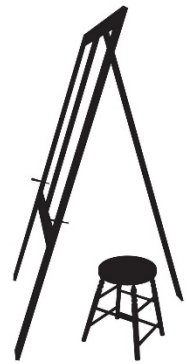


# THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**THE THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE ANNOUNCES THE OPENING OF *THE POLLINATOR PAVILION* – A NEW PUBLIC ARTWORK BY INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS MARK DION AND DANA SHERWOOD**

***The Pollinator Pavilion* Provides a Fantastical Architectural Setting that Offers Miraculous Moments in which Individuals can Encounter Hummingbirds while Exploring a Nurturing Relationship with Nature**

**Catskill, NY – August 11, 2020** – The Thomas Cole National Historic Site announced today the opening of *The Pollinator Pavilion*, a new outdoor architectural sculpture designed specifically for the Thomas Cole National Historic Site by internationally acclaimed artists Mark Dion and Dana Sherwood. Combining their well-known practice of making site-specific installations and their fascination with the natural world, the interactive artwork is a fantastical architectural setting in which individuals can share miraculous moments with pollinators, while exploring a nurturing relationship with nature.

The artists created this interactive artwork to provide sustenance to pollinators and a place of wonder for human visitors, who may have an up-close encounter with these creatures, particularly the fleeting ruby-throated hummingbird, an important pollinator and the only hummingbird species native to this region.

The open-air, lilac, Gothic-style gazebo is filled with original paintings by the artists, living pollinator gardens, feeders, and seating for one guest at a time. Designed to attract pollinators and humans to share the same space, the pavilion creates a radical decontextualization in which individuals can see themselves as part of nature and understand their own capacity to foster an environment of ecological balance.

*The Pollinator Pavilion* is a 21½-foot-high, painted wood, architectural confection draped with flowers, plants, and paintings by the artists, designed as much for hummingbirds, butterflies, bees, and other pollinators, as for people. Sherwood and Dion have worked with living animals



*The Pollinator Pavilion* © Peter Aaron/OTTO

for years, and their approach is to emphasize the animal as an individual that is best appreciated by an actual face-to-face encounter like the one pictured below. *The Pollinator Pavilion* invites human viewers to slow down and allow the process of pollination and feeding to be observed with reverence and joy.

The pavilion will be on site at least until the end of October 2021 and provides a unique artistic encounter and destination that is full of wonder and restoration, especially now during an era of social distancing. The open-air public artwork is set amid the six-acre historic site, and entry into the pavilion is paced to allow individuals to experience it one by one.



Artists Mark Dion and Dana Sherwood express delight as a hummingbird feeds at *The Pollinator Pavilion*.  
© Peter Aaron/OTTO

On many levels *The Pollinator Pavilion* illuminates the critical importance of pollinators and their habitats in a moment of rapid environmental transitions and climate change. It further draws upon a variety of artistic legacies inherent to the Hudson River Valley:

It reflects Thomas Cole's (1801-1848) fascination with the natural world, architecture, and architectural features in the landscape. The pavilion is sited adjacent to Cole's reconstructed New Studio building that was originally designed by the artist in 1846. The pavilion also echoes Cole's alarm at the destruction of the natural world that he witnessed in his time and inverts our response to nature by giving to it rather than taking from it.

This work was originally inspired by the influential series of paintings known as *The Gems of Brazil* (1863-64) by the 19<sup>th</sup>-century artist Martin Johnson Heade (1819-1904), a protégé of Frederic Church, who was in turn a protégé of Cole. Heade's jewel-like and intimate series depicts hummingbirds in their natural habitats and demonstrates his

commitment to close observation of nature and his interest in the ways that art and science intersect – interests that were also of central importance to Thomas Cole and Frederic Church. *The Gems of Brazil* will be on view as part of a major traveling exhibition, "Cross Pollination: Heade, Cole, Church and our Contemporary Moment," created by the Thomas Cole Site (Catskill, NY), The Olana Partnership at Olana State Historic Site (Hudson, NY), and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art (Bentonville, AR), which will be presented jointly and open in full at the Thomas Cole Site and Olana State Historic Site in Spring 2021. *The Pollinator Pavilion* anticipates its arrival and will be a part of that exhibition, which was delayed by a year due to COVID-19.

The Gothic-style open-air pavilion builds upon the fantastical architecture of the Hudson River Valley, which includes Thomas Cole's New Studio that he designed in 1846, and Olana, the home and landscape created by Frederic Church. Both are now connected by the Hudson River Skywalk, a pedestrian walkway across the Hudson River via the Rip Van Winkle Bridge. The pavilion also reflects the design of Hudson River Valley gardens of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – a legacy that Dion and Sherwood continue to enjoy in the garden of their own Hudson River Valley home.



Artist Dana Sherwood puts finishing touches on *The Pollinator Pavilion*.  
© Peter Aaron/OTTO

“Thomas Cole delighted in nature and fantasy, and *The Pollinator Pavilion* shares that sense of delight,” said Mark Dion. “It creates a dialogue between architecture and nature that Cole would have relished.”

“We know that we have the capacity to destroy nature,” said Dana Sherwood. “Here art is enabling us to experience the wonder of co-existence with nature. It makes possible miraculous moments that can profoundly alter our sense of place within nature and our responsibility for it.”

