

A LOVING EYE

There is no glory in star or blossom till looked upon by a loving eye . . .
William Cullen Bryant

One of my earliest and happiest childhood memories is of a huge wild family garden. Many times over the years I have returned there in my mind's eye, embellishing the memory, imagining overgrown hidden paths with flowers everywhere. I seem to have found my way back to that cherished garden in my art. And my art allows something nature does not: a degree of permanence within the natural flow from seed to bloom to withered stalk.

This emotional attachment to botanicals has found expression in photography. As with my imaginary garden ramblings, I often go beyond precise representation to convey what else I "see" in the subject. In flowers, petals, and leaves I find intimate structures, as well as hints of small universes and anthropomorphism. To transform these raw photographs into my personal visions, I apply digital and traditional techniques, at times revealing formal architectural elements, and at times reverting to the wildness of my remembered garden.

Some of my flowers are as they appear in the natural world, while others are imagined. My work flow proceeds as follows: I capture an image either in my studio or in the subject's natural environment. Once I have the raw file on my computer, I may make only subtle changes or I may use my imagination to transform the original flower or leaf. To achieve the final form that pleases me, I adjust the composition and colors and tone of each image. Recently I have begun painting my botanical creations with a digital brush, resulting in even more impressionistic and interpretive images. But nature is always the inspiration.

In 2006 I began searching for alternative ways to present my prints. I began mounting images on hardboard, sealing them with varnish or wax and using natural papers for matting. I like the added texture and luster lent by the varnish and wax finishes, as well as the accessibility of the image. As an extension of this, in the last year I have moved to mixed media creations that combine my pigment ink prints with textured papers, dried flowers and leaves, fabric, metal, waxes, gilder's paste, oil pastels and found objects. I am weaving these media with images that call for a more complex context, and I now capture images for pieces that may not be realized for months, when I build a natural stage set for the botanical subject, a tactile permanent garden on hardboard.

My camera is a Canon EOS 30D. All of my prints are produced in my studio on an Epson Stylus PRO 3800 that utilizes Epson UltraChrome K3 pigment inks. The patented Micro Piezo print head technology and other cutting edge features of the 3800 set the industry standard for brilliance, clarity and archival consistency. I use Archers heavyweight museum standard papers to ensure long-lasting prints of the finest quality.

I have spent my professional career in the arts, as an actress, writer and visual artist. I received my Master of Fine Arts from Columbia University and lived and worked for 20 years in New York City. I returned to my native Midwest in 1998 where I live in Omaha with my husband, artist James Putnam Abbott. I have shown my work in Fort Worth, Jackson Hole, Des Moines, Phoenixia, NY and Evanston, IL, as well as at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens in Sarasota, FL, Olbrich Botanical Gardens in Madison, WI, Memphis Botanic Garden in Memphis, TN and at Lauritzen Gardens, Jackson Artworks, Dundee Gallery and other venues in Omaha.

