

BOTANICALS

By

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A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Art

University of Alaska Fairbanks

May 2022

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## **Abstract**

*Botanicals* is an exhibit of extremely close-up color photographs of flowers and plant materials which were created without the use of a camera. The 31 framed works reference the historical *memento mori* art movement intended to remind the viewer of the fragility of life. The work explores the details of a world unseen by the naked eye. The images were all made using a flatbed scanner at extremely high resolution but often seem more three-dimensional than would usually be expected from that process. There is something unusual about the lighting in these images but it's hard to put one's finger on quite what unless you are aware of the process.

## Photographic Foundations

I was born and raised in El Paso, Texas, a product of several generations of my family on both sides who primarily made their homes in the American Southwest. My first photographs were made with a Kodak Brownie Holiday camera my parents gave me for Christmas when I was about 11 (Fig. 1). I exposed a fair amount of film in that camera, though I wasn't yet interested in processing it myself; all of it was developed and printed at the drugstore. I have lost any prints from those days but the camera resides in a place of honor in my living room.



*Fig. 1 – My first camera, a Kodak Brownie Holiday, sold by Kodak in the U.S. and Canada from 1953 – 1962*  
Photo by LJ Evans.

Though my parents thought my childhood experiments in drawing and watercolor seemed promising, by the time I reached high school I was more interested in music as my major creative outlet.

I was active in band and choir, and I did not have space in my class schedule for art classes. Both my

mom and dad took up painting as a serious hobby

after retirement. They each, in their own realms, achieved some successes and definitely derived a great deal of personal satisfaction from these creative endeavors, and I know that their interests and encouragement influenced me.

It has been a long and winding road from that Brownie to the work I'm making now. There were a few pivotal milestones along the way.

### Andrew Kilgore

I was first exposed to photography as an art form when I met Andrew Kilgore in 1968. Our families lived around the corner from each other in El Paso but we had never met until he returned from two years in India in the Peace Corps; we were married in 1969. He had picked up a Pentax Spotmatic camera in his travels and over the next several years enthusiastically soaked up everything he could about photography, photographers, film, paper and cameras. He was just beginning, he didn't even know at this point he would dedicate his whole life to photography.

Right along with Andrew I learned about the work of important photographers like Ansel Adams and Edward Weston, Eugene Smith and Margaret Bourke-White. I also learned



*Fig. 2 – From We Drew A Circle, 1981 - 1984. Photo by Andrew Kilgore.*

it was possible to have a functioning darkroom in the small bathroom of a small apartment. I didn't do any of that darkroom work myself, but I watched the magic happen.

Andrew made a career for himself as a professional portrait photographer in Arkansas. He photographed families, business people, politicians and celebrities, and in fact, he still does, at age 81. He has also pursued personal projects throughout his career. Andrew has used his photography to make visible groups of people who share the heartrending quality in our culture of being "unseen" by the general public, such as people with developmental disabilities, youth at risk and the unhoused (Fig. 2). After we parted company in 1974, I

carried with me all that I had learned by osmosis about photography, composition, the beauty of a fine print, and the impact a powerful photograph can have on society.

## **Photo Graphics Workshop**

My first personal explorations in fine art photography began in 1979. I was living in Stamford, Connecticut, working at the corporate research headquarters for a big food company. My boss asked me to take over production of the newsletter for our facility and she offered to send me to classes in graphic design and photography at a gallery and school close by. That's how I met Beth Shepherd and the other instructors at Photo Graphics Workshop in New Canaan (Fig. 3).

Over the next couple of years I took all the classes PGW offered: beginning, intermediate and advanced photography, introduction to graphic design, pasteup and layout, portrait photography. Within a year of the first class I had assembled my own darkroom, not in a tiny bathroom



*Fig. 3 – Beth Shepherd, Bernini, Italy 1979*

but in the furnace room of a house off Long Island Sound I shared with roommates.

From Beth and her colleagues I learned the basics, not only how to use a camera, process film and make archival black and white prints, but also principles of composition, how to see clearly and create images with intention and emotional content.

### **Transition to Alaska**

I completed a Bachelor of Science in psychology at Sacred Heart University in Connecticut in 1983 and a Master of Education in instructional technology at Arizona State University in 1985. In 1986 I moved to Sitka, Alaska, where I held a couple of jobs simultaneously, one of which was teaching photography classes for Islands Community College. I saw an ad in the Sitka Sentinel noting that University of Alaska Museum photographer Barry McWayne would be in town and photographers who would like him to review their portfolio should make an appointment, which I did. That meeting and Barry's advice had a major influence on my photographic future. He commended the work I showed him, but told me I needed to join photographic organizations, enter juried exhibits, take classes when I could, attend workshops led by photographers whose work I admired, and put in the time to hone my vision and craft. I didn't see Barry often in subsequent years, but he always asked about the photographic projects I was working on and encouraged me to keep at it (Fig. 4).

In 1988 I moved a little further north, to Valdez. I had been teaching photography classes at Islands Community College in Sitka, and I continued teaching in Valdez. I borrowed an 8x10 camera from the photographer at the Valdez Star newspaper and learned the basics of using it.



