

Artist celebrates commencement with boarding house for bees

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Artist Esther Solondz, the parent of a 2018 Tulane graduate, will discuss her sculpture called “The Bee Palace” at a special event hosted at Audubon Zoo on Friday, May 18, from 3-5 p.m. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Artist [Esther Solondz](#) has two reasons to celebrate commencement weekend this year.

Solondz will travel from Providence, Rhode Island, to New Orleans for her first big reason — to cheer on her daughter, Ana Stolle, when she walks across the Mercedes-Benz Superdome stage during the [Unified Commencement Ceremony](#) on Saturday, May 19.

Stolle is currently working with AmeriCorps in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and will receive her bachelor of arts degree in art history from the Tulane [School of Liberal Arts](#).

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— Esther Solondz

Tulane University

The second cause for celebration is that Solondz, a former resident at [A Studio in the Woods](#), will also appear at a special event hosted at [Audubon Zoo](#) to discuss her sculpture called “The Bee Palace.” Installed in the zoo’s Pollinator Garden, the towering, golden structure aims to introduce locals to the environmental challenge of preserving habitats for wild solitary bees.

“The sculpture primarily functions as a nesting site for bees,” said Solondz, noting that the piece was produced in collaboration with Tulane entomologist Claudia Riegel and the New Orleans Mosquito Board.

Important to pollination, wild solitary bees are non-aggressive and do not live in colonies, make honey or have queens like honeybees do.

The piece was created over two months last spring at A Studio in the Woods, Tulane’s artist in residence program located in a bucolic forest on the Mississippi River.

The buzzing boarding house is constructed of tubing with plant reeds, where bees can deposit their eggs and provide pollen for their larvae to eat.

“Entomologist Zack Lemann has been monitoring the piece over the course of the year. He told me that approximately half of the structure is occupied, which is great for the first year,” she said.

Taking place before [Wave Goodbye](#) begins on the Tulane uptown campus, A Studio in the Woods and Audubon Zoo will commemorate the educational installation’s success by hosting the [Bee Palace Celebration](#) on Friday, May 18, from 3-5 p.m.

There, Solondz and representatives from the zoo and the [Audubon Butterfly Garden and Insectarium](#) will discuss the work and answer guests’ questions.

The free event is open to the public, and patrons can enter through the Education Gates, which are located to the right of the zoo’s main entrance.