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Socrates Sculpture Park to Debut 2022 Season, Featuring never-before-realized project by Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica, New Site-Responsive Sculptures from Maren Hassinger, beginning May 14

Pioneering Projects highlight the Human Relationship to Natural and Social Environments, Following Tamsin Dillon’s Recent Leadership Appointment as Executive Director

Long Island City, NY | April 26, 2022 - Socrates Sculpture Park will explore human relationships to natural and sociopolitical environments with the debut of Hélio Oiticica’s never-before-executed Subterranean Tropicália Projects: PN15 1971/2022, opening May 14, and Maren Hassinger’s site-responsive Steel Bodies, opening May 28. Socrates’ Spring/Summer 2022 exhibition and programming season, anchored by the exhibition of Oiticica and Hassinger’s works, build upon the Park’s long-standing collaboration with, and support of artists who are expanding the boundaries of their practice in nontraditional, public spaces at crucial junctures in their careers. The commissions reaffirm the Park’s commitment to the contemplative presentation of and engagement with groundbreaking, participatory public art.

Socrates’ presentation of Oiticica’s Subterranean Tropicália Projects: PN15 1971/2022 (or PN15) will be the first execution of the late-Brazilian artist-activist’s idea that he originally conceived – but never realized – in 1971 for Central Park while he was living in New York City. The immersive environment of PN15 draws inspiration from the City’s thriving underground culture, encouraging visitors to drift through the circular structure of curving corridors for a multi-sensory experience. The installation features plants and image projections that create a play of light, shadow, changes in opacity, framing, and orientation. Presented in partnership with Projeto Hélio Oiticica and Americas Society, PN15 will be a space for collective creativity and leisure, dubbed “creleisure” by the artist.

"We are thrilled that Socrates Sculpture Park has taken the initiative to realize Hélio Oiticica’s PN15 for the first time," said brothers of the artist, César and Claudio Oiticica. “Hélio knew the work may not be actualized during his lifetime so he left copious notes and a scale model. It feels appropriate that the project will see its first physical iteration in the city in which it was conceived. The spirit of collaboration was always important to Hélio so we are excited that this participatory work will be activated through films and other performers during the exhibition."

Steel Bodies marks Hassinger’s return to Socrates after the artist’s first exhibition at the Park in 1988. The new, site-responsive work examine the complications of human interrelation and affinity, identity, and collectiveness, through abstraction in the outdoors. The public is invited to walk among the steel vessels, up to nine feet high, experiencing new perspectives through their linear frames. The pieces evoke literally and figuratively, containers and forms of different shapes and sizes, but all share the same internal air. The proximity of Hassinger’s sculptures to one another, choreographed throughout the Park’s five-acre landscape, encourages visitors to
move through the exhibition taking note of their bodies in public and shared space.

“Vessels are what we all are - and it's within our capacity to recognize each other as companions,” said Hassinger about her work for Socrates. “Whoever we are, wherever we're from, we are companions - capable of compassion for one another.”

Accompanying the two major commissions by Oiticica and Hassinger is a new artwork on the Park’s main entrance billboard from Socrates alumni artist, Joiri Minaya which was curated by the Park’s teen program, Socrateens. The Park continues its exploration of our relationship with the natural environment later this year with its open call exhibition, Sink or Swim: Climate Futures which will feature five original projects from early-career artists and goes on view in September.

“Oiticica was a pioneer and remains one of the most prolific contemporary artists of his time. His ideas gave way to a new social and political movement, rooted in revolutionary artistic expression. Oiticica pushed the public towards acknowledging the realities of life in 1960s Brazil, and the relationship of South American immigrants to their experience in America,” said Tamsin Dillon, who joined Socrates as Executive Director in February. “Fifty-one years after Oiticica lived and worked in New York City’s Lower East Side, the public will finally experience his vision for Central Park brought to life here at Socrates.”

“It is quite the honor to have Maren return to us after more than three decades following her first exhibition at the Park,” Dillon continued. “I have been a fan of Maren’s work for many years and am excited to see the well-deserved attention she has garnered. Her consideration for material, form and concept has created a steadfast career with much to discover. She is an innovative artist whose work asks us to consider how we engage with and access our natural environment. I hope the public will enjoy Maren’s invitation to reconstitute themselves in relation to her sculptures. It will challenge their notions of interiority and exteriority. I am very excited about this season, my first as Executive Director, and the opportunities Socrates continues to offer our community to interact with these artists and their ideas expressed through public art.”

