

A Printmaker's Field Guide:
A Chronicle of Artistic Succession Through Printmaking
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This series of prints highlights the intricacy, inherent beauty, and ecological importance of plants in a format that bridges our indoor, synthetic tendencies with the complexity and beauty of the natural world. This work connects viewers with the natural world through my deeply rooted curiosity by using techniques that mimic natural processes, propagation, and artistic succession to depict the interactions between the environments and these plants.

A Printmaker's Field Guide:
A Chronicle of Artistic Succession Through Printmaking

A Thesis
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by
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INTRODUCTION

Propagation of Prints and Plants

My grandmother would collect specimens from the forest to make herbariums and plant scrapbooks, only two generations ago. The botanical knowledge that formal education withheld from my generation was, instead, imparted to me by my mother. I grew to have a never-ending interest in the secrets that are hidden in the botanical world. Once I was introduced to printmaking, I finally found a way to recreate the wonder I see into something that everyone else can see through the prints made. Printmaking became a visual exploration and process to interpret the natural world.

In 2014 Margaret Conover gave a TED talk about the death of botany as a field, partially due to young scientists leaving their career paths to enter the biotechnology sciences (Conover). This is in part due to school systems no longer teaching plant science in elementary school, captivating young audiences with the wonder of nature.

Scientists Wandersee and Schussler introduced the term *plant blindness* in 1998, after years of discussion, literature searching, investigation, and “a fair amount of trepidation,” (Wandersee 84). They define plant blindness broadly, including “the inability to see or notice the plants in one's own environment, leading to the inability to recognize the importance of plants in the biosphere and in human affairs.” (Schussler 82) Plant blindness also comprises an “inability to appreciate the aesthetic and unique biological features” of plants and “the misguided, anthropocentric ranking of plants as inferior to animals, leading to the erroneous conclusion that they are unworthy of human consideration.” (Wandersee; Schussler 82)

Ecological succession is a term developed by botanists that describes the development of an ecosystem over time. Primary succession is a type of ecological succession in which plants and animals first colonize barren lifeless habitats. I draw parallels between primary succession and the way I layer, or

build, a print. *Artistic Succession* is a term I coined, noting the parallels of biology and printmaking. Species that arrive first in their newly created environment are called pioneer species; the base layer of a print is a pioneer layer that will help me build a simple biological community the same way these pioneer plants build a budding new community on the previously lifeless habitat.

As a society we have lost our curiosity about wild plants because we no longer need to interact with them due to our agriculture of limited species, our reliance on indoor spaces, and our view of them being worth less than animals. This has led us to forget the aesthetic, medical, food, and ecological value of plants. How do we recapture that wonder and appreciation for the value of plants? By giving viewers the opportunity to see plants in pattern, color, form, interaction with surrounding environment and up close in a way that elicits an emotional and curious response. The viewers don't have to go outside but are learning to observe and take notice.

This series of prints explores and aims to express the intricacy, inherent beauty, and ecological importance of plants in a format that bridges our synthetic indoor bias with the complexity and beauty of the natural world. This work connects viewers with the natural world through my deeply rooted curiosity by using techniques that mimic natural processes, propagation, and artistic succession to depict the interactions between the environments and these plants.

I continuously strive to show the multiple-level connections plants and prints have. Prints have copies or “multiples” so to speak, and so do plants. Each one is a little different from the next, and through the progression of differences, evolution is in process. With this evolution also comes extinction and the connection it carries between the natural world and that of printmaking. Many of the plants that catch my interest are endangered. The term *functionally extinct* means a species has such a small number left that there is no way they could reproduce enough to continue their survival. This is reflected by the editions of prints, reminding us of their fragility in numbers and that each print series is essentially *functionally extinct*.

While at the University of North Florida (UNF) I took a senior seminar where I worked with the cyanotype process. I bought some flowers, took them home, and set up a studio shot - a little still life. One of my fellow students, Paula Runon, who was also a florist said, "These are great Adam, but there are so many better wildflowers out there." These were the words of motivation I needed to begin taking my camera outside to take pictures of local wildflowers around Jacksonville, Florida.

Even with my background and my childhood teachings from my mother, I'm positive that I had been suffering from plant blindness myself. Plant blindness is not just a lack of knowledge about plants in general, but also the ignorance about the plants we see every day. I didn't realize all these fantastic flowers and plants were all around me. As I started taking pictures of them my passion for plants grew and began to influence my studio explorations defining my creative activities.

Most research is exploratory, but mine is a more literal interpretation. I grab my bag filled with field manuals, binoculars, my camera, and, of course, lots of sunscreen, and I go out into nature. Maybe I head to an old quarry in New Bern, and as I walk around, I find what grows there and document it. I take photographs and occasionally notes as I walk. Later, as I go through my photos, I write lists of things I want to explore further and then work on any necessary identifications. Then I usually make some sort of illustration via a multitude of printmaking processes. It is these first steps in the exploration that literally help guide me in my creative process. What do I notice the most what captures my attention and imagination? What do I return to?

With my two passions now fused into one, I have made and curated the prints that make up the body of this Thesis like one would curate a collection of orchids. There is a collaboration between the botanical investigations and in the building of layers in a print. The artwork is informed by the process of studying plants, the discovery, the idea, the conception. These pieces will open a door to show the beauty and intricacy of the natural world. Helping people see a bit of beauty in the small, green world will help to cure our collective plant blindness. An exhibition of these prints is the catalyst in helping cure, or at least

put our collective plant blindness in remission. The exhibition includes 28 traditional prints framed in size from 22 x 30” to 30 x 44” framed in locally sourced native timber.

