

**NEW NATURE**

a group show curated by Julia Tarasyuk  
organised with Ikebana projects

PATERSON ZEVI London  
10 June - 15 July 2021

## OLIVIA PATERSON AND ALMA ZEVI ON IKEBANA AND ART



Olivia Paterson (left) and Alma Zevi (right). Photography by Tereza Cervenova

*This summer PATERSON ZEVI London together with IKEBANA projects are delighted to present 'New Nature', a group exhibition bringing together eleven international contemporary artists from Japan and around the world. Drawing inspiration from Ikebana, the artists in New Nature engage in a discourse about our relationship with plants, opening a dialogue that challenges us to reevaluate our existence with nature. We sat down with the founders of PATERSON ZEVI to talk about Ikebana and art.*

*PATERSON ZEVI is a hybrid Art Agency and Consultancy. They work across both the gallery and museum sectors to serve international artists, collectors, institutions and philanthropic projects. They have offices in London and Venice, each of which hosts exhibitions throughout the year and operate as private viewing rooms. Olivia Paterson and Alma Zevi are trained Art Historians, (both graduates of the Courtauld Institute of Art), and have worked in the commercial sector in blue-chip galleries and in collaboration with many museums and institutions worldwide.*

*PATERSON ZEVI is an evolution of ALMA ZEVI gallery, founded in 2016 in Venice.*

### **How did you first discover Ikebana and what sparked your initial interest in this ancient Japanese practice?**

*Olivia Paterson:* I discovered Ikebana through a discussion with Julia Tarasyuk, co-founder of IKEBANA projects. Her insight and her passion for the subject really piqued my interest, and it seemed somehow such a relevant topic for the world right now; finding beauty in nature in unusual or unexpected places. Both Alma and I thought that it would make such an interesting show concept and promptly asked Julia to curate an exhibition!

*Alma Zevi:* We were very interested in the concept around arrangements, nature and artifice; Ikebana is an ancient art form that still feels so contemporary and inspiring to creative people. The exhibition really took off from there.

### **Drawing inspiration from the past is a common practice for contemporary artists today. Having received feedback from participating artists, what do you think inspired them the most in the *New Nature* concept?**

*AZ:* Many were so inspired that they chose to make new work on the occasion of the show - which was wonderful for us to witness and to now enjoy in the exhibition itself. The artists were excited at the novelty of the exhibition concept, as well as the opportunity to learn more and delve into the art form.

OP: With such a rich theme, there was so much to choose from inspiration-wise. I think most artists were really happy to think about nature and the natural world in a new way, that focused less on just the aesthetic pleasure of experiencing it and more on the issues it faces today.



Japanese ceramic artist Kazuhito Kawai in his studio in Kasama, Japan. Photography by Takashi Homma

**Is there a work in the exhibition that for you has interpreted the ideas of Ikebana in the most meaningful and profound way?**

OP: I think Kazuhito Kawai's ceramic sculptures are really shocking and beautiful in real life. Ikebana is about building something in a new language or way of expression away from the norm, and Kazuhito's melting, decaying compositions are a perfect metaphor for the revolution happening in Japanese ceramics and for Ikebana in general.

AZ: All of the works engage with theme in very different ways, some more immediately evident than others. It is interesting to see work where ideas about negative space and arrangements come to the fore, such as Esme Hodsoll's exquisite oil painting, in comparison with the more representational style of Fumi Imamura, where the textures of the flowers and their sensory response to smell and touch is activated.



Fumi Imamura, One Flower (yellow), 2022



Esme Hodsoll, Orchids/Torso, 2021-2022



Kazuhiro Kawai, Bunkayazakkaten, 2020

**How can art contribute to conversations on sustainability?**

AZ: We believe that Art and sustainability should certainly dialogue. So many artists are very serious about the environment and are taking steps to limit their waste and be mindful of how they live and work.

**New Nature presents works of artists some of which have never been shown in London or even outside Japan before. What made you choose them?**

OP: We were keen to have an international group of artists so that we could really see many different perspectives around the theme and create a cross-cultural exchange. It is also always exciting for all of us to be debuting artists in London!



Olivia Paterson looking at Nano Funo's artwork, *Maze to Search for a Star*, 2018, as part 'New Nature' exhibition. Photography by Will Amlot

**Japan, its culture and natural beauty, provides an endless source of inspiration for the creative community. Is there another Japan related subject you would like your artists to explore in their works?**

AZ: Absolutely! There are so many other ideas that one could explore, from crafts such as their textiles, papers, lacquer, ceramics; to the stunning (and varied!) natural landscapes of the country.

