

Bad WAtEr

As for me, I'm just passing through this planet

Jacob Jackmauh, Caitlin McCann & Benjamin Stallings

March 8 – March 31, 2024

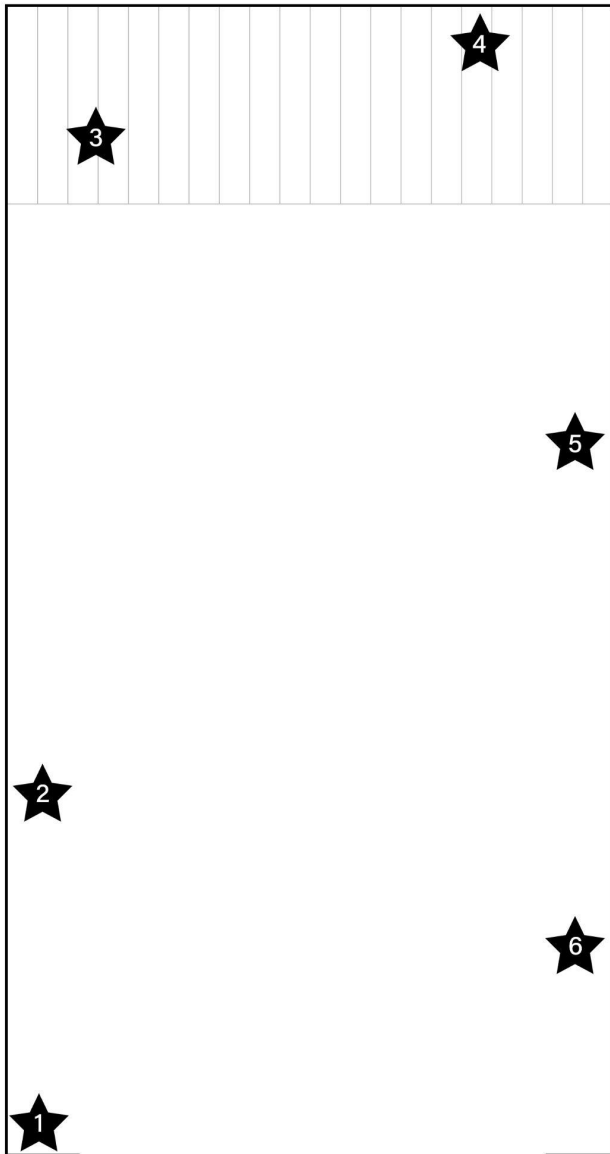
I didn't want to write about kudzu, but I live in South Knoxville. When I drive home from work everyday, the window of my car is completely overtaken by the 45 mph blur of the vine. I didn't want to write about kudzu because every writer in the South writes about kudzu, but how can something that is both so monstrous & so every day be avoided? When a friend of mine moved to East Tennessee—her first time living in the southern part of the United States—driving around she asked me, “What are these amazing grape vines growing everywhere?” I paused, confused for a moment at what she might be talking about, before I realized she meant the thing covering every roadside, taking over empty parking lots & creeping into junkyards where cars have sat for centuries. Kudzu was brought to the United States during the Dust Bowl as a cover crop meant to revitalize the earth. Instead, it took over, causing widespread panic that it might quickly cover the entire continent. But then, it just... stopped. This show isn't about kudzu, but it is entangled with the power of storytelling, connection to place, and transformation across time that the mythmaking of the vine reveals. It's about the things we try to save, and what happens when we surrender to letting them take over.

As for me, I'm just passing through this planet is a line from the artist & minister Howard Finster, who was called by god to spread the gospel through his visionary compound Paradise Garden in Summerville, Georgia. Writer Benjamin Stallings spent several days staying at Paradise Garden working on a piece that made its way into a publication for the exhibition. When we caught up on the phone, he relayed to me that he was trying to bait a line from the caretaker of the gardens for this piece of writing, asking why he thought it was important to continue to care for Howard's gardens long after his passing. He told Ben something along the lines of, “Everything else here has fallen into the swamp; I think we should keep one more thing out of it.”

