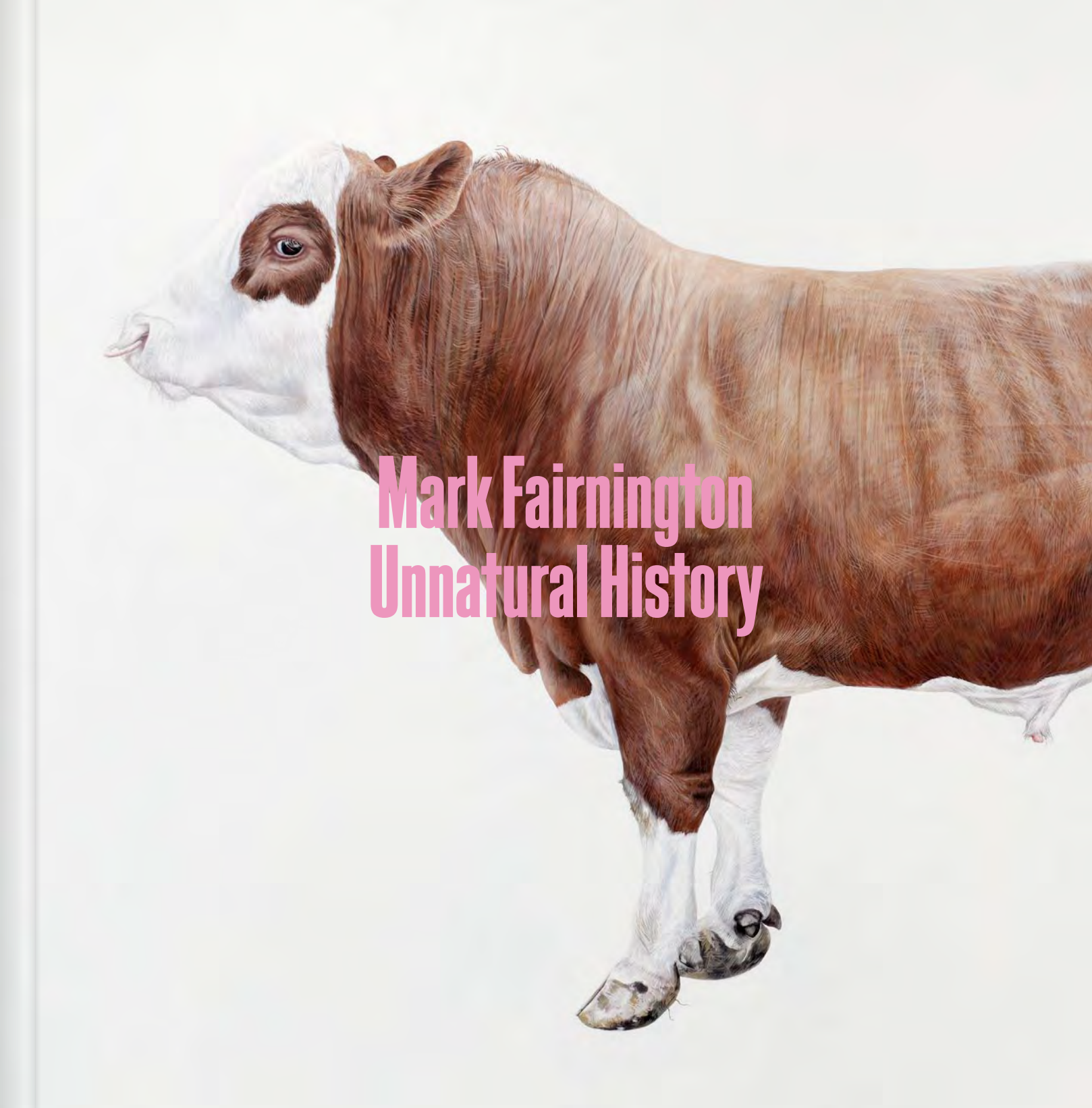

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The Observing Eye

Martin Stather

"The eyes of an animal when they consider a man are attentive and wary. The same animal may well look at other species in the same way. He does not reserve a special look for man. But by no other species except man will the animal's look be recognized as familiar. Other animals are held by the look. Man becomes aware of himself returning the look." (Berger, 1980)

The animal motif, as also the flower still life, has a long and quite checkered tradition in the history of art. We think of the earliest animal paintings in the caves of Altamira and Lascaux, of Dürer's hare or rhinoceros, of the Dutch painter Paulus Potter in seventeen century with his wonderful cows. Then there would be Maria Sibylla Merian with her pictures of plants and insects, the English painter Edwin Landseer, who became famous in the middle to the end of the nineteenth century with his lifelike depictions of animals, and finally Courbet and Realism. A generation later, the German painter Heinrich von Zügel came into the limelight with his depictions of domesticated animals. Finally, Expressionism metamorphosed the animal into the human, closed a gap in the distance between human and animal, not always to the benefit of either.

Mark Fairnington at first appears to follow in the tradition of these historical predecessors. His works show animals and plants that, at first glance, might seem to come from a botany or zoology textbook. The images often have emblematic traits – plants and animals are depicted in isolation or in additions or juxtapositions on a neutral-monochrome background, and often illuminated by an imaginary light, which suggests three-dimensionality where there is none. The isolating of the motif facilitates a focused look that is not diverted although it simultaneously causes a pulling away, that maintains a distance between the subject of the painting and the viewer. The living now seems lifeless, excised from the normal passage of time, dissected with the eye and put together anew. We are thus forced to see the supposedly familiar with entirely new eyes. Like visitors from another world, we are told of the Earth's natural history and this story deals by no means with nature alone but rather, and perhaps first and foremost, with the nature of human beings, who are left out of the images but are, nonetheless, omnipresent.

Mark Fairnington paints what we, in the first instance, generally identify as nature. But he also paints specimens, for example from the natural history museum, thus dead animals, and arranges them in tableaus in intimated glass cases. They seem to be showpieces from the nineteenth century, a painted selection from natural history, exemplified by individual pieces. However, they are carefully arranged in a way different to how a museum would set them up. A veritable dramaturgy is created on the canvas, a chamber piece that tells an entire story in one space. Fairnington's subject is not, however, nature per se, but rather what we see as nature and how this seeing has changed over the centuries.

"Stubborn, muddle-headed, and narrow-minded though she is, she has at last submitted, and her master has succeeded in changing the soil components by means of chemical reactions, in utilizing slowly matured combinations, carefully elaborated crossings, in employing cuttings and graftings skilfully and methodically, so that now he can make her put forth the blossoms of different colours on the same branch, invents new hues for her, and modifies at will the age-old shapes of her plants. In short, he rough-hews her blocks of stone, finishes off her sketches, signs them with his stamp, impresses on them his artistic hall-mark." (Huysmans, 1884)

Since nature is also no longer what it once was. Genetically modified foodstuffs, animals that are bred with more ribs, more muscle tissue in the right places from a marketing-related perspective, or with a resistance to particular illnesses – human beings have long intervened in the natural cycle of nature and changed the creation according to their desires, and in the case of some animals and plants, according to their appetite. Mark Fairnington thus paints what he sees and what he knows. What results from this has nothing at all to do with a romantic enthusiasm for nature but rather with a contemporary form of painting that pertains directly to our lives.

Fairnington visibly does not occupy himself with documentary or photo-realistic painting, even when elements of these types of painting are by all means used. He paints in the way the he as a human being and painter sees things, with the small deviations that the eye performs, with conscious, painterly gestures, therefore, as painting occurs. The result is the artistic expression and essence of how we deal with nature, with the creation, today. Far from being a moralist with an accusing finger, the painter states a transitory condition, a now that is subjected to constant change, as is painting, but in contrast to this, one might assume that this change will hardly be a positive one, even if approaches to it already exist. In order to lift animals and plants, which stand as synonyms for the nature that surrounds us, out of anonymity, the artist adds his view of things, captured in the ductus of painting and/or through highlighting the animal or plant as something particularly unique. Although not portraits in the conventional sense, these images are, nonetheless, distinctive in their portrayal and in the respect that is perceptible in them and expressed in taking a step back. Fairnington leaves his subjects their dignity, their beauty, and their self-assurance; he cautiously approaches them with the means of his painting and presents them in an absolutely convincing manner. The tradition of animal and plant pieces is thus present, but we can also apprehend that Mark Fairnington is also not purely a painter of animals or plants.

In this, his art is something particularly precious – the empathy and approach of the artist does not lead to a false identification with the subject. His images shimmer in the eye of the viewer, do not allow themselves to be pinned down in an unambiguous way, and thus precisely for this reason, exert for us a special, nearly magical fascination. The images of eyes, always in the traditional form of the tondo, allow the viewer to encounter the animal (and more rarely: human being) eye-to-eye. Here, his artistic strategy is perhaps most clearly manifest: we see the observing eye, communicate with a counterpart – and ultimately find ourselves mirrored again in this eye. Magnificent painting that cannot be regarded highly enough.

Das beobachtende Auge

Martin Stather

„Die Augen des Tieres sind, wenn sie einen Menschen betrachten, aufmerksam und wachsam. Das gleiche Tier wird wahrscheinlich andere Tiere auf die gleiche Weise ansehen. Für den Menschen ist kein besonderer Blick reserviert. Doch keine andere Gattung als die des Menschen wird den Blick des Tieres als vertraut empfinden. Andere Tiere nimmt der Blick gefangen. Der Mensch jedoch wird sich, indem er den Blick erwidert, seiner selbst bewusst.“ (Berger, 1980)

Das Tierstück hat, wie auch das Blumenstilleben, in der Kunstgeschichte eine lange und durchaus wechselhafte Tradition. Wir denken an die früheste Tiermalerei in den Höhlen von Altamira und Lascaux, an Dürers Hase oder Nashorn, an den Niederländer Paulus Potter im 17. Jahrhundert mit seinen wunderbaren Kühen. Dann wäre da Maria Sibylla Merian mit ihren Pflanzen- und Insektenbilder, der englische Maler Edwin Landseer, der Mitte bis Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts mit seinen naturgetreuen Tierdarstellungen bekannt wurde, schließlich Courbet und der Realismus. Eine Generation später tritt der deutsche Maler Heinrich von Zügel mit seinen Darstellungen von Haus- und Hoftieren an die Öffentlichkeit. Der Expressionismus schließlich verwandelt das Tier dem Menschen an, schließt eine Lücke in der Distanz zwischen Mensch und Tier, nicht immer zum Vorteil von beiden.

Mark Fairnington scheint zunächst in der Reihe dieser historischen Vorbilder zu stehen. Seine Arbeiten zeigen Tiere und Pflanzen, die auf den ersten Blick vielleicht einem Lehrbuch der Botanik oder Zoologie entstammen könnten. Die Bilder tragen oft emblematische Züge – Pflanzen und Tiere werden isoliert oder in Addition oder Gegenüberstellungen auf neutral-monochromem Hintergrund dargestellt, oft von einem imaginären Licht beleuchtet, das eine Räumlichkeit andeutet, wo keine ist. Durch das Isolieren des Motivs wird ein fokussierter Blick ermöglicht, der nicht abgelenkt wird, gleichzeitig jedoch eine Entrückung bewirkt, die Abstand hält vom Gegenstand der Malerei zum Betrachter. Seltsam leblos wirkt das Lebendige nun, aus dem normalen Zeitablauf herausgeschnitten, mit dem Auge seziert und neu zusammengesetzt. So werden wir gezwungen, vermeintlich Bekanntes mit gänzlich neuen Augen zu sehen. Wie Besucher von einer anderen Welt bekommen wir irdische Naturgeschichte erzählt und diese Erzählung handelt beileibe nicht von der Natur allein sondern, und vielleicht sogar zuallererst, von der Natur des Menschen, der in den Bildern ausgespart und doch allgegenwärtig ist.

Mark Fairnington malt zunächst einmal das, was wir gemeinhin als Natur bezeichnen. Er malt aber auch Präparate, etwa aus dem Naturhistorischen Museum, tote Tiere also, und arrangiert diese zu tableaus in angedeuteten Glaskästen. Schaustücke des 19. Jahrhunderts scheinen das zu sein, eine gemalte Naturgeschichte in Auswahl, durch einzelne Stücke exemplifiziert. Allerdings sind diese sorgfältig arrangiert, anders, als dies ein Museum einrichten würde. Eine regelrechte Dramaturgie entsteht dort auf der Leinwand, ein Kammerstück, das eine ganze Geschichte in einem Raum erzählt. Fairningtons Thema ist aber nicht Natur per se, schon eher, was wir als Natur sehen und wie sich dieses Sehen über die Jahrhunderte verändert hat.

„So verrannt, so verwirrt, so beschränkt die Natur auch sein mag – schließlich hat sie sich doch unterworfen, und ihr Gebieter hat es erreicht, sie zu verwandeln: durch chemische Einwirkungen verändert er die Substanzen der Erde, langsam herangereifte Kombinationen wendet er an, sorgfältig vorbereitete Kreuzungen, er gebraucht raffinierte Stecklinge und methodische Pfropfungen – da blühen Blumen in verschiedenen Farben auf demselben Zweig, er erfindet für sie neue Farbtöne, verwandelt nach seinem Belieben die jahrhundertealte Form ihrer Pflanzen, schleift Blöcke ab, vollendet Entwürfe, drückt ihnen seinen Stempel auf und versieht sie mit dem Siegel seiner Kunst.“ (Huysmans, 1884)

Denn auch die Natur ist nicht mehr das, was sie einmal war. Gentechnisch veränderte Lebensmittel, Tiere, die mit mehr Rippen, mehr Muskelfleisch an den vermarktungstechnisch richtigen Stellen oder mit Resistenzen gegen bestimmte Krankheiten gezüchtet werden – der Mensch hat längst in den natürlichen Kreislauf der Natur eingegriffen und verändert die Schöpfung nach seinen Wünschen und, im Fall mancher Tiere und Pflanzen, nach seinem Appetit. Mark Fairnington malt also was er sieht und was er weiß. Was dabei herauskommt, hat mit romantischer Naturschwärmerei nicht das Geringste zu tun, wohl aber mit einer aktuellen Malerei, die unser Leben direkt betrifft.

Fairnington beschäftigt sich erkennbar nicht mit dokumentarischer oder fotorealistischer Malerei, auch wenn Elemente dieser Malerei durchaus Verwendung finden. Er malt so, wie er die Dinge als Mensch und Maler sieht, mit den kleinen Abweichungen, die das Auge macht, mit bewusst malerischer Geste, mithin so, wie Malerei geschieht. Das Resultat ist künstlerischer Ausdruck und Essenz dessen, wie wir heute mit Natur, mit der Schöpfung umgehen. Weit davon entfernt, Moralist mit erhobenem Zeigefinger zu sein, konstatiert der Maler einen transitorischen Zustand, ein Jetzt, das ständiger Veränderung unterworfen ist wie auch die Malerei, aber im Gegensatz zu dieser darf man vermuten, dass diese Veränderung kaum eine positive sein wird, auch wenn Ansätze dazu bereits existieren. Um Tier und Pflanze, die synonym für die uns umgebende Natur stehen, aus der Anonymität herauszuheben, gibt der Künstler seine Sicht der Dinge dazu, eingefangen im Duktus der Malerei und/oder durch eine Hervorhebung von Tier oder Pflanze als etwas jeweils Einzigartigem. Keine Porträts im herkömmlichen Sinn sind diese Bilder doch unverwechselbar in ihrer Darstellung und in dem in ihren spürbaren Respekt, der sich im Abstandnehmen ausdrückt. Fairnington lässt seinen Subjekten ihre Würde, ihre Schönheit und ihr Selbstbewusstsein; behutsam nähert er sich ihnen mit den Mitteln seiner Malerei und stellt sie auf absolut überzeugende Art und Weise vor. Die Tradition des Tier- und Pflanzenstücks ist also präsent, wir können jedoch auch festhalten, dass Mark Fairnington auch kein reiner Tier- oder Pflanzenmaler ist.

