

DEEPENING ROOTS:

OUR GROWING CONNECTIONS TO THE BOTANICAL WORLD

ORIGINAL ARTWORKS BY

Ashley Cecil

artist & illustrator

www.ashleycecil.com

Please direct purchase inquiries to
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PHIPPS CONSERVATORY AND BOTANICAL GARDENS, PITTSBURGH, PA
JANUARY 11 – MARCH 17, 2019

The power of plants often goes unnoticed, although examples of their vast contributions to human welfare are everywhere — from the clothes on your back to the wood forming your home. This exhibition is a glimpse at six of these deep human bonds to the botanical world, some familiar, some unexpected.

These “plant profiles” are the result of Ashley Cecil’s artist residency at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens. The painter and textile designer spent months learning what Phipps staff know about the ways plants support and enhance human well being. The best examples became the subject of Ashley’s vibrant paintings, which she translated into her signature patterns. Each pattern is overlaid with the painted silhouette of someone from southwestern Pennsylvania whose work embodies that connection, from a food security advocate to a nature-inspired material scientist.

Each painting is a celebration of plants that serve our human interests and an individual harnessing that botanical benefit, which hopefully inspires or deepens your biophilia, or love of nature.



CLOTHING

36" x 48" acrylic on archival print, \$2,950

Chances are good that you are wearing a plant product as you read this. Cotton, linen, bamboo and hemp are all used to dress us. Even BEECH TREES (*Fagus grandifolia*) can be used to make a textile called modal, which is an increasingly popular component of activewear. Consider, though, that the average American sends about 80 pounds of textiles to landfills every year and the collective environmental toll that has.

That's where entrepreneur NISHA BLACKWELL comes in. In 2014, she founded Knotzland Bowties, which makes artisan neckwear from upcycled textiles. Blackwell and her team are keeping an average of 1,000 pounds of fabric, vinyl, and leather out of landfills every year.

Ashley Cecil, *Deepening Roots*, 2

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MITIGATION

36" x 48" acrylic on archival print, \$2,950

With climate change comes increased rainfall in areas including southwest Pennsylvania. Phipps Botany in Action Research Fellows Toby Liss and Kate Douthat are studying how plant species can mitigate stormwater woes. Liss is investigating hardy plants like MOSS PHLOX (*Phlox subulata*) and QUILL FAMEFLOWER (*Phemeranthus teretifolius*) to find out which can survive on green roofs and which move the most water back out into the air through a process called transpiration. Douthat is studying whether NARROW LEAF GOLDENROD (*Euthamia graminifolia*) and WHITE HEATH ASTER (*Symphiotrichum ericoides*) can effectively remove pollutants from stormwater basins.

SHAWN TAYLOR is putting boots on the ground to implement this nature-as-defender strategy. As the Senior Crew Leader of Landforce, he works with individuals that face barriers to entering the workforce — including veterans and the formerly incarcerated — to restore and maintain land through stormwater mitigation and other green infrastructure projects.

Ashley Cecil, *Deepening Roots*, 3

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PLEASURE

36" x 48" acrylic on archival print, \$2,950

The CACAO TREE (*Theobroma cacao*) has a long and storied history of providing culinary pleasure. Its latin genus translates as "food of the gods." The Aztec people used cacao beans as currency and chocolate was even given as partial compensation for soldiers of the Revolutionary War.

AMANDA WRIGHT, the Head Chocolatier and Co-founder of A519 Chocolate, is intimately aware of our love affair with cacao. She painstakingly creates handcrafted chocolates that tantalize the eye as much as the palate.

