

T.M.Glass

**The Audible
Language
of Flowers**



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The Audible
Language
of Flowers

with text by

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John Deal
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Amish Morrell
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The Audible Language of Flowers

When I first encountered T.M. Glass' large flower photographs, I responded strongly to the hyper-reality of the images. The intense colours, the dramatic and simple composition on a black ground, and the pairing of the particular flower species with its vessel seemed to capture the very essence of both the plant and the container. The oversize scale also revealed details that one cannot always perceive in a small plant in a garden or in a vase within a room full of furniture and other décor.

The next thing that drew my attention was the texture of the plants and vessels. The velvety petals of one flower against a shiny porcelain vase, or a woody stem against a rough clay vessel. Moving to another photograph, I was surprised to notice obvious digital “painting” strokes clearly made by the photographer. I went back to the first image and realized that the brushstrokes were there too, albeit less thickly applied, but they were everywhere, on the flowers, leaves, branches and the rich and varied vases that contained them.

T.M. Glass loves to talk about cameras. In a typically pleasant, soft-spoken manner, Glass explains this camera's incredible number of pixels, what year that camera was first issued, and which company produced the one on this tripod. Many high-end cameras dot the studio, each with unique features (and limitations) that Glass eagerly describes. The type of camera and lens, each camera's photo finishing software and the latest digital printers all play important roles in the creation of the final image.

What happens after shooting the photograph? How does Glass prepare the raw image for printing on the huge Epson printer in the studio? On this point, Glass talks of extensively manipulating pixels across the entire image, using the powerful software that is specific to each type of camera. A long, slow process using these advanced digital tools in extreme close-up controls the luminosity, sharpness, colour scale and many other factors of the incredibly high-resolution images (up to 100 megapixels, for now). In the digital cameras that most people commonly use, these parameters are pre-decided, even when we cleverly add that sepia filter to add a vintage feeling to a selfie.

Instead, Glass undertakes the painstaking process of deciding from among thousands of options before manipulating each pixel separately. This sends the resulting image into an “in-between world” connecting hyper-realistic photography and painting.

All digital photographers must make similar decisions to produce an image for printing. Glass takes this process further by reworking the entire surface of the image, sometimes making it intentionally less realistic. We see the artist's hand, working over the picture, sometimes creating an impressionistic effect, especially in the earlier works shown in the exhibition, and more recently reinforcing the crispness and clarity of the images.

By adding this detailed hand embellishment, Glass is attempting to imbue each image with the specific memories and sensations experienced while making the image. The final image represents what the artist saw and felt, not just what was physically before the camera, and is akin to a portrait that attempts to capture the personality of its subject. This widens the definition of the artist's photo-based work from an objective recording to a subjective dreamlike interpretation of remembrance and seeing.

"I am a digital painter," the photographer declares.

As a student at the Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University), Glass focused on sculpture and learned the classical techniques and theories of art. However, after graduation, life led Glass into a completely unrelated, and successful, professional career as a writer and producer in film and television. After being drawn back to art through digital photography around 2010, Glass studied the history and representation techniques of flowers in painting, and experimented with various cameras and printers for years, before feeling that the tools were sufficiently advanced to represent an imagined vision. Along the way, Glass arrived at the formal, large-scale square-format composition with a black background and dramatic lighting that is typical of the work in the exhibition, all produced in a burst of creativity since 2017.

Glass admits to being deeply inspired by northern European still life flower paintings of the 17th and 18th centuries, in which painters often created "impossible" bouquets combining blooms from different times of year and even diverse geographic locations. In the exhibition, we present a wonderful example of this painting tradition loaned by the Art Gallery of Ontario. The still life painting is presented beside four of the actual vessels from the Gardiner and Royal Ontario museums that appear in Glass' works. (Might this be the first time all three institutions appear together in a single exhibition?)

