

Curator Statement

Waterlines: Stories of Urban Ebb and Flow brings together five noted local artists, whose newly commissioned and freshly rendered works invite us to reflect on and examine our relationship with water.

As human beings, we are powerfully drawn to water. Every important passage of our lives is touched by water. However, as urban dwellers, we often have an abstract connection to it, as invisible infrastructures and complex systems of water lines bring it to us. Over time, our need for water has shaped our urban environments. Yet, as water cycles change, and our cities densify, how can we envision the future? How will we navigate droughts and floods, learn to adapt to our changing environment, and move in new ways?

The artists immerse us in sights and sounds, letting us viscerally feel our way through possible future environments. Treating water as a sculpting fluid, elemental force, consciousness, and sonic material, they invite in both the translucence and reflective shimmer of its surfaces and the overwhelming and terrifying power of its undercurrents. This sense of contrast and mutability is refracted throughout the exhibit—addressing the water inside and around us, and the fragile balance between them.

Ann Hirsch and Jeremy Angier's multimedia odyssey, *You Are Here*, challenges our sense of place, as it envisions fourteen different waterscapes projected across the topography of Somerville. While Georgie Friedman's *Confluere*, multi-channel, site-specific, video installation "floods" the historic, two-hundred-thirty-year-old Charles Bulfinch butterfly staircase with global tidal waters.

Caitlin & Misha's *Surface Tension* uses the streamflow data api from USGS to map the surface water of the U.S. in real time, highlighting the interdependence of the local and the global water systems. The work also draws a naturalistic comparison between the flow of the rivers and the movement of fluids in our own bodies, reminding us that our watery bodies are nature.

Artists Heather Kapplow and Faith Johnson look to our daily rituals and spiritual practices as ways to awaken and restore our relationship with the inner and outer bodies of water. Kapplow's installation, *Seeking the Source*, surveys the contemporary practices of dowsing or water divining, and searches for ways to heighten our intuition through object- and sound-collecting. Johnson's installation brings into the museum water collected from natural local sources and lets us commune and find a sense of balance with it through guided meditations.

The exhibit also showcases *Dialogues with Water*, a site-specific installation of soundscapes and sound acousmatic works by a group of Northeastern University music students guided by Pr. Hubert Ho. These aesthetically eclectic pieces cast water sounds as material, allowing us to have unexpected sonic encounters with water in the gallery space.

Ultimately, *Waterlines* invites us to deeply explore the ecological, spiritual, and social dimensions of water and urges us to reawaken our personal connection with it.

Arlinda Shtuni