Ashley Cecil, *Deepening Roots*, 4

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PROTECTION

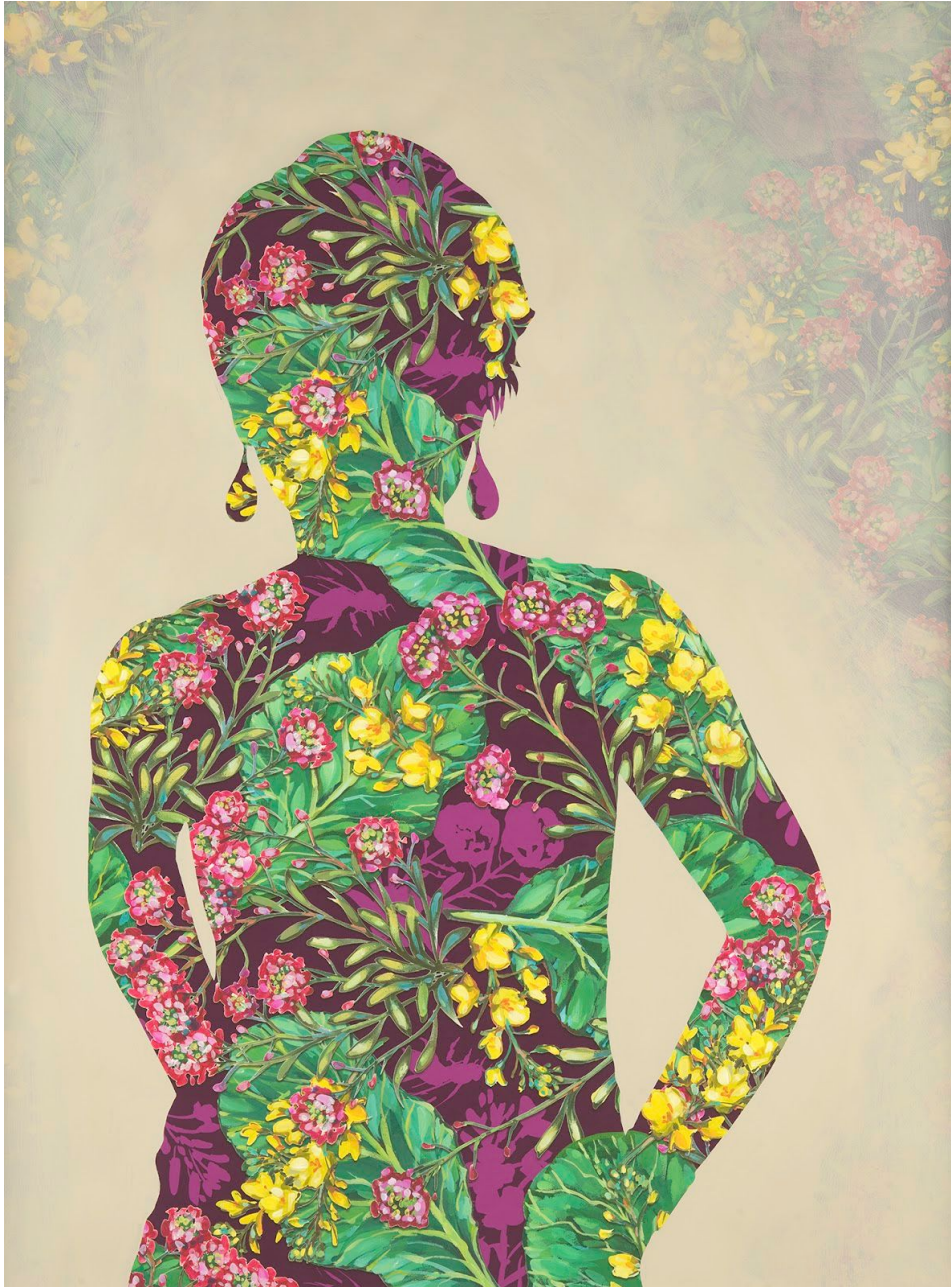
36" x 48" acrylic on archival print, \$2,950

The carnivorous PITCHER PLANT (*Nepenthes* spp.) has an ultra-slippery surface. It is so slippery that insects that can gain traction on most surfaces, like ants, step on the lip of the plant, fall into the pitcher and are unable to climb out.

