations to present to the audience the exhibitions of new names and well-known artists in the art world, which it intends to bring to the art scene in the future.

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text GARY SANGSTER

Plant-life is an astonishing, renewable resource, even more extensive and pervasive than the complexity of Animalia. Plant-life is utilised and processed to include all manner of food, fashion, furniture, fuel, medicine, shelter, decor, utensils, and tools. It has been hewn, harvested, cultivated and manipulated, and now genetically modified as well. Until synthetics and advanced metallurgy, chemistry, and the extraction industries matured, plant-life was the main game supporting human, community development.

Plant-life has been an unending source of material for scientific analysis, life support, and economic production, and has also been a somewhat decorative or exotic source of cultural production. In such an exceptionally rich context, this exhibition, *Botanicals* becomes a meditative reflection of some ways of understanding plant-life, its interrelationship with humans, their dependency perhaps, and the consideration of what that means, in an uneasy time of immense scientific, technological, and social hyper-change.

Botanicals are commonly known as substances, extracts, or parts derived directly from plants. They are valued for their natural scents, flavours, or therapeutic properties. Because they encompass such a broad category, they are used across a wide variety of industries ranging from holistic medicine and skincare to food and beverage production. The intended agency of botanicals is quite specific, locked into the fields of health and well-being, both physical and psychological.

Botanicals, an exhibition of contemporary art, extends the highly functional scope of the scientific, medicinal, and therapeutic agency of the term to images and art, and poses questions about the symbiotic relationship between humans and plant-life. The exhibition does not adhere to the scientific programmes of botany or phytology. Neither does it function in a purely aesthetic framework either, exploring the consensus around the formal, sensual qualities of beauty common in natural, organic form, so prominent and evocative in imagery of plant-life in the field of art. The work operates in terms common to contemporary art – perception, sensual aesthetics, visual form, and critical intelligence – and is an open-ended invitation to engagement and reflection about plant-life and humanity, rather than defining and stipulating particular or intentional viewpoints that may have a constraining effect on dialogue and perception.

The biological kingdom *Plantae* is a subset of the vast biomass that constitutes nature and the living environment. As artists operate within this complex environment of the real world, both reflecting and reflecting on it, it is understandable that a vast amount of art intersects with plant life, from landscape to still-life, to botanical records and flower painting or photographs.

The artists included in *Botanicals* operate in a variety of registers. Their range includes manipulated plant-life images in black and white that refine the positive/negative relationship of the organic form in nature, unexpected interventions in the forest floor, a dialogue between the natural and the commercial in agriculture, the hyper-growth of the jungle, the slow growth of trees in silhouette against a white ground, the unruly, unpredictable effects of untended glasshouses, the slow growth of trees in silhouette against a white ground, or an organic depiction of cultural activism in the Brazilian Amazon produced from living grasses.

The artists are posing questions about accepted thinking and reassessing common practices and beliefs. Not just of specific issues around the relationship between humanity and plant-life, but questions about forms of representation and the richer, more complex meanings that can be evoked or alluded to, without constricting meaning and value to singular, pre-emptive points of view.

Exhibitions function within a material construct, consisting of artefacts, space, light, and time. As well as the immaterial constructs of social history and cultural contexts, the logic of the exhibition is driven by how all of those elements are seamlessly arranged and juxtaposed.

The work in *Botanicals* operates in the nexus across research, representation, expression, and metaphor. Four familiar categories of contemporary art-making. Producing and exploring new meaning, a key platform of contemporary art, resides in the particular depictions in the work in concert with the form/media and the arrangement in the exhibition space. In this case, photographs, drawing, painting and sculpture capture and document situations, environments and actions, compiled to reveal elements of our encounters with plant-life that are either not expected or not entirely familiar or common.

Considering the work in *Botanicals*, while recognisable, identifiable, legible, and easy to read what we see, none can be described as realism. All forms of language, visual language included, are neither natural nor universal. Interpretation, and understanding, requires engagement with additional layers of context, history, and knowledge. The work included here projects artistic values, social engagements and cultural interventions that speak to constantly evolving relationships with plant-life.

While research-driven images and artefacts record and document elements of our environment, the places we experience and the things we encounter, what differentiates art from the sciences is the critical application of metaphor, that one thing can mean or infer another, the fundamental agency of art and the discourse inter-connected with it.

There is recreational, touristic pleasure in the vast, diverse world of contemporary art and exhibitions, entities idealised with the patina of rigour supplied by the extensive reach of cultural economics, the museum archives, and scholarly academic research and publishing. We tend to imbue art with a higher purpose, a kind of purity, a purity of intent and positivity of effect, outcome. It's not that fine art cannot be dark or even morbid, it is that even these effects will ultimately make a positive contribution to society, in terms of knowledge, understanding, and values.

Art has always offered a sense of an alternative reading of the world, one that opens up new insights and possibilities, rather than confirming existing beliefs and practices. In reality it can do either or both. How the work may actually operate is based on the imaginary conditions of art and the methodological approaches to using different media in its production.

Being seen as providing moral clarity, and a way of re-interpreting the world, revising standard models and data-driven outcomes, is a distinct advantage in a media-driven world where doubt prevails.

Artists, always talented visual practitioners, are now also trained in advanced research methods, and committed to data gathering, investigative procedures allied with a quasi-religious sense of mission, conscience, and moral imperative. Responsible, intelligent actors in an increasingly, so it seems, irresponsible world. In its rigorously cultivated engagement with the real world, a world in which art for art's sake plays a dramatically limited role in the defining directions of contemporary art.

