

NATURAL WORLD



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Nick Bibby & Steve Russell
Sculpture and Photography

2021



Introduction

The sumptuous wonders of the natural world have been a constant source of inspiration for artists ever since humans first painted animals on the walls of caves and our evolving relationship with nature can be clearly charted through more than forty thousand years of art history. We have depicted ourselves attacking nature, defending ourselves from its forces, competing with it, taming, changing and domesticating it and are now at a unique moment; we are responsible for nature's very survival in its diversity.

The awe that we still feel faced with the grandeur and beauty of the natural world is the subject of this exhibition seen from two very distinct and different perspectives. Nick Bibby and Steve Russell are passionate advocates for preserving and celebrating this essential support system in which we have evolved and are dependent on.

Great Art always picks up on the grand themes central to our times and there is no more important subject at present than the self-created crisis of biodiversity loss and climate change. Art communicating emotionally as it does has the potential to break through entrenched values and systems to create a mass participating audience for the contemporary necessity of Nature Conservation. We are now in a dynamic relationship with nature where our actions have a direct impact on the ecology of the varied environments around the globe.

Photographs and bronzes may seem puny agents for change on such a scale as is evidently needed but all and everyone of us need to do something and, by sharing through the intimacy of art a feeling for and a connection to nature, as is seldom directly experienced by most of us, they punch way above their weight.

Both artists have proved their commitment over many years.

Nick Bibby's incredible poignant sculptures commissioned for our 'Bones to Bronze' exhibition in 2004 raised thousands of pounds for the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation whilst giving conceptual visibility to the void that is extinction. Steve Russell has contributed to the study of glacier retreat on the Rwenzori Mountains of East Africa with the Royal Geographical Society as well as years of support to our rewilding project in Uganda.

'A picture paints a thousand words' and this remains true for the photographs that Steve Russell makes. His sense for both the vastness of the wilderness compared to our human scale, as well as the detailed micro world of hair, feather, leaf, petal or scales hold as much wonderment in their own right as the animals or plants that bear them.

We have become accustomed to seeing the natural world through epic films of the likes of David Attenborough and stunning volumes of images by generations of outstanding photographers. It is a testament to Russell's commitment that through the destinations that he has come to know intimately, he crafts

an individual and distinct voice in such a crowded field. Using the latest digital technique's, he searches out the images that reveal not just a beautiful animal or plant but a sense of the vulnerable beauty of the wildness. The shrinking glacier high on the peaks and the echo of the shrill cry of Africa's largest eagle soaring over its endangered forest haunts us with its potential demise but also exhilarates us with its beauty.



Balancing Montane Side-Striped Chameleon



Salt Pan

In contrast the very structures of plumage and scales that represent camouflage and display essential for survival brings us hope and wonderment.

Russell's eye, honed through photographing art works, when tuned to the natural world brings out his favoured subject of expression. Survival, just like a photograph, can depend on a split second. A chameleon's tongue extended longer than its body grabs a grasshopper revealing the fastest flash in a chameleons otherwise sedate life, simultaneously illustrating the struggle for existence between insectivore and prey. Close up, the very chromatophores that the chameleon relies on to evade its own predators paint an abstract landscape of colour and texture that in itself is a wonder of evolution.

Human's symbiosis with nature also finds its way into Russell's message. Traditional and sustainable salt manufacture in the volcanic soda lakes, creates patterns imposed on nature, the stillness of the heavy saline water giving symmetry in its reflection. The fishermen in the immensity of the great lakes remind us of our own vulnerability and quest for survival.

