

NEWS RELEASE

For more information, contact:

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



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Natural Pairings, Works by Christine Neill and Lew Fifield, on View through Jan. 30 at Adkins Arboretum

Artists Christine Neill and Lew Fifield are both compelled by the idea that everything in nature is connected, both visually and ecologically. On view through Jan. 30 in the Adkins Arboretum Visitor's Center, their mixed media works explore the natural world as well as the relationship between their respective ways of interpreting its beauty, diversity and fragility. There will be a reception on Saturday, December 6 from 3 to 5 p.m. to meet the artists.

Fifield's background is in graphic design, while Neill works in the fine arts tradition. The two met at Maryland Institute College of Art, where they are both on the faculty. Married in 1998, they each have a studio in their Baltimore home and in their summer home in a small, rural New Hampshire village.

"We work independently in our own studios," Fifield explained, "but we naturally look at what each other is doing and comment."

Neill concurred, "It's inevitable if you are married to an artist that there will be that sharing of ideas. We both take a lot of photographs, so we're often together when we're photographing and get similar kinds of images. I think that we each deal with these images in a very different way."

Neill enjoys the hands-on processes of drawing and painting, which she seamlessly combines with digital photography. Focusing mostly on plants, she may paint an orchid, bromeliad or kelp



"Beachbush Ferro" by Christine Neill

plant. She then prints a ghostly digital image, often of the plants' home environment, either directly on the paper or on Plexiglas mounted slightly in front of the painting so that delicate shadows fall on the paper. The effect is of airiness and shimmering depth.



"Eukaryotic Apparition" by Lew Fifield

Fifield also layers his imagery, but he works exclusively with digital photographs. In "Eukaryotic Apparition," a transparent image of fungi is superimposed on top of a photo of gray duck feathers, so that the curves and textures interrelate. In the center, he has cut and folded the paper to create a kind of door revealing an image of a spiny cactus underneath.

He explained, "The concept behind these pieces is that the layering creates a back-and-forth visual dialogue. There's more to them than what appears on the surface, so each person is challenged to see what they want to in each of the images."

In their separate ways, both of these artists create images that focus on the beauty, complexity and interconnections found in the natural world. Both have an eye for subtle color and fascinating textures, and it is obvious from their work that they share a deep love and concern for nature as we face the challenges of our changing climate.

"We're fervent about how climate change is affecting everything—all species including the human species," Neill said. "It underlies all of the work. So it's a celebration of the wonders of these very diverse plant and animal species and how they are surviving, but it's also that the predictions are absolutely dire that our world is going to change. Well, it's already changing."

Natural Pairings is part of Adkins Arboretum's ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through Jan. 30 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.

CUTLINES:

"Eukaryotic Apparition" by Lew Fifield is among the works of Fifield and Christine Neill on view through Jan. 30 at Adkins Arboretum.

"Beachbush Ferro" by Christine Neill is among the works of Neill and Lew Fifield on view through Jan. 30 at Adkins Arboretum.

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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. Through its **Campaign to Build a Green Legacy**, it will build the **W. Flaccus and Ruth B. Stifel Center at Adkins Arboretum** and a "green" entranceway to broaden*

educational offerings and research initiatives promoting best practices in conservation and land stewardship. For additional information about Arboretum programs, visit www.adkinsarboretum.org or call 410-634-2847, ext. 0.

**Adkins Arboretum 12610 Eveland Road P.O. Box 100 Ridgely, MD 21620
410.634.2847 www.adkinsarboretum.org info@adkinsarboretum.org**