

Thursday, April 6, 2006

Bev Byrnes



Looking through a number of wonderful paintings of small objects for my post on “painting a day” sites put me in mind of another type of art, one that, like architectural rendering and medical illustration, seldom gets notice from artists and observers outside the genre: botanical illustration.

Like architectural rendering, which I mentioned in my post about [T.W. Schaller](#), much botanical illustration can seem similar and formulaic. To a large extent, this is because of the restrictions imposed by the very specific requirements for this type of art. There are always those who manage stand out, however, and when I came across Bev Byrnes’s wonderful graphite renderings of gourds, plants and mushrooms, I was struck by the visual appeal of her style and approach.

I’m certain she is fulfilling the technical requirements of the projects for which her images are created, but she has managed to step beyond that with the attention she pays to the creation of form, the rendering of texture and the careful arrangement of tonal values.

Her drawings of cloves of garlic (above, left), a gourd and an artichoke are rendered with the kind of attention to tone and surface detail that many artists might devote to a landscape. Her careful and faithful rendering of a simple beet (above, right) is done with the kind of artistic sensibility usually reserved for objects of more obvious beauty, flowers or trees for example, and in the process makes it obvious that this humble root vegetable is, in fact, just as beautiful as a flower or a tree.

In particular her drawing of the beet reminded me of something I used to enjoy very much but haven’t indulged in for years – root drawing. I had a drawing teacher once who suggested, and rightly so, that thick, gnarled roots made wonderful subjects for drawing. At the time, I was astonished at how involved and fascinated I would get in drawing these root forms. The practice was not only enjoyable, it pushed my skills at observing and drawing ahead significantly.

Byrnes has studied several kinds of drawing and has taught workshops in botanical rendering. She has also participated in a number of exhibitions in both fine art and botanical art venues. In the course of developing her personal style she has managed to see and capture the beauty in the botanical forms she is rendering and create works that not only fulfill their role as scientific illustration, but also as wonderful drawings.

Link (indirectly) via [Making a Mark](#). (*this article can be found at -- <http://linesandcolors.com/2006/04/06/bev-byrnes/>*)