

Kew / Pamplémousse

From April 8th

2020



GAYLE CHONG KWAN

On-line only
From april 7 2020

For its second online project, Alberta Pane Gallery is pleased to present a focus on Gayle Chong Kwan's photographic series Kew/Pamplémousse, where natural elements of botanical gardens, the concepts of exploration and hierarchies merge, giving birth to very colorful, yet transparent, reflective, and partially blurred, images.

Overlapping forms, lights and synesthetic sensations from two different geographical and cultural realities, Gayle Chong Kwan invites us to a timeless journey where distance is omitted, a topic that seems of particular interest in this time of isolation.

In this series, started in 2001, the artist combines two aspects of the 'botanical Empire' in double-exposed analog photographic prints that connect the botanical gardens of Kew in the UK and Pamplémousse in Mauritius, which was once one of its colonies.

Botanical gardens played an important role in the political economy of the British Empire, with Kew Gardens holding a central role as receptor of seeds, cuttings and dried flowers from the colonies. Moreover, botanical gardens were established in Europe to cultivate the specimens that were brought back from explorations, with a view to marketable profit.

Botanical framing incurs a mode of collecting and categorization so that species, people, and places, could find themselves in a 'system' of hierarchies, split from the content or relationships in which they existed, and made strange, curious, or of interest to those for whom the system made sense or was useful: one system of classification becomes visible and other systems disappear.

During the peculiar and unique moment that we are living today, this series offers a visual journey where temporality, history, and nature seem to blend into each other, leaving us the possibility of having an experience through sight, of renewing our perceptions and exploring new perspectives.

Gayle Chong Kwan

Born in 1974 in Edinburgh, UK. Lives and works in London, UK.

Gayle Chong Kwan is a London-based artist, whose large-scale photographic installation, sound, participatory, and video work is exhibited nationally and internationally, both in major galleries and in the public space.

Her work is an ongoing investigation into simulacra and the sublime, which she explores through constructed immersive environments and mise-en-scenes, constructed in states of resolution and dissolution between imagined futures, alternative presents, and fictional mechanisms.

Currently studying for a PhD at the Royal College of Art, in London, she explores The Poetics and Ethics of Imaginal Travel, through two registers: of shared communal travel in social, sensory and spatial reality in relation to the island of Mauritius; and the individual or personal experience of hypnogogia and nyctalopia. She's conducting her research through field trips to Mauritius, and conversations and collaborations with environmentalists, historians, archivists, philosophers and scientists.

Currently in a residency program at the V&A Museum, in London, where she is working on a photographic research project called Capturing Motion, the artist is also developing a sustainable project in collaboration with Ca' Foscari University, in Venice, as the winner of the Sustainable Art Prize 2019.

A selection of her recent exhibition includes: Wastescape: Weaving Landscapes of Politics, Dairy, and Waste at Auckland Arts Festival in New Zealand (2019), Quarantine Archipelago at Tai Kwun in Hong Kong (2019), Preserved, commissioned by Nuit Blanches for the City of Toronto (2018), Experiential Ecology, The Edge at Bath University, UK (2019); The People's Forest at William Morris Gallery (2018) and at Barbican Centre (2017), in London, Microclimate commissioned by Invisible Dust (2018), The Pan Hag (2016), and Anthro-scene at Bloomberg Space (2015).

Moreover, she was awarded with the International Artist Award from the British Council. She also took part in the Asia-Pacific Biennial in Berlin, in the 54. Biennale di Venezia in 2011 and in the 10. Havana Biennial in 2009.



Kew / Pamplemousse series, 2001