

From the Paper's Edge



Water in Literature and Art



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Exhibition Itinerary, 2011:

Moravian College Bethlehem PA., March 17 – April 17

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum Vergennes, VT., May 9 – June 26

Albany Institute of History & Art Albany NY., July 2 – August 28

William Paterson University Wayne NJ., September 12 – October 14

Artists:

Daniel Anthonisen

Eloise Beil

Robert Berlind

Virginia Creighton

Heidi Glück

Richard J. Haas

Andrea Halbfinger

Bill Hochhausen

Diana Kurz

Greg Kwiatek

Peter Malone

Herman Maril*

Peter McCaffrey

Dona Nelson

Tom Nelson

Joe Overstreet

Howardena Pindell

Susan Pyzow

Sidney Tillim*

From the Page's Edge: Water in Literature and Art is a sponsored project of the New York Foundation for the Arts, with support from Margaret Lamar King, Laura Rosenstock, and others.

* Deceased



Words and Paintings in

From the Page's Edge Water in Literature and Art

Loving both literature and art, I decided to combine the two disciplines in a traveling art exhibit. I gathered artists and told them the theme: water. Given that vehicle, they were to find a segment of literature that mentioned it and would inspire an artwork.

Months passed, and I welcomed images of basking seals, ponds by night and day, streams where salmon could swim. A building appeared on a river, a yard was flooded with rainwater, the earth was born.

How, you ask, do these views relate to literature? The artists were told that the chosen segments of literature would be printed on panels and hang next to their paintings. Without knowing in advance what the responses would be, I saw the artists were not illustrating so much as painting how something felt to them in their hearts. The paintings' relation to the literature was intuitive, and the intersection was powerful. Personal statements connecting art with literature are found in the exhibition binder.

Diana Kurz's seals were not "ordinary" seals but mythological ones waving their heads while seduced by Sirens' songs. Susan Pyzow's pond may have been visited by the type of "antedeluvian wading bird" Thoreau saw. Robert Berlind's pond probably felt the laps of larger waters and knew it would hear lark-song in the morning.

Patterns appeared with strong emotions. Joe Overstreet's water offered the gift of safety and Daniel Anthonisen's that of solace. Eloise Beil's underwater experience matched the poet Daniel Lusk's poetic statement of dislocation and Heidi Glück's abstract work provided response to the dislocated sailor in Charles Olsen's poem. Howardena Pindell turned her horror of high waves into a sculptural painting, crediting the author of 'The Perfect Storm.'

A change of seasons with mixed elements of excitement and nostalgia are seen in the paintings of Richard Haas and Tom Nelson. Mystery involves the workings of the moon (Greg Kwiatek), the dispersal of a dead person's clothes in water (Peter McCaffrey), and the staunch triangular forms struck by the tide in the Herman Maril's work.

In Dona Nelson's painting, an outsized splash hitting the Upper Bay recalls for me both 9/11 and the March 11 tsunami in Japan. Memories add an odd perspective to the busy tautness of Leaves of Grass. The sacrificial ritual of salmon (Bill Hochhausen/ Stanley Kunitz) may have been performed by humans on the same dates.

A single building on a river (Peter Malone/ William Wordsworth) and "Kids' House" by Virginia Creighton (E.E. Cummings) both express childhood joys. The waves in Sidney Tillim's poem go back in time through "earth's dentistry of mountains" – perhaps tracing the route in "A Gully Somewhere." Andrea Halbfinger cites Genesis when the first day begins in the evening.

