

Ori Orisun-Merhav

A PORTAL INTO THE MULTI-SPECIES

SARAH MYERSCOUGH GALLERY

A primordial obsession reimagined in the present, whispering of future utopias.

This is the vocation of Ori Orisun, an artist whose fascination with the entomological phenomenon of shellac defines her practice. Inherently feminine, secreted by the Lac insect in the forests of South East Asia, her volatile medium glistens with an amber glow - pooling into deep gradients or stretched taut as a glassy skin in planes and fractal constellations of sparkling resin.

With inherent links to the history of craft and furniture-making, the storied past of shellac finds new hope in the artist's intrinsic dialogue with the natural processes of the animal kingdom. Once applied as protection and insulation as a varnish, sealant, or glaze, today Orisun respects the material's organic legacy, re-imagining its scale and conscientiously widening the parameters of its inherent behaviours. Tempered by machine - its sculptural proclivities forced into a semblance of uniformity - it rebels, transforming once again into cellular networks at the chemical mercy of temperature and time.

For *A Portal Into The Multi-Species*, Orisun approaches the corridor as a liminal space, imagining a transitory architecture or passerelle between the differing modalities of her work.

In an opening gesture, delicate clusters of mouth-blown bubbles sprout like creatures on sprigs of steel, forming suspended cocoons frozen on the gallery walls. By mimicking the insect itself formed with its own byproduct, they exist somewhere between the animal and the botanical: representing the building blocks of her research grounded in the artisanal processes of hand manipulation and the tools of sugar and glass-blowing.

Beyond, the scale shifts as the artist imagines shellac in conversation with other natural fibres. Fiery globes of shellacked palm sheaths (each a rigid carapace) rest in steel claws to form a canopy of orb-like lamps: LEDs illuminate the structure from inside to reveal the exoskeletal qualities of the woven fibres trapped within it.

On the ground floor below, the video artwork METAXÝ conceived with Studio Mimesis proposes a self portrait of the artist as insect. In an interspecific conversation with the Lac insect, Orisun appears adorned by her shellac creations forming an architectural halo that seems to defy gravity, as digital expressions of shellac dematerialise around her. Anthropological and allegorical in its approach, the work comments on material relationships as disguise and adornment, evoking the human capacity to transform our environments and in turn our selves.

In a monolithic fusion of technology and happenstance, a lone vessel from the Morpho series demonstrates the unique and constantly evolving process of 3D extrusion printing defined by the artist. Trapped between order and chaos, the womb-like vase seems both prehistoric and alien, its 360° honeycomb of shellac forming an imperfect amphora erupting with dripping grids of resin. Part record, part mirage, it's a printed metaphor for shelter and resistance - a living, growing organism wounded and healed *ad infinitum*.

Words by Dan Thawley



THE WOVEN INSECT CANOPY

Ori Orisun Merhav's latest body of work emerges after a two-month immersion in the desert of AlUla, where her practice unfolded through direct engagement with the land and the farmers of Mabiti—custodians of date palms cultivated for over 3,000 years. Guided by a material-led approach, Orisun approached the palm not merely as a subject, but as a system of intelligence, deconstructing its structural anatomy layer by layer. Observing how the plant's interlocking sheaths naturally weave themselves into being to transfer nutrients and sustain life, she uncovered a resilient architecture formed by nature itself.

By developing a technique to harvest these naturally grown palm textiles—materials already imbued with rhythm, tension, and communal reverence—Orisun initiated a continuous dialogue between hand and land, tradition and experimentation. She gathered fallen trees to decode their internal logic, integrating harvested palm fibres with natural insect resin to engineer a novel composite material. The resulting medium balances structural rigidity with elasticity and translucency, capturing a structural skeleton within a subtle, light-transmitting polymer.

Hand-stitched into organic bodies, the works exist at the intersection of artefact and organism, blurring the boundary between what is grown and what is constructed. In her atelier, these natural weaves coalesce into a sculpted landscape that carries the distinct scent of the desert alongside a quiet shimmer of heat and time. For Merhav, creation becomes a profound act of listening, allowing the desert to demonstrate how structure, care, and time can coexist within a single fibre.



