

# NYBG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 14, 2023

***The Orchid Show* Returns to The New York Botanical Garden for Its 20th Year, Showcasing the Immersive and Dynamic Designs of Landscape Artist Lily Kwong, Exploring the Healing Power of the Natural World through Flowers and Heritage**

***The Orchid Show: Natural Heritage* Is On View February 18 Through April 23, 2023**



Landscape Artist Lily Kwong (NYBG Photo)

**Bronx, NY**—The 20th annual *Orchid Show* returns to The New York Botanical Garden with landscape artist Lily Kwong as the guest designer. Featuring immersive installations of thousands of orchids, Lily Kwong’s design of the exhibition transports guests to ethereal, reverent landscapes inspired by ancient Chinese garden design and artistic principles. *The Orchid Show: Natural Heritage* is on view from February 18 through April 23, 2023, in NYBG’s historic Enid A. Haupt Conservatory. Tickets for the exhibition, which has been called “the most Instagrammable event,” are on sale now at [nybg.org/orchidtickets](https://nybg.org/orchidtickets).

*The Orchid Show: Natural Heritage* by Lily Kwong explores the diversity, adaptability, and worldwide cultural significance of these formidable flowers. Inspired by classic paintings of Chinese mountainscapes passed down through her family from Shanghai, Kwong utilizes an extraordinary array of orchids—including iconic and rare specimens—enveloping visitors in towering mountainous forms that blend ecology, culture, and fantasy. Influenced by Kwong’s own heritage, medicinal traditions, and her artistic interpretation of nature as a healing force, the resulting experience beckons visitors into an immersive world in which humanity and nature coexist peacefully.

Working in collaboration with Kwong to bring her vision to life, horticulturists and Exhibitions staff at NYBG have identified and assembled spectacular selections of orchids that are native

to Asian countries and companion plantings. These flowers have been assembled to create dynamic displays that are not only visually dramatic and striking, but emotionally evocative, inspiring visitors to reflect on their own plant heritage and ancestry. The exhibition's varied installations evoking ancient mountainous topographies invite visitors to experience the boundlessness of nature's creativity and imagine a future where environmental harmony is restored.

"I am deeply honored by the invitation to be the guest designer of NYBG's historic, 20th annual *Orchid Show*. The Garden's Conservatory, greenhouses, and educational programs inspired my early career. This exhibition's design is my most autobiographical work to date, and the piece took shape through meditation and exploration of my ancestral roots stretching back generations to Shanghai," said Kwong. "As the first woman of color to step into the role as guest designer, it felt urgent to celebrate an Asian-centered perspective in the midst of this charged and precarious moment," she said. "The piece is meant to offer a bridge of cultural understanding across the valley between us, and act as an invitation to celebrate the diverse lineages that make up our country."

Kwong continued, "At a time when we are all starved for connection, the prayer of this installation is to offer a sense of community, reciprocity, and grounding into ancient wisdom and traditions that have guided us for millennia. In traditional Chinese culture, flowers are the carriers of rich cultural information and have been revered by scholars for representing integrity, peace, and refinement. These beautiful and often elusive flowers invoke poetry and admiration, inspire entire scientific careers, and are a critical part of our ecosystems. Orchids are the perfect plant to draw people into the complexities of our relationships with the natural world and our vital roles nourishing those connections."

"We are thrilled to have Lily Kwong join us as the guest designer for *The Orchid Show*, sharing her artistic insight and perspective with our audiences," said Jennifer Bernstein, Chief Executive Officer and The William C. Steere Sr. President of The New York Botanical Garden. "Orchids are one of the largest families of flowering plants and the second most diverse plant family in the world. Lily's meditative and captivating designs will reveal the importance of plants in reconnecting people to nature and as a powerful source of healing and self-discovery." Bernstein added, "One of our major goals here at this beloved green space in the Bronx is to inspire visitors and learners of all ages to appreciate, respect, and care for nature. This exhibition gives us an opportunity to showcase orchids, which are among the most celebrated and most beguiling of our unparalleled living plant collections, and to educate the public about NYBG's plant research and conservation work, and it is our pleasure to be able to partner with Lily Kwong in that endeavor this time."