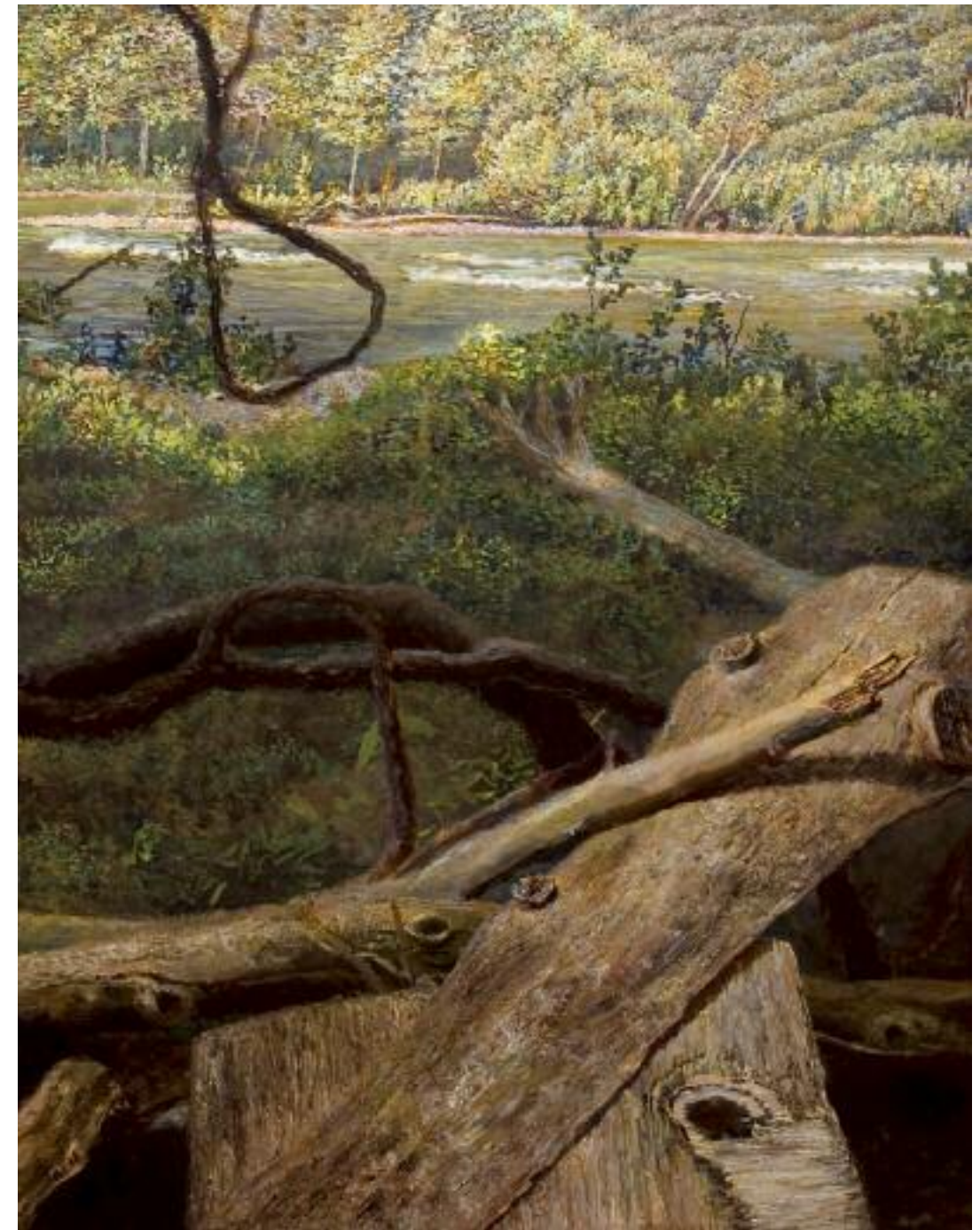
We hope the exhibit entertains and prompts an interest in looking at literature in visual terms.

Virginia Creighton, Curator

A river sings a holy song conveying the mysterious truth
that we are a river; and if we are ignorant of this natural law
we are lost.

from *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life* by Thomas Moore

The quote from *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life* ©1996 was used with the generous
permission of Thomas Moore.



Daniel Anthonisen

Reaching the River
Oil on linen 30" x 24"
2008

Daniel Lusk, *Nocturne*, Four stanzas

When we go below,
we almost expect to see the stars,
mirrored by the surface so vividly at night,
fixed in their places along the bottom.

The big fish – the elegant pike,
reclusive channel cat,
the lordly muskellunge – they graze
the hillsides around and below us like cattle...

Are there seasons here?
Or only overhead, as in dreams?
Like storm clouds, the hulls of boats
An occasional swimmer in flight.

Are dusk and dawn the same?
There are no pedestrians,
no panhandlers, no streetlights.
No distant porch light but the moon.

Reprinted with the kind permission of Daniel Lusk.



Eloise Beil

That Which Endures
Oil on canvas 40" x 30"
2008

Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Sea and the Skylark*, Stanzas 1 and 2

On ear and ear two noises too old to end
Trench – right, the tide that ramps against the shore;
With a flood or a fall, low, lull-off or all roar,
Frequenting there while moon shall wear and wend.

Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend,
His rash-fresh re-winded new-skeinèd score
In crisps of curl off wild winch whirl, and pour
And pelt music, till none's to spill nor spend.



