

For Immediate Release

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Staten Island Museum opens new exhibition ***Vulnerable Landscapes on Earth Day***

Opens April 22, 2023

(Staten Island, NY – March 23, 2023) – Today the Staten Island Museum announced its next exhibition, ***Vulnerable Landscapes***, an interdisciplinary exhibition that centers the shorelines at the forefront of climate change in one of New York City's most vulnerable landscapes: Staten Island.

Poised to **open to the public on Earth Day, Saturday, April 22** the exhibition explores Staten Island's unique challenges due to its geography and history, with industry and community concentrated where water meets ground.

Vulnerable Landscapes circumnavigates Staten Island illuminating the past to shed light on the future.



Idea Viola Reid - Climate Justice Advocate
Sarah Yuster (b. 1957, American)
Oil on canvas, 2023
Part of the series *Biophiles - A New Generation*

"This exciting exhibition brings together an invited group of artists, students, engineers, educators, scientists, advocates, and landscape architects to create an inspiring and illuminating gallery experience. It communicates what is uniquely Staten Island and yet globally relevant, highlighting the individuals documenting, working with, rebuilding, reimagining, and advocating for this island," says Rylee Eterginoso, Director of Curatorial Affairs and Programs, and curator of the exhibition. "We are excited to put objects from the museum's collection in conversation with new works of contemporary art, as well as projects rooted in community science and innovation – connecting visitors to what is truly special, and at risk."

In ***Vulnerable Landscapes***, concepts of resistance, change, and recovery are investigated and reimagined through contemporary art supported by objects and archival materials from the Museum's collection.

The exhibition will feature the work of: Billion Oyster Project, James Vincent Brice, Nate Dorr, Edrex Fontanilla and Sarah Nelson Wright, Nataki Hewling, HERShot students: Alexandria Anderson, Madison Davis, Savannah Washington, Soojin Yoonsmith), Nathan Kensinger, Living Breakwaters: SCAPE, Michael McWeeney, Beryl Thurman, and Sarah Yuster.

