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W A S H I N G T O N S C U L P T O R S G R O U P

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Flora: Growing Inspirations

On view May 23 – October 12, 2009

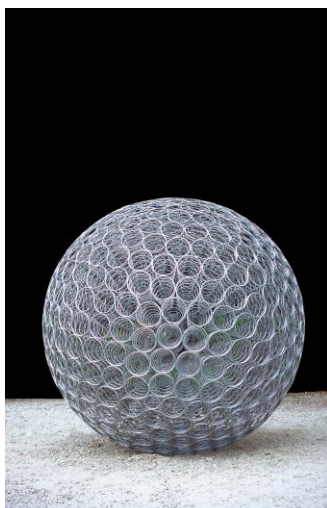
Washington, DC: In coordination with the United States Botanical Garden (USBG), the Washington Sculptors Group (WSG) is pleased to announce the opening of **Flora: Growing Inspirations**, an exhibition that features more than 30 sculptures by artists from across the United States and Zimbabwe. The exhibit will be on display from May 23 until October 12, 2009 in outdoor garden rooms spanning the Conservatory Terrace and in the East Gallery.

Following a national competition, works were selected by a jury as art that best celebrates the symbolic and aesthetic role of plants in culture. The artists chosen have drawn on the diversity of plant form, and the fundamental strength of plants' life force to create powerful metaphors that comment on both modern society and individual human existence.

"Plants have inspired art since the ancients created the palmette and the lotus blossom for ornamentation. The symbolism of plant images in art, such as the olive branch, has extended across the millennia," said Holly Shimizu, executive director of the USBG.



Fiddlehead
John Jayson Sonnier
Recycled Indiana limestone



Volvox
Wendy Ross
Coiled and welded steel

An opening reception will take place on Thursday, May 28 from 6:00 until 8:00 pm, and a complement of lectures and special events will accompany the exhibition, including a stone-carving workshop; sculpture, music, and culinary festivals; and a special exhibit tour with Matt King, Assistant Professor in Art Foundation and Sculpture at Virginia Commonwealth University, and one of the exhibition jurors.

The USBG is open to the public, free of charge, every day from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Conservatory is located at 100 Maryland Avenue, SW, at the foot of the U.S. Capitol. Visitors are encouraged to take Metrobus and Metrorail. Further information is available by calling 202-225-8333 or visiting the USBG website at www.usbg.gov.

The WSG's mission is to promote awareness and understanding of sculpture and to foster the exchange of ideas among sculptors, collectors and the public. To become a member, or to find more information about the many activities in which the organization is involved, visit the WSG website at www.washingtonsculptors.org

Flora: Growing Inspirations

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United States Botanical Garden

WSG Artists in the exhibition include: Christian Benefiel, Mary Early, Pattie Firestone, Barbara Kobylinska, Laurel Lukaszewski, Dalya Luttwak, James Mallos, Donna McCullough, Wendy Ross, Foon Sham, John Jayson Sonnier, Laura Thorne, Novie Trump, and Millicent Young.

Other artists selected to be part of the exhibition are: Betsy Alwin (Brooklyn, NY), Jessica Broad (Pamplin, VA), Micah Cain (Micaville, NC), David Eisenhour (Port Hadlock, WA), Stephen Fabrico (Bloomington, NY), Arthur Fata (Zimbabwe), Jim Gallucci (Greensboro, NC), Janet Gohres (Falls Church, VA), Mary Anne Hensley (Richmond, VA), Richard Herzog (Tulsa, OK), Tamara Laird (Takoma Park, MD), Allen Linder (College Park, MD), Chris Mahonski (Richmond, VA), Julie Ann Nagle (Richmond, VA), Anne Percoco (Fanwood, NJ), Justin Shull (Piscataway, NJ), David Silverman (Silver Spring, MD), John Thigpen (Decatur, GA), Jim Tisnado (Greenville, NC), and Lenny Wilson (Wilmington, DE).

About the Exhibition:

The exhibit will be on display in outdoor garden rooms spanning the Conservatory Terrace and in the East Gallery. On the Terrace, plants are the medium of expression, albeit living, in eight playful garden rooms designed by USBG Gardeners and Landscape Architect Nick Nelson, ASLA. Their designs draw inspiration from styles and elements ranging from contemporary minimalism to the traditional checkerboard to architectural features on the grounds of the Capitol. The gardens demonstrate how plants' color, form, and texture combine with sculpture and design to create art environments, with the observer immersed in the setting. The rooms include:

- A pavilion inspired by the Summer House, the open-air grotto on the Capitol Grounds.
- A garden of black plants, filled with such stunners as the large-leaved taro *Colocasia* 'Diamond Head', *Canna* 'Australia' whose brilliant red flowers crown nearly 5 ft. burgundy-black foliage, and the graceful, dark-purple ornamental grass *Pennisetum* 'Prince', which reaches nearly 6 ft. in height.
- A checkerboard of silver, yellow, and dark-green plants, including *Dichondra* 'Silver falls' and the dark green oregano, *Origanum vulgare* ssp. *hirtum* 'Green Mountain.'

In the Conservatory's East Gallery, the sculptures will provoke much thought, and a bit of laughter. While some of the sculpture is unabashedly "wearable," other works represent an exploration of pure form inspired by plants. Works ranging from Betsy Alwin's *Opus*, in which a circuit of potato plants transmits Mozart's *Come Scoglio* aria to Barbara Kobylinska's whimsical *Mutant Cucumber*.

About the WSG

The Washington Sculptors Group (WSG) is a volunteer, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting awareness of sculpture and fostering exchanges among sculptors, sculpture enthusiasts and the public. Organized in 1984, membership has grown to more than 300. The WSG sponsors frequent public programs and organizes professional sculpture exhibitions juried by prominent curators. Visit www.washingtonsculptors.org for more information about WSG membership and programs.

About the USBG

Dating from 1820, the United States Botanic Garden (USBG) is one of the oldest botanic gardens in North America. The Garden informs visitors about the importance and fundamental value of plants to the well-being of humans, all nations, and our planet, and highlights the diversity of plants worldwide, as well as their aesthetic, cultural, economic, therapeutic, and ecological significance. With nearly a million visitors annually and located on the National Mall, the USBG strives to demonstrate and promote sustainable practices for individuals, organizations, and institutions. The U.S. Botanic Garden has been recognized as a museum and accredited by the American Association of Museums.