

Reviewed: “Understory” at the U.S. Botanic Garden

Posted by **Louis Jacobson** on Mar. 15, 2013 at 9:20 am



For wildflower photographer **Jackie Bailey Labovitz**, a large part of the appeal is the hunt. A native of rural Virginia, Labovitz will spend hours at a time in the forests of the Shenandoah Valley, seeking out telltale splotches of color lurking just inches above the forest floor. When she finds these delicate and transitory flowers, she photographs them using a long lens and available light, then prints the images on canvas.

The fruits of her labor, currently on display at the U.S. Botanic Garden, are somewhat repetitive, but a few offerings stand out—a common blue violet in a pose that suggests a cartoon duck (bottom), a Virginia bluebell with fussy petals that look like a frilly antebellum dress (top), a positively downcast red columbine, and a blade of “blue-eyed grass” that somehow manages to live up to its name. (Not familiar with these species? An affiliated [website](#) provides a wealth of background detail on each—quite a bit more, in fact, than the exhibit itself.)

Underappreciated in this parade of showy petals is the recurring background—an out-of-focus mélange of green tones that can make you feel like you’re in a dreamy fog, or at least a gallery full of color-field paintings.

*Through Oct. 14 at the U.S. Botanic Garden, 100 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, D.C.
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