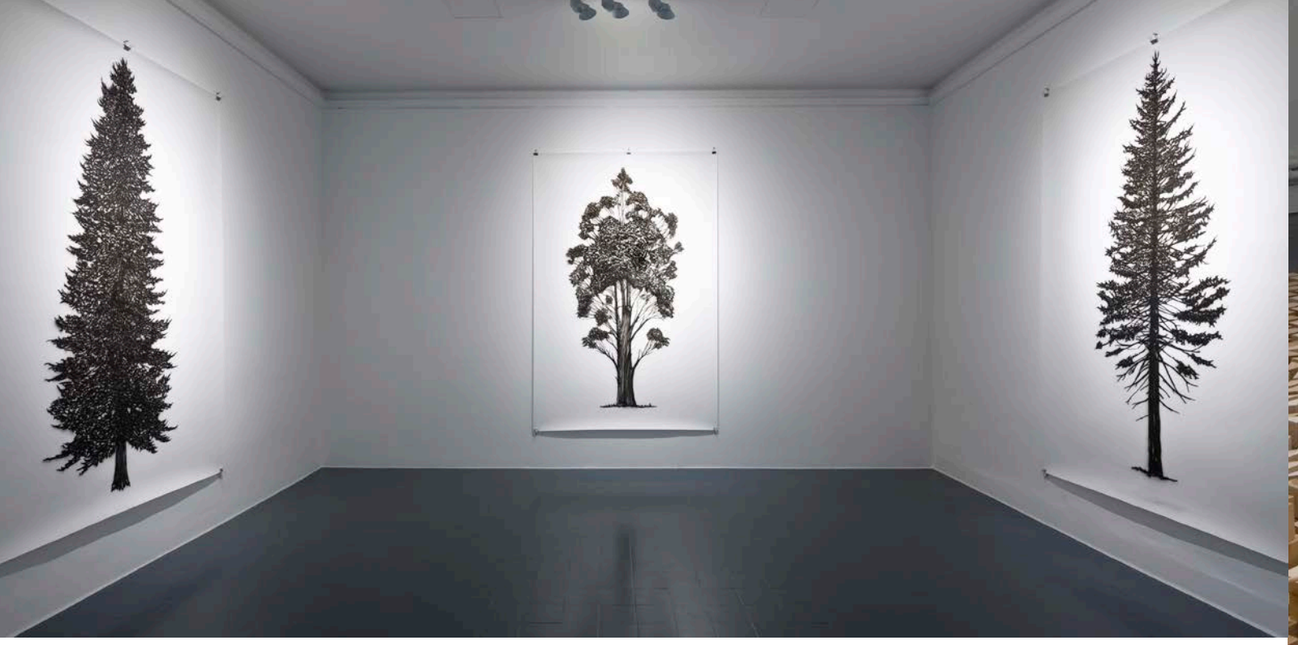
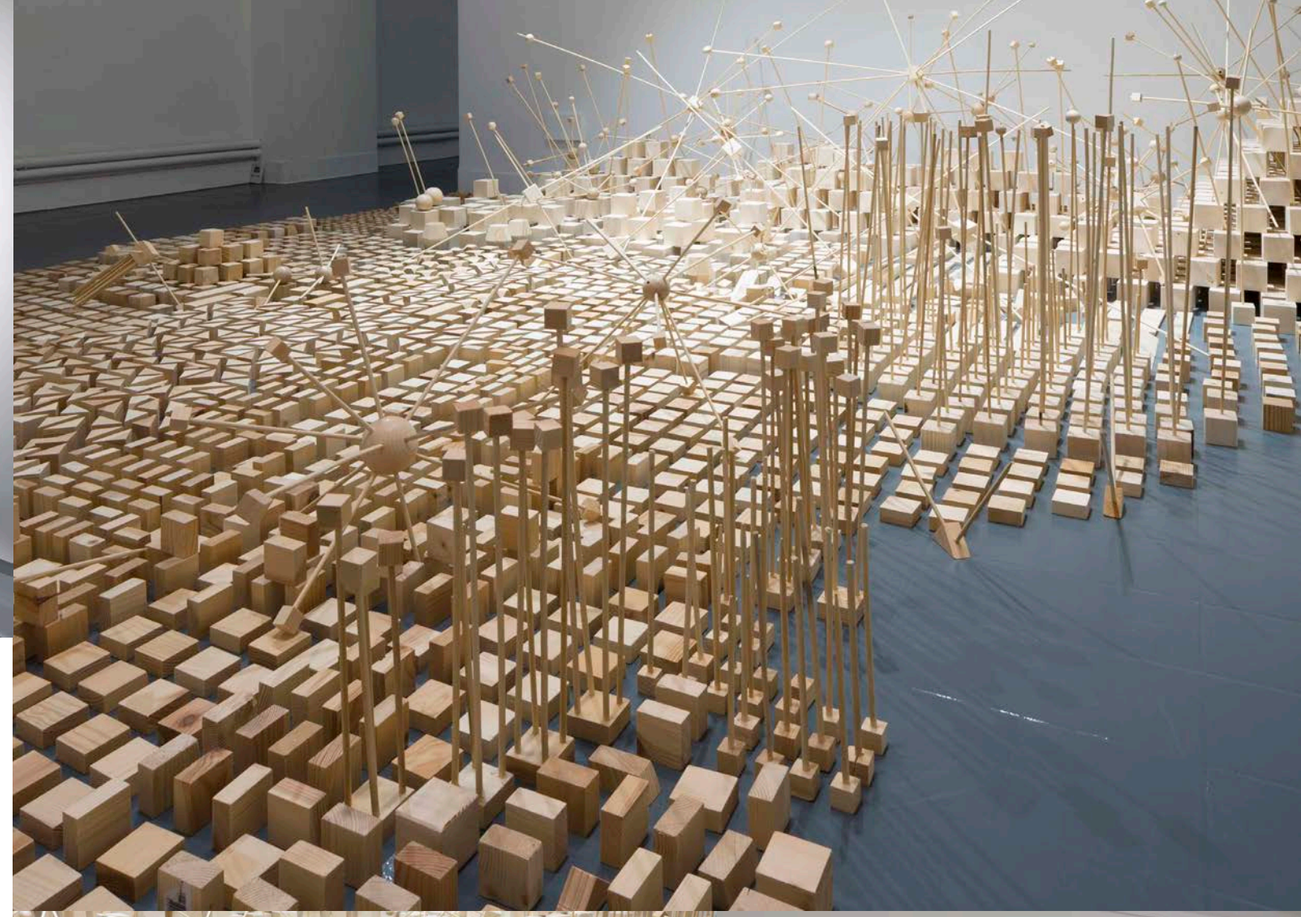
Does all the beauty of the world cease when you die?
EAMON O’KANE
BUTLER GALLERY, IRELAND 2017





