



NATIONAL MUSEUM  
of WOMEN *in the* ARTS

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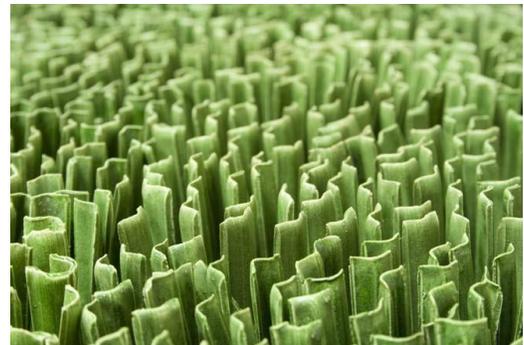
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***Biennial contemporary art exhibition, Organic Matters—Women to Watch 2015, on view  
at National Museum of Women in the Arts June 5–Sept. 13, 2015***

*This exhibition features 13 artists actively  
redefining the relationship between women, art and nature*

WASHINGTON—The National Museum of Women in the Arts ([NMWA](http://www.nmwa.org)) presents [\*Organic Matters—Women to Watch 2015\*](#), the fourth installment of NMWA’s biennial Women to Watch exhibition series.

On view June 5–Sept. 13, 2015, this exhibition explores the relationships between women, art and nature, examining contemporary women artists’ complex views and inventive treatments related to the theme of nature. Through a diverse array of mediums, including photography, drawing, sculpture and video, the featured artists depict fragile ecosystems, otherworldly landscapes and creatures both real and imagined.



This series presents emerging or underrepresented artists from the states and countries in which the museum has outreach committees. Committees participating in Women to Watch 2015 worked with curators in their respective regions to create shortlists of artists working with the subject of nature. From this group, NMWA curators selected 13 artists, one representing each of the participating committees.

“The connection between women and nature has a long history, one that is fraught with gendered stereotypes and discriminatory assumptions,” said NMWA Director Susan Fisher Sterling. “The contemporary artists selected for the 2015 installment of Women to Watch turn this archaic paradigm upside-down.”

Historically, women artists were encouraged to take the natural world as their subject because still lifes and portraiture seemed to require merely the power of observation, in contrast to history and religious painting, which required invention and imagination.

“The artists highlighted in *Organic Matters* build upon and expand the pre-existing conceptualizations of women’s relationship with nature by actively investigating the natural world—to fanciful and sometimes frightful effect,” said NMWA Associate Curator Virginia Treanor. “Collectively, their work addresses modern society’s complex relationship with the environment, ranging from concern for its future to fear of its power.”

Artists of the feminist movement of the late 1960s and 1970s embraced the idea of women’s supposed bond with nature and focused on new subjects, including the figure of the mother goddess. The environmental movement developed alongside, and often intertwined with, the feminist movement. The proponents of what is sometimes labeled “ecofeminism” argue that the domination of nature and women by patriarchal systems are inextricably linked, being viewed as existing to serve the needs of man. This philosophy holds that men, women and nature are inseparably bound in a common ecosystem, each relying on the others for survival.

The artwork featured in *Organic Matters* highlights the many different aspects of nature. In some works, the natural world is the only protagonist. Ysabel LeMay’s hyper-manipulated image of flora and fauna in *Reflection* (2014) conveys a sense of respite and refuge from the civilized world, while others, such as the hauntingly beautiful photographs from Lara Shipley’s series *Devil’s Promenade*, evoke humanity’s primal fear of the wild and the unknown terrors that lurk there.



The relationship between humans and nature is captured in works like Andrea Lira’s video sequence *RHYTHMS* (2013), which speaks to the interdependence of humans and plants and the simultaneous fragility and tenacity of both. In Mimi Kato’s hybrid digital landscapes, the woods are a place of enforced and regulated recreation, invariably altered by those who visit, while Dawn Holder’s *Monoculture* (2013) more obliquely references humans’ detrimental manipulation of nature through her manicured porcelain “lawn.”