But it is in this very space we can perceive art and exhibitions as a perfect instrument for the contemporary crises of what might be termed common knowledge. The relative disruption or even the collapse of shared understandings and confirmed evidence. Notions of truth and reality are threatened by the somewhat overwhelming assaults of misinformation, disinformation, the ill-conceived production of ignorance, which not only produces doubt and deflates confidence, it divides communities, produces epistemic silos, and traps individuals within stubborn intellectual bubbles. The entire programme is not accidental; it is a precise response calibrated to produce competing agendas to capture diminishing resources.

Art and exhibitions are intentionally designed for freedom of thought and freedom of expression. Artefacts of imagination and creativity. An exhibition is a fictive space of perceptual speculation and sensory persuasion. Creativity, the underlying driver of art production, is itself driven by manipulations – manipulation of materials, form, context, art history and the physical exhibition space – as well as making critical juxtapositions with other works of art of similar or distinctly different ilk. In this context art and exhibitions are the perfect post-modern entities or objects where unreality is the reality; as viewers we accept and embrace the fictive space, where belief is the primary mode of understanding, not evidence or truth.

Art is like a magic trick, where deception and ambiguity are key, and the work posits a puzzle to be solved, an image or object to be interpreted where, in actuality, we can say anything about art, anything at all, providing our rhetoric, our mode of discourse is believable. It is the ultimate 'floating' signifier.

Ackroyd & Harvey

Heather Ackroyd and Dan Harvey operate in the realms of research, art and activism. They produce works that intersect with art, activism, architecture, biology, ecology and history. Referencing memory and time, nature and culture, urban political ecologies, the climate emergency and degradation of the living planet, their time-based practice reveals an intrinsic bias towards process and event. Processes of germination, growth and decay (organic and inorganic) feature in artworks that often evolve through extended research in response to people and place, interfacing their profound interest in local ecologies and global planetary concerns.

The artists often work with living plant material. In their multi-award-winning photographic work, blades of seedling grass provide a highly light-sensitive surface that the artists use to create a unique form of photography, imprinting complex images in the living material through the controlled production of chlorophyll.

The work in Botanicals consists of two new versions of a work made in 2025 as a billboard campaign between the UK and Brazil, commissioned by The Gallery for COP26, the United Nations global conference addressing climate change. One of the versions is a photosynthesis portrait, the other a direct black and white photographic print of the grass-based image. The portrait is of Josimara Melgueiro (Baré), an Indigenous woman of the Baré people from the Upper Rio Negro, Brazilian Amazon, introduced in person to the artists by Greenpeace International at London Climate Action Week, 2025. An administrator and activist, Melgueiro has dedicated her career to strengthening Indigenous-led financing mechanisms. She is the Coordinator of the Rutí Indigenous Fund, of the Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR). She is also part of the Network of Community Funds of the Brazilian Amazon (RFCA), which brings together Indigenous, quilombola, extractivist, coconut breaker, and traditional community funds. With extensive experience in financial governance, climate finance advocacy, and Indigenous philanthropy, she works at the intersection of local initiatives and global climate policy, promoting direct access to resources, territorial sustainability, and Indigenous solutions to the climate emergency.

Benjamin Jones

Benjamin Jones' work explores the way photography captures the world in a moment of time, but inherently distorts that record into a flat, two-dimensional image. In Jones' case, he resists the tendency to colourise this record, instead retaining familiar black and white images that have not receded entirely from fine art photography.

Jones is committed to analogue techniques. While not archaic, the materiality of the process in which light affects a film to produce a negative and then light in turn articulates an image on paper, to be fixed in place through the transformational effects of chemicals, is old-school. Images that can be produced by the in-computer manipulations of digital photographic reproductions are no less authentic, but analogue photography suggests a sense of history and tradition that highlights the materiality of process and making being closer to the artist's hand, and the vicissitudes of professionally trained bodily gestures and technique.

In the four photographs included in Botanicals, Jones' images have a stark, forbidding dynamic, and reference the defensive strategies of plant-life such as thorns and poisons, nature's twin defence mechanisms to protect plants from herbivores. While true thorns generally don't inject venom, they frequently introduce harmful bacteria, and many plants combine these physical spines with chemical irritants in their sap or on surrounding foliage.

The accentuated figure-ground relationships in Jones' works, Sun-Sanctifying Glass (4), Pampas Grass (Diptych), Apple Tree and Butterfly, Buckthorn, dramatize the unequivocal sense of foreboding possible in nature, as well as the evolutionary lean into survival.

Eamon O’Kane

Eamon O’Kane’s practice is focused on painting and drawing. He deals with certain kinds of environments, the home; specifically, architect-designed houses, that generally echo Modernist approaches to utopian living, and the natural environment, with echoes of human engagement or encounters with plant-life, such as the forest, jungle, or trees. There is a kind of forthright clarity in O’Kane’s work, a precision of description and, simultaneously, isolation of subject matter.

In this case, a near panoramic jungle painting and a suite of starkly drawn trees in silhouette set against the soft white ground of paper, which are selected from a very large series. In 100 Trees, the extent of the repetition is both meditative and taxonomic, depicting just a fraction of the seemingly unending nature of different species. And the breadth and density of the jungle image is nearly as enveloping as an actual jungle.

Both works subsume the viewer because of their scale, placing us in a self-conscious engagement with the scope and breadth of plant-life.

