

The Institute of Critical Zoologists

Exhibition at Chapter Arts Centre, Wales
Curated by Lauren Jury and Helen Warburton





Blind Long-tailed Owl, Desert Variant of Little Owl

From the series, *As Walked on Water*, 2011

Installation of vinyl print, 280cm x 194cm

Synopsis

Artist biography

List of works

Installation shots

Curator's note

Synopsis

The Institute of Critical Zoologists (ICZ) works with artists, scientists and researchers to develop a critical approach to the zoological gaze, exploring how we perceive and classify the natural world. This exhibition brings together commissioned projects by Zhao Renhui (an artist who works closely with the ICZ) and extracts from the Institute's museum collection.

Taking fictional environments as a starting point for quasi-factual scenarios, projects are realised as installations, photographic art works, archive material and expedition reports. The ICZ aims to test the role of art and photography in the dissemination of knowledge and acceptance of truths.

Chapter has worked in collaboration with the ICZ to present its first UK retrospective exhibition that interrogates the boundaries between the seen and the unseen, art and artifice, credence and fantasy; exploring methods of allegorical representation and interpretation.

In March 2012, ICZ artist Zhao Renhui undertook a residency at the National Museum Cardiff that has informed part of the research for this exhibition. An installation by the artist is open in the Natural History Galleries at the Museum between 13 March and 17 June 2012.

Pauline J Yao writes, Zhao's work "may be truthful depictions or artful fabrications, but it hardly matters: Zhao succeeds in proving that our assumptions about reality must be rigorously questioned if not, on occasion, fully abandoned". (Best of 2010, Art Forum)

This exhibition is curated by Lauren Jury and Helen Warburton.



Figure 2. The author at the 8th Phylliidae Convention with Phyllium S. when he first entered the competition in 1991
Diasec on aluminium shelf, 29.7cm x 21cm

Synopsis

Artist biography

List of works

Installation shots

Curator's note

Artist Biography

Under the organisational name of The Institute of Critical Zoologists, Zhao Renhui has shown in a number of international exhibitions and been the subject of extensive writing and commentary. He is currently undertaking an artist residency with Ffotogallery, UK on behalf of the Land Archive. Recent group exhibitions include: The Singapore Art Museum (2012); Langgeng Art Foundation, Indonesia (2011); Fukuoka Art Museum, Japan; Seoul Arts Center, Korea; (both 2010); Photo Levallois, Paris (2008), as well as solo exhibitions at The Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore (2012) and The Arts Gallery, London (2011). In 2011 he received the Deutsche Bank Award in Photography from University of the Arts London and was Winner of the Sony World Photography Awards in Still Life. He was awarded the Singapore National Arts Council Young Artist Award in 2010 and won a distinguished art prize in Singapore, The United Overseas Bank Painting of the Year Award in 2009. Zhao graduated with a Masters in Photography from The London College of Communication under its graduate scholarship program. He lives in London and Singapore.

