

MMFA

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GINNY RUFFNER: REFORESTATION OF THE IMAGINATION **TRANSFORMS THE MONTGOMERY MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS INTO A POST-APOCALYPTIC HAVEN OF HOPE**

This exhibition of traditional craft and augmented reality opens March 17, 2023.



Ginny Ruffner with Grant Kirkpatrick, *Digitalis artherium (Double art flowers)*, 2017, sculpture (handblown glass with acrylic paint tree rings), island (plywood, low-density foam, fiberglass, epoxy, sand, pebbles, and acrylic paint), and holographic image. Sculpture: 9 x 13 x 11 ½ in. Installation view at MadArt Studio, 2018. Courtesy MadArt. Photo by James Harnois.

Montgomery, AL, March 3, 2023 – Imagine an apocalyptic landscape. It appears barren, devastated, and hopeless. It is not. At the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA), internationally renowned artist Ginny Ruffner creates a seemingly bleak environment that suddenly blooms into a thriving floral oasis by combining traditional sculpture with augmented reality (AR) technology. In collaboration with

animator and media artist Grant Kirkpatrick, Ruffner brings to life a colorful world where glass stumps suddenly sprout mythical flora that have adapted to their surrounding conditions in unexpected, beautiful, and optimistic ways. By transforming the galleries into a multidimensional experience, *Ginny Ruffner: Reforestation of the Imagination*, a nationally touring exhibition from the Smithsonian American Art Museum, calls into question the very notions of reality and fantasy, of concrete and abstract, and of desolation and hope. The exhibition will be on view at the MMFA from March 17 through June 11, 2023.

“As with our colleagues at the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM), we believe visiting exhibitions and participating in their related programs to be meaningful opportunities for us all to grapple with some of today’s most pressing challenges,” said Jennifer Jankauskas, Curator at the MMFA. “*Ginny Ruffner: Reforestation of the Imagination* provides a powerful platform for thinking about climate change and its potential effects on the natural world through a lens of optimism. And that, in creating this immersive experience, Ruffner turned to the intersection of art and technology—she creates an opportunity for both art- and technology-leaning visitors to see the beauty and interplay of both disciplines, both useful tools for pondering what brightness the future might hold.”

Ginny Ruffner: Reforestation of the Imagination is one of the first exhibitions at the MMFA to explore an expanded definition of contemporary craft and new technologies. Ruffner is among a vibrant group of artists bringing AR to museum installations. By using this technology as another art medium, she transforms visitor experiences. The installation consists of five landmasses, each featuring intricate handblown glass sculptures of tree stumps, with painted tree rings that function as discrete QR codes. These five islands relate to a sixth landmass that supports a large fiberglass stump sprouting beautifully grotesque bronze and glass appendages. Other than the central stump and the painted shelf mushrooms and tree rings on the surrounding stumps, the scene appears colorless and desolate; however, when viewed through AR’s technological lens, an alternate landscape is revealed.



Ginny Ruffner with Grant Kirkpatrick, *Astromaria zentada lillium (Blue/purple flowering vine)*, 2017, holographic image. Courtesy Ruffner Studio.

Other than the central stump and the painted shelf mushrooms and tree rings on the surrounding stumps, the scene appears colorless and desolate; however, when viewed through AR’s technological lens, an alternate landscape is revealed.

Visitors can download the free app “Reforestation” on their phones or use the iPads available through the MMFA’s visitor’s services desk to bring this second reality to life. When the tree rings of a stump are viewed through the device’s camera lens, a hologram of a fictional plant appears to sprout from the sculpture. These imagined fruits and flowers have evolved from existing flora, developing dramatic appendages and skills necessary to flourish in this radically different environment. In this reality, tulips develop stem flexibility, pears contain windows to the outside world, and flowers take on the form of birds. The installation includes Ruffner’s tongue-in-cheek descriptions of her fanciful flora and their remarkable, sometimes humorous adaptations, as well as 19 original drawings by the artist that were the inspiration for the AR images.