Deirdre O’Mahony

Deirdre O’Mahony’s work for Botanicals consists of three film stills extracted from her evocatively titled film, *The Quickening*, a kind of archaic term used to describe a new heartbeat, organic revival, or even de-vivisection. The film is a lyrical response to issues in farming, food production and consumption in the face of the current ecological and climate crises. The film-still forms an artefact from the more narrative-based experience produced in *The Quickening*. The film is a documentary and interview-based elegy, in which a wide range of land management professionals, plant-life experts, and farming and wilderness communities articulate their causal relationships to their environments. O’Mahony re-imagines in song, using everyday language, work descriptions, comments on the landscape and agricultural management, with a transfixing effect; the libretto shaped by a wide-range of commentary from industry policymakers, farmers, distributors and consumers, set to music and voiced by professional singers. The effects of this unexpected quasi-documentary form, are evocative to the point of transforming our relationship and understanding of the pragmatic vicissitudes of high-function land-use, and the evolving industrial and artisanal agricultural industries.

The film stills produce an entirely different effect by isolating a single frame, considered for both its documentary function and its aesthetic impact, the lyrical singing and linear story-telling of the film are absent. O’Mahony uses this aesthetic selection to highlight the diverse effects of production, human usage of land, and the interface between technology and agriculture.

Rosemary Laing

One of Rosemary Laing’s primary signatures is to eschew digital manipulation in favour of real-time, real-life interventions in the landscape. As performative gestures the artist undertakes to realise her goals, they are resonant of how artists work, inventive and disconcerting. In Laing’s renowned *Bulletproof Glass* series, brides fully clad in wedding gowns are sky-diving. Already disconcerting to see, coupled with the ‘gun-shot blood stains’ on their dresses, the breathtaking product of make-up artists’ expertise – and no one could think otherwise – these images of fictional gunshot wounds and brides free-falling from a plane are palpably affecting nonetheless.

In *Groundspeed* (Rose Petal) #17 and *The Paper*, Wednesday the carpet and newspapers are real, but the activity is surreal; the forest floors covered with suburban living room carpet and the daily newspapers present a dislocation of material, a disruption to the site, and a distortion to our casual, expectant relationship with nature. Both images serve as meditations on human interaction with the forest as a natural and looming presence in relation to the odd and artificial ground cover. The artist has produced a temporary site in which the natural and man-made are unexpectedly conjoined in an incomprehensible space, a space of unnatural, dysfunctional invasiveness. The effect is unquestionably both enquiring and eerie.

Wendy McMurdo

Working primarily in the field of digital photography and film, Wendy McMurdo is known for visual explorations of imagination and play within childhood, a long-term component of her research-based practice in fine art. However, since 2021 following the global lockdown that saw a stringent and unexpected interruption to the routines of daily life and the virtual shutdown of the invisible spaces and systems that undergird the casual relationships to our collective normality, McMurdo’s practice has commenced a detour into the world of plant-life.

Her 2022 photographs for *Pollinators*, emerge from a profound meditation on the work and function of the glasshouse, an artificial environment specifically tuned to harness sunlight, to sustain propagation, and enhance reproduction of plant-life. Glasshouses, commercial, scientific, or domestic, are particularly privileged sites of plant nurturing, plant-lab research, and eco-conservation.

What happens when the glasshouse is not fully operational and carefully monitored? A never-before experience of a pandemic-induced lock-down, in its strangely alienating, dystopian fashion, threatened the very model of planned and controlled botanic generation endemic to the glasshouse function. A constructed environment, designed for developing and idealising living things, unexpectedly allowed to propagate in an unwieldy, untended, and uncontrolled manner is a perfect metaphor for the very nature of nature. When not constrained, trained, and trimmed, nature, our environment, becomes an overwhelming, spatially mutating experience.

Thematic exhibitions are designed to reinforce the ways in which different forms and practices imagine and interpret similar ranges of subject matter, content, or intentionality. They can be curated in a way to reiterate a single perspective or alternatively to accentuate a dialogue around competing or correlating ideas.

Botanicals self-consciously explores the way artists use the imaginary potential of art, the material forms invested with deliberate aesthetic choices, and their moral authority and agency, as cultural actors to utilise research and invest their work with practices and positions designed to animate audience response.

Plant-life is a universal element of the world, ubiquitous, unavoidable, and constantly evolving. It is a critical renewable resource. As the appetites for voracious global consumption in all its guises continues unabated, it remains worth paying close attention to. And cultural production continues to be a vital, thoughtful model for that necessary focus.

ACKROYD & HARVEY
BENJAMIN JONES
EAMON O'KANE
DEIRDRE O'MAHONY
ROSEMARY LAING
WENDY MCMURDO

ACKROYD & HARVEY

Heather Ackroyd and Dan Harvey (b. 1959/1959 England) are internationally acclaimed for creating works that intersect art, activism, architecture, biology, ecology and history. Referencing memory and time, nature and culture, urban political ecologies, the climate emergency and degradation of the living planet, their time-based practice reveals an intrinsic bias towards process and event. Processes of germination, growth and decay (organic and inorganic) feature in artworks that often evolve through extended research in response to people and place, interfacing their profound interest in local ecologies and global planetary concerns.

They give high profile keynotes and public presentations and contribute writings and photographs to books and journals. In 2019, the artists co-founded Culture Declares Emergency in response to the climate and ecological emergency.

