

KNOW
YOUR
TREES





KNOW YOUR TREES



Know Your Trees

Un nouveau livre d'artiste de Blaise Drummond, publié par Michael Woolworth Publications.

40 pages. 30 × 25 cm. Édition limitée à 40 exemplaires.

Lithographie originale, gravure sur bois, collage, découpe laser, intervention manuelle, impression pigmentaire, photolithographie, monotype et typographie

Entre l'Irlande profonde et le cœur de Paris, l'artiste Blaise Drummond et le maître-imprimeur Michael Woolworth se sont associés pour créer *Know Your Trees* [Connaissez vos arbres], un livre d'artiste de quarante pages qui évolue avec fluidité entre dessin et poésie, mémoire et processus, collage et lithographie, et ouvre une fenêtre rare sur le fonctionnement intérieur d'un esprit créatif.

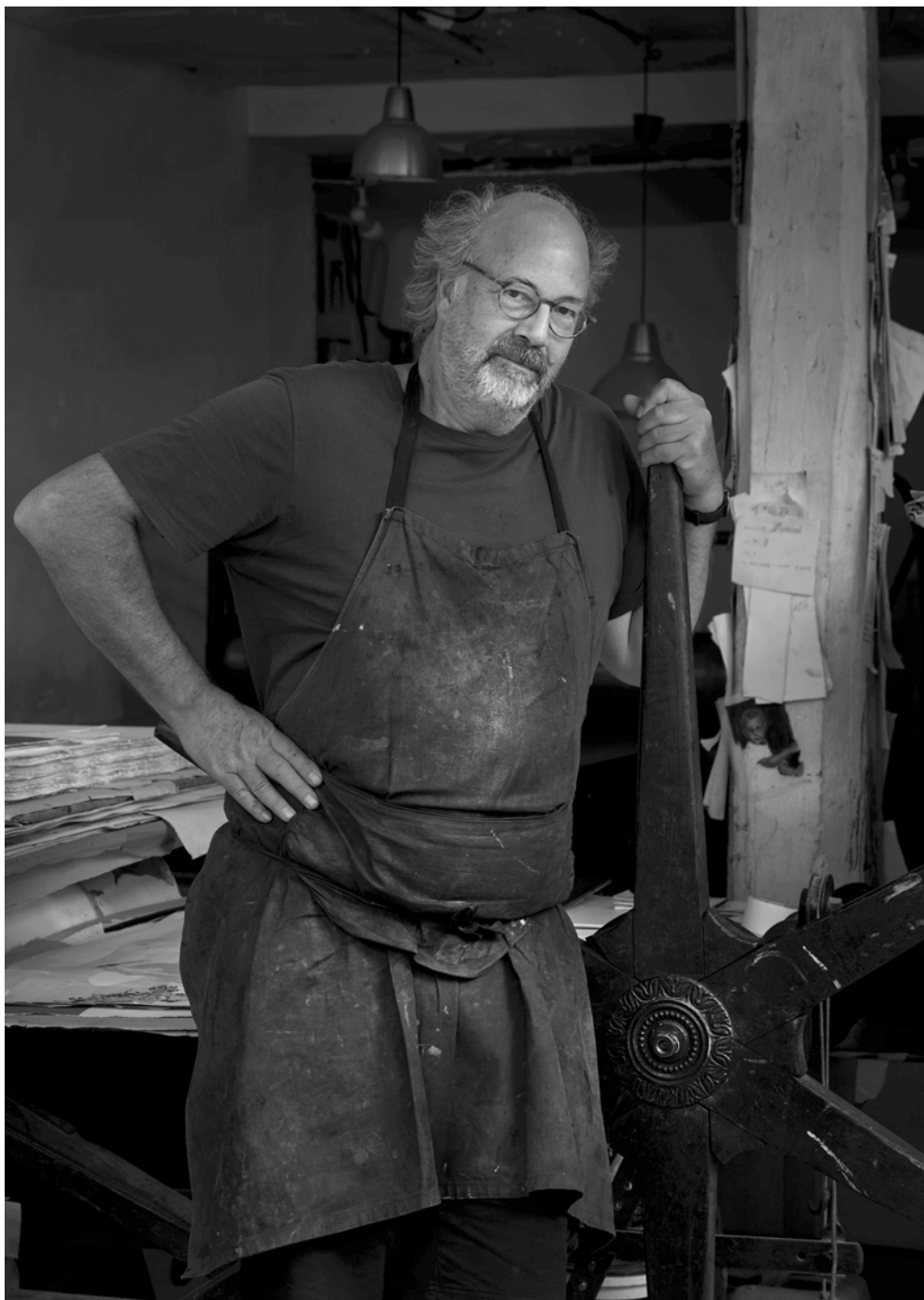
Reconnu pour son œuvre, qui explore avec délicatesse l'espace entre architecture et monde naturel, Drummond aborde ses sujets non pas avec une distance ironique, mais avec une attention subtile, teintée d'un humour discret. Son art se nourrit d'une observation nuancée – à la fois romantique et sceptique – qui interroge notre rapport ambivalent à la nature : comment nous l'esthétisons, la protégeons, et l'exploitons tout à la fois.

