

Residues

Arja Hop and Peter Svenson

Nina Svenson

We see a collection of colours. Different shades, tones, textures. They form a rhythmic whole, they seem to move together, talk to one another . . . This is Amsterdam, seen through the colours of ruderal urban plants. Arja Hop and Peter Svenson use experimental analogue photographic techniques to reveal how plant pigments change colour as they adapt to their environment.

COLLECTION

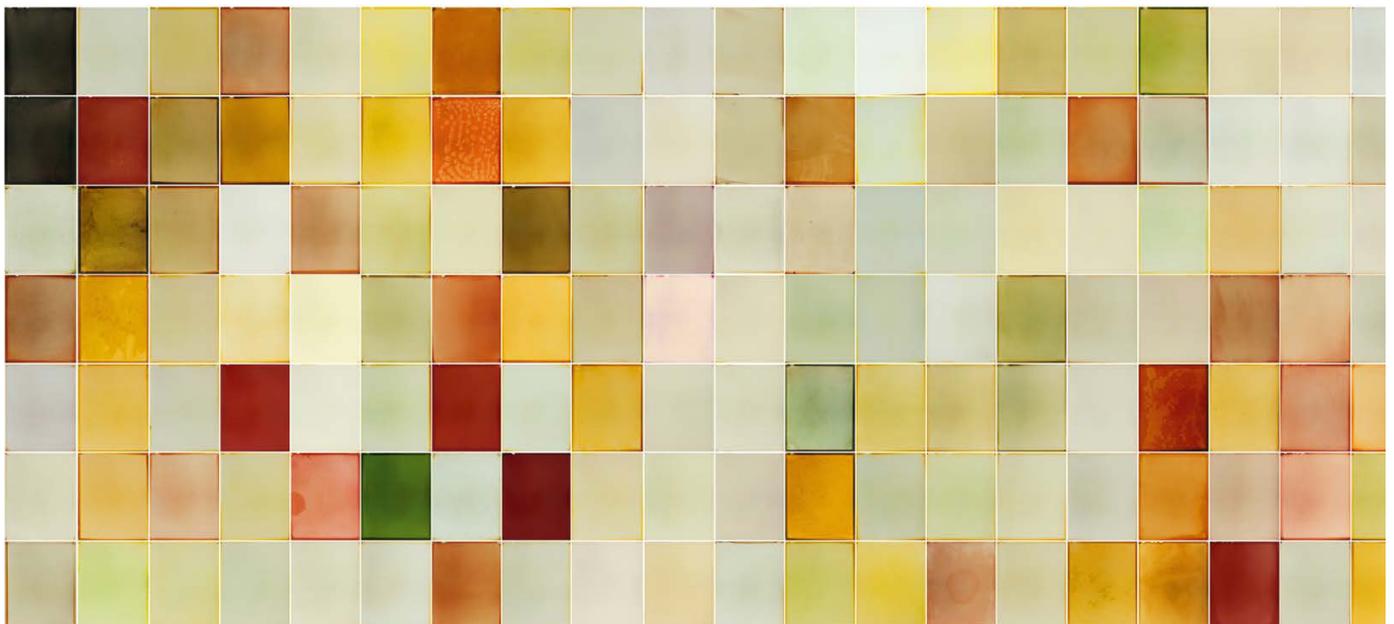
They start by collecting small samples of ruderal plants found in the city. Elderberry, hollyhock, dandelion, poppy and dock are examples of the over one hundred different species of herbaceous plants collected from Amsterdam's streets. Gelatin silver prints depict 'natural habitats', the location where each species is found. The images are documentary, focusing on plants that are part of the city but generally go unnoticed. Printed on barite paper, the prints enhance the gritty urbanness of the site.

EXTRACTION | DISTILLATION | PIGMENT: FLORACHROME

By dissolving the plant material in water, Hop and Svenson extract pigmented juices and mix them with photographic gelatin—the binding element. The pigment is poured onto transparent black-and-white 4 x 5-inch film. Then the camera enters into the process. A camera that the duo built specifically for the project allows them to photograph the film on a large-format colour negative. Finally, the negative is transformed into an analogue chromogenic print, a photographic colour residue. This happens through a laborious process of refinement that takes place in the darkroom, until the colour of the print is optically as much alike as possible to the original plant residue. Each residue, each print, corresponds to a specific plant from a specific place. This meticulous process enables Hop and Svenson to make comparisons between the colours and thus the status of different plants of the same plant family found in different circumstances, based on slight colour nuances of the extracted pigment. The work clearly shows the hands of the artists, like the brush of the painter, yet the outcome of the work is to some extent based on coincidence and dictated by nature, by the colours the plants produce. The artists keep to these colours, not making the residues any more or less beautiful, staying as close to 'the original' as possible. This gives the work directness, as though the plants speak to the viewer through the raw material nature of the work. The work shows the unexpected abundance of colours these seemingly insignificant city plants hide from us, but also the direct consequences of environmental factors on plants.

