

NYBG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 15, 2022

***The Bond of Live Things Everywhere* at NYBG Features a Word and Sound Installation of Black Poetry That Speaks to Our Relationship with the Natural World**

On View Saturday, September 17–Sunday, November 6, 2022, the Installation Will Be Accompanied by a Symposium; Opening- and Closing-Day Celebrations with Live Music and Poetry Readings; an Online Conversation Series with Black Writers, Activists, and Educators; and More



Joshua Bennett, Ph.D., curator of *The Bond of Live Things Everywhere* at NYBG
(Photo by Rog Walker)

Bronx, NY—Beginning Saturday, September 17, 2022, at The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG), *The Bond of Live Things Everywhere* will feature a word and sound installation of Black poetry that speaks to our relationship with the natural world. Programming includes a symposium; opening- and closing-day celebrations featuring live music and poetry readings; an online series of conversations with Black writers, activists, and educators; and a poetry contest for first to 12th-grade students. *The Bond of Live Things Everywhere* will be on view along NYBG's Mitsubishi Wild Wetland Trail through Sunday, November 6, 2022.

Curated by poet and scholar Joshua Bennett, Ph.D., in partnership with the Poetry Society of America, *The Bond of Live Things Everywhere* stages Black poetry and performance in the open air close to water and trees, inspired in part by “The Clearing”—a green space cut deep in the woods where a free Black community finds grace in Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved*. Exploring the bond between Black freedom dreams and stewardship of Earth, it will feature displays of 12 poems by classic and contemporary Black poets, including Robert Hayden, Nikki Giovanni, Lucille Clifton, and Terrance Hayes, and a sound installation that will combine recordings of poets reading their work with songs by Black performing artists. The combination of poetry and music is intended to invite visitors to encounter nature via the Black environmental imagination.

The installation was designed by Morcos Key, a Brooklyn design studio that collaborates with arts and cultural institutions, nonprofits, and commercial enterprises in North America and the Middle East. The sound design is by Marcus Johnson, who has more than 20 years of experience in music composition, multimedia, and technical event design.

As part of *The Bond of Live Things Everywhere*, students in elementary, middle, and high school who live or study in New York City are invited to participate in NYBG's Youth Poetry Contest. Poems inspired by experiencing the installation can be submitted from Tuesday, September 20 through Friday, October 21, 2022. Ten winning poems will be selected by the Poetry Society of America. More information about the contest will be available by September 17 at nybg.org

The schedule of public programming follows.

The Bond of Live Things Everywhere Symposium

Saturday, September 17, 2022; 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Arthur and Janet Ross Lecture Hall

Moderated by **Joshua Bennett**, this symposium will feature a conversation about the role of Black ecological thought in the panelists' work and life and draw from the poems featured in the exhibition.

- Panelists:
 - **Abra Lee** is a storyteller, horticulturist, and author of the forthcoming book *Conquer the Soil: Black America and the Untold Stories of Our Country's Gardeners, Farmers, and Growers*. Her work has been published by *The New York Times*, *Fine Gardening*, and *Veranda*, among others. Lee is a graduate of Auburn University College of Agriculture and an alumna of the Longwood Gardens Society of Fellows, a global network of public horticulture professionals.
 - **Aracelis Girmay** is the author of the poetry collections *Teeth*, *Kingdom Animalia*, and *the black maria*. She was a finalist for the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 2018. Girmay is on the editorial board of the African Poetry Book Fund and is also the editor of the forthcoming *So We Can Know: Writers of Color on Pregnancy, Loss, Abortion, and Birth*. Her poems and essays have been published in *Astra*, *The Paris Review*, *Granta*, and *Black Renaissance Noire*.
 - **Leah Penniman** is a Black Kreyol farmer, author, mother, and food justice activist. She currently serves as founding co-Executive Director and Farm Director of Soul Fire Farm in Grafton, New York, a Black- and Brown-led project that works toward food and land justice. She is the author of *Farming While Black: Soul Fire Farm's Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land* and *Black Earth Wisdom: Soulful Conversations with Black Environmentalists*.
 - **Sonya Posmentier, Ph.D.**, is an associate professor of English at New York University. Her first book, *Cultivation and Catastrophe: The Lyric Ecology of Modern Black Literature*, received the William Sanders Scarborough Prize from the Modern Language Association. Her essays and articles have appeared in *The New York Times Book Review* and *American*

Literature, and she has published poems in *Grey*, *Seneca Review*, and *Perihelion*.