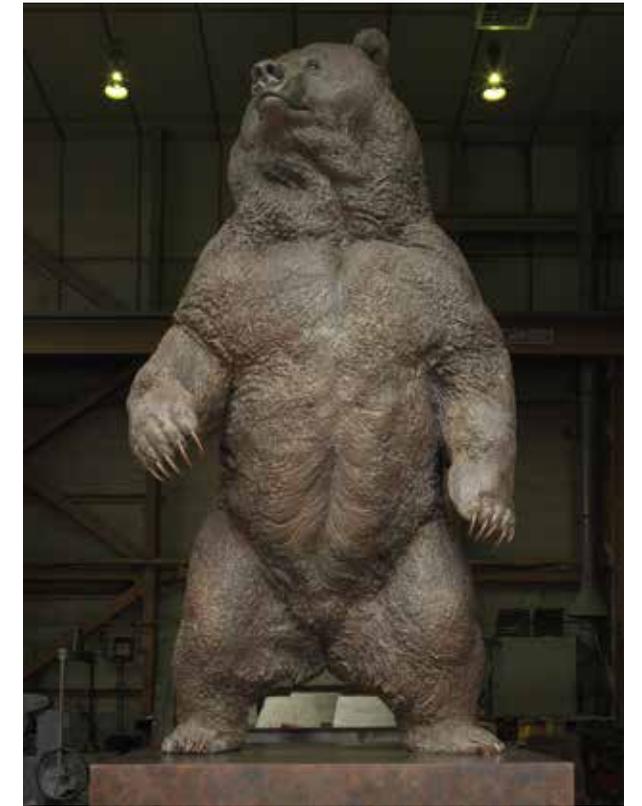
Nick Bibby's sculptures are works of such fine craftsmanship that they could be seen as distillations of nature. Essences in the visual and sensual sense of the wildlife he is enthralled with. They petrify fossil like, moments in animal's lives. Skin and fur, muscle and plumage, worked in clay until they magically transform into a feeling of the living forms he studies so intensely. This obsessive technique was harnessed to tremendous effect in his extinct species bronzes of the Mascarene Islands. Every animal and



Rodrigues Giant Tortoise

bird in this series were no longer in existence and therefore the only references for their realisation were drawn from ships journals, dusty museum specimens and bones found in swamps and caves. Bibby's profound knowledge of anatomy allowed him to create living portraits that gave a face to the very concept of extinction poignantly reminding us of what we have to loose should we not urgently change our ways. A number of these pieces we are once more exhibiting alongside recent work.

The magnificent ten foot tall Kodiak Bear sculpted for Brown University is not on show but its head and face demonstrate at a monumental scale the intensity of his modelling. The stunning portrait of 'Dagu', the patriarch orangutan in Jersey Zoo, captures his character vividly; his ageing wrinkled skin contrasting with the swirl of his orange dreadlocks, his stare stoic, patient and reproachful for our wanton destruction of his primeval forest home.



Kodiak Brown Bear (Indomitable)

The lightning bolt of a hefty peregrine falcon sculpted in frozen time, like the way memory fixes in the mind of those who have witnessed this fastest of all birds in a heart stopping stoop. The thrumming feather tips of its primaries recalls in our ears the surge and rush of wind.

From the huge and dramatic to the humble and tiny, no subject is too insignificant for Bibby. Indeed he revels in exposing beauty in the ordinary garden snail and the common toad; most of us pass by such common urban life failing to observe the minute perfections of their extraordinary forms.

The images created by both Russell and Bibby are important as symbolic markers of our dichotomous relationship with nature. We are now both its



Von Höhnel's Chameleon Skin

destroyer and saviour and in this Janus-like position we could end up either. Through art we can project an instinctive or intellectual emphasis, a sensual or cerebral one. I hope that the skill and craftsmanship involved in creating these images are a reminder that life in a world devoid of the inherent beauty and variety of the environments that shaped us and our abilities, would totally deny us the means to express ourselves. We are a part of Nature and no amount of technology will ever be able to fulfil this role.

The photographs and bronzes in this exhibition are unabashedly beautiful. They delight and celebrate as they not only explore the common subject matter but also revel in the sensual and imaginative sharing of that beauty.

Rungwe Kingdon



Orangutan "Old Man of the Woods" (Miniature)



Sausage Trees
Kidepo, Uganda
Edition of 5
100 x 200 cm





Indian Rhino
(maquette)
Bronze
Edition of 12
38 x 48 x 19 cm



Indian Rhino
Bronze
Edition of 12
63 x 76 x 38 cm

Crater Lake
Uganda
Edition of 5
59.4 x 84.1 cm



Curlew
Bronze
Edition of 12
39 x 45 x 21 cm





Tributary detail

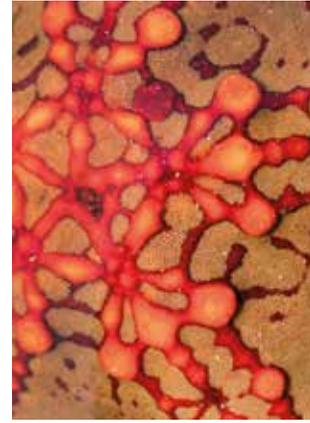
Tributary
Landing at Murchison, Uganda
Edition of 5
84.1 x 59.4 cm