“This is nature reimagining itself,” said Ruffner. “The imagination cannot be exterminated. It just re-creates itself. To me, ‘Reforestation’ is about hope.”

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Ginny Ruffner (American, born 1952) is based in Seattle and trained at the University of Georgia, graduating with a master’s degree in fine arts in drawing and painting. She is an artist best known for her elegant sculptures and mastery of glass techniques. Ruffner has had more than 85 solo exhibitions and several hundred group shows, and her artwork can be found in numerous national and international collections, including three works in the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts’ permanent collection. Ruffner has also lectured and taught extensively and has served as an artist-in-residence at schools and universities around the world.



Ginny Ruffner, Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Doug Tucker.

Grant Kirkpatrick, also based in Seattle, received a master’s degree in fine arts from the Cornish College of the Arts and is an emerging animator and new-media artist.

His interests include the intersection of art and technology, particularly VR/AR, game design, and mixed-media work.

RELATED EXHIBITION

Fantastical Flora

ArtWorks Community Gallery

March 4 through March 23, 2023

Middle and high school students respond to *Ginny Ruffner: Reforestation of the Imagination* through the creation of realistic or imaginative flowers and plants.

Continued on the next page

RELATED PROGRAMS

Alabama Plant Walk

March 17 through June 11, 2023

The Alabama Plant Walk, a collaboration with MGMWERX, extends the augmented reality (AR) experience of the Ruffner exhibition into the John and Joyce Caddell Sculpture Garden by highlighting select native plants.

Sensory Space

March 17 through June 11, 2023

The MMFA's efforts to be a more inclusive place continue with the addition of a sensory space to the Ruffner exhibition galleries. Visitors with sensory needs will find bean bag chairs, an interactive touchscreen, and exhibition catalogues to use during their time in the exhibition. Museum sensory bags, including noise-canceling headphones and sensory tools, will also be available for checkout at the front desk.



Ginny Ruffner with Grant Kirkpatrick, *Ventus ingenero (Windmill flower)*, 2017, sculpture (handblown glass with acrylic paint tree rings) and island (plywood, low-density foam, fiberglass, epoxy, sand, pebbles, and acrylic paint). Sculpture: 14 x 12 x 7 in. Courtesy MadArt. Photo by James Harnois.

Opening Reception

Thursday, March 16, 2023, 5:30–7 PM

Free; Cash Bar and Snacks

Celebrate the opening of *Ginny Ruffner: Reforestation of the Imagination*, the Ruffner-inspired student exhibition, *Fantastical Flora*, in the ArtWorks Community Gallery, and *The Modern Matrix*. Galleries will be open for browsing with staff and docents available to talk about the works of art on view.

Art After Five: Plant and Play

Friday, April 7, 2023, 6–8 PM

Free

Join us in the Caddell Sculpture Garden for an evening inspired by the wonders of Ginny Ruffner's *Reforestation of the Imagination* augmented reality (AR) "forest." Attendees will enjoy live music by Amon Robinson, the Alabama Plant Walk, seed-planting activities with Eat South, food trucks, and a cash bar featuring Common Bond beers.

Whimsical Watercolor with Laura Bocquin

Saturday, April 29, 10 AM–1 PM and Sunday, April 30, 1–3 PM

\$25 | Scholarships Available

Teen and adult artists are invited to explore the creativity of watercolor paint during a two-day class with local artist Laura Bocquin. This workshop will include fundamental instruction plus a variety of techniques. All experience levels are welcome.

Pick, Press, Paint: Colors of the Garden Workshop with Tara Sartorius

Saturday, June 3, 2023, 10 AM–1 PM

\$25 | Scholarships Available

Explore the power of flowers to create art. Participants will collect flowers from the Museum Sculpture Garden to create an original work of art on paper and then add finishing touches using natural inks.

Learn about the science of natural pigments, how to grow your own dye plants, and celebrate the beauty of nature with friends and family. All ages are welcome to this community workshop. Children under the age of 10 must have an adult in attendance.

