

The representation of nature in text and image presents specific problems. Central to this challenge is the distance between the thing one verbally or visually articulates and the thing itself. The exploration, paradoxically, may distance one from the subject one wishes to get closer to. How does one describe nature? One method is through a scientific description of the parts which represents its meaning and presumably brings us closer to an understanding of it. Nature in this sense is known objectively. Alternatively, nature can be understood as a reflection of culture. In this case our perception of nature will be directly connected to how we perceive ourselves in it. The work that follows is an attempt to integrate the two disciplines of science and art proposing that the distance between our human experience of nature and the language we use to describe that experience be diminished.

Natura bumblebee



identification of aulocara species

elliotti

1. forewings extending beyond end of abdomen
2. dorsal field of forewings usually with pale median stripe along entire length, originating at pronotum
3. face without small black vertical streak above front articulation of mandible
4. body length to end of hind femora 16-25 mm in males, 22-35 mm in females

Sugar Maple



large tree with rounded dense crown and multi colored foliage in autumn.

Height: 70-100'

Diameter: 2-3'

Leaves opposite; 3 1/2-5 1/2 " long and wide; palmately lobed with 5 deep long pointed lobes; few narrow pointed teeth; 5 main veins from the base; leaf stalks long and often hairy on veins beneath; turning deep red, orange, and yellow in autumn

Bark: light grey; becoming rough and deeply furrowed into narrow scaly ridges

Twigs: greenish to brown or grey; slender

This makes me think about the William Carlos Williams' poem The Red Wheelbarrow. Although I don't have a copy at hand I will attempt to remember it.

So much depends upon
a red wheelbarrow
glazed with rainwater
beside the white chickens

Two ways of seeing the world seem to be expressed by the description of the maple and the poem. It seems that the two ways of seeing the world are in stark contrast with one another. Williams attempts no explanation of the meaning of the objects in his poem. The wheelbarrow is not defined by its parts. The wheel, the handle with its corresponding length and width. It is not described by the type of wood it is composed of nor the capacity it has for holding weight.

I am caught between a maple and a wheelbarrow.

How to look at the world.

Robert Plitt is a graduate student in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University. The inspiration for his work was born from time he spent on a small organic farm in southwestern Ontario. He would like to acknowledge the efforts of Toni Greenwood in managing her farm and her generosity in welcoming him into her challenging environment.