

For Immediate Release
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Glasshouses: The Architecture of Light and Air

May 14 – August 14, 2005

**An exhibition of more than three centuries of evolving architecture,
social class and style, horticulture and plant collecting**

A new exhibition titled *Glasshouses: The Architecture of Light and Air* will feature more than three centuries of glasshouse evolution and history at The New York Botanical Garden's LuEsther T. Mertz Library. It will display drawings, prints, paintings, photographs, and illustrated books, many from the extensive collections of the library itself. The exhibition is being curated by Dr. Therese O'Malley from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and opens on May 14, 2005, in the Rondina and LoFaro Gallery of the Mertz Library.

Glasshouses, a specialized form of architecture that transcends the normal limitations of nature and permits tropical flora to grow in northern climates, captured the public imagination even before the creation of Joseph Paxton's iconic Crystal Palace in the mid-nineteenth century. *Glasshouses: The Architecture of Light and Air* will demonstrate how form has followed function in the evolution of glasshouse architecture. It will also reflect changing social and cultural influences, such as evolving class and gender roles. The exhibition will also include botanical illustrations of glasshouse plants such as passion flowers, palms, pineapples, and orchids.

The exhibition will have four main sections. The first and largest section includes three display cases presenting **the origin and history of glasshouses**. It will cover the structural and technological history of glasshouses, primarily in Europe, illustrating architectural, stylistic, and functional variations. It will also record the history of botany, horticulture, and plant collecting as global travel, trade, and exploration grew rapidly. The first display case will begin with woodcuts and engravings of early glasshouses and orangeries in seventeenth century botanical and architectural books. The second display case will show eighteenth and nineteenth century designs and trends. This era marked the beginning of technological change, with the advent of wrought iron architecture allowing for innovative curved and bent shapes, including domes. The third case in this section will display British and continental conservatories, from grand conservatories for royalty to "hothouses for the millions," as *The Gardener's Chronicle* trumpeted in 1860.

The second section of the exhibition moves across the ocean to **the glasshouse in America**. It will highlight New York's Elgin Garden and Crystal Palace, Philadelphia's Centennial Hall, and residential glasshouses. Nineteenth and twentieth century horticultural manuals, gardening treatises, and industry catalogs that relate to glasshouses will also be included.

The third section will concentrate on architectural drawings, catalogs, and advertising from one of America's oldest and most famous glasshouse firms, **Lord and Burnham**. Advertisements for a range of residential glasshouses that the firm fabricated for the middle

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class to the very wealthy will illustrate increasing demand and changing technology, while touching on social issues of gender and class. Major institutional, commercial, and public commissions will represent the breadth of Lord and Burnham's influence as the largest manufacturer of glasshouses in America.

The fourth and final section of the exhibition will illustrate the history of **glasshouses at The New York Botanical Garden** itself. It will include an architectural history of the Botanical Garden's historic landmark Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, itself a Lord and Burnham design constructed between 1899 and 1902, and it will introduce the design for the new Nolen Greenhouses for Living Collections, which open on May 14, 2005. The Nolen Greenhouses, a network of eight growing zones in two glass buildings, will be the largest behind-the-scenes propagation greenhouses at any botanical garden in the United States. *Glasshouses: The Architecture of Light and Air* at the Mertz Library complements and celebrates the opening of the Nolen Greenhouses.

Dr. Therese O'Malley is Associate Dean at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Dr. O'Malley is an expert on the history of landscape and garden design, concentrating on the transatlantic exchange of plants, ideas, and people. She is a noted lecturer, curator, professor, advisor, and author, as well as the current President of the Society of Architectural Historians. Her upcoming publications include a reference work entitled *Keywords in American Landscape Design*, to be published by the Yale University Press, and a book on the history of botanical gardens in America, from the colonial period to the twentieth century.

The **LuEsther T. Mertz Library**, established in 1899, houses one of the world's most important plant science research collections of published and archival documents tracing the development of botany and horticulture from the 12th century to the present.

The Mertz Library's William D. Rondina and Giovanni Foroni LoFaro Gallery is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free with admission to the Botanical Garden.

Sponsored by Andron Construction Corporation. Additional support provided by Mr. and Mrs. Wilson Nolen, The Indian Point Foundation, and The Helen Clay Frick Foundation. Exhibitions in the Mertz Library are made possible by the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust, William D. Rondina and The Carlisle Collection, and The Kurt Berliner Foundation.

The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road in the Bronx. The Garden is open Tuesday—Sunday and on Monday holidays, from 10 a.m.–6 p.m. April to October and from 10 a.m.–5 p.m. November to March. The best way to enjoy the Botanical Garden is with the *Combination Ticket* that includes grounds admission, the Conservatory, Rock Garden, Native Plant Garden, Tram Tour, and Everett Children's Adventure Garden, and costs \$13 for adults, \$11 for students and seniors, \$5 for children 2–12. Grounds admission is free all day Wednesdays and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. For information call 718. 817. 8700 or visit our Web site at www.nybg.org.

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