Analogical C print
273 Residues
250 x 1030 cm, Each one: 24.6 x 31 cm
2014-2019

Residue Amsterdam



PHOTOGRAMS

Photograms create a herbarium of the plants collected. In this camera-less technique, which dates back to the origins of photography but did not enter the realm of art until the twentieth century with avant-garde artists like Man Ray and László Moholy-Nagy, plant subjects are placed onto 8 x 10-inch lithographic film and exposed to light for several seconds. The film is then developed and a gelatin print is made. The detailed structure and form of the plants is emphasized, providing a counterpoint to the colour studies that make the raw colour quality of plants palpable.

NEW GEOGRAPHIES

Detailed engagement with the material and physical qualities of plant matter through a range of analogue techniques makes an overlooked, seemingly invisible part of the environment photographically visible. Hop and Svenson have discovered a mode that is expressive not of the form of plants, but of the complex systems that underlie their growth. Their technique of capturing colours and preserving them on film as 'florachromes' has been registered with the Benelux Office of Intellectual Ownership. The methodological innovation is replicable across wider geographies and has become the impetus of complementary projects across the Netherlands and in New Zealand.

The microscale colour distillations of plants capture an ephemeral, fluid materiality of plants, and are a measure of larger-scale changes in temperature variation and vegetal and geological composition. And yet, each work is still in progress and each chromatic signature informs further investigations and studies. How do local geological sedi-

ments and ecological conditions contribute to colour variations within species? What might a spectrophotometric of the coloured plant dyes reveal? What is the anthropological significance of indigenous plant dyes? The florachromes offer a rigorous visual distillation of broader ecological and cultural questions and both local and regional distinctions in vegetation colours through careful engagement with the material and chemical properties of plants.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Arja Hop and **Peter Svenson** are an artist duo based in Amsterdam. Their work has been exhibited widely in the Netherlands.

Nina Svenson is an art historian. She has worked on projects in art and architecture centres including the Dudok Architecture Centre and the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam.

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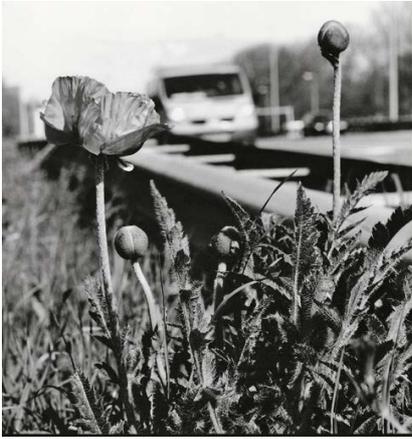




