

*Mystery and Magic in Nature:*

*by Barry Nemett*

*When Christine Neill walks through gardens alone, she is amongst friends. She knows them all by their first and last and Latin names. To form an even deeper bond, she invites many of them into her studio where these outdoor actors dance and sing, gesturing with pride or grace or wit as they stand their singular ground or huddle into rhythmic ensembles. Then she paints their portraits.*

*Mostly, her paintings of plants, flowers, and other natural life are subtle, nuanced, haunting. They let you know they're there the way Mozart can tap you on the shoulder or whisper in your ear just as you're about to go out the door, and suddenly, going to work or the party can wait. But sometimes, with their large-scale, leafy, lyrical forms that burst off her paper, her paintings can wake up the neighbors. She applies her medium of choice, watercolor, with a sure but gentle touch, and like other masters before her-- Cezanne, Turner, Morandi, Burchfield--this gifted, inventive artist lets fluidity lead the way, dissolving spontaneous accidents into brilliant intentions.*

*Christine Neill is a weaver of lustrous leaves that have grown up playing hide and seek. In her world it's called "figure and ground." Now you see the forms, now you don't. They fill the eye and mind even after they tiptoe or whither or whirl away into the expressive dissolves of their amorphous atmospheres. Occasionally they explode across her compositions, taking their outbursts with them. More often, the forms she paints wait to be coaxed out of their surrounds. She weaves nature into nurture, abstraction into representation, specifics into suggestions, facts into fictions, earthly, organic matter into the sublime.*

*Christine Neill's plants parade to the page with veins full of science, poetry, and painting. And like these disciplines, her art is full of mystery. And magic. And skill. And a passion for the blossoming and still lives that grow in gardens, friends all.*