*New Nature* exhibition will be held at PATERSON ZEVI gallery from 10 June to July 15, 2022.

*PATERSON ZEVI, Flat 1, 41 Davies Street, London W1K 4LT*

[www.patersonzevi.com](http://www.patersonzevi.com)



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## NEW NATURE: DRAWING INSPIRATION FROM IKEBANA

*Taking place at PATERSON ZEVI gallery in Mayfair, New Nature is a group exhibition organised with IKEBANA PROJECTS, bringing together eleven artists from Japan and worldwide. The exhibition is inspired by Ikebana 生け花, the 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. Exhibition curator Julia Tarasyuk interviewed one of the exhibiting artists, Esme Hodsoll, in an exclusive for the Garden Museum newsletter:*

Posted on June 17, 2022  
Posted in News

### **Botanical elements are often present in your paintings. Do plants and flowers play an important part in your practice?**

I tend not to differentiate between my practice/painting, and my life. Plants play an extremely important role in my life, without them, I wouldn't be living. I find myself drawn to them and the way in which I'm attracted to, or affected by their presence changes constantly which keeps me returning. The element of mystery and surprise is compelling.



Esme Hodsoll Orchids / Torso, 2021 – 2022, oil on wood panel. Courtesy the Artist and PATERSON ZEVI, photo by Will Amlot

**The painting you created for the exhibition is a beautiful example of intimacy between the person (yourself) and a plant (orchid). What is the symbolism behind this work and why have you chosen orchids?**

It was more a coincidence, I had just started it when the idea of the show was presented. There is no symbolism behind the painting, I chose the orchid because I was drawn to the way the flowers cascade downwards, almost leaving a residue in their path. Orchids want to climb upwards but as the flowers have a certain density they are pulled down by their own weight. Something about the way they fall yet cling on moved me. Perhaps this is felt in the painting.



Esme Hodson Rosebush (At Night), 2020, oil on copper. Courtesy the Artist and PATERSON ZEVI

**Japanese culture and in particular cinematography has influenced on your practice. What attracts you in this aesthetics?**

Japanese prints and paintings share certain characteristics which I've also noticed in some Japanese films, most memorably Mizoguchi's ghost story Ugetsu. It's to do with the placing of the elements/objects and the space in between. The imagery is generally very graphic which gives them an immediacy, yet the compositions are so subtle and unusual that they disturb, and live on within us. I was thinking about these mysterious compositions and the spaces in-between from the film (Ugetsu) around the time I started Orchids/Torso.



Esme Hodson Buttercups & Rubbish, 2018 – 2020, oil on wood panel. Courtesy the Artist and PATERSON ZEVI, photo by Enrico Fiorese

**How have the ideas of Ikebana inspired you and shaped the 'Orchid/Torso' printing?**

I was not familiar with Ikebana as a concept until this show, but I learnt that at the root, is the Buddhist desire to preserve life, which in turn has created many of the rules for the arrangements of flowers. The desire to preserve life is one of the principal forces which drives me to paint. After reading about Ikebana I have tried to consider what affect this core desire could have on the way I got about it. Ikebana, being also functional/decorative, is preoccupied with the actual preservation of the life of the flowers. In order for the display to last, techniques have been devised and vases created especially. Being a slow painter I too am invested in creating the ideal environment for my subjects to last in. I often find myself in conflict with the life/patience of my subjects, and my desire to capture/depict everything I can of it. Perhaps whilst painting Orchids/Torso the Zen Buddhist thinking behind Ikebana had an effect on me. When making this picture, after I had painted each flower, it would fall off and I would move onto the next one whereby (once I had finished) it too would fall off until there were no more flowers and the painting was finished. I'd be interested to continue with this Zen approach towards painting, being at one with the subject etc. although, for portraits, I'm not so sure how it would work...

**Do you have any favourite pieces in the collection of the Garden Museum?**

The collection has a very interesting, diverse selection of pictures and objects. The painting, 'Cabbage' by Cedric Morris is very good. I can feel the plant growing, a growth not usually visible to the human eye, but something painting can capture through sustained observation. It's a bit Ikebana, in the way it has preserved the life of this cabbage, which otherwise would have probably been forgotten long ago.

