

**A DEVIL AND A WITCH  
MAKE A NAIL**



Vince Phan & Serena JV Elston

**1821 S. Racine Avenue, Chicago**  
**December 2, 2023--January 6, 2024**  
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"A Devil and a Witch Make a Nail," is a dramatic duo exhibition featuring the works of artists Vince Phan and Serena JV Elston. The title of the show draws inspiration from a 1700s woodcut, a relic that encapsulates the mystical collaboration between human and supernatural forces, crafting objects that defy the natural course of growth.

In his seminal work, "The Denial Of Death," cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker delves into the creation of such metaphorical objects, uncovering their existence within the tangible symbols of ideologies and relics. Within the realm of this exhibition, Vince and Serena embark on an exploration of this concept through the malleable nature of materials, traversing the boundaries between the organic, synthetic, and inanimate.

This artistic dialogue manifests as a dialectic, a dance between ephemerality and permanence, where the artists manipulate materials to breathe life into symbolic representations of immortality. The interplay between the biological and the inanimate serves as both the form and material, unveiling a profound exploration of content and object. The resulting structures become symbols of immortality, urging viewers to ponder questions of change that manifest on both a biological and political level.

## About the Artists:

**Vince Phan**

**[www.v-et-al.com](http://www.v-et-al.com)**

**[@v\\_et\\_al](#)**

V, a.k.a Vincent Phan, et al. (Valienese, b. 1992) is an earthly-alien collective. Their works are systems-oriented investigations of chaos in nature and the nature in the chaos. V et al. adopts furniture and composts organic materials to create a hybridized existence of humans and nature. These creations are then traded for soil in human-occupied territories in order to create a new terra of possibility. Hybridizing objects and materials, V et al. re-naturalizes the man-made back into a natural ecology that once was its birthplace but has now become foreign.

V et al. trades earthly-alien creations for the soil of colonized territory. This accumulated soil then builds Valien, a new continent that exists within colonized continents. As long as V et al. lives, this terra expands as the soils are added. As long as Valien exists, V et al.'s reality exists as do the earthly-alien creatures that constitute Valien.

**Serena JV Elston**

**[www.serenajve.com](http://www.serenajve.com)**

**[@serenajve](#)**

Serena JV Elston (USA, b. 1987) investigates historical and contemporary avenues of preservation. In particular, she probes the mechanisms that facilitate these pursuits - the forms and actions that serve to maintain preservation. Expanding on post-colonial theory, her work critiques aspects of institutional preservation as an extension of Western civilization - its colonial illusion of power and ultimate frailty. If the level of maintenance required to sustain a system is relative to its fragility, her work illuminates the constant necessary actions to sustain and uphold its construction. Identifying these moments of porosity, which then require maintenance, allows these systems to be seen as choices rather than inevitabilities.













## 1. Hourflesh

Vince Phan

2023

16 x 26 x 26 inch

Hair, cured flesh, wax







## 2. Immortal Bath

Serena JV Elston

2023

50 x 50 x 16 inch

Mushroom of Immortality in  
bronze, Reishi tea, plywood, steel







### **3. Titan Arum: Heavily Bodied**

Vince Phan

2023

53 x 26 x 25 inch

Hair, cured flesh, worm castings, sandalwood powder,  
Miracle-Gro mix







#### **4. The Hero On Drybone**

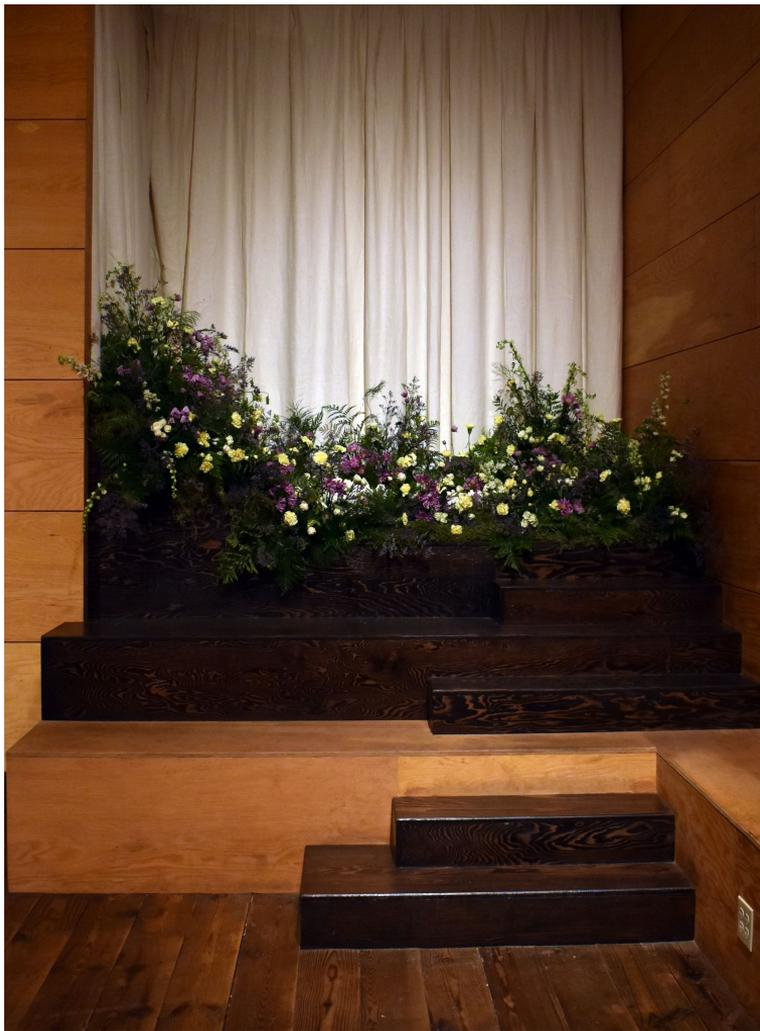
Serena JV Elston

2023

30 x 48 x 5 inch

Synthetic bone, plywood





## **5. The Hero At Rest**

Vince Phan & Serena JV Elston

2023

84 x 36 x 50 inch

Urea a synthetic bodily secretion that mimics the decalcification of bones from aging, paper, flowers



