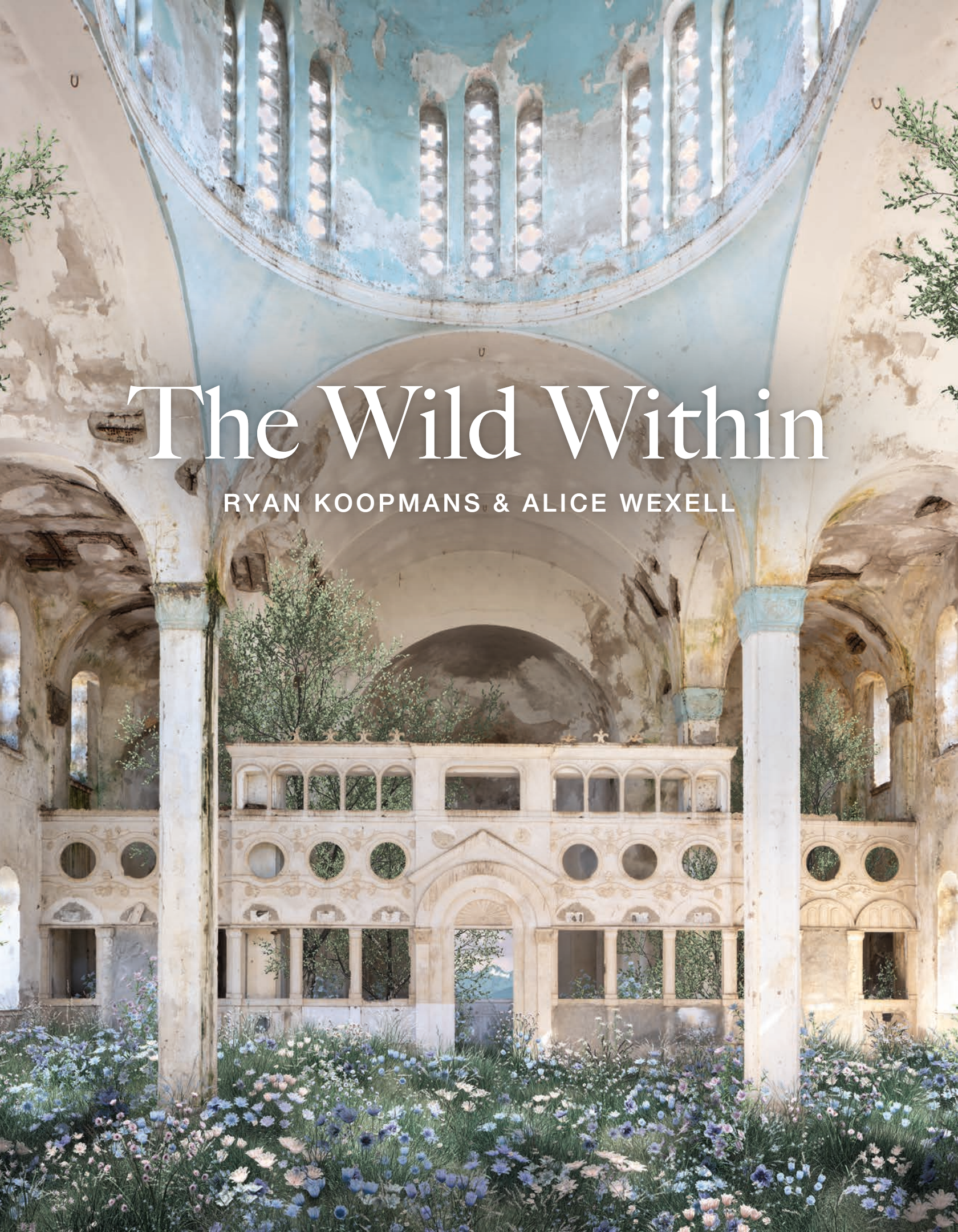


A surreal illustration of a large, domed building, possibly a mosque or church, in a state of ruin. The interior is overgrown with nature. In the foreground, a dense field of small blue and pink flowers grows. In the middle ground, a multi-story structure with arched windows and circular openings stands amidst the ruins. The background shows a large dome with a blue and white patterned interior. The overall scene is a blend of architecture and nature.

The Wild Within

RYAN KOOPMANS & ALICE WEXELL

The Wild Within

RYAN KOOPMANS & ALICE WEXELL

The Wild Within

An Exhibition by Ryan Koopmans & Alice Wexell

The Wild Within is a series of lens-based artworks by Dutch-Canadian artist Ryan Koopmans and Swedish artist Alice Wexell that explores the evolving relationship between nature and architecture.

The body of work reimagines historic, unique, and often abandoned spaces through themes of rebirth transformation, and renewal.

Blending photography with three-dimensional digital sculpting, the artists breathe new life into architectural sites, envisioning them as places where nature gently reclaims the built environment.

Overgrown vegetation winds through ornate halls, light drifts across aging surfaces, and each scene becomes a meditation on the passage of time. The work creates a suspension of disbelief, drawing viewers into a world that feels both tangible and imagined.

Each artwork takes the artists many months to create, shaped by meticulous attention to detail and a deep fascination with geometry, symmetry, and the intricate patterns found in both nature and architectural design. These pieces demand substantial resources and technical precision, resulting in artworks that are highly sought after by collectors and institutions worldwide.

A recurring motif is the flower, a symbol of life's fleeting cycle from seed to bloom to decay. In the physical world, flowers embody impermanence; in these artworks, they are preserved, their transience prolonged to infinity.

The artwork is informed by the artists' global travels and by their process of creating virtual foliage in their Swedish studio, shaped by seasonal extremes. Long, dark winters contrast with luminous summers culminating in midsummer rituals of flowers, greenery, and light that inspire the project's meditation on cycles of life and renewal.

When stepping into the spaces they photograph, from the cracked walls of a forgotten sanatorium to the intricate carvings of a grand palace, a sense of curiosity arises about the lives once contained within. Who conceived these structures? Who lived here? What conversations filled these rooms, and what memories linger in their walls? These same questions guide the artists' creative process, transforming each work into a site of reflection, history, and memory.

Spanning Azerbaijani spas, Italian palaces, Mexican estates, Lebanese villas, and Soviet-era sanatoria, Koopmans and Wexell capture culturally significant sites suspended between history and transformation. On location, they photograph and scan interiors; in the studio, they digitally sculpt foliage, adjust lighting, and add subtle motion, reviving stillness with imagined growth and vitality.

Conceptually, the project draws from the 17th and 18th century Capriccio tradition, when artists painted architecture overgrown with nature, merging archaeology and imagination. Koopmans and Wexell adopt a similar approach, blending documentary precision with invention to explore the tension between structure and wilderness, permanence and impermanence.

In *The Wild Within*, nature and architecture coexist in fragile balance. The overgrowth is shown at a moment when both can equally shine, embodying nature's quiet presence, softening, reviving, and ultimately reclaiming. In most cases, the buildings depicted have since deteriorated or been demolished, making the artworks a preservation of memory as well as an imaginative reconstruction.

The Wild Within exists as both still images and seamlessly looping videos, offering immersive experiences where time feels suspended.

