

Staff. "A group exhibition considers future gardens as embodiments for imaginative discourse and protest," *Artdaily.com*, 12 December 2024.



Thursday, December 12, 2024

A group exhibition considers future gardens as embodiments for imaginative discourse and protest

RIDGEFIELD, CONN.— A Garden of Promise and Dissent is the debut exhibition unveiling The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum's newly renovated campus and Sculpture Garden, and also spanning the Museum's interior galleries. This intergenerational group show features twenty-one artists exploring the animation of the "garden" as a site of personal expression (poetics) and collective action (praxis). Traditionally, gardens are symbols of beauty and contemplation, but they also serve as stages for environmental stewardship, civic engagement, and rebellion. A Garden of Promise and Dissent is on view in The Aldrich's galleries from October 28, 2024 to March 16, 2025 and on the Museum's grounds from November 17, 2024 to November 2025.

The artists participating in the exhibition are Terry Adkins (1953-2014), Kelly Akashi* (b. 1983), Teresa Baker (b. 1985), Alina Bliumis (b. 1972), Carolina Caycedo (b. 1978), Carl Cheng (b. 1942), Rachelle Dang* (b. 1977), Anders Hamilton* (b. 1992), Maren Hassinger* (b. 1947), Hugh Hayden (b. 1983), Athena LaTocha* (b. 1969), Gracelee Lawrence* (b. 1989), Cathy Lu (b. 1984), Jill Magid (b. 1973), Suchitra Mattai (b. 1973), Mary Mattingly* (b. 1978), Brandon Ndife* (b. 1991), Max Hooper Schneider (b. 1982), Meg Webster* (b. 1944), Faith Wilding (b. 1943), and Rachel Youn* (b. 1994).

*Artists who have works that span the grounds from the Museum's façade to the rear Sculpture Garden.

Gardens offer solace, community, nutrition, and well-being; they provide safe spaces for dissent and empowerment; and they contribute to climate change mitigation, revitalization, and widen access to land use— supporting localized food resources and alternative medicine. Symbolizing growth, regeneration, and resilience, gardens reflect devotion and hope, yet can also reveal shared aspirations and failures, whether meticulously structured or anarchic.

Historically, gardens have embodied earthly edens across cultures—from medieval monastic and Japanese Zen gardens to Islamic designs—while also signifying capital and power. The artists in this exhibition radicalize the garden as a concept to confront the complexities of our relationship with nature on our increasingly fragile planet. Works spanning the galleries and grounds challenge the dichotomy between natural and built environments, integrating into the landscape or mimicking nature to provoke change, defy perceptions, or emphasize their essential interdependence by unsettling the gulf that exists between the two.

The exhibition explores elements of a garden, from the commodification of vegetation and radical care practices to human interaction with nature, food, and technology, and cultural artifacts. Taken as a whole, A Garden of Promise and Dissent invites viewers to consider future gardens as alternative models for imaginative discourse and protest.

A Garden of Promise and Dissent is curated by Amy Smith-Stewart, Chief Curator. The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue with plates, installation views, and a text by the curator.