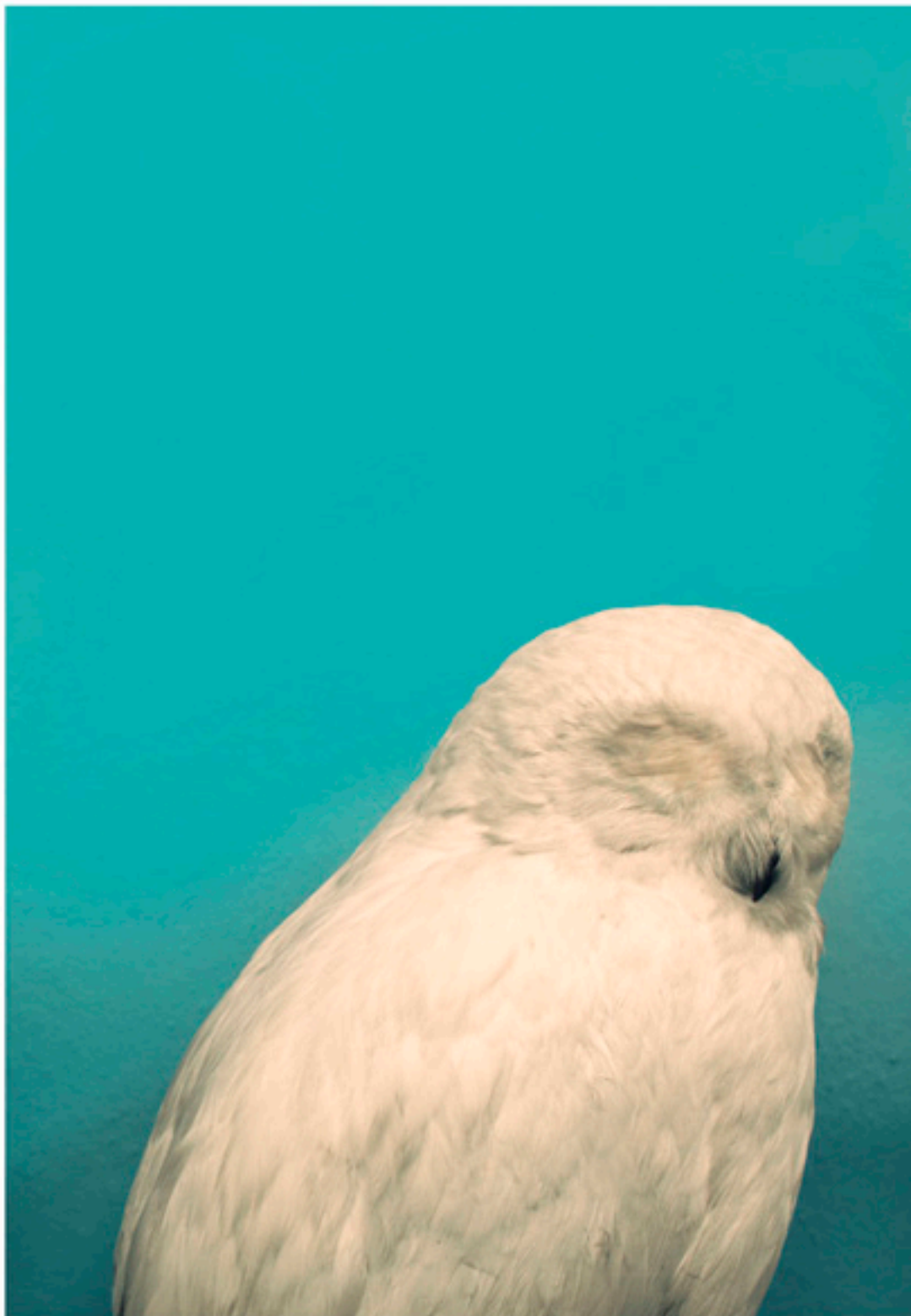
info@criticalzoologists.org
criticalzoologists.org



Exhibition view, Chapter Gallery, Wales
Installation of 530 documents from The Institute of Critical
Zoologists, (1923 - 2012)

Synopsis
Artist biography
List of works
Installation shots
Curator's note

Gallery 1



Blind Long-tailed Owl, Desert Variant of Little Owl
From the series, *As Walked on Water*, 2011
Installation of vinyl print, 280cm x 194cm

