

The Timeless Botanicals of... Margaret Morrison

By ANDRIA WATSON / CASA

THE VICTORIAN AGE INTERTWINED WITH THE DAWN OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION are the inspiration for Margaret Morrison's exhibit *Victorian Modern - Botanical and Related Prints*, which is on display at The Arts Fund April 18th through May 16th. The opportunity to exhibit at the Arts Fund is part of the Individual Artist Awards and includes a reception on Friday, April 18th, from 5:30 to 7:30pm.

"I've been making art as long as I can remember. I got involved in photography while attending Humboldt State University in the mid 1970s," shared Morrison. "It was an exciting time for the growth of new forms of photography and it's recognition as fine art."



Margaret Morrison

Morrison also received an Arts Fund Grant which allowed her to step outside her comfort zone, producing larger work

that is 50 by 40 inches in size.

"The grant gave me the opportunity to grow and discover different directions in my work. It enables artists to pursue their unique visions while offering some much needed help," Morrison explained. "The grant allowed me to go big!"

Her current work at The Arts Fund Gallery questions creation and destruction while studying nature's resiliency using vibrant interpretations. Morrison has been working on several series to address different aspects of that idea, which are: The Charcoal and Matilija Leaf Series and the Parrot Tulip Series.

"The show is a Victorian landscape gone mad!" Morrison laughed. "I used the curling leaves from a matilija poppy, a native California plant that's found here in Santa Barbara, to honor a sense of this time and place. It has a sense of animalistic energy and vibrant acidic color. A caramel colored illumination also seems to remind me of older photographic processes from the turn of the century. Dark and glowing, morbid and simultaneously, hopeful."

The Parrot Tulip Series was a way for Morrison to experiment with shape, color, and the personal meaning of form. The work is presented in unique, custom-painted frames.



Charcoal and Matilija Series 04 by Margaret Morrison

"My art has evolved over time as a rich record of personal associations. I've always felt a deep kinship with the plant world, so it's been my subject," Morrison shared. "If there's a thread of continuity in my work and intent as an artist, I'd say it's always been my meditation on mortality and timelessness."

Born in Wisconsin, Morrison moved to the East Coast when she was four. While attending Humboldt State, she was encouraged by professors Ellen Land-Weber and Thomas Joshua Cooper. She found herself immersed in a community of students that revered the ancient and natural world. She was awarded a Reese Bullen Arts Scholarship and in '79 received her B.A. in Art.

"After graduating, I had opportunities to live in Tokyo and New York City in the 1980s and had amazing art and cultural experiences in both places. The gardens of Kyoto have been a lasting inspiration to me. In NYC, I belonged to the Camera Club of NY off Union Square (founded by Alfred Stieglitz in the late 19th C.) where I printed late into the night before walking back to my hotel room in Gramercy Park."

Morrison has been exhibiting since 1977 in solo and group shows. In the Santa Barbara area, she has shown work in juried shows such as the Atkinson Gallery's *Small Images* shows, Ventura College Friends of the Arts *Small Works Competition*, and *Transformation*, Ojai Center for the Arts Photography Show, and several solo shows at the Faulkner West Gallery.

"I hope all who attend will benefit in some way and take some new insight or

emotion with them from the show," Morrison expressed. "I'm trying to take viewers to a place they've never been before. It's a symbolic show, that encourages meditation, but also has a strong energy."

The gallery is located at 205C Santa Barbara St. For more information call 965-7321.



Parrot Tulip Series 04 by Margaret Morrison