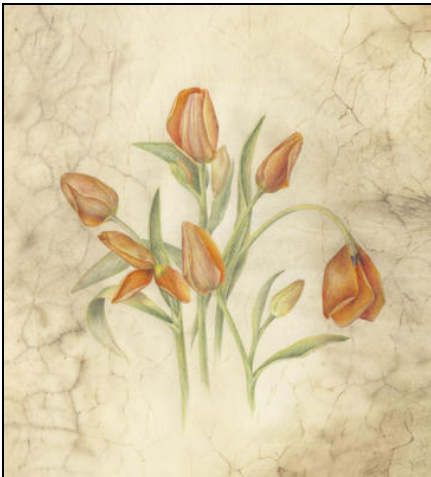


Botanical Art Show Opens in Cross River

May 23, 2010

Corinne Lapin-Cohen happened onto her current career as a botanical artist almost by accident. After taking a few gardening classes in the Continuing Education Department at the New York Botanical Garden in the early 1990s, she noticed the department also offered courses in botanical art. She had majored in art and teaching, so why not try her hand at it?

Let's just say she was pretty good, right from the start. In no time, she was teaching these same courses, deftly showing her students how to paint and draw dried seed pods, tiny berries and the lush, tightly knit blooms of roses and peonies. Then she turned to botanical art full time, quickly getting good enough to hold shows of her watercolor works on vellum around the country. She has even earned a spot in the permanent collection of the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.



(Ardem tulips)

On Sunday, Lapin-Cohen opens a summer-long show, "Discoveries ... Botanical Explorations," at the Gallery in the Park at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation in Cross River. The show is part of the county's Arts in Parks program, which highlights three artists a year. A portion of sales is donated back to the park to support the program. Lapin-Cohen's exhibit of her paintings and drawings is also supported by the New York Foundation for the Arts and the Garrison Art Center.

(Bird of paradise)

The Gallery in the Park is a great spot to view nature-related artwork, says Lapin-Cohen, of Katonah.

“Oh my gosh, it’s the perfect setting — the gallery is all overlooking the parkland,” she says. “You’re looking out into these beautiful woodland meadows.”

The show will include more than 70 life-size pieces that Lapin-Cohen has produced in the past few years, including painstakingly prepared — and gorgeous — paintings of tulips, hydrangeas, orchids, dried leaves, ears of corn and hyacinth beans. They range in size from 4 by 6 inches (“my little gems,” she calls them) to 30 by 40 inches.



(Sprouting coconut)

Each piece takes from 40 to 1,000 hours to complete.

“It’s a very slow process,” she says. “I use a layering of color — there could be as many as 15 to 20 layers of paint to get the depth and texture and colors I want.”

“It doesn’t seem laborious,” she adds. “I disappear when I paint, like meditating.”

When you view one of her paintings, “you’re seeing through the layers — your eye does the mixing,” she says. “I put down a layer of yellow, then a layer of blue — and you see green.”

(Gingko balboa)

Lapin-Cohen also teaches botanical art at her StoneHouse Studio in Katonah. Lately, she has cut back on teaching to concentrate on her own work and to prepare for this show.



"I'm really more an artist who teaches rather than a teacher who does art," she says.

(Johnny Jump-Up)

Typically, Lapin-Cohen has turned her new show into a teaching experience, too, dividing it into four themes and rooms. In the first, you learn about the process of botanical painting, and then you get to see her work on vellum. The third room features her drawings using an ancient technique known as metalpointe, which uses silver, gold and copper to create works of art that will continue to evolve as they age and tarnish. Room 4 will focus on the importance of plants — how they are used in medicine and as a source of food, clothing and wood.



(Nikko blue hydrangea)

If you like what you see, much of it is for sale. Prices for prints range from \$150 to \$650. Unframed paintings begin at \$850 and top out at \$4,500.

"People tend to buy at these shows, but with the economy, who knows?" says Lapin-Cohen. "It used to be a lot; now it's a few."

Considering how much time each piece takes to produce and how much care and talent gets added to the mix, these prices seem pretty good.

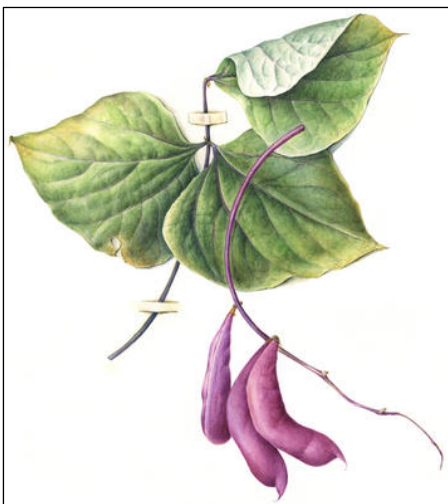


(Purple hyacinth bean)

If you go

What: "Discoveries ... Botanical Explorations," with more than 70 works of botanical art by Corinne Lapin-Cohen.

When: Sunday, May 23 to Sept. 6. An opening reception will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. on Sunday. All are welcome.



Where: The Gallery in the Park at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation on Route 121 South in Cross River.

Admission and parking are free.

Also: Lapin-Cohen will be teaching a workshop on roses and peonies at her StoneHouse Studio in Katonah the first three weeks of June. For more information, visit www.corinnelapincohen.com or call 914-962-1558. The Gallery in the Park is open every day from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, call 914-864-7317.

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