Darin ist seine Kunst etwas besonders Kostbares – die Einfühlung und Annäherung des Künstlers führt nicht zu einer falschen Identifizierung mit dem sujet. Seine Bilder changieren im Auge des Betrachters, lassen sich nicht auf eine eindeutige Art und Weise festlegen und üben gerade deshalb eine besondere, beinahe magische Faszination auf uns aus. Die Augenbilder, immer in der tradierten Form des tondo, lassen den Betrachter Aug´ in Aug´ mit Tier (und seltener: Mensch) treten. Hier tritt seine künstlerische Strategie vielleicht am deutlichsten zu Tage: Wir sehen das beobachtende Auge, treten in Kommunikation mit einem Gegenüber – und finden letztlich uns selbst als Reflex in diesem Auge wieder. Eine großartige Malerei, die man nicht hoch genug schätzen kann.

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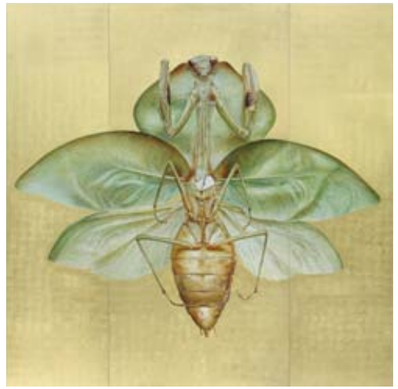


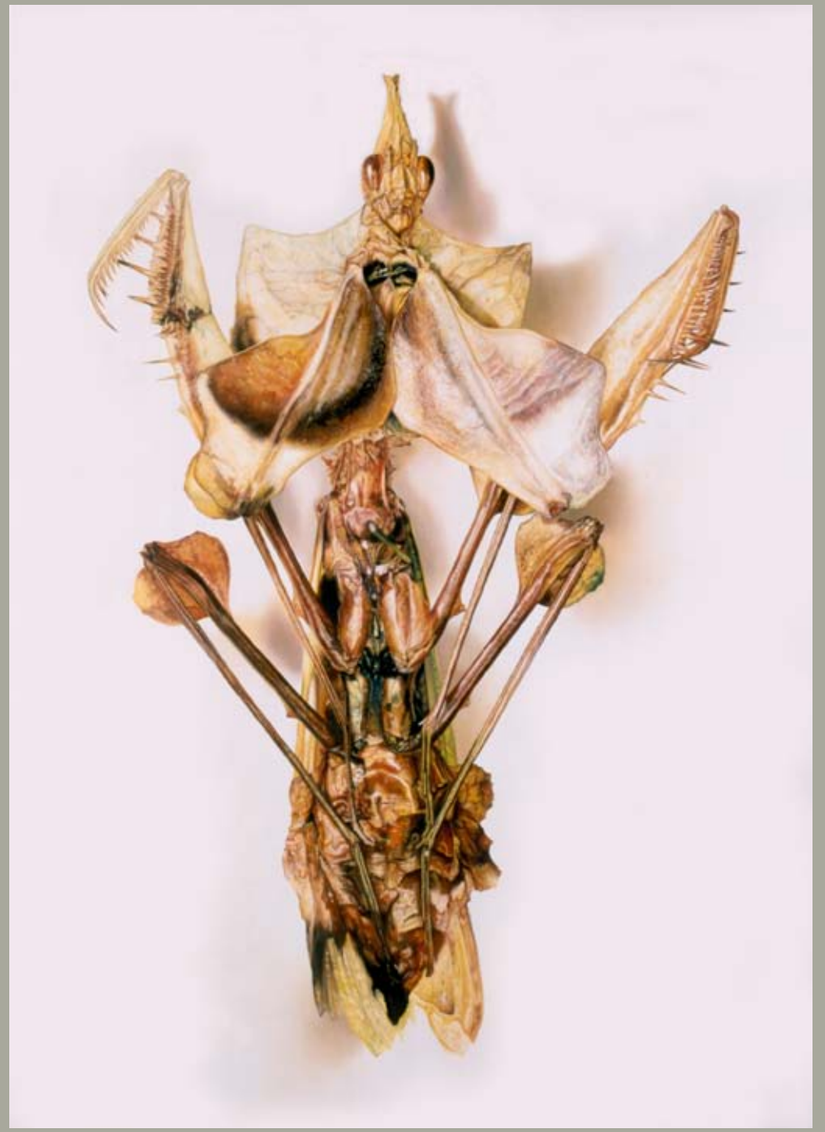
XIV.

XV.

Specimens

I. Specimen (1) – **II.** Specimen (2) – **III.** Specimen (3)
IV. Specimen (4) – **V.** Specimen (5) – **VI.** Specimen (9)
VII. Specimen (6) – **VIII.** Specimen (7) – **IX.** Specimen (8)
X. Specimen (10) – **XI.** Specimen (11) – **XII.** Specimen 12 (Fall)
XIII. Specimen 13 (Fall) – **XIV.** Shield Mantid
XV. Idolomantis diabolica

Specimen (1)
oil on canvas
202 × 66 cm, 1999



Specimen (5)
oil on canvas
228 × 163 cm, 2000

Specimen (6)
oil on canvas
203 × 214 cm, 2000

Specimen (7)
oil on canvas
214 × 189 cm, 2000

Specimen (9)
oil on canvas
103 × 122 cm, 2000

Specimen 12 (Fall)
oil on panel
80 × 42 cm, 2010

Specimen 13 (Fall)
oil on panel
80 × 50 cm, 2010

Idolomantis diabolica
oil on canvas
190 × 204 cm, 2009

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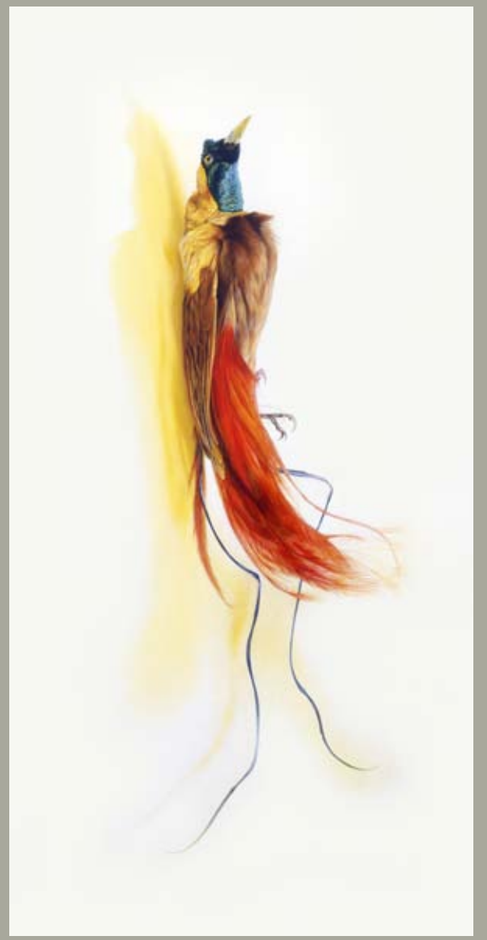
XVII.

XVIII.

XIX.

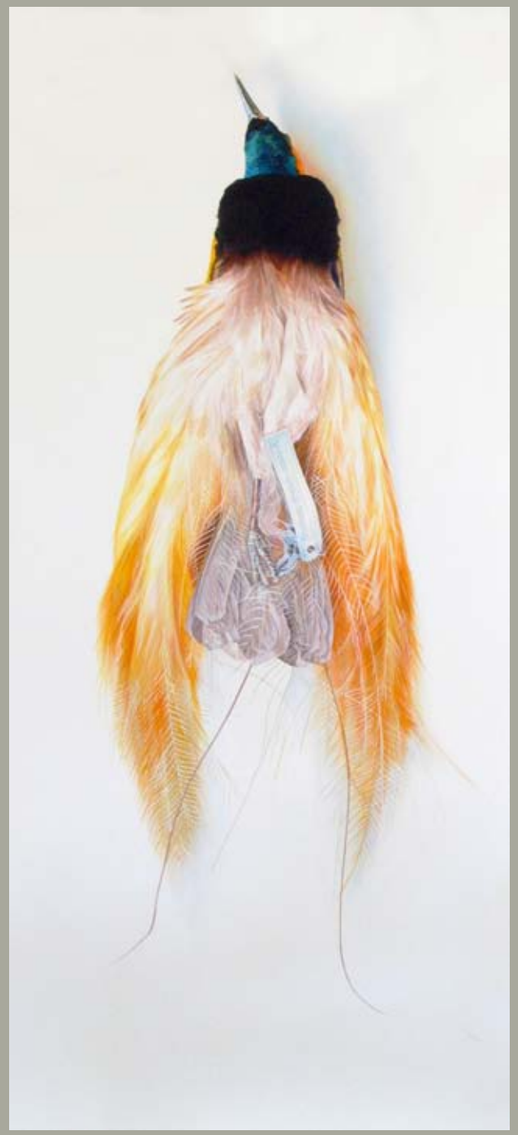
Paradise Birds

I. Paradise Bird – **II.** Paradise Red Revisited – **III.** Paradise Red
IV. Falcinellus striatus – **V.** Paradisea Apoda – **VI.** Epimachus magnus
VII. Paradisaea raggiana – **VIII.** Paradisea augusti-victoria
IX. Wilson's Bird of Paradise – **X.** Paradisea Rubra
XI. Magnificent Bird of Paradise – **XII.** Six-Plumed Paradise bird
XIII. Albert's Golden Paradise Bird – **XIV.** Lawes Golden Paradise Bird
XV. Sickle Billed Bird of Paradise – **XVI.** Superb Bird of Paradise
XVII. Wallace's Standard Wing – **XVIII.** Twelve-Wired Bird of Paradise
XIX. Paradise Deceased



Paradise Bird
oil on canvas
220 × 110 cm, 2005

Paradisea Rubra
oil on canvas
182 × 92 cm, 2005



Paradisaea raggiana
oil on canvas
231 × 104 cm, 2005

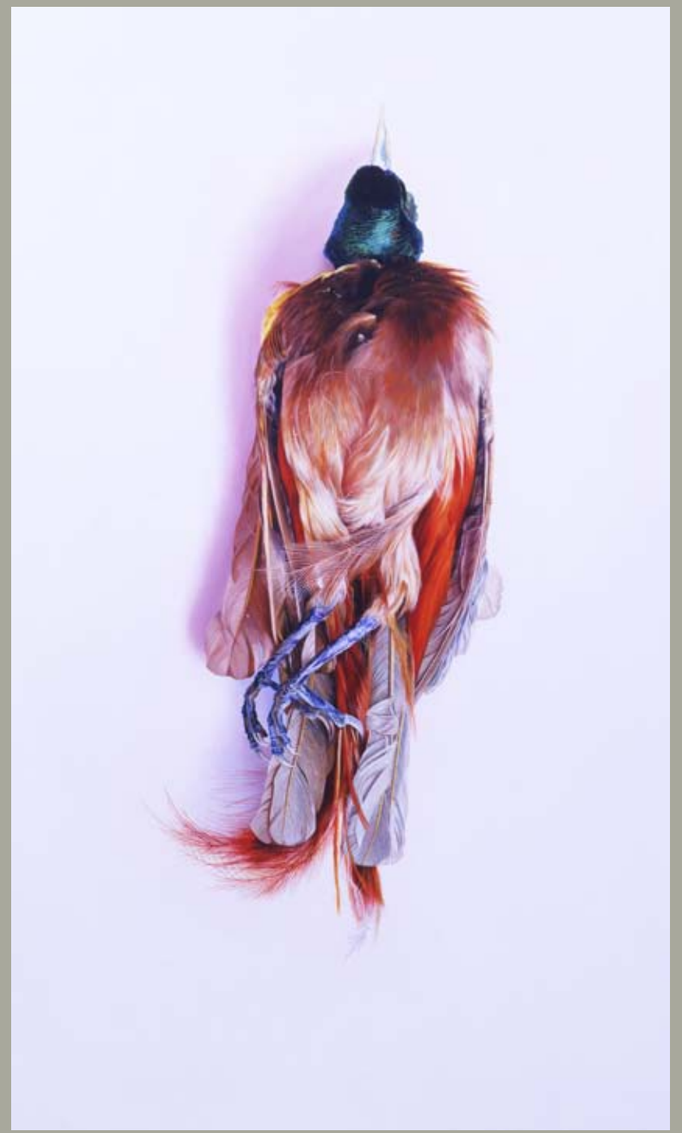
Paradisea augusti-victoria
oil on canvas
231 × 104 cm, 2005

Falcinellus striatus
oil on canvas
200 × 66 cm, 2005

Paradise Deceased
oil on panel
30 × 20 cm, 2009

Paradise Red Revisited
oil on canvas
199 × 118 cm, 2005

Paradise Red
oil on canvas
199 × 118 cm, 2005



An Interview with Darian Leader

Why painting?

Painting is something I've always done, it's the way I've made work since I first started making work so it's never really been a question to me about why one should do it and I think I've tried to understand it in terms of a sort of storytelling. The images that I use are images that I've found out in the world, which I record in different ways, and the making of a painting is like a retelling of that image, and it's a way of connecting my understanding of that image to the history of painting, which is a history that I know and I've studied and which inevitably informs quite deeply the way that I look at the things that I'm researching. Apart from that I enjoy doing it. It's a great pleasure to actually make the paintings and it's a never-ending problem about what painting will bring to a particular subject, or how a certain subject might manifest itself as a painting. And in a sense I only really understand what the process of making a painting has done once the finished thing's in front of me; it's not something that I know before I start making it. And it's the continual interrogation of that problem which interests me I suppose… you know ultimately… I don't stop painting because it's always interesting to me.

Where you working in other media before?

Well I studied sculpture at Saint Martins but I was on what was known as the A Course sculpture which was a conceptual art course that people like Gilbert and George and Richard Long came out of, and when I first left college I was actually making comic books, underground comic books. I was also working with collage, appropriating images from different sources and remaking them in terms of stories. I really began painting again seriously when I was living on a council estate in South-East London, and became fascinated by the stories that people told, urban myths about the place, and I began to make a series of paintings about that.

What kind of narratives interested you at that time?

Things that were unexpected. Things that you would only know about if you lived somewhere, and in a way that idea has come right the way through to the work that I've done recently. The detail of looking at a specific thing generates information that you wouldn't have knowledge of otherwise and I think that's what interested me about those kinds of stories. The first show that I did was called 'Things that fall from tower blocks' and I had a painting with a list of things around it so I think in some ways that idea of observing something and seeing things that you wouldn't see unless you're actually just sitting there looking at it has been important to the work right the way through.