How to Use This Field Guide

The way the *Printmakers Field Guide* has been assembled is as follows: first, we start at a micro view and look at individual plants in the process of printmaking in depth. Next, we zoom out and think about the family of plants. Then we look at a community of plants. Finally, we look at the three of the many environments where all these plants are growing.

The first eight prints are a look into examples of plants to offer a commentary and description of the process and methods used to create the body of work. I’ve chosen these eight works because either they are turning points or apexes of my exploratory research. Five of these are plants from the asters group, and three are from the carnivorous plants group. I write the most about these eight prints in these two families because these families of plants have the most influence and inspiration for me, in creating this body of work.

Next, there are a group of lilies with two prints and a group of orchids which also have two prints. I am fascinated with native lilies and terrestrial orchids, so I will be making more work about these in the future.

The final group consists of a more random assortment of plants. A climax community is a term used by biologist to express a community in its final/stable stage of succession, and I have developed my own climax community in this grouping. These are the individual plants across several different families, all within the community of North Carolina which warranted their own prints after I found them during my exploratory research.

Finally, the last group is another suite of prints that came to fruition out of the creation of the individual plant prints, “*The Environment.*”

CHAPTER 1: The Asters



Figure 1
Fleabane Daisy 2021
30"x22" Lithograph with Screenprint

The Fleabane Daisy

The fleabane daisy is everywhere, yet this “weed” is hardly talked about. It’s on the roadsides, in the woods, and it fills the fields. It can be found in in quarries, ditches, and in backyards. How was I to ignore it? The plant draws me in from afar whether I’m looking for it or not. In her book *Braiding Sweet Grass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer writes that “Our indigenous herbalists say to pay attention when plants come to you; they’re bringing you something you need to learn.” (Kimmerer 275) I believe this to be true for my artwork as well.

Fleabane daisy has many uses including its use as a dye. I've made some beautiful, yellow-dyed cotton paper using this plant as the dye. The fleabane daisy has always been very attractive to me, not just for its beautiful little blooms or its dainty little white and purple ray flowers. Its opposing leaves have always reminded me of delicate brushstrokes.

For a long time, I have adored botanical Sumi-e paintings, with their very delicate brushstrokes all in one smooth pass. The Japanese term "sumi" means "black ink", "e" means "painting". It indicates one of the art forms in which subjects are painted with black ink in all possible gradations ranging pure black to the lightest shades achievable by dissolving ink in water. How the ink washes puddle at one end and make a beautiful realistic and quite stunning leaf. Taking time to hand paint film to build the layers of the screen print of the actual plant was quite pleasant for me.

I've experimented a lot with different mediums in art. And I do take photographs of plants and nature, which in some ways might feel like enough. A picture is, after all, a duplicate representation. But to me, turning that representation into a print is what truly brings a feeling of cogency. Each step of the print allows me to contemplate and focus my attention to areas of the plant I had previously overlooked. I feel like printmaking can also give the plant an aesthetic that a photograph cannot and connect the viewer with an aspect of the plant that the artist might specifically want to showcase.

When building this print, I wanted there to be a large group of flowers and plants. Whenever I find the fleabane daisies in orphan spaces, it is always with a whole bunch of flowers and other plants. The term orphan spaces were coined by professor Merrill Ingram at University of Wisconsin Madison, and she defines it as:

Orphan spaces might be thought of as 'un-places' and are distinctive in their lack of connections. They are managed, often intentionally, but not always, to be homogeneous and single purpose, via fencing, channelization, mowing, cementing, polluting, or regulating such that they are maintained in a simplified state, forced to a streamlined purpose such as moving water,

serving as a dumping ground, or a storage site. They are ubiquitous, of all sizes and locations, and routinely created as part of our activities. (Ingram 1)

I decided to attempt a gum arabic stencil. In the past I have used these for borders on lithography plates and lithography stones. However, I had not previously used this technique to make shapes or layers. To understand the process of making gum arabic stencils one must understand the lithographic process. Simply put, the lithographic process works because oil and water don't mix. The matrix i.e., the aluminum plate or Bavarian limestone is hydrophilic, but the drawing media is a waxy crayon or other greasy material and is hydrophobic. If one is to lay down gum arabic and then lay down a greasy material wherever the gum arabic is, what is applied will then lift off and leave an open negative area. I have continued to use the gum stencil technique to successfully stencil out non-image area or create an image in negative to contribute to the composition.

As I wander around in everyday life, whether it's to and from work or school, or out on a hike somewhere on the east coast of the United States, I always keep my eyes open and my newly acquired alleviation from plant blindness has made me more aware of my surroundings. There is a part of my work where the viewer should enjoy the print not just for an aesthetic value, but to make a connection to the earth, a connection to their ancestors, and a connection to the food they eat.

I recognize that the fleabane daisy with its opposite leaves and an adorable little baby daisy flower structure aren't to be seen as food or the answer to climate change, yet there is still value. My goal with this *Fleabane Daisy* (see fig. 1) is to help review or make a connection and join the web of reciprocity by practicing the exchange of ideas with others for mutual benefit.



Figure 2
Dandelion 2021
30"x22" Etching with Chine-collé and Lithograph, Screenprint

The Dandelion

The common name dandelion comes from the French *dent-de-lion* meaning lion's tooth, seemingly because of the tooth-shaped leaves. The first thing one might notice about this plant are the bright yellow flowers. However, when it is not in bloom you can find the dandelion erratically growing in rosettes of tooth-shaped leaves in any nook and cranny it can propagate itself. I find these rosettes attractive in the same way scientists admire fractals. When I'm walking around the urban landscape these rosette leaves pop up everywhere and are the inspiration for many drawings and prints that I have made.