**New Nature is open at Paterson Zevi until 15 July – [find out more](#)**

Esme Hodsoll (b. 1992, London) first studied at Pennighen, École de Direction Artistique et Architecture Intérieure, in Paris before attending the Royal Drawing School, London. Hodsoll was awarded the Richard Ford Award, and in 2017 she participated in residencies at both Dumfries House, Scotland and The Prado, Madrid. Hodsoll's scenes breathe with life, which is reflected not only in her choice of subjects but also through her skillful hand. Her years of artistic travel leading to Scotland, Greece and Spain aided Hodsoll in her close study of light, which lends itself to embedding life and action into the artist's renderings of landscapes, portraits, and scenes of quotidian domesticity. One of Hodsoll's works is included in *Ways of Drawing: Artists' Perspectives and Practices* published by Thames and Hudson in October 2019. In 2020, she completed a residency at ALMA ZEVI Venice and her solo exhibition *Esme Hodsoll: Air du Temps* ran from September to December 2021. A new work is included in the exhibition *NEW NATURE* at PATERSON ZEVI, opening June 2022. Hodsoll lives and works in Paris.

Follow Esme on Instagram: [@esme.hodsoll](#)

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. 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.

# FUMI IMAMURA'S FLORAL WORKS



Fumi Imamura in her studio in Aichi, Japan. Photography by Norihito Hiraide

*Interview with Japanese artist Fumi Imamura opens a series of conversations with artists participating in 'New Nature' exhibition at PATERSON ZEVI gallery London, curated by Julia Tarasyuk and organized with IKEBANA projects.*

*Fumi Imamura 今村文 (b. 1982, Aichi Prefecture, Japan) is a contemporary artist who uses encaustic wax painting, an ancient technique once applied to the coffins of mummies, to create glossy, crinkly floral works on paper. Her delicate creations resemble dried flowers pressed into the pages of a book, but on a wall-sized scale. These plants derive their charm not only from their branching, budding, insect-nibbled blossoms and leaves, but also from their poignantly rendered roots. Imamura's works speak to the beauty of the cracked, the faded, and the lovingly preserved.*

*Her 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 to express her own body and mind and imagine a world with an organic sense of freedom.*

*'New Nature', PATERSON ZEVI, London, on view until 15 July 2022. To book an appointment or for further information, please email [info@patersonzevi.com](mailto:info@patersonzevi.com)*

**How did the floral subject appear in your work? What interests you the most in the botanical world?**

When I was a student, I decided that I would draw exclusively flowers. This is because I have loved plants since I was a child and found painting flowers to be the most enjoyable thing to do. Human beings don't have the ability to change their body whereas plants can grow branches and spread their leaves.

When I try to express my own body and mind, I feel that I can be much freer to express myself by borrowing the form of a plant than the form of a human being.

What interests me about the plant world is that plants have no cranial nerves and relate to the world as open internal organs. I came to know this as the idea of the anatomist Shigeo Miki. The novelist Kyusaku Yumeno said that 'the brain is not a place to think', while Shigeo Miki said that 'the brain is merely a mirror reflecting the internal organs'. We tend to think that the brain is the essence of a person, but rather the brain is an accessory organ. A plant that lives only with its visceral organs is very simply connected to the world and does not question it. I sometimes think that this is a happiness that people have forgotten.



Fumi Imamura, *Circle and Root*, 2022. Installation view, PATERSON ZEVI gallery, London. Photography by Will Amlot

**Your shapes and forms inspired by nature have a mystical air about them. Do you see them as continuation of nature or something separate?**

I don't try to recreate actual plants, but I am always inspired by their presence, shapes and colours. Plants as decoration are also an important element for me. I like flowers in my daily life, for example in embroidery and floral patchwork. When I look at worn-out floral patterns, I feel gentle. There is a human presence and emotion through the flowers. There is no linguistic meaning in the way the decorative plants stretch their branches and sway their heavy flowers, but I feel a wordless poetry in them. Along with the independent theme of 'plants', I am interested in the idea of 'people painting plants'.



Fumi Imamura cutting paper. Photography by Norihito Hiraide

**Tell us a little bit more about your unique technique.**

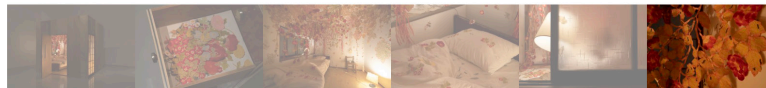
I make my work by cutting out drawings on paper and pasting them back onto the paper. I also overlap and change the shape when pasting them together. It's hard to tell from the image, but the actual piece isn't flat. I think it's interesting how something that was flat becomes three-dimensional by cutting

it out, and then back to flat again. The paper is also made from plants, so the flower motifs become very realistic.

