



HEART OF DARKNESS

Not content with just hanging pictures on walls, photographer Alexandra Hedison is bringing the untamed wilderness indoors

Featuring: American Amazon. Exotica. Pacific Northwest.

When researching for a suitable location for her next project, Los Angeles-based artist and photographer Alexandra Hedison was fully prepared to travel overseas in search of the exotic. To her surprise, though, the exotic was a lot closer to home. For just a few hundred miles up Highway 1, in the Pacific Northwest, was the largest natural rainforest in North America. “I did a lot of research into this area and even before I got to Washington State, I knew I’d made the right choice,” she says. “It seemed to articulate what I was trying to say.”

The result was the startling exhibition *Ithaka*. Large-scale chromogenic prints spotlight centuries-old trees and thick vegetation, dense forests are alluring and intimidating in equal measure. “When you walk on the ground there it’s this lush carpet with layer upon layer of growth and decay,” she says. “It’s extraordinary.”

Her large-scale prints were previewed at Shoreditch House in July on a long wall constructed from split wooden planks. “It was really a fantastic introduction to the show. I had so many people asking if I planned it or built the wall for the show. In fact, it was just already there.”

Hedison grew up in Los Angeles to an English mother and American father, the latter famous actor David Hedison. She started experimenting with photography around 15 years ago, when her own acting career started to take off. Gradually photography became “what I do”, to the point where today only occasional acting jobs interrupt her time behind the camera. Her first show was at the prestigious Rose Gallery in Santa Monica and she has also exhibited at the White Room Gallery in West Hollywood, Los Angeles.

Her acting career has also afforded Hedison the chance to travel the world and experience different environments; she’ll often sneak off to shoot the construction sites or extreme physical landscapes. “What’s the point in shooting the Eiffel Tower? It’s been done. Just go buy the postcard.”

Hedison says she has an affinity for natural landscapes although is not

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interested in them so much as literal landscapes; for her they are a metaphor for something else.

“For me it was less about the trees and more about the forest. I got into this position of wanting to walk through this dense wild wood but also being afraid of it. It mirrors the journeys we take in our own lives. I wanted to get to the other side.”

Alexandra Hedison says she is not yet “done” with forests although says she would have reacted differently to, say, the forest architecture of Thailand. “I’ll take on another environment but I’m not sure what that is yet.”

Alexandra Hedison is “taking a break from mounting and framing” to appear in the final season of the hit drama television show *The L Word*. Bringing things full circle, Hedison sees parallels in her photography with the processes of TV and film.

“I was in pre-production for a long time, where I was researching and scouting suitable locations. Then there was the shooting – with a support team – and then we were in post-production with the framing and, finally, the exhibitions. We’re turning the spaces in which we’re exhibiting into actual experiences. It’s not just about putting pictures up on a wall.” ●

W—Kieran Wyatt P—Alexandra Hedison

Alexandra Hedison’s exhibition Ithaka, sponsored by Barclays Capital, will be at Shoreditch Town Hall, London, from 2-17 October 2008. www.hedison.com