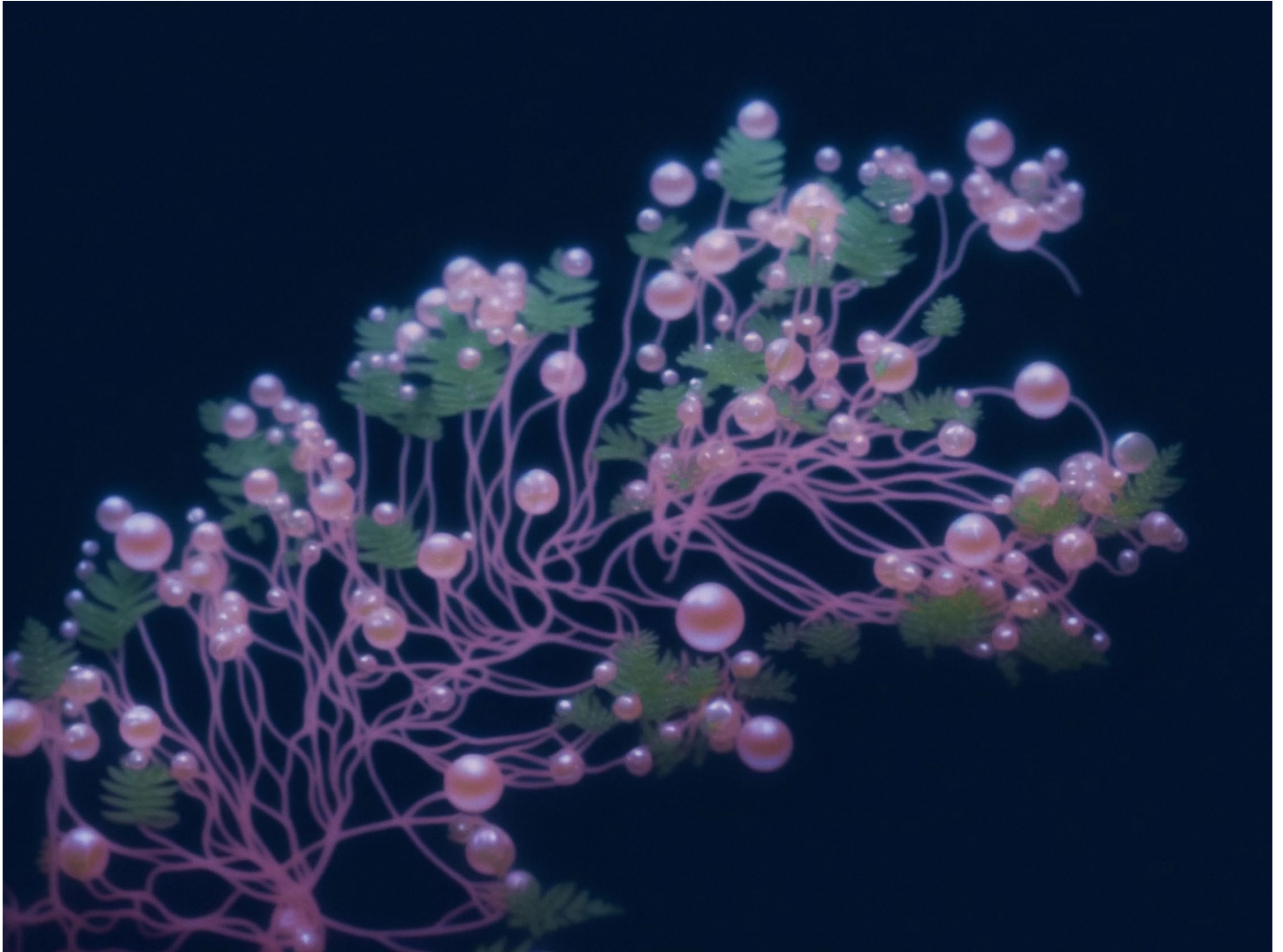


MEP MAISON
EUROPÉENNE
DE LA
PHOTOGRAPHIE

Press kit



Science/Fiction — A Non-History of Plants

16.10.2024–19.01.2025

Studio

Ludovic Sauvage

Late Show

16.10–01.12.2024

María Silvia Esteve

CORTEX

05.12.2024–19.01.2025

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The MEP would like to thank the Collector's Circle of the MEP and the Friend's Association of the MEP for their continued support.

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The seed of the idea for the exhibition *Science/Fiction — A Non-History of Plants* came from the MEP's Artistic Director, Clothilde Morette, and was planted several years ago, very much inspired by the work of the great African-American Science-Fiction writer Octavia E. Butler. This seed, once taken root and nurtured, together with her co-curator Victoria Aresheva, has flourished into one of the most original and beautiful exhibitions held at MEP in recent years. From the origins of photography in the nineteenth-century, to present contemporary practice and beyond, this is a project of incredible scope and ambition, that helps us not only to look, but really to see the natural world in myriad different ways. As indeed, will the two associated solo exhibitions in the MEP Studio that engage with similar ideas and concepts.

Photography as a medium has had a long relationship with the world of plants, its own history, in fact is intertwined, vine-like, with this most readily available and natural of subjects. From Anna Atkins' earliest cyanotypes, the idea of the technical or chemical auto-reproduction of the world, (it being able to make its own image), has been both fantastic inspiration and practical fact. What we would now call 'science-fiction' writers had imagined photographs before they existed, and, moreover, the desire for photography to exist at all was driven equally by the arts and the sciences. To call this exhibition a 'non-history', although it covers nearly two hundred years of works is to remember that the natural world has no need for, or reliance on, human dates and chronologies; but also to remember that it is more often through fictions that natural time, and the full span of time, are made comprehensible to us.

The artists and film-makers included in the exhibition have approached the world of plants with and without lenses, with and without advanced technologies, but always with curiosity and passion to enable their viewers to see and think differently. Lenses have taken their users into strange invisible worlds, however, not only to further the imagination but to describe practical human problems, and even propose solutions.

At this moment of global climate crisis, during which nations, cities, companies, institutions and indeed photography museums are looking for eco-responsible solutions to avoid science-fiction's more terrifying dystopias, it is right that we turn the microscope back on the green shoots of life that surround us, and on which we depend, whether we have been paying attention to them or not.

Cover image

Agnieszka Polska, *The Book of Flowers*, 2023

Full HD video, 9 min 38 sec, 2023

© Agnieszka Polska
Courtesy Galerie Dawid Radziszewski, Warsaw

Simon Baker,
Director



Galleries +2 +3

Curators

Clothilde Morette,
artistic director, MEP
Victoria Aresheva,
curator, MEP

Production manager

Elisa Monteillet, MEP

The MEP would like to extend its warmest thanks to all the artists featured in this exhibition, their galleries and the collections and private lenders who have generously agreed to lend large bodies of work, making this exhibition possible.

Among these collections, we would like to thank:

Archive of Modern Conflict, Londres
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Wilson Centre for Photography,
Londres.

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BeauxArts^{Magazine}

Society

POUR UN MONDE MEILLEUR

So good

**LE
QUOTIDIEN
DE L'ART**

Miljohn Ruperto and Ulrik Heltoft,
50 Leto, 'Voynich Botanical Studies',
2014
50 x 40 cm

© Miljohn Ruperto and Ulrik Heltoft
Courtesy Friends Indeed Gallery, San Francisco, and Vacancy
Gallery, Shanghai

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Science/Fiction —
A Non-History of Plants
16.10.2024–19.01.2025

The exhibition

In development since 2020, this exhibition retraces the visual history of plants through art, technology, and science from the nineteenth century to the present day. Bringing together over 40 artists from different periods and nationalities, this exhibition juxtaposes historic photographic works such as Anna Atkins' cyanotypes, Karl Blossfeldt's inventory of plant forms and Laure Albin-Guillot's microscope experiments with creations by contemporary artists such as Sam Falls, Pierre Joseph, Jochen Lempert, Angelica Mesiti, and Agnieszka Polska.

Divided into six chapters, this exhibition's structure is inspired by science fiction novels: starting from the idea of a stable and identifiable world, it gradually descends into uncertain and unexpected landscapes. The first two chapters, entitled 'The Agency of Plants' and 'Symbiosis and Contamination' respectively, are devoted to so-called objective approaches connected to science. The following chapter, entitled 'Beyond the Real', is devoted to transcending the visible. The last three chapters, 'Plants are Watching You', 'Plants as Political Fiction' and 'Speculative Fiction(s)', explore the links between science and science fiction, two fields that have used flora as a field for experimentation. Transcending normative divisions between fiction and reality, science and art, the artists in this exhibition go beyond rigid categories to capture the complexity of plant life and our relationship with plants.

This exhibition offers an opportunity to explore the special relationship between photography and video, two techniques for capturing images that were first used for scientific research, and plants. Paradoxically, instead of creating a distance between us and the natural world, these photographic and cinematic processes have highlighted plants' subjectivity, intelligence, and expressive capacity, compensating for our 'anthropocentric myopia'.

By questioning our projections and representations of plants, this exhibition integrates narratives from science and science fiction as a means of creating new imaginary worlds. These narratives are not centred on the idea of progress and modernity, but rather are conceived in terms of the planet's limits. These emancipatory stories go beyond an anthropocentric vision of the world, giving plants a place and a voice. They thus become a space for repairing our relationship with the natural world. To think about environmental change, we need to consider the political power of the imagination, to accept our hopes and explore our innermost fears, so that together we can continue to write a common future.