*Fig 4. Finn Island, Sitka, 1987. Accepted in Rarefied Light 1988. Photo by LJ Evans.*

The *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in March 1989 turned everything in Valdez upside down. I ended up working for the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation in the public information office. I met Charles Mason for the first time during the spill response, in a helicopter taking reporters and photographers out to oiled beaches. In 1990 the entire spill response administration moved to Anchorage, and I relocated again, taking me yet a little further north.

I have primarily made my living throughout my adult life as a writer and editor, but a commitment to photography has also been part of my self-identity ever since those formative early experiences at Photo Graphics Workshop in Connecticut. As Barry recommended, I participated in numerous workshops in Anchorage, Fairbanks and the Lower 48. My images were selected for juried exhibitions including *Rarefied Light* and *Alaska Positive*, and I exhibited work in small shows in Sitka, Valdez and Anchorage. In 1991 I was invited to take over as director of the Alaska Photographic Center in Anchorage, a volunteer post I held until moving to Fairbanks in 1996.

For a number of years, I created images using classic analog black and white film and darkroom prints. I am still profoundly drawn to the simplicity of black and white imagery. It seems to me that subtracting the seduction and distraction of color emphasizes form and texture. The visual story shifts when the image is monochromatic; it can be more abstract, the narrative more ambiguous and emotional.



*Fig. 5 – Family Inventory #3, Polaroid Transfer, 1994.  
Photo by LJ Evans.*

During the years I lived in Anchorage, photographers around the world had begun experimenting with color Polaroid films, creating images in ways those materials were never designed for. I loved the soft watercolor look of Polaroid transfers and the distortions possible with manipulated SX-70 prints. I made several groups of work using these materials, including a series of photographs of objects that had belonged to my parents and grandparents (Fig. 5). I still worked with black and white films and papers, but these explorations with Polaroid were my first major forays into color. In 1996 I made one more move further north, to my present home of Fairbanks. I showed some of the Polaroid transfer work at Site 250 in a joint show with Charles Mason in 1997.

In Fairbanks I worked at UAF as a writer and public information officer in a couple of different settings until 2013, when I retired from full-time work. In 2016 I took my first class with Charles — Digital Darkroom. In essence this class is about creating the same kind of visual magic that is possible in a darkroom, but digitally, using Photoshop and inkjet printers. I had acquired an old but quite functional 8x10 camera, which I used to make portraits, scanning the negatives and making archival digital prints. This work was transformational for me. All those years I'd made images with straight analog photography using manual cameras (no automatic settings at all), film, chemistry and paper. Even the Polaroid was very much a hands-on process, not at all digital. With this portrait project I was able to blend analog techniques with digital processes, using the strengths of each to create work that was different from either. The Fairbanks Arts Association Bear Gallery accepted a selection of these portraits for a solo exhibit, *Here Then Are Faces*, in 2019 (Fig. 6).

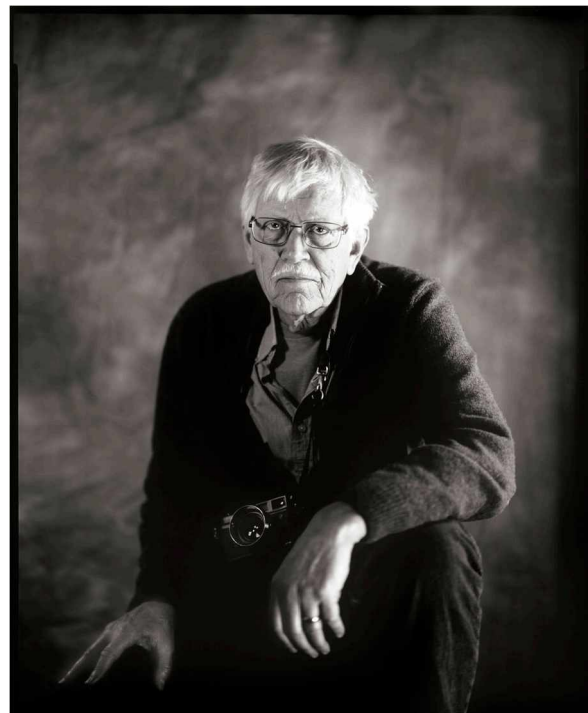


Fig. 6 – Jim, 2016. Photo by LJ Evans

During that first semester of Digital Darkroom I realized once again how important making photographs is to me and that I needed to acknowledge this and dedicate some serious time and energy to growing as a photographer and an artist. I decided to apply to the UAF Master of Fine Arts program. The department accepted me, and I have spent

the last four years learning new techniques, making new work, and going further outside my comfort zones more than I would have believed possible.

Through classwork in the MFA program I have explored alternative photographic processes like cyanotypes, pinhole cameras, cyanotypes, Mordençage, anthotypes and photograms, and I ventured into printmaking, using polymer photogravure techniques to transform photographs into etchings.

I've enjoyed intensely the challenges of exploring and bending visual possibilities as well as learning what's involved in becoming a professional artist. The work I chose for my Master of Fine Arts thesis project has again taken me in an entirely fresh direction.