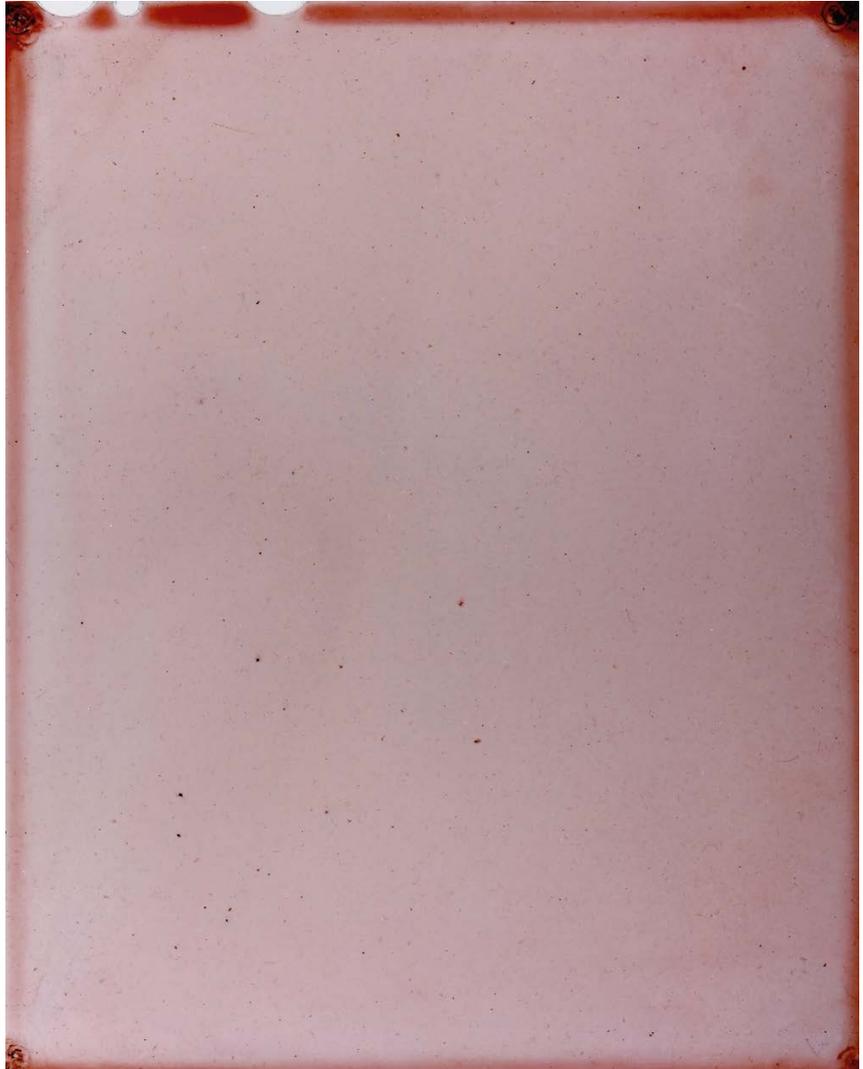
Dyer's rocket / *Reseda luteola*
IJsbaanpad, Amsterdam
Pigment distillation
2018



Dyer's rocket / *Reseda luteola*
IJsbaanpad, Amsterdam
Analogical C print
24.6 x 31 cm
2018



Iranian poppy / *Papaver bracteatum*
Gooiseweg, Amsterdam
Street photography of wild plants
with Mamiya C330S 6 x 6 twin eye
50 x 50 cm
2015



Iranian poppy / *Papaver bracteatum*
Gooiseweg, Amsterdam
Analogical C print
24.6 x 31 cm
2015



Iranian poppy / *Papaver bracteatum*
Gooiseweg, Amsterdam
Photogram on film, silver gelatine - barite
50.8 x 63.5 cm
2015



