

## NEWS RELEASE

For more information, contact:

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



---

(RIDGELY, MD—April 4, 2019)

### ***Evidence of Meaning*, Mixed Media Works on Paper by Susan Benarcik, on View through May at Adkins Arboretum**

Plants are Wilmington artist Susan Benarcik's first love. From childhood, she was captivated by the old-fashioned flowers her grandfather grew in his greenhouses, and now they fill her collages and encaustic paintings. In her show *Evidence of Meaning*, on view in Adkins Arboretum's Visitor's Center through May 31, her artworks offer compelling invitations to explore and imagine. There will be a reception to meet the artist on Sat., April 27 from 3 to 5 p.m.

Benarcik uses a baffling array of collage materials. There are vintage illustrations, photographs, maps, and text from many sources, especially old books on science and horticulture. She chose many of them for a certain dated charm that calls to mind the zeal with which Victorian botanists and biologists sought out, dissected and categorized their specimens, though without always understanding their role in their particular ecosystems.



***"Sabah," a photo collage, is among the works of artist Susan Benarcik on view through May at Adkins Arboretum.***

In "Sabah," a cluster of cymbidium orchid blossoms, skillfully and painstakingly trimmed from an illustration, lean across a curious striped background composed of strips cut from another illustration (perhaps a plant? perhaps some branches of coral?) and spliced across a colorful map. In the corner are two postage stamps bearing the name "Sabah," a state in Malaysia.

It's hard not to become engrossed in an image so full of such fascinating detail and not to wonder how its elements relate to one another. Each of Benarcik's intricately crafted artworks is unique and evolves organically. Delicate and complex, they hold fragmented visual vocabularies that hint at the interconnections and living essence of plants, animals and their particular

environments, but with a certain tension. Just as in life itself, art ultimately can't define the vital mystery that lies behind their existence.

Explaining her method of working, Benarcik said, "I begin by collecting materials that enchant me. Then, working on several pieces at one time, I'll move things around until the combination pleases my eye. It's an intuitive behavior. There's never a right and a wrong—just a good, better or best solution."

Humming with playfulness and a sense of curiosity, her works brim with a deep affection for plants and all of the natural world.

"As a kid, I spent many a day in fields of flowers and in the warmth of my grandparents' greenhouses," she said. "My grandfather was a cut flower farmer. There is nothing quite as comforting to me as the warm, earthy scent of a greenhouse or the itchy, green scent of a crushed lantana leaf."

For Benarcik, nature is both refuge and teacher. Long fascinated with the vitality of plants and animals and the beauty and universality of growth patterns, she uses the process of making art to explore what she sees as a metaphor for human experience— how vulnerable nature is to adversity, yet how tenaciously it adapts and flourishes.

This show is part of Adkins Arboretum's ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through May 31 at the Arboretum Visitor's Center located at 12610 Eveland Rd. near Tuckahoe State Park in Ridgely. Contact the Arboretum at 410-634-2847, ext. 0 or [info@adkinsarboretum.org](mailto:info@adkinsarboretum.org) for gallery hours.

###

*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 is the region's resource for native plants and education programs about nature, ecology and wildlife conservation gardening. For more information, visit [adkinsarboretum.org](http://adkinsarboretum.org) or call 410-634-2847, ext. 0.*

**Adkins Arboretum 12610 Eveland Road Ridgely, MD 21620**  
**410.634.2847 [adkinsarboretum.org](http://adkinsarboretum.org) [info@adkinsarboretum.org](mailto:info@adkinsarboretum.org)**