

A Seed of Truth

An exhibition inspired by the life and work of Ernest Douglas

The inspiration for the work in this exhibition stems from a chance find by Liz Brown in 2007 of an old book wrapped in felt when helping clear a friend's attic. In addition to the book, two small photographs were found among the pages. The book, which is displayed in a case in the gallery space, is a copy of *Mechanical Engineering of Collieries* by C.M. Percy. What makes the book unusual is the handwritten notes and drawings that are written among the pages.

The notes apparently detail the results of rather unusual botanical experiments over a series of months, and while the year has not been recorded in the entries, it has been estimated that they date from about 1879 to 1885. The notes do not appear to be written chronologically, that is, the records of one experiment do not follow on from the next and the results are scattered throughout the book.



Figure 1

Most noteworthy are the images of what appear to be an attempt at hybridisation of animals and plants with the aim of growing an animal inside a fruit - one image shows a human baby growing inside a fruit.



Figure 2

It is unknown whether the drawings are the documentation of actual results or the constructs of a fruitful imagination.

The notes and drawings have been attributed to one "Ernest Douglas" whose signature appears on a number of occasions throughout the book. Very little is known about him, other than that he was one of the previous occupants of the house in Scotland in which the book was found. The lady and child portrayed in the photos [Figures 1 and 2] found with the book have not been identified, and their relationship to Ernest is open to interpretation.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the OPW and Feltmakers Ireland for their support in this exhibition.