

Dave Allen	Melanie Carvalho	Marcus Coates
Henrik Håkansson	Iana Halperin	Duncan Marquiss
Christopher Orr	Diana Thater	The Lonely Piper

Where The Wild Things Are

Where The Wild Things Are takes its title from the children's book of the same name, written by Maurice Sendak in 1963. The book illustrates the fantastical journey of Max, a young boy dressed in a wolf costume who tames the 'Wild Things' and becomes king of their land. Although Max has plenty of fun adopting animal behaviour by swinging in the trees and dancing and howling to the moon, he soon finds himself feeling homesick and longing to be back in his own world. The book clearly illustrates the divide between the human and animal worlds. While Max on the one hand seems to want to 'become animal' ultimately he finds it too hard to abandon his human attributes.

This exhibition brings together a diverse group of works which all explore the complicated relationship between humankind and nature. Fascinated by the natural world the artists all seek ways to communicate with, understand, interpret or 'get back to nature' in order to find out how it is possible for the two to co-exist.

This search for the wild side of our nature is expressed in the work of **Marcus Coates**, an artist who aspires to be something 'other' than his human self. Dressed in a white shirt, wearing dark-rimmed spectacles, Coates could be mistaken for an Open University professor about to explain his work to the public but instead we are offered a different kind of spectacle. His talking head video *The Guide to the British Non Passerines* (2001) is in fact Coates imitating all 86 species of wild fowl from this particular classification of non-perching birds. His outwardly human appearance slowly begins to morph into bird as he produces throaty, guttural sounds from deep within.

This desire to become closer to and communicate with nature is also evident in the work of **Dave Allen**. His extraordinary sound installation, *The Mirrored Catalogue d'Oiseaux* (2002/2003), originates from the work of French composer Olivier Messiaen who composed *Catalogue d'Oiseaux* (1959) – 13 pieces for solo piano based on an interpretation of natural bird song. On his field trips Messiaen would compose his pieces directly from the songs of

Marcus Coates
*A Guide to the British Non-
 Passerines*
 2001
 Video still
 Courtesy of the artist



63. Arctic Skua



Dave Allen
*The Mirrored Catalogue
d'Oiseaux*
2002/2003
aviary, mockingbirds/starlings, CD
recording and hi-fi equipment
Courtesy of the artist and Hans-
Jürgen Wege, Halle für Kunst,
Lüneburg

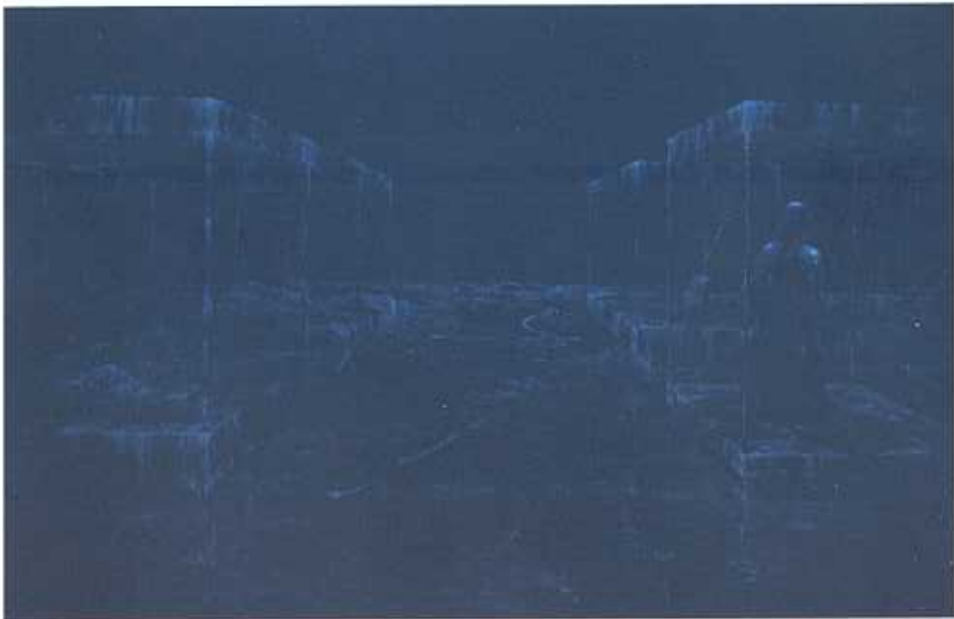
different birds rather than recording them and listening back at a later date. Allen has installed a large aviary in the gallery and during the course of the exhibition Messiaen's original composition will be played to its inhabitants – two Long Tailed Glossy Starlings. Over time the starlings, known for their ability to mimic, will naturally begin to imitate the sounds from the 'music': thus what was once a human interpretation of nature will revert to the wild.

