

When the Planet Blooms: Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss, and Artistic Creation

Quando o Planeta Florescer: Mudanças Climáticas, Perda de Biodiversidade e Criação Artística

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ABSTRACT

When the Planet Blooms: Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss, and Artistic Creation explores the intersection of art, technology, and ecological awareness, presenting a vision for a sustainable future rooted in creativity and connection. Through 3D-printed sculptures inspired by endangered and native flowers, the artist, Darlene Farris-LaBar reflects on the fragility and resilience of nature amidst the escalating challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. Highlighting the intricate interdependence of ecosystems, the work bridges science, art, and technology to emphasize nature's design brilliance and adaptability. The artist's practice not only mourns ecological loss but celebrates the interconnected beauty of life, urging collective stewardship and action. By fusing human ingenuity with nature's wisdom, the creations serve as a call to reimagine our relationship with the natural world, blending wonder, reflection, and activism. This work underscores art's transformative power in shaping ecological awareness and fostering hope for a flourishing planet.

KEYWORDS

Environmental Awareness, Ecological Art, Biodiversity, Climate Change, 3D-Printed Flowers.

RESUMO

Este artigo explora a interseção entre arte, tecnologia e consciência ecológica, apresentando uma visão de futuro sustentável enraizada na criatividade e na conexão. A partir de esculturas em 3D inspiradas em flores nativas e ameaçadas de extinção, o artigo traz reflexões sobre a fragilidade e a resiliência da natureza diante dos crescentes desafios das mudanças climáticas e da perda de biodiversidade. As proposições artísticas discutidas neste artigo articulam ciência, arte e tecnologia, ressaltando a engenhosidade e a capacidade de adaptação presentes no design da natureza. Dessa forma, a prática da artista e autora não apenas lamenta a perda ecológica, mas também celebra a beleza interconectada da vida, convocando à ação e ao cuidado coletivo. Ao fundir a engenhosidade humana com a sabedoria da natureza, tais proposições artísticas servem como um chamado para que possamos reinventar nossa relação com o mundo natural, mesclando encantamento, reflexão e ativismo. Busca-se, assim, evidenciar o poder transformador da arte na construção da consciência ecológica e no cultivo da esperança para o florescer do planeta.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Consciência ambiental, arte ecológica, biodiversidade, mudanças climáticas, flores em impressão 3D.

In a world reshaped by shifting winds and warming seas, where forests fall silent and blossoms fade unseen, my art seeks to breathe life back into nature's vanishing whispers. Each work I craft is a love letter to the Earth—a fragile hymn of beauty, resilience, and impermanence. Through the fusion of art and technology, my work transforms into a tribute to what we risk losing and a beacon of hope for what we can still protect.

Every petal and stem I digital design, grows from the fertile soil of my reverence for the natural world. From childhood, I have been drawn to the intricate choreography of

nature: the way a wildflower bends to the breeze, how sunlight dances across its surface, how it holds the memory of seasons within its delicate seeds.

But the world we cherish teeters on the brink. Climate change gnaws at the edges of our landscapes, and the vibrant tapestry of biodiversity unravels strand by strand. I realized that as an artist, I could not merely stand witness to this loss. My work needed to reflect, to mourn, to celebrate—and most importantly, to awaken.

To speak of climate change is to speak of a story in flux—a tale where ice melts into water, water swells into storms, and storms scatter life in their wake. Plants, the quiet lifeblood of our ecosystems, bear the brunt of this chaos. Rising temperatures and erratic seasons disrupt the rhythms they have followed for millennia.

Through my sculptures, I translate this silent struggle into something tangible, something visceral. Each piece is a pause, a still moment carved out of nature's ongoing dance with disorder. Using the precision of digital design and 3D printing, I capture not just the form but the essence of these blooms—the curves, forms, textures, colors and the way it seems to sigh under the weight of its own existence.