Gallery 1

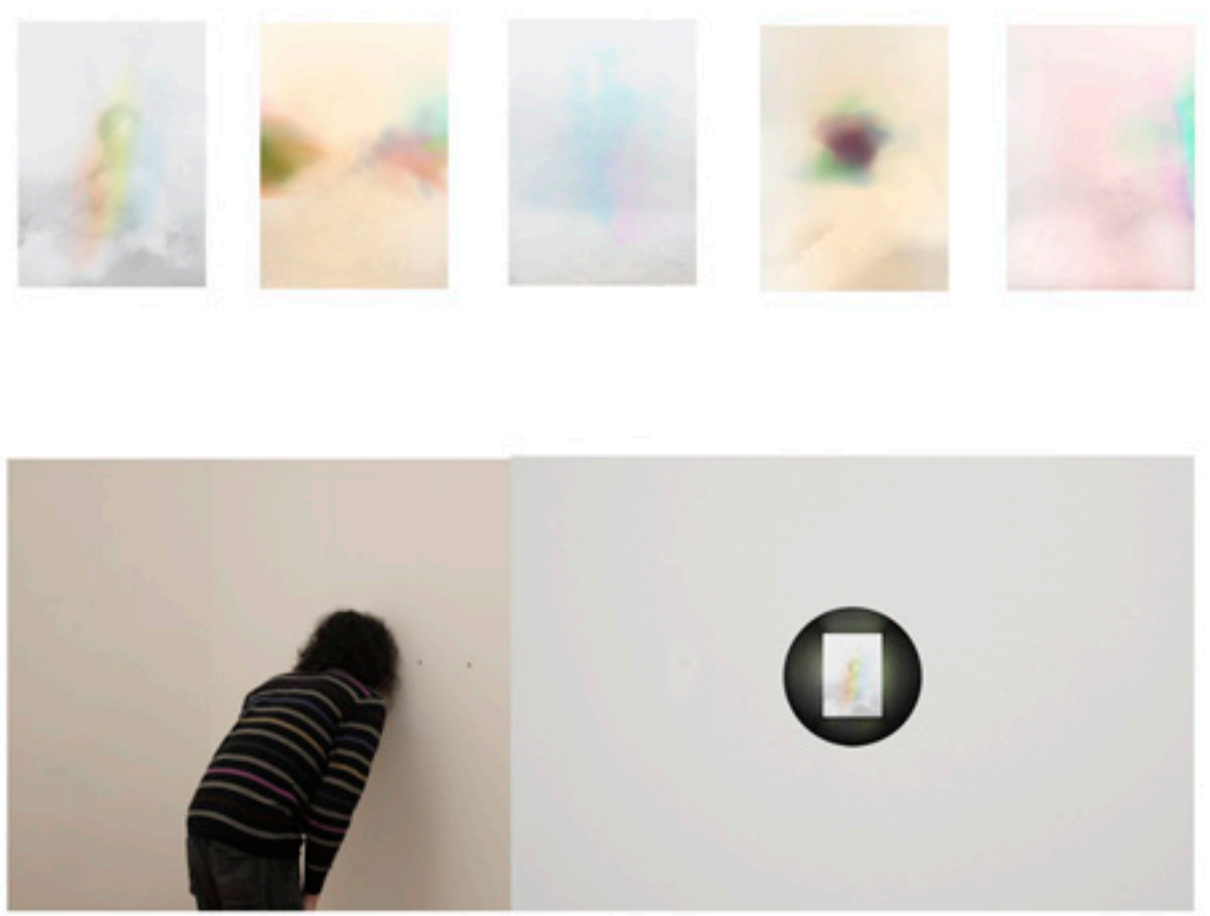


#243, after 321 days, 2009

From the series *A heartwarming feeling*, 2009

Installation of diasec on aluminum shelf, 40cm x 26.6cm

Gallery 2



#121, #471, #523, #1230, #1420

From the series A heartwarming feeling, 2009

Light box installation with 5 transparencies mounted in wall

Dimensions Variable.

