



## In response to COVID-19, Powell Gardens reimagines the visitor experience to provide a space for release this summer.

Powell Gardens announces partnership with Chef Michael Foust and site-specific digital exhibition commissioning new work by regional artists, musicians, and creatives.

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On May 6, Powell Gardens began to admit members with safety precautions including capacity restrictions, contactless timed tickets, and one-way paths. Today, the Gardens will welcome back the public as well.

As an outdoor institution, Powell Gardens, Kansas City's botanical garden, is uniquely positioned to safely provide a space for release, cultural engagement, and entertainment during time when many have been stuck indoors for nearly two months and many venues for recreation remain closed.

In response to the pandemic, Powell Gardens has reimagined its programming and amenities, introducing new self-guided activities for families; curating a site-specific digital exhibition that supports regional creative voices; and replacing its sit-down restaurant with a dispersed food model spearheaded by Chef Michael Foust.

"Throughout this challenging period, we have remained focused on serving our community," said Powell Gardens C.E.O./President Tabitha Schmidt. "Not only by providing increased digital access to the Gardens while under stay-at-home orders, but by looking ahead to what the visitor experience could be once those orders were lifted. We know that nature and the outdoors play a crucial role in our wellbeing and that as a public garden, we can help fill this need. We set a course to adapt and innovate in order to offer the safe, restorative, and joyful experiences that we all need this summer."

### **A Distributed Dining Model led by Chef Michael Foust**

Rather than reopen its 50-seat indoor restaurant, Powell Gardens partnered with Chef Michael Foust of [Black Sheep + Market](#) who will manage the culinary experiences at the Gardens for the remainder of 2020. In June, the Gardens will implement a distributed dining model featuring ingredients sourced from the Heartland Harvest Garden, one of the nation's premiere edible gardens. Visitors will be able to reserve gourmet picnics on special occasions, order from Foust's 35-foot food truck, (the 1953 Spartan RV made from aircraft metal fondly known as "Ethel"), and pick up grab-and-go options to enjoy across the Garden's 175 acres.

### **Digital-Forward Exhibitions Supporting Local Artists + New Work Created During the Pandemic**

Funds intended for the a summer concert series designed to pull in crowds were diverted to commission new work by musicians, artists, writers, dancers, and other cultural producers in response to the setting of the Gardens for a new, digital site-specific exhibition, [Press Play](#). By activating QR codes placed throughout the Gardens, visitors can listen to a poem dedicated to a plant, follow prompts from a dancer to move through the garden, or hear a piece of music inspired by the view in front of them. Much of the work included in the exhibition, which will launch in mid-June and build over the course of the summer, was created during the pandemic, offering Kansas Citians an early glimpse of the cultural production from this unprecedented period. To date, there are ten participating artists including Calvin Arsenia, José Faus, and Jana Harper.



“We are proud to support artists, performers, and healers during a time when so many of them have had gigs, workshops, exhibitions, readings, and entire tours cancelled,” said Jennifer Baker, Curator of Exhibitions at Powell Gardens. “It is no surprise to me that the important work of these talented creators is leading the way for us to imagine new futures in an uncertain world. It is inspiring to work with each collaborator as they respond to the atmosphere of the Gardens and create expansive, responsive, and contemplative experiences meant to be shared with our visitors through this new digital platform.”

Opening today is [\*Head Outside\*](#), the Gardens’ spring exhibition featuring the work of six ceramic artists situated within the horticultural displays. A vignette of sculptures created while shelter-in-place orders were in effect by Lawrence-based ceramic artist Nicole Rene Woodard will peer out the windows from inside of the Visitor Center (currently closed). Also on view will be a group of ceramic self-portraits by five students in the Ceramics Department at the Kansas City Art Institute. Together, these interpretations of the portrait explore how we are learning to care for ourselves and each other as we move through the world, and how that care is being reimagined day by day.

Throughout the summer, Powell Gardens leadership will continue to meet frequently to monitor new developments and ensure that precautionary measures are adequate and appropriate as the Gardens launch the summer exhibition, [\*Fun & Games: Play in the Gardens\*](#) and the family favorite, [\*Festival of Butterflies\*](#).