



FOREWORD

STUART REID

Rodman Hall Art Centre is very proud of *The Source: Rethinking Water Through Contemporary Art*, a major exhibition on the theme of water that coincided with Borders Without Boundaries, the 2014 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, hosted by Brock University. In this exhibition, artists from a multitude of cultural backgrounds, working in a diversity of media, considered changing concepts of water and associated cultural, political and aesthetic implications. The exhibition's themes were particularly engaging not just to the thousands of academics attending Congress, but to a diverse public who visited the show and participated in the wide array of public programs associated with it. The show led to creative collaborations with other departments, including the Environmental Sustainability Research Centre at Brock University.

Rodman Hall is very grateful for the generosity of the artists participating in the exhibition: Nadine Bariteau, Raymond Boisjoly, Elizabeth Chitty, Soheila Esfahani, Gautam Garoo, Patrick Mahon, Colin Miner, Lucy + Jorge Orta and Gu Xiong. By bringing together Canadian artists representing Indigenous and settling cultures, both French- and English-speaking, alongside artists with roots in countries around the globe, this exhibition represents a diversity of perspectives on an important subject.

A wide variety of media employed in *The Source* occupied all of the galleries, including the Project Space and the Walker Botanical Gardens at Rodman Hall. Esfahani created numerous ceramic-cast water bowls that altered the outdoor fountain at Rodman Hall. An on-site *Antarctica Passport Office* created by the Ortas generated a lot of interest and discussion; the Ortas' Antarctica flag flew proudly on the hill outside the gallery during the run of the exhibition. St. Catharines-based artist Elizabeth Chitty's media installation, *Streaming Twelve*, included a live video feed of the flow of Twelve Mile Creek

as viewed from the roof of Rodman Hall, as well as drone footage shot by a local aerial photography company. The work opened up a discussion of governance issues over water that had great local significance. Gu Xiong's residency in July 2013 allowed the artist to engage with migrant worker culture supporting the wine and stone-fruit industries along the Niagara River. His installation of floating boat forms moved from the inside of the building through windows, to traverse the lawns down to the edge of Twelve Mile Creek. This project drew in new audiences and forged new partnerships with the Niagara Migrant Workers Interest Group. Through a multi-sensory approach, the exhibition prompted visitors to engage with divergent viewpoints encompassing disparate stories and cultural perspectives on water.

The Source has benefitted greatly from a partnership with Western University's Arts and Humanities department and the ArtLab who have been co-publishers of this book and have supported Patrick Mahon's generous collaboration on this project. We offer special thanks to Patrick Mahon, who brought to life the *Immersion Emergencies* project that was the foundation of *The Source*. We are grateful for his thoughtful essay included in this book. Also to Robert Sandford, for his extensive expertise and knowledge of the contemporary world water crisis that led him to contemplate hope in the context of *The Source*. We thank Rob Gray of Designworks Studio for his elegant design of this catalogue, and Stuart Ross for editing our words. Rodman Hall is grateful for ongoing support from Brock University, the Ontario Arts Council, our members, donors and sponsors. We are pleased to acknowledge the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for the *Immersion Emergencies* project, the residencies and this documentation of that research.

We hope this book will convey the scope of this ambitious project in light of its relevance to our contemporary world.