

Helene Schmitz' latest project emerged from a journey to South American Surinam. A visit to a butterfly farm resulted in the book and exhibition *Sunken gardens*.

Helene Schmitz, born 1960, lives and works in Stockholm. She has had numerous exhibitions in Sweden and internationally, and her work is included in the collection of Moderna Museet in Stockholm. She has published two award-winning books that have also been translated into English, French and Japanese.

According to a long tradition within western culture nature is often perceived as paradisaical. In Helene Schmitz' photographs a darker side of nature emerges: devouring, seductive and hostile.

*The foremost and most striking about Sunken gardens is perhaps the sentiment transmitted: the enclosures resemble aquariums, where the green and moist ancient forest generates a sensation of water, making us experience a feeling of relocation between the elements, transferred from the foliage on land to the bottom of the sea. In this process of relocation a critical tension is born, which subsequently advances the photographs to tell a history.*

*In his The Critique of Judgment (1790) Immanuel Kant points out the impossibility to draw a distinct line between Nature and Culture. Here he promotes the garden as a form of art where man re-disposes Nature's gifts, into a rest for the eye. The garden, Kant writes, is for the eye, and not to be touched. Yet in Sunken Gardens we are transferred from the sovereign gaze controlling the enclosures, to an un-intentional stroke by Nature itself: here Nature's disintegrated form can hardly be seen, but intensely felt.*

Cecilia Sjöholm, Professor of Aesthetics at Sodertorn University college