“This exciting transition to Tamsin’s leadership provided a perfect opportunity for the curatorial program to reflect on the past, as we look to the future,” said Jess Wilcox, Curator & Director of Exhibitions for the Park since 2016. “The Spring projects look to different histories: with Oiticica, a reframing of art historical narrative of participatory art that champions those on the margins; with Hassinger, Socrates’ early (and now continued) support of a pioneer in public and environmental art, and with the Socrateens-curated Billboard, further engaging our recent artist fellows and the next generation of artworkers.”

Socrates will also continue its series of free, public programming throughout the spring and summer including a series of family-friendly workshops, conversations, performances, and more. The full programming schedule is available and will be updated at Socrates.org/programs.

Héli Oiticica Subterranean Tropicála Projects: PN’15 1971/2022 is on view from May 14 - August 14, 2022. Opening hours are Friday 5:00 - 7:30pm, Saturday 11am - 5pm, Sunday 11am - 5pm.

Maren Hassinger Steel Bodies is on view May 28, 2022 – March 5, 2023.

For full exhibition details, visit socratesscupturepark.org/exhibitions

Socrates Sculpture Park is located at 32-01 Vernon Blvd. in Long Island City, NY 11106. 718-956-1819 info@socratesscupturepark.org The Park is open 365 days a year, from 9am to sunset. Admission is free.

Artist biographies and images available for download here.

About Hélio Oiticica
Hélio Oiticica (1937 – 1980) is widely regarded as one of Brazil’s leading artists of the twentieth century and a touchstone for much contemporary art made since the 1960s, primarily through his freewheeling, participatory works of art, performative environments, avant-garde films and abstract paintings. He was a countercultural figure and underground hero, foregrounding bodily interaction with spatial and environmental concerns over pure aesthetics. He was a key member of the historic Rio de Janeiro-based Grupo Frente (1954-56) and a leading figure of Brazilian Neo-Concretism (1959-61) which ultimately gave rise to the artistic movement known as
Tropicalismo, named for a work of Oiticica’s from 1967. Oiticica’s work has been the subject of exhibitions at several major museums including the Carnegie Museum of Art (Pittsburgh), the Art Institute of Chicago, the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), The Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and the Tate Modern (London). His work is included in the collections of numerous international institutions including Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA, USA; Inhotim Centro de Arte Contemporânea, Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, USA; Museo de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain; Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX, USA; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, USA; Tate Modern, London, UK; and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA, among others. The Projeto Hélio Oiticica was established in Rio de Janeiro in 1980 to manage the artist’s estate.

About Maren Hassinger
Maren Hassinger (b.1947) has built an expansive practice that articulates the relationship between nature and humanity. Carefully choosing materials for their innate characteristics, Hassinger has explored the subject of movement, family, love, nature, environment, consumerism, identity, and race. Wire rope has played a prominent role in Maren Hassinger’s artistic practice since the early 1970s when, as a sculptor placed in the Fiber Arts program at UCLA, Hassinger used the material to bridge the gap between the two disciplines. The artist often takes a biomimetic approach to her material, whether bundling it to resemble a monolithic sheaf of wheat or planting it in cement to create an industrial garden. Maren Hassinger is the recipient of numerous honors, including a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Women’s Caucus for the Arts. Her work is included in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; Baltimore Museum of Art; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Modern Art, NYC; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC, among others.

SUPPORT

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ABOUT SOCRATES
For over 35 years, Socrates Sculpture Park has been a model of public art production, community activism, and socially inspired place-making. Over 1,000 artists have created and exhibited new works on its five waterfront acres and outdoor studio facilities. Socrates is free and open to the public 365 days a year from 9am to sunset. It is located at 32-01 Vernon Boulevard (at Broadway) in Long Island City, New York. Socrates Sculpture Park is a not-for-profit organization licensed by NYC Parks to manage and program Socrates Sculpture Park, a New York City public park. Covid-19 Updates: Socrates remains open to the public at regular hours, 9am – sunset, with free admission. Park policies and updates regarding health and safety can be found at socratessculpturepark.org/Covid19.

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