Robert Berlind

Grace's Pond I
Oil on board (2 panels, joined)
12" x 48"
2006

in Just-
spring when the world is mud-
luscious the little
lame balloonman

whistles far and wee

and eddieandbill come
running from marbles and
piracies and it's
spring

when the world is puddle-wonderful

from *in Just-* by E. E. Cummings

The lines from "in Just-" are reprinted from *THE COMPLETE POEMS: 1904-1962* by E.E. Cummings. Copyright © 1923, 1951, 1991 by the Trustees for the E. E. Cummings Trust. Copyright © 1976 by George James Firmage. Used by permission of Liveright Publishing Corporation.



Virginia Creighton

Kids' House; Flooded Yard with Rhubarb
Oil on Canvas 36" x 48"
2010

I have had to learn the simplest things
last. Which made for difficulties.
Even at sea I was slow, to get the hand out, or to cross
a wet deck.

The sea was not, finally, my trade.
But even my trade, at it, I stood estranged
from that which was most familiar. Was delayed,
and not content with the man's argument
that such postponement
is now the nature of
obedience,

that we are all late
in a slow time,
that we grow up many
And the single
is not easily
known

from *Maximus, To Himself*
By Charles Olson, from *SELECTED WRITINGS OF CHARLES OLSON*, copyright © 1951, 1966 by
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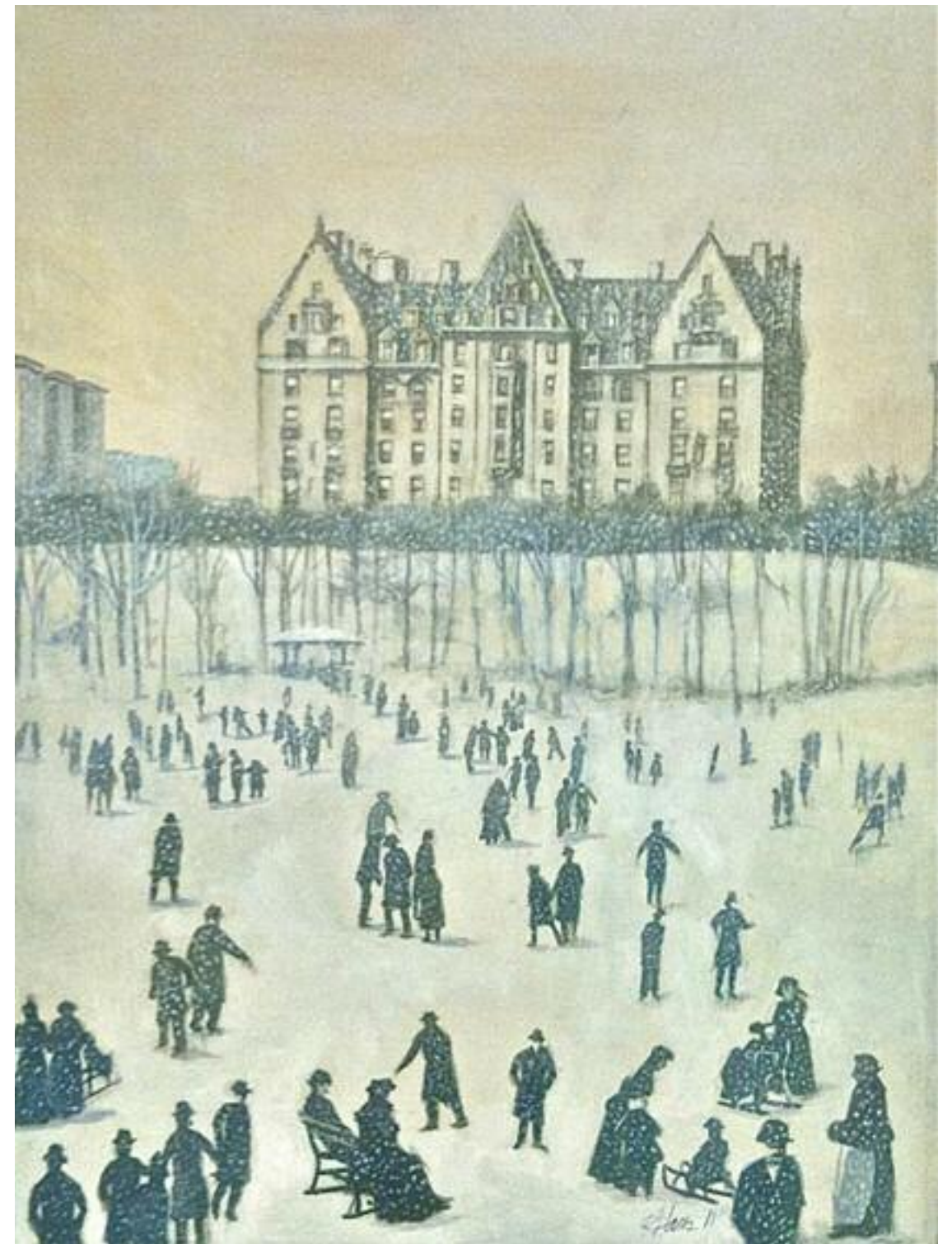


