

# NYBG

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## **The New York Botanical Garden Announces Major Site-Specific Exhibition of New Work by Visual Artist Ebony G. Patterson**

Opening spring 2023, the exhibition of sculptural and horticultural installations will explore formal gardens as symbolic of the inherent tension between the visible/invisible and desirable/undesirable in society at large

Ebony G. Patterson is the first visual artist to embed within NYBG to create new, responsive work through an immersive residency

On view May 27 through September 17, 2023



Courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery  
Photo: Frank Ishman

**Bronx, NY**—The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) today announced a major site-specific exhibition of sculptural and horticultural installations by visual artist Ebony G. Patterson. The first visual artist ever to embed within the institution for an immersive residency, Patterson is working directly with NYBG’s gardens and collections to form a new body of work that brings her unique perspective on formal gardens to life within the 250-acre National Historic Landmark landscape. Opening on May 27 and running through September 17, 2023, the exhibition will reflect a deep engagement with the concept of gardens as human-made interventions in nature, shedding new light on the Botanical Garden while providing new pathways for engagement with the natural world.

Marking the first solo exhibition for Patterson at a major New York institution since 2016, the show at NYBG will provide a unique insight into the artist's work, which has long examined and experimented with the concept of the garden: depicting, realizing, and creating spaces that evoke the natural world, flowers, and landscape through a practice that uses beauty as an invitation to confront larger societal questions and concerns. Patterson's dynamic, colorful, and immersive work across media images gardens that grow out of a complex entanglement of race, gender, class, and violence, seducing viewers into acknowledging a darker truth lurking ominously beneath the lushly planted surface. Patterson's 2018 traveling exhibition *...while the dew is still on the roses...*, which originated at the Pérez Art Museum Miami and traveled nationally, imagined an immersive night garden inhabited by lavishly detailed installations combining tapestries, videos, sculptures, and silk and cast-glass flowers seemingly growing from every surface—winding out from walls, creeping out from corners, spilling down from the ceiling.

"Working in a living garden is the culmination of my thinking about cultivated land as a metaphor for post-colonial space, and I'm inspired to work in an institution that challenges my practice and introduces a new vocabulary," said artist Ebony G. Patterson. "Gardens are fundamentally about man taming what is wild. I'm interested in how that assertion of control over plants also relates to human bodies, and what happens when we look underneath the embellishments on the land."

Patterson's exhibition at The New York Botanical Garden, opening spring 2023, will explore formal gardens as symbolic of the inherent tension between the visible/invisible and desirable/undesirable in society at large. Working with symbols that embody this dichotomy—such as peacocks and birds of prey, vegetation traditionally regarded as weeds, and both poisonous plants and those with medicinal properties—the works will problematize common assumptions about "undesirable" elements in the natural world, their necessary role, and their potential as catalysts for disruption and change.

The exhibition that emerges from her engagement with NYBG will include sculptural installations, with objects depicting flora and fauna that provoke questions about what is traditionally considered beautiful and what is often cast aside as unwelcome, even threatening. In addition to creating sculptural objects, Patterson will work directly with NYBG horticulturists and botanists to envision planted environments installed within the landscape.

An institution at the intersection of culture and science, NYBG is rooted in the centrality of nature to human experience. Since its founding in 1891, NYBG has seen the potential for civic and cultural organizations to engage the communities that surround them, and, in the 21st century, emphasizes the importance of plants in helping to address the mounting climate and biodiversity crises, and the role of the arts in these broader societal conversations. Patterson's creative engagement with NYBG's distinguished collections, the experts entrusted with their care, and the dynamic surrounding communities in the Bronx and in New York City at large, will bring the Garden to life in new unexpected and provocative ways.

“We have a tremendous opportunity at The New York Botanical Garden to provide artists access to experts and specialists as they respond to our landscape and create new, compelling work,” noted Jennifer Bernstein, NYBG Chief Executive Officer and The William C. Steere Sr. President. “We’re thrilled to have Ebony G. Patterson bring her vision to life here at NYBG this spring. Her longstanding exploration of gardens, plants, and landscape as revelatory of broader social and political issues will both challenge and excite our visitors and expose our historic landscape in an important new way.”

Additional details on the exhibition and related programming will be provided in the coming months.

### **About Ebony G. Patterson**

Ebony G. Patterson received her BFA in painting from Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing Arts in Kingston, Jamaica in 2004. She received an MFA degree in 2006 in printmaking and drawing from the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis. Patterson has taught at the University of Virginia; Edna Manley College School of Visual and Performing Arts; has served as Associate Professor in Painting and Mixed Media at the University of Kentucky; and was the Bill and Stephanie Sick Distinguished Visiting Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has been featured in biennials worldwide including Liverpool (2021), Athens (2021), São Paulo (2016), Havana (2015). Her work is in the collections of institutions including 21c Museum and Foundation, Louisville, Kentucky; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Art and Design, New York; Nasher Museum, Duke University, Durham, NC; the National Gallery of Jamaica, Kingston; the Pérez Art Museum Miami; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky; Studio Museum in Harlem; the Virginia Museum of Fine Art; and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Patterson is Co-Artistic Director, along with curator Miranda Lash, of Prospect.6 New Orleans, slated to open in Fall 2024.

### **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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Exhibitions in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory are made possible by the  
Estate of Enid A. Haupt.

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**The New York Botanical Garden is located at 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10458. For more information, visit [nybg.org](http://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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