**We have been lucky to attend your incredible exhibition at the historic Shiseido gallery in Tokyo a couple of years ago where you transformed the space in large scale installations of domestic environments covered with overgrown vegetation. What was the story behind it?**

The exhibition at the Shiseido Gallery was a rare opportunity that I got through an open call. Under the title *Invisible Garden*, I recreated my own bedroom in the gallery and created a world in which flowers and insects infested it. The novel *Dogura magura* by Kyusaku Yumeno was the inspiration for this work, which addressed the absence while sleeping.

I created this work based on my fantasy that I do not exist while I am asleep, and that going to sleep and waking up means that I die once and am reborn every day. I exhibited flowers and insects as if I were dying and decomposing. This exhibition has become an important thing for me.



*Invisible Garden*, Shiseido Gallery, Tokyo (2019). Photography by Ken Kato

**Japanese culture has a very special relationship with nature, flowers and plants. Does it find reflection in your work?**

I have never made my work with Japanese culture in mind, but I believe that as long as I live in the Japanese climate, I am influenced by it. In Japan, there is a belief that everything has a god, and I believe the same.

**Have you encountered Ikebana before? What do you think of this ancient practice and the way it becomes a modern art form today?**

Ikebana was one of the most common things that many people learnt in my grandmother's generation, along with tea and cooking, as part of the training for brides. I never learnt it, but my grandmother always had flowers in her tokonoma and at the entrance.

It's a strange thing, flowers look so much tighter in style when they are arranged in this way. I also thought Kuniko Donen's ikebana work, which I met in Kanazawa, was wonderful. Like my own work, I am attracted to things that are an extension of my daily life, rather than being there as art.

## CUTTING SPACE WITH DAVID MURPHY'S SCULPTURES



Portrait of David Murphy at the Fulmer Contemporary Sculpture Park in Buckinghamshire, United Kingdom

As part of 'New Nature' exhibition currently on view at PATERSON ZEVI gallery in London, curated by Julia Tarasyuk and organized with IKEBANA projects, we interviewed British artist David Murphy.

David Murphy (b. 1983, Newcastle Upon Tyne) studied at the Glasgow School of Art (2006). Recipient of the Kenneth Armitage Foundation Fellowship London (2015-2017), Murphy completed a residency with the Yorkshire Sculpture Park (2014) and was shortlisted for the John Moores Painting Prize (2016) and the Jerwood Drawing Prize (2017). He currently lives and works in London.

David Murphy's steel sculptures 'Cut Shade' (2022) inspired by Ikebana and created for the exhibition appears to have a life of its own, a biomorphic form suggesting a growing tree or architectural entity. Reminiscent of branches and fabricated in bronze, these sculptural pieces 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.

'New Nature', PATERSON ZEVI, London, on view until 15 July 2022. To book an appointment or for further information, please email [info@patersonzevi.com](mailto:info@patersonzevi.com)

**Your work focuses a lot on the shape, light conditions and dimensions of living and natural forms. Where does this interest come from?**

I think it comes from a simple curiosity about the world around us, and in particular how we as humans understand, interpret and utilise 'nature', and 'natural' materials. I don't mean this only in an ecological sense - I'm fascinated by the hidden structures within things, both manmade and organic. I still don't tire of seeing ordinary everyday things made strange by simply zooming into the surface and revealing what is just beyond our vision...in my recent work this has been particularly important in relation to textiles, but actually everything becomes abstracted by looking closely. I remember seeing the old Eames film the 'Powers of Ten' when I was about twelve years old and I don't think its influence has ever really left me...

Often I think my work resides at the point where human action or activity meets the natural world, and it takes inspiration from architecture, anthropology, tool-making, textiles - a whole range of different activities performed on different materials for different purposes. I think that's where the resonance with Noguchi's notion of 'degrees of nature' comes from. I took it to mean that this 'new nature' can be created from anything, and that it manifests through a sensibility, care and creativity, rather than any specific material.

**Your practice includes painting and sculpture. What came first and how do your ideas find reflection in these two different fields?**



In David Murphy's studio working on a *Cut Shade* sculpture

I use a wide variety of materials and surfaces in my work, including wood, metal, glass, stone, paper... I try not to prioritise any particular output. It sounds quite varied when I write it like that, but I think it all belongs to the same investigation, and there is a consistency of approach. It's an evolving enquiry into material qualities, histories and processes, revealing and giving form to the intangible, or the invisible.

