



FLORAE II

7 November - 21 December 2025

TENDING THE GARDEN – FLORAE II

Alexandra Boscacci, Bernadette Boscacci, Ellen Clark, Katherine Cornwall & Naomi Smith

Florae: Plants considered as a group, especially the plants of a particular country, region, or time.
Flōra (Latin): goddess of flowers, from *flōs* (flower).

Florae II has evolved from the 2013 exhibition *Florae*, which was also held at Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts, and created by longtime friends and collaborators Naomi Smith and Bernadette Boscacci. In *Florae*, the artists explored how humans incorporate plants into artworks and domestic spaces, creating a diverse body of work that paid homage to the plants and people inspiring them.

Twelve years later, *Florae II* extends this inquiry. The artists are still enamoured with plants and have expanded their partnership into a collective with like-minded, younger-generation artists. The new members bring fresh perspectives and voices to the conversation, recognising that they will be most affected by the current and future impacts of climate change and species loss. By fostering intergenerational dialogue, *Florae II* seeks to broaden its message and reach a wider audience.

Rooted in a desire to cultivate a richer appreciation for North Queensland's endemic plants — our local allies — *Florae II* highlights their vital role in sustaining ecosystems. Plants, through their presence alone, improve our wellbeing. They teach us about resilience, cooperation, and interconnectedness.

The *Florae Collective* — comprising Alexandra Boscacci, Bernadette Boscacci, Ellen Clark, Katherine Cornwall, and Naomi Smith — focuses on plant environments shaped by human interaction, exploring how these spaces affect both plants and people. We are all part of this ecosystem, and yet much of humanity remains disconnected from the natural world.

Like plants, people thrive in community, and *Florae II* embraces an organic, collaborative process. Regular group gatherings — accompanied by food, art, conversation, and critique — have nurtured an evolving synergy. Through the exhibition, the collective promotes reconnection with plants, especially within urban settings, highlighting that plants are essential for life. *Florae II* also contributes to urgent conversations on climate change, biodiversity loss, and the imperative for ecological action.

The artists are motivated to include and make spaces for plants into their homes, communities, and workplaces, advocating for greater interaction with plants through conservation, cultivation, art, and design. Their diverse media, styles and approaches create a fertile ground for dynamic creative dialogue and collaboration, grounded in shared reverence for the beauty and wonder of plants.

Alexandra Boscacci's video and photographic works centre on the coastal she-oak (*Casuarina equisetifolia*), blending realism with dreamlike elements. Her practice embodies a collaboration with both the natural and otherworldly realms, capturing organic forms such as trees, earth, sky, water and light orbs with a magical realist sensibility. Alexandra's art reflects an animistic worldview, where plant and artist engage in a fluid, reciprocal relationship. She describes her work as “echoes of conversations with wind, leaves, light, and creatures who speak in gestures and songs,” offering glimpses of a supernatural exchange that blurs the line between observation and communion. In her practice, nature emerges as sentient and divine, inspiring reverence and recognition of our kinship with the living world.

Ellen Clark, a budding ecologist and artist, creates botanical drawings that reveal the delicate beauty of native flora. Her miniature ink, watercolour, gouache and photographic studies focus on the morphology and blooms of regional grasses and forbs encountered during environmental surveys in northwest Queensland. Ellen's scientific training sharpens her observation, while her artworks invoke a sense of playful stewardship. “Creating these artworks evokes a sense of purpose, like a little protector of the flowers,” she reflects.

Engagement with science, combined with Indigenous knowledge, has enriched our understanding of plants. Ethnobotanical perspectives which are passed down through oral and experiential traditions, expand not only what we depict but also how we understand our connection to plants and their interactions with the world.





