

## PLANTING FIELDS FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES SAM VAN AKEN AS 2025 CATALYST ARTIST



Artist Rendering: *The Planting Fields Stand*, summer (right) and spring (left) in 2025

OYSTER BAY, NY – December 16, 2024: Planting Fields Foundation (the Foundation) has just announced that renowned contemporary artist and agricultural innovator Sam Van Aken, known for his *A Tree of Forty Fruit*, has been selected by the organization as their 2025 *Catalyst* artist. The site-specific project, titled *The Planting Fields Stand*, is set to be installed in March of 2025.

*The Planting Fields Stand* will feature four multi-grafted trees that explore the fruit growing history of Planting Fields and Long Island, including an indigenous tree composed of varieties cultivated by the Matinecock; a pear tree comprised of varieties recorded in planting notes from the Coe family and found in the Foundation’s archives; an apple tree comprised of Coe family era apples (the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century); and a stone fruit tree composed of peaches, plums, apricots, and cherries that were historically grown on Long Island. “Planting Fields is a diverse place and offers so much, from history to horticulture, to art and community. It is an exciting thing to be able to honor the past of this place and bring to life trees that embody just a few stories of Planting Fields”, said Sam Van Aken. “My hope is that this project not only represents where this site has been, but where it wants to go too”.

Gina Wouters, the Foundation’s President and CEO shared that, “this installment is entirely unlike *Catalyst* projects we’ve commissioned in the past because it will allow visitors the opportunity to learn about this site’s history in a living way. They’ll be able to witness these trees grow and bear fruit.” Wouters continued, “Viewers are invited and encouraged to reconsider the relationship between humanity and nature, both at Planting Fields and beyond. This project is particularly important to us as we foster a deeper appreciation for local biodiversity and promote sustainable agricultural practices. By showcasing the beauty and historic varieties, we are encouraging our community and visitors to engage with their environment, raising awareness about the importance of preserving genetic diversity in our food sources. Such initiatives can inspire local gardening efforts, food sovereignty movements, and educational programs that connect people with the origins of their food.”

An exclusive evening lecture led by Sam Van Aken at the Main House of Planting Fields will take place on Friday, September 19, and the public opening of the project on Saturday, September 20. Avid gardeners and horticulturists interested in volunteering their time to install and maintain *The Planting Fields Stand* should contact Donna Moramarco, Director of Horticulture, at [dmoramarco@plantingfields.org](mailto:dmoramarco@plantingfields.org) with a cover letter and resume outlining their interest. Individuals, organizations, and corporations interested in sponsorship opportunities should email Neal Edelson, Director of Development, at [nedelson@plantingfields.org](mailto:nedelson@plantingfields.org).

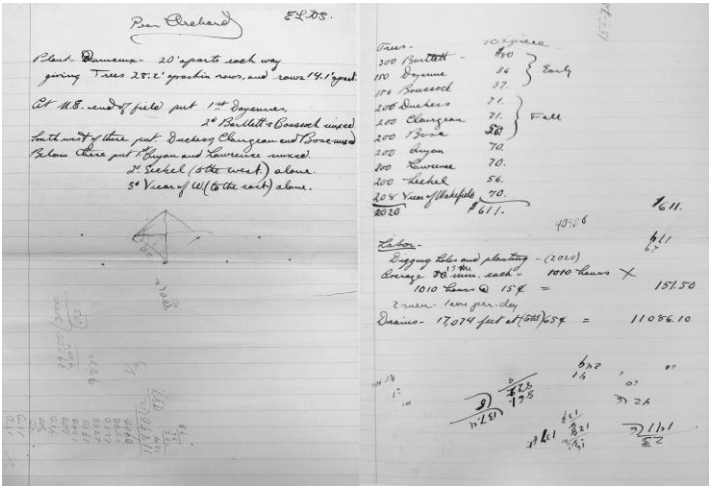
Every year since 2020, Planting Fields Foundation has commissioned artists to create site-specific art within the 409-acres of Planting Fields. The organization launched *Catalyst* to continue the legacy of artistic patronage the Coe family brought to Planting Fields over a century ago by inviting leading artists of their time to create work for the site. Through *Catalyst*, we challenge and expand our relationships with history as we explore this site from different points of view.

Sam Van Aken is a contemporary artist who works beyond traditional modes of art making, crossing artistic genres and disciplines to develop new perspectives on such themes as communication, botany, agriculture, climatology, and the ever-increasing impact of technology. Van Aken’s interventions in the natural and public realm are seen as metaphors that serve as the basis of narrative, sites of place making, and in some cases even become the basis of scientific research. Van Aken received his MFA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and since this time his work has been exhibited and placed nationally and internationally. He has received numerous honors including a Joan Mitchell Foundation Award, Association of International Curator’s of Art Award and a Creative Capital Grant. Most recently, his work has been presented as part of Nature-Cooper Hewitt Design Triennial with the Cube Design Museum, Netherlands.

###

### Planting Fields Foundation

Established in 1952 as a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization, 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. Planting Fields is a dynamic and vibrant site that features numerous historic structures, Olmsted Brothers-designed landscapes, and world class art and horticultural collections. As a former Gold Coast estate, it is preserved today as a celebration of art, architecture, landscape, and the people that resided on its land. Annual festivals and seasonal 5Ks, as well as year-round programs, lectures, symposia, exhibitions, concerts, performances, and family events take place, ushering in over 200,000 visitors each year. Thousands of school-aged children engage with Planting Fields to learn about the sciences and humanities through varied offerings that are uniquely reflected at the site. Learn more at [plantingfields.org](http://plantingfields.org).



William Coe pear orchard planting notes. With list of varieties, prior to 1921. Planting Fields Foundation Archives.



Olmstead Associates, 1935 Topographical Map with apple and pear orchards highlighted and inset of greenhouse magnification with proposed *Planting Fields Stand*.



Indian Blood Cling Peach, descendent of variety grown by Matinecock in Oyster Bay



Artist Rendering: *The Planting Fields Stand*, spring, 2024