The artist's interest in emerging technology also led to pioneering experiments in 3d scanning and printing, new techniques that are extensions of photography, in Glass' view. "Until 3d printing," Glass says, "there was no adequate way to represent accurately the shape of a flower in three

dimensions." During a residency at OCAD University in the summer of 2016 and working with technician John Deal, Glass began experimenting with 3d scanning and printing. The exhibition includes four remarkable 3d "prints" of flowers in vases, further complicating the relationship between photography and sculpture in the space of quickly evolving new digital technologies. The scans could be called a type of photograph, and the "print" stitches together thousands of photographs created by scanning the flowers and vase from all angles. Presenting a stark contrast to the profusely vibrant photographic images, Glass foregrounds the highly constructed and fragile nature of a deceptively simple subject.

This and other dualities are always at play in Glass' work, from the tension between the digital images' high-definition photo-realism and their painterly abstraction to the tragically short life of an individual cut bloom nestled within a centuries-old, seemingly eternal artifact, and the eloquent contrast of textures and geometries of the flower and its container.

Most recently, Glass' interest in experimenting with technology has led to the creation of a new video work, *Plantasia* (2019). Inspired by the title of the exhibition, Glass researched the ways in which plants might "speak" and discovered the Midi Sprout, a machine that translates a plant's natural electromagnetic vibrations into sound via electrodes placed on the plant's leaves. Bob Ezrin is a celebrated Canadian music producer and musician who has been inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame and worked with bands such as Lou Reed, Alice Cooper, Kiss, Pink Floyd, Deep Purple, and Peter Dinklage. In his recording studio, Ezrin jammed with music produced by a pansy plant, resulting in a composition titled *Duet with Pansy*. Overtop, Glass has created a surreal expression of the language of flowers with time-lapse images of flowers blooming.

"The most beautiful thing on the planet is a flower," says Glass, "and people have always looked for the most beautiful ways to display them." The artist brings attention to the beauty of nature and the nature of beauty. In particular, Glass' digital portraits celebrate the unique geometry of flowers and plants, calling to mind the organic shapes and natural structures that inspired the great Catalan architect, Antoni Gaudí. In *The Audible Language of Flowers*, T.M. Glass shows how flowers often speak for us in times of celebration or sorrow.

Francisco Alvarez
Curator, *The Audible Language of Flowers*
Dorene & Peter Milligan Executive Director, OCAD University Galleries



PLATES

The Artist's Garden

T.M. Glass' first digital photographs were images of flowers from the artist's own meticulously created Arts and Crafts-style garden in Toronto. Inspired by a late Emily Carr painting of flowers in a bowl, Glass tried to preserve fresh-cut flowers that might only bloom for a few days each summer, mixing blooms from different times of the growing season, while building a personal collection of interesting vases that matched the personalities of the flowers.





The Royal Lodge Series

When Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York, met T.M. Glass at tea with business associates, she asked to see the artist's work. Impressed, she and Prince Andrew, Duke of York, invited Glass to photograph flowers and vessels at The Royal Lodge at Windsor, where they live. Designed by the late Queen Mother, their spring garden features plants that bloom for just two weeks each April, remaining green the rest of the year. Glass set up a photography studio in the Royal Lodge's Victorian conservatory and photographed flowers arranged by the Assistant House Manager in vessels from the Royal Lodge Collection.

















The Museum Series

Looking for more interesting vessels, the artist approached the Gardiner Museum and the Royal Ontario Museum, obtaining permission to photograph vessels from their permanent collections. Because it was impossible to place flowers inside these fragile and unique artifacts, Glass digitally paired them with separate flower photographs from the garden, skillfully creating the illusion of flowers arranged inside the historic containers. For the exhibition, we have been fortunate to borrow some of the same vessels that Glass used in The Museum Series pictures.



















The India Garden

Having received an invitation to photograph in India, Glass created The India Series in early 2018, shooting at the City Palace and Museum in Jaipur, Delhi's Presidential Palace and the final home of Mahatma Gandhi, among other locales. In each setting, Glass used typical local ceramic vessels. The India Series explored the reasons why flowers in India have deep symbolic meanings and are present at every important occasion.





