

NYBG

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The New York Botanical Garden Announces Highlights of 2020 Exhibition *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature*, Featuring New Work by Celebrated Japanese Artist Yayoi Kusama

The first-ever comprehensive exploration of the artist's lifelong fascination with the natural world takes place across the Garden's 250 acres and in its historic buildings

The New York Botanical Garden is the only venue for this exhibition that will include immersive experiences and debut four new works by Yayoi Kusama

On view May 9–November 1. Tickets go on sale February 26, at nybg.org/kusama



Yayoi Kusama, 2020

Bronx, NY—The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) today announced highlights of its expansive 2020 exhibition *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature*, featuring work by internationally celebrated Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama (b. 1929), including new experiences and immersive installations, four of which will debut at the Botanical Garden. NYBG is the exclusive venue for *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature*. On view May 9 through November 1, 2020, the exhibition will be installed in and around the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, across the Garden's 250 acres, and in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library Building. Tickets for the landmark presentation go on sale February 26, 2020, at nybg.org/kusama.

The exhibition reveals Kusama's lifelong fascination with the natural world beginning in her childhood spent in the greenhouses and fields of her family's Nakatsutaya seed nursery. Multiple installations will be on view, including her signature mirrored environments and organic forms, colossal polka-dotted sculptures of flora, and mesmerizing paintings of plants and flowers and their diversity of colors and patterns. Several of these works are newly completed and will be shown along with archival works that have never been publicly exhibited, and more that will be on view for the first time in the United States.

Among the new works debuting are:

- *Flower Obsession* (2020), Kusama's first-ever obliteration greenhouse where visitors apply coral flower stickers throughout the interior;
- *Dancing Pumpkin* (2020), a monumental, 16-foot-high sculpture presented on the Haupt Conservatory Lawn;
- *Infinity Mirrored Room—Illusion Inside the Heart* (2020), an immersive outdoor installation responding to changing light throughout the day and seasons; and,
- *I Want to Fly to the Universe* (2020), a brightly colored, 13-foot-high biomorphic form with a yellow face and polka dots.

Complementing the artworks on view, Garden horticulturists will create spectacular in- and outdoor displays through the seasons. Glorious displays of tulips and irises in spring transform into masses of pumpkins and autumnal flowers in fall. Kusama's plant-inspired polka-dotted sculptures will be installed across the Garden in dialogue with meadow grasses, bellflowers, water lilies, and other plantings. In the Conservatory, stunning floral presentations will bring one of Kusama's paintings on view in the Library Building to life through a seasonal progression of violas, salvias, zinnias, chrysanthemums, and other colorful annuals. In fall, displays of meticulously trained *kiku* (Japanese for "chrysanthemum" and one of the country's most heralded fall-flowering plants) will create a dramatic finale for the exhibition.

Carrie Reborá Barratt, Ph.D., CEO & The William C. Steere Sr. President of The New York Botanical Garden, said, "This once-in-a-lifetime presentation will stand apart from previous exhibitions of Yayoi Kusama's work because it is rooted in the artist's profound and enduring exploration of nature and its countless manifestations that evoke meanings that are both personal and universal. Kusama often cites plant life—specifically, a repeating pattern of flowers—as the mythic origin of her concepts of obliteration, infinity, and eternity she explores in her practice. By integrating horticulture and her art, our exhibition will illuminate the powerful role of nature that pervades Kusama's dynamic oeuvre. We look forward to welcoming visitors to our singular setting in which the landscape and artworks by one of the most important artists of a generation are in lively dialogue through the seasons."

The exhibition will include works from throughout Kusama's prolific career and multifaceted practice. On display in the Mertz Library Building, her sketchbooks from adolescence signal

the beginning of Kusama's connection with the natural world that has inspired her aesthetic and practice across mediums. This early work also portends avant-garde ideas she developed while living in New York between 1958 and 1973, as a contemporary of Joseph Cornell, Eva Hesse, Donald Judd, and Claes Oldenburg, and continues to explore rigorously today.

The Library Building presentation will also feature examples of her botanical sketches, paintings, works on paper, biomorphic collages, assemblages, and recent soft sculpture and canvas works depicting flora and their limitless variety of patterns. *Life* (2015) provides an immersive experience as visitors navigate a circular space enclosing polka-dotted forms with mosaic surfaces. *Pumpkins Screaming About Love Beyond Infinity* (2017) comprises a mirrored cube reflecting an infinity of polka-dotted pumpkins. It is accompanied by a statement by the artist that reads, in part, "My pumpkins, beloved of all the plants in the world. When I see pumpkins, I cannot efface the joy of them being my everything, nor the awe I hold them in."

KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature guest curator Mika Yoshitake, Ph.D., said, "It is especially gratifying to realize a Kusama exhibition of this scale at The New York Botanical Garden, one of the world's premier museums of living plant collections. For Kusama, cosmic nature is a life force that integrates the terrestrial and celestial orders of the universe from both the micro- and macrocosmic perspectives she examines in her practice. Nature is not a mere source of inspiration, but integral to the visceral effects of Kusama's artistic language in which organic growth and the proliferation of life are made ever-present."

On the Conservatory Lawn showcasing *Dancing Pumpkin*, Garden horticulturists will design an immersive landscape of river birches, flowering plants, grasses, ferns, and whimsical topiary inspired by the sculpture. The exuberantly colored and patterned sculpture *Hymn of Life: Tulips* (2007) featuring three outsized, fiberglass flowers will be on view around a Conservatory Courtyard pool, in conversation with the water lilies and other seasonal plantings.

Two exhibition galleries in the Conservatory will be transformed into a horticultural celebration of Kusama's practice and her self-proclaimed biophilia. *Starry Pumpkin* (2015) adorned with pink and gold mosaic will be featured in a woodland garden of foliage and flowers chosen to harmonize with the sculpture's pink polka dots. Using Kusama's vibrant painting *ALONE, BURIED IN A FLOWER GARDEN* (2014) as inspiration, NYBG horticulturists designed a living work of art with plantings changing seasonally separated by rows of river rock to mimic the work's bold shapes and colors. The patchwork of shapes in the painting reads as garden beds seen from above.

Like Kusama, plant scientists examine the connections among living things, many of which are not visible to the naked eye. In the Britton Science Gallery of the Library Building, an

exhibition of highly magnified images of plants viewed through scanning electron microscopes will disclose the hidden patterns that appear on the micro level—and what these connections reveal about the interrelationships of organisms on the macro level.

On view through November 1, 2020, the exhibition will provide ample opportunities to experience Kusama's work throughout the changing seasons as new plantings, textures, and palettes are introduced.

KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature will be accompanied by a roster of public programs for all ages, including lectures; film screenings of *Kusama Infinity* (2018) and *Kusama's Self-Obliteration* (1967); fun-filled Polka Dot Picnics in spring; and Pumpkin Power Weekends in October with activities amid thousands of pumpkins of myriad shapes and sizes. Artist-designed merchandise will be available for purchase at NYBG Shop and there will be special Kusama-inspired menu items offered in the Hudson Garden Grill and Pine Tree Café.

Coming in summer 2020, a fully illustrated exhibition catalogue, co-published with Rizzoli, will include essays by *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature* guest curator Mika Yoshitake, art historian Jenni Sorkin, curator Alexandra Munroe, and NYBG curators and scientists that focus on Kusama's lifelong engagement with nature and the ways in which her interest in nature and plants has formed her career-long investigation of themes of infinity and the interconnectedness of all living things. Images of works displayed throughout the 250-acre landmark landscape and historic buildings of The New York Botanical Garden will make this a unique publication.

The *KUSAMA All-Garden Pass* ticket includes access to the LuEsther T. Mertz Library Building, Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, *Flower Obsession* (2020) obliteration greenhouse, and garden features, including the Rock Garden, Tram Tour, Everett Children's Adventure Garden, and grounds. The *KUSAMA All-Garden Pass + Infinity Mirrored Room* ticket includes *KUSAMA All-Garden Pass* access, plus timed entry to the *Infinity Mirrored Room—Illusion Inside the Heart* immersive outdoor installation. Tickets go on sale for NYBG [Patrons and Members](#) on February 19, 2020, and to the general public on February 26, 2020. Visit nybg.org/kusama for additional ticketing information and pricing and to sign up for e-mail alerts on the exhibition.

About The New York Botanical Garden

Founded in 1891, The New York Botanical Garden is the most comprehensive botanical garden in the world and an integral part of the cultural fabric of New York City, anchored in the Bronx. More than one million people visit the Garden each year to connect with nature for joy, beauty, and respite, and for renowned plant-based exhibitions, music and dance, and poetry and lectures. Innovative children's education programs promote environmental

sustainability and nutrition awareness, graduate programs educate the next generation of botanists, while engaging classes inspire adults to remain lifelong learners. The 250-acre verdant landscape—which includes a 50-acre, old-growth forest—and the landmark Enid A. Haupt Conservatory support living collections of more than one million plants. Unparalleled resources are also held in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library, the world’s most important botanical and horticultural library with 11 million archival items spanning ten centuries, and William and Lynda Steere Herbarium, the largest in the Western Hemisphere with 7.8 million plant and fungal specimens. Committed to protecting the planet’s biodiversity and natural resources, Garden scientists work on-site in cutting-edge molecular labs and in areas worldwide where biodiversity is most at risk.

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KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature *is presented by:*

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The New York Botanical Garden is located at 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10458. It is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad, bus, or subway. NYBG is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit nybg.org

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden’s general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

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