

Richard Nik Evans

Preta Vasculum ~ A Container of Ghosts

Opening Wednesday 20th July 6-9 pm

Open Thursday 21st, Friday 22nd and Saturday 23rd July 12-6 pm

Preta is a Sanskrit word that translates as 'hungry ghost'. It suggests a soul stuck in a transient state between death and reincarnation. A vasculum is a Victorian collecting case carried by Darwin on the Beagle, a tool of exploration, enlightenment, secrecy, and communication.

The sculptural forms are encased in a hand-made, repetitive texture of seaweed – half alive, otherworldly, unknowable, ominous: preta. Ghosts of an alternative evolutionary process. They sit on plinths related to the human, engineered world of traps and industry, carrying cases designed to exhibit and limit: the vasculum.

The spectre of the ocean seethes behind the works representing a dark and mysterious place within the human psyche. The Church becomes a spiritual container of these disjointed ghosts, encasing the psychological sprawl.

Algae cover the face of our planet, yet it lives out of sight; its dark tendrils penetrate the deepest depths. Even when it's in our presence, we view it through an undulating reflection; we see ourselves in the water first. Algae is a life form that elicits feelings often associated with the unconscious, dreams and the haunted self.

Seaweed forests are sunken islands, carriers of nightmarish entanglements, and marine aliens that provide over half of the oxygen we dreamers breathe. They create life-sustaining networks that extend over our planet. All the arts, notably Moby Dick, have treated it as a portal into the unknown, a panpsychic, anthropomorphic substance that monstrosly alludes to both god and science. It also has a well-known range of practical uses; agriculture, new materials and climate change mitigation. It is speculated that ancient man used seaweed to slide giant stones from the sea to build circles and henges.

Huge floating forests of kelp create enormous life hives, providing food and safe ecosystems, but they can also kill. Its tendrils extend over sixty per cent of the ocean floor. Research has shown that specific strains of algae in the South Pacific have learned to sicken fish and poison coral; they can block out light and dominate. Marine life that keeps the organisms in check is depleting.

The plinths are traps—visual puzzles. A soft net becomes an imposing space. A prison that you can see into but cannot escape from, lines that support the form become drawings thrown against a white wall. An interdependent structure suggests a form that may lie on top, in front, or live inside. A system to trap thoughts presents a sculpture, animal, plant, or idea—a fisher of ideas. Laying down the parameters for the form to exist in, rules to execute the design, laying the aesthetic runway for the work to take flight.

The plinths are created from natural and industrial forms; lighthouses, fishing traps from Lake Inle in Myanmar, a butterfly chrysalis, and a garden folly.

The sculptures clash one culture against another, a storm of organic forms sitting precariously on handcrafted industrial structures. A balance caught in a trap of holes tied together with string.



Swiss Church in London

The Swiss Church
79 Endell St,
London, WC2H 9DY

Go Before Dawn

2022

steel, clay, resin, paint, thread, pond netting, found cork floats

140 x 41 x 41 cm



Edgelands

2022

steel, clay, resin, paint, thread, pond netting, found cork floats

110 x 96 x 25 cm



The Charcoal Blues

2022

steel, clay, resin, paint, thread, pond netting

192 x 45 x 45 cm



Tingle

2022

steel, clay, resin, paint, thread, pond netting, chain, float

196 x 120 x 56 cm



Cat's Cradle

2022

steel, clay, resin, paint

140 x 24 x 24 cm



Drifting Folly

2022

steel, clay, resin, paint

154 x 17 x 17 cm

