

Plant Scenery of the World

Laura Aldridge | Charlie Billingham | Bobby Niven | Oliver Osborne | Ben Rivers
With botanical paintings by Işık Güner, Jacqui Pestell and Sharon Tingey and artworks by R. K. Greville from the collection of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

Inverleith House and the Front Range Glasshouses
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

29 July – 29 October 2017

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) is delighted to present a major new group exhibition at Inverleith House and the Front Range Glasshouses as part of the Edinburgh Art Festival.

Plant Scenery of the World brings together new, commissioned and existing work by Scottish, UK and European artists alongside rare and unseen archival material from the Garden's own collection and botanical drawings commissioned by RBGE.

Summer 2017 marks the 50th anniversary of RBGE's modernist Glasshouses, the 'Front Range', designed by city architects George Pearce and Allan Pendreigh and opened in 1967. A rare example of Scottish modernist architecture and lauded for its radical design, the Range was commissioned to house plants collected in tropical, temperate, and arid lands by British explorers. Together with RBGE's Victorian Palm House, these innovative and pioneering glass structures are significant for botanists and aesthetes alike, representing an assimilation of 18th and 19th century Enlightenment values with the utopian ideologies of the mid-twentieth century in the heart of the Garden.

Plant Scenery of the World reflects on these buildings for plants critically examining their past, current and future use from the 18th century to the present day. The exhibition also seeks to explore our enduring fascination with tropical plants and changing attitudes towards collection, exploration, study and display through archival material and new work by contemporary artists.

Through researching horticultural practices, plant species and archival material at RBGE, exhibiting artists have directly responded to the site and Collections with new context-specific commissions. Laura Aldridge will exhibit a new nature printed floor using exotic plant material grown in the Edinburgh Glasshouses continuing her longstanding engagement with sculpture as an immersive, sensory driven experience; Charlie Billingham will create an energetic and elegant room installation with new wall prints and painting installations stylistically borrowed from the work of Enlightenment and Regency era social satirists; and Bobby Niven will create a new series of hand carved anthropomorphic sculptures that animate the gallery and glasshouses.

Oliver Osborne brings together a selection of emotive and ambivalent rubber plant paintings from 2012 to the present day in a new room installation and Ben Rivers presents his recent film *Urth* (2016) a faintly dystopian meditation on ambitious experiments, constructed environments, and visions of the future shot in the science research facility Biosphere 2, Arizona.

Items on display from the RBGE Collections include architectural plans and drawings of the Victorian Palm House and Front Ranges from 1892 to 1964; photographs from the 19th Century to the present day, living plant displays with orchids, cycads and ferns, and plant material including historical palm trunks.

Central to the exhibition is a suite of previously unseen watercolour paintings by the artist-botanist R.K. Greville (1794-1866) from which the exhibition takes its name. Held in the RBGE archives and commissioned c. 1858 to accompany the eponymous but subsequently unpublished monthly periodical, these paintings represent anachronistic depictions of exotic plants in imagined 'natural' landscapes, centralising questions of perception, authenticity, and acts of looking still relevant to artists and botanists today.

A newly acquired series of large-scale watercolours by botanical artists Işık Güner, Jacqui Pestell and Sharon Tingey will also be displayed. These watercolours are based on studies of the *Amorphophallus titanum*, the world's largest flower, which flowered in Edinburgh for the first time in 2015.

Considering the Glasshouses as a nexus between culture and nature, dialogical displays of contemporary art and archival material will examine historical narratives dominated by Western exploration; narratives that have shaped (pre)conceptions of 'the exotic', (mis)understandings of other places and views on identity and otherness. By investigating plants through human culture, the exhibition demonstrates the way we use plants as symbols, impressing them with our own values and ideological beliefs. It will question human enquiry and the nature of perception, think about captivity, false habitats and inhospitable environments and begin to consider how plants might communicate as well as how artists might speak through plants.

Plant Scenery of the World offers integrated displays, revelatory pairings and a polyphony of voices, to illuminate new perspectives across the disciplines of art and science. The exhibition will evoke the theatrical, awe-inspiring, utopian and naturalistic display of plants under glass. The gallery presentation takes inspiration from the varied climatic zones of the Glasshouses, creating different 'temperatures' and offering an interconnected series of 'micro-climates' from room to room. Together the exhibition will create an uplifting and celebratory display context which is receptive to different accounts of the world and expanded thinking around historical and contemporary endeavour.

