



THE PALM HOUSE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMELIA STEIN

The Lilliput Press, 2012

pp 128 fully illustrated h/b

€40.00/£32.00 ISBN 97818435118723

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The *Palm House* is a published book collection of Amelia Stein's photographs of the Palm House in the National Botanic Gardens in Dublin. The photographs were shot at a turning point in the life of the Palm House, over the two years

and Art Museum Act, 1877, the Botanic Gardens Dublin, which was founded originally in 1795, also had its origins in the 1731 Dublin Society for the Improvement of Husbandry, Manufacturing and Other Useful Arts and Sciences. The Dublin Society became the Royal Dublin Society in 1820.

Many structural aspects of the Palm House such as the fine weight-bearing supports and struts, arched glass domes, and iron floor walkways are common to all three public buildings. It echoes the Victorian conservatory we see in late 19th-century photographs of larger Irish houses but it is on a grander scale in Glasnevin.

In their original environments, palms protect by filtering out fierce sunlight, throwing off rain, nourish with their fruit and oil, and provide building and domestic materials. Amelia Stein's photographs reveal the Palm House as a protective and decaying space where exotic trees, shrubs and grasses are lovingly sheltered, fed and watered, kept warm and pruned. These photos evoke the smell of the tropics and of steamy jungles and the sound of wind and rain on the leaves and stems. They also point to the absence of jungle

Palm House leaves, fronds, stems, barks and flowers, in a critical moment in the life of the Glasnevin Victorian Palm House.

This is a beautiful book. It is a pleasure to leaf through, the photographs are riveting, and the book design is stunning.

Elizabeth M Kirwan is Director of the National Photographic Archive.

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preceding the beginning of its restoration in 2002. This Palm House was erected in 1884 to replace an earlier one that had blown down in 1883, and its construction is a fine example of Victorian engineering and architecture.

Like the National Library and the National Museum, both of which were founded by the Dublin Science

and desert wildlife, which the public would have seen in the Zoological Gardens in the nearby Phoenix Park.

The large sculptural forms are contrasted with the small, delicate and colourful world of potted orchids. The black and white photographs successfully capture the marvellous structural forms and textures of the