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New Exhibition *Crafting Variance* Focuses on
Materials as Creative Agents

Show features nine artists in conversation with natural, living, and discarded materials

On View: October 9, 2026–May 1, 2027

Opening Reception & Curator Talk: Friday, October 9, 2026



Laura Maria Gonzalez, *Copper Carbonate Sculpture*, 2023, sand, copper carbonate, iron oxide, 13 × 13 × 9 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist.

Asheville, NC (September 15, 2026) — What does it mean to know and work with a material, and what happens when makers embrace variability? *Crafting Variance*, a new exhibition opening at the Center for Craft on Friday, October 9, brings together nine US and international artists who work with natural, living, and discarded materials that grow, change, decompose, and transform over time.

Guest curated by **Lola Ben-Alon**, Assistant Professor and Director of the Natural Materials Lab at Columbia University, the exhibition features work by **Alvaro Azcárraga**, **Felecia Davis**, **Meaghan Elyse**, **LIZ ENSZ**, **Sasha Fishman**, **Laura Maria Gonzalez**, **Fernando Laposse**, **Precious D. Lovell**, and **Elise Marks Vazelakis**. The artists work across sculpture, objects, film, and material experiments using sand, clay, maize, plant fibers, fungi, bacteria, recycled plastics, and more.

Visitors can encounter materials beyond the gallery walls through a microscope station that offers a closer look at structures invisible to the naked eye. Alongside the Center's [Materials Collection](#), audiences can also touch, feel, and explore samples of materials used in the show. Together, these experiences make discovery part of the viewing experience.

“At the heart of this exhibition is the recognition that materials are not passive matter, but active participants in the making process,” says Ben-Alon. “Working with living, natural, and discarded materials means working with variation, transformation, and uncertainty. No two samples are ever quite the same, asking makers to negotiate with the material’s inherent properties rather than simply impose form upon it.”

The exhibition brings together questions of craft, science, ecology, historic narratives, and diasporic traditions—examining what can happen when artists work with materials that are vibrant and, at times, messy. Rather than treating variation as a problem to overcome, the artists embrace the quirks and changing conditions of materials as part of making itself.

The opening of *Crafting Variance* coincides with the Center for Craft’s 30th birthday celebration, with a curator talk and reception on Friday, October 9. The event is free and open to the public. Cake and refreshments will be available after the talk.

Support for *Crafting Variance* comes from the MillerKnoll Foundation. The Center for Craft Materials Collection is supported, in part, by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Maxwell | Hanrahan Foundation, and the Center for Native Health.

RELATED EVENTS

Opening Reception & Curator Talk / Center for Craft 30th Birthday Celebration

Friday, October 9, 2026

5:30 pm–6 pm | Curator Talk

6 pm–8 pm | Reception

Free and open to the public

[RSVP requested](#)

[Artist and Curator Bios \(with headshots\)](#)

[Selected Images with Credits](#)

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About the Center for Craft

The Center for Craft catalyzes the people and practices shaping the future of making by investing in artists, expanding craft scholarship, and supporting material innovation. Founded in 1996, it has awarded more than \$11 million in grants and fellowships to craft artists, researchers, and organizations across the United States. Rooted in Asheville, North Carolina, the Center's free public galleries explore craft's evolving impact on culture.

In 2028, the Center will open its Community Library and Archives—combining holdings transferred from the American Craft Council with existing collections to form the nation's leading resource on American craft. Learn more at centerforcraft.org.