This phenomenon inspired materials scientist DR. TAK-SING WONG, the principal researcher at the Laboratory for Nature Inspired Engineering at Penn State University. By replicating this plant's slippery properties, the technology has applications that reduce bacterial growth in medical devices and could potentially isolate and detect diseased molecules in blood samples. It may also be used to harvest water vapor from air, capturing this precious resource to address water scarcity.

Ashley Cecil, *Deepening Roots*, 5

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SUSTENANCE

36" x 48" acrylic on archival print, \$2,950

For most of us, our most intimate association with plants is consuming them as food. COLLARD GREENS (*Brassica oleracea*) are a garden vegetable that, like many foods, are imbued with deep meaning and cultural ties that can nourish both our bodies and spirits. SWEET ALYSSUM (*Lobularia maritima*) is in the same family as collards and is an excellent companion plant. When planted in vegetable gardens, it attracts beneficial insects that can serve as pollinators or control pests.

LEAH LIZARONDO is a devoted fan of these garden gems as well as founder of 412 Food Rescue, which is a direct response to the disconnect between food waste, hunger and environmental sustainability. Through educational programs and a robust network of volunteer food rescuers, 412 Food Rescue is helping ensure uneaten food goes to the tables of people in need rather than landfills.

Ashley Cecil, *Deepening Roots*, 6

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HEALTH

36" x 48" acrylic on archival print, \$2,950

The modest BRAKE FERN (*Pteris vittata*) is garnering much-deserved attention from Phipps Botany in Action Research Fellow Sarick Matzen, who is studying how effectively the plant can absorb and store arsenic found in contaminated soil.

DR. MOLLY MEHLING is an ecologist who advocates for urban land remediation, especially as it relates to children's health. For years she has been helping Pittsburgh communities assess the risk of environmental contaminants and educating the public on how pollutants move through ecosystems as well as strategies to reduce human exposure.

Ashley Cecil, *Deepening Roots*, 7

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The top and bottom of each of the six paintings above are positioned between pieces of solid wood magnetized together. The artworks are ready to be hung from twine threaded across the top, or they could be framed behind glass at the buyer's expense. Prices include the frames shown.



CLOTHING (PREPARATORY PAINTING)

12" x 16" gouache and ink on paper, \$575 (unframed)

These botanical studies were used to make the pattern included in the corresponding silhouette painting.



MITIGATION (PREPARATORY PAINTING)

12" x 16" gouache and ink on paper, \$575 (unframed)

These botanical studies were used to make the pattern included in the corresponding silhouette painting.



MITIGATION (PREPARATORY PAINTING)

8.5" x 11" ink on paper, \$75 (unframed)

These botanical studies were used to make the pattern included in the corresponding silhouette painting.



PLEASURE (PREPARATORY PAINTING)

12" x 16" gouache and ink on paper, \$575 (unframed)

These botanical studies were used to make the pattern included in the corresponding silhouette painting.

