

Orchidaceae batemanii

Much of my work is about the natural world, specifically about the intricacies of plant morphology and function. *Orchidaceae batemanii* is a response to Bateman's '*orchidio mania*'. Given the printed and illustrated legacy of his orchid collections I wanted to use his obsession as a starting point.

Each orchid is sculptured in vellum, and painstakingly depicted in a similarly obsessive way to which they were collected and recorded for Bateman. I wanted to evoke something of the artifice created by Cooke and Bateman in attempting to capture such a diversity of environments within gardens; the romantic and half-imagined notions of exotic places. The isolated and deliberate display of the work echoes the creation of micro-ecologies within the garden, fascinating in their displacement and adaptation.

Curious stories must have accompanied the acquisition of the plants; fictions could easily be weaved around their provenance and whole environments imagined and created around specific specimens. I would like to convey the ambiguities and fictions of this world. On initial viewing each piece resembles a spectral orchid, apparitions from Bateman's collection, on closer inspection different aspects of the garden are assimilated into their different hybrid forms. These orchid forms will inhabit and illuminate some of the indoor spaces of the garden, echoing the compartmentalised nature of the gardens and provoking a sense of making hidden discoveries.

THE SHELTER HOUSE

Grotesques Creatures (*Vanda batemanii*)

Work in progress, 2015

Vellum, hair sheep leather, armature



Case 1 contains two orchids, each growing from one of Bateman's original orchid pots. The first is a spectral copy of Bateman's namesake *Vanda batemanii* grandiflora.

THE SHELTER HOUSE

Grotesques Creatures (*Vanda batemanii*)

The second a similar plant revealing within its complex morphology many hybrid creatures; both of the garden and of Bateman's world. Although Bateman was averse to hybridising orchids, as he saw it as contrary to God's law, the artificial nature of transporting plants around the world was not considered an affront to God and nature; he wrote to Darwin expressing his frustration at not knowing the true form of the blooms of some orchids as he could not effectively recreate the required micro-climate for them to flourish. Bateman struggled in reconciling his religious beliefs with Darwin's new theories of evolution, referencing the hybrid forms found in Cooke's 'Grotesque Animals' cartoons, a critique of Darwin's ideas, the piece plays with the uncertainties of the new world of scientific ideas experienced by Bateman and Cooke.

Ecology (*Galeandra batemanii*)

2015

Vellum, hair sheep leather, armature

Case 2 contains another orchid named after Bateman, *Galeandra batemanii* and an 'exotic weed' *Gaultheria shallon*. This piece refers to the huge changes in the ecology and nature of our gardens and landscapes, brought about by the introduction of many new and exotic species of flora and fauna by the likes of Bateman. *Gaultheria shallon*, originating in the Pacific Northwest of America, was the plant named by head gardener Paul Walton when I asked about nuisance weed species at Biddulph. This piece examines the way in which we categorise and validate different plants species, the orchid has almost iconic status but other species have affected a greater impact on the ecology of our environments.



THE ICE HOUSE

Lady Slipper (Vernacular)

2015

Vellum, supernatural vellum, armature

This piece is based on a Lady's-slipper orchid, an extremely rare but native species of orchid. Only a single clump survives in Yorkshire due to the legacy of 19th century collecting. The garden at Biddulph often seems a fantastical tribute to the exoticism of far off places. As a contrast I like the idea that this unusual species would have been, relatively speaking, on Bateman's door step. Its fate also highlights the dark side of plant collecting, the destruction of entire plant populations at the hands of competitive collectors.

