

## **Absinthe §2: Hector Campbell interviews exhibiting artist Jane Hayes Greenwood**

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**H.C : As an interdisciplinary artist you work across a wide range of artistic mediums, including painting, sculpture, digital and video artworks. How do you approach the matching of concept and medium?**

My work definitely expands out of a painting practice. I have always had an interest in objects; the relationships we have with them; the way we invest in and covet particular things and the power they feel to have over us. In 2015, I spent a lot of time drawing and painting objects and thinking about them as psychological repositories as well as active agents. As well as coming across things in the world that interested me at that time, I started making small sculptural pieces as props for these works. Whilst it felt important that they existed as models to be represented rather than exhibited, I began to have more and more ideas for works that could be made in different materials rather than just straight paintings on canvas. There is a lot of fluidity and reflexivity in my practice. Something might start as an object in the world, be translated into a painting, then further evolve into a CGI animation and back to painting etc. The different forms and approaches to making feed each other and continue to generate excitement and new work for me.



*Lead Me Not Into Temptation, 2017*  
Block 336, installation view  
Jane Hayes Greenwood

**H.C : Much of your work is heavily research-based, with your last solo exhibition, ‘Lead Me Not Into Temptation’ in 2017, examining issues related to desire, consumption, shame and eroticism inspired by the Garden of Eden. How do you use research to develop the ideas that support your artworks?**

I'm quite greedy when it comes to research so if I become interested in a subject, I tend to gorge on connected artwork, imagery and information that strikes me. I follow it and see where I end up. I really love those research holes, where you make lots of new connections between seemingly random

things and you can open them up and follow the offshoots. At the beginning of a project or new body of work there are often lots of things feeding in. As a way of making some kind of sense of this, I make lots of drawings. In a similar way to the small sculptural pieces I was making in 2015, these kind of drawings are usually very raw. I see them as a way of thinking through different ideas rather than being works in themselves. In the case of *Lead Me Not Into Temptation*, the research was focused but broad. I made 150+ drawings at the beginning of that project as a way to process what I was thinking through. From these I filtered and distilled the things I felt were important and had depth and then developed them into paintings, and a large-scale sculptural installation.

**H.C : You also draw upon a wide range of source material, with subtle references to not only art and literary history but also popular culture and socio-cultural discourse. To what extent do exterior influences and source material guide your artistic practice?**

It's difficult to say. I am driven by the things that interest me first on a personal level but I am of course also interested in looking outside of that, even if this is partly to understand my own position.



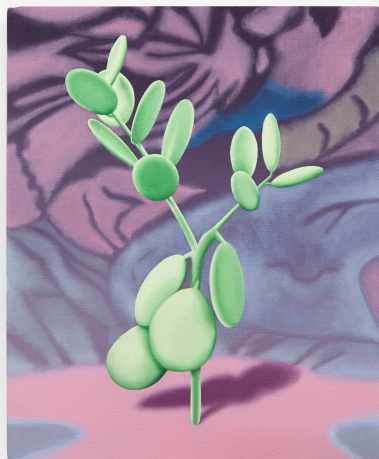
Block 336, Brixton (London)

**H.C : Alongside your own artistic practice you are also the Director and co-founder of Block 336, a Brixton-based public art space and studio provider that aims to encourage the creation of site-specific work, much in line with the ideals promoted by the Absinthe project. What do you believe to be the importance of site-specificity, and how does it compare and contrast to works created for the 'White Wall'?**

At Block 336 we invite and commission artists to produce new and ambitious solo projects, giving them time, space and support to do this. Typically an artist will spend 5+ weeks working in our main gallery space, or both our exhibition spaces (which total 340 sq m), in a residency-style install period. They receive technical support and feedback from our team before opening a 4-week exhibition that has a connected, public-facing events programme. Block 336 is not a commercial gallery and doesn't rely on sales of work meaning artists are able to make work without that pressure and create something that they may not have been able to realise previously. We are located in the basement of a Brutalist building and the architecture requires artists to work with or against it. Working in-situ allows them to do this. For many artists, Block 336 is the largest space they have exhibited in, so it really gives them a chance to stretch out and do something exciting. We feel this approach is more interesting and generous for both artists and audiences. Whilst we have done a number of great group exhibitions, parachuting works in to be shown often feels less exciting than enabling an artist to make something new that really grapples with the space.

**H.C : How has your work at Block 336 and that as a Fine Art tutor at your alma mater City & Guilds of London Art School influenced and affected your own artistic output?**

Working with artists to realise their vision at Block 336 and supporting artists to develop their practices at City & Guilds of London art School is incredibly rewarding. From the perspective of being an artist myself, being around committed, interesting and driven people is really inspiring and definitely feeds my own practice.