Transparency each, 11.6cm x 7cm

Gallery 2



The Arctic Circle
From the series *A heartwarming feeling*, 2009
Installation of Vinyl print, 180cm x 120cm

Gallery 2



Whiteness of a Whale, 1937 – 2008

From the series *The whiteness of a whale*, 2010

Installation of 8 diasec on aluminium shelves, 15cm x 9.3cm

Courtesy of Satoshi Kataoka

Gallery 2



Secret Place, 2010

From the series *The whiteness of a whale*, 2010

Framed piezographic print, 121cm x 84cm



House of Mr Kazuhiro Nagashima, 2010

From the series *The whiteness of a whale*, 2010

Framed piezographic print, 121cm x 84cm

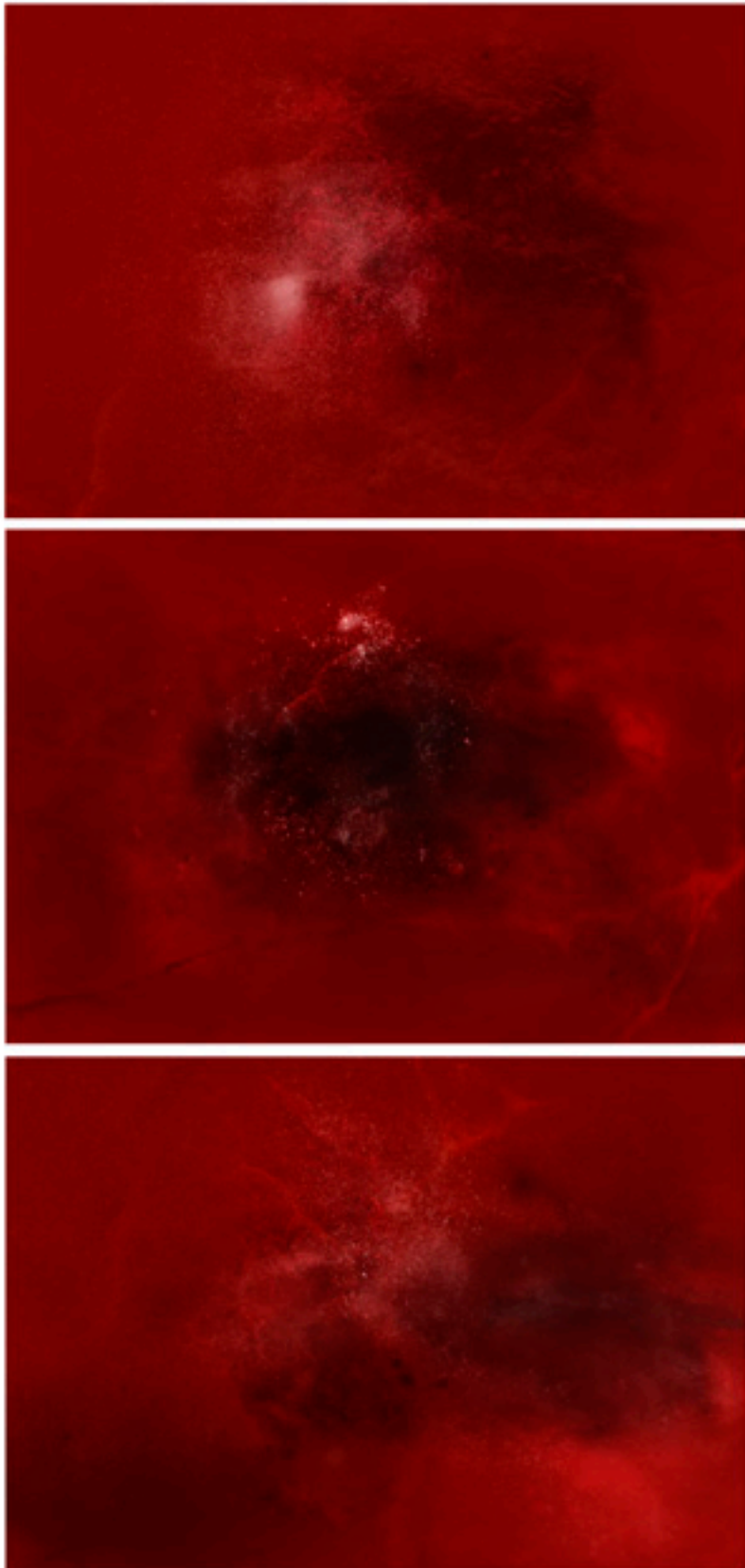


Temple of the Whales #23

From the series *The whiteness of a whale*, 2010

Framed piezographic print, 121cm x 84cm

Gallery 2



The Whale People's Rose

From the series *The whiteness of a whale*, 2010
Microscopic images of ingredients; whale sashimi, strawberry,
beef sashimi. Installation of diasec in wood tray table, all
images 58cm x 40cm