*Laure Albin-Guillot
Anna Atkins
Karl Blossfeldt
Henry Bradbury
Stan Brakhage
Jean Comandon
Imogen Cunningham
Gohar Dashti
Rebekka Deubner
Ágnes Dénes
Elsbeth Diederix
Kalev Erickson
Sam Falls
Éléonore False
Joan Fontcuberta
Stephen Gill
Walon Green
Olga Grotova
Ken Hannam
Horst P. Horst
Peter A. Hutchinson
Pierre Joseph
Philip Kaufman
Ali Kazma
Samir Laghouati-Rashwan
Jochen Lempert
Angelika Loderer
Angelica Mesiti
Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau
Alice Pallot
Agnieszka Polska
Max Reichmann
Albert Renger-Patzsch
Almudena Romero
Philippe Roux
Miljohn Ruperto & Ulrik Heltoft
Stuart A. Staples & Frank Percy Smith
Steve Sekely & Freddie Francis
Timur Si-Qin
Richard Tepe
Charles T. Scowen
Anaïs Tondeur
Edward Weston*

Exhibition overview

Chapter I | The Agency of Plants

The exhibition begins with a chapter exploring the hidden powers of plants in three sections: 'Shapes and Colours', 'Movement and Growth', and 'Plant Matter' and, through photography and film, reveals their fascinating creative capacities. Long thought to be passive and insensitive, plants are now being reconsidered by biologists, philosophers, writers, and artists. Photography and cinema that combine science and art have to help develop our understanding of plants, paving the way for a new ethical vision that calls anthropocentrism into question.

Shapes and Colours

This first section presents a carefully detailed view of plants that emphasises their impressive formal diversity. Bringing together iconic photographers from the 1920s and '30s and contemporary artists, this section focuses on the ability of plants to generate shapes and colours.



Richard Tepe, *Wilde tinstange lithorpende tak (Chestnut, buttoned branch)*
Gelatin silver print, 22 x 16,5 cm

Courtesy private collection, Paris

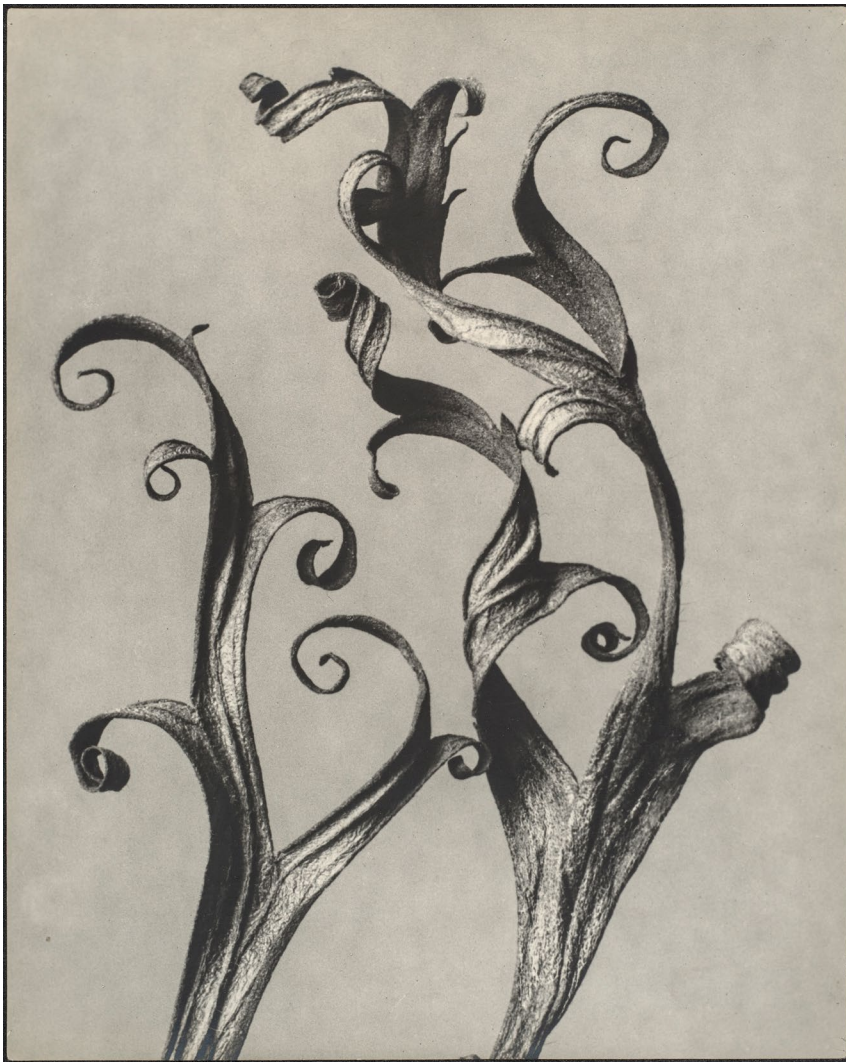
Richard Tepe

Richard Tepe (1864–1952), a naturalist born in Amsterdam, used photography to document the flora and fauna of the Netherlands, with a particular focus on birds. Active in societies devoted to nature conservation and photography at the beginning of the twentieth century, Tepe focused on the documentary function of his images. Using a large-format view camera with glass plates, he captured precise details for his research. His simple compositions on neutral backgrounds reflect the ‘modern’ style of German photographers such as Albert Renger-Patzsch and Karl Blossfeldt, underscoring the scientific and aesthetic importance of his work.

Karl Blossfeldt

Karl Blossfeldt (1865–1932), famous for his photographic close-ups of plant details, was a sculptor, teacher, and photographer. His major photographic work *Urformen der Kunst* (Art Forms in Nature, 1928) reveals the decorative forms found in the plant world.

His large-format prints—exhibited internationally, notably in the landmark Bauhaus exhibition *Film und Foto* (1929)—influenced the New Objectivity movement. Associated with sculpture and architecture, his enlargements explore both natural and artificial forms. His photographs inspired influential writers such as Walter Benjamin and Georges Bataille, and revealed unsuspected visual treasures of the plant world.



Karl Blossfeldt, *Delphinium. Rittersporn*,
1920-1929
Gelatin silver print, 29.8 x 24 cm

Courtesy Gallery Berinson, Berlin



*‘Science is a fiction.
Making science fiction
is downright useless.’*

Jean Painlevé in an interview by
Philippe Jérôme, ‘La science est
une fiction’, *Patriote Côte d’Azur* (28
November 1986), p. 16.

Laure Albin-Guillot, *Graine* [variante de
la planche X de l’album *Micrographie
décorative*] (Seed [variant of plate X from
the Decorative Micrography album]),
ca. 1931
Direct carbon print (Fresson process),
50 × 42.5 cm

© Laure Albin-Guillot / Roger-Viollet
Courtesy private collection, Paris

Laure Albin-Guillot

The French photographer Laure Albin-Guillot (1879–1962) became known in the 1930s for her pictorialist and modernist female nudes as well as for her commercial work. In collaboration with her husband, the microscopy researcher Albin-Guillot, she produced the series *Micrographie décorative* (Decorative Micrography) in 1931. This sophisticated work presents slide enlargements of natural microscopic phenomena such as diatoms and spores with gold and silver highlights on charcoal. Laure Albin-Guillot transformed these abstractions into textile motifs, eliminating the separation between scientific objectivity and artistic interpretation. Her innovative work reveals the cultural potential of natural forms at the dawn of a new century.

Imogen Cunningham

Imogen Cunningham (1883–1976) was one of the most respected pioneers of pictorialist and modernist photography in the United States. In the 1920s, she concentrated on botanical photography, spending almost two years capturing a single plant, the magnolia flower. In 1933, she co-founded the California Horticultural Society, for which her detailed photographs became key documents for scientific research. She exhibited her botanical images internationally as part of her own artistic practice alongside nudes and architectural details. From the 1960s onwards, she became an important figure for an emerging generation of photographers.

Edward Weston

Along with Paul Strand and Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Weston (1886–1958) established modernist photography in the United States. Initially influenced by Pictorialism, in the 1920s he moved towards works of radical purity. Using a large-format view camera, Weston captured images of intense sharpness, emphasising the formal aesthetic of his subjects. His famous works include still lifes of shells, bell peppers, and other natural objects, reflecting his interest in natural forms.

Albert Renger-Patzsch

Albert Renger-Patzsch (1897–1966) was an important German photographer of the New Objectivity movement of the 1920s and '30s. Associated with the Bauhaus, he sought to capture the beauty of objects, both natural and industrial, with scientific precision. His book *Die Welt ist schön (The World is Beautiful)*, published in 1928, presents one hundred photographs of remarkable clarity that are often compared to scientific illustrations. One of his major works is *Heterotrichum macrodium* (1922), an almost microscopic close-up included in the Bauhaus book *Foto-Auge* (1929). By paying particular attention to detail, impeccable focus, and cropping, Renger-Patzsch sought to reveal the nature and beauty of 'things', whether organic or man-made.



'How can one take new beings into account if one cannot radically change the position of one's gaze?'

Bruno Latour, *The Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, London: Harvard University Press, 2004,, p. 138

Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Heterotrichum macrodium*, 1922-1923
Gelatin silver print, 22,9 x 17 cm
© Albert Renger-Patzsch / ADAGP, Paris 2024
Courtesy Berinson, Berlin

Horst P. Horst

Horst P. Horst (1906-1999) is one of the most renowned photographers of the twentieth century. After studying fine art in Germany and with Le Corbusier in Paris, he began his career in fashion, collaborating with Vogue, and exhibited his work from 1932 onwards. After moving to the United States in the 1940s, Horst developed a passion for photographing plants, particularly close-up, and developed a complex and nuanced practice in which images of nature and the environment play an essential role. In 1946, he published *Patterns from Nature*, illustrating his interest in the structure and texture of plants. Horst produced gelatin silver and platinum prints of them in soft, silky tones.

Jochen Lempert

Born in 1958 in Moers, Germany, Jochen Lempert lives and works in Hamburg. Trained as a biologist, he became a photographer at the age of 31. His interest in science is reflected in his delicate and poetic black-and-white photographs. He captures fragments of life and fleeting movements such as a butterfly on a flower or the shadow of birds on concrete. Influenced by the New Objectivity movement, he shares with Karl Blossfeldt and Albert Renger-Patzsch a taste for detail and for working with light. Lempert reminds us that looking is an act of care, and encourages us to observe our surroundings.



Jochen Lempert, *Perlmutter & Sennenhut 2*, 2022
Gelatin silver print, 22 x 16 cm

© Jochen Lempert / ADAGP, Paris, 2024
Courtesy ProjecteSD

Pierre Joseph

Born in Caen in 1965, Pierre Joseph lives and works in Paris. His work explores ways of representing reality and for several years he has been producing works based on plants, drawing parallels between the photographic medium and agriculture and its industrialisation. In his series 'Suite (Lavande)', he photographed lavender flowers isolated from their biotope presented on a wooden table, always captured in close-up using the same protocol. The images are arranged in a vertical frieze, revealing a series of subtle variations despite the uniformity of the flowers. These photographs are reminiscent of botanical images, contrasting scientific objectivity with personal experience and illustrating a method of inventorying while escaping from the constraints of classification.

