

In Waiting

These works were commissioned through the Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust Connect 3Ts Hospital Redevelopment Public Art Programme, in partnership with Photoworks and Willis Newson. James Hyman presented the works in an online exhibition of the same name in 2020.

In 2017 Helen Sear was appointed Lead Photographer to make work for 8 of the 36 public waiting rooms in the new hospital. One of Helen's starting points was to look at the legacy of other artists with Sussex connections: Roland Penrose, Lee Miller, Eileen Agar, and Max Ernst. This led her to Edward James and West Dean Gardens, which inspired a surrealist approach, both in terms of the manipulation of images and a lightness of touch. Visiting inspirational locations - from Standen House and its arts and crafts legacy, to Iping Common, a magnificent example of endangered heathland habitat - Helen playfully manipulates and layers images to create beautifully patterned compositions that celebrate nature in all its forms.

Drawn to examine the contrast between places in which nature is left to its own devices, and places where plants and landscapes have been carefully cultivated and protected by human intervention, Sear spent two years exploring the gardens and landscapes of Sussex in the making of these works. As she has explained:

"I saw parallels between these sites and environments for wellbeing and worked to produce pictures that playfully explore colour and light through combining images in post-production. My central aim was to make pictures that stimulated and engaged hospital users at times of anxiety and in situations when waiting times are often unpredictable."

"The pictures I have constructed are as much about touch as vision, sometimes the "operations" performed on the surface of the image taking many days to complete, extending time through the act of drawing or the enhancement of colour to allow a journey both inside and outside the picture".