The artists often work with living plant material. In their multi-award-winning photographic work, blades of seedling grass provide a highly light-sensitive surface that the artists use to create a unique form of photography, imprinting complex images in the living material through the controlled production of chlorophyll. They have received the Royal Academy Rose Award, Wu Guanzhong Prize for Art & Innovation, L'Oreal Art and Science of Colour Grand Prize, NESTA Pioneer Award, Wellcome Trust Sci-Art Award, and exhibited worldwide including the Hayward Gallery, London; Spencer Museum of Art, Kansas; WOMADelaide, Australia; Le Centquatre-Paris, France; Festival Images, Switzerland; Hangar Bicocca, Milan, Italy; Void, Derry, N. Ireland; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, USA; Mostra SESC des Artes, Brazil; Chicago Public Arts Program, USA; Rice Gallery, Houston, USA.



Ackroyd & Harvey
Josimara (Photographic Photosynthesis), 2026
 Seedling grass, clay, hessian
 183 x 122 cm, Edition Number: 3



Ackroyd & Harvey
Josimara (Transcribed B/W) 2026
 Archival C-type print, 183 x 122 cm
 Aluminium subframe, Edition Number: 3

Beuys' Acorns is an open-ended research project initiated in 2007 when the artists germinated hundreds of acorns collected from Joseph Beuys's seminal artwork 7000 Oaks: City Forestation not City Administration. Today, they have over 150 surviving young trees. Drawing on the agency of ideas integral to the provenance of the seeds, the trees have acted as both artwork and catalyst for a public research process carried out in galleries, museums, botanic gardens, sites of special interest and exhibition spaces across the UK and France. The initial research phase focused on Beuys' statement that the world, towns and cities should become 'forest-like', and culminated in a six-city road tour across France in 2015. This formed the inspiration to a large-scale intervention, Radical Action Reaction, premiering early December 2015 at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris during the United Nations Conference of All Parties on Climate Change, COP21. Between 2016-2018 the artists were involved in a direct activist phase to seek ecological/social justice to protect threatened rural landscapes in England from fossil fuel exploitation resulting in a win to protect Leith Hill, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty close to their studio home in Surrey, from fracking. They are currently exploring regenerative plant-based culture through a critical understanding of the latest emerging science that sheds new light on trees and plants and how photosynthesis is the true economy of the living planet. Their research also reveals the necessity of large-scale protection of primary rainforest and other undamaged ecosystems in parallel with restoration of local ecologies as a way to regenerate our sickening planet, and revalue our relationship with Nature. In 2021, one hundred Beuys' Acorns trees were exhibited at Tate Modern to commemorate Beuys's centennial and Tate's declaration of climate emergency. In 2024 they initiated the next phase – the Prelude & the Planting planting circles of seven trees in partnership with cultural centres and borough councils. To date, three circles have been planted: Twickenham Common, London; Harding's Pits, King's Lynn and Sainsbury Centre Sculpture Park, Norwich. The aim is to plant up to 17 circles between 2025-2027. Currently, Beuys' Acorns is residing at Woodhatch Place in Reigate. Each tree is contained in a specialist Air-pot that has enabled both portability of the trees and ensured their on-going welfare through healthy root development.

Equally renowned for their monumental architectural interventions, Ackroyd & Harvey act upon iconic or heritage buildings with living plant material, intercepting perceptions of place and landscape. The growing vertical wall can be seen as a dislocated fragment of nature in the urban space: a gravity-defying artefact of the natural where the first shoots of living blades point to the potential of place to be renewed. Commissions include the AROS Triennial, Aarhus Art Museum, Denmark; Royal National Theatre, London; Dilston Grove, London, UK; 9th Sculpture Quadrennial, Riga, Latvia; Wellington Festival of Arts, New Zealand; Theaterhaus Gessneralle, Zurich, Switzerland. They have been recipients of prestigious public art awards including a commission for the inauguration of the David Attenborough Building in Cambridge 2016, whereby they realized a series of new works to work with the Museum of Zoology, Department of Zoology and the Cambridge Conservation Initiative. In 2015 they completed History Trees, a major public art commission for the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London, where a series of individual sculptures comprising semi-mature trees holding six meter diameter engraved rings mark ten of the major entrances into the park.

Public exchanges, keynotes, conversations and live open-ended research are integral to their approach and practice, and Ackroyd & Harvey give many high-profile keynote lectures and presentations, notably Declaring Emergency: Museums and the Climate Crisis, Courtauld Institute of Art, London; Big Botany, Spencer Museum, Kansas; How to be a COptomist, Kings College, London; On Energy, Banff Centre, Canada; Environmental Funders Network, Cambridge, UK; COCE/Conference on Communication and Environment, University of Colorado, Boulder; 'Nobel Laureate Symposium' on Creativity, Leadership and Climate Change at London's Science Museum; 'Art + Alchemy' Trinity College, Cambridge; EARTH: Art of a Changing World, Royal Academy of Arts, London; Smith School, Oxford; London School of Economics, UK; the Royal Society, London; Royal Institute of British Architects, London; Tate Britain, London; Royal National Theatre, London; Manchester International Festival, UK; Courtauld Institute, London; Harvard University, Boston, USA; San Francisco Institute of Arts, USA; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, USA.