Heidi Glück

Untitled
16" x 20" Acrylic/ink/paper
2011

The next day he persuaded May to escape for a walk in the park after luncheon...The day was delectable. The bare vaulting of trees along the mall was ceiled with lapis lazuli and arched above snow that shone like splintered crystals. It was weather to call out May's radiance and she burned like a young maple in the frost.

From *The Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton



Richard Haas

Skaters and Dakota, New York City
Oil on canvas 24" x 18"
2011

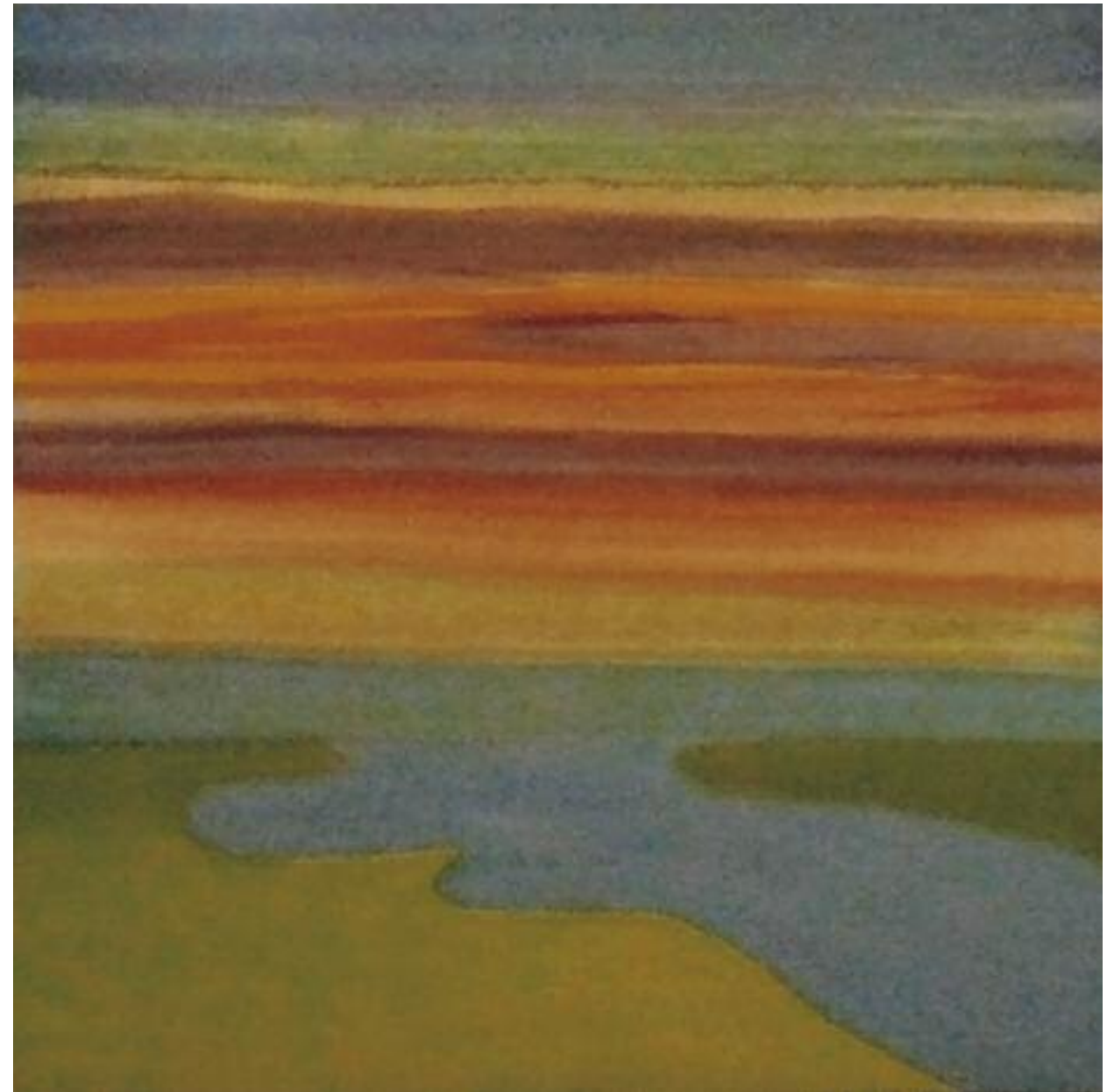
GENESIS: I

When God began to create heaven and earth—the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—God said, “Let there be light”, and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.