Last spring, I began to particularly take notice of the intricate bloom of the dandelion. I took about 50 macro photos of dandelion blooms all around my neighborhood. I closely studied specimens and decided that the best way to represent or interpret the amazing flower of the dandelion is intaglio shaped

plate. No other media would represent the detail of the flower, the anatomy, the inflorescent of the dandelion.

My personal connection with the dandelion started as many others might, by picking them as a small child to complete the age-old tradition of blowing a wish into the air along with all the seeds on the dandelion pappus. When I began developing the flower plate for the *Dandelion (Fig 2)* print in the summer of 2021, my mother unexpectedly passed away. The trip to Florida for the funeral, helping my family, and setting her affairs proved to be a very challenging task. When I returned to the university, it was hard to find the personal direction. As I was picking up the pieces of my daily routine and putting them back together, I also picked up the beginnings of the *Dandelion* (see fig. 2) intaglio plate. This plate became my medicine, as every day I worked on the plate I wasn't lost in thoughts about missing my mother. Instead, I was able to focus on creating. Rather than sadness, I remembered my childhood days of picking dandelions with my mother and was able to find solace in nature once again.

More recently I have become aware of the many literal medicinal uses dandelions have, including a drink made from the roots said to taste like coffee, which contains antioxidants. Uses like this are fascinating to me and it appears I am not the only one interested in the utilization of unappreciated plants. This interest was something else my mother and I held in common, and her curiosity helped spark my own lifelong quest to learn more about the things we eat commonly and the things we don't and where they come from.



Figure 3
Goldenrod 2021
30"x22" Lithograph with Screenprint and Gold leafing

The Goldenrod

Goldenrod is a misunderstood plant; a lot of people contribute fall allergies to goldenrod, unaware that their itchy noses can be attributed to ragweed. Instead of being a pest plant, goldenrod has many medicinal uses; a lot of herbalists make tinctures, teas, and even salves out of the goldenrod blooms. For these reasons and the aesthetic nature of the plant, goldenrod required my focused attention and a deliberate plan to represent it.

There are occasionally instances where a certain plant will catch my eye due to its environment or the light and I will know exactly how I want the print to look. This shows that my process is at times very reactive. Sometimes I just know that a plant needs to be interpreted through screen printing, photolithography, and the like. In fact, reacting to a print-in-progress is a large part of the creative process for me. It begins as my initial ideas are turned into illustrations. I then take a step back and think about

what I want to do next. What would look “good” and what approach do I need to take to get there? What colors would enhance the print? Maybe purple against that yellow background, maybe a warmer green rather than a cooler one? Then I must decide whether I will make a screenprint, a lithograph, or even an etching because some of the plants deserve that kind of attention. As I go through these steps, it often feels like working through the scientific method, but I do not limit myself to only allowing this spontaneity during the initial stages. Throughout the process, I continue acting re-actively until I get to a point where the print is successful in portraying certain qualities that I am looking for.

For the first rendition of the *Goldenrod* (see fig. 3) print, I inked up the plant and just printed it onto paper because I was so amazed by the plants' structure itself and not only its blooms.

The second time, however, I took some time creating a different type of print. Inspired by the many road trips I take with my fiancé around eastern North Carolina, I remember looking out of the car window and seeing these beautiful swaths of yellow on the roadsides. After stopping the car and upon closer inspection, I noticed that the leaves appeared to me like brushstrokes. I saw gold in the afternoon sunlight as the winds gently rocked the flowers from side to side. At that moment, after taking those first few pictures, I knew that I had to make a screenprint so that I could hand paint that plant directly from my memory. I knew what its surroundings needed to look like, and had the whole image worked out in my head before I got home. Again, this was a reactionary experience.

When I first began printing plants as my subjects, my prints were more documentation than art and the work became too scientific. The images didn't have any deeper aesthetic value. That's when I began taking samples of the actual specimen and using the plant matter itself on the matrix. I find it to be more meaningful to include the real plant in the process itself instead of just using film from a digital. This inclusion of plant material naturally leads to making dyes out of the plant and using them to then print. This also feels like a genuine way of connecting the plant to the art. Playing with the dyes reminded me of watercolor and I found its lithographic parallel in tusche. The tusche washes make beautiful tones on an aluminum lithographic plate. They have become the foundation of the many layers that I build

upon, including on my *Goldenrod* print. When layering I use my intuition and react based on how the print progresses from one layer to another.

Knowing that the foreground structure of the *Goldenrod* was going to be yellow, I used a bit of color theory and started building the environment in a cool receding blue. The color is also affected by the textures and values of the drawing materials, which range as well. In this case, the material applied to the plate to be inked in blue was a tusche wash. Tusche is German for ink or lay on color. Tusche wash is by all intents and purposes ink but not a printing ink - some Europeans call it a chemical ink. It is used to paint beautiful washes in lithography. I employ the use of tusche wash quite often; the reticulation and unpredictability are quite magical and perfectly represent the natural environment. The tusche wash is a very versatile painting medium in lithography and I have several different varieties that help me achieve an array of different effects. I can get a beautiful water reticulation wash, as well as flat smooth brush strokes. With the right combination of ingredients, I can get almost a Sumi ink style brushstroke. It's still unpredictable how the tusche wash is going to print. Every time I make a lithographic plate and ink it up, I have an idea but I'm never 100% sure on how it will turn out. The first layer of the *Goldenrod* (see fig. 3) print was with a tusche wash for my rendition of the sky gradient in the background. From there I made each additional plate on how the last plate printed until I got a beautiful environment where I believed the goldenrod would be. The goldenrod leaves lend themselves to long and steady brush strokes. These brushstrokes are reminiscent of those that the Chinese masters made. The pen and ink drawing for the *Goldenrod* print was then scanned digitally and separated in to print films representing each color and was made into stencils for screenprinting. The ease of layering through screen printing and the speed at which one can make many layers of a print is very efficient. This efficiency helps to quickly build layers of the *Goldenrod* print. The real beauty of the integral layer of this print is the finishing layer of the gold leaf. This can be seen in the *Echinacea* print (see fig. 4) as well. I wanted to use gold leaf on the goldenrod not just because of the name, but also to make the print vibrate visually or sway in the wind the same way you might see it blowing on the side of the roadways.

