



AS LAND REMEMBERS

DENNISTON HILL AT
MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

CURATED BY
ARIANA FAYE ALLENSWORTH

American Artist
Deborah Anzinger
Ei Arakawa-Nash
Nancy Brooks Brody
Carolina Caycedo
william córdova
Annalee Davis
Nikita Gale
julie ezelle patton
Marcela Torres
Las Nietas de Nonó
Lorna Williams

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MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY, 385 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, NY 10013

II. LAND AS IDEA

“According to [Ralph] Ellison, at the time if you asked someone how they were, they’d say, ‘Oh man, I’m nowhere.’ It’s the idea that a place can also be a mindset.”
—Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts on the title of her book, *Harlem Is Nowhere* (2011)⁸

Through works by Nikita Gale, Ei Arakawa-Nash, william córdova, and American Artist, landscapes emerge as constellations of ideas and temporalities. Gale’s *HXSTXRI-CAL RECORD* (2022) probes the residues of the Holocene epoch, the geological age whose climatic stability enabled the rise of extractive systems that now haunt the built environment. Bleachers, a keyboard, synthesizer, trilobite, and spotlights are assembled alongside minerals like calcite and shungite whose properties have preserved ancient cave drawings and now undergird contemporary infrastructures like drywall and concrete: “new caves”⁹ of the built environment, as Gale describes them. The work invites us to attune to frequencies of listening buried in these everyday materials.

Nearby, *Untitled (Yoko Ono, Haru [Spring], January 25, 1969)* (2025) is Arakawa-Nash’s LED painting that renders the character for “Spring” as drawn by Yoko Ono in 1969. Mounted on hand-dyed textile, the character pulses between pink and blue hues, glowing with light and archive. The work was inspired by the artist’s witnessing of Ono make this calligraphic mark in archival footage, an encounter that reshaped his relationship to her oeuvre.¹⁰ *Untitled* invokes spring as both a season and a symbol of renewal, unfolding within a layered terrain of Japanese diasporic memory and interpersonal connection.

william córdova’s *lumumba-zapata (bpp vol. ii, no. 25, sunday, march 9, 1969)*, (1969–2009) reclaims the architectural language of the column through a sculptural stack of 3,000 orig-

AS LAND REMEMBERS

Marian Goodman Gallery presents *As Land Remembers*, an exhibition about Denniston Hill, the artist residency founded by artists Julie Mehretu and Paul Pfeiffer and architectural historian Lawrence Chua. The exhibition features alumni and collaborators of Denniston Hill’s residency program including American Artist, Deborah Anzinger, Ei Arakawa-Nash, Nancy Brooks Brody, Carolina Caycedo, william córdova, Annalee Davis, Nikita Gale, Las Nietas de Nonó, julie ezelle patton, Marcela Torres, and Lorna Williams.

The heart of Denniston Hill is its campus in Sullivan County, NY—over 200 acres of farmland, forest, and wetlands traditionally tended by the Esopus people of Lenapehoking. For nearly 20 years, its residency program has provided a refuge for artists from around the world to live, build new ideas, and create work in deep relationship with the environment. To be in residence at Denniston Hill is not only to create in place, but to participate in its ongoing making: tending gardens, sharing meals, walking the land, and joining in a collective rhythm of care. In this context, the rural is not marginal but a reflection of the mutual dependence of all living beings within a common world. Here, the land is a field in every sense: of tall grasses and milkweed, bees and wind, interwoven lifeforms and relationships—but also a field of shared inquiry. It is an active participant in the process of making and remembering.

As Land Remembers extends the ethos of Denniston Hill into the gallery, bringing together artworks grounded in ecological attunement and relational practice. These artists do not treat land merely as a backdrop, but engage it as collaborator, teacher, kin, and witness to history’s turning cycles.

The show’s title resists the tendency to frame land as a singular, fixed entity—an impulse of

III. LAND AS METHOD

“If you don’t move with the land, the land will move you.”
—Tyson Yunkaporta, *Sand Talk* (2019)¹³

Deborah Anzinger, Marcela Torres, and Lorna Williams turn to land as both method and praxis. Through painting, ceramics, and sculpture, they engage land as a co-creative force that shapes how they make, heal, and transmit knowledge.

