

PHOTO PLAY

Works take on whimsical qualities when plant materials are arranged on modified scanner, covered with black box and illuminated only by equipment itself

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ZANESVILLE - A sense of play coupled with an elegant design sums up the photographic works of Doug McLarty. Using simple objects and bits of plants and flowers, he produces narratives both comic and poetic.

A selection of works from his "Nature by Design" series is on display through April in the Zanesville Museum of Art.

McLarty's technique has a direct kinship to the photograms made famous by artists Man Ray and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. A photogram is produced by arranging objects on photo paper and exposing it to light. Usually, the results are ghostly white silhouettes on black backgrounds.

Instead of chemicals or a camera, McLarty uses a modified flatbed scanner to produce his images.

He carefully places his materials on the surface of the glass and covers the arrangement with a black box. Rather than lighting the subject with studio lights, the light source is the scanner itself. The result is a spatially rich image with extremely rich foreground details.

He investigates textures and subtle shifts of color, producing hypnotic works such as *Luminescence*. The rich and layered image consists of an anthurium, calla lilies and sea-grape leaves.

Many a piece maintains an iconic presence. With a centrally placed bright-red flower, *Redball* seems otherworldly and magical.

Comedy comes into play when McLarty alters natural forms to suggest figures and actions. In *Dancers I*, the stamens of day lilies and trumpet plants become the arms and legs of ballet dancers.

In *Iris Stream*, a row of iris petals among stones becomes a cascading waterfall.

The exhibit offers more than 45 images, providing a thorough overview of McLarty's process, humor and sense of design.

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Scheherazade by Doug McLarty, at the Zanesville Museum of Art



Left: Luminescence



Above: Dancers I