I strive to bring awareness not only to the beauty of flowers but also to their ingenious, naturally engineered features. Each flower is a marvel of design, shaped by millennia of evolution to fulfill a specific purpose within the tapestry of life. Nature's creations are never accidental; they are deliberate and purposeful, solving challenges of survival with elegance and precision. The structure of a flower is no mere ornament—it is an intricate mechanism for life itself. Its petals, curved and delicate, are perfectly crafted to guide a pollinator. Its colors, vibrant and diverse, are signals in a language understood by bees, birds, and butterflies. This is nature's technology in action—a system of quiet brilliance that adapts, evolves, and thrives in balance.

As I immerse myself in the study of each flower, preparing to digitally recreate its form, I find myself awestruck by the deeper truth it reveals nothing in nature exists in isolation. A flower is never just a flower. It is a source of sustenance, offering nectar to pollinators who, in turn, ensure the survival of countless other species. It is a seed disperser, carrying the promise of new growth to far-reaching corners of its ecosystem. It is a shelter, a home for insects or small creatures seeking refuge. Even in death, it serves—returning nutrients to the soil, feeding the roots of future life.



Figure 1: Darlene Farris-LaBar, 3D Printed Milkweed Flower, 2022. Photos of the artist.

When one flower disappears, its absence ripples outward, a silent wave of loss that touches lives we may never see. Without the food it provides, pollinators falter. Without the seeds it scatters, plant populations dwindle. The air we breathe, the soil we rely on, and the delicate balance of our climate—all are shaped by the quiet labor of these blossoms. The disappearance of even a single species is a fracture in the web of life, a break in the chain that binds us all together.

This understanding of interconnectedness is at the heart of my work. Each 3D-printed flower I create is not just an object of beauty but a story—a narrative of relationships, interdependence, and balance. Through my art, I seek to remind viewers that the web of life is both intricate and fragile. Plants, animals, fungi, and even the elements are all threads in this tapestry, woven together by invisible forces of collaboration and coexistence.

Yet, this masterpiece—the Earth's most profound creation—is under threat. Climate change, habitat destruction, and biodiversity loss pull at the threads, unraveling connections that have held for millennia. The fragility of this web is our greatest challenge, and our responsibility as stewards of this planet has never been more urgent.

My art is an invitation to see the world through this lens of connection. To touch a 3D-printed flower is to touch a fragment of this interconnected story. It is to witness the

brilliance of nature's design, to feel the weight of what we stand to lose, and to recognize the role we play in its preservation.

Nature's wisdom lies in its interdependence, its ability to sustain itself through collaboration and harmony. It is a lesson humanity must learn and relearn—a call to remember that our fate is entwined with that of every flower, every bee, every tree. My work serves as both a celebration of this truth and a call to action, urging us to protect the delicate web that sustains us all.

For in the end, no life exists in isolation. We are all connected—each flower, each breath, each moment—woven together in the vast, luminous fabric of existence. Let us honor it, protect it, and marvel at its beauty while we still can.

Technology: The Arm of Nature

Technology is often cast as the opposition to nature, a force that disrupts and exploits. But to me, the two are deeply intertwined, each enriching the other in ways we are only beginning to understand. I see technology as the arm of nature—a tool that extends humanity's ability to create, adapt, and solve problems, mirroring the creativity and resourcefulness found in the natural world. If we look closely, we realize that nature itself is the oldest, most sophisticated form of technology on this planet.

Every flower, every tree, every ecosystem is a marvel of engineering, honed over billions of years through a process of trial and error more elegant and enduring than any human invention. Nature's technology is sustainable, self-regulating, and endlessly innovative. It doesn't force solutions but harmonizes with its surroundings, solving problems of balance, adaptation, and efficiency in ways human systems often struggle to replicate.

Consider the leaf—its surface a masterpiece of design, effortlessly converting sunlight into energy through photosynthesis. This natural process operates with precision and efficiency that no solar panel can yet match. Or think of flowers, which evolve to attract exactly the right pollinators with colors, scents, and shapes that form a silent but potent language. These adaptations are not accidents; they are deliberate solutions, crafted by nature's own technology to ensure survival and interdependence.



