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Lynn Cazabon's *Portrait Garden* Premieres December 1 on Baltimore Light Rail

Baltimore, November 19, 2014 – *Portrait Garden* is a series of audio and photographic portraits of eleven women incarcerated at Maryland Correctional Institute for Women in Jessup, MD, culminating a 1-1/2 year long collaboration between artist **Lynn Cazabon** and the inmates to create perennial gardens on the prison grounds consisting of plants chosen to represent each woman and recorded interviews with each about the selected plants and her past and present experiences with gardening.

The completed portraits are photographs of the selected plants that were planted and cultivated over the course of a year, displayed with a short textual excerpt from the audio interviews and QR codes, which when scanned with a mobile device, play the full interview with each woman. The complete set of images and audio interviews are available through the project website: <http://portraitgarden.org>

For the month of December, *Portrait Garden* will be displayed as a series of 100 posters in trains within the Baltimore Light Rail system. This public dissemination is conceived as a moving gallery designed to bring the women metaphorically into the community of Baltimore City.

Portrait Garden started in the summer of 2013 when Cazabon began working with this group of women who volunteered to be part of the [Maryland Green Prisons Initiative](#), a program that trains inmates to assist with ecological research. *Portrait Garden* was built upon the foundation of this training, while adding a personal dimension to environmental stewardship by fostering meaningful connections between the activity of cultivating plants and personal growth. Cazabon asked each woman to self-identify with perennial plants and to talk about their choices, in order to encourage self-reflection and renewal for this group of incarcerated women. Perennial plants were chosen specifically for their growth cycle throughout the year, with a dormant period over the winter months, as a symbol of re-birth. The project also seeks to shed light on the realities of long-term incarceration by bringing the thoughts and voices of these women to a wide public audience.

Nine of the inmates are each represented by two photographs: an image of a plant she selected and an image of a native plant Cazabon selected for her, based on their conversations. Two of the inmates have been released since the start of the project and are each represented by a single photograph. To protect the privacy of each woman, they are identified by their first name only, and in some cases, by a first initial.

Portrait Garden was made possible in part by a Rubys Artist Project Grant from the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance, and through support from Babikow Greenhouses and the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

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About the Artist

Lynn Cazabon is an American artist based in Baltimore whose photographic and multi-media works have been exhibited extensively nationally and internationally in museums and galleries for the past 20 years. Cazabon is an Associate Professor of Art at University of Maryland Baltimore County.

<http://lynncazabon.com>

About the Rubys Artist Project Grant Program

The Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance established the Rubys in 2013 through the vision and start-up funding of the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation, to provide meaningful support to individual artists as well as enrich the arts and broader community of Baltimore and the five surrounding counties. The grants provide project-based funding for emerging and established Baltimore-regional artists to support the creation of innovative artistic projects. The grants support the region's gems—the local creative community of performing, visual, media, and literary artists. The name is inspired by the work of Ruby Lerner, the visionary founding director of Creative Capital in New York City.

<http://www.baltimoreculture.org/programs/grants-awards/rubys-artist-project-grants>

About the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance (GBCA)

GBCA nurtures and promotes a vibrant, diverse, and sustainable arts and cultural community essential to the region's quality of life. GBCA speaks boldly in advancing the idea that arts and culture matter to the current and future success of our region.

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***High-resolution images available upon request.
Sample images on following page.***



Carol, tiarella plant, 2013



Elsa, helenium flower, 2013