Les Jardins de Métis Series

This series was photographed in the summer of 2018 at the renowned Jardins de Métis, a two-hour drive northeast of Quebec City, at the invitation of the Director Alexander Reford, whose grandmother Elsie Reford transformed an inherited forest fishing camp into 15 gardens in 1926. Opened to the public in 1962, today it is a Canadian National Historic Site. Using vessels from the Jardins' museum, which is rather more modest than the previous Museum and Royal Lodge, the artist explores the wilder tangle of foliage that characterizes this hardy garden nestled among Quebec's rugged forests. T.M. Glass will present a parallel exhibition at Les Jardins de Métis in the summer of 2019.











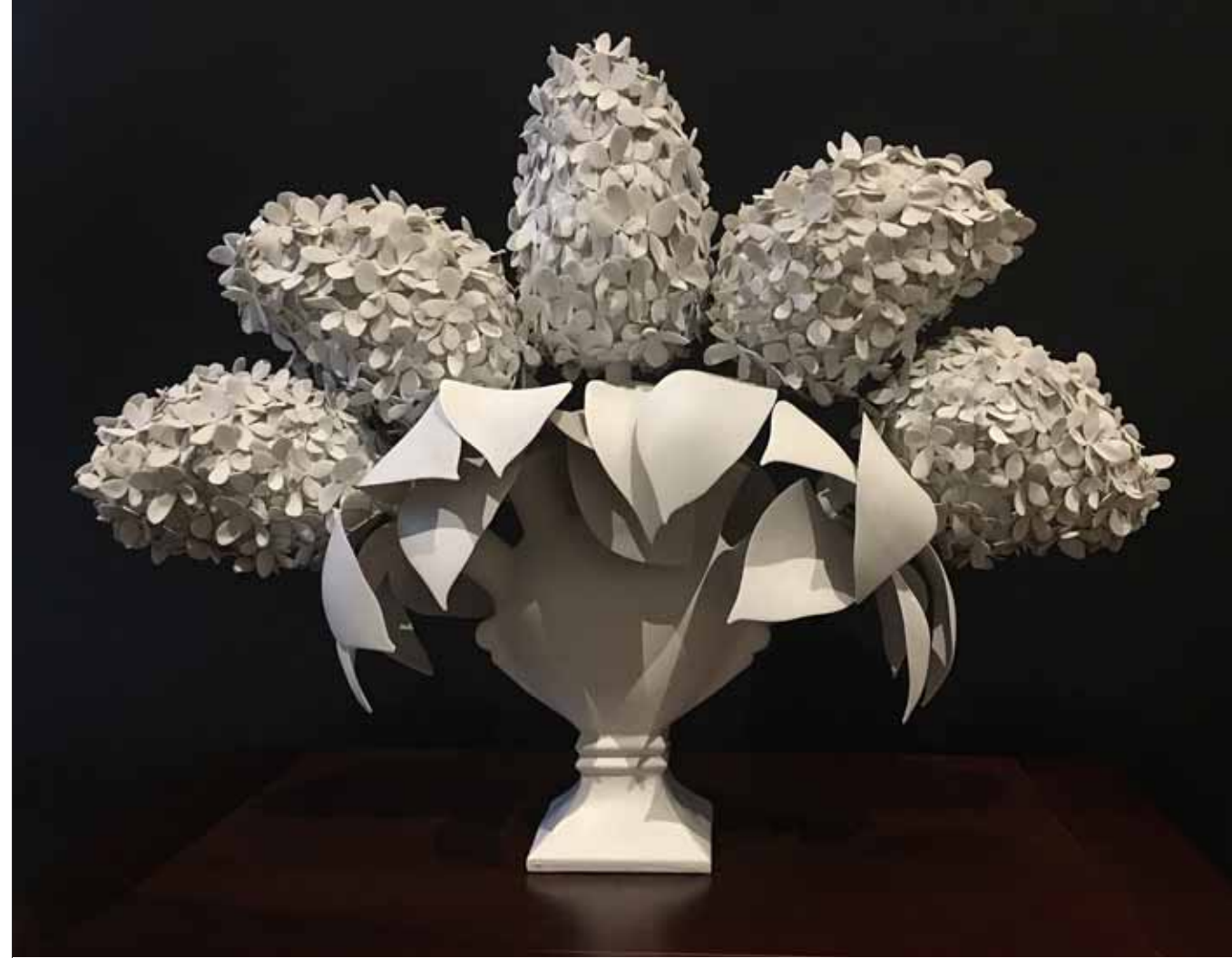






3D Printed Sculpture

Each sculpture listed is technically a photograph, created by combining a series of 360-degree photos into a computer mesh and outputting the result by means of a 3d printer. The printing material is a blend of white sandstone and plastic. The photographs seen in this book are of the resulting photo sculptures.





72 Tulips in a Salt Glaze Jug, 2017



Left to right: Narcissus in a Chinese Vessel, 2017; Magnolias in a Chinese Vessel, 2017 73

LIST OF WORKS

Images are printed in limited editions, at varying sizes, using archival pigment ink on archival cotton rag paper fused to Dibond.

The Artist’s Garden, 2017 – ongoing

Hydrangeas in a Dutch Tulipière, 2017
Japanese Anemones in an Arts and Crafts Movement Vase, 2017
Flowers from the artist’s garden in a vessel from the artist’s collection

The Royal Lodge Series, 2018

Tulips in a Blue, White and Gold Vessel
Euphorbia in a Japanese Imari Vessel
Narcissus in a Green Falcon Vessel
Azaleas and Tulips in a European Vessel
Camellias in a Silver Punch Bowl
Red and White Bouquet in a Sèvres Vessel
Hellebores and Bleeding Hearts in a Chinese Vessel
Yellow, White and Orange Bouquet in an Asian Vessel