Elspeth Diederix

Born in Nairobi in 1971 and based in Amsterdam, Elspeth Diederix is an artist and horticulturist. In 2018, she founded 'The Miracle Garden' at Erasmuspark, Amsterdam, an artistic and botanical space open to the public. The project was born out of the 'Let it Grow' competition, which aims to reconnect city dwellers with nature. Diederix created a garden with a variety of flowers documented through photography, sketches, and annotations. Each image expresses her admiration for the colours, shapes, and stages of growth of flowers, capturing their fascinating visual impact. Her work celebrates the wonder these flowers evoke in observers.



Elspeth Diederix, *Digitalis ferruginea*,
2019, from the series 'The Miracle
Garden'
Inkjet print, 40 x 30 cm

© Elspeth Diederix
Courtesy Stigter van Doesburg, Amsterdam

Almudena Romero

Spanish artist Almudena Romero's experimental photographic practice is at the crossroads of art and science, using both historic and contemporary photographic processes. Passionate about the botanical world, she seeks to reveal the creative capacities and intelligence of the plant world. Her latest project, "The Museum of Plant Art", presented in the MEP's Petite Galerie, explores the artistic production of wild flowers. Based on non-anthropocentric thinking, the project challenges the idea that only human beings can create art. It examines the creative role of plants in ecosystems through photographic works and texts drawn from dialogues with philosophers and scientists.

Movement and growth

The second section brings together films that reveal the growth of plants, often considered to be inert, motionless objects. Belonging to a very different temporality, plants appear immobile to us, yet they are dynamic beings, capable not only of growth but also of deliberate movement.

Jean Comandon

Jean Comandon (1877–1970), a scientific figure of the early twentieth century, was a pioneer of cinema and the creator of nearly 400 educational films. Constantly perfecting his tools, he filmed living things to reveal the sophistication of plants' invisible mechanisms by accelerating them. Comandon believed that film could show us 'some of the secrets of life'. Inspired by scientific positivism, he defied the order of time and dimensions. His films, like those of Georges Méliès, combine science and illusionism. Jean Painlevé, his successor, saw scientific cinema as a source of poetry, in a view shared by Comandon, who had a passion for aesthetics.

'The plant possesses everything that distinguishes a living creature—movement, sensation, the most violent reaction against abuse, and most ardent gratitude for favors—if we will but take sufficient time to wait with loving patience for its sweet and gentle answers to our stormy questions.'

Raoul Heinrich Francé, Germs of Mind in Plants, Chicago, C.H. Kerr & Co., 1905, p. 20

Jean Comandon, still from the film *La Croissance des végétaux* (The Growth of Plants), 1929, 11 min

© Musée Albert-Kahn / CD92





Max Reichmann, *Zucchini Bluete 3*,
still from the film, *Das Blumenfeld* (The
Miracle Garden), 1926
1h21 min

Courtesy Absolut Medien

Max Reichmann

In 1921, the German chemical company BASF produced films showing the effects of its fertilisers. In 1926, the company went a step further with *Das Blumenwunder* (*The Miracle of Flowers*), directed by Max Reichmann (1884–1958). This feature-length film combines a narrative and ballet sequences with accelerated footage of plants. Maria Solveg Matray, who was a television star at the time, and dancers from the Berlin Opera portray floral nymphs in an art nouveau-style choreography. Inspired by Schellingian philosophy, the film teaches children that plants and human beings share the same essence. The work met with a resounding success. Walter Benjamin is thought to have seen it before writing *News About Flowers* in 1928.

Walon Green

A screenwriter and director of award-winning nature and insect documentaries, Walon Green adapted the psychedelic book *The Secret Life of Plants* at the end of the hippy movement in 1978. Both the film and book are based on a theory of the 'great whole' inspired by Hindu panentheism and popular with the 'flower power' movement. This vision suggests that humans are emotionally connected to every element in nature; it also posits that plants have extrasensory perception and the capacity to speak to us if we learn to listen, and are even said to be connected to cosmic existences that can only be perceived by clairvoyants. Green films many sumptuous plant sequences, accompanied by Stevie Wonder's organic music.

Plant matter

This third section looks at plant matter as an agent of image-making, bringing together the artistic practices that have made it an important field of experimentation. By establishing a connection between the vital phenomenon of photosynthesis and the chemical process of photography, certain printing techniques can reveal the photogenic power of plant matter.

Anna Atkins

Anna Atkins (1799–1871) was a pioneering botanist and photographer. Trained by her naturalist father, John George Children, she began by illustrating scientific works. In the 1830s, she built up a reference herbarium, and in 1842, influenced by W. H. F. Talbot and Sir John Herschel, she adopted the cyanotype technique. Atkins captured dried algae on light-sensitive paper, obtaining negative images on a blue background. In 1843, she published *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*, which was to become the first book illustrated with photography. She went on to work with other plants, and collaborated with Anne Dixon on several books, including *Cyanotypes of British and Foreign Ferns* in 1853.



Anna Atkins, *Asplenium angustifolium*
(*Glade Fern*), ca. 1852
Cyanotype print, 33 × 23 cm

Courtesy Wilson Centre for Photography

Henry Bradbury

The technique of nature printing, which dates back to Leonardo da Vinci in the sixteenth century, became widespread in the eighteenth century. It consisted of printing plants coated with oil and ink on paper.

In the nineteenth century, an indirect process similar to photography emerged, allowing greater precision and application to other subjects, such as butterflies and minerals. Henry Bradbury (1829–1860), famous for his work on British ferns and algae, improved this technique with electroplating. His four-volume work, *The Nature-Printed British Sea-Weeds* (1859), produced with the botanists William Johnstone and Alexander Croall, is an important example of this method.

Stan Brakhage

Stan Brakhage (1933–2003) was a major figure in American experimental cinema, making over 350 films. He explored genres ranging from documentaries to abstract films, developing a unique aesthetic with intense camera movements and manual interventions on the film itself. Uninterested in narrative, he focused on the visual experience of films. For *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1981), Brakhage used leaves, petals, stems, seeds, and roots placed between two 35mm films, creating images without a camera. Inspired by Hieronymus Bosch's triptych, the film alternates between white and black backgrounds, celebrating the relationship between the botanical world and light.



Stan Brakhage, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, 1981
3 min. 16 mm

Courtesy of The Estate of Stan Brakhage / Marilyn Brakhage

Stephen Gill

Born in Bristol in 1971, Stephen Gill has been fascinated since childhood by worlds invisible to the naked eye, such as those of insects and bacteria. He made photography his medium for capturing these microcosms. His approach draws on the natural sciences (biology, ecology), the human sciences (urban sociology, anthropology) and experimentation (burying prints, playing with scale, using plant pigments). In *Hackney Flowers*, Gill photographs and pays homage to the London borough of Hackney, mixing street images and everyday scenes with locally harvested plants to create a hybrid landscape. This project goes beyond conventional photographic techniques to offer a sensory portrait of the urban landscape.

Sam Falls

Born in 1984 in San Diego and based in Los Angeles, Sam Falls is known for hybrid works that combine painting and photography, and also uses sculpture, video, and installation. Falls seeks synergy with plants and natural elements, often working outdoors. He creates his paintings by arranging plants on canvas, spraying pigments, then exposing the results to the sun, rain, and wind. The negative silhouettes retain traces of place and time. His recent ceramic works incorporate instant photographs of plants applied to wet clay, then glazed, thereby preserving the memory of endangered species.



Sam Falls, *Reflection*, 2022
Fujifilm FP-100C45 instant film, glazed
ceramic, and glass

© Sam Falls
Courtesy Galerie Eva Presenhuber

Chapter II | Symbiosis & Contamination

The exhibition continues with a chapter bringing together artists who explore the interaction of plants with other species and their adaptation to natural and artificial phenomena. Their works show plants as sensitive and dynamic beings that have an impact on ecosystems and participate in complex interspecific relationships such as pollination and the Wood Wide Web. Angelika Loderer, Angelica Mesiti, and Philippe Roux reveal the life cycles and collaborations between plants and other organisms. Rebekka Deubner, Alice Pallot, and Anaïs Tondeur explore the impact of radioactivity and intensive agriculture on ecosystems. This section bears witness to a shift in artistic thinking about plants in symbiosis with the living and non-living.

Symbiosis

This section deals with the question of inter-species networks, more specifically between plants and their environment. By focusing in particular on the modes of communication between different species, this section presents them not as isolated entities but, on the contrary, as engaged in a constant dialogue with other living beings.



'The polyphonic assemblage is the gathering of these rhythms, as they result from world-making projects, human and not human.'