This exhibition is part of the 2017 Edinburgh Art Festival and has received funding from the National Lottery through Creative Scotland.

Artist Biographies

Laura Aldridge (b. 1978) graduated with an MFA from Glasgow School of Art in 2006, spending a period of exchange at CALARTS, Los Angeles. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Go Woman Go!* British Council UK/NG, Abuja, Nigeria (2017); *Inside all my activities*, Koppe Astner, Glasgow (2016); *One-to-another, One-to-one*, Passerelle Centre D'Art Contemporain, Brest, France (2015); *California wow!* Tramway, Glasgow (2015); *Underside, backside, inside, even*, CCA, Glasgow (2012); Studio Voltaire, London (2011). Recent group exhibitions include: *Jack and Diane*, Kate Werble Gallery, New York; *DIDING - An Interior That Remains an Exterior*, Künstlerhaus, Graz (2015), *Earth Minutes*, Andrew Kreps, New York (2014); *On the Devolution of Culture*, Rob Tufnell, London (2014), *Rubbernecking in the Stacks*, Greene Gallery, Los Angeles (2014), *Out of Doors*, Supplement, London (2013); *The Cat Show*, White Columns, New York (2013); *Laura Aldridge & Sara Barker & Sue Tompkins*, Shane Campbell Gallery / Lincoln Park Space, Chicago (2013).

Charlie Billingham (b. London, 1984) lives and works in London. He graduated from the Royal Academy, London in 2013 and completed an MA Fine Art at Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh in 2008. Solo exhibitions include: *Schaulust*, Supportico

Lopez, Berlin (2015); *Free Time*, Emalin, Zuoz, Switzerland; *Jam Standard*, Brand New Gallery, Milan; *Tender 2 The Sunshine Room*, OHWOW, Los Angeles (all 2014) ; *Tender*, Ceri Hand Gallery, London, and *Coming Out*, Royal Academy, London (both 2013). Recent group shows include: *A Scratching Not a Biting*, Bureau, New York, (2016); *The Ultimate Vessel*, Koppe Astner, Glasgow; *The Funnies*, MOT International, Brussels; *Nobody Home*, A Palazzo, Brescia (all 2015); *Forever Now*, Capodimonte Museum, Naples; *The Word Today Serves No One Except To Say To The Grocer Give Me A Pound Of Lentils*, Supportico Lopez, Berlin; *Bloody English*, OHWOW, Los Angeles (all 2014); and *New Order: British Art Today*, Saatchi Gallery, London; *Open Heart Surgery*, The Moving Museum, London (both 2013).

Bobby Niven (b. Fife, 1981) lives and works in Edinburgh. He completed an MFA at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver in 2006 and received his BFA in 2003 from the Glasgow School of Art. Recent solo exhibitions include *Broad Reach*, curated by ATLAS Arts at Taigh Chearsabhagh, South Uist, Outer Hebrides (2015); *Palm of the Hand*, Old Ambulance Depot, Edinburgh (2013); *ISLAND*, SWG3, Glasgow and Peacock Visual Arts, Aberdeen (2012); and *Hermit's Castle. Chez Galip*, Sierra Metro, Edinburgh (2010). Group exhibitions include *Moths* curated by Modern Edinburgh Film School, Summerhall, Edinburgh (2015) *Reclaimed - The Second Life of Sculpture*, The Briggait Glasgow ; *Openaries I : Thought forms/Theories of the universe (uttered rather than written)/ John Baldessari*, The Hidden Gardens, Tramway, Glasgow (both 2014); *The Good Work*, New Media Scotland Edinburgh; and *157 Days of Sunshine*, Walled Garden, Glasgow (both 2013). He initiated and runs *The Bothy Project* , a network of small-scale, off-grid art residency spaces in distinct locations around Scotland with architect Iain MacLeod.

