



Zina Swanson  
*Their seeds are winged and borne in pairs*

4 SEPTEMBER – 4 OCTOBER 2025  
SUMER FINE ART

Sumer is pleased to present *Their seeds are winged and borne in pairs*, by Ōtautahi Christchurch-based artist Zina Swanson. Her fourth solo exhibition with the gallery, the show presents an ambitious new series of figurative paintings and sculptures—acrylic on canvas, watercolour on paper, and sculpture in clay and painted steel (all 2024–25). Highly imaginative, occasionally even seemingly peculiar, the works exemplify what Swanson is best known for. Equally, they possess her particular attention to the minutiae of the everyday—an intricacy that extends from her work's subject matter to its material execution.

Long attuned to the overlooked textures and rhythms of the natural world, Swanson's work frequently begins with a chance encounter. Here, the starting point was the sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), noticed in her own backyard through the seeds scattered across the grass. From this modest discovery, the artist traces an imaginative, expansive investigation of form and empathy, looking closely at how humans see—or fail to see—the vegetal life around them.

At the core of the exhibition is a seventeen-part watercolour, from which the show takes its title. The works depict the paired seeds of the sycamore, often likened in childhood play to “helicopters” tossed into the air. As the series unfolds, these winged pairs accumulate and repeat, gradually suggesting human features—eyes, brows, faces—until a densely layered visage emerges. Swanson writes, “The series of 17 begins with a single pair, separated. It grows and grows, human feature after feature to become a face that is eventually difficult to distinguish among the mass of seeds... I think the face is more in a very general sense a ‘human’ or represents something much broader—‘humanity’.”

Other works extend these associations into three dimensions. In sculpture, seeds are reimagined at the scale of the human body: suspended spines that echo both falling seed pods and the physical structure of the artist herself. These pieces, constructed in painted steel and clay, embody a tension between weight and flight, suspension and collapse.

As with earlier projects that turned attention to daisies, nettles, convolvulus, or sticks, Swanson's sycamores are estranged from their parent tree—isolated, repeated, and reimagined through her hand. The result is a body of work that both playfully anthropomorphises and soberly interrogates our tendency toward what botanists have termed “plant blindness”—a human inclination to overlook the vegetal in favour of the animal.

*Their seeds are winged and borne in pairs* continues Swanson's exploration of the porous boundaries between human and plant worlds, offering works at once delicate and uncanny, grounded in everyday observation yet expansive in their imaginative reach.

Zina Swanson (b. 1981, Ōtautahi Christchurch) lives and works in Ōtautahi. Her practice, encompassing painting, drawing and sculpture, explores the shifting relationships between humans and the natural world, often using repetition, delicate line, and found botanical forms to reveal the ways in which we project, anthropomorphise, and overlook plant life. She graduated with a BFA from the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts in 2003, and in 2014 was awarded the Frances Hodgkins Fellowship at the University of Otago, Dunedin. Swanson has exhibited widely throughout Aotearoa, including solo presentations at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, and Tauranga Art Gallery, alongside her four exhibitions at Sumer. Her work is held in major public collections, including Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand, University of Canterbury, Hocken Collections, and The Dowse Art Museum, as well as in significant private collections.



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Zina Swanson  
*Their seeds are winged and borne in pairs*, 2024-2025  
Watercolour on paper, 17 parts  
29.7 x 21 cm each  
11 3/4 x 8 1/4 in each  
(ZS-000056)



Zina Swanson  
*Synchronized Falling*, 2025  
Acrylic on canvas  
40 x 30 cm  
15 3/4 x 11 3/4 in  
(ZS-000054)



Zina Swanson  
*Mask (Self Portrait)*, 2025  
Acrylic on canvas  
40 x 30 cm  
15 3/4 x 11 3/4 in  
(ZS-000049)



Zina Swanson  
*Countdown to Falling*, 2025  
Acrylic on canvas  
40 x 30 cm  
15 3/4 x 11 3/4 in  
(ZS-000050)



Zina Swanson  
*Plant Blind*, 2025  
Acrylic on canvas  
76 x 101.5 cm  
30 x 40 in  
(ZS-000057)



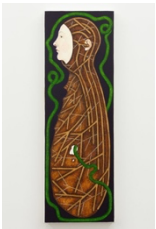
Zina Swanson  
*Falling and Worn*, 2025  
Terracotta, powder-coated steel  
165.5 x 67.5 x 41 cm  
65 1/4 x 26 1/2 x 16 1/4 in  
(ZS-000058)



Zina Swanson  
*Fallen and Worn*, 2025  
Terracotta, powder-coated steel  
165.5 x 67.5 x 40.5 cm  
65 1/4 x 26 1/2 x 16 in  
(ZS-000059)



Zina Swanson  
*Reclining Figure*, 2025  
Acrylic on canvas  
45.5 x 35 cm  
18 x 13 3/4 in  
(ZS-000053)



Zina Swanson  
*Find Me in the Leaf Matter*, 2025  
Acrylic on canvas  
91.5 x 30.5 cm  
36 x 12 in  
(ZS-000055)

## WINDOW SPACE



Zina Swanson  
*Sycamore Tears*, 2025  
Acrylic on canvas  
40 x 30 cm  
15 3/4 x 11 3/4 in  
(ZS-000051)



Zina Swanson  
*Rays*, 2025  
Acrylic on canvas  
45.5 x 35 cm  
18 x 13 3/4 in  
(ZS-000052)