

Lehman
College
Art
Gallery

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Eco-Urgency: Now or Never

At Wave Hill: August 28–December 5, 2021

At Lehman College Art Gallery: December 7, 2021–April 23, 2022

Two Dozen Artists Heed the Call of the Climate Crisis



Image: Alexis Rockman. *Gowanus*, 2013, oil on wood, 72 x 90 inches. Courtesy of Sperone Westwater

Location: Lehman College Art Gallery, Bedford Park Boulevard West, Bronx, NY 10468
lehmagallery.org Tue - Thurs, 10 - 4

Lehman College Art Gallery
250 Bedford Park Blvd W, Bronx, NY 10468 718.960.8731
lehmagallery.org

To Visit Lehman College Art Gallery, Advance Reservations Required thru Eventbrite here <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/exhibition-eco-urgency-now-or-never-tickets-205688147787>

**Please note that proof of vaccination is required to visit Lehman College
Masks must be worn on Lehman College Campus at all times**

Lehman College Art Gallery opens its Edith Altschul Lehman and Robert Lehman wings from December 7, 2021–April 23, 2022, presenting Part II of the exhibition *Eco-Urgency: Now or Never*. The presentation at Lehman, **Or Never**, is both speculative and reflective, treating our ecological crises as a cycle that repeats itself endlessly. Here, artists examine the resonant patterns of history that have shaped and led us to our current moment alongside possible and causal futures. The presentation at Lehman complements Part I of the collaborative exhibition, **Now**, at Wave Hill, which brought together artists looking at the urgency of the present moment, raising awareness through a holistic approach to understanding our ecological crises, including overlapping social, political, and environmental concerns.

As part of Lehman’s site-specific **Rotunda Series**, Bronx-based artist Nicky Enright creates a new variation on his work *What on Earth? (Have You Done)*, which begs multiple questions for the viewer. The hand painted repetition of text in the large circular space, overlapping beginning and ending, urges us to interpret this question in varied ways and engages the viewer in a dialogue of personal relevancy and responsibility.

Alexis Rockman presents the viewer with a startling apocalyptic vision in *Gowanus*, merging lurid paintbox colors with a representation of a cascade of toxic chemicals, to present a polluted version of New York City’s famous Gowanus Canal, a nearly 2-mile waterway in Brooklyn. The canal is one of the most polluted bodies of water in the world and has been designated as a Superfund cleanup site. Here, Rockman suggests the power of nature to adapt, respond and transform as a result of the pollution humans have poured into the environment. The artist posits that even in a corrupted and altered form, the life force continues. In contrast, Allison Janae Hamilton examines the delicacy of the biodiversity operating within the marshes, wetlands and swamps of her native Florida, an area where the symbiosis of nature is increasingly under threat by storms, draining of the Everglades, and rampant development. Hamilton looks at these ecological disasters through socioeconomic and racial boundaries, and their consequences as to what populations are most impacted by our changing ecology.

As Hamilton’s work is concerned with the social implications of environmental change, so too Samantha Box’s, *Diaspora Herbarium* an “herbarium of resistance” addresses themes of accessibility and justice. Her photographs and literal herbarium question whether Caribbean diaspora communities in the Bronx can harness the healing and sustenance of “ethnomedicine – a knowledge of plants held by enslaved and indigenous peoples.” Her work delves into questions of sustainability, pondering access and ensuring the plant resources’ survival as an act of resistance.

Rachel Frank’s video, *Thresholds* reflects on wildlife corridors, pathways for wildlife linking habitats, disrupted by manmade growth. Through her explorations and contemplations of

the southern Arizona Sonoran Desert's borderlands, Frank addresses wildlife fragmentation; migration; borders; climate change; droughts; and the changing uses of the desert. Her large-scale sculptures of animal heads are worn in performances using her body to interact with the landscape, addressing the practice of rewilding, a reintroduction of species to restore eco systems.

