

# inventory I

## SEAWEED ART THE CURIOUS WORLD OF SEAWEED

The oceans hold so many mysteries for us, especially the Pacific, the largest and deepest ocean on Earth. Its kelp forest along the coast of California is a place of particular wonder – a vast tangled mess of underwater plant life that's home to countless organisms. But this kelp is under threat from rising sea temperatures and Josie Iselin – a photographer and artist on the front line of ocean activism – has been working with scientists and organisations to help preserve these habitats of incomparable richness.

As well as creating stunning large-scale prints of marine algae, Josie has recently produced a book, *The Curious World of Seaweed*, which explores the artistic and biological profiles of 16 seaweeds and kelps that grow in the thin band where the Pacific Ocean converges with the North American continent. Each species features a detailed description of its structure and ecological importance; and its vibrant and whimsical colours are shown to full effect in the *marimekko*-like portraits Josie generates on her flat-bed scanner. This visual treasure is a clever intertwining of art and science, and is a testament to how “we can learn not only about seaweeds, but also learn from them: their resilience, their resourcefulness, their poetry and magic.” Words: **Abi Whyte**. *The Curious World of Seaweed* by Josie Iselin (Heyday Books, 2019); [josieiselin.com](http://josieiselin.com).

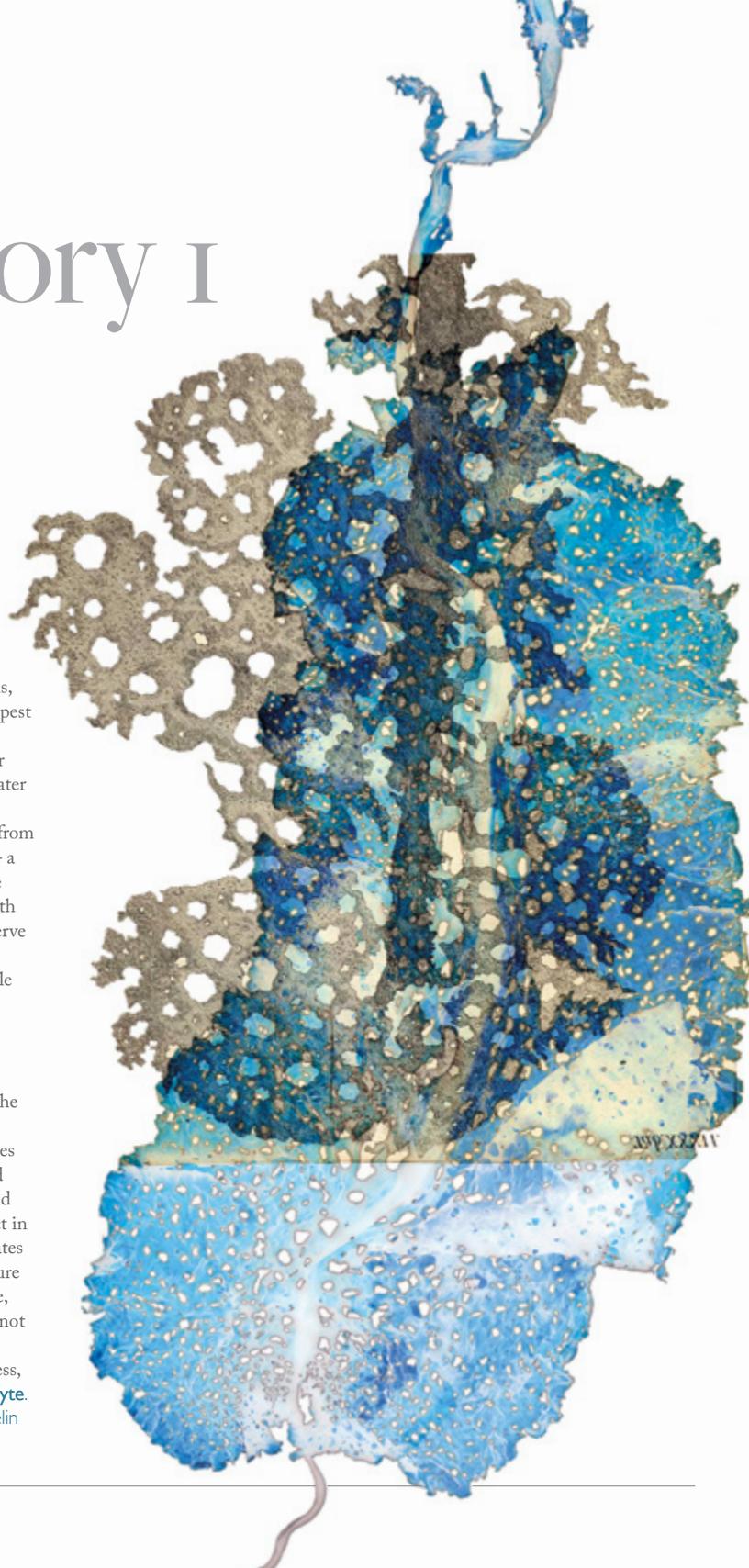


IMAGE COURTESY OF JOSIE ISELIN