You say that one of the things that interested you in the painting process was recording, and a lot of your work seems to be about not just this but actually recording recordings, exploring how people group and classify.

Yes, I mean looking at the natural history collections, what I really liked was the way in which the image of the specimen seen in collections through to displays… When you look at it now it seems to say much more about the culture that created that display, or put that collection together than it does about the thing itself.

On a superficial level the paintings seem to be about particular insects and birds and plants, but very very quickly the viewer realises that they are not simply about that but they are about the way in which humans classify the supposedly natural world.

Absolutely. And I suppose that the work's also about how an apparently truthful representation can be a construct of a whole number of different fictions, and I think what I got interested in in terms of the history of science was how observed things generate theories, and there's a point where you jump off into kind of fantasy and speculation, and those sort of stories tend to get written out of the history of science. But if you look back at them they're really quite powerful descriptions of the relationships between people and the natural world.

An obvious example might be the behaviour and even the colouring of dinosaurs. We all assume we know what dinosaurs looked like and did but actually we know very very little about their habits and their pigmentation. What we 'know' is a reflection of our own interests.

Yes. And there are many well-known examples of specimens that come back from somewhere, and the person studying them uses a mixture of their imagination of what the thing was, and then when you come on to scientific research put on display for the public, when you go into dioramas and things like that, you get into an even more kind of convoluted territory of different kinds of fictions coming together…

The whole notion of the specimen is something that you explore continually in your work. You seem to question the classical idea that the specimen has to be a paradigmatic representation of the species, as you show the viewer specimens that are broken, or rotten, or holed.

Well they become different kinds of specimens; in a sense they become specimens of specimens. The damage that's occurred through the process of them being collected and stored and, you know, the strange things that happen in collections.

Sally O'Reilly wrote in her beautiful text about your work that it's about a 'meta-collection'; not just a representation, but a representation of how things are represented.

Yes. And another thing that governs the work is the idea of a kind of amateur engagement, somebody coming from outside a discipline. Basically I picked the insects that I kind of liked the look of, resurrecting the nineteenth century idea of the person who just decides they want to do something and goes out and does it. With the bull paintings I just looked the images up online, where the farms advertise the services of their stock bulls and chose to photograph the ones that I liked the look of.

So your own desire and curiosity rather than the attempt to impose a schema or a grid onto the specimens?

Absolutely. And in a way, underpinning the whole idea is the image of the cabinet of curiosities, the Wunderkammer, the sort of pre-Enlightenment

idea of a collection where objects are collected because of their sense of fascination or wonder, and that again is something that runs through the whole work.

But there also seems to be a tension in your work between the paintings that treat isolated specimens where the borders or edges of the specimens seem clear and the other paintings where you have a relation established between specimens. Birds move close to plants and there is a sense of a trajectory or some kind of vector, yet there always seems to be something that blocks the meeting or the union of the two different things. We see the bird or the moth about to get to the plant but with this empty space in between.

Those paintings consciously reference botanical illustration and one artist in particular, Maria Sibylla Merian, whose work combined very intense observation with quite decorative structures. But also the idea that a whole life cycle of one insect can be put into one painting. So in some ways those paintings take this idea of different points in time coming together in the same image, which also happens in the big single insect specimen paintings in that they're made up of thirty or forty photographs shot at different points in time and then put together to make a single image. The paintings with the light grounds definitely reference the idea of botanical painting, whereas the flower paintings on the darker grounds are much more about seventeenth century still life painting.

Your use of background seems to move from surgical white to rich black which evokes nineteenth century velvet.

There's quite a funny story behind that. When I did my first specimen for the Natural History Museum in London, you had to take the specimen from the collection to the photography department and I took this idolomantis and then their cameraman got a bit of black velvet out and spread it on the table and I said "I've never done a black background before" and he said "Well that's just the way we do insects" and I like the idea that the aesthetic decision is just made and then it becomes the way things are seen.

And how about the rather luminous pinks and yellows, colours which seem to disrupt the idea of a scientific background to the image?

I'm always interested in this point where quite detailed painting of specimens becomes a source material for decoration and fabric design and things like that and you see that crossover going on all the time and in some ways that's what the work refers to.

The colour backgrounds seem to index the space of painting rather than the space of scientific classificatory systems.

Yes. And how the space of painting comes into the work has always been really important to me. I suppose what's interested me are those moments where something in the history of painting comes into the way you're thinking. And it's amazing how it's part of the body of the work that is very difficult to record and very difficult to remember afterwards but it's hugely important and…

Can you say more about that?

Well, with the Birds of Paradise paintings, a friend of mine, the painter Andrew Grassie looked at one brushstroke in a painting and said "it looks just like a brushstroke out of a van Dyck" and it seemed to sum up an idea of a kind of portraiture: a brushstroke that is quietly confident of itself, a bit overconfident, a bit brash you know, kind of flashy and I just liked all the references that one connection introduced. So I think the more I've made the work the longer I've gone on the more those kind of references have become important in terms of the way I think about it.

One of the other contrasts I found very powerful in the work is that between death and life. The specimen in the mode of representation that you are exploring is a dead one, it's a kind of mortification.

Yes.

And at the same time in nearly all of the paintings which contain more than one element, where you have the flower and bird and so on, you have both the sense of mortification but also a sense of life, an aspiration towards or a movement.

The first time I kind of recognised that in the work was with the insect specimens. When you open the drawers they are pinned down facing the bottom of the drawer. You just turn them around and they immediately become alive.

In what sense?

Well they're animated and then when you blow them up to the size of human beings they become resurrected in a way, and it was people's response to them as alive things that I became fascinated by. And I think that's again it's something that's run through all of the work: with the flower works it's very like the idea of the vanitas painting in which however alive it is, the sense of death is always there lurking somewhere.

And there's a convergence of death and sexuality isn't there, in those paintings?

Yes, and in the insect works, I was drawn to the idea of the Mantids because of the stories about the praying mantis that so fascinated the Surrealists.

But in the botanical paintings as well, it's difficult not to see evoked the reproductive system…

It's not something I think about hugely when I'm making the work but I think there's this kind of life force in them that's self-perpetuating, regardless of your input or looking at it, a world that will go on without your involvement. I think that's something that I like from those paintings, the barrier between the image and the person looking at it; like when you look at animals in the wild. When I saw soldier ants in Belize in the rainforest, they just marched on and it was fairly obvious that my being there had absolutely no relevance.

There's still a sense of purpose or direction. What ought to be a neutral, blank background is in fact a vector space, governed by desires. The various insects and birds are moving towards this female sexual apparatus. The background is less a neutral space than a force field.

Yes, I like that description of the work. The other thing about the flower paintings is they're

impossible, they're not actual, they're the result of somebody thinking. I suppose they reflect the idea of genetic engineering, the sense that someone thinks that would look good with let's just put it together and see what happens.

But isn't it also a very precise evocation of fantasy life, the idea that what governs the relations between people is fantasy, which always conjures up some kind of impossible link between things that could never be in the same place at the same time.

Yes, I think those paintings are where that idea is most fully explored but it probably underpins a lot of the work actually.

Perhaps this brings us to the eye paintings. What were you interested in here?

What I liked about the eyes was the layering of fictions: they're taxidermy specimens, so the fur and the skin are real but the eye isn't. The focus of the painting is in fact a glass eye, which reflects the interior of the building, the room in which the specimen is being displayed, so you get the institution reflected in the creature. The question of the veracity of images is also important here, how believable they are. When people have described the work as realism, I'd say it's more about questioning realism in painting.

You focus on the reflective property of the eye. The eye isn't something that we see into but that reflects the outside. It reminds us that the eye is something that's being looked at by the containing space rather than the other way round.

And often there's a kind of image of me in there, taking the photograph.

Why do you make the eye paintings round when the eye isn't?

The roundness came from thinking about them being shown as paintings, and I like the idea that these are objects you might have found in some curious collection somewhere that weren't necessarily made to be hung on the wall but actually just made to be brought out and looked at so they didn't hang on the architecture in any way. They could just float.

They're also evocative of classical shields or amulets which often had an eye motif, or the ocellus in the animal and insect world.

For me, the other thing about the shape of the eye paintings and their format is something to do with the idea of possession. The first eye painting I ever did was actually a self-portrait eye that was mounted inside a woman's compact and that was made in response to a piece in the Harris Museum collection of a woman's eye painted on a brooch. It was made for a nineteenth century English aristocrat who fell in love with a woman from the Belgian royal family. He was told there was no way it was going to happen so he had her eye painted on a brooch and there's this idea that somehow the image is a way of possessing something, and the shape strengthens that idea that this is a collected thing, rather than an image to be seen.

So again the idea of the space of a collection as reflecting the human necessities to classify, possess and contain.

Yes. The more recent eye paintings are less actual animals than a mixture of different creatures, so they become more like imagined things and the skin and fur stretch far beyond what it ever would if it was wrapped around a skull.

And how do you see the relation between the eye paintings and the collection works?

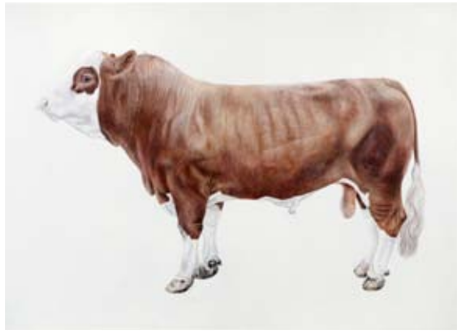
I think some of the paintings of collections, in particular the ones of the storage depot at the Natural History Museum seem to be more about a particular collection, a particular place, whereas the eye paintings don't seem to be like that: they detach themselves from an institution in as much as they can, they seem to reach out beyond those walls.

It's interesting to go back to the works that you did many years ago, like 'Objects fallen from tower blocks'. Was that in itself a sort of minimal collection?

It makes us wonder what one thing is next to another thing, and I suppose there's a whole series of works that I did before any of the natural history paintings that looked at the idea of collections in different ways. I did a series that looked at early Renaissance images of the Madonna and Child and portraits of body builders cropped out of magazines, so I think that the idea of the painting series being a kind of collection is something that goes back much further.

With the tower block presumably the objects themselves had an arbitrariness or a contingency but your artistic act rendered them into a collection. Whereas then you moved to this kind of meta level where it's collections of collections… you're exploring in a way the act that made you classify or combine in the first place…

I suppose the other thing about that is where do you end, when do you stop, because in a sense there's a sort of terrifying idea that once you've started doing this you kind of have to keep going because that's the road you're on.



I.

II.

III.

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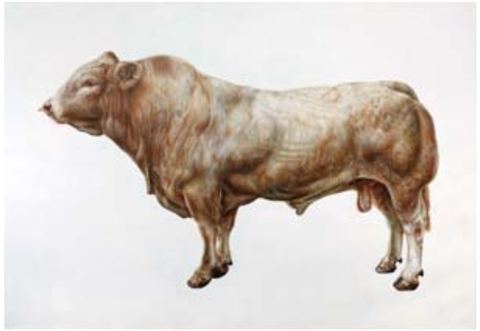

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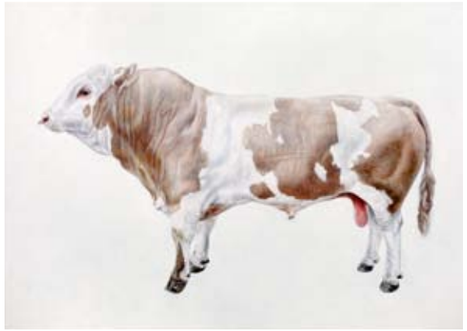
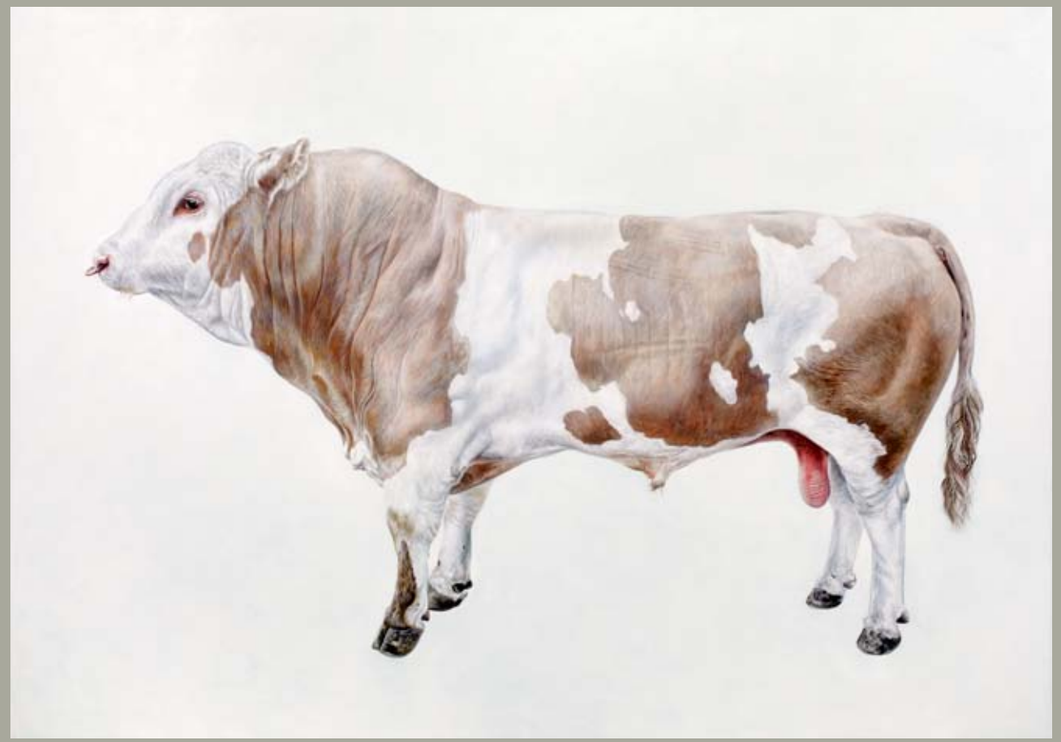


VI.

