

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

Aileen Bordman: Monet's Garden

Leila Heller Gallery, New York

March 5 - May 3, 2024

Leila Heller Gallery, New York, is thrilled to present the debut exhibition of work by American photographer Aileen Bordman, whose photographs of Claude Monet's iconic gardens in Giverny, France, capture what the Impressionist painter called "my one and only masterpiece."

Aileen Bordman is the celebrated author of two best-selling books about Claude Monet (b. France 1840-1926) and Giverny. Her acclaimed film, *Monet's Palette*, is currently available nationwide through American Public Television. The fifteen works in this exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue with texts by Bordman and curator, Janis Gardner Cecil.

With a technique founded in twentieth century photography, Bordman uses a variety of Sony cameras, always fitted with Zeiss lenses (the same brand that Monet himself used in his spectacles). Bordman's extensive knowledge of Monet's planting process in the *Bassin, Clos Normand*, and the artist's two-acre kitchen garden has been fundamental to her artistic practice, as she has sought to capture Monet's intricate garden compositions and color schemes. Just as Monet brought his rich understanding of color theory and atmosphere to Giverny's garden design, Bordman's aesthetic is shaped by the Impressionist movement, including a focus on the effects of changing light and temporal mood.

Aileen Bordman writes, "Through decades of studying Monet's Garden at Giverny, from my youth in the 1980s to now, I have observed that Giverny has changed in a multitude of ways. With these works, I seek to share the grand vision that Monet intended for his most special creation. Monet's enduring love for nature is often present in his paintings, yet is felt most at Giverny through his careful selection and arrangement of thousands of flowers, bushes and trees with dazzling color and distinct perspectival effects. Since its restoration, the garden has evolved into a global destination, attracting over 10,000 visitors daily during the season. Through my work I aim to share the serenity, energy, and beauty of Giverny, inspiring others to experience it for themselves."

Bordman's photographs of Giverny range from large-scale, horizontal landscapes that capture views from the Japanese Bridge and waterlilies of the *Bassin* to the rose-covered archways and meandering paths of the *Clos Normand*. Other works focus on tightly composed sections of the artist's cultivated color harmonies in the full bloom of the spring growing season. Bordman's carefully composed images capture many of the hundreds of species of flora that comprise Giverny's gardens. Her work reflects a deep and intimate knowledge of the site and its particularities, which only a lifetime of passionate study could allow.

Janis Gardner Cecil writes, "Embodied in Aileen Bordman's Giverny series is the history of the garden as a personal refuge and a place of divine expression. Within every image there is the animating spirit of the garden's creator - Claude Monet - as well as the physical labor and dedication of as many as one hundred horticulturalists and laborers that tend to the garden's design, continued growth, and cultural legacy. Parallel to the appreciation for the extraordinary beauty of the garden lies the appreciation of its fragility. The threat of global warming, the necessity of a fresh water supply, and the reliance upon human caretaking are implicit in every frame."

The roots of Bordman's passion began with her mother, Dame Helen Rappel Bordman (1932-2020), one of a small group of dedicated Americans responsible, alongside French authorities and benefactors, for the renaissance of Monet's garden and home at Giverny. Monet lived and worked at Giverny from 1883 to 1926, but the property was bequeathed to his son after his death and ultimately left to ruin in 1947. The meticulous restoration process began in 1974 when the Institut de France asked art historian Gérald Van der Kamp (1912-2002) to restore the desolate home and gardens of Claude

Monet. American philanthropist Lila Acheson Wallace, at the suggestion of Metropolitan Museum Curator, Charles Moffett, supported this effort with generous funds, and her friend Helen Bordman joined their vigorous campaign to rescue this cultural treasure for all to visit and enjoy.

Throughout the next years and for decades after, Dame Bordman helped to raise significant financial support to grow, maintain and operate Fondation Claude Monet in Giverny, leading the development of a creative volunteer program that has included historians, gardeners and artists alike. Drawing upon these special ties to Giverny, Aileen Bordman has come to know every square inch of the garden at every time of day. In honor of Claude Monet and her mother's dedicated service to Giverny, Bordman now carries the baton, bringing the world of Claude Monet to all.

In addition to her work as a photographer, Aileen Bordman is an author, filmmaker, and entrepreneur. Bordman's two bestselling books, *Monet's Palate Cookbook: The Artist & His Kitchen Garden at Giverny* (Gibbs Smith, 2015), with a foreword by Meryl Streep, and *Everyday Monet* (HarperCollins, 2018), feature her photography as well as extensive information about the artist and his life.

Bordman's acclaimed documentary film *Monet's Palate – A Gastronomic View from the Gardens of Giverny*, examines the connection between fine art and fine cuisine as seen through the eyes of Claude Monet. Meryl Streep's opening narration takes the viewer through the region of Normandy and Monet's home garden. The film includes interviews with art historian Joachim Pissarro, Chefs Alice Waters, Daniel Boulud, and Roger Vergé. Screened from Cannes to New York, the film was featured during the exhibition, *Monet's Garden*, held at the New York Botanical Garden in 2012 and was distributed nationally by American Public Television on PBS, where it can still be viewed.

Bordman's work has been featured in *Forbes Magazine*, *New York Magazine*, *The New York Times*, and *USA Today*, among other international publications. Bordman has lectured about Claude Monet and the gardens at Giverny at museums and cultural venues throughout the United States, including the 92nd Street Y, Kimbell Art Museum, the Nassau County Museum of Art, The Norton Museum of Art, and The New York Botanical Garden.

Janis Gardner Cecil, JGC Fine Art, is an art advisor, art historian and curator with over 30 years of experience in the primary and secondary art markets.

About Leila Heller Gallery: For over four decades, Leila Heller has been globally recognized as an industry trailblazer—fostering creative dialogue and cultural exchange between Western artists and their counterparts in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. In 2010, the gallery relocated from the Upper East Side to its flagship space in Chelsea, New York, where it quickly established a reputation for discovering and nurturing artists who have made a lasting impact on contemporary art and culture.

In March 2019, Leila Heller returned to the Upper East Side after an eight-year stint in Chelsea. The New York space has since refocused on the secondary market, hosting notable exhibitions such as "Double Vision," curated by Jane Holzer and featuring works by iconic artists like Andy Warhol, Richard Prince, Jeff Koons, and Keith Haring.

Expanding its international presence, Leila Heller opened its first satellite location in 2015 in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue, a major cultural hub in the region. The Dubai gallery, boasting 16,500 square feet and soaring 32-foot ceilings, is the largest in the Middle East and comprises three distinct exhibition spaces. It showcases a diverse array of leading regional and international artists, many of whom are exhibiting in the Middle East for the first time. The gallery is committed to supporting the evolving practices of established artists through innovative curatorial and educational programs, emphasizing a cross-cultural dialogue between Western and Middle Eastern artists.

Beyond its robust exhibition schedule, Leila Heller Gallery is also known for its collaborations with world-renowned curators, educational panels, film screenings, and the production of scholarly catalogues and books. The gallery actively participates in major international art fairs and stages off-site projects to foster new conversations in the broader context of galleries, artists, and institutions. Its artists are regularly featured in international museum exhibitions and biennials, and their works are part of prestigious institutional collections worldwide.

Press inquiries: For more information, images, and prices, please contact sosi@leilaheller.com