

FOLLIES: INTERACTIVE COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS AND PERFORMANCE AT PLANTING FIELDS



Invisible Cities. Performance Space 21. Chatham NY. Image courtesy of Processional Arts.

OYSTER BAY, NY – June 10, 2024: Join Planting Fields Foundation for a unique opportunity to work with this year's *Catalyst* artists, Processional Arts, to create *Follies: A Botanical Backstory*, a site-specific performance on the grounds of Planting Fields. The performance will be built during a week of FREE art workshops starting on July 19 and culminating in a final event on Saturday, July 27. Registration is available online [by clicking here](#) or visiting plantingfields.org

Inspired by the horticultural collections of Planting Fields, *Follies* explores botanical connections to material cultures, colonial histories, medicinal wisdom, and scientific discoveries. Workshop participants will translate these botanical backstories onto mobile illustrated hothouses and translucent puppets that mysteriously assemble, then drift apart as they move through the gardens in performance. President and CEO of Planting Fields Foundation, Dr. Gina J. Wouters encourages lovers of Planting Fields near and far to participate as “...this experience will be unlike any other *Catalyst* project. By inviting Processional Arts to come in and engage directly with our community, we hope to open the *Catalyst* program up to a wider audience than ever before. This event will activate the landscape and highlight hidden histories of the site in ways that are sure to excite long-time and first-time visitors alike.”

Follies invites makers and audiences alike to dig deeper into the buried tales of Planting Fields Foundation’s historic and horticultural collections and see Planting Fields through a newly colored glass. “When we first encountered Planting Fields, we were intrigued by the way structures like the Tea House and the Playhouse balance the extravagant with the intimate, and the functional with the fanciful” says Alex Kahn and Sophia Michahelles of Processional Arts. “We are so excited to engage the Planting Fields community in helping us translate the stories behind its orchids, camellias, succulents, and other plants into translucent hothouse follies”. Processional Arts will engage workshop participants in every stage of creating this collaborative immersive performance. Employing techniques such as paper mâché, decoupage, and lightweight sculptural assemblage, the stories, symbols, and seasons of Planting Fields will come to life as ambulatory artworks. Workshops will take place twice a day (session one: 11am – 2pm, session two: 2pm – 5pm) from July 19 – 25. Wednesday July 24, sessions will take place 2pm – 5pm and 5pm – 8pm. Rehearsal will take place on July 26 from 6:30 – 8:30pm, and the culminating performance on July 27. Workshops are geared towards adults and teens, but children ages 8 and up are welcome to work with an accompanying adult. No experience necessary – one will be provided!

Follies is the 2024 *Catalyst* program. Every year since 2020, Planting Fields Foundation has commissioned artists to create site-specific art within the 409-acres of Planting Fields. We 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.

Processional Arts, led by Alex Kahn and Sophia Michahelles, works with communities to create site-specific, human-powered, art parades and Carnavalesque happenings. These collaborative works evoke unique local narratives and visual cultures through pageant puppetry, illuminations, ceremonial architecture, and masking/costuming. Since 1998, performances by Processional Arts have led NY’s Village Halloween Parade and appeared at the High Line, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Miami’s Vizcaya Museum, and the Obama White House.

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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.

Additional Image



Volunteers of every age working on an element from a previous Processional Arts workshop. Image courtesy of Ben Thacker.