Prairie Rattlesnake
Bronze
Edition of 12
15 x 21 x 16.5 cm





L-R top: Kibale Forest Lichen IV,
Zanzibar Star, Warthog
middle: Blue Monarch,
Pomacanthus Impersonator,
Red Veined Moth Wing
bottom: Ornate Tree Snake Skin,
Hibiscus Pistil, Monitor Lizard
Hahnemuhle Baryta, mounted
on aluminium
Edition of 10
21 x 14.8 cm



L-R top: Zebra Skin, Johnston's Three Horned Chameleon Tail (Red)
bottom: Ornate Tree Snake Skin, Giraffe Skin
C-Type Metallic print, mounted on aluminium
Edition of 10
29.7 x 42 cm



Dragonfly
Sterling Silver
Edition of 25
3 x 8 x 8 cm



Toad II
Bronze
Edition of 25
8 x 15 x 10 cm



View from Bujuku Hut
Rwenzori, Uganda
Edition of 5
100 x 200 cm



Peregrine II
(Lightning Bolt)
Bronze
Edition of 15
81 x 46 x 25 cm





Snow on the Peaks *detail*

Snow on the Peaks
Rwenzori, Uganda
Edition of 5
118.9 x 84.1 cm





Humpback Whale
Bronze
Edition of 15
40 x 79 x 30 cm





Latham Island
Tanzania
Edition of 5
100 x 200 cm



Pygmy Shrew
Sterling Silver
Edition of 9
5 x 4 x 2.5 cm



Water Snail
Sterling Silver
Edition of 12
13 x 12 x 5 cm

Storm over Narus Valley
Kidepo, Uganda
Edition of 5
59.4 x 84.1 cm



British Longhorn Bull
(Blackbrook Philosopher)
Bronze
Edition of 12
76 x 101 x 30 cm



Wildebeest Migration
Crossing the Mara River
Kenya
Edition of 5
100 x 200 cm





Kodiak Brown Bear
(Indomitable – Miniature)
Sterling Silver, Bronze Base
Edition of 25
11 x 4 x 4 cm



Kodiak Brown Bear
(Indomitable – Head Study)
Bronze
Edition of 12
110 x 60 x 40 cm