Works by Koopmans and Wexell are held in some of the most significant private and institutional art collections worldwide. They form part of the permanent collection of the Francisco Carolinum Museum in Linz, Austria, and the Swedish Ministry of Culture Permanent Collection, and have been exhibited at leading cultural institutions and events including Fabbbrica del Vapore in Milan, the 2022 Venice Art Biennale, Milan Design Weeks, Global Art Fairs, Museum of the Future, and Prague Castle in the Czech Republic. Additional partnerships have taken place at Le Bristol Paris, the Jane Goodall Institute at the Cannes Film Festival, UNICEF art galas, and through the world's foremost auction houses Christie's and Sotheby's.

Available Formats

With the exception of the mosaics, all artworks are available in two formats:

- Motion video, unrestricted in size
- Archival pigment print, mounted on Dibond and framed in wood

Prints are offered in three standard sizes, with bespoke dimensions accommodated within the fixed edition.



[Previous page](#)

A New Era

Sharjah, UAE, 2025 / printed 2026

Formats: Motion video · Archival pigment print

Set within the shifting sands of Sharjah's desert, *A New Era* reimagines a once-inhabited Bedouin settlement where traditional Emirati architecture meets the quiet vastness of the dunes.

Koopmans and Wexell were drawn to the site by its serene atmosphere, the minimalist geometry of its structure, and the striking palette: soft blue eroded interior hues contrasted by the golden light of the surrounding landscape.

[Opposite page](#)

At Last

Novi Ligure, Italy, 2026

Formats: Motion video · Archival pigment print

Rising from the hills above Novi Ligure, *At Last* reflects the fading grandeur of a historic residence shaped by wealth, ambition, and abandonment. Once connected to Count Edilio Raggio, a powerful industrialist, shipowner, and long-serving parliamentarian, the building still carries traces of its former status within its weathered rooms. Its frescoed ceilings and ornamented interiors remain among the most evocative remnants of the site, where grandeur, memory, and decay quietly converge.

[Next page](#)

Tides of Time

Mumbai, India, 2025 / printed 2026

Formats: Motion video · Archival pigment print

Along the rocky shore of Worli in Mumbai, a pale blue shrine rises at the edge of the Arabian Sea. Built in 1908 by a mariner shaped by those same waters, it stands where the land yields to the tide, its dome and arches breathing with the sea's slow rhythm.

Within it, soft blue flowers unfold like echoes of the ocean, symbols of maternal grace and quiet renewal, their forms drifting between solidity and surrender.

Framed by the shifting skyline of Mumbai, the room becomes a threshold between nature and architecture, the real and the imagined, a moment of stillness held within an ever-changing city.







[Previous page](#)

Ignite

Genoa, Italy, 2024 / printed 2026

Formats: Motion video · Archival pigment print

Set within Genoa’s historic coastal district of Albaro, *Ignite* traces the metamorphosis of a structure shaped by devotion, refinement, war, and resilience. Once a medieval place of worship, later transformed into a neoclassical villa and eventually repurposed as a healthcare facility, the building carries layered histories within its weathered surfaces, where traces of faith, elegance, and endurance quietly coexist.

[Opposite page](#)

Heights

Beirut, Lebanon, 2022

Formats: Motion video · Archival pigment print

Within a crumbling villa in Beirut’s Zuqaq Al Blat neighbourhood, built between 1890 and 1920, the artwork reimagines its faded grandeur as a flourishing garden.

Sunlight streams through the partially collapsed roof illuminating a hybrid of Parisian influences and Baghdadi painted ceilings, alongside intricate mouldings, arched columns, and timeworn walls.

Wild blooms and ferns reclaim the space, merging Lebanon’s architectural heritage with the quiet resilience of nature.

[Next page](#)

Into the Light

Güllübahçe, Turkey, 2025 / printed 2026

Formats: Motion video · Archival pigment print

Set within the abandoned Church of St. Nicholas (Aziz Nikolaos Kilisesi) in Güllübahçe, Turkey, this work reimagines the 1821 structure, built atop the remains of an earlier church and later converted into a mosque. Digitally sculpted flora and a central tree fill the crumbling nave weaving nature into the building’s layered history of cultural and religious transformation.







[Previous page](#)

Memories of the Future

Baku, Azerbaijan, 2025

Formats: Motion video · Archival pigment print

Reimagining the abandoned “Fantasy Hamam,” a lavish bathhouse once adorned with painted ceilings, Romanesque columns, and ornate detailing, as a surreal sanctuary.

With sections of its ceiling now collapsed, the building is rapidly deteriorating and may soon disappear entirely.

[Opposite page](#)

Held in Light

Alaniçi (Pigi-Peristerona), Cyprus, 2026

Formats: Motion video · Archival pigment print

Within the village of Alaniçi, historically known as Pigi–Peristerona, *Held in Light* reimagines the blue interior of an abandoned Greek Orthodox church in Cyprus, a fragile marker of the island’s layered past.

Shaped by histories of faith, displacement, and the geopolitical tensions between Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, the building now stands under threat, its presence slowly fading within a divided landscape.

Bathed in luminous blue, the space becomes a vessel of memory and continuity, where light gathers across surfaces touched by history, absence, and time.

[Next page](#)

Resilience

Aley, Lebanon, 2025 / printed 2026

Formats: Motion video · Archival pigment print

Built in 1926 in the mountain town of Aley, outside Beirut, the Grand Aley Hotel witnessed decades of change, from glamorous summers to wartime service, before falling silent during the Lebanese Civil War. Its walls, now layered with flaking and peeling paint, bear the marks of time.

Embracing the building’s monochromatic green palette, the work reflects Lebanon’s enduring spirit.







[Previous page](#)

Constellations
Istanbul, Turkey, 2025
Formats: Motion video · Archival pigment print

Set within the abandoned 19th-century Yusuf İzzettin Efendi Mansion in Istanbul, this work reimagines the Ottoman heir’s former residence as a blooming, dreamlike interior. Once celebrated for its blue ornamentation, intricate woodwork, and sweeping gardens, the mansion’s imported Romanian timber now frames a vision where history and nature intertwine.

[Opposite page](#)

Spring Sonata
Pontremoli, Italy, 2024
Format: Archival pigment print

Within a historic palazzo in Pontremoli *Spring Sonata* reflects the fragile grandeur of an eighteenth-century residence shaped by myth, ornament, and decline. Its crumbling rooms are marked by frescoes painted by Nicolò Contestabili in 1795, including the Sala della Niobe, where scenes from the myth of Niobe unfold across the damaged surfaces. Through this layered setting, the artwork evokes a suspended dialogue between classical tragedy, architectural memory, and nature’s quiet return.





This page

Horizon

Yucatan, Mexico, 2026

Formats: Motion video · Archival pigment print

At an abandoned crumbling Hacienda, *Horizon* reimagines the remains of a once-powerful henequen estate, part of a regional history shaped by agriculture, industry, colonial wealth, and complex systems of labour.