Gallery 3

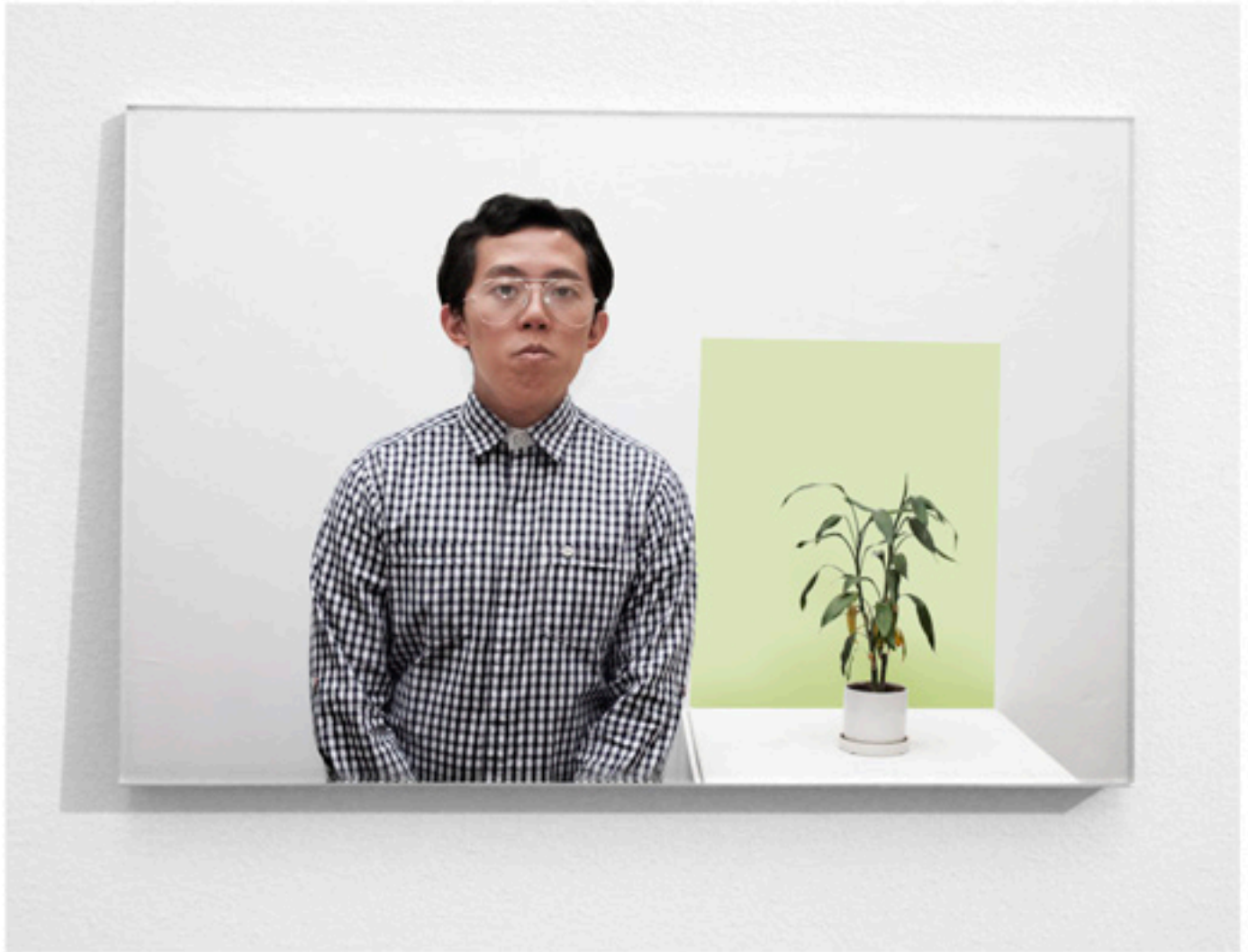


Figure 2. The author at the 8th Phylliidae Convention with *Phyllium S.* when he first entered the competition in 1991
From the series *The Great Pretenders*, 2011
Diasec on aluminium shelf, 29.7cm x 21cm



Film showing *Phyllium gigas* from a video presentation at the 13th PSG AGM in 1999 by the author
From the series *The Great Pretenders*, 2011
Digitally Remastered Looped Video
Courtesy of Hiroshi Abe

Gallery 3



The Great Pretenders, 2011

**Hiroshi Abe, Winner,
2008/9 Phyllidae Convention, Tokyo
Piezographic Print on Aluminium, 110cm x 73cm**

**Minoru Honda, New Culture Award,
2009 Phyllidae Convention, Tokyo
Piezographic Print on Aluminium, 110cm x 73cm**

**Kiichiro Furukawa, Special Mention,
2009 Phyllidae Convention, Tokyo
Piezographic Print on Aluminium, 110cm x 73cm**



Documents table
Wood, perspex and metal stand, 150cm x 80cm

Gallery 3



Pulau Pejantan, 2009

Ghost Hare

(Day 61, Rock sampling off campsite Raas)

Installation of diasec on aluminium shelf, 21cm x 15cm

Gallery 3



Pulau Pejantan, 2009

Pejantan Black Geyser

(Day 131, Western end, Madura Forest)

Framed piezographic print, 121cm x 84cm

Private Collection



Pulau Pejantan, 2009

Pacific Lantern Fish surfacing off the coast of Pulau Pejantan

(Journey to Pulau Pejantan onboard Sea-Farer II, 11th January)

Framed piezographic print, 121cm x 84cm

Gallery 3



The Blind, 2007-2010

Taiheiyo Evergreen Forests

Installation of vinyl print, 300cm x 200cm

Gallery 4



Artist Impression of Blind Long-tailed Owl, Desert Variant of Little Owl
From the series, *As We Walked on Water*, 2011
100cm x 20cm x 15cm

Gallery 4



From the series The More We Get Together (from left to right)

Mole, Japan, 2011

Mole, Paris, 2008

Black Crested Gibbon, 1982

Eastern Coachwhip, 2007

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the Museum of The Institute of Critical Zoologists

A Guide to the Common Flora and Fauna of the World, 2010

Book, Lizard Replica, Reptile's essence, Torchlight, 42cm x 30cm

Gallery 4



52 Cockatoo Eggs, 2010 (left) and Lizards, 2009 (right)
From the series *A Guide to the Common Flora and Fauna of the World*
Framed piezographic print, 66cm x 44cm

