

## Artist Ebony G. Patterson Will Change the Way You See Gardens Forever

Working between Jamaica and Chicago, Patterson crafts monumental works with a message.



BY [NAFEESAH ALLEN](#) PUBLISHED: MAR 8, 2023



### Patterson in her Chicago studio

Frank Ishman

### "Would you cut a painting in half?"

This is how [Ebony G. Patterson](#) responds when people ask if her artwork can be displayed without her signature wallpapers. Maximalist floral patterns are often the backdrop of the Jamaica-born artist's displays, but they aren't there for decoration. Patterson views the garden as a multilayered metaphor for the human ecosystem in today's postcolonial world: Vines enshrine her portraiture and sculptural depictions of Black people. "My work examines ideas around visibility and invisibility," the artist explains.

In her gardens, Patterson toys with vulgarity. People sometimes appear

headless, limbless, or punctured. (The detail above, with a fly on the face of a young girl, is from her 2021 work *...the hawk looks out...as she embraces the haunt...and flies come for the nourishing...*) The artist's use of monarch butterflies isn't about beauty at all. She finds it odd that "the butterfly is the only insect we're not creeped out by," when compared to other bugs like roaches that clean gardens and flies that are pollinators. After all, monarch butterflies evolved to survive eating poisonous milkweed plants. "When we face difficulties, we survive," Patterson says. "We always do. Nature tells us that." Growth is not always pretty but without it, we wither.

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Patterson came to the U.S. from Kingston for graduate school, then spent 12 years teaching at universities. Right before the pandemic, she moved from Kentucky to Chicago (where her main gallery, [Monique Meloche](#), is located). Although the winters are harsh, the artist says the warmth of the people has drawn her in. "There's a sense of visibility. For the first time, I've known my neighbors," Patterson says. Like her subjects, she needed the proper ecosystem to thrive.

From May 27 through September 17th, 2023, you can see stunning horticultural installations by Patterson during her residency at the New York Botanical Garden, located at 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, NY 10458-5126. [Sign up for ticket alerts here!](#)

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## A Selection of Patterson's Botanical Work



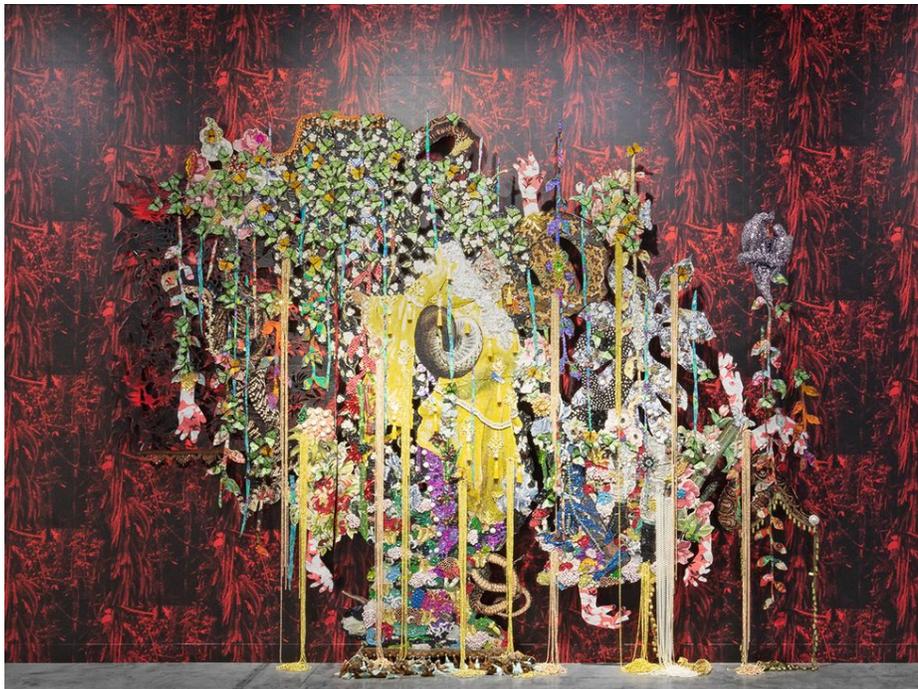
*...the hawk looks out...as she embraces the haunt...and flies come for the nourishing...*, 2021. Detail shown at top of page. Work on paper and custom vinyl wallpaper, with hand-cut paper, feathered monarch butterflies, and plastic toys.

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*...in the swallowing...she carries the whole...the hole, 2021-22. Hand-cut jacquard woven photo tapestry with appliqué, fabric, plastic, beads, feathers, trim, glitter, and wood mounted on wallpaper in two (2) parts*



*...when the bellying is evidenced in the arch of a back...and the coupling of gun metal birds reminds us....love is still here...., 2022*

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Detail of *...and the dew cracks the earth, in five acts of lamentation...between the cuts...beneath the leaves...below the soil...*, 2020. Digital print on archival watercolor paper with hand-cut and torn elements, construction paper, wallpaper, poster board, acrylic gel medium, feathered monarch butterflies.



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*Women's Day 2023. Women lead, define, and shape our challenging world, and artists such as Patterson exemplify just that.*