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Image: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Cara-Ann Simpson is an artist, curator, educator and consultant. Her background encompasses the arts, culture, tourism, festival, and land management sectors. Simpson lives and works on the lands of the Wakka Wakka nation in southern Queensland. Her creative practice spans digital media, photography, sound, olfaction, sculpture and immersive experiences. As an interdisciplinary artist, Simpson's practice engages with sensory perception, deep listening, and environmental interaction. Simpson often draws upon the sonic landscape and its visualisation to create sensory connections to land, plants, and place.

Simpson's lived experience of disability informs her practice, which is reflective in recent work. She has led organisations, provided leadership, and curatorial expertise in Queensland and Victoria. Simpson supports artists through professional development and mentoring, including a focus on regional arts practice. She has received recognition for her art and contribution to the arts and culture sector. Recognitions include Heysen Prize for Landscape 2022, Young Alumnus of the Year 2017 (University of Southern Queensland), University of Ballarat Emerging Artist Award 2012 (Flanagan Art Prize), and the Hobday and Hingston Bursary 2007 (Queensland Art Gallery). Simpson has shown her work in Australia and internationally, including interactive installations produced with technical collaborators. She has received funding from Creative Australia, Arts Queensland, Arts Victoria and the Regional Arts Fund. Her work is held in public and private collections in Australia and internationally, including Hahndorf Academy, Darebin City Council, Toowoomba Regional Council, Albury City Council, and Alroe Solicitors.

Onespace and the artist would like to thank:

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Brisbane region, the Turrbal and Jagera peoples.

We acknowledge their continuing connection to the lands, waters, culture and community. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present.

Onespace is a trusted gallery for quality artists, contemporary art exhibitions and public art commissioning services. Our gallery work is part of a valuable conversation with curators, institutions and collectors that draws a wider audience towards the cultural and environmental narratives that shape our era.

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Cover: Cara-Ann Simpson, *fragili vanitatem mortis (the fragile vanity of death)*, 2020, pigment print on Ilford gold fibre gloss rag, this edition 76 x 76cm, 2AP + Edition of 10. Specimen: *Grevillea* sp. (yellow grevillea) Image: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Inside: Cara-Ann Simpson, *ubi aqua vita - colligentes Lotophagos (where there is water there is life - Lotophagi gather)*, 2020, pigment print on Canson baryta photographique rag, this edition 76 x 76cm. 2AP + Edition of 10. Specimen: *Nymphaea caerulea* (sacred blue lotus). Image: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Cara-Ann Simpson
Furari Flores (Stealing Flowers)

31 January - 1 March 2025

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Cara Ann Simpson's *Furari Flores (Stealing Flowers)* brings together old and new works that explore the relationship between plants and lived experiences of chronic illness and disability. Following a year-long hospitalisation with a brain infection in 2017 and subsequent diagnoses of multiple sclerosis and neurosarcoidosis (both neurodegenerative), the artist 'stole' a flower. She was emerging out of "living death" (her own words), learning again how to talk and walk, moving slowly through a familiar world made strange, rehabilitating (not healing), but persisting. From the gardens surrounding her health facility, she took a single yellow grevillea, placed the flower in a jar of water and kept it by her bedside. This simple gesture sparked a deep and enduring relationship between the artist and the plants around her, a relationship which now focusses on the plants that live and die on the Wakka Wakka lands where she lives and works.

In particular, Simpson is captivated by certain native plants—the winter flowers—such as purple pea (*hovea lorata*) and Queensland silver wattle (*acacia podalyriifolia*), images of which occur repeatedly throughout the exhibition and feature prominently in the video works. In *narratio regenerationis (the narrative of rebirth)* (2023), sprigs of yellow wattle flowers and milky-green leaves dilate and contract, erupt and dissolve while hot pink beams of light (such as solar flares or linear auroras) dart in and out of a signature jet-black background. In *spiritus terrae leniter et quiete cadit (the spirit of the earth falls gently and quietly)* (2023), mesmerising whorls of purple pea flowers momentarily settle into butterfly- or moth-like formations before radiating outward, revealing an opening, or chalice. In *corpus non sacrificium (the body is not a sacrifice)* (2023), a red bottlebrush (*callistemon*) slowly emerges out of a black expanse like a shuttle returning from outer space or a baby's head crowning during vaginal birth.

The red blossoms continue to unfold, unfurl, and expand until the foliage establishes a familiar form: a uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries. Before long, the ovaries curl up and the womb folds in on itself, slowly receding, and disappearing into the darkness. Set against the luscious sounds of bird song, trees rustling, or water flowing, these videos contain repeated visual references to reproductive organs, openings dilating, or vessels collapsing which together seem to suggest traditional understandings of the cycles of life: birth, flourishing, death, decay, and rebirth, perhaps. But with their surprising, unpredictable, and freeform rhythms, these visual ostinatos carve out space for representations of what might be called non-linear lifecycles, such as those characterised by chronic illness.

Like her videos, Simpson's prints are mesmerising and kaleidoscopic. Take *spirans novam vitam (breathing new life)* (2024), for example, another devotional study of the artist's beloved wattle. In this work, yellow blossoms and dusty leaves appear almost mask-like, clustered around and echoing out from an abstracted focal point. The eye darts in and out of these loops, knottings, links, and crossings, interrupted as before, by thin beams of hot pink.

With its void-like central focal point, perfect symmetry, and repeated patterns, this work and others like it, call forth a myriad of associations not limited to: *camera obscura*, Rorschach inkblot test imagery, central core imagery (as seen in the work of Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro), disjointed algorithms, or the visual appearance of molecular structures. Indeed, some of the compositional structures favoured by Simpson are based on mathematical principles or concerned directly with the chemical components of the plants under scrutiny. One example of this is *ubi occurrit terra in lacrimas kosmos (where the earth meets the tears of the cosmos)* (2023), a sculptural scent work evoking the fecund fragrance produced by *Streptomyces* bacteria reacting with the iron in the soil of the eucalypt forest in Simpson's backyard.

At times, there is a visual tension in the imagery, a tension that speaks to Simpson's ongoing physical and psychological reality, but also to adjacent issues such as election results, abortion rights, reconciliation, environmental concerns, and fear. Among these is also a quiet discomfort, an awareness of the complexities of living on stolen-neverceded Aboriginal lands in a non-indigenous migrant/settler body. Borrowing from the teachings of Aunty Karen Hall, a Butchulla elder, Simpson explains that her process involves asking the plant for permission to take, only taking what is needed, and giving thanks. In this way, her interactions with the plants are like exchanges, dialogues, and indeed, the artist conceptualises them in this way. "I interview the plants, but they can't speak back to me", Simpson explains, "so it's about my psyche, [almost like] my characteristics have been transferred onto them, but I take on some of their traits too". This statement reveals part of Simpson's complex creative process, but also reflects the expansive notions of kinship informing her practice. *Furari Flores (Stealing Flowers)* began with a single pilfered flower and grew into a vital, reciprocal cross-species entanglement that sustains both the artist's life and practice.

Sally Molloy

Right: Cara-Ann Simpson, *scuto protectoris nostri coronati (nam Eddie) [crowned with the shield of our protector (for Eddie)]*, 2022, pigment print on Canson baryta photographic rag, this edition 120 x 120cm, 2AP + Edition of 5. Specimen: *Eucalyptus sideroxylon Rosea* (pink-flowering iron bark). Image: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