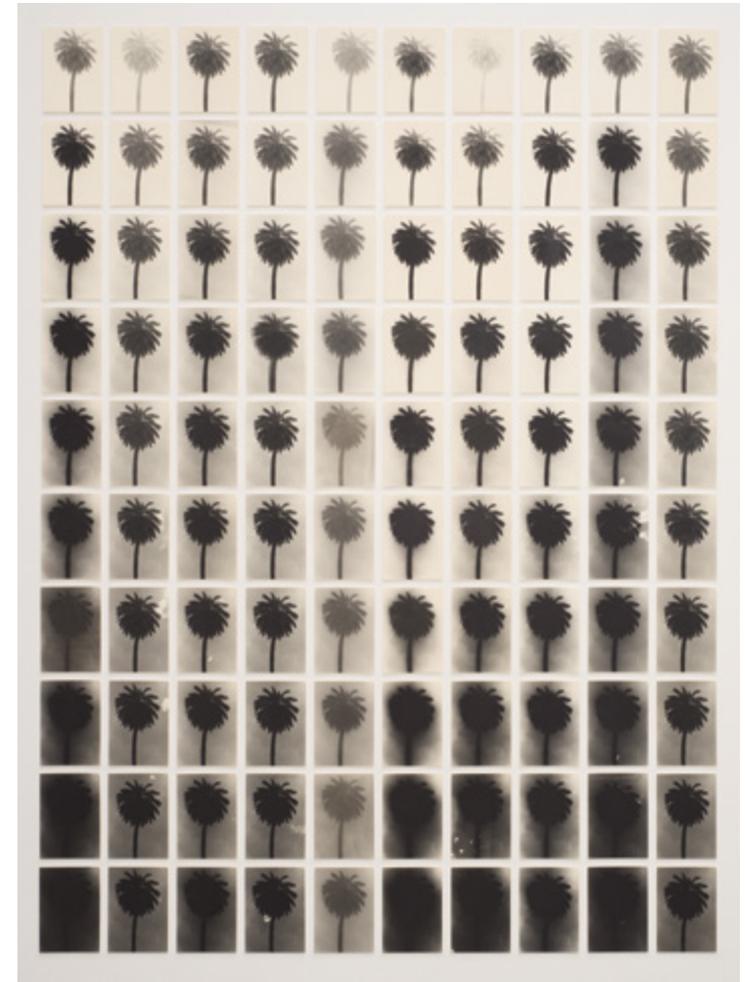
## PHOTOGRAPHY THE TYRANNY OF THE VIEWFINDER

Instagram, eh? Not as effortless as it looks. Each casual, Aperol-sipping holiday selfie the result of 10 rejected snaps (wonky angle, pigeon photobomber, weird smile, side-eye from woman on the next table) plus 15 minutes adjusting filters and dreaming up a witty caption.

Ghent-based artist Bruno Roels has an alternative strategy, centred around freeing us from “the tyranny of the viewfinder”. Bruno believes that photography fusses too much about cameras, films, development methods and a million other things. His argument is that all versions of an image have value, and some of his work shows hundreds of printed variations of the same picture.

He's currently working on a series called *A Palm Tree Is A Palm Tree Is A Palm Tree*, where images of nondescript palm fronds belie the fact that they could be anywhere in the world, from the French Riviera to the war-torn Middle East. Food for thought next time you're framing up the classic 'legs on a beach' shot. Words: **Joly Braime**. See Bruno Roels' latest work at [brunoroels.com](http://brunoroels.com)

IMAGE COURTESY OF FIFTY ONE GALLERY



## NAVIGATION SILK ESCAPE MAPS

*Ernest* once scrawled a map to his favourite wild swimming spot on a bit of tissue, but he forgot to take it out of his shorts pocket when he jumped in the water and it disintegrated before he could find his way home again. Perhaps he'd have been better off printing it on parachute silk, like the escape maps used by downed pilots in WW2.

