CULTURAL
PROGRAMS OF
THE NATIONAL
ACADEMY OF
SCIENCES

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NAS Building, West Gallery
2101 Constitution Ave., N.W.

# Dornith Doherty
## Archiving Eden

# **Archiving Eden:** An Introduction

Over the last decade, Texas-based artist Dornith Doherty has traveled across five continents to document and poetically reflect on seed banking. This exhibition presents a sampling of that effort.

Doherty began this project after reading about the opening of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault set deep within an icy mountain near the North Pole. Long interested in issues of human activity on the land, she soon learned that Svalbard is one of more than 1,700 such seed research and storage facilities in diverse locations around the world.

The photographs in this exhibition mix straightforward depiction with X-ray images of seeds made by the artist in collaboration with seed-bank scientists. These varied works ask us to stop and think for a moment about the beauty, dynamism, and fragility of our botanical surroundings. They remind us of important ongoing efforts to preserve plant diversity, including our most basic foods, in the face of blight, global warming, loss of habitat, and unexpected change.

This exhibition originated at the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, and was curated by John Rohrbach. It is organized by Cultural Programs of the National Academy of Sciences

**#ArchivingEden** | **@CPNAS**

CULTURAL PROGRAMS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

# **Dornith Doherty:** Archiving Eden

In the summer after I finished second grade, my mother told my siblings and I that we each would be required to raise a vegetable of our choice in the family garden. It was her way of instilling in us her love of gardening, while also teaching us responsibility. I chose corn. We lived in Connecticut, so I didn't have to think much about watering. Just plant, weed once or twice, and pick. I quickly came to enjoy watching the stalks grow tall, and then harvesting and shucking the ears when the cooking water was about to boil.

Now, fifty years later, I spend much of my waking hours in an office. But still, each turn of the calendar year unleashes the urge to peruse seed catalogues in preparation for my own small backyard vegetable garden. I meditate on testing new varieties versus relying on what version I know will cope best against North Texas's prolonged summer heat and sudden deluges.

We have been hearing a lot about global warming these days—about how storms and droughts are getting more severe, how species are being lost at an alarming rate, and how some places with a modicum of water may well have substantively less in the future. If insects, blight, or unexpected flooding do in my green beans or tomatoes, I don't have to worry. I have a local farmer's market and multiple grocery stores to fall back on. The vegetables I get through these sources may not taste quite the same, but I don't have to worry about starving. Yet recently I came to recognize that even those food sources are not so secure.

In July 2017, I encountered a sobering article in *The New York Times Magazine* about scientists' ongoing efforts to save our planet's diminishing biodiversity. The article opened with a description of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, an internationally funded facility set deep within an icy mountain near the North Pole. The facility holds more than 1/3 of the world's plant genera, including 160,000 varieties of rice alone. Dornith Doherty was well ahead of me. She had learned about Svalbard just after it opened in 2008, and since then had come to recognize that it was just one of 1,400 such seed vaults around the world. A descendent of the Irish diaspora brought by the potato blight that hit Europe in the mid-1840s, she felt deep connection to seed banking, and to the recognition that such vaults are crucial backstops to disaster. *Archiving Eden* is her response.

Doherty's clean documentary photographs of seed collection, sorting, and storage give me vivid entry into the world of seed banks, and to the frightening effects brought by what scientists have taken to calling the Anthropocene era. They remind me that saving our biodiversity is the work of thousands of volunteers and professional scientists. They also show me the remarkable range of the world's facilities, from the hundred-year-old wooden drawers holding the barley collection at the Vavilov Institute for Plant Industry in St. Petersburg, Russia, to the cleanly lit steel shelved laboratories and storage facilities run by the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture.

But science and seed management are only half the tale. Doherty's real achievement is to give poetic tenor to the history of seed dispersal, and to the beauty, diversity, and abundance of seeds themselves. I learned back in college about the constant movement of plants and animals across almost inexplicable distances, and how this spread increased exponentially with the European "discovery" of the Americas. Doherty's *Columbian Exchange* photographs help me reimagine this important migration by framing it in terms of bouquets of flowers much like those I pick all summer from my front yard perennial garden. Her arrangements are flatter, showing single leaves and seed pods splayed against a bright light box whiteness. But they have a similar beauty that coaxes me into slowing down to consider their varied shapes and wave-like patterns. They prompt a desire to come up with each plant's name and to contemplate the history of their spread across parts of America. The artist's vision of pycnantha reflects this same notion in a different fashion. Here she arranges this Australian acacia's tiny blossoms across a white sheet to suggest seeds being dispersed by the wind.

Seed bank scientists know that freezing seeds is the best way to preserve them for the tens and even hundreds of years until they are needed. An essential part of this preservation practice involves periodically germinating samples of the seeds to make sure they remain viable. Doherty draws attention to this testing but also to other biogenetic research that goes on in these laboratories by showing us an array of banana clone seedlings that quickly disabuses us of the belief that "clone" means identical. She arranges epiphyte seeds to suggest the growth of a bacterium, and the flowers of banksia so that they seem to sprout across the sheet like expanding yeast bubbles. A lenticular photograph of sunflower seedlings reflects the translation from freezing to growing in its shift from blue to green. A similarly made photograph shifts from green and brown to reflect the drying of ash tree seeds for storage. Where the sunflowers come to life, shifting and dancing across the frame, the ash seeds transition to stasis, their ordered slashes bringing to mind an Agnes Martin painting. Metaphor is never far from the artist's mind. A photograph titled *Finite* even draws attention to the confluence between seed plentitude and star clusters.

