

Press Release

# Sarah Graham Genius Loci

8 October – 14 November 2025



*Musa acuminata I & Musa acuminata III*, 2025, charcoal, ink and acrylic on canvas, 191 x 150 x 4.5 cm

*"There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved."* - **Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species**

On the 8<sup>th</sup> October Lyndsey Ingram will present a new body of work by Sarah Graham. **Genius Loci** was realised in the heart of Kenya, following an immersive three-month stay at Sirocco near Lake Naivasha and the Samburu National Reserve. Graham uprooted to Africa at the beginning of 2025 with her two young daughters and husband, leaving behind the confines and comfort of her London studio to work in the wilderness. In a makeshift studio, she began creating work with what little she had to hand and completely exposed to the elements.

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*"I found the endless plains, the invigorating light and the wildlife all around me completely intoxicating. I had very little with me and it was cathartic to empty both my mind and my environment of all the things I usually carry around at home."* This lack of control led to unrestrained creative freedom and a transformation in her work. Drawing from the raw, unfiltered beauty of her surroundings, she observed her subjects in their natural habitat. This profound experience forms the foundation for a new body of work, where she explores a more visceral and immediate approach to her practice.

The result is a powerful series of paintings and drawings that marks a significant evolution in Graham's *oeuvre* and an important departure from her previous work. Pushing boundaries with her boldest work to date, she ventures into the realms of gesture and abstraction, embracing the power of shape, form and space. As is always the case with her work, this series is rooted in observing the natural world. Graham focuses on the *Musa acuminata* (banana plant), taking inspiration from the untamed beauty of the Kenyan landscape. The work is a testament to the power of mark-making, bringing the natural world before us with a clear, unorthodox eye. Form comes into being with subtly coloured ink blushes, washes, stains and seepages. Mottled pools puddle and soak into the canvas, drying to make the layers of glossy leaf sheaths. Graphic, calligraphic dashes and delicate striations define the sail-like leaves of the banana plant. Nature requires no further manifesto or explanation. Her pictures are – in essence – about wonder and strange pleasures, engaging the eye and mind.

Working on unstretched canvas used for dhow sails and rolls of Japanese paper laid on the ground - Graham became fully immersed in the landscape, absorbing the grittiness of her surroundings. She found the African light very addictive and inspiring, opening up a completely new palette of colour and intensity. Painting in the bush surrounded by curious monkeys, zebras, giraffes and other indigenous wildlife, Graham formed a profound connection to the land. Her use of ancient materials; charcoal, dyes made from squid ink and oak gall apples, infuses the work with a sense of timelessness and primal energy, reflecting the very essence of her environment.

Graham has always referred to the Modern British Romantics in her work; particularly Paul Nash and his ethos - *spirit of place*. Nash was drawn to landscapes with a great sense of ancient history and talismanic quality which he called *genius loci*, or 'the spirit of a place', painting them repeatedly. She found a great affinity in this new environment and with the banana plant that she was painting. Like Nash, she recognised the spirit or guardian deity unique to this specific place and the way in which she was emotionally experiencing it.

Sarah Graham's approach is fluid and instinctual; she creates work that balances the organic with the abstract. Through the work, she invites us into a tactile, immersive world that feels both ancient and timeless. The exhibition will be accompanied by a film directed by Felipe Sanguinetti and a publication with photographs taken by Miguel Flores-Vianna, that add further depth to this remarkable story of art, conservation and a profound connection to the land.

**The Sirocco Wildlife Sanctuary** is situated at the foot of Mount Longonot, across from Lake Naivasha, the sanctuary began its transformation from a working farm to a wildlife haven in 1993 by Iain & Oria Douglas-Hamilton. Since then, nature has taken charge, and Sirocco has become a vibrant protected area and riparian corridor for a fascinating assortment of wild creatures. The gentle co-existence between people and animals that so marks this place is evident in the supremely relaxed and confident manner of the wildlife and held a huge fascination for Graham.

**The Samburu National Reserve** was established in 1962; a community- managed wilderness, preserved by the local Samburu communities. With vast, arid landscapes, it is home to nearly 900 elephants and a diverse range of indigenous wildlife. In 1993, Iain Douglas-Hamilton founded Save the Elephants (STE), a conservation organisation and charity, with its primary research station located at the reserve. STE's mission is to secure a future for elephants and sustain the beauty and ecological integrity of the places they inhabit. Today, the elephants of Samburu are among the most studied in the

world. The data collected over the last 30 years has allowed scientists to understand the impacts of the ivory poaching crisis on populations across Africa. The sight of these magnificent creatures in their vast, unbridled landscape left a profound impact on Graham and her family, igniting a desire to honour them through her work.



*Sarah Graham and her family in Kenya, photograph taken by Miguel Flores-Vianna, 2025*

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Sarah Graham **Genius Loci** is open to the public at Lyndsey Ingram, 20 Bourdon Street, London W1K 3PL every Monday to Friday between the 8 October to 14 November 2025 from 10am until 6pm.

For images and further information please contact [info@lyndseyingram.com](mailto:info@lyndseyingram.com) or call +44 (0) 207 629 8849.