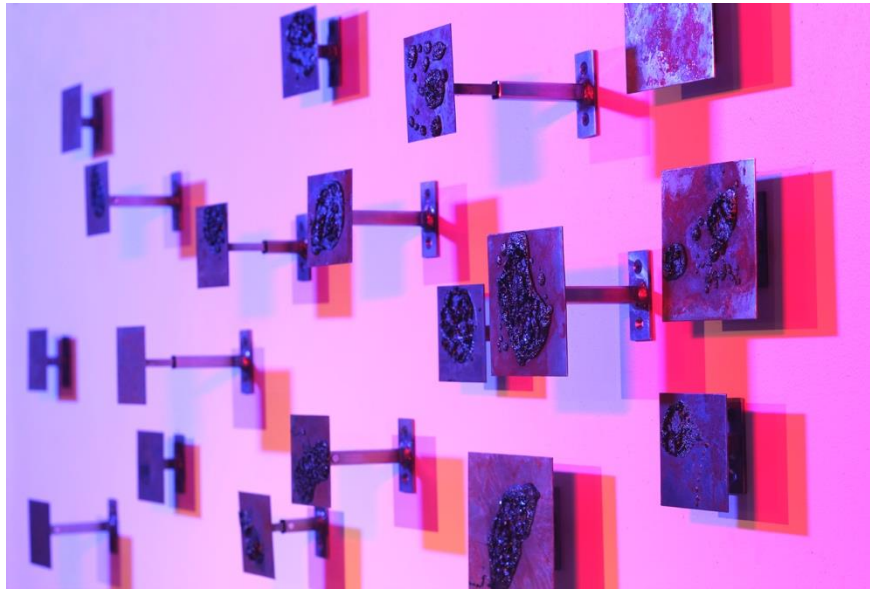


**For Immediate Release**  
May 17, 2023



John Roach, *Scorched Honey Archive: Hotspots*, 2023, Steel, Honey and light

# *Scorched Honey Archive*

June 2 – June 21, 2023

An exhibition of works by John Roach

NARS Project Space

Opening Reception: Friday, June 2, 6-8pm

Performance: June 3rd - 2:30pm

*Foulbrood Orchestra* - John Roach, Thessia Machado and Ranjit Bhatnagar

Artist Talk & Listening session: June 21<sup>st</sup>

Featuring the 2022 multichannel audio work *Colony*

NARS Foundation is pleased to present *Scorched Honey Archive*, a solo exhibition by John Roach. *Scorched Honey Archive* is a multisensory meditation on human disruption of pollinator ecology. It pairs a tapestry of wall-mounted steel plates, forming a rough map of beekeeping hotspots in the United States, with the sound of burning honey quietly spatialized through eight fragrant beeswax speakers. Each sound that emerges, played at a volume teetering on the edge of audibility, corresponds to one of the steel plates bearing the charred honey remains.

*"The Archive emerges from two events. The first is the invitation I received in 2018 from the designer and beekeeper Mark Randall to record his hives in Narrowsburg New York. The second is more distant, likely around 1989, and is the recollection of a mishearing in a subterranean bookstore in San Francisco.*

### **Bees**

*The recordings I captured of Mark's bees, using a variety of mics: shotgun, contact, ambisonic (360°), hydrophone, ultimately led to the multichannel sound installation Colony (2022). Colony mixes bee sounds with interviews that probe the human/insect relationship. In centering a work on bees and beekeepers it becomes critical to acknowledge the anthropocentric influences and impacts on our terrestrial pollinators, honey-making and otherwise. The planet-wide crisis of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), that was first theorized in 2006 when beekeepers began to report unusually high losses of 30-90 percent of their hives, has resulted in steep declines in bee populations. While there's no single known cause of CCD, scientists link it to viruses, parasites, pesticides, and changes in habitat and food availability that are, not surprisingly, exacerbated by climate change. CCD threatens our global food supply, and according to the USDA, Honey bees alone pollinate 80 percent of all flowering plants, including more than 130 types of fruits and vegetables.*

*In a capitalist system of production, bees are not left to their own devices to buzz free in the flowering clover. We truck them all the way across the country. In Michigan where I've recorded bees, they are transported all the way to California to pollinate the trees that produce 100% of the US supply of almonds. Does this additional pressure further contribute to immune-suppressing stress, exacerbating collapse? Perhaps. And if so, it's a vicious cycle. If crops are threatened by bee decline, farmers are forced by demand to scrape together as many healthy hives as they can, from wherever they can, to pollinate their crops.*