It is easy to get carried away by all the light-infused beauty. Doherty's images reflect a kind of biophilia that comfortably aligns them with longstanding traditions of landscape and nature photography. This take is not surprising. Despite today's postmodern framework of irony and emotional remove many of us still comfortably connect nature to beauty. It is hard, after all, not to be amazed by the balloon-like structures of Yucca seed pods, their internal shelf-like layers, and how their spherical shape splits open at the top to facilitate release.

Even as *Archiving Eden* celebrates beauty, variety, and growth, it refuses to release us from the subject at hand. The ash tree seeds that Doherty so carefully lines up across one of her lenticular images have been collected by America's main national seed bank in Fort Collins, Colorado, in response to an impending species crash brought by the accidental introduction in the 1990s of the emerald ash borer from northeast Asia. The artist uses art to ask us not only to appreciate the wonderful variety of seeds, but to think hard about what we are doing to our surroundings, and to appreciate the monumental efforts of some to retain our global biodiversity. She reminds us that seeds, in all their diversity and staying power, are our backstop to disaster.

John Rohrbach
*Senior Curator of Photographs*
*Amon Carter Museum of American Art*
*Fort Worth, Texas*

# Photo Synthesis

What could be more ordinary than a seed? Most of us begin our day consuming them in one form or another, whether as rice, nuts, or beans or else in the more processed form of bread, cereal, or toaster waffle. Indeed, omnivorous humans have been consuming seeds – fruits, nuts, grains – for about 100,000 years. Plants and seeds as we know them weren't always part of the landscape and their development transformed the way most human beings lead their lives. But by now, for most of us, they have become not only an indispensable but also an unremarkable aspect of our world, clinging to the trees in our yards, filling our bird feeders, literally lying around on the ground beneath our feet.

Accustomed to their presence, we don't often give thought to how extraordinary they are. A seed is a beginning, waiting to happen. Only with the propitious coupling of earth and sun does it come alive. Seeds are paradigms of good design, beautifully suited to their primary purpose of propagation. Within their elegant architecture lies the instruction manual for the complex undertaking of creating a specific plant. More than anything, they want to live, and they come clothed in some amazing get-ups to accomplish that, from hairs and claws to wings and air pockets. In such abundance and inventive form, how could seeds possibly need our protection?

But they do. Because their physical and chemical makeup has evolved to operate with maximum success within specific ecosystems, their survival is endangered when those fine-tuned systems change rapidly, as they have in recent years. While species decline and disappearance are a normal part of life on earth, it is not in our best interest to be cavalier about it. We forget the extent to which plants sustain us: as food, as anchors for the soil, as medicine, as filters of the air we breathe. Functions that are critical to our survival.

Dornith Doherty's ambitious and multi-faceted undertaking *Archiving Eden* tells the timely and poignant story of present-day efforts to preserve the world's global biological heritage in the form of these seeds. The artist began the project in 2008 as an extension of her ongoing photographic exploration of the relationship between human and natural environments. The series ultimately evolved into two parts, one with an emphasis on the seeds themselves and the other on the facilities where they are stored.

The resulting body of work is rife with dualities. The juxtaposition of the natural with the artificial is a powerful and fundamental aspect of the series, embodying a crucial hybrid approach to the future. For as much as it is an examination of the artificial circumstances in which these life-giving kernels are preserved, it is also a lyrical love song to the real-world magic of seeds. It gives us not only the how but also the why for the road ahead.

**Archiving** Eden

Seed preservation is hardly a new idea and has long been practiced on a local level. In the late twentieth century, however, the idea has gained international currency in response to a growing awareness of issues such as decreasing agricultural diversity, increasing use of genetically modified seeds, and ongoing evidence of human-stimulated climate change. Like any library or archive, the primary function of seed banks is to preserve information for public wellbeing and posterity. In this case, what is being saved is nothing less than the genetic information that comprises the world as we know it. The word "archival" in Doherty's title may evoke images of nineteenth-century naturalists collecting plant specimens and cataloging them on pages with spidery handwriting but most of these contemporary repositories are state-of-the-art research facilities. No longer pressed between leaves of paper, specimens are now preserved in liquid nitrogen or vacuum packed in envelopes with the objective of maintaining not just their appearance but their viability.

Doherty's full-color, documentary-style photographs emphasize the sterile and clinical

appearance of these limited-access facilities, which are fascinating but so far removed from the original habitats of the seeds. Here, the tools of science are employed in earnest, not only for study but as a fail-safe repository in the event of a disaster, critical resources when severe fire or flood (or other form of doomsday) wipe out a population of plants. Her images give us a behind-the-scenes view of this hidden world, although we do not see those whose labor preserves this biological legacy. For them, a high comfort level with cognitive dissonance must surely be a job requirement, as optimism and engagement must coexist with an awareness that their efforts are made in the face of a possible worst-case scenario.

More than 1,700 seed banks are maintained across the globe with tens of thousands of plants represented therein, their active life spans extended under carefully calibrated conditions. Doherty concentrates her attention on the major global repositories that initially captured her attention as a way of understanding this phenomenon. During the course of the project, she arranged to work cooperatively with biologists at twenty of the most advanced facilities on five continents, including the United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service's National Center for Genetic Resources Preservation in Colorado, the Millennium Seed Bank, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in England; PlantBank, Threatened Flora Centre, and Kings Park Botanic Gardens in Australia; and Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway. The extent to which these facilities have proliferated and the level of technology and international cooperation that characterizes most of them is a powerful testament to the high level of concern.