Christopher Orr
Nothing Will Be As It Was
2004
oil painting
Courtesy of Ringier Collection,
Switzerland

Ony way, the strangest bird I ever saw was a magpie. Looked like a hunder magpies ah'd seen afore. Perched itself outside the hut an did a bit o a chorus but ah didnae pay much attention right away. It wis jst another magpie see. But then, then a heard a wee voice. At first ah thought ah was imaginin things, then I thought it was jst somebody outside the hut playing silly buggars. But then. Then ah looked oot at the magpie and ah saw the strangest thing. It was opening and shutting it's wee beak but it wasnae twitters or tweets that were comin oot, it was words.

Malcolm Stuart, *Magpie*, 2004





Duncan Marquis
Peace in the Valley
 2005
 drawing on paper
 Courtesy of Hiscax (Art) Collection

The exquisite miniature paintings of **Christopher Orr** depict nature as awe-inspiring, often submerged in supernatural mists. They evoke the overwhelming power of nature reminiscent of the Romantic landscapes by Caspar David Friedrich and J.M.W. Turner, who through their paintings sought to reinvent nature rather than imitate it. The characters within these small landscapes seem lost or 'out of place' in nature, as if they have been accidentally dropped into some foreign land. Orr culls his odd assortment of people from old copies of the National Geographic, Ladybird books and wildlife publications. In *Nothing Will Be As It Was* (2004), people appear indifferent to each other and to the beauty of their surroundings. In *Field Trip* (2005), a lone character looks straight out of the canvas using his camera to protect and separate himself from the approaching darkness.

Drawing on Edmund Burke's definition of the sublime as *a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquillity tinged with terror*, **Duncan Marquiss** presents a darker side of nature. Inspired by mythologies that have emerged from human interpretations of the natural world, Marquiss creates claustrophobic atmospheres where the presence of the supernatural or 'other' plays on the viewer's mind. His video installation *Roggenwolf* (2005) re-imagines the tale of



The Lonely Piper
The Cosmic Monarch
 2005
 collage
 Courtesy of the artist

the 'rye-wolf' from German rural folklore and the known hallucinogenic properties of Ergot, a fungus that grows in rye or maize crops (also known as 'Wolf-tooth'). Marquiss' drawings *Ur Got* (2005) and *Hella* (2005) also explore man's interpretations of the natural world, in particular, the theory that Ergot poisoning has been cited as one possible explanation for the Salem Witch trials.

The Lonely Piper explores the lighter side of traditional folklore with a distinctly Scottish twist. He is an artist who personifies Scottishness, a *dondering soul whose vital essence is older than myth*; he offers his own mix of wit and wisdom from his time spent in the Scottish highlands where he gathers source material for his paintings, collages and web drawings.





Melanie Carvalho
Gunnera
 2004
 (from *Expedition*)
 film still
 Courtesy of the artist

His webs are spun with inspiration from his wee *metaphorical spider* and consist of evocative phrases and poignant observations. *Every Moments A Masterpiece* (2005), *Silver sweethearts with tiny heads and tiny tails* (2005) and *It'll grow on you* (2006) – all describe and elaborate upon details found within the Scottish landscape.