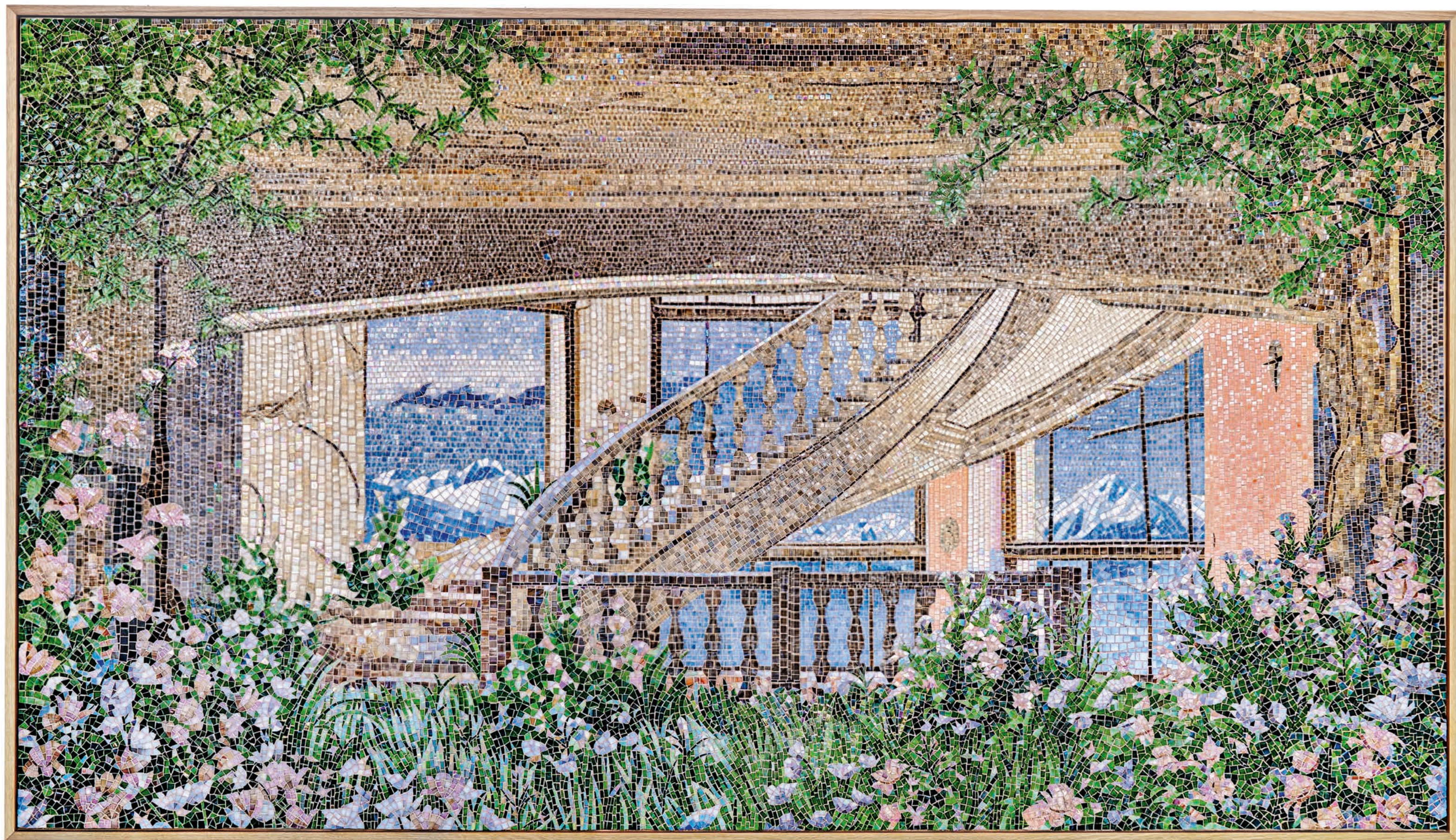
During Yucatán's henequen boom, estates like this helped produce the fibre known as "green gold," generating immense prosperity while also carrying the social tensions and inequalities of the era.

Now weathered by time, its arches, chapel, machine house, and crumbling rooms stand as traces of a vanished economic order.

Within this setting, the artwork reflects on the fragile endurance of architecture after power has receded, allowing nature, memory, and light to move through the remains of a place shaped by ambition, labour, and decline.

Wall Sculptures

HAND-CUT GLASS TESSERAE



[Previous page](#)

Walk With Me
Hand-Cut Glass Mosaic Wall Sculpture
2026
Hand-cut glass tesserae, grout, mounted on Dibond, framed in oak
Unique work
270 × 152 cm

Inside an abandoned sanatorium in Tskaltubo, Georgia, *Walk With Me* unfolds within a stairwell that once belonged to one of the Soviet Union’s most celebrated spa destinations. From the 1940s through the 1990s, Tskaltubo drew thousands of visitors seeking rest, treatment, and the restorative qualities of its mineral waters, before the collapse of the USSR left its grand sanatoriums in decline.

Designed in a Classical style, the building’s stripped corridors and fractured architectural details now reveal the bare structure of a former era.

[Opposite page](#)

Walk With Me (detail)



Fragments from The Wild Within
Hand-Cut Glass Mosaic Wall Sculpture

The mosaics mark a new evolution of *The Wild Within*, extending the project through glass, tile, and architectural materials.

Their visual language originates in one of the earliest discoveries behind the series: Soviet-era flower postcards found scattered across the floor of an abandoned post office in Georgia.

Their vivid colours felt strangely alive within the ruined architecture, small remnants of another time already being reclaimed by silence, memory, and decay.

These fragments became a spark for the project's practice of rewilding: the idea that colour, growth, and imagination might return to spaces marked by abandonment.

Across the series, some mosaics translate the found flower postcards directly into hand-cut glass, while others reinterpret new works from *The Wild Within*, depicting architectural spaces transformed by imagined growth. Together, they complete a full circle: from physical architecture, into the digital realm through photography and 3D reconstruction, and back into material form through glass, tile, and architectural surface.

The choice of glass and architectural materials connects the works to the built environments from which they emerged, while each square tessera also echoes the digital pixel, linking the ancient material language of mosaic to the digitally native origins of the artworks.

Each fragment becomes part of a larger whole, suspended between ruin and renewal, past and future, the physical and the digital, the real and the imagined.





Flower postcards, found scattered across the floor of an abandoned site in Georgia, became an early point of origin for *The Wild Within*, inspiring the introduction of fantastical foliage into forgotten architectural spaces shaped by abandonment, memory, and nature's return.



The works draw on the history of Soviet-era mosaics, from decorative wall tiles to glass compositions found throughout many of the same buildings we explored.

