

NEWS RELEASE

For more information, contact:

Jodie Littleton
Communications Consultant
Adkins Arboretum
410.490.6930
jlittleton@adkinsarboretum.org



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***Wabi Sabi*, Graphite Drawings and Watercolors by Lee Boulay D’Zmura, on View through July at Adkins Arboretum**

The pure beauty and precision of Lee Boulay D’Zmura’s botanical drawings and watercolors are astonishing. But in her exhibit *Wabi Sabi*, on view at the Adkins Arboretum Visitor’s Center through July 28, this Saint Michaels artist departed from the botanical art tradition of illustrating perfect plant specimens in order to explore the ongoing changes plants experience in their life cycles. There will be a reception to meet the artist on Sat., June 23 from 3 to 5 p.m. in conjunction with a reception for the ninth biennial *Outdoor Sculpture Invitational*.

Two things happened to inspire this show. D’Zmura found a branch from a box elder tree that had fallen in a storm. Although dying, its crinkled leaves still clung to it, as did its samaras, the winged seedpods often called “helicopters,” so that the branch was both dying and giving life through its seeds.

Shortly afterward, she found herself reading a magazine article about wabi-sabi, the Japanese art aesthetic that recognizes beauty in things that are imperfect, impermanent and incomplete. The idea of honoring the ever-changing cycle of growth and decay and the dignity of aging with grace resonated strongly for her.

“I have been on the hunt for the dead and dying ever since,” she said.



“Lichen,” Lee Boulay D’Zmura, watercolor, 6” x 4”

Before the advent of photography, scientists relied on botanical illustration to accurately record the distinct characteristics of plant species. Trained as a botanical artist at Brookside Gardens School of Botanical Art and Illustration, D’Zmura has been teaching botanical art classes at the Arboretum since 2006 and has become known for her remarkable skill in accurately reproducing every detail of a plant, from the subtlest colors to the finest webbing of its veins. But in this show, she uses her expertise to capture the fascinating beauty and poignancy of individual plants throughout the stages of their lives, including the death and decay of their blossoms and leaves.

In her graphite drawing of the box elder branch, D’Zmura sketched its clusters of samaras and each elaborately complicated curve of its crinkled leaves with lines finer than a single hair. Likewise, she captured the stages of anemone plants at different times of year, from blossoms through dormancy.

As any gardener knows, decaying plant material is an important nutritional source for other plants. In one of four compelling watercolor studies of bark through the seasons, D’Zmura shows a cluster of fragile, frilly gray-green lichen spreading across a decaying log.

“I came across this while hiking with my daughter and grand dogs,” she said. “I loved the contrasting colors and surfaces of the decaying log and lichen.”

D’Zmura’s extraordinary sensitivity to the myriad kinds of nuanced beauty found in plants is a magnet for looking closer and closer at her work to discover all the extraordinary details she was able to find. Studying her unbelievably fine line work and stunning color range has the quietly exhilarating effect of honing the eye to nature itself. It’s an invitation to see our everyday environment with fresh eyes and deeper understanding.

This show is part of Adkins Arboretum’s ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through July 28 at the Arboretum Visitor’s Center located at 12610 Eveland Road near Tuckahoe State Park in Ridgely. Contact the Arboretum at 410-634-2847, ext. 0 or info@adkinsarboretum.org for gallery hours.

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Adkins Arboretum is a 400-acre native garden and preserve at the headwaters of the Tuckahoe Creek in Caroline County. Open year round, the Arboretum offers educational programs for all ages about nature and gardening. For more information, visit adkinsarboretum.org or call 410-634-2847, ext. 0.

Adkins Arboretum 12610 Eveland Road Ridgely, MD 21620
410.634.2847 adkinsarboretum.org info@adkinsarboretum.org