Svalbard, a high-tech bunker where scientists collect and study seeds, maintaining them in a remote, sterile, and secure facility, was the impetus for Doherty's project and she photographed there in 2010. The facility is located on a remote Arctic archipelago and is built to withstand extreme weather conditions as well as powerful physical impact, offering its extensive holdings all the protection that human technology can muster at this juncture. Here the seeds are collected and archived. Many seeds have a tremendous capacity to endure, to hold the potential for life in suspension until the right conditions eventually present themselves, which makes the idea of seed banking viable. Some can last for two hundred or more years. Should catastrophe strike somewhere in the world, the cached seeds corresponding to that ecosystem could be summoned to help reintroduce regional plant life.

## Archiving **Eden**

In the part of her series focusing on the seeds and plantlets, Doherty shifts from macrocosm microcosm, photographing her organic subjects in the artificial environment of the labs. In keeping with the scientific setting, Doherty makes her photographs with the x-ray equipment used by staff to assess the viability of the collected seeds. While her views of the seed bank part of the series are made in color, most of the photographs of the seeds themselves are monochromatic, a result of the radiography that offers the advantage of allowing us to concentrate more closely on the individual subjects.

X-ray technology reinforces the sense of scientific inquiry in the series and allows us to look beyond the surface or husk of each seed to find out what makes it work. Contemporary Western belief in scientific evidence and the objectivity of photography bolster the aura of factuality in these images, yet there is a distinct tension. For while the images reveal structures invisible to the naked eye, giving a sense of having a privileged and technical view of the seeds, the foreignness of this view often evokes subjective, visceral response in viewers. For the untrained eye, these images evoke a parallel world beyond our everyday reality. It is a view inside a secret, a secret we can parse but never fully grasp. The seeds are distinct and radiant, floating in space as if fascinating alien beings. We

see them anew.

The monochromatic images that are printed in blue are a reminder of the nineteenth-century botanical photograms of Anna Atkins, whose groundbreaking photo-illustrated *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* was published in 1843. Placing her specimens directly onto photographic paper and exposing them to sunlight, Atkins cataloged the sea plants of England using the cyanotype process, which takes its blue tone form the presence of iron salts and was invented the previous year by her friend Sir John Herschel. Atkins quickly recognized photography's potential to accurately communicate scientific information, as a technique that appeared to avoid human biases and ineptitudes inherent in other methods of recording, such as drawing.

Doherty's seed images carry the immediacy and sense of direct contact that characterizes Atkins' photograms, conveying a powerful sense of presence on the page. The photographs give voice and personality to what are, despite being possessed of the latent ability to generate life, fairly unassuming organic nuggets. The result is an evocative synthesis of science and art that uses photography as an instrument of description and exactitude that also offers a gateway into the poetic.

Working with seeds in the laboratory, disassociated from their intrinsic external associations, also allows Doherty room for unfettered artistic license. The blank slate of the lab frees her to use the holdings as raw material for her own artistic compositions, and she uses a variety of approaches to portray the seeds and seedlings, often alluding to familiar visual references from science as well as art.

Some are organized into grids and typologies, reminding us of their morphological and biological diversity. In *1,400 Ash Tree Seeds*, Doherty assembles seeds from America's main national seed bank in Fort Collins, Colorado. They were collected in recognition that ash trees are being wiped out due to the emerald ash borer. Introduced accidentally to North America in the 1990s, these Asian beetles have already killed tens of millions of ash trees across Canada and the United States. The lenticular photograph is made of three images that are stacked, cut into strips, interlaced, and placed behind triangular-shaped lenses. The color changes in the work reflect the seeds' shift from green to brown as they dry for storage.

Other seeds are arranged into shapes that could be read as mandalas, geometric forms representing the universe that are intended for deep contemplation. The circular shapes also serve as cognates for the cycle of life or the round shape of earth, non-linear arrangements that openly invite us to celebrate and consider the vibrant life force contained within each small subject. Some compositions suggest the wind, the starry sky, a wild spray of confetti, or a bouquet.

In addition to the seeds, Doherty photographs small plants, cloned or grown from the archived seeds, in interesting ways. In her picture of banana clones, the artist arrays them in a lineup that highlights the delicacy and dynamism of each living plant, granting them animation even in the face their incarceration. The dance of life is coded in their DNA and they await any opportunity to become fruitful and multiply. In other compositions, she uses her subjects to transcend the setting and the tools at hand to create calligraphic or still life arrangements that powerfully convey their latent vibrancy.

Science tells us that it takes approximately 5,000 seeds to save a species and many of Doherty's images show concentrations of seeds that illustrate that vastness. Her photograph *More Than This* (made with more than 4,700 seeds) begins to put that figure into a form we can grasp. She evokes their multitudes in dense concentrations and graceful scatterings. Some appear against a dark background like a million stars, one of our most enduring references to infinitude. Yet she pointedly titles one of these *Finite*, bringing us back to earth with the reminder that abundance is a survival tactic and that the odds can shift quickly if conditions change.

Ultimately, Doherty invites us to delight in the wonder of the seeds and plants she photographs. Biodiversity, the grand variety of plants, animals, and organisms we live amongst, is one of the great wonders of the world. We delight in (and cultivate) all manner of roses, from rustic varieties to exotics, reveling in their flowers, their creamy petals, their unique fragrances. Human beings would surely survive if only one kind of rose existed but our lived experience would be lessened.

