

more about florilegium

Plants - both foliage and flowers - have long been inspirational elements to humans as we record the world in our artwork. The acanthus leaf has been used as an architectural ornament for centuries. Florilegiums - books of voluptuous flower paintings - proliferated in the 1600 and 1700's. We've given flowers symbolic meaning, with certain flowers standing for love, loyalty, passion, remembrance.

Why this enduring fascination with plants as artistic subject matter? When flowering plants first occurred 130 million years ago the face of the earth was forever changed. Now comprising some 235,000 species, flowering plants provide food for all of the animal world including humans. Without these plants the world as we know it today would not be and humans would not have come to exist. Do we know this innately and so, are properly respectful of plants?

The many colors, forms and fragrances of flowers are their methods for attracting pollinators, thus insuring their perpetuation. These devices work on us, too, although we might choose to think our attraction is more cerebral, more aesthetic. Maybe the fact that we are awed by the beauty of plants is not coincidental. Our fascination with them - nurturing them, sharing them, searching the earth for new forms - has contributed to their perpetuation. We, plants and humans, are involved in an eons old dialog.

I contribute to this dialog through my dual passions of photography and gardening. My photography series titled Florilegium has evolved along with my growth as a gardener. Gardens are an easily accessible way for any person to re-connect every day with the natural world, to be comforted by our place in it and to grow respectful of it. I use flowers, plants and seedpods as subject matter for my photographs in the hope of sharing my experience of this essential connection. I observe plants as they grow and bring them to my studio when

they've reached a stage that interests me. Many are past their prime but speak to me precisely for that reason - they possess a subtle beauty that flowers and foliage in full bloom do not. Often they will sit in vases of water for days or weeks after their initial recording, progressing through their natural course of growth and senescence. I just noted this morning that a cardoon bud that I brought to the studio last week is beginning to show its purple, thistle-like fluff. In another day or two it will be in full flower and I will likely record it again. As I observe the plants changing I am presented with new opportunities.

Art can provoke or it can soothe the viewer. My hope is that Florilegium will do both. I wish for these photographs to provide respite for the viewer, to help to create balance in lives that are often too hectic and disconnected from the natural world. If these images can help the viewer appreciate the beauty, complexity and mystery of the plant world, so much the better. Perhaps that person then will be impelled to understand and treasure the natural world.