

HOLDING WATER



EVELYN RYDZ



HOLDING WATER, 2025

Cast glass, steel, concrete, field stones

Cupped hands, in gradient shades of blue glass, cascade in a formation that suggests flowing water into this oversized vessel. Evelyn Rydz cast the hands of local environmental caretakers and those who have a special connection to water, including Flint's Pond, the body of water in view at deCordova. Flint's Pond is a protected reservoir and provides drinking water to residents of Lincoln. Drawn to the diverse ways that people protect, pollute, and access water, Rydz named this sculpture *Holding Water*. The phrase alludes to a kind of "truth telling"—in this case about how water is sacred and necessary to all life, and yet clean water is not a given for so many. The glass hands are positioned in relationship to each other to suggest a passing of responsibility and knowledge across generations and among communities. The varying shades of blue of the glass and vessel are inspired by Rydz's many photographs of the nearby water, which is constantly changing due to climate shifts, light, and time of year.

SARAH MONTROSS

Museum Director and Chief Curator



The following quotes are from each person whose hands were cast, from top to bottom. To access fuller audio excerpts of these and other conversations with the artist, please scan this QR code.



WATER CONNECTIONS

EVELYN RYDZ IN CONVERSATION WITH

Water is a living being.
It holds emotions, it holds
memory. Literally and
metaphorically, spiritually.
To think about how much
of the world, how much we
are water, physically as
a planet and also as human
beings, how much we are
water and how much we
rely on water—you can't
have one without the other.
I think that water is life.

For me, especially as I get
older, it's not necessarily
holding on to all of the past,
but holding on to the things
that are meaningful and
powerful. Holding on to
memories, the intangible
things that are sometimes
passed down through
generations that give us
a sense of comfort, but
also a sense of who we are
and where we're going.

My people were and are
of the land. And we only
took what we needed. And
we did it with honor.
You never take something
without offering or giving.
So there's a balance and
there's an understanding
that there's no separation.
There's no hierarchy
when you're in nature.

I think for me being in
nature is where you
find the Creator, and
where you find your
peace. So for me, being
a steward is somebody
that is making sure that
it stays protected.

ALICIA
TRUTHSEEKER
MITCHELL

*Troy/Watuppa Indian (Pocasset Wampanoag),
Perry Clan of Watuppa Reservation*



EVELYN RYDZ IN CONVERSATION WITH

Even though an environment, like a pond or conservation land looks pristine, it doesn't mean there aren't threats to it. And fundamentally it's hard for us to grasp some of these major threats to our environment, to our waters.

What one community does ultimately affects their wetlands, but it also affects the downstream communities. And it really brings us together like nothing else that I can imagine. It also is this glimpse into our past. What we've done on the land and landscape for hundreds of years is still reflected in our water, in our rivers.

As I continue my journey in this career, the thing I feel most rushed to do is to protect land. Because the rate of development is so extreme and we have lost so much land in the last 50 years. Nature is the best filter. Our wetlands are the kidneys of nature. Without our wetlands and our protected buffers, I don't see how we're going to sustain clean water in a developed environment.

It really just takes time to be outside. Giving yourself the permission to just sit in nature and absorb what's happening around you really leads to remarkable observations that I think, as humans, we don't often allow ourselves to do.

MICHELE
GRZENDA

*Conservation Director,
Town of Lincoln*



I think most people don't know where their drinking water comes from. It is something that we probably should be educated on a little bit more—a lot of us just don't know where our drinking water comes from, particularly for the cities that are pulling from the surface water, you know, people realizing that stream—that one there—that's where your water comes from.

MARJA COPELAND

Stormwater Projects Manager, Mystic River Watershed Association



El agua es como los hijos, los puedes tener por un tiempo, pero al igual que el agua, se van entre tus dedos y forman otras ideas y otras generaciones. La esperanza es que estas nuevas generaciones vuelvan otra vez y sea como un círculo en el cual lo que yo aprendí de mis padres y lo que mis hijos aprendieron de mí pueda conservarse para el futuro.

Water is like our children, you can have them for a while, but like water, they slip through your fingers and form other ideas and other generations. The hope is that these new generations will return again, and it will be like a circle in which what I learned from my parents and what my children learned from me can be preserved for the future.

Yo creo que los humanos hasta ahora nos estamos dando cuenta de que el querernos a nosotros mismos quiere decir querer al medioambiente.

I believe that only now are we as humans realizing that loving ourselves means loving the environment.

No sabemos lo que el futuro nos traiga, y la gente no se da cuenta de lo importante que es conservar lo que tenemos.

We don't know what the future will bring, and people don't realize how important it is to preserve what we have.

El mar siempre ha sido muy curativo y sagrado en mí vida, simplemente porque mi relación con tu papá siempre fue en el mar. Usábamos el mar para todo lo bueno y también cuando no nos sentíamos bien íbamos al mar. Entonces hay veces que el mar era curativo, hay veces que el mar era la felicidad. Siempre el mar constituyó ambas cosas, lo bueno y lo malo. En mi experiencia el mar es sagrado.

The sea has always been very healing and sacred in my life, simply because my relationship with your dad was always at the sea. We used the sea for everything good, and also when we didn't feel well, we would go to the sea. So sometimes the sea was the healer, sometimes the sea was happiness. The sea always represented both things, the good and the bad. In my experience the sea is sacred.

SONIA
RYDZ

Mother of the Artist



This is it. This is the water we have. This is the water we are all using. It's moving between us. In a natural history timeframe, we have this quick time of interacting with water. Respect it. Think about its history. Think about its future. And think about how it's connecting us to other people, to nature.

JULIE DYER WOOD

Climate Resilience Director, Charles River Watershed Association



We're part of something that is so much bigger than ourselves. And it also makes you question the relationship, our definition, of what is animate versus what is inanimate. You can think of water as being always in motion, having life, giving life. But we don't think of water itself as an animate being. We think of ourselves and other animals as such, but where exactly do you draw that line?

I think the word stewardship is an interesting one because I think that it connotes that we are part of the legacy of a certain part of the town with the land that we have, but that's different from ownership. It's something that we are helping to carry forward in what we feel is the best way. Going back to impermanence, nothing lasts forever, so we have to do the best job that we can.

If we don't have an overarching goal to preserve what matters, whether it's land or certain agricultural practices, or bodies of water, then we can get lost. Because we're not able to keep ourselves buttressed by anything. That's a really important concept in our family, just to keep it going.

TOM
FLINT

*11th generation of Matlock Farm,
Town of Lincoln*



Holding Water is a site-inspired commission by Evelyn Rydz created for Nature Sanctuary, an outdoor exhibition that explores relationships between the natural world and ideas of home.

Nature Sanctuary
June 5, 2025–October 4, 2026
Organized by Sarah Montross,
Museum Director & Chief Curator

On Site Photos: Rafael Medina
Cover Photo: Mel Taing

deCordova
Sculpture Park and Museum

