



WAKE

Resa Blatman, Nancy Cohen, Matthew Cusick, Ellen Driscoll, Stacy Levy,
and Naoe Suzuki

Curated by Michele L'Heureux

May 6 – July 15, 2018

Opening reception: Sunday, May 6, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

Water is essential to life. It covers 71% of the Earth's surface, comprises nearly 60% of the human body, and is the key component in the search for extraterrestrial life. Yet the world's water is in deep trouble. Fresh water held by ice and permafrost is melting into the sea, causing sea levels to rise and reducing the planet's fresh water supply, both of which pose a danger to life. Moreover, the increasing demand for and diminishing supply of fresh water is causing severe droughts throughout the world.

Clearly, water represents one of the most salient and critical issues of our time, yet paradoxes, contradictions, and binary choices characterize our conversations about water: abundance and scarcity, serenity and terror, prosperity and drought, life and death, to name a few. The issues related to water encompass political, environmental, social, health, and ultimately, existential questions. These significant questions are what motivate the artists in *Wake* and what inspired me to develop this exhibition.



Nancy Cohen *An Underside*, 2017

Wake examines the power of water to sustain life and to destroy it—and also looks at what is left in its wake. The paintings, drawings, sculptures, and installations in this exhibition explore the sheer force of water in the form of waves, storms, and energy, as well as the aftermath of water once it retreats: parched earth, invasive plants, dwindling animal populations, human illness. The visual dialogue between these six artists invites reflection and discussion on the impact of global climate change.

Inspired by a 2015 artist's residency to the Arctic Circle aboard an antique sailing vessel, **Resa Blatman's** paintings and installations on wood panels and Mylar speak to a warming planet, to invasive plant and animal species, and to rising tides—and to the ways these phenomena are transforming our landscape and natural resources. Like other works in this exhibition, Blatman's work embraces the dichotomy between the peril and the beauty inherent in our natural environment. In *Shrouded Reef* (2017), Blatman



Resa Blatman *Shrouded Reef*, 2017



Resa Blatman *The Breaking*, 2018



Matthew Cusick *Three Horses #4/20, 2011*

layers laser-cut forms that mimic coral, invasive plants, seaweed, and flora in tangled swarms that meander across the walls. The negative shapes left by the cut mylar suggest bleached coral reefs and failing ocean ecosystems. In *The Breaking* (2018) and two other paintings, cold-weather animals try to survive in hot, swampy environments by perching themselves on untenable stalks or sheltering themselves in the tangled overgrowth to avoid being swallowed by the tumultuous landscape.

Nancy Cohen juxtaposes the unlikely partners of glass, metal, and handmade paper to create sculptures that evoke both fragility and strength, a dichotomy that recurs in her small sculptural works. Cohen has approached the topic of our

fragile natural environment through both scientific research and her personal observation of waterways, resulting in collaborations with both scientists and environmentalists. Her sculptures and installations exploit extreme imbalances in weight as a metaphor for the vulnerability and tenuousness of nature. They also reference the frailty and endurance of the body. *Hackensack Net* (2015) is one of several works inspired by watery urban landscapes like Mill Creek Marsh in the



Nancy Cohen *Hackensack Net, 2015*



Ellen Driscoll *Stilt, 2015*

Meadowlands of Secaucus, New Jersey, the site of a former cedar forest, now rife with scattered pools of water pierced by branches and debris.

Matthew Cusick's large, collaged and painted images of waves embody the contradictory nature of water. In the write-up for his 2012 exhibition, *The Mind is Its Own Place*, Pavel Zoubok Gallery described the work as embodying both “the beauty and terrifying power of the ocean, teetering on the brink of serenity and destruction.” Cusick created his paintings *Procella Crisium* (2013) and *Three Horses #4/20* (2011) by intricately cutting and arranging pieces of maps and applying them as brushstrokes, using roadways, text, and landmasses to fashion impressionistic tidal landscapes that communicate the balance between beauty and violence inherent to our oceans.