### **The Bookstore**

*In the late 1980s I visited a bookstore in San Francisco, entering the shop by descending a number of steps that sonically separated it from the street. Like any small library or bookstore*

*that has well-stocked floor to ceiling shelves, the sound environment in the store tightened up in a warm embrace as the patchwork of soft paper spines absorbed the reflections in the room.*

*As I wandered the stacks, I gradually became aware of faint rhythmic sounds at the fringes of my attention, like the distant tink-tunk-tank of plumbing as it travels to your ear from some other part of a building. After some time listening and marveling at its musicality, I asked the shop clerk if he knew what that sound was. "Sure" he said "It's the band Zoviet France"*

*I was shocked. I had been listening to this band for years! What was it about this location that so altered my perception and my ability to correctly understand what I was hearing? This event has always stayed with me – particularly as I consider, through my studio work and research, the fallibility of our human perception and our often misguided compulsion to interpret the world through a human sensory lens. It made me wonder: what other things am I missing?*

*Scorched Honey Archive links this mishearing, or perceptual negligence, to the plight of the honey bee. It is so easy to ignore these fuzzy little creatures as they fizzle out, and yet our own existence is literally tied to theirs." – John Roach*

### Hotspots, Thresholds, Containments and Residues

The sound heard in the gallery, *Thresholds* (2023) is an 8-channel collage of honey, recorded as it burns, played back through speakers made of thinly cast beeswax. Like the misheard bookstore percussion, it is played back at a volume that encourages it to blend into the space, with the industrial felt pads on the floor mimicking the absorptive acoustics of walls of books.

In *Hotspots* (2023), 37 metal plates, presented on custom magnetic wall mounts, are organized into a rough map of US locations where bee declines are regularly recorded. Each one, emblazoned with the carbonized blobs and squiggles of the honey that was burned onto it, links to an individual sound emerging from one of the speakers in *Thresholds*.

In the rear of the gallery is a large wooden box, *Containments* (2014 - 2023), that acts as a miniature sound booth where the process of heating, burning and recording took place. The box will be used during the opening and other events to scorch honey onto additional steel plates to add to Hotspots.

In *Residues* (2023), A single channel silent video traces the path of moving bees in a flickering procession. Like the other elements in the installation it suggests an abundance and perpetuity that mask decline and disappearance.

**John Roach** is a Queens-based artist and educator whose work is concerned with the often slippery role of sound in how we perceive the world. His most recent projects have explored the ability of sound to construct immersive portraits of places, and how the careful assembly of spatialized field recordings, sound design elements, and voices can connect a listener to unexpected impressions of a landscape or soundscape. Roach received his MFA from Hunter College. His work has been exhibited at Urban Glass, Parkers Box, Flux Factory, NARS, Local Project, Leslie Heller Gallery in New York; The Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, GlazenHuis in Lommel, Belgium; and The RMIT Gallery in Melbourne, Australia. He has completed residencies at Zion National Park in Utah; Triangle Artist Workshop in Salem, New York; Pilchuck Glass School in Stanwood, Washington; Tacoma Museum of Glass; Uncommon Arts Residency in Jackson Wyoming; NARS Foundation in Brooklyn, New York; The Ionian Center for Art and Culture in Kefalonia Greece; and Marble House Project in Dorset Vermont. As an educator Roach teaches at Parsons School of Design and has taught workshops at Urban Glass and Pilchuck Glass School.

---

The NARS Galleries are open Monday - Friday from 12 to 5 pm. For more information please call the office: 718-768-2765 or email [info@narsfoundation.org](mailto:info@narsfoundation.org).

The New York Art Residency and Studios (NARS) Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit arts organization committed to supporting artists and curators on an international level as well as engaging the local community in Brooklyn and the Greater New York area. Our mission is to present diverse platforms on which to nurture creative inspiration and innovative cross-pollination of ideas.

For further information, please contact us at [www.narsfoundation.org](http://www.narsfoundation.org) / [info@narsfoundation.org](mailto:info@narsfoundation.org) / 718-768-2765.

**For Immediate Release**  
May 17, 2023



NARS exhibition programs are made possible in part through the generous support from **the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts** with the support of the **Office of the Governor** and the **New York State Legislature**, and, in part, supported by public funds from the **New York City Department of Cultural Affairs** in partnership with the **City Council**.