Avec *Know Your Trees*, Drummond se tourne vers lui-même. C'est son premier livre d'artiste – un format qui lui semble idéal pour décrire « ce qui se passe dans la tête d'un artiste ». Le projet n'est pas né d'un récit linéaire, mais d'une constellation de fragments puisés dans le quotidien de l'atelier : carnets de croquis, recherches chromatiques, bribes diverses et références multiples. « Nous ne voulions ni illustrer un texte, ni raconter une histoire en images », explique-t-il. « Il s'agissait d'assembler ce qui existait déjà – en puisant dans des années de carnets – et de permettre à ces éléments d'entrer en dialogue. »

L'un des premiers fragments retenus est un minuscule dessin, niché dans un carnet d'avant 2018 – une méditation sur la *Madonna del prato* de Bellini, à la National Gallery de Londres – et assorti d'une note en marge : « idée de livre d'artiste pour Michael ». En faisant des recherches sur ce tableau, Drummond a découvert qu'il avait été inspiré par les *Géorgiques* de Virgile, un texte qu'il avait particulièrement aimé quand il étudiait la philosophie et les lettres classiques à l'université d'Édimbourg. « J'ai relu ce poème au fil des ans, y compris durant mes études d'art, et je lui empruntais souvent des vers pour des titres. Quand le moment est venu enfin de travailler sur mon livre, revenir à ce texte s'est imposé à moi tout naturellement. »

Mais plutôt que de simplement illustrer les *Géorgiques*, Drummond et Woolworth ont cherché à établir des résonances subtiles entre le texte antique et des fragments visuels contemporains. Ils ont choisi des vers imprégnés d'attention, de soin et de culture, des qualités qui accompagnent l'esprit même de la confection de ce livre.