Mainly issued to air crews, but also to special forces and other covert operatives, these simple maps were the brainchild

of MI9, the British military intelligence escape and evasion service. Based on pre-war Continental touring maps, they used silk (and later rayon) because it was durable, easy to conceal and didn't make crinkly paper noises when you were sneaking around in the dark. Escape maps are still in use today, now printed on synthetic Tyvek.

When Pierre and Clémence from French company Bonhomme came across an original WW2 silk map at

a flea market, it inspired their own range of silk scarves. They're currently collaborating on a special edition Norfolk scarf with Coastal Exploration Co., who ply the creeks and sandbanks of the English east coast in their fleet of wooden boats. Words: **Joly Braime**. Silk evasion scarves (from 95€); [bonhomme.fr/en](http://bonhomme.fr/en). Or see the Norfolk scarf in action on an adventure with [coastalexplorationcompany.co.uk](http://coastalexplorationcompany.co.uk)





## CHRONOCYCLEGRAPHS EFFICIENCY OF MOTION

Frank and Lillian Gilbreth were an industrial engineering super-team. An engineer and a psychologist, their focus was efficiency of motion – doing things better rather than just faster.

In the 1910s, in an early version of time-lapse photography, they attached a camera to a timer and filmed workers performing tasks with lamps attached to their hands. They would analyse these ‘chronocyclegraphs’ to find the ‘paths of least waste’, sometimes creating beautiful wire sculptures to aid this visualisation.

The Gilbreths had 11 children and ran their home like a factory. There were daily fire drills, assembly calls and

dishwashing was filmed and analysed for efficiency. The children learned languages while performing chores and dinner conversation was only permitted if the subject was ‘of general interest’.

When Frank died aged 55, Lillian was left to raise the family alone. Her work on their projects was often uncredited, and factories wouldn’t take her seriously without her husband, so she ran workshops from home instead. She was one of the first to address fatigue and stress as detriments to productivity, which led to improvements in working conditions. **Words: Guy Lochhead.** Two of the Gilbreth children wrote a book of their unique family experience, *Cheaper by the Dozen*, which has been adapted into three films.

## PROJECT CERAMIC HISTORIES

When a reclusive relative died in 2016, Sussex-based ceramic artist Emily Ticehurst discovered the most extraordinary family treasure trove squirrelled away in a garage – the relics of generations of surgeons, ornithologists and adventurers. There were diaries of annual expeditions to the Norwegian Arctic dating back to the 1850s; surgical instruments

cushioned on decrepit velvet; crusted vials containing liquid cocaine, pure adrenaline, morphine and poison; carefully preserved bird skins and handwritten ornithological books. Among it all was a camera, complete with glass plate negatives of Sami reindeer herders, egg collectors and flocks of gulls.

Emily has gone on to design a body of



## EXPLORATION SEA JOURNALS

Ernest loves to bring his sketchbook with him when he takes to the boating lake on a rented pedalo, but he’s not the best at drawing – his portrait of a swan looks like a plesiosaur smoking a cigar.

More noteworthy attempts at maritime art are featured in Huw Lewis-Jones’s recent book, *The Sea Journal*. Described as a ‘gathering of superlative original artworks’ culled from “tattered journals, notebooks, sea-logs, diaries and cloth-bound sketchbooks”, it features everything from spidery cartoons and diary extracts to zoological watercolours – complete with potted biographies of the mariners behind them.

While there are plenty of offerings from titans of the high seas like Horatio Nelson and Francis Drake, in some ways the most interesting characters are the ones you might not have heard of. There’s Tupaia, the Polynesian navigator who helped Captain Cook chart more than 2,000 miles on the *Endeavour*, or Else Bostelmann, whose sinister sketches of deep-sea denizens were made as she stood on the Bermuda seabed, scratching on an engraver’s plate with a pin and trying not to lose her cartoonish diving helmet. As Dutch artist Louis Apol once said, “to sketch at sea is not too much a problem; to get home safely, well, that is the most important thing.”

