



IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS

Donna Beer Stolz's main line of work isn't art photography. But the PhD associate professor of cell biology and associate director of Pitt's Center for Biologic Imaging (CBI) sometimes can't help but be taken by the beauty of the images she gathers from the lab's microscopes, even if she's peering at a pack of liver-destroying cancer cells.

Stolz's son, Ezra, graduated from Pittsburgh's Creative and Performing Arts School (CAPA) in 2012. Thinking that the school's budding creatives might have overlapping interests in art and science, Stolz recruited two CAPA students, Latia Tucker and Ben Kraemer, who were willing to look through the microscope for art's sake.

At Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, Stolz helped the teens gather samples, including clusters of pollen from coffee and princess flowers, to photograph with CBI's confocal and field-emission scanning electron microscopes.

They colored and fleshed out the images from the microscopes in Photoshop. Ben says he tried to use colors that would create a connection between the scanned sample and the finished piece. "If it was a plant, I tried to use greens and yellows. One of the pieces was of a fern, and it had spores. I thought they should look like veins." (Latia was also taken with a fern; her staghorn fern is shown here.) Phipps put 14 of the pieces on display during its 2013 Secret Garden Spring Flower Show. Because the pieces had such a positive response, they will reappear at Phipps' fall flower show.

Latia, a visual arts major, says the process changed the way she looks at everyday items. "It was very bizarre to look at items we take for granted that closely. Everything, no matter how smooth it looks to the eye, has friction beneath it, and I think about that when I see everything now."

—Nick Keppler

—Microscopy by Donna Beer Stolz/Coloring by Latia Tucker