At the root of everything is the line, the thread, the filament... Almost everything I make can be characterised in this way. It's the driving force behind the work. I don't have a preferred medium, rather I tend to try and keep a few different things happening simultaneously. On the same day this might involve working between public projects and studio work, between welding and painting, or even simply between two paintings. I find it creatively rewarding to be able to move fluidly between modes of work - it transfers a certain energy or tension between them.

**When we first spoke about Ikebana it seemed like you immediately connected to this art form. What sparked your interest?**

Though I didn't know the name, I think I had been peripherally aware of Ikebana already, and learning more about it fed into an existing appreciation of Japanese aesthetics, which I feel increasingly connected to. I suppose I would say Ikebana is a subtly physical practice, quite finely crafted and methodical, but staying a bit playful and spontaneous too, and that feels quite analogous with how I would describe my own work.

**How did Ikebana ideas transform into 'Cut Shade' pieces currently on view at 'New Nature' exhibition?**

I was particularly interested in the Moribana expression of Ikebana. Moribana, I read, is directly translated as 'piled up flowers', which conjures a lovely image, but of course its casualness is completely inaccurate in relation to the fine and meticulous arrangements that constitute the art form. In any case, Moribana is characterised by a very naturalistic arrangement held within a shallow dish or tray, a lovely formal device that I thought would be interesting to work with. Like other areas of Ikebana, it presents a framework of rules, but also encourages great freedom and creativity. The title comes from the idea that these arrangements cut into space, and create new patterns and shapes between elements. The resonance of the work exists in the balance of the present and the absent, the material and the void, and so I was developing the work in this spirit. It's actually very direct.



David Murphy, *Cut Shade (III)*, 2022. Photography by Will Amlot

**Tell us about the choice of the material (bronze) when making this work?**

Bronze holds such a place in the canon of sculpture that it's actually quite a difficult material to confront. I suppose I wanted to find a way to use it where its innate characteristics can be seen a bit differently, as something light and flexible, and as the antithesis of heavy metal sculptures... The softness of the bronze sheet means it's very tactile; it can be folded, rolled and spun by hand using very simple equipment. I also liked that these sculptures are constructed/assembled rather than traditionally cast, and that the patination with all these different oxides bring a really painterly quality to it too. I feel like I found ways to bring it into my own vocabulary and way of working.

**Is there a particular way you see them displayed in order to correspond to your vision?**

I always like sculptures to have an easy presence in the space where they are shown, and with the smaller works in particular I enjoy seeing them displayed on tables, or shelves or mantelpieces, and sharing space with other items. I have one of these pieces in my living room at the moment, on top of a cabinet, and it looks so good at dusk in the shadows, I think maybe that's the best condition for these works, where they become a very simple, dense, and beautifully soft presence in the periphery.

**How did the larger version of Cut Shade pieces, currently on view at the Fulmer sculpture park, come about?**

If I'm honest, the research I was doing about Ikebana fed very much into that work too, as I was making them at the same time as the bronzes. There are really clear connections in form, despite different scale and material. In their context, the larger pieces are really much more tree-like, or sapling-like, and are titled collectively 'High Shade' - they have a youthful quality to them, as if they are still growing. I liked the idea of 'shading' as a connecting concept for these bodies of work - the complex geometry of the folded leaves filters the light and elegantly connects the notions of ground and sky.

## IN CONVERSATION WITH JOHANNA TAGADA HOFFBECK



Johanna Tagada Hoffbeck in her studio. ©Nishant Shukla

*As part of 'New Nature' exhibition currently on view at PATERSON ZEVI gallery in London, curated by Julia Tarasyuk and organized with IKEBANA projects, we met artist and Ikebana practitioner Johanna Tagada Hoffbeck to discuss her commitment to nature and sustainability through her transdisciplinary artistic practice.*

*Johanna Tagada Hoffbeck (b. 1990, Strasbourg, France) studied in Fine Arts and Textile Design at the Haute école des arts du Rhin, France. She is a founding member of Poetic Pastel Press and co-founder of the publication Journal du Thé - Contemporary Tea Culture with Tilmann S. Wendelstein, UK. Tagada Hoffbeck is an Ikebana practitioner and has studied at Ohara School of Ikebana since 2018. She lives and works in rural Oxfordshire, UK, where she practices existing with nature through Deep Ecology, sustainable gardening, foraging and growing.*

*Her practice composed of painting, drawing, installation, textile, sculpture, film, photography and publishing often conceals ecological messages, rendered in soft and delicate methods. Often semi-autobiographical, Tagada Hoffbeck's works offer an instinctive and personal approach to positivity rising from a close observation and interpretation of nature and inspiration from her daily life. Best described as serene and poetic, her often figurative scenes focus on interaction with the environment and others.*