God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, that it may separate water from water.” God made the expanse, and it separated the water which was below the expanse from the water which was above the expanse. And it was so. God called the expanse Sky. And there was evening, and there was morning, a second day.

God said, “Let the water below the sky be gathered into one area, that the dry land may appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that this was good. And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants of every kind, fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, seed-bearing plants of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that this was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times—the days and the years; and they shall serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night, and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth, to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that this was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.



From TANAKH: The Holy Scriptures

Reprinted from Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation to the Traditional Hebrew Text, © 1985 by The Jewish Publication Society, with the permission of the publisher.

Andrea S. Halbfinger

Sunset Series: #5
40" x 40" Oil on canvas
2010

Stanley Kunitz, *King of the River*

If the water were clear enough,
if the water were still,
but the water is not clear,
the water is not still,
you would see yourself,
slipped out of your skin,
nosing upstream,
slapping, thrashing,
tumbling
over the rocks
till you paint them
with your belly's blood:
Finned Ego,
yard of muscle that coils,
uncoils.

If the knowledge were given you,
but it is not given,
for the membrane is clouded
with self-deceptions
and the iridescent image swims
through a mirror that flows,
you would surprise yourself
in that other flesh
heavy with milt,
bruised, battering toward the dam
that lips the orgiastic pool.
Come. Bathe in these waters.
Increase and die.

If the power were granted you
to break out of your cells,
but the imagination fails
and the doors of senses close
on the child within,
you would dare to be changed,
as you are changing now,
into the shape you dread
beyond the merely human.
A dry fire eats you.
Fat drips from your bones.
The flutes of your gills discolor.
You have become a ship for parasites.
The great clock of your life

is slowing down,
and the small clocks run wild.
For this you were born.
You have cried to the wind
and heard the wind's reply:
"I did not choose the way,
the way chose me."
You have tasted the fire on your tongue
till it is swollen black
with a prophetic joy:
"Burn with me!
The only music is time,
the only dance is love."

If the heart were pure enough,
but it is not pure,
you would admit
that nothing compels you
and more, nothing
at all abides,
but nostalgia and desire,
the two-way ladder
between heaven and hell.
On the threshold
of the last mystery,
at the brute absolute hour,
you have looked into the eyes
of your creature self,
which are glazed with madness,
and you say
he is not broken but endures,
limber and firm
in the state of his shining,
forever inheriting his salt kingdom,
from which he is banished,
forever:

From *Passing Through* by Stanley Kunitz

"King of the River" is reprinted from the *THE COLLECTED POEMS* by Stanley Kunitz, Copyright 1971 by Stanley Kunitz
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Bill Hochhausen

BRANCH
Oil on wood panels with Red Cedar
56 3/4" X 26 1/2"
2010

And all things stayed around and listened;
the gulls sat in white lines around the rocks;
on the beach great seals lay basking, and kept time with
lazy heads; while silver shoals of fish came up to hearken,
and whispered as they broke the shining calm.
The Wind overhead hushed his whistling, as he shepherded
his clouds towards the west; and the clouds stood in mid
blue, and listened dreaming, like a flock of golden sheep.

from *The Heroes, or Greek Fairy Tales* by Charles Kingsley, 1885
Published by David McKay Company, Philadelphia



Diana Kurz

Water's Edge
Oil on Linen, 36" x 48"
2010

Cuchulain stirred,
Stared on the horses of the sea, and heard
The cars of battle and his own name cried;
And fought with the invulnerable tide.

from *Cuchulain's Fight With the Sea*
by William Butler Yeats



Greg Kwiatek

Sea Sounds
Oil on canvas, 22" x 30"
2009

Was it for this
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams?

...When he had left the mountains and received
On his smooth breast the shadow of those towers
That yet survive, a shattered monument
Of feudal sway, the bright blue river passed
Along the margin of our terraced walk...