With her two-part series, Doherty asserts the need to engage all of our faculties, all of our senses, in the effort to preserve our Eden here on earth. As much as she articulates the complex issues raised by her photographic exploration of seeds and seed banks, she also strives to make us fall in love with this world all over again, not only for the sheer joy of it but as a strategy to stimulate our engagement. She reminds us of our need to restore our connection with plants and the natural world, to regain firsthand experience and knowledge of the world in the face of the depletion of not only our environment but also our culture. She gives us the science and the poetry, two inseparable sides of a coin. A seed is a beginning, waiting to happen.

Katherine Ware
*Curator of Photography*
*New Mexico Museum of Art*

# **Dornith Doherty:** Archiving Eden

***Svalbard Global Seed Vault***
2010
Inkjet print, 2017
26 x 36 inches
Courtesy of the artist, Holly Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and Moody Gallery, Houston

Spurred by the completion of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, Dornith Doherty began her *Archiving Eden* project in 2008 as a way to explore the role of seed banks and their preservation efforts in the face of climate change and the extinction of natural species. She found the simultaneously optimistic and pessimistic nature of the Svalbard Vault compelling: individuals and governments from around the world are collaborating to create the first truly global botanical back-up system, but also, the gravity of climate change and political instability has created the need for an inaccessible "doomsday" vault near the North Pole. Situated high enough within a mountain that if both polar ice caps melt it will still be above water, it also is positioned below the permafrost line, so that if there is a cooling system failure, the seeds held in its core will remain naturally frozen.

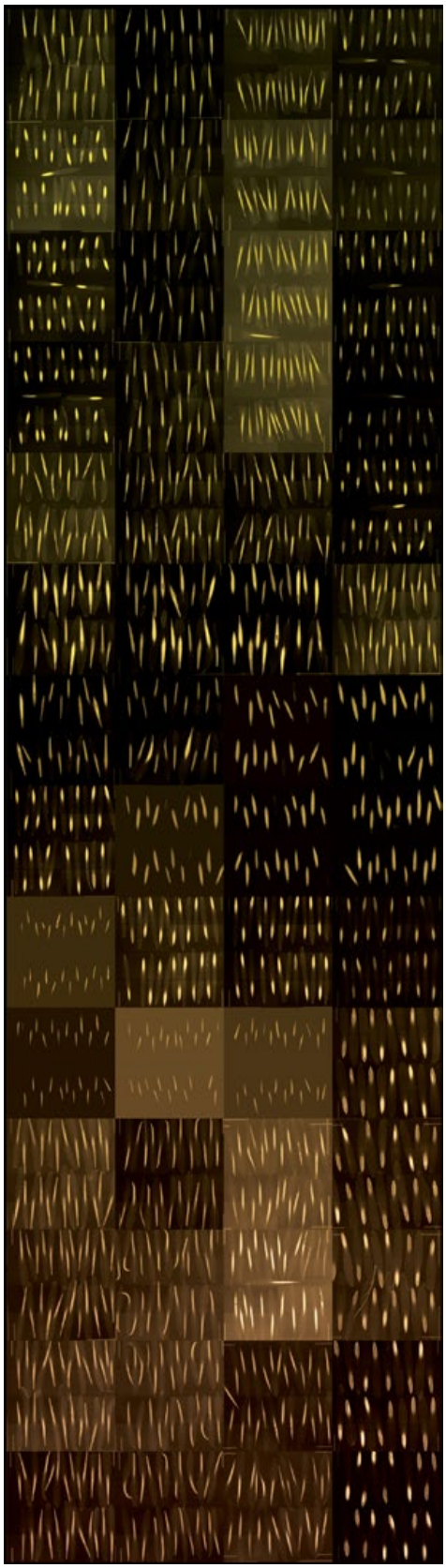
***Drying Screens, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center***
2008
Inkjet print, 2017
27.5 x 36 inches
Courtesy of the artist, Holly Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and Moody Gallery, Houston

Dornith Doherty began her *Archiving Eden* project by visiting the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas. There she saw volunteers hand-fold paper envelopes, and then count and insert dryland seeds into each package for shipment to Svalbard Global Seed Vault, Norway; the Millennium Seed Bank in West Sussex, England; and the National Center for Genetic Resources Preservation in Fort Collins, Colorado. In this low-tech activity she found a powerful symbol for how modest individual actions can collectively make a major difference.

***1,400 Ash Tree Seeds***
2009
95.5 x 27.75 inches
Dye coupler lenticular photograph, 2016
Courtesy of the artist, Holly
Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and
Moody Gallery, Houston

These seeds come from America's main national seed bank in Fort Collins, Colorado. They were collected in recognition that ash trees are being wiped out due to the emerald ash borer. Introduced accidentally to North America in the 1990s, these Asian beetles have already killed tens of millions of ash trees across Canada and the United States.

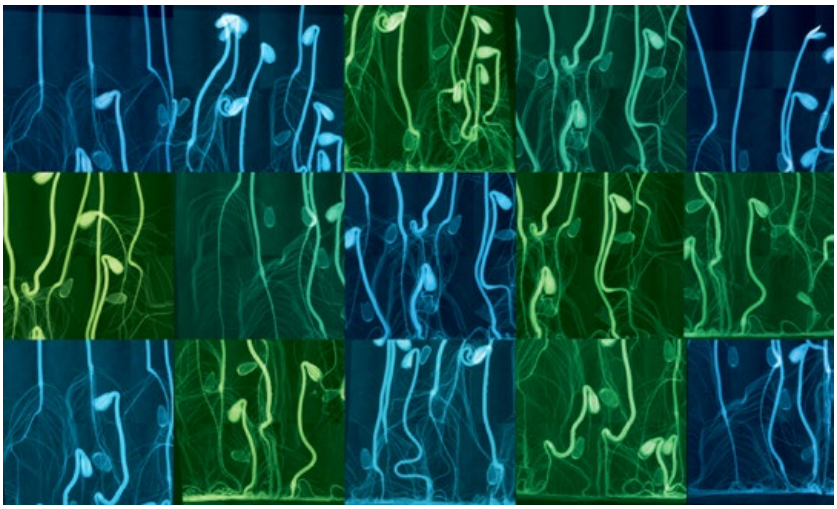
This lenticular photograph is made of three images that are stacked, cut into strips, interlaced, and placed behind triangular-shaped lenses. Dornith Doherty created this animation to reflect the seeds' shift from green to brown as they dry for storage.