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017, p. 24

Angelika Loderer, *Exposure (5)*, 2024
Plexiglas, chromogenic print, wood,
mushroom mycelium, 37 x 28 x 4 cm

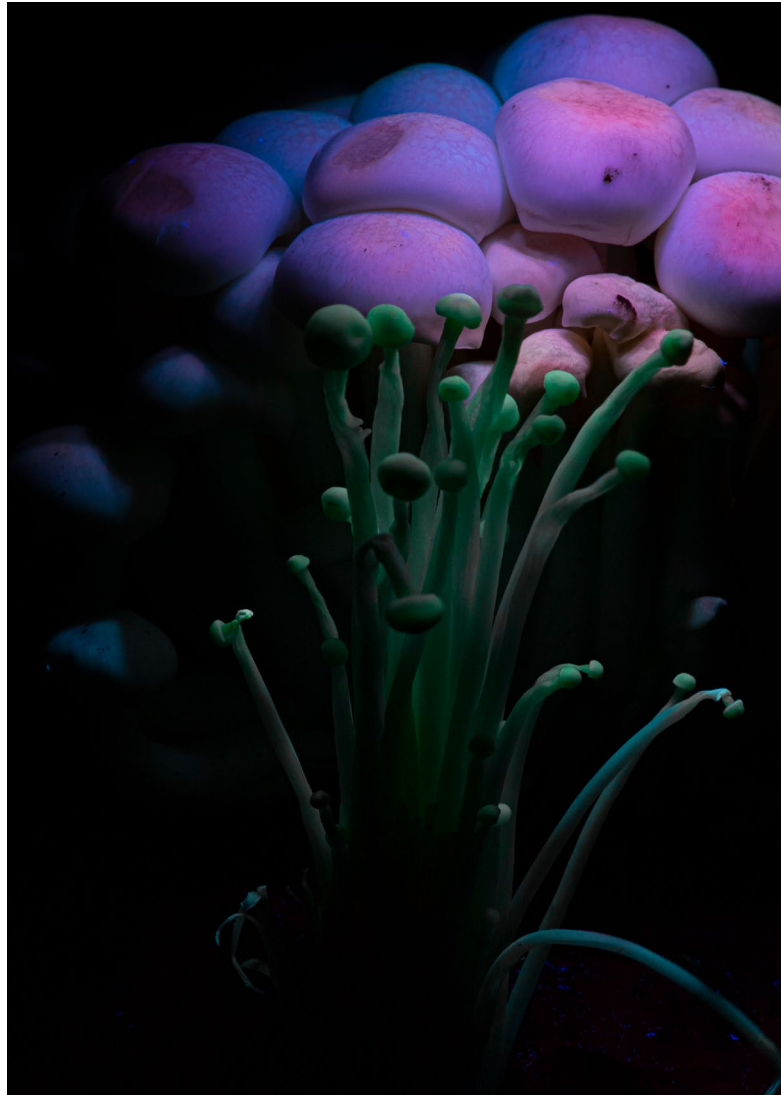
© Angelika Loderer / ADAGP, Paris, 2024
Courtesy of Sophie Tappeiner
Photo © Kunst-dokumentation.com

Angelika Loderer

Born in 1984 in Feldbach, Austria, Angelika Loderer lives and works in Vienna. In her series 'Exposure', she explores the materiality of the photographic image. Fascinated by ecosystems, she uses mycelium taken from forest mushrooms, which she introduces into the frames of her photographic prints. The growth of the fungus, at first invisible, gradually modifies the images, creating new landscapes. By affecting the life cycle of photography, Loderer underlines the transient nature of memory. Her images of everyday moments express the fragility of our ecosystem and the interconnectedness of all things.

Angelica Mesiti

Angelica Mesiti was born in Sydney in 1976 and lives in Paris. She explores ideas about non-verbal communication through video, installation, and performance. Her video installation *Over the Air and Underground*, made after the first Covid-19 lockdown, presents plants filmed in UV light at various stages of decomposition. Speakers broadcast a song centred on the 220 Hz frequency attributed to tree roots for communication. Mesiti uses time-lapse to show the plants decomposing rather than growing, revealing the emergence of mycelia. *Over the Air and Underground* explores the rhythms of the plant world and the interactions between fungi and plants, inviting us to experience the creation of interconnected worlds.



Angelica Mesiti, *Over the Air and Underground*, 2020
5 channel video, 10 channel mono audio,
9 minutes
Commissioned by the Busan Biennale
2020

© Angelica Mesiti / ADAGP, Paris, 2024
photo © Pierre Jouvion
Courtesy Galerie Allen

Philippe Roux

Philippe Roux, born in France in 1988, lives in Paris and Corrèze. He makes films situated between experimental fiction and surrealistic animation. His latest short film, *A Symphony of Silence*, is a contemplative journey through undergrowth, insects, plants, mushrooms, and people. The artist breaks away from the anthropocentric perspective, giving equal importance to all forms of life. The film invites us to listen to and admire these unobtrusive creatures: to feel the growth of grass, the movement of a beetle, the breath of a human being. *A Symphony of Silence* tells a story of coexistence and symbiosis between living beings connected by the earth.



Philippe Roux, still from the film
Symphony of Silence, 2024
Video 2K, stereo, ProRes, 14 min

© Philippe Roux

Contamination

Contrary to the anthropocentric view that pits nature against culture, our ecosystems are not only made up of so-called natural components but also include all the artificial materials and objects produced by human technology. These have a lasting impact on organisms and are sometimes inseparable from the fabric of the living, such as microplastics, chemical pollution, and radioactivity.

Anaïs Tondeur

Born in 1985, Anaïs Tondeur lives and works in Paris. Since 2011, she has been developing the 'Tchernobyl Herbarium' project, which consists of 38 rayograms bearing witness to the nuclear disaster of 26 April 1986 when, at 1h23m44s, the Chernobyl reactor No. 4 exploded, spraying radioactive particles over Europe. Working in collaboration with bio-geneticists, Tondeur shows the impact of radioactivity on the flora of irradiated areas. Her imprints of radioactive plants on light-sensitive sheets evoke the history of photography and botanical classification, while also highlighting current ecological upheavals and the underlining the resilience of life.

Rebekka Deubner

Born in Munich in 1989, Rebekka Deubner lives between Seine-Saint-Denis and Paris. Her series 'Tempête après tempête', produced in Fukushima from 2014 to 2019, explores the fragile vitality of the post-disaster coastal ecosystem. In 2011, a nuclear accident turned the region upside down, encouraging the proliferation of algae and the growth of fauna. Using night-time close-ups and a flash, Deubner captures landscapes and organic elements (algae, insects, humans), revealing something vibrant, wet, and teeming with life. These fragments of life form a new chimerical body that resonates with Timothy Morton's 'dark ecology', exploring an ecological consciousness that is both dark and hopeful.

Alice Pallot

Alice Pallot lives in Brussels and Paris, where she was born in 1995. The works in the exhibition are taken from the series 'Algues maudites' (Cursed algae) (2022) and the film *Anoxie verte*, which explore the proliferation of green algae in Brittany. These algae, enriched with nitrate and phosphate by agribusiness, invade the coastline and become toxic, depleting oxygen and disrupting ecosystems. The project, which began in Brittany, has continued in Toulouse at the LEFE laboratory (CNRS), where the phenomenon is being reproduced in an aquarium to observe the transition from an oxygenated to an anoxic ecosystem. Pallot captures anoxic environments teeming with life, evoking a worrying future while demonstrating the resilience of life in extreme conditions.

'We are contaminated by our encounters; they change who we are as we make way for others. [...] Everyone carries a history of contamination; purity is not an option.'

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017, p. 27

Alice Pallot, from the series 'Algues maudites, a sea of tears' (Cursed algae, a sea of tears), anoxic aquarium at the CNRS with Lymnaea and watermilfoil plants), 2022
Pigment print laminated on Dibond
190.5 × 75 cm

© Alice Pallot
Courtesy Hangar, Brussels



Chapter III | Beyond the Real

This chapter explores the reformulation of known elements, where artists connect ecosystems, invent new plant species, and reinterpret scientific objects. They transcend the natural-artificial divide and invite us to rethink the environmental experience by integrating human beings. This chapter, which could also be called 'Beyond the Visible', imagines the cross-breeding of species born of their migration or of their encounters or hybridisation with inert matter, suggesting potential futures. The artists reaffirm the importance of imagination and fiction as spaces for experimentation in the face of the environmental emergency, and emphasise the need to overcome the divisions separating humans from other living beings.

Joan Fontcuberta

Joan Fontcuberta lives and works in Barcelona, where he was born in 1995. A photographer, theorist, and critic, in 1983 he produced the series 'Herbarium', assembling fantastic plants from industrial detritus, plants, and animals. The series pays ironic tribute to Karl Blossfeldt's photographic herbarium, *Art Forms in Nature* (1928), which revealed the beauty of flora for the decorative arts. Fontcuberta's work questions photographic objectivity and the notion of scientific truth in photographs that mimic botanical classification, creating the illusion of veracity and using humour to demystify the idea of an idealised nature.



Joan Fontcuberta, *Giliandria escoliforcia*,
from the series 'Herbarium', 1984
Gelatin silver print, 39,6 x 30 cm

© Joan Fontcuberta / ADAGP, Paris, 2024
Collection MEP, Paris

Peter A. Hutchinson

Born in London in 1932, Peter A. Hutchinson, trained as a botanist, moved to the United States to study agriculture before turning to art. From the 1960s onwards, he became interested in ecology and was associated with the Land Art movement, making photomontages, sculptures, and interventions in nature. He documented his work in photography and writings from the 1970s onwards. Passionate about science fiction and science, Hutchinson imagined fantastic landscapes with alpine mountains, bucolic glades, and palm trees. His works, which combine different territories, have resonance today in the face of global warming and the transformation of ecosystems.

Miljohn Ruperto & Ulrik Heltoft

Miljohn Ruperto, born in 1971 in Manila, and Ulrik Heltoft, born in 1973 in Svendborg, have created a work based on the mysterious Voynich manuscript, which was discovered in 1912 and comprises texts and drawings of unidentified plants. Using both digital and analog photography, they reconstructed these plants in three-dimensional views, creating negatives and black-and-white gelatin silver prints. Their images, which depict the plants from their roots to their flowers, emphasise their strangeness; they seem to levitate in the darkness. *Voynich Botanical Studies* uses the trappings of botanical photography to question our understanding of nature and living things.

'The whole landscape of England is essentially a planned landscape which attempts successfully to give an idea of the natural. This unnatural nature is repeated in English gardens where a sort of controlled false Darwinism takes place. Plants appear to be competing without actual competition. There is a frozen immortality to such landscapes that can never change in any natural way but only by the dictate of the planners.'

*Peter A. Hutchinson,
Dissolving Clouds: Writings
of Peter A. Hutchinson,
Provincetown, MA: Provincetown
Arts Press, 1994, p. 33*

Miljohn Ruperto and Ulrik
Heltoft, *50 Leto*, from the series
'Voynich Botanical Studies', 2014
50 x 40 cm

© Miljohn Ruperto and Ulrik Heltoft
Courtesy Friends Indeed Gallery, San Francisco, and Vacancy
Gallery, Shanghai



Timur Si-Qin

Timur Si-Qin, an artist of German and Mongolian-Chinese descent, was born in Berlin in 1984 and lives and works in New York. He uses a variety of media to question the idea of nature. Inspired by neo-materialist philosophies and non-Western knowledge, he challenges the division between the organic and the synthetic. His project 'Natural Origin' (2023) combines 3D sculptures and digital imagery with shadow projections to provide an immersive experience. The works simulate landscapes threatened by climate change, combining memories of temperate forests and jungles. Si-Qin aims to create a meditative and devotional experience, connecting with the plant world through the senses and the mind.

