

BERKSHIRE BOTANICAL GARDEN

SPRING/SUMMER 2018

# CUTTINGS

ART/GARDEN



# BEAUTIFUL STRANGERS:



James Salomon

## Artists Discover the Garden

*Editor's note:* In preparation of this issue of *Cuttings*, BBG board chairman Matt Larkin and art curator James Salomon discussed *Beautiful Strangers* — this season's exhibition of contemporary sculpture in the Garden — along with the elements that brought James to the international art world and of course the Berkshires.

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26

### Beautiful Strangers

Exhibit opens at the Garden's annual gala, Fête des Fleurs, and will remain on display through October 8.

**Matt Larkin:** *How did you get into the art business?*

**James Salomon:** By mistake! I was living in Paris right after college and I wanted to work in a bookshop, just as a regular job. I love the smell of bookshops. It's intoxicating, like walking into a florist. Well, I was walking around in the Latin Quarter with CVs in my hand, when I came across Librarie Maeght on Rue du Bac. This was the editions house for a famous gallery that originates from the marvelous Fondation Maeght in St Paul de Vence. It was out of my realm of thinking but I was really wowed visually, and I gave someone my CV. They called me to offer a summer internship. This was in 1995, and I still love going back there.

**ML:** *For Beautiful Strangers, you bring ten amazing sculptors to the Garden. Is curating site-specific installations a forté of yours?*

**JS:** I've done a lot of gallery shows with great artists that I'm proud of, but to be given a fresh locale is fun and exciting for me. Particularly outdoors, where nature provides the variables and possibilities. After leaving behind a "storefront" gallery in 2016, I was figuring things out — what I wanted, where I can take things on and keep my mind fresh. I already had a project in the hopper for a great Hamptons artist named Jill Musnicki. We did a weekend photography show on this gorgeous manicured wooded property, complete with fox holes and a carpet of pine needles. I thought how magical it was,

*Continued on page 10*

## Beautiful Strangers: Artists Discover the Garden features the following contemporary artists:

**ALICE AYCOCK** is a sculptor and installation artist. She was an early artist in the land art movement in the 1970s, and has created many large-scale metal sculptures around the world. Aycock's drawings and sculptures of architectural and mechanical fantasies combine logic and imagination, and intermingle science and faith. Her piece, as part of the Twister series, evolved from the Park Avenue Paper Chase project in 2014.

**WENDELL CASTLE** has recently passed on, but had been creating unique pieces of handmade sculpture and furniture for over four decades. From the outset of his career, Castle consistently challenged the traditional boundaries of functional design and established himself as the father of the American studio furniture. His bronze installation, *Grand Temptation*, joins the Beautiful Strangers exhibition.

**E.V. DAY** is a New York based artist whose work explores themes of sexuality and humor while employing gravity-defying suspension techniques. By manipulating iconic imagery from popular culture, Day re-animates the recognizable into new forms that illuminate contradictions in gender roles and stretch the confines of social stereotypes.

**FITZHUGH KAROL** works in wood, metal, and clay, and creates work that ruminates on man's imprint in the landscape. His installation, *Pulse*, 2013 consists of five separate white pine structures sited near the Pond Garden.

**MARK MENNIN** is a stone sculptor specializing in granite. His BBG installation, *Classical Interiors*, is part of a series where he has transformed the meanings and functions of recycled granite column sections originating from a quarry in Quincy, Massachusetts.

**MICHELE OKA DONER**'s art spans five decades. Her work is fueled by a lifelong study and appreciation of the natural world from which she derives her formal vocabulary.

**TONI ROSS** has long had an interest in enclosed sculptural forms where the interiors are uncertain and infused with a sense of mystery. For *Beautiful Strangers*, she will create an installation on site at the Garden; a first for this artist.

**NED SMYTH**, considered a pioneer of public art, was among the first sculptors to work with architectural concepts and build site-specific, large-scale public installations. *Male Torso*, is a 14' sculpture derived from a 4" piece of glacial till.

**STEPHEN TALASNIK** expands the visual language of architecture and engineering through drawing, sculpture, and site-specific installations. His installation *TreeHive #3* will be created on site as a large, flat reed hive that will naturally change in color throughout the course of the seasons in the Garden.

**ROB WYNNE** tests the boundaries of kitsch and beauty, sappiness and profundity in his delicately crafted mixed-media objects, installations, drawings, and canvases. His bronze installation, *Teardrops*, will be exhibited on one of BBG's mature trees.



Rob Wynne, *Teardrops*, 2015. Bronze.  
© Rob Wynne, Courtesy Domaine du Mui,  
Photo: JC Lett.





## SAVE THE DATE!

**May 26, 2018 5–7:30 p.m.**

Our annual gala returns to BBG this year for good reason! We tip our hats to *Beautiful Strangers: Artists Discover the Garden*, a summer-long sculpture exhibition spotlighting ten noted contemporary artists and curated by James Salomon. Wear your fanciest hat and enjoy cocktails, music and the twinkling magic of the Garden at twilight at this very special event. Sponsorships are available.

## BERKSHIRE BOTANICAL GARDEN

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and wanted to keep that vibe going. I immediately ask myself what makes this property or environment so special, and tap into that.

**ML:** *Do you have personal relationships with these artists?*

**JS:** I have great personal and professional stories with almost all of the artists in the show. Alice Aycock and Ned Smyth I have known the longest, since my first days at Salomon Contemporary Warehouse in East Hampton. They were both extremely influential and helpful in my development.

**ML:** *What's the thought process behind creating *Beautiful Strangers*?*

**JS:** All my group shows have a loose narrative. I like to start with an intriguing title, and lately I've been sifting through song titles for inspiration. I just did a show in

Washington Depot, Connecticut called *A Hazy Shade of Winter*, based and loosely themed on the Simon and Garfunkel song. For BBG, I arrived at Frank Sinatra and heard *Beautiful Strangers* which I liked a lot, thinking of introducing the sculpture to the trees as if they never met and are just "passing through" for a season. Then for the heck of it I googled "Beautiful Strangers" and came across a completely different song by this young Texan folk singer named Kevin Morby. I thought: "That's It!!! That's exactly how I want this show to feel."

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