

Pavína
Kourková



The SOULS of Flowers

*The loveliest flowers
in our meadows and gardens*



Albatros





GARDEN HYACINTH

Hyacinthus orientalis

The Greek mythology gives us several stories about the origin of this striking, fragrant flowering plant. Hyacinthus was the beloved son of King Amyclus of Sparta and his wife Diomed. He was favored by the gods Apollo and Zephyrus, but this caused jealousy in Zephyrus, and he killed Hyacinthus while they were playing a game called quoits, which involved throwing a discus. Hyacinthus's blood spilled to the ground, and from it grew the beautiful and fragrant hyacinth flower. To honor him, the Spartans held a three-day Hyacinthia festival each summer. The first day was a day of mourning for his death, and the second and third days celebrated his rebirth as a flower, as told in Roman poet Ovid's book *Metamorphoses*.

At age 11, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote the opera *Apollo et Hyacinthus* about a forbidden love. Despite the title, though, Apollo's love interest was Hyacinthus's sister Melia, not Hyacinthus himself.

A nymph named Daphne adds another story to the legend. Apollo and Hyacinthus were playing quoits when a sound awoke her. When Apollo fell in love with her, she promised herself to whichever of them could throw a discus the farthest. As they competed, an errant discus thrown by Apollo struck Hyacinthus in the head, killing him by accident. In his honor, Daphne planted white, blue, and yellow candles, which were turned into flowers by the Fates.

Three species of the asparagus family (Asparagaceae) are common in Southwest Asia. In Europe, the garden hyacinth (*Hyacinthus orientalis*) is grown as an ornamental flower. Along with the daffodil and tulip, it's one of the most recognizable spring flowers, and it does well in flowerpots and gardens alike. Though it doesn't contain any health-giving properties, it's a favorite among perfumers, who use it in their luxury products.

If someone ever gives you this flowering plant, you should rejoice: the gift of a hyacinth means that the giver's heart belongs to you.

THROUGH THE PAINTER'S EYES

Due to the intoxicating scent of the dozens of florets in each of its beautiful large heads, the hyacinth is a symbol of the joy and energy of spring. Whenever I bring it into my home, I'm amazed by how quickly and easily the life-giving force of a bulb in a pot can produce a magnificent bunch of flowers that fills the entire house with its evocative scents.



COMMON COLUMBINE

Aquilegia vulgaris

The columbine has been a popular motif in Italian embroidery for centuries. It has a delicate, funnel-shaped flower and long spurs. About 70 species of this flowering plant of the buttercup (Ranunculaceae) family grow throughout the northern temperate zone. It thrives in partial shade as well as in full sunlight. It stands out beautifully on rocks. We know of around 25 types of foxglove plants. They grow all over Europe, northern Africa, western and central Asia, America, Australia, and New Zealand. Their unusual, lavish inflorescence (meaning, the complete flower head, including stems, stalks, bracts, and flowers) makes them popular ornamental plants.

Columbine is a charming and graceful flowering plant. It features unique, bell-shaped flowers with five distinctive spurred petals that come in an array of colors, including shades of blue, purple, pink, white, and yellow. The plant's delicate and elegant appearance makes it a favorite in cottage gardens and natural landscapes. Additionally, columbine is a favorite of hummingbirds and butterflies, as they are attracted to its nectar-rich blooms. This perennial flower typically blooms in the spring and early summer, adding a touch of beauty to any garden or outdoor space.

In the language of flowers, the giver loves youth and the courage of the receiver.

THROUGH THE PAINTER'S EYES

I consider the columbine to be a lovely, obliging flower. It is so unfussy that we find it in many places, most notably meadows, deciduous woodlands, and gardens. Its coloration and delicate structure remind some people of the orchid. I painted The Gentle Columbine in winter – on New Year's Eve, actually. At about half-past nine in the evening, a little ladybird landed on my desk, on the picture I was working on. I was delighted by this unexpected visit on the last day of the year!



WILD CHERRY

Prunus avium

In the Bible, the Holy Family rested under a cherry tree, which lowered its branches to offer them refreshments. A flowering plant of the rose (Rosaceae) family, the cherry is a symbol of joy, fertility, and unity, as well as transience. In mythology, it was dedicated to Gaia (the Greek goddess of the Earth) and Flora (the Roman goddess of nature and flowers). In the mythology of Japan, fallen heroes of war return to Earth as cherry blossoms.