Vessels photographed at Royal Lodge with permission of Prince Andrew

The Museum Series, 2017

Tulips in a Persian Vessel
Anemone Canadensis in an Italian Pharmaceutical Vessel
Siberian Iris in a Roycroft Vessel
Narcissus in a Staffordshire Pitcher
Vessels photographed with permission at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

Magnolias in an Ancient American Vessel
Tulips and Bleeding Hearts in a Japanese Vase
Clematis in a Chinese Teapot
Anemones in a Japanese Vessel
Allium in an Ancient American Tripod Vessel
Vessels photographed with permission at the Gardiner Museum, Toronto

The India Series, 2018

Orchids in a Gold-Coloured Ceramic Vase
Jaipur Wedding Bouquet with Lilies, Marigolds and Carnations

Les Jardins de Métis Series, 2018-2019

Anemone Canadensis in a Silver Jug, 2019
Blue Poppies and Forget-Me-Nots in a Chinese Vase, 2019
White Hawthorne and White Shrub Rose in a Blue and White Chinese Vase, 2019
Yellow Azaleas and Barberry in a Blue and White Chinese Vase, 2019
Red Maple and Peony Seed Pods in a Historic Brass Cup, 2018
Woodland Scilla and Phlox in a Silver Cup, 2018
Buttercups and Other Wildflowers in a Japanese Vase, 2019
Lamb’s Ear and Lichens on Pine Branches in a Lalique Glass Vase, 2018
Vessels and flowers photographed with permission at Les Jardins de Métis

3D Printed Sculpture, 2017

Hydrangeas in a Dutch Tulipière
Magnolias in a Chinese Vessel
Narcissus in a Chinese Vessel
Tulips in a Salt Glaze Jug
Printed using a blend of white sandstone and plastic

3D Printed Sculptures

Artists and designers are notorious for adopting emerging technologies and innovating new forms for their ideas. 3d scanning and printing have earned a cherished space in the innovator's toolbox since their invention by American Chuck Hull in the mid-1980s. Time has made these technologies increasingly accessible to the public. As makers leverage new technology, they build new aesthetic forms, shifting their paradigm in step with the zeitgeist.

