



The Power of Flowers

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Glass 451
Robert Lewis

Why Flowers?

I have always used floral motifs in my artwork, they crept onto my beads and then into the hotshop as well. But why flowers? It is already an established fact that I love color, pattern and processes that border on OCD, but why is it that the details in my work so often revolve around floral imagery?

In my FINA 450 class this semester, we focused on “breaking aesthetics” and separating out artistic choices based on philosophical underpinnings. This class gave me the language to define my motivations in terms of a desire to generate positive affect, but still left me with the question as to why I thought of floral imagery as innately “happy”.

I started with mid-century Morris wallpapers and worked my way forward until I found my answer in the “Flower Power” movement of the 1960’s and 70’s. Here were the two-dimensional, simplified flowers that I was looking for and they were tied to a movement that wanted to utilize flowers as a means to add positive, non-combative imagery to their opposition to the Vietnam War. They were using flowers as a method to counter negativity and promote peace, a sentiment I can echo while facing the current unsettling and anxious sociopolitical climate.

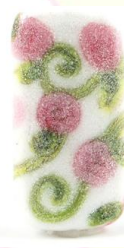
There is a degree of kitsch present in my work, an oversimplification of theme, a focus on the “girly” side of the feminine and something simple and relatable that I am always hoping will bring a smile and a bright spot to someone’s day.



Monet Garden Bead Set, 2009



Daisy Focal Bead, 2010



Rose Chintz Bead, 2011



Pink Garden Bead, 2011

The Power of Flowers:
Iconographies of the 1950's, 60's and 70's.



"Perfect"



"Pretty"

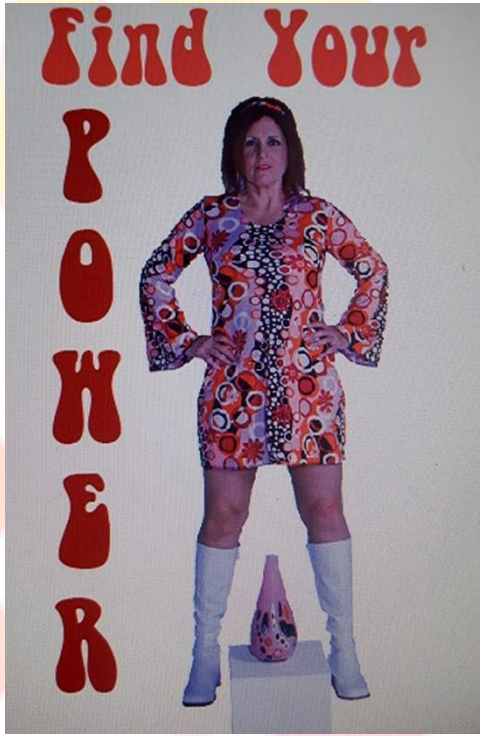


"Powerful"

Perfect, Pretty, Powerful

Floral motifs were used heavily in women's clothing the 1950's, 60's and 70's, albeit in a progressively louder way as the decades progressed. In the 1950's, flowered tea dresses and gowns were a mainstay of the "perfect" Stepford wife. Pretty rose chintzes and large, soft flowers on a patterned background expressed the ultimate in docile femininity. In the 1960's, hemlines were shortened, shoulders were bared and it became acceptable to choose pop patterns that conveyed personality, individuality and a desire to have fun. In the 70's, textiles became even more expressive, louder, with a desire to create spectacle and no fear of drawing attention; women were confident, powerful and able to stare aggressively back.

For this project, I chose a representative dress from each decade and created a blown glass vessel that mimicked the pattern of the textile and placed the function of the object in the context of the era. This resulted in a series of iconographic photos that create a somewhat ironic resonance with these hypothetical women of the past.



Yayoi Kusama, Assemblage, 2012

<http://www.messiejessieblog.co.uk/yayoi-kusama/>
Accessed April 2018

Perfect, Pretty, Powerful

The concept for the photos was originally centered on the advertising of each era, with an intent to utilize the same fonts and poses that were seen magazine ads of the times. The taglines were to be simple so that the focus stayed on the object. i.e.) “This vase will make your home life perfect” or “You can be pretty even when you’re eating ice cream. “ The text tended to pull focus away from the glass and the messages were strongly implied already in the photo, so I made the decision to leave the explicit words out and let the message come from the imagery. I also looked at Yayoi Kusama’s camouflage style works as a possible reference and tried some highly graphic backgrounds as well, but they also pulled too much attention away from the object and I wanted to focus to stay with the glass seeing as that’s what this class is about!

The simple color wash backgrounds offered the best visual effect, with each background color being sampled from a section on the vessel and then reduced in saturation. I have a whole new appreciation for Visual Design professionals as the editing required to crop a photograph from its original background is not a simple matter if you want to create a smooth, nicely transitioned edge. It turns out that while I may have OCD tendencies when working with glass, this does not translate to working with individual pixels on a screen.

Femin(ine)
Femin(ist)



Femin(ine), Femin(ist)

This project developed out of my desire to include a glass vessel I had blown earlier in the semester into the textiles project. It is perhaps the nicest blown object I have made to date, with uniformly thin walls and what I felt was a perfect balance of decoration. I wanted to be able to show this carafe as part of the iconographic dresses project, but I couldn't find a dress from my online resources that "worked" with the pattern. So I went to Fabricland, found material that matched and a vintage-inspired pattern and set out to make a dress to match the vessel rather than the other way around.

This became a very thoughtful process. As I sat there sewing, I pondered a great deal about the dichotomies in my life. I am pretty much a poster child for feminism as a female engineer who managed a group of her male peers and earned more than her spouse for most of her career. But at the same time, I am a person who can sit down at a sewing machine and whip out a perfectly functional dress. Never have I felt the need to sacrifice my love of girly things despite competing in a masculine industry for most of my life. It really made me consider how it is more acceptable in today's society to be loudly and combatively femin(ist) than it is to be a maker of art that is strictly decorative and femin(ine).

The two cups were added to the display to evoke a more domestic impression and to stress the notion of servitude that would often be assumed as the role of someone wearing a dress such as this.

Some People Count Sheep



Some People Count Sheep

Some people count sheep at bedtime, I count everything all the time. Perhaps it is my background in mathematics, perhaps it's a part of my borderline OCD, but I count stairs as I climb, I count my M&M's as I eat them and I count flowers as I apply them to my blown glass vessels!

This project gives a nod to my engineering background and the idea of "quantification", but it also investigates the relation of pattern density to size of form. I investigated three distinctly different methods of applying floral image to a blown vessel. There are 100 flowers sandblasted on the first vase, 50 roses cane-painted on the second and 10 lampworked daisies applied hot to the third.