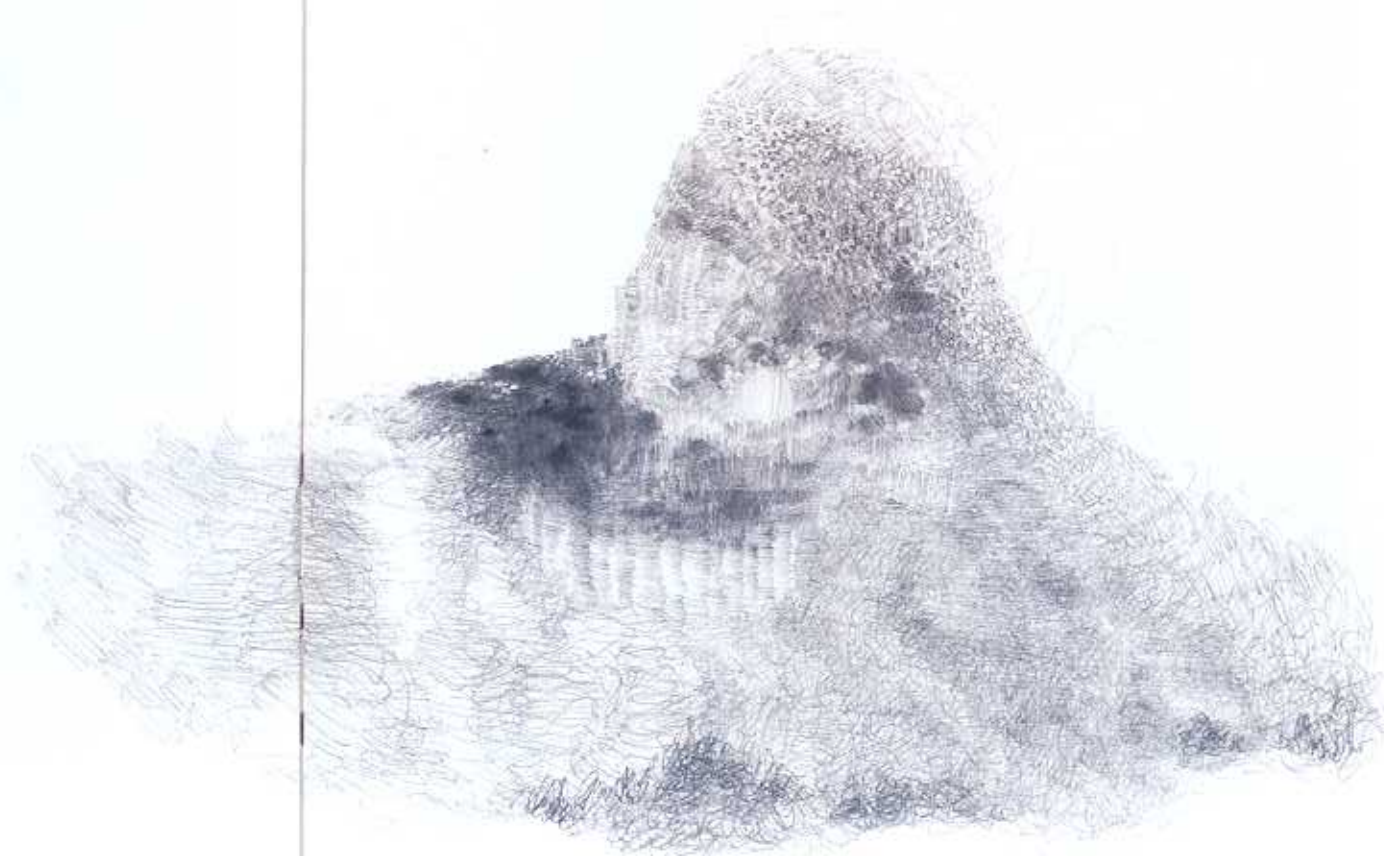
In search of a retreat during the 2002 World Cup, **Melanie Carvalho** found her way to Inverleith House in the Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh. The exhibition on at that time was a display of botanical drawings by an unknown artist of Portuguese Indian descent commissioned to draw the flora in Dapuri, India. This chance encounter solidified a number of Carvalho's on-going interests and led her to begin a three-year *Expedition* around the West coast of Scotland. She went in search of 'alien species', the palms and subtropical flora that flourish in this area due to the climate influenced by the Gulf Stream. Comprising photographs, drawings, paintings, objects, a short film and a publication, *Expedition*, reveals her unique experience of the landscapes and characters she encountered. From Carvalho's perspective as a British woman of Portuguese Indian descent, the project questions traditional perceptions of the Scottish landscape.