The Woven Insect Canopy
Bifurcation, 2026
Palm fibres, insect resin and steel



The Woven Insect Canopy
Bifurcation, 2026
Palm fibres, insect shellac and steel



The Woven Insect Canopy
Bifurcation, 2026
Palm fibres, insect resin and steel



The Woven Insect Canopy Regeneration, 2026
Palm fibres, insect resin and steel

The Woven Insect Canopy Germination, 2026
Palm fibres, insect resin and steel

The Woven Insect Canopy Awakening, 2026
Palm fibres, insect resin and steel



The Woven Insect Canopy Regeneration, 2026
Palm fibres, insect resin and steel



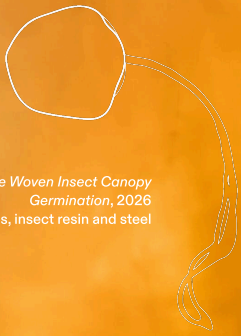
The Woven Insect Canopy
Awakening, 2026
Palm fibres, insect resin and steel



The Woven Insect Canopy
Germination, 2026
Palm fibres, insect resin and steel



The Woven Insect Canopy
Bifurcation, 2026
Palm fibres, insect resin and steel



The Woven Insect Canopy
Germination, 2026
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Awakening, 2026
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The Woven Insect Canopy
Regeneration, 2026
Palm fibres, insect resin and steel



THE *MORPHO* SERIES

Following an inquiry by the Centre Pompidou, Orisun and her research partner Ninon de Loisy developed a coded language derived from the extrusion patterns of Kerria lacca insects—establishing an intimate dialogue between living organisms and digital machines. Their method was one of rigorous iteration, progressing through systematic trials, failures, and breakthrough discoveries.

Guided by these natural systems, the duo adapted Ginger Additive technology to engineer a bespoke 3D printer they call the 'Insect Printer'. Echoing the insects' innate process of deposition, the apparatus builds up successive layers of bio-resin via code distilled directly from cocoon architecture. In the wild, the female insects ultimately become encased within the amber crust of their own creation, forming a quiet, collective urn—a phenomenon faithfully mirrored in this material synthesis.

The series is limited to an edition of 26. Highlighting its critical success, the inaugural piece was acquired by the Centre Pompidou for its permanent collection, while the second entered a prominent private collection following its debut at TEFAF New York. With the third edition similarly secured by a private collector, the gallery is delighted to unveil the fourth edition to the public for the very first time in this exhibition.



Morphopoiesis, 2026
3D printed insect
polymer (shellac)
58 H x 37 W x 37 D cm
Edition 04/26