Anzinger’s *Untitled Transmutations* series (2022-present) transforms the aftermath of ecological catastrophe into an abstract record and offering. Painted with charcoal pigment sourced from a wildfire and subsequent controlled burns in Jamaica’s Cockpit Country—a historic region where Maroons sought refuge and resisted their enslavement—the works are materially rooted in a shared process of devastation and regrowth. The fire nearly destroyed hundreds of native fruit and timber trees planted by Anzinger and her collaborators as part of *Training Station* (2020–present), an environmental sculpture and community reforestation project situated on her familial land in the same region. Using rainwater harvested onsite, the fire was extinguished, and many of the trees, miraculously, survived. Together, the two bodies of work mark a shift in Anzinger’s practice toward grounding art in reciprocity with land and more-than-human life, using aesthetics as a way to relate to nature in ecologically generative ways. As she states, “These paintings are an attempt at an art practice based in the joy of regard, reciprocity, and appreciation for what the earth provides us...”¹⁴

In this liminal state, the charcoal becomes both ruin and record, artifact and agent, marking the intertwined violences and recoveries that shape the land’s ecology. The paintings not only commemorate these moments but directly support ongoing afforestation efforts.

Torres’ collection of ceramic sculptures from their body of work, *Quipaxaloliztli Itenan*

ten reinforced by the qualifier “The,” which can imply a bounded, knowable, and static terrain. As, by contrast, introduces openness, relationality, and time in motion. It invites us to think *with* land, not about it. Language, here, matters: the smallest word can open or foreclose the possibility of relation. In this case, As offers space for multiplicity—for memory that is distributed, refracted, and ongoing. It gestures toward a field of mutual attunement, de-centering what Sylvia Wynter calls the “over-representation of Man,”¹¹ a narrow, Western, colonial conception of the human imposed as universal. For Wynter, this figure not only displaces² other ways of being but actively sustains the extractive, racialized systems we now associate with the Anthropocene. Geographer Laura Pulido extends this critique by emphasizing land’s relational capacity to absorb and transmit memory and energy. She writes that “all living things that pass through a landscape leave a trace—an energy, if you will—that inhabits the land. Just as individual trauma rests in the body, collective trauma rests in the land, even when it’s rarely visible...due to our heavy investment in denial.”³ Pulido’s framing complements the shift away from viewing land as fixed or singular and instead underscores its presence as a living entity. Spanning visual, performative, sculptural, and archival practices, these artists collaborate with land’s memory and enact practices of remembering with and alongside it.

I. LAND AS RELATION

“As around the sun the earth knows she’s revolving...”
—Stevie Wonder, “As” (1976)⁴

Reciprocal entanglements with place are central to Denniston Hill, where working in deep relation to its rural context opens new pathways for creation. Textile works by Carolina Caycedo and Annalee Davis extend this commitment to relation, engaging with land as a living presence.

Huitzilopochtli - Visitando La Madre De Huitzilopochtli (2024), depicts scenes from a mythic journey in which sorcerers transform into animal forms to traverse cosmic planes, returning with gifts from ancestral realms. Drawing from Aztec cosmology and colonial-era retellings¹⁵, the works channel communion with animal kin not as metaphor but as method. Here, kinship becomes a technology of travel and remembrance, where earth acts as a conduit for return to ancestral time. Clay, a similarly shapeshifting entity, functions as a geological body through which cultural knowledge is activated and passed on.

Lorna Williams’ *ólter* (2017) gathers an assemblage of rope, leather, bicycle handle, skeleton arms, dead insects, and ancestral offerings into a suspended sculptural form. Composed of both natural and human-made materials, the work engages both the anatomical and the mythic, forming a ritual vessel shaped by cycles of life and death, birth and decay, and the ceremonies that accompany transformation. It creates a space for initiation, shedding, recognition, and remaking self by inviting viewers into the space between figuration and abstraction. Reflecting on her practice, Williams describes how she hopes her work invites viewers to “spend time investigating, asking questions, making connections, relating to and dancing around [it].”¹⁶

Together, the artists in *As Land Remembers* engage a field shaped by the very conditions which place makes possible—and impossible. Like Denniston Hill itself, a site of refuge and shared study, where experimentation, stewardship, and interdependence guide the work of building more liberated futures. In a moment when crisis and catastrophe dominate our sense of what’s possible, these works echo Denniston Hill’s quiet commitment to a different tempo: one that counterbalances the demanding rhythms of cultural production by valuing the often-invisible aspects of artistic processes. Here, land is not just a place to make, but a companion in imagining otherwise.

“They gleaned the woods for fallen limbs and used them to create the ‘Alphabet Fence.’ Cleveland-based Charmaine Spencer helped carry out this wooden vision. It stopped traffic. People got married in front of it. A vulture perched on the letter Z gnawed off the head of a squirrel. Bloody letters! The councilman requested that the fence be put to rest.

Death rode a fence. But that’s another story...

The energy of this topoetgraphical project for Cleveland (all so alphabet-eco) also pops from an attempt to honor the ancestors. My father’s name was Cleve. Yes, Cleve. He was named after an uncle (not the city of his birth) who looked after a pear tree, made sure it blossomed (as if it was the child he never had). Pear with me. Bare...”