# **Dornith Doherty:** Archiving Eden

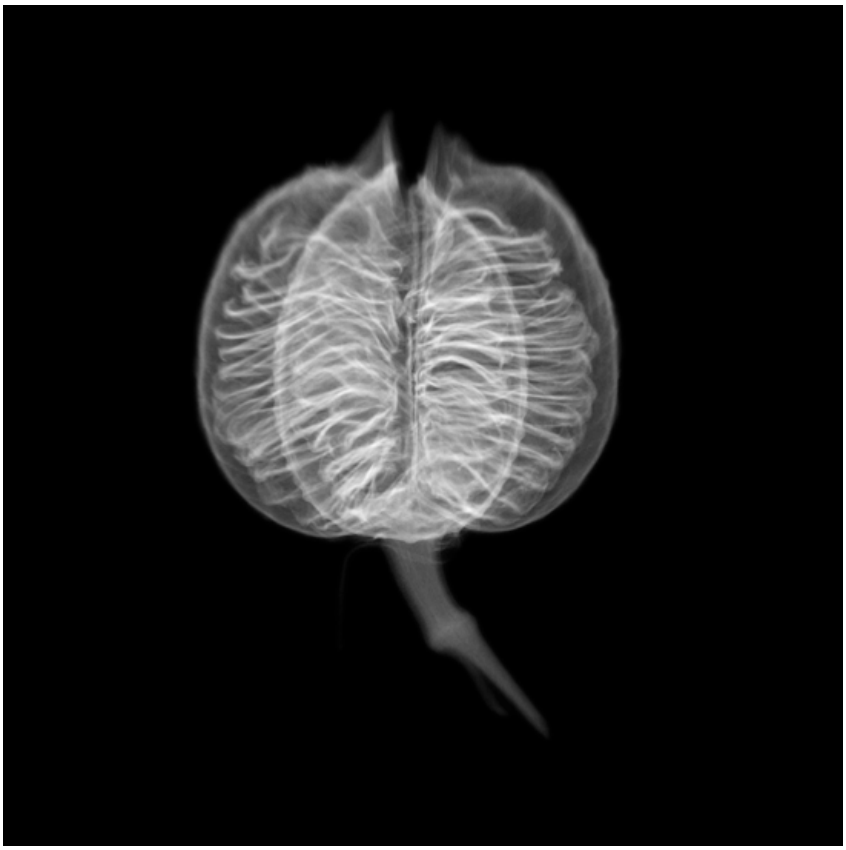
***Sunflowers***
2009
29.75 x 48.5 inches
Dye coupler lenticular photograph
Courtesy of the artist, Holly Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and Moody Gallery, Houston

Dornith Doherty is inspired by the power of these tiny plantlets and seeds to generate life, and to endure the timespan central to the process of seed banking, which seeks to make these sprouts endure for two hundred years or more.



***Red Yucca***
2011
Inkjet print, 2012
36.5 x 36.5 inches
Courtesy of the artist, Holly Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and Moody Gallery, Houston

The red yucca is a common nursery plant. Dornith Doherty created this elegant X-ray view of the plant's seed head because its internal structure reminded her of the architecture of seed banks.



***Barley Collection, Vavilov Institute for Plant Industry, St. Petersburg, Russia***
2012
Inkjet print, 2017
51 x 39 inches
Courtesy of the artist, Holly Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and Moody Gallery, Houston

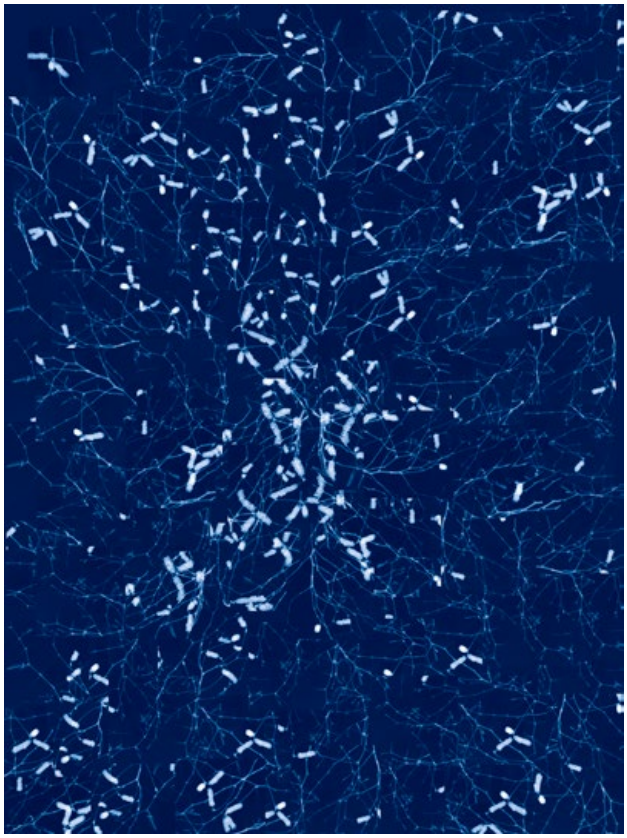
Established in 1921, this institute once housed the world's earliest, and for many years largest and most comprehensive, collection of plant seeds. The facility is named for Nikolai Vavilov who grew up in a Russian village that coped with repeated crop failures and food rationing. He devoted his life to overcoming global hunger through the creation of improved strains of barley, corn, wheat, and other cereal crops. During the twenty-eight-month Siege of Leningrad in World War II, several botanists working here starved to death rather than eat the collected seeds under their care.

