

NYBG

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The New York Botanical Garden Announces Dates for 2021 Exhibition *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature*, Featuring New Work by Celebrated Japanese Artist Yayoi Kusama

On view April 10–October 31, 2021, the first-ever comprehensive exploration of the artist's lifelong fascination with the natural world takes place across the Garden's 250-acre landscape

The New York Botanical Garden is the sole venue for this exhibition, originally scheduled for 2020

Tickets go on sale to the public March 16, at nybg.org/kusama



Kusama with Pumpkin, 2010 ©YAYOI KUSAMA. Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo / Singapore / Shanghai; Victoria Miro, London; David Zwirner, New York

Bronx, NY—The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) announces the dates for its expansive 2021 exhibition, *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature*, featuring work by internationally celebrated Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama. Postponed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the exhibition will include four experiences that will debut at the Botanical Garden. NYBG is the exclusive venue for *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature*. On view April 10 through October 31, 2021, the exhibition will be installed across the Garden's landscape, in and around the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, and in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library Building. Advance, timed, limited-capacity tickets for the landmark presentation go on sale to the public March 16, 2021, at nybg.org/kusama.

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

The exhibition, related programs, and accompanying publication will reveal Kusama's lifelong fascination with the natural world and its countless manifestations beginning in her childhood spent in the greenhouses and fields of her family's seed nursery in Matsumoto, Japan. The exhibition will include works from throughout Kusama's prolific career and multifaceted practice. By integrating seasonal horticultural displays, *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature* will further illuminate the power of nature that pervades the artist's practice and dynamic body of work.

Multiple outdoor installations will be on view, including monumental sculptures of flora that will transform the Garden's 250-acre landscape and the visitor experience. Her signature polka-dotted organic forms and mesmerizing paintings of plants and flowers will also be presented. These vivid observations of biodiversity will be shown along with archival material that has never been publicly exhibited, and more that will be on view for the first time in the United States.

Among the works created for and debuting in the exhibition are:

- *Flower Obsession* (2017/2021), Kusama's first-ever obliteration greenhouse;
- *Dancing Pumpkin* (2020), a monumental sculpture presented on the Haupt Conservatory Lawn;
- *I Want to Fly to the Universe* (2020), a 13-foot-high biomorphic form presented in the Visitor Center; and
- *Infinity Mirrored Room—Illusion Inside the Heart* (2020), an outdoor installation reflecting its environs.

Spectacular seasonal displays will complement the artworks on view, making each visit unique as new plantings, textures, and palettes are introduced. Glorious outdoor displays of tulips and irises in spring give way to dahlias and sweetpeas in summer, and masses of pumpkins and autumnal flowers in fall. In and around the Conservatory, Kusama's plant-inspired polka-dotted sculptures will be nestled among meadow grasses, bellflowers, water lilies, and other plantings. Stunning floral presentations will bring to life one of Kusama's paintings on view in the Library Building through a seasonal progression of violas, salvias, zinnias, and other colorful annuals. In fall, displays of meticulously trained *kiku* (Japanese for "chrysanthemum," one of that country's most heralded fall-flowering plants) will create a dramatic finale for the Conservatory displays.

KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature guest curator Mika Yoshitake, Ph.D., said, "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 investigates in her practice. Her explorations evoke meanings that are both personal and universal. Nature is not only a central source of inspiration, but also integral to the visceral effects of Kusama's artistic language in which organic growth and the proliferation of life are made ever-present."

In the Garden

On the Conservatory Lawn, visitors will encounter the monumental *Dancing Pumpkin*, a 16-foot-high bronze sculpture in black and yellow. Both playful and powerful, it will be sited in an immersive landscape of river birches, flowering plants, grasses, and ferns. The setting is inspired by the sculpture itself and plants native to Kusama's childhood home.

Visitors can marvel at the bright, purple-tentacled floral form with a vivid yellow primordial face of *I Want to Fly to the Universe* in the Visitor Center Reflecting Pool, and then behold *Ascension of Polka Dots on the Trees* (2002/2021), where soaring trees adorned in vibrant red with white polka dots will pop in the landscape along Garden Way.

Narcissus Garden (1966/2021), 1,400 stainless steel spheres each nearly 12 inches in diameter, will be installed in the 230-foot-long water feature of the Native Plant Garden. The reflective spheres will float on the water's surface, moved by wind and currents, each mirroring the environment around them to a captivating effect.

The exterior of *Infinity Mirrored Room—Illusion Inside the Heart*, a cube-shaped structure with a reflective surface, will be on view, revealing and repeating the changing landscape throughout the seasons. Interior access to the installation, which responds to natural light through colored glass throughout the day, is planned to begin in summer, per New York State and New York City guidelines for COVID-19. A timed-entry ticket will be required for limited-capacity access.

In the Galleries

In *Flower Obsession*, visitors may opt to apply coral-colored floral stickers to the glass-paned walls and interior objects. Over the course of the exhibition, the stickers will transform the greenhouse. Through works like this, Kusama employs the repeating patterns and forms of flowers to represent the concepts of obliteration, infinity, and eternity.

Three galleries in the Conservatory will be transformed into a horticultural celebration of Kusama's self-proclaimed biophilia. *My Soul Blooms Forever* (2019), colossal polka-dotted flowers made of stainless steel and painted in dramatic colors, will greet visitors under the newly restored dome of the Palms of the World Gallery.