Oliver Osborne (b. Edinburgh, 1985) lives and works in Berlin. He is a graduate of the Royal Academy (2011) and Chelsea College of Art (2008). Selected solo exhibitions include *European Paintings*, Peles Empire, Berlin, Germany; *False Friends Falsche Freunde*, Vilma Gold, London (both 2016); *The Neck*, Giò Marconi, Milan (2015); *Anna*, Vilma Gold, London; *Otto*, Frutta, Rome (both 2013); and *Buy a good bed and good shoes, if you are not in one you are in the other*, Peles Empire, London (2010). Group exhibitions include *Monday is a Day Between Sunday and Tuesday*, Tanya Leighton, Berlin and *Home is not a Place*, German Embassy, London (both 2017); *The Ultimate Vessel*, Koppe Astner, Glasgow; *The Funnies*, MOT International, Brussels (2015); *Everything Falls Faster Than An Anvil*, Pace Gallery, London; *New Order: British Art Today II*, Saatchi Gallery, London, and *Bloody English*, Moran Bondaroff, Los Angeles (all 2014); *The writing is on the wall*, Jonathan Viner Gallery, Margate; *Yes I will Yes*, American Contemporary, New York; and *Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, Liverpool Biennial and ICA, London (all 2013).

Ben Rivers is an artist and filmmaker represented by Kate MacGarry Gallery in London. Rivers recently won the second EYE Art Film Prize 2016, as well as the FIPRESCI International Critics Prize, 68th Venice Film Festival for his first feature film *Two Years At Sea*; Baloise Art Prize, Art Basel 42, for *Sack Barrow*; Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award for Artists, 2010. Recent solo shows include *Urth*, The Renaissance Society, Chicago; *Islands*, Kunstverein of Hamburg; *Earth Needs More Magicians*, Camden Arts Centre, London; *The Two Eyes Are Not Brothers*, Artangel, London and Whitworth Museum, Manchester. His work has exhibited in numerous museums, galleries and festivals worldwide. His most recent feature film, *The Sky Trembles and the Earth is Afraid and the Two Eyes Are Not Brothers*, premiered in the main competition at Locarno International Film Festival. Between 1995 and 2005 he co-programmed Brighton Cinematheque.

ENDS

The **Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE)** is a leading international research organisation delivering knowledge, education and plant conservation action in more than 50 countries around the world. In Scotland its four Gardens at Edinburgh, Benmore, Dawyck and Logan attract nearly a million visitors each year. It operates as a Non Departmental Public Body established under the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985, principally funded by the Scottish Government. It is also a registered charity, managed by a Board of Trustees appointed by Ministers. Its mission is “To explore, conserve and explain the world of plants for a better future”. www.rbge.org.uk



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Plant Scenery of the World

Events, education and activities programme

Inverleith House and the Front Range Glasshouses
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As part of *Plant Scenery of the World*, the basement gallery at Inverleith House will be transformed into *the Green Room*, an interactive space for learning, reading, listening and making. Hosting a range of talks, workshops and family activities, *the Green Room* will also include a resource space, with reading materials, a timeline and participatory displays.

Paradise in palm houses: A history of the glasshouses at RBGE

Sunday 27 August & Saturday 9 September, 2pm

Free | No booking required | Inverleith House Green Room

Learn about the history of the glasshouses at RBGE in an informative talk with Glasshouse Manager Fiona Inches. From the first evidence of a glasshouse in the 18th century at a site in Leith, to the recent re-landscaping of the Temperate Palm House, the glasshouses have been instrumental to research and discovery at RBGE.

Modernism's Temporary Structures

Tuesday 26 September, 7pm | Inverleith House Green Room | Booking required via Eventbrite

RBGE's Front Range glasshouses were opened in 1967, a moment in architectural history when there was worldwide fascination for temporary, open and flexible structures - from transparent living pods, to universities on rails and pop-up parliaments, the international architectural journals of the time are full of them. The glasshouses belong to this stylistic tendency, although, ironically, they've proved extremely durable. Join Richard Williams, Professor of Contemporary Visual Cultures at Edinburgh University and Head of the History of Art, to explore this fascination for temporariness, what it means, and how it relates to contemporary trends in architecture.

Glass Menageries

21 October, 3pm

£3 | Booking required via Eventbrite

In this guided tour with Ed Hollis, storyteller of the secret lives that buildings live, we'll take a walk from jungle to desert, mountaintop to tropical swamp. Drawing on diverse influences and stories, Ed will bring the microcosm of the glasshouses and the imaginary worlds they contain to life.

Exhibition tours

Saturdays 5, 12, 19, 26 August; 2, 16, 30 September; 14, 28 October, 2pm

Free | No booking required | Meet at Inverleith House reception

Join a member of Inverleith House staff for an insightful tour of the exhibition.