On View April 22 – December 30, 2023

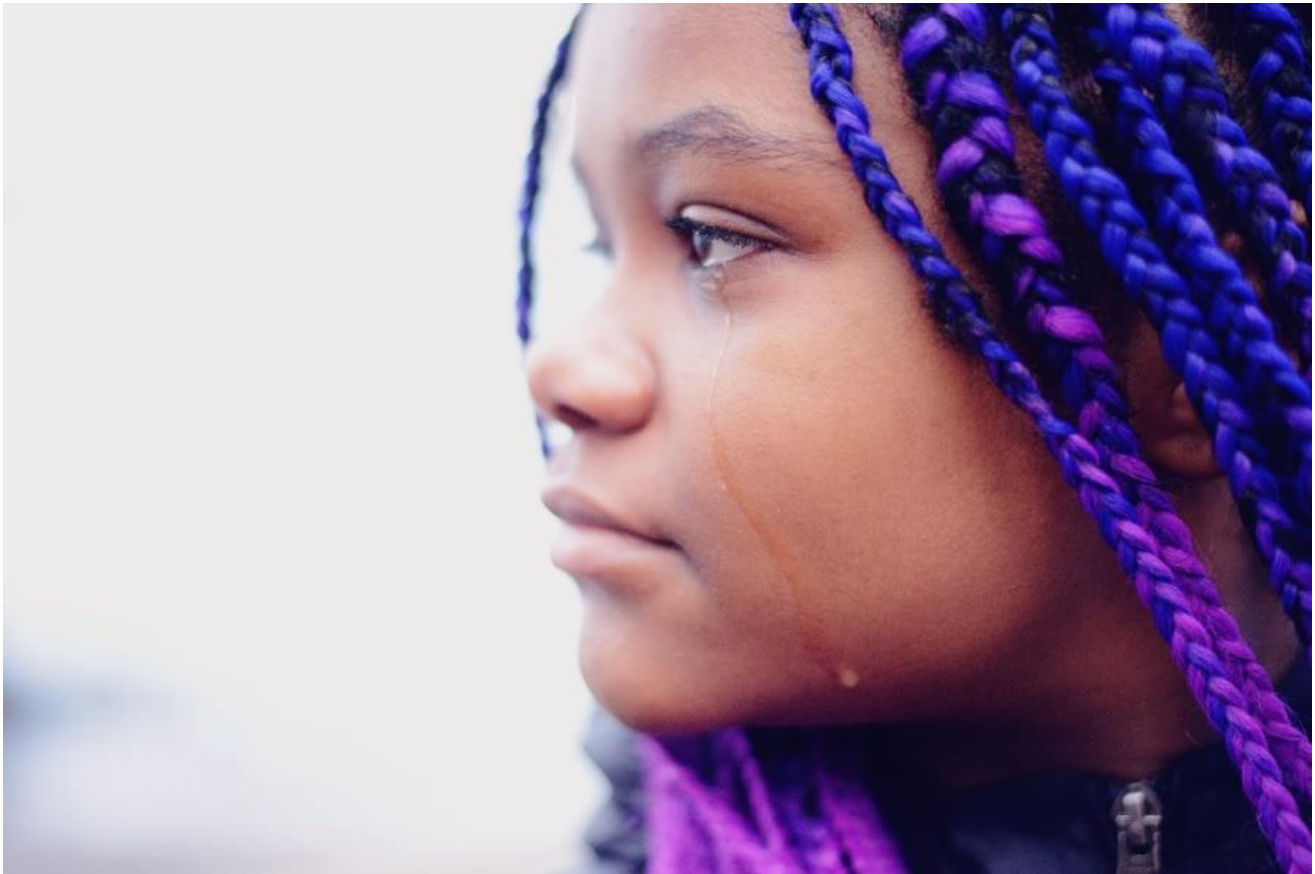
Public Opening: EARTH DAY! Saturday, April 22, 2:00pm – 4:00pm

Celebrate Earth Day at the Museum with the opening of *Vulnerable Landscapes* as well as crafts and activities for all ages. Enjoy free seedlings from the NYC Native Plant Center (supplies are limited), try your hand at charcoal landscape drawing with Freshkills Park, make plantable seedpaper, examine habitat loss over millennia with a mastodon fossil dig, and more. Sponsored by National Grid.



Watchers of Gulfport
Still from *Specters of Watch Oak*
Nate Dorr (b. 1979, Brooklyn)
Photograph, 2021

Vulnerable Landscapes includes the premiere of **Nate Dorr's Specters of Watch Oak**, a human-haunted nature film in which all stories are ghost stories. The video moves through Mariners Marsh, Bloomfield, Watchogue, and Old Place. In *Specters*, history, mythology, nature, anthropogenic industry, and digital perception collide in the salt meadows and brownfield beaches of northwestern Staten Island. Narration is drawn from the writings of preeminent historian, naturalist, and Staten Island Museum founder William T. Davis.



Reset
Savannah Washington (b. 2001, Staten Island)
Photograph, 2023

Nataki Hewling and the students of **HERShot (Alexandria Anderson, Madison Davis, Savannah Washington, and Soojin Yoonsmith)** were 2022-23 artists-in-residence at the Staten Island Museum, meeting biweekly to discuss issues around climate justice and the North Shore while building their skills as photographers. Students responded to the prompts of *Vulnerable Landscapes* expressing their concerns and hopes through the lens of their cameras.

HERShot was founded in 2018 by artist and photographer Nataki Hewling as a girls photography collective that inspires and empowers students to tell visual stories that educate, entertain, and inform their communities.

Nataki Hewling presents photography and drawing on recycled canvas - a call to action around climate justice and environmental racism on the North Shore of Staten Island.