Works from: *The Witch's Garden* series, 2019  
Jane Hayes Greenwood

**H.C : GiG Gallery in Munich will present your latest solo exhibition this July. What can we expect to see at that show?**

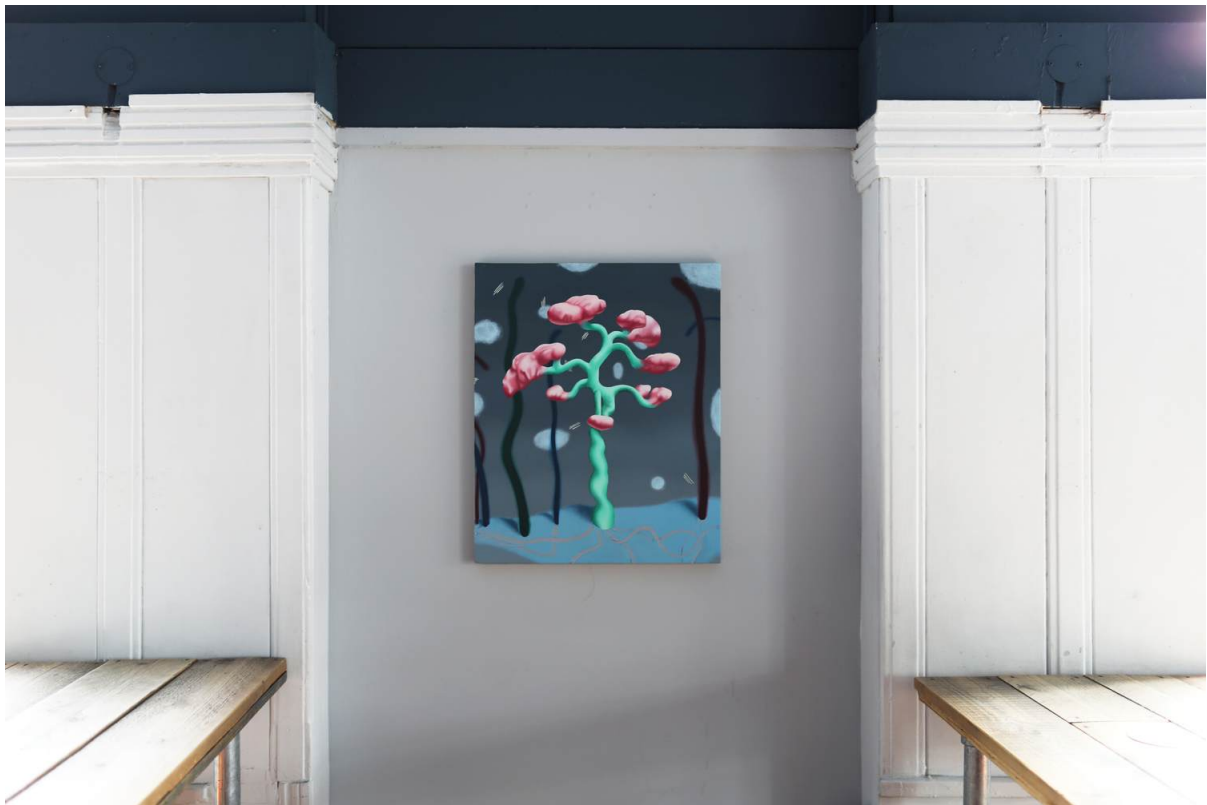
The exhibition is titled *The Witch's Garden* and will feature a new series of plant paintings alongside some larger works that feature figures in garden-like spaces. The powerful, threatening image of the witch really interests me. Perceived as transgressive and frightening, 'witches' have been persecuted throughout time, largely because of entrenched misogyny. By showing difference, these women were often viewed as dangerous: trespassing on territory deemed as off limits, posing a threat to patriarchal structures.

With the plant paintings, I am thinking about them as potential ingredients for love potions or spells. Some are based on plants from herbal fertility guides and others like the diptych, *Apollo's Gift I, II*, 2018 are based on historical plants such as the now extinct Silphium, which was reportedly used as a contraceptive and aphrodisiac from the 7th Century BC. Silphium is reported to have a heart-shaped seed and one theory suggests this might be where the heart shape symbol originated from ♥.

**H.C : You've previously exhibited in experimental curatorial projects such as Ultra Sunrise (curated by IKO and Milk Collective), what draws you to these projects? And can you give us an insight into the work you are exhibiting in Absinthe §2?**

I like the energy of DIY projects. They are often being run on miniscule budgets and are therefore driven by love and belief. I guess I'm drawn to the collaborative and generous spirit of these endeavours.

The work I am showing in Absinthe §2, *Queen of Poisons* was made as part of my plant series. I started by looking at imagery of wormwood and other herbs involved in the making of absinthe. I wanted to make something that drew on the mythic stories around this hallucinogenic drink that had such status amongst artists and writers in the 19th and 20th centuries. The painting evolved into the depiction of a plant which is as much under the effects of something psychedelic, as having hallucinogenic properties itself. It occupies a trippy space, growing strange forms and radiating an acidic glow as if inhabited by absinthe's green fairy.



*The Queen of Poisons*, 2019.  
Acrylic and oil on linen, 45 x 55cm  
Jane Hayes Greenwood  
*Absinthe §2*, installation view