Bulls

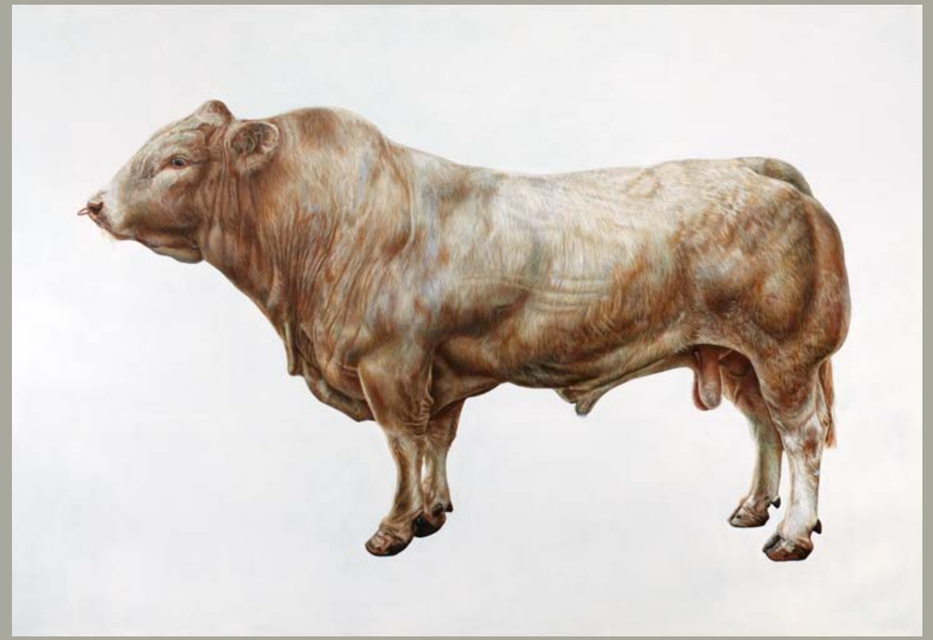
I. Turbo Tommy – **II.** Maerdy Tally
III. Gretnahouse Umpire – **IV.** Soldier
V. Doncombe Aga Khan – **VI.** Wroxall Tracer

Gretnahouse Umpire
oil and palladium on panel
235 × 366 cm, 2010

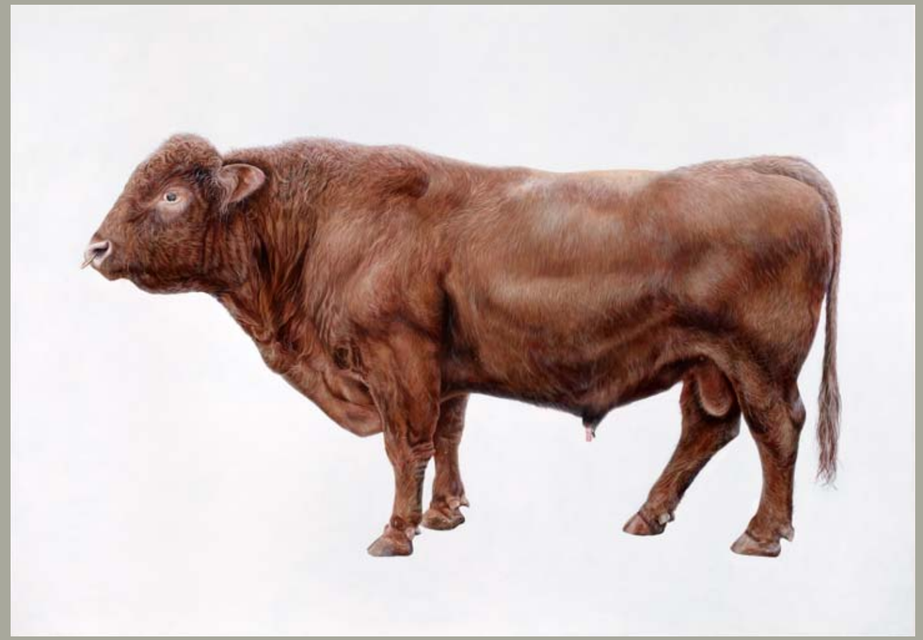


Wroxall Tracer
oil on canvas
235 × 330 cm, 2009

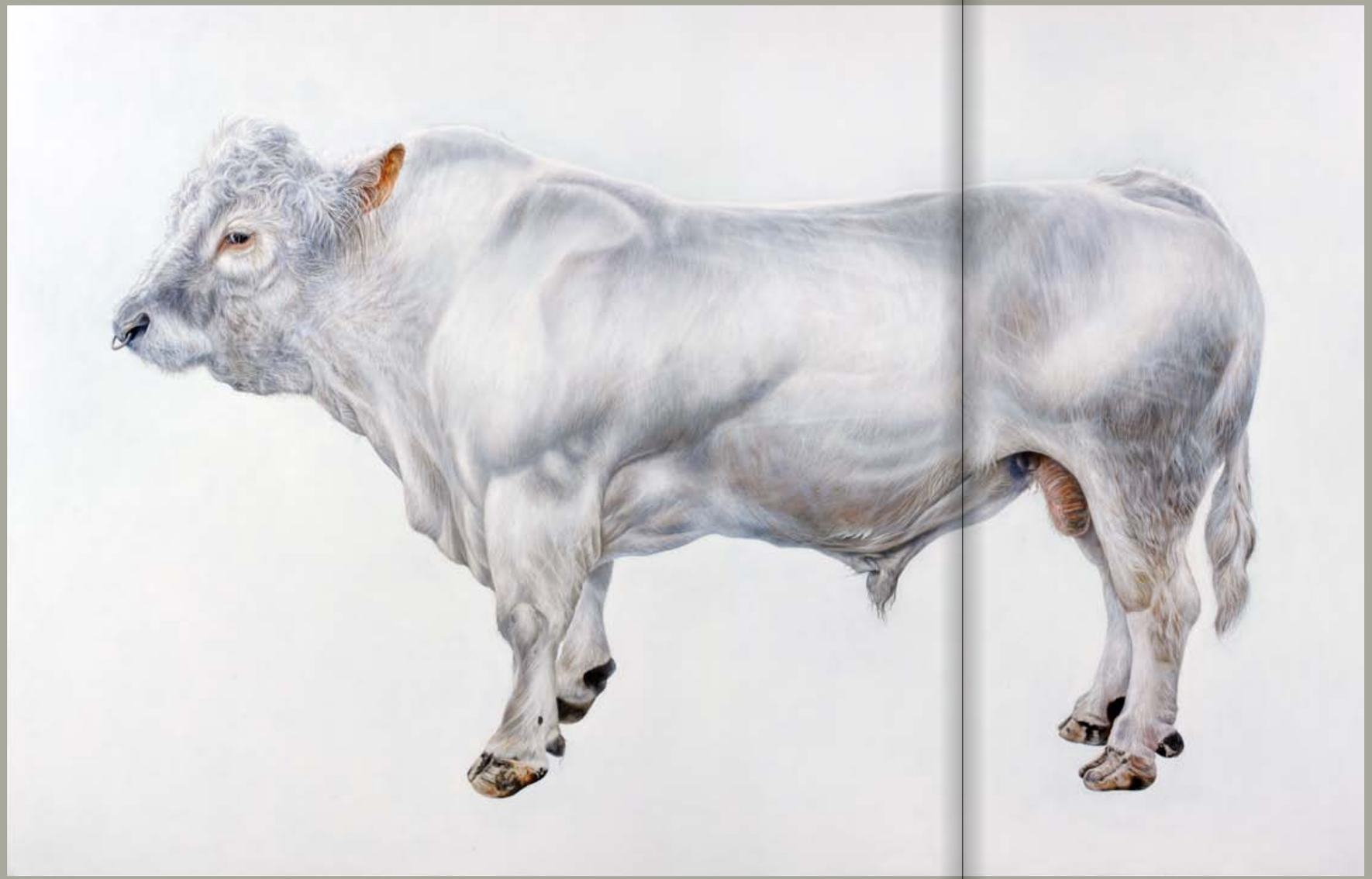
Turbo Tommy
oil on canvas
235 ×330 cm, 2009



Doncombe Aga Khan
oil on canvas
235 × 342 cm, 2011



Soldier
oil on canvas
235 × 330 cm, 2010



Maerdy Tally
oil on canvas
235 × 367 cm, 2009

German interview missing mit Darian Leader

Why painting?

Painting is something I've always done, it's the way I've made work since I first started making work so it's never really been a question to me about why one should do it and I think I've tried to understand it in terms of a sort of storytelling. The images that I use are images that I've found out in the world, which I record in different ways, and the making of a painting is like a retelling of that image, and it's a way of connecting my understanding of that image to the history of painting, which is a history that I know and I've studied and which inevitably informs quite deeply the way that I look at the things that I'm researching. Apart from that I enjoy doing it. It's a great pleasure to actually make the paintings and it's a never-ending problem about what painting will bring to a particular subject, or how a certain subject might manifest itself as a painting. And in a sense I only really understand what the process of making a painting has done once the finished thing's in front of me; it's not something that I know before I start making it. And it's the continual interrogation of that problem which interests me I suppose… you know ultimately… I don't stop painting because it's always interesting to me.

Where you working in other media before?

Well I studied sculpture at Saint Martins but I was on what was known as the A Course sculpture which was a conceptual art course that people like Gilbert and George and Richard Long came out of, and when I first left college I was actually making comic books, underground comic books. I was also working with collage, appropriating images from different sources and remaking them in terms of stories. I really began painting again seriously when I was living on a council estate in South-East London, and became fascinated by the stories that people told, urban myths about the place, and I began to make a series of paintings about that.

What kind of narratives interested you at that time?

Things that were unexpected. Things that you would only know about if you lived somewhere, and in a way that idea has come right the way through to the work that I've done recently. The detail of looking at a specific thing generates information that you wouldn't have knowledge of otherwise and I think that's what interested me about those kinds of stories. The first show that I did was called 'Things that fall from tower blocks' and I had a painting with a list of things around it so I think in some ways that idea of observing something and seeing things that you wouldn't see unless you're actually just sitting there looking at it has been important to the work right the way through.

You say that one of the things that interested you in the painting process was recording, and a lot of your work seems to be about not just this but actually recording recordings, exploring how people group and classify.

Yes, I mean looking at the Natural History collections, what I really liked was the way in which the image of the specimen seen in collections through to displays… When you look at it now it seems to say much more about the culture that created that display, or put that collection together than it does about the thing itself.

On a superficial level the paintings seem to be about particular insects and birds and plants, but very very quickly the viewer realises that they are not simply about that but they are about the way in which humans classify the supposedly natural world.

Absolutely. And I suppose that the work's also about how an apparently truthful representation can be a construct of a whole number of different fictions, and I think what I got interested in in terms of the history of science was how observed things generate theories, and there's a point where you jump off into kind of fantasy and speculation, and those sort of stories tend to get written out of the history of science. But if you look back at them they're really quite powerful descriptions of the relationships between people and the natural world.

An obvious example might be the behaviour and even the colouring of dinosaurs. We all assume we know what dinosaurs looked like and did but actually we know very very little about their habits and their pigmentation. What we 'know' is a reflection of our own interests.

Yes. And there are many well-known examples of specimens that come back from somewhere, and the person studying them uses a mixture of their imagination of what the thing was, and then when you come on to scientific research put on display for the public, when you go into dioramas and things like that, you get into an even more kind of convoluted territory of different kinds of fictions coming together…

The whole notion of the specimen is something that you explore continually in your work. You seem to question the classical idea that the specimen has to be a paradigmatic representation of the species, as you show the viewer specimens that are broken, or rotten, or holed.

Well they become different kinds of specimens; in a sense they become specimens of specimens. The damage that's occurred through the process of them being collected and stored and, you know, the strange things that happen in collections.

Sally O'Reilly wrote in her beautiful text about your work that it's about a 'meta-collection'; not just a representation, but a representation of how things are represented.

Yes. And another thing that governs the work is the idea of a kind of amateur engagement, somebody coming from outside a discipline. Basically I picked the insects that I kind of liked the look of, resurrecting the nineteenth century idea of the person who just decides they want to do something and goes out and does it. With the bull paintings I just looked the images up online, where the farms advertise the services of their stock bulls and chose to photograph the ones that I liked the look of.

So your own desire and curiosity rather than the attempt to impose a schema or a grid onto the specimens?

Absolutely. And in a way, underpinning the whole idea is the image of the cabinet of curiosities, the

Wunderkammer, the sort of pre-Enlightenment idea of a collection where objects are collected because of their sense of fascination or wonder, and that again is something that runs through the whole work.

But there also seems to be a tension in your work between the paintings that treat isolated specimens where the borders or edges of the specimens seem clear and the other paintings where you have a relation established between specimens. Birds move close to plants and there is a sense of a trajectory or some kind of vector, yet there always seems to be something that blocks the meeting or the union of the two different things. We see the bird or the moth about to get to the plant but with this empty space in between.

Those paintings consciously reference botanical illustration and one artist in particular, Maria Sibylla Merian, whose work combined very intense observation with quite decorative structures. But also the idea that a whole life cycle of one insect can be put into one painting. So in some ways those paintings take this idea of different points in time coming together in the same image, which also happens in the big single insect specimen paintings in that they're made up of thirty or forty photographs shot at different points in time and then put together to make a single image. The paintings with the light grounds definitely reference the idea of botanical painting, whereas the flower paintings on the darker grounds are much more about seventeenth century still life painting.

Your use of background seems to move from surgical white to rich black which evokes nineteenth century velvet.

There's quite a funny story behind that. When I did my first specimen for the Natural History Museum in London, you had to take the specimen from the collection to the photography department and I took this idolomantis and then their cameraman got a bit of black velvet out and spread it on the table and I said "I've never done a black background before" and he said "Well that's just the way we do insects" and I just like the idea that the aesthetic decision is just made and then it becomes the way things are seen.

And how about the rather luminous pinks and yellows, colours which seem to disrupt the idea of a scientific background to the image?

I'm always interested in this point where quite detailed painting of specimens becomes a source material for decoration and fabric design and things like that and you see that crossover going on all the time and in some ways that's what the work refers to.

The colour backgrounds seem to index the space of painting rather than the space of scientific classificatory systems.

Yes. And how the space of painting comes into the work has always been really important to me. I suppose what's interested me are those moments where something in the history of painting comes into the way you're thinking. And it's amazing how it's part of the body of the work that is very difficult to record and very difficult to remember afterwards but it's hugely important and…

Can you say more about that?

Well, with the Birds of Paradise paintings, a friend of mine, the painter Andrew Grassie looked at one brushstroke in a painting and said "it looks just like a brushstroke out of a van Dyck" and it seemed to sum up an idea of a kind of portraiture: a brushstroke that is quietly confident of itself, a bit overconfident, a bit brash you know, kind of flashy and I just liked all the references that one connection introduced. So I think the more I've made the work the longer I've gone on the more those kind of references have become important in terms of the way I think about it.

One of the other contrasts I found very powerful in the work is that between death and life. The specimen in the mode of representation that you are exploring is a dead one, it's a kind of mortification.

Yes.

And at the same time in nearly all of the paintings which contain more than one element, where you have the flower and bird and so on, you have both the sense of mortification but also a sense of life, an aspiration towards or a movement.

The first time I kind of recognised that in the work was with the insect specimens. When you open the drawers they are pinned down facing the bottom of the drawer. You just turn them around and they immediately become alive.

In what sense?

Well they're animated and then when you blow them up to the size of human beings they become resurrected in a way, and it was people's response to them as alive things that I became fascinated by. And I think that's again it's something that's run through all of the work: with the flower works it's very like the idea of the vanitas painting in which however alive it is, the sense of death is always there lurking somewhere.

And there's a convergence of death and sexuality isn't there, in those paintings?

Yes, and in the insect works, I was drawn to the idea of the Mantids because of the stories about the praying mantis that so fascinated the Surrealists.

But in the botanical paintings as well, it's difficult not to see evoked the reproductive system…

It's not something I think about hugely when I'm making the work but I think there's this kind of life force in them that's self-perpetuating, regardless of your input or looking at it, a world that will go on without your involvement. I think that's something that I like from those paintings, the barrier between the image and the person looking at it; like when you look at animals in the wild. When I saw soldier ants in Belize in the rainforest, they just marched on and it was fairly obvious that my being there had absolutely no relevance.

There's still a sense of purpose or direction. What ought to be a neutral, blank background is in fact a vector space, governed by desires. The various insects and birds are moving towards this female sexual apparatus. The background is less a neutral space than a force field.

