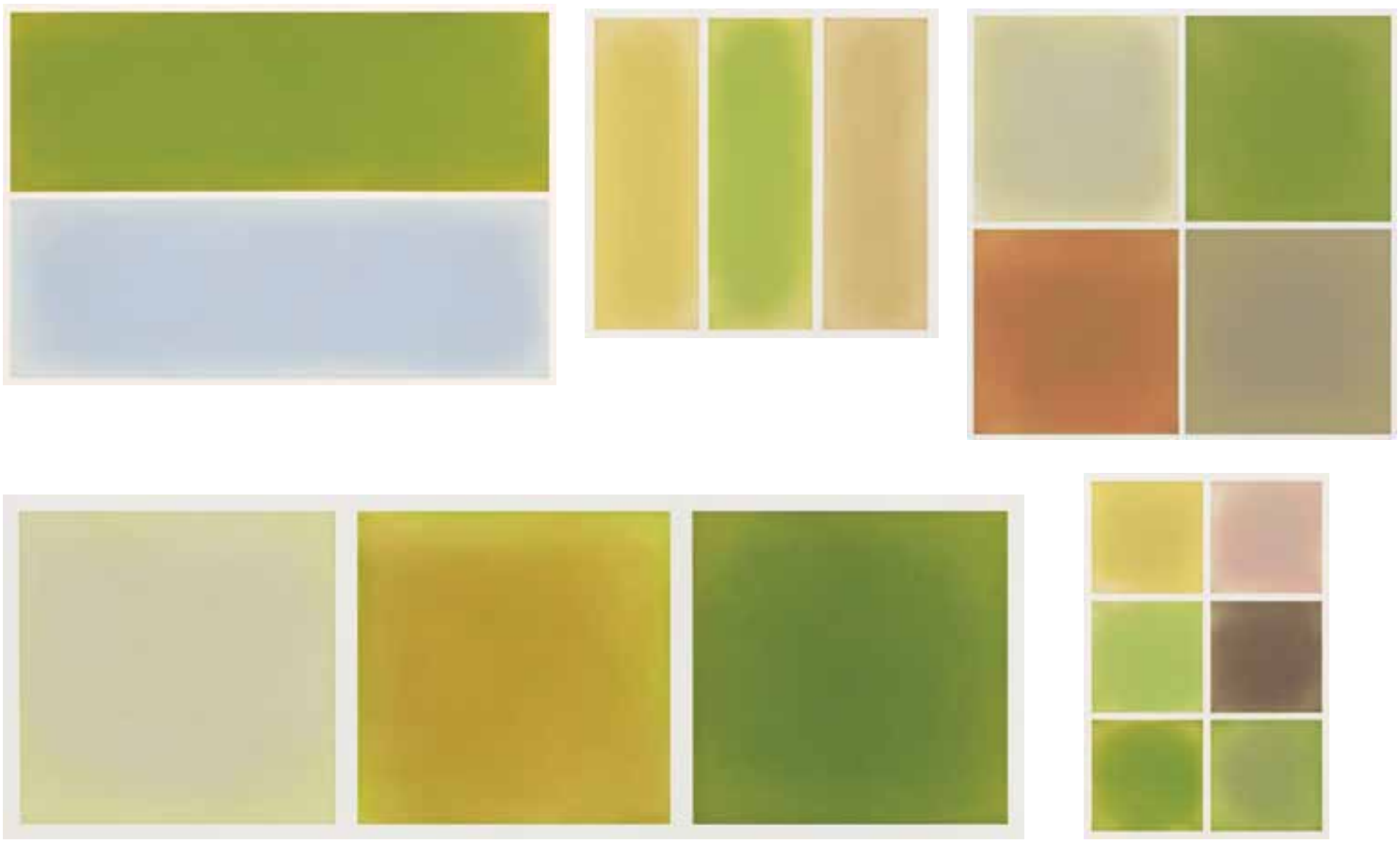
ANNE APPLEBY
THE RIPARIAN ZONE



Clockwise from top left: *River*, 14¾ x 22″ image on 26 x 32″ sheet; *False Iris*, 12 x 12¾″ image on 24 ½ x 24¼″ sheet; *Quaking Aspen*, 18¼ x 18¼″ image on 30¼ x 29¼″ sheet; *Horsetail*, 12½ x 8¼″ image on 23½ x 18¼″ sheet; *Cottonwood*, 12 x 37½″ image on 23 x 47½″ sheet.
All images are color aquatints with burnishing, printed by Emily York in editions of twenty.

Anne Appleby is sitting at the studio table, polishing a square copper plate around its edges using a folded pad of steel wool. “Aspens are one of my favorite trees,” she says as she polishes. “I keep painting them over and over, and—of course—I’ve used them in my etchings before. Did you know they can pull even something as strong as arsenic out of the water and cleanse it?”

I didn’t know that, but I did know not to expect to see outlines of leaves and bark in the aspen portrait Anne was drawing. There would be no lines, but I knew the sense of leaves and bark would be there, created magically through color and texture. “Some people call my work ‘reductive’ or ‘minimal,’” she says, “But there is a certain amount of drawing going on here.” The print called *Quaking Aspen* is printed from sixteen copper plates, four layered in each square, each plate carrying a thin film of a different precisely formulated color.

“In Montana, I have a stream that runs through my property. Aspens grow near it, and also cottonwoods, and a lot of smaller plants that form the riparian zone,” Anne continues. “The trees are at the outer edge of the zone, shielding a very very dense mat of smaller plants like false iris and horsetail. The plants crowd against the water’s edge and form a buffer. They are like the kidneys of the earth; they make sure the water is pure.”

“Horsetail,” she says, pointing to a print on the wall, “is surprisingly colorful.” The print is made up of six small squares of color, each color created by layering films from four plates—twenty-four plates all together. “Horsetail is ancient, and it’s prehistoric looking. The flower head is quite colorful. And this is the dark ring on the stem—it’s not really black.” She could have chosen mint, she said, which lends its scent to the entire zone, but instead she made a portrait of false iris: “So papery, semi-transparent; it looks fragile but it’s really not.”

“Cottonwoods are big trees, strong, but they can’t reproduce unless they are near water,” Anne concluded. “It’s a wonderful thing to know that these plants are cleaning the water so we can drink it, so animals can drink it, and that this has been going on for longer than humans and animals have been on this earth.”

–Kathan Brown