

**Julie Niskanen**  
Artist Statement

The natural forms that permeate our world too often become background patterns in our hectic lives. For the most part, people no longer feel the wonder of the complexities and intricacies seen in forms such as a single seedpod. All too often one walks by a scene or object without noticing it. Many people go through a day or lifetime ignoring the small beauties and ideas around them. What happens when we slow down to truly notice and examine what is around us? Examining these organic forms allows me to reflect on the human disregard for so many things, while also reflecting on and bringing forth these rhythms of nature that are often unnoticed in our lives. The images I work with address this issue and elucidate the beauty I find within these natural forms.

Transformation is an underlying theme in these works, as I am constantly working through my own transformative journey. The subtle changes and cycles in nature are often unnoticed, and I work to bring attention and give power to them, as meaning can be found in the smallest things. In the course of exploring my connection with natural forms, I imbue them with my own feelings and experiences. For me, these prints are reliquaries – containers for powerful forms and ideas. By altering the scale, space, and context of these forms, I work to free them from their concrete cognitive associations and augment interpretations of the forms. These forms become signifiers the viewer can associate with a range of ideas from their own personal experiences. The printmaking processes I use give me an invaluable vocabulary of marks that feeds my thoughts and work. The process of creating each plate parallels the history of the forms, images, and their metaphors. Through using mezzotint and various etching techniques, I am able to achieve a wide range of tones and textures to complement the images and ideas.