

Artist Statement

In the springtime, sometimes the least noticeable things can be a humbling force of nature. Since my move to Ohio from the more sinus friendly climate of the California coast, I noticed that in late March and early April my nose would itch, my eyes water, and incessant sneezing would commence for a period of about three weeks. Some years were worse than others. This variability both in severity and time intrigued me. I began to observe the trees, spotting the catkins dangling from birch trees or strange brussel sprout forms at the foot of sweet gums. I even subscribed to a daily email report on pollen and allergens sent out by the National Allergy Board. I began to collect parts of trees that had fallen to the ground or were hanging from branches within reach of my outstretched hands. Instead of my eyes, my sense of smell and seasonal allergy were suggesting a future photographic project.

During a summer workshop in the late 1990's I became acquainted with the use of the flatbed scanner as a means of creating photographic images. The attraction lay in a slight misuse of this device by leaving the lid open in a darkened room and allowing the light source of the scanner to create dramatic chiaroscuro upon objects placed upon the glass. In subsequent years I would occasionally use the scanner in this way and would also notice other photographers work using this method. It wasn't until I started collecting the specimens from trees that I realized that I had a need to record them in order to preserve them from decomposition. The newer flatbed scanners offered the ability to capture the finest features of the tree parts that I suspected were causing my misery.

Nineteenth century naturalists like Sir John Herschel, William Henry Fox Talbot, and Anna Atkins recording their researches in photogenic drawings. Some 170 years later I returned to their botanical photography by collecting parts of trees, scanning the specimens and creating images from them. In 2008 I bought a few sheets of Japanese Kozo Unryu paper to use as a lining for the inside cover of a handmade book. Out of curiosity I decided to coat a sheet of this paper with Vandyke Brown chemistry (first introduced as Herschel's Argentotype in 1842) to see how the paper and chemistry interacted. Using an inkjet transparency negative of one of the pollen sample scans; I exposed the image in sunlight. The intensity of the brown color and the interaction of the swirling paper fibers with the granularity of the pollen image seemed to provide something new. At first I had doubts about the threads in the paper but have come to realize that they provide the unexpected to an image so grounded in the scientific. Sometimes the swirls intrude, sometimes they are hardly noticeable; sometimes the titles of the pieces clearly identify their origins but mostly they allude to the dreamy, somnambulant state of observation I sometimes find myself in early April under the influence of pollen and antihistamines.

-francis schanberger, 2010

About Francis Schanberger

From an early age I was fascinated by images of science. Illustrations accompanying articles on red blood cells, tomato –potato hybrid plants or a view of Saturn from one of its moons were some of the pictures that led to my interest in science classes. In college I ended up studying biochemistry but I struggled with grades in a very competitive Pre Med program. As a means to “boost” my grade point average, I took an introductory level black and white photography class. The instructor, Craig Freeman, introduced me to a pantheon of artists who had made a living as photographers. Following graduation I continued to do photography, taking classes at a community college to have access to a darkroom. After college I was hired as a lab assistant to grow and test cell lines. The work was easy and I found I could do most of the 40 hour a week job in about 25 hours. The remainder of the time became increasingly devoted to photography. I set up a dimroom, a place to coat UV sensitive photographic emulsions, in a lab that was mostly used for storage. The last year that I worked in the lab I would lay cyanotypes under the germicidal lamps of the glass cabinets in which we were supposed to be growing cells under sterile conditions. The cyanotypes were photograms made from the lab ware that I used in the lab. The exposures, 14 hours long, were made overnight and needed to be removed before anyone came back to use the lab the next morning. Additionally I photographed the lab with studio lights and a 4x5 camera to create negatives for making palladium prints. After six years as a lab assistant I came to realize what I loved about science wasn't the journal articles or the actual lab work, it was the pictures that science could produce.

