

MUSEUMS

WASHINGTON AND LEE

PRESS RELEASE

The Museums at Washington and Lee Present *Impossible Garden: Dusk & Dawn*

Emma Steinkraus' captivating installation explores feminism, flora, and fauna while celebrating the contributions of overlooked women artist-naturalists.

Exhibition: *Impossible Garden: Dusk & Dawn*

Location: Watson Galleries, 124 Letcher Ave, Lexington, VA

Dates: Oct. 2, 2024 – May 4, 2025

Reception: Thursday, Oct. 3, 2024, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Lexington, VA — The Museums at Washington and Lee University (Museums at W&L) present *Impossible Garden: Dusk & Dawn*, an immersive art installation that pays tribute to over 100 historical women artist-naturalists. The installation was designed and created by Emma Steinkraus, a visual artist and professor of art, who creates colorful, imaginative paintings and installations about gender, mythmaking, and the more-than-human world.

Impossible Garden: Dusk & Dawn features two panoramic wallpapers that incorporate illustrations of flora, fauna, and fungi made by women artists across the globe between the 16th and 19th centuries. Working in Adobe Photoshop, Steinkraus collaged their illustrations with her own hand-painted elements into a continuous landscape that teems with fruit trees, insects, mushrooms, and small creatures. Expanding on past versions of Steinkraus' *Impossible Garden* series, this latest exhibition includes works by an additional thirty-six artists, as well as a unique version of the wallpaper set at dusk that includes astronomical illustrations.

Impossible Garden: Dusk & Dawn celebrates the achievements and ambitions of women artists who made art in overlooked genres such as scientific illustration and botanical art. At the same time, the exhibition includes materials that invite viewers to grapple with histories of colonialism, slavery, and gender oppression, as well as their enduring impact on the present. Steinkraus' immersive landscape offers a portal to a fantastical world designed for both pleasure and confrontation, where human and non-human lives are deeply interwoven.

"The Museums team is thrilled to host Professor Steinkraus' *Impossible Garden* for the W&L and Rockbridge community," said Nalleli Guillen, associate director of curatorial affairs. "This immersive experience will not only be beautiful (a great selfie opportunity!) but will also bring to life the process of academic research and discovery in a whole new way. Visitors will be introduced to a fascinating group of talented women — artists, naturalists, and scientists — whose contributions to art and history have long been overlooked."

Museums at Washington and Lee

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Impossible Garden: Dusk & Dawn is curated by Guillen and Steinkraus and made possible with the support of Washington and Lee University and the Museum Art Fund.

This exhibition is free and open to the public, with a scheduled artist talk in Northen Auditorium and a reception in Watson Galleries from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 3, 2024. There will also be a gallery tour with the artist in Watson Galleries, followed by a game of nature bingo on Woods Creek Trail from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 19, 2024, and an artist-led wildflower walking tour in Brushy Hills Nature Preserve from 11 a.m. to noon on Saturday, April 26, 2025. For more information, visit museums.wlu.edu/dusk.

The Museums at W&L are open 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday. The galleries are free and open to all.

Emma Steinkraus is a contemporary artist and professor of art at Washington and Lee University. Her work is represented by 1969 Gallery in New York and has been included in recent exhibitions at the UNTITLED Art Fair (Miami, FL), Sow & Tailor x WOAW Gallery (Hong Kong, China), the StadtPalais Museum (Stuttgart, Germany) and Steve Turner Gallery (Los Angeles, CA). She has attended artist residencies at the Studios at MASS MoCA, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the Wassaic Project and the Blue Mountain Center, among many others. Recent awards include an Eliza Moore Fellowship at the Oak Spring Garden Foundation in 2020 and a Helen Frankenthaler Fellowship at the Vermont Studio Center in 2022. Her work has been on the cover of *New American Paintings* and featured in *Burnaway*, *Juxtapoz* and *Art Maze Magazine*. She lives and works in Lexington, Virginia.

#IMPOSSIBLEGARDEN
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