

# **THOSE WHO CARRY WATER**

By Walter Kitundu

Commissioned by the San Francisco Arts Commission  
In partnership with the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

**Those Who Carry Water** is a celebration of the workers and community members whose lives are intertwined with the water system in San Francisco. It is a recognition of the water itself, and the wide array of communities it nurtures and sustains as it cycles through our lives. In addition to the water department workers and neighborhood residents the artwork honors plant, mammal, fish, bird, and insect communities, as well as the arts ecosystem it exists in. It remembers the past and offers some hopeful guidance for the times to come.

## **COMMUNITY**

A critical aspect for the development of this work is the investment of both time and support by the San Francisco Arts Commission and by the SFPUC that allowed the work to be developed through meaningful exchange with workers and Bayview Hunters Point residents over time. This meant that the imagery and symbolism, stories and histories present in the work were able to grow out of direct conversations with the people who the work seeks to honor.

I visited with children and elders, with community leaders and with folks I met in the neighborhood. This is in addition to the natural communities I encountered on extensive site visits to SFPUC facilities from Hetch Hetchy Reservoir to the treatment plants in the city. I also visited power stations, local reservoirs, and water temples.

This relationship building will continue after final design because it is meant to generate a connection with the artwork and the process of its development.

As part of our community engagement, Joanna Haigood and I are developing a public performance for the unveiling of the artwork. We will use the artwork design as a prompt for gathering stories and continuing our community conversations around water in the coming years.

## **MATERIALS**

Those Who Carry Water consists of 388 glass panels that make up 19 separate images on the north, west, and south facades of the parking structure. The architectural glass panels will receive digital ceramic prints of the imagery before being laminated for safety and durability.

Each glass panel will be installed using point support fixtures placed according to glass engineering specifications. There are four different glass panel sizes in the work.

144" x 62.5" Qty 268

76" x 62.5"	Qty 100
60" x 62.5"	Qty 10
36" x 62.5"	Qty 10

We consulted with bird safety experts about the scale, reflectivity, and location of the work and received confirmation that the piece is considered bird safe. A lack of reflective glass coatings, combined with largely opaque pigments and a matte surface finish all contribute to a structure that will be recognizable to birds as an obstacle rather than open sky.

The glass panels will be attached with point fixings to horizontal steel members connected to vertical steel beams affixed to steel embeds in the edge of the concrete slab. This structure has been carefully designed by Tipping Structural Engineers to allow for expansion and contraction and to accommodate wind loading and seismic factors as well.

## **IMAGERY AND DESIGN**

The imagery of the artwork was gathered through a series of trips made to the region visiting rivers and reservoirs, power stations and treatment facilities, community centers, local parks, an elementary school and the Bayview Senior Center. Additionally, I was granted access to several active PUC jobsites around San Francisco as well as welcomed at the current City Distribution Division campus where I met many of the people responsible for maintaining and sustaining the water system. Their silhouettes have become the storytellers of the artwork.

Every image in the artwork (with the exception of one small bird) is made up of water photographed somewhere in the water system - that includes the people, whose silhouettes are also images of water.

There are a host of smaller and sometimes hidden elements for people to discover. This helps the artwork function at a variety of scales, from the sidewalk, to Potrero Hill, to the interior. I have been mindful of the various ways the imagery will be received and made a work that adapts to different perspectives. The trees that line the Evans (west) side of the building may obscure or reveal parts of the work as they gain and lose their leaves seasonally, and I've designed the imagery with that in mind.

There are three general movements in the work corresponding to the north, west, and south faces of the building. The North features water and the environment, the West, ways we carry and receive water, and the South asks us to consider our future relationships to water.

The work also highlights multiple communities in conversation - the SFPUC and the residents it serves, ecological communities from the Sierra to the Bay, and our teachers and students. It also honors those who have left us, and those who carry their memories forward. Even the broader arts community is woven into the work. Consider the water of Garfield Pool visible in the silhouette of a student from the Meadows Livingstone School. It shows a reflection in the water of a wonderful public artwork by the artist Favianna Rodriguez on the windows next to the pool.

The process of making this artwork exists in a larger context full of life and art and stories. It makes sense that these local connections would find their way to the surface of this work.

