

The Wardian

Confiscated Dendrobiums and Displaced Identities

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From China

Currently in Boston

Fun Fact!

ADPD is also recognized as ADPG and APMG by certain group of individuals.

Project Description

The Wardian: Confiscated Dendrobiums and Displaced Identities addresses issues around displacement and migration.

By retracing the personal journey of this illegally traded, ecologically endangered, confiscated - then rescued - Dendrobium orchid, currently held in quarantine at the Botanic Garden of Smith College, this project investigates the mechanisms by which institutions and legal systems transfer and detain plants.

The installation consists of five hand-welded metal structures, the primary artifacts for the research. Each structure stands as an individual signifier of the legislative, the socio-political, the biotic, and the ethnomedicinal knowledge systems. Together, the artifacts enter in a dialogue which invites the viewer to question, beyond the journey of the Dendrobium orchid, our relationship with one another as living beings.

Inside one of the structures, a video performance of a speaking dendrobium loops: morphing Dendrobium species are generated by a machine learning algorithm. One thousand photos of Dendrobium orchids are transformed through the machine's rules of re-creating, re-presenting and deconstructing the taxonomy of the plants. The video voice over intertwines excerpts from interviews with eight international students, workers, and refugees who anonymously talked about their experience of being 'temporarily confiscated,' or being settled at 'in-between' space on the border.

