



THE STILL HOUSE

Plants, Potions and Power

1 September - 10 October 2025

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

About the exhibition

A 17th-century botanical laboratory is reimagined for the 21st century in **The Still House: Plants, Potions and Power**, a new exhibition by The Storybox Collective in collaboration with the National Trust’s Ham House and Garden.

Inspired by the 17th-century Still House at Ham House—once an enclave of domestic alchemy and herbal remedy-making—the exhibition brings together creative responses in ceramics, textiles, print, poetry, mixed media and installations. Members of the Collective explore diverse, yet interwoven themes including the power of plants, the enduring role of women and nature in supporting health and wellbeing, endangered crafts and digital technologies, and the tension between self-sufficiency and privilege.

Exhibition highlights include the reinvention of 17th-century Dutch marquetry through AI and 3D printing, ‘Mother Thames’ a hand built terracotta fountain with votive offerings, an embroidered ‘Fantastico Herbal’ book and a Sylvanian Family still house inspired by handwritten recipes and archival material.

Drawing on Ham House’s unique collections, its intriguing history, and vibrant gardens, the exhibition blurs the boundaries between garden and interior, connecting past and present, fact and folklore—inviting visitors to examine the role of historic places and collections as sources of creativity.

Work on display is curated in the following spaces:



The Library



The Still House



The Dairy

Julia Buckley
Rug – From Turf to Table
2025
Velvet and cotton
128 x 128 cm



In ‘The Ham House Kitchen’, Caroline Davidson notes the way that arrangement of the 17th-century dining table mirrors the formal layout of the garden. While the rich fabrics and wallpapers within Ham House itself favour motifs of flowering plants like roses, lilies, and carnations my project seeks to celebrate the edible plants of the kitchen garden. 17th-century cuisine featured a diverse range of fruit and vegetables, exemplified by ‘The Grand Salad’ featured in John Evelyn’s ‘Acetaria’ (1699), and comparisons can be drawn with the plants growing at Ham today. Evelyn himself visited Ham in 1678 and was effusive in his praise for ‘the Parterres, Flower Gardens, Orangeries, Groves, Avenues...’ The kitchen garden and Still House did not appear amongst his comments, but most certainly played a quieter yet significant role in the running of the House. Much like the demarcation of female space signified by the use of a chequerboard floor in the Still House and Duchess’s bathroom my textile blurs the boundaries between garden and interior. It could at once serve as wall hanging, floor rug, or even tablecloth (rugs adorn the table in many paintings of the period).

Clare Conway
Forget-Me-Not: A Cabinet of Floral Miniatures
2025
Terracotta with coloured slip and lustre glazes

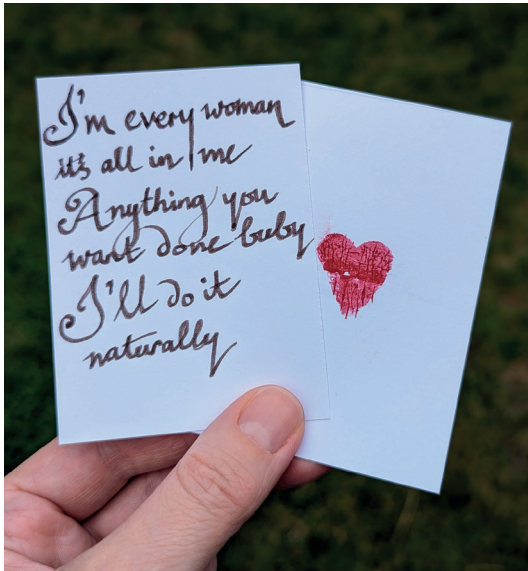
‘Forget-Me-Not: A Cabinet of Floral Miniatures’ draws inspiration from the floral motifs found throughout Ham House and the portrait miniatures of the Green Closet to explore the fragility of plant biodiversity from the 17th-century to the present day. Historical sources such as Elizabeth Blackwell’s ‘A Curious Herbal’, Mary Delany’s intricate paper “mosaicks,” and the 1930s Kensitas silk flower cards, inform a practice rooted in observation, data analysis, and making.

The project focuses on five once-common wildflowers—Lady’s-slipper, Pasqueflower, Deptford Pink, Cornflower, and Globeflower—now rare, endangered or under threat due to issues such as grazing levels, the conversion of pasture to arable land, and the loss of over 97% of wildflower meadows since the 1930s. Each miniature is hand-built from terracotta clay and decorated with coloured slip and glazes including mother of pearl lustre and gold.

