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The Bruce Museum is the first venue to exhibit Mark Dion and Alexis Rockman: Journey to Nature's Underworld

By GREENWICHFREEPRESS | June 21, 2023
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On June 24, 2023 the Bruce Museum in Greenwich will be the first venue to showcase Mark Dion and Alexis Rockman: *Journey to Nature's Underworld*, a new traveling exhibition surveying 30 years of both artists' work, on view through August 27, 2023.

The exhibition is the first two-person survey of these renowned artists and will explore their shared allegiances and sustaining friendship over three decades. Mark Dion and Alexis Rockman: *Journey to Nature's Underworld* is guest curated by Suzanne Ramljak and organized by the American Federation of Arts.



Mark Dion (American, b. 1961) and Alexis Rockman (American, b. 1962) with Aaron Delehanty (American, b. 1961), Low Cow Studio
American Landscape, 2021
 8 x 16 x 8 feet
 Mixed-media diorama with taxidermy, found objects, and painted background
 Cross-sectioned golf course rendered in day and night, with species that successfully exploit and adapt to human-transformed environments
 Photography: Walter Colley Post-Production: Maria Spinelli Courtesy American Federation of Arts

Both Dion and Rockman have achieved international prominence for their own distinctive practices. Together they have embarked on tropical expeditions; published dialogues; and co-edited the pioneering 1996 book *Concrete Jungle*, on anthropogenic ecosystems. Each has probed humankind's strained relationship with the environment and the consequences of reigning ideologies about nature.

As a community-based, world-class institution that highlights art, science, and natural history, the Bruce Museum is uniquely suited to launch Mark Dion and Alexis Rockman: *Journey to Nature's Underworld*, which features some twenty-five sculptures and paintings that explore the artists' aesthetic strategies for engaging viewers with today's pressing ecological challenges. Dion and Rockman were among the earliest artists to address, and even anticipate, the epic ecological problems now facing the Earth. Indeed, their vision has become increasingly urgent in this time of visible environmental collapse.

The Bruce Museum is the only venue on this nationwide tour to feature a new, collaborative installation mining the Museum's extensive holdings and archival material devoted to founding curators and naturalists Edward F. Bigelow and Paul G. Howes. Comprised of dioramas, microscopes, personal items, artwork, and photographic scrapbooks, as well as taxidermy and mineral specimens, this cabinet of curiosity charts both the history of the Museum and the evolving trajectory of its natural history and science collections.

"Mark Dion's and Alexis Rockman's work could not be more uniquely suited to the Bruce Museum's mission to explore art and science and the synergies between the two disciplines" said Margarita Karasoulas, the Bruce Museum's Curator of Art in a release. "Both artists' practices are rooted in scientific concerns and probe humankind's relationship to nature. Together, the artists not only grapple with the most pressing issues of our time related to global warming and environmental and ecological change, but also interrogate the very history of the scientific discipline. We are particularly thrilled to work with both artists to realize a cabinet of curiosities showcasing an array of objects from the Museum's collection. This dynamic installation marks yet another occasion of collaboration between the two artists that can only be seen at the Bruce."

Mark Dion and Alexis Rockman: *Journey to Nature's Underworld* is organized by the American Federation of Arts and curated by Suzanne Ramljak. Support for the exhibition has been provided by Elizabeth Belfer and Victoria E. Triplett.

Located in Bruce Park overlooking Greenwich Harbor, the Bruce Museum is a community-based, world-class institution that offers a changing array of exhibitions and educational programs to promote the understanding and appreciation of art and science.

For over a century the Bruce Museum has delighted and engaged its visitors by presenting exceptional exhibitions in art, science, and the intersections between the two disciplines. Now recognized as ahead of its time when textile merchant Robert Moffat Bruce (1822-1909) conceived of the museum and bequeathed the building to the Town of Greenwich in 1908, the Museum is at the heart of contemporary efforts to bring together art and science, technology and creativity, creating moments of discovery and dialogue. The first exhibition at the Bruce Museum took place in 1912 and featured works by local artists known as the Greenwich Society of Artists, several of whom were members of the Cos Cob art colony. Their works formed the nucleus of the Museum's art holdings and continue to be a strength of a collection which has grown to focus on global art from 1850 to the present. Other strengths include Native American Art, modernist works on paper, and photography. Over the years, the community, through its generosity, has built the Museum's varied collection to nearly 30,000 objects. Early Museum directors pursued a parallel development of the natural sciences, building strengths in the mineral and avian collections.

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In 2019, the AAM-accredited Museum broke ground on an ambitious expansion project, which took the building from 33,000 to over 70,000 square feet. The new Bruce features state-of-the-art exhibition, education, and community spaces, including: a changing gallery for art and five new permanent galleries in the new William L. Richter Art Wing; a changing gallery for science; the new permanent science exhibition, *Natural Cycles Shape Our Land*; three new classrooms the Steven and Alexandra Cohen Education Wing; and a café, an auditorium, and grand hall. The new building now connects the Museum to its picturesque setting in Bruce Park in dramatic ways. The new Bruce campus will feature a sculpture-lined, landscaped walking path and inviting spaces for relaxation and contemplation—natural enhancements to Bruce Park and an anchoring connection to the retail hub of Greenwich Avenue. The grand opening of the new Bruce was on April 2, 2023.

The American Federation of Arts is the leader in traveling exhibitions internationally. A nonprofit organization founded in 1909, the AFA is dedicated to enriching the public's experience and understanding of the visual arts through organizing and touring art exhibitions for presentation in museums around the world, publishing exhibition catalogues featuring important scholarly research, and developing educational programs.

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