Pian Upe
Uganda
Edition of 5
59.4 x 84.1 cm





Sumatran Orangutan
(Old Man of the Forest)
Bronze
Edition of 12
70 x 105 x 90 cm



Nyamileju
(Forest of Giant Heather)
Rwenzori, Uganda
Edition of 5
100 x 200 cm



Black Rhino
Bronze
Edition of 12
38 x 48 x 17 cm



Road to Kigali
Rwanda
Edition of 5
59.4 x 84.1 cm





Long-Tailed Tits
(The Lovebirds)
Bronze
Edition of 25
33 x 15 x 15cm



Camels
Moroto, Uganda
Edition of 5
100 x 200 cm





Carinate Tropic Snail
(Extinct Species)
Bronze
Edition of 20
4 x 11 x 3 cm



Rodrigues Giant Tortoise
(Extinct Species)
Bronze
Edition of 10
122 x 94 x 81 cm

Pilot Whales
Tanzania
Edition of 5
59.4 x 84.1 cm





Emperor Penguin
Bronze
Edition of 12
104 x 60 x 40 cm



View down upper Mubuku
Uganda
Edition of 5
100 x 200 cm





Pangolin
Sterling Silver
Edition of 25
6 x 9 x 8 cm

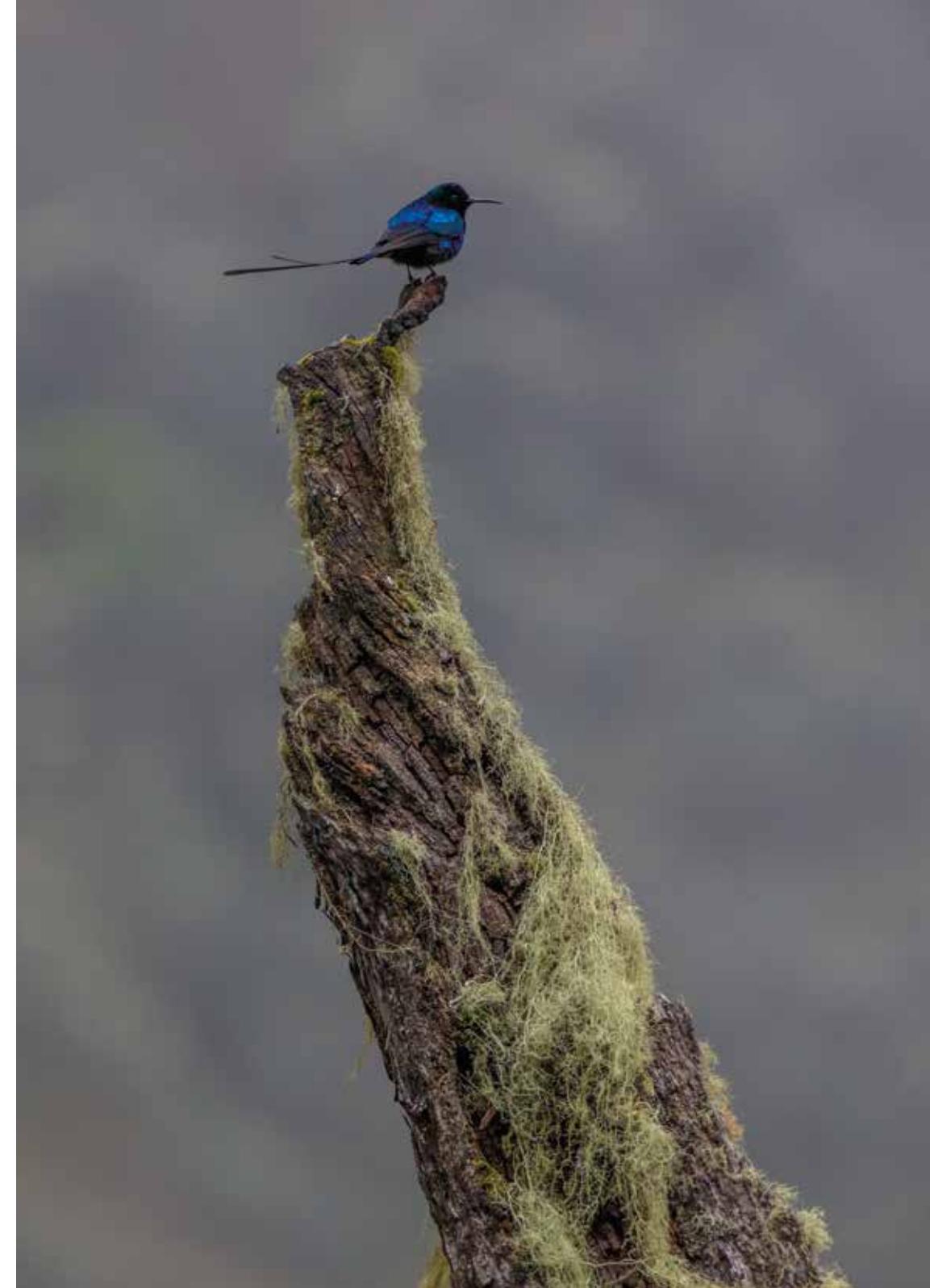


Pangolin
Bronze
Edition of 50
6 x 9 x 8 cm



Orange Tufted Malachite Sunbird *detail*

Orange Tufted Malachite Sunbird
Lower Bigo Bog
Rwenzori, Uganda
Edition of 5
84.1 x 59.4 cm





