

I intend to curate an exhibition entitled "Seed to Bloom" In the Marianne North Gallery, Kew. It will combine the existing 833 paintings in the gallery with ceramic works by contemporary designer Carol Long. The exhibition will be a collaboration between these two and the seed bank to explore the importance of preserving plant species and the diversity of plants from around the world.

The Marianne North Gallery is an ideal space for the exhibition since it embodies natural lighting which beams down from second story windows and fitted artificial lighting allowing each corner of the building to be illuminated. When walking through the double door entrance the viewer is immediately immersed into the artwork but there is plenty of space for them to walk around or for a table exhibiting Carol Long's ceramics. This creates the idea that the room will be cramped but the high ceilings will make a lightness to the exhibition. Since Marianne North originally designed the building to be used as a tea room there are rooms aside from the main gallery space to be used to show the work done by the seed bank. Having a room dedicated to this allows the viewer to have full focus on the work and impact the seed bank has on collecting and preserving species.

I have chosen Marianne North as a main artist to curate not only because her gallery provides an intimate setting which is already full of talent and beauty for the exhibition to take place, but because of her outstanding role towards botany. North travelled the globe as an independent Victorian woman and conducted her paintings along the way. This twisted traditional role of a Victorian woman and how botanists drew plants. Originally plants would be labelled and against a white background but North drew them submerged in the landscape and interacting with other wildlife. For the Victorian public, entering the gallery would give them a glimpse into tropical lands which most would never be able to explore. A key work in the gallery is the painting titled 'Norpentis northiana' a species discovered by and named after North herself. The species was planted in the hot house at Kew so visitors would see it then be able to visit the gallery and see North's painting showing how it grows in its natural environment. The painting depicts an upper and lower pitcher plant in Borneo, the plant takes up the foreground of the painting while there are blue mountains in the background creating a sense of pictorial space. The painting is done in oil on a board which was easy for North to transport back to England and work into without the paint drying. I intend to make this painting a highlight of the exhibition to raise awareness about the species because it is endangered, it only grows in a protected area in.

Alongside North I have chosen Carol Long, a contemporary ceramicist. This creates a stark contrast to 2D oil paintings because Long explores 3D organic and expressive forms which reflect nature in her own personal interpretation, allowing the viewers to feel engaged in the broad amount of subject matter the exhibition has in store. I have chosen 4 works to display at the exhibition, peacock tall vase (figure 2), lidded caterpillar (figure 3), textured fern mist bowl (figure 4), and small iris bottle (figure 5). All works are designed in the same way being thrown on a pottery wheel out of clay, having its form altered, attaching pulled handles, and slip trailing, staining, and using oxides to decorate. This makes them appear of similar style yet they all have different functions and depict a different aspect of nature ranging from plants to animals.

The exhibition also collaborates with the seed bank which allows the public to engage with the Kew. The far room in the gallery will be dedicated to visitors planting their own flower

which once grown will be moved into the gardens at Kew. The seed bank contains 2.5 billion seeds from 40,000 species of plant from nearly 100 countries. Scientists and researchers use the seeds in order to preserve species and help with biodiversity. A key project is researching plants which can adapt to the ever-changing conditions due to climate change.

To encourage public engagement in plants and preservation, as part of entry to the exhibition visitors are able to plant their own flowers in Kew gardens. As mentioned prior, Marianne North originally wanted the gallery to be used as a tea room. To honor this a corner of the gallery will be dedicated to handing out tea and coffee as a way of giving back to the north for creating such an inspiring space.

List of figures:

Figure 1:



North, M. (1876). *Nepenthes northiana*. [oil on board] 50.4 x 34.8 cm.

Figure 2:



Long, C. (n.d.). *Peacock tall vase*. [Clay] 22"x 13.5"x 5".

Figure 3:



Long, C. (n.d.). *Lidded caterpillar*. [Clay] 7" x 11" x 4.5".

Figure 4:



Long, C. (n.d.). *Textured fern mist bowl*. [Clay] 3" x 13" x 11".

Figure 5:



Long, C. (n.d.). *Small iris bottle*. [Clay] 5.5" x 5" x 3".

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