Like the overwhelming capacity of the kudzu vine to envelop, the work in *As for me, I'm just passing through this planet* is all wrapped up in the desire to understand your relationship to something you feel undeniably pulled towards. In response to the Southern landscape and the people in it, Benjamin Stallings' *Museum Garden* is split into three distinct parts: Old Car City, Kudzu, and Paradise Garden. The first and third sections move between normative prose structures and sparse lyric poetry that mirrors the experience of driving on a state highway in Georgia and Tennessee—slowing through towns and speeding through hills and trees. The second section, “Kudzu,” layers words on top of each other, creating an excavation site where the reader can move through the text like digging through soil, vegetation, and objects left behind on a roadside, collecting materials that still have use. All sections look at what's left after an event, what to preserve, what to let rot, and what to prune.

Jacob Jackmauh's sculptures consist of discarded fiberglass and resin mold fragments from Fast Fiberglass LLC, a factory in western Wisconsin that produces novelty sculptures. These molds have spent decades in the factory's outdoor storage lot—weathered, discolored, broken—covered in dirt, moss, lichen and other organic matter. They exist as distorted husks that bear the ancestral markings of their counterpart-products which dot the American landscape. Ownership of Fast Fiberglass LLC has changed hands multiple times over the past 50 years, leaving little record of the operation's total output. Nevertheless the countless molds that occupy the plot represent decades of market-driven manufacturing, revealing an inadvertent index of symbols that, for better or worse, speak to the conditions of American monumentalism, regional identity, and cultural mythmaking.

Motivated by a desperate yearning for the expression found through music, Caitlin McCann began teaching herself to build and code machines in recognition of her own limitations in playing instruments or singing. The sculptures serve as a bridge between her longing for musical proficiency and the emotive power inherent in the folk tradition. In this work, McCann is specifically interested in recreating folk songs in the American tradition so old that they have no author credited, suggesting a collective, collaborative human inheritance. These early songs have evolved over generations as tools of expressions necessitated by love, oppression, liberation, labor, and faith. The machines have become their own innovations of expression, and vessels for these ancient songs. Like a folk song, and like a vine or a living being, the machines will also slowly atrophy and change over time as they are played.



1. Benjamin Stallings
Museum Garden, 2024
hand-bound publication
2. Jacob Jackmauh
Seeing The Elephant, 2024
discarded factory mold, moss, lichen,
dirt, pine needles, hardware
3. Caitlin McCann
*That Land Where Joy Will Never End
(Folk Song Machine IV)*, 2024
briefcase, wood, aluminum, LEDs,
transistor array, solenoids, PCB, sound
modules, 8ohm speaker, amplifier
circuit, hookup wire, Arduino Mega,
foam earplugs, single-pole switch
4. Jacob Jackmauh
Calf, 2024,
discarded factory mold, moss, lichen,
dirt, hardware
5. Jacob Jackmauh
Dividend, 2024
discarded factory mold, moss, lichen,
dirt, wasp nest, hardware
6. Caitlin McCann
*And Neither Have I Wings to Fly (Folk Song
Machine III)*, 2024
telephone headset, rotary phone dial,
amplifier circuit, servo motor, I2C LCD,
Arduino MKRZero, acrylic storage box,
brass pipe, gears, breadboard, PCB,
hookup wire, single-pole switches

Jacob Jackmauh (b. 1994, Boston, MA) lives and works in Queens, NY. Selected exhibitions include *International Objects*, Brooklyn, NY (2024); *Eyes Never Sleep*, New York, NY (2024); *Subtitled NYC*, Brooklyn, NY (2023-2024); *Art Lot*, Brooklyn, NY (2021–2022); *Koganecho Area Management Center*, Yokohama, Japan (2021); and *The Cooper Union*, New York, NY (2018). Jackmauh received a BFA from The Cooper Union School of Art, New York, NY in 2018.

Caitlin McCann (b. 1996, New Brunswick, NJ) is a painter and sculptor based in Queens, NY. Her work investigates themes of technological ephemera, allegory, and limitation as an apparatus for expression. McCann received a BFA from The Cooper Union School of Art, New York, NY in 2018.

Benjamin Stallings (b. 1996, Billings, Montana) lives and works in North Georgia. His writing has appeared or will soon appear in *DIAGRAM*, *Ghost Proposal*, *Eco Theo Review*, *Tulane Review*, and others, and has been anthologized in *Las Vegas Writes*. He has worked in editorial roles for publications like *Witness*, *Speaking of Marvels*, and *Rolling Stone*.