

# THE TRUST FOR GOVERNORS ISLAND

## Trust for Governors Island Announces New Public Art Commission

*'Rock, Mosquito and Hummingbird: A Prehistory of Governors Island' by artist David Brooks to be unveiled in historic Fort Jay*

*Installation will be open to visitors every day from August 19-October 31*

**August 15, 2017. New York, NY.** The Trust for Governors Island (The Trust) today announced a new public art commission, its first since 2014. *Rock, Mosquito and Hummingbird*, a site-specific work by award winning artist David Brooks, will be on display between Saturday, August 19 and Tuesday, October 31 in Fort Jay's magazine, a defensive structure built in 1794 and now part of the Governors Island National Monument. Curated by Meredith Johnson, Vice President of Art and Culture for the Trust for Governors Island, the installation is free and open to the public from 10 AM to 4:30 PM.

“Governors Island offers a one of a kind opportunity for artists to expand their audience and create memorable public art tied to the rich history of this special place,” said Michael Samuelian, president of the Trust for Governors Island. “With the extension of our public season through the end of October, New Yorkers will have even more opportunities to enjoy our first art commission this year, and many other cultural, food and recreational experiences during the fall.”

David Brooks' *Rock, Mosquito and Hummingbird* digs down to the core of the place we now call Governors Island, exposing the strata of history of this floating rock at the entrance of NY Harbor— layers stretching down to a foundation of Manhattan Schist that predates complex life on earth. Probing three sites on the northern side of the original footprint of the Island, Brooks bored through the ground surface to a range of 90 to 125 feet in depth, telling a story of this ancient place in cobbles, soil, silt, shells, clay and bedrock. This excavated narrative utilizing core samples of the grounds leads visitors beyond the dominant military history of the site, to imagine a landmass that for millions of years played a part in a larger strategic operation – the origin of land and life itself.

“The story of Governors Island is one of many layers, and our art program translates and reveals the myriad connections the Island has to the history of New York, this country, and the animals and people that have inhabited the region,” said Meredith Johnson, Vice President, Art and Culture of the Trust for Governors Island. “David Brooks' new site specific work *Rock, Mosquito and Hummingbird* starts at the very beginning, pre-dating the human history of this place and weaving a story from the very strands of magma that formed the landmass we now know as the

archipelago of New York Harbor. This project is in many ways a first act in the epic novel that is Governors Island, told through art and the voice of the artist.”

From August 19 to October 31, 2017, visitors to Governors Island can enter the subterranean magazine of historic Fort Jay to find Brooks’ winding sculpture. Three long continuous rock core samples are assembled in contrasting trajectories referencing slow time (the creation of bedrock) and fast time (the flight of a mosquito and hummingbird), the piece engages the visitor with a series of objects one must navigate through, around, and under – much like time itself.

Accompanying the installation are a series of bronze markers around the Island, at the sites of Brooks’ rock core extractions. In July of 2017, core samples were taken from three locations on the historic north side of the Island by a rotosonic drill that bored through the ground surface to depths of 90 to 125 feet. A core sample is a cylindrical section of earth obtained by drilling into the ground with a hollow steel tube called a “core drill.” The earliest core drills were used by the ancient Egyptians in 3000 BC to build the pyramids. Brooks’ drill sites on Governors Island, moments of penetration into the earth, propose a glimpse into a hole of deep time that is intimately linked to the creatures that still call this place a hunting, fishing, and nesting ground.

“Governors Island is a place that intersects so succinctly with my own interests, but in a not so obvious way,” said David Brooks. “It’s not its military, colonial or civilian history that I’m interested in highlighting, but rather a much bigger picture of its natural history. The Island itself, its nonhuman inhabitants, and the manmade structures that dot the Island all owe their existence to a turbulent geologic history that gives us a much more dramatic and visceral understanding of what makes it so unique.”

*Rock, Mosquito and Hummingbird* is the first work commissioned directly by the Trust since 2014, and is the first work by David Brooks on Governors Island. The recipient of several prestigious awards, including a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship, Brooks creates works that consider the relationship between the individual and the built and natural environment. Major commissions include the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, CT, MOMA/PS1, NY, Storm King Art Center, NY, de Cordova Museum, MA and Cass Sculpture Foundation, UK, as well as Desert Rooftops in Times Square, a 5,000-square foot urban earthwork commissioned by Art Production Fund. Brooks currently lives and works between New York City and New Orleans.

Through site specific commissions and its signature OpenHouseGI Program, Governors Island has a history of engaging the public through free public art and programming. Previous commissions on Governors Island include *Cabin* by Rachel Whiteread, a permanent, site specific concrete cast of a New England-style wood shed at Discovery Hill, as well as long-term temporary installations by Mark Handforth and Susan Phillipsz. *Rock, Mosquito and Hummingbird* is the first work on Governors Island curated by Meredith Johnson, the Trust’s Vice President for Art and Culture.

This year’s commission was made possible through private donations to the Trust’s ArtCommissionsGI program. The commission was produced in collaboration with the National Parks Service.

Governors Island is open to the public seven days a week from May 1 through October 31 from 10 AM to 6 PM weekdays and weekends from 10 AM to 7 PM. *Rock, Mosquito and Hummingbird* will be on view from Fort Jay, Governors Island National Monument every day from 10 AM to 4:30 PM. For more information, visit [www.govisland.com](http://www.govisland.com).

### **About The Trust for Governors Island**

The Trust for Governors Island is the nonprofit corporation created by the City of New York that is responsible for the redevelopment and operation of 150 acres of Governors Island. The Trust's mission is to transform Governors Island into a vibrant resource for New York City, making this island at the center of New York Harbor a destination with extraordinary public open space, as well as educational, not-for-profit and commercial facilities. For more information, visit [www.govisland.com](http://www.govisland.com).

### **About Governors Island National Monument**

The National Park Service manages Governors Island National Monument, which consists of twenty-two acres, including the historic fortifications Castle Williams and Fort Jay. The Monument is one of twenty-two sites operated by the National Park Service in the New York City area. Its purpose is to preserve and protect Castle Williams and Fort Jay, and to interpret them and the harbor's rich history and ecology for the public. More information can be found at [www.nps.gov/gois](http://www.nps.gov/gois).

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