Florilegium

Kim Kauffman
Misterioso
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LensWork Publishing Monograph Series
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Kim Kauffman’s extensive and ongoing *Florilegium* series presents a lush and endlessly fascinating world of plants and flowers. Her combinations and recombinations are done with meticulous craftsmanship and and offer refreshingly new ways to see nature. Just as the 17th century European still-life painters used collections of botanically accurate illustrations known as *florilegia*, Kauffman uses a compendium of specimens as her visual vocabulary. Her “drawings” number more than one thousand digital files of natural materials that she has created on a flatbed scanner. The specimens come from the extensive garden she tends around her house as well as from friends. She then crops, enlarges, layers, and combines the files on her computer to create collaged images of intense color and depth.

Akin to the earlier artists, Kauffman uses forms that may not all bloom at the same time, that are perhaps past their prime or attract insects and other organisms that assist in their transformation. Dragonflies, for example, devolve in Kauffman’s manipulations to become a patterned background, unrecognizable because of the disregard for the original scale. Forms may be wispy and featherlike, have rippling or defined edges, appear soft or hard, transparent or opaque. She tinkers with nature to create images that are luminous, radiant, vivid, and lavish, with an attention to detail that invites one to marvel at nature’s process, as well as the artist’s selective eye.

Like Karl Blossfeldt, who early in the last century photographed magnified natural forms, Kauffman finds nature endlessly fascinating and also reveals and revels in organic patterns, textures, and forms, oftentimes creating surreal compositions. Her cameraless images are difficult to classify. They are works on paper, but they cross the boundaries between photography, printmaking, and painting, making her a 21st century photographer who is influenced by the past. The selection presented in this monograph is part of a larger series. *Florilegium* also has spawned other works with slightly different parameters such as the inclusion of animals and materials other than plant life. In each, Kauffman evokes new worlds for our visual delight, quiet contemplation, and wonder.
Artist’s statement

by Kim Kauffman

Why do I make pictures of flowers and plants? Flowers have been common subjects since humans began to record their world. How could there be anything new that I might add? Why might I want to do so?

As long as humans breathe the oxygen that plants transpire and we reciprocate by expelling the carbon dioxide they require, there will be a reason to picture plants and flowers. We are of one interconnected system—all of Earth’s inhabitants depend on each other in order to survive. The understanding of this symbiosis is often lost in our increasingly urban world. Until I began to garden, this relationship seemed insignificant. As I tended plants, I learned to observe them, watching their cycles and marveling at their designs. In time, my garden just outside my door came to stand for the larger natural world as well.

Along the way the stunning beauty, complexity, and variation of plants and flowers drew me in. My garden is an alternate canvas on which to work out the dynamics of color, form, and space. The plants not only sustain my body, but also nourish my artist’s soul.

I make images of flowers and plants to share my fascination. I wish for others to look closely as I do. If this helps lead to more curiosity, respect, and a greater understanding of our natural world, I am satisfied.
FOR

Edwin Bonnen
Helen & Ralph Kauffman
Sarah & James Bonnen
Calla
Witch-hazel
Serpent Garlic, Feathers and Moth Wings
Aloft
Whirl
'Round Midnight
Faded Amaryllis
Orchids
Native Dancer
Night-blooming Cereus
Gray Ghost
Blue Clematis
Symbiosis
Angel’s Trumpet
Light as a Feather

Patina
Sepals
Senescence
Drop Dead Gorgeous
Crocosmia I
Hosta and Tulip

Crocosmia II
Joy in Repetition
Dance
Solitude
Tapestry
Clusius’ Craze
Orchids and Banana Leaf
Colorspace Conundrum
Peony
Trio
Cosmos and Dried Yucca
Butterfly Dreams II
Dream of Monarchs

Dispersal
Cameraless Photography

After years of experimenting with a number of alternative processes, I discovered a method that allows me to seamlessly meld images. Created with a camerless, filmless technique, *Florilegium* photographs are botanical collages that move beyond traditional realistic interpretations.

Using a flatbed scanner, I record the individual building blocks of the collages when the subjects are available, observing plants as they grow and decay, bringing them to my studio when they’ve reached a stage that interests me. Later, I combine multiple images, often as many as eight to twelve, to create the final composition.

I have often been asked whether these are really photographs. The answer is definitively “Yes.” Photography is defined as writing with light—a camera is not necessary to make photographs. Camerless images are as old as the photographic medium itself. The photogenic drawings of plants created in the 1830s by the father of photography, William Henry Fox Talbot, were among the first. Anna Atkins’ camerless botanical studies of algae and ferns followed in the early 1840s. My photographs contribute to this tradition in both subject matter and process.
Florilegium

This collection of color photographs is named after the books of voluptuous flower paintings that were produced in the 16th and 17th centuries as Europeans traveled the world in search of new plants. A “florilegium” is defined as an anthology; a collection of flowers. It is derived from the Latin florilegus, meaning flower gathering, composed of flora: flower and legere: to gather.

Florilegium images are available in limited editions in three sizes: 11x14, 17x22, and 24x30 inches. This refers to the size of the paper; actual image sizes vary based on the proportions of each image.

Archival pigment prints are made by Kim Kauffman in her studio on Moab Entrada Natural 300gsm paper using Epson’s K3 archival ink set. Prints are signed, titled, and editioned on the front in pencil.

For more information you may visit her website at www.synecdochestudio.com.
Kim Kauffman began her photography practice after graduating from Michigan State University with a B.A. in Social Science in 1974. She worked in the highly regarded Lansing Community College photography program as a lab manager and instructor. Later she served as a photographer’s assistant until opening her own studio in 1986.

Recording her immediate surroundings, developing an abstract vision, and exploring alternative processes and technologies are major threads that run through her career. While she spent many years working in a film-based, wet darkroom, Kauffman has embraced the opportunities and challenges that digital technology offers. In 1998 she developed a digitally-based cameraless photo-collage technique that she continues to employ today.

Kauffman advises photography students on portfolio development and lectures to classes, art groups, and gallery patrons. She enjoys working one-to-one with students, sharing her knowledge and experience in all aspects of photography, including business skills, that are often not readily available in photography curricula.

Kauffman has won numerous national awards and presented many group and solo exhibitions. Her work is included in private, public, and museum collections.
Flamenco
LensWork Monograph Series

Monograph #5 – Florilegium by Kim Kauffman
Monograph #4 – Chariots of Desire by Huntington Witherill
Monograph #3 – Mexico: The Light and The Warmth by Michael Reichmann
Monograph #2 – Photographs 1979-2013 by Stu Levy
Monograph #1 – Made of Steel by Brooks Jensen

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