

THE CULTURE OF NATURE

# EARTHLINES

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New nonfiction, story, wild myth and ecopoetry  
Neil Ansell catches a glimpse, Sally Huband and a driftwood journey  
William Henry Searle stands to the storm, Mark Roper on the rocks

## FEATURED ARTIST

# MADELINE VON FOERSTER

**E**xecuted in the oil and egg tempera *mische* technique developed by the Flemish Masters, these paintings allude to Renaissance sources in both method and style. A strong influence from the School of Fontainebleau loans an aura of mystery and otherworldliness to the artworks. The paintings often resemble *Wunderkammern* – Enlightenment era ‘cabinets of curiosities’, where the wonders of nature were collected and displayed. Surrealistic elements also often occur, though in the service of meaning and metaphor, rather than for oddity’s sake.

Meaning and beauty are the twin impulses expressed in the work, with neither sacrificed to the other. Concepts are developed and drafted in detail, often involving weeks of research and drawing for a single painting. Flora and fauna, which appear in nearly every painting, are rendered with reverence and exactitude. Photographic references are always interpolated through the filter of the artistic process, being drawn via eye alone – never projected or traced – which adds to a visual impression of timelessness.

In subject matter, however, the work is staked firmly to the present day. Humanity’s relationship with nature provides an impassioned narrative, with such topics as deforestation and human-caused extinction sounding a recurring thematic knell. The ironic detachment of much contemporary art is challenged, in favor of intimacy, knowledge, and connection. The artworks could be described as ‘living’ still-lives, which intentionally use the motifs of that genre to explore our assumptions about ownership and objectification of nature. But on a deeper level, they are visual altars for our imperilled natural world.

### FRONT COVER

REDWOOD CABINET, 2008  
24 x 32.5 inch  
Oil and egg tempera on panel  
Private Collection

### BACK COVER

TREE RELIQUARY, 2010  
7.5 x 14 inch  
Oil and egg tempera on panel  
Private Collection



ORCHID CABINET, 2014  
 24 x 32 inch  
 Oil and egg tempera on panel  
 Private Collection

In 'Orchid Cabinet' I've painted eleven species in danger of being 'loved to death': beetles and orchids whose over-collection and poaching from the wild poses an existential threat. The airline label is meant as a reminder that, every single day, endangered plants and animals are being smuggled through the airports of the world.



WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING, 2011  
20 x 28 inch  
Oil and egg tempera on panel

*'While You Were Sleeping' is my musing on the silent, secretive nature of extinction. Other than when the last of a species dies in a zoo, there is no precise awareness of this world-changing event when it occurs. What if there were some kind of a signal, a bell or a flare, at this fateful moment?*



UNTITLED (PANGOLIN), 2012  
36 x 36 inch  
Oil and egg tempera on panel  
Private Collection



THE PROMISE II, 2012  
16 x 20 inch  
Oil and egg tempera on panel  
Private Collection

'Madeline von Foerster is a very gifted and highly original artist, who brings new imagery and a novel approach to conservation ... which we need.' Edward O. Wilson

To create her unusual paintings, Madeline von Foerster uses a five-century-old mixed technique of oil and egg tempera, developed by the Flemish Renaissance Masters. Although linked stylistically to the past, her paintings are passionately relevant to the present, as such timely themes as deforestation, endangered species, and war find expression in her work.

Von Foerster's artworks are in collections around the world and have been featured in numerous publications, including *100 Painters of Tomorrow* (Thames and Hudson, 2014). She was also the subject of a television portrait on ARTE's 'Metropolis', broadcast in Germany and France. Her upcoming solo exhibition, 'Uprooted', will be presented at the Academy Art Museum in Easton, Maryland, and the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno. Born in San Francisco, von Foerster studied art in California, Germany and Austria. After fifteen years in New York City, she now resides in Germany with her husband.

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