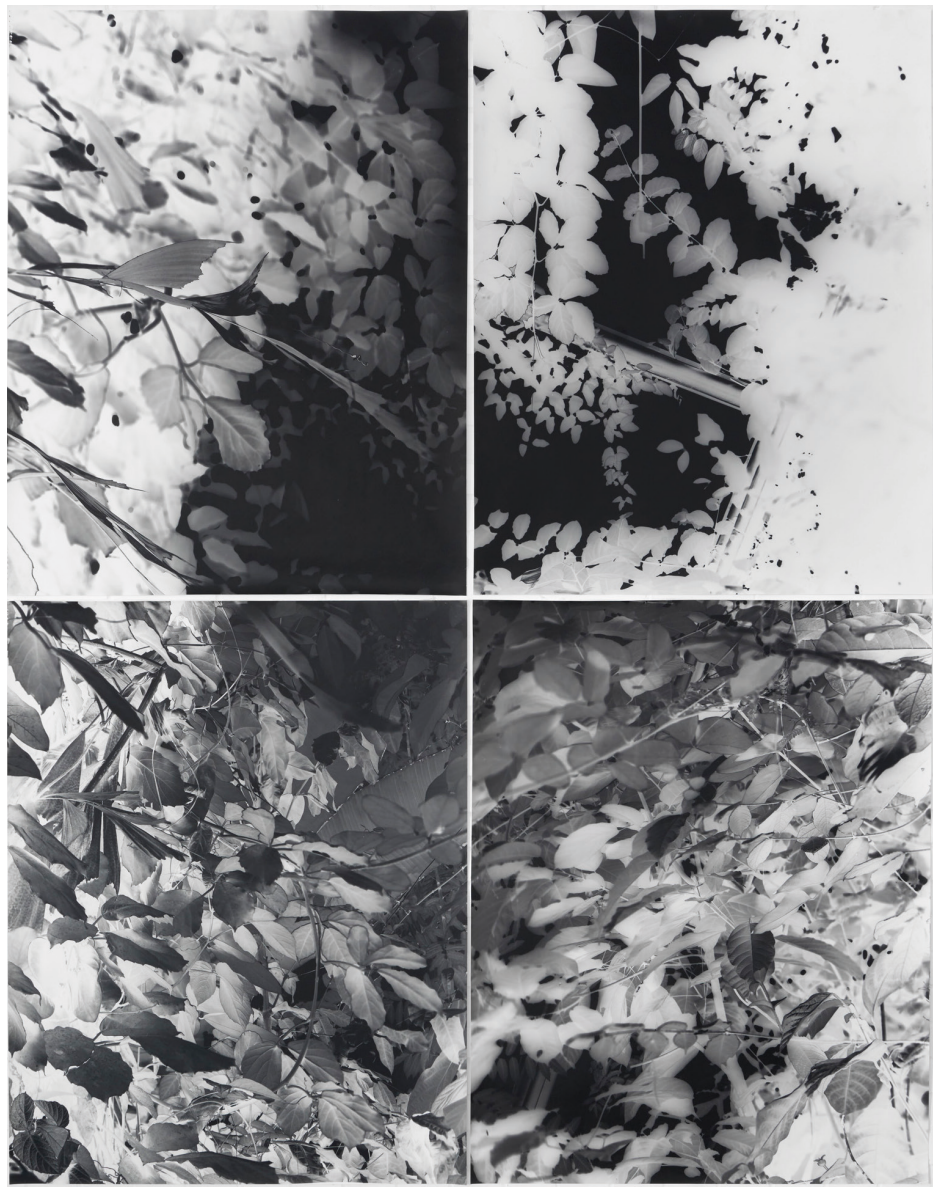
BENJAMIN JONES

Benjamin Jones (b. 1994) is an artist based in London working with photography, who studied at Bath School of Art and Design. Recent solo exhibitions include *One Particle of an Inch*, Lisbon (2025), *To Live Inside a Second*, Una Boccata d'Arte, Pieve Tesino (2023), *A Section of a Living Circle*, Galerie Heimat, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (2023), *The Actual Life of a Thought*, Loom Gallery, Milan (2023). His works are held in various private collections and that of the Museo del Novecento, Milan, with the public commission *To Live Inside a Second* permanently installed in Pieve Tesino, Trentino.

Producing a heterogeneous body of photographs which offer themselves to affect as well as controlled close looking, Benjamin Jones has been developing a project in which photography is a technology of observation and visual reproducibility embedded in our experience of the world. Working often in environments dedicated to focused study and close observation, including natural history museums, botanical gardens, and protected landscapes, his work might be mistaken for being concerned predominantly with its subject matter. This recalls a concern in the works of conceptual artists to explore the structures of meaning and the disciplinary boundaries and categories of art without sacrificing an interest in the world and its appearances. - Duncan Wooldridge



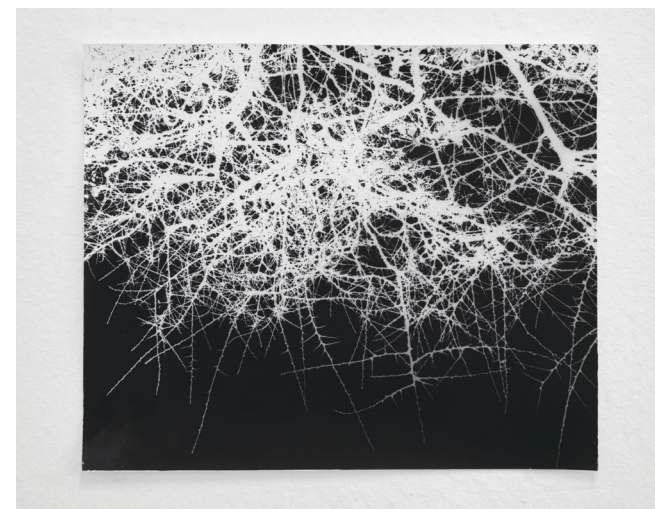
Benjamin Jones
Pampas Grass (Diptych), 2022/22
 Two unique fibre based silver gelatin prints
 Each 54 × 44 cm, 1/1