While participating in the Digital Painting Atelier at OCAD U in the summer of 2016, T.M. Glass and I brainstormed project ideas. Since the artist is highly engaged with digital technology, we conceived a project that would use emerging technology. Photogrammetry is the production of a 3d model using multiple photographs and triangulation to simulate a model. This fit the brief, so we started taking multiple photographs of hydrangeas in a tulipière. Having failed initially to create a good virtual model, we took a lot more photos.

Through trial and error, we started to get some promising results. However, it was clear that our ambitions needed some extra help to produce tangible results. T.M. Glass found a production house to carry the project the last mile. They used a type of 3d printing that fuses layer upon layer of sandstone and resin in a complex pattern to reproduce the object from a digital file created by the artist. Finally, after negotiating many hurdles, we realized our aims and brought into being this wonderful sculpture in which technology, innovation and ambition converge.

John Deal, OCAD University

The History of Digital Photography

Digital photography has existed since the late 1950s, when a lens-less image was made by scanning a photograph into an early computer. In 1973, a Kodak engineer created the first digital camera by combining a CCD sensor that had recently been developed by Bell Labs with the lens from a movie camera, which saved a 0.01 megapixel image onto a cassette tape. It took until the early 1990s for digital cameras to reach the mass market and until the early 2000s for professional photographers, artists and the public to adopt digital photography widely.

While early digital photography was hampered by poor resolution, high cost and fast obsolescence, it allowed its users to do things they could not do with analogue photography. They could immediately assess and manipulate their images, they could take and store almost unlimited numbers of pictures and they could transmit them almost instantaneously. Digital photography also shifted the places where we view photographs, from physical prints to electronic screens.

Because of these qualities, digital photography became rapidly and seamlessly integrated into contemporary art practice. Pioneers including Nancy Burson and Pedro Meyer used digital photography to explore the relationship between image and truth. Others, such as Stan Douglas and Jeff Wall, use the photograph in a directorial mode, constructing elaborate tableaux that blur the distinction between photography, painting and cinema. As digital sensors and imaging software continue to evolve, artists are able to work with ever-increasing detail and scale, recording and constructing scenes that were previously unimaginable.

Amish Morrell, OCAD University



European Flower Painting in the 17th Century

The 17th century was the golden age of still-life painting, of which flower pictures were the most revered category. Their appearance resulted from a growing admiration for and progress in botany, captured in Europe's new botanical gardens and princely cabinets of curiosities exhibiting rare plant specimens.

Although flower paintings were created across Europe, Flemish and Dutch artists were considered the genre's best practitioners. Accomplished "foreigners" such as the French painter Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer (1636-1699) trained in Antwerp and ensured a fashion for flower still lifes continued at the French and English royal courts.

The stylistic evolution of 17th-century flower pictures is divided between the first and second half of the century, in which a progression from often crowded and stiff compositions to loose and shaded multi-dimensional paintings occurs. Still lifes consistently demonstrate the Dutch penchant for realism, while capturing each artist's ingenuity, tools and knowledge of historic symbolism. Actual blooms or related books, drawings and prints were the preferred references for flower painters.

When generally portrayed, flowers could represent the transience of life or conversely an eternal spring, while specific blooms like tulips might suggest nobility or wealth. Flowers of a particular season or origin were imaginatively depicted with blooms of another, resulting in a surreal garden of the artist's mind rather than one of the earth.

Although most well-known 17th-century flower painters were men, the genre did attract women. Flower painting continued into the 18th century through the genius of Dutch painters like Rachel Ruysch (1664-1750), whose brilliant work provided inspiration for artists well beyond her time.

