

Exhibition report

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Wildflower



Wildflower is a mixed media installation based on the celebration of 'Women's Shed' a female gardening group in Duvant. Conceptually this exhibition explores materiality both in geographic considerations and organically which works to reinforce a community aspect especially around women and gardening. Cyanotypes replicate the same process a flower takes to grow through time, water and UV light and with a historical relation to Anna Atkins whose botanical impressions fed into my work, as well as being an iconography for female photography. Finding an environmental approach to cyanotypes lead me to anthrotypes where I developed the process of sustainability throughout the project, such as using seed paper to print using beetroot the flowers grown by 'Womens Shed' and recycled coffee cup paper for the prints on the wall.

Historically Women in the arts have been oppressed and devalued, such as Mary Somerville who wasn't allowed to publish the anthrotype process due to her gender. This transpires into society as a visit to the West Glamorgan archive showed the lack of documentation around women and female communities, with nurses being the only example. With my main influence on this work being Anna Atkins who created the first photobook which was unheard of in this era, I wanted to embody her in a contemporary form and change the narrative which was especially important on a female based project where gardening is male dominant such as the well-known 'Men's Shed'. Cyanotypes rich blue colour often symbolic of men plays on gender roles here giving the women in my images a powerful position. Research into Atkins impressions such as the one bellow have been drastically impacted by climate change, this further reinforces my projects environmental aims and questions if the flowers on my anthrotypes will one day be archival images.

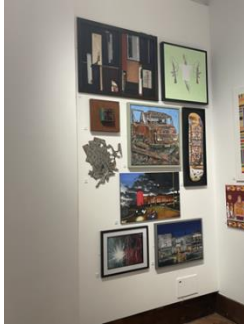


*'Cystoseira foeniculacea', 1843 A cyanotype
of 'Cystoseira foeniculacea' from
'Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype*

Editorial work such as Huck and Manor house by Ossi Piispanen influenced me in how to represent a community through my images, here I learnt that interaction and lots of time spent with the subject is what makes for a successful project. Knowing this I attended every session at 'Women' shed' in the duration of the project. Writers such as John Tagg influenced me in understanding representation as well as Susan Sontag's book 'on Women' who specified this further to the nature of my project.

Visiting exhibitions curatorially and conceptually impacted my work where first Glyn Vivian Swansea open grouped work by themes seen bellow, reflecting on this my work was curated next to Molly Pierce who used images of flowers in contrast to ideas around imperfection, this reflected well to my work as the processes in my work have a handmade element that will never be perfect. Situated in the window area I utilised the

light for my flowers and promote my work to passersby, further establishing myself. Arguably Glyn Vivian however didn't utilise space well as it was cramped and some images were too low-down effecting the visibility and perspective, with this issue also comes the impact of lighting on the work, these were all considered when curating my work.



Metal themed

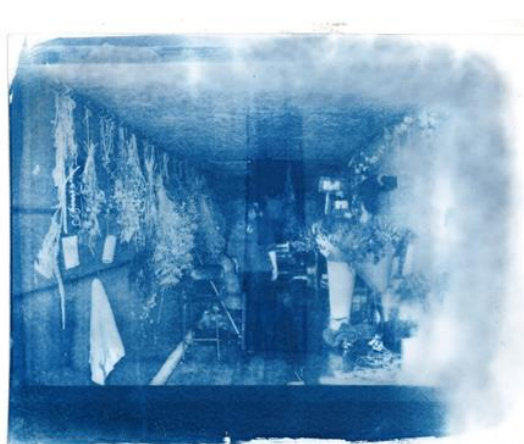


Nature themed

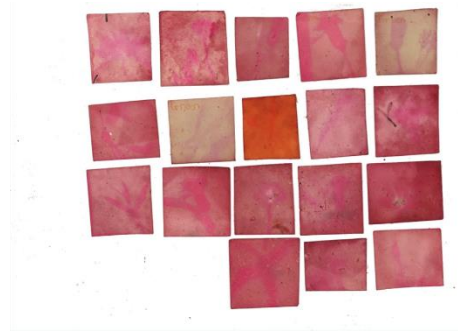
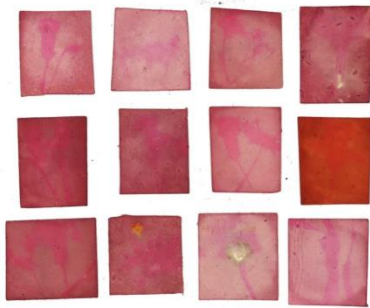