## The Work

My original plan for the MFA thesis exhibition was to create a body of work about people and places in Ester, the small, unique community outside Fairbanks where I live. I wanted to make portraits of Ester people in their homes and involved in personal and community activities. I started using a 4x5 film camera to collect these images, but the pandemic made that project frankly impossible. I had to come up with something different.

Over the winter of 2020 – 2021 I began experimenting with creating images of various objects using a flatbed scanner. The first of these experiments that I considered successful consists of 20 desiccated Christmas cactus blossoms arranged in a grid against a black background (Fig. 7). When I pulled it up on my screen and later printed it, this image suggested elements of joyful movement that I hadn't expected. As I showed it to others, viewers said it made them think of twirling dancers.

I continued experimenting, scanning quite a number of diverse objects, including glass,

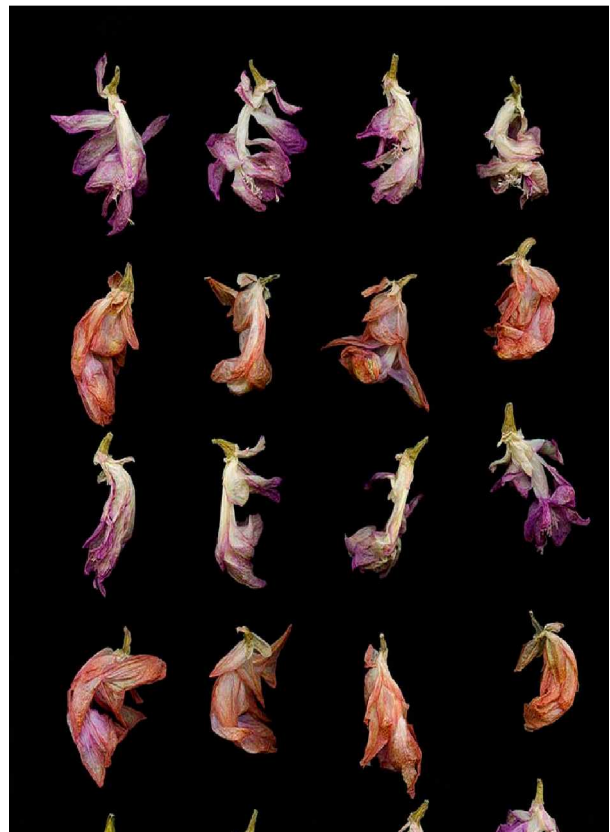


Fig. 7 – Christmas Cactus: *Schlumbergera truncata*. Photo by LJ Evans



crumpled paper, feathers, ceramics and family artifacts. Consistently the images I found most compelling and thought-provoking were of plant materials: flowers, leaves, even whole plants. I'm an avid gardener, indoors and out, an avocation inherited from my mother, who worked so hard to grow roses in the inhospitable environment of the desert Southwest. Working with and photographing plant materials is a natural extension of a deep personal interest, and a reflection of my appreciation for the living, natural world. I narrowed my subject matter in that direction.

Some of the resulting images are of flowers and leaves I've collected and pressed over many years, notably *Paper Birch* and *Quaking Aspen: Betula nealaskana* & *Populus tremuloides*, (Fig. 8). I also made images from fresh flowers and plant materials from my garden and houseplant collection, and wild plant materials from other locations in Fairbanks and nearby areas of Alaska.



Fig. 8 – *Paper Birch* & *Quaking Aspen: Betula nealaskana* & *Populus tremuloides*. Photo by LJ Evans.



Fig. 9 – *Dahlia* & *Leaf Hopper: Dahlia 'Firepot'* & *Cicadellidae*. Photo by LJ Evans

I quickly realized some flowers were too soft, the petals squashed on the glass and the effect was not pleasing. I had such hopes to use this technique to create photographs of peonies, for example, but they just were not suitable. However, some flowers had just enough stiffness in the petals to hold themselves up. The best example and possibly the most beautiful flower I captured this way was the orange dahlia, *Dahlia and Leaf Hopper: Dahlia 'Firepot'* & *Cicadellidae* (Fig. 9). The colors are intense and vibrant, the morning dew still clings to the petals. Hiding in the pointy end of one petal is a tiny bug



*Fig. 10 – Rosette: Echeveria elegans. Photo by LJ Evans.*

which UA Museum of the North entomologist Derek Sikes identified as most likely a leaf hopper.

The process I settled on to create these images is actually relatively simple. I scanned each of the objects in a darkened room with the cover of the scanner *up*, instead of flat against the glass as would be the norm. The only source of light is the LED light in the bar of the scanner as it moves slowly down the length of the glass. The scanner bar light is intense but not strong enough to illuminate anything further than a few inches away from the glass. The Epson Perfection V750 PRO scanner in the MFA studio, like most scanners, uses an electronic, light-sensing integrated circuit to collect the reflected light. This sensor bears a resemblance in its function to the

electronic sensor in a digital camera, but the way the visual information is collected is quite different.