Yes, I like that description of the work. The other thing about the flower paintings is they're impossible, they're not actual, they're the result of somebody thinking. I suppose they reflect the idea of genetic engineering, the sense that someone thinks that would look good with let's just put it together and see what happens.

But isn't it also a very precise evocation of fantasy life, the idea that what governs the relations between people is fantasy, which always conjures up some kind of impossible link between things that could never be in the same place at the same time.

Yes, I think those paintings are where that idea is most fully explored but it probably underpins a lot of the work actually.

Perhaps this brings us to the eye paintings. What were you interested in here?

What I liked about the eyes was the layering of fictions: they're taxidermy specimens, so the fur and the skin are real but the eye isn't. The focus of the painting is in fact a glass eye, which reflects the interior of the building, the room in which the specimen is being displayed, so you get the institution reflected in the creature. The question of the veracity of images is also important here, how believable they are. When people have described the work as realism, I'd say it's more about questioning realism in painting.

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And often there's a kind of image of me in there, taking the photograph.

Why do you make the eye paintings round when the eye isn't?

The roundness came from thinking about them being shown as paintings, and I like the idea that these are objects you might have found in some curious collection somewhere that weren't necessarily made to be hung on the wall but actually just made to be brought out and looked at so they didn't hang on the architecture in any way. They could just float.

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Yes. The more recent eye paintings are less actual animals than a mixture of different creatures, so they become more like imagined things and the skin and fur stretch far beyond what it ever would if it was wrapped around a skull.

And how do you see the relation between the eye paintings and the collection works?

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XXI.

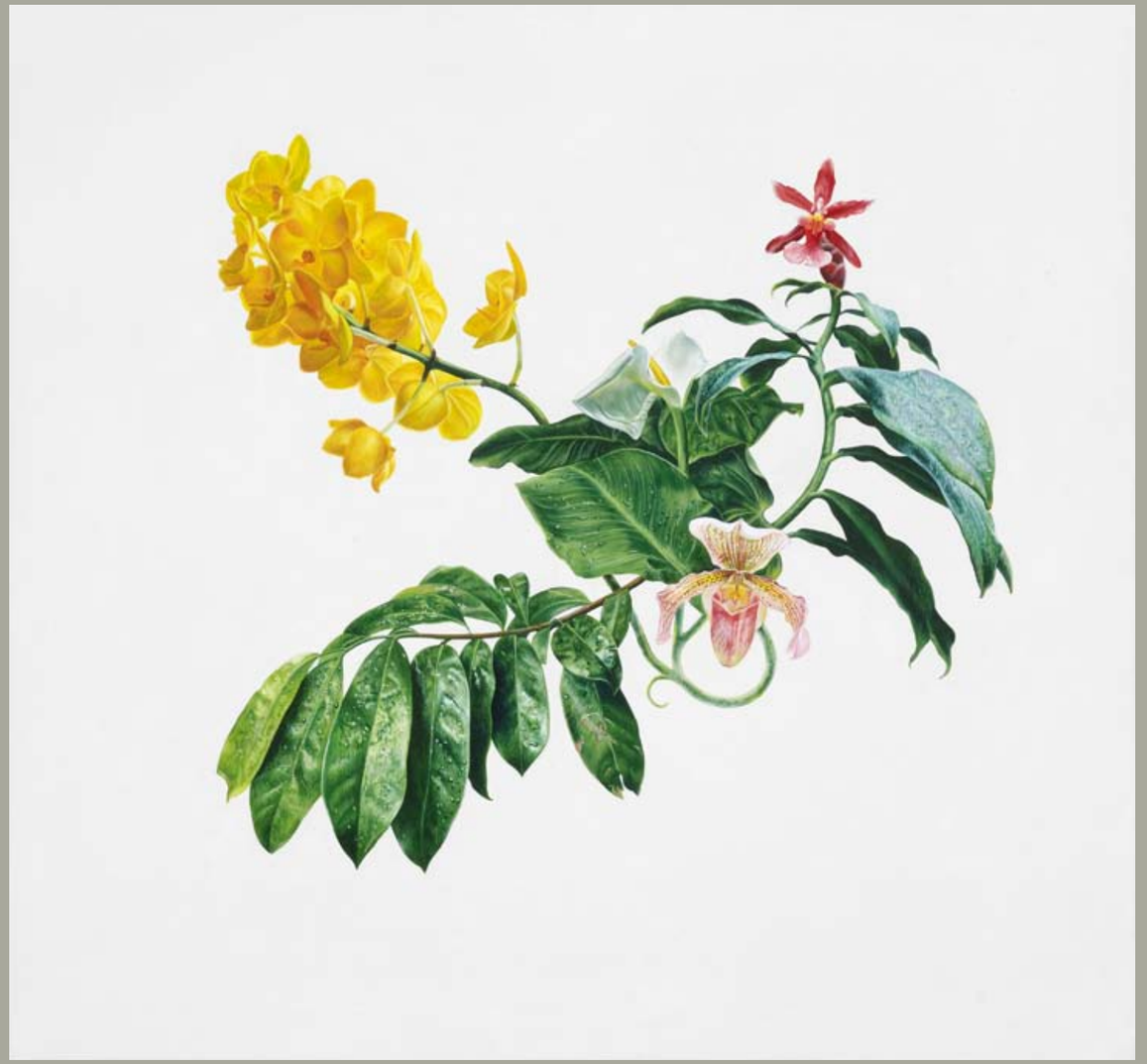
XXII.

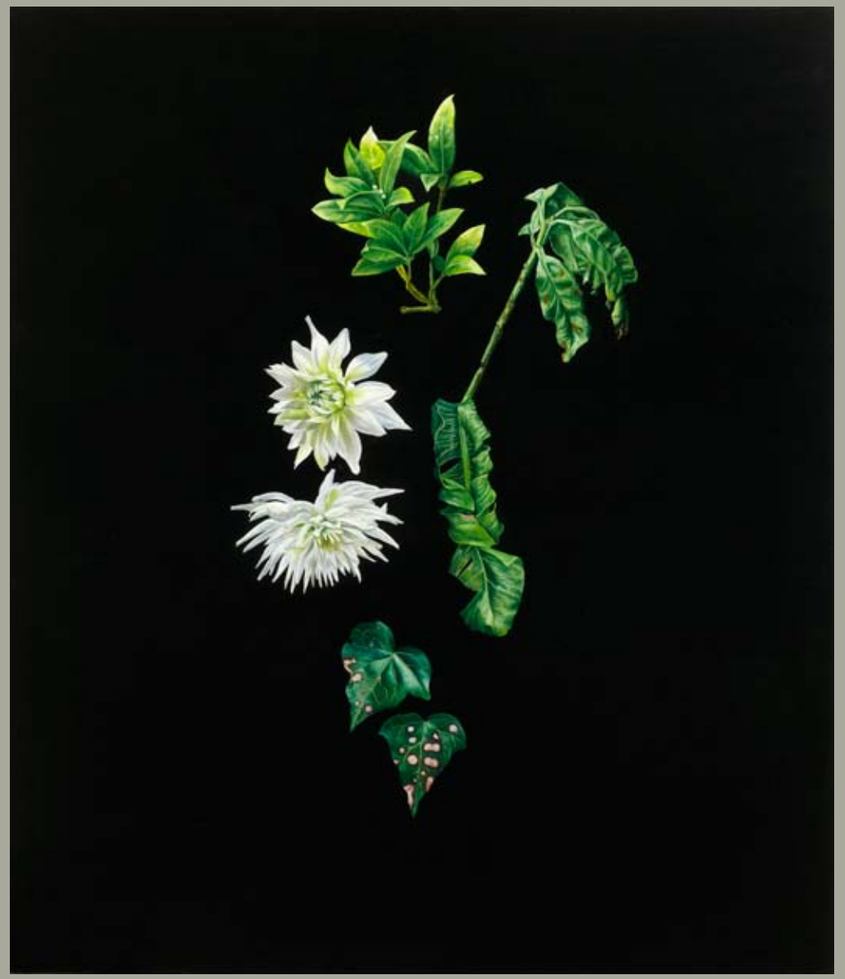
XXIII.

Flora

I. Water Lily – **II.** The Deaths Head Hawkmoth – **III.** The Love Bird
IV. The Golden Leaves – **V.** The Invisible Tree – **VI.** Cuculidae Slipper Orchid
VII. The Parrot Plant – **VIII.** Coucal Cattleya – **IX.** Turaco Green Lady
X. The Tiger Swallowtail Plant – **XI.** Morpho Menelaus Plant
XII. Dead Leaf Plant – **XIII.** A Line of Points – **XIV.** Flirt (six butterflies)
XV. The Insect's Bite – **XVI.** Glossy Starling Plant – **XVII.** Cuckoo Moth
XVIII. Plant Plant – **XIX.** Ms Butterfly – **XX.** The Four Hummingbirds
XXI. The Insect Eating Plant – **XXII.** Roadrunner Zygopetalum
XXIII. Flirt (tortoiseshell) – **XXIV.** Dead Leaves

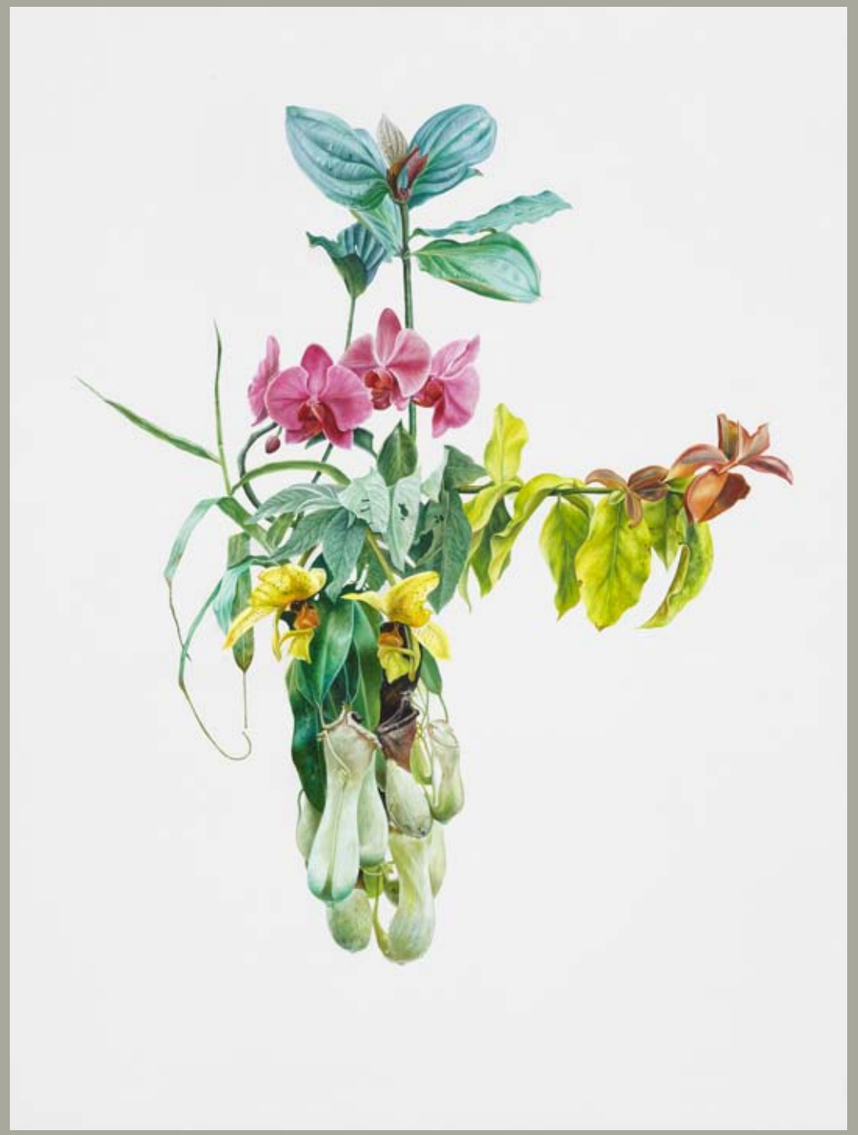
Cuculidae Slipper Orchid
oil on panel
66 × 77 cm, 2011





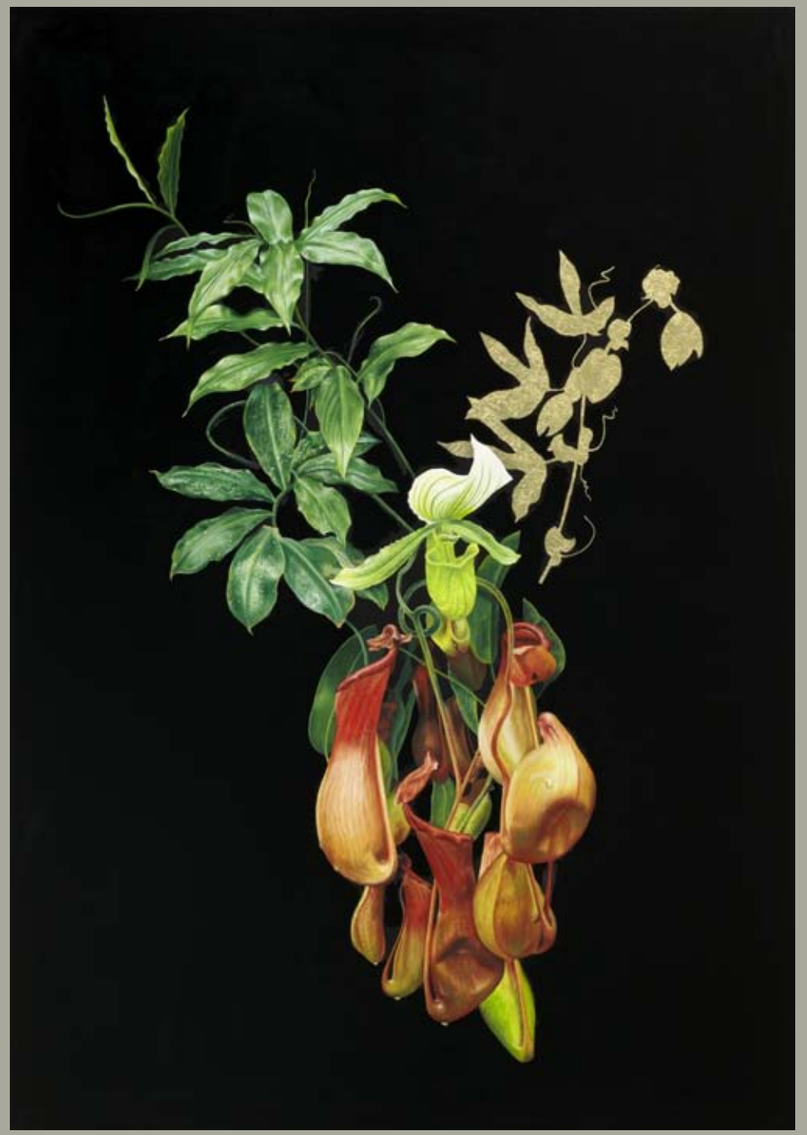
Plant Plant
oil on panel
70 × 60 cm, 2011

