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Unbe-leaf-able Etchings

By Olivia Gillingham, Library Specialist in the Marian Library

From my desk on the seventh floor of Roesch Library, I can see the intense reds, oranges, and yellows that color the campus in the midst of fall. I remember being enthralled with autumn leaves as a child, and picking up those with especially bright and beautiful colors to turn into craft projects, or simply to admire. This is why I was especially delighted to have come across the incredible leaf etchings of Brother Adrian Lewis within the Marian Library's flat file collection.

Brother Adrian was a professor at Manhattan College, and had a similar admiration for the beauty found in nature. Inspired by lace-like patterns that insects carve across leaves and petals, he began to create his own designs using tools like pins, needles, and razor blades to etch into fresh leaves, and later flower petals, at various depths to achieve different shades. The results of his often time-intensive labor were beautiful religious images like the two you see here in the photo gallery. Brother Adrian did not sell his work, but rather gave his leaves and petals away based on merit or as tokens of thanks. Today his leaves are scattered across the world.

When I first opened the folder that enclosed the two etchings, I thought they were simply pressed leaves and nothing special. But upon looking closer, and holding them up to the window against the

light, I marveled at the intricate design carved into such a delicate object. Through his unusual artistic, and no doubt contemplative, process, Brother Adrian was able to infuse an everyday object of natural beauty with new wonder. His works invite us to see the beauty of the world with fresh eyes and childlike awe, and to take time for reflection.



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