In a digital camera the light is focused through a lens and recorded instantaneously by a small, stationary sensor. Scanners, on the other hand, record data progressively as the bar containing both the light source and sensor moves across the subject. The sensor moves down the length of the glass with the light bar, scanning quickly back and forth under the glass. How many times the sensor goes back and forth per inch is a function of the resolution setting.

This is not a particularly large scanner, the glass is 9 by 11 inches. I scanned most of these images at the highest resolution I could, 24-bit color, 1,600 – 2,400 dots per inch, or dpi, which resulted in extremely large digital files. The scanner saved the



*Fig. 11 – Echeveria showing the process of scanning the plant for the final image.*

images as .tif files to the computer, and then I opened them in Photoshop for finishing. See Figs. 10 and 11 for an example of a final image and the process of scanning it.

For most of the photographs, what you see is basically what I got — I made minimal changes in Photoshop. Overall, I increased contrast, removed dust and debris, and in some cases intensified or shifted colors slightly.

## Underpinning the Work: Ideas & Influences

### Memento mori

There's a philosophy which is prominently reflected in art of many periods named *memento mori*, a Latin phrase that literally means "Remember you must die." I was thinking about that concept, particularly as it is represented in Dutch flower still life paintings from the 1600s, as I consciously chose to leave bruises, insect damage and broken bits in the final photographs. Even though many of these images were stunning, their



Fig. 12 – Peony 'Ada Niva'. Photo by LJ Evans

beauty was not all that I wanted them to convey or that was drawing me to create them. I also wanted to emphasize the fragility and ephemerality of these living things, to remind the viewer of the fleetingness of all living things, even me. It seemed to me they revealed more of their life story through those imperfections. The idea of *memento mori* is to remind the viewer not to get too attached to beauty and fleet-

ing material things because all of this will pass. There is a more optimistic aspect to the message, as well: *carpe diem*, seize the day, make the most of what time we have.

The most spectacular example of this fragility is *Peony Ada Niva*, (Fig. 12) This is a fairly new peony variety in my garden; 2021 was the third year for this plant and the first year it bloomed. Only three flowers appeared, and they were exquisite and unlike any of my other peonies. I checked progress every day as the blossoms matured. But by

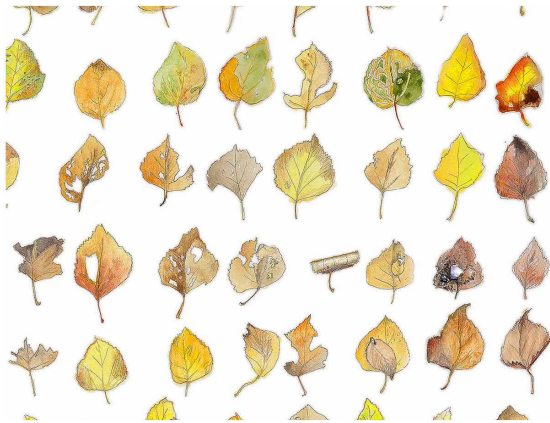


Fig. 13 – *Birch Leaves*, Miho Aoki, 2019.

the time it was a good time for me to make an image, they had already gone a bit past their peak. I cut them and brought them into the house, and as I laid them on the glass, all of the petals fell off. This is a variety with more prominent yellow stamens than some, and the stamens scattered as if I had dropped a handful of toothpicks. My hopes for this image were dashed, but I didn't immediately scoop the pieces into the compost bucket. I decided to run the preview on the scanner just to see what the tableau looked like. When the image came up on my computer screen I was astonished. I moved nothing, changed nothing, merely added a couple of leaves when I made the final scan.

The images of pressed leaves and flowers convey another echo of mortality. Portraits of birch and aspen leaves have been themes in works I've admired before. Miho Aoki's *Birch Leaves* (Fig. 13) was in a 2019 exhibit at Well Street, and Elizabeth Eero Irving's *Phyllocnistis populiella*, #2, (Fig. 14) made in 2006 for an exhibit at the UA Museum of the North, hangs on the office wall of a friend. In both cases I was quite drawn to these images. My version, *Paper Birch and Quaking Aspen: Betula neoalaskana & Populus tremuloides*, (Fig. 8) fills the frame with leaves in the brilliant golden, brown and orange hues of autumn. The shapes of the leaves express supple grace, even in death — though they are no longer whispering or quaking, and even the leaf miner insects have left behind only their tracks.

the time it was a good time for me to make an image, they had already gone a bit past their peak. I cut them and brought them into the house, and as I laid them on the glass, all of the petals fell off. This is a variety with more prominent yellow stamens than some, and the stamens scattered as if I had dropped a handful of toothpicks. My hopes for this image were dashed, but I didn't immediately scoop the pieces into the compost bucket. I decided to run the preview on the scanner just to see what the tableau looked like. When the image came up on my computer screen I was astonished. I moved nothing, changed nothing, merely added a couple of leaves when I made the final scan.



Fig. 14 – *Phyllocnistis populiella* #2, Elizabeth Eero Irving, 2006.



