



P L A N T I N G F I E L D S

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NEW SOUND INSTALLATION BY NICO MUHLY OPENS AT PLANTING FIELDS ON JUNE 24

Planting Fields Foundation presents its *Catalyst 2021* exhibition: *Pastoral (Indoors/Outdoors)*

Oyster Bay, New York – May 4 – Planting Fields Foundation (“Planting Fields” or “the Foundation”) announced today its 2021 *Catalyst* contemporary arts commission entitled, *Pastoral (Indoors/Outdoors)*, a new sound installation by American composer Nico Muhly. The first of its kind at Planting Fields, the installation will be comprised of two parts and accessible via guided tour of the concurrent exhibition, *Everett Shinn: Operatics* for an immersive intersection of historic and contemporary art. Exhibition tours are always free for Planting Fields Foundation members.

Said Executive Director, Gina Wouters, “We are thrilled to present the work of Nico Muhly for the first time at a historic site such as Planting Fields. This commission is a wonderful addition to our *Catalyst* program, which continues the legacy of arts patronage established by Planting Fields creators W.R. and Mai Coe who supported some of the most important living artists of their time. The installation reflects our enduring commitment to elevating artistic voices of today within the layered experience of Planting Fields, where we are always, simultaneously, on the cusp of looking back and looking forward.”

The first part of *Pastoral (Indoors/Outdoors)* is a six-minute piano piece, recorded by pianist Conor Hanick, that will reference nature-inspired music of the early twentieth century. The music will play in the Gallery of Coe Hall, a space characterized by its floor-to-ceiling windows, Gothic beams, minstrel gallery and the Steinway piano once played by Mai Coe and her daughter Natalie. The second part of the installation is a longer, twenty-minute composition, that will be played in a continuous loop and audible inside and around the exterior of the 1915 Tea House in the Italian Garden. The compilation of piano, strings, and woodwinds with electronic enhancements will recall the pastoral landscape, and the fanciful, floral decoration of the Tea House painted by artist Everett Shinn, with hints of birdsong in the spirit of French composer Olivier Messiaen.

“Music, art, architecture, and natural beauty are all important aspects of the history of Planting Fields, not only in terms of what the Coe family built here in the early twentieth century but also for everyone who has visited here since. This two-part sound installation brilliantly combines all these elements and brings a new dimension to the visitor experience

of Planting Fields,” said Meredith A. Brown, Director of Museum Affairs and Chief Curator. “I can think of no one better suited to translate the particulars of this site’s architecture, landscape, and social history into music than Nico Muhly, who brings such nuance, intelligence, and accessibility to all his work.”

Pastoral (Indoors/Outdoors) will open to the public during regular Coe Hall hours on Thursday, June 24 for a special evening reception following a private preview event with Nico Muhly on June 19 that will feature a performance by concert pianist Conor Hanick. The exhibition will remain open through November 14, accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with introduction by Executive Director Gina J. Wouters, essays by curator Meredith A. Brown and art historian H  l  ne Valance, and contributions by Nico Muhly and Conor Hanick.

Artist Statement

“This work at Planting Fields is site-specific in that it’s both inside and outside, natural and constructed. The first part of the piece, designed to be experienced in the main house, is a piece of unadorned solo piano music, whereas the second part in the Tea House is more abstracted, pastoral, and stylized. The tangible and recognizable chamber music in the home has exploded and densified into more modern sounds and variations. So often, in earlier music, you get the sense that nature is to be kept apart. Something that I’ve always felt with Olivier Messiaen, who has been an inspiration for this commission for Planting Fields, is that he’s allowing inside to be outside. Suddenly, it’s like the walls have vanished from the space. You can see things through the glass, and that is what is so magical - that’s what the architecture at Planting Fields does, in its eclecticism. There is access to the outside from everywhere inside, the imagery of birds and nature evokes a sense that outside is being invited in.”

About Nico Muhly

Nico Muhly, born in 1981, is an American composer who writes orchestral music, works for the stage, chamber music and sacred music. He’s received commissions from The Metropolitan Opera: *Two Boys*, (2011) and *Marnie* (2018); Carnegie Hall, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Tallis Scholars, and King’s College, Cambridge, among others. He is a collaborative partner at the San Francisco Symphony and has been featured at the Barbican and the Philharmonie de Paris as composer, performer, and curator. An avid collaborator, he has worked with choreographers Benjamin Millepied at the Paris Op  ra Ballet, Bobbi Jene Smith at the Juilliard School, Justin Peck and Kyle Abraham at New York City Ballet; artists Sufjan Stevens, The National, Teitur, Anohni, James Blake and Paul Simon. His work for film includes scores for *The Reader* (2008) and *Kill Your Darlings* (2013), and the BBC adaptation of *Howards End* (2017). Recordings of his works have been released by Decca and Nonesuch, and he is part of the artist-run record label Bedroom Community, which released his first two albums, *Speaks Volumes* (2006) and *Mothertongue* (2008).

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 of a 501(c)(3) organization. Located in Oyster Bay, New York and originally landscaped by the Olmsted Brothers of Brookline, Massachusetts, the 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.

To learn more about Planting Fields Foundation, please visit our website at www.plantingfields.org.

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