William Wordsworth
from *The Prelude: Book I*
Selected Poems and Preludes; Houghton Mifflin, 1965



Peter Malone

Tidewater
Oil on canvas, 41.5" x 51.5"
1985

From *Benedicite Omnia Opera* by William Bronk

There are mountains
in the sea;
oh, deep down
deep down
density.

From the poetry book *My Father Photographed With Friends*,
published by Elizabeth Press, New Rochelle, N.Y. 1976
William Bronk



Herman Maril

Breakwater Tide
Oil on canvas 24" x 18"
1966

She liked the Grand Canal because it led out to the lonely open water, where you could meet no one. Even in the winter, she had loved it, he said. Even in the bad weather. As far out as you could go. She had her favorite places there...

From *The Master* by Colm Toibin.
First Published 2004 by Picador; Copyright Colm Toibin 2004.
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Peter McCaffrey

Laid to Rest
Oil and gold leaf on Panel, 12"x 12"
2011

Mannahatta

My city's fit and noble name resumed,
Choice aboriginal name, with marvelous beauty, meaning,
A rocky founded island — shores where ever gayly dash the
coming, going, hurrying sea waves.

Walt Whitman
Leaves of Grass: First Annex, Sands at Seventy



Dona Nelson

Falling to the Sea
Oil on canvas, 36" x 29 1/2"
1984

The Painter

Sitting between the sea and the buildings
He enjoyed painting the sea's portrait.
But just as children imagine a prayer
Is merely silence, he expected his subject
To rush up the sand, and, seizing a brush,
Plaster its own portrait on the canvas.

So there was never any paint on his canvas
Until the people who lived in the buildings
Put him to work: "Try using the brush
As a means to an end. Select, for a portrait,
Something less angry and large, and more subject
To a painter's moods, or, perhaps, to a prayer."

How could he explain to them his prayer
That nature, not art, might usurp the canvas?
He chose his wife for a new subject,
Making her vast, like ruined buildings,
As if, forgetting itself, the portrait
Had expressed itself without a brush.

Slightly encouraged, he dipped his brush
In the sea, murmuring a heartfelt prayer:
"My soul, when I paint this next portrait
Let it be you who wrecks the canvas."
The news spread like wildfire through the buildings:
He had gone back to the sea for his subject.

Imagine a painter crucified by his subject!
Too exhausted even to lift his brush,
He provoked some artists leaning from the buildings
To malicious mirth: "We haven't a prayer
Now, of putting ourselves on canvas,
Or getting the sea to sit for a portrait!"

Others declared it a self-portrait.
Finally all indications of a subject
Began to fade, leaving the canvas
Perfectly white. He put down the brush.
At once a howl, that was also a prayer,
Arose from the overcrowded buildings.

They tossed him, the portrait, from the tallest of the buildings;
And the sea devoured the canvas and the brush
As though his subject had decided to remain a prayer.

by John Ashbery

John Ashbery, "The Painter," from *Some Trees*. Copyright © 1956, 1985, 1997, 2008 by John Ashbery. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission of Georges Borchardt, Inc. for the author.



Thomas Nelson

Detail from *Six Studies of Newton Hook*

Oil on prepared rag mat board, August –
November, 32" high x 26"
2010

Wade in the Water Lyrics

Wade in the water (children)
Wade in the water
Wade in the water
God's gonna trouble the water

If you don't believe I've been redeemed
God's gonna trouble the water
I want you to follow him on down to Jordan stream
(I said) My God's gonna trouble the water
You know chilly water is dark and cold
(I know my) God's gonna trouble the water
You know it chills my body but not my soul
(I said my) God's gonna trouble the water

(Come on let's) wade in the water
Wade in the water (children)
Wade in the water
God's gonna trouble the water

Now if you should get there before I do
(I know) God's gonna trouble the water
Tell all my friends that I'm comin' too
(I know) God's gonna trouble the water
Sometimes I'm up lord and sometimes I'm down
(You know my) God's gonna trouble the water
Sometimes I'm level to the ground
God's gonna trouble the water
(I know) God's gonna trouble the water