*Fig. 15 – Amaryllis Relic: Hippeastrum. Fig. 15 and Fig. 16 are flowers from the same amaryllis bulb, just from different years. Photo by LJ Evans.*



*Fig. 16 – Amaryllis ‘Ferrari’: Hippeastrum. Photo by LJ Evans.*



*Fig. 17 – Tricia’s Morels #1: Morchella esculenta. Photo by LJ Evans.*

*Fig. 18 – Tricia’s Morels #2: Morchella esculenta*



The dried purple flower in *Amaryllis Relic: Hippeastrum* (Fig. 15) is the shroud-like remains of a bloom from the exact same bulb as the fiery red and fiercely alive blossom in *Amaryllis 'Ferrari'* (Fig. 16). Not the same flower, not the same year, but the same genesis, and again embodying the transition from life to death. The mushrooms in *Trish's Morels #1 and #2: Morchella esculenta* (Figs. 16 & 17), all collected by a friend in a year following fires in the boreal forest and dried for consumption later, went on to become food for the table, sustaining life for other living things.

## Mysteries of the Light

A certain visual mystery became apparent as the work evolved. There is something unusual about the lighting in these images but it's hard to put one's finger on quite what it is. For one thing, it's difficult to deter-

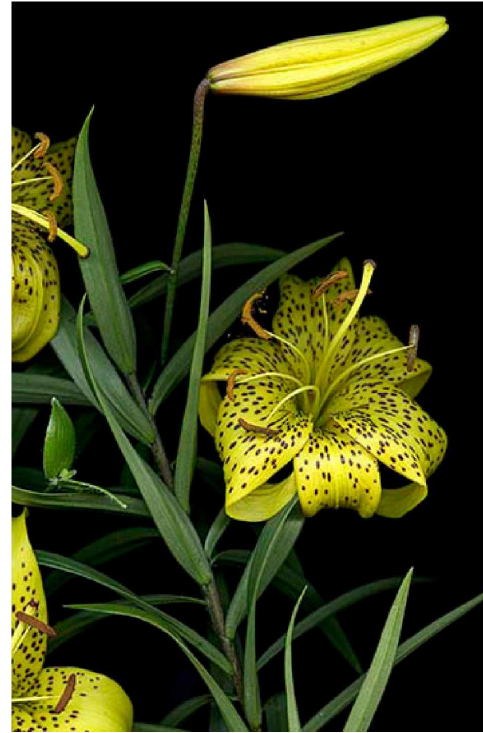


Fig. 19 – Detail from *Tiger Lillies: Lillium lancifolia*. Photo by LJ Evans.

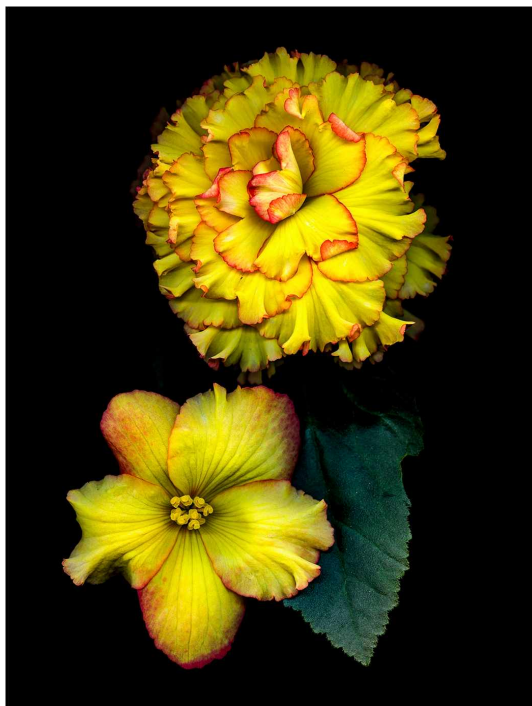


Fig. 20 – *Begonia 'Picotee Sunburst': Begonia tuberosa*. Photo by LJ Evans.

mine the source of the light or the perspective the image was made from unless you are aware of the process I used. A good example is *Tiger Lilies: Lillium lancifolia*. Yellow-orange pollen has fallen and is sprinkled in a few tiny heaps on the glass surface of the scanner. The pollen particles appear to be hanging in space just a fraction of an inch closer to the viewer than to the flower. If the image were made with a regular camera the pollen would either be still on the stamen, with perhaps some dusted on other petals or leaves as it indeed is in this image, or it would have fallen to the ground. It could only be hanging in air like this if the photographer managed to capture that exact instant when it was falling.

But even more it is the *quality* of the light in the images which I find so striking. It appears to



Fig. 21 – Amy's Tomatillo: *Physalis philadelphica*. Photo by LJ Evans.

pierce right through the petals in *Tiger Lilies* and *Begonia 'Picotee Sunburst'*: *Begonia tuberosa* (Fig. 20), making them seem translucent. In Amy's *Tomatillo: Physalis philadelphica* (Fig. 21), all of the paper-thin husks around the fruits are luminous in a way that reveals their texture in extraordinary detail, and the light has made its way inside the casings and reveals the presence of the fruits within.

