



In the Mood for Spring? Try “Garden Party” at Nassau County Museum of Art

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by Hamptons Art Hub Staff

In the mood for Spring? Dreaming of lush grass, vibrant flowers, and cocktails sipped outside? The Nassau County Museum of Art has you covered. Just in time to beat back the winter is “Garden Party”. The group show explores the imagery of *fête champêtre*—outdoor entertainments and garden parties—through paintings, sculpture, costume, fabrics and decorative arts and designs.

“Garden Party”, along with the first daffodils, is a colorful, festive harbinger of spring. The show opened on March 8 and continues through July 6, 2014. Included are works by Jane Freilicher, Charles Burchfield, Marc Chagall, Larry Rivers, Janet Fish, Martin Johnson Heade, David Hockney, Robert Mapplethorpe, Georgia O’Keeffe, Maurice Prendergast, James Rosenquist and Louis Comfort Tiffany.

The exhibition is organized by guest curators Franklin Hill Perrell, the museum’s former senior curator, and JoAnne Olian, curator emeritus at the Museum of the City of New York. “Garden Party” explores the imagery of *fête champêtre*—outdoor entertainments and garden parties—through paintings, sculpture, costume, fabrics and decorative arts and designs.

For the exhibition, the curators have assembled a bouquet of paintings illustrating the appeal of flowers in every season. “Garden Party” also takes advantage of the museum’s sprawling 145-acre property, richly embellished with beautiful gardens and sculpture.

This exhibition of gardens and flowers in an array of styles is organized thematically by season, beginning with a stunning portrayal of spring through a monumental mural by Robert Kushner. Works by artists from many different traditions are on view



“Spring Scatter Summation (detail)” by Robert Kushner, 2005. Oil, acrylic, gold leaf, and glitter on canvas, 7 x 46 feet (10 panels), Courtesy DC Moore Gallery.

The works portray floral images as objects of enjoyment and pure visual pleasure, the recreation of a natural paradise envisioned since antiquity and perpetually recreated in gardens, the nuances of horticulture plus floral arrangements and flower motifs in fashion and decorative art. according to

the museum. The prevalence of floral imagery in costume design is demonstrated with charming, flowery dresses and accessories, enchanting millinery, and delightful 19th-century beaded purses.



“The San Fernando Valley as Seen from the Breakfast Table” by David Hockney, 2000. Private Collection.

Highlights include spectacular installations, beginning with Kushner’s 47-foot multi-panel piece done on gold leaf. First prominent in the 1970s, Kushner is a key artist in the pattern and decoration movement. Georgia O’ Keeffe’s *Coxcomb*, 1931, offers an example of how a traditional theme is interpreted in a modernist mode.

Plants and animals recall the first garden, beginning with Richard Gachot’s *Adam and Eve*, Hunt Slonem’s imposing sculptures of wildlife, birds and tropical plants; and Janet Fish’s *Monkey Business*, where a leaping monkey disrupts a splendidly arrayed outdoor table laden with flowers and fruit.



“Monkey Business” by Janet Fish, 2005. Oil on canvas, 50 x 80 inches. Courtesy DC Moore Gallery.

Rosenquist’s *Sister Shreik*, one of his classic representations of females and flowers; Prendergast’s *The Promenade*, n.d., a post-impressionist painting of a garden party with costumed women in a setting of nature; Chagall’s *Le Repos*, c. 1980 with its essential bouquet offered by a lover floating above a village; and Ben Schonzeit’s spectacular photorealist still life, *Fred and Ginger Rose*, 1997.



“Sister Shrieks” by James Rosenquist, 1987. 23 color monotype with collage of color lithograph on Arches paper, ed. 14/39. 48 x 80 inches. Courtesy Richard L Feigen Gallery, New York.

“The garden party idea pervades the exhibited selections: flowers are themselves festive in character, and uplifting to the spirit, ever attesting to the life force and nature’s generous and

spontaneous beauty,” according to an exhibition release. “Floral patterns, often used in fashion and décor, affirm our innate desire to capture such loveliness. We intuitively recognize that flowers are a universal symbol of life and well being.”



“Le repos” by Marc Chagall, c. 1980. Gouache, watercolor and pastel on paper,
22 1/4 x 30 3/4 inches. Dr. Harvey Manes.

It can be argued that the first garden was Eden—a setting of flowers and plants for the creation of our world and mankind, continued the museum.

“Ever since, people have cultivated gardens simply for their beauty or for the sustenance they provide as food. Flowers have served as inspiration for painters and poets from time immemorial. From the mundane to the exquisite, flowers enhance every facet of our lives. Their physical expression may be found in gardens and outdoor parties of every kind, from the humblest to the most elegant 18th-century fête champêtre.”

BASIC FACTS: “Garden Party” is on view from March 8 to July 4 at the Nassau County Museum of Art, 1 Museum Drive, Roslyn Harbor, NY. www.nassaumuseum.org.

The museum is open Tuesday through Sunday. Docent-led tours of the exhibition are offered at 2 p.m. each day; tours of the mansion are offered every Saturday at 1 p.m.. Tours are free with museum admission. Parking is free on weekdays. On weekends, there is a \$2 parking fee (museum members are free).

HAMPTONS INSIDER: [Jane Freilicher](#) (b. 1924) and Larry Rivers (1923 - 2002) both have ties to the Hamptons. Freilicher lives and works in Water Mill, NY and NYC. Rivers lived and worked in NYC, Mexico and Southampton, NY, where the [Larry Rivers Foundation](#) is currently based.

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