

FRANCES YEATTS WHITEHEAD

Desire subset from the installation the DREAM,
installation view, Chicago Cultural Center, 1993:

Equivalent Crown and Equivalent Standard, 1993-
ongoing, laurel plants (*laurus nobilis*), glass, zinc, steel, cast
iron, each 60 x 18

Laurel Mantle, 1993, laurel leaves, linen, zinc, steel, cast
iron, dimensions variable (stand, 50 x 12 x 10; mantle, 30 x 60)

Pistils and Stamens, 1993, glass, zinc on steel, laurel oil,
18 x 18 x 16

Datura meteloides (moonflower), 1993, lithograph,
metal leaf, shellacked Japanese paper, pressed
flower specimen, 25 x 37

Courtesy of the Artist and Lisa Sette Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ



In 1987, after living in Chicago for nine years and creating art that referenced metals and the industrial world, Whitehead planted her first garden, and the focus of her work shifted to embrace the metaphors, systems and mythology of plants. Today she incorporates plants and their essences into sculptural objects and installations, which give rise to a variety of associations based on physical attributes, historical and present uses, and their juxtaposition with other sculptural elements. Laurel, symbol of achievement and fame, is grown and sculpted into the shapes of a standard and crown on stands decorated with cast aluminum datura (nightshade) blossoms. In *Laurel Mantel*, hundreds of dried leaves are attached to linen, suggesting a “cloak” of noble attitude. An accomplished printmaker, Whitehead also produces parallel two-dimensional works. Plants are pressed and dried, then collaged with metal leaf and lithographed drawings which schematize, and illuminate, their architecture.