

Bardolf, Dierdre. "Natural and social environments at Socrates," *Queens Chronicle*, 28 April 2022.



A maquette for "Subterranean Tropi Projects: PN15 Penetrable," 1971, left, by Hélio Oiticica, and Maren Hassinger's "Steel Bodies," right, at Socrates Sculpture Park. PHOTOS BY MIGUEL RIO BRANCO COURTESY CÉSAR AND CLAUDIO OITICICA, LEFT, AND JOYCE CHAN

Socrates Sculpture Park in Long Island City is a waterfront haven lush with five acres of tranquil park space but also offers rich educational programming, free activities and impressive rotating exhibits. This season, Socrates will be home to two works that highlight human relationships to natural and social environments. Starting May 14, a never-before-executed presentation of the late Brazilian visual artist Hélio Oiticica's "Subterranean Tropicália Projects: PN15 1971/2022" will be on view.

Oiticica lived in New York City in the '70s and was inspired by the underground culture. "PN15" invites visitors to drift through the 40-foot diameter enclosed wood and mesh space. It offers a multisensory experience with tropical plants, mulch floors and a final room with a wall projection by contemporary artists inside. Presented in partnership with Projeto Hélio Oiticica and Americas Society, "PN15" will be a space for collective creativity and leisure, dubbed "creisure" by the artist. "Oiticica was a pioneer and remains one of the most prolific contemporary artists of his time," said Tamsin Dillon, Socrates' new executive director, in a press release. "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," Dillon continued. "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."

This is also a rare presentation because the park primarily works with living artists.

New York-based artist Maren Hassinger is making a return to Socrates since her first exhibition at the park in 1988. "Steel Bodies" features steel vessels, all of which were fabricated at Socrates, up to 9 feet high and evoking containers of different shapes and sizes. They examine the complications of human interrelation and affinity, identity and collectiveness, through abstraction in the outdoors. Guests can move through the exhibit and note their bodies in the shared public space.

"Vessels are what we all are – and it's within our capacity to recognize each other as companions," said Hassinger of her work in a prepared statement. "Whoever we are, wherever we're from, we are companions – capable of compassion for one another."

A new artwork is up on the park's main entrance billboard from alumni artist Jori Minaya, which was curated by the Park's teen program, Socrateens.

Activities returning to the park include yoga on Saturdays and Sundays through October, sunset meditations with Mindful Astoria on Tuesday evenings through October and Groove NYC: Dance for Kids through August. The Hellgate Farm Stand will be open every Saturday through October. New Agora events on Saturdays from June till September will offer family-friendly workshops, screenings, music and more. Field Guide workshops will be on Saturdays, embracing art, ecology and mindfulness. On select Saturdays, Socrates will partner with The Noguchi Museum to explore a "new nature," using reproductions of Noguchi's sculptures and writing and the park to inspire conversation and creativity. Visit [socratessculpturepark.org](http://socratessculpturepark.org) for more information. [QueensChronicle.com](http://QueensChronicle.com)