Ellen Driscoll's drawings and sculptures express ideas about climate change migration. People are currently being forced to move because of rising seas, droughts, and economic shifts due to climate change. In *Stilt* (2015), a city plan cut out of thick felt hangs on a peg next to a ladder from which is hung a child's hooded jacket sewn from the continental landmasses of the world. Children are one of many things left behind in the wake of climate-related changes. Driscoll's *Soundings* series of drawings (2015) were made from a study of volunteer plants in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Red Hook, a neighborhood that survived severe flooding during Hurricane Sandy and that showed incredible resilience in the face of this climate disaster. Volunteer plants are not planted but crop up in unexpected places, for



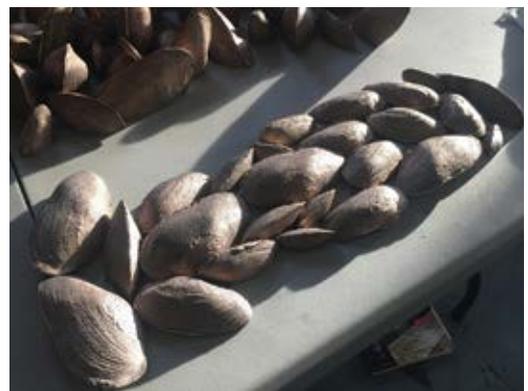
Ellen Driscoll *Untitled*, 2015

example after their seeds are scattered by the force of a hurricane, potentially changing the entire landscape of urban neighborhoods in particular.

Stacy Levy brings the outdoors indoors with large-scale, lenticular images of the water's surface that appear to be moving when the viewer walks past. In *Lake* (2016), four different photographs of the water's surface, each one taken a second after the previous one, are divided into thin strips that are placed



Stacy Levy *Lake*, 2016



Stacy Levy *Wrack Line*, 2018

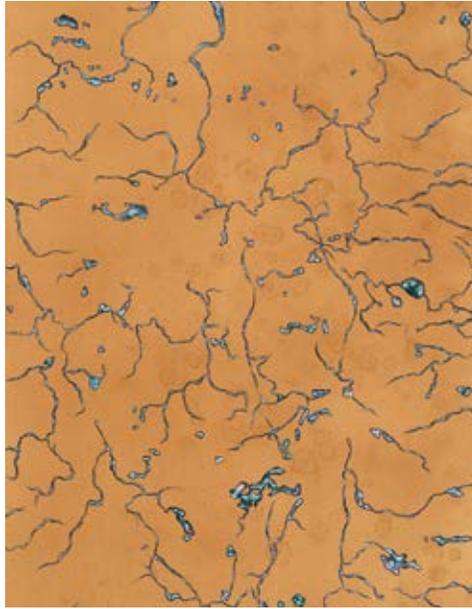
in a repeating sequence to create the illusion of movement and to provide a moment of tranquility and reflection. *Wrack Line* (2018), which references the line of debris left on the beach by high tide, was made by taking scans of actual barnacles and printing them in 3D plastic. A wrack line can be made up of shells, feathers, dried plant matter, and litter, and it not only provides food and habitat to insects and birds, but it also serves as an incubator to shoreline grasses and other plants that help to anchor dunes.

Naoe Suzuki has created numerous works inspired by water, one of her main passions in life. The title of this series, *Water, Is Taught by Thirst* (2015), is borrowed from an Emily Dickinson poem by the same name:

*Water, is taught by thirst.
Land—by the Oceans
passed.*

*Transport by throe—
Peace—by its battles told—
Love, by Memorial Mold—
Birds, by the Snow.*

Suzuki's works on paper were created by tracing the waterways from topographical maps of Boston and the Adirondacks. In the white works, Suzuki laser-cuts the paper so that the waterways are removed, leaving behind a crackled, sculptural terrain with a hint of singed edges. In the blue



Naoe Suzuki *Water, Is Taught by Thirst (BLUE)*, Greater Boston, 2015



Naoe Suzuki *Water, Is Taught by Thirst (WHITE)*, Central Adirondacks, 2015

iterations, the waterways are painted using bright mineral pigment and watercolors on tea-stained paper. The white series speaks of injury and loss, while the blue series signals hope and healing.