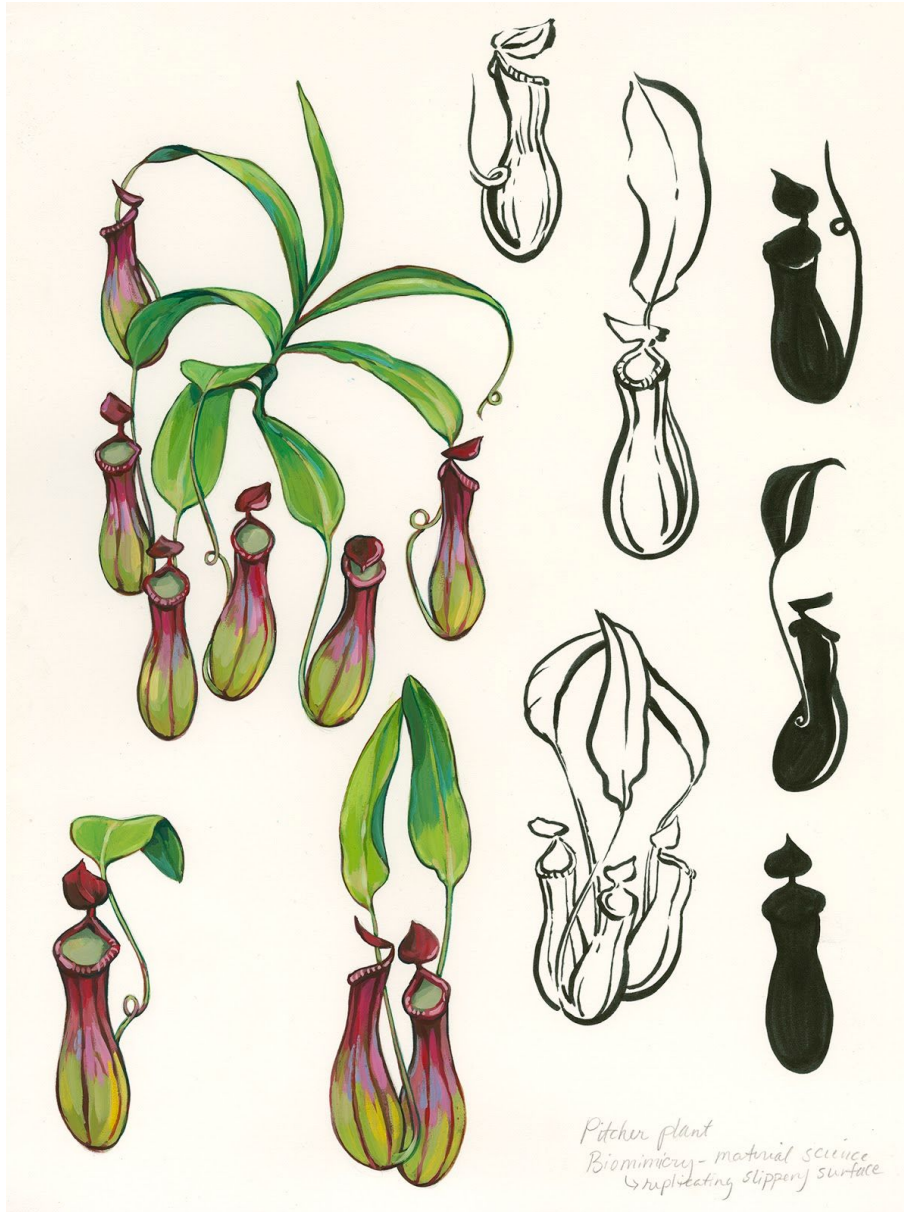


*Chocolate tree
Theobroma cacao
10/10/18*

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PROTECTION (PREPARATORY PAINTING)

12" x 16" gouache and ink on paper, \$575 (unframed)

These botanical studies were used to make the pattern included in the corresponding silhouette painting.



SUSTENANCE, COLLARD GREENS (PREPARATORY PAINTING)

12" x 16" gouache and ink on paper, \$575 (unframed)

These botanical studies were used to make the pattern included in the corresponding silhouette painting.



SUSTENANCE, COLLARD GREENS FLOWERS (PREPARATORY PAINTING)

9" x 12" gouache and ink on paper, \$250 (unframed)

These botanical studies were used to make the pattern included in the corresponding silhouette painting.



