



KENISE BARNES FINE ART

MARGOT GLASS

STATEMENT

The idealization of nature in ornament across cultures is a source of fascination to me, and my work explores this tension between symmetry and pattern within the natural and unnatural forms of plants in nature and design. This relationship of how we see and seek to alter nature to suit our aesthetic desires is what attracts me to decorative arts traditions for inspiration as much as to fine art.

Central to my work is the exploration of the ephemeral, focusing primarily on weeds, “waste plants”, other plants generally considered to be undesirable, to elevate them and to highlight their beauty in all of their imperfection and asymmetry as we navigate the disrupted landscape that we find ourselves in today. I find my subjects sprouting through cracks in the sidewalks and in the margins of public spaces and forest borders on hikes and walks, and I am interested in what is present around us in these disturbed areas. Between my professional training in traditional metalpoint drawing and gilding techniques and my interest in decorative arts, gold was a natural choice of drawing medium. Active engagement with light is important in my drawings on dark grounds, inspired by the tesserae of byzantine mosaics, traditional decorative metalwork and architectural adornments. The activation of the drawing by light and its shifting properties of luster across line and density of detail of serve as an invitation to step closer. Silverpoint is a medium that attracts me for its delicacy and the requirement to slow down, as mark-making is permanent on the prepared ground, and the inability to erase is a challenge to work with care and intention.

I use traditional methods and formulas for making organic ink from materials that I collect for my ink drawings, and the time involved, from collecting the black walnuts to the process of drying and brewing into ink, is another aspect of the slowing down of time that is integral to my process. In my grasses and clover drawings explore the transcendent power of natural forms to shift from taxonomic specificity in detailed drawing to a more meditative visual experience, through repetition of negative space, shape and line.

My compositions are invented, based on plants I have found in nature, but recombined for compositional interest, often including representations of life phases of the plant which are not possible in reality, and often guided more by the balance and rhythm of the negative space in the drawing as much as the line and elements themselves. I am interested in exploring the coexistence of certain forces within my work such as the dualities birth and decay, beauty and what we might consider to be “ugly” and awkward, the tension between positive and negative space.

While much of my subject matter revolves around what are considered to be marginal plants, I seek to gain a deeper understanding of the symbiotic relationships in the natural environment between ‘desirable ’and ‘undesirable’ and how nature we can nurture both to enhance the health and richness of our surroundings, recognizing what is present around us. There is a passage in Robin Wall Kimmerer’s Braiding Sweetgrass stating that goldenrod and asters always grow side by side in the wild; their symbiotic relationship based on their ability to attract pollinators only when growing together. This resonated with me for the reminder of the strategic balance in nature, even in the most

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random of spaces; in this case the disturbed human-made environment of roadside margins. My drawings seek to recognize the fragile beauty of these plants and their value in the landscape to hopefully expand our understanding of the world we have altered to increase compassion and care.