

Sturt Haaga Gallery at Descanso Gardens

"The WILD Flowers"

the earth laughs in flowers

--e.e. cummings

Although the southern California winters are mild, everyone still looks forward to the first signs of spring—the colorful blooms of cherries, crabapples, poppies and tulips. The flower is a powerful symbol of regeneration, fertility, birth, and the continuity of life, measured out in the chapters we call seasons. Besides, to eyes human, insect, bird, and bat alike, flowers are both beautiful and irresistible.

Next year's spring bloom will come early to Descanso with a profuse and colorful exhibition in the Sturt Haaga Gallery of contemporary artists' interpretations of flowers. Opening to the public on January 15, 2013, the group show of primarily southern California artists' painting, installations, and sculpture will present a garden of delight for the eye, and a thought-provoking investigation of how and why we instantly recognize certain forms and colors as "flowers," even though what we are seeing is totally imaginary. The show is entitled, "The WILD Flowers"—a play on words, since these flowers will be "wild" in the sense of fanciful and perhaps even a bit outrageous. The Descanso show has been timed to coincide with and complement an upcoming exhibition at The Huntington entitled, "When They Were Wild," an examination of the artistic tradition of documenting and cataloguing botanic subjects through watercolor, drawing, and painting which opens March 9.

According to curatorial coordinator John David O'Brien, "The WILD Flowers" at Descanso Gardens will "... extrapolate the unique forms, complex shapes and fantastic colors of flowers and present a compelling, even radical, departure from representation, renovating the tradition of the still life, but bringing this time-honored compositional format into the vocabulary of contemporary art." The exhibition will include work by: Lisa Adams, Maura Bendett, Holly Boruck, Gary Brewer, Charles Fine, Penelope Gottlieb, Kymber Holt, Erika Lizée, Renée A. Fox, James Griffith, Mara Lonner, John Millei, Nancy Monk, Roland Reiss, Raymond Saunders, Michael Todd, and Michiko Yao.

Of the many categories of the fantastical in nature, none is quite as diverse and as consistently astonishing as that of the flower. While we may admire the flower as a beautiful object, what we are really seeing is delightful evidence of possibly the most sophisticated and durable strategy for reproduction, speciation, and evolution our planet has yet offered.

"The WILD Flowers" opens to the public on Tuesday, January 15, at 10 a.m. The exhibit runs through March 31, 2013. The Sturt Haaga Gallery is located at Descanso Gardens, 1418 Descanso Drive, La Cañada Flintridge, 91011.

About Descanso Gardens:

Established as a public garden in 1953, Descanso Gardens is located at, near the interchange of the 2 and 210 freeways. The Gardens are open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, members welcome at 8 a.m. Closed Christmas Day. Admission is free for members and children 4 and younger. \$8 for adults; \$6 for seniors and students; \$3 for children 5 to 12. Parking is free. Fees for classes and programs include Gardens admission. For information, call (818) 949-4200 or visit www.descansogardens.org. Descanso Gardens is accredited by the American Association of Museums.