

Daniel Steegmann Mangrané *A Transparent Leaf Instead of the Mouth*

CCS Bard, Annandale-on-Hudson 23 June – 14 October

A wall caption tells us that the largescale glass vivarium (*A Transparent Leaf Instead of the Mouth*, 2017) at the metaphorical centre of Daniel Steegmann Mangrané's first institutional show in the US features local flora combined with foreign stick and leaf insects. The insects are so well camouflaged as to be hard to find (to the extent that the act of finding them can become something of a compulsive game: the vivarium was surrounded by children when I was there). So while we're told that the environment is, to some extent, freakish or impure, our eyes tell us that it is a seamless whole. (In the spirit of the times, and to distinguish it from anything actually Frankensteinian, the wall caption also includes a lengthy explanation of how the artist produced this unnatural slice of nature in consultation with professionals: Bard's horticultural staff; the artist had wanted to be a botanist at one point, but desires don't count.)

He goes on to further fuck about with our perception in *Spiral Forest* (2017), a 16mm film

shot using a custom-built camera-rig (titled *Spiral Forest Gimbal*, 2014–15, and also on display, like a discarded Sputnik or abandoned theodolite, as part of the installation) that careens around a 360-degree axis according to a score devised by the artist. Watch the film, however, and the results appear more random than choreographed, offering a dizzying vision (both onscreen and in your eyeballs) of the tropical habitat: almost as if you're experiencing multiple and simultaneous perspectives on the place. The effect is slightly psychotropic, and when it comes to divining a precise purpose behind Steegmann Mangrané's offerings, things become a little hazy as well. Certainly there's a commentary here on ideas connected with surveying, measuring and recording environments – a case of the Alexander von Humboldts, if you like – but there's a poetry in Steegmann Mangrané's work, in part produced by the shifts in scale and perspective, that balances any sense that this is simply about cod-science.

With *Elegancia y renuncia* (2011), we move from the forest to a single leaf. It's dried, flattened and held upright by an elegant metal stand as if it were some prize botanical specimen (it's from a rubber plant). On closer inspection it becomes clear that a pattern of circular bubbles has been cut into the leaf through which a projector, lined up opposite, beams light. There are holography plates (featuring hands, twigs, leaves and bugs), a wall drawing of a cellular structure (*Morfogenesis – cripis*, 2013) and, as you enter the main exhibition space, *Systemic Grid (Window) 17* (2015), a thick glass sheet (security and ornamental glass) inserted into a square concrete base. You're not quite sure whether to look at it (during the process of which the concrete support or display structure becomes the apparent subject of the work) or straight through it (it's transparent) and at all the distorted people and objects on the other side. Once again Mangrané's got you looking two ways at once. *Mark Rappolt*



Elegancia y renuncia, 2011, leaf, wireframe, video projector.
Courtesy the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, New York & Brussels