Displayed in a cabinet lined with bespoke wallpaper and accompanied by a handmade book, the work echoes the language of miniature portraiture while quietly mourning the threats to our native flora.



Sadie Cook
Aide-mémoire
2025
Ink & lipstick on paper



1: an aid to the memory
especially: a mnemonic device

This piece explores site-specific ideas around secrets, juxtapositions and the feminine sphere. My two starting points from inside Ham House are the tapestry in the North Drawing Room, from which a section has been cut to fit the wall; and the miniatures in the Green Closet, one of which is rumoured to be painted on the back of a playing card. 17th-century playing cards did not have a patterned backing, and were often used for notes and shopping lists.

Research into the activities of Elizabeth Murray, and the site of a Still House as a place for traditionally feminine pursuits such as the preparation of balms, tinctures and medicines, made me think of the song ‘I’m Every Woman’ (Chaka Khan, 1978). Through smashing together the lyrics of the song with an imagined 17th-century version, I propose that Murray herself is an ‘Every Woman’. An educated mother to 11 children (5 of whom survived), with political influence on both sides, who was able to secure the future of Ham House through a time of upheaval and revolution in England, Elizabeth can be arguably seen as an influential and tenacious protofeminist.

Marta Cubeddu
A True Fantastico Herbal Book
2025
As Zine and embroidery

Living in Italy, the artist experienced Ham House through photos and stories shared by others. She was particularly struck by the Still House—imagining the work and experiments that once took place there—and by images showing engravings, marks, and worn surfaces. These traces of time fascinated her, not just for their aesthetic value, but for what they suggested: the importance of what lies beneath the surface.

Marta’s practice often values process over outcome. Inspired by the Still House and medieval herbals—where illustrations were based on written descriptions rather than observation—she saw a metaphor for her own remote experience. She asked fellow Storybox Collective members to describe flowers without naming them, allowing her to imagine each one without preconceptions.

This began a period of experimentation in embroidery and illustration. Each flower took on a different form, material, and technique. As a newcomer to embroidery, Marta embraced the freedom to explore. Showing the backs of the embroideries was essential—they reveal the work’s hidden essence, including the mistakes.

This project invites viewers to look beyond appearances and remain open to new perspectives and ways of seeing.



Louise Dukes
Elizabeth, a chara (Elizabeth, my friend)
2025
Mixed media piece with digital and traditional collage & crochet
42 x 59.4 cm

An exploration of the artist’s relationship with Elizabeth Murray that poses an interesting question: what would they have made of each other if they had met? The piece explores the commonalities, the points of divergence and the unknowns in-between.

Gender, heritage, identity and the complex feelings surrounding these themes are at the work’s core. The artist uses both English and the Irish language to highlight the differences between herself and Elizabeth while remaining tethered to her via traditionally feminine craft that is used to represent womanhood. The piece’s title is a wordplay referencing the traditional opening of a letter in Irish, where friendship is assumed, even though the ambiguity of this imagined relationship remains. Elizabeth is addressed as though she is still present, creating a feeling that she is observing the piece too.

Mediums such as crochet and collage echo the process of unravelling and reassembling. Some strands of crochet are tight and neat before slowly becoming messy and tangled, symbolising the complex and shifting thoughts and emotions throughout the project.



Matt Hams
‘Why are there roses all over the place?’
2025
Video animation



From 18th century recipes, to the paintings inside Ham House, and the writings of William Shakespeare, Christina Rossetti and George Orwell, roses seemingly appear everywhere in English heritage—as symbols, as emblems of power and as a flower of beauty and fascination.

This work explores the strange and wonderful ubiquity of the rose in English heritage, folklore, literature and art. Through a playful combination of digital motion, text, images and sound, the video animation imagines a computational conversation in which knowledge and understanding about roses evolves, devolves (and sometimes revolves). The conversation considers the multifarious ideas about a flower so endlessly repeated throughout time, in its many and varied permutations. Question: Why are there roses all over the place?

‘Rose of memory
Rose of forgetfulness
Exhausted and life-giving
Worried reposeful
The single Rose
Is now the Garden
Where all loves end’

T. S. ELIOT, ‘ASH WEDNESDAY’.

Martine Aamodt Hess & Nora Marie Vatland
Fed With a Silver Spoon
2025
Photography series and zine, printed on recycled paper with plant-based inks

Gardens are political. What we grow and how we grow it mirror our culture. Similarly, what we put on our plates reflects our attitudes. Each forkful reveals love, loss, care and carelessness.