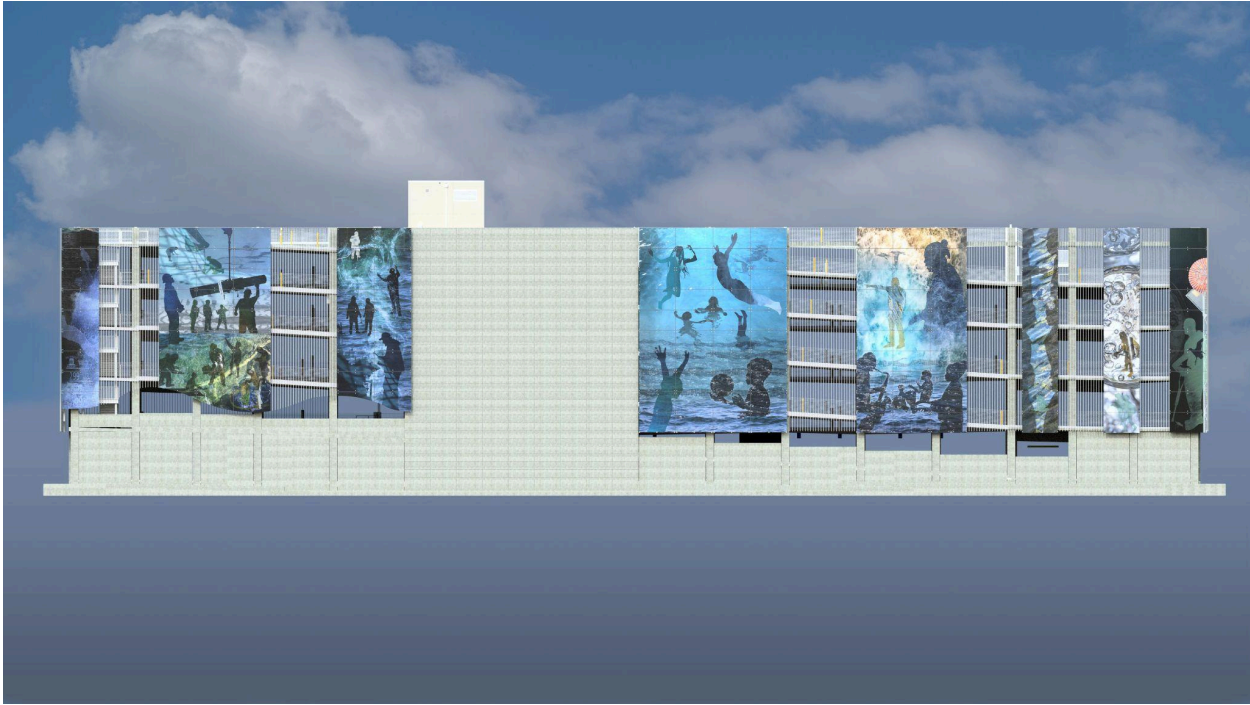
## **CONTEXT**

In conversation with Jonathan Cordero of the Ramaytush Ohlone about this work, he reminded me of the water's agency and power, and that even as we coerce it into tunnels and attempt to control it, the water maintains agency. It allowed me to recognize the water as an entity that only moves through our system temporarily. An entity for whom we bear the responsibility of care and on whom we will always depend. The artwork begins and ends with the water as the main figure.

