

TOTAH

Melissa McGill
Ripple
Opening November 12th, 2025

TOTAH presents *Ripple*, an exhibition of recent works by Melissa McGill. *Ripple* opens on Wednesday, November 12th, 2025. This is McGill's third solo exhibition with the gallery.

Taking water in its most elemental sense—as both an acculturated symbol and an ecological fact shaping the collective experience of life on earth—McGill's current body of work engages with cartography to reveal how modern systems of measurement contain fluid geographies prefigured by the expansiveness of water. Easy dichotomies like figuration and abstraction fall away in the face of McGill's enlarged conception of water, which quite literally reshapes the relationship between map and territory—both materially and contextually, in form as well as in content.

McGill states that she is “exploring the re-mapping of watersheds to celebrate water's own expression while deepening our collective attunement to its language. This project grows from a longstanding exploration of water as both living material and metaphor, and from my conviction that we, as human beings, are not separate from water but are ourselves bodies of water; one body resonating with another. These maps function as sensorial records of water's movements and voices.”

Using materials and colors from natural sources—chlorophyllin, kaolin clay, indigo, salt, vinegar, copper oxide, homemade soy milk—McGill develops her own pigments. She integrates these colors into paintings that invite water's active participation in the creative process. A work like *Septentrio* (2025) recontextualizes a historical found map into a microcosmic ecosystem, with salt crystal formations threading through the picture's surface. Many of McGill's works operate by analogy. Her materials are sourced near specific bodies of water and often transformed by water's influence. For McGill, the tracings that water leaves—the stains and rivulets that emerge—add a sense of numinosity to mark-making. Maps cease to be representations in the conventional sense and instead indicate domains of potential experience. As the folds of McGill's maps become flooded, they reveal new centers and peripheries, reconfiguring the language in terms equally ontological and cartographic.

Two large-scale watercolors, *Ebb and Flow* (7th dimension), employ a grid as framework, inviting water to mediate the pigments, creating an ebb and flow of color that reveals their shifting relationships. These works reflect on her recent project *A Lake Story*, which took the form of a 400 person canoe procession writing Lake Ontario's story through color across the sky and water in Toronto. The celebration mapped Toronto's harbor and waterfront biosphere with the lake's own vocabulary expressed through its natural palette.

Melissa McGill (b. 1969, Rhode Island) is an interdisciplinary artist who creates large-scale, site-specific art projects while maintaining an integrated studio practice. Her work connects viewers to overlooked histories, exploring the conversation between the visible and invisible, heightening awareness of our surroundings. McGill regularly turns to waterways for inspiration, research and artistic collaboration. Her most recent large-scale project, *A Lake Story*, was commissioned by The Bentway with collaborators Jason Logan and Dr. Duke Redbird in Toronto, September 2025. *Eridanus: The River Constellation* was exhibited at Mazzoleni in Torino (2024-2025), and included work from 1998 to 2024. *Red Regatta* (2019), an independent public art project that activated Venice's lagoon and canals with four regattas of traditional *vela al terzo* sailboats hoisted with hand-painted red sails, presented in collaboration with Associazione Vela al Terzo Venezia, co-organized by Magazzino Italian Art. In the *Waves* (2021), presented by Art&Newport, evoked the urgency of rising sea levels and a rapidly changing climate with an ensemble of local community members. *Constellation* (2015-2017), installed on an island in the Hudson River, lit each night creating a new constellation transforming the Bannerman Castle ruin; *Canaletto and Melissa McGill: Performance and Panorama*, 2022, The Lightbox, Woking, UK; *The Campi*, 2018, Venice, Italy; and a solo exhibition at the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations, New York. She is a graduate of The Rhode Island School of Design and is a National Endowment of the Arts ArtWorks Grant recipient. Her work is held in the permanent collection of JP Morgan Chase, New York; Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio; Ron Pizzuti, Ohio; and Williams College of Art, Massachusetts, among others. McGill lives and works in Beacon, New York.

For further information please contact info@davidtotah.com