Walking through the salad plot at Ham House, we learned that each flower, root and bud is inspired by the Grand Sallat. During the 17th-century, it would be the first dish to grace the banquet table, flaunting the bounty of the estate’s kitchen garden in the process.

The Grand Sallat is not only a decadent symbol of wealth and excess, it also provides a glimpse into the prestige that came with growing. Fast forward to the current day and we find ourselves in a similar moment: Self-sufficiency is chic, once again.

In the spirit of Peter Brears, we decided not to dismiss an old recipe as an archival text, but to “experience it with all the senses”. We set out to recreate the legendary salad, hoping to unravel the complex relationship between growing and class, produce and status, self-sufficiency and privilege.

Our project, ‘Fed With a Silver Spoon’, is a sliver of past and present, presented as a photography series and an essay in the form of a zine.



Jayasree Jayakumar
A Handmade House
Mixed-media artwork, 2025
Handmade paper, linen thread, cotton thread



This work draws inspiration from Ham House, a 17th-century mansion built entirely by hand in a pre-industrial age. The idea that every surface and object was once carefully crafted by human hands became the foundation for the piece. While exploring the house’s rich textile history, the artist was particularly drawn to the embroidered cover of the Book of Common Prayer, gifted by King Charles I to William Murray. Still on display today, its intricate detailing speaks to the value once placed on time, skill, and ornamentation.

The two outcomes in this series respond to different aspects of the house. One draws on the visual language of the interiors—their rhythm, balance, and repeated shapes—reinterpreted through embroidery and collage. The other takes inspiration from the delicate bird motifs in the plasterwork, evoking themes of presence, transience, and quiet symbolism.

Rather than replicate historical techniques, the artist responds to their spirit—reimagining hand embroidery through a contemporary lens. These works reflect on materiality, slowness, and the emotional resonance of the handmade—a tribute to historic domestic craft and a personal meditation on making by hand.

Samuel Knowles
Mono-Arch
2025
Watercolour monotype on Awagami paper
28cm x 36cm



Using a copy of the Book of Common Prayer from the Ham House archives as a starting point, my work explores print techniques and woodcut styles, pairing them with a fictional poem by an anonymous author. The poem takes the reader on a feverish ghost tour—never quite sure what will jump out around the next corner.

‘...A woodcut of souls, a pamphlet dancing in the hand. Pages of flame where witches and ghosts of monarchs are pale in instability. All that detail, a burin has carved, so that the press can contort the sensible mind...’

Text by a fictional anonymous author, found scribbled in the margins of a 1663 copy of The Common Book of Prayer within the Ham House archives.

Mrudula Kuvalekar
Sakhli Sabeli
2025
Fabric book (hand-stitched)
10.5 x 14.8 cm

This hand-stitched ‘friendship book’ imagines a bond between a fictional Indian ayah and British memsahib at Ham House. Inspired by European album forms traditionally used to document personal connections and social bonds, the work reframes the house through the eyes of the ayah—an unseen presence whose emotional and physical experiences have long gone unrecorded.

Made using vintage Indian sarees, the book treats fabric as a kind of memory keeper—holding onto feelings, histories, and moments that might otherwise be lost. Often dismissed because of their domestic and feminine associations, fabric here is treated as archive, as narrator, as witness. Through this quiet language of stitch and pattern, the work explores how femininity, care, and labour shape the rhythms of a space. The stitched fabrics are intentionally uneven, frayed, and unfinished, reflecting the fragmentary nature of memory and the incomplete way these stories survive.

By tracing imagined relationships between women of colour and figures like Elizabeth Lauderdale, the project invites the viewer to observe the emotional histories threaded through the house. Through fabric and form, the project explores intimacy, hierarchy, and cultural entanglement across time.



Julia Rose Lewis
Still Life
2025
Illustrated volume of original poetry



A photograph of Tansy—the aromatic, perennial member of the Daisy family—taken in the Fountain Garden was an early point of fascination for the artist—valued as a fly repellent, a remedy for gout, and a vermifuge (a word she notes for its curious beauty). It evoked the rhythms of equine care and the lingering presence of stables on the property, drawing attention to the shared needs of humans and animals.

