

PENN ARTIST STATEMENT

Beverly Penn is inspired by the kingdom of plants with which we share this planet—particularly native species, invasive species, and other stoic upstarts that persist without our stewardship. These symbiotic partners give us everything we need to sustain life on Earth, including the very oxygen we breathe. As complex living organisms, they are the carbon sinks that allow us to reduce global warming, control drought, and maintain our water supply. And yet science tells us that most humans, and many animals, see only a wallpaper-like background when situated in a lush plant environment. Plants, not just animals, are wildlife; but as essential as they are to human life, endangered floras are rarely protected. Plants are our barometers—when a species dies, it predicts our future.

Penn's cast bronze sculptures are constructed one small piece at a time, cell linked to cell, part to part, into hypnotic interlocking systems. The sculptures are assembled on the wall like aerial perspectives of the land, growing perpendicular to the force of gravity, in an exploration of line, shape, density and complex patterning. It embraces both the scientific mind that must categorize and shape a new body of knowledge, and the equally compelling desire to order and shape unruly plants into a desirable form.

Beverly Penn's cast bronze botanical sculpture confronts the underpinnings of climate injustice by creating enduring memorials of the ephemeral plant world. The notion of a memorial is significant in these times of climate change and extinction. Yet a memorial also links us to desire, so it can be equally hopeful, because within the idealized spaces we cultivate in our imagination, and in the world around us, our best intentions flourish and proliferate.

Beverly Penn's work is included in the collections of the National Museum of Women in the Arts; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Yale University Art Gallery; Racine Art Museum; El Paso Museum of Art; Moody Foundation; ConocoPhillips Corporation; Rosewood Corporation; Cassilhaus; Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art; and the Monarch Contemporary Art Center and Sculpture Park. She was recognized as the State of Texas 3D Artist for 2017 by the Texas Commission on the Arts. Her 2024 monograph [*Beverly Penn: Foregrounding*](#) is now available by the publisher French and Michigan.

Penn is the recipient of grants and fellowships from the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation; The Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center; Lux Art Institute, now Institute of Contemporary Art, San Diego; Connemara Conservancy; Smitten Forum; and Texas Commission on the Arts. She has received a Fulbright Fellowship in Barcelona, Spain, the Texas State University Presidential Seminar Research Award, and nine Texas State University Faculty Research Grants involving research in Mexico, Italy, Spain, and New York.

She has been commissioned for public art projects for Carte Hilton Hotel San Diego Downtown; McCoy College of Business, Texas State University; Whole Foods Landmark Headquarters; DHRL Administration, Texas State University; The Austonian; and the cities of Austin, El Paso, and Las Cruces. Penn is a Texas Master Naturalist and Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Texas State University. Lisa Sette Gallery in Phoenix, William Campbell Contemporary Art in Fort Worth, and Flatbed Press in Austin represent her work.