

## ROB KESSELER



*Scabiosa crenata*. Fruit – diameter 7.2mm, 2013  
Hand-coloured scanning electron micrograph, dimensions variable  
Private collection

What at first glance might resemble some kind of descending UFO with extended legs is in fact a vastly magnified micrograph image of a tiny seed of *Scabiosa crenata*, the pincushion flower, a member of the honeysuckle family. For more than a decade the British artist Rob Kessler has been working on the frontier between art and science, producing microscopic views of plant material such as seeds and pollen grains, and highlighting how little we know about

the mysterious workings of plant propagation. Kessler applies a fine coating of gold to his specimens before scanning them with a high-magnification electron microscope to produce black-and-white images, which he then begins to tint with thin washes of colour. He does not necessarily reproduce the hues of the objects themselves; instead, he uses colour to enhance the seemingly alien forms, revealing their delicate structure. The results are intended to evoke a

sense of the unfamiliar and an impromptu symbolism that inspires curiosity and wonder in those contemplating the possible functions underlying the forms. Through his art, Kessler makes the invisible features of plants visible, and his extreme highlights of nature reveal the extraordinary diversity of plant forms.