“Mark Dion and Dana Sherwood have created an extraordinary work of art that cultivates a profoundly moving experience. It is perfect for this moment, and as an outdoor work it can be experienced in person in a safe way,” said Elizabeth Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole Site. “The installation nourishes not only the local pollinators but also our need for art that transports us outside of ourselves and our everyday lives. It is a work of stunning beauty and delight that illuminates humanity’s relationship with nature.”

“This luminous space is full of life and draws me in like a firework or a blooming flower,” said Curator Kate Menconeri. “There are so many points of connection, spanning Martin Johnson Heade, nature and fantasy, to Thomas Cole’s environmental advocacy and architectural practice. What moves me most, however, is the way that the pavilion enacts and sustains symbiotic relationships. In a moment when colonies of bees are collapsing and habitats are under threat, the pavilion provides a feast for pollinators, whose lives in turn are inextricably linked to ours and to human food chains. Instead of mining or taking nature, the pavilion responds with reverence and reciprocity – here something is given back.”

Mark Dion is known for works of art that go against the grain of dominant culture to challenge perception and convention. Appropriating archaeology, field ecology, and other scientific methods of collecting, ordering, and exhibiting objects, he creates works that question the distinctions between “objective” (i.e., “rational”) scientific methods and “subjective”



("irrational") influences. He frequently collaborates with museums of natural history, aquariums, zoos, and other institutions mandated to produce public knowledge on the topic of nature. He has had major exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art (New York), Tate Britain (London), MASS MoCA (North Adams), The Institute of Contemporary Art (Boston), and British Museum of Natural History (London), among many others, and has frequent solo gallery exhibitions. His permanent outdoor installation and learning lab – "Neukom Vivarium" – was commissioned by the Seattle Art Museum for the Olympic Sculpture Park. He lives with his wife and frequent collaborator Dana Sherwood in the Hudson River Valley and works worldwide.



*The Pollinator Pavilion* with Thomas Cole's Main House shown behind it  
© Peter Aaron/OTTO

Dana Sherwood is known for works of art that explore contact between human and non-human animals in order to understand culture and behavior. Her sculptures, video works, paintings, and drawings portray ritualized feedings that she performs for animals who live among or at the borders of human populations. The animals play a complex role as subjects and collaborators, asserting their visibility and desires even as her work theorizes about the Anthropocene, the current

geological epoch in which human activity has caused substantial irreversible damage to the natural world. She has exhibited throughout The Americas and Europe, including solo exhibitions at Nagle-Draxler Reiseburogalerie (Cologne), Denny Dimin Gallery (New York) and Kepler Art-Conseil (Paris).

Audio recordings of both artists discussing separately *The Pollinator Pavilion* are available [here](#). High-resolution versions of the above pictures are available from Jennifer Greim at [JGreim@thomascole.org](mailto:JGreim@thomascole.org). More information is at [www.thomascole.org/pollinatorpavilion](http://www.thomascole.org/pollinatorpavilion).

**THE THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE** is an international destination presenting the original home and studios of Thomas Cole (1801-1848), founder of the Hudson River School of painting, the nation's first major art movement. Located on 6 acres in the Hudson Valley, the site includes the 1815 Main House; Cole's 1839 Old Studio; the recently reconstructed New Studio building; and panoramic views of the Catskill Mountains. It is a National Historic Landmark and an affiliated area of the National Park System. The Thomas Cole Site's activities include guided and self-guided tours, special exhibitions of both 19<sup>th</sup>-century and contemporary art, print publications, extensive online programs, activities for school groups, free community events, lectures, and innovative public programs such as the Hudson River School Art Trail—a map and website that enable visitors to visit the places that Cole painted. The goal of all programs at the Thomas Cole Site is to enable visitors to find meaning and inspiration in

Thomas Cole's life and work. The themes that Cole explored in his art and writings—such as landscape preservation, the need for public art museums, and our conception of nature as a restorative power—are historic and timely, providing the opportunity to connect to audiences with insights that are highly relevant to their own lives.

**Thomas Cole VISITOR INFORMATION:** Visit [thomascole.org/events](http://thomascole.org/events) for outdoor and digital programming available now. Keep in touch on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at @thomascolesite.

*Cross Pollination: Heade, Cole, Church, and Our Contemporary Moment* was created by the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, The Olana Partnership at Olana State Historic Site, and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas. Its tour is organized by Crystal Bridges.

Support for the exhibition and its national tour is provided by Art Bridges. Additional major support is provided by the Henry Luce Foundation.

The exhibition is also supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art. In New York the project is supported in part by The National Endowment for the Arts; Empire State Development's I LOVE NEW YORK program under the Market NY initiative; and the New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, and the New York State Legislature.

In New York the project is also supported by the Robert Lehman Foundation; The Bank of Greene County Charitable Foundation; the Greene County Legislature through the County Initiative Program of the Greene County Council on the Arts; The Olana Partnership's Novak-Ferber Exhibitions Fund; and the Kindred Spirits Society of the Thomas Cole Historic Site.

Support for the catalogue is provided by Furthermore, a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund.



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