Climate change, pollution, competition for natural resources and food insecurity threaten to overwhelm our planet and make earth uninhabitable. To encourage public engagement and deepen awareness of these issues, the artists in *Eco-Urgency: Now or Never* rely on research, critical analysis, observation, and direct action that manifest as objects, videos, performances, and community organizing. There are no easy answers, yet *Eco-Urgency: Now or Never* distills the current moment so that it can be approached, understood, and acted on, provoking conversation and shared ideas.

Unfolding over a period of eight months, the two exhibition venues and related public programs present research across multiple seasons. The work of several of the artists in the show will appear in both venues, deepening the connections between the two galleries. Both parts of the exhibition investigate a series of overlapping thematic inquiries that preoccupy artists today. These include:

- *Depicting Imminent Change*—Imagining apocalyptic climate catastrophe, artists propose ideas for mitigating the resulting damages and impacts of ongoing environmental changes.
- *Politics and the Land*—Artists explore the impact of political and economic policies on natural resources, considering the land as witness to devastation, and the social health inequities exacerbated by unequal distribution of resources.
- *Stewardship*—Focusing on the urge to collect, archive and preserve, artists promote strategies for reducing consumption and working toward a more equitable and sustainable way of living.
- *Decentering Human Experience*—Artists posit the importance of non-human perspective, and of rethinking humans as both a determinative force embedded in, and standing apart from, the natural world.
- *Grief*—A growing body of artistic work is mournful or elegiac, prompting questions about what it means to memorialize what is already lost, or what is about to be lost.

Artists at Lehman College Art Gallery: Vanessa Albury, Samantha Box, Nicky Enright, Rachel Frank, Alicia Grullón, Alison Janae Hamilton, Mary Mattingly, Alexis Rockman, Francesco Simeti, SPURSE, Will Wilson, Natalie Collette Wood and Ken + Julia Yonetani.

Artists at Wave Hill: Allora & Calzadilla, Tatiana Arocha, Hannah Chalew, Lionel Cruet, Nicky Enright, Susan Rowe Harrison, Richard Ibgby & Marilou Lemmens, Mary Mattingly, Alison Moritsugu, Alexis Rockman, SPURSE, Candace Thompson, Natalie Collette Wood, Suné Woods and Sasha Wortzel.

Credits, Catalogue, and Related Content

Eco-Urgency: Now or Never is co-organized by Wave Hill and Lehman College Art Gallery, The City University of New York, and is curated by Bartholomew Bland, Gabriel de Guzman, Jesse Bandler Firestone, Eileen Jeng Lynch and Deborah Yasinsky. The curatorial concept for the exhibition was initiated with Jennifer McGregor, former Director of Arts at Wave Hill. Each venue will create a catalogue devoted to the *Now or Never* portions of the exhibition and will include essays and entries about each artist by the contributing curators.

About Lehman College Art Gallery

Always free to the public, Lehman College Art Gallery has been serving the interests of our diverse audience from the Bronx and greater New York City since 1984. The gallery specializes in thematic group exhibitions that bring together famous artists with emerging talents. Education is an integral component of the Gallery's programming and provides the basis of community outreach—from young students to senior citizens.

The Lehman College Art Gallery exhibition program is supported by the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the New York City Council; the New York City Council and the Bronx Delegation; the Edith and Herbert Lehman Foundation; The Jarvis and Constance Doctorow Family Foundation; and The New Yankee Stadium Community Benefits Fund.

Support for Wave Hill's Visual Arts Program is provided by Con Edison; the Council for Canadian American Relations; Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation; Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation; the National Endowment for the Arts; New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; New York Community Trust Edward and Sally Van Lier Fund; New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature; The Pollock-Krasner Foundation; Stavros Niarchos Foundation; Teiger Foundation; The Willem de Kooning Foundation; and by the Cathy and Stephen Weinroth Commissioning Fund for the Arts. The City of New York owns the buildings and grounds of Wave Hill. Wave Hill's operations are made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; the Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquariums Grant Program administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; the National Endowment for the Arts; the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; and New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature.