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**Your artistic practice is truly unique given how close you exist with nature not only in your work but also in everyday life. How do you introduce philosophies and movements like Deep Ecology and Ahimsa within your work and why is it important to you?**

Deep Ecology is "an environmental philosophy that promotes the inherent worth of all living beings, regardless of their instrumental utility to human needs"; it stands in contrast to shallow ecology, which is overly present today. I value Deep Ecology; according to Arne Næss, it can continuously be revised and adapted to one's place of living and time; it is a very living philosophy. For me practising Deep Ecology means having a complete and committed plant-based diet for several years now, mainly eating local food, and I have the privilege to grow some of it from organic seeds. The energy from such a lifestyle and food provides me with the positive energy to carry on my work and aims.

Ahimsa is translated from Sanskrit as "absence of injury" or "non-violence" it is a way to turn toward all living beings. It also informs how one is addressed in speech; it encourages compassion and respect. While I was aware of this path, meeting my husband, British Indian

Sikh artist Jatinder Singh Durhailay, nurtured my curiosity and desire to practice Ahimsa.

There is always room for improvement, and fun and joy are essential. Deep Ecology and Ahimsa continuously encourage, challenge, and shape how I live and conduct myself. For example, I explore paper making from waste, using second-hand material, employing vegan art materials, do not use single usage plastic for my publications etc. It is an ongoing journey.



Johanna Tagada Hoffbeck cultivating turnips and radishes

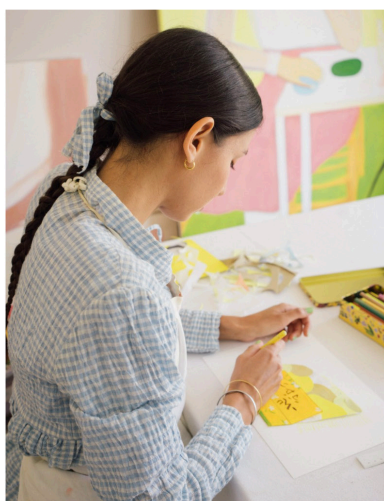


Johanna Tagada Hoffbeck, *Gently The Formative Years*, Oil on linen canvas, 2022. ©Will Amlot

I garden quasi-daily, based in rural Oxfordshire, where I am the happy holder of two allotment plants. Gardening is very similar to painting, except there is no end to the garden, it is ever-changing, and unlike painting, it is a work in process that is for all to see.

Both gardening and painting contain an abundance of vitality. It is a sort of ecosystem of its own. There is love, a sense of touch and movement, a demand for decision-making, and both swift and slow action in gardening and painting. It is sometimes complex and challenging, too, turning both practices into a setting to learn resilience. While these are 'activities,' I find that both bring about safe space and a feeling of oneness when performed holistically. Unlike my painted pictures, which reach an end and may only change slowly with age, a garden is constantly in motion.

Materials in my garden or from the gardens of others may find their way into my practice, gardening scenes may be depicted in my painterly works, and likewise, being a painter nurtures my approach to gardening.



Johanna Tagada Hoffbeck in her studio. ©Sach Dhanjal, 2019

**Figurative elements are often present in your paintings. Are they referencing your own journey as a grower, planter and forager?**

The paintings depict my personal experience, friends, insects, family, and other things I have seen in old horticultural books, for example. Some of the scenes are also imaged through pieces of reality.

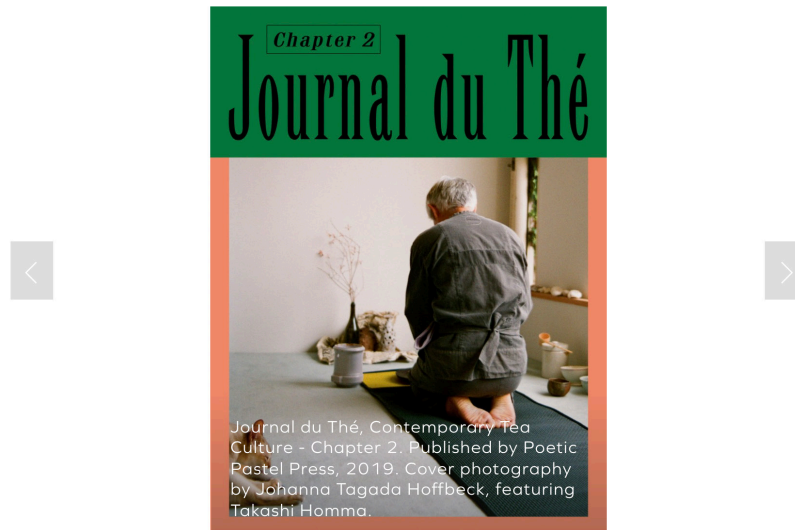
**Painting is just one of the directions of your transdisciplinary practice. You're also a founder of some amazing projects including the Gardening Drawing Club, Poetic Pastel and Journal du Thé. What is at the core of all these initiatives?**

