

Simon Periton
National Geographic
The Modern Institute, Bricks Space
6th June – 27th August 2025
Preview: Thursday 5th June 2025, 6 – 8pm

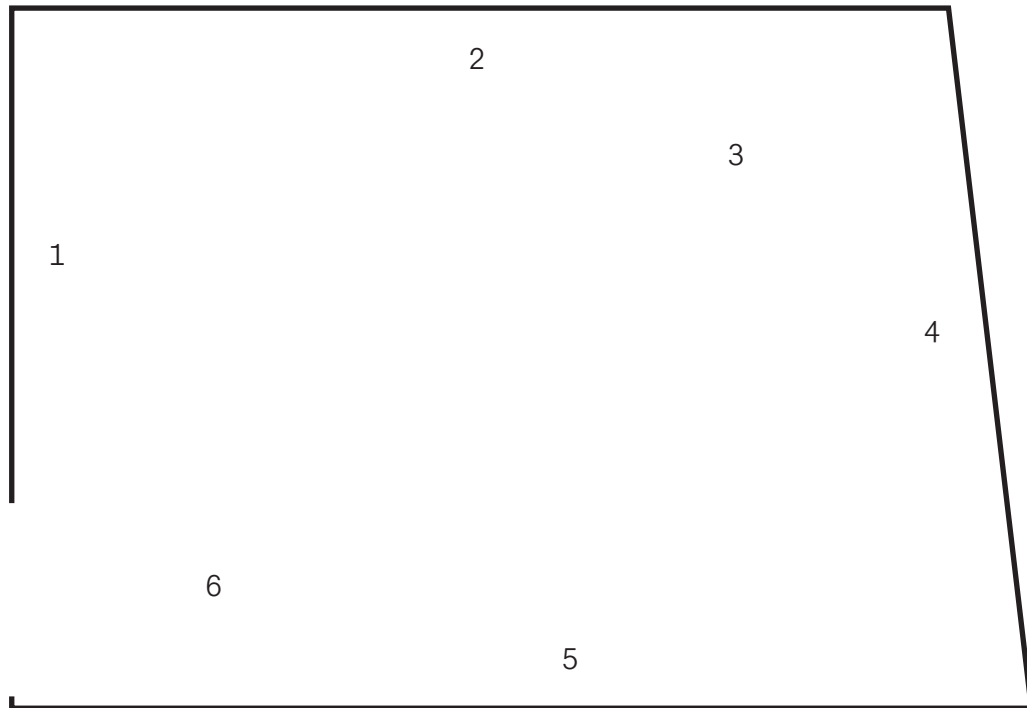
Motifs of leaves, barbed wire and chains thread their way through Simon Periton's *National Geographic*, drawing into alignment notions of the natural, the decorative and the securitized – a set of themes that have preoccupied the artist across his career. While embracing a wide range of approaches and mediums, the works share a graphic appearance, one which both articulates the intricacy of the natural world and also the threatening appearance of the fences and boundaries which often curtail and order it. The positive and negative spaces in the works draw attention to their edges, which serve a key metaphorical role in the exhibition.

Periton's leaves could in turn be understood as a kind of barrier, mimicking the hedgerows which bound agricultural land and the countryside. In this sense, questions of ownership, or how power is inscribed in space, are at the heart of the installation. Periton's titles – *National Geographic*, *Manifest Destiny*, *Pearlree Farm*, *International Anthem* – refer to politics, anthropology and settler colonialism. Visually, *Manifest Destiny* refers obliquely to John Gast's painting *American Progress* (1872). This depicts Columbia, a figure representing 'progress', guiding settlers across America as indigenous people flee, laying a telegraph wire as she goes. In Periton's work, the line becomes a crown of barbed wire. In contrast, *International Anthem*, with its symbolically broken chain, references *The Internationale*, a song adopted by the socialist movement in the late nineteenth century, and also artist Gee Vaucher's DIY publication, issues of which were distributed at the concerts of activist punk band Crass (1977–1984) that Periton attended as a teenager.

Periton mixes utopianism with historical realities. The stencilled countercultural visual language of his paintings recall the visual language of punk and protest banners, suggesting a negative view of efforts to contain and fence, particularly in a political moment when questions around migration, freedom of movement and hydrocarbon exploration are at the forefront of political debates across the globe. Representative of these concerns is *Silver Jack*, 2025. In this a kind of Green Man figure – commonly found carved into medieval churches across Britain – is inverted, becoming a carceral mask representing enclosure rather growth and rebirth.

Simon Periton (b. 1964, Kent) lives and works in Bath. He has exhibited internationally and completed numerous prestigious public art projects in the United Kingdom. Recent public commissions include: Farringdon Station for The Elizabeth Line, London (2022); 'Hyperaccumulator', Osiers Road Quarter, London (2022); 'Pollinator', Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, University of Oxford (2015); 'Resistance is Fertile', Waddesdon Manor, Aylesbury, (2015); 'Shed', Brentford Connection, Brentford (2014). Selected solo exhibitions include: 'Your War, My Love', GS Artists, Swansea (2018); 'Celestial Agriculture', New Art Centre Sculpture Park & Gallery, Salisbury (2015); 'The Asbo Mystery Play and other public works' / 'The Gild The Lily Files' (with Alan Kane), Sadie Coles HQ, London (2012); 'Spirits of Salt', Sadie Coles HQ, London (2009); 'A Rabble of Butterflies', The Galerist, Istanbul (2008); 'Simon Periton', The Modern Institute, Glasgow (2007); 'Flag', Henry Moore Gallery, Leeds (2004); 'Mint Poisoner', Inverleith House, Edinburgh (2003). Selected group exhibitions include: 'Frieze Sculpture 2018', Regent's Park, London (2018); 'Regenerate Art', Kunstverein Munchen, Germany, (with Alan Kane) (2014); 'The Hepworth Wakefield: A Celebration Backbone: Modern British Sculptors', NewArtCentre, Roche Court, Salisbury (2011); 'Undone: Making and Unmaking in Contemporary Sculpture', Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (2010); 'The Dark Monarch: Magic and Modernity in British Art', Tate St. Ives (2009) (touring to the Towner Gallery, Eastbourne); 'Wunschwelten', Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2007).

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|--|--|--|
| 1 <i>Manifest Destiny</i> , 2025
Paint on canvas
152 x 122 x 2 cm
59 7/8 x 48 x 3/4 in | 2 <i>Ghost Train</i> , 2024
Paint on stretched canvas
152 x 122 x 2 cm
59 7/8 x 48 x 3/4 in | 3 <i>National Geographic</i> , 2025
Colour wax oil on birch ply
280 x 94 x 77 cm
110 1/4 x 37 x 30 1/4 in |
| 4 <i>Peartree Farm</i> , 2024
Collage and paint on canvas
152 x 122 x 2 cm
59 7/8 x 48 x 3/4 in | 5 <i>Silver Jack</i> , 2024
Chrome plated stainless
steel mirror polish
105 x 84 x 6 cm
41 3/8 x 33 1/8 x 2 3/8 in | 6 <i>International Anthem</i> , 2025
Painted wood
205 x 62 x 3 cm
80 3/4 x 24 3/8 x 1 1/8 in |

* Aird's Lane Green Space: *Mayflower*, 2025, Coloured natural oil finish on marine ply, 330 x 110 x 5 cm, 129 7/8 x 43 1/4 x 2 in