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PURE & SIMPLE

KATE WINSLET

Green Gables

A 235-year-old house and garden in upstate New York have become a laboratory where the artist Paula Hayes can explore the future of landscape design.

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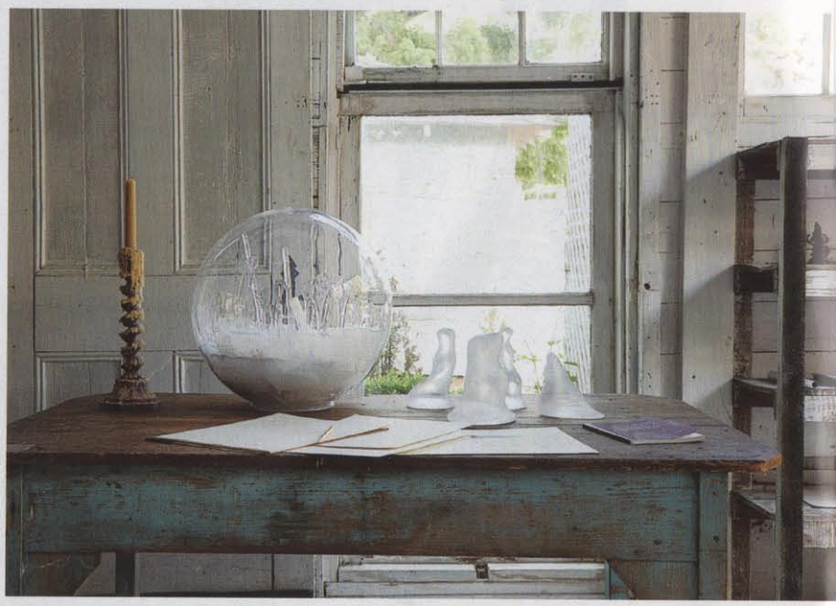
HISTORICAL SOCIETY Hayes's new home in Athens, New York, dates from 1780. The exterior is painted shades of green in homage to poet Walt Whitman. Opposite: Antique armchairs upholstered in vintage linen, a 19th-century mirror and an antique table once used for ceramic work.

SECRET GARDEN
Hayes, above and in her garden at right, says she'd like her work to inspire a "tribe of caregivers." For her own plot, she layered plants of varying heights, colors and textures. The large, black silicone planter (right) is one of her signature pieces, and at far right is a red cast-acrylic sculpture, also by Hayes.

MAGIC HOUR
Clockwise from far left: Hayes calls her studio "the psychic barn," where a cast-acrylic sculpted light fixture is visible; a Haitian wood figure shares space with crystal and coral; one of Hayes's gazing balls sits on a worktable in her studio with models for a new project called *Time Capsule*.



"I FEEL CALLED UPON TO CREATE A NEW AESTHETIC. I WOULDN'T EVEN CALL THIS GARDEN DESIGN. IT'S A WAY OF SCULPTING THE LANDSCAPE."

–PAULA HAYES

WALK INTO THE white-picket-fenced garden of landscape designer and artist Paula Hayes, located behind her recently acquired 18th-century house in Athens, a town in New York's Hudson River Valley, and at first glance it will suggest a traditional cottage plot. But look more closely, and it soon becomes clear why Hayes calls this her vessel for "time travel." Tucked among the heritage rose shrubs and goatsbeard plants and beyond the dwarf blue spruce and vegetable patch bursting with leafy red and green lettuces are sculptural planters made from squishy silicone, a gazing globe holding a futuristic diorama built with old radio parts and an aluminum tree with spiky metal branches from which dangles a white plastic birdhouse. A bluestone path leads to a small gray shed that is Hayes's studio—she calls it "the psychic barn." Here, seated alongside a cast-acrylic sculpture that suggests an upside-down morning glory or a psychedelically colored witch's hat, she dreams up ideas and makes drawings and models for new work. "I feel called upon to create a new aesthetic," Hayes says of juxtaposing contemporary, man-made objects with the otherwise romantic surroundings. "I wouldn't even call this garden design. It's a way of sculpting the landscape that includes what we have done to it already."

Over the past decade, Hayes, 56, has become known for her blown-glass terrariums: biomorphic bubbles that house miniature ecosystems of ferns, bonsai, crystals and flowering plants. In creating them, Hayes reinvented a Victorian concept—the portable greenhouse—by giving it a curvy shape and a pristinely futuristic aesthetic. Her botanical sculptures have been shown around the world, including at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which in 2010 installed two in its atrium for a six-month-long exhibition. (They have also been imitated by retailers from West Elm to Target—much to Hayes's chagrin, although she also says their popularity has helped her achieve her true goal: creating a global "tribe of caregivers.") Behind the scenes, Hayes has created many grand outdoor gardens, for art-world luminaries including New York gallerists Marianne Boesky and David Zwirner, architect Rafael Viñoly and the hedge fund manager and art collector Daniel S. Loeb.