— julie ezelle patton (2012)

As Land Remembers is curated by Ariana Faye Allensworth, a 2023 Curatorial Research Fellow at Independent Curators International (ICI). Her fellowship supported the development of a research and convening series exploring how arts and culture can shape just ecological futures in Allensworth, California—a historic Black town founded by her ancestors in the San Joaquin Valley. Her curatorial practice centers art as a means for communities to sustain memory and belonging in place.

ABOUT DENNISTON HILL

Denniston Hill was established in 2004, when artists Julie Mehretu, Paul Pfeiffer, and architectural historian Lawrence Chua transformed a 150-year-old farmhouse and its surrounded 200+ acres of rolling farmland, wetlands, and protected forests (ancestrally known as the Lenapehoking) into an artist residency guided by the principle that creative and critical voices are essential in shaping a more just and equitable society. In 2008, they formalized as a 501c3 whose mission is to advance dialogues across disciplines of art and political action through residencies, exhibitions, and educational programs. It offers a place where queer artists and artists of color can see themselves mirrored back in the heart of the organization, ensuring that the voices of the most vulnerable, and risk-taking artists continue to be heard. Today, nearly 20 years in continuous operation, Denniston Hill’s residency program has welcomed artists from around the world to live, work, build new ideas, and better understand

our shared human conditions, together. The campus is a place of collective refuge for so many people who experience ongoing precarity in their lives, art-making, and activism. It is a laboratory. A place for discursive study. And a testing ground for radical hospitality and communal living.

ABOUT THE INDEPENDENT CURATORS INTERNATIONAL (ICI) CURATORIAL FELLOWSHIP

ICI’s Curatorial Research Fellowships reflect the organization’s commitment to the advancement of new knowledge and practices. The program supports curators’ research, travel, and the development of their professional networks, promoting experimentation, collaboration, and international engagement in the field. Expanded in 2021 with the support of the Marian Goodman Gallery Initiative in honor of the late Okwui Enwezor, the program aims to strengthen and expand educational and research opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) curators, empowering and sustaining a more diverse generation of creative professionals and forging international collaborative networks. In a moment when crisis and catastrophe dominate our sense of what’s possible, these works echo Denniston Hill’s quiet commitment to a different tempo: one that counterbalances the demanding rhythms of cultural production by valuing the often-invisible aspects of artistic processes. Here, land is not just a place to make, but a companion in imagining otherwise.

Caycedo’s *Wanaawna* (2019), an expansive fabric work from her ongoing *Water Portraits* series, honors the native Tongva name for what is now called the Santa Ana River in Southern California. It portrays the river as both lifeforce and political agent in ongoing environmental struggles. Critiquing Eurocentric and patriarchal visual traditions of “landscape” that frame nature as separate from human life, the work calls for a decolonized gaze. Featuring mirrored and kaleidoscopic images of river water, its ceiling-hung form invites viewers into a new, relational orientation to land, water, and image. Drawing from Indigenous medicinal and shamanic visions, the imagery resists singular perspective. Definitions are not given; instead, the work opens a process of meaning-making, encouraging viewers to find their own images and relationships within it.

Davis’ *An Unbound Book of Prayer* (2022-2024) is a series of hand-embroidered and appliquéd linen pieces that draw on the history of the plot in the context of Barbadian plantation society. These marginal provision grounds carved out within the plantation system were cultivated by enslaved Africans to grow food, prepare medicine, and practice ritual. As sites of refusal, they sustained relationships to land and healing knowledge rooted in African cosmologies across generations.⁵ Davis’ intimate works extend this legacy, offering strategies for care and calm amid the weight of ecological crisis. Each piece alludes to plants with traditional use value specific to the Barbadian landscape. Inherited British sewing traditions are transformed from decorative objects into spiritual gestures—acts of devotion and quiet worship grounded in reverence for the natural world. The work asks how nature might accompany us in survival, where beauty is not an ornamental pursuit, but a reparative one.

Las Nietas de Nonó’s video-performance *barullo a la orilla* (2025) is a choreographic meditation on the longing for intimacy with the coastline—a space marked by both dispossession and resistance in their homeland of Puerto Rico. Loosely translated as “commotion at the shore,” the work unfolds as a visual and somatic reflection on the tension

“Salon des Refusés is very much a living sculpture of—time, the changing seasons, and community building its primary materials and reason for existing.”

— julie ezelle patton (2012)

This exhibition poster pays homage to julie ezelle patton’s improvisational ecopoetics, featuring a collage drawn from images of *Alphabet Fence* (2008-2010) at Salon des Refusés, an artist cooperative she co-founded in Cleveland, Ohio. Guided by a deep attunement to place and the ephemeral, patton’s writing, performances, and site-specific installations often draw from what materials and setting make available in the moment, recomposing meaning through collaboration with the living world. Also included are excerpts from her poetic essay *The Building by the Side of the Road: Cleveland’s Native/Green Rights Movement* (2012), which chronicles the ecocultural reclamation projects she has helped seed at *Salon des Refusés*—most notably the Let it Bee Garden and Poet Tree Mitigation Program, which helped establish one of Cleveland’s first conservation easements. patton was a Denniston Hill resident in 2021.

