

# Diving Into 'The Empire Of Water'



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Staff Writer on Mar 18, 2022

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The Church in Sag Harbor will open its spring exhibition “Empire of Water,” with a reception from 6 to 8 p.m. on Saturday, March 26. The exhibition will run through May 30. Given the effects of climate change, the global need for clean water, and the specific issues on the East End, the topic of water is timely and important. In the exhibition, the theme of water is depicted as a natural element, a scientific subject, an issue of social justice, a historical factor, an ecological question, an aesthetic tradition, a metaphor, and a simple necessity for the existence of life on Earth.

From the plentiful resources it provided to Native Americans before first contact to the area’s maritime history — which includes colonization and slavery — in addition to the area’s long-

standing tradition of agriculture and the current economic importance of the ocean and beaches as the motor of the region's tourism industry, fresh and salt waters have defined the historic communities on the East End of Long Island since their inception.



Including 47 artworks by 44 artists in a variety of mediums including painting, photography, sculpture and digital work, this exhibition brings together established and emerging artists in the area with artists from across the globe. Their artworks represent and use the theme of water in myriad ways and artists Doug Aitken, Linda K. Alpern, Reneke Dijkstra, and Sally Mann who address its place in leisure; Daniel Beltra, Scott Bluedorn, Edward Burtynsky, Liza Lou and Andy Warhol find beauty, horror, and humor in the realities of pollution; Tonico Lemos Aud, Cappy Amundsen, Paton Miller and Duke Riley reflect on the traditions of those who live by the sea; and John Alexander, Ross Bleckner, Jim Campbell, Vija Celmins, Thornton Dial, April Gornik, Lawren Harris, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Longo, Clifford Ross, and Hiroshi Sugimoto create compelling images of waterscapes.

“Water, water everywhere is what you will see when you visit ‘Empire of Water,’” explains artist Eric Fischl, cofounder of The Church. “We’ve pulled together 44 artists who have found a wide range of creative and surprising ways to express aspects of our complex relationship to this liquid which covers most of the Earth’s surface and dominates so much of our history of exploration, commerce, conquest and survival.

“This magical and mundane substance has occupied the creative and spiritual imagination since man began to make images and sounds,” he adds. “It is our hope that the audience, so familiar with this subject, will find works of art that surprise, impress, provoke and amuse them in utterly new ways.”

“Empire of Water” exhibition hours are Wednesday through Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. through May 30. The Church is located at 48 Madison Street in Sag Harbor. For more information, visit [thechurchsagharbor.org](http://thechurchsagharbor.org).