Julia’s work considers the ways in which plants cross into the body—taken in, digested, absorbed—until they become part of us. In this sense, the human body becomes an extension of the still house, and the still house an extension of the body: both sites of transformation.

Interweaving food and medicine, across species and disciplines, this illustrated book of poetry draws these connections into form—tender, precise, and quietly alchemical.

Maisie Noble
Mother Thames
2025
Hand built terracotta fountain and votive offerings.*

This piece acknowledges the role of water at Ham House. The house’s position on the river Thames emphasises the historic importance of access to water channels as a point of connection to the outside world. The statue of the river God, Father Thames is one of the first things you see on approach to the property, highlighting the status of the river as a commercial and trade route. In response to this patriarchal and capitalist symbol the artist has created a terracotta fountain entitled ‘Mother Thames’ which seeks to highlight the value of water as a symbol of fertility and sustainer of life.

Maisie’s work explores the complex relationship between humanity and the water-systems that sustain us. The Spring of 2025 was the driest on record and hosepipe bans have been in place throughout the Summer, criticism of water management companies is predominant in the media, the pollution of our water-systems and lack of responsibility by private companies, regulatory bodies and government policy is deeply concerning. Presently the kitchen garden at Ham House is irrigated with collected rainwater, allowing the garden to flourish through periods of drought, this system is refreshing and values the sacredness of water as a scarce natural resource.

* the installation is on display in the Fountain Garden





Honey Postle
The Curious Adventure of the Sylvanian Still House
 2025
 1:16 Hand-crafted model

The Still House is a mysterious space, with little knowledge remaining about its original function. This project playfully reimagines what might have taken place within its walls, blending historical research with a touch of whimsy to spark curiosity and invite discovery.

Created in 1:16 scale and inspired by Ham House, the miniature model of a 17th-century Still House and its gardens encourages young historians to imagine the daily rituals, remedies, and quiet industry of this female-led space.

Through model-making, the artist explores how play can be a powerful tool for learning, especially for younger audiences. The project invites reflection on our historical relationship with the earth and how natural materials have supported human wellbeing for centuries:

“This process deepened my connection to the past and to those who lived it. As I pieced together tiny bricks and crafted imagined objects from historical references, I found myself considering the hands that once worked in the real space; hands that prepared, preserved, and healed. I became more aware of how knowledge, especially women’s knowledge, often went undocumented and now fascinates us centuries later. Though the room’s purpose may have changed over time, its significance and the quiet power it held, continues to resonate today.”

HONEY POSTLE, 2025.

Image (left): Honey Postle crafting the ‘Curious Adventure’.

Paul Postle
The Still
 2025
 Jacket & zine
 800mm x 700mm



Inspired by the Still House at Ham House which was constructed under Elizabeth Murray around the time of Nicholas Culpeper’s groundbreaking publication of ‘The Complete Herbal’, this project engages in a dialogue with a layered past, considering the term “still” in a world that constantly changes. It re-evaluates the Materia Medica and other historical knowledge of natural remedies used by rich and poor alike, whilst challenges the notion that design and natural healing are invariably seen separately.

The exhibit is entitled ‘The Still’, a zine format that uses a vibrant, collage aesthetic to make this historical knowledge accessible, informative and enjoyable to a diverse audience. The zine is displayed within a custom-printed chore jacket, a piece of traditional workwear, made from a unique polypropylene fabric that features inkjet printing technique. This work ultimately asks the viewer to reconsider how the knowledge of our ancestors can still be a dynamic force in modern culture, transcending the centuries and the social divide.



Leonardo Russo & Milo Tonry Brown
Seat of Power
 2025
Ash, mild steel, glass enamel

A contemporary throne grounded in 17th-century opulence, ‘Seat of Power’ reimagines Dutch marquetry as a living language of plants and colonialism. Blending AI-generated design with traditional craft, the work explores how botanical symbolism can be revived to interrogate legacies of colonial expansion, plant medicine, and societal control.