Figure 2: Darlene Farris-LaBar, 3D Printed Wildhorse Mint, 2019. Photos of the artist.

Even ecosystems operate like complex, interconnected machines. Each species, each element, has a role to play. A fallen tree in a forest becomes a home for fungi, food for insects, and nourishment for the soil, creating a cycle of renewal. Nothing is wasted, and everything contributes to the greater whole. These are nature's problem-solving systems—balancing, regenerating, and sustaining life in ways that defy human imitation.

In my work as an artist, I turn to modern tools like digital designing, scanning and 3D printing to echo these natural technologies. When I digitally design and recreate flowers, I am not simply mimicking their outward beauty but delving into the deeper genius of their design. Each petal, each curve, and each vein tell a story of adaptation and purpose, revealing a system for older and more intricate than any human-made creation.

By replicating these features, I hope to invite viewers to see flowers not just as decorative objects but as symbols of nature's brilliance. My art challenges the narrative that human technology is separate from or superior to the natural world. Instead, it shows how much we must learn from the systems that have sustained life on Earth for eons.

This connection between technology and nature is more than a metaphor; it is a reminder of our shared roots. Humanity's greatest inventions—architecture, engineering, even medicine—are often inspired by the natural world. The concept of biomimicry itself

underscores how much of human innovation is drawn from studying the solutions nature has already perfected.

Through my sculptures, I aim to blur the line between human and natural creation. Technology, when wielded with care and reverence, becomes a means to amplify nature's voice, to preserve its beauty, and to honor its wisdom. My work stands as a bridge between these worlds, a reminder that our tools are not separate from nature but extensions of it—proof that even in an age of machines, we remain deeply connected to the Earth's creative force.

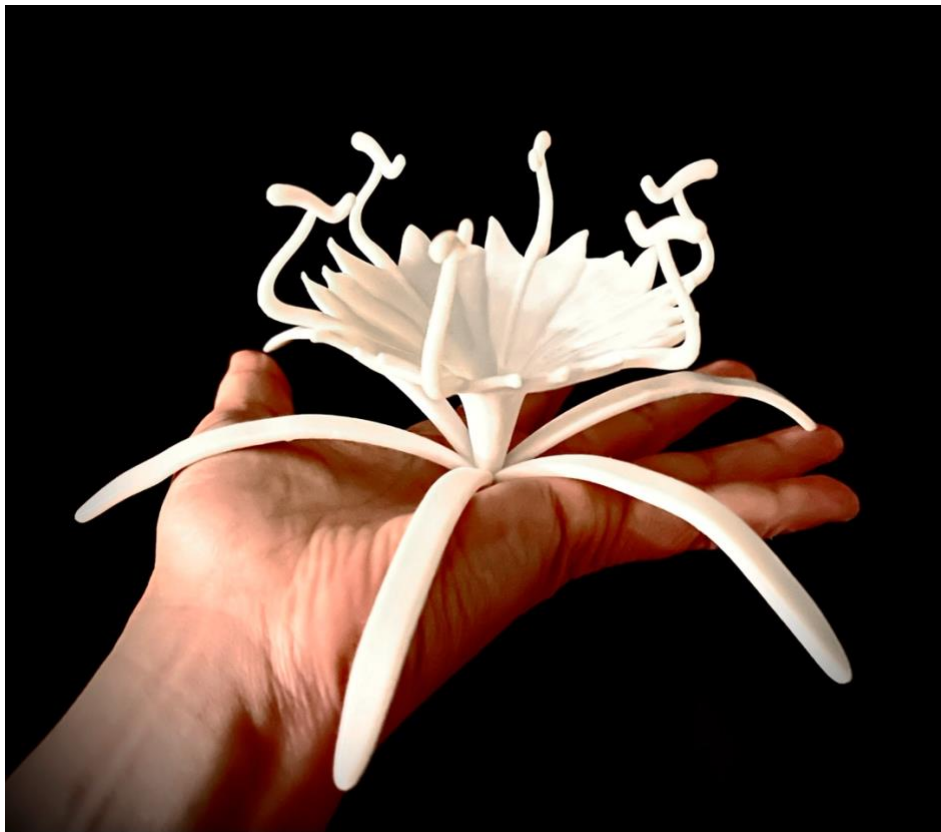


Figure 3: Darlene Farris-LaBar, 3D Printed Spider Lily, 2022. Photos of the artist.

