

LICHEN for SKYSCRAPERS PROJECT

VIRTUAL
WALKING
TOUR

2011
aiop RITUAL

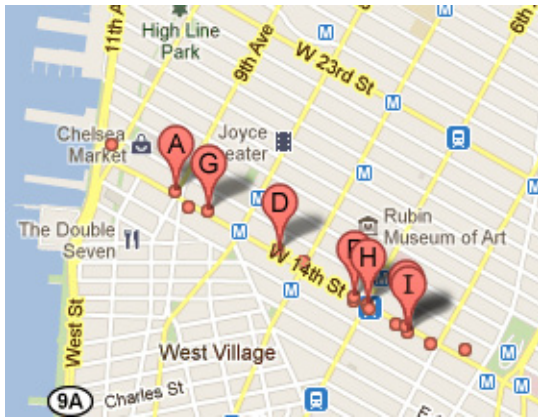
Project Description

This project seeks to ameliorate the lack of native vegetation in global cities by culturing lichen on the sides of skyscrapers and other urban structures. Lichen, a wonderfully adaptable plant, can grow vertically on many porous surfaces. Once propagated, it forms a protective barrier, insulating its supporting building from harmful elements while lowering the cumulative temperature in metropolitan centers. This, along with its ability to withstand extreme drought, makes lichen an almost ideal “houseplant.” As part of AiOP 2011: RITUAL, the Lichen for Skyscrapers Project proposes planting this unique type of vegetation as a new ritual for the urban dweller.

Lichen for Skyscrapers Project Walking Tour

A versatile plant, lichen does not have roots and can grow vertically on exposed rock, sand, cement and other porous surfaces. It does not need soil and can thrive at high altitudes, where it is often the only form of vegetation. Once it is propagated on a building's surface, it protects the supporting structure from harmful elements. Since it can also thrive during long periods of drought, lichen is hardy enough to exist in the harsh urban environment.

In support of growing these life forms on buildings, Harlem-based artist Elizabeth Demaray is offering this guided walking tour/workshop on lichen care in both an in-person and virtual format. This brochure also allows lone lichen enthusiasts to explore the mature lichen sites along 14th Street, while learning about the benefits of lichen propagation.



14th Street Lichen Map

The map on the back of this brochure indicates the placement of each planting between Union Square and the Hudson River along 14th Street. Most of the lichen sites listed on this map are sponsored by members of the 14th Street community. Some of the sites also exist in New York City's shared public spaces. When you come to a site that is on this map, and do not immediately see a lichen planting, look around. Some lichen plantings are small, some are high up and slurry-type gardens may be hard to see until the plantings take hold--a process that takes about three months.

Please note that this map indicates lichen site as of October 8th, 2011. Newly propagated sites are updated on the pdf version of the map which is included in the project's blog at: <http://demaray.rutgers.edu> under lichen-for-skyscrapers-project.

Ritual

As a city dweller, all one needs to plant lichen is a window that opens a few inches and a spray bottle. The plant itself, in a slurry of natural protean substrate, can easily be spread on any variegated surface that receives sunlight. As part of AiOP 2011: RITUAL, this project seeks to promote lichen planting as a new urban practice—one that seeks to renew nature in an inner-city context.

Lichen Planting

Lichen may be planted as a slurry, which is a combination of lichen powder and milk protean (recipe below). It may also be introduced into a new environment fully grown and may propagate itself via air and water run off.

The lichen slurry used for this project is a combination plain yogurt, powered milk and *Flavoparmelia baltimorensis*, a local rock lichen collected from boulders and blacktop within a five-mile radius of New York City. All ingredients were put into a blender and processed on the "chop" setting for several minutes until the mixture achieved the consistency of a thick cream.

Once the slurry achieves a cream-like consistency, it may be applied to many porous surfaces including granite, sandstone, and terracotta. The lichen variant used for this project likes variegated sunlight and moisture, although it can exist in situations of extreme drought.

Maintenance

Lichen needs no maintenance.

Lichen Project Deinstallation

The wonderful thing about planting lichen slurry is that it is not graffiti. It is a completely natural process and, if a planting does not take, it will dry up and blow away to possibly re-propagate itself in other naturally favorable habitats. Do the fact that lichen is classified as a fungi, there are no formal guidelines concerning its collection or transport. If you are asking your own slurry please use only local varieties of lichen.

Documentation

A video will be produced featuring time-laps footage of the 14th Street plantings and walking tour.

Elizabeth Demaray

Elizabeth Demaray knits sweaters for plants, upholsters stones, and fabricates alternative forms of housing for land hermit crabs. An associate professor of art at Rutgers University, she is the recipient of the MOMA/PS.1 National Studio Award, the Aldrich Emerging Artist Award, and the New York Foundation for the Arts Award in Sculpture. <http://www.elizabethdemaray.com>



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