

Lost in vegetation

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One of Spain's most successful contemporary artists, Cristina Iglesias, now in her late 40s, belongs to a generation of international artists whose work has expanded conceptions of sculpture to include installations that incorporate elements of the pictorial, sculptural and architectural. Made between the early Nineties and now, the 40 works shown here revolve around the idea of space and environment, both man-made and organic, and their aesthetic and psychological reception by us.

Using various strategies, ranging from representation and allusion to actual physical interventions in the environment, she attempts to create strange and emotive "personal spaces", as is highlighted by the first work you experience.

Suspended from the ceiling slightly above head height and just inside the gallery's entrance, Titled Hanging Ceiling is meant to at least surprise, perhaps even unnerve you. Large, flat, rectangular, grey and pitted with organically shaped indentations, it resembles a fossil bed dragged from beneath sea.

Elsewhere, odd, intricately latticed screens that look Moorish in design stand together in odd formations. Like another ceiling-suspended piece, Passages, made of raffia, the screens incorporate abstract shapes and letters that make up fragmented quotes from Modernist novels and are repeated as silhouettes cast on floor and ceiling. The fullest expression of Iglesias's desire to manipulate environment, however, is found in the Vegetation Rooms, a series of corridors and alcoves made from panels of casts of dense organic matter such as leaves, stalks and flowers.

Ironically, it is Iglesias's earliest, most "traditional" sculptures that work best, for the artificiality of the art object both manages the viewer's expectations and allows meanings to be alluded to and played with. Most installations aim for "real" aesthetic and psychological effects in their audience that they simply cannot hope to achieve. ■

- *Cristina Iglesias is showing at the Whitechapel Gallery until 18 May. Information: 020 7522 7871*