In the end, nature's genius lies in its ability to create harmony, not dominance. It offers solutions that do not deplete but replenish, that do not conquer but collaborate. If we let it, technology can follow this same path, becoming not an adversary but a partner—a way for humanity to rejoin the cycle of life instead of standing apart from it.

Every flower I design, every intricate detail I replicate, is a testament to this belief. It is an invitation to look closer, to marvel at the ingenuity that exists in the smallest petal and the grandest forest. It is a call to rethink how we use our tools, not to overpower nature but to align with it.

Technology and nature are not enemies; they are two sides of the same coin, each reflecting the boundless creativity that sustains life on this planet. When we embrace this truth, we unlock the potential to create a future where innovation and preservation walk hand in hand, ensuring that the beauty and balance of life continue to thrive.



Figure 4: Darlene Farris-LaBar, 3D Printed Jewelweed Seed, 2022. Photos of the artist.

Heroes of the Ecosystems

When I choose which flowers to recreate, I listen for the stories that most need telling. Many of the blooms I craft are endangered species, their names unfamiliar to most. These are the unsung heroes of their ecosystems, quietly holding the threads of life together.

Take, for instance, a rare wildflower from the Amazon Rainforest. Its bright petals have witnessed the passing of centuries, rooted in soil that is slowly disappearing beneath invasive species and human encroachment. In recreating it, I aim not to replace but to preserve—a digital echo of its existence, a reminder that even the smallest life has worth. One of the most transformative experiences in my artistic journey was my trip to the Amazon rainforest. Immersing myself in this unparalleled reservoir of biodiversity, I was captivated by the intricate beauty and ecological importance of its flora. The flowers I encountered there—vibrant, complex, and purposeful—spoke to me of nature’s ingenuity, its capacity for adaptation, and the delicate balance that sustains life.

The Amazon's flowers are not just beautiful; they are vital components of their ecosystems. Each bloom serves as a critical link in a web of relationships, supporting pollinators, regulating the environment, and fostering the intricate interdependencies that define the rainforest. Witnessing these dynamics deepened my understanding of nature's collaborative essence and inspired me to translate these discoveries into my art.

While the Amazon inspired me with its abundance and grandeur, I also find profound meaning in the native flowers of the region where I live. These blooms, though often overlooked, are vital threads in the fabric of their ecosystems. Through my work, I aim to celebrate their significance, highlighting their roles in supporting local biodiversity and connecting communities to the land.

Digitally designing these native flowers allows me to explore their forms and features in detail, learning from the adaptations that have allowed them to thrive in harmony with their environments. By bringing these flowers into the gallery space, I hope to encourage viewers to see their value—not just as aesthetic objects but as vital participants in a shared ecological narrative.



Figure 5: Darlene Farris-LaBar, 3D Printed Delphinium Flower, 2022. Photos of the artist.

Art and Nature in the Anthropocene

As humanity's impact on the environment deepens, the boundaries we once drew between nature and culture are dissolving, revealing the fragile interdependence that binds all life. The Anthropocene—a term describing this epoch of human-driven planetary change—has made one thing undeniable: we are not separate from the natural world. To act otherwise is to imperil not only the ecosystems that sustain us but also the intricate web of relationships that define our existence. This era demands a new way of thinking, one that transcends outdated binaries and acknowledges our profound entanglement with the Earth.

Contemporary thinkers call for a radical reimagining of our relationship with non-human life. They urge us to embrace partnerships rooted in respect, reciprocity, and shared stewardship. Donna Haraway speaks of "staying with the trouble"—facing the complexities of our ecological crises head-on—while Bruno Latour emphasizes the interconnected agency of humans and non-humans alike. Together, their ideas challenge us to abandon exploitative paradigms and forge alliances that honor the intrinsic value of all life forms.