Goldenrod has captured the imagination and the awe of people for centuries. When goldenrod blooms in early fall its beautiful little golden flowers blow in the wind as we would think amber waves of grain would look. Even the esteemed academic and author Robin Wall Kimmerer wrote a chapter in her award-winning book *Braiding Sweetgrass* entitled “*Goldenrod and Asters.*” In this chapter, the author writes about entering forestry school and wanting to be a botanist. She writes “I chose botany because I wanted to learn about why asters and goldenrod look so beautiful together.” She was told that this was not science, and maybe she should go to art school instead of forestry (Kimmerer 40).



Figure 4
Echinacea 2021
44"x30" Cyanotype and Lithograph with Gold leafing

Echinacea

I knew about echinacea as an herbal remedy before knowing what the plant looked like. This homeopathic medicine is used to help boost our immune system and comes from the root of the echinacea plant. It was once commonly given to me as teas and tinctures by my mom whenever I got colds. When I put together that the commonly named purple coneflower and the echinacea were the same thing I was wildly excited. The making of this print was from my experience studying coneflowers growing in the botanical gardens and arboretums of eastern North Carolina, thus making the connection. This is the time I used the gold leaf to represent the glow that comes from the inflorescent of the purple coneflower.



Figure 5
Swamp Sunflower 2021
30"x22" Lithograph with Chine-collé

Swamp Sunflower

For the *Swamp Sunflower* print, I collected, dried, and made a lithographic plate with a dried specimen of the flower. I felt compelled to incorporate more of the plant itself into the print, as the swamp sunflower has time and time again helped inspire me over the years. This bold little plant is one of my favorites, and this print is the last of several interpretations I have made. During the hot summer these flowers begin to poke their heads out over the shrubs in ditches and along waterways, not shying away from the sun but reveling in it.

CHAPTER 2: The Carnivorous Plants



Figure 6
Bladderwort 2021
44"x30" Lithograph with Chine-collé

The Bladderwort

In the creation of this print, I wanted to really scale up the size - enlarge the plant and zoom in on the details. While the print is 44" x 30", the bladderwort plant is usually only about 4" tall. The bladderwort is an aquatic carnivorous plant. The most interesting part of this print is the bottom of the plant. This is where the plant is trapping and digesting its prey. The bladderwort has its namesake small bladders underneath the water. These bladders serve multiple purposes. The first is to keep the plant buoyant and float above the water, the second is to eat small bugs and other microbial animals that become trapped within the bladders. The bladderwort also possesses five inflated spokes that stick out

from the stem. These spokes keep the plant floating on top of the water. It has a very appealing yellow bloom, looking like a small little flag sticking out of the pond or a water-filled ditch. These flowers coming up out of the water first drew my attention to them, as they do the pollinators.

The *Bladderwort* (see fig. 6) print represents a moment in time. At the top of the print, the clouds drift on a very hot day. I can almost feel the humidity and smell the musty decay and chlorophyll wafting up from the body of water. The sweat dripped from my face, brushing the mosquitoes away from my eyes. On the horizon, you can see the tree line - the only evidence of shade and relief in sight. This print, like all my other prints, is a short love letter not just to a plant but to the time in the environment. I see these prints as my hopeless romantic poetry about the environment we live in, and the amazing times I have had in it. The warm fuzzy feeling that an opioid addict gets when they finally get the fix that they need, is the only way I can explain the euphoria and happiness that doing this research gives me. This also fulfills the need that I've always had nagging at me to be a citizen scientist. I want to contribute to the understanding of these plants, so I contribute to the knowledge pool through the conversation of contemporary printmaking.

The bladderwort, it has been suffixed with “wort”. This word has been derived from Old English for “plant” and has been commonly added on to other plant names. While not the case with the bladderwort specifically, it was once believed that if the plant looked like a particular body part, it must also be good at healing that body part. Although this method is archaic up against 21st century medicine, it is an interesting reminder of our co-existence with and the quest for knowledge about plants throughout the ages of human existence. Learning about common names of plants, I have realized that many people have forgotten more than they know about the plants that grow around them. Luckily, I have also found that the instinct to explore plants and use plants is human nature and spreads across every culture. In cooking as I began to learn more about different cuisines, this was obvious to me.

My desire to correct my own plant blindness has become a quest to help others overcome the unrecognized prejudices they may have about the plants around them. If a person doesn't have any care

for their own surroundings and the life growing beneath our feet, how can they truly understand that issues like climate change will affect their everyday life? There is a bigger picture to all of this, but it starts by noticing things at the micro-level. Can my prints help people to see that connection? My prints explore the wonders of nature rather than tapping into the storehouse of iconography.



Figure 7
Pitcher Plant 2021
30"x22" Screenprint

The Pitcher Plants

I came to North Carolina from Central Florida. My home state is a surprisingly different environment in terms of what grows and how cold it gets. What is growing throughout the year changes much more drastically here in NC than it did in Florida, where the seasons were milder. Not only do I find this more challenging because of the winter season, but I also think it is exciting as well. Also, my creative research often takes me to other parts of the state, including the Piedmont, the same Piedmont

that stretches all the way up from Raleigh North Carolina to upstate New York is located and further west, the Appalachian Mountains. During 2020, the first year of the COVID pandemic, there was a lot of downtime. I used that time to get more familiar with the wilderness of NC and familiarize myself with the native flora.

