LIFE WITH NATIVE PLANTS

NATURE
through Culture’s Lens

by TALYA MEYERS

No matter how many times we may have glanced at a California poppy or coast live oak, an artist can make us see familiar favorites anew. And for those who don’t (yet) have a deep knowledge of our state’s native plants, a painting, photograph, song, or tattoo can be an important tool to create connection and generate curiosity.

For each Conference, CNPS invites musicians, artists, and writers to share work that explores and celebrates the intersections among California native plants, places, and people. Their work is warmly received and fondly remembered each time.

In 2022, Conference organizers received 308 submissions from artists and photographers, and the larger community was invited to vote for individual favorites. The top 20 were then chosen by invited artists whose work was featured in the 2022 Conference Art Exhibition. In addition, organizers held a second botanical tattoo contest, in which entrants shared the significance of the individual species and even specimens they had chosen for their body art. We’re delighted to share this year’s winning pieces in the following pages.

ESMERALDA CABRERA
“Toloache”
Mixed media

“Origami and botany go hand in hand for me, as both are a journey of puzzling, trial and error, and constant iteration based on whatever discoveries yield to that particular day’s observations. I’ve folded origami models my whole life, but only recently began to design my own models based on my love for California native plants. These sacred datura (flor de toloache, Datura wrightii) origami models are folded from single pentagons (no cuts) of Japanese calligraphy paper, and assembled with separately folded sepals and leaves on a piece of river driftwood from the American River in Sacramento.”

SNOWDY DODSON
“Our Lady of Poppies”
Quilt

“Appliquéd and quilted tribute to the patroness of the Americas and our state wildflower.”

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ERIN E. HUNTER
"Look Closer"
Acrylic on watercolor paper

“This painting, part of a series depicting California wildflowers and their floral visitors, features 40 different California native bees and a variety of bee-favored blooms. Each flower and bee is painted at three times life size to show the beautiful details that distinguish each species.”

SHIRA BEZALEL
“Rare Manzanita at Sobrante Ridge”
Digital Photograph

ESTHER PERKINS
“Sierran Tree Frog and Indian Rhubarb”
Photograph

LEO DALE
“Misty Agrifolia”
Photograph

SHELLY EUSER
“California State Lichen”
Gouache

DEE SHEA HIMES
“Crab Spider on Calochortus catalinae”
Digital photograph