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Behind the Cover: Margot Glass, Dandelion

by NICHOLAS TRIOLO

AUGUST 7, 2019



Orion's Summer 2019 cover has become a hit, and it wasn't even trying.

The illustration is of a dandelion, what many consider a weed, ordinary flora, overlooked and under-appreciated for its beauty.

However, this dandelion was different. This dandelion, drawn with 14-karat gold to a black backdrop, was finally given a spotlight, made visible, celebrated. The cover glistens metallic on magazine shelves when placed beside a lineup of otherwise summer hues and prolific harvests. The artwork is subversive, an X-ray, a photo negative, an inside-out investigation of the flower's interior secrets.

And this was precisely what artist Margot Glass was hoping to communicate.

Two weeks before the cover launch I met with Margot for a walk around her favorite trail in Hadley, Massachusetts, and later, a visit to her studio. Glass is a humble artist, mother, and pursuante of the out-of-doors. I found her generous with her time and rooted in the inclusion and attention of her surroundings. Her work is a direct reflection of that.

Margot Glass grew up in New York City and studied art at the Art Students' League, Brown University, Rhode Island School of Design, and Fashion Institute of Technology. Her work explores the ephemeral through still life, nature and botany, text and communication. Find Glass's full artist statement on her [website](#).

Here's what emerged in our conversation.



On the Importance of Going Slow: “Each of these drawings takes roughly thirty hours, on average. These drawings are *really* slow. I continue to experiment with grounds and primers to serve as a foundation for the drawing, and the prepared surface is extremely fragile and unforgiving. It’s difficult stuff to work with. There’s no taking anything back. If I touch the drawing and it spreads across the paper, everything is ruined. So I have to be very careful while I’m working, bringing as much detail I can without overworking it.

They’re slow, but I get a lot of satisfaction out of doing them. After a while, your whole worldview changes because suddenly you’re getting this very intimate and enlarged view of the plant, and I can tune out the rest of the world. I just love the challenge of capturing them before they completely disintegrate.”