The hooded pitcher plant is a carnivorous plant that fills me with admiration and awe. My first encounter with these plants was in Northeast Florida, a different species but still one of the most interesting plants that I have encountered. This encounter was at the University of North Florida where they have a small preserve, where there are a few re-introduced pitcher plants growing in the wild, tucked back in some little buggy marsh areas next to a lake so they're maybe purposefully hard to pick out but ever so rewarding to spot. Since this encounter, I have sought out the different species of pitcher plants to gaze at like living art. These plants evolved to become carnivorous because they couldn't get enough nutrition from the soil. That is one of the most interesting things about carnivorous plants to me, especially the carnivorous plants of the North Carolina coastline. So how does one artistically represent a non-nutritious soil that plants grow in?

The *Pitcher Plant* (see fig. 7) print started out as just a pen and ink illustration on paper. I sat for hours meticulously drawing from photographs of plants I took at the UNC-Chapel Hill botanical gardens. I really got to know the structure of the plant through this drawing, however, in about the fifth or sixth hour of drawing, I had a realization that the illustration would not translate to the 30"x 22" format and that I would lose some of the details and nuances of the vascular structure of the plant. So, I scanned in the print and adjusted it in Photoshop to make it to the appropriate size. I printed out the film on a large format printer and continued to draw on the film with special red pens created for blocking out light. Somewhere in the few hours of doing this I decided that this would be a screenprint. Screenprinting would lend itself perfectly to translate all the aesthetic nuances that this drawing had to offer. The practice of screenprinting is one of the fastest and most painless techniques in printmaking. The *Pitcher Plant* is the only print that is all screenprint with no other printmaking technique. I also used a soft-ground

technique to try to represent the plants that go around a pitcher plant as well as the non-nutritious soil. This soft-ground technique in screenprinting is achieved by rolling a soft ground medium onto a piece of clear acetate, then running the acetate through the press with not much pressure and a selection of other plants on the acetate. This process left the impression of actual plants on the acetate. I then created a stencil and screenprinted these impressions on the paper. When creating this drawing, the photographic references that I took all had moss at the bottom. I re-created this using a natural sponge and painted it on the film. Then printing multiple layers, and I selected different colors. The use of the splatters of yellow and green in the background are to interpret the idea of sandy loam or non-nutritious soil. The color pallet and the mark-making also give an impression of a longleaf pine forest, a habitat where most of these carnivorous plants are native.



Figure 8
Venus Fly Trap 2021
44"x30" Lithograph with Screenprint

Venus Fly Trap

Venus fly traps are only native to about a 75 mi.² area on the North and South Carolina border. They are one of the most famous carnivorous plants, partially due to the classic movie *Little Shop of Horrors* and are traded amongst plant enthusiasts around the world. When I look at the print, the bold red magenta swash in the middle of the print grabs your attention and points down to the ground where the small and ever so interesting venus fly trap resides.

CHAPTER 3: The Lilies



Figure 9
Carolina Lily 2021
30"x22" Van Dyke with Lithograph

Carolina Lily

The Carolina lily print inspiration is taken from what was from a much-needed excursion to western North Carolina and the Blue Ridge Parkway back in 2020. In May, these lilies are blooming up and down the Blue Ridge Parkway roadside and stopping to take pictures of them would be foolish to pass up. This is one of the first prints that I successfully merged the photo process of Van Dyke and Lithography.



Figure 10
Trout Lilly 2022
30"x22" Lithograph with Screenprint

Trout Lilly

Trout lilies only grow in deciduous forests where they take advantage of the dappled sunlight after the trees lose their canopy leaves. The lilies have a very short lifespan in which they grow, bloom, and distribute seeds in a short time between late winter and early spring, right before these trees grow their leaves back. This print is my interpretation of the forest floor with the moss in the dappled light of the deciduous forest.

CHAPTER 4: The Orchids

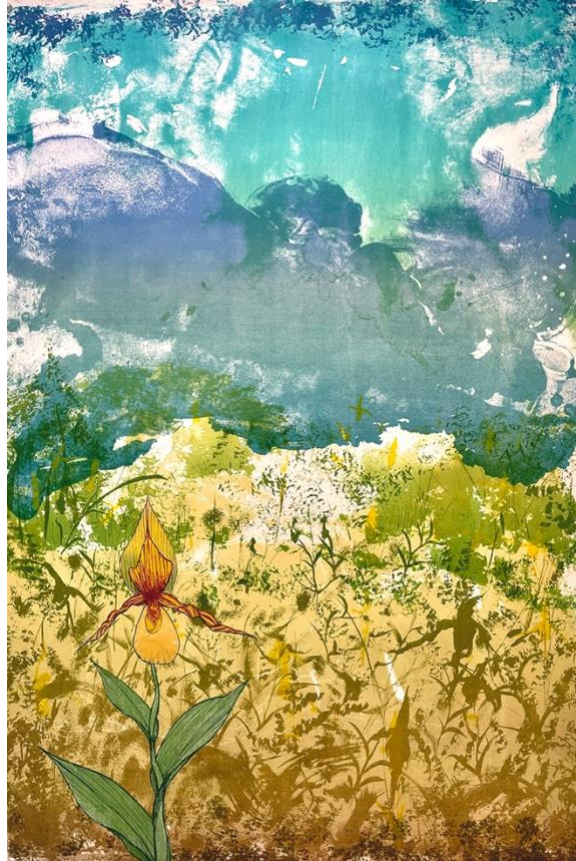


Figure 11
Lady Slipper 2021
44"x30" Lithograph with Screenprint

Lady Slipper

Native to North Carolina the yellow lady slipper orchid is something we came across in the mountains of western North Carolina. Hiking over by the Blue Ridge we came across a mountainside where I saw one yellow lady slipper orchid. As we hiked further, they became more frequent, and my excitement grew. This print represents this experience for me of finding the first one and then seeing more and more orchids the more I looked.