Thank you. Painting is a chore of my practice; it influences all other projects and mediums, as well as how I approach them. I like to say that I write, photograph, and garden like a painter. The essence of all these projects I founded or co-founded is a deep-rooted wish to share, transmit joy and encourage peace.

*Journal du Thé - Contemporary Tea Culture* is a printed publication series I co-founded with my dear friend, the German art director and graphic designer T. S. Wendelstein. We have released three chapters since 2018 and are working on the fourth one. While the history of tea is far from a peaceful picture, I believe that a shared cup of tea (regardless of its grade or how fine the tea vessels) can provide a place where one may reflect and converse sincerely.

Poetic Pastel, which includes Poetic Pastel Press, is a positive and independent collaborative cultural initiative informed by Deep Ecology, which manifests through projects including art exhibitions, plant-based food gathering, gardening, musical performances and textiles, amongst others. The project has had nearly 400 participating cultural practitioners since its founding in 2014.

The Gardening Drawing Club embodies the values of Poetic Pastel and is its most recent project. It provides moments with free art and horticulture access to children and adults in Britain. It is a chance for people of various backgrounds to meet at an intergenerational gathering. It also provides some restorative, fun and educational time. The project began this April with some of our first free workshops at Camden Art Centre. A little over 300 people of various ages have taken part in The Gardening Drawing Club, and events took place in the community centre of a Gurdwara (Sikh Temple), a church's garden and a plant nursery. What people create and how they interact with one another and the plants inspires me for a new body of paintings. And it also made me realise the extent to which I love transmitting, sharing, learning and playing. I look forward to continuing these projects.



**You had a number of solo and group presentations in Japan, a country which seems to have influenced your practice a lot. What do you most admire about Japanese culture?**

Yes, I have the great joy of having several trusted and enjoyable ongoing collaborations in Japan. I hold these relations and collaborations, dear. My first solo exhibition took place in Japan, in Tokyo, in 2014! So, it will always remain special, the country that first responded to my practice and offered me a chance.

I think it is important to remember that, as for all cultures, Japanese culture is plural. What I admire and enjoy the most in Japan is the appreciation of craft; like in India, another country I love visiting, crafts are alive, and there is a tendency for people to appreciate the works of artists who create their own work with their very own hand. I highlight this as it isn't uncommon for contemporary artists to have their work produced by their assistants or abroad. I also enjoy the sense of care, politeness, and respect that is generally instilled in Japan. During five visits to Japan, I have never witnessed someone throwing some rubbish on the street, for example, something far more common in the UK and Europe, I would say.

**How did you first encounter Ikebana and why did you decide to become a practitioner of this art form?**

My first encounter might have been through some book as an art student in the late 2000s. Yet my first memorable encounter came much later; I went to an Ikebana demonstration in London by the Ohara School. Soon after, in 2018, I decided to join as a student, as I realised that this would not only be something I would enjoy but also help me become a better painter through composition, breathing spaces and training my eye.

Through the years, I have also slowly started growing flowers with the idea of employing them for Ikebana practice. It is also an ideal way to keep learning the name of plants, and they favour growing conditions. I am still at the very early stage, and this is the being of a life-long journey.

**What ideas behind Ikebana philosophy you find most inspiring for your work. Did some of them find reflection in your paintings for the 'New Nature' exhibition at PATERSON ZEVI?**

I appreciate the devotional aspect that infused the early history of Ikebana and the attention that is demanded to create an arrangement. I also love that it is seasonal materials that are encouraged and that plants which are not in their highest shape or form might be employed. Ikebana may celebrate all moments of life, from the first bud to a decaying leaf. In the paintings presented at *New Nature*, a person is growing plants and imagining what they may do with them, while another focuses on an arrangement, her hands gently tangled within a plant, as an embrace or a dance.