Naomi Smith continues her exploration of flora through multimedia artworks. In her *YIMBY* (Yes, In My Back Yard)¹ series, she collects cuttings from native plants grown in her garden, the Mundy Creek Landcare site, and local bushland. Naomi uses these materials to dye and imprint colours and shapes onto paper. The resulting prints are the substructure for her plant portraits and landscapes — rivers, gorges, coastal views — enhanced with embroidery, metal shim, gouache, and watercolour. These impressionistic works induce memories of familiar places; of seeing and being in landscapes. Her plant portraits, framed in embroidery hoops, reference women's traditional floral art, anchoring the bush within domestic space. The works in *YIMBY* are inspired by her suburban regenerative practice — planting local species, and creating spaces that provide refuge, food and homes for plants and animals. Her work reminds us of the power of small, local actions that can offset the threats facing wildlife in urban areas. Through her screenprints, Naomi further explores plant environments, layering detailed leaf patterns over topographic maps to intertwine a story of nature and geography.

Katherine Cornwall, who migrated to Gurambilbarra / Townsville from Fiji, embraces the dry tropics of Queensland in her work, where fallen leaves, bare branches, flowers, and fruit mark the changes in our many seasons. Kathy² creates intricate painted microcosms that summon place, climate, and personal reflection. Using a posterizing technique in oil paints on wood, she reduces colour into shapes, guiding the viewer's eye through layers of fallen plant debris encountered on her walks. "Being in the headspace of noticing... the caress of the eye makes the world real," she explains. Her small sculptures further explore space between forms — where relationships and energy unfold — acting as artefacts that transport viewers to the places she walks, embodying a delicate sensitivity to place and memory.

For *Florae II*, **Bernadette Boscacci** presents new works alongside revised and reimagined pieces, including drawings, sculptures, paintings and prints. Using materials primarily sourced from the wet and dry tropics of North Queensland — timber panelling, bark, vines, rushes, and paper—her practice reflects ongoing engagement with place, ecology, and sustainability.

Bernadette's *memento mori* works reference the ephemerality of life, weathering seasons, and the fragile yet resilient grandeur of native species. She explores enduring themes of life and death, grief and loss, ecological wonder, environmental concern, and humanity's often fraught relationship with the natural world. Creative play and the physical work of gathering, processing, weaving, cutting and carving her materials provide Bernadette a meditative response to *solastalgia*³ — a personal grief for environmental loss and the ongoing struggle to protect nature. Central to her practice is regeneration, exemplified by her long-term (ongoing since 2010) Mundy Creek Natureway Regeneration Project, where she collaborates with plants, people, and place — tending land and art as interconnected acts of care and inspiration.

Time is a vital thread that weaves art and ecology together. The practices of growing and protecting healthy plants and trees, nurturing families and communities, and creating artworks — each an act of love and commitment — require patience, care, flexibility, and adaptability. These interdependent, dynamic systems evolve as living entities, requiring ongoing attention to sustainably thrive and maintain strength.

Florae II highlights the artists' practices and their collaborations with nature, showcasing the authentic ways they express their connection to plant life through both their creative work and daily lives. This authenticity is evident not only in the materials and methods they use but also in their relationships — to nature, to their work, and to one another. As Kathy reflects, "Nature allows my mind to unfurl into the disorderly. Being a maker is when I feel most natural, because it allows me to create as part of nature, of this world unfurling."

Florae II is a celebration of life, growth, community and creative transformation. It invites reflection on the role plants play as both subjects and partners in artistic exploration, and serves as a call to remain connected to nature in our world that urgently needs collective care and attention.

~ Florae Collective, 2025

¹ A play on NIMBY ("Not in My Back Yard")

² Kathy previously joined Bernadette in the group exhibition *Tree* at Pinnacles Gallery, 2014

³ "Solastalgia - as an enplaced or existential melancholia experienced with the negative transformation (desolation) of a loved home environment." Glenn Albrecht, 2012. <https://theconversation.com/the-age-of-solastalgia-8337#>

IMAGE LIST

Front cover: Ellen Clark, *Nine Awns*, 2025, Watercolour and ink on paper, 3 x 4cm (14.9 x 21cm paper). Photograph: Amanda Galea.

p.2: Alexandra Boscacci, *Spirited away*, 2025, Photographic image.

p.3: Bernadette Boscacci, *Splintered*, 2025, Red cedar timber panelling, fabric, leather and rubber, 206 x 76cm. Photograph: Amanda Galea.

p.6: Katherine Cornwall, *Delicate landings*, 2025, Water-based oil on plywood, 94 x 64cm. Photograph: Amanda Galea.