My artistic practice aligns deeply with this vision, seeking to bridge the gap between reflective contemplation and actionable engagement. Through my sculptures, I reimagine nature's delicate beauty in forms that invite both wonder and introspection. These creations are not merely decorative but deeply symbolic. Each flower represents a moment of awe, a reminder of the fragile and fleeting magnificence of life. Yet they are also calls to action, urging viewers to confront the urgent need to protect what remains of the natural world.

In crafting these pieces, I strive to create a dialogue between the human and non-human, between technology and nature. The use of technologies—a process emblematic of human ingenuity—becomes a tool for storytelling, a way to re-create and revere the intricate forms of flora that inspire me. These sculptures are both elegies and rallying cries. They mourn the loss of biodiversity, the scars left by deforestation and climate change, while also celebrating the resilience and beauty of the life that persists. By transforming flowers into lasting works of art, I hope to preserve not just their forms but their messages: of connection, fragility, and the urgent need for care.

Art, in this sense, becomes a vessel for ecological awareness and an agent of change. It invites viewers to pause in wonder, to reflect on their own place in the web of

life, and to consider what actions they can take to protect the world around them. My work is a call to honor what we have, to recognize its profound value, and to act before it is lost. The Anthropocene demands nothing less than a collective reawakening—a recognition that the future of humanity is inseparable from the future of the Earth. Through creativity and collaboration, we can shape a path forward, one where beauty, balance, and biodiversity are not merely preserved but celebrated.

An Invitation to Act

In this fragile age of climate change, art holds a unique power: to awaken ecological awareness and inspire collective action. Beyond mere aesthetic expression, art becomes a medium for cultivating empathy and understanding, forging a connection between the observer and the natural world. By reimagining historical genres and inventing new poetic forms, artists can transcend conventional boundaries, creating works that speak simultaneously to the heart and the mind. These creations can weave together the spiritual, historical, political, and social dimensions of the natural world, providing a lens through which we can understand both the beauty and urgency of our current ecological challenges.

Art has the power to do what facts and figures often cannot—it stirs the soul, bypassing the noise of logic and reason to connect directly with the heart. In the face of the climate crisis and the rapid loss of biodiversity, art emerges as an essential tool, capable of transforming abstract concerns into vivid realities. Where data might overwhelm and words might fall short, art speaks a universal language, one that invites us to feel rather than merely think.

Through its colors, textures, and forms, art gives a voice to what is often unseen or unheard: the whispers of disappearing forests, the quiet absence of birdsong, the ghostly memory of flowers that once graced the earth. It doesn't simply tell us what we are losing—it shows us, drawing us into the story of the natural world's fragility and resilience. A painting, a sculpture, an installation—each becomes a bridge between humanity and the ecosystems we are so often detached from, reminding us that the beauty we take for granted is slipping away.

Art has the power to make the intangible tangible. Climate change can feel distant, something happening elsewhere or in some future time. But art collapses that

distance, confronting us with the immediacy of the crisis. A photograph of a bleached coral reef, stark and silent, can speak volumes about the urgency of ocean conservation. A sculpture of an endangered animal, sculpted with precision and care, can rekindle our sense of wonder and responsibility for species on the brink of extinction.

More than just a mirror, art is a catalyst. It doesn't just reflect the world as it is but reimagines what it could be. It invites us to pause, to see the world through a different lens, to feel the weight of our choices and the possibilities of our actions. In its quiet stillness or bold declarations, art becomes a space where reflection and transformation meet. It calls to us, not with the sterile urgency of warnings but with the aching beauty of what is at stake.

Art also bridges the gap between knowledge and action. It slows us down, urging us to stop and connect—to see not just a tree but a life-sustaining force, not just a flower but a testament to resilience, not just a species but a thread in the intricate web that binds us all. This emotional connection is the first step toward action. When we care deeply, we are moved to protect.