In the Seasonal Exhibition Galleries, *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 have designed a living work of art to mimic

the painting's bold shapes and colors, with plantings that will change seasonally. The patchwork of shapes in the painting reads as garden beds seen from above.

In the Conservatory Courtyard Hardy Pool, the exuberantly colored and patterned sculpture *Hymn of Life—Tulips* (2007) featuring outsized, fiberglass flowers will be bordered by water lilies and other seasonal plantings. The “buoyant” flowers echo the stunning horticultural displays in the Conservatory.

Pumpkins Screaming About Love Beyond Infinity (2017) comprises a glass cube with two-way mirrors reflecting an infinity of glowing polka-dotted pumpkins within it. The work, one of Kusama's signature mirrored environments, will be installed in the Visitor Center Gallery. Viewed from the outside, the installation 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.”

On display in the Mertz Library Building, Kusama's 1945 sketchbook reveals the 16-year-old artist's keen eye for detail in some 50 drawings capturing the bloom cycle of tree peonies. This early work is the product of a lifelong connection with the natural world that has inspired her practice across mediums, and also portends avant-garde ideas she developed while living in New York City 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 feature examples of her botanical sketches, works on paper, biomorphic collages, assemblage boxes, and recent soft sculpture and paintings on canvas depicting flora and its limitless variety of patterns.

Kusama's considerable body of performance works is represented in the exhibition by projected photographs of *Walking Piece* (ca. 1966), a performance in which Kusama walked the streets of New York wearing a bright-pink floral kimono and carrying an umbrella decorated with artificial flowers. Art historians have analyzed *Walking Piece* as a carefully calculated representation of the artist's ethnicity and gender, one that was intended to demand attention. Interpretation will provide further context for the artist's performance works.

From monumental polka-dotted pumpkin sculptures to abstract paintings that suggest cells magnified thousands of times, Kusama's works suggest the patterns that can be observed all around us. In *Patterns in Nature: Science Walk*, a self-guided walking tour bringing together living plants and images of magnified laboratory specimens, visitors will explore the visible—and microscopic—patterns that can be found in nature, and how they reveal what makes species unique as well as how all living things are connected at the genomic level.

Lauren Turchio, NYBG Vice President for Garden Experience, said, “When the exhibition had to be postponed last spring, Yayoi Kusama shared a moving message that read, in part: ‘The passion that I and those at The New York Botanical Garden have poured into this exhibition is still burning. Everyone, I hope you will wait.’ We are so grateful to our visitors for waiting for this once-in-a-lifetime presentation.”

Programs and Publication

KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature will be accompanied by a roster of public programs for all ages, including pop-up performances by musicians, jugglers, and puppeteers; self-guided “Kids Get Cosmic” activities in the Everett Children’s Adventure Garden; and more. Signature exhibition merchandise will be available for purchase at NYBG Shop.

Coming in summer 2021, a fully illustrated exhibition catalogue, co-published with Rizzoli Electa, will include essays by *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature* guest curator Mika Yoshitake, art historian Jenni Sorokin, 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 the cosmos and the interconnectedness of all living things. Images of works displayed at The New York Botanical Garden will be featured.

Ticketing

Since reopening July 28, 2020, the Garden has incorporated safety measures based on best practices and guidelines from health authorities and government agencies. Admission to the Garden is currently available through the advance purchase of timed tickets. For more information, go to nybg.org/visit.

KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature tickets go on sale for NYBG Patrons beginning on March 9, 2021, Members on March 11, 2021, and the general public on March 16, 2021. The new, limited, timed-entry ticketing system staggers visitors’ arrivals and promotes social distancing. Advance purchase of timed tickets is required and will be confirmed by e-mail with the option to print or download a mobile ticket.

The following options will be available:

- *KUSAMA Garden & Gallery Pass* includes access to all *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature* outdoor installations across the grounds and access to the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, installations in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library Building and Ross Gallery, as well as interior access to *Flower Obsession* and *Pumpkins Screaming About Love Beyond Infinity* in the Visitor Center Gallery, plus the Tram Tour and Garden features including the Everett Children’s Adventure Garden and outdoor collections.

- *KUSAMA Garden Pass* (Non-NYC Residents) includes access to all *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature* outdoor installations across the grounds, plus Garden features including the Everett Children's Adventure Garden and outdoor collections.
- *KUSAMA Garden Pass* (NYC Residents) includes access to all *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature* outdoor installations across the grounds, plus Garden features including the Everett Children's Adventure Garden and outdoor collections.

A timed-entry ticket will be required to access the interior of *Infinity Mirrored Room—Illusion Inside the Heart*. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

NYBG will welcome Bronx Health Care Heroes and Bronx Neighbors to *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature* with complimentary tickets. Communities in the Bronx are among the most severely impacted by COVID-19 in New York City. Through these community access initiatives, the Garden seeks to acknowledge, with gratitude, the dedication, strength, and resilience of Bronx frontline health care workers and residents. Additional information about these initiatives will be available in the coming weeks.

Visit nybg.org/kusama for additional ticketing information and pricing and to sign up for e-mail alerts about 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. Visitors come to the Garden 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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LUESTHER T. MERTZ CHARITABLE TRUST: Providing leadership support for year-round programming at NYBG

The New York Botanical Garden is located at 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10458. For more information, 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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