***Seed Vault, Kuban Experimental Station, Russia***
2012
Inkjet print, 2017
63.75 x 56 inches
Courtesy of the artist, Holly Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and Moody Gallery, Houston

This photo depicts the Russian national collection of soy at the Kuban Experimental Station, Krasnodar Territory, Russia. Established in 1924, the station studies crops such as maize, sorghum, and sunflower, and carries out immunological research. The station has suffered from staff cuts, inadequate storage conditions, and is at risk due to lack of financial support. Dornith Doherty wants to raise awareness about the need for consistent funding and conservationist policies for the preservation of large-scale collections of seeds, one of the world's most basic resources.

***Yuma***
2011
60 x 44 inches
Dye coupler lenticular photograph
Courtesy of the artist, Holly Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and Moody Gallery, Houston

This digital collage is made from X-rays of thorn scrub seedpods, plants adapted to the hyper-arid growing conditions found in the Yuma, Arizona field research station.



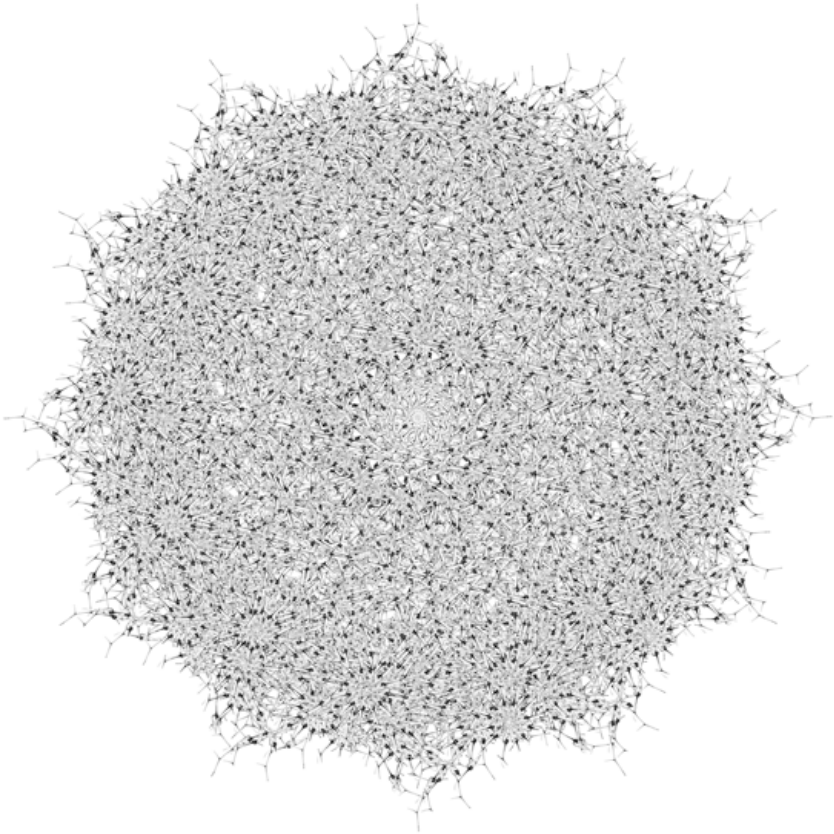
***Incubator, EMBRAPA, Brasilia, Brazil***
2012
Inkjet print, 2015
43.5 x 36.5 inches
Courtesy of the artist, Holly Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and Moody Gallery, Houston

This photo depicts a facility where scientists are conducting agricultural research for crop improvements and food security related to manioc, commonly known as cassava. A major staple food in the developing world, manioc provides a basic diet for over half a billion people and is the third-largest source of carbohydrates in the tropics after rice and maize. Many national seedbanks, including EMBRAPA, have facilities that focus on agricultural improvements to ensure a secure food supply for the rapidly growing global population in addition to ensuring the survival of genetic diversity in plants.

