

'Too Shallow for Diving': Artists pour out ideas on water issues facing mankind

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By Mary Thomas, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



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"Glut Hut" by Roger Laib is part of the exhibition "Too Shallow for Diving: the 21st Century Is Treading Water"

One of the hottest (literally as well as metaphorically) topics of the day is the environment, and artists take it head on in the exhibition "Too Shallow for Diving: The 21st Century Is Treading Water" at the American Jewish Museum, Squirrel Hill.

The list of artists represented is impressive, a mix of new, younger voices -- such as Vanessa German who will perform during Saturday's opening reception -- and pioneers in the arena of environmental art, such as Tim Collins and Reiko Goto, who were instrumental in the Nine Mile Run project that resuscitated the now highly popular stream and greenway.

Artist and educator Carolyn Speranza curated the exhibition with a focus on projects and artworks that address water issues affecting the planet and its human residents.

"All of the exhibition's artists received an honorarium to support the creation of new and provocative work," Ms. Speranza said in an e-mail.

Funding came from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Jewish Healthcare Foundation, the Buhl Foundation and the Sprout Fund. [See the Facebook page](#) for updates.

An opening reception will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. Saturday. Ms. Speranza will speak about the show at 7:30 p.m. followed at 8 p.m. by Ms. German's spoken word performance, "Water: A Love Poem."

"Clean Water Action," a "citizen engagement event" held in collaboration with PennEnvironment, will be held from 6:30 to 9 p.m. May 24. Conrad "Dan" Volz Jr. will speak at 7 p.m. June 6. Mr. Volz recently resigned his position with the University

of Pittsburgh Center for Healthy Environments and Communities due to his public health advocacy on water and natural gas drilling.

A closing reception will be held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. July 28.

All events are free and open to the public.

The artists and brief project descriptions follow:

- **Tim Collins and Reiko Goto** -- A documentation of the Pittsburgh Nine Mile Run and 3 Rivers: 2nd Nature projects carried out in collaboration with scientists, attorneys, engineers, city planners and landscape designers that were ground-breaking in their merging of community, art and environment.
- **Jim Denney** -- large-scale paintings that reflect upon the tensions between nature and humans.
- **Vanessa German** -- a one-night-only love poem for water that invites viewers to consider the place of water in their lives, bodies, world and communities.
- **Prudence Gill** -- a holographic installation drawing upon the reflective, elemental qualities of water.
- **Jamie Gruzka** -- photographs that highlight the complex aesthetic and emotional dependence humans have with water.
- **Richard Harned** -- a kinetic glass, audio and light sculpture that addresses the aesthetics of water's movement.
- **Roger Laib** -- the "Glut Hut," a large-scale mobile hut made of recycled objects that will fill with rain water until it begins to leak from its nooks and crannies (installed on the lawn).
- **Lisa Link** -- "Water Ways," 2010-2011 conversations with Boston scientists and residents about the relationship between water and humans in the coastal city provided the basis for exhibited digital prints.
- **Maritza Mosquera** -- the artist engages with the soul of water in her own "Body in Water," a video installation.
- **Wendy Osher** -- an installation, "Something in Water," comprises abstract breast-like forms crocheted of plastic bags to call attention to toxins that leak into the bloodstream and affect women's breast milk.
- **Ann T. Rosenthal and Steffi Domike** -- mixed media work "Watermark" that reflects upon the American landscape and waterways as an essential aspect of American identity in an update of Hudson River School philosophy and aesthetics.
- **Carolyn Speranza and Frank Ferraro** -- "Requiem for the Net-Makers," a seven-minute sound and visual work played out by Big Oil Gangsters, the ocean and generations of people whose livelihoods are given by the sea.
- **David Stairs** -- explores Africa's water crisis through maps, photographs and statistics, proposing the culpability of global human behaviors. He is executive director

of Designers Without Borders, a consortium of designers and design educators working to assist institutions of the developing world with their communication needs.

"Too Shallow" continues through July 28 at the Jewish Community Center, 5738 Forbes Ave. Admission is free. Information: 412-521-8010 or www.jccpgh.org.

Give today

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"Neighbo(u)rhood" opens

The last in the series of exhibitions by curators-in-residence Mark Garry and Georgina Jackson is "Neighbo(u)rhood," reflections upon what that means locally and globally. It opens with a reception from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday at the Mattress Factory, 500 Sampsonia Way, North Side (\$10, members free; 412-231-3169).

Carnegie Tech faculty

"They Practice What They Teach: Artist Faculty of Carnegie Institute of Technology" opens from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Saturday at the Westmoreland Museum of American Art, 221 N. Main St., Greensburg, as does "Moments in Time: Paintings by Hubert J. FitzGerald," a Jeannette native and Carnegie Institute of Technology graduate who studied with some of the artists in the faculty show. (Free; 724-837-1500.)

Quilt art talk

Curator and fiber artist Petra Fallaux will speak about "pattern, abstraction, improvisation and the unexpected in the art of quilting" at 1 p.m. Sunday at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, North Side, where her quilts are being shown through May. Ms. Fallaux's vividly modern, abstract quilts are inspired by the vibrant landscape of the Netherlands, where she grew up (www.petrafallaux.com). For information, call 412-322-5058 or visit www.pittsburghkids.org.

Post-Gazette art critic Mary Thomas: mthomas@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1925.

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