In this way, art becomes an agent of change, weaving together the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual aspects of our relationship with the Earth. It transcends cultural and linguistic boundaries, uniting people in a shared vision of what we must preserve. Art reminds us that the Earth is not a resource to be consumed but a masterpiece to be revered, one that demands our humility and stewardship.

In an age where climate change and biodiversity loss threaten the very fabric of life, art becomes more than a form of expression—it becomes a call to action. It is a beacon, a compass, and a reminder that within the beauty of creation lies the responsibility to protect it. Through art, we are invited to remember, to grieve, to hope, and ultimately, to act. For if we lose the natural world, we lose not only the subject of our art but the very essence of what it means to create.

My artistic practice is deeply rooted in a celebration of nature's wonders, particularly the flowers of the Amazon rainforest and the native landscapes of my home. These blooms are more than botanical marvels to be admired from a distance—they are lifelines in a fragile and intricate ecosystem. Each petal, leaf, and stem carry the essence of resilience, adaptation, and interdependence, reminding us of the interconnectedness that binds all living beings. The Amazon, often referred to as the lungs of the Earth, exemplifies nature's unparalleled capacity for renewal, while also highlighting the peril it

faces due to human actions. Through my work, I aim to honor this duality, portraying both the vibrancy and vulnerability of these ecosystems.

Art and technology, when fused together, can amplify this message and expand its reach. From augmented reality installations to digital paintings, innovative tools allow us to reinterpret nature in ways that captivate and engage a modern audience. Technology is not an adversary to nature but a potential ally, enabling us to tell its story with unprecedented clarity and depth. Through this fusion, I hope to spark a broader dialogue about our shared responsibility to safeguard the delicate, interwoven web of life. By creating immersive experiences that evoke wonder and reflection, I believe we can inspire action—be it through conservation efforts, policy advocacy, or individual lifestyle changes.

Art is not merely a mirror reflecting the state of the world but a catalyst for transformation. It is a vessel for rethinking and renewing our relationship with the environment, inviting us to envision a future where human ingenuity harmonizes with the wisdom of the natural world. It challenges us to move beyond exploitative paradigms and embrace a more symbiotic relationship with the Earth.

Through creativity, we can chart a path forward, one where beauty and balance are not just preserved but celebrated. This vision extends beyond conservation; it encompasses a profound cultural shift in how we perceive and interact with the natural world. By elevating the narratives of biodiversity, resilience, and interconnection, we can foster a sense of stewardship and reverence for life in all its infinite, wondrous forms. Art, in this sense, becomes a call to action—a way of ensuring that the awe-inspiring complexity of life on Earth continues to thrive for generations to come.

In the face of climate change, where every decision carry weight and consequence, art can be a beacon of hope and a source of collective strength. It has the power to remind us of our shared humanity, our shared planet, and our shared responsibility. Together, through the transformative power of creativity, we can imagine and build a world that not only survives but flourishes, where the interconnected beauty of life is honored, protected, and celebrated.

One aspect of my work is seeing how people respond. At exhibitions, I often watch as visitors approach with curiosity, their eyes drawn to the vibrant hues and intricate details of the flowers. But as they read the stories behind each piece—the species' plight, its role in its ecosystem—I see something shift.

These moments of connection are why I create. Art has a unique power to bypass logic and speak directly to the heart. By presenting nature's beauty in such an intimate, tangible way, I hope to spark a deeper awareness of its fragility and a greater commitment to its preservation.



Figure 6: Darlene Farris-LaBar, Portals to the Rainforest, Embroidered Tapestry, 2023. Photos of the artist.

Conclusion

In today's rapidly evolving society, where technology has become an inseparable part of our existence, artists are harnessing its potential to forge new connections, amplify their voices, and reach ever-expanding audiences. This intersection of creativity and innovation reflects the evolving relationship between humanity and the natural world, a relationship that my work seeks to explore and deepen. My journey into the intricate world of plants and flowers—through art and research—has illuminated a profound truth: technology is not a force apart from nature, but an extension of it. It offers tools to refine, reimagine, and safeguard the delicate patterns that sustain life.