Traditional, Gospel variant



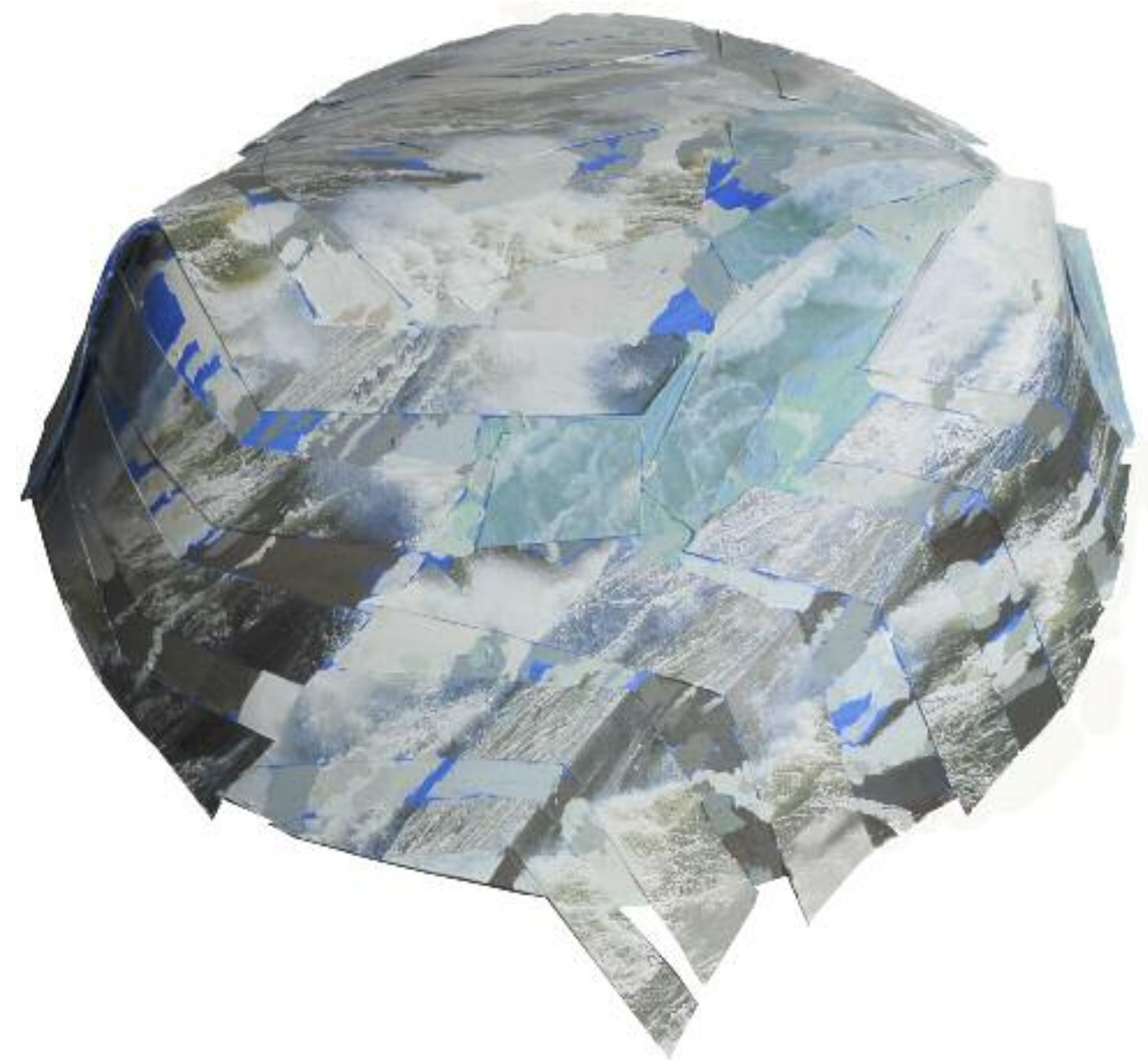
Joe Overstreet

Wade in the Water
Watercolor on paper, 20" x 26"
2011

By midnight sustained windspeeds are fifty knots, gusts hitting sixty, and peak wave heights are over one hundred feet.

From *The Perfect Storm* by Sebastian Junger

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Howardena Pindell

Wave
Acrylic and paper mounted on museum board
10.5" x 10.625" x 3" (irregular)
2010-2011

Water is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature. The attractive point is that line where the water meets the land-not distinct but known to exist. The willows are not the less interesting because of their nakedness below. How rich like what we love to read of South American primitive forests is the scenery of this river-What luxuriance of weeds-What depth of mud along its sides! These old antehistoric-geologic-antediluvian wading birds are worthy to tread-

