

Extract from "Weeds" by Carl Sandburg

Nature Strip is a new body of painted works that looks at the contradictory behaviour of weeds and their paradoxical context within nature.

The concept of a weed can be defined in many ways, but most of these definitions highlight the relationship between plants and human behaviour. In its simplest form a weed is " a plant growing where it is not desired" , and we often attribute negative descriptions to them such as undesirable and ugly as well as moral judgements that contribute to them being much more than a simple annoyance.

In his book *The End of the Wild*, Stephen Meyer refers to the weedy species as the botanical motif of the Anthropocene. As a species they have globalised ecology and are re-defining nature and wildness. It is true that weeds ruin crops, spoil beautiful gardens and leach nutrients out of soils, but a weed is also a displaced individual, a plant that has been taken out of cultural context and flourishes in contested or conflicted sites ; sites such as roadsides, parking lots and vacant land, in fact any site that has been disturbed or disrupted. In their original context they may exist as a quiet flowering native but taken outside these locations these once enchanting characteristics can become destructive.

In the body of work *Nature Strip*, weeds are presented as graphic silhouettes that are both beautiful and elusive. The motifs hover through thin veils of pearlescent-layered paint on natural beech grounds. They are delicate in their appearances and at times disappear from view. The wildness presented here is ideal and alludes to utopian gardens and serene vistas while the simple motifs are common and ordinary in their depiction.

i Sandburg, C, 1920, " Weeds", *Smoke and Steel*, Harcourt, Brace and Howe, New York

ii Buchholz, K.P. 1967, Report of the terminological committee of the Weeds Science Society of America. *Weeds* 15:388-389.

iii The Anthropocene is the current geological age that is marked by sustained human activity.

iv Mabey, R, 2010, *Weeds*, Profile Books LTD, London