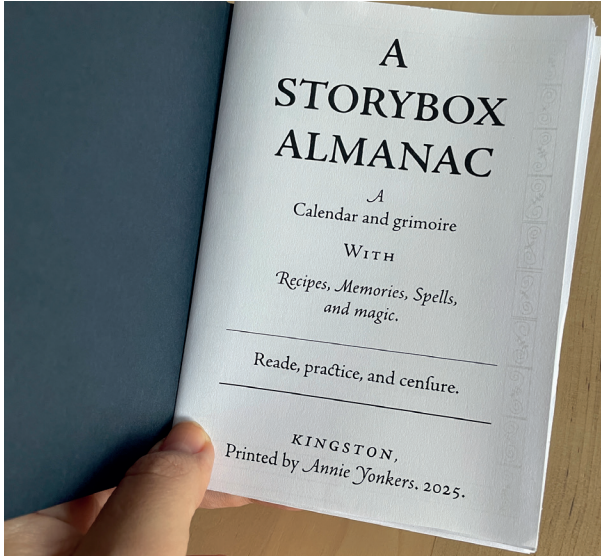
The marquetry features poppy, coca, hemp, and the Tudor rose—plants deeply entangled in histories of healing and domination. Once revered in sacred and plant medicine traditions, these species were seized and transformed by empire: turned into opiates, narcotics, and fibres of industry. Poppy and coca became the engines of global trade and prohibition alike; hemp, essential to naval conquest, became a political scapegoat; the Tudor rose symbolized dynastic myth and national identity.

Apothecary gardens once coexisted with imperial ambition, ‘Seat of Power’ evokes the uneasy balance between symbolism and subjugation, wealth and exploitation. The chair becomes both a vessel and a warning—exposing how empire drew power from the plants it commodified, and reminding us how beauty, pharmacology, and control have long been intertwined.



Image (left): Small scale prototypes. Above: render for final piece.

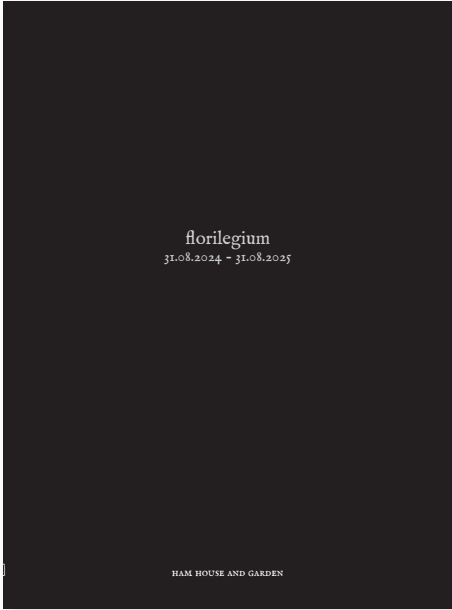
Annie Yonkers
A Storybox Almanac
 2025
Risograph printed and handbound booklet
 105 x 148 mm



Inspired by the books ‘A Delight for Ladies’ and ‘The Book of Common Prayer’, ‘A Storybox Almanac’ explores the tension between knowledge and power. Books have always been a source of power, but who has the say in what gets put on the pages, and is the power derived from our hands or through mass duplication from printing? Folk knowledge, and ‘women’s’ knowledge throughout history has been undermined or weaponised – with recipes and remedies passed on through journals or grimoires being branded as spells and witchcraft.

King James I is a pivotal character in establishing the negative perspective towards witchcraft that defined the 17th-century. The publication of ‘Daemonologie’ in 1606 the King James Bible in 1611 both exemplify the hegemonic attitudes and power in the printed word that set the context for the world Elizabeth Murray was born into.

‘A Storybox Almanac’ is a collection of memories, recipes, spells and knowledge that span a year from members across the collective through our own hands.



The ‘Florilegium’ for Ham House and Garden currently on display in the Dairy as part of **The Still House: Plants, Potions and Power** exhibition, brings together curated content from the research sketchbooks of Storybox Collective members.

This anthology serves both as a visual record and a creative tool, celebrating the role of cultural heritage sites like Ham House and Garden in inspiring new, collaborative modes of making. It lays the groundwork for future creative partnerships and community engagement.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this exhibition guide. However, details may be subject to change, and we recommend checking with individual exhibitors for the most current updates.

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With thanks to:

Sarah McGrady, Sarah Hourahane, Anna Dempf, Frances Leeds and the team at Ham House and Garden.

The Storybox Collective [SBC] is a group of artists, designers and writers working with historic collections and archives to explore the potential of creative research through collaborative making. Previous collaborative projects include: ‘William Morris Wallpaper Man’ with The William Morris Society and ‘Finding Ways In’ with the Sussex opera house Glyndebourne.

www.thestoryboxcollective.org.uk
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