



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS

**For Immediate Release**

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***CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE GARDEN—  
DECEITS AND FANTASIES***

CURATED BY THOMAS PADON AND ORGANIZED BY THE  
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS, THE EXHIBITION WILL TOUR SIX VENUES  
BEGINNING IN JANUARY 2005



New York, NY (October 7, 2004)—Since the mid-1980s a number of photographers have created bodies of work that examine the diverse forms and rich metaphorical associations of gardens. Curated by Thomas Padon and initiated and organized by the American Federation of Arts (AFA), *Contemporary Photography and the Garden—Deceits and Fantasies* looks at a group of

American and European artists and their wide range of artistic responses—from reflecting upon the garden as a site of lyrical beauty to drawing upon it as a dark visual metaphor for the manipulation of nature. *Contemporary Photography and the Garden* will open at The Middlebury College Museum of Art in Middlebury, Vermont (January 20–April 17, 2005), and will travel to six additional museums (see tour schedule for details).

The exhibition is made possible, in part, by a grant from the A.R. Brooks Trust. Additional support is provided by David L. Davies and John D. Weeden and the Founders Circle of the AFA.

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Linda Hackett  
*Allium giganteum*, 1992  
Chromogenic color print, 9 x 19 inches  
Collection of the artist, New York  
Photo credit: © 2001 D. James Dee



“This exhibition has been many years in the making and we are pleased to present this beautiful and stimulating body of work to a broad national audience,” states Julia Brown, Director of the AFA. “Thomas Padon has embraced this project with much passion, building relationships with many remarkable artists. We were thrilled that Sally Mann and Catherine Opie responded with such enthusiasm to his invitation to create new work especially for the exhibition. Looking at all of the photographs in the exhibition, I am still struck by the diversity of artistic expressions to the form, atmosphere, and symbolism of the garden.”

Sally Apfelbaum’s mural-sized, multiple-exposure prints of Giverny reveal the lush and lavish atmosphere of the garden, as do Linda Hackett’s color-pinhole photographs of Long Island gardens, and Sally Gall’s silver-gelatin images of gardens in Brazil and Hawaii. The panoramic silver-gelatin photographs of Italian gardens by Geoffrey James; Len Jenshel’s intensely hued photographs of gardens in California and South Carolina; and Erica Lennard’s rich silver-gelatin prints documenting the sculptural forms and textures of Japanese gardens, all demonstrate the abundant beauty of the garden. Jack Pierson’s vividly colored photographs are tightly focused and detailed compositions in which a single element within the garden is often isolated.

Other artists play against the notion of a garden as an idyllic site and provide a dark visual metaphor for the manipulation of nature. Some of them, such as Lynn Geesaman and Jean Rault, create photographs that present gardens as places whose artificiality would seem to fend off human interaction. Gregory Crewdson—through carefully constructed tableaux—creates disturbing color photographs of gardens that hint of nature run amuck; and Marc Quinn’s *Italian Landscapes* series features photographs that document his installation for the Prada Foundation in which he composed a “garden” of exotic plants and a lawn of grass coated in silicone and presented in a refrigerated glass enclosed environment.

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Daniel Boudinet and Fischli and Weiss emphasize the garden as a work of art in its own right—Boudinet in his luminous prints of “Little Sparta,” artist Ian Hamilton Finlay’s garden in Scotland; Fischli and Weiss in their room-sized installation, originally created for the Münster Sculpture Project in 1997, that surrounds the viewer with projected images of the kaleidoscopic colors of plants. Capturing the cycle of growth and decay in a single year, the series underscores the temporal aspect of the garden.

A unique feature of *Deceits and Fantasies* is the AFA’s commissioning of new works by Sally Mann and Catherine Opie. Mann explores Englishman Edward James’s surrealist garden in the jungle of San Luis Potosí in Mexico; Opie investigates the affinities among disparate gardens, ranging from estates in Santa Barbara and the Hamptons to community gardens in New York City and a men’s prison in Minnesota.

The curator of the exhibition, Thomas Padon, is Deputy Director for Exhibitions and Programs at the AFA, where he has organized many major exhibitions, among them, *Eternal Egypt: Masterpieces of Ancient Art from The British Museum*; *Degas and the Dance*; and *Wolfgang Laib: A Retrospective*. He was also the curator of the touring exhibition *Nancy Graves: Excavations in Print* (1996), for which he wrote the accompanying catalogue raisonné, and *Shadows in the Floating World: Silhouette in Ukiyo-e Prints* (1990), presented at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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Catherine Opie  
*Untitled*, 2000  
Chromogenic print, Diptych, 30 x 40 inches  
Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles and Gorney,  
Bravin and Lee, New York



A fully illustrated catalogue accompanying the exhibition and co-published by the AFA and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., includes an essay by Mr. Padon on the garden as a subject in contemporary photography since the mid-1980s and a text by artist Ronald Jones discussing the *Cosmic Garden* he created in Hanover in 2000. Artist Shirin Neshat offers her reflections on the garden's significance for Iranians, and Robert Harrison, Professor of Italian Literature at Stanford University, traces the garden in the Western cultural imagination from Gilgamesh to Jean Paul Sartre's *Nausea*, and Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*.

The AFA initiates and organizes art exhibitions that are presented in museums around the world, and also publishes exhibition catalogues and offers educational and professional development programs for the museum community and general public. For more information, look at our Web site at [www.afaweb.org](http://www.afaweb.org).

Tour Schedule:

The Middlebury College Museum of Art, Middlebury, VT.....January 20–April 17, 2005  
 Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, NY.....May 22–July 17, 2005  
 Columbia Museum of Art, Columbia, SC .....October 21, 2005–January 2, 2006  
 Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma, WA .....January 14–April 30, 2006  
 Cheekwood Museum of Art, Nashville, TN.....May 13–August 20, 2006  
 Two additional venues tbd.

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Marc Quinn  
*Italian Landscape (3)*, 2000  
 Permanent pigment on canvas, 43 1/4 x 65 1/2 x 1 5/8 inches  
 Courtesy of Jay Jopling/White Cube, London  
 Photo credit: © Stephen White

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Gregory Crewdson  
*Untitled (butterflies and braids)*, 1994  
 C-print  
 30 x 40 inches  
 Courtesy the artist and Luhring Augustine,