

Since 2000, the Finnish artist Sanna Kannisto has spent several months of each year living alongside biologists in the rainforests of Brazil, French Guyana and Costa Rica, undertaking her own wide-ranging visual research project. Exploring and adopting the same scientific methods and concepts that the biologists use in their field units, she has developed her own form of research, which she calls *Private Collection*, showing the jungle, with its diversity of species, flora and fauna, in all its mystery and unspoilt beauty. As an artist, however, Sanna Kannisto pursues her research beyond the narrow confines of the natural sciences. She explores issues concerning the portrayal of nature and culture in artistic and scientific contexts—including forms of portrayal that were in use centuries before the invention of photography, such as the herbarium.

One important decision Kannisto made was to widen both her visual and intellectual viewpoints. The artist took a step back and, in doing so, gained more insight: instead of just showing animals and plants in isolation against a white background, she also addresses the act of staging and photographing the image. Her photographs, with their biologically correct titles, show not only the breathtaking beauty of nature, but also the velvety black drapes to the left and right of the picture, the difficult 'neutral' lighting and other technical aids used to achieve the setting in front of the camera. Signs of a scientifically standardised process, such as the use of graph paper and rulers or the marking of test fields, appear strangely out of place and almost absurdly surreal amid the lush green foliage of the rainforest. In this, Kannisto references scientific practices with a hint of irony, while at the same time adopting certain usable elements of these practices for her own compositions. The artist recognises the limits and constraints of both research and photography. But in both methods she finds a mutually supportive potential.

In works such as *Private Collection* (2003), *Observations I* (2003), *Bat Studies* (2001), and *Frog Studies* (2001/2003), the photographer herself can often be seen alongside the portrayal of the scientific-photographic setting. Like an ac-

trix in an imaginary shadow theatre, she gathers insects that have been lured into a nocturnal light trap, or appears as the astonished and fascinated observer of a huge toad. In other shots, her hand reaches into untamed nature, grasping, missing, stroking and touching. The visually diverse, genre-crossing approach in Kannisto's finely balanced photographs builds a bridge between logic and emotion, between rationality and intimacy, and opens up to the viewer unknown realms of imagery and thought.

SANNA KANNISTO, born in 1974 in Hämeenlinna, Finland, lives in Helsinki. Studied for a Master of Arts at the University for Art and Design, Helsinki, 1998–2002. Numerous travel scholarships and lengthy research visits to Costa Rica (2004) and Brazil (2005). Since 2002, solo and group exhibitions have included *The World of Objects*, Kunsthalle Helsinki (2004), *The Helsinki School—A New Approach*, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (2005), and *Selbstauslöser*, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel (2006). [www.sannakannisto.com](http://www.sannakannisto.com). Sanna Kannisto is represented by Galerie La Ferrière, Paris; Galerie Georg Kargl, Vienna, and Galerie Wilma Tolksdorf, Berlin/Frankfurt.