In some of the images there is also a notable illusion of three-dimensionality, as in *Echeveria elegans*, (Fig. 10). The light seems to have penetrated into the recesses of the succulent plant's rosette of leaves. The scanner sensor captured enough of it to make the fleshy leaves seem to recede into the distance. This subtle 3D effect was unanticipated and it is not present in all of the images

but I found it extremely affecting when it appeared. In Western cultures sometimes we speak of time receding into the distance as if it were a physical thing, so I envision the objects in these images receding into the distance of the past, because all of them are now gone.

Generally speaking we don't think of scanners delivering images with the depth of field or depth of focus you'd expect in a photograph made with a camera. A scanner is designed to make a two-dimensional image of a two-dimensional object, whereas a camera lens is designed to make an image of scenes where the entire subject matter can be in sharp focus, from front to back, depending on the lens settings used. Though in these images the range that is in focus is extremely limited — sharpness in the details falls off after only an inch or so — the illusion of greater depth in the resulting images is notable and striking.

The effect of the bottomless black background in each of these images also adds a potent ambiance. The deep black seems to hold and cradle the objects, maybe to form a barrier between them and the chaotic world beyond. In physics black is the total



Fig. 22 – Fiddle-leaf Fig & Croton: *Ficus lyrata* & *Codiaeum variegatum*. Photo by LJ Evans

recognize the form of the whole organism. In *Ficus Lyrata* and *Croton: Ficus lyrata* & *Codiaeum variegatum* (Fig. 22), the larger leaf in the background is the reverse side of a *Ficus*. But in a large print, every cell is visible, and the pattern of branching conduits that carry fluids and nutrients among the cells calls to mind a satellite image of the earth, revealing drainage patterns of valleys and rivers, the topography and shapes of fields and hills, and even conjures the veins and arteries that carry our own vital fluids.

In *Cactus and Succulents* (Fig. 23) the tiny hair-like fibers at the base of each of the cactus spine clusters are visible, as well as the even smaller hairs protruding from the surface of the cactus ribs. The

absence of light. Black calls to mind the night that conceals nightmares. Black is the color of mourning. Black has symbolic significances which infuse all human cultures (Ronnberg, 2010). In this body of work the intense black makes a stark and dramatic contrast with the living or once-living matter that is the subject of each image. It also contrasts with and lifts up the colors and increases our visual perception of their vibrance.

### A World Unseen

The extreme detail made visible because of the high resolution of the scanned image reveals a world invisible to our naked eyes, suggesting a world of its own. It has some similarities to a microscopic view but not quite at that fine a scale; you can still see and



Fig. 23 – Cactus & Succulents: *Trichocereus grandiflorus* hybrid, *Adromischus cristatus* & *Haworthia emelyae*. Photo by LJ Evans.



crassula is divided into roughly triangular lobes and the surface is bumpy and rough, like a cat's tongue. The surfaces of the fleshy lobes are translucent, and if you look closely, you can see linear divisions within the lobe that run from the base of the triangle to the tip. The fat lobes of the haworthia are covered with an evenly-distributed sparse fuzz, and bear a distinct resemblance to pattypan summer squash; they really do look like something you could eat.

In all of these cases, careful examination rewards the patient observer with glimpses into a micro, if not microscopic, world of seemingly endless detail and texture.



Fig. 24 – Log 5, Melinda Hurst Frye.

I saw were from *The Nurse Log* series (Fig. 24). Frye describes the exhibit as “a set of five photographs made from scans along a fallen log while it returns to the soil as it cradles new life. *The Nurse Log* series is part of ... an ongoing observation and witness to the brilliance of an active forest, celebrating the smallest of natural efforts and champions.” (Frye, 2022)

I had the good fortune to visit the gallery on a day when Frye was there and we talked about her work. Frye's process is thoughtful and reflective. She spends considerable time in Pacific Northwest forest areas seeking the

## Influences That Led to This Work

### Melinda Hurst Frye

The experience that is most closely connected with this work was viewing Melinda Hurst Frye's *The Forest Floor* exhibition in Seattle in October 2019. This beautiful and impressive work gave me the idea of using a scanner in ways I hadn't thought of before. The particular images



Fig. 25 – Melinda Hurst Frye with her scanner in the woods near Seattle. Photo by Gordon Hempton.

places to create her images. Though she uses cameras as well, her primary creative tool is a scanner. She removes the lid from a portable scanner, powers it with a car battery, carries her gear into the woods and places the device close to the subject of her interest, and scans it at the highest resolution she can (Fig. 25). The exhibit I saw in Seattle consisted of five very large photographs from scans made along a fallen log as it returns to the soil and cradles new life.

I came away from Frye's exhibit buzzing with ideas for using a scanner but with the revolutionary idea of *not* closing the lid while doing so. I had been saving a bowl of dried Christmas cactus flowers at that point since the prior winter, just because they were so fragile and beautiful, with the intention of photographing them but now I thought — scan them instead! This resulted in *Christmas Cactus: Schlumbergera truncata*, (Fig. 7). This was the first successful image I made using this technique, and I found the concept extremely exciting.

