

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
PORTRAIT GARDEN**

Portrait Garden is a series of photographic and audio 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 Media Arts Grant from the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance, and through support from Babikow Greenhouses and the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

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. Her work can be viewed at <http://lynncazabon.com>