

Matthew Beach

**The Herbarium's
Shadow**

14 April – 22 May 2020

The Herbarium's Shadow is a site-specific exhibition, the first solo show by artist and researcher Matthew Beach. The exhibition is the culmination of Beach's research from his time on the LABVERDE residency in Brazil's Amazon rainforest during the summer of 2019. Whilst there, Beach researched the surrounding ecologies and considered the plants growing unmanaged in the rainforest in relation to the potted plants he was familiar with back in the UK. He realised that many of the tropical and subtropical plants native to Brazil, which are sold in the UK as houseplants, were immediately present in the rainforest landscape. This was a hint to a more global network that sees plants as commodities.

Examining the historical and contemporary practice of botany, the exhibition reflects on the formation of such human-plant relations via a fully immersive presentation of his research. Employing various modes of indexing, examining the materiality embedded in historical and contemporary practices of domestic botany, *The Herbarium's Shadow* addresses several questions. What does it mean to extract a botanical species from its native habitat and what is the environmental impact? How do humans living in a domestic environment relate to the plants they encounter? What more-than-human narratives become lost through the practice of cultivation? How can the aesthetics surrounding houseplants be conceived as a new form of exoticism? What kind of knowledge is being passed between plants from different geographies?

By cross-referencing the dates plants were recorded with the production of British wallpapers, the artist hopes to question the ongoing relationship between the domestic space, colonial history, environmentalism and value.

The Herbarium's Shadow takes place at San Mei Gallery from 7 April - 15 May, with a first week of online viewing only.

You can take home part of this exhibition to form your own more-than-human botanical relationships with a cutting from the Philodendron plant and its corresponding cyanotype (£40).

Works

Clockwise from left:

Propagations

2021

cyanotype on conservation paper
with chine-collé + live plant

21 x 30cm

Editions 1-24 of 30

William Morris and Roberto Burle Marx on Holiday at Charleston House

2021

standard wallpaper, 120gsm
dimensions variable

Demo Day at the Botanist's Conservatory (No.1)

2021

inkjet on plastered board framed, reclaimed floorboards
64 x 94 cm

Demo Day at the Botanist's Conservatory (No.2)

2021

inkjet on plastered board framed, reclaimed floorboards
64 x 94 cm

Demo Day at the Botanist's Conservatory (No.3)

2021

inkjet on plastered board framed, reclaimed floorboards
64 x 94 cm

Demo Day at the Botanist's Conservatory (No.4)

2021

inkjet on plastered board framed, reclaimed floorboards
64 x 94 cm

Demo Day at the Botanist's Conservatory (No.5)

2021

inkjet on plastered board framed, reclaimed floorboards
64 x 94 cm

Matthew Beach is an artist and researcher based in London, UK. Recent exhibitions include *The Making of Landscape* at Galerie Duchomp, Yvetot, and *Prospect for the More-Than-Human* at Regency Townhouse, Brighton, and his work has been screened at The Showroom, London and Bloomsbury Theatre, London. Matthew Beach is currently a Teaching and Research Fellow in Printmaking at City and Guilds of London Art School; and a PhD candidate in the School of Geography at Queen Mary, University of London, researching historical and contemporary practices of producing and consuming gelatine and collagen peptides. He received his MFA from the Slade School of Fine Art, London (2017), and he is an alumnus of LABVERDE (2019) and the Saas-Fee Summer Institute of Art (2016).

Public Programme

book all our events via our website

Olha Pryymak Virtual Tea Workshops (online)

Saturday 10 April, 2-3.15pm / 3.30-3.45pm
£10 - £25

A conversation over a cup of hibiscus tea and an opportunity to pay deeper attention to human-plant relationships.

Harold Offeh: Black Bodies in the Landscape

Talk: Thursday 15 April, 6.30pm
Screening: 12-18 April on our website
Free

Online artist talk by Harold Offeh discussing black bodies in the landscape, accompanied by an online screening of his film *Body Landscape Memory. Symphonic Variations on an African Air, Op.63* commissioned by Wysing Arts Centre in 2019.

Olha Pryymak Tea Workshops at San Mei

Saturday 24 April
12-12.45, 1-1.45pm, 2-2.45

A conversation over a cup of hibiscus tea and an opportunity to pay deeper attention to human-plant relationships, outside on the grass.

Plant Swap

Saturday 15 May, 10-6pm

Bring a plant with a note attached to it with a memory of that plant. Then, on the last day of the exhibition you will pick up someone else's plant!

Matthew Beach in Conversation (online)

Saturday 22 May, 4.30-6pm

Free

A conversation between Matthew Beach and postgraduate researcher Anna Lawrence about our relationship with botanical beings in domestic spaces.

IFLA! Virtual Pub Quiz

Saturday 30 May, 6-7.30pm

£6 - £7

A 'pub quiz' of enlightening, inspiring, shocking, jaw-dropping facts and figures about the environment and ecologies, designed by It's Freezing in LA, a critically acclaimed independent magazine with a fresh take on climate change.

Plant Pot Painting

Saturday 8 May, 1-4pm

£4.50

A family day outside San Mei Gallery, on the grass painting and decorating plant pots!

Reading List

Braiding Sweetgrass, by Robin Wall Kimmerer, Penguin, 2020

Decolonizing Nature, Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology, T. J. Demos, Stenberg press, 2016

Compost Politics: Experimenting with Togetherness in Vermicomposting, Sebastian Abrahamsson and Filippo Bertoni, Environmental Humanities, 2014

Hyperobjects, Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World, by Timothy Morton, University of Minnesota Press, 2013

Lab Girl, by Hope Jahren, Little Brown Book Group, 2020

Staying with the Trouble, Making Kin in the Chthulucene, by Donna J. Haraway, Duke University Press, 2016

The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins, by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Princeton University Press, 2015

Hybrid Geographies: Natures Cultures Spaces, by Sarah Whatmore, SAGE Publications, 2002



San Mei Gallery

39a Loughborough Road, London, SW9 7TB

Open: Weds-Sat, 12-6pm

www.sanmeigallery.co.uk @sanmeigallery

info@sanmeigallery.co.uk