Landscapes

Differentiating this exhibition from the photobook project relies in the element of interaction and community, as a photobook is often read individually whereas the nature of this exhibition is a shared experience of planting the seeds that grow together. Here the planter brings the outside inside and creates a juxtaposition to the traditional white wall gallery. Post exhibition this community aspect lives on through moving the planter outside permanently in a public space allowing the flowers to grow. This interaction aspect was influenced by Vivian Ross Smith's performative exhibition 'Holding place', which influenced the importance of touch and interacting with the materials, which relays into the hands-on motion of gardening. Furthermore, aspects I transferred through both projects was my experimentation on scrap materials as well as reducing my artificial enhancements digitally by using the original raw images, this allowed me to become more aware of shooting high quality images. Using the same acetate in both projects also reduced waste, as well as sourcing all my materials from small businesses reducing my carbon footprint or choosing alternatives such as jute compared to garden twine to hang my seed prints as its more biodegradable.



Anthrotypes was a highly experimental process where often the results were not successful so through many variations, I evolved the process to become better. For example, ensuring my solution is kept in the dark and introducing a blender and cheese cloth improved my prints as well as exploring if natural or UV light works better. Mixing both lighting for three weeks I received my most successful prints as seen bellow. Through also experimenting how the thickness of different seed paper and textures I began to narrow down which paper works best and to reduce my errors.



Chelsea Summers lectures on female photographers and workshops on photograms allowed me to experiment with different ways light can affect images through photograms. This also allowed me to layer materials together and create compositions those flowers and the images I'd taken as well as exploring how the amount of light can affect the image. I found though that the effect of chemicals on the processes doesn't contextually work. However, her lectures have given me a further relationship.

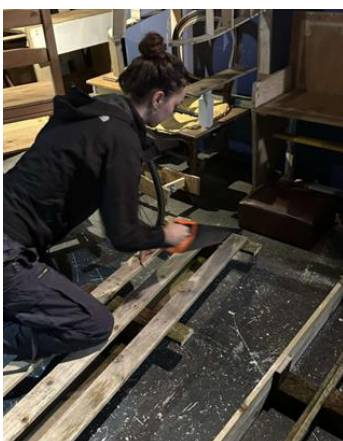


Collaborating with Fine art I saw the exhibition as an opportunity to combine my practices as a response to both elements of media. This was particularly inspired by G39 an exhibition in Cardiff where the multimedia approach curated sculptures and photography well in the natural lighting of the warehouse, here the ability to hear the rain on the roof of the exhibition is another reason as to why I choose to situate my work

by the window to add natural authentic audio. Natural light will be a big aspect of my exhibition, using recycled coffee paper which has a matte finish won't be affected by this. However a consideration from G39 to learn from was the vinyl printing having air bubbles in was very prominent against the natural light, another consideration as to why I didn't mount my work this way.



Geographically the choice to collate an abandoned pallet into a planter as well as a log washed up on the beach into a shelf all relates back to the community. Reusing materials and creating them into forms is reacting back to my environment and the project itself. Using found materials takes control over the process and matched the narrative of gardening, additionally the material itself has a history in which this exhibition feeds into. By using screws to hold it all together it reflected Gareth Phillips work on exploring the dominance that humans have over nature and the relationship of materiality in providing a bigger picture about industrialisation and natures response.



Prepping the area involved filling, sanding, painting, removing furniture, applying vinyl lettering, organising the photobook table and invigilating exhibition days. The director role meant involvement in all aspects of the exhibition, including organising groups, sending emails, creating, and delivering a presentation, formatting the structure and

plan, overseeing groups were on track and being a primary contact for questions. Mediating disagreements advanced managing and negotiating skills ensuring everyone's voice was heard. Curating Wildflower was a considered process lead by narrative and inspired by Masao Yamamoto. Following a conversation with Tamzin Green around reusing material and sustainability I was influenced to use pins to display my work to avoid adhesive and displayed less successful anthrotype prints to avoid wastage.



Masao Yamamoto, installation view at the Jackson fine art gallery, 2003

Overall, my aims for this project were to be experimental, ambitious and develop my practice contextually and through materiality. Being environmentally conscious in every decision made me socially aware of my role as an artist in the current climate crisis. Although the short duration of the semester restricted my Anthrotype process as it takes weeks to develop each batch, this was clear as there was none left after the opening event. Some attempts not working at all meant the exhibition lost an integral component. Limited time spent at 'Women's Shed' meant my relations were rushed effecting the personal interactions. Furthermore, exploring different natural dyes or using beetroot grown by 'Women's shed' itself would create a further contextualisation. Exploration of my images scale would develop the narrative further, and using a biodegradable liner instead of plastic would enhance my environmental practice.

Members of 'Women's shed' attended the exhibition and have planted my seed prints completing the natural circular journey of nature.

