

Relli De Vries | Soil Drift and Plant Movement

Curator: Leah Abir

17/07/2025 – 13/09/2025

This exhibition was created in a time-out-of-time, in a space loaded with violence and yearning for grace. It brings together artworks that evolved along an axis of earth and sky—a trajectory of falling and attempts at flight. Various movements, both physical and mental, of drift and pull, guide Reli De Vries' sculptures, installations, and their positioning in the gallery space. The exhibition features sculptures that function as "substandard devices": humanoid-vegetative metal constructions with outstretched arms. Alongside them are static and moving images, sculptures generated from imprints of body parts, and objects that were found and collected.

The exhibition began with thoughts about plant behavior and their growth mechanisms. De Vries sees plants as a society in its own right, coexisting with human society with an entangled space between them. In human hands, plants are subjected to instrumentalization, that is, they become objects for human use. Even without physical contact, simply being within sight, they turn into metaphor—another form of human usage. For example, they would immediately be made into symbols of earthiness, belonging, desire, beauty, nourishment, and inspiration.

Yet the motion of human yearning for beauty and rootedness runs into the plant dynamic of a yearning for light—reaching toward the sun, whose rays become their breath. Another botanical generative force, branching, also plays a key role in the new works—visually, materially, and conceptually. The different components of the installations are inspired by arboreal and ramification structures—the way one thing leads to another.

At the center of the exhibition is *The Institute for Soil Drift Research*: a participatory social sculpture intended for gathering, but also for opening up the exhibition to conversations and encounters. The notion of viewership as concentrated and attentive communication with the world aligns with the vision of this gallery, which was founded by social organizations dedicated to society and culture, labor and ecology, shared existence, and social change.