Éléonore False

Éléonore False, born in 1987, lives and works in Paris. Her work, based on printed images, explores a variety of medical, domestic, and botanical archives. Using photomontage and sculpture, she cuts, isolates, and alters motifs and transposes them onto different media (tapestry, metal, ceramics, glass). False assembles these fragments into unexpected landscapes which are often deceptive at first glance. Here she presents several works, including hollowed-out books and collages of hybrid plants with other living beings. These works overturn traditional notions of nature, revealing it as something strange and in constant mutation.



Éléonore False, *Chat*, 2023
Collage, 29 x 22 cm

© Éléonore False / ADAGP, Paris, 2024

Chapter IV | The Plants are Watching You

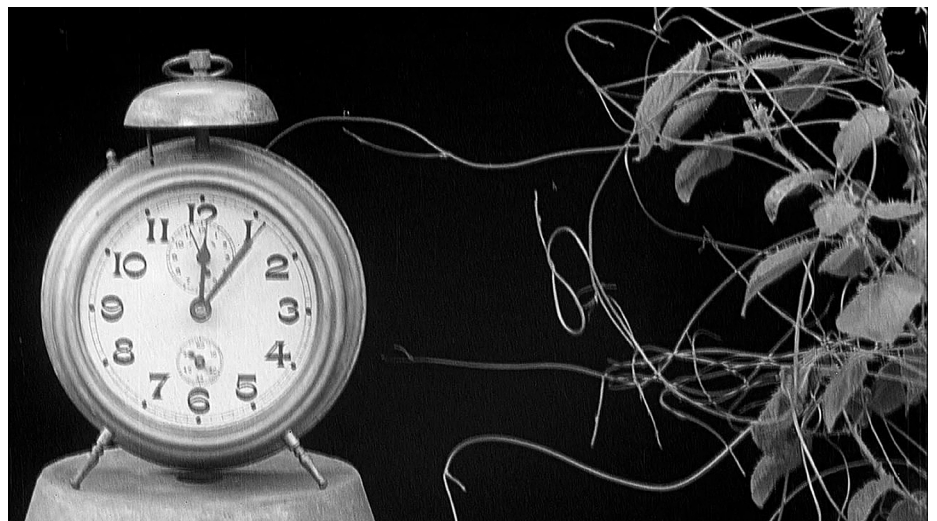
The plant world is a major theme in science fiction, as a source of anguish, desire, and hope. From Philip K. Dick to Kim Cho-Yeop, from Ursula K. Le Guin to Octavia E. Butler, plants are at the heart of many memorable stories. This chapter explores science fiction from the 1950s to the 1980s, in which plants symbolise human vulnerability. Taking John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* as its starting point, this chapter focuses on plants as killers, parasites, and captors. Long regarded as insensitive and amorphous, plants fascinate us with their capacity to survive and adapt as well as their silent expansion, revealing an intriguing mystery.

Frank Percy Smith / Stuart A. Staples

Frank Percy Smith (1880–1945), was employed as a clerk. Fascinated by photography and microscopes since his teens, he also became involved in a microscopy club. His picture of a fly caught the eye of producer Charles Urban, who decided to finance his films. Their first success, *The Balancing Bluebottle* (1908), which depicts a juggling fly, mixed humour with science. A lover of documentary entertainment, Urban collaborated with Smith to develop a style combining scientific imagery and a poetic sense of the comic. Stuart A. Staples, the lead singer of the band Tindersticks, paid tribute to Smith in the film *Minute Bodies* (2017), contributing to the meditative poetry of his images.

Stuart A. Staples, *Minute Bodies: The intimate world of F. Percy Smith*, 2017
Directed by Stuart A. Staples
Photography and animated sequences by F. Percy Smith
55 minutes

Courtesy The British Film Institute



Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau

Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau (1888–1931), who had already experimented with drama and fantasy, made *Nosferatu the Vampire* in 1922, a landmark film that cemented his reputation. Associated with Expressionism and Romantic Fantasy, this film is a masterpiece of pictorial invention. Shot on location, it also makes skilful use of nature. In addition to its script, which was inspired by Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the film incorporates atmospheric elements and documentary footage. Murnau visually metaphorises the figure of the vampire as an extension of the natural order, as with the Dionea closing in on a fly, an image of strange, organic beauty. These sequences are from the UFA's 'Kulturfilms', which were widely shown during the Weimar Republic.

Steve Sekely / Freddie Francis

The Day of the Triffids is a 1960s fantasy film directed by Steve Sekely (1899–1979) and based on the book by John Wyndham. After a meteor shower, monstrous plants invade the Earth. The adaptation by blacklisted screenwriter Bernard Gordon differs from the book in that the plants come from outer space rather than from biological experiments. Although the concept of mobile, poisonous plants seemed promising, the film suffered from mediocre special effects, a disjointed script, and a chaotic organisation that forced the lead actor to improvise his dialogue. Despite its flaws, the concept of mutant plants established the film as an archetype in the genre of the B-movie fantasy. Ken Hannam's adaptation of the film into a BBC television series is also presented in the exhibition.



'What's the good of it all?', he says.

'Dragons and hobbits and little green men—what's the use of it?' [...]

'The use of imaginative fiction is to deepen your understanding of your world, and your fellow men, and your own feelings, and your destiny.'

Ursula K. Le Guin, The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction, (New York: Ultramarine Publishing, 1979), p. 43

Steve Sekely and Freddie Francis,
The Day of the Triffids, 1960
1h33 min
Poster from the film

Philip Kaufman

Philip Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, released in 1978, is based on the novel by Jack Finney. Unlike previous adaptations, such as Don Siegel's 1956 film, which was steeped in the paranoia of McCarthyism, Kaufman took a fresh look at the story. He added an environmental dimension to the themes of alien invasion and a troubling otherness. In 1978, when the younger generation was rebelling against materialism and advocating 'flower power', Kaufman connected the disappearance of humanity to the arrival of tiny pink flowers that digest their victims and create inhuman clones, a replacement marked by visually disturbing plant gestation.

Kalev Erickson

Kalev Erickson's work questions the notion of photographic objectivity and the reliability of documentary by placing fiction and reality in tension. In this exhibition, Erickson presents works inspired by his passion for plants and science fiction, including John Wyndham's book *The Day of the Triffids* (1951). During a trip to the island of Socotra in Yemen, he discovered the Socotra dragon tree, whose roots seem to grow towards the sky, which influenced his visual research. In a humorous vein, his project exposes the human inability to understand the diversity of the plant world, presenting plants as objects of both fascination and repulsion.



Kalev Erickson, *Where the Wild Things Grow*, 2018-2024
Inkjet print, variable dimensions

© Kalev Erickson

Chapter V | Plants as Political Fiction

In this chapter, plants are situated at the crossroads of past and future narratives. Olga Grotova shows plants that bear witness to the conflicts in the Stalinist labour camps. Ágnes Dénes cultivates a field of wheat in Manhattan in 1982, highlighting the urgent need to rethink our lifestyles and universal access to food. The Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway, filmed by Ali Kazma, stores seeds to mitigate future food crises. Samir Laghouati-Rashwan and Gohar Dashti use plants to tell stories of migration and resistance, recalling their central role in political and ecological issues.

Charles T. Scowen

Charles T. Scowen (1852–1948) lived in Sri Lanka and India in the early 1870s. He photographed industry, tourism, and commerce, as well as making portraits of Malay women, landscapes, and plants. Before retiring to England, he ran a tea plantation, a highly lucrative business that contributed to the development of the British Empire in the nineteenth century. The photographs on display explore the connections between botanical knowledge and trade, highlighting the economic importance of plants in colonial history.



Scowen & Co., *Liberian Coffee Blossom*,
ca. 1880

Albumen print, 27,9 x 21,5 cm

Courtesy Wilson Centre for Photography

'Well, today, I found the name, found it while I was weeding the back garden and thinking about the way plants seed themselves, windborne, animalborne, waterborne, far from their parent plants. They have no ability at all to travel great distances under their own power, and yet, they do travel. Even they don't have to just sit in one place and wait to be wiped out. There are islands thousands of miles from anywhere—the Hawaiian Islands, for example, and Easter Island—where plants seeded themselves and grew long before any humans arrived.'

Octavia E. Butler, Parable of the Sower, New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1993, p. 73

Ágnes Dénes, *Wheatfield – A Confrontation: Battery Park Landfill, Downtown Manhattan – With Ágnes Dénes Standing in the Field*, 1982, photography by John McGrail
Chromogenic print, 40 x 50 cm

© Ágnes Dénes
Courtesy Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York



Ágnes Dénes

Born in 1931 in Budapest and now living in New York, Ágnes Dénes made a major Land Art work by transforming 8,000 square metres of landfill in Manhattan into a field of wheat. In May 1982, with the help of volunteers, she sowed grains of wheat by hand near Wall Street, the World Trade Center, and the Statue of Liberty. The harvest in August produced over 500 kg of wheat, which was then taken to twenty-eight countries for the *International Exhibition for the End of Famine*. This installation calls into questions social priorities and highlights the challenges linked to food and ecosystems.

Ali Kazma

Born in 1971, Ali Kazma lives and works in Paris and Istanbul. His video *Safe* captures images of the world seed reserve on the Svalbard Islands near the North Pole. Opened in 2008, this vault, buried in the Arctic permafrost, maintains a temperature of -18°C and stores over a million crop samples to preserve genetic diversity in the event of catastrophe. Kazma's stripped-down aesthetic shows the outside and inside of the bunker devoid of people, creating a sense of isolation and imminent danger. The last bastion protecting humanity from famine, this installation, worthy of a dystopian science fiction novel, is often referred to as the 'apocalypse safe'.



Gohar Dashti, *Untitled #2*, from the series 'Home', 2017
Inkjet print, 80 x 120 cm

© Gohar Dashti

Gohar Dashti

Gohar Dashti was born in 1980 in Ahwaz, Iran, and now lives in Tehran. Her photographic work is imbued with the trauma of war and migration. Shaped by the Iran-Iraq conflict of her childhood, her approach is poetic and fictional rather than documentary. In her project *Home*, plants replace human figures in places that have since been abandoned, illustrating the persistence of nature in the face of human fragility. These staged photographs underline the resilience of plants, offering a political reflection on the power of life in the face of the ravages of war.