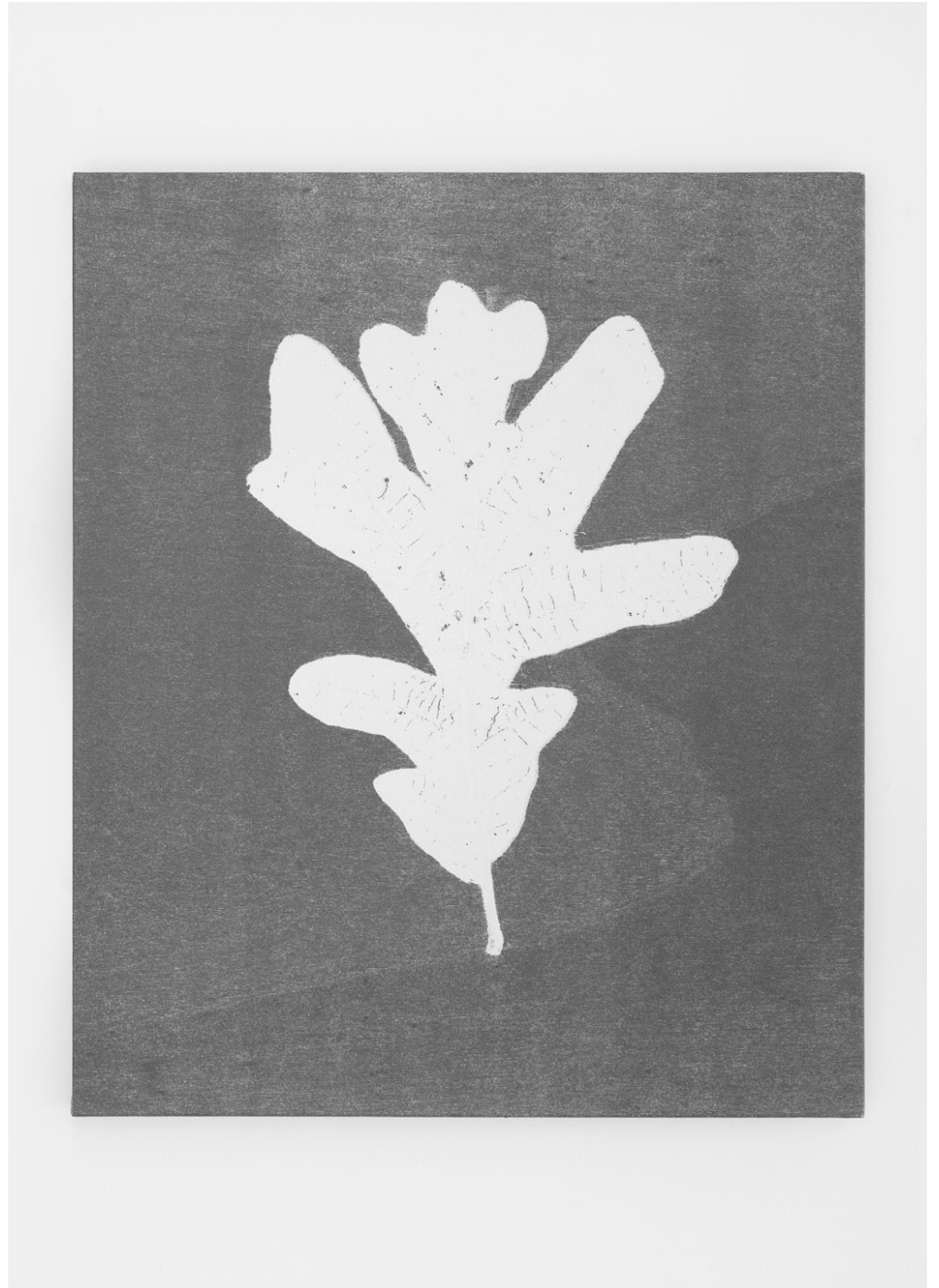


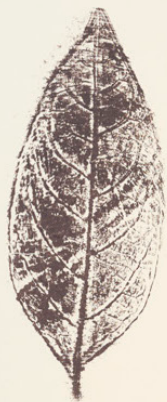
Réalisé dans l'atelier Michael Woolworth à Paris, *Know Your Trees* a été produit selon des techniques exigeantes et lentes – lithographie, gravure sur bois, collage, composition manuelle – autant de gestes patients qui reflètent la respiration de l'ouvrage : une pratique de l'observation, enracinée dans le rythme du travail artisanal. « Nous voulions saisir ce moment de liberté », note Woolworth, « cette légèreté d'esprit où rien n'est encore assigné à une œuvre finale. Chaque page recueille des éléments qui pourront ou non aboutir, mais qui tous participent à l'élan créateur. »