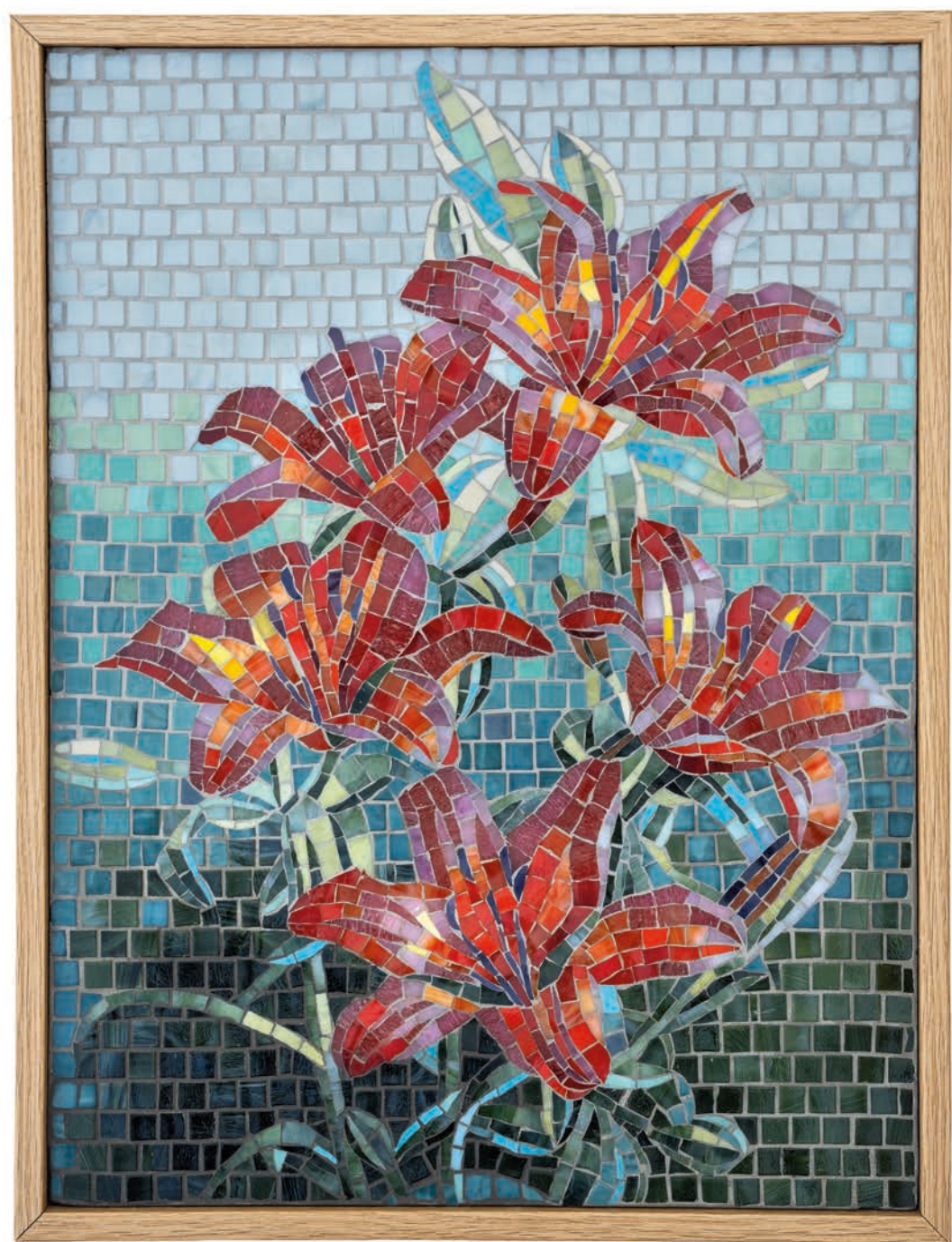




Fragment No. 1
 Hand-Cut Glass Mosaic Wall Sculpture
 2026
 Hand-cut glass tesserae, grout, mounted on Dibond, framed in pine
 Unique work
 30 × 40 cm



Fragment No. 2
 Hand-Cut Glass Mosaic Wall Sculpture
 2026
 Hand-cut glass tesserae, grout, mounted on Dibond, framed in pine
 Unique work
 30 × 40 cm



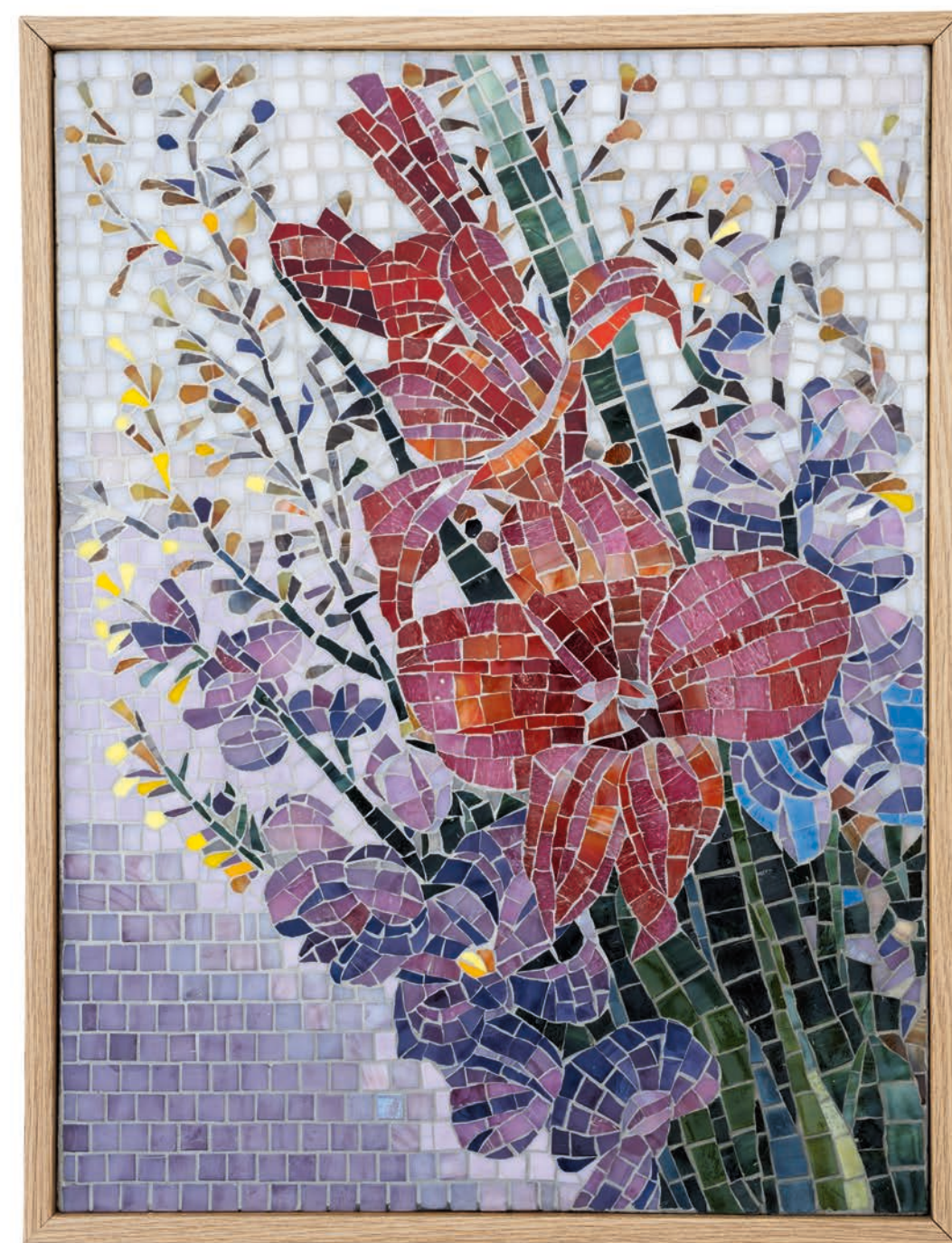
Fragment No. 3
 Hand-Cut Glass Mosaic Wall Sculpture
 2026
 Hand-cut glass tesserae, grout, mounted on Dibond, framed in pine
 Unique work
 30 × 40 cm



Fragment No. 4
 Hand-Cut Glass Mosaic Wall Sculpture
 2026
 Hand-cut glass tesserae, grout, mounted on Dibond, framed in pine
 Unique work
 30 × 40 cm