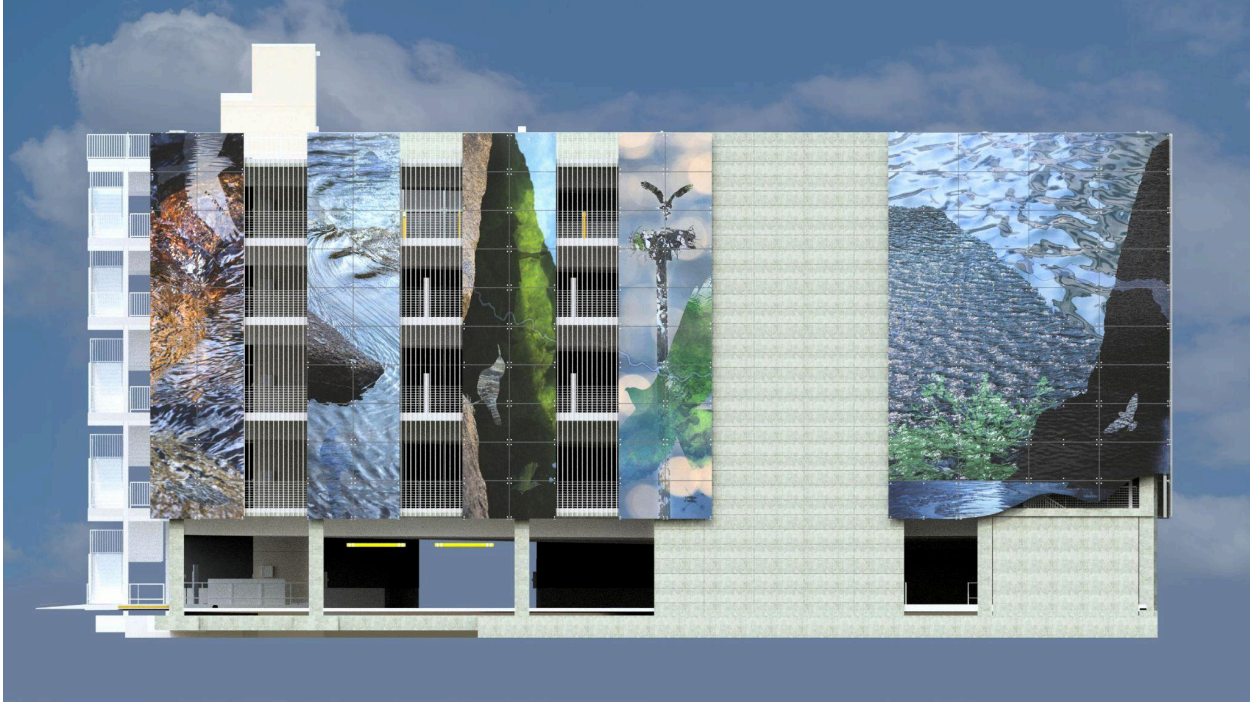
I'm grateful for the time and support that enabled me to develop this artwork in conversation with SFPUC workers and Bayview residents. It allows the work to hold real stories and moments drawn from natural environments and lived experiences. The relationship building with people and places that this public art project has fostered has been invaluable. It will continue until the unveiling of the artwork and beyond.

