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350
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Royal
Botanic Garden
Edinburgh

Media Release:

Neera Joshi Pradhan showcased in inaugural biennial botanical art Inverleith House, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh to celebrate the power of flowers

New and existing works by contemporary artists Lee Mingwei, Annalee Davis, Wendy McMurdo and Lyndsay Mann join over 40 established botanical artists such as Neera Joshi Pradhan in *Florilegium: A gathering of flowers*, at Inverleith House, Edinburgh. The biennial exhibition is the first of a new programme as Inverleith House begins its transformation into Climate House following the award of the Outset Contemporary Art Fund's Transformative Grant.

The artists have responded to Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's (RBGE) globally-important plant collection comprising over 13,500 species with works that reveal how flowers can elicit cultural, historic, geographic, socio-political and scientific ideas. The title derives from the name for a group of botanical artworks and is part of RBGE's ambitious project to catalogue the plant collection through botanical and contemporary art responses. The artists - living and working internationally - have overcome the challenges of a global pandemic this year to create new and never seen before works of art for *Florilegium*. They are displayed for the first time in this major exhibition marking the post COVID-19 reopening of Inverleith House.



Florilegium- A gathering of Flowers - RBGE - Press - Image Credit Tom Nolan

Running from 16 October until 13 December 2020, *Florilegium: A gathering of flowers* features works showing plants that can be seen growing in the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh Glasshouses, and others of significant scientific value. Joining these botanical artworks are a series of new and existing works from Annalee Davis, Wendy McMurdo, Lee Mingwei and Lyndsay Mann. Work draws upon ideas of death, renewal, ritual and colonial history and span photography, moving image and works on paper.



Leucosceptrum canum water color by Artist Neera Joshi

A florilegium is a book of flowers. It is commonly a group of botanical paintings depicting a particular collection. The collection may also represent an exploration of a garden or plant family. *Florilegium: A gathering of flowers* is the first public exhibition arising from the RBGE Florilegium, a project which was initiated in 2019. It recognises the need to expand the Garden's important collection of botanical illustrations in a planned way to ensure that plants being grown and studied by RBGE staff will feature as new works in the collection. RBGE botanists identify, describe and name plants new to science and rely on botanical illustration and herbarium specimens as important reference material.

The artistic depiction of plants has an ancient history, and was originally deployed as a means of identification, although, by the end of the Renaissance, botanical painting had also come to be appreciated as an art form in its own right. In Scotland, one of the earliest books recording scientific illustrations of plants was Robert Sibbald's *Scotia Illustrata* in 1684. Sibbald was the first professor of medicine at the University of Edinburgh and a founder of RBGE. The botanical illustrator's eye for detail continues to play an important role in the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's 350-year history, bringing together scientific scrutiny and artistic skill to highlight the beauty and diversity of rare and endangered plants and helping to communicate the vital message of conservation.

Emma Nicolson, Head of Creative Programmes, RBGE said:

"From common weeds to exotic cultivars, flowers are deeply embedded within our lives and have long been an inspiration to artists. This visually stunning exhibition reveals how flowers can elicit cultural, historic, geographic, social and scientific ideas. Botany, the doctrine of plants, is a basis for the exhibition, drawing together work by botanical illustrators from across the globe

alongside contemporary artists who explore our wider relationship to flowers and nature. The exhibition aims to shed light on the living collections of RBGE and human behaviour.

This exhibition has something for everyone, from the beautiful detail and precision of botanical illustration to Lyndsay Mann's storytelling in film that captures the hidden voices held in our herbarium, and Lee Mingwei's deeply engaging 'Invitation for Dawn', a digital sister to his work 'Sonic Blossom' and an offering of a "sonic gift" of a song delivered to individuals in a live encounter with a classical opera singer via video.

We hope the show will provoke new ways of thinking and responding to plants, and encourage visitors to treasure their encounters with the art and the amazing diversity of flora to be discovered in our Garden and Glasshouses. The year 2020 and the coronavirus is revealing truths about the fragility of our ecosystems and the need to halt biodiversity loss. At a time when our ecological future depends so much on deeper connection to the natural world, these artists present captivating and imaginative responses to plants and flowers when it could never be more important."

Listings Information

Florilegium: A gathering of flowers

Friday 16 October - Sunday 13 December 2020

Inverleith House, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

Open daily from 10.30am. Last admission to the exhibition is 4.15pm in October and 3.15pm November – December.

Participating artists in *Florilegium: A gathering of flowers* are: Natalia Alatortseva, Julia Asenbaum, Claire Banks, Rattikorn Bunprakasit, Giovanni Cera, Annie Chen, Paresh Churi, Jessica Daigle, Annalee Davis, Sansanee Deekrajang, Maria Alice de Rezende, Sandra Doyle, Janet Dyer, Gülnur Ekşi, Akiko Enokido, Ann Fraser, Keiko Fujita, Işık Güner, Yoko Harada, Marianne Hazlewood, Cheryl Hodges, Sarah Howard, Mariko Ikeda, Mieko Ishikawa, Neera Joshi Pradhan, Thutploy Kaewpradub, Hideko Kamoshita, Sandunmali Kulasekara, Pornlert Laorsuwan, Nicola Macartney, Lyndsay Mann, Mike May, Mhorag McDowall, Wendy McMurdo, Lee Mingwei, Eunike Nugroho, Jacqui Pestell, Wichanee Pongpawasuit, Jane Roxburgh, Lizzie Sanders, Wendy Smith, Narongsak Sukkaewmanee, Anna Suprunenko, Dianne Sutherland, Margaret Trent, Nataya Udompat, Sunanda Widel, Michie Yamada and Tapita Yomnage.

Inverleith House was designed in 1774 by David Henderson for the Rocheid family and was the official residence of successive Regius Keepers (directors) of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh until it became the founding home of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, from 1960 to 1984. Since 1986 it has run a continuous programme of temporary exhibitions spanning visual art and botanical science under the auspices of the Garden, which recognises the need for art as well as science in our appreciation and understanding of the natural world, making it pre-eminent amongst botanic gardens today, in this respect.

In 1960, the house was turned into the inaugural Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, before transitioning into the official art gallery of RBGE in 1986. For 30 years, Inverleith House

presented stellar shows – from the likes of Douglas Gordon, William Eggleston and Robert Rauschenberg, Karla Black and Louise Bourgeois. Climate House marks a new era in the legacy of this leading contemporary art institution. For more information visit <https://www.rbge.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/current/new-vision-for-inverleith-house-revealed/> or follow **@RBGECreative**

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) is a leading international research organisation delivering knowledge, education and plant conservation action 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.*” Learn more: www.rbge.org.uk