In **Cedar Grove Beach Club**, photographer Michael McWeeney documents the final days and current state of this historic beach community.

Michael McWeeney
From the series *Cedar Grove Beach Club*
Photograph, 2010

The environmental justice advocacy of **Beryl Thurman** is shared through audio, video, and writing. Thurman is a founding member of the North Shore Waterfront Conservancy (NSWC). From 2005 until 2022, NSWC dedicated its efforts to fast tracking the remediations needed for these contaminated waterfront sites on Staten Island's North Shore in order to protect the Environmental Justice communities behind them.



View of the Kill Van Kull looking toward the Narrows
May 8, 1947
Aerial Photograph #6040
Borough President's Photographs
Collection of the Staten Island Museum

Visitors are invited to look into **Shifting Sands** an artist-built virtual reality viewer by **Edrex Fontanilla and Sarah Nelson Wright**. View and walk around it to immerse yourself in some of the

most vulnerable Staten Island landscapes facing destruction from sea level rise, storm surges, and development.

Videos and miniature models detail the design and construction of **Living Breakwaters: SCAPE**, widely considered a model for climate-adaptive green infrastructure, Living Breakwaters uses a layered approach to risk reduction—enhancing physical, ecological and social resilience along the South Shore of Staten Island. Support for this installation was provided by the New York Office of Resilient Homes and Communities (RHC; formerly known as the Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery)



Learn about the **Billion Oyster Project**, a New York City-based nonprofit organization with the goal of engaging one million people in the effort to restore one billion oysters to New York Harbor by 2035. Because oysters are filter feeders, they serve as a natural water filter, with a number of beneficial effects for the ecosystem.

Photo by Agata Poniatowski

Nathan Kensinger presents selections from **Water Towns: Staten Island** - a series of guided walks and story maps tracing out the history of Staten Island’s forgotten streams and waterfront towns.

Inspired by Kensinger’s photographs and essays about the island from the last 15 years, these new works investigate hidden green spaces and historic landmarks threatened by pollution, development, sea level rise, and climate change.

Water Towns was developed by Nathan Kensinger in collaboration with NYC H2O with generous support from City Council Member Joseph Borelli.



Tappen’s Creek in Clay Pit Ponds Park
Nathan Kensinger (b. 1979, American)
Photograph, 2020
Part of the Series *Water Towns: Staten Island*

Also on view will be five portraits from the series **Biophiles - A New Generation by Sarah Yuster**: Aly Stoffo - *Urban Forager*, Myisha Humphrey - *Native Plant Specialist*, Nick Rozak - *Urban Beekeeper*, Ivan and Ezekiel Arce - *Birdwatchers*, and a new portrait *Idea Viola Reid - Climate Justice Advocate (above)*. *Biophiles - A New Generation* is made possible by public funding from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and a DCA Art Fund Grant from Staten Island Arts, with cooperation by NYC Parks.

Based on the Lemon Creek tidal estuary and its history as a working waterfront, *Resilient Landscapes* by MIT graduate student James Vincent Brice seeks to reveal the physical, ecological, and social resilience embedded within the coastal landscapes of Staten Island, asking how we can leverage a deeper understanding of these phenomena to design a better future. Support for the coastline model provided by the MIT Water Club.

For more information about exhibition related programming and for full artist bios, please visit www.statenislandmuseum.org/exhibitions/vulnerable-landscapes/

Major support of *Vulnerable Landscapes* is provided by the Lily Auchincloss Foundation and by National Grid.



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Additional support provided by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

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About the Staten Island Museum

Founded in 1881, the Staten Island Museum engages visitors with interdisciplinary exhibitions and educational programs that explore the dynamic connections between natural science, art and history based on its diverse collections. The Museum will be open for extended summer gallery hours beginning March 29, Wednesday – Sunday: 11am – 5pm. Universally accessible. For advanced tickets and info visit StatenIslandMuseum.org.

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