Unpolished Echoes Curators’ Statement
By Holly Ewald and Becci Davis

This collection of artworks, artifacts, cultural belongings, documents, images, and stories is the latest in a series of related projects. Our first collaboration, Unpolished Legacies, was a series of interventions responding to Gorham Silver, Designing Brilliance 1850-1970, an 2019 exhibition at the RISD Museum. Unpolished Echoes is an exhibition that continues our exploration of Mashapaug Pond and the adjacent land that is home to Mashapaug Park, but centers the natural world and its survival rather than the legacies of local industry.

As one of Providence’s newest parks, Mashapaug Park is an archive of stories. Located on the remediated site of the Gorham Manufacturing Company, it holds connections to Indigenous communities, tales of resilient plant life, the environmental abuse of industry, the cacophony of celebrations, and the comfort of redemptive solitude. As one educator, Brendan Haggerty stated, “Mashapaug Pond contains all the lessons we need to teach.”

This exhibition includes three sculptural thresholds created by Ewald representing the water, woodland, and grassland habitats of Mashapaug Park. Each structure was created using mostly natural materials and traces of human presence collected from the site. The video and audio work created by Davis documents the seasonal change in all three habitats. Our contributions to this exhibit are accompanied by displays that weave together the work of contemporary Indigenous artists inspired by their local environments with narratives detailing the site’s cultural and natural histories. Many stories weave their way through this installation, appearing as imagery, sounds, cultural belongings, text and artifacts peeking through the layers of physical material and media.