



# ROYALS, ANGELS & ASSASSINS

## Artist Statement by Shane Rowlands

The seed for these works was released on New Year's Day 2014 – although I did not know it then. I spent the morning at the kitchen table, cutting out photographs from the past year's calendar, too beautiful to throw away. I bower-birded them in my cupboard-full of cut outs, oddments, clippings, postcards and fabric scraps.

In the winter, something stirred. I gathered scissors, paper, glue.

The process of assembling these works is one of 'happening upon' a composition. I arrange and re-arrange cut-outs on a page and then a configuration announces its own arrival from some future myth.

A series of hybrid creatures – part animal, plant, insect, fish, mineral, human, flower – emerge. Many have a dignity and nobility, or the bearing of being in service to a realm. Some appear as deities or archangels; others as soothsayers or future-tellers; and others still as cutthroats and predators. And, when you pay close attention, many shimmer and shape-shift.

The lineage of the works in this exhibition is that of sixth generation creations:

- The first generation are the original images created by hundreds of photographers, professionals and passionate amateurs, who work in the fields as ecologists, artists, teachers, botanists, journalists, gardeners, and scientists.
- The second generation are the publication of these photographs in books, magazines and calendars, which I sourced in op shops and at second hand book stalls or friends gave to me.
- The third generation are the images I cut out and cut into parts.
- The fourth generation are the compositions I discovered assembling and re-assembling these cut-ups on the page and then made into collages.
- The fifth generation are the photographs of these collages. A special thanks here to my friend, photographer and artist, Wayne Talbot.
- The sixth generation are the dye-sublimated prints on aluminium that are in the exhibition. A special thanks here to Javier Gonzalez from Flash.

In this sixth generation, I offer the works as an adaptation of lamina or retablo, the Latin American tradition of votive paintings on small sheets of tin or other metal. Traditionally, lamina are an offering made to a saint or divinity, given as an expression of gratitude or devotion.

For me, each of the works in *Royals, Angels & Assassins* is an expression of gratitude for the connectedness and interdependence of all life on earth, and also for its resilience in continuing to evolve and adapt to changing conditions.

The titles of many works in this exhibition are informed by my conversations – real and imagined – with poets and writers, including Galway Kinnell, Emily Dickinson, Theodore Rothke, Carlo Levi, Alice Walker, Leonard Cohen and William Carlos Williams.