



HSP
HIGH STREET PROJECT

creative *nz*
CONCEPTS & DESIGN







DIENEKE JANSEN
DIRECTING WEEDS



Directing Weeds aims to offer a 'pot-plant' to the car park as a visual vibration of the outside world in a manner that questions our relationship with nature. These photographic images acknowledge that they have their referential origins, yet have tenuous ties with time and place – dislocated by digital edits, these images embrace the generic aspects of the subject in form and concept. Berms, footpaths and parks are the public interface of the suburban experience, that which validates a particular set of social values. Generic and structured in their setup, nature with time has a way articulating its own order in these spaces – one that isn't always welcome.

So our relationship with the pot-plant in the office-block continues.

Can a representation of nature meet the need that we have for it?

Is the desire to understand and control it infinite?

If nature is a cultural construct, surely our simulation and control of it can fulfil the needs that we have of it?

Can images placed in an advertising context avoid instructional communication and engage the emancipation of the viewer? (Rancier 2004).

Why direct weeds in car-parks?

Dieneke Jansen

Batchen, Geoffrey. (1997). *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA.

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Need it, Control it – Directing Weeds

Nature is a very complex idea – once conceived of as God’s exquisite art, our relationship with nature has been dominated by a desire to analyse and order it so that we may understand it. We continue to devise systems of analysing nature through various representational means, yet its unruliness and continual expansion dominates any attempt to order and to know it.

As a representational and indexical tool, photography has been instrumental in this analysis and desire to make meaning of nature, of our world. In turn nature was considered central to the idea of photography, as Geoffrey Batchen points out in *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*, the ‘proto-photographers’ Talbot, Niépce and Dauguerre attempted to articulate photography in the following ways:

‘Photogenic Drawing or Nature Painted by Herself’; that nature seemed to have drawn its own image, as a compound which was ‘Nature Herself’, as ‘the effects of nature’, and as an ‘imprint of nature’. As this places photography as a process – in the role of conduit for nature to reproduce itself – we can conceive either as having agency. “...nature being simultaneously active and passive, just as photography is simultaneously natural and cultural.” (Batchen, 1997)

Photography, like nature, has no fixed identity and traverses many discourses, technologies, and fields of institutions. From its early application in the medical sciences and criminal registers it has been, as Allan Sekula states, a socially repressive instrument (Sekula, 1992) and photography’s association with the regulation and control of populations is ongoing. Within advertising, whether presenting information or product, photography plays a key role in depicting and playing out the late capitalist myth of the individual and self-determination in a field of normalisation. How desirable, and to what degree we want a regulated and prescribed society, continues to be the democratic dilemma.

Most facets of our urban experience entail control, containment, compliance and normalisation. Within our constructed and manicured world, our notion of the natural keeps shifting, being challenged, rearticulated and re-experienced as we recognise its innate might – and both our need of it, and our desire to control it. We attempt to control and cultivate vegetation, not just for consumption but also to accessorise and to illuminate our lives, and we acknowledge this as essential to our well-being.

