Water seeks water, finding its own level as it flows. Our bodies, being mostly water, are sensitive to the call of the source. A longing for reunion pulls one to the edge of the level surface, only to recognize our reflection in its mercurial mirror. Like Narcissus, we find it hard to look away. We learn about ourselves when we contemplate water. Its essence pervades our physical life, our spirituality and our imagination. Water forms cultural ties that bind people, and informs our stories, myths, beliefs and customs.

As much as water makes up our physical bodies, it pervades and surrounds us, comprising our earthly environment and atmosphere. From an ocean wave to a snowdrift to a rainbow, water interacts with energy and transforms itself into phenomena, both majestic and sublime.

Our inextricable links with fresh water as a life source prompt much anxiety in our fast-changing world. Our era, marked by rapid climate change, destructive hydroclimactic weather events, loss of polar ice and rising global sea levels, is witness to shifting shorelines, borders, migration patterns and lines of economic and cultural exchange. In decades to come, water will be the source of redefining our global community based on the collective interests of humanity.

The Source: Rethinking Water Through Contemporary Art

was an ambitious assemblage of artists who came together to discuss, explore and learn from one another. The resulting exhibition was constructed around those individual explorations and a new understanding of water. This shared focus spurred investigations that were far-reaching, divergent and informed by individual interest, cultural perspective and geographic viewpoint.

It was important to the spirit of the project that there was no summary or didactic messaging – fluidity and the changing course of questioning were important to show in their true states. Although there was a collective understanding that the topic of water spilled over into the political sphere, and issues are pressing and global in nature, a definitive stand on these issues did not arise. Instead the show opened up a cascade of ideas and directions that mirrored the intangible nature of the material we were discussing. The Source contemplates water from a nationless, borderless perspective that is altogether human.

The following pages serve to introduce each artist’s practice and their contribution to The Source.