

PRESS RELEASE

Harley Weir

The Garden

5 June – 13 September 2025

The Garden brings together new and archival images that combine Harley Weir's signature intensity and fluid approach to image-making with a melancholic but resolved nostalgia, a forceful, subversive energy, presenting the complexity, depth and charge of her arresting visual language.

The title of the exhibition is chosen for its universal symbolism: place of seed and growth, space of beginning and ending; garden as paradise, heterotopia, utopia, and in the contemporary context, reflecting the enduring human desire for action and imagination to converge towards a more sustainable, equitable future. For Weir, the garden is “the pinnacle and the pipe dream of where I'm going and what I want”.

The exhibition presents Weir's reflections on the ideal versus real garden in personal terms. In the downstairs gallery she shows us in visual terms her reality of adulthood, and her own journey through womanhood, with looming questions and contradictions of mother/daughter, parent/child, clock and time, caring and being cared for, as well as her experience of the changing, aging body. Upstairs, she presents *love at first sight*, 28 new works memorialising adolescence and first experience, its excitement, anticipation and naivety. Using ancient paper making techniques she merges photos and objects collected over decades - dry flowers and butterfly wings, memorabilia from her teenage years, and letters written to friends, lovers and pen pals in the late 90s and early 2000s - embedding her personal archive within handmade paper sheets to create singular new works in soft, sugar pastel colours.

For the exhibition, Weir embraces once again her ongoing project titled *Sickos*, which started with her unrestrained experimentation in the darkroom during the pandemic. Images are transformed and transfigured in the darkness: an alchemical mixture of unconventional materials - blood, sperm, vitamins, health supplements, egg freezing hormones, the contraceptive pill, perfumes, spices, butterfly wings to name a few - connects and fuses with traditional photo developing chemicals and devours the original composition, altering the figurative into abstraction, order into unpredictability, tradition into insurrection.

Harley Weir continually subverts the expected. Known for the intimacy of her images carefully composed with a highly attuned sense of colour, material and composition, Weir radically reshapes ideas of womanhood and how the female gaze might be engaged with and made new in our current era. Her work deploys analogue and digital techniques with experimentation in the darkroom and in post-production - combining a signature visual intensity and freedom with mysterious and unguarded subjects. The resulting images evoke a familiar world filled with emotion, but equally suggestive of a darker and more compulsive sense of our place within it. A world in which the body is turned inside out, in which images take on an unnamed agency and where the transformative effects of desire, anger, ecstasy and turmoil leave an indelible mark on our gaze.

Through her work Weir has sought to heighten awareness around social issues including abortion, planned parenthood, sex work, plastic waste, genocide, the rights of refugees, marine

conservation, and therapeutic support for young people, with cycles of images that record the lives and times of those impacted with startling clarity and power. Alongside this she has made memorable - and often surprising - portraits including of Charli XCX, Chloë Sevigny, Rihanna, Sharon Eyal, Winona Ryder, Lena Dunham, Mia Khalifa, Bella Hadid, Cara Delavigne, Yves Tumor, Pharrell, Ramellzee, Slipknot, Young Thug, Maggi Hambling and Cate Blanchett, amongst many other artists of our contemporary moment.

Harley Weir (b. 1988, Surrey, UK) lives and works in London. She graduated from Central St Martins with a BA in Fine Art (2010). Solo exhibitions of her work include *The Garden*, Hannah Barry Gallery, London, UK (2025); *Sins of a daughter*, Hannah Barry Gallery, London, UK (2022); *Walls*, MEP, Paris, FR (2020); *Homes*, Fabrica Gallery, Brighton Photo Biennial, Brighton, UK (2018); *Boundaries*, Foam, Amsterdam, NL (2017). Recent group exhibitions include *All Fours*, Homecoming Gallery, Amsterdam, NL (2025); *Ponyshow - a group exhibition supporting LA Fire Relief*, organized by Amity, Los Angeles, US (2025); *Domestic Rituals, Foreign Entities, Indecisive Hosts*, Numeroventi, Paris, FR (2024); *SHADOW-BAN*, SHOWstudio, London, UK (2024); *Masquerade, makeup & Ensor*, MoMu - ModeMuseum, Antwerp, BE (2024); *Fragile Beauty: Photographs from the Sir Elton John and David Furnish Collection*, V&A South Kensington, London, UK (2024); *Sin Centre*, Hannah Barry Gallery, London, UK (2024); *Epoch Review*, Permanent Files, Paris, FR (2024); *ECHO. Wrapped in Memory*, MoMu, Antwerp, BE (2023); *You May Find Yourself... Just Stop Oil*, Koppel X, London, UK (2023); *Dream Journal*, Company Gallery, New York, US (2023); *Girls Girls Girls*, Lismore Castle Arts, Waterford, IE (2022); *Old Friends, New Friends*, Collective Ending HQ, London, UK (2021); *Crowd*, Hannah Barry Gallery, London (2020); *CLAY*, T J Boulting, London (2020); *Transformer: A Rebirth of Wonder*, 180 The Strand, London (2019). Weir has published multiple books with Beauty Papers, IDEA, Baron Books, and Loose Joints. Her work is included in Sir Elton John and David Furnish Collection.