

BUTLER ■ GALLERY

Christine Mackey

SEED MATTER and 'other' stories

October 22 – December 18, 2011

(*Artist Talk*: November, 2011 – Please contact the gallery for details)

The Butler Gallery is delighted to present *SEED MATTER and 'other' stories*, a multi-media exhibition by Christine Mackey. This exhibition addresses Mackey's on-going social investigation between the micro/macro geographies of the 'seed' in an attempt to envision local ecological processes relative to global contexts.

SEED MATTER AND 'OTHER' STORIES IS HOUSED UNDER THE COLLECTIVE TITLE: 'THE POLITICS OF SEEDS', WHICH HAS EVOLVED INTO VARIOUS PRODUCTIONS: A SITE-VISIT TO THE GLOBAL SEED VAULT IN SVALBARD, NORWAY (2010); A PUBLICATION 'TRADE OFF PLANTERS' (2009-2010) - A SEED EXCHANGE EVENT THROUGH TRADE (2009); AND A RECENT COLLECTION OF DRAWINGS THAT EXPLORED THE VULNERABILITY OF BIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS. DRAWING IS THE COMMON THREAD LINKING THESE PROJECTS TOGETHER.

SEED MATTER AND 'OTHER' STORIES MERGES HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION, 'HEARSAY' AND CONTEMPORARY AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES BY TRACING THE HISTORICAL LINEAGE OF THE DANIEL O'ROURKE PEA [*PISUM SATIVUM*], AN IRISH CULTIVAR SOURCED FROM THE IRISH SEED SAVERS ASSOCIATION IN CLARE. THIS PEA, WHICH SUPPOSEDLY ORIGINATED IN CORK IN THE 1800'S FOUND ITS WAY TO AMERICA, GERMANY AND MUCH FURTHER AFIELD TO RUSSIA.

IN RUSSIA, SEED SAMPLES OF THE DANIEL O'ROURKE PEA HAVE BEEN HELD SINCE 1921 AT THE VAVILOV ALL-RUSSIAN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF PLANT INDUSTRY IN ST. PETERSBURG. THIS INSTITUTE IS THE WORLD'S FIRST SEED BANK, AND ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST COLLECTIONS OF PLANT GENETIC MATERIAL. THIS PEA FELL INTO THE HANDS OF MANY PLANT BREEDERS, ONE OF WHOM WAS JOSEPH SANGSTER, WHO POSSIBLY BRED THE PEA AS 'SANGSTER NO. 1.' IN LISSADELL GARDENS, SLIGO, WHERE HE WORKED FOR TEN YEARS AS HEAD GARDENER (1903-1913).

For this exhibition, Mackey has playfully applied a range of taxonomic and museum display methods, enacted with live material, in an attempt to uncover the geo-political control of biological organisms, food sovereignty, land use and social justice. This juxtaposition of live material constructs an open discursive framework to tease out a range of issues in relation to the control of food; put succinctly by farmer Kevin Dudley: 'whoever controls our seeds controls our food'.

Christine Mackey was born in Co. Kilkenny and lives and works in North Leitrim. Her practice combines site-specific and public works, exhibitions, performance and art-books. Mackey has exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally and is a recipient of numerous awards and artist residencies. In 2002, Mackey graduated with an MA (Time based and Performance Studies) at Dartington College of Art, England and in

1992 with a BA in Sculpture from the National College of Art and Design, Dublin, Ireland and was recently awarded a practice-based PhD at the University of Ulster, Belfast.

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