Kwong tapped acclaimed composer, Gary Gunn, to create a 30-minute soundscape which plays on a continual loop throughout the Haupt Conservatory's Seasonal Exhibition Galleries. Consisting of field recordings interspersed with subtle musical moments created by traditional

acoustic instruments native to areas in which orchids are most closely associated, these elements are interwoven to induce the feeling of traveling these natural terrains: footsteps wandering the forest of the Himalayas, the *shakuhachi* flute imitating the sound of wind blowing through bamboo, the *guqin* instrument evoking the sound of flowing water, children playing in a field adjacent to a nearby temple. While these aspects capture the external environments, abstract elements are also introduced to help convey an imagined inner-world of the orchid itself. Visitors will hear sporadic, and at times unfamiliar sound beds and spatial accents that play on the "otherworldly" qualities of the provocative plant. Guests will also hear melodic/rhythmic structures composed of whispers and breathing, and vocal pads inspired by the "divine feminine energy" notions associated with orchids across many mythological/mystical traditions.

On select evenings during *The Orchid Show*, adults 21 and over can experience the exhibition through Orchid Nights, with music, cash bars, and food available for purchase.

At NYBG Shop, visitors to *The Orchid Show* may browse thousands of top-quality orchids, from exotic, hard-to-find specimens for connoisseurs to elegant yet easy-to-grow varieties for beginners, along with orchid products and books.

### **About Lily Kwong**

Los Angeles-based artist Lily Kwong works at the junction of horticulture, urban design, contemporary art, climate awareness, urban agriculture, and wellness, reconnecting people to nature through transformative landscape projects and site-specific botanical art installations.

Kwong has been part of numerous public art initiatives since beginning her practice in 2017, including botanical installations at The Highline, New York; Faena Arts, Miami; Grand Central Terminal, New York; Taipei Night Market, Taiwan; Bal Harbor Shops, Florida; and many more. She has received numerous accolades for her work: ARCHMARATHON & Dezeen Awards in 2020 for Glossier Seattle and the World Spa Awards for Shou Sugi Ban House in East Hampton, New York. Kwong was named to the Forbes 30 Under 30 (Art & Style) list in 2018 and ELLE DECOR's A-List. She has been selected to speak at MOCA, The Aspen Ideas Festival, The World Youth Forum, Design Miami and NeueHouse.

Recognizing her efforts, Kwong was named one of "9 Young New Yorkers Poised for Creative Greatness" by *The New York Times*, and her work has been featured in *The New Yorker*, *Vogue*, *Architectural Digest*, *Domino*, *Forbes*, *Fast Company*, and more. She previously served as Landscape Editor for *Cultured* magazine, where she profiled legends in her field from Agnes Denes to Fernando Caruncho.

Lily Kwong graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Columbia University's Urban Studies program in 2012 and participated in the Landscape Design program at The New York Botanical Garden in 2017. She was a fellow at the Academy of Global Humanities & Critical Theory in Bologna, Italy (2019) and part of the New Museum's incubator program, NEW INC, from 2018–2020.

### **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.

For more information about *The Orchid Show*, please visit: <https://www.nybg.org/event/the-orchid-show-natural-heritage/>

*Major Support:*

Guerlain

Janet Traeger Salz Charitable Trust

LUESTHER T. MERTZ CHARITABLE TRUST:

Providing leadership support for year-round programming at NYBG

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

###

**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.

**Contacts:** Nick Leshi at 718.817.8658, [nleshi@nybg.org](mailto:nleshi@nybg.org)  
Stevenson Swanson at 718.817.8512, [sswanson@nybg.org](mailto:sswanson@nybg.org)