



KATHLEEN ELLIOT

I work with a botanical vocabulary that currently feeds two bodies of work. The first is a series of fairly representational botanical sculptures. The second is a series of imaginary botanical forms.

This work holds great meaning for me, allowing me to explore and express ideas I have engaged most of my life – love of plant life, and philosophy and spirituality.



The first body of work, is a series of natural-appearing botanical sculptures. I loved plants, trees, leaves, flowers, branches, seeds and seedpods, the varieties and cycles of botanical life since childhood, and am fascinated by the infinite variety and details of plants. They create a visceral, emotional reaction for me that I think of as spiritual.

I experience the same feeling when I read about the intricacies of the human body or the vastness of the universe, and am reminded that life is an incredible mystery we may never understand – giving me a beautiful sense of joy and relief, of gratitude and appreciation for the life I live, a sense of wonder and aliveness. This is when I know “God”.

For me, God is undefined. God is the possibility that allows us to live and build our lives, with an amazing variety of elements and creatures and happenings and people and possibilities that exist or can exist in the opening that life is. Being amidst Nature, especially botanical life, reminds me of all this.

Botanical life simply is, with no regard for or connection with human intention. It was here before humans were, and it will live after we are gone. There is something spiritual about leaning on a tree that is older than I am, looking up into its branches and leaves, knowing it will remain after I die. I never tire of plants. They never fail to amaze me. Making botanically- based art is simply a natural expression of my Self.

My studies in philosophy framed my experience with Nature to a deeper level and convince me that humans need Nature in our Western, fast-paced, media-driven, technological culture.

When in Nature, we slow down, attune to a different rhythm, ease away from the push and pull of television and media and technology in our culture. We return to a fundamental level, gain space, quiet, capacity to notice life, breathe deeply, smell and to hear more richly. These are poignant moments, when we stop to reflect, listen and look quietly, and experience spirituality, a connection with the rest of the world and a return to our Selves.

Nature reminds me that we are part of Nature. We are not machines, we are human beings. Reminded of our humanity, I believe we need these respites from Nature to stop and reflect on our lives. Nature softens the hard effects of our media culture, enabling us to reflect on whether we are living life as we would choose.

My second body of work encompasses a wide array of imaginary botanical forms that were initially inspired by reading the writing of, and encounters with, author and anthropologist Carlos Castaneda, along with studies in philosophy.

A primary inquiry of philosophy is "what is real and how do we know?" Inspired by Castaneda, I am inspired to investigate the outer limits of natural representation and imagine what botanical life might be like in alternate realities. My imaginary botanicals are a reminder that our experience of "reality" can be re-interpreted and reinvented.

These imaginary botanical forms continue to evolve, expressing other ideas as I work. Sometimes they convey exaggerated aspects of natural botanical life; or they portray human or animal characteristics, such as actions or intentions or sexuality; and sometimes they address social issues such as diversity and the need for tolerance.

On a basic level, these imaginary botanical sculptures are also an opportunity for me to have fun - to explore and play with the materials, with colors and forms, to express moods, feelings and emotions. My natural tendency is to be contained, lacking confidence, and shy, and this body of work gives me the opportunity to shake out of that mode into a more playful, expressive style. My exploration with this body of work has become a means for me to build trust in my imagination, intuition and creativity. Although her work is photographic in its beginning, it is completed and finished by text placed directly on the work or incorporated into the work.