As stewards of this planet, we can choose to protect and preserve its waterways for future generations or continue to injure those waterways until we eventually bleed them dry. With current governmental protections at risk, big business playing an ever-increasing role in shaping policy, and personal

consumption and waste at an all-time high, often it is hard to maintain confidence in the wisdom of our choices with respect to the environment. These six artists have made their choice on the side of raising awareness, offering healing, and asking tough questions, in the hope that more of us will, first and foremost, fall in love with water, and second,

recognize the imperative to protect our planet's water—our most valuable natural resource. ■

— Michele L'Heureux, 2018

BIOGRAPHY

Michele L'Heureux is Curator and Director of the Galleries at Montserrat College of Art in Beverly, MA. She has spent the past ten years curating exhibitions of contemporary art at higher education institutions and nonprofit art galleries with a focus on interdisciplinary themes and programming, particularly those that bring the humanities and science to bear on art. She is also a visual artist who combines collage, printmaking, and painting to create 2D and 3D works that explore themes of travel, migration, and home. Learn more about her artwork and curatorial work at www.michelelheureux.com.

CHECKLIST

RESA BLATMAN

THE BREAKING, 2018

Oil on wood panels
48" x 144" (quadriptych)

SHROUDED REEF, 2017

Oil on hand- and laser-cut Mylar
and Lexan
96" x 232" x 5"

STANDING CROW, 2015

Oil, graphite, and latex on laser-cut
Mylar
26" x 28"

BIGHORN AMID THE KELP, 2015

oil and graphite on laser-cut Mylar
23" x 18"

NANCY COHEN

BREATH, 2017

Glass, metal, wire, and handmade
paper
16" x 8" x 4"

AN UNDERSIDE, 2017

Glass, metal, aquaresin, wire,
handmade paper
15" x 20" x 9"

HACKENSACK NET, 2015

Handmade paper
98" x 86"

SWEPT UP IN, 2017

Metal, glass, ceramic, wire, aqua
resin, sand
8" x 16" x 4"

IN THE MIDST OF, 2015

Metal, glass, resin, handmade paper,
and monofilament
22" x 12" x 10"

EROSION STILL LIFE B, 2017

Glass
26" x 12" x 9"

MATTHEW CUSICK

PROCELLA CRISIUM, 2013

Inlaid maps, engravings, sumi ink
on panel
18" x 27"

THREE HORSES #4/20, 2011

Archival pigment print on German
etching paper
21" x 69"

ELLEN DRISCOLL

UNTITLED, 2015

Walnut and sumi ink on paper
59" x 82"

STILT, 2015

Wood, paper pulp, and felt
9' x 4' x 18"

*UNTITLED ARTIST'S BOOK
(WATER TOWER)*, 2008

Ink on paper
4-3/8" x 8-1/2" x 1/2"

UNTITLED ARTIST'S BOOK, 2008

Ink on paper
5 1/2" x 7 3/8" x 3/4"

STACY LEVY

WRACK LINE, 2018

Plastic filament
dimensions variable

LAKE, 2016

Lenticular composite photograph
36" x 72" x 2"

NAOE SUZUKI

*WATER, IS TAUGHT BY THIRST
(BLUE)*, *GREATER BOSTON*, 2015
Mineral pigment, watercolor, and
tea on paper
36" x 24"

*WATER, IS TAUGHT BY THIRST
(BLUE)*, *CENTRAL ADIRONDACKS*,
2015

Mineral pigment, watercolor, and
tea on paper
36" x 24"

*WATER, IS TAUGHT BY THIRST
(WHITE)*, *CENTRAL ADIRON-
DACKS*, 2015

Laser-cut paper, mat board, and
glue on paper
24" x 36"

*WATER, IS TAUGHT BY THIRST
(WHITE)*, *GREATER BOSTON*, 2015
Laser-cut paper, yellow spray paint,
mat board, and glue on paper
24" x 36"

Cover: **Matthew Cusick**, *Procella Crisium*, 2013

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Resa Blatman for inviting me to collaborate on an exhibition about water and for identifying Dorsky Gallery Curatorial Programs as an ideal venue for this project. A big note of appreciation goes to all the *Wake* artists for contributing their work to this exhibition and for being so delightful throughout the process. I am grateful to the staff of DGCP for accepting this proposal and for working with me to bring the exhibition to fruition. Thanks, too, to Deborah Rising of Rising Design for her skill in designing this brochure.



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