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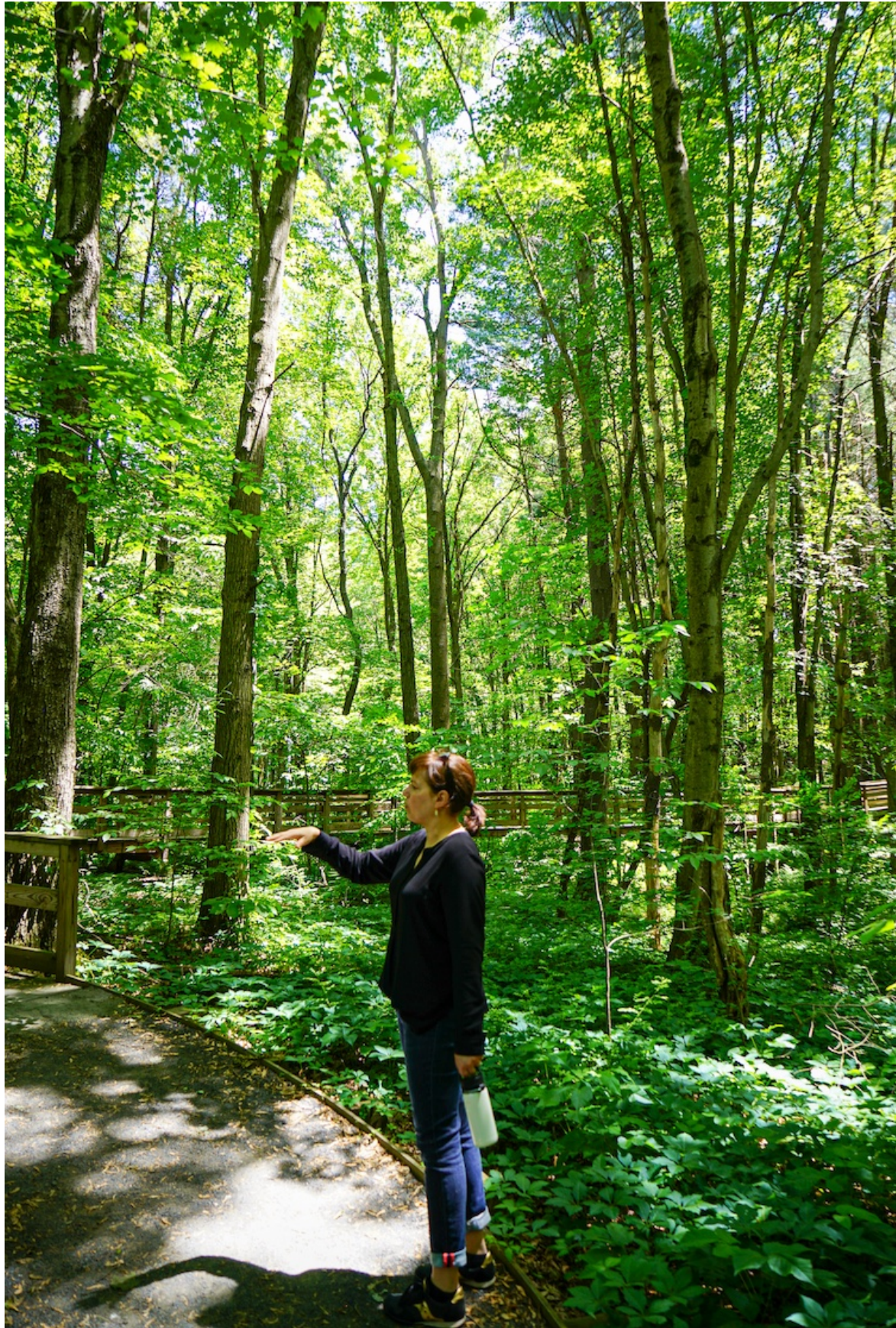
On the Joys of Ordinary Nature: “I have always appreciated ornamental plants, the beauty of planned gardens and parks. But I just find my eye always goes to the plants popping up on the margins, in between things. I appreciate the ‘accidental beauty’ of what’s growing in the places where no one tinkers. We live in a place where we have altered our landscape in large and small ways, and I want to highlight the beauty of the more modest plants underfoot.”



“The dandelion drawings are painstaking and slow, and I sometimes find myself holding my breath when putting lines down—almost as if I’m trying not to blow the seeds off the flower head!”



On Accessibility and Inclusion in the Natural World: “This trail we’re following is a favorite of mine because it allows everyone to access and enjoy the experience of taking a walk through the forest. Right before you arrived I saw a family group of mixed age and physical ability who may not have had the opportunity to walk together outside on just any ordinary trail. Not only does this trail provide access to people of all abilities, but the very existence of this forest boardwalk also offers a visual reminder to be kind and considerate to all.”



On Preciousness and Vulnerability: “I have a collection of bugs in my studio. They’re like gems to me. I like finding the preciousness of something other people might not necessarily take the time to see, something they might want to eradicate, feeling as though it doesn’t belong in a perfectly cultivated garden. Of all the plants I like to draw, the dandelion is the quintessential magical plant. I chose to use gold because I thought it’d be an interesting pairing, to celebrate its beauty and not treat these essential parts of our landscape as something to be disposed of. What’s so incredible is their structure, or when you find patches of irregularity, a little gap in the seeds. I get so mesmerized by the delicacy. There’s something about dandelions that suggests volume, and yet they’re so vulnerable to any strong wind or breeze.”



On Being on *Orion*'s Cover: "Making art is a solitary practice. I'm so accustomed to being alone at the work table, making drawings without thinking about an audience of any kind. There is something surreal about having it shared in such a public way.

I am still really surprised to see it there when I look at the magazine. It's an honor! And it's not just any magazine cover; I really appreciate what *Orion* is about, and the quality of the work represented in the magazine, so having my work on the cover has special value to me.

This particular drawing on the cover is on view through January 2020 at the Roberson Museum and Science Center in Binghamton, New York, in [Focus on Nature XV](#), an exhibition organized by the New York State Museum."



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