Gallery 4



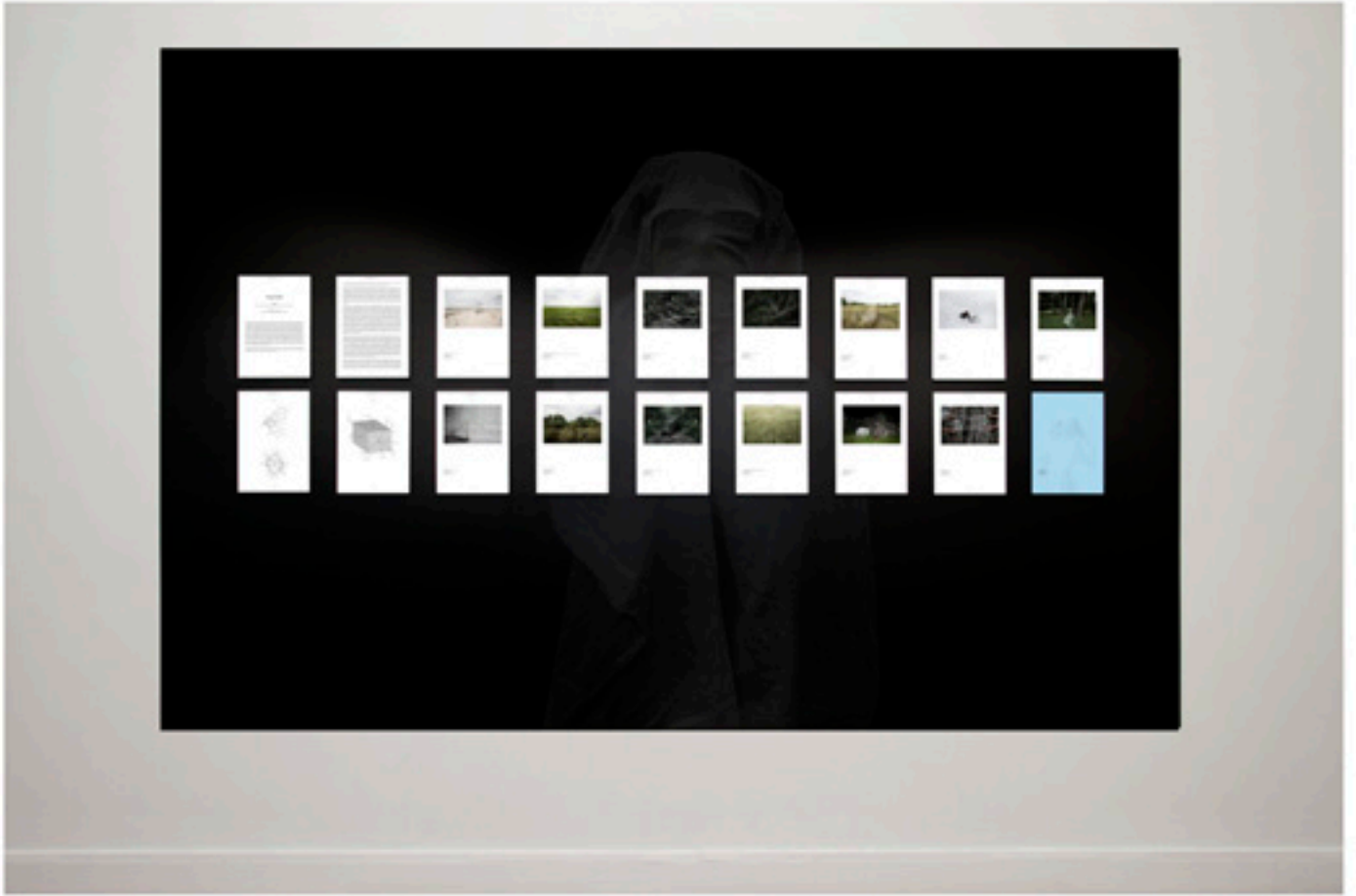
Budgie/UV (left) and Blue Tit/UV (right)

From the series Watermarks, 2012

A project with the National Museum of Wales commissioned by Chapter.

