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## THE THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE ANNOUNCES “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 – July 28, 2020** – The Thomas Cole National Historic Site announced today that it will unveil on Friday, August 7, *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 nature, 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 enchanting creatures, particularly the fleeting Ruby-throated hummingbird, an important pollinator and the only hummingbird species that lives in this region. The open-air, lavender painted Gothic style gazebo will be filled with living pollinator gardens, feeders, original paintings by the artists, 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.



Mark Dion and Dana Sherwood, *Sketch for The Pollinator Pavilion*, 2020 (Interactive wood and metal sculpture (with acrylic on panel, potted and hanging plants, bird feeders, and seating 21 1/2' x 12'), watercolor and pencil on paper, 12 x 9 in.

*The Pollinator Pavilion* is a 21 ½-foot-high, painted wood, architectural confection draped with flowers, plants, and paintings by the artists, designed as much for hummingbirds as for people. Sherwood and Dion have worked with living animals for years and their approach is to emphasize the animal as an individual that is best appreciated by an actual face-to-face encounter. *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.

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 nineteenth-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 the 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.

“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.

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).

For more visit: [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.

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