Jennifer Franks, Art Historian

The History of Flower Vessels in the West

Ancient flower vessels were primarily reserved for gardens. The earliest depiction of arranged cut flowers in a container occurs in second-century Rome. In the Middle Ages, cut flowers filled silver, glass and ceramic vessels. As gardens became decorative extensions of the house, the use of flower containers increased. Large Renaissance pedestal vases and tin-glazed earthenware apothecary jars called albarelli held cut flowers. Enlightenment advances in botany and technology prompted specialized flower vessels. European ceramics illustrated the West’s fascination with Chinese porcelain, and 17th-century Dutch earthenware, known as Delftware, exhibited Chinese blue-and-white decoration in new shapes like the tulipière, a tulip vase.

In 1709, the Chinese method of hard-paste porcelain was achieved at the German manufactory of Meissen; the medium, perfected by the French at Sèvres, spurred countless flower vases. Improved travel and horticulture in the 19th century increased the availability of exotic flowers, which appeared in bud and tiered vases called epergnes. Potteries like Staffordshire produced transfer-printed vessels for a growing middle class. The Arts and Crafts movement countered the Industrial Age; William Morris described this rebellion by evoking contemporary flower vessels: “Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.”

In the 20th century, flower vases flourished due to advances in manufacturing and the demand for “art pottery” with unique shapes and glazes. Floral arranging became popular along with flower vessels, mass-produced or artist-made, which graced most domestic interiors.

Jennifer Franks, Art Historian

Horticultural Imperialism in the 19th Century

At the height of the British Empire, gardens were lush with specimens from around the world, plants whose cosmopolitan travels were propelled by ambitious nurserymen and new horticultural technologies. Some exotic species were planted as annuals in large, geometrical plots—a practice called “bedding out.” In other cases, imported plants were naturalized in British soil. Rhododendrons discovered high in the Himalayas, for example, flourished in Cornwall, marking the spring landscape with their brilliant hues. And in the Himalayan foothills at Simla, British colonists cultivated English primroses, violets, buttercups and larkspur to remind themselves of home as they escaped the heat of Indian summers.

Horticultural proficiency grew exponentially throughout the 19th century: it was a period of unparalleled botanical innovation, driven by the British imperial impulse to acquire both commodities and knowledge. Colonial botanical gardens in Calcutta, India, and Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, traded seeds, specimens and expertise with the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, outside London. This generated a vast network that extended even to working-class gardeners with only a potted geranium to tend. By the century’s end, however, some gardeners were beginning to realize that botanical ambition came with a cost. The British demand for exotic orchids had “stripped whole provinces,” lamented one prominent orchid fancier in 1893, predicting the extinction of several species from their indigenous habitats. Today, we live with the mixed legacy of British horticultural imperialism: monocultures that suppress biodiversity along with gardens whose abundant botanical profusion continues to grant immense aesthetic and emotional pleasure.

Lynn M. Voskuil, University of Houston



AFTERWORDS

Those among us who love things botanical sometimes experience a special resonance in the presence of flowers, especially on the occasions that signal one of life's signpost moments—weddings, funerals, anniversaries, graduations. The silent messages associated with flowers reach us quite clearly. Flowers speak to us: Congratulations! Happy anniversary! Welcome! I'm sorry. I love you. Rest in peace, I'm sorry for your loss. Get well. Thank you. Thinking of you. Bon appetit! Let's celebrate! This is a significant occasion.

A truly audible message can also come from plants. Recently, renowned music producer Bob Ezrin conducted an experiment in his Nashville studio with a pansy plant. He attached electrodes to the pansy's leaf and directed their electronic signals to a MIDI synthesizer which interpreted them as music. In an email, Bob wrote, "I did not touch the plant. The only thing I did was control the sounds and the sensitivity of the box to get the kind of performance I was looking for."

On a keyboard, Bob played a duet with the pansy plant. The music they created together, which Bob titled *Plantasia*, became the soundtrack for the video I created for this Onsite Gallery exhibition which I called *The Audible Language of Flowers*. After the exhibition, the video will be posted on my website, tmglass.com.

