

News

Floral art blossoms on a more ambitious canvas

Visual arts Giles Sutherland

Kirsty Lorenz: Floresce
Meffan Gallery, Forfar

★★★★☆

The term *votive* relates to a kind of offering made in fulfilment of a vow. Although it has mainly religious associations, it can also be used in secular contexts.

Two years ago, at the Society of Scottish Artists, the painter Kirsty Lorenz showed an installation consisting of a series of 50 paintings

of posies of wild indigenous flowers, collectively assembled under the title *Votive Offerings*. Although the nature of the implied vow was not entirely clear, it might have been, given the context, a dedication to nature, which underlined its strength, fragility and beauty.

Lorenz has developed this project (aptly named *Floresce* — a bursting into flower) as an exhibiting prize won at the SSA for her *Votive Offerings* series. Whereas each of her works in the original series was small-scale, here they are larger and accompanied by film, audio and other



Picked is a series of paintings and films

media. The idea of the posy remains, as each wild bouquet is wrapped with a stem of grass or other plant. It is

significant that “posy” itself derives from “poetry”, so the idea of structure, composition and a concentration of meaning are also present.

In the past Lorenz worked on the rather simpler idea of flower portraits, although without the attention to scale, detail and seasonal variation that are the hallmarks of traditional botanical illustration. Here the departure from scientific method is even more pronounced. *Primula scotica*, from the *Orkney* series, depicts the small flower, which is native to northern Scotland, on a large scale. A small silhouette in the corner of the painting shows the flower's actual size (about 2.5 cm in height).

The series also contains a number of short films paired with different posies. The artist's hand picks a variety of (non rare) flowers, later assembled into a bouquet and painted — in this case against a series of uniform blue backgrounds. The

Prayer series, in which Lorenz collaborated with Graham Deas, a sound engineer, offers a re-interpretation of Tibetan prayer flags, traditionally used to symbolise peace and compassion. These were printed with reproductions of the original *Votive* works and installed in a Fife woodland, where they created a small pathway through the forest, suggesting the loss of habitat and ecological complexity. Deas's sound recording offers a layered mosaic of woodland sounds, punctuated by the steel rhythm of a nearby railway.

Lorenz has moved the traditional depiction of flowers away from the twee, the decorative, the domestic and the aesthetically conservative on to a more complex and ultimately satisfying level. Her work transcends the ordinary and communicates an experience of nature on a higher, even spiritual, level.

Until November 4 (then Montrose Museum, Nov 11 to Dec 16)