# **Dornith Doherty:** Archiving Eden

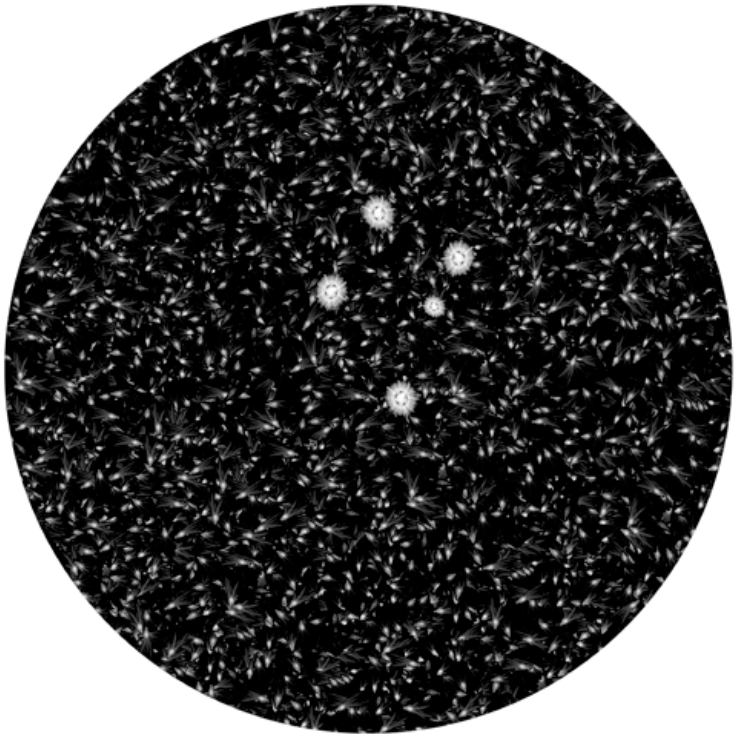
***Epiphyte***
2014
Inkjet print
36.5 x 36.5 inches
Courtesy of the artist, Holly Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and Moody Gallery, Houston

Orchids are a type of epiphyte, plants that gain their nutrients directly from the air. They constitute one of the largest families of flowers in the world and produce some of nature's smallest seeds. Dornith Doherty has collaged these Australian epiphyte seeds and stems into this snowflake-like structure to celebrate the species' reproductive vigor.



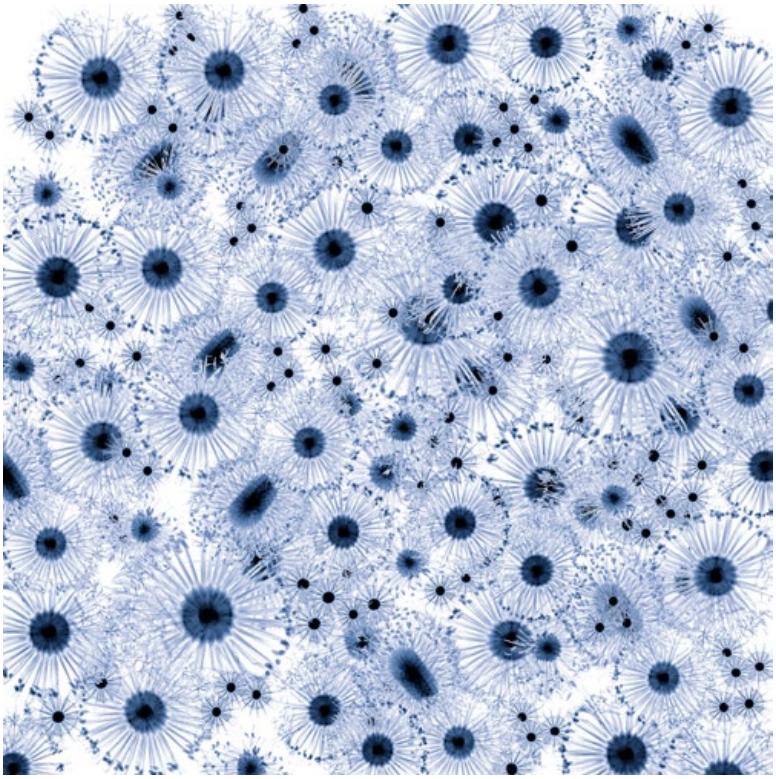
***Finite***
2014
Inkjet print, 2015
56 x 56 inches
Courtesy of the artist, Holly Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and Moody Gallery, Houston

This collage may remind you of the view through a microscope or a telescope. It has been printed to the approximate dimensions of the native habitat of a plant species whose range is limited to one or two meters in Western Australia. Dornith Doherty wants viewers to think about how biodiversity is threatened by habitat loss.



***Banksias***
2014
Inkjet print, 2017
36.5 x 36.5 inches
Courtesy of the artist, Holly Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and Moody Gallery, Houston

There are 173 Banksia species and all but one occur naturally only in Australia. Banksias were named after Sir Joseph Banks, who, in 1770, was the first European to collect specimens of these plants. The flower heads are made up of hundreds (sometimes thousands) of tiny flowers, and many species have adapted to their habitat by releasing seeds in response to bushfires.



***Pycnantha***
2014
Inkjet print, 2015
30 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist, Holly Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and Moody Gallery, Houston

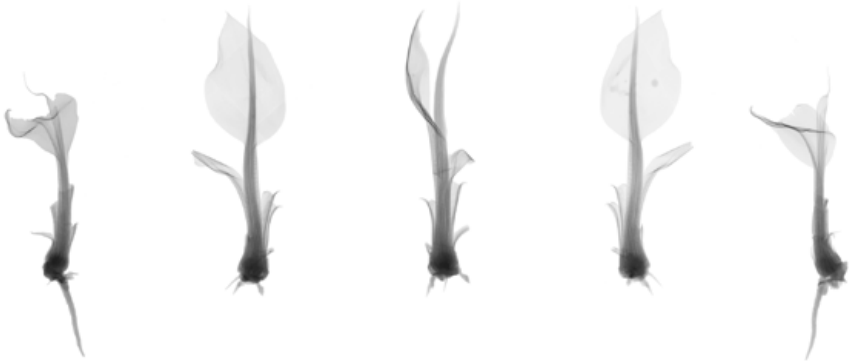
The Australian acacia pycnantha is one of the first plants to regenerate after a wildfire. Inspired by this so-called “pioneer” tree, Dornith Doherty has multiplied and carefully arranged X-rays of a small sampling of the plant’s tiny blossoms to suggest its dispersal by the wind.