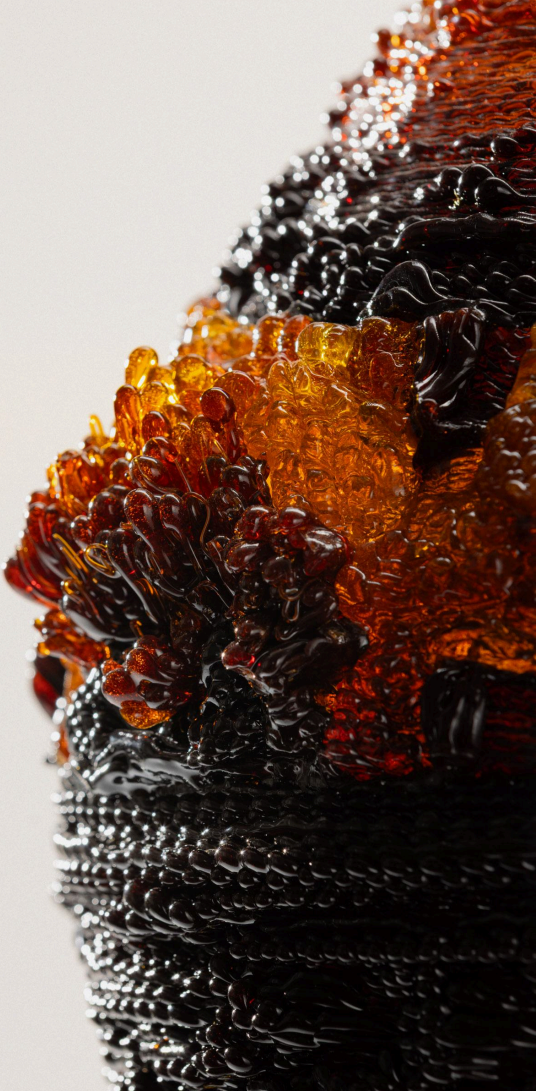
Morphopoiesis combines
two Greek roots

morphe (μορφή)
form, shape

poiesis (ποίησις)
making, creation, bringing-into-being.



Morphopoiesis, 2026
3D printed insect
polymer (shellac)



Morphopoiesis, 2026
3D printed insect
polymer (shellac)



Morphopoiesis, 2026
3D printed insect
polymer (shellac)



Morphogenesis, 2026
3D printed insect
polymer (shellac)
64 H x 43 W x 43 D cm
Edition 01/26

First in edition acquired by the
Centre Pompidou for their
permanent collection.



Morphocatalysis, 2026
3D printed insect
polymer (shellac)
64 H x 43 W x 43 D cm
Edition 02/26

Second in edition acquired
at TEFAF New York for a
private collection.



THE INSECT BRANCHES

Insects Branches is a new series by Made by Insects, presented for the first time in *A Portal into the Multi-Species*. Abstracting the form of the insect's cocoon, Orisun imagines new forms situated somewhere between botanical structures and organisms—as if insect and tree had merged into a single species.

Steel branches coated in an insect-produced patina extend delicate, mouth-blown lac bubbles, creating small growths along their surfaces. Designed to expand beyond a single composition, the branches can be added to and extended over time, allowing the work to gradually take over a wall. Part sculpture, part growing system, Insects Branches plays with the boundary between something made and something that appears to be growing, inviting the architecture itself to become a host for an evolving material organism.



Branching Insects 01
Steel and insect polymer (shellac)
80 H x 25 W x 30 D cm

Branching Insects 02
Steel and insect polymer (shellac)
53 H x 17 W x 25 D cm

Branching Insects 03
Steel and insect polymer (shellac)
58 H x 11 W x 16 D cm





Branching Insects 01
Steel and insect polymer (shellac)





Branching Insects 02
Steel and insect polymer (shellac)
53 H x 17 W x 25 D cm



SARAH MYERSCOUGH GALLERY



Prices exclude crating & shipping costs.
Quotes available on request.

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Founded in 1998, Sarah Myerscough Gallery is a leading voice in contemporary craft and material-led practice. The gallery represents an international roster of artists working at the intersection of craft, design, and sculpture. Their practices reflect an attunement to cultural relationships with natural materials, particularly wood, combining traditional craftsmanship with innovative approaches that challenge disciplinary boundaries.

Through skills honed in dialogue with material, our artists articulate complex philosophical questions that contextualise our present-day relationship to making. Their practices speak to environmental, social, and cultural representation, often navigating a coexistence with the natural world. Through its programming, the gallery invites ongoing reflection on how we embrace the significance of the handmade to foreground the intelligence of materially grounded and conceptually rigorous works.

The gallery continues to foster long-term collaboration with artists, curators, critics, and institutions, and is committed to expanding the role of craft within contemporary culture, representing sundry works from bespoke furniture collections and architectural applications, to dynamic sculpture and installation. In 2024, it presented its first international exhibition at Galerie56 in New York, and its artists' works are held in significant public and private collections worldwide. The gallery's programme reflects this ethos across exhibitions, public events, and major international fairs, including TEFAF Maastricht, TEFAF New York, PAD London, FOG Design + Art San Francisco.