

pollination wunder station

extending our senses into the biosphere

BY SARAH PEEBLES



POLLINATION WUNDER STATION is a *wunderkammer*—cabinet of curiosities—full of fascinating living things. The piece is part habitat interpretation, part bio art, part sound installation, and part sculpture. It is one in a series of audio bee booths that are amplified habitat installations for solitary nesting bees and wasps. These works express my conviction that, in order to perceive the connections between our actions and their consequences in nature, we need to cultivate a mental image of biodiversity, and that this is best done using all of our senses while immersed in the outdoor environment with which we seek to connect. The dynamics of pollination ecology—a cornerstone of the biosphere as well as of our food security—can be more easily perceived and understood through extending our senses, especially when we pair sound with visual observation.

Pollination Wunder Station is a permanent outdoor vessel and, like a dead or dying tree, it attracts a wide variety of solitary bees and wasps already foraging for food, mating, and hunting for homes in the booth's vicinity. More like a condo than a beehive, it has no honey bees, no honey, no colonies, no beeswax or honeycombs, but instead has individual apartments for the many varieties of solitary bees and wasps naturally present in the habitat in which it's placed. The *Wunder Station* brings together nesting planks (routed with tunnels and covered in plexiglass), embedded vibrational sensors (acting as microphones), solar-powered amplification, and weather-resistant cabinetry on which are wood-burned illustrations of pollinators and plants. Through the use of headphones and a magnifying lens, it allows the participant to safely spy on the bees' nesting activities, including their fights with each other and sometimes their fights with fabulously beautiful cleptoparasites (cuckoo bees and wasps). These activities are omnipresent in most rural and urban environments but are usually inaccessible because they take place in the dark. Visitors to the booth experience an immersive microworld that allows them to make a connection between what they observe and the surrounding habitat(s).

Pollination Wunder Station is by Sara Peebles, with Rob Cruickshank (electronics), John Kuisma (woodworking), and Chris Bennett (wood-burned illustrations), in consultation with Laurence Packer, Peter Kevan, Peter Hallett, James Thomson, and Stephen L. Buchmann.

Sarah Peebles is a Toronto-based sound and installation artist, improviser, and composer.

LINKS:

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<resonatingbodies.wordpress.com>