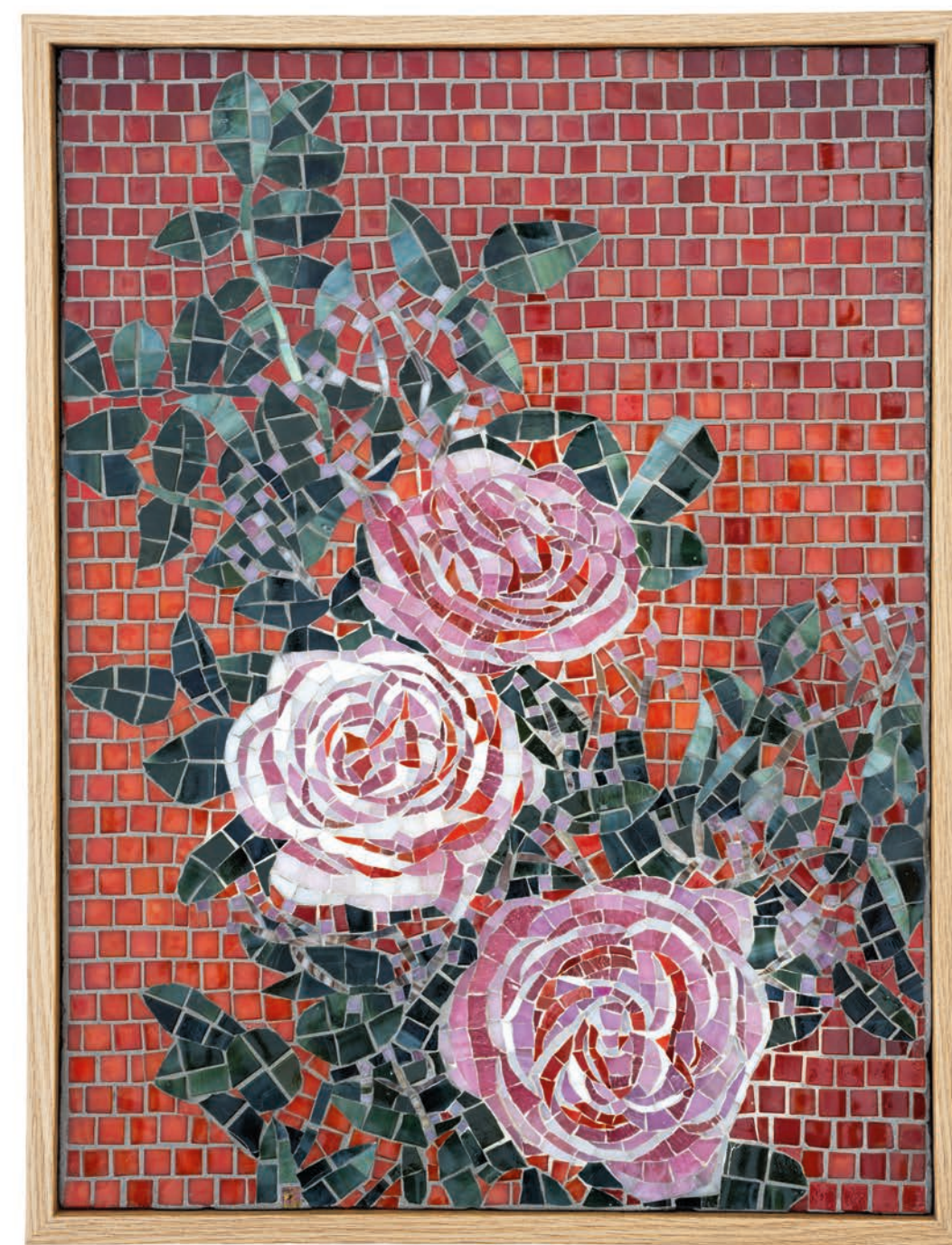
Fragment No. 5
Hand-Cut Glass Mosaic Wall Sculpture
2026
Hand-cut glass tesserae, grout, mounted on Dibond, framed in pine
Unique work
30 × 40 cm



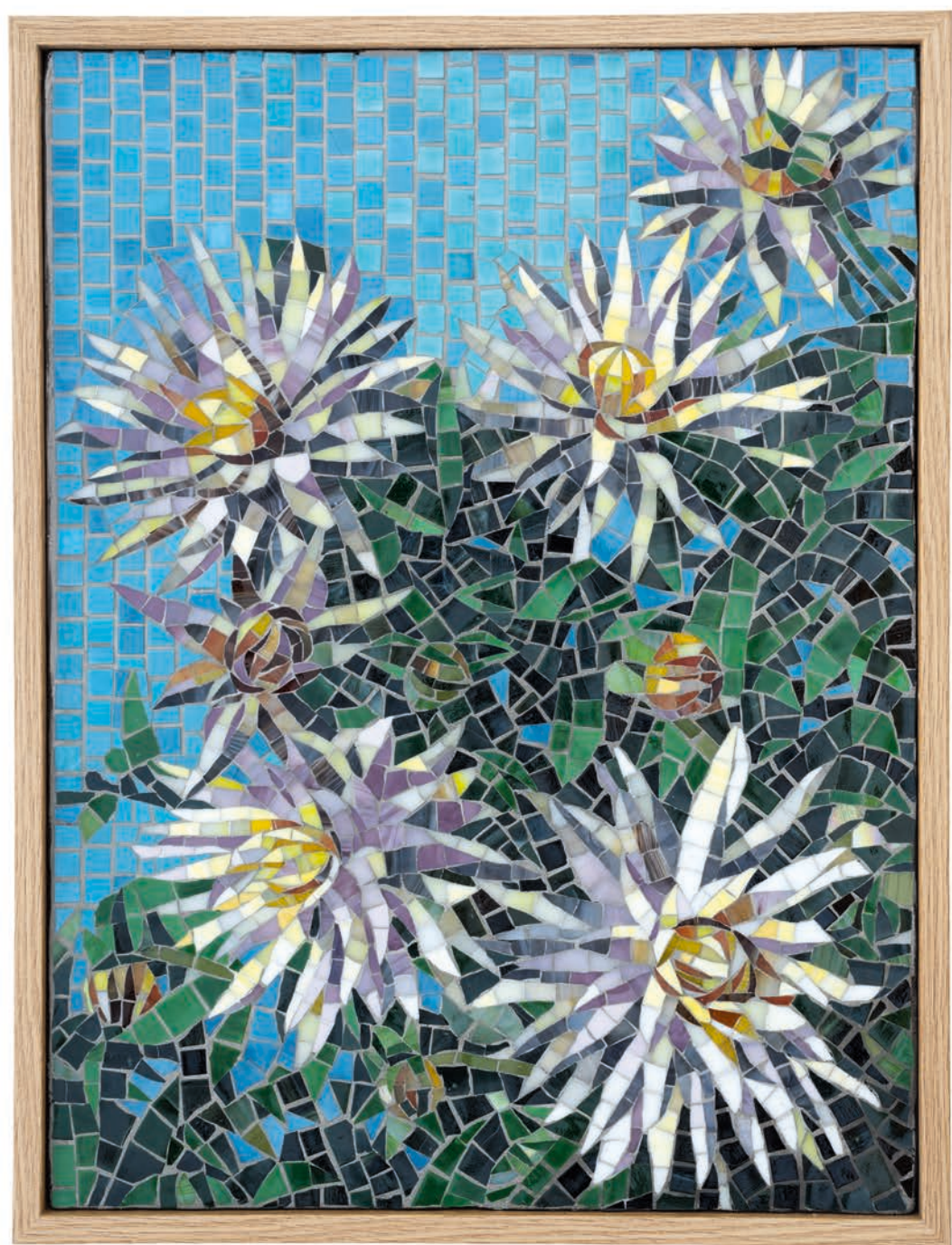
Fragment No. 6
Hand-Cut Glass Mosaic Wall Sculpture
2026
Hand-cut glass tesserae, grout, mounted on Dibond, framed in pine
Unique work
30 × 40 cm



