

NEW NATURE

10 June - 15 July 2022

curated by Julia Tarasyuk

organised with Ikebana projects

PATERSON ZEVI London



PATERSON ZEVI together with IKEBANA projects are delighted to announce the group exhibition *New Nature*, bringing together eleven artists from Japan and worldwide. The pieces themselves encourage us to rethink our relationship with flowers and plants, as framed by the principles of Ikebana 生け花 (Japanese art of flower arrangement). Dating back to the 8th Century, this Ancient art form - also known as *kado* (way of flowers) - has now evolved into an avant-garde movement emphasizing the necessity to create new forms using materials from nature. The title of the exhibition echoes the words of the renowned Japanese-American artist Isamu Noguchi:

Nature is not just one thing. The nature of trees and grass is one thing. But there are many degrees of nature. Concrete can be nature. Interstellar spaces are also nature. There is human nature. In the city, you have to have a new nature. Maybe you have to create that nature!

In his practice, Noguchi often referred to the philosophical and aesthetic principles of Ikebana; in particular, its relationship with space. He recognised the need for artists to not only draw inspiration from nature but to also reinvent it – constantly pushing the boundaries between nature and artifice.

In today's world, where some 45% of the flowers managed by the industry die before they are sold, our relationship with flowers and plants has come under scrutiny. Thus, Ikebana regains its relevance as one of the most sustainable botanical practices; embracing seasonality and working not only with fresh blooms but also with a variety of unconventional materials.

Japanese artist **Fumi Imamura's** collages on semi-transparent wax paper feature delicate botanical motifs inspired by the landscape of her native Aichi prefecture in central Japan. Meticulously crafted tiny floral elements are arranged in surreal shapes that the artist borrows from nature, imagining a world with an organic sense of freedom.

David Murphy, Bijoy Jain/Studio Mumbai, and Christopher P. Green's works explore materials, shapes, colours and forms encountered in Ikebana and often seen in nature. Green's painting offers an abstract fantasy of intense layers of green and brown colours most commonly associated with the Japanese natural landscape. Similar to the gold elements in Green's work, Bijoy Jain/Studio Mumbai's bamboo sculpture covered in gold leaf is a subtle reference to bamboo installations introduced to the avant-garde Ikebana movement by the legendary Japanese artist and filmmaker Hiroshi Teshigahara. Reminiscent of branches and fabricated in bronze, sculptural pieces by David Murphy are cut, folded, rolled and welded into graceful arrangements that move responding to their environment. Like Ikebana, they cut into space, shading and filtering the light whilst also connecting the notions of earth and sky.

According to modern Ikebana, an arrangement of flowers is not there only to show the beauty of the fresh bloom but also to explore decay disrupting the norms of visual aesthetics. This quest for unconventional beauty, often ironically, brings together the work of ceramic artists **Katy Stubbs** and **Kazuhito Kawai**. For the occasion of this exhibition, Stubbs has made her first work with bronze elements.

Painter and transdisciplinary artist **Johanna Tagada Hoffbeck** is a forager, grower and Ikebana practitioner. Through her paintings on natural cotton and linen, where figurative elements gently interact with floral bodies, she shares a sensitive and respectful view towards existing with nature. In parallel, the hidden human presence within the magnolia flower painted by **Natalia González Martín** reminds us that the natural world looks after us despite our tendencies for destruction.

Esme Hodsoll's domestic scene offers a close study of an invisible, negative space (MA in Japanese). Filled with air and light, Hodsoll's oil painting of an orchid is charged with an emotional intensity typical to her work, where we can understand the beauty that is to be found in humans and plants co-existing. The exhibition is also the London debut of Japanese artist **Nana Funo**, who carves her dreamy botanical and natural worlds in layers of monochrome paints, inviting the light to direct the experience of interaction with her wooden panels.

Moribana vessels designed by **YALI Glass** and **Marie-Rose Kahane**, handcrafted in the historical artisanal glass furnaces of Murano, Italy, have been inspired by the traditional shallow Ikebana containers named after a type of arrangement, *moribana*. The word *moribana* (literally translates from Japanese as "piled up flowers"), and first appeared in Japanese culture in 1890.

The dialogue and interchange between artists, plants and artificial materials sparks a new conversation amongst the artists exhibited, and challenges us to reevaluate our relationships with nature. By introducing concepts often associated with modern Ikebana - decay, seasonality and locality, non-organic materials and invisible space - *New Nature* presents creative and sustainable ways to interact with botanical world around us.

Julia Tarasyuk is an art historian and curator specializing in Japanese contemporary art. Through her projects and publications, she promotes an exchange between Japanese and international creative communities providing an insight into the local art scene. While living in Tokyo, Japan, Julia began practicing Ikebana and is particularly interested in its intersections with modern and contemporary art. She is a co-founder of IKEBANA projects and her book on contemporary art in Japan is due to be published by Skira Editore in 2023.

IKEBANA projects emphasize a modern vision of Ikebana 生け花 (Japanese art of flower arrangement) through a series of art collaborations, events, and other forms of artistic expression. Working closely with Japanese Ikebana artists and craftsmen, IKEBANA projects aim to highlight this traditional art and explore its infinite contemporary expressions.

www.ikebanaprojects.com

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Image: Nana Funo, *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, 2019
Courtesy the Artist, PATERSON ZEVI and Tomio Koyama Gallery