Figure 12
Cranefly Orchid 2021
30"x22" Van Dyke with Lithograph

Cranefly Orchid

Spring hikes in the coastal plain of North Carolina are full of all kinds of surprises. Hiking through the woods in an area of the Croatan Forest was the first time I stumbled across these very interesting leaves that are a dark green on top and a black, purple underneath. I knew these leaves had to belong to something interesting. It wasn't until I returned to that same hike a month or so later that I witnessed the bloom of this terrestrial orchid. This print tries to encapsulate my memory of the very first time I saw a blooming crane fly orchid and the stark contrast it created to everything else near it.

CHAPTER 5: The Climax Community

A climax community is a term used by biologists to express a community in its final or a stable stage of succession. This suite of prints is at a stable stage of succession of my practice of printmaking. This section of A Printmaker's Field Guide is about plants that have inspired me, about plants that I have researched. As you read through this there are small little insights into my process and interesting facts about the plants.



Figure 13
Aloe 2021
30"x22" Lithograph with Screenprint

Aloe

Aloe is said to have some 500 species. The earliest record of its use dates to the fourth millennium. Growing up as a redhead in Florida it became useful after spending too much time in the sun, and later burns received while working in kitchens as an adult.



Figure 14
Bee Balm 2021
30"x22" *Lithograph with Screenprint*

Bee Balm

It is said that when the American colonists were boycotting English tea, they began instead to steep bee balm into their cups, which grew prevalently in the region. Sometimes called Oswego tea, this

herbaceous plant has many medicinal uses as it contains a natural source of antiseptic. This print is inspired by the hills and fields of Bee Balm in western North Carolina.



Figure 15
Butterfly Weed 2021
30"x22" Lithograph with Screenprint

Butterfly Weed

This native milk weed is a host plant for most people's favorite butterfly, the Monarch. Attention grabbing to both humans and butterflies alike, I chose to focus on the structure of the miniature blooms that make up the composition of the whole flower.



Figure 16
Carolina Jasmine 2022
22"x30" Cyanotype with Lithograph and Screenprint

Carolina Jasmine

Carolina jasmine is one of those plants that I literally have always looked up at, high in the trees. It's the first sign for me that spring is here. In Florida the Carolina jasmine blooms in late February through March. Since moving to North Carolina I have seen some beautiful displays of yellow with throughout the deciduous trees. The *Carolina Jasmine* (see fig. 16) is a combination of illustration, printmaking, and photography all in one. It has a cyanotype background with photolithography in the mid-ground as well as hand-drawn screen-printed specimen in the front. It is one of my favorites.

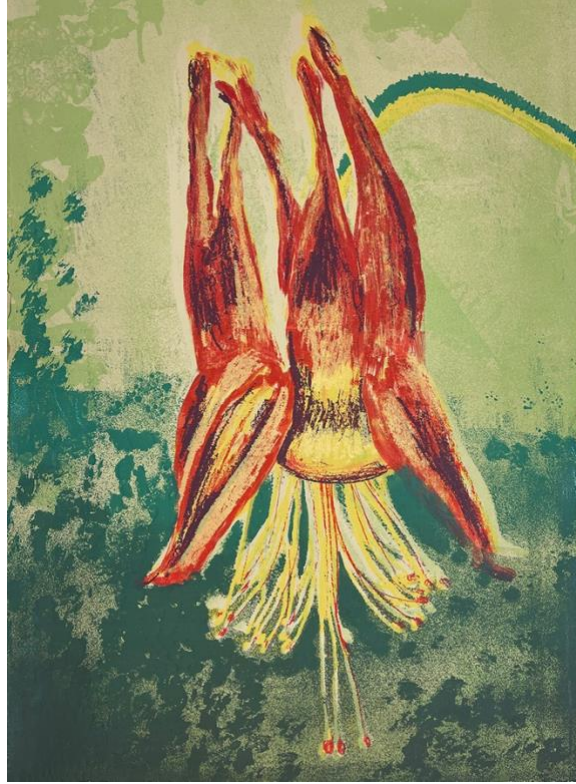


Figure 17
Columbine 2021
30"x22" Screenprint

Columbine

The first time I heard the word columbine was in 1999, from then on, I associated it with a school in Colorado. It wasn't until about 10 years later that I even knew the columbine was a flower, and a beautiful one at that. On our hikes in eastern North Carolina in the spring we come across mini wild columbine, often next to streams along rocky ledges. For this screenprint, I painted films to print each layer directly from a photograph from one of those hikes.



Figure 18
Common Violet 2021
30"x44" Lithograph with Screenprint

Common Violet

Growing up in Florida, it was unusual to come across wild violets. Upon moving to North Carolina and hiking in eastern North Carolina as well as in the Piedmont, there are wild violets everywhere in spring. In this print I try to show the vast ground and how the common violet clusters in little bunches. I find the rich blue, green, and the soft purple of the patches to be magical and inviting, like somewhere fairies would lay down for a spell.



Figure 19
Elderflower 2021
22"x30" Screenprint

Elderflower

The elderflower has a long history of medicinal uses as well as being made into bubbly beverages and cordials for people to enjoy. I never had tried an elderflower beverage until I went to Croatia. There we were greeted at our hosts' house, and they offered us elderflower beverage. It has the delicate flavor and floral essence that you smell from the elderflower, but it's more like a fermented lemonade. I have always had a fond admiration for the elder flowers that grow along the wastewater ditches and sides of highways and hold personal reverence for their delicious flavor.