All are drawn to Hayes knowing that the landscape she creates will be unlike any other, because of her fluency with different styles and her individuated approach to each project. Her creations are as diverse as a Hamptons rock garden that blends lichen-covered boulders with contemporary sculpture, and a Gauguin-esque grove of native sea grape and saw palmetto trees at the W Hotel in Miami's South Beach. The unifying theme is her penchant for mixing the industrial and the pastoral. Architect Annabelle Selldorf, who has collaborated with Hayes on several projects for Zwirner's galleries and home, observes that Hayes's work also always introduces a subtle urban edge. "Paula understands the grittiness that New York City brings," Selldorf says, "and juxtaposes that to the dream of nature." (The two are working on an installation for the lobby of a SoHo building.)

Those who have worked with Hayes tend to wax lyrical about her sympathetic warmth. Art collector Mickey Klein, a blunt Texas oilman, softens when he describes her as "an earth mother." Hayes brings formidable horticultural expertise to her calling, too. "I can see Paula's strong artistic vision in how she masses and combines the plants, but I can also see her deep knowledge of and sensitivity to them," says Jennifer McGregor, artistic director of Wave Hill, a historic home, garden and cultural center in the Bronx, New York, where Hayes showed her silicone planters in 2006. "That's what distinguishes her designs."

Hayes, who grew up on a farm in Fonda, New York, was always fascinated by art, often disappearing into the woods to build rock-and-branch sculptures. But it didn't occur to her to combine her interests until the mid-'80s, when, recently divorced with two small children, she was studying sculpture at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York. As part of an experimental program there, she did an off-campus summer internship in biodynamic farming, a holistic approach based on the teachings of the Austrian philosopher and educator Rudolf Steiner. When Hayes realized that Steiner had also inspired Joseph Beuys, the shamanic godfather of conceptual art, her future direction took root.

In 1987 Hayes, then 28, moved to New York City to pursue an M.F.A. at Parsons School of Design. She managed to continue gardening in the city: Within a week of her move, she found a job caring for plants, some of which turned out to belong to celebrities like Woody Allen, Mia Farrow and Miles Davis. "I was just a girl from upstate, with my gardening bag, my braids and my overalls," says Hayes, still wide-eyed. "The things I saw, all these houses and people, it was like, 'Whoa!'"

By the early 1990s, she had joined AC Project Room, an artist-run collaborative in SoHo, where she showed sculptures and installations that incorporated vegetation. One attention-getting 1997 piece allowed the purchase of a potted plant only after the buyer co-signed an agreement that obligated its care, with Hayes promising to continue her mission to grow more. Hayes ran her gardening business from the gallery, thinking of it as a conceptual artwork. She also built one of her first urban gardens there, using pots of orchids, jasmine and lotus to create a fragrant retreat on a deck at the bottom of an air shaft.

Soon, Hayes was designing terrace gardens, too, for Boesky and Artspace co-founder Christopher Vroom, for whom she devised a rooftop aerie in Chelsea with a wisteria- and rose-covered pergola. Her original approach was to "create an oasis," Hayes says. "I felt I was providing this service of bringing an ecstatic experience to people in the city."

In the early 2000s the dealer Jeanne Greenberg commissioned Hayes to create a garden for her Upper

INTO THE BLUE
A vintage armchair and cushion reupholstered in linen in one of the upstairs bedrooms. The painting is Indian, a portrait of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi.

East Side townhouse. Greenberg in turn helped Hayes bring her terrariums, then in prototype, to a broader audience. In 2004 Greenberg opened her Salon 94 gallery with Hayes's first major show, *Forest*, which displayed her silicone planters in the garden as well as planters and terrariums inside the house. Then the landscape commissions began arriving in earnest.

After buying several works from the *Forest* show for his home in Santa Fe, Klein asked Hayes to help sculpt the grounds, which already held site-specific works by Olafur Eliasson and Andy Goldsworthy and a James Turrell "skyspace." "It was an experiment," Klein says. "We were treating her as an artist but also as a landscape architect."