### **Dutch Still-life Painting and the Work of Rachel Ruysch**

Another important influence for me as this work began to evolve was an introduction to still life paintings from the Dutch Golden Age, particularly those of Rachel Ruysch but also others, that I was exposed to in Zoë Jones World History of Art II class. Ruysch was prolific and very successful in her painting career; her paintings sold for more than those of her contemporary Rembrandt. Her innovative still-

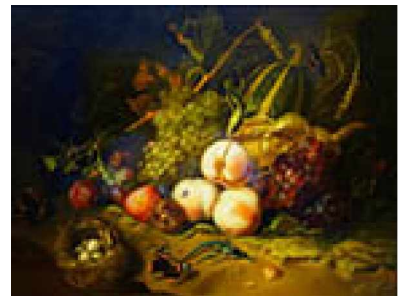


Fig. 26 – “Fruit and Insects,”  
Rachel Ruysch, 1711.

life paintings of meticulously detailed and realistic flower arrangements, fruits, cheeses, vegetables, and creatures from the forest floor are bursting with vibrant color and life (Fig. 26). Part of her fame is the attention she paid to depicting incredibly fine detail showing the delicate texture of a poppy petal or subtle crinkle of a leaf. She was painting in an era when the microscope had become available for close viewing, and she took full advantage of it. Ruysch was working in the *memento mori* genre mentioned earlier. Thus at the same time there are also hints in her compositions that not all is well: these are not paintings of perfection. Some of the flowers are wilted and drooping, there might be mold on the cheese, bloom on the grapes, or bug-chewed holes in the leaves and petals.

## Scanography

I've been interested in alternative photographic processes since the first time I saw a Polaroid transfer print in the 1990s. *Botanicals* is the most significant body of work I've created using an alternative process since then but there are some parallels to other work I've made recently, including cyanotypes, photograms and pinhole photographs. I am strongly drawn to the idea of pushing the possibilities using unusual materials and techniques to create provocative and appealing imagery that still falls within the realm of fine art photography.

Cameraless photographic processes are not new. Anna Atkins produced cyanotypes of botanical specimens of algae and seaweed in the mid-1800s (Fig. 27). The albums she published which bound original images from this work are considered by many to be the first photographic books (Batchen, 2016). Man Ray stumbled upon using photograms to create art through a darkroom mishap in the

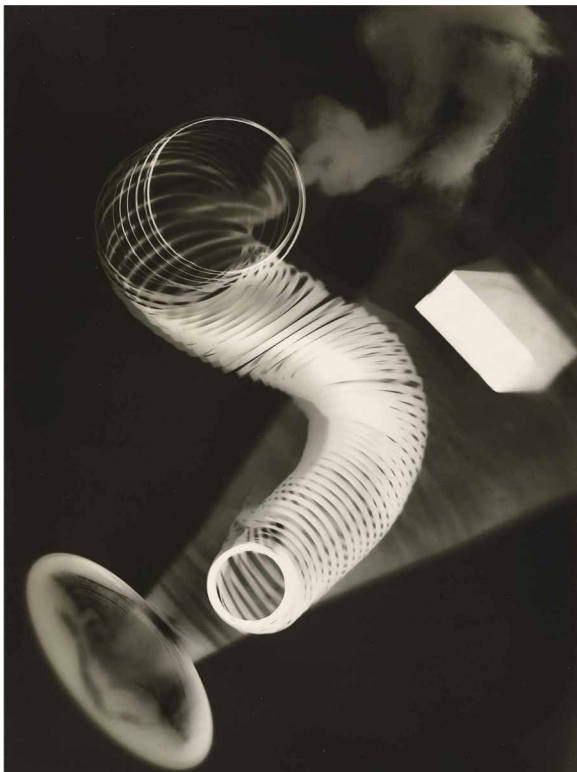


Fig. 28 – Man Ray, *Untitled Rayograph*, gelatin silver photogram, 1922.



Fig. 27 – Anna Atkins, *Pteris crandifolia*, circa 1852.

1920s. He renamed his particular process Rayographs (Fig. 28), and created an arresting body of work which freed photography from being defined by images produced by cameras, and instead “reduced the definition of the medium to the registration of light” (Greenough, 1989). The catalog from a 2016 exhibition in New York at the International Center for Photography titled “What Is a Photograph?” cites one definition of a photograph as “a ‘shape’ that is ‘borrowed’ from its subject” (Squiers, 2013). I think that is a perfect description of the images I created for *Botanicals*.

The common name for art created using a scanner is scanography. Joseph Meehan dedicates two chapters to scanography in his book, *The Magic of Digital Close-Up Photography*. He compares scanography to



*Fig. 29 – Milkweed Seeds.  
Jennifer Tucker and Gerald  
Lang.*

using a very large close-up camera to produce still lifes. “After all, how much closer can you get to an object than placing it directly up against the lens of the camera?” he says. (Meehan, 2006).

Though there are many artists using scanners to create, through the recommendation of a friend I became familiar with a pair of artists who have created similar work in this medium, Gerald Lang and Jennifer Anne Tucker from Wyoming (Lang, 2013). Their exhibit and book titled *The Botanical Series Photographs* blended art and science as they combined the idea of botanical specimens and drawings found in museum archives to be used as keys for identifying plants with digital imaging using the scanner and Photoshop (Fig. 29). I echo some of their ideas in this exhibit by including botanical names in the image titles.