Henry David Thoreau, 31 August 1851, Journal 4:23-24



Susan Pyszow

Pond
Oil on Panel 26" x 19"
1999

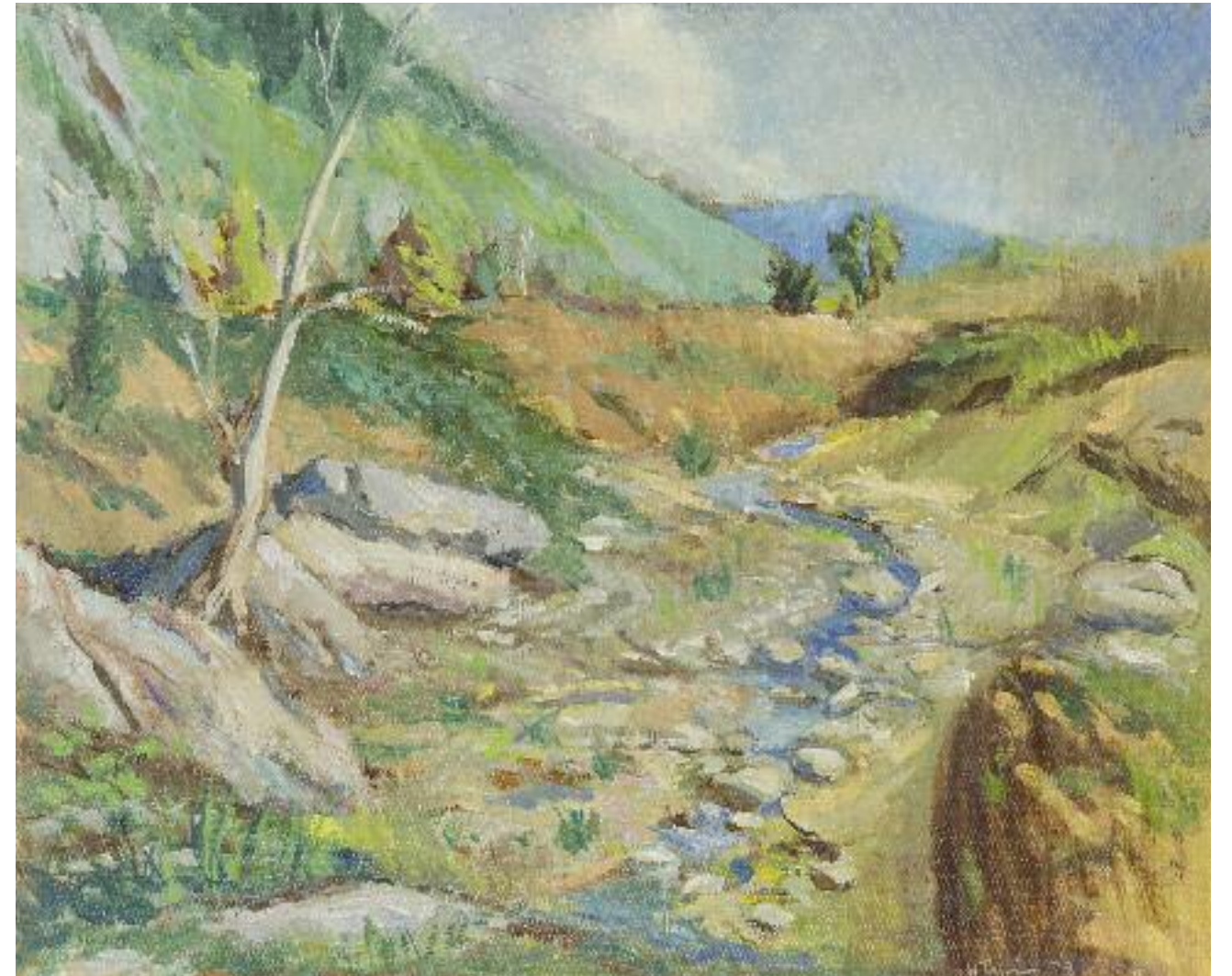
Sidney Tillim, *Damp Traveller*, 1950

Do the waves know they are
going back forever? –
washed over rocks who's been
the confidants of glaciers –
sunk in sands of loam
among earth's dentistry
of mountains,
run through sockets
of numberless skulls. All is cavity! –
to receive the everlasting
flowing from the source
it never leaves

We come in wetness but
it knows us in another form.
The dust which it picked up
in Virginia was an Egyptian
brick before history.

Time's damp traveller!

From *Those Days and Then the Sea*, 1952



Sidney Tillim

A Gully Somewhere
Oil on canvas 15" x 18"
1978

Acknowledgements

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This exhibit is dedicated to readers of books.

Virginia Creighton, 2011



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