

*Umble[bumble]* is a personal testament to the natural world and as a body of work, has as its core dialogue the interconnectivity between plants, pollinators and people. The body, fragility and femininity are all addressed with a circle and cycle motif throughout and an emphasis on the posthumous poise of specimens.

Regarding the title, *Umbel* refers to Umbelliferae, a family of plants, many of which are identifiable by their large inflorescent heads with multiple stalks protruding from a central point as with the spokes of an umbrella, from which the name was derived [Latin, 'Umbra' meaning shade]; the Umbelliferae family of plants is also called Apiaceae, this word being derived from the Latin 'apic' meaning 'bee'; the *[bumble]* in the exhibition's title refer to bumblebee. Umbellifers are attractive to bees due to their high nectar content and therefore beneficial to pollination. Those plant specimens of the family used in the exhibition include dead and dried giant hogweeds and cow parsley, presented upright as though growing out of the gallery floor, fragile figurative forms of human scale with their slender stalks and bulbous heads holding a Giacometti-esque grace. The central installation is composed of one hundred and ninety nine dead bumble bees suspended from the ceiling in individual clear cylindrical vials like test-tubes, quasi-scientific in presentation, and their head-height hanging level allowing for a 360° view of each little body. The posthumous poise of the plants and pollinators in the white cube gallery space, creates a clinical but calm post apocalyptic stage in an accelerated present where the plight of the bees due to pesticide poisoning has resulted in nature being presented as a thing of the past. The title of the bee piece is a play on the chorus line from Joni Mitchell's environmentally orientated anthem 'Big Yellow Taxi', with I have replaced Mitchell's 'trees' instead with 'bees'; "They took all the bees, and put them in a bee museum, and charge..". The piece is an aesthetic response to the epidemic of pollinator decline, the sheer scale of dead bees invoking an anxiety about the toxic environment which we reside in. I wanted to give a platform to the issue through my practice and though the exhibition is not a factual investigation into the problem, it endeavours to provoke empathetic awareness. Information on The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is available in the gallery for the public to peruse should they seek to know.

Growing up, throughout my formative years, my father practised Taxidermy; he has always been a great observer of nature and instilled in me a deep interest in and respect for the natural world. This influence and embedded sensibility-specifically in terms of *Umble[bumble]*, manifests itself fundamentally through the notion of the 'posthumous poise'. In ancient Greek, 'taxi' meaning 'to arrange' and 'dermis'-'skin', this preservation for conservation and presentation of specimens after their life. I work in organic horticulture so this preoccupation with the posthumous poise-or the 'static aftermath' if you like-is applied in my practice through the use of plants and associated insects.

The eleven part photographic print series '*Spectre*', with its images in negative of dried flower forms, echo the Victorian preoccupation with compiling herbariums or pressed plant collections

with the print series aesthetic referencing early technology namely that of the cyanotype tradition of solar prints, with a nod to the first female photographer who used this process, Anna Atkins. The delicate lines of the pressed specimen photographs in high contrast white against a blank charcoal background again have a strong figurative poise, their graceful posture mounted on the wall conjuring the connection between the floral, the body and femininity, with undertones of such terms as 'wall flower', and the notion of having and losing ones 'bloom'. The eerie waif-like forms floating in dark space are ghost-like in their appearance, again reference a post-apocalyptic present where plants are recalled only through old images of once existing elements of the natural world. In creating this series, only a small fraction of which was ultimately presented in the exhibition, I compiled a large herbarium of plants, collecting them for months and pressing them, photographing them, editing, printing and mounting for presentation. The actual specimens represented in the prints and the large collection otherwise that I preserved which were not on display, have given rise to a larger project in this line. Inspired by female artists of various veins who also held a keen interest in botany such as Hildegard Von Bingen [composer] and Emily Dickinson [writer], again provide a parallel between the female and the floral.

Directly related to these apparent 'solar prints' is the highly graphic 2.2 meter in diameter yellow circle painted directly onto the gallery wall, overlaid with a high contrast abstract grid of black paper tape; Entitled '*Sigil Sun*'; sigil refers to the geometric abstraction of the black tape design, elongated lettering imbued with an unwritten intention, appearing against the huge mustard circle as the fundamental solid and stripes black and yellow of a giant de-constructed bee. The linear aspect of this installation with its thick black grid is juxtaposed dramatically with the waif-ish lines of the umbellifer uprights in its vicinity. It is also in conversation with the fine grid work of another piece consisting of three analogue aerial heads suspended from the ceiling; their protruding central receptors mimicking the stamen of a flower centre; below these suspended aerials lies a mound of tape entitled 'magnetic mycelium' referring to the magnetic tape and the subterranean fungal network of mycelium that acts as a communication device between plants; in using largely obsolete communicative formats-defunct aerials and cassette tape reels-the piece suggests at once aesthetically the formal aspects of a simple flower bed but conceptually due to its components, a communicative vacuum where no information is imparted. Neonicotinoids are commonly used sublethal pesticides which though they do not kill bees, cause such severe disorientation that they cause these vital pollinators to often die as a result to being unable to find sustenance or their way back to base. This aspect along with my ongoing interest in the shortcomings of language, the constitution of comprehension and communication in general is, with reference to certain perspectives on futility and meaninglessness found in the work of Derrida and Beckett, constitute this piece. The notion of 'bumbling' ones speech is also a key dialogue. The audio aspect of it, though it is technically mute, relates to the audio piece that permeates throughout the galleries chambers. The piece is called Ariel, a play on the fact that it is constructed of actual aerials but referencing Sylvia Plath collection of poetry of the same name, whose work

'*The Rabbit Catcher*' was the inspiration for the audio installation in gallery three titled '*The Snare*'.

The circle/cycle motif, the audio/visual installation entitled 'The Snare', depicts in an early cinema aesthetic of broken black and grey imagery, depicting a series of images morphing into each other around a central dark void,; the slug morphs to the beetle morphs to the moth morphs to the arms of a clocks and repeats in reverse ending with the same opening image of a long instrument piercing petri-esque shapes. The accompanying audio is a vocal recording of garbled female voice from my dark ambient audio project d4t [https://www.facebook.com/d4t-656065354537272/]. At once both hymnal and heinous, 'The Snare' depicts the sacred/savage binary of nature; the track spits ,wails and chokes itself in euphoric entrapment, echoing the 'woman-gone-wrong' undertones of other work and the wild warblings of druidic glossolalia. It references the matriarchal aspect of the notion of 'mother' nature, conjuring connotations of the wise-woman, the witch, and mother nature despairing at the state of her wombs world. The audio permeates the other rooms of the exhibition, a haunting wail that creeps around the other installations bestowing upon them the intended context of strangled and suffocated nature.

'Pube' is a contemporary drawing work made from plant roots mounted on graph paper; through suggestive titling, it draws parallels between nature and the feminine, the visceral and the perceived vulgar and the compulsion towards its control. The aesthetic emphasis on line juxtaposes the natural trajectory of the plant roots with the static grid work of the paper, opening dialogue on the natural:synthetic binary.

Other elements include the tiny individually box-framed bee wings, tiny fragile pieces like stained glass windows, the delicate dried tendrils of a once flowering mashua plant cascading down the sides of a plinth and the skeletal fine lines of the fleshless cape gooseberry entitled '*anatomy*', along with dried poppy uprights.