- **Terrance Hayes** is a professor of English at New York University. His most recent publications include *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin*, which won the Hurston/Wright 2019 Award for Poetry, and *To Float In The Space Between: Drawings and Essays in Conversation with Etheridge Knight*, which won the Poetry Foundation's 2019 Pegasus Award for Poetry Criticism.

Opening Day Celebration

Saturday, September 17, 2022; 1–5 p.m.

Mitsubishi Wild Wetland Trail, Clay Family Picnic Pavilions, and Daffodil Hill

The opening of *The Bond of Live Things Everywhere* will be celebrated with live music, poetry readings, lawn games, a pop-up bookstore, and food available for purchase.

- **Poetry Workshop and Bookstore with The Bronx is Reading**

1–5 p.m.

The Bronx is Reading, which promotes literacy and a love of reading, will have a pop-up bookstore on site, with books by the featured panelists and poets, and will also hold poetry workshops led by Bronx Poet Laureate Haydil Henriquez.

- **Poetry Readings**

2:30 p.m.

Featured poets:

- **Taylor Johnson** is the author of *Inheritance*, winner of the 2021 Norma Farber First Book Award from the Poetry Society of America. His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *The Paris Review*, *The Baffler*, and *Scalawag*.
- **Marwa Helal** is the author of *Ante body*, *Invasive Species*, and the chapbook *I AM MADE TO LEAVE I AM MADE TO RETURN*. Helal is the winner of *BOMB*'s Biennial 2016 Poetry Contest and a 2021 Whiting Award.
- **Tongo Eisen-Martin** is the author of *someone's dead already* and *Heaven Is All Goodbyes*, which received a 2018 American Book Award and was named a 2018 National California Booksellers Association Poetry Book of the Year.

- **Musical Performance featuring Brandi and the Alexanders**

3:15 and 4:10 p.m.

Brandi and the Alexanders is a genre-bending, soul-rocking band from Brooklyn. Initially formed in 2014 as a nine-piece classic R&B cover band, by 2016 members had begun writing original material inspired by bluesy Southern soul and rock plus harder '70s-era funk.

In Conversation Series

Online webinars; select dates to be announced

In a series of online conversations, *The Bond of Live Things Everywhere* Curator Joshua Bennett will

discuss the Black experience in nature with fellow writers, activists, and educators. Dates and speakers will be posted on nybg.org by September 17.

Closing Day Celebration

Sunday, November 6, 2022; 12–3 p.m.

Mitsubishi Wild Wetland Trail and Daffodil Hill

The closing of *The Bond of Live Things Everywhere* will feature a live DJ and readings by the winners of NYBG's Youth Poetry Contest. More details will be available closer to the date; check nybg.org for updates.

About the Curator

Professor Joshua Bennett teaches English and creative writing at Dartmouth College. He is the author of *The Sobbing School*, which was a National Poetry Series winner and a finalist for an NAACP Image Award; *Being Property Once Myself: Blackness and the End of Man*; *Owed*; and *The Study of Human Life*. Bennett holds a Ph.D. in English from Princeton University and a M.A. in theatre and performance studies from the University of Warwick, where he was a Marshall Scholar. In 2021, he received a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Whiting Award in Poetry and Nonfiction. He has also received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Ford Foundation, and the Society of Fellows at Harvard University. His books are available for purchase at NYBG Shop.

The Bond of Live Things Everywhere is presented in partnership with the Poetry Society of America. Support for this project has been provided by the Destina Foundation, the David Rockefeller Fund, and Humanities New York. Additional support has been provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York State Council on the Arts.

For more information and to register for *The Bond of Live Things Everywhere* Symposium, please visit <https://www.nybg.org/event/the-bond-of-live-things-everywhere/>

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The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road. It is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad or subway. The Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The best way to enjoy the Garden is with the *All-Garden Pass*, which includes admission to the grounds as well as to seasonal gardens, exhibitions, and attractions such as the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, Everett Children's Adventure Garden, and Tram Tour. For ticket pricing, please check our Web site. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit nybg.org

The New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10458

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

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