

J.W. Fike's Photographic Survey of the Wild Edible Botanicals of the North American Continent

Within my system the plant is excavated, arranged in the studio, photographed, then illustrated digitally in such a way as to render the edible parts in color while the remaining parts, less emphatically, are gray scale. The plants in the images each hover over a deep black space, referencing photograms from early botanical studies, but the 1:1 ratio of the photographs and high resolution color coding speak to modern modes of imaging and an archive for an uncertain future.

It is my hope and ambition that this art offers people concrete information that if activated leads to positive transformation. While this type of art may appear atavistic, its redeployment, in the precise moment of history, is vitally relevant to issues of sustainability. These edible plants grow all around us, in yards, alleys, ditches, and empty lots. Each testifies to our symbiotic evolution with all of life, and I hope, functions as both metaphor and proof of our intimate tether to the natural world.

I envision this as a thoroughly inclusive catalogue that will result in hundreds of photographs. The aesthetic consciously combines empirical and romantic traditions, but takes advantage of digital imaging's capacity to create rhetorical shifts in the photograph as information system – that is the images are engaging, layered, historically aware and readily adaptable to a wide variety of displays and modes of communication.

“To know the spirit of a place is to realize that you are a part of a part and that the whole is made of parts, each of which is a whole. You start with the part you are whole in.” - Gary Snyder