After several conversations, Hayes realized that the Kleins were drawn to ornamental evergreens more commonly found in the Pacific Northwest, rather than the native high desert plants she'd planned to use. Although the idea of importing such trees to the desert was "totally against my better judgment," Hayes says, she devised a plan that combined the two, using a sea of native stipa grass to soften the arid grounds and weeping cedar and pines pruned into cloud-form shapes to echo the surrounding mountains. For Hayes, it was a creative turning point, prompting her to "embrace the idea of hybridity," she says, as well as a more flexible approach. (A project of this nature can take two to five years to complete, she says, with additions and maintenance throughout subsequent seasons.)

Hayes's work today is often inspired by the theme of hybridity. Upcoming projects include an Aspen home where she is mixing her silicone planters with specimen Colorado evergreens and the garden of a Rhode Island Japanese-style house for which she is integrating native plants and boulders with traditional English-style flower beds. For a residence designed by the artist Maya Lin, Hayes will be interspersing dracaena trees with her terrariums and gazing globes.

Most recently, Hayes has been focusing on the landscape of her own Revolutionary War–era house in Athens, which she and her husband of seven years, composer Teo Camporeale, bought nearly two years ago. (They also have an apartment in downtown Brooklyn.) Built as a two-room farming homestead in 1780, it was expanded into a two-story frame house 20 years later and still has many original details.

The previous owner had already planted a "moon garden" in the backyard, with perennials whose flowers look white at midday but intensify as darkness falls, so that they glow yellow, purple, pink and blue. After observing the garden's growth for a while, Hayes decided she loved the idea, as well as most of the plants—although she moved them around into different configurations in the 20-by-40-foot space, building miniature landscapes, such as a fern grove, and creating passageways. She has spent countless hours enriching the soil with biodynamic compost, carefully observing growth patterns and lavishing meticulous care upon each plant. (Unlike in her more expansive gardens, which are prepared, planted and maintained by huge crews, Hayes has carried out all the labor in this one herself.)

To attract hummingbirds and butterflies, Hayes introduced bright flowers, like purple salvia, golden honeysuckle vine and fuchsia and mango lilies. Then she began "adding bones and architecture," as she puts it, planting smokebush and an apple tree for height as well as boxwood and blue spruce for color.

"I like depth in a garden and darker, deeper greens," Hayes says. "If you don't have structure, it gets kind of mushy. Having columns helps you see the entire space." Yet that framework, she adds, should be subtle: "I love it when you can't quite see it at first, and then you stare at it for a while, and you start to see intelligence in how it's laid out." Her process includes building "a sequence of spaces" and layering height and texture, combining plants that stay consistently green with those whose size and color change. "You're making a symphony."

That same harmonious touch can be seen throughout the house. Hayes painted the exterior a somber sage and olive green, in homage to Walt Whitman's Greek Revival home in Camden, New Jersey, which he bought after the success of *Leaves of Grass*. Yet inside, everything seems illuminated by whites and pastels, with curtains and upholstery made from 19th-century linen and walls painted pale shades. Deeper hues appear in a calfskin fireside rug and a dark 19th-century mirror whose mercury glass is impressed with its first owner's fingerprints. A four-poster bed that belonged to the house's original owner is in one bedroom, while a dining-room cabinet holds toys for Hayes's grandchildren (her daughter, Rylan, lives in New York City and frequently visits with her children). Upstairs are such objects as a vase by the Italian designer Gaetano Pesce, a drawing by the Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx and a drawing of Hayes done by her son, Andrew, when he was a child. A basket filled with paintbrushes once used by Camporeale's father, Philip, hangs by the door like an amulet.

"The garden is about color being light in the dark," says Hayes, "and I tried to do that with the interior, too. The rooms feel neutral, but there's every color of the rainbow here. It's about dosage."

Nearly a year ago, she and Camporeale bought the 1860 house next door, which they are transforming into a workspace, with a double-height glass-walled "garden laboratory" on the ground floor for Hayes. Camporeale will have his own soundproof music studio upstairs. Hayes is already thinking about how she'll link the overgrown weeds in that backyard with her painstakingly shaped garden.

"There is this decayed-ruins wonder to it," she observes, looking at the waist-high growth. Although her first instinct is always to "walk away for five years and let the natural vegetation do its thing," Hayes says, she acknowledges that she is unlikely to let that happen. Instead, she says, she will watch and wait, figuring out how to sculpt the flora. This is her living studio, where patient attention is a central tenet: "It's an art form that is transforming and hopefully transformative to others," Hayes says of her work. "There is nothing still-life about it." •

ROOM TO GROW
A bedroom decorated with kilims and 19th-century American tables. Opposite: The garden features Hayes's drawstring planters made from rubber roofing membrane.