Olga Grotova

Born in 1986 in Chelyabinsk, Russia, and now living in the United Kingdom, Olga Grotova combines photography, screen printing, and painting. She explores the past of the USSR and Eastern Europe through the stories of women who are generally invisible in historical narratives. The artist uses soil samples and endemic plants from places where traumatic events took place, such as former gulags. These natural elements are often the only witnesses to events where traces of life have been erased and replaced by official discourse. Her photograms of plants and female bodies, covered in earth pigments, preserve the memory of trauma and resist political manipulation.

Samir Laghouati-Rashwan

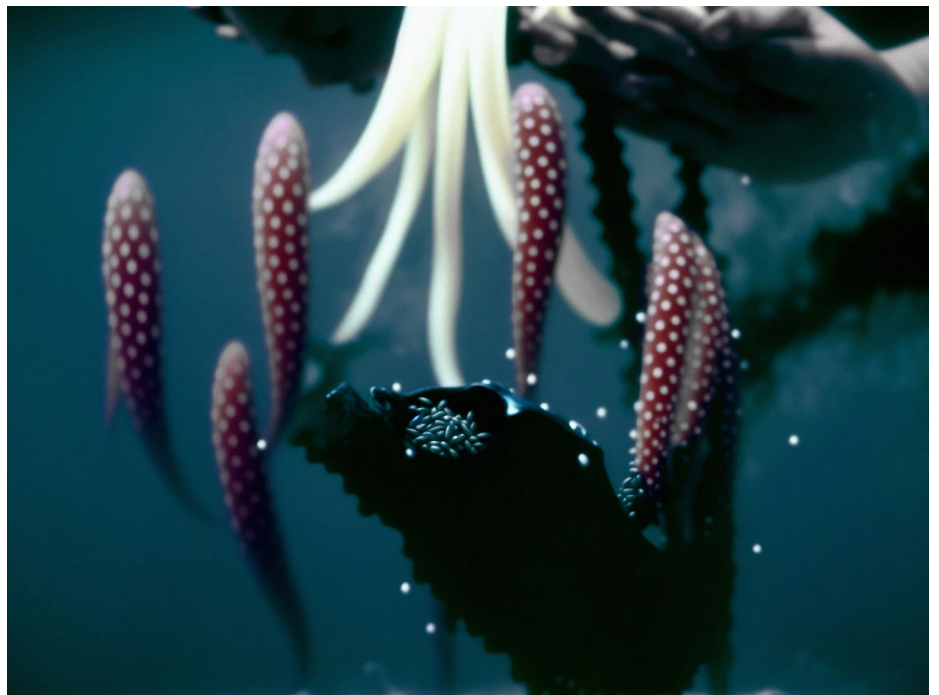
Born in Arles in 1992 and now based in Marseille, Samir Laghouati-Rashwan presents the video *Quinquina Diaspora*, which explores the history of plants and in particular cinchona quinine; used in medicine and the drinks industry, it is an anti-malarial agent and a key ingredient in tonic water. The artist endows 3D-modelled quinquinas with speech in order to evoke their memory and tell of their migration from South America. Inspired by the archives of the Jardin d'Agronomie Tropicale in Vincennes and the story of a friend's grandfather in Cameroon, the artist proposes a plant-based rereading of history, challenging the dominance of anthropocentrism.

Chapitre VI | Speculative Fiction(s)

This final chapter explores the forgotten history of the symbiosis between plants and humans. Agnieszka Polska imagines a time when giant flowers serve as receptacles for humans, their main pollinators. This relationship evolves with technology, reducing the size of the flowers and our connection to them. In *The Book of Flowers*, Polska proposes a speculative fiction that reimagines our relationship with plants beyond symbolism. She reminds us that the imagination is an essential space for devising new ways of living together. This story tells of the end of symbiosis; but it is actually also the beginning of our common history, and it invites us to continue writing it.

Agnieszka Polska

Born in 1985 in Lublin, Poland, and now living in Berlin, Agnieszka Polska directed *The Book of Flowers*, a short science fiction film using artificial intelligence. The film presents a speculative fable about the ancient symbiotic relationship between humans and flowering plants. It combines a classical narrative format and nineteenth-century organ music with images generated by the Stable Diffusion neural network. Using text and 16mm footage, Polska creates a fabulous and strange flora that immerses us in a paracosm—an imaginary world that is usually begins in childhood. This fantastical tale explores technological advances and raises awareness of the relationship between human societies and the plant world.



Agnieszka Polska, *The Book of Flowers*, 2023

Full HD video, 9 min 38 sec

© Agnieszka Polska
Courtesy Galerie Dawid Radziszewski, Warsaw

Press images

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Anna Atkins, *Asplenium angustifolium* (Glade Fern), ca. 1852
Cyanotype print, 33 x 23 cm
Courtesy Wilson Centre for Photography



Scowen & Co., *Liberian Coffee Blossom*, ca. 1880
Albumen print, 27,9 x 21,5 cm
Courtesy Wilson Centre for Photography



Richard Tepe, *Wilde tinstange lithorpente tak* (Chestnut, buttoned branch)
Gelatin silver print, 22 x 16,5 cm
Courtesy private collection, Paris



Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Heterotrichum macrodum*, 1922-1923
Gelatin silver print, 22,9 x 17 cm
© Albert Renger-Patzsch / ADAGP, Paris 2024
Courtesy Berinson, Berlin



Max Reichmann, *Zucchini Bluete 3*, still from the film *The Miracle Garden*, 1926, 1h21 min
Courtesy Absolut Medien



Jean Comandon, still from the film *La croissance des végétaux*, (The Growth of Plants), 1929, 11 min
© Musée Albert-Kahn/CD92



Edward Weston, *Halved Cabbage*, 1930
Gelatin silver print, 19,1 x 24 cm
© Edward Weston / ADAGP, Paris, 2024
Courtesy Wilson Centre for Photography



Laure Albin-Guillot, *Graine* [variante de la planche X de l'album *Micrographie décorative*] (Seed [variant of plate X from the *Decorative Micrography* album]), ca. 1931
Direct carbon print (Fresson process), 50 x 42.5 cm
© Laure Albin-Guillot / Roger-Viollet
Laure Albin-Guillot
Courtesy Private Collection, Paris



Karl Blossfeldt, *Delphinium. Rittersporn*, 1920-1929
Gelatin silver print, 29.8 x 24 cm
Courtesy Gallery Berinson, Berlin



Steve Sekely and Freddie Francis, *The Day of the Triffids*, 1960
1h33 min
Poster from the film



Stan Brakhage, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, 1981
3 min. 16 mm
Courtesy of The Estate of Stan Brakhage / Marilyn Brakhage



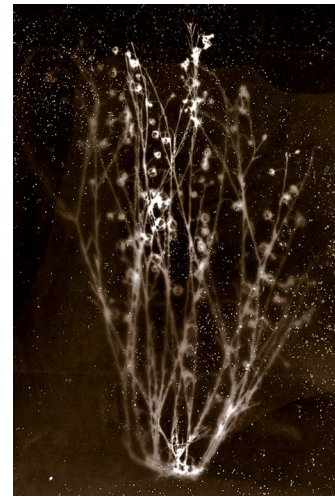
Ágnes Dénes, *Wheatfield – A Confrontation: Battery Park Landfill, Downtown Manhattan – With Ágnes Dénes Standing in the Field*, 1982, photography by John McGrail
Chromogenic print, 40 x 50 cm
© Ágnes Dénes
Courtesy Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York



Joan Fontcuberta, *Giliandria escoliforcica*, from the series 'Herbarium', 1984
Gelatin silver print, 39,6 x 30 cm
© Joan Fontcuberta / ADAGP, Paris, 2024
MEP collection, Paris



Peter A. Hutchinson, *Looking from my Garden to Giverny and on to the French Alps*, 1991
Color photograph enhanced with ink, pastel, 104,4 x 148,6 x 5,2 cm
© Peter A. Hutchinson
Courtesy Gad Collection



Anaïs Tondeur, *Linum usitatissimum* Zone d'exclusion, Tchernobyl, Ukraine – Niveau de radiation : 1.7 microsievverts/h, from the series 'Tchernobyl Herbarium', 2011
Rayogram, pigment print, 36 x 24 cm
© Anaïs Tondeur



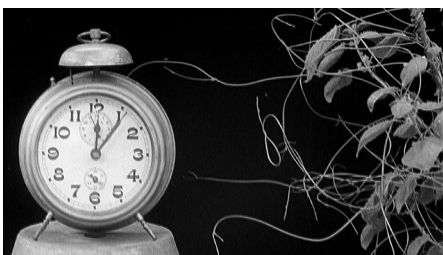
Miljohn Ruperto and Ulrik Heltoft, *50 Leto*, from the series 'Voynich Botanical Studies' 2014
50 x 40cm
© Miljohn Ruperto and Ulrik Heltoft
Courtesy Friends Indeed Gallery, San Francisco, and Vacancy Gallery, Shanghai



Ali Kazma, *Safe*, 2015
Single-channel video, 3 min 17 sec,
© Ali Kazma
Courtesy Francesca Minini, Milan



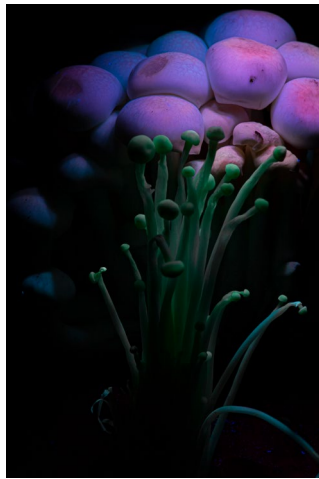
Gohar Dashti, *Untitled #2*, from the series 'Home', 2017
Inkjet print, 120 x 80 cm
© Gohar Dashti



F. Percy Smith, still from the film *Minute Bodies: The intimate world of F. Percy Smith* de Stuart A. Staples, 2017
55 min
Courtesy British Film Institute