Image:
julie ezelle patton
Everything There is To Say on Earth & Then Some, 2011
Photographs, stencil and ink-based collage on paper
11 × 17 in. (27.9 × 43.2 cm)

between ancestral practices and extractive forces. Through sequences of string figures—ancient, playful designs crafted from a single thread—they evoke a tactile archive of relation between archipelagos marked by colonial legacies. The performance becomes a cartographic exercise shaped by the artists’ relationship to the shore, where inherited histories and spiritual survivals are held in tension through gesture and line. Here, cartography is not a tool of conquest or containment but a practice of maintaining connection to place through embodied ritual, even in the face of disorientation and grief caused by extraction, displacement, and separation from ancestral lands. The artists describe their work as a way to deepen their understanding of a “living Afro-Caribbean geography”⁶—a geography this piece honors through acts of protection, remembrance, and care. *barullo a la orilla* echoes Denniston Hill’s own acknowledgment of land as a living territory, where ancestral memory and spirits from across oceans and time continue to speak to and nourish one another.

Nancy Brooks Brody’s *Glory Holes* series (2008-2013) extends this thread of relation through its quiet rigor and fugitive hues. The title draws from two entwined references: the “glory hole”—a spatial architecture of anonymous queer intimacy—and “glories,” optical phenomena in which circular rainbows halo the observer’s shadow. Each work invites us into a relational mode of seeing. Composed of oil on Venetian plaster and infused with incremental measures of the ROYGBIV spectrum, the paintings initially appear monochromatic. But under particular conditions, at the right angle and with time and proximity, a web of interlaced lines and tonal shifts becomes perceptible. As Brody explained, “The color is there... and I believe or hope that is something one will feel.”⁷ What emerges is a queer visual language of presence and veiling, where recognition need not rely on visibility. In a moment when the visibility of marginalized bodies is both demanded and weaponized, Brody’s queer abstraction reminds us of the radical power of opacity. At Denniston Hill, there’s an abiding respect for nurturing what must remain underground, because what’s unseen is often what most deserves care and protection.

NOTES

- Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom,” *New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–317.
- See Katherine McKittick’s *Demonic Grounds* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006) and her co-edited volume *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human As Praxis* (Duke University Press, 2015) for how Wynter’s critique of “Man” reveals the racialized production of space and opens toward Black geographic alternatives that unsettle colonial definitions of the human.
- Laura Pulido, “Landscapes of Racial Violence,” in *Latitudes: An Angeleno’s Atlas*, ed. Patricia Wakida (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2015), 63–71.
- Stevie Wonder, “As,” *on Songs in the Key of Life* (Tamla Records, 1976).
- See Sylvia Wynter, “Jonkonnu in Jamaica: Towards the Interpretation of the Folk Dance as a Cultural Process,” *Jamaica Journal*, June 1970 for an articulation of how plot practices embodied sacred relations to land that countered colonial logics of property.
- Las Nietas de Nonó, artist talk at *Creative Time Summit 2024: States of Emergence—Land After Property and Catastrophe*, September 21, 2024.
- Nancy Brooks Brody, “Audio Guide: Nancy Brooks Brody on Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon,” New Museum Audio Archive, 2017.
- Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts, interview by Jeanine Ramirez, *New York Daily News*, February 9, 2011.
- Nikita Gale, “Artist Statement for *HOLLOWSCENE*,” Commonwealth and Council, 2022.
- See Ei Arakawa-Nash, “We Love You, Yoko,” *Tate Etc.*, April 15, 2024.
- See *Lumumba-Zapata College: B.S.C.-M.A.Y.A. Demands for the Third College*, U.C.S.D., March 14, 1969.
- william córdova, email message to Ariana Faye Allensworth, April 18, 2025.
- Tyson Yunkaporta, *Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World* (HarperCollins, 2021), 2.
- Deborah Anzinger, email message to Ariana Faye Allensworth, April 18, 2025.
- See Marcela Torres’ artist statement for *Quipaxaloliztli Itenan Huitzilopochtli - Visitando La Madre de Huitzilopochtli*, Artshack Brooklyn, 2024, for reflections on Codex Durán and how colonial-era retellings can simultaneously document and obscure Indigenous cosmologies.
- Carly Gaebé, “Tree of Life: Q+A with Lorna Williams,” *Art in America*, September 6, 2011.

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY DENNISTON HILL