Ptarmigan
Bronze
Edition of 12
42 x 28 x 18 cm



Leaving Nyamileju Shelter
Rwenzori, Uganda
Edition of 5
59.4 x 84.1 cm





Garden Snail
Bronze
Edition of 25
13 x 15 x 8 cm

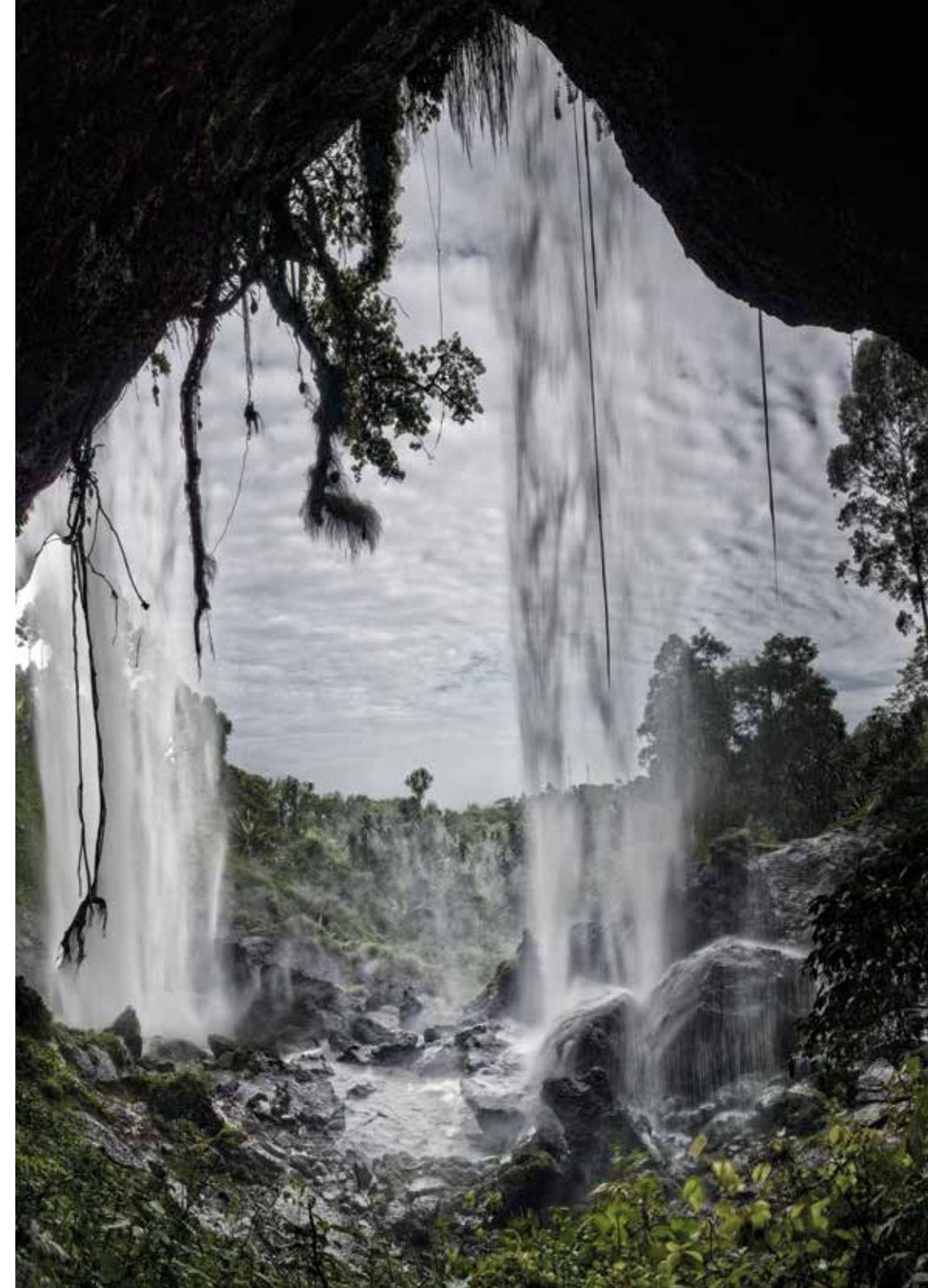


Garden Snail
Sterling Silver
Edition of 25
13 x 15 x 8 cm



Sipi Falls detail

Sipi Falls
Kapchorwa, Uganda
Edition of 5
84.1 x 59.4 cm



Red Deer Stag
(The Emperor of Exmoor)
Bronze
Edition of 12
40 x 36 x 15 cm



Crowned Hawk Eagle
Rwenzori, Uganda
Edition of 5
59.4 x 84.1 cm





Goshawk
Bronze
Edition of 12
38 x 43 x 15 cm



Lower Bigo Bog
Rwenzori, Uganda
Edition of 5
100 x 200 cm



White Park Bull
(Ash Nik-Nak)
Bronze
Edition of 12
38 x 53 x 15 cm





Off the Coast of Zanzibar *detail*

Off the Coast of Zanzibar
Tanzania