## **The Exhibit: Botanicals**

My goals in planning the *Botanicals* exhibit in the UAF art gallery were to make the space inviting and for there to be enough varied images to fill the walls without crowding. It feels like when there is only two-dimensional work on the walls in such a large, open space the overall impression would benefit from some kind of interruption, some kind of three-dimensional relief from all that flatness, in the middle of the room. When I think of visiting museums and art galleries, the work in the spaces I find most successful and inviting encourages the viewer to move around freely. I also very much appreciate the ability to alternate getting close and backing away from images, as well as the occasional opportunity to sit, rest, and think about what I’m examining.



*Fig. 30 – View of the Art Department Gallery from the back of the room. Photo by LJ Evans.*

With all of that in mind I assembled and finished a wooden garden bench (Fig. 30), about the size of a loveseat, which sits in the middle of the room. Because the entire exhibit is about plants and flowers, I arranged several pedestals around the bench with plants. Some are my own — a photograph of one of the hoyas is included in the exhibit — and several are borrowed from Rasmuson Library (Fig. 31). I also included on a pedestal the shriveled remains of the sunflower that is featured in three of the images.



*Fig. 31 – View of the Art Department Gallery from the hall side. Photo by LJ Evans.*

My exhibit consisted of 30 color archival inkjet prints, all in black frames with white mats, in three sizes. Twenty-one were framed to 16 x 20 inches, five to 24 x 29 inches and three to 24.5 x 14.5 inches. I arranged the gallery such that the wooden garden bench faced the back wall (Fig. 31), and in the center of that wall a sign with the exhibition name was mounted high enough to float above the framed pieces, with a pedestal below which held a guestbook, pens in a ceramic jar and some show announcement cards.

The exhibit opened to the public Monday morning, March 28 and remained on display through the evening of Friday, April 8 from approximately 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. each weekday. I presented an artist's talk about the work on Friday, April 1 at 3 p.m. in Elvey Auditorium on campus, and hosted the opening reception from 4 – 7 p.m. in the gallery. As the show was drawing to a close I announced on social media that I would host a closing reception on Friday, April 8, to hold the gallery open in the evening after business hours to accommodate people who'd been unable to come earlier. I was extremely gratified by the attendance at both the opening and closing receptions, which I think I can attribute in part to having lived in Fairbanks for more than 25 years.

I produced show announcements in five designs. The text was identical on each postcard but five different images from the exhibition were printed on the reverse. I delivered individual, hand-written invitations with a show card enclosed to the offices of UA

President Pitney, UAF Chancellor Dan White, UAF Provost Anupma Prakash, Graduate School Director Richard Collins and Summer Sessions Director Michelle Bartlett. I put out a call on Instagram and Facebook for people to let me know if they'd like me to mail them a show card. Through these and other means I distributed more than 250 announcements in Fairbanks and elsewhere.

I provided images to the Art Department for use announcing the show, talk and opening reception on social media, and I also made announcements about the show's dates, artist's talk and the closing reception on Instagram and Facebook. I submitted information to the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner about the exhibit and the opening reception, which happened to fall on a First Friday, which was published in the weekly Latitude 64 events and entertainment newspaper insert on Thursday, March 31.

# Acknowledgements

When I walked into Charles Mason's office in 2016 and said I want to pursue a photography MFA, my aim was to spend a significant period of time acknowledging the love of making photographs that has fueled my creative life for so many years but that I've never been able to make the *center* of my life. In these four years I've challenged myself to do things and create things I simply would never have been able to do if I hadn't made this project — fulfilling the requirements for the degree — my major objective for that period of time. I've grown and struggled and learned so much, and I've made many new friends in the process. Charles' support was integral to my success in this endeavor.

I extend most sincere thanks to the University of Alaska system for supporting the senior citizen tuition waiver, and the Geophysical Institute for the part-time job I've had in the Public Information Office for the entire duration of my pursuit of the degree. Making art is an expensive undertaking, and I wouldn't have been able to afford to complete the requirements if it hadn't been for that financial support. I have also very much appreciated the flexibility of both of my supervisors at the GI during this time period, Sue Mitchell and Lynda McGilvary. It is because all of these circumstances lined up that I was able to achieve this goal.

Thank you to all of the faculty and staff of the Art Department, particularly my committee, Charles Mason, Zoë Marie Jones, David Mollett and Miho Aoki, for all your support and inspiration. The skills and photographic insights I gained from Charles and Jason Lazarus in photography classes broadened my horizons.

Special thanks to Charles, who kept all of the photo grad students moving forward during the COVID-19 pandemic. He met with us weekly over zoom during the lockdown and even during the two summers, helping us set and achieve objectives, and he generally just helped us keep going.

Particular thanks to Carol Hoefler, whose positive can-do attitude and enthusiasm as Administrative Assistant for the Art Department helps keep things running smoothly and everyone's spirits and energy revved up.

Thank you to the UA Foundation and the Barry McWayne Fine Art Photography scholarship for your support. I was extremely honored to receive this scholarship.

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