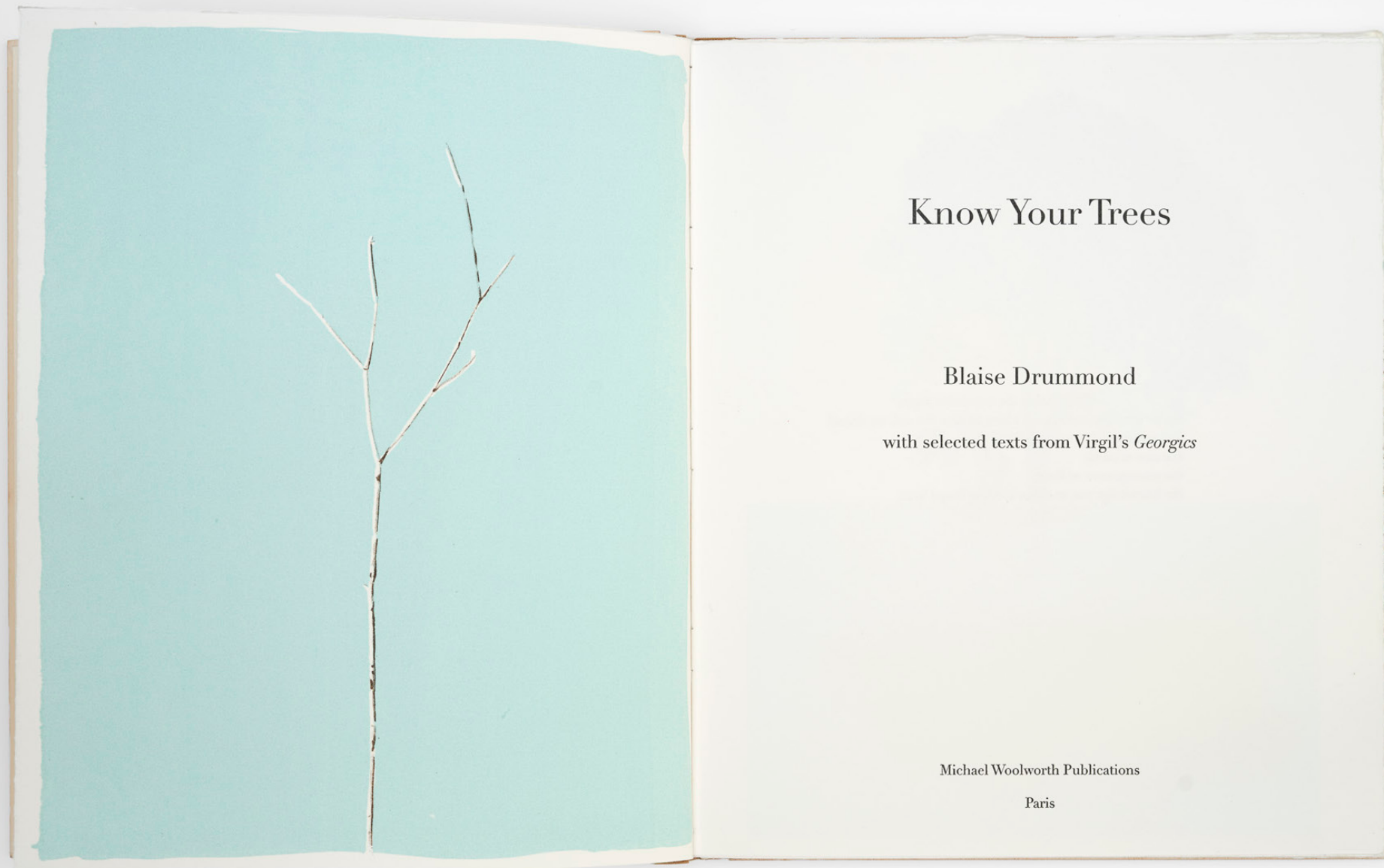
Les pages se déploient comme une constellation mouvante : une tige de fenouil cueillie sur le toit de l'atelier, un frêne aperçu depuis une fenêtre, une liste d'oiseaux tirée des *Géorgiques* – et l'image d'un traquet, absent du poème. Une photographie de Léon Tolstoï aux côtés de Maxime Gorki ouvre un autre fil : la question, insistante, de ce que signifie « bien vivre ». D'autres fragments surgissent : des échos musicaux (Jonathan Richman), un hommage pictural à Fairfield Porter, des logos de caisses de fruits, des timbres, des listes de mots, des pensées éparses sur la langue et la représentation. Chaque image reste ouverte, laissant place à l'interprétation. Ce ne sont pas des illustrations, mais des reflets, des notes intimes, des annotations visuelles dans un dialogue ininterrompu entre l'esprit, la page et le monde.

Le titre, *Know Your Trees*, se veut à la fois une suggestion et une invitation : observer de plus près, nommer ce qui nous entoure, et rester attentif à la présence du monde.

Michael Woolworth est un maître-imprimeur d'origine américaine, installé à Paris depuis quarante ans. Il se consacre exclusivement à l'estampe, utilisant des presses manuelles et des techniques telles que la lithographie traditionnelle sur pierre, la gravure sur bois, la linogravure et le monotype.