Ms Butterfly
oil on panel
70 × 70 cm, 2011



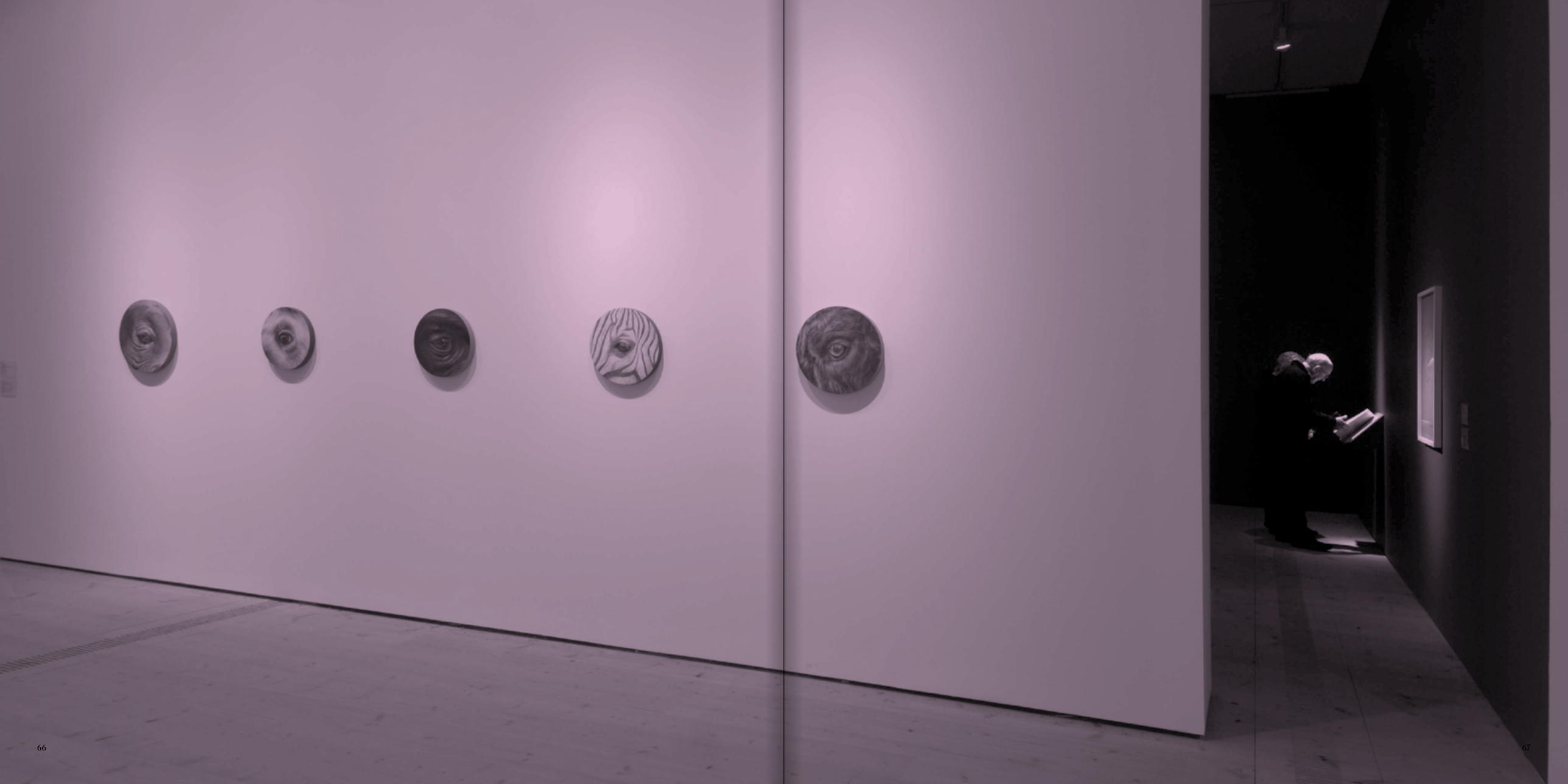
Cuckoo Moth
oil on panel
80 × 60 cm, 2011

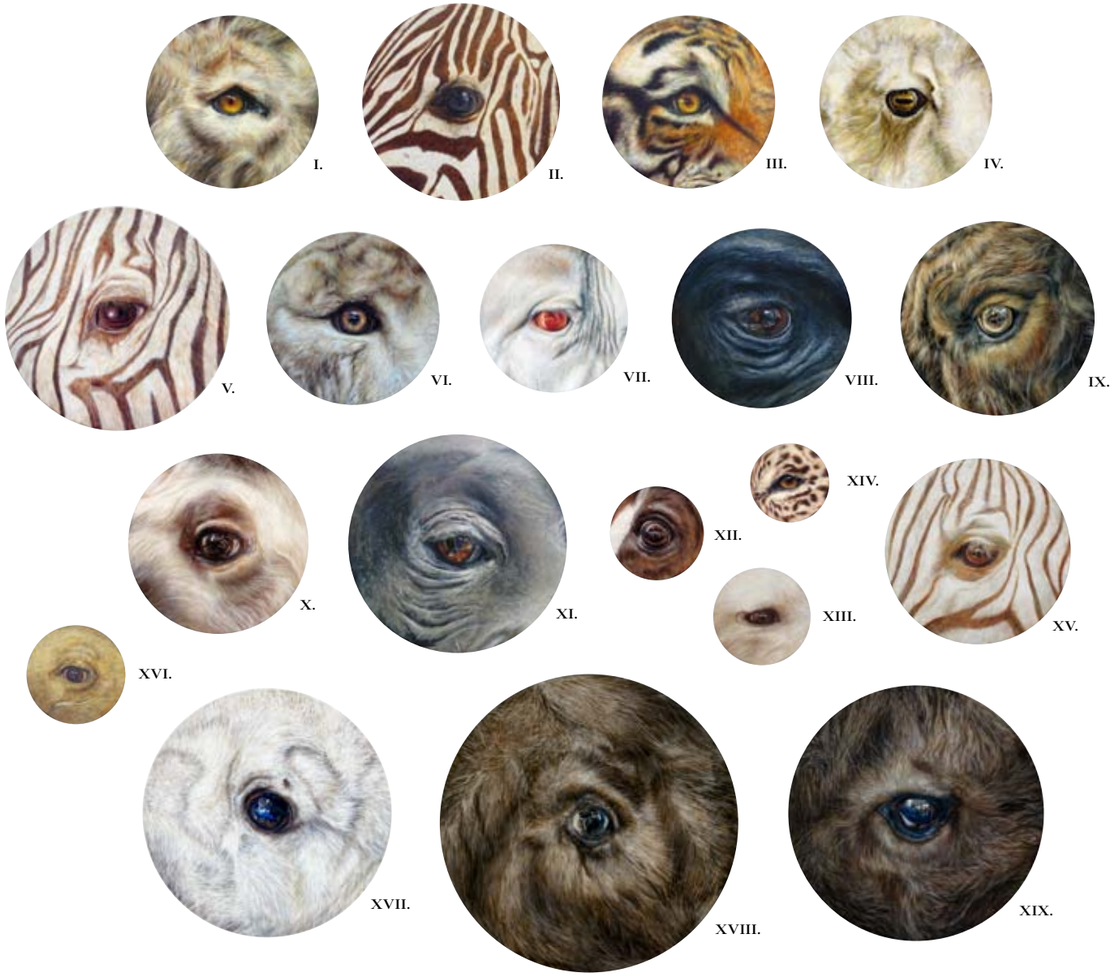
Roadrunner Zygopetalum
oil on panel
80 × 48 cm, 2011



Turaco Green Lady
oil and gold leaf on panel
80 × 56 cm, 2011

Coucal Cattleya
oil on panel
70 × 65 cm, 2011





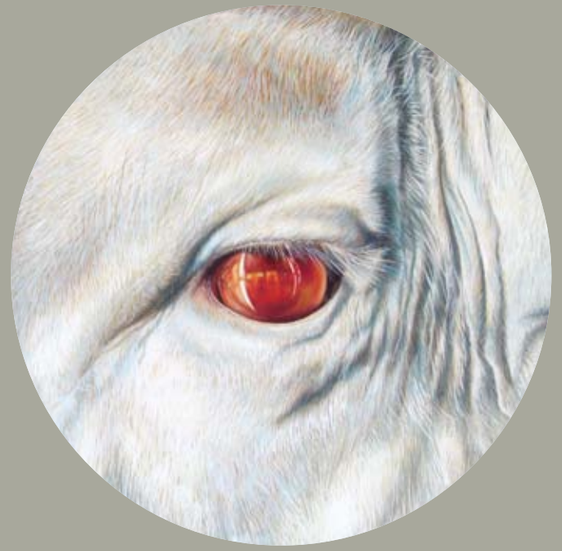
Eyes

I. Lion – **II.** Zebra – **III.** Tyger Tyger – **IV.** The Goat
V. Zebra Zebra – **VI.** Lion Lion – **VII.** Red Eye – **VIII.** Gorilla
IX. Bison – **X.** Gnu – **XI.** Orangutan – **XII.** Sable Eye
XIII. Polar Bear Eye – **XIV.** Leopard – **XV.** Zebra Eye – **XVI.** Seal
XVII. Itself – **XVIII.** The Beast – **XIX.** Prodigy

