

Following in the Bartrams' Footsteps

Contemporary Botanical Artists Explore the Bartrams' Legacy

April 25 - May 24, 2013

PHILADELPHIA, PA: The traveling exhibition *Following in the Bartrams' Footsteps* will open at Bartram's Garden in Philadelphia on April 25, 2013. A collaboration between the American Society of Botanical Artists and Bartram's Garden, the exhibition will feature contemporary botanical artworks depicting plants discovered and introduced by two generations of the Bartram family. It will reflect John and William Bartram's passionate observation and discovery of nature, which has influenced generations of artists and explorers throughout the world.

The forty original artworks will be juried from a field of approximately 200 entries expected to be submitted by ASBA members from around the world and Philadelphia Society of Botanical Illustrators members. Focusing on the native plant discoveries made by John and William in their travels through the eastern wilderness between the 1730's and 1790's, the exhibition allows a fresh look at their seminal body of knowledge and art. Other subjects depicted will be some of the important exotic introductions the Bartrams made to American and worldwide gardening through their plant business. The exhibition promises to appeal to a wide audience as it ties together art, science, history, nature, and culture.

Artists have enthusiastically sought their subject matter and created their images over the past two years, with some having gone so far as to track down heirloom seeds and cultivate them in their own gardens in order to be able to paint a particularly appealing plant. Artists have worked with Bartram's Garden itself, or other botanical gardens to find their inspiration, and still others have explored the wilds of North America. The exhibition will open in the gallery of the restored Barn, built in 1775 by John Bartram, and the oldest barn in Philadelphia.

William's natural history illustrations were often the first images seen of North American plants and animals and are an under-utilized cultural resource. A recent project of American artist Mark Dion reconsidered and re-enacted the travels of William Bartram throughout the southeast. In a similar vein, *Following in the Bartrams' Footsteps* seeks to draw attention to the history and culture of 18th-century American naturalists including those of botanical and artistic bent, and to illuminate the role contemporary artists play in depicting these same plants for today's audience and preserving their record for generations to come.

As the exhibition draws closer, a schedule of related events including gallery talks and classes will be released. The exhibition will remain on view through May 24, and will then travel to further venues throughout the southeastern US.

Among those venues are the Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, GA, South Florida Museum in Bradenton FL, and the University of North Carolina Botanical Garden in Chapel Hill, NC.

ASBA is seeking individuals interested in collaborating to bring a broader audience to this exhibition through writing articles or providing media coverage as well as sponsors to assist in covering costs of traveling the exhibition. ASBA would also like to identify parties interested in presenting lectures, developing educational components, and organizing events that capitalize on the historical, cultural and educational potential of the exhibition.

For further information, please contact:

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