The Imaginary Navelwort, 2022



Growing Memories - Series Village, 2021



This Spring Moment, 2022

These works are on view at PATERSON ZEVI as part pf New Nature exhibition (10 June - 15 July). ©Will Amlot

## JAPANESE ARTIST NANA FUNO ON HER BOTANICAL INSPIRATION



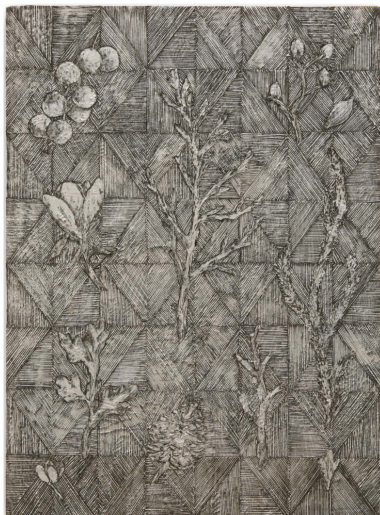
Nana Funo in her studio. Photography by Taishi Nishi.

As part of 'New Nature' exhibition at PATERSON ZEVI gallery London, curated by Julia Tarasyuk and organized with IKEBANA projects, we spoke with the Japanese artist Nana Funo about her botanical carvings in paint and Ikebana inspiration from her mother. The exhibition marks Nana Funo's debut outside of Asia.

*Nana Funo (b. 1983, Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan) graduated from Osaka University of Arts, Japan (BFA) in 2006 and completed the Graduate Kyoto City University of Arts, Kyoto, Japan (MFA) in 2008. She currently lives and works in Shizuoka, Japan.*

*Nana Funo's dense images are delicately and laboriously constructed. Each of her works is built up in a complex series of layers. She starts with applying muted tones of acrylic on a wooden panel, carves her narrative with a heated pen, applies gesso to create gradation, and masks the surface in another layer of acrylic paint. The final work has both depth and kaleidoscopic texture. The subjects of Funo's works appear fantastical, but are in fact based on her day-to-day experiences and moods; recurring motifs include figures, animals, flora and fauna, and writing.*

*'New Nature', PATERSON ZEVI, London, on view until 15 July 2022. To book an appointment or for further information, please email [info@patersonzevi.com](mailto:info@patersonzevi.com)*



Nana Funo, *Leaves That Smell Good*, 2019, acrylic on panel. On view at PATERSON ZEVI gallery London until July 15th. Photography by Will Amlot.

**Your work presents a complex layer of botanical motifs. What interests you in flowers and plants?**

Painting flowers and plants as motifs has opened my eyes to how the “thick, green masses” – as I used to perceive them – comprise veins of venation on each uniquely shaped leaf, and how diverse these shades of green are. It’s like the world comes into focus, from which beauty emerges. What I like about plants is how they don’t speak yet are still alive.

**Please tell us about your unique technique reminiscent of ancient carvings. How was this idea of sculpting in paint born?**

I’ve never been that interested in painting with a paintbrush. I would instead apply dye on canvas, paint using masking tapes, or wipe applied paint with cloths – Even with oil painting, I paint with thin lines rather than brushstrokes. This came about from wanting to paint like how I draw on paper with a ball-point pen, which is my favorite method of drawing. I have also tried scratching thick layers of paint with bamboo and reed pens, but my current painting method has the closest feel to drawing with a ball-point pen.

**The color scheme of your work ranging from black to silver, is almost the opposite of what we can encounter in nature. Why have you chosen to work in this style?**

It’s kind of a personal taste, but I don’t feel so comfortable with bright colors and when I do try, they tend to not sit so well. So just as I often dress in black, I keep coming back to the black and silver colors. In a formal sense, these contrasting colors also have the effect of bringing lines forward.



Nana Funo's studio in Shizuoka, Japan.

**Japanese culture has a very special relationship with nature, flowers and plants.  
Does it find reflection in your work?**

I'm not sure if it's specifically a Japanese thing, but I do have a sense of awe toward nature. That is, nature is not merely beautiful but something scary at the same time. I think that's also reflected in my work in some way, if not a directly.

**Have you encountered Ikebana before? What do you think of this ancient practice and the way it becomes a modern artform today?**

Despite my mum having a teaching certificate for a school of Ikebana called Isuzu Koryu, I haven't had much exposure to Ikebana before. Even so, I can definitely see when she arranges flowers it comes out much more beautiful than when I try. I was also fascinated by this performance by a ceramic artist I've recently met – Shozo Michikawa – which was a collaboration between Ikebana and ceramic artworks. Ikebana sure is a tradition, but I strongly feel it's also connected to our time.



*Details of Nana Funo's works currently on view at PATERSON ZEVI gallery in London. Photography by Will Amlot*