The work I did in the 1990's was rooted in experimentation and responding to the research environment in which I found myself working. After receiving my Masters in Fine Art in 2002, my images became characterized by an interest in self-portrait. The use of self-portrait was a response to moving from Southern California to the Midwest and until 2008 I struggled to call Ohio home. It took years to make the Midwest landscape familiar enough so that the little changes that happened everyday and throughout the year could become the objects of my study. I have returned to the scientific in my images. Like a 19<sup>th</sup> century naturalist, I am looking in places within the natural world that until recently I had forgotten to look and using my discoveries as the basis for my image making.

-francis schanberger, 2010

First Panel, at the North End, East Side

1. Title: Two Leaves (Secret Hiding Place)  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 15 3/8" x 5 1/2", matted  
to 20" x 16", 2009
2. Title: Decaying Leaf (Dunce)  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 16" x 8", matted  
to 24" x 20", 2008
3. Title: Decaying Leaf (Falling)  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 9" x 16 1/4", matted  
to 20" x 24", 2009
4. Title: Curl  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 10" x 7", matted  
to 20" x 16", 2008

Second Panel, East Side

5. Title: Pollen Bunch  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 12.5" x 11.5", matted  
to 20" x 16", 2009
6. Title: Birch Catkin [was Birch Pollen]  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 16" x 7", matted  
to 20" x 16", 2008
7. Title: Decaying Leaf (First Heart)  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 12.5" x 12", matted  
to 24" x 20", 2008
8. Title: Decaying Leaf (Apron)  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 13 1/2" x 12 3/4", matted  
to 24" x 20", 2009
9. Title: Hackberry Leaf with Nipple Gall  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 13 3/4" x 7 1/4", matted  
to 20" x 16", 2008
10. Title: Second Heart (Decaying Leaf)  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 12" x 13", matted  
to 16" x 20", 2009

Third Panel, East Side

11. Title: First Pollen  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 9 1/4" x 14.5", matted  
to 16" x 20", 2008
12. Title: Decaying Leaf (Sting Ray / Kite)  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 12 1/2" x 12 1/2", matted  
to 24" x 20", 2008
13. Title: Twelve (Leaves)  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 15.5" x 7 5/8", matted  
to 20" x 16", 2009
14. Title: Yucca Seed Pod (Reclining)  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 7" x 15 3/4", matted  
to 16" x 20", 2009

Fourth Panel, East Side

15. Title: Five (Sweet Gum)  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 16 1/4" x 10", matted  
to 24" x 20", 2008

First Panel, West Side

16. Title: Decaying Leaf (Flying Bird)  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 12 1/2" x 12 3/8", matted  
to 24" x 20", 2009

Second Panel, West Side

17. Title: UFF  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 15.5" x 5.5", matted  
to 20" x 16", 2009
18. Title: Split Pod (Like Chaps)  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 14 1/2" x 13", matted  
to 24" x 20", 2008
19. Title: Gingko (Verso)  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 12 3/8" x 12 1/4", matted  
to 24" x 20", 2009
20. Title: Hairy Cemetery Nut  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 12" x 11.5", matted  
to 20" x 16", 2009

Third Panel, West Side

21. Gingko [letter] B  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 8 1/8" x 8 1/8", matted  
to 20" x 16", 2009
22. Gingko [letter] I (Chasper Paw)  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 8 1/8" x 8 1/8", matted  
to 20" x 16", 2009

Fourth Panel, West Side

23. Title: Two Leaf Stems  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 16 1/2" x 9", matted  
to 24" x 20", 2009

Fifth Panel, West Side, North End

24. Title: Two Seed Pods  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 16" x 8 1/2", matted  
to 24" x 20", 2008
25. Title: Winged Seeds  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 15" x 7 3/8", matted  
to 20" x 16", 2008
26. Title: Tree Bud (Down)  
Media: Van Dyke Brown Print on Kozo Unryu paper  
Image Dimensions: 15.5" x 5 1/4", matted  
to 20" x 16", 2009