Know Your Trees

Blaise Drummond

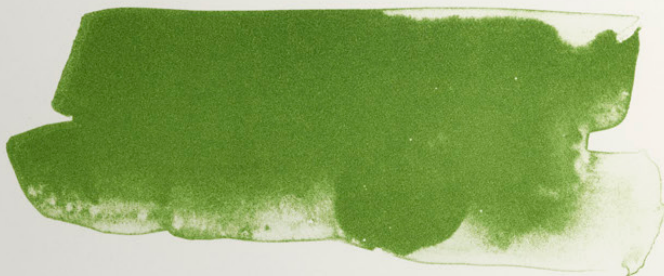
with selected texts from Virgil's *Georgics*

Michael Woolworth Publications

Paris

What makes the cornfields happy
under what constellation it's best to turn the soil, my friend
and train the vine on the elm
the care of cattle
the management of flocks
the knowledge you need for keeping frugal bees.





For the father of agriculture gave us a hard calling
he first decreed it an art to work the fields
sent worries to sharpen our mortal wits
and would not allow his realm to grow listless from lethargy.

Early spring
when a cold moisture sweats from the hoar-head hills
and the brittle clods are loosening under a west wind
is the time for the bull to grunt as he pulls the plough deep-driven
and the ploughshare to take a shine
scoured clean in the furrow.

That crop
which twice has felt the sun's heat and the frost twice
will answer at last the prayers of the never-satisfied farmer
and burst his barns with an overflowing harvest.
But plough not an unknown plain:
first you must learn the winds
and the changeable ways of its weather
the land's peculiar cultivation and character
the different crops that different parts of it yield
or yield not.

A corn-crop here
grapes there will come to the happier issue
on another soil it is fruit trees
and the grass
of its own sweet will
grows green.

ROOK

KING
FISHER
EIZHEB

GULL

FROG

EMMET

RAVEN
SWALLOW

LARK



Look!

From the hilltop he coaxes the water out of its course
and it slides over smooth pebbles
whispering hoarsely
and soothes the parched fields
with its purling.

Be the first to dig the land
the first to wheel off the prunings for the bonfire
the first to bring your vine-poles under cover
but the last to gather the vintage.
Twice will the vines grow thick with shade
and twice will a tangle of briars overrun the vineyards
each makes for hard work
so admire a large estate if you like
but farm a small one.

For a law of nature
makes all things go to the bad
lose ground
and fall away.

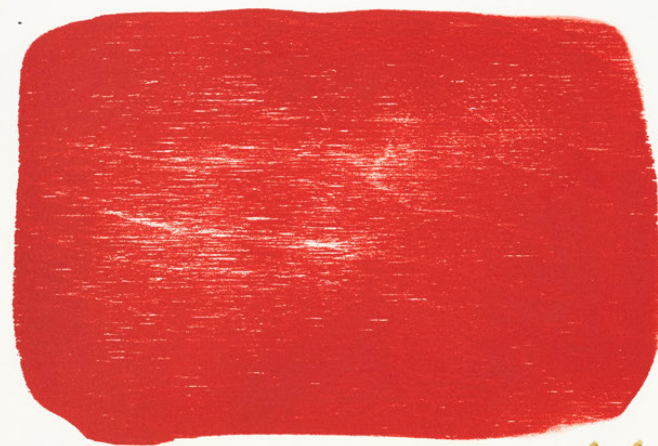
Just as an oarsman, when he is sculling his skiff against the current,
needs but relax the drive of his arms a little
and the current will carry him headlong
away downstream.



