



For Immediate Release:

The Magic of the Sun Playing with the Moon

May 18th-June 22nd, 2024

Reception 5.18.24 5-8pm



BIG RAMP is pleased to announce *The Magic of the Sun Playing with the Moon*, curated by members Alexandra Schoolman and Michelle Anne Harris. Call it what you will — science, the divine, synchronicity, magic — but there was a shared sense of awe this past April 8th in the northern hemisphere when for a maximum of four minutes and thirty seconds the light of the Sun was shielded from Earth by the Moon’s cratered surface. The perfection of proportion, the sun being 400 times bigger than the moon and 400 times further away, is equally impressive and daunting. Big Ramp’s exhibition, opening six weeks after this celestial display, acknowledges how the two most important astronomical bodies to our planet also have a relationship with each other. In Steve Kuhn’s song “The Meaning of Love” (1971), he describes this relationship between the Sun and Moon as one of play and magic, giving rise to the exhibition’s title.

Generating our seasons and inducing our tides with heights and depths of awaited recurrence, the Sun and the Moon have further inspired meditations on duality; the gradients between light and dark; the cultivating of traditions; and the marking of time. Stephanie Manzi uses scraps of recycled paper from discarded art projects to create collages that trace the transition of color value from white to gray to black. A sense of fragile balance is struck in Kristin Neville Taylor’s *29.5 Earth Days* (2024), in which antique photographic glass slides of the Sun and Moon hang from a helium weather balloon —referencing the prospect of helium mining on the Moon and the delicate equilibrium of life on Earth. Works by Japeth Mennes and Paolo Mentasti, each capture the experience of passing time through Mennes’s sun-bleached photographic print that fixes the cumulative chromatic effects of the Sun’s rays over time and Mentasti’s archaeologically speculative sundials that blur the distinction between past and present, the technologically advanced and the long obsolete. Lauren Nickou’s nocturnes, with an electrified palette and reduced composition, reinterpret the moon-drenched coastline of Sète, France in her Vienna studio. The panels effuse a nostalgic state of enchantment with the glittering stillness and solitude of early morning. Amira Pualwan’s work honors the seasonal rite of the opening of public swimming pools and the cool refreshment they bring during the dog days of summer. While Jason Lazarus’s on-going collection of handmade eclipse viewers highlights the long-standing tradition of the camera obscura, the ingenuity of amateur photography, and their combination into readymade sculptures to mark the Moon’s passage in front of the Sun.

The diversity of these works demonstrates the myriad ways we are touched, moved, and conditioned by our planetary alignment within the solar system. While we may not be directly participating in, or have any effect on, the astral play unfolding around us, moments like the April 8th eclipse remind us that we can always be joyful witnesses.

Artist Bios:

Jason Lazarus is an artist exploring vision and visibility. His work includes a range of fluid methodologies: original, found and appropriated images, text-as-image, photo-derived sculptures made collaboratively with the public, live archives, LED light images, and public submission repositories among others. This expanded photographic practice seeks new approaches of inquiry, embodiment, and bearing witness through both individual and collective research. Selected permanent collections include the Whitney Museum of American Art, Art Institute of Chicago, SFMOMA, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, High Museum of Art, Milwaukee Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Photography Chicago, and the Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, FL among others.

Stephanie Manzi is a painter and educator from Upstate, NY working in Philadelphia. She received her MFA at Tyler School of Art in 2022 and her BFA from SUNY Purchase in 2014. Manzi has shown throughout New York, Philadelphia, PA, Southern California, and a selection of other states.. In 2018, Manzi received the Award of Excellence at Conception Arts NYC in 2018, the MFA Project Completion Grant in 2022, and the Faculty Committee Life Grant in 2023 and 2024. She has been featured on the cover of Tinge Magazine in 2021 and Friend of the Artist in 2023. Manzi was a resident at Mount Gretna School of Art in February 2024, Grand Marais Art Colony in July 2023, Dear Artists in December 2022 and has an upcoming residency in July 2024 at ChaNorth. She was featured most recently in the 215 | 610 Contemporary at DCCC, Waterways at Wallingford Gallery, Abstraction at Covet Gallery and All Things Considered, at Las Laguna Gallery.

Japeth Mennes is an artist and musician who lives in New York City. From 2012 to 2019 Mennes was a member of the music group Dead Painters. Recent exhibitions include the 2023 solo show "Waltz" at 65 GRAND (Chicago), a 2022 two person show at My Pet Ram (NYC), the 2021 solo show "City Paintings" at Ampersand Gallery (Portland, OR), as well as group exhibitions at Taymour Grahne (London), 57w57 Arts (NYC), The Ekru Project (Kansas City, MO), and a 2022 three person show at Stockton University (NJ). He received his MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art and his BFA from Kansas City Art Institute. His work is in the collections of Agnes Gund, NYC and Fidelity Investments, Boston, MA.

Paolo Mentasti was born and raised on a plane flying between Sao Paulo, Bogota, and Mexico City. He received his BFA from The Cooper Union in 2020 and his MFA in Sculpture from Tyler School of Art and Architecture at Temple University in 2023. He is currently the Technical Assistant in Sculpture at Tyler School of Art and Architecture in Philadelphia..

Lauren Nickou (b. 1986 Massachusetts, USA) is an American artist based in Vienna, Austria. She holds an MFA from Queens College, City University of New York, and a BFA from the University of Massachusetts Amherst where she was the sole recipient of the Gordon Scholarship in 2009. Her works are included in public collections of the San Antonio Museum of Art, TX, and Colby College Museum of Art, ME, gifts of the Alex Katz Foundation. Recent exhibitions include: "Landline" at Ve.Sch Kunstverein, Vienna, 2024 (solo); "Waves" at Galerie Peter Gaugy, Vienna, 2023 (solo); "Sunflowers" at WasserWasser, Vienna, 2022 (solo); "Position" at Kunstraum SUPER, Vienna, 2021; "Downtown Painting" presented by Alex Katz at Peter Freeman, Inc., New York, NY, 2019.

Amira Pualwan is a multidisciplinary artist and educator living and working in Philadelphia, PA. She holds an MFA in Printmaking from the Tyler School of Art and Architecture at Temple University, and a BA in Studio Art from Wheaton College (MA). Pualwan has completed residencies at Highpoint Center for Printmaking, the Minnesota Center for Book Arts and the Women's Studio Workshop Beisinghoff Residency.

Kristen Neville Taylor is an Philadelphia artist whose diverse practice combines drawing, sculpture, and glass which converge playfully in installation style environments. Her work considers the impact of the stories we tell about nature calling attention to the systems and events that establish definitions and shape public perception of the environment. She is a co-founder of The Green Sun, a multifaceted project focused on the intersection of art and policy as they relate to the history of energy, energy democracy and possible energy futures. Taylor's work has been shown at Vox Populi, the Woodmere Art Museum and the Philadelphia Art Alliance (Philadelphia), Pacific Northwest College of Art (Portland), Richard Stockton and Rowan University Art Galleries (New Jersey), and Expo Chicago. She has organized several exhibitions including Landscape Techne at Little Berlin, The Usable Earth at the Esther Klein Gallery, and she co-curated Middle of Nowhere in the Pine Barrens. Taylor is the recipient of the Pew Fellowship, Laurie Wagman Prize in Glass, a RAIR Recycled Artist-in-Residence, and a Penn Program for the Environmental Humanities Artist-in-Residence.