Tyger Tyger
oil on wood
35 cm diameter, 2006

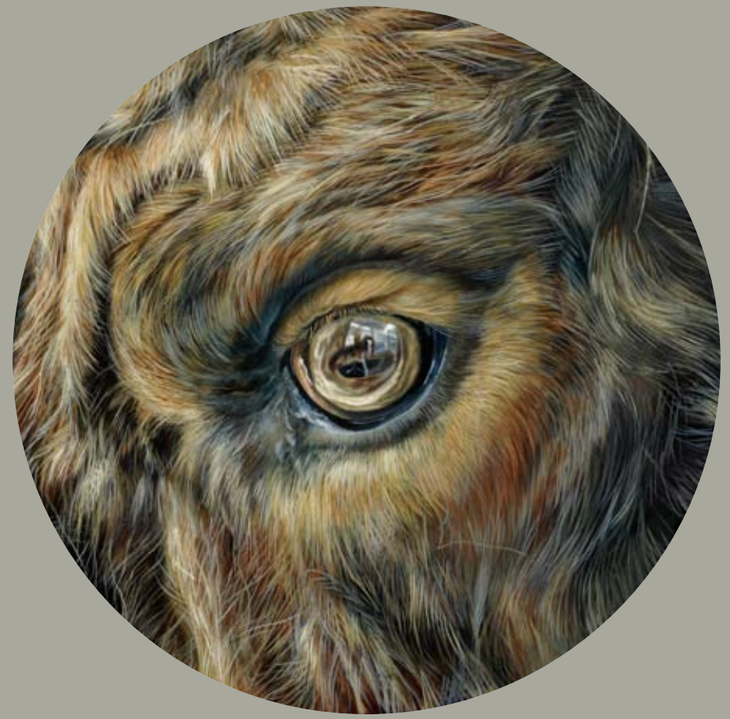
Lion
oil on wood
35 cm diameter, 2006

Zebra
oil on wood
40 cm diameter, 2003



Red Eye
oil on wood
35 cm diameter, 2006

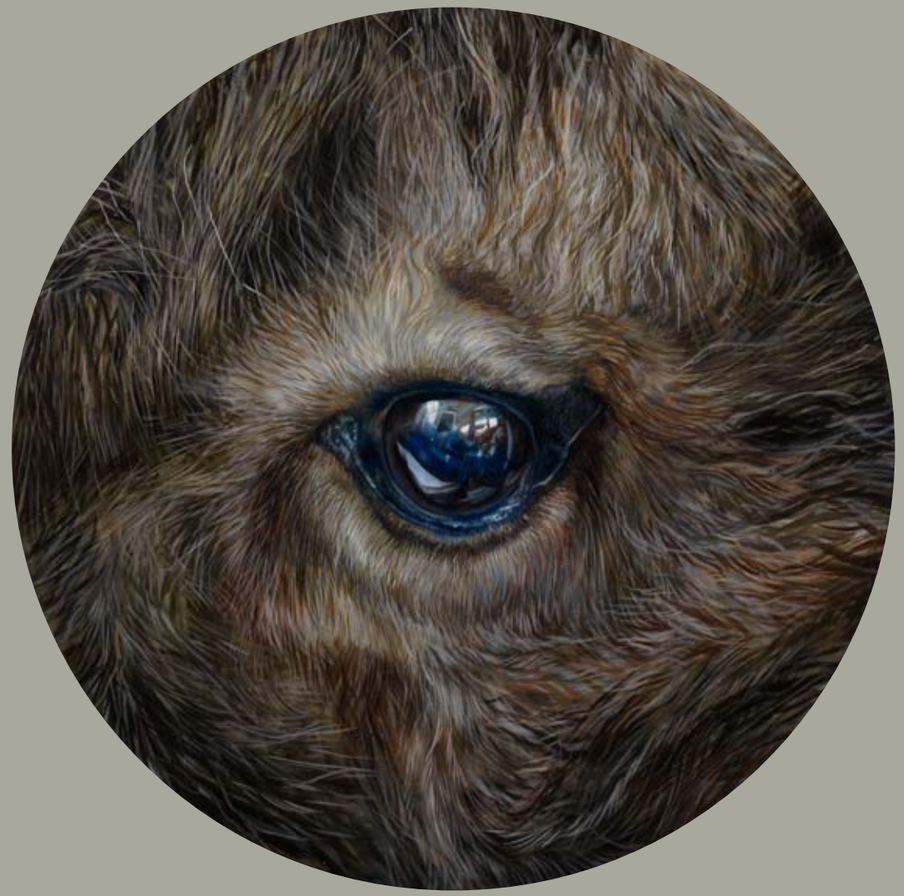
Bison
oil on wood
35 cm diameter, 2006

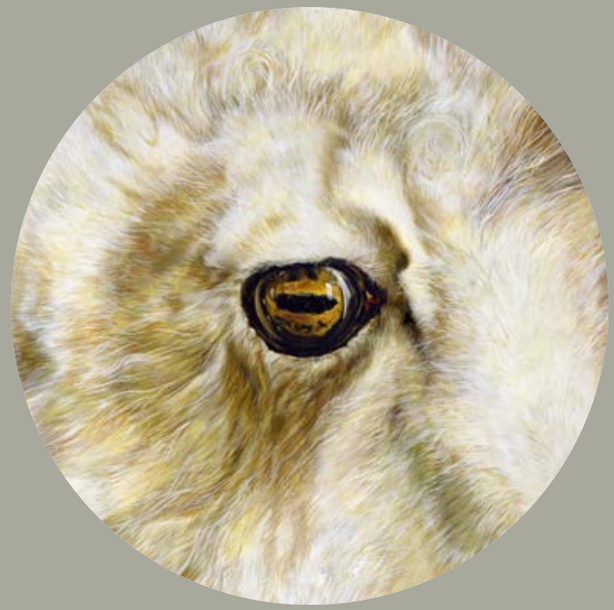


Gnu
oil on canvas on wood
35.5 cm diameter, 2008

Sable Eye
oil on canvas on wood
19 cm diameter, 2008

Itself
oil on panel
50 cm diameter, 2011

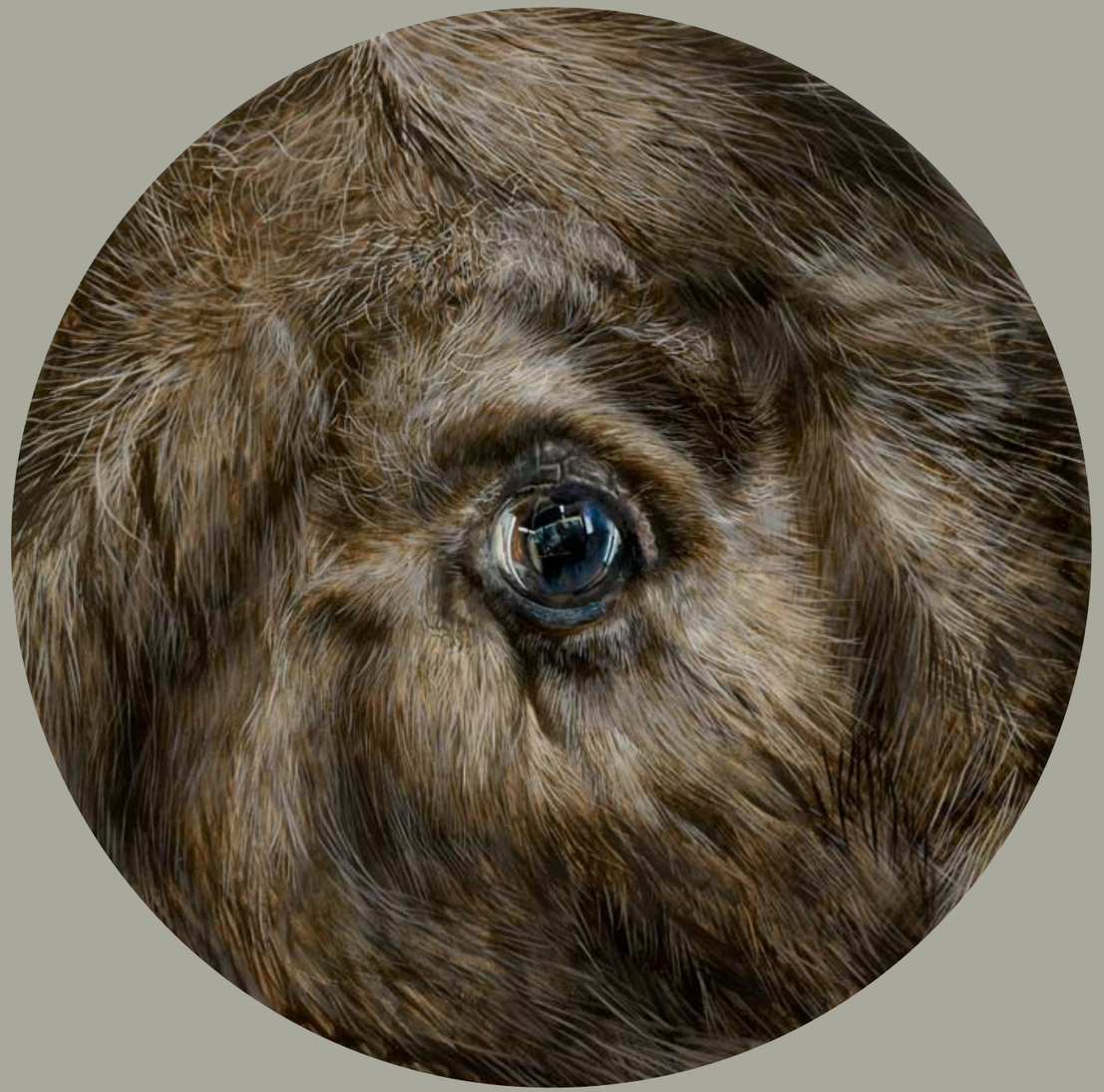




Prodigy
oil on panel
50 cm diameter, 2008

The Goat
oil on canvas on wood
35 cm diameter, 2004

The Beast
oil on panel
60 cm diameter, 2011



How can I move thee?

For Specimens 2 and 4

Mary Madden

I first encountered Mark Fairnington's *Specimens* series at the *Dead or Alive* show in Leeds after emerging from a long engagement with Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (Madden, 2012). I was therefore susceptible to the paintings', "almost gothic" fascination (Harewood House, 2002). Pinned in pigment to each canvas was a portrait of an isolated and oversized Mantis. Each insect portrait is based on observations of original specimens once extracted from their ecological habitats to exemplify places in a taxonomical system. Fragile, desiccated remains had been combined and then individualised by their status as scientific samples and as subjects for painting; then individualised again by their employment in the narratives of the viewer. In my mind, man sized Mantidae morphed with memories of three dimensional écorchés, the 'life' subjects once used by artists and medical students unable to draw directly from dissected corpses. Specimen 2 has one perfectly poignant intact wisp of antenna. A damaged limb rests on the stake through its middle; two more are bent in prayer. Its coy, waxy defensiveness called to mind André-Pierre Pinson's 18th century *Anatomy of a Seated Woman*. In *Specimen 4*'s knock-kneed splay I read the ambivalence I perceived in images of flayed cadavers holding up their skins in anatomy books.

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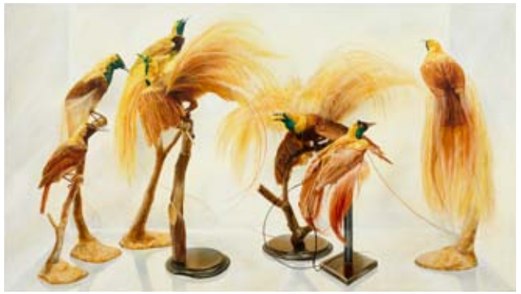
I.

II.

III.

IV.

V.



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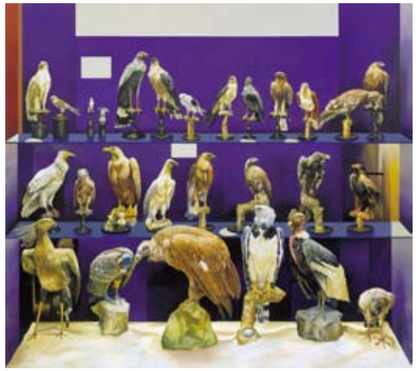
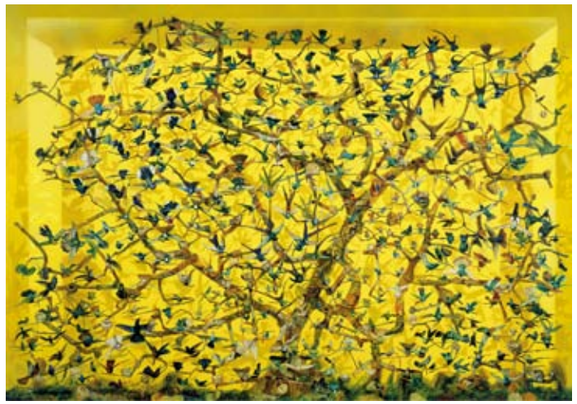


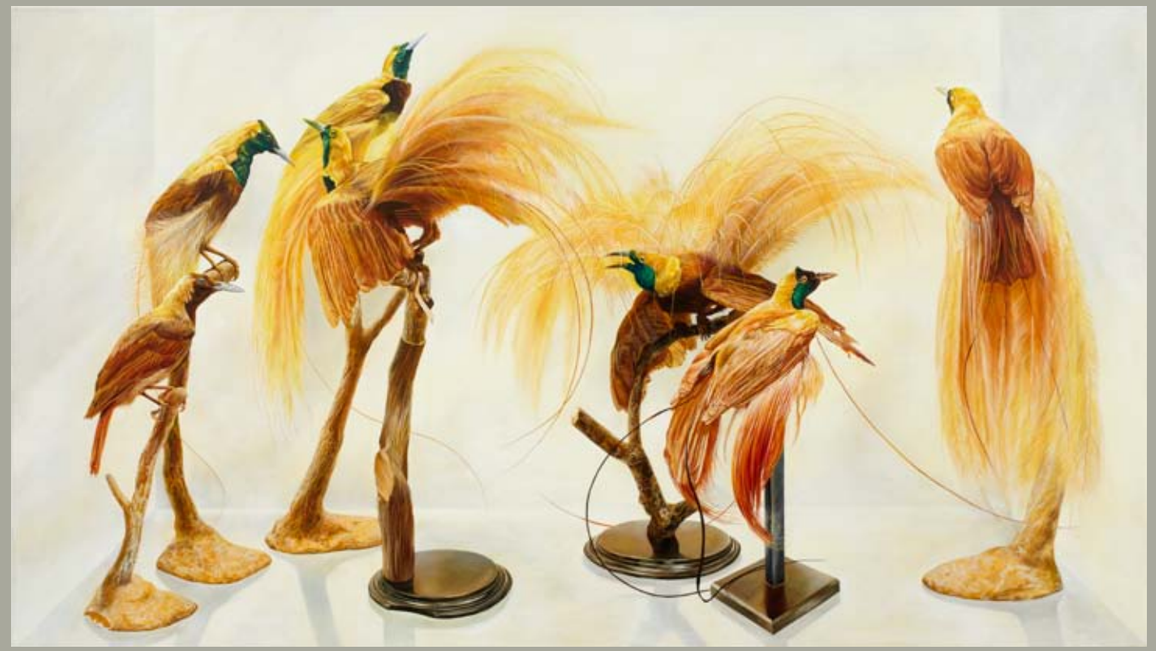
VII.



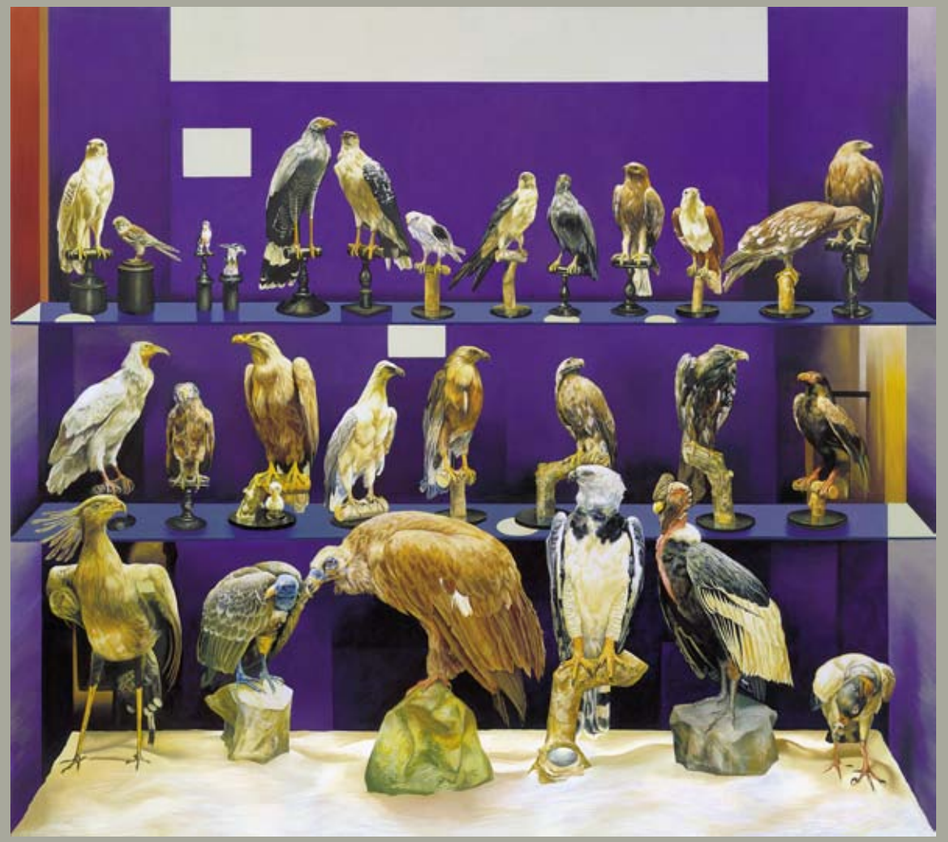
VIII.

Displays

I. The Donkey Box – **II.** Harpy Eagle (The Duke)
III. Griffon Vulture Surrounded by Moths – **IV.** The Brotherhood
V. Zebra Box – **VI.** The New Paradise – **VII.** The Ancestors
VIII. The Hummingbird Tree



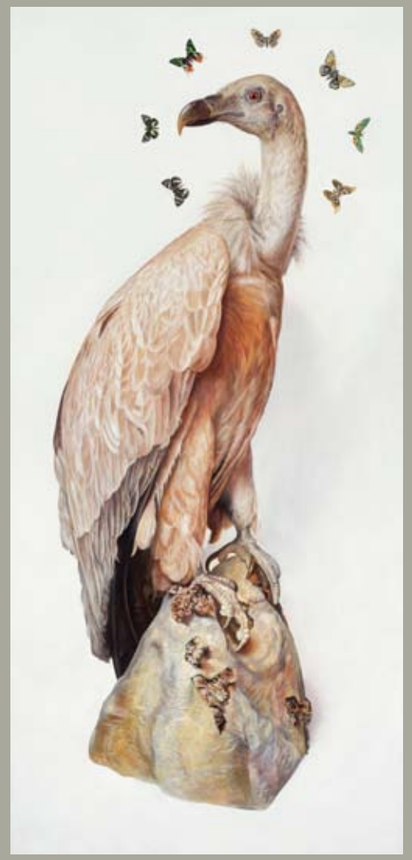
The New Paradise
oil on canvas
160 × 250 cm, 2006



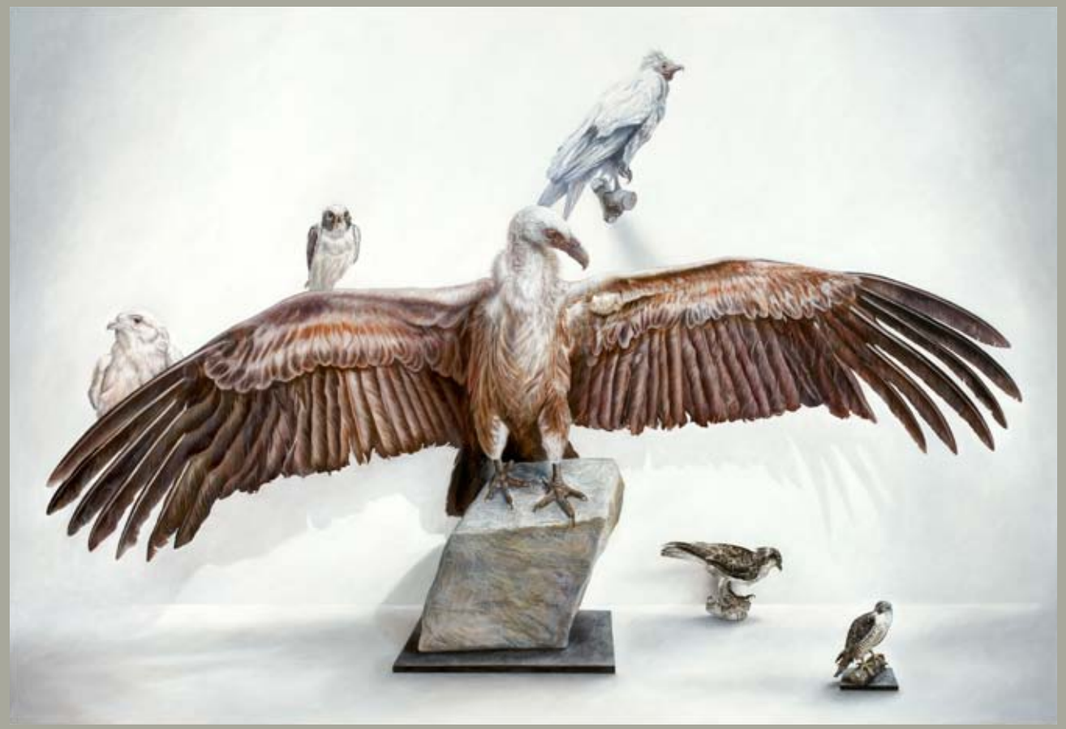
The Ancestors
oil on canvas
199 × 224 cm, 2009

Zebra Box
oil on canvas
100 × 276 cm, 2009

Harpy Eagle (The Duke)
oil on canvas
171 × 110 cm, 2005



Griffon Vulture Surrounded by Moths
oil on canvas
200 × 93 cm, 2010



The Brotherhood
oil on canvas
165 × 241 cm, 2011

The Hummingbird Tree

oil on canvas
214 × 300 cm, 2009

German text missing

For Specimens 2 and 4

Mary Madden

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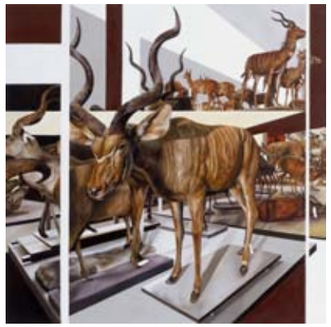

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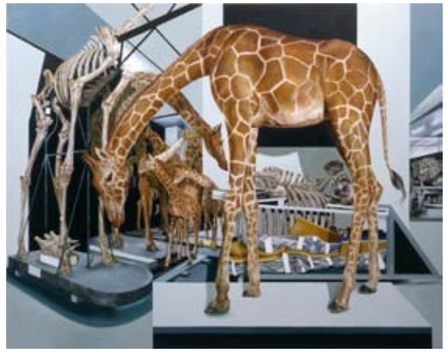


III.