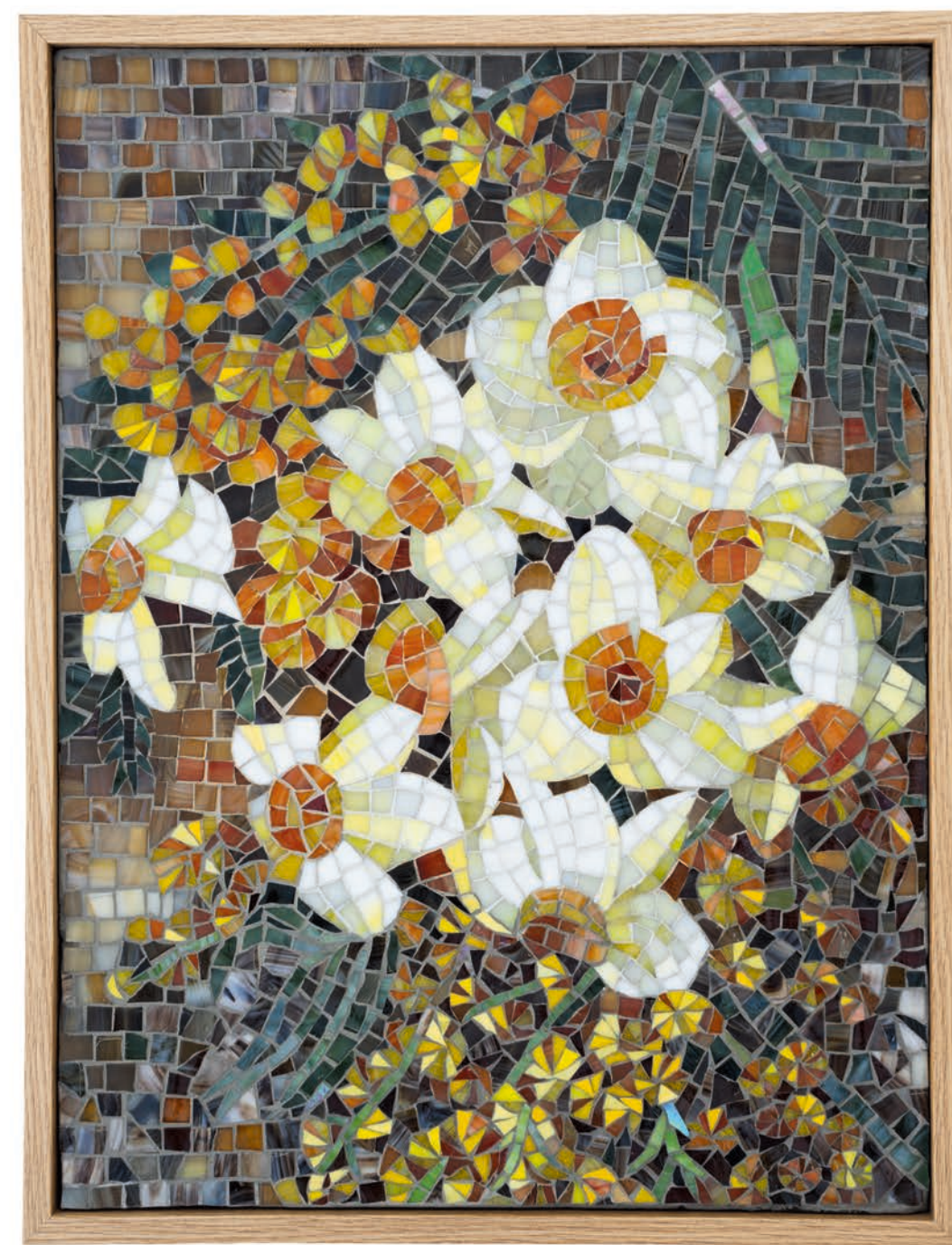
Fragment No. 7
 Hand-Cut Glass Mosaic Wall Sculpture
 2026
 Hand-cut glass tesserae, grout, mounted on Dibond, framed in pine
 Unique work
 30 × 40 cm



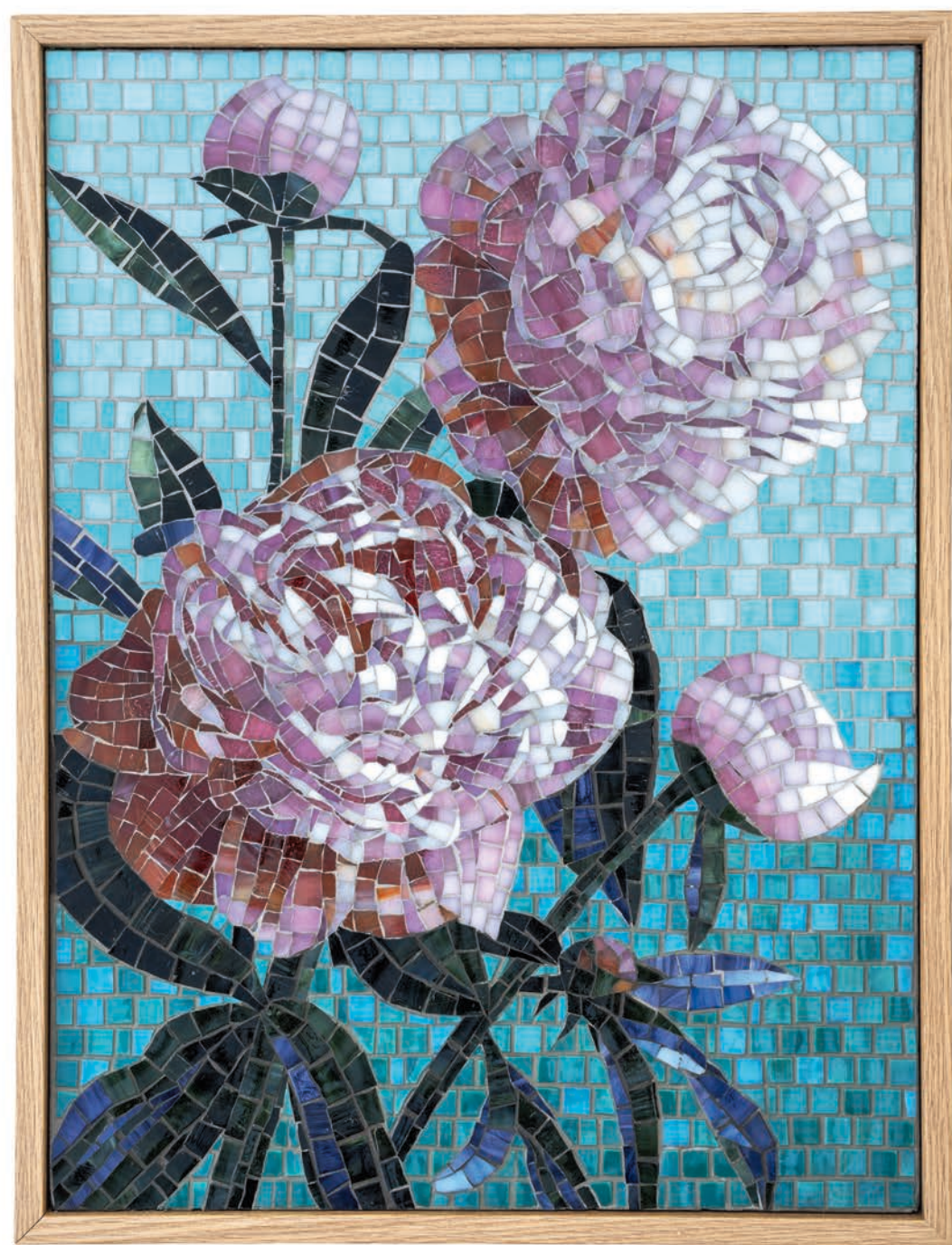
Fragment No. 8
 Hand-Cut Glass Mosaic Wall Sculpture
 2026
 Hand-cut glass tesserae, grout, mounted on Dibond, framed in pine
 Unique work
 30 × 40 cm