Meanwhile
singing a song
to lighten the lengthy task



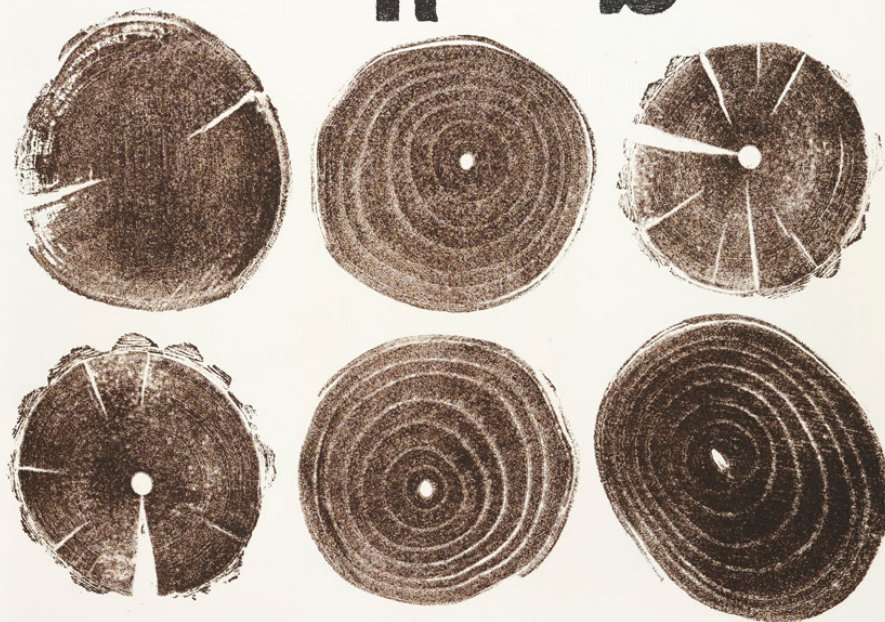
This North Pole's always above us
the South appears beneath







KNOW YOUR TREES



Then are the trackless copses alive with the trilling of birds
 and the beasts look for love
 their hour come round again.
 Lovely the earth in labour
 under a tremulous west wind
 the fields unbosom
 a mild moisture is everywhere.



by a minute fungus, *Ceratocystis ulm*, which grows in the outermost annual ring of wood that the tree forms each summer. It blocks the flow of sap and kills a high proportion of trees attacked. The fungus is spread by little black beetles, *Scolytus scolytus*, which feed on the bark and bast of weakened trees; they carry fungal spores on their bodies, which infect healthy ones. Both fungus and beetle are almost impossible to detect by direct means, so tree growers hope that strains of elm immune to the disease will soon be found.

78



PLANE

Platanus x hispanica

PLATANACEAE

Plane trees are usually first recognized by their dappled bark, for as each segment of olive-brown bark ages, it flakes off and exposes a creamy-white surface below. This turns green and later brown. Bark shedding definitely helps the plane to thrive in smoky cities, for trees must breathe in oxygen through bark as well as leaves.

79



BOX

ILEX

ROWAN

YEW

ALDER

ARBUTUS

MYRTLE

PINE

CEDAR

PLANE

OSIER

CORNEL

OAK

WILLOW

ELM

ASH

LIME

CYPRESS

HAZEL

CHESTNUT

WALNUT

Or acres
from which the ploughman has carted the wood away
intolerant of trees that stood idle for many a year
he felled them
root and branch
he demolished the ancient dwellings of birds
their nests abandoned
the birds have made for the sky
but the land that once was wild
is gleaming now
with furrows.



To begin.

Nature is catholic in the propagation of trees.

Some without human help spring of their own sweet will

and spread abroad by winding streams and on plains—

soft osier, the bending spanish broom

poplars and the pale willow that shows a silver-blue leaf again some grow from seed
they have dropped—

the high-tiered chestnut

the common oak, most prolific of leaf among woodland trees

and the oak that in Greece they fancy is able to tell their fortune.

Others like elm and cherry have a thick undergrowth

cropping up from their roots

the Parnassian bay-tree also when tiny

shelters beneath the immense shade of its mother.

Nature gave from the start such modes

to evolve the green of each tribe of trees

in forest, shrubbery, sacred wood.

Others we've found by experience.

One man takes suckers off the tender stock of the mother

and plants them in trenches : another fixes sets in the field

by notching stakes cross-wise or sharpening the wood to a point.

Some forest trees there are prefer the pinned-down arches of the layer that make a
nursery alive in the parent's earth.

Some need no root

and the pruner can safely commit to the soil

cuttings from off a high branch.

What's more, and this is a marvel,

if you take a saw to the trunk of an olive

a root will come pushing out from the dry wood.

Often again we observe the boughs of one tree change

without harm into another's—

grafted apples growing on a pear

and stony cherries reddening on a plum tree.

So come, you countrymen,

learn the correct training of each in its kind

domesticate wild fruits by your cultivation

and let not the earth be lazy!

It's good to plant with vines Ismarus

and to clothe in olives Mount Taburnus.

