

For Immediate Release:

We Are All Compost

Viola Bordon

Bobby Haskell

Narendra Haynes

Rebecca Schultz

Cindy Stockton Moore

Nichole van Beek

March 15 - April 19, 2025

Opening Reception 5-9pm 03/15/2025



BIG RAMP is thrilled to announce *We Are All Compost*, a group show of decomposing compositions of entanglement with the more-than-human world. Curated by William Schwaller, this exhibition brings together a diverse body of work by artists seeking *symbiopoiesis* with the environment, *making with* its critters and vibrant matter. Rooted in the materiality of the world around them, these artists embark on collaborations and entanglements with bacteria, composting insects, fungi, plants, soil, and stone in the composition of sculpture, painting, and video.

Nuancing the anthropocentrism within Western artistic traditions of painting and sculpture, these artists' entanglements with other forms of life relinquish control as the sole authors of artworks conceived as autonomous, timeless objects. Their collaborations produce assemblages of materials that compose and decompose within the lifecycle of the work. Composition and decomposition of matter (either as process, product, or subject) of the work highlight the fruitful, productive, and/or thought provoking ways these artists have chosen to position themselves and their practices on our planet, amidst human induced climate change, and within blasted landscapes.

The title of the exhibition quotes Donna Haraway, the philosopher queen of our environmental crises, to emphasize the shared materiality and vibrancy of our organic and inorganic world. The works, like ourselves, are all in flux, in cycles of composition and decomposition, and enmeshed with our environments and those with whom we cohabitate.

Bobby Haskell and Narendra Haynes both invite living critters to inhabit and consume the material forms of their work. Respectively, deadwood and Styrofoam are composed by the artists as literal and symbolic fallen trees within which universes of bacteria, fungi, lichen, worms, and insects live and die. These works productively collapse our human dualisms of natural/artificial and outside/inside as communities of more-than-human life transform and compost their forms alike.

Viola Bordon's entangled weavings embrace and care for humble stone "bodies" while holding those dualisms in tension. Weaving, a technology gifted to humankind from animal kin, Spider Woman (Na'ashjé'íí Asdzáá) in Navajo mythology, and preserved over centuries through women's and artisanal labor, is a fitting practice for a *sympiopoetics* (making with) of human and more-than-human actors. The tension that Bordon's weavings exert on these stones mimics their originating conditions in the pressure cooker of Earth's geological formations, while simultaneously preventing, in vain, their gradual erosion by physics and fungi. According to the artist, they serve as metaphors for "the misplaced care" humans frequently, vainly, offer to our damaged planet.

Cindy Stockton Moore's video installation similarly reminds us that "no city is all city." Stockton Moore's videos playfully animate the lives of overlooked and underappreciated living beings within our environments, including the biological and chemical agents with whom she collaborated in her research on soil. With inks made from materials found on site, the paintings animated within her videos connect form and process, material and site.

Nichole van Beek and Rebecca Schultz also appeal to plant and mineral collaborators, crafting natural pigments for paintings that represent and reflect the sumptuousness and the transformations of the environments we traverse. Van Beek's paintings of mushrooms stemmed from her sculptural collaborations with mycelium to produce living sculptures of mycocomposite and the serendipitous beauty of fungi she encounters while hiking in West Virginia. Schultz's mural on the gallery's exterior wall entwines the "natural and human" histories of Kensington and Port Richmond with the very materials that stand as witnesses to these political and ecological transformations of a place. Exposed to the elements this mural will fade, wash and blow away like succumbing to the forces of decay and entropy like everything in the eternal material flux of our universe (Christians are presently reminded during Lent "for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"¹).

We compose

We compost

We recompose

We decompose

We are all compost²

We are all lichens³

We are all stardust⁴

¹ Genesis 3:19

² Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016)

³ Scott F. Gilbert, et al, "A Symbiotic View of Life: We Have Never Been Individuals," *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 87 no. 4 (2012), 325–41.

⁴ This has been variously attributed to Carl Sagan, Neil deGrasse Tyson, and Erin Morgenstern

Viola Bordon is a Philadelphia-based artist and educator who works with sculpture, drawing, printmaking, and fibers. Her research speaks directly to her art practice; one that is intricately connected to craft and landscape. Her artwork is a synthesis of material exploration and environmental fluctuation that question stability and interrelationships. As a global nomad, she has never had a claim on any land she has existed on, and so she seeks sources of deep and direct connection to landscapes. Bordon's work with fibers relies on pre-industrial craft histories of weaving and quilting, while her work with landscape suggests questions about human impact. Bordon graduated with an MFA from the University of Pennsylvania, and a BFA from Washington University in St. Louis as a transfer student from St. Louis Community College. She has certifications in Emerging Design and Research and Land Art of the American West. Her work has been shown globally, and her work has been published in Vogue India, Cover Magazine, and Garland Magazine.
<http://violabordon.com>