SUSTENANCE, SWEET ALYSSUM (PREPARATORY PAINTING)

12" x 16" gouache and ink on paper, \$575 (unframed)

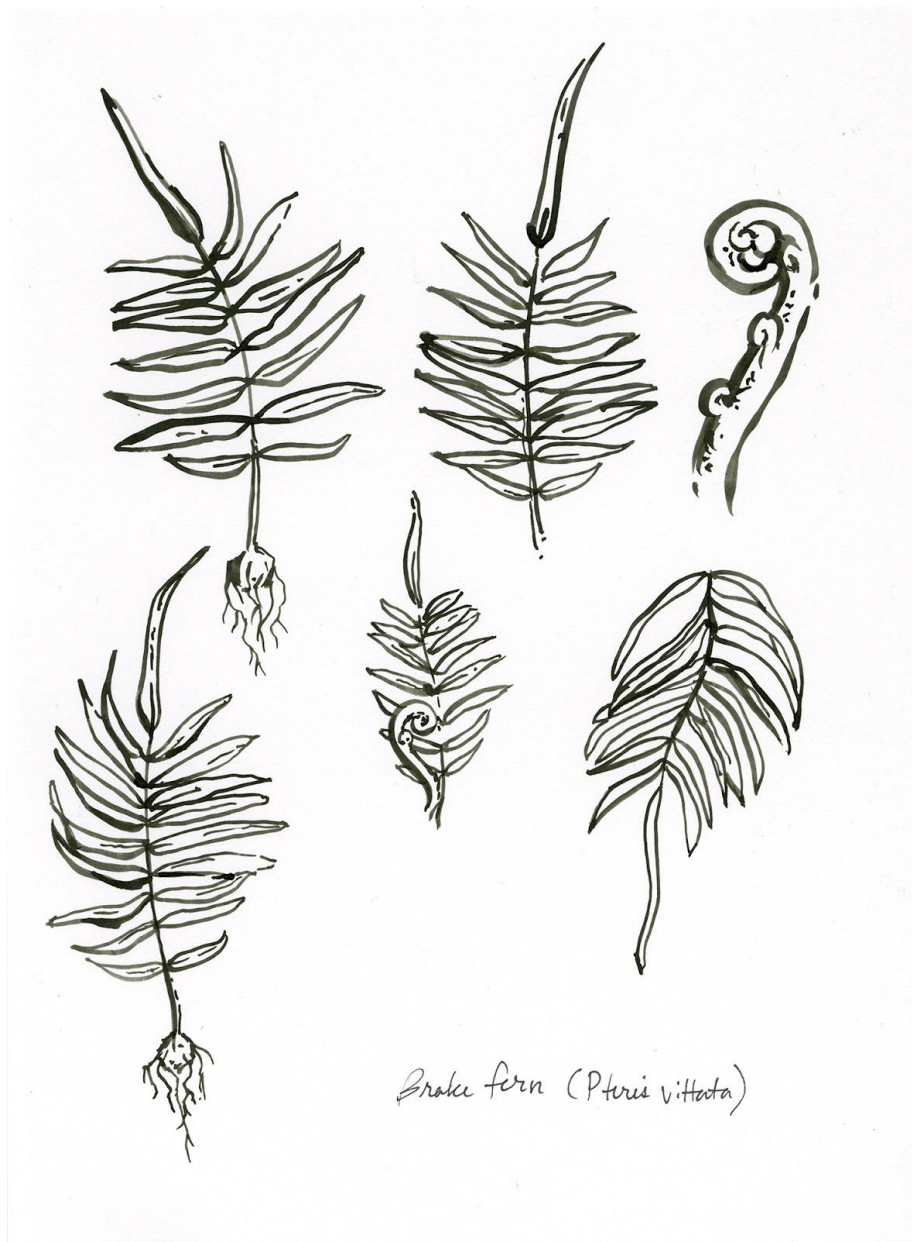
These botanical studies were used to make the pattern included in the corresponding silhouette painting.



HEALTH (PREPARATORY PAINTING)

12" x 16" gouache and ink on paper, \$575 (unframed)

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About the Artist



Artist Ashley Cecil specializes in paintings and sculptural works of flora and fauna that illustrate connections between the natural world and its human inhabitants. Her work includes collaborations close to home with several beloved Pittsburgh institutions such as the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, as well as far-flung adventures to biological oases like the Amazonian rainforest. The aim of her artwork is to endear you to nature by making scientists' understanding of it relatable to our everyday lives.