Benjamin Jones
Sun-Sanctifying Glass (4), 2022
 4 unique fibre based silver gelatin prints
 245.6 x 195.5 cm, 1/1



Benjamin Jones
Apple Tree and Butterfly, 2023/25
 Unique fibre based silver gelatin print
 26.5 x 39.6 cm, 1/1



Benjamin Jones
Buckthorn, 2022/22
 Unique fibre based silver gelatin print
 20.5 x 25.4 cm, 1/1

EAMON O'KANE

Eamon O'Kane was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and lives in Denmark and Norway. He has received various awards including the Taylor Art Award and a Fulbright Award, and has had exhibitions in international galleries and museums such as the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles; the Sheldon Art Museum in Lincoln, Nebraska; the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin; and Museum Frieder Burda in Baden-Baden, Germany. Eamon O'Kane is Professor of Visual Art at The Art Academy, Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, University of Bergen, Norway.

Oneiric Nature: Eamon O'Kane

In putting together this publication I have endeavoured to delve deep into my artworks as living objects and to explore connections between the various mediums I have worked with over the years and how they bear the traces of my life.

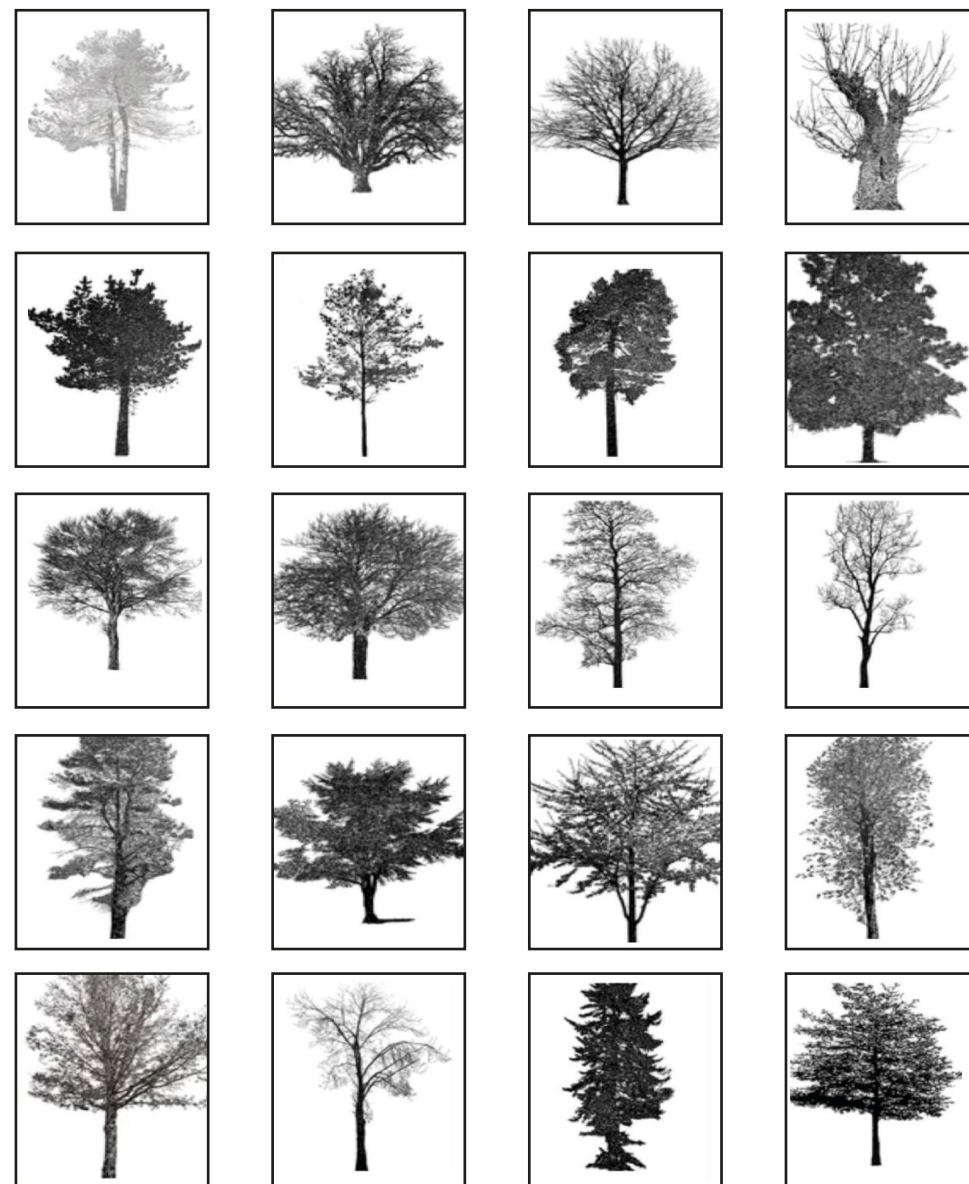
In the first text, "Eamon O'Kane's Oneiric Architecture", Dr Margaret Iversen analyses my architectural painting practice since 2003 by referring to several themes in my artwork and putting the paintings in context with my installations and drawings. She points to my childhood experience of growing up in Ireland as the origin of all my artistic themes and uses Gaston Bachelard's concept of 'oneiric architecture' to frame the origins of my art practice. 'Oneiric' relates to dreams or dreaming and her text has inspired the title of this publication.