Bobby Haskell uses sculpture installations to create habitat in places that have been ecologically degraded by human activity. Their work combines traditional sculpture techniques with emerging conservation methods to explore new possibilities for nature in the built environment. Haskell holds a BFA in sculpture from The University of the Arts in Philadelphia, and an MPhil in human ecology from the College of the Atlantic in Maine. They currently work in both the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia and on the coast of Downeast Maine, drawing their inspiration from both environments. They show their work nationally, and their public sculpture work can be found at the Dorr Museum of Natural History, the Davistown Museum Sculpture Garden, and on the campus of Southern Maine Community College. Their residencies include Bethany Arts Community's Multidisciplinary Residency in New York, Wildacre's Environmental Artist in Residence program in North Carolina, and the Carving Studio and Sculpture Center's Artist in Residence program in Vermont. They are an active member of ecological artists groups such as EcoArtSpace, and Creature Conserve; and they were awarded the Penn Program in Environmental Humanities 'Ecotopian Toolmaker' award in 2024.
<http://bobbyhaskell.com>

Narendra Haynes has rooted his life and practice in Philadelphia, since 2018, and he earned his MFA from The University of Pennsylvania in 2021 where he was awarded the Steward Egnal Scholarship, Halpern-Rogath Travel Grant, and a Graduate Lecturer Position at The Institute of Contemporary Art. His work has been exhibited for the Poetry Project in New York City, as well as at Icebox Project Space, the Asian Arts Initiative, and The Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education in Philadelphia. In 2022 he was an Artist in Residence at RAIR, Philadelphia, where he ran workshops investigating waste, nature attunement, and ecological practices. He was awarded an artist grant from the Joseph Roberts Foundation in 2024. <http://narendrahaynes.com>

Rebecca Schultz is a mixed media artist living in Elkins Park, PA. She has had solo exhibitions at the Abington Art Center, Patricia Ladd Carega Gallery, NoBa Artspace, and Da Vinci Art Alliance. Recent group exhibitions include We Are the River at Stockton University and WANDERING: Observations of Our Watershed at Fairmount Water Works. Rebecca's public works include two mural commissions and two community-engaged projects with Mural Arts; temporary site-specific installations in local parks and gardens; and an installation created in Atlantic City with Nancy Agati for the Coastal Climate Resiliency Art Project. For her 2023 project Mapping Our Watershed, she partnered with arts and environmental organizations working in Cheltenham Township to engage residents in experiential science and art activities designed to connect them with the complex ecology of the Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Watershed. She has collaborated with scientists at the Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest in New Hampshire, and has been awarded residencies in Canada, Iceland, Wyoming, Ireland, and California; in 2024 she was the artist-in-residence at the Sawtooth National Recreation Area in Idaho. Rebecca holds a BFA in Painting from Rhode Island School of Design, an MA in Community-Based Education from San Francisco State University, and an MFA in Interdisciplinary Art from the University of New Mexico. <http://www.rebeccaschultzprojects.com>

Cindy Stockton Moore is a Philadelphia based artist who works with aqueous media to create multimedia animations, works on paper, and site-specific installations. Installations currently on view (2025) include 'an openness to all things

lovely' at Glen Foerd on the Delaware and 'Other Absences' at Eastern State Penitentiary. Her experimental, often collaborative, videos have been screened on-line and in festivals and exhibitions nationwide and abroad. Cindy's writing on art has appeared in FlashArt, ArtNews, NYArts Magazine, SciArt Magazine, The New York Sun, and Title Magazine in addition to university and web publications. She is a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist, working primarily in the Delaware River Watershed. <https://cindystocktonmoore.com/>

Nichole van Beek received a BFA from The Cooper Union in 1998 and an MFA from The University of California, Santa Barbara in 2007. She has exhibited work at Jeff Bailey Gallery (Hudson and NYC), Geoffrey Young Gallery (Great Barrington, MA), Morgan Lehman Gallery (NYC), Interstitial (Seattle, WA), White Flag Projects (St. Louis, MO) and Ortega y Gasset and Tiger Strikes Asteroid in Brooklyn, among other spaces. She has attended residencies at Vermont Studio Center, Jentel Foundation, and Kingsbrae International Residency for the Arts. She was also the recipient of a New York Foundation for the Arts Grant in painting, and she participated in Socrates Sculpture Park Emerging Artist Fellowship. <http://nicholevanbeek.com>