I have discovered an extraordinary synergy between the organic structures of nature and the geometric constructs of technology, a harmonious interplay that mirrors the interconnected systems of our planet. Beneath the surface of both lies an intricate web of data—natural patterns shaped by evolution and human-designed networks crafted through ingenuity. My art seeks to reveal and celebrate these unseen connections, using the dual lenses of science and technology to underscore the fragile yet essential roles that each species, each element, plays within our ecosystems. By highlighting the beauty and importance of these connections, I hope to foster a deeper understanding of their significance and inspire a collective commitment to their preservation.

The future I envision is one where art and science walk hand in hand, each amplifying the other's ability to provoke thought, spark curiosity, and drive change. Artists, I believe, should collaborate with ecologists, conservationists, and scientists to create works that are not only visually captivating but also rich in ecological and scientific meaning. By integrating advanced technologies into this partnership, we can uncover new perspectives on the intricate balance of life and its interdependencies, offering a profound and nuanced interpretation of the natural world.

In the face of a changing world, my art remains steadfast in its purpose: to remind us of the beauty and interconnectedness we are entrusted to protect. Through my 3D-printed flowers, I aim to offer not only a reflection of what is at risk but also a vision of hope—one where human ingenuity collaborates with nature to nurture, sustain, and celebrate life. These blooms, delicate yet enduring, embody resilience, a reminder of nature's capacity for renewal and our role in ensuring its survival.

They carry a timeless message: that life, in all its forms, is interconnected, precious, and worth every effort to protect. I hope they inspire in you the same wonder they inspire in me—a sense of awe at the intricate beauty of our world, a call to action to safeguard its future, and a belief that even amidst loss, we have the power to create a future where beauty and balance can bloom anew. In this shared endeavor, art becomes a catalyst for change, a vessel for awareness, and a beacon of hope for the generations to come.

As the world changes around us, my art remains rooted in a singular purpose: to remind us of the beauty we are tasked with protecting. Through my work, I offer not just a glimpse of what we stand to lose but a vision of what we can still nurture and save.

These blooms, delicate yet enduring, carry a message as old as the Earth itself: that life is interconnected, precious, and worth every effort to preserve. I hope they inspire

in you what they have always inspired in me—a sense of wonder, a call to action, and a belief that even in the face of loss, beauty can bloom anew.

About the author

Darlene Farris-LaBar, a Professor of Art + Design at East Stroudsburg University, has an MFA in Sculpture from SUNY, Purchase College, a BFA in Sculpture from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and an AAS in Digital Media Arts from College of Technology of NYC. She oversees the 3D Printing Program and the G3D 3D Printing lab located in the Art + Design Department. The artist uses 3D printing and other emerging technologies to focus her art on a variety of plant species. Her art requires research through environmental interaction and the study of a variety of eco-systems. It focuses on preserving plant and flower species through digitally designing and 3D printing. As one of the top 30 most influential women in 3D printing, she has been represented by Women in 3D, The Additivist Cookbook, Whitney Museum, New York Hall of Science, Athens Onassis Cultural Center, 3D Pioneers, 3D PrintShow. Her work has been exhibited around the world such as Assam State Art Museum in India, “Tomorrows” at Les Uniques in Nantes, France and EcoVisionaries at Matadero Madrid, Spain where she represented endangered species on the red-list through 3D printed work called “Ancient Mediterranean Flowers.” Most recently, her work of 3D printed representation of rain formed from flowers, titled Atmospheric Chords, was shown in Vancouver, Houston, and Brasilia. She also presented Also, she was recently honored by Stratasys, a business leader in 3D technology, for her work with students at ESU and her professional work with 3D printing. She was awarded the Stratasys eCab Award for Most Innovative in Additive Manufacturing. Since the onset of COVID, Farris-LaBar has volunteered and dedicated her time towards creating and collaborating in the design process of PPE.

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