

PRESS RELEASE



REAL JARDÍN
BOTÁNICO

ENDEAVOUR **The Eucalyptus, a Case Study** PHotoEspaña 2019 - Official section

The exhibition *Endeavour – The Eucalyptus, a case study* offers a glimpse into the photographic research project that Clément Verger has been working on for more than three years.

Currently in residence at Casa de Velázquez, Clément Verger is a visual artist born in France in 1988. This exhibition, framed within the PHotoEspaña festival programme and in the evocative and significant context of the Real Jardín Botánico, highlights how closely photographic creation can be bound to research processes and natural sciences approaches.

In his research-based approach, Clément Verger's work essentially questions the apparent naturalness of the landscapes that surround us. Photography serves as a tool for reading and analysing the complex mechanisms of the Anthropocene, the era of the influence of human beings on their natural environment.

In *Endeavour*, a project started in Portugal in 2016, Verger uses the case of the introduction of eucalyptus in Europe as an example of the phenomenon of the transport and implantation of species in the world. As the artist and professor at the University of New Mexico Jonathan Blaustein points out, «by weaving large-format photographs of landscapes, subtle photoscans and microscopic images, Verger uses native Australian eucalyptus as a meta-symbol of globalization.

The Endeavour project borrows its name from James Cook's 1768 vessel, which sailed from England to Tahiti to observe and document the transit of Venus across the sun. Once this first objective was achieved, the second part of the expedition -under orders from the Royal Society- came to explore the South Pacific in search of the mythical *Terra Australis Incognita*. From this trip, the then young Joseph Banks, naturalist and important financial founder of the mission, brought the first specimens of eucalyptus to Europe.



Today, *Eucalyptus Globulus* covers about 7% of Portuguese territory. The first massive plantations, in the Coimbra region in the 19th century, were intended to drain the marshy soils to control erosion and prevent the spread of malaria. In the second half of the next century, the paper industry intensified cultivation. This monoculture now extends to Spain as well as the whole world. These immense plantations do not take long to generate consequences, paralyzing biodiversity, depleting water reserves and favoring the spread of fires.

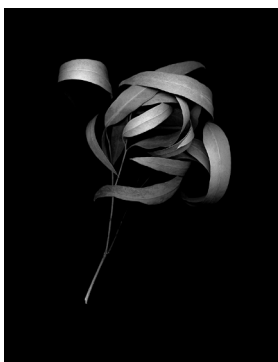
Endeavour - The Eucalyptus, a case study, takes us into a visual study where the codes of the scientific protocol are mixed with more distant and suggestive sights.

In addition to being the thematic core, eucalyptus is also physically present in the exhibition: both the paper and the frames -made of wood, burned or not- both come from this plant, giving it a material protagonism that runs through the exhibition.

In the exhibition, photographs of branches and leaves alternate at a scale of 1:1, constituting a black and white herbarium that makes direct reference to botanical history. Moreover, are shown wider views of landscapes in which the presence of the human being is never obvious, but appears in subtle features that let us glimpse the strata of time captured in the photographic instant.

In short, Verger takes us through the interstices of human intervention and invites us to go back to the fundamental task of observation, around a simple but essential question: for the time being, what can still be called *nature*?

The Endeavour project began in 2016 during a residence of The Independent A.I.R. in Portugal. It was supported by the Royal Botanic Gardens of Kew, the Jardim Botânico da Universidade de Coimbra, the city of Aarhus - European Capital of Culture 2017, CNAP, the Cité Internationale de Arts and Casa de Velázquez.



EXHIBITION FROM JUNE 11TH TO JULY 8TH 2019

Opening on Monday 10th of June at 7.00 p.m.

Monday-Sunday (10 a.m -8.30 p.m.) - Entrance fee: 4€

In the Royal Botanical Garden - CSIC / Plaza de Murillo, 2, Madrid

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