Back cover: Naomi Smith, *Casuarina Landscape*, 2025, Botanical ecoprint (*Casuarina equisetifolia*) and embroidery cotton on watercolour paper, 10 x 28.5cm. Photograph: Amanda Galea.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

The *Florae Collective* is composed of an intergenerational group of five north Queensland women. Alexandra Boscacci, Bernadette Boscacci, Ellen Clark, Katherine Cornwall and Naomi Smith each share an interest in arts and culture, and value the positive holistic effects that plants and nature have on health and wellbeing.

Alexandra Boscacci (b. 1985, Gurambilbarra / Townsville, QLD) is an artist working with photography, video, and digital media. Since 2009, she has explored the arts through performance, music, and singing. Her practice has also evolved into a more personal visual language rooted in photo and video montage. Living rurally for many years, Alexandra worked closely with the land through organic and regenerative systems of management. Immersed in cycles of care and renewal, she deepened her understanding of ecological processes and developed a strong connection to plants—as healers, allies, and teachers. This work with the earth continues to shape both her horticultural practice and her art.

Bernadette Boscacci (b. 1969, Juru Country / Bowen, QLD) is an interdisciplinary artist whose work spans sculpture, printmaking, drawing, photography, graphic design, performance and writing—across both poetry and prose. Her artworks are often created using found, recycled, and locally sourced materials, and inspired by the northern Australian environment. Active in the arts since 1980 and working professionally since 1987, her practice explores the intersections of nature, culture, community and environmental philosophy. Boscacci holds tertiary qualifications in Fine Art, Visual Arts, Psychology and Social Work. She is a longtime member of Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts and has curated and exhibited in Australia and internationally.

Ellen Clark (b. 1999, Bundjalung Country / Grafton) is a budding ecologist and artist whose practice is deeply informed by her scientific work and field experience. Ellen's creative work draws inspiration from the natural world in which she works, lives and travels. The macro perspective of plants observed in situ is the foundation for Ellen's works which focus on the finer details of her

subject matter. She works across drawing, painting and photography and is excited to continue developing her practice alongside and under the mentorship of experienced creatives.

Katherine Cornwall (b. 1980, Fiji) earned her Bachelor of Visual Arts from James Cook University in 2005. She has curated and exhibited locally, as well as in Naarm / Melbourne, Gadigal / Sydney, and in Nadi and Suva, Fiji. Her work has been shortlisted for the *Heysen Prize for Landscape* at Hahndorf Academy and Townsville City Gallery's *The Percivals*. Katherine experiences the natural world through observational response. Painted shapes and organic linework permeate the layers of her paintings. Her visual practice also features drypoint, linocut, ceramics, and wooden forms. She is a multidisciplinary artist who has recorded an original album, *Shiny Dirt*, and holds a Bachelor of Professional and Creative Writing from Deakin University. Her poems engage with philosophy and the environment.

Naomi Smith (b. 1965, Mulubinba / Newcastle, NSW) is a multidisciplinary artist working with drawing, gouache, screen printing and botanical printmaking. Her practice is inspired by North Queensland's plants and ecosystems, shaped by time living across Queensland and New South Wales, working in health and with Cape York Aboriginal communities on arts and cultural projects. Her experiences have deepened her connection to local knowledge, landscapes and places, and creative practices. Now based in Gurambilbarra / Townsville, she creates habitat gardens for native species, and is inspired by close observation of the cycles and seasons of the natural world. Naomi is also a long-time Landcare volunteer and bush regeneration advocate.



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