

## **Helen Sear: *Spirits of a Painted Forest***

The marks of the forester either hand painted or sprayed onto trees, manifest in high visibility colours and fluorescents, displaying an alphabet of signs, an orange slash for a cut, a blue triangle to protect, and numerous other individual signature tags that demarcate small parcels of forest.

Helen Sear has been photographing the marks painted by the foresters in the Fôret de Buan in Burgundy for over 7 years, continuing a long-term exploration of connections between photography, painting and pictorial space, focusing on our human relationships with natural environments and the re-presentation of the nature of experience.

In 2020 she started to adopt a more playful approach to the photographs she had been taking, excavating the painted marks within the image and through repetition, distortion and scale, allowing them to escape the fixed nature of their position on the trees, and trespass beyond their boundaries.

The work is finished with the application of physical paint, matched to the hues of the pigment print, in the form of a frame that is simultaneously a hand painted signature. This act of decoration is intended to both contain and extend of the potential of the picture: photographing paint and painting photographs.