And you be at hand and help me complete the task I've begun—

my pride, who rightfully share the chief of my renown— my friend,

and unfurl your flying sails

for the sea lies open.

I cannot hope to include everything in my poem

no, not if I'd a hundred tongues

a hundred mouths

and a voice like iron.

But come and coast the shore

dry land is near

I'll not detain you with lengthy preambles,

digressions, or any poetic fiction.

Trees that spontaneously reach up to the world of light

bear no fruit it's true

but they grow up bonny and strong

for natural vigour is in their soil.

Yet even these

if you graft them or transplant them into prepared trenches

will cast their wildwood ways

and by constant cultivation

be disciplined soon to whatever habits you design for them.

Even a barren sucker

that shoots from the bottom of a tree will do the same

if you plant it out in open ground

otherwise the leaves and boughs of its mother blanket it from above

stifle its growth

dry up its fruitfulness.

A tree that springs from dropped seed grows slowly

it'll give shade one day to your descendants

apples deteriorate, losing their pristine savour

and the vine bears nasty grapes that are good for nothing

but birds.

The fact is, all of these require attention,

all must be forced into furrows

and tamed

with much expense

of labour.



Before Jove's time
no settlers brought the land under subjection
not lawful even to divide the plain
with landmarks and boundaries
all produce went to a common pool
and earth unprompted was free with all her fruits.
Jove put the wicked poison in the black serpent's tooth
Jove told the wolf to ravine
the sea to be restive always
he shook from the leaves their honey
he had all fire removed
and stopped the wine that ran in rivers everywhere
so thought and experiment might forge man's various crafts
little by little
asking the furrow to yield the corn-blade
striking the hidden fire that lies in the veins of flint.
Then first did alder-trunks hollowed out take the water
then did the mariner group and name the stars
the Pleiads, Hyads
and the bright Bear

TURN



STONE

Crops fail
a prickly forest comes pushing up
goose-grass, star-thistle
unfeeding dandelion and barren wild-oats
tyrannize over the shining tillage.
Unless you make war on the weeds relentlessly
with your mattock
and scare the birds away
and pare with a bill-hook
the darkening overgrowth of the country
and the rain has come to your call
vainly alas
you will eye another man's heaped-up harvest
and relieve your own hunger
by shaking an oak in the woods.





And send to our sown fields
the plentiful rain from heaven.



This book was designed by Blaise Drummond and Michael Woolworth. Printed by hand on BFK Rives 250g paper, it juxtaposes images with excerpts from Virgil's poem *The Georgics* (published in 29 BC), selected by the artist from the 1966 English translation by C. Day-Lewis.

The project was completed in December 2023 at Atelier Michael Woolworth, Paris.

Lithographs, monotypes, woodcuts and photo etchings were hand-printed from July 2022 to December 2023 by Léa Tupper and Paul Moragues, with additional printing by Gaëtan Girard and Michael Woolworth. Printers' assistants were Marion Bernard, Cyril Boivin, Jonas Droff, Léa Manzano, Émile Mariot, Eva Nieto, Theodora Paillason and Robinson Plesse-Costa.

The book also includes manual interventions by the artist (watercolor, colored pencil), collages (thread, paper, aluminum foil) and monotypes (leaf imprints). The leaves were collected by the artist in the printshop's immediate surroundings, Place de la Bastille, Paris.

Cover in laser-cut plywood. Letterpress by Pascal Duriez, Issy-les-Moulineaux. Bookbinding by Atelier Houdart, Paris. Slipcases made by Stéphanie Dumont, Vitry-sur-Seine. Photoengraving by Vincent Fardoux, Paris. Laser cutting by Cutter, Paris. Digital printing for the collages by I-Labo, Paris.

The artist extends his sincere thanks to the Arts Council of Ireland for supporting the development of this project.

The edition is limited to forty copies and five artist's proofs, signed and numbered.

Copy n°





Know Your Trees

Mardi 23 septembre, 18h–20h

Rencontre avec Blaise Drummond et Michael Woolworth
autour de ce projet éditorial

Du 18 septembre au 11 octobre

Exposition consacrée au projet de livre d'artiste publié
par Michael Woolworth Publications
Galerie Loevenbruck, 12 rue Jacques-Callot, Paris 6^e