**Words: Joly Braime.** *The Sea Journal* by Huw Lewis-Jones (Thames & Hudson).

art work inspired by her find, which she calls her Living Museum collection. She’s used some of the more striking images on wheel-thrown ceramic wall plates and mugs, and there are also lampshades featuring swan markings from her great uncle Norman Ticehurst’s book, *The Mute Swan*.

**Words: Joly Braime.** Orkney Egg Collectors wall plate (£35); **emily ticehurstceramics.com**



Hommage à nos Héros.

PHOTOGRAPHY

## SUBMERGED FOREST

“Years ago, a landslide choked off this valley on Vancouver Island, turning the forest into a lake. A hike up to a bluff revealed thousands of silver, branchless spires sticking out of the water with no visible access. A ghostly old-growth forest, never logged.

For two years I tried to figure out a way in. After an attempt to go upriver failed, I asked a pilot friend to fly me over, and spotted a dry creek below the lake. I called a friend, who’s often down for ‘type-2 fun’, and we carried a secondhand canoe over our heads for six hours to stash it by the lake, struggling over car-sized boulders.

We returned to shoot these eerie images a week later. I took an inflatable raft while two friends paddled through the trees. Haunting fog loomed in the hilltops as these wooden stakes punctured the lake, looking almost like a watery graveyard.”

Words: Graeme Owsianski, photographer. Explore his work at [benchandcompass.tumblr.com](https://benchandcompass.tumblr.com) or follow him on Instagram @[graeme\\_o](https://www.instagram.com/graeme_o)





## PRINTMAKING COPPER AND WAX

Since the 1980s, Leeds-born artist Norman Ackroyd has lived in and worked from an old leather warehouse in Bermondsey, south London. There he produces his work on an early 20th-century printing press, including his stunning coastal landscapes.

These semi-abstract etchings capture Britain's craggy outcrops and wild seas in dramatic monochromes, using a technique called aquatint. The meticulous process involves applying a fine powder of acid-resistant pine rosin onto the engraved copper plate, then immersing it in an acid bath where it produces large swathes of soft half-tone, giving a watercolour-like quality to the image.

Ackroyd etched many of his landscapes on a tour of the British Isles in the 1960s and 70s, yet they remain strikingly fresh and contemporary.

Words: **Abi Whyte**. *High Island, Connemara*, by Norman Ackroyd. See more at [normanackroyd.com](http://normanackroyd.com)

## LINGUISTICS WHISTLING LANGUAGES

There are around 70 whistled languages worldwide, all based on spoken tongues and created to communicate across remote terrain. Each one is formed through changes in pitch, either following a tonal structure (where whistles, or syllables, follow the melody of the parent language), or non-tonal (where whistles mimic changes in vowel resonance, while the jump and slide of notes indicate the consonants).

Words: **Matt Iredale**

### silbo gomero

the most whistled language in the world

The shrill whistles of the Silbadors echo among the steep volcanic peaks of La Gomera, second smallest of the Canary Islands. The 4,000-word language of Silbo Gomero replaces the principal phonetics of Castilian Spanish with two distinct sounds for the five vowels and four for the consonants. It's understood by over 20,000 people and can be heard up to two miles away – substantially further than a ruddy good yell. As a wise Silbador once said, "whistling is always easier than walking".

### kuş dili

the 'bird language'

In an isolated valley on northern Turkey's mountainous Black Sea coast, locals shoot the breeze with the chirruping sounds of Kuş dili. Used by around 10,000 people in Kuşköy ('the village of birds'), this centuries-old language takes standard Turkish syllables and transforms them into piercing whistles that you can hear from over half a mile away.

It's in decline, but since 2014 local authorities have been trying to reverse this by teaching it at primary school level.

### the h'mong

whistle of courtship

Deep in the Himalayas exists a whistling language with a twist. Used by the H'mong people to penetrate dense forests, their whistles also feature in the delicate act of courtship.

Historically, young boys would saunter through the moonlit streets of neighbouring villages, whistling poems to catch the ears of young girls. Although rare today, this ancient language permits a complex and private code of love that's far more chivalrous than the unwelcome 'wit-woo' of a wolf whistle.



## WORKMANSHIP UNDER THE MOUNTAIN

Woodworker David White carves spoons, jugs and other objects out of oak that he's salvaged from abandoned Welsh slate mines – which has to be one of the most *Ernest* projects we've ever encountered.