ELEVATIONS

WEST



NORTH

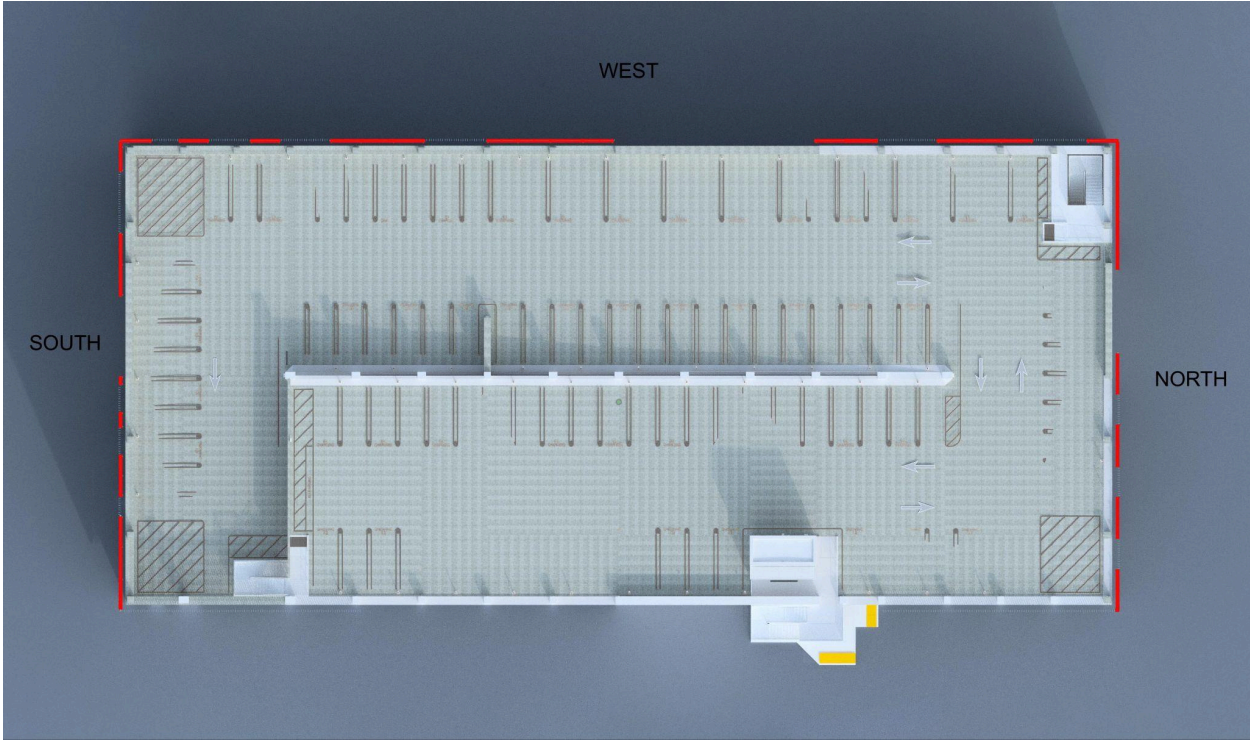


SOUTH



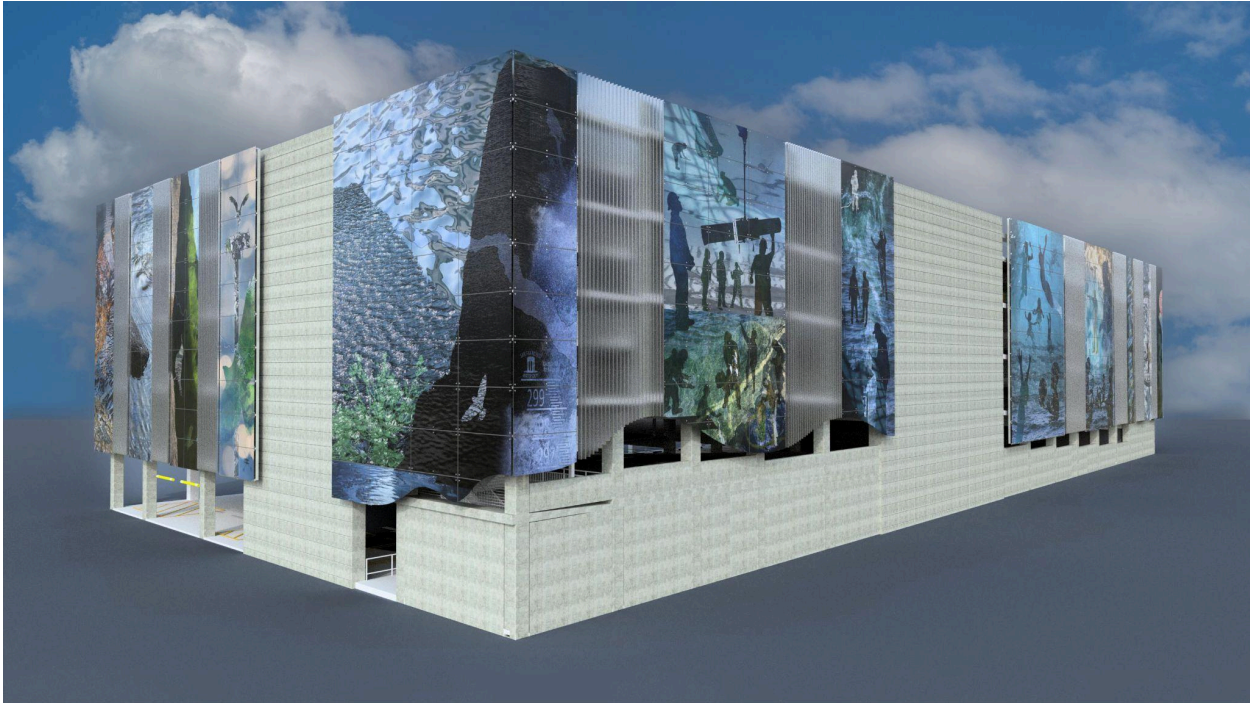
PLAN

Red areas indicate locations of art glass.