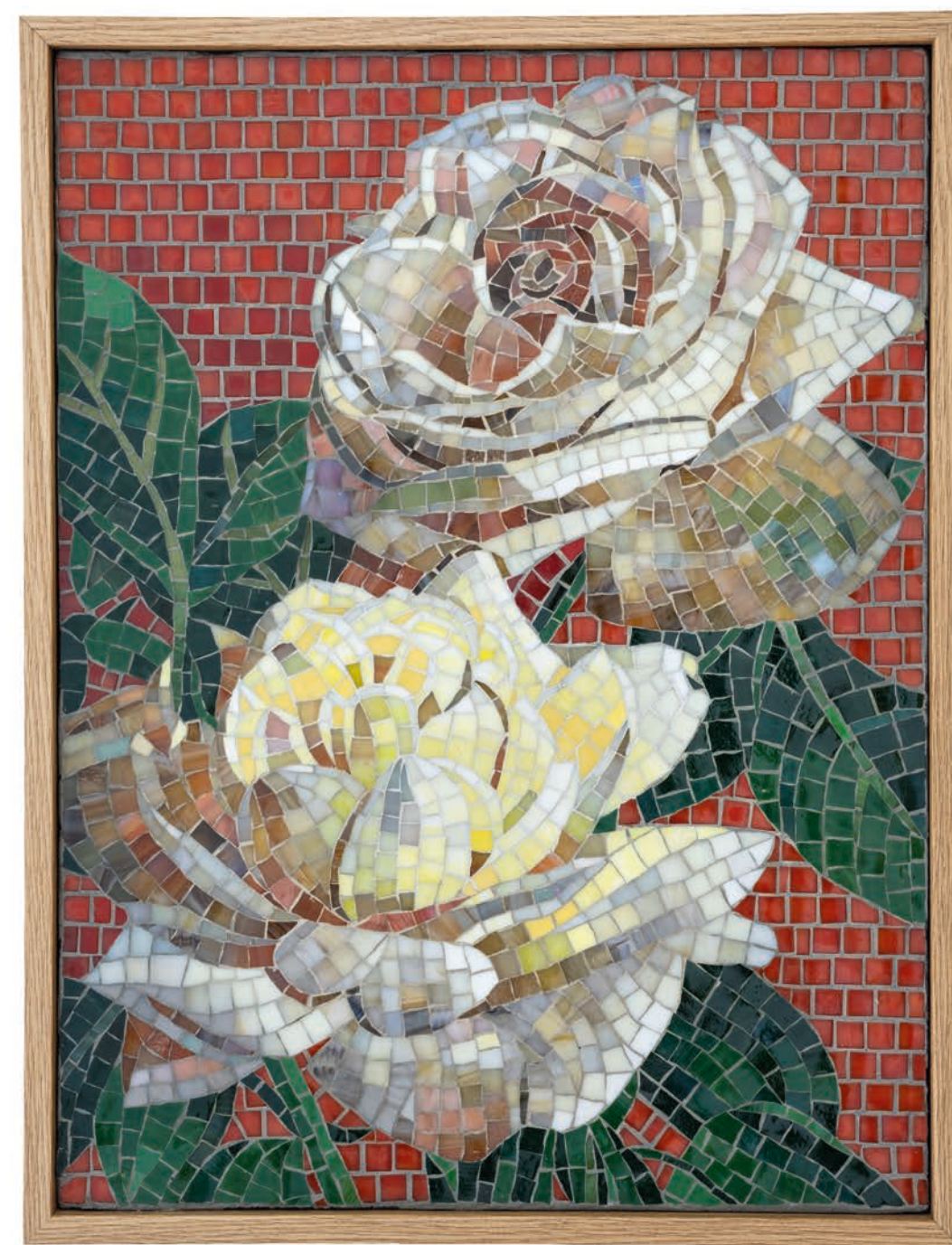
Fragment No. 9
 Hand-Cut Glass Mosaic Wall Sculpture
 2026
 Hand-cut glass tesserae, grout, mounted on Dibond, framed in pine
 Unique work
 30 × 40 cm



Fragment No. 10
 Hand-Cut Glass Mosaic Wall Sculpture
 2026
 Hand-cut glass tesserae, grout, mounted on Dibond, framed in pine
 Unique work
 30 × 40 cm



Fragment No. 11
 Hand-Cut Glass Mosaic Wall Sculpture
 2026
 Hand-cut glass tesserae, grout, mounted on Dibond, framed in pine
 Unique work
 30 × 40 cm



Fragment No. 12
 Hand-Cut Glass Mosaic Wall Sculpture
 2026
 Hand-cut glass tesserae, grout, mounted on Dibond, framed in pine
 Unique work
 30 × 40 cm

The Algorithmic Garden: Memory, Media, and Manufactured Decay

In *The Wild Within*, Ryan Koopmans and Alice Wexell have created something paradoxical: digital artworks that use cutting-edge technology to evoke pre-digital forms of contemplation. Their practice operates at the intersection of multiple art historical lineages, from the architectural fantasies of the *capriccio* tradition to modern notions of spectacle in the cybernetic age.

But this isn't nostalgic pastiche. Koopmans and Wexell have identified something crucial about how post-digital cultural processes factor into ecological anxiety. Their digitally animated, historic architectural subjects do not simply document decay, they propose alternative narratives of transformation that feel both impossible and necessary.

The lush vegetation that emerges through Lebanese villas and Emirati palaces do not grow according to botanical logic but according to aesthetic and emotional logic, creating spaces where beauty and melancholy coexist in high fidelity and resolution.

The technical sophistication required to create these images arises from their collaboration. Ryan Koopmans brings the documentary photographer's eye for architectural detail, ensuring that even the most fantastic digital interventions remain grounded in specific material histories. Alice Wexell's background in animation and digital environments enables the precise choreography of light, growth, and atmosphere that makes these spaces feel genuinely inhabitable rather than merely spectacular.

Together, their collaboration, between documentary precision and digital speculation, produces what might be called *speculative archaeology*: a practice that uses contemporary image-making technologies to reimagine the life of architecture across shifting cultural and historical contexts.

Their work examines how structures endure, transform, or disappear, through political forces, economic change, or natural evolution, and how digital reconstructions become alternate sites where these architectures resonate. Several of the buildings featured in *The Wild Within* have since been demolished, leaving the digital works as the only places where they continue to exist.

This idea also harkens to what some have called quantum archaeology, the theoretical possibility that soon through a process of retrodiction, the past can be rendered with greater precision than ever before.