In the second text, "Return of the Trees", Dr Mikkel Bogh examines my painting practice and specifically references the interplay of shadows of trees on the architecture and the impact of the painterly qualities of the artworks on the viewer.

In the third text, "The Garden of Children", Norman Brosterman investigates the relationship of my interactive installations to the legacy of Friedrich Fröbel. He highlights how my work is innately derived from my experience of nature and that this provides many intuitive entry points for the viewer.

In the fourth text, "Play Our Way Forward", Ellen Mara De Wachter continues the focus on my relational artwork, especially my recent installation Maria Montessori: Glass Classroom. She highlights how these interactive installations 'reacquaint practices of education and creativity in different environments' and how I use open free play as a tool to liberate the participants in the process of engaging with the artwork.

To conclude, in the final text I reflect on several strands within my art practice to reflect on my most current artwork and how my art practice relates to my upbringing in Ireland as well as themes connected to seasonality, history and architecture.



Eamon O'Kane
100 TREES, 2020-24
 Ink on paper, 100 sheets (20 selected for this exhibition)
 40 x 30 cm



Eamon O'Kane
Jungle (Black Mirror), 2016 - 2023
Acrylic on canvas
200 x 500 cm

The exhibition features a new *jungle* artwork from the year 2026.

DEIRDRE O'MAHONY

Deirdre O'Mahony is a visual artist living in Ireland. Public artworks X-PO (2007-) and SPUD (2009–2019) both reflected on the broader tensions between knowledge erasure and agricultural modernisation. She is a graduate of St Martins School of Art, London, Crawford College, Cork and completed a PhD at the University of Brighton in 2012.

Her major new work, *The Quickening*, was commissioned by the Douglas Hyde Gallery of Contemporary Art and exhibited (29 March – 23 June) 2024. Recent projects and exhibitions include *Snakey River Forest*, for The Gleaner's Society, 40th EVA Biennale curated by Sebastian Cichocki (2023); *Eat Food Policy*, feast and event, Kunstverein Aughrim (2023); *Sustainment Experiments* feasts and exhibition at Butler Gallery, Kilkenny (2022); *PLOT 1*, VISUAL Carlow (2021 – 2024); *PLOT 11* Gangwon Triennale Korea(2021), *Little did they know*, EVA Biennale Guest Programme curated by Merve Elvern (2021); and *POST_*(2020) for Saolta Arts /Galway2020.

Awards include Arts Council of Ireland Project and Bursary awards, Irish and international residencies and a Pollock-Krasner Fellowship. Her work is in the National Collection of the Arts Council of Ireland and the Irish Museum of Modern Art.

For over thirty years, Deirdre O'Mahony's research and art practice has focused on the complicated relationship between land, landscape, and ecological sustainability. Responding to conflicts about land use and regulation, ideas were considered through painting in the 1990s and then increasingly through a variety of approaches; painting, context-specific land artworks, socially engaged art practice, archival and moving image installation, writing and events. Deploying whatever means were most relevant to communicate connections between people and place, the artist has focused on creating public space for better understanding of the complex factors affecting land use, landscape, and by extension food security.

It is no longer possible to consider landscape without taking account of climate change and biodiversity collapse. Drawing on design philosopher Tony Fry's idea of the 'Sustainment' as an equivalent movement to the Enlightenment in its capacity to transform systems of thought and behaviours, since 2020, O'Mahony's *Sustainment Experiments* project has used a range of activities, from sculptural plantings (*PLOT 1 & 2*, *Model Plot*), feast events (*Parmentier Feast*, *Eat Food Policy Feast*) as well as on-the ground research, as public spaces for speculative conversations between farmers, food producers, and scientists to collectively imagine a different approach to farming, food production and consumption, as climate change becomes an irreversible fact.

The outcome of this process is *The Quickening* which brings together urgent conversations, original music and moving image alongside the voice of insect and soil life; a polyvocal response to the most urgent questions affecting land and its inhabitants that gives voice to the invisible protagonists that shapes earth's future, reflecting an idea of being-in-common that encompasses all earthly being.



Deirdre O'Mahony
Crop, 2023
 Archival digital print
 Film still from *The Quickening*
 Photograph by Tom Flanagan
 66.7 x 100 cm
 edition 1/5, 2 artist proofs



Deirdre O'Mahony
Diversification #1, 2023
 Giclée Print on Hahnemühle Fine Art Baryta Satin
 Film still from *The Quickening*
 photograph by Tom Flanagan
 66.7 x 100 cm
 edition 1/5, 2 artist proofs



Deirdre O'Mahony
Diversification #2, 2023
 Giclée Print on Hahnemühle Fine Art Baryta Satin
 Film still from *The Quickening*
 Photograph by Tom Flanagan
 66.7 x 100 cm
 edition 1/5, 2 artist proofs

ROSEMARY LAING

Rosemary Laing was born in 1959 in Brisbane, Australia, and died in 2024. Laing has participated in several international biennials including the Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2008); Venice Biennale, Italy (2007); Busan Biennale, South Korea (2004); and Istanbul Biennial, Turkey (1995). Solo exhibitions of Laing's work have been held at numerous museums, including Domus Artium 2002, Spain; Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Tennessee; Kunsthallen Brandts Klædefabrik, Denmark; Museum of Contemporary Art Australia; National Museum of Art Osaka, Japan; and TarraWarra Museum of Art, Australia. Her work can also be found in many public collections worldwide, including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia; 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Japan; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia; Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne, Switzerland; Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; Harvard Art Museum, Massachusetts; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Spain; Museum of Contemporary Art Australia; National Gallery of Australia; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC; North Carolina Museum of Art; and Wadsworth Athenaeum, Connecticut. Laing was honored at the 35th Higashikawa International Photography Festival in 2019, Hokkaido, receiving the Overseas Photographer Award for photographic achievements.