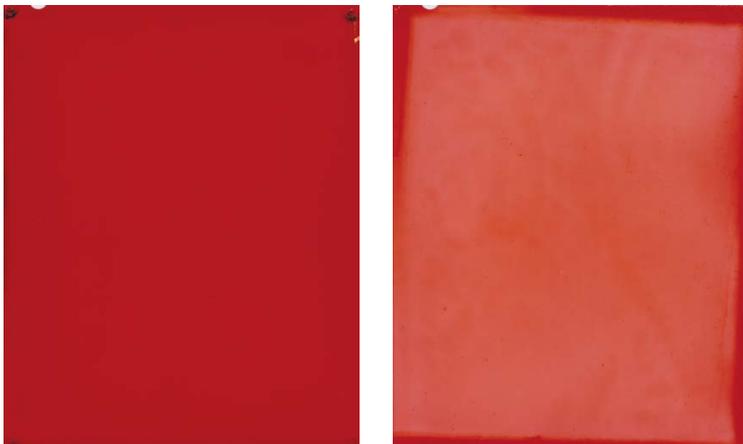
Before summer solstice
May 2020

Vincent Van Gogh
Artist in Residency
Zundert, NL
Tree residues

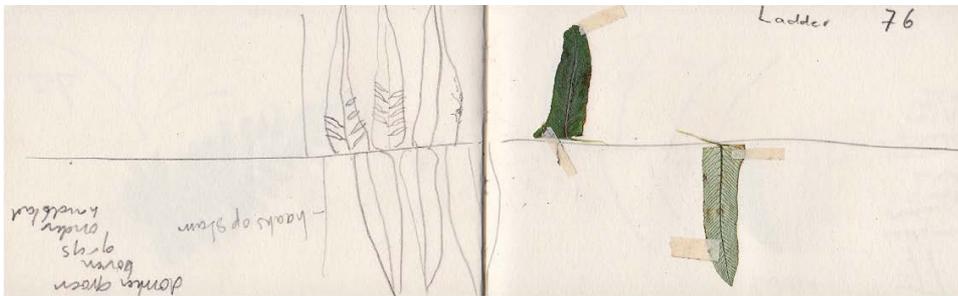
No.	English name	Botanical name	Dutch name	Part
1	European beech 'purpurea'	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i> 'Atropurpurea'	Rode beuk	Leaves
2	Weeping willow	<i>Salix alba</i> <i>cryscocoma</i> 'tristis'	Treurwilg	Leaves
3	Pear	<i>Pyrus communis</i>	Stoofpeer	Leaves
4	Horse chestnut	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	Paardenkastanje	Leaves
5	Weeping ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> 'Pendula'	Treures	Leaves
6	European beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Groene beuk	Leaves
7	Common walnut	<i>Juglans regia</i>	Walnoot	Leaves
8	Turners' oak	<i>Quercus turneri</i> 'Pseudoturneri'	Turners' eik	Leaves
9	Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Zomereik	Leaves
10	Horse chestnut	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	Paardenkastanje	Fruit
11	Norway maple	<i>Acer platanoides</i> 'Faasen's black'	Noorse Rode Esdoorn	Leaves
12	Scots pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Grove den	Needle



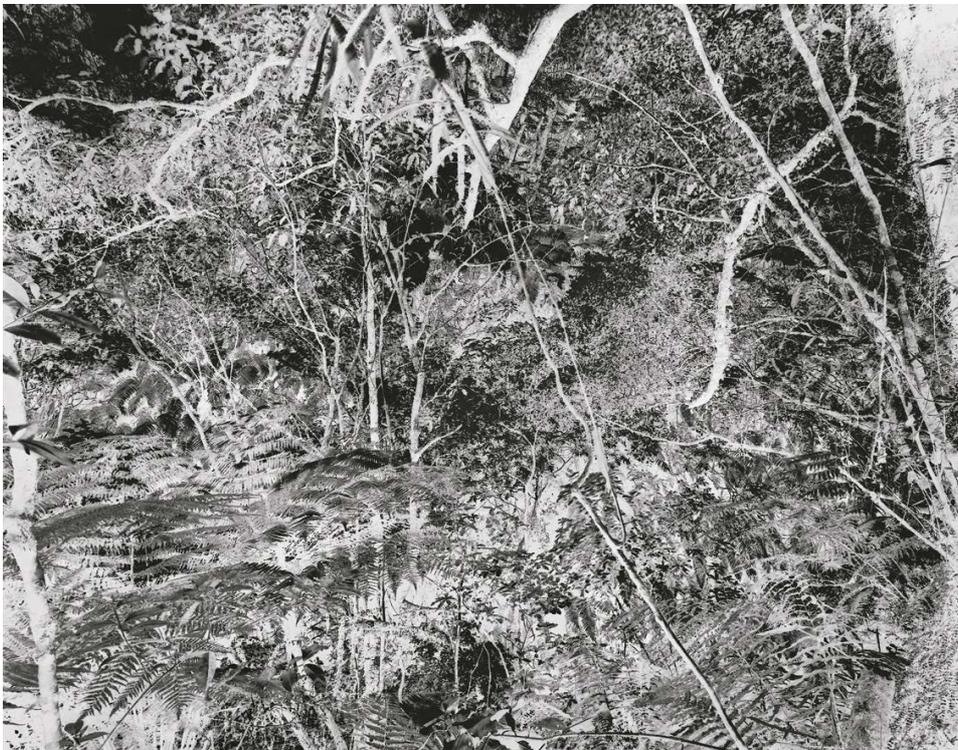
After summer solstice
July 2020



Norway maple
Acer platanoides / 'Faasen's black'
Before and after the summer solstice.
Zundert, NL
Analogical C print
24.6 x 31 cm
2020



Whanganui National Park
Ladder fern, fieldnotes
Mangawaiiti, New Zealand
2019



Whanganui National Park
Silver gelatine - barite
Registration photograph
with technical camera (4-5 inch)
104 x 130 cm
2017