If architecture could speak, what would these buildings say? In their series *The Wild Within*, the duo Koopmans and Wexell attempt to answer this question.

Using a blend of photographic tableaux, their works bear witness to the visual DNA and hallmarks of ultra-contemporary techniques and virtual processes. A first principle of art tied to the sublime power of nature, the melancholy of historical decay, the fantasy of peaceful reconciliation between culture and wilderness - becoming, in effect, forebearers of a new data-centric, speculative archaeology.

An arena of art in which dadaists become dataists, and the *capriccio* painting of Italian whimsy becomes a romantic way in which to recontextualize both architecture and decay.

— Dorian Batycka

Dorian Batycka is an art curator, critic, and journalist whose writing has appeared in Artnet, The Art Newspaper, and Artforum. He works internationally on exhibitions spanning contemporary art and media.

Ryan Koopmans (b. 1986) and Alice Wexell (b. 1992) are Stockholm-based artists whose collaborative practice explores the relationship between architecture, nature, and time.

For over a decade, they have worked together on art projects worldwide, often transforming real-world spaces into captivating digital environments that blur the boundaries between reality and imagination.

Koopmans, a Canadian-Dutch lens-based artist, holds a BA and MFA and has a long-standing interest in the built environment and its connection to society.

Since 2007, his work has been exhibited and collected internationally. In 2020, he published *Vantage*, a book featuring surreal architectural forms and urban landscapes.

Wexell, a Swedish artist, creates surreal digital environments using emerging technologies. With a background in animation and coding, she studied at Lund and Uppsala University before earning two degrees at Hyper Island.

Their global perspective has been shaped by residences in New York, London, and Amsterdam.

Together, they are best known for *The Wild Within*, an acclaimed series that reimagines architectural interiors through the introduction of flora and motion, symbolically exploring renewal and transformation.

Artworks from the body of work have been widely exhibited and acquired by leading collectors, institutions, and auction houses around the world.

Education

Ryan Koopmans

Master of Fine Arts (MFA)
Photography, Video & Related Media
The School of Visual Arts
New York City, USA
2009 - 2012

Bachelor of Arts (BA)
Psychology, Geography & Art History
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada
2004 - 2009

Traditional Technique in Drawing
Emily Carr University of Art & Design
Vancouver, Canada
2008

Alice Wexell

Motion Creative
Hyper Island - Stockholm, Sweden
2021 - 2022

3D-Modelling & Animation in an Open Source-Miljö
University of Gävle, Sweden
2020 - 2021

Digital Media Creative
Hyper Island - Stockholm, Sweden
2014 - 2016

Webbdesign w/ HTML & CSS
Uppsala University, Sweden
2015

Digital Culture and Strategic Communication
Lund University, Sweden
2012 - 2014

Notable Collections

Francisco Carolinum Museum Permanent Collection, Linz, Austria

Statens Konstråd - Swedish Ministry of Culture Permanent Collection

Royal Family of Dubai Collection: Her Highness Sheikha Latifa bint Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum

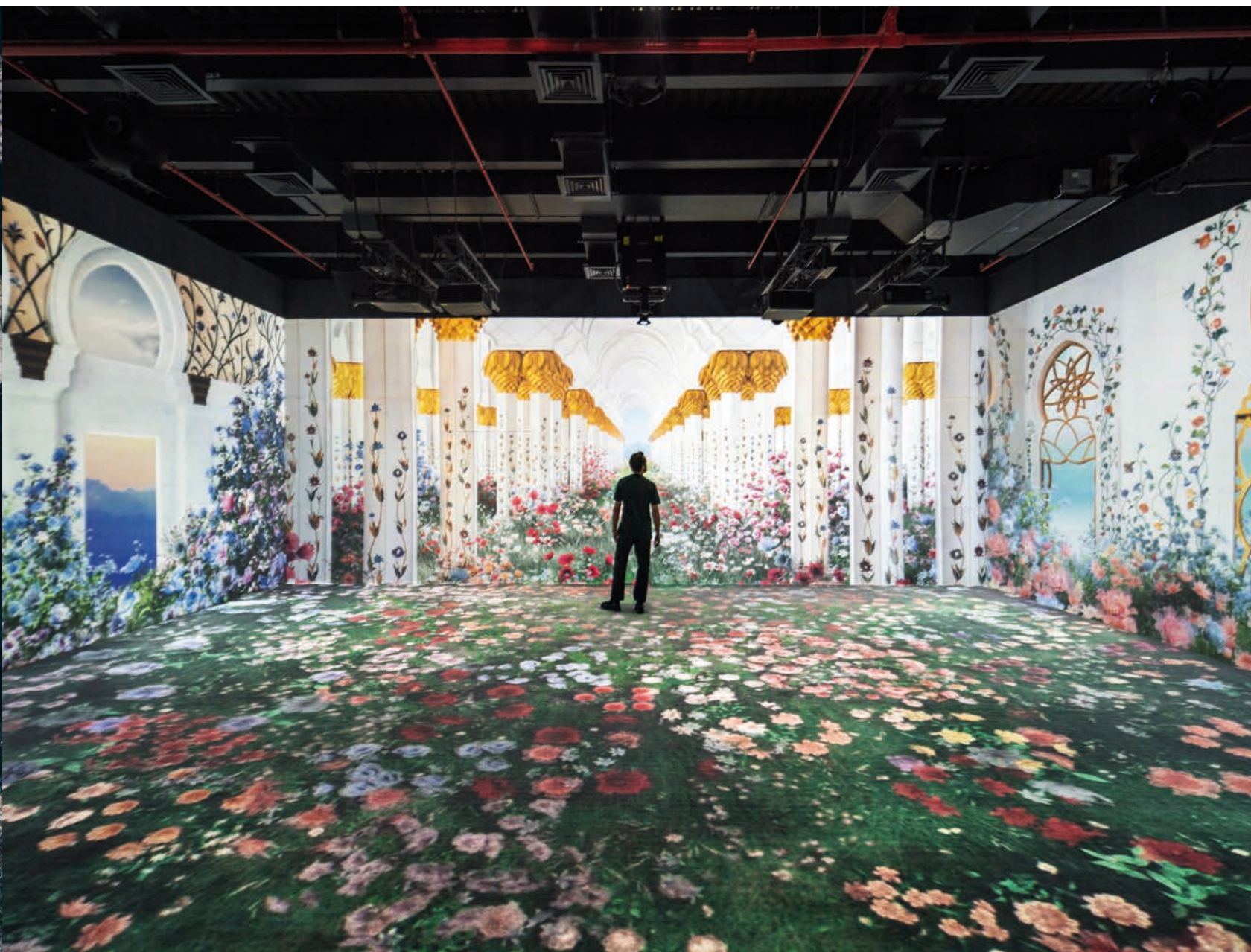
Durres International Biennale of Contemporary Art Permanent Collection

Art Collection of actor Jim Carrey, and other major private collections









Published on the occasion of the exhibition

The Wild Within

September 2026

Catalogue design by Ryan Koopmans & Alice Wexell

Front cover image:

Held in Light

Archival Pigment Print & Time-Based Media

Back cover image:

Ignite

Archival Pigment Print & Time-Based Media

LEILA HELLER GALLERY

22 E 80th St

New York City, NY

10075 United States of America

www.leilahellergallery.com

Publication © 2026 LEILA HELLER GALLERY, NYC



LEILA HELLER GALLERY.