



Art meets ecology in One World Café

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Joan Linder poses with her artwork, *Inhabit*, in One World Café. Photo: Courtesy of Joan Linder.

The smell of freshly prepared food mingles with chatter from students and faculty taking a break from academics in One World Café, UB's international eatery and gathering spot. But one floor above the hustle and bustle, adjacent to a seating area, visitors find something unexpected: walls adorned with strikingly beautiful botanical illustrations on glass.

CRISTIN TIERNEY

This isn't just artwork. *Inhabit* is a dialogue between art and nature crafted by UB faculty member Joan Linder.

Linder, professor in the Department of Art, is committed to "slow looking," a process that uses drawing as a form of meditation, rather than something that attracts only a cursory glance. She is known for making large-scale conceptual and observational drawings with thousands — if not hundreds of thousands — of marks. Her works have been exhibited in Europe and throughout the United States, including the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the AKG Art Museum here in Buffalo.

"The inspiration behind this artwork was to bring the outside in, representing the natural world of our campus, featuring native and non-native species," Linder explains.

Interestingly, the illustrations — collectively titled "Inhabit" — represent edible and medicinal plants.

The series includes mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*) and broadleaf plantain (*Plantago major*).

"Everything represented here, a student could walk around on campus and find," Linder says. "For example, the mayapple, displayed on the left of the installation, grows in Letchworth Woods," a wet woods found between the academic spine and the Ellicott Complex on the west side of campus.

Linder worked closely with Solon Morse, a biologist and lab manager of the Coalesce Center for Biological Art, to identify the plants.

"Touring Letchworth Woods in spring, Morse pointed out edible species, which I then collected a few samples of and brought to my studio to use as subjects for the drawings" says Linder, who works with a quill pen dipped in ink.

"'Inhabit' also takes inspiration from botanical illustrations of the 1700s and 1800s, such as those of Elizabeth Blackwell. However, I also take liberties to make the work more playful."

This playfulness can be found in the color. Although the original plants were all green, Linder opts for hues that are "not exactly accurate but rather, aesthetically pleasing."

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The four panels, printed on glass, take inspiration from plants gathered from UB's Letchwood Woods, as well as botanical illustrations from the 1700s and 1800s, like those of Elizabeth Blackwell. Photo: Courtesy of Joan Linder.

Despite her exacting technique, Linder welcomes little imperfections.

“Sometimes there are ink drops and mistakes. I don’t try to hide these marks; rather I see them as capturing the process of making the drawing,” she says.

Instead of being presented on a traditional canvas, Linder’s drawings are printed on glass. “While these artworks are unique, the translation from works on paper to glass is a print fabrication process,” she says.

During that process, the original drawings are photographed, altered and printed on a substrate sandwiched between two layers of glass — a technique known as laminated glass.

“Inhabit” is part of an open call for artists to create work for One World Café overseen by Kelly Hayes McAlonie, an architect and director of campus planning.

“One World Café was designed to be a special space for UB students, faculty and staff to gather and honor our diverse community,” says McAlonie. “Joan Linder beautifully contributes to the space by exquisitely portraying the healing flora in our landscapes.”