"It was going underground on a tour of the slate caverns that opened my eyes to how much wood is still down there," says David. When he whittled a sample into some cups, he was delighted by the unique colours running through the wood – partly the product of all the rusty metal that's down there. "It's made an iron-rich water in the mines, which reacts with the tannins in the oak, leaving areas of black flowing through the grain like dark clouds in the wood."

Dragging 30-kilo chunks of sodden oak out through hobbit-

sized tunnels is hard enough for a six-foot man, but back in his workshop, David faces another challenge.

"However carefully I dry the wood, it often splits," he says. Working with axes and carving knives, he uses green woodworking techniques to minimise and anticipate splits, sometimes filling the cracks with contrasting metals.

The history of David's reclaimed oak influences the form of his designs, too. "The rugged, industrial-looking jugs are a reaction to the rough wood, the massive landscapes and the industry of the mines," he says.

He has plans to develop his work with mine oak, and to venture further afield in his search for connection with the Welsh landscape. "I also want to look to the coast – perhaps shipwreck oak?"

Words: **Joly Braine**. Read a full interview with David at [ernestjournal.co.uk](http://ernestjournal.co.uk) and explore his work at [thewhitlings.co.uk](http://thewhitlings.co.uk)



## MIRAGES THE WATERLESS SEA

Mirages are “real, but not true”, according to Christopher Pinney in his book, *The Waterless Sea*. Real in that they are genuine optical phenomena (and can even be photographed); but not true in that “the exact nature of what beholders believe they can see reflects, in part, the concerns and anxieties of their times”. Pinney’s book describes some famous examples. Words: **Joly Braime**. Illustrations: **Joe Latham**. Taken from *The Waterless Sea*, by Christopher Pinney (Reaktion Books, 2018), £18.



### The thirst of the gazelles

Mirages occur when light is refracted by hot or cold air, making things appear in the wrong place. They can be ‘superior’ or ‘inferior’, depending on whether the apparition is above or below the real object. A typical ‘inferior’ mirage is the desert oasis – actually a refraction of the blue sky above. Known in Sanskrit as *mrigtrishna* – ‘the thirst of the gazelles’ – Lawrence of Arabia regarded these frustrating visions as “an ever-present feature of the desert”.



### The elusive island of St Brandan

A superior mirage frequently takes the awe-inspiring form of a ‘city in the sky’ – also called a *Fata Morgana* after the tricky Arthurian sorceress, Morgan le Fay. The most enduring of these was the phantom isle of St Brandan in the Canary Islands. Seen many times over hundreds of years, this mysterious landmass prompted four abortive expeditions and appeared on maps from the 1400s right up to the 1750s.



### The breath of the clam-monsters

In Japan, *shinkiro* (mirage) was attributed to the breath of giant sea molluscs. When this purple mist bubbled up from the deep, it hung above the water in the form of a spectral island called Horai, complete with palaces and temples. In China, the island was known as Penglai, and 8th-century poet Ch’ien Ch’i declared that any dignitary making the crossing to Japan would spot “the high houses of the clam-monsters bannered with rainbows”.

## MICROBIOLOGY HUMAN MICROBIOME AS CORAL REEF ▶

In his *Magic Circle Variations* series of cut paper sculptures, artist Rogan Brown depicts the microscopic structures and bacteria present in the human body, imagined as a coral reef.

### How do you create these insanely intricate sculptures?

Some pieces are entirely hand-cut whereas others are laser-cut and then hand-mounted. They grow slowly and organically, starting as drawings, then single-layer cuts and finally 3D sculptural motifs made up of many layers.

### What fascinates you about the ‘micro world’?

I think we all have a memory from the biology lab at school when we looked through a microscope and were blown away by the amazing detail and intricacy of a fly’s wing or a fragment of leaf. I suppose that sense of awe at the sheer scale of the natural world has never left me, and it’s that moment of amazement I try to recreate.

### What inspires you?

Art and science and the relationship between the two. I spend a great deal of time looking at a wide variety of images from different sources: electron micrographs of microbes and cell structures, satellite images of the surface of the earth, anatomical drawings, telescope images of the heavens.

### What would you create if money and materials were no object?

I’d love to scale up the sculptural elements from *Magic Circle*, cut them from sheets of metal instead of paper and then mount them on the exterior of buildings to make them look as though they’re growing and alive.

Interview: **Abi Whyte**. See Rogan’s work at [roganbrown.com](http://roganbrown.com)

