

ARTLOT

Community Garden

David L. Johnson

Jul 8—Sep 10, 2023

Removed street planters, wild bergamot, soil, unlocked gate

Art Lot is pleased to present *Community Garden*, a solo exhibition by David L. Johnson.

In New York City, there are approximately 550 community gardens registered with GreenThumb, a subsidiary program of the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. GreenThumb provides materials, organizational support, and legal permissions to community groups involved in cultivating gardens on city-owned property. Together, these gardens account for over 100 acres of land the city classifies as “public open space.” As dictated by the NYC Parks GreenThumb License Agreement, registered gardens are required to be open to the public for a minimum of 20 hours per week, from April 1 to October 31. However, unlike other designated green spaces, the official operating hours of these gardens are left up to the volunteers, park workers, and tenants responsible for their management. Because of their reliance on the labor of individual key holders, the listed hours of a community garden may not always align with the time it is physically open, resulting in inconsistencies between public and private access.

Art Lot is an artist-run space situated in an empty lot on the border of Carroll Gardens and Redhook, Brooklyn. Art Lot operates under the permission of the lot’s owners, James and Roberta Vaughn, and has been managed for over three decades by a rotating group of artists and curators. The public hours of Art Lot vary based on the schedules of its participants.

Adjacent to Art Lot are two community gardens: Human Compass Garden and South Brooklyn Children’s Garden. Human Compass Garden’s public hours are Friday to Sunday (9:00 AM to 5:00 PM) and are visible on the garden’s front gate. The public hours of South Brooklyn Children’s Garden are Wednesday (10:00 AM to 2:00 PM) and Saturday to Sunday (10:00 AM to 6:00 PM) but are not visible on the garden’s front gate.

Community Garden consists of eleven street planters that have been removed from different parts of New York City. Public and private entities previously used these planters to obstruct access to steps, benches, building awnings, and other potential resting areas. Emptied of bricks, cast cement, dirt, and dead plant matter, each planter has been replanted with wild bergamot. Also known as bee balm, bergamot is a native herb to New York State that attracts pollinators such as bees, hawk moths, and hummingbirds. Chewing bergamot leaves can help to alleviate headaches, stomach pain, colds, and high blood pressure. The oil from bergamot plants can be used as a salve to treat burns and cuts. Art Lot’s front gate will be left unlocked throughout the duration of *Community Garden*.

David L. Johnson (b. 1993, New York, NY) is an artist who lives and works in New York City. Johnson received a BFA from the Cooper Union in 2015 and an MFA from the University of Pennsylvania in 2020. He is an alum of the Whitney Independent Study Program and a part-time lecturer at the New School. Recent exhibitions include: *La Morsure des Termites*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR; *Life Between Buildings*, MoMA PS1, New York, NY; *Everything is Common*, Artists Space, New York, NY; *Revocable Consents*, Theta, New York, NY.