The wild cherry likely originated in western Asia, but now it can be found throughout Europe. Not only does it grow wild, but it is also a favorite in gardens and orchards. Chefs and confectioners appreciate it for its fruit, which they use to make jams, juices, and desserts. Cherry stones are used to make heat pillows and pads. Cherry wood, which is reddish-brown in color, is highly valued and is often used to make luxury furniture and veneers.

Cherries have lots of health benefits! They're packed with vitamins and minerals like iron, iodine, potassium, magnesium, and zinc. Eating cherries can help with digestion, cleanse your kidneys and liver, and protect your body from damage. Plus, they can help your thyroid work better and keep your bones, tendons, and teeth healthy. You can even make a face pack with cherry stones and rose clay.

THROUGH THE PAINTER'S EYES

The wild cherry is a stunning springtime sight, comparable to the apple and Japanese cherry. As I painted this one, I was captivated by the thought of being in a realm of pristine white petals. A wild cherry in bloom is truly special. No surprise that lovers select it as the tree to kiss under during the May Day springtime festival in Europe.



*Tulips I, 2018,
watercolor, 9" x 14"*



*Tulips II, 2018,
watercolor, 14" x 20"*



The cornflower is a charming and delicate wildflower loved for its brilliant blue color. Found in various regions, including Europe and North America, this flower thrives in sunny meadows and gardens. Its distinctive appearance, with petals arranged in a star-like pattern around a vibrant center, makes it a favorite among bees and butterflies. Additionally, cornflowers have been used in herbal remedies for centuries, known for their soothing properties and eye-catching beauty.

In a legend from the Dnieper River, blue is the color of the blood of a young man who falls in love with a water nymph (known as a *rusalka*) after his parents demand he marry a rich girl from the village. The young man reluctantly agrees to the marriage when they threaten to kill the *rusalka*. On the way to his prospective bride's home to sign the marriage contract, the young man turns his horse around and rides away. When he fails to return, his friends search for him. They find only a hollow in the grass under a willow tree, his decorative silver belt, and a bunch of cornflowers the same shade of blue as the young man's eyes. As they look for signs of his blood, an old woman tells them it turned blue in the *rusalka*'s embrace, then grew into cornflowers.

In France, the cornflower honors the memory of those affected by war, including widows and orphans. On Armistice Day, the French wear a cornflower on their

Cornflowers, 2020, watercolor, 13" x 22"

CORNFLOWER

Centaurea sp.



Brown Knapweed, 2018, watercolor, 22" x 15"

lapels. The cornflower is also the national flower of Estonia. It was greatly admired by German Emperor William I, as it reminded him of his mother Queen Louise, who crafted a crown of cornflowers for him to wear during their escape from Berlin and Napoleon's invading army.

Belonging to the aster (Asteraceae) family, the cornflower is both beautiful and valuable. As it is sensitive to soil quality, it doesn't grow everywhere. Medicinally, it can help with colds and the flu, stomach ulcers, urinary tract infections, and skin, hair, and eye issues. People used to think that if you rubbed your eyes with a cornflower, you'd have no eye-ache for a year. It's also said to relieve pain from injuries. According to Greek mythology, the centaur Chiron used cornflowers to treat an injury caused by an arrow belonging to Heracles that was treated with Hydra's blood.

THROUGH THE PAINTER'S EYES

I remember picking the cornflowers for my painting on a visit to the Bohemian Forest. Their remarkable blue struck me even from the car; I just had to pull over and pick a few. That year, their heads were really big. How glad I was to come across them like that – and then to paint them!



Pavína Kourková and her art

“The Earth laughs in flowers,” said the 19th-century American poet, essayist, and spiritual thinker Ralph Waldo Emerson. World-renowned botanical artist Pavína Kourková shows us exactly what he meant. Inspired by the beautiful flowers she sees on her travels around the Czech countryside, she brings them to life in vibrant watercolor. Naturally, her work is admired by lovers of art, as well as by prestigious associations of botanical artists all over the world, who have accepted her as a member. Above all, Pavína Kourková paints with passion and love.

“When I first saw the work of Pavína Kourková, I recognised in it a pure softness that is a pleasure to behold. Pavína manages to paint with such even beauty that it captivates the viewer. There is both precision and simplicity in each study and a clarity of decision-making in her delivery of the paint. Her studies have a smooth and gentle quality all of their own. Her work in this book is pure colourful joy from start to finish.”

—*Billy Showell, BA, SBA*

*World-renowned artist & illustrator, tutor, author,
president emeritus of the Society of Botanical Artists UK*

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