

Images Available Upon Request

Contact: Martha Gellens 718.549.3200 x232 or marthag@wavehill.org

Painting Exhibition Reveals Beauty in The Labor of Gardeners and Their Working Spaces

Rebecca Allan: Cultivating Eden

January 18–June 4, 2023

Bronx, NY, January 5, 2023—Opening in mid-January in Wave Hill House is *Cultivating Eden*, a new exhibition of paintings by Rebecca Allan referencing the labor of gardeners and their spaces at Wave Hill, a compact, 28-acre garden in the northwest Bronx overlooking the Hudson River. By focusing on their working process—both visible and unnoticed—this series of paintings is an ode to the devoted, daily care that Wave Hill’s gardeners provide. As a professional garden designer herself, the artist considers Wave Hill a special place in which art and horticulture are intertwined. Both practices require tenacity, refined skill and historical curiosity.



Rebecca Allan, *Red Winter (Dry Garden from the Alpine House)*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Adi Talwar

As the artist/gardener explains, her work is driven by “a desire to nurture the world by envisioning and then enacting spaces where beauty is revealed.” Since moving almost 20 years ago from Seattle to Spuyten Duyvil, a neighborhood just south of Wave Hill, Allan has become a frequent visitor and

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has cultivated a relationship with the garden and the people who maintain it. In 2009, her work was included in the exhibition *Arbores venerabilis*, in Glyndor Gallery. She sees Wave Hill's landscape as a cosmos, like the worlds encapsulated in Pieter Bruegel the Elder's 16th-century paintings. Allan draws inspiration from Bruegel's Dutch landscapes and genre paintings, that depict views of daily life and labors. In a painting that she has created for the ceiling in the foyer of Wave Hill House, Allan also references 18th-century Venetian painter Giovanni Batista Tiepolo's oval, ceiling murals with figures floating among billowing clouds.

For Allan, the elemental forces and seasonal cycles of growth and decay are evidence of the resilience of nature, which, at Wave Hill, is cultivated by the nurturing hands of the gardeners. Her painterly depictions range from panoramic to intimate. Grand canvases provide sweeping views of Wave Hill's gardens, terraced landscapes and open horizons, while smaller works show the Alpine House behind the scenes, the workspaces and sheds, the tools and bins underneath the benches and the courtyard where the staff keep their equipment and vehicles. For this exhibition, Allan also created a series of individual portraits of the gardeners immersed in their work. She captures candid moments during everyday tasks—pruning, raking, watering and weeding. In this way, Allan honors the seemingly mundane yet sophisticated knowledge of the horticulture staff, recognizing its value as subject matter for art and seeing the artistry in their handiwork.

About the Artist

Rebecca Allan is a Bronx-based artist, horticulturist and writer whose work is informed by her longstanding interest in botany and land conservation. Exhibiting in the United States and abroad for more than 25 years, she has been awarded residencies at the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France; Hermitage Artists Retreat, Sarasota County, FL; Monson Arts, Monson, ME; Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Amherst, VA; Dorland Mountain Arts Colony, Temecula, CA; and Centrum Foundation, Port Townsend, WA. In 2018, she established her design firm Painterly Gardens. Dedicated to the dialogue between the arts and environmental stewardship, Allan is a board member of the Kentucky Natural Lands Trust. She earned an MFA in painting from Kent State University and is certified in sustainable garden design by the New York Botanical Garden. www.rebeccaallan.com.

Public Programs

- Sun, March 5, 2023, 1:00–2:30PM, onsite. Spade & Brush: Excavating the Garden's Meaning through Painting. Rebecca Allan engages in conversation with design historian Sarah Lichtman.
- Thu, April 13 and Sat, April 15, 2023, 1:00–2:30PM, onsite. Behind the Scenes Tour: Alpine House and Art Exhibition with Wave Hill Gardener Sandra Schaller and Artist Rebecca Allan.

The curatorial team at Wave Hill includes Gabriel de Guzman, Director of Arts and Chief Curator; Rachel Raphaela Gugelberger, Curator of Visual Arts; and Cecilia Lu, Curatorial Assistant.

Support for the Visual Arts Program is provided by the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation; National Endowment for the Arts; New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; New York Community Trust Edward and Sally Van Lier Fund; New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature; Pollock-Krasner Foundation; and by the Cathy and Stephen Weinroth Commissioning Fund for the Arts.

Wave Hill Incorporated is an independent non-profit cultural institution governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. The City of New York owns the buildings and grounds of Wave Hill. With the assistance of the Bronx Borough President and Bronx representatives in the City Council and State Legislature, Wave Hill's operations are supported with public funds through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; the Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquariums Grant Program administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; the National Endowment for the Arts; and New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.



About Wave Hill

A 28-acre public garden cultural center overlooking the Hudson River and Palisades, Wave Hill's mission is to celebrate the artistry and legacy of its gardens and landscape, to preserve its magnificent view, and to explore human connections to the natural world through programs in horticulture, education and the arts.

Hours: Open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday, 10AM–4:30PM. Wave Hill House hours: 10AM–4PM

Admission to the grounds: \$10 Adults, \$6 students and seniors 65+, \$4 children 6–18. Free Thursdays. Free to Members and children under 6

Directions at wavehill.org

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