

Eleanor Morgan: Glass Delusions

1 October - 19 December 2015
Grant Museum of Zoology, UCL

“Man, like all animals, is glass and can return to glass.”
Johann Becher, alchemist (1669).

Glass Delusions is an exhibition of prints, drawings, videos and objects by the Museum’s artist in residence Eleanor Morgan, exploring the slippery boundary between living and non-living materials. Morgan’s work is inspired by the Grant Museum’s collection of glass sponges – deep-sea animals that naturally build themselves out of glass. These intricate creatures are formed of 90% silica. Over the past year, Morgan has been exploring glass as a material, its cultural significance and the strange history of humans believing they are made of glass - a phenomenon known as ‘the glass delusion.’

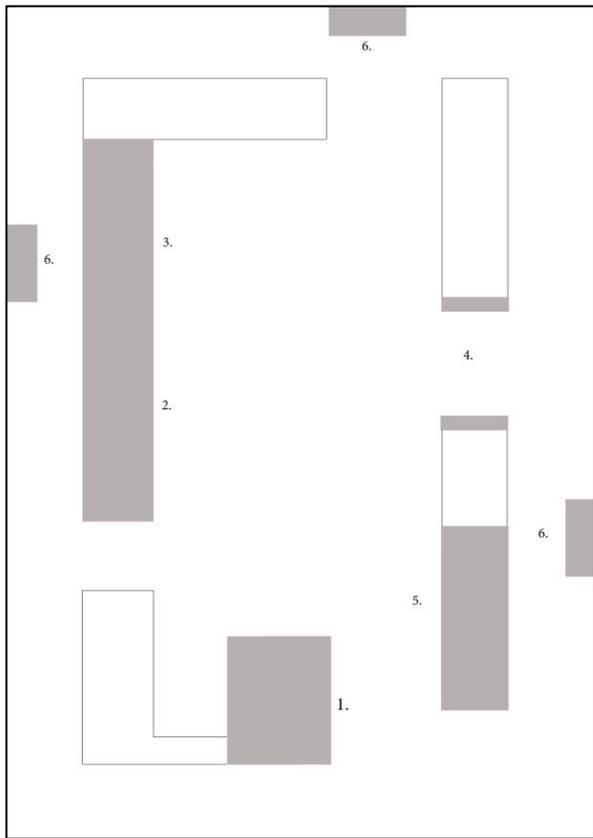
In **The garden of spongy delights** a mirrored print of naked men diving for sponges (some of whom come to a sticky end) forms the backdrop to a vitrine of glass sponges, a shrimp and a pencil urchin. Opposite this case is an underwater **video** of the same species of glass sponge - the Venus flower basket - being planted back into its deep-sea home by a robotic arm.

The **photograms** in the exhibition explore the way that light is cast through the Museum’s glass sponge specimens and the glass jars in which they sit. Running along the base of the long pink wall is **Rock pool**, shapes from a direct rubbing using squid ink of a rock pool near Eastbourne. Its colours, along with the pink and yellow of the walls, are taken from those of sponges found around the coast of Britain.

During the residency, Morgan collected organisms from the banks of the River Thames – bits of hair, skin, fur and wood. Working with UCL chemists and geologists, she has transformed this organic debris into **The Mudlark diamonds** - tiny diamonds embedded in graphite. Displayed beside it is the broken container in which the diamonds were formed under high pressure and temperature. Unlike glass sponges, which can take over a hundred years to grow from silica which they draw from the surrounding sand, the Mudlark diamonds were formed from organic carbon in just a few hours.

Biography

Eleanor Morgan is an artist based in London working with printmaking, sculpture, video and drawing. She is interested in materials and processes of making, in particular how human making intersects with that of other animals. Morgan’s projects have included rubbing fish, embracing a giant sea anemone and serenading a spider. Her book on the human uses of spider silk, *Gossamer days: spiders, humans and their threads*, will be published by Strange Attractor Press in spring 2016. More information can be found on her website at www.eleanormorgan.com



All artwork in the exhibition is for sale.
For more information please contact
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1. The garden of spongy delights

Sponge Divers, 2015. Digital print and mirror.

Venus Flower Basket vitrine, NHMUK 2015.2.23.2.

2. Spicule soup

Emerging #1, 2015. Photogram.

Spicule soup #1, 2014. Monotype collagraph and chine collé on Fabriano rosaspina

Spicule soup #2, 2014. Monotype collagraph and chine collé on Fabriano rosaspina

The Sponge Man, 2015. Print on Ilford Galerie FB digital., mounted on MDF.

Rock Pool, 2015. Squid ink rubbing with felt-tip pen on Japanese paper, mounted on MDF.

Sponge head. Glass sponge spicules, mud and debris. NHMUK 94.10.10.1-2.

3. Growing on the bodies of their ancestors

Birling gap, 2015. Flint, bone, fish rubbing, prints, masking tape.

Ancient Egyptian glass rods and shards, c. 1543 – 1292 BC. UC22911 - UC22920

The Mudlark diamonds, 2015. Diamonds, graphite, magnesium oxide octahedron.

Growing on the bodies of their ancestors, 2015. Body prints.

4. They draw themselves

Emerging #2, 2015. Photogram.

Emerging #3, 2015. Photogram.

5. Man, like all animals, is glass and can return to glass

Video projection, 5 minutes 40 seconds.

Laying on, 2015. Stained glass fragment, wax, wooden dowels, acrylic rod, MDF, lightbox.

6. Glass sponges on display

Acknowledgements

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