



For Immediate Release: June 5, 2014

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Pittsburgh Public Garden Awakens Green Building with Large-Scale, Multisensory Biophilic Art Exhibit
Phipps brings spirit, life and inspiration to landmark Center for Sustainable Landscapes.

Pittsburgh, Pa. — [Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens](#) has unveiled its [BETA \(Biophilia Enhanced Through Art\) Project](#) at the [Center for Sustainable Landscapes \(CSL\)](#), one of the greenest buildings on Earth. As part of the premier public garden's mission to advance sustainability and promote human and environmental well-being, this large-scale, multisensory installation reaches beyond traditional biophilic features— such as natural views, light and ventilation often incorporated into sustainable structures — to rekindle innate bonds to nature through engagement of all of the senses. Now a model for the world, the new exhibit demonstrates how both people and the planet can benefit from enhancement of the places in which we live, work and play.

A collaborative effort between Phipps, [SmithGroup JJR](#) and [MoxBox](#), the BETA Project features the work of both international artists, such as Dale Chihuly and Hans Godo Fräbel, and local artists, whose pieces reflect qualities of the Pittsburgh region, reinforcing a sense of place. Moving beyond art that is just visual, the exhibition not only showcases paintings and sculptures but also fragrant plants and art pieces with textures that can be touched, as well as a unique [sound art piece by Abby Aresty](#), a year-long composition of nature's sounds in the built environment that interacts dynamically with building controls and is projected into the space by turning windows into speakers via transducers, giving voice to the CSL. The idea behind the pieces, totaling more than two dozen, is to awaken the spirit of the building by connecting people to the beauty found in nature's patterns, cycles and seasons.

"We live in a world where many of the significant global environmental problems we face can be attributed to the fact that we are not only disconnected from nature but also live in a society that values the importance of 'me' rather than 'we'," says Phipps Executive Director Richard V. Piacentini. "We are inspired by beauty and it is important that our green buildings inspire people if we hope to encourage them to change. Ultimately, we want to reinforce those really important connections to nature that we all need to reestablish."

The CSL, a home-base for environmental education and research programs, as well as a space for visitors to explore, is a place of beauty and inspiration. Built on a former brownfield, the structure — incorporating recycled, salvaged and non-toxic materials, and other elements that celebrate connections to nature and promote wellness — is surrounded by a restorative landscape with native plants and a green roof. Other site features added to achieve net-zero energy and net-zero water aims include photovoltaic solar panels, a wind turbine, geothermal wells, a lagoon, rain gardens and constructed wetlands. This landmark facility is expected to be the first in the world to achieve Living Building Certification (so far, Net Zero Energy Building Certification has been awarded under the [Living Building Challenge™](#) in 2014) in tandem with [LEED® Platinum](#) and Four-Stars [Sustainable Sites Initiative™](#) (SITES™) certification for landscapes, both of which were earned in 2013.

The BETA Project exhibit guide can be found here: <http://issuu.com/phippsconservatory/docs/beta>.

About Phipps: Founded in 1893, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in Pittsburgh, Pa. is a green leader among public gardens with a mission to inspire and educate all with the beauty and importance of plants; to advance sustainability and promote human and environmental well-being through action and research; and to celebrate its historic glasshouse. Learn more: phippsconservatory.org.

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