

Catherine Christiano

Album of Flowers | Interesting Times
Artist's Statement

Album of Flowers | Interesting Times chronicles a year in nature and society. Each painting represents one month and includes seasonal flora juxtaposed on a collage of content from *The New York Times* in 2016—the emotionally charged election year during which the series was conceived.

In Southeastern Connecticut where I live, seasonal changes in the landscape mark the passage of time. Each year, winter's subtle palette yields to early blossoms of witch hazel and crocus. Spring flowers gradually unfurl and fade in steady seasonal progression. Summer blooms relieve the prevailing green until a riot of autumn color returns winter's spareness. It is easy to see why artists throughout the history of both Eastern and Western art created "albums of flowers" to represent the months of a year.

Prior to becoming a studio artist, I worked in the fields of engineering and finance, for which reading *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* was essential. When I turned to artmaking, I instinctively incorporated newspapers in my work. Newspapers mirror society's concerns, reflecting what is collectively on our minds. They also mark time in a way that is distinct from nature.

The lyrical flower paintings of early Japanese and Chinese artists, including Tao Rong (China, 1872-1927) and Katsushika Hokusai (Japan, 1760-1849), provided an aesthetic model for the *Album of Flowers*, emphasizing elegance, space, and rhythm in composition. The backgrounds in my works, however, represent the omnipresence of societal activities in everyday life, the mundane appearing alongside historic or catastrophic events. References in each panel to the death of a public figure, serve as a reminder of the transience of life.

This series represents my experience of navigating between society and nature. With the news now a constant flow, I'll check media websites several times a day. While painting, I listen to podcasts and the news. With what I've heard or read still in mind, I may switch realms and head outdoors to where my garden of flowers offers respite from chaos.