Pollution and climate change are the subjects of Jennifer Celio’s meticulous drawings that make explicit the threat of human encroachment upon the natural world, while the photography of Italian duo Goldschmeid & Chiari takes a more lyrical approach, referencing iconic Western painting styles such as French Impressionism within carefully constructed compositions. Mary Tsiongas’s videos actually

incorporate works by past artists of New Mexico such as the botanical illustrator Edward M. Skeats, mediating nature through art as well as art through technology.

Empirical scientific observations act as the foundation of Rachel Sussman's photographs, which document some of the oldest organisms on the planet, and Rebecca Hutchinson's ethereal constructions made from porcelain paper clay are based on the artist's close observation of nature.

Jiha Moon fuses nature and ethos in her works in paint and ceramic, where repeated and juxtaposed motifs of animals, fruit and flowers offer a multiplicity of meaning, signifying both American and Korean culture. Oversized children and animals are paired in dream-like vignettes in Françoise Pétrovitch's works, while Polly Morgan uses taxidermy animals to likewise address the primordial concerns of all organisms—life and death.

The Women to Watch series expresses NMWA's commitment to presenting the work of emerging artists as well as the vital role of the museum's outreach committees. NMWA currently has 18 outreach committees with more than 2,000 dedicated members throughout the United States and around the world and continues to expand its network. Members work with local museum directors and curators, education experts and business leaders to capitalize on their region's artistic, financial and educational strengths and resources in order to develop meaningful programming and build a bridge between their communities and the museum.

***Organic Matters—Women to Watch 2015 Participating Committees, Selected Artists and Curators:***

**Arkansas:** Selected Artist Dawn Holder; Curator Courtney Taylor, Arts and Science Center for Southeast Arkansas

**California (Southern):** Selected Artist Jennifer Celio; Curator Corrina Peipon, Hammer Museum

**Chile:** Selected Artist Andrea Lira; Curator Soledad García Saavedra, Independent Curator

**France:** Selected Artist Françoise Pétrovitch; Curator Julia Garimorth, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris

**Georgia:** Selected Artist Jiha Moon; Curator Michael Rooks, High Museum of Art

**Italy:** Selected Artist Goldschmied & Chiari; Curator Iolanda Ratti, Museo del Novecento

**Greater Kansas City Area:** Selected Artist Lara Shipley; Curator Catherine Futter, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

**Massachusetts:** Selected Artist Rebecca Hutchinson; Curator Jen Mergel, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

**New Mexico:** Selected Artist Mary Tsiongas; Curator Lisa Tamiris Becker, UNM Museum of Art

**Greater New York Region:** Selected Artist Rachel Sussman; Curators Christiane Paul, Whitney Museum of Art; Dana Miller, Whitney Museum of Art

**Ohio:** Selected Artist Mimi Kato; Curators Reto Thüring, Cleveland Museum of Art; Rose Bouthillier, MOCA Cleveland

**Texas:** Selected Artist Ysabel LeMay; Curator Virginia Treanor, National Museum of Women in the Arts

**United Kingdom:** Selected Artist Polly Morgan; Curator Lisa Le Feuvre, Henry Moore Institute

### **National Museum of Women in the Arts**

Founded in 1981 and opened in 1987, NMWA is the only museum solely dedicated to celebrating the achievements of women in the visual, performing and literary arts. The museum's collection features 4,700 works from the 16th century to the present created by more than 1,000 artists, including Mary Cassatt, Frida Kahlo, Alma Thomas, Lee Krasner, Louise Bourgeois, Chakaia Booker and Nan Goldin, along with special collections of 18th-century silver tableware and botanical prints. NMWA is located at 1250 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C., in a landmark building near the White House. It is open Monday–Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. and Sunday, noon–5 p.m. For information, call 202-783-5000 or visit [nmwa.org](http://nmwa.org). Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for visitors 65 and over and students, and free for NMWA members and youths 18 and under. Free Community Days take place on the first Sunday of each month. For more information about NMWA, visit [nmwa.org](http://nmwa.org), [Broad Strokes Blog](#), [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

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#### **Image credit lines:**

Dawn Holder, *Monoculture* (detail), 2013; Porcelain, 2 1/2 x 92 x 176 in.; Courtesy of the artist

Lara Shipley, *In the Ozarks There Are Lights (Devil's Promenade)*, 2013; Inkjet print, 30 x 37 in.