

A Review of Taraxacum Officianale : Growth, Growth, Growth!
Division of Labour Gallery, Holy Trinity Church, London

by Paul Carey Kent

This is triple nice: Castor Gallery's former space in Holy Trinity Church, Islington, continues to find good use; Nat Pitt's adventurous and socially-engaged Worcester-based Division of Labour gets a London outpost for May-June; and the humble dandelion takes centre stage in Hilary Jack's presentation.

Her title – 'The Taraxacum Officinale' – suggests that it's a biennale-style event in the art calendar, and her sub-title – 'Growth, Growth, Growth!' – tells us that the officinale will regularly question a system in which economic expansion is prioritised over the well-being of nature and community. Taken straight, though, Taraxacum officinale is the scientific name of the dandelion, the 'official' element in the Latin recognising its medical use.

Jack goes beyond that value to focus on the fact that the serum derived from dandelion roots can be used to make rubber – and switching from the current dominance of imported rubber tree production would greatly reduce the industry's environmental impact.

Her demonstration piece is a dandelion rubber version of Duchamp's readymade bicycle wheel. A vintage jar of roots is also presented, together with a line of dandelion seeds at the entrance – I don't think I was alone in not noticing that 'Line' was an artwork as I came in! And you can pick up a pack of seeds... That leads us back to my first images, 'Cash Crop' I and II, 2026: Jack has made bronzes which, consistent with that enhanced status, memorialise the dandelion in the manner of statues of 'the great'. Accordingly, they're not hyper-realist, as we don't confuse statues with people (go to @tonymatelli for the bronze plant as exhibition deception).

The gallery texts also point out the positioning of Jack's works in the traditions of conceptual art, and – given the dominance of men in the tyre industry as well as in memorial representations – the inbuilt critique of patriarchy. All that I missed was a nice cup of dandelion tea...