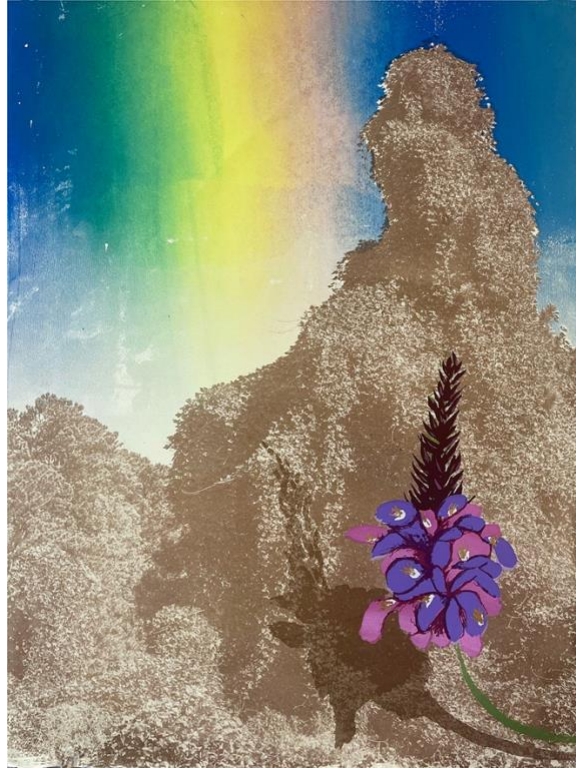


Figure 20
Kudzu 2021
30"x22" Lithograph with Screenprint

Kudzu

There are a few things in the botanical world that are as beautiful and destructive as kudzu. Although the kudzu plant is a devastating invasive, I needed to add it to the community because it is now a part of our community. Humans introduced the kudzu, along with thousands of other non-native plants, and it is important to recognize this. By acknowledgement, we can now work towards a solution. The fast growing invasive, edible kudzu plant makes a giant botanical sculpture as it engulfs all the native plants and structures in path. Throughout my travels up the eastern coast, I have seen kudzu take over whole sides of mountains. Occasionally I would imagine what the hillsides would have looked like were the kudzu never brought here.

It was not until the last few years that I have ever seen the kudzu bloom. In the pea family, it has a brilliant pink and purple flower that I have interpreted here. By capturing both the sinister nature and the

delicate beauty of this plant, I aim to bring the viewers' attention to a problem not often discussed. The Van Dyke of the kudzu structure in the background of this print is the plant engulfing a longleaf pine forest somewhere in the piedmont of North Carolina.



Figure 21
Mullen 2021
30"x22" Cyanotype and Gum Print with Lithograph

Mullen

This mountain plant has always piqued my curiosity after reading stories of people smoking it to help with coughs and lung ailments. Additionally, and possibly more sensibly, the leaves of the mullen plant have reportedly been used as diapers for children. Studies say that the plant has antimicrobial properties and would help with diaper rash. Mullens grow well in disturbed earth and in areas of sustainable development. The *Mullen* (see fig. 21) represents something intangible to me, like an idea whose concept has not fully been implemented. A field of windmills helps convey this.



Figure 22
Rattlesnake Master 2021
44"x30" Lithograph with Screenprint

Rattlesnake Master

Rattlesnake master gets its scientific name *Eryngium yuccifolium* (translated to yucca leaved) because the leaves do look like that of the yucca. Rattlesnake master is a fiber plant, and a pair of 2000 year old shoes in North America were made from the leaves of this plant. In modern times however, this plant is hard to come by because it does not like disturbed earth and as we know, humans like to disturb the earth. The *Rattlesnake Master* (see fig. 22) print is my interpretation of the lone standing rattlesnake master in the long shadow it casts over time.

CHAPTER 6: The Environment

Amid making *A Printmaker's Field Guide* another smaller body of work came to fruition while working on the individual pieces, *The Environment*. In these prints I begin with my own primary succession. I begin building environments or 'colonizing' the barren environment. We will refer to barren environment as the blank piece of paper. This happens the same way as when the mosses and lichens arrive to newly formed piece of land where previously no plants have lived. As I begin to introduce these pioneer species, or first layers of the print the community and the print become more complex. I reached a point where I stop at the intermediate species. This environment isn't so complex but for both the viewer and me it gives a sense of being. A place where we belong. These prints are the beginning of the microcosm that eventually becomes the macrocosm of all the other prints.



Figure 23
The Coast 2021
30"x22" Lithograph

The Coast

As an adult, I would return to the oak scrubs of Florida's central and northern coastline to hike and eventually collect specimens for my creative research. Walking through these sugar sand forests and coming out the other side to the shoreline, this is the image I hold in my head that I needed to translate to print. This print happens on the edge, on the heel of the sand dunes, right before reaching the water.

I grew up in Saint Augustine Florida, a beach town that has been a beach town since the 1400s, when the Spanish colonized Florida. Being a redhead, using the beach to relax in the sun was not for me. Instead, I spent my time crouched in the shade of the mangroves on the intercoastal waterway, and in the scrubs of oaks and wax myrtles on the shorelines. These areas along the coast are made up of dry, loose sand and house some of Florida's oldest plant communities. Here I spent my days hunting for fiddler crabs and sand fleas, running from jellyfish, digging for sand dollars, and collecting sharks' teeth.