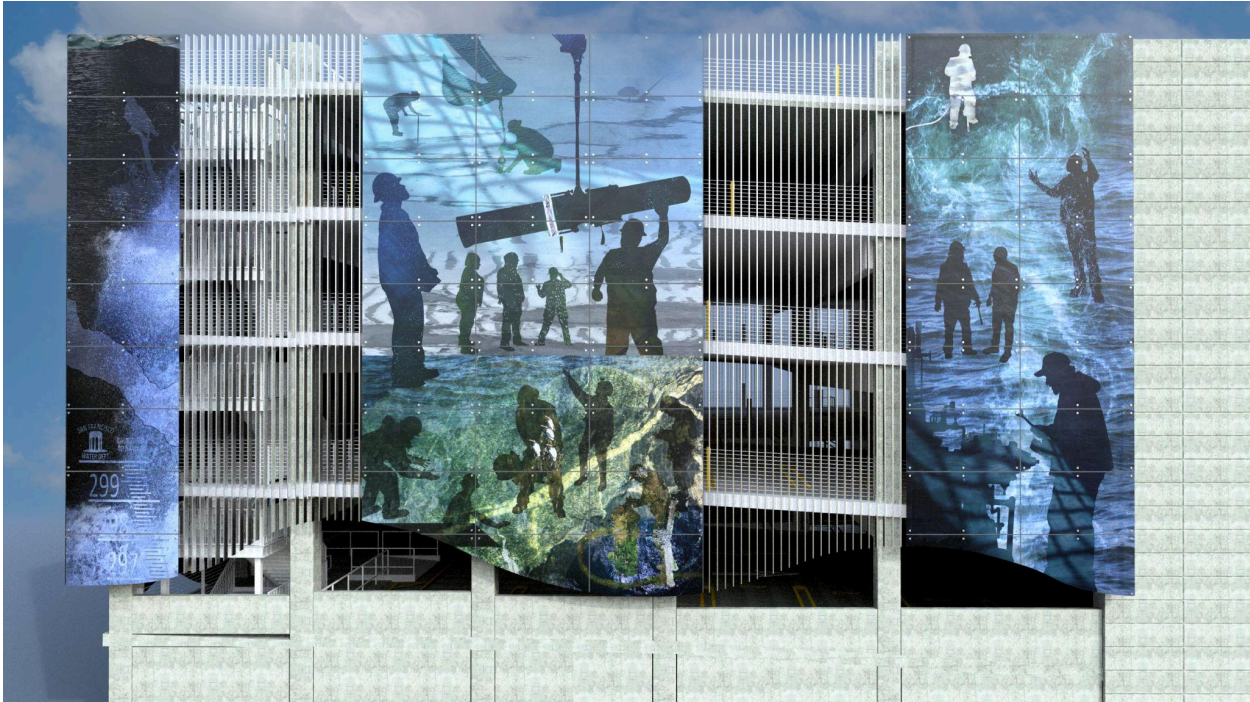


**RENDERINGS**

NW corner



NW corner detail



SW Corner



Glass panel detail



Evans and Cesar Chaves intersection



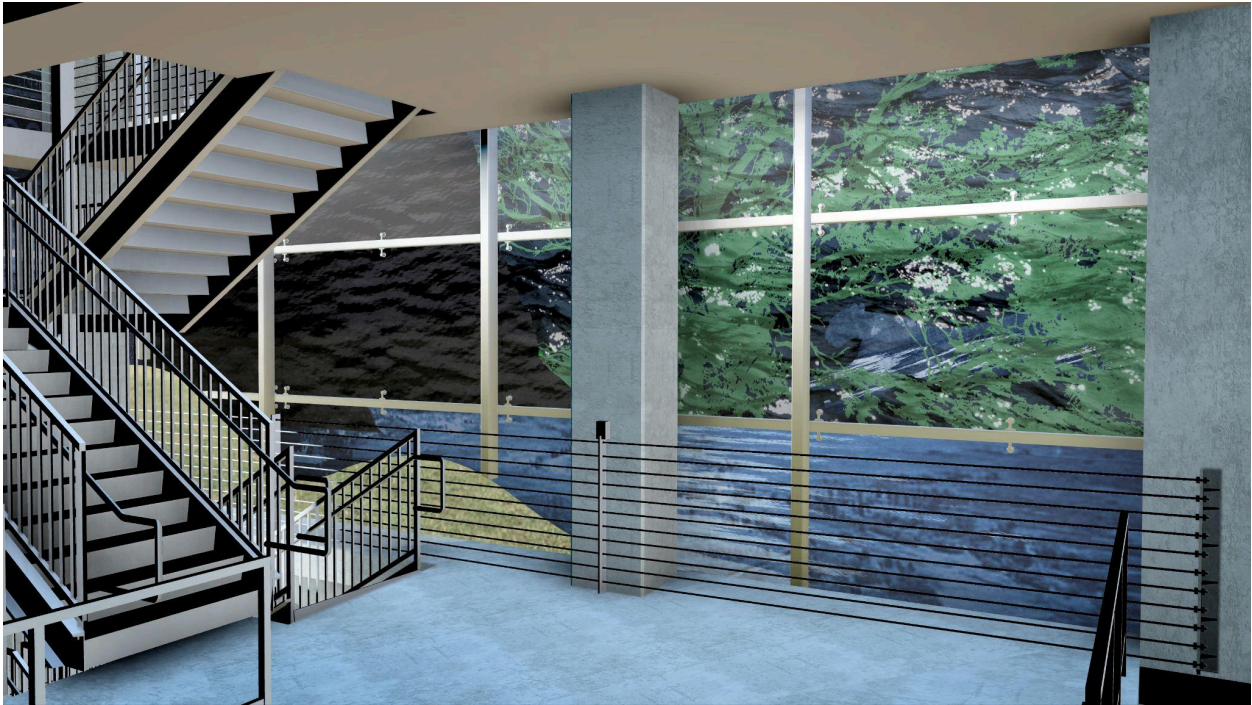
Evans and Marin St intersection



Rooftop view and text



Interior view

