



Patterned Petals

Moonlighting as a florist inspires the colorful, botanically styled work of Seattle artist and illustrator.

Freelancing as a floral designer has influenced Seattle artist **Josephine Rice's** prints, patterns, illustrations and murals. Her work is playful, graphic and polychromatic, a collection of visually mesmerizing flowers, buds, vines, leaves, pods and petals.

What she sees in a three-dimensional flower inspires her two-dimensional art. Rice's drawings are far from literal, but they convey the unique attributes and personality of familiar flowers. The hundreds of small botanical shapes that appear in her compositions are bold, engaging – and very much dimensional. Fans like me are fascinated with her color sensibility, her use of thin and thick black lines to define each shape, the intricate surface designs created by layered cutouts of plant parts that become a finished composition.

Slow Flowers commissioned Rice to translate her signature style into unique branding for **American Flowers Week 2019**. Joyous and uplifting, Rice's red-white-and-blue interpretation gives a modern twist to the conventional patriotic palette. In the botanical world, flowers themselves change color throughout a single season, so it's enticing to see how she reimagines traditional flag colors in a new, inventive way.

In the lead-up to American Flowers Week (June 28-July 4), floral designers, flower farmers, retailers and wholesalers used several versions of this special campaign branding. Recently, I sat down with Rice for an extended face-to-face interview. Here's an excerpt of my conversation with this ingenious artist. You can read the full Q&A at americanflowersweek.com.

DP: How did you start making large-scale murals?

JR: Being a mural artist has always been a fantasy of mine, but I realized there was no way I was ever going to get a mural job unless I had a portfolio of murals. So, I put out an ad on Craigslist, and said, "I will do a mural for you for free. I will pay for the mural if you have a wall." I got lucky and a few people wanted me to do a mural. They let me do insane rainbow stuff.

DP: What came out of your mural work?

JR: I got this idea, "I love flowers so much; why don't I work in flowers?" That just clicked one day and because I also love travel, I thought, "If I'm going to go to a workshop, I'm going to travel at the same time." I ended up taking a two-week workshop on "The Business of Flowers" at **Judith Blacklock's Flower School** in Knightsbridge, London. That was nearly four years ago, and when I came back, I just cold-called everybody in Seattle looking for a floral job.

DP: Where did you land?

JR: I went to work for **Anne Bradfield of Floressence** in Seattle. It worked out wonderfully to be taken under Anne's wing. At least I knew art and I knew design and I knew what looked good and what doesn't look good.

DP: How did your art change because of working with flowers?

JR: Before I even went to the London workshop, I would go to the public hours at the **Seattle Wholesale Growers Market**. I was drawing flowers and I needed inspiration, so I would go there and snap a bunch of pictures and buy just one bundle of something. It was so amazing. I remember being there one day and taking home Icelandic poppies, which were, to me, the most special thing I'd ever seen. I also ended up working part-time at the Market, while also working for Floressence and making art. I was getting so much inspiration at the Market. I was seeing things I'd never seen before. You don't see those flowers on the street. I began to focus on different palettes or whatever was in season at the Market.

DP: Where are you now with your art?

JR: I always did flowers. I somehow can't draw anything else. I just have a very specific style and I can only do it that way. The work I am creating happens when I forget about "How am I going to sell this?" and instead, focus on "I just like drawing." I just like painting on paper and making paper cutouts. I make little pieces of paper, and over time, I have hundreds of them. Then I layer them together. It looks beautiful and who cares if I sell it or not? Maybe all I care about is that it looks cool and to share a glimmer of beauty on the internet.



DP: There's definitely a thread between your large-scale murals and the prints you're creating.

JR: Oh yeah. It's all about the line. That's what I have going for me. My line. Everything starts with the Sharpie. I love Sharpie. I start by sketching flowers with a black Sharpie, which often looks like a doodle. Then I paint the whole page. Then, my favorite part is adding tiny details of the black line and cutting out the shapes.

DP: What else can you share about your process?

JR: I used to think it was really wrong to take photos of a flower and then draw it later. Then I realized that process actually goes with the way I work, because my work is flat, and I've simplified what I'm drawing. The paper cutouts give my work a 3D look. Now, I'm exploring starting my own line, maybe a line of journals.

DP: How do you find sanity as an artist in a commercial setting?

JR: I always wanted to make a tangible piece of art that a person could buy. And I was very concerned with "how am I going to sell this?" I don't know why I cared whom I was going to sell it to. Finally, I just kind of put those concerns on the back burner and told myself, "Why don't you just let it be fun? Stop ruining the fun part of this."

DP: That's really good advice for anybody.

JR: There's the level of trying to make it your living, and then also letting go a bit.

DP: Right, and finding your voice in all of that.

JR: Yes, and don't think it's all over the second you start. I have no idea what my art is going to look like in five years. I can't wait to see.

DETAILS:

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