T.M. Glass

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

T.M. Glass is a digital artist based in Toronto, whose practice explores the historical, technological, and aesthetic conditions of photography to stretch it beyond its traditional definition. The works have been showcased in multiple solo exhibitions and held in private collections in Canada, the United States, Britain, France, and Australia. Glass turned to photography as the primary mode of production after studying sculpture at the Ontario College of Art and Design and pursuing a distinguished career in writing and production for film and television. Glass uses rapidly advancing digital technology to celebrate the beauty of nature.

www.tmglass.com

WRITERS' BIOGRAPHIES

Francisco Alvarez is the Dorene & Peter Milligan Executive Director, Galleries, at OCAD University, Canada's oldest and largest university of art and design, and a principal at Mr. Pink Art Consultants in Toronto. He has led the development of numerous exhibitions, public events and festivals of art and culture. Over 14 years at the Royal Ontario Museum, he produced more than 25 exhibitions and public education programs. At OCAD U he has led the development of two new galleries and an international curatorial residency program. Under his direction, the Onsite Gallery has presented diverse exhibitions of art, design and new media that explore the questions of our time.

John Deal is an instructor at OCAD University in Toronto, and a technician specializing in digital technology, working with OCAD U digital programs including the Digital Painting Atelier and the Drawing and Painting Digital Suite.

Jennifer Franks is an art historian specializing in Decorative Arts, specifically ceramics and glass (1600 to present), with a MA in the History of Decorative Arts and Curatorial Studies via Parsons, The New School for Design (New York). She has worked for Christie's (New York), Waddesdon Manor (Buckinghamshire, UK), on behalf of the National Trust and Rothschild estate, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, among other leading art institutions, as a researcher, chief curator and executive director.

Amish Morrell is an educator, curator, editor and writer. He is currently an assistant professor in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences & School of Interdisciplinary Studies at OCAD University in Toronto. From 2008 to 2017 he was editor and director of Programs at C Magazine, one of North America's foremost visual arts magazines.

Lynn Voskuil is associate professor of English at the University of Houston, where she teaches Victorian literature, the Environmental Humanities and Empire Studies. She is currently completing a manuscript entitled "Horticulture and Imperialism: The Garden Spaces of the British Empire, 1789-1914," which has been funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.



ARTIST ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This catalogue and the exhibition it documents are the result of an impressive team effort. The staff of OCAD University headed by President Sara Diamond, together with Francisco Alvarez, executive director of OCAD University's galleries, took the decision to exhibit my work at Onsite Gallery, the University's professional gallery. Honoured and very grateful for this exceptional opportunity, I wish to thank each person who has been involved in the many tasks required to pull an exhibition and a catalogue together. First and foremost, I am ever grateful for Francisco Alvarez's unwavering support while I was a studio hermit creating images for this exhibition. Next, I thank the executives of each museum and heritage garden for the permission they so kindly gave for photographing the historic vessels and flowers that appear in this exhibition and for lending vessels to the exhibition, as well as the executives of the Art Gallery of Ontario for lending a 17th-century still life flower painting to the exhibition.

More thanks to the people who agreed to facilitate the permissions that made this project possible: Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson and their Royal Lodge staff; Royal Ontario Museum staff Robert Little, Sascha Prieve, Mark Engstrom and Carol Baum; Alexander Reford, director, Les Jardins de Métis; Kelvin Brown, director, Gardiner Museum, and Karine Tsoumis, curator, Gardiner Museum. Much appreciation for the work of camera and lighting assistant Paolo Cristante, who worked on the England, India and Quebec photo shoots. A big thank-you to renowned music producer Bob Ezrin for his permission to include *Plantasia* in the video soundtrack.

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T.M.Glass

The Audible Language of Flowers

EXHIBITION

T.M. Glass, The Audible Language of Flowers
May 8 to August 16, 2019
Onsite Gallery, Toronto, Canada

The exhibition is comprised of lens based digital painting, 3D sculpture and a video work titled *Plantasia* with sound by Bob Ezrin. The exhibition has been supplemented by historic works on loan from the Gardiner Museum, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Onsite Gallery is the flagship professional gallery of OCAD University and an experimental curatorial platform for art, design and new media.

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