***Columbian Exchange III***
2014
Inkjet print, 2016
50 x 35 inches
Courtesy of the artist, Holly Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and Moody Gallery, Houston

This bouquet of X-ray images mixing eucalyptus, mesquite, pecans, and teosinte, is both a portrait of Texas and a reference to the Columbian Exchange—the global movement of animals, plants, technology, culture, and disease brought by European colonization and trade with the western hemisphere after 1492. Dornith Doherty's image connects the Columbian exchange to the present day practice of seed banking in which an expansive professional network fosters the exchange of research, botanical materials, and information to support the effort of preserving botanical biodiversity.

***Banana Clones***
2009
Inkjet print, 2015
23 x 46 inches
Courtesy of the artist, Holly Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and Moody Gallery, Houston

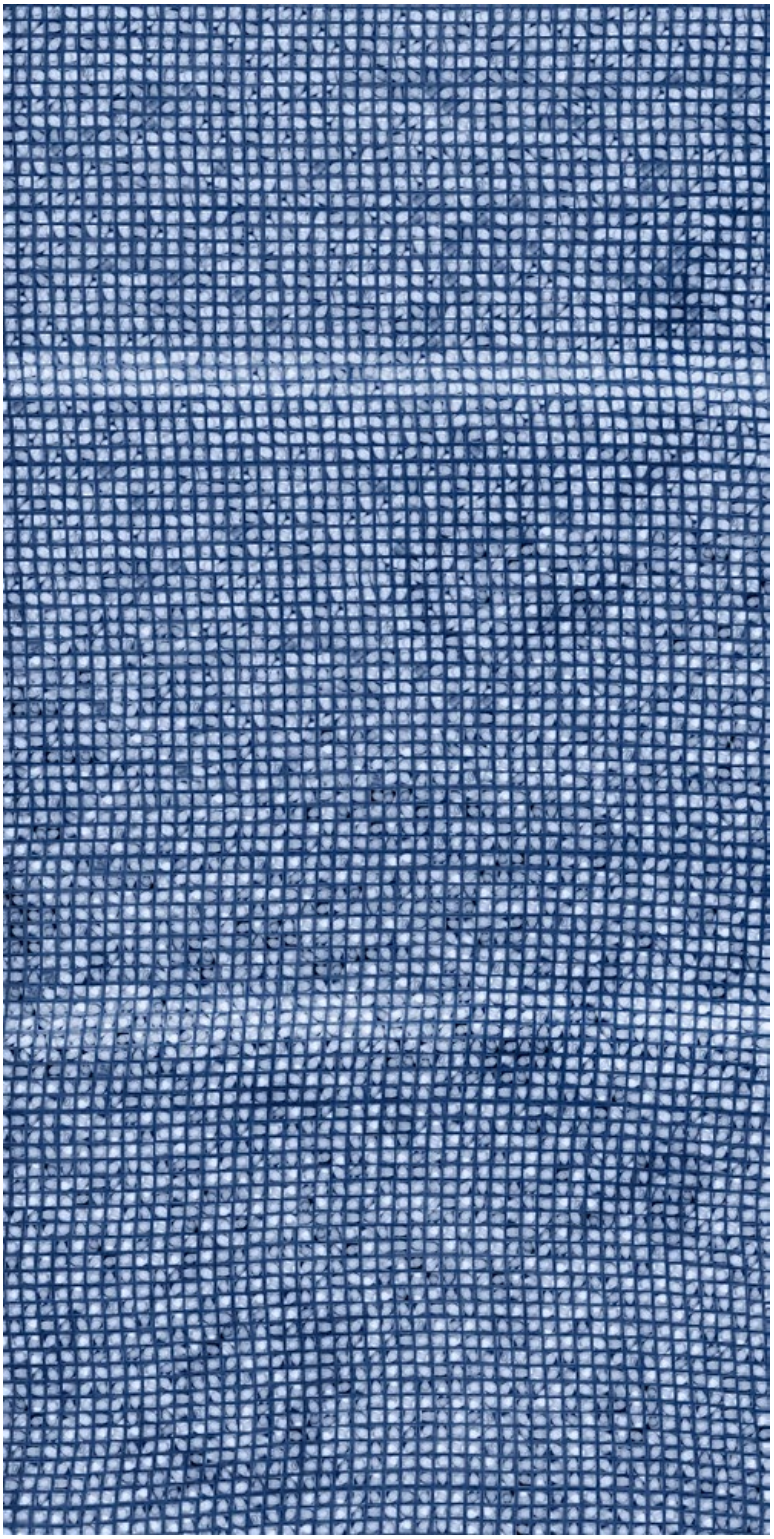
The bananas we eat are facing extinction, attacked by a pathogen similar to the blight that decimated potatoes in the mid-19th century. Scientists around the world are trying to come up with an alternative through breeding programs to find a new species that will be resistant to this disease. As these X-rays reveal, even clones, despite being "identical," quickly develop structural variations.



# **Dornith Doherty:** Archiving Eden

***More Than This***
2015
85.15 x 43.25 inches
Dye coupler lenticular photograph
Courtesy of the artist, Holly Johnson Gallery, Dallas, and Moody Gallery, Houston

Dornith Doherty's digital collages, made with X-ray images of thousands of seeds she captured using on-site research equipment, are a more intimate exploration of individual seeds stored in these crucial collections. This image shows more than 4,800 individual seeds, a number that is not sufficient to save a species from extinction. Color shifts in this and other lenticular works in the exhibition, between green to brown or green to blue, refer to the process of drying and freezing involved in cryogenic preservation.



# **Dornith Doherty:** Archiving Eden