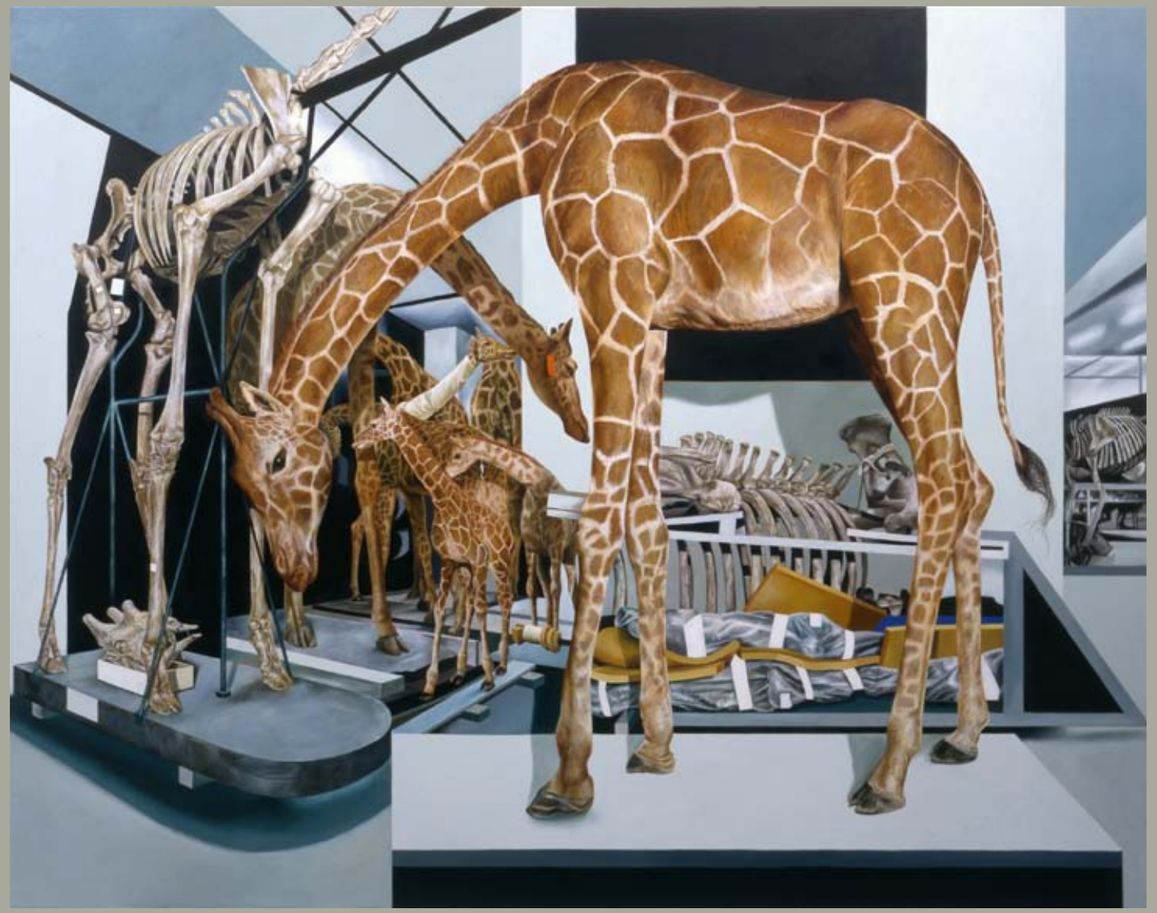
IV.

Storage

I. The Raft – **II.** Entourage
III. The Ambassadors – **IV.** The Night Watch

The Raft
oil on canvas
225 × 450 cm, 2006

The Night Watch
oil on canvas
214 × 351 cm, 2007



The Ambassadors
oil on canvas
204 × 256 cm, 2007

Mark Fairnington

BOOKS AND EDITIONS

2012 *Mark Fairnington, Unnatural History*, Galerie Peter Zimmermann, Mannheimer Kunstverein, ISBN 978-3-9808352-9-9
2011 *Flora*, published by Oliver Sears Gallery, text by Adrian Rifkin ISBN 978-0-9565485-1-2
2009 *The Artist's Studio*, Edited by Giles Waterfield, Hogarth Arts and Compton Verney, ISBN 978-0-9554063-3-1
A Duck for Mr Darwin, Evolutionary Thinking and the Struggle to Exist, BALTIC. ISBN 0-00-867530-9
2008 *Arkive City*, University of Ulster, Belfast ISBN 978-1-899377-30-5
Bloedmooi / Bloody Beautiful, Historical Museum Rotterdam, 6/40 1000.2718786
2006 *Experience and Experiment*, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, ISBN 1-903080-05-03
2005 *Mark Fairnington*, Galerie Peter Zimmermann, ISBN 3-9808352-5-1
Insect Poetics, edited by Eric Brown, University of Minnesota Art and Science, Sian Ede, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
Blumenstück. Künstlers Glück, Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen
Infallible, In Search of the Real George Eliot, ARTicle Press, ISBN 1-873352-83-2
2004 *John Moores 23*, Walker Art Gallery, ISBN 1-902700-28-7
2003 *Transmission Portfolio*, Sheffield Hallam University
Transmission: Speaking and Listening Volume 2, Sheffield Hallam University/ Site Gallery, ISBN 1-8999-2626-7

ONE PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2012 *Unnatural History*, Mannheimer Kunstverein, Mannheim
Unnatural History, Galerie Peter Zimmermann, Mannheim
2011 *Flora*, Oliver Sears Gallery, Dublin
2010 *Bull Market*, Bury St Edmunds Art Gallery, Suffolk
2009 *Private Collection*, Galerie Peter Zimmermann, Mannheim
2008 Galerie Peter Zimmermann, Mannheim
2007 *Dynasty*, Art Agents, Hamburg
2006 *The Raft*, Fred (London)
2004 Galerie Peter Zimmermann, Mannheim
Wunderkammer II, *Wunderkammer I*, Kunsthalle Mannheim
Artlab, Imperial College, London
2003 *The Hummingbird Tree*, Mobile Home Gallery, London
2002 *Dead or Alive*, Oxford University Museum of Natural History
Dead or Alive, Harewood House, Leeds
2001 *Staying Alive*, Mobile Home, London
2000 *Specimen*, Gallery Axel Thieme, Darmstadt
Mantidae, Oxford University Museum, Oxford
Ace Gallery, Los Angeles
1999 *Peepshow*, Mobile Home, London
1998 Gallery Axel Thieme, Darmstadt
Heavier Than Air, Imperial War Museum, London
1997 Todd Gallery, London

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2011 *Auction Room*, Globe Gallery, Newcastle, inc. Fiona Banner, Douglas Gordan, Mike Nelson, Jane and Louise Wilson.
Drawing: Interpretation/Translation, The Drawing Gallery, Powys inc. Jordan Baseman, Paul Coldwell, Mark Dunhill & Tamiko O'Brien, Stephen Farthing, James Faure Walker, Rebecca Fortnum, Paul Ryan, Chris Wainwright
London Calling, Galerie Peter Zimmermann, Mannheim, Germany
40 Artists – 80 Drawings, The Burton Art Gallery and Museum, Devon
2010 *Miscellaneous*, Galerie Peter Zimmermann, Mannheim, Germany
The Moment of Privacy Has Passed, Usher Gallery, Lincoln
Now and Then, Oliver Sears Gallery, Dublin, inc. Martin Brown, Kate Davis, Peter Davis, Mark Fairnington, Philip Guston, Seán Hillen, David Hockney, Anselm Kiefer, Leon Kossoff, Joan Mitchell, Robert Motherwell, Sean Scully, Pierre Soulages, Tom Wesselmann
21, Harewood House, Leeds, Norman Ackroyd, Sutapa Biswas, Sonia Boyce, Jason Brooks, Thomas A. Clark, Maurice Cockrill, Susan Collins, Kate Davis, Mark Fairnington, Leo Fitzmaurice, Laura Ford, David Hockney, Sophie Lascelles, Sea Hyun Lee, Neeta Madahar, Ian McKeever, Peter Mitchell, Eleanor Moreton, Paul Rooney, Mark Wallinger, Simon Warner
Blood Tears Faith Doubt, Courtauld Gallery, The Courtauld Institute of Art inc. Andrea Mantegna, Polidoro da Caravaggio, Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo, Adam Chodzko, Siobhan Hapaska, Grayson Perry
Profusion, Calke Abbey Derbyshire, inc. Johanna Billing, Karla Black, Lucy Clout, Clem Crosby, Jimmie Durham, Martino Gamper, Roger Hiorns, John Plowman, Daniel Silver, Robert Smithson, Jack Strange, Marcel Broodthaers
2009 *The Artist's Studio*, Compton Verney, inc. Art & Language, John Bratby, Eduard Burne-Jones, Albrecht Durer, Andrew Grassie, Eric Racilious, Paula Rego, Rembrandt van Rijn, Joseph Mallord William Turner. Touring to the Sainsbury Centre, Norwich
A Duck for Mr Darwin, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, inc. Tania Kovats, Dorothy Cross, Mark Dion, Charles Avery, Marcus Coates and Conrad Shawcross. Touring to the Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, University of Warwick
2008 *War and Medicine*, Wellcome Trust London, touring to The Museum of Hygiene, Dresden
Darwin's Canopy, Natural History Museum, inc. Christine Borland, Dorothy Cross, Tanya Kovats, Alison Turnbull, United Visual Artists, Mark Wallinger, Richard Wentworth, Rachel Whiteread and Richard Woods
2007 *Bird Watching* curated by Tanya Rumpff inc. Lothar Baumgarten, Mark Dion, Kiki Smith
Bloedmoo, The Historic Museum Rotterdam, inc. Thomas Grünfeld, William Wegman, Wim Delvoye
Bloody Beautiful, Gallery Ron Mandos, Rotterdam
2005 *Blumenstück. Künstlers Glück*, Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, Germany
A history of flower painting inc. James Ensor, Claude Monet, Marc Quinn, Fiona Rae, Gerhard Richter
Infallible in Search of the Real George Eliot, Hatton Gallery, Newcastle inc. Jordan Baseman, Le Ecole de Burrows et Bob Smith, Cullinan + Richards Artlab, Volker Eichelmann/Roland Rust, Ian Kiaer, Eve Sussman, Roxy Walsh
2004 *John Moores 23*, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
Fabulous Beasts, The Natural History Museum, London with Giles Revell
The Goat, Medieval Modern, with Olivier Richon

Acknowledgements

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Harewood House (2002). Dead or Alive: Paintings by Mark Fairnington, exhibition flyer, Harewood House, Saturday 1 Jun 2002 – Sunday 4 Aug 2002, Leeds.

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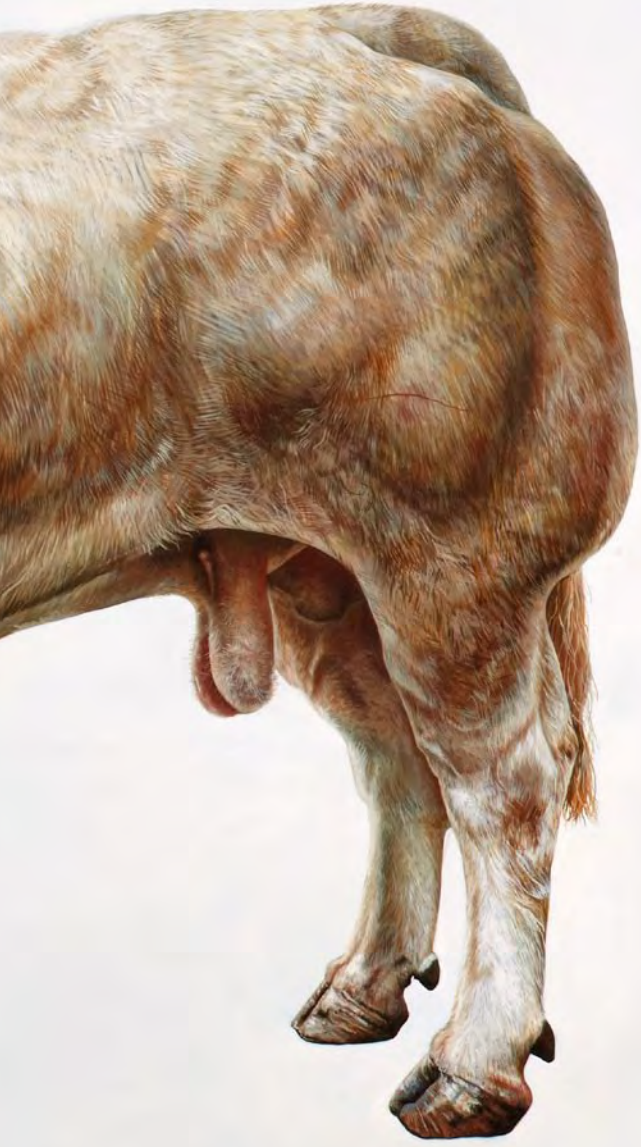
The work for Unnatural History has been loaned from private collections.

Front cover *Turbo Tommy* (detail)
oil on canvas, 235×330 cm, 2009
Back cover *Maerdy Tally* (detail)
oil on canvas, 235×367 cm, 2009



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