In a career spanning over four decades, Australian artist Rosemary Laing created photo-based work that is cinematic in vision and large in scale and scope. Instead of using digital manipulation, Laing photographed real-time performance and physical installations, meticulously staging scenes in culturally and historically resonant locations across Australia. Her work was informed by post-colonial perspectives on the occupation and ownership of land and speculates upon how the past intersects with the present situation. Laing frequently worked in series, creating thematic bodies of work that are large in scale and scope and accumulatively form an ongoing narrative of events that have impacted cultural consciousness.

"The 'looking', from which images emanate, is an act of the mind, as much as it is a reaction of the senses. It is about the huge space between our eyes and what we see, which is infected by everything we have ever come to know and understand."
—Rosemary Laing



Rosemary Laing
The Paper, Wednesday, 2014
Hand-painted analogue C-Type print
Image size: 35 1/2 x 69 7/8 inches (90 x 177.5 cm)
Paper size: 43 3/8 x 77 3/4 inches (110 x 197.5 cm)
Frame size: 44 1/2 x 79 x 3 inches (113 x 200.5 x 7.5 cm)
Edition of 8

© The Estate of Rosemary Laing
Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York



Rosemary Laing
Groundspeed (Rose Petal) #17, 2001
 C Type photograph
 Image size: 43 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 76 $\frac{3}{4}$ in (110 x 194.9 cm)
 Paper size: 48 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 82 $\frac{3}{8}$ in (124 x 209.1 cm)
 Edition of 15

© The Estate of Rosemary Laing
 Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York

WENDY MCMURDO

Wendy McMurdo was born in Edinburgh where she studied fine art painting. She left the UK in the mid-1980s to study at the Pratt Institute, in New York. While studying there, she turned to photography. After completing an MA at Goldsmiths College, London, she was awarded a two-year fellowship by The Henry Moore Foundation. In 1993, she produced her first major solo exhibition 'In a Shaded Place - The Digital and the Uncanny', Site Gallery Touring, UK which saw her working for the first time with the computer, creating a series of works that explored the intersection between autographic photography and the digital image.

In the strange summer of 2021, I began to document the interiors of the breath-taking and dream-like interiors of the RBGE Glasshouses, documenting the orchids and cycads, the jade vines, and the rare magnolias. I photographed the snaking paths and overhanging vegetation that tracked through the interconnected spaces. I studied the flora that both blossomed and withered there, largely out of public sight. At that time, the Glasshouses were closed to everybody but horticulturalists and research staff, remaining largely in suspension. The leaves however continued to unfurl and seeds to germinate, despite the pandemic chaos of the world outside.

During the first deep lockdown, I often thought about the gardeners there as they made their way from their homes through the empty streets of the city to the Gardens. If they stopped coming (that was not an impossible thing to imagine in 2020-21), would the plants outgrow their containment? Would they push uncontrollably against the glass, force themselves out from underneath the steel frames that contained them? That's – I decided – what would happen. Would wild creatures (foxes were already at home in the wider gardens) gain access and roam through the Glasshouses? If birds could enter and become trapped, would they batter their bodies against the glass panes of the walls, unable to find a way out? But none of that happened because the humans kept on coming. The complex heating systems were maintained; the water supply continued unabated.



Wendy McMurdo
Pollinators (xii), 2022
 C-type photographic print on Fuji Archival Paper
 113 x 85
 Edition of 5, AP

Courtesy the artist and Patricia Fleming
 Gallery, Glasgow
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The gardens outside were closed to the public but life in the Glasshouses remained largely the same. The uncertainty of the outside world was at dramatic odds with their lush and burgeoning interiors. Everything in the garden continued to flourish while everything outside of the glass frames was quickly going to hell. This is something we all sensed: life as we knew it was over. The vines would continue to grow, but the humans that tended them were altered and not necessarily in a subtle way.

Moving on to 2023, the vast spaces of the original Glasshouses continue to remain in a state of perpetual slumber as the living collection awaits its impending move. Plants continue to grow profusely. Birds, insects, and even small animals continue to gain access to the Glasshouses. A black cat patrols the interiors: vines twist around the steel supports and the paths that wind their way through the entire network of spaces still hang with profuse vegetation. The environment is both dreamlike, fragile, and soon to be part of the history of the city. A memory, a dream, a phantom orchid curling and unfurling in perfumed isolation.

Nearby – in empty glasshouses – the remains of ancient palms are carefully stored and labelled. They stand like silent sentinels, witnesses to our own attempts to repair and restore our exquisite garden.

Wendy McMurdo
Pollinators (I), 2022
 C-type photographic print on Fuji Archival Paper
 113 x 85
 Edition of 5, AP

Courtesy the artist and Patricia Fleming
 Gallery, Glasgow
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cover
Rosemary Laing
Groundspeed (Rose Petal) #17, 2001
C Type photograph

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Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York

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