

PRESS RELEASE

September 14, 2020

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PLANTING FIELDS FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES OPENING OF *THE GREAT BIRD BLIND DEBATE*

New exhibition by Mark Dion and David Brooks inaugurates Catalyst commissions program

Oyster Bay, New York – Planting Fields Foundation (“Planting Fields” or “the Foundation”) and New York State Parks Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation are pleased to announce the September 26 opening of the outdoor sculptural exhibition entitled, *The Great Bird Blind Debate*. Located in the Carl F. Wedell Bird Sanctuary, world-class artists Mark Dion and David Brooks have created site-specific installations in the form of bird blinds designed for the close observation of birds, reflecting on the natural world and history of Planting Fields. A corresponding exhibition including the artists’ renderings, models, sculptures, and other multimedia will be displayed inside Coe Hall.

The first of its kind at Planting Fields, the exhibition ushers in the Foundation’s new *Catalyst* program created to bring newly commissioned work by living artists to the site. Planting Fields creators W.R. and Mai Coe were bird enthusiasts and shared a deep appreciation for art, commissioning leading artists and designers of the early twentieth century. *The Great Bird Blind Debate* preserves their legacy of arts patronage established one hundred years ago. “As Planting Fields continues to be a respite in nature for our community, we are incredibly excited to have Mark and David’s work add fresh perspectives for our visitors,” says Gina Wouters, Executive Director of Planting Fields Foundation.

The Carl F. Wedell Bird Sanctuary was carefully selected as the site of the installations based on the artists’ mutual interest in ornithology and new perspectives that emerged out of the Cultural Landscape Report highlighting the environmental impact of the landscape of Planting Fields. W.R. Coe is also remembered for his endowment of the Professor of Ornithology position at Yale University, an appointment that historically has been filled by the world’s leading ornithologists, including today by Richard Prum, Ph.D.

Exhibition Opening and Book Release

On the exhibition opening day, registered guests will have a chance to meet the artists, explore in and around the exhibitions and get the first look at the artists' renderings inside Coe Hall. The Foundation is also publishing a hardcover, full-color book to coincide with the exhibition that will be released to the public on opening day. Along with stunning photography and facts and tips on birds and birdwatching, the publication features contributions by both artists, Erik Kulleseid, Commissioner of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, J. Drew Lanham, Nadir Souirgi, Corinne Spencer, Hara Woltz and Planting Fields Foundation Executive Director Gina J. Wouters.

Opening day reservations are available for 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM and 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM. Advance tickets required, \$20 for members and \$30 for non-members. Reservations and pre-orders of the book can be purchased at www.plantingfields.org.

Exhibition Tour Overview

A guided tour of *The Great Bird Blind Debate* will be offered Tuesday through Sunday through December 1. The tour begins in the exhibition rooms in Coe Hall and continues with a guided walk to the installation site to view David Brooks' *Budding Bird Blind* and access the inside of Mark Dion's *The Posh Blind*. Participants will see how Dion and Brooks drew from the aesthetic elements of Coe Hall and Planting Fields to create sculptures that reflect on human interaction with the environment, the culture of birding, and the interplay of observation and debate in the scientific community.

Exhibition Tours - Hours Tuesday – Sunday (Closed Monday) 11:00 AM 12:30 PM 1:30 PM	Admission \$10 Adults \$9 Seniors \$5 Youth 12-17 FREE for members and kids under 12
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Safety Protocols and Procedures

To ensure the health and safety of our visitors, staff, and volunteers, the ticketing system and carefully crafted visitation procedures for exhibition tours align with CDC and New York State Forward guidelines:

- Tour groups are limited to 10 members of the same household or party.
- Tours may be booked online, or walk-ins are also accepted at the front door of Coe Hall, pending availability.
- Face coverings or masks covering nose and mouth are mandatory for all visitors inside Coe Hall. The Foundation can provide face masks to visitors who need or request them.
- 6 ft social distancing guidelines must always be maintained.
- High-touch surfaces are regularly disinfected.
- Hand sanitizer is readily available in locations across the grounds and within all buildings.

- Per New York State guidelines, the Foundation is required to maintain a trace log for all visitors. All guests will be asked to confirm contact information upon arrival.

About the Artists

Mark Dion and David Brooks are conceptual artists known for incorporating elements of ecology in their works, exploring the relationship between individuals and their built and natural environments. *The Great Bird Blind Debate* is their first collaboration.

Mark Dion has had major exhibitions at Storm King Art Center, New Windsor, New York, dOCUMENTA 13 in Kassel, Germany, MoMA PS1 in New York City, ICA Boston, British Museum of Natural History in London, Guggenheim Bilbao and the Tate Gallery in London and his work can be found in the collections of MoMA, Tate Gallery, Carnegie Museum of Art, Centre Pompidou and Seattle Art Museum.

David Brooks has had major exhibitions at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut, MoMA PS1 in New York City, Storm King Art Center, New Windsor, New York, along with exhibitions at the Tang Museum, Saratoga Springs, Vizcaya Museum in Miami, Florida and major commissions from The Trust for Governors Island, Art Production Fund with the Time Square Alliance, and deCordova Museum, Massachusetts.

About Planting Fields Foundation

Planting Fields Foundation strives to preserve and make relevant to all audiences the heritage of Planting Fields, an early 20th century 409-acre estate, designed as an integrated composition of the built and natural world. Founded in 1952 by William R. Coe, the Foundation is a not for profit public educational foundation chartered by the New York State Board of Regents and tax exempt under the status for a 501C3 organization. Located in Oyster Bay, New York and originally landscaped by the Olmsted Brothers of Brookline, Massachusetts, the Arboretum grounds feature 409 acres of greenhouses, rolling lawns, formal gardens, woodland paths and outstanding plant collections. The original historic estate buildings remain intact including Coe Hall, a 65-room Tudor Revival mansion designed by Walker & Gillette. The interior of the house is a showcase of artistry and craftsmanship and features a distinctly American aesthetic through original ironwork commissions by Samuel Yellin and murals painted by artists Robert Winthrop Chanler and Everett Shinn. Planting Fields is included in the National Register of Historic Places. Learn more at www.plantingfields.org

About New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation oversees more than 250 parks, historic sites, recreational trails, golf courses, boat launches and more, which are visited by 74 million people annually. For more information on any of these recreation areas, call 518-474-0456 or visit www.parks.ny.gov, connect with us on Facebook, or follow on Instagram and Twitter