Creating a suite of prints based on landscapes was never my plan. I was synthesizing environments to eventually focus on specific species that would be placed into the foreground. It was not until later that I realized I had unintentionally created some of my favorite scenery, without a subject. The simplicity in this allows the viewer to imagine more rather than be told. One can look at this print and smell the sweet salty air and feel the steady pounding breeze blowing off the ocean. I can hear the constant roar of the Atlantic Ocean crashing in the background. Tides going in, tides going out, and with each rotation bringing newfound treasures on every wave. With a horizon line that never ends and only begins with building clouds. They call the Midwest big sky country, but there's nothing like the big sky of the Atlantic Ocean.



Figure 24
Lake Woodruff 2021
30"x22" Cyanotype and Lithograph

Lake Woodruff

There's a place in central Florida that's near, dear, and close to my heart, Lake Woodruff. Florida has a tremendous amount of biological diversity with sandhill cranes, alligators, otters, great blue herrings and so many other wild animals co-existing. The plant biodiversity is the same. Several species of bladderworts grow in the water. The bank waterway is filled with different kinds of mallows, aquatic grass, and thistles. The long hot, humid, and sometimes very buggy hikes in this amazing place have brought endless inspiration to me, even when I don't get a chance to visit often. Whenever we adventure to a new place, I do hold it to the standards of Lake Woodruff. Eastern North Carolina has some very similar areas with some of the same flora except perhaps missing a few palm trees. The area around Lake Woodruff has a blend of ecosystems that are some of my favorites. Within areas of the wetlands there are also longleaf pine flats with soil of poor nutritional content, and it is in this harsh environment that butter

warts and other carnivorous plants grow. I haven't had the chance to make a butter wort print yet, but Lake Woodruff and the matching environments on the coastal plains North Carolina have sparked my intrigue. The suite of environmental prints are very much explorations that are part of creating more descriptive plant specific compositions. These prints could be categorized as the primary succession of all the other prints.



Figure 25
Savannah 2021
30"x22" Lithograph

The Savannah

The Savannah is our favorite view. At least the research that scientists have done say that this is our favorite view. They attribute that to the human humble beginnings or the place of origin where humans started. Some studies suggest that the selective pressures imposed on early hominids in Africa during the Pleistocene, specifically in the savanna environments, were so decisive for the evolutionary

history of the human species that, to date, there seems to be a universal preference for this type of landscape (Moura 2)

I am no different. I talk a lot about the environment, and eventually I began to print the environments where I found these plants living. The suite of prints known as The Environment, are not just landscape prints. This suite of prints conveys a sense of emotion, a sense of belonging, and when asked by some viewers they emanate a childhood like wonderment of exploration. These prints coincide with all the other prints. The mind's eye will connect the plants to the environment. The same way humans commonly love the view of a savannah; is the same way we know instinctively that these plants belong there, moreover, our need for these plants to survive.

Influences

The diminishing populations of plants and the implications that come along with the subsequent collapse of working eco-systems will surely impact us all; the importance of plants is a bipartisan issue. Politics have shaped our countries, our habitats, and how our society has evolved alongside nature. Ultimately, I see these as social-political issues that need to be addressed. My work imbues a sense of understanding to the viewer about the landscapes people live in which further translates to a deeper connection and awareness about things such as environmental conservation.

With the new education and the recent resurgence of foraging long-lost edible plants, the lines between my chef background and my current passion for printmaking have blended further. The attention that foraging is bringing to businesses, cultures, foods, and the histories of Black, Indigenous and People of Color has only added to the interest of using local ingredients. Instagram and Tiktok users are helping lead this movement. People are realizing that most of us only consume twelve species of plants and four species of animals in our diets. But there are thousands of edible plants available to us, some of them outside our back doors. We have moved from an agrarian society to an industrial one, where we forget

how food grows, where it grows, and what its origins are. Given my passion for plants, it is refreshing and influential to see other people begin to show interest in the knowledge that we've been losing.

We live in a society that is bombarded with videos of people doing creative things. So much time is spent sifting through all of this. I look at botanical artwork and it influences me a little, but surprisingly I find ideas, processes, and methods to be a bigger influence on me than the visual traits of the piece itself. One process I am influenced by is *Mokuhanga*, the Japanese art of woodblock printing. This technique has been practiced for about 2500 years. One contemporary practitioner is David Bull. He has a working print shop eponymously called *Mokuhanga* located in Japan. He takes contemporary subject matter and uses classic techniques to make amazing prints with a whole crew of carvers and printers. His business model alone excites me. They make open-ended editions of prints that are very affordable. It takes printmaking's ideas of multiples and gets the work into the hands of as many people as possible. His dedication to Japanese woodblock printing has helped popularize this ancient technique, bridging a gap between *Mokuhanga* masters and Western Society. I see myself doing a similar service by creating interpretive botanical prints and bringing them to the common public. Botanical illustration can be traced back many centuries. This art was often used for identification and medicinal purposes. Throughout the centuries, artists have depicted botanical works gracefully and with the same intricate care that I now try to convey. By bringing botanical prints back in a new and different way, they regain relevance in the contemporary printmaking conversation.

CONCLUSION

It has become clear to me during my research that many people living their day-to-day lives pay little attention to their environment. Plant blindness has become normalized through both complacency and busy modern lifestyles. There is however still a fundamental curiosity and intrinsic value that humans feel towards nature, often sparked once they begin to learn more. This suite of prints is the fire starter that sets them off into their world again with more awareness and appreciation for the spectacle of the natural world.

This field guide has been my constant companion for the past 3 years. The prints that I have made are my notes, my memories, my sketches, and meditations on the green and growing world all around us. My hope is that this body of work will guide others, not to follow my path, but to forge a new one with a better awareness of our connection to this planet and all that it offers. I encourage the reader to run their hands through the grass, watch wild bees pollinate clover, and feel the wind on the water. Be curious about the world around you and remember that we live in and are a part of our environment.

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