Elspeth Diederix, *Digitalis ferruginea*, 2019, from the series 'The Miracle Garden'
Inkjet print, 40 x 30 cm
© Elspeth Diederix
Courtesy Stigter van Doesburg, Amsterdam



Angelica Mesiti, *Over the Air and Underground*, 2020
5 channel video, 10 channel mono audio, 9 minutes
Commissioned by the Busan Biennale 2020
© Angelica Mesiti / ADAGP, Paris, 2024
photo © Pierre Jouvion
Courtesy Galerie Allen



Sam Falls, *Reflection*, 2022
Fujifilm FP-100C45 instant film, glazed ceramic, and glass
© Sam Falls
Courtesy Galerie Eva Presenhuber



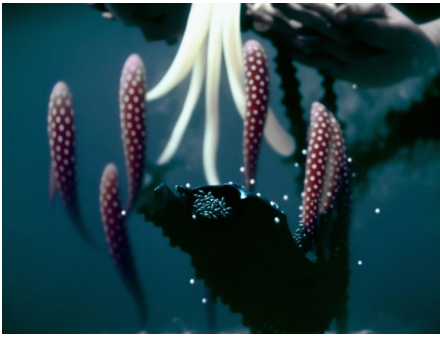
Jochen Lempert, *Perlmutter & Sennenhut 2*, 2022
Gelatin silver print, 22 x 16 cm
© Jochen Lempert / ADAGP, Paris, 2024
Courtesy ProjecteSD



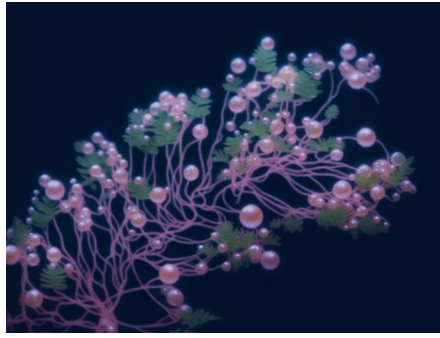
Alice Pallot, from the series 'Algues maudites, a sea of tears' (Cursed algae, a sea of tears), anoxic aquarium at the CNRS with Lymnaea and watermilfoil plants), 2022
Pigment print laminated on Dibond
190.5 x 75 cm
© Alice Pallot
Courtesy Hangar, Brussels



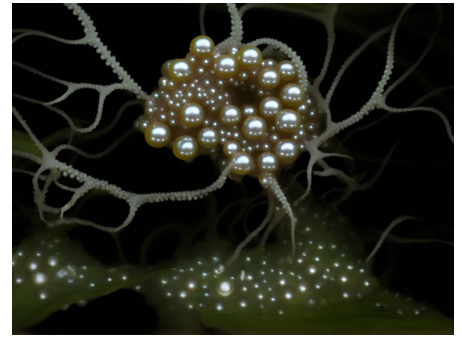
Eleonore False, *Chat*, 2023
Collage, 22 x 29 cm
© Eleonore False / ADAGP, Paris, 2024



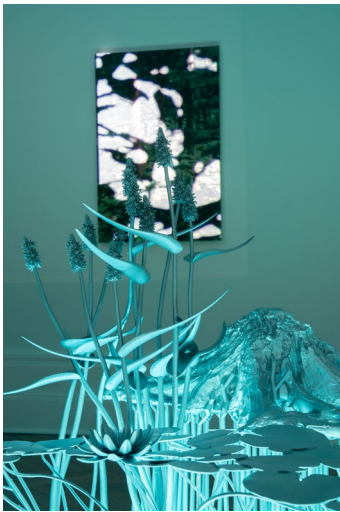
Agnieszka Polska, *The Book of Flowers*, 2023
 Full HD video, 9 min 38 sec
 © Agnieszka Polska
 Courtesy Galerie Dawid Radziszewski, Warsaw



Agnieszka Polska, *The Book of Flowers*, 2023
 Full HD video, 9 min 38 sec
 © Agnieszka Polska
 Courtesy Galerie Dawid Radziszewski, Warsaw



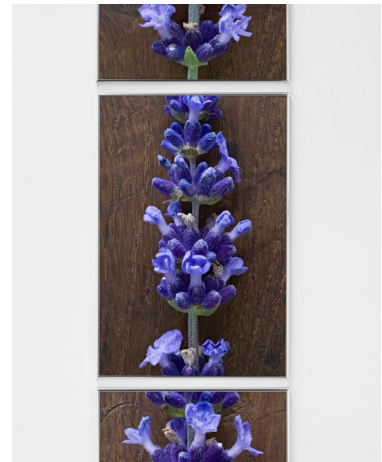
Agnieszka Polska, *The Book of Flowers*, 2023
 Full HD video, 9 min 38 sec
 © Agnieszka Polska
 Courtesy Galerie Dawid Radziszewski, Warsaw



Si-Qin Timur, *Untitled*, 2023
 3D stereolithography print on LCD screen, 119 x 75 x 75 cm
 © Sin-Qin Timur
 Courtesy Société Berlin



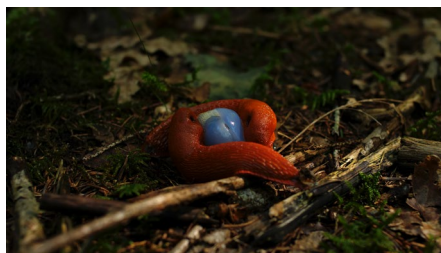
Kalev Erickson, *Where the Wild Things Grow*, 2018-2024
 Inkjet print, variable dimensions
 © Kalev Erikson



Pierre Joseph, from the series 'Suite (Lavande)' (Lavender), 2024
 Variable dimensions, 385 x 35 cm max (x 7) 35 x 52,5 cm, 9 Epson P20000 digital prints
 © Pierre Joseph / ADAGP, Paris, 2024
 photo © Grégory Copitet
 Courtesy Air de Paris, Romainville | Grand Paris



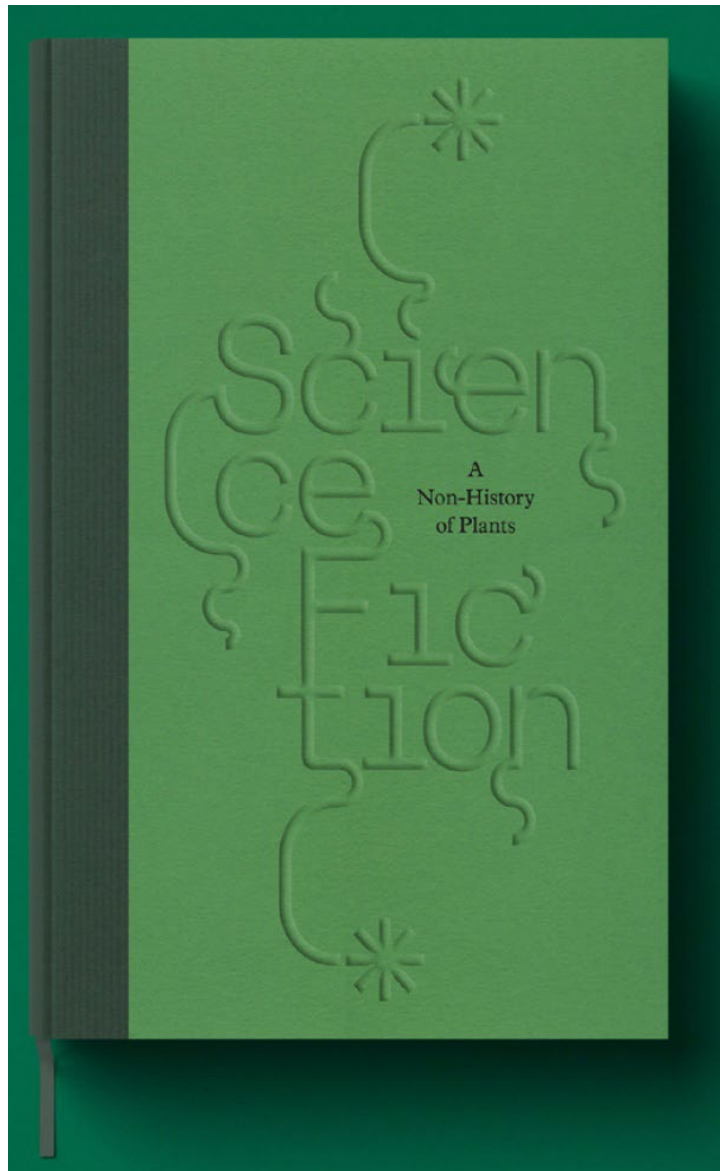
Angelika Loderer, *Exposure (5)*, 2024
 Plexiglas, chromogenic print, wood, mushroom mycelium, 37 x 28 x 4 cm
 © Angelika Loderer / ADAGP, Paris, 2024
 Courtesy Sophie Tappeiner
 photo © Kunst-dokumentation.com



Philippe Roux, still from the film *A Symphony of Silence*, 2024, 14 min
 © Philippe Roux

Catalogue

To coincide with the exhibition, a catalogue has been published by Spector Books with contributions by Giovanni Aloï, Victoria Aresheva, Emmanuel Bacquet, Simon Baker, Felix Hoffmann, Michael Marder, Clothilde Morette, and science fiction writer Natsumi Tanaka.





Studio +1

The MEP supports young artists

In parallel with the programming of the Galleries (floors +2 and +3), which is made up of major exhibitions three times a year featuring the work of artists with established careers and reputations, the Studio (floor +1) presents emerging artists on a more regular basis, giving them their first solo and institutional exhibition.

Curator

Clothilde Morette, artistic director, MEP

Production manager

Elisa Monteillet, MEP

The exhibition is organised with the support of

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Poster, 2024

© Ludovic Sauvage
Courtesy Gallery Valeria Cetraro

#LudovicSauvage
#StudioMEP





Ludovic Sauvage

Late Show

16.10–01.12.2024

The exhibition

The Studio, a space dedicated to emerging art, presents *Late Show* by French artist Ludovic Sauvage. On the edge of a liminal space-time, visitors will discover images in which poetry and science fiction coexist. By working with projected images, Sauvage questions our relationship with representation, space, and time.

Sun, waves, light, flowers.

Night falls over the city.