Ilana Halperin delves into the academic studies of geology and volcanology to find out more about strange natural phenomena. Her intricate drawings are part scientific exploration, part intuitive mark making, emerging from 'real' events but possessing their own internal language – that of the artist's personal history. For the exhibition, Halperin has brought together components of a project about Ferdinandea, a volcanic island that emerged off the coast of

Sicily in 1831 only to disappear months later. Situated on a strategic trade route, the island was claimed by a number of different countries and given seven different names. The discovery that one of only two sets of mineral samples from the island were sitting in the collection of a museum down the road from her home in Glasgow is just one of the uncanny coincidences in her project *Emergent Landmass (a chronicle of disappearance)* (2006).

Like a scientist, **Henrik Håkansson** longs to penetrate the mysteries of nature by observing, recording and cataloguing fragments of the cycles found in the natural world. Many of his projects make use of the same types of equipment found in scientific field experiments and research projects such as surveillance cameras, high-speed film and recording apparatus. In *For a Day Like Today (Spiritual Tree No.2, Thailand)* (2004) the sound of crickets, recorded live in Thailand, is played constantly through tiny

Ilana Halperin
Emergent Landmass (Ferdinandea) IX
 2006
 graphite on paper
 Courtesy of the artist and
 doggerfisher, Edinburgh





Henrik Håkansson
For A Day Like Today
(Spiritual Tree No. 2 Thailand)

2004
 tree, supports, cd player, amp, speakers
 Courtesy of the artist and The Modern
 Institute, Glasgow

speakers hung on a full size tree. This simulation creates an atmosphere of 'wild nature' inside the gallery, in effect emphasizing the distance between humankind and nature.

Diana Thater's film transports 'wild things' into a controlled environment, focusing on the relationships between animals, human brings and technology. Her films depict animals outside their natural environments. Shot on 35mm, *Perfect Devotion Two* (2005) is a highly edited film of tigers at Tippi Hedren's unique Shambala big cat sanctuary in Acton, California. The tigers are seen here in entirely man-made settings and behave like domesticated animals. They were born in captivity, many of them being

orphans or cast-offs from circuses, zoos and private owners. None has ever been in the wild. By displaying the technology as an inherent part of the work Thater illustrates our constantly mediated experience of nature.

Bringing a sense of the outdoors into the galleries, this exhibition looks at the often extraordinary ways through which we attempt to relate to nature, its birds and beasts. Taking their inspiration from the slightly odd, disturbing and often overwhelming power of nature, the artists expose our fascination with the natural world while at the same time highlighting the uneasy relationship that exists between the two. As in the ending of the book *Where The Wild Things Are*, Max ultimately fails to truly connect with the 'wild things' and instead seeks refuge in the human world somewhere on the edge of nature.

For information about artists talks and other related events please see the Events, Talks & Activities leaflet.

Diana Thater
Perfect Devotion Two
 2005
 film still
 Courtesy of the artist and
 Haunch of Venison, London

