

# Inspired by life... death and decay



**P**ATRICE Moor's home may be in London but Oxford is where her art is.

Well, a lot of it is. She's coming to the end of 18 months as artist-in-residence at the city's Botanic Garden and an exhibition of her work is being held before she moves on to take the same post at Somerville College, also in Oxford.

"My connection started 37 years ago when I first arrived in England," says Patrice, who is half-Dutch and half-Luxembourger, with French as her mother tongue.

"I came to Oxford to learn English and lived here for two years before going to college in London.

"It was a very happy time for me and I have kept my connection up ever since and have many friends in and around Oxford."

Her previous residency was at the Royal College of Physicians.

"I was asked by them to inspire myself from the medicinal garden to produce some works. This made me realise how integral plants were to my areas of interests: life, decay and death."

It led her to approach the University of Oxford's Botanic Garden and her current residency.

"It has been hugely enjoyable and very beneficial for my work. I have had many hours, in all weathers and all seasons on my own here, all of it interesting and stimulating and all with beauty."

Patrice has spent about a day a week at the garden and the rest of the time at her studio in London.

"My main challenge has been to force myself back to my studio rather than be in the garden for yet another day," she says.

"This was a constant temptation throughout my residency.

"The opportunity to explore plants further has been very helpful to my work. As an artist the longer you have to immerse yourself in a subject the more interesting it becomes, the more you see that you had not seen before and the more your horizons expand.

"This is a tremendously exciting process, full of possibilities and challenges."

The exhibition, which starts next Saturday, is called *Nature Morte*. The underlying subjects of life, death and decay are all reflected in the works exhibited, which highlight the diversity and fragility of living things as well as the transience of plants and their life cycles.

Patrice's next residency at Somerville starts officially in May and will last for one year.

She may be half-Dutch and half-Luxembourger, but artist Patrice Moor is no stranger to Oxford – and tells Jaine Blackman why she loves the city so much



Artist Patrice Moor in her favourite part of the gardens

Picture: Andrew Walmsley

## WHAT IS AN ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE?

**RESIDENCIES come in many shapes and sizes," says Patrice Moor.**

"Fundamentally it is an agreement between an institution or place and an artist and therefore it is up to

them to tailor it to the requirements of both parties.

"Usually a contract gets drawn up and it is rare to get paid, but it does happen.

"If you are lucky your expenses may be paid.

"There will be an agreement as to roughly how many works will be

produced over a set period of time and an exhibition put on of the works produced.

"Suitable publicity will be organised which gives the artist exposure and an opportunity to dialogue with a new public and gives the institution an opportunity to expand their public."

people as possible in the college and trying to translate a little of the essence of Somerville on to canvas.

"I am always happy to come to Oxford and always happy to be here.

"The cultural life of the city is so rich, whatever your areas of interest may be.

"Visually it is a feast and on a cold, sunny winter's day I think it is utterly stunning. "The sense of history is palpable everywhere in the centre of the city, and I still find after all these years of coming that I see new things that I had not noticed before.

"I love the Ashmolean and always spend



Pictures: Opposite page: Rheum bud. This page from top: *Datura Stramonium*; detail from *Helianthus annuus*; and Branch. Below: *Philodendron Bipinnatifidum*

some time there whenever I come, and make a point of visiting exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art."

Patrice finds that one placement often leads to another.

"My residencies come about quite organically, I follow my instincts and one residency often influences another," she says.

"It relates very much to my approach to the work, which is purposefully instinctive and organic.

"There isn't a specific plan.

"Opportunities arise and I follow them; sometimes it leads nowhere and sometimes it bears fruit.

"I think that dialogues between institutions and artists can only be positive for both parties and add another dimension and some

stimulation. Seeing things from another perspective, another point of view is always of interest.

"Beyond my exhibition at the OBG, I am very much looking forward to my residency at Somerville and the new vistas it will open up; new challenges, new opportunities and an entirely different exhibition at the end of my residency there.

"I am also thinking, in the back of my mind, about what possibilities for residencies will emerge afterwards. These have to be thought of as they need a great deal of advance planning. I am always on the lookout for new opportunities and challenges. Wherever I go I take my areas of interests and my subjects with me. I have not chosen them, they have chosen me."

## 'MY PAINTINGS CAN TAKE FOUR MONTHS'

PATRICE MOOR says:

"My upcoming exhibition at Oxford Botanic Garden comprises 15 paintings – 10 small works and five medium-sized ones.

"Each painting takes a long time to paint.

"I build up very thin layers of paint upon very thin layers of paint, so some of the paintings take up to four months to paint.

"I am excited about showing the work and sharing my experiences of the last year-and-a-half.

"It will be interesting to discuss my very personal view of a minute segment of what happens in the plant world at Oxford Botanic Garden with people and see how they respond and react.

"My approach is realistic but I find reality is truly extraordinary at every juncture.

"By staying in reality, an alchemical transformation can sometimes take place in the painting that transforms the subject of the painting into something other.

"It is quite magical and one of the great joys of painting for me.

"My paintings are emotional and I hope this will communicate.

"I always paint in oils.

"It is my medium and I love everything about it, the feel of it under the brush, the smell and the way it moves on the canvas.

"I say canvas but very often I paint on fine linen.

"I find the paint moves beautifully on the linen and it creates an harmony with the oil, a kind of flowing which is very exciting."

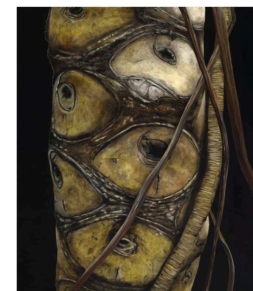
▲ University of Oxford Botanic Gardens, Rose Lane, Oxford OX1 4AZ, telephone 01865 286690, website botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk.

March and April opening hours are 9am until 5pm with last admission at 4.15pm.

Entrance is adults £4.50; accompanied under 16s, the disabled and their carers and Oxford students, free.

▲ Patrice's exhibition *Nature Morte* will run from Saturday March 7 until Monday May 4.

Free with entry to the garden.



THE CULTURAL LIFE OF THE CITY IS SO RICH, WHATEVER YOUR AREAS OF INTEREST