

# LUMINOUS GARDEN: BETH GALSTON



Photo Credit: Clements/Hoveroft

Beth Galston creates site-specific installations using innovative materials that combine nature and technology to create new hybrid forms. *Luminous Garden (Aerial)* is the sixth version of her strange and enchanting floral environments where plants have nuclei made of LED light bulbs. Galston has shared that she was influenced by her father, a scientist who researched the interaction of plants and lights.

As a fellow at MIT's Center for Advanced Visual Studies early in her career, Galston played with light in other forms, first screened through scrim and later in floor-to-ceiling sculptural pieces. As critic Marty Carlock observed, Galston's work always combines a close attention to nature

with a mastery of contemporary technologies. Between 1998-2016, she cast urethane resin blocks containing oak leaves, magnolia and sweet gum seed pods, rose petals, leaves and thorns.

*Luminous Garden (Aerial)* was inspired by a trip to Galapagos. There Galston was swimming underwater and had the experience of being in a different environment, one without hard walls and hard floors. She felt surrounded by a fluid viscous material. This prompted the work in which she wanted to create a setting in which the viewer feels suspended, as if floating in the air or under the water.

Galston sees the installation with three zones. At the bottom, the floor tethers the multiple wires as they come down, circulate and spread as a root system takes hold. The middle section is an area of underwater kelp or brambly plant. Here the silver wire and the copper wire come together in nodes creating a tangled 3-D drawing in space. At the top are the illuminated bloom elements made of plastic resin cast from actual red-oak acorn caps she collected. Even though this is a garden, they are the only natural part of the work. These elements flower into clusters of golden, luminous blossoms. The piece becomes magical, Galston says, because it defies gravity. It brings the floating world beneath the sea up above ground, allowing the viewer to become part of that world.