This succinct inventory could literally describe *Late Show*, a video installation featuring a succession of cutaways and ambient images with familiar connotations. Conceived in the form of a trailer, Ludovic Sauvage gives these images a strong fictional quality by placing them at the core of the narrative. Evoking the clichés of the natural world (sun, flowers, sea) and those of the urban environment (office buildings, traffic circulation), by combining these short videos Sauvage generates a narrative charged with tension. As the artist says of his images: 'They travel between two worlds, for which they are the exits and entrances. They draw on fiction, entertainment, and advertising as extensions of reality, which in fact provides a completely different anchor: a situation in which we all already agree. They are not the narrative. They are its introduction.'

Late Show evokes a catastrophe, although it is unclear whether we are witnessing its beginnings or its culmination. In making this film, Sauvage was inspired by a certain type of dystopian cinema produced on the fringes of New Hollywood, such as Peter Weir's *The Last Wave* (1977) and Geoff Murphy's *The Quiet Earth* (1985). This video is based on analogue images that were then digitised and processed by artificial intelligence software to endow them with movement. Accompanied by a soundtrack that interweaves concrete sounds and synthetic composition with New Age overtones, *Late Show* can be read as a self-fulfilling prophecy that draws on the capacity of science fiction to fashion ever more strangely familiar alternatives.

Ludovic Sauvage was born in 1985 in Aix-en-Provence. He lives and works in Paris and is a graduate of the Villa Arson, Nice, and the Beaux-Arts de Valence. In addition to numerous exhibitions in France and abroad, in 2012 he was selected for the Salon de Montrouge and invited to take up a residency at the HEC contemporary art space in 2014. In 2015, he presented his first solo exhibitions *Terrasse* at Glassbox, Paris, and *Le soleil se meut toujours* at the Parc Floral de Paris. In 2017, Ludovic Sauvage was selected to take part in the 67th Jeune Création programme. In 2021, he took part in the Photo Festival Incadaqués, invited by the MEP. In 2023, he took part in several group exhibitions: *Plein Feux* at the Centre d'art La Chapelle de Clairefontaine, Clairefontaine-en-Yvelines, *Slackers* at the Tonus in Paris, and *Paroi* at Doc in Paris. He also presented his solo exhibition *Boxes* at the Mármol project, Porto. Ludovic Sauvage is represented by Valeria Certraro Gallery.

Press images

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Still from *Late Show*, 2024, 2 min 50 sec
© Ludovic Sauvage
Courtesy Gallery Valeria Cetraro



Still from *Late Show*, 2024, 2 min 50 sec
© Ludovic Sauvage
Courtesy Gallery Valeria Cetraro



Still from *Late Show*, 2024, 2 min 50 sec
© Ludovic Sauvage
Courtesy Gallery Valeria Cetraro



Still from *Late Show*, 2024, 2 min 50 sec
© Ludovic Sauvage
Courtesy Gallery Valeria Cetraro



Still from *Late Show*, 2024, 2 min 50 sec
© Ludovic Sauvage
Courtesy Gallery Valeria Cetraro



Poster, 2024
© Ludovic Sauvage
Courtesy Gallery Valeria Cetraro



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Curator

Aden Vincendeau, assistant curator, MEP

Production manager

Elisa Monteillet, MEP

The exhibition is organized with the support of

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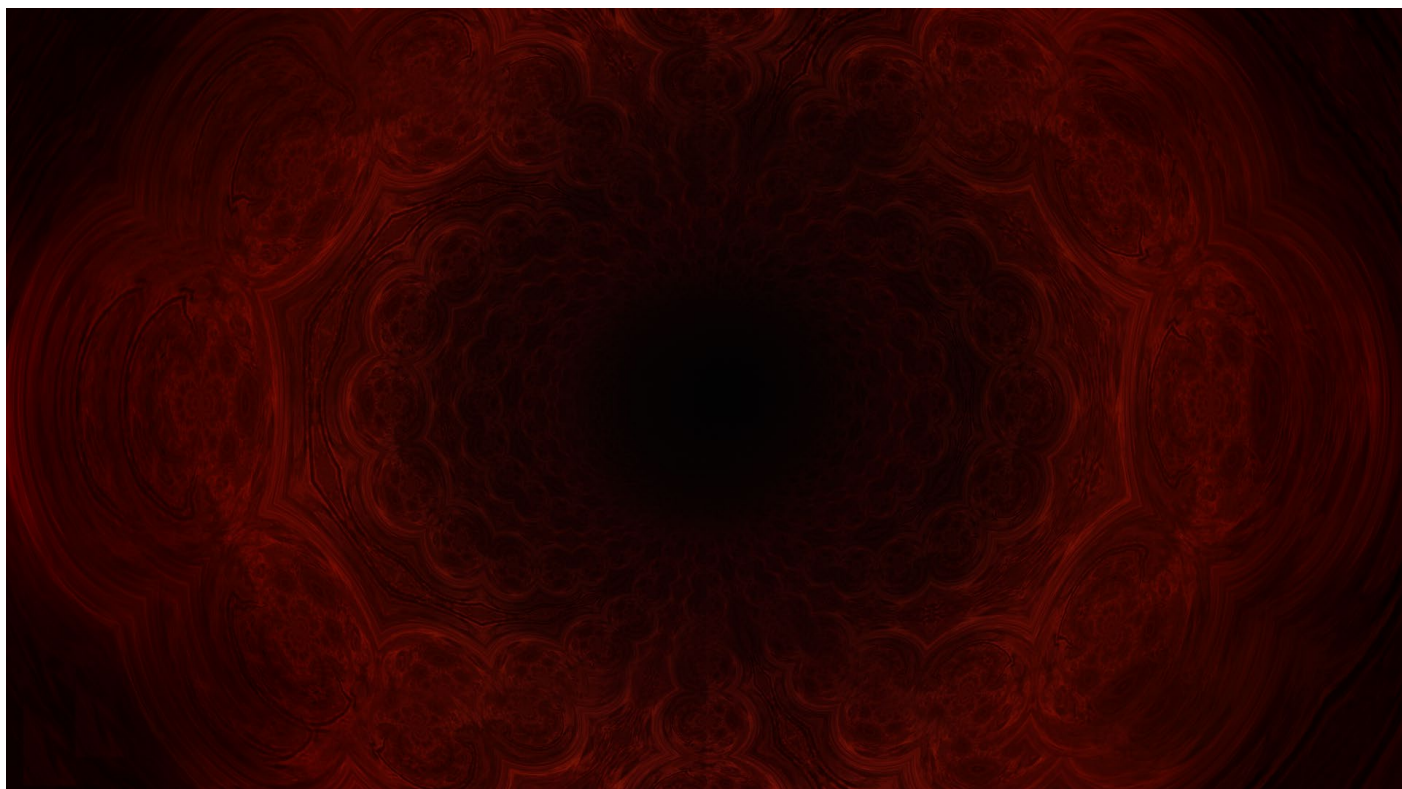
Still from *CORTEX*, 2024

© Maria Silva Esteve

#MariaSilviaEsteve

#StudioMEP





María Silvia Esteve

CORTEX

05.12.2024–19.01.2025

The exhibition

In the second half of the Season, the MEP Studio is presenting the first solo exhibition in France by the Argentine filmmaker María Silvia Esteve, whose immersive installation *CORTEX* deals with our relationship with memory and the subconscious.

Exploring the connection between memory and trauma, *CORTEX* is an immersive video installation by María Silvia Esteve which conjures a labyrinthine forest immersed in a soundscape populated by living organisms. The starting point for María Silvia Esteve's forthcoming feature-length hybrid documentary *MAILIN*—based on the story of Mailin Gobbo, who was sexually abused for fifteen years by the priest at her school—the short film *CORTEX* evokes the atmosphere of a dreamlike forest, as in the telling of a fairy tale, driven by the quest to recover the memory of a forgotten past.

Imagined as a metaphorical vision of an individual's subconscious, the installation is conceived as a sacred place where memory is transformed into an active organ that is in constant reflection. The different strata of our subconscious are evoked by a play of light and shadow that generates multiple densities and textures. As the forest is gradually engulfed by a dense red mass, the video installation brings about an ambiguous space which emerges from the contrast between light and darkness.

Through the diffuse presence of image and sound, María Silvia Esteve reproduces a metaphor for our own existential questions, generating a strange, hypnotic feeling that confronts visitors with their own existence. Set in a circular space with no spatial or temporal markers, the installation is conceived as a place without boundaries, highlighted by the use of transparent panels that interrupt the linearity of the location.

In this way, the public becomes involved in a sensory space, becoming immersed in the director's dreamlike, reflective universe.

María Silvia Esteve is an Argentine director and producer. Trained in the arts and in opera, she develops experimental visual imagery focusing on stories about women led by women. Her films have premiered at Cannes, won the Locarno prize, and been screened at MoMA. The founder and president of the women's audiovisual collective HANA Films, she was also awarded a prize by the Spanish Association of Cinematography Authors AEC, before her first feature documentary *SILVIA* had its world premiere at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) 2018. Her film *CRIATURA*, won the Pardino d'oro for best short film d'auteur at the Locarno Film Festival 2021 and her short film *THE SPIRAL*, shown at the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes 2022, was selected at New Directors/New Films MoMA, as well as the Hong Kong International Film Festival and IDFA.

Press images

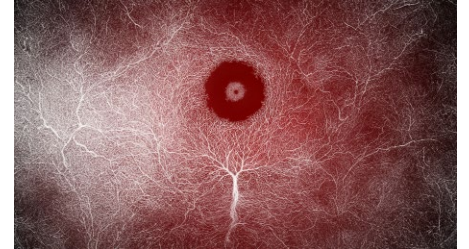
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Still from *CORTEX*, 2024
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Still from *CORTEX*, 2024
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Still from *CORTEX*, 2024
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Useful information

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Opening hours

Wednesday and Friday from 11 am to 8 pm
Thursday from 11 am to 10 pm
Saturday and Sunday from 10 am to 8 pm
Ticket office open till 7:30 pm
Closed on Monday and Tuesday

Admission fee

Full price: €13
Over 65 years : €10
Reduced price: €8
MEP Pass*: €40
MEP Pass 18-30*: €25
MEP Pass Donor*: €120
*Pass for two people for an entire year.

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