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**For Immediate Release**

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## ***TOO SHALLOW FOR DIVING: THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY IS TREADING WATER***

AMERICAN JEWISH MUSEUM OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF GREATER  
PITTSBURGH • MAY 16 – JULY 28, 2011

### Exhibition Description

The Anna L. and Irene V. Caplan exhibition *Too Shallow for Diving: the 21st Century is Treading Water*, guest curated by Carolyn Speranza, comprises painting, sculpture, video, installation, spoken word, and photography. The artists' work inventively addresses aesthetic issues as well as environmental problems surrounding water, examining global topics including oceans, and the decreasing availability of drinking water on a local and global scale, and local topics including the effects of natural gas drilling on our water supply. The projects explore ways issues surrounding water impact health and public welfare. Able to cross disciplines, propose solutions and pioneer change, ecologically charged artwork is a powerful genre. Noted art historian Dr. Elaine A. King lends critical insights into this framework by way of introductory panels positioned in the gallery.

Every living thing on earth and every culture in the world depends on water. No environment can survive without water. Shockingly, however, water is a resource often taken for granted. Pollution, loss of aquatic species and the demise of coral reefs are recognizable negative factors on the water supply. As the planet's temperature increases, the availability of water will decrease, directly threatening society and human welfare.

Scientific studies confirm the effects of global warming, which are now part of public discourse. While much has been written and discussed about fossil fuel shortages, an unspoken blind spot issue is the looming crisis on the scarcity of water. The artists participating in *Too Shallow for Diving: the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is Treading Water* believe their role is to bring unspoken conversations to the surface. The exhibit serves as the foundation for dialogue regarding this most precious resource.

The invited artists have a track record of working with scientists, environmental advocates and citizens' groups. The projects fuse aesthetic concepts with ecological observations as a catalyst for viewers to consider how human intervention impacts the future of water sources. Audiences will enhance their understanding of how artistic and scientific concepts work together to shape understanding of environmental problems; identify factors and conditions leading to water's depletion; identify concrete ways to make personal choices that positively impact the supply of water; and use forms of personal expression, observation and interpretation to deepen understanding of environmentally-based artistic principles.

*Artists' Books on the Environment*, including a selection of books by artists participating in *Too Shallow For Diving*, will be displayed on the 4th floor of Hunt Library at Carnegie Mellon University from May 14 – July 1. Works in the exhibition cases can be viewed anytime during library hours and in the Fine and Rare Book Room by appointment from Monday through Friday. For more information about *Artists' Books on the Environment*, contact Mo Dawley, Art and Drama Librarian, 412-268-6625.

## Programs to Date

### Opening reception

Saturday May 14, 7pm (@ the AJM)

8pm: *Water: A Love Poem* spoken word performance by Vanessa German

Reception sponsored by Ellie Baker Feldman

Clean Water Action citizen engagement event in collaboration with PennEnvironment (@ the AJM)

Tuesday, May 24, 6:30 – 9:00pm

Presentation with Dr. Conrad Volz, who recently resigned his position with the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Healthy Environments and Communities; Monday, June 6, 7:00 – 9:00 pm (@ the AJM)

Closing reception and Green Drinks Social Edition (@ the AJM)

Thursday July 28, 5:30 – 7:30pm

The AJM is not just exhibiting environmentally engaged artists – we're living environmentally. Instead of mailing invitations we'll be sending out electronic information and keeping our Facebook page current. Feel free to forward information to your friends and co-workers and check out our Facebook page often:

<http://tiny.cc/o5cbq>

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## Artists' Project Descriptions

**Tim Collins and Reiko Goto** document their groundbreaking projects *Nine Mile Run* and *3 Rivers: 2<sup>nd</sup> Nature*. Assisted by scientists, attorneys, engineers, city planners, landscape designers both projects made substantial contributions to the intersection between community, art, and the environment.

**Jim Denney's** large-scale paintings reflect on the tensions between nature and humans. Employing the genre of landscape painting, Denney explores ways the randomness of natural change has been replaced by the destructive patterns of man.

**Vanessa German**, an acclaimed sculptor and spoken word artist, will perform a one-night only love poem for water. The love poem will engage the imagination, the senses, and the hearts of all who hear it, giving people the opportunity to consider the place of water in their lives, bodies, world and communities. The performance takes place during the May 14<sup>th</sup> opening reception. Ms. German received Sprout Fund support for this project.

**Prudence Gill's** holographic installation draws upon tactile, textural, intimate, sensual and metaphorical attachments to the reflective, elemental qualities of water. The subtle, yet potent, installation visually and conceptually connects viewers to the waters of the Ohio River Basin.

**Jamie Gruzka's** photographs consider the hypnotic allure of water as a subject. Gruzka's selection of photographs draws upon various instances of water in his life. Gruzka aims to make himself as well as the audience more aware of the complex aesthetic and emotional dependence we have to this substance.

**Richard Harned**, an acclaimed kinetic sculptor and glass artist, incorporates glass, audio, and light to address the aesthetics of water's movement.

**Roger Laib's** *Glut-Hut* is a large-scale mobile-hut made of recycled objects that collects water. When it rains the hut will completely fill up with water to the point of leaking from all its nooks and crannies. It will be on display in the lawn of the JCC's Robinson Building.

**Lisa Link's** *Water Ways* developed out of a series of conversations with scientists and residents throughout the Boston area, including Dr. Anamarija Frankic and Dr. Sarah Oktay of UMass Boston, and explores the relationship between water and humans in the coastal city.

**Maritza Mosquera's** *Body in Water* utilizes digital prints and video installation documenting the artist's rendition of herself treading water, learning how to swim, making a human spectacle of herself in water, essentially engaging with the soul of water.

**Wendy Osher's** *Something in the Water* sculptural installation calls into question plastic's inability to decompose. Through leaching, plastic bags are linked to toxins in the bloodstream that affect women's breast milk. Osher, along with crocheting groups from around the nation, crocheted abstracted breast-like forms using plastic bags, which will be suspended in mid-air to create a reef-like environment.

**Ann T. Rosenthal's and Steffi Domike's** *Watermark* incorporates mixed media to explore how our bodies and cultures have been marked over time by our relationships to water and bodies of water. The installation reflects on the conflicted and contradictory relationship to the American landscape and its waterways as an essential aspect of our American identity.

**Carolyn Speranza's** *Requiem for the Net-Makers*, in collaboration with sonic artist Frank Ferraro, presents a seven-minute piece where the centuries-old duel of Man vs. Nature is played out by Big Oil Gangsters, the Ocean and the generations of people whose livelihoods are given by the sea.

**David Stairs**, Executive Director of *Designers Without Borders*, utilizes maps, photographs, and statistical information to explore Africa's water crisis, proposing the crisis experienced there is the manifested result of human behaviors on a global level.