

# Galerie



Installation view of Patterson's "...things come to thrive...in the shedding...in the molting..." at the New York Botanical Garden. PHOTO: NYBG PHOTO

## Artist Ebony G. Patterson Opens Site-Specific Exhibition at the New York Botanical Garden

On view through September 17, the solo show utilizes the Bronx institution to explore issues surrounding colonialism and regeneration

BY [MELISSA FELDMAN](#)

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Ebony G. Patterson. PHOTO: NYBG PHOTO

"I'm going to give you a show that you've never had before," says multimedia artist [Ebony G. Patterson](#) at the preview of her show "Things come to thrive...in the shedding...in the molting," a major large-scale exhibition of sculptural and horticultural installations at the [New York Botanical Garden](#), on view through September 17.



Ebony G. Patterson. PHOTO: NYBG PHOTO

The work at NYBG parallels themes shown in Patterson's 2018 show at the Perez Art Museum, Miami "...while the dew is still on the roses," which utilized robust blooms of man-made materials to investigate more thought-provoking ideas. "In recent years, I've been using the garden as a metaphor for post-colonial space," she says. "I think in many ways, we're still living in a colonial period. A lot of my work is an attempt at speaking about histories of violence, but not a history that's necessarily in the past."

Throughout her career, the Kingston- and Chicago-based creative has explored tough themes underscoring race, beauty, death, gender, flora and fauna, and post-colonial space, merged with an ornamental sensibility.

And while the artist continues to incorporate decorative materials like textiles, glitter, lace, metal, plastic, found objects, wallpaper, and even hand-blown glass into her art, the elemental idea of nature prevails. "I'm specifically interested in Black bodies," Patterson explains. "There's also this possibility of regeneration, which actively and normally happens in a garden and also happens with us."



Installation view of Patterson's "...things come to thrive...in the shedding...in the molting..." at the New York Botanical Garden. PHOTO: NYBG PHOTO

For “Things come to thrive...in the shedding...in the molting” Patterson drew from a number of influences, including visits to the Hope Botanical Gardens in her native Jamaica. A 2019 residency at Crystal Bridges in Bentonville, Arkansas, included planting a test garden that had both poisonous and healing properties while a visit to NYBG’s “Brazilian Modern; The Living Art of Roberto Burle Marx” exhibition inspired a new collection of work. “The opportunity to work directly with the NYBG, using its collections and landscape as inspiration, provided the opportunity to bring many of my elements into practice together,” Patterson tells *Galerie*.



Installation view of Patterson's "...things come to thrive...in the shedding...in the molting..." at the New York Botanical Garden. PHOTO: NYBG PHOTO

After a year-long immersion at the 250-acre landmark in the Bronx, Patterson's site-specific works incorporating living plants are now on view. “This direct intervention allowed us to begin to literally peel back the landscape to look not only at the plants on the surface, but also explore the plants beneath, and the generative life cycles that sustain the entire ecosystem,” Patterson says.

Visitors to the exhibition will encounter hundreds of glittering black-resin vultures positioned on the front lawn, juxtaposed against vibrant flower varieties including Tidal Wave Velour Red Petunias, Hot Flash Caladium, and Purple Knight Alternanthera. And while the birds are perceived as dangerous creatures that prey on the dead, they also symbolize spirituality and rebirth.



Ebony G. Patterson, *...fester...*, (2023).PHOTO: NYBG PHOTO

Inside the landmark Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, tableaus feature more vultures, glass sculptures, and flower beds interspersed with Canna Cannova Yellow, Profusion Double Fire Zinnia, Surfinia Double White Petunia, Wild Romance Red Impatiens, and Canary Wings Begonia. Patterson researched, dried, and pressed specimens of now-extinct plants from the garden's Herbarium which became the impetus for the series of glass sculptures on view.



Installation view of Patterson's "*...things come to thrive...in the shedding...in the molting...*" at the New York Botanical Garden. PHOTO: NYBG PHOTO

At the Mertz Library, mixed media paper collages, suggestive of funerary wreaths are on view as is *...fester...* (2023), a two-sided sculpture situated in the rotunda.

Strategically draped with woven jacquard fabrics, glitter, trim, tassels, lace, metal, plastic, and hand-blown glass plants; on the reverse, 1,000 hand-cast red lace gloves are enveloped by Patterson's patterned wallpaper. "Ebony often repeats the phrase 'the weeds come for us all,'" says curator Joanna L. Groarke, vice president for programming and exhibitions at NYBG. "In creating *...fester...*, she found herself contemplating what it would look like if a building or a structure—in this case, a wall—was cracked open and the landscape came back."

From molting to shedding and decay—as the title implies—transitional states are at the core of this exhibition. But within a transitory condition, renewal, transformation, and even beauty, can prevail.