



FREDERIK MEIJER Gardens & Sculpture Park

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MEIJER GARDENS HOSTS FIRST U.S. SOLO EXHIBITION BY BRITISH SCULPTOR LAURA FORD

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., — June 17, 2011 — Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park is the exclusive venue for the first solo exhibition by sculptor Laura Ford in the United States. The British sculptor has received widespread acclaim across Europe for her ironic, witty and poignant imagery. **Laura Ford: Actual, Factual Fables** will display a collection of anthropomorphous animals, children behaving mischievously or hiding in plain sight and an array of hybrid creatures. The exhibition is on display through August 21.

The sculptor draws inspiration from a variety of sources and experiences, in the tradition of Aesop, Brothers Grimm and Beatrix Potter, while incorporating contemporary societal issues such as homelessness, poverty, violence and war.

Ford's creatures in the *Rag and Bone* series reveal much about the human condition. Drawing direct inspiration from Potter, they comment on the disenfranchisement of contemporary society.

"Viewers are confronted with kindly woodland creatures, now urbanized, who are down on their luck and forced to forage and beg for sustenance," said Joseph Becherer, Vice President and Chief Curator of Horticulture and Sculpture. "Her work shows sly foxes who must beg, clever badgers who need to scavenge and lady hedgehogs reduced to lives as bag ladies. Ford's goal is to engage viewers with kindly animals while offering insight and sincerity that endears us to their plight, and by extension, the plight of the humans they represent."

Another iconic installation in the exhibition, *The Great Indoors*, is a large-scale, multi-piece work containing five larger-than-life deer made of cloth and leather on steel and jesmonite armatures. The motionless stags appear like stoic trees as two child-size figures appear to move through the group like woodland journeyman.

"At a distance, each animal seems to resemble a large stuffed toy, but on closer inspection the lifelike scale suggests that these are far from children's playthings, but creatures of imagination and message" said Becherer. "Each is partially cloaked in camouflage, calling to mind and juxtaposing the roles of the hunted and the hunter, the obvious nature of the target contrasted with the subtlety of the seeker."

This exhibition is sponsored by Bissell Inc., Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, National Endowment for the Arts, The Meijer Foundation, Botanic and Sculpture Societies of Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park. The exhibition is organized in cooperation with Galerie Scheffel, Germany.

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Images available upon request. [View thumbnails](#)

About Laura Ford

Laura Ford was born in 1961 in Cardiff, Wales to a family of showmen who traveled the fairgrounds during the summer months. Ford is among the foremost figures of a new generation of young British artists whose work has become internationally regarded in the tradition of Henry Moore, Anthony Caro, Antony Gormley and Tony Cragg. In 2005, the artist represented her native Wales in the famed Venice Biennale and has since shown works across England, Sweden, Germany and Spain. Ford earned her BA at the Bath Academy of Art and an MA from the Chelsea School of Art. She lives and works in London.

About Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

One of the world's most significant botanic and sculpture experiences, Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park serves more than a half-million visitors annually. Meijer Gardens was recently ranked in the top 100 most-visited art museums worldwide by *Art Newspaper*, the leading publication in global art news. The 132-acre grounds feature Michigan's largest tropical conservatory; one of the largest children's gardens in the country; arid and Victorian gardens with bronze sculptures by Degas and Rodin; a carnivorous plant house; outdoor gardens; and a 1900-seat outdoor amphitheater, featuring an eclectic mix of world-renowned musicians every summer. The internationally acclaimed Sculpture Park features a permanent collection including works by Rodin, Oldenburg, Moore, Bourgeois and Plensa, among others. Indoor galleries host changing sculpture exhibitions with recent exhibitions by Picasso, Degas, di Suvero, Borofsky, Calder and Chadwick.

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