Family activities:

Plant Stories of the World

Wednesday 9 August & Saturday 23 September, 2pm

Free | Booking required via Eventbrite

Explorers through the centuries have learnt to value the traditional knowledge of tribal people which has been honed by the need to live in balance with nature. Join a family storytelling walk through the tropical rainforest to discover the powerful plants that can sustain, cure or kill you.

Family art trail

Daily | Free | Ages 3+ | Pick up a trail at the John Hope Gateway reception or the Inverleith House reception

Journey into your imagination through *Plant Scenery of the World* in a fun, interactive in-gallery resource for all the family.

Drop-in printing activities

Daily | Free / £4 for optional tote bag | All ages | Inverleith House Green Room

Using rubber stamps and inks, plant up your own glasshouse, taking inspiration from the Front Range glasshouse plans, currently on display in *Plant Scenery of the World*. Tote bags and fabric inks also available at a small cost to create and take home your own design.

Weekend workshops:

Bold Lines and Bulbous Forms: A lino printing workshop

Learn the basics of line printing in this two day workshop with Siobhan Scott. In this hands on workshop you will be given an introduction to the glasshouses and the plants held within. Taking inspiration from the forms and textures of the ferns, vines, fruits and flowers, you will be guided through a series of fun drawing and line making exercises to create a design for your print, before learning how to cut, ink and print with lino. Take home your own bespoke print along with the skills and tools to continue to make prints at home.

Runs: Sat 5th & Sun 6th Aug 2017 | 10.30am - 4.30pm | £120/£108 | Inverleith House Green Room | Book via Education

Make your own Terrarium

Little Botanica bring their sell-out terrarium workshops to RBGE! Take a guided tour of the glasshouses with RBGE horticulturists, before learning how to assemble and care for your very own terrarium with experts from Little Botanica, taking the RBGE glasshouses as inspiration.

Runs: Sun 20th August or Sat 7th Oct 2017 | 10.00am - 2.00pm | £65 | Conference Room | Book via Education

Concrete Planter Casting Workshop

Experiment with forms and colours in this concrete planter casting workshop with Siobhan Scott. Learn the fundamentals of basic geometric mould making and casting processes, taking the geometric forms of the Modernist Front Range glasshouses as a starting point to produce your own planter. Experiment with marbling and colours in concrete, before planting your creation up with assistance from the RBGE horticulture team.

Runs: Sat 2nd & Sat 9th Sept 2017 | 1.00pm - 5.00pm | £60 | Inverleith House Green Room Day 1 & Fletcher Building Day 2 | Book via Education

Victoria Braithwaite - Painting the *Zingiberaceae*: A bold approach to Gingers

The ginger family, well-represented at RBGE, gives us fascinating textures, dramatic shapes and inspiring patterns. Working with material collected from the RBGE collection. This two-day workshop with award winning artist Victoria Braithwaite will encourage an expressive, bold approach.

Runs: Sat 23rd - 24th Sept 2017 | 10.00am - 4.00pm | £140/£126 | Inverleith House Green Room | Booking via Education

Flowers & Foliage from the Glasshouses

Experiment with a "loose style watercolour technique" to illustrate the variety of exotic flowers and foliage from the Glasshouses at RBGE. Observing the intricate patterns, exotic textures and sumptuous colours.

Runs: Wed 27th Sept - 1st Nov 2017 | 10.00am - 1.00pm | £75/£67.50 | Inverleith House Green Room | **Level:** Intermediate + | Book via Education

Straight Lines and Tangled Leaves: A mixed media exploration of plants and architecture

To correspond with the exhibition Plant Scenery of the World at Inverleith House in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Front Range glasshouse, award winning artist David Forster will be leading a two-day mixed media workshop to explore the contrast between the lines of this Modernist architectural gem, and the tangled exuberance of the foliage within.

Runs: Sat 30th Sept - Sun 1st Oct 2017 | 10.30am - 4.30pm | £100 | Inverleith House Green Room | Book via Education

An *Amorphophallus* Colour Explosion

Be inspired by exploring the *Amorphophallus* - in all its wonderful aspects. Using the live potted plant we will use the leaf and colour imagery of the flower through its growth stages, to build a collection of charcoal and pastel drawings and paintings of this extraordinary plant. Rich colours will be layered to create the depth of reds and interesting surfaces. Taught by Jacqui Pestell.

Runs: Sat 7th - Sun 8th Oct 2017 | 10.00am - 4.00pm | £120/£108 | Inverleith House Green Room | **Level:** Beginners + | Book via Education



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