‘Does all the beauty of the world cease when you die?’

The title of this exhibition, ‘Does all the beauty of the world cease when you die?’, is taken from The Last Dream of the Old Oak Tree by Hans Christian Andersen (1858). The show consisted of various artworks which together explore the history of, and human-kind’s relationship to, the natural world. O´Kane installed a new series of large scale works on paper inspired by the term ‘Baum Test’ or ‘Tree Test’, which is a psychological projective test developed by Swiss psychologist Charles Koch in 1952. Patients are asked to draw a broad-leaved tree on a standard 8.5” x 11” blank sheet of paper. A psychologist or a psychiatrist will then evaluate the different aspects of the tree drawing, as well as the individual’s behaviour and comments while completing the test. It is used extensively across the world as a method of analysing an individual’s personality and underlying emotional history. These drawings of trees are also mirrored which evokes an eerie element that references a more well-known psychoanalytic tool – the Rorschach or ink blot test.

Other works in the exhibition included a series of animations and videos relating to carbon. Carbon is the fifteenth most abundant element in the earth’s crust, and the fourth most abundant element in the universe (by mass) after hydrogen, helium, and oxygen. It is present in all known life forms, and in the human body, carbon is the second most abundant element (by mass: about 18.5%) after oxygen.

This abundance – together with the unique diversity of organic compounds and their unusual polymer-forming ability at the temperatures commonly encountered on earth – make this element the chemical basis of all known life. O´Kane installed a new installation of wooden objects, which could be seen as a study of entropy, where the material of wood represents a snapshot of carbon on its way towards decomposition.