PUBLICATION

The exhibition is accompanied by an interactive “field guide” to the AR images featured in the exhibition. The book, written and illustrated by Ruffner, features pictures of the glass sculptures with the QR code embedded, making them compatible with the “Reforestation” app. It includes Ruffner’s 19 original drawings and detailed explanations of the artist’s naming conventions for her flowers. The book also features an interview with Ruffner in which she discusses her artistic background and her inspiration for *Reforestation of the Imagination*. The publication is available for purchase in the Museum Shop for \$18.95.

SUPPORT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ginny Ruffner: Reforestation of the Imagination is organized by the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Generous support for this exhibition has been provided by Art Bridges, the Smithsonian American Women’s History Initiative, Elizabeth and James Eisenstein, Ed and Kathy Fries, Shelby and Frederick Gans, James Renwick Alliance, Colleen and John Kotelly, Betty MacMillan, Jacqueline B. Mars, Kim and Jon Shirley Foundation, and Myra and Harold Weiss. The C. F. Foundation in Atlanta supports the museum’s traveling exhibition program, Treasures to Go.

Annual support for exhibitions is made possible by the following sponsors and grantors. Lead sponsors and grantors Alabama State Council on the Arts, Alabama Power Foundation, The Ford Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Barrie H. Harmon III, Lamar, Medical Properties Trust, Inc., MGMWERX, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Regions Bank, and Rheem Manufacturing, with additional support from sponsors Dr. and Mrs. Mark H. LeQuire, PowerSouth, The S. Adam Schloss Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Ken Williams, and Laurie J. Weil, D.V.M. and Dr. Tommy Wool, and co-sponsors AmeriFirst Bank, Balch & Bingham, LLP, Borganier Davis Williams Architects Associated, AIA, Captrust, Nick Drollette Photography, Ms. Camille Elebash-Hill, Mrs. Ann Hubbert, Jernigan & Jernigan, LLC., Morgan Stanley Wealth Management, Mr. and Mrs. L. Daniel Morris, Jr., Harmon Dennis Bradshaw, Inc., Dr. and Mrs. Alfred J. Newman, Jr., River Bank & Trust, Russell Construction of Alabama, Inc., Ms. Micki Beth Stiller, Valley Bank, and Warren Averett, LLC.

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ABOUT THE MMFA

The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts was founded in 1930 by a group of local artists as a place for both exhibiting art and a space for art education. The founders' original intentions—to exhibit and teach—continue to inspire and inform every action and activity at the Museum. Since 1988, the MMFA has shared the 175-acre Blount Cultural Park with partners across the lake at the celebrated Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

Today's MMFA visitors stroll through art-studded grounds and permanent collection galleries. They see compelling changing exhibitions and learn about art by playing in the interactive gallery, ArtWorks; making art in the bustling studios, and participating in other engaging events and programs. In addition, MMFA visitors can relax and recharge in the serenity of the Museum's stunning three-acre John and Joyce Caddell Sculpture Garden.

While the Museum's collection is still home to the art of many of the regional artists who first established it, it has become known for its strengths in American art and Old Master prints. Recent important acquisitions of art made by African American and Asian American artists and works inspired by images and themes related to the experiences of these groups represent the breadth and depth of the lives and concerns of those who call Montgomery and the River Region home. Through the exhibition of these works and the programs and events that help connect our communities with them, the MMFA has become recognized as a leading arts and cultural resource here in the state and the Southeastern region.

The MMFA is a department of the City of Montgomery and is supported by funds from the City of Montgomery, with additional funds from the Montgomery County Commission and the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts Association. Programs are made possible, in part, by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

GENERAL INFORMATION

WHAT: *Ginny Ruffner: Reforestation of the Imagination*

WHEN: March 17 through June 11, 2023

WHERE: Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts
Wynton M. Blount Cultural Park
One Museum Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117

INFORMATION: mmfa.org
334.625.4333
@MontgomeryMFA

HOURS:
Galleries, ArtWorks, Mondays, Closed
Sculpture Garden, Tuesdays–Sunday, 10 AM–5 PM
Terrace, and Store: Last entry at 4:45 PM

ADMISSION: Free! With ample, free parking.

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MEDIA CONTACT

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