



Dianna Wells
FINDING WILD

Finding Wild engages with ideas about landscape, botany and 19th-century photography. The exhibition of black-and-white photographs and lumen prints explores the notion of 'the new wild' – where introduced plant species grow wild in bush lands and urban fringes – by examining areas in and around Melbourne.

What is contemporary wilderness? Can plants considered weeds, such as fireweed and African boxthorn, sustain biodiversity in dunes, creeks and remnant bushland within our city and its fringes? Indigenous species found in the dunes on Brighton's Dendy Street Beach and at Deep Creek in the coastal township of Torquay coexist with many invasive but benign species. In these environments, introduced species prevent erosion and provide habitat for birds, reptiles, insects and other animals.

English science writer Fred Pearce argues that we should no longer view all introduced species as unwelcome invaders. This position conflicts with the conservationist view that introduced species are the second greatest threat to nature after habitat loss. Pearce suggests that the removal of weeds from ecosystems might further damage the environment rather than strengthen it. The black-and-white photographs created for *Finding Wild* reflect upon these ideas.

While Wells was photographing various environments in and around Melbourne, she collected samples of introduced species, from which she created a set of lumen prints. These works reference the cyanotype prints of plant specimens created by 19th-century British artist Anna Atkins and explore the photographic medium as a means to record the collecting of introduced species. This form of camera-less photography is achieved by using sunlight to directly expose the plants onto photosensitive material and then fixing the images in a darkroom.

Finding Wild eschews the digital and combines two analogue photographic processes in order to emphasise the botanical histories of the sites. In this exhibition, Wells invites us to look more closely at these environments, particularly those we would normally overlook.

Dianna Wells is a Melbourne-based artist, currently utilising hand-printed analogue photography and lumen prints to explore themes related to introduced species growing wild in natural environments.

Wells began her art practice as a printmaker after studying at the Canberra School of Art. After a career in design, she completed an MFA at Monash University in 2013.

Wells has exhibited in Australia, England and Spain, in exhibitions including the *Renaissance Photography Prize*, the *Julia Margaret Cameron Award* and the *Josephine Ulrick & Win Schubert Photography Award*.



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Images:

1. *Fireweed*, gelatin silver print, 2017, 50 x 50 cm
2. *Senecio madagascariensis* (*Fireweed*) 3, 2017, lumen print, 28 x 35.5 cm
3. *Aeonium haworthii* (*Pinwheel*) 1, 2017, lumen print, 35.5 x 28 cm
4. *Soursob*, 2017, gelatin silver print, 2017, 50 x 60 cm



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Finding Wild

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Corner Glen Eira and Hawthorn Roads
Caulfield, VIC 3162

www.diannawells.com.au