Edition of 5
118.9 x 84.1 cm





Little Owl II
Bronze
Edition of 15
50 x 20 x 20 cm



Committee Meeting
Moroto, Uganda
Edition of 5
59.4 x 84.1 cm





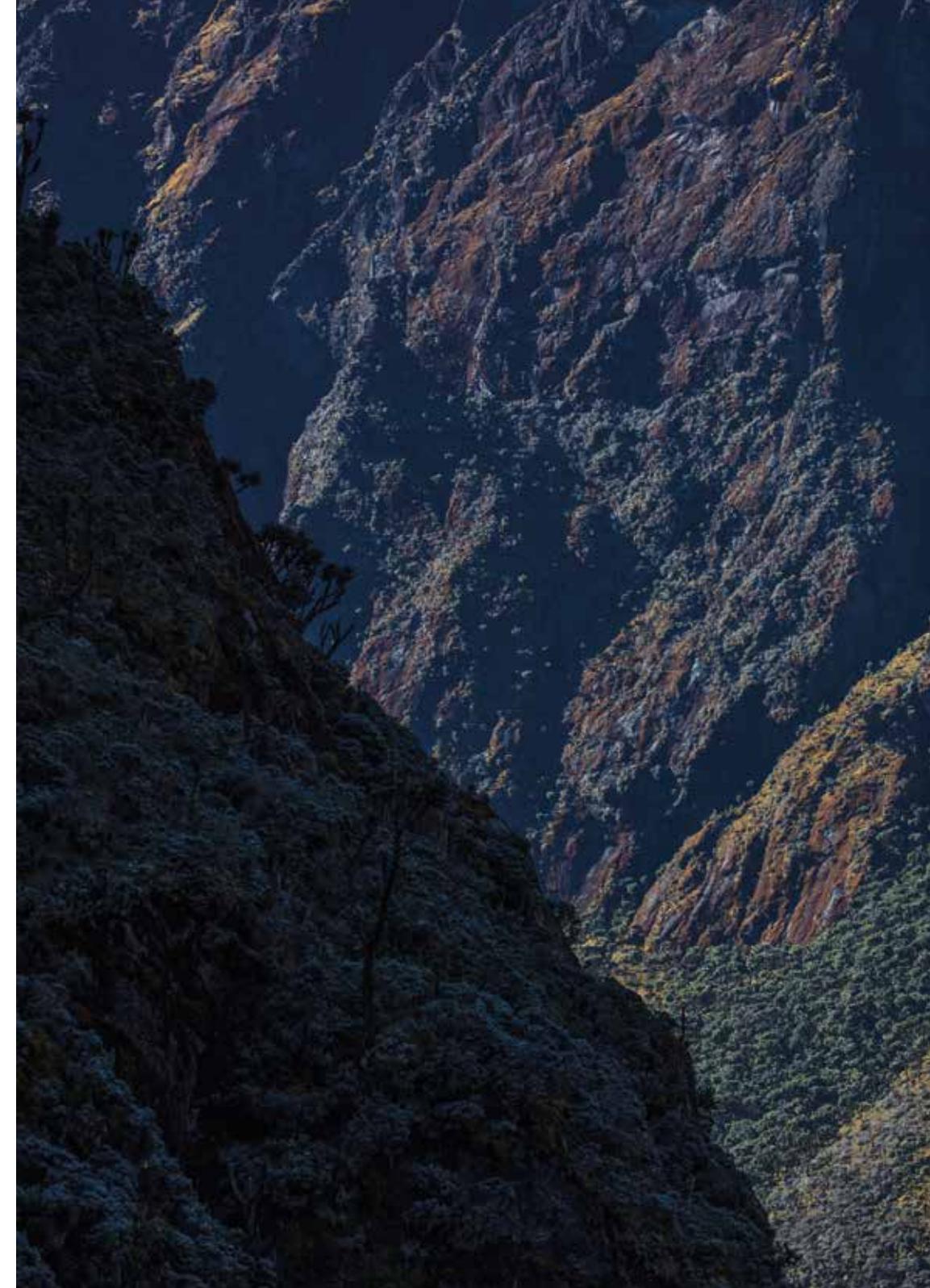
Gyrfalcon
Bronze
Edition of 12
170 x 61 x 46 cm





Minus 6 at Bujuku Hut detail

Minus 6 at Bujuku Hut
Rwenzori, Uganda
Edition of 5
84.1 x 59.4 cm





Red Grouse II
Bronze
Edition of 12
13 x 30 x 17 cm



View from Kurt
Schaffer Bridge
Rwenzori, Uganda
Edition of 5
84 x 42 cm





Design: Gallery Pangolin
Photography: Steve Russell Studios
Printing: Severn

Sculpture measurements are height x width x depth

Photograph measurements are height x width
Printed on Hahnemuhle Baryta, mounted on aluminium

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