

Inverleith House is delighted to present the first major UK exhibition by Corin Sworn, recent winner of the 2013- 15 Max Mara Art Prize for Women and one of three artists chosen to represent Scotland at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013 (alongside Duncan Campbell and Hayley Tompkins).

All of the works on display in the seven ground and first-floor rooms have been made by the artist for this exhibition and are being shown for the first time. Sworn's synchronised light, sound and film installation, *The Rag Papers* (2013), premiered at Chisenhale, London in 2013, will also be presented for the first time in Scotland in Inverleith House's lower-ground floor gallery.

Sworn's new work extends directly from *The Rag Papers*, expanding the artist's investigations into aspects of chance, reappropriation, and the circulation of objects and ideas – central concerns of the film installation. The exhibition also follows a period of study by the artist at the Royal Botanic Garden's Herbarium, during which time Sworn's interest in the properties of plants used in natural dyeing developed alongside an interest into the manipulation of the chromatic register of photographic images. A number of plant specimens selected from the Herbarium's collection of almost 3 million dried plants are also displayed as part of the exhibition, representing some of the species used by Sworn in the dyeing process.

Sworn's conversant and tangential approach to research has stimulated a variety of connections with the Garden's Herbarium collection and the artist's earlier work. In this new work, Sworn has borrowed the techniques of natural dyeing - with their catalytic interventions, idiosyncratic tendencies and unstable results - as a means of exploring the instability of objects as they shift and change through time and relative to their environment.

Using hand-dyeing techniques, Sworn has produced lengths of coloured silk, using many of the plant species and varieties traditionally utilised for this purpose in the past. Stretched over thin, vertical rectangular wooden frames, these erratic monochrome panels offer up a broad spectrum of colours; from pale yellows and greens, to pink, violet and blue. Their varied colour derives not only from the plants used to dye the fabric itself, but also changes in the chemical composition of the water and the mordant used to 'fix' the dye to the fabric. Sourced by the artist, the plants used range from Scottish natives such as Golden Rod, Gorse and Woad, to Logwood from Central America, Indigo from the Arabian Peninsula – and common food plants such as Cabbage and Onion.

The inherently unpredictable, yet malleable nature of these dyes enables Sworn to create colour works whose colour derives from chance encounters with different formulas, objects and materials. These experiments, with their imprecise methodologies, investigative approach and association with

the pre-industrial contain echoes of the proto-scientific aspects of alchemy. Through a variety of interventions, everyday items such as the skin of an onion or the leaves of a cabbage become the subject of myriad transformations.

In a similar vein, *The Rag Papers* (2013) explores some of the complexities which trouble depictions of thought processes and cause and effect in filmic narratives. Throughout the work, characters examine and are affected by objects immediately present, or else are suddenly distracted by recalled associations.

The central characters – a man and a woman – are seen using the same domestic space at different times. Their experiences are articulated as a collection of real and imagined spaces that transport the action from a Georgian townhouse to sorting depots, markets, gardens and hotel rooms. These temporary moments may influence the characters' interactions within their immediate environments, or perhaps, like many thoughts, occur briefly and pass on. As a result, the film's narrative trajectory unfolds in a puzzling way, and by following the protagonists' unsettled and deliberating actions, the directed narrative logic to which film viewers have become accustomed, is disabled.

Sworn has described *The Rag Papers* as 'a seedy noir that wishes it was an intellectual thriller' and through its disarming narrative structure, the film expresses the way in which a person receives, processes and reacts to multifarious thoughts and information at any one moment. Like the dye process itself, Sworn's subjects perform according to the contextual relationships which immediately address them.

In addition to *The Rag Papers* and the dyed silk panels are a series of photographic colour prints of plants and flowers often used in dyeing. Some of the plants depicted have been used to dye the silk panels on display here, whilst others have not. Each one of the photographs have been manipulated digitally and their tonal ranges demonstrate the plant's varying chromatic potential. The plants were captured on film in the autumn, at a moment of instability, just before dying off in the winter months, and the implied colour changes, which are latent within each plant, are in harmony with the plants' autumnal colours. By contrast, the archival specimens, carefully preserved and displayed alongside Sworn's work, have in fact lost much of their original colour over time.

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