Diasec on aluminium shelves, 58cm x 40cm

Gallery 4



The Blind, 2012

Set of 18 diasec documents, aluminium shelves, vinyl print, 300cm x 200cm

Gallery 4



Installation of 530 documents from The Institute of Critical Zoologists, (1923 - 2012)



Blind Long-tailed Owl, Desert Variant of Little Owl
From the series, *As Walked on Water*, 2011
Installation of vinyl print, 280cm x 194cm

Synopsis

Artist biography

List of works

Installation shots

Curator's note

Gallery 1



Gallery 2



Gallery 3



Gallery 3



Gallery 4



Gallery 4





52 Cockatoo Eggs, 2010

From the series *A Guide to the Common Flora and Fauna of the World*

Framed piezographic print, 66cm x 44cm

Synopsis

Artist biography

List of works

Installation shots

Curator's note

Curator's note

This exhibition brings together commissioned projects by Zhao Renhui (an artist who works closely with the ICZ) and extracts from the Institute's museum collection.

In Gallery 2, the remote Japanese village of Omishima provides the backdrop for an exploration into a community living in the shadows of the elusive white whale and the last living descendant of the 'Whale People', Mr Kazuhiro Nagashima. These works - including found images of reported sightings, a whale temple and Nagashima's house - evidence the historic relationship between the whale, the land and collective consciousness of its people.

This narrative is underpinned by three microscopic images that compare the cellular make up of whale sashimi, strawberries and raw beef. Viewed here at an atomic level, the apparent lack of visual distinction questions ethical hierarchies inherent in the food chain.

Opposite this work, **A Heartwarming Feeling (2009)** appropriates existing technology to track the migration of birds from Yamshina, Japan to the Arctic Circle. Illuminated through small apertures that puncture the gallery wall, the resulting pinhole images reveal fantastical spectrums of light. This dream-like installation is juxtaposed with a single, disconcerting photograph that alludes to the impact global warming and human intervention has on the flight path of these birds.

Gallery 3 presents a series of hyper-real still lives that record prize-winning leaf insect specimens at the 2009 Phylliidae Convention, Tokyo. These 'walking leaves' are bred to mimic their food plants, becoming so well camouflaged that detection is near impossible. The accompanying material from **The Great Pretenders (2011)** humorously subverts the exploits of the Phylliidae Study Group, commenting on the notion of the hybrid as a status of human achievement.

A human desire to discover is reflected in the work made on Pulau Pejantan, a small, previously undiscovered island off the coast of Indonesia. Whilst exploring its unique microclimate, the ICZ recorded a vast number of discoveries, including natural phenomena like the erupting Black Geyser and over 600 new animal species, including the Ghost Hare and Pacific Lantern Fish.

This expedition was also pioneering in its use of a meta-material cloak, which reflects light to render the wearer invisible. **The Blind (2007-2010)** seen at the end of Gallery 3 and expanded in Gallery 4, presents this working prototype through images and field reports.

A Guide To The Common Flora And Fauna Of The World (2010) documents some of the paraphernalia used to smuggle animals across borders. These devices, confiscated by customs, are re-presented in photographs and a bookwork from which the series takes its title. Featured alongside a selection of animal traps from *The More We Get Together* (1996-ongoing), these displays, which examine a need to capture, conceal and ultimately control, further unravel the complexities of our relationship with animals.

Adopting a scientific rhetoric, the supporting project reports are laid out and shown in museological form, providing a deeper understanding to the provenance of the exhibited photographic works.

Gallery 4 also features the outcome of a research residency by Zhao, working with the National Museum Wales' collection*. The artist has developed these densely coloured photographs that simulate the 'bird's eye view'; a visual frequency outside the perception of the human eye.

The Blind Long-tailed Owl (2011), 'watches' over us at both the beginning and end of the exhibition - This owl has evolved a sight-sheltering plumage to cope with the desert conditions it has been forced into, due to de-forestation. This bird becomes a totem; it's visual impairment /adaptation alludes to the limitations of the human regard for animals and suggests a change of perspective and abandoning of our assumptions about reality.

This exhibition interrogates the boundaries between the seen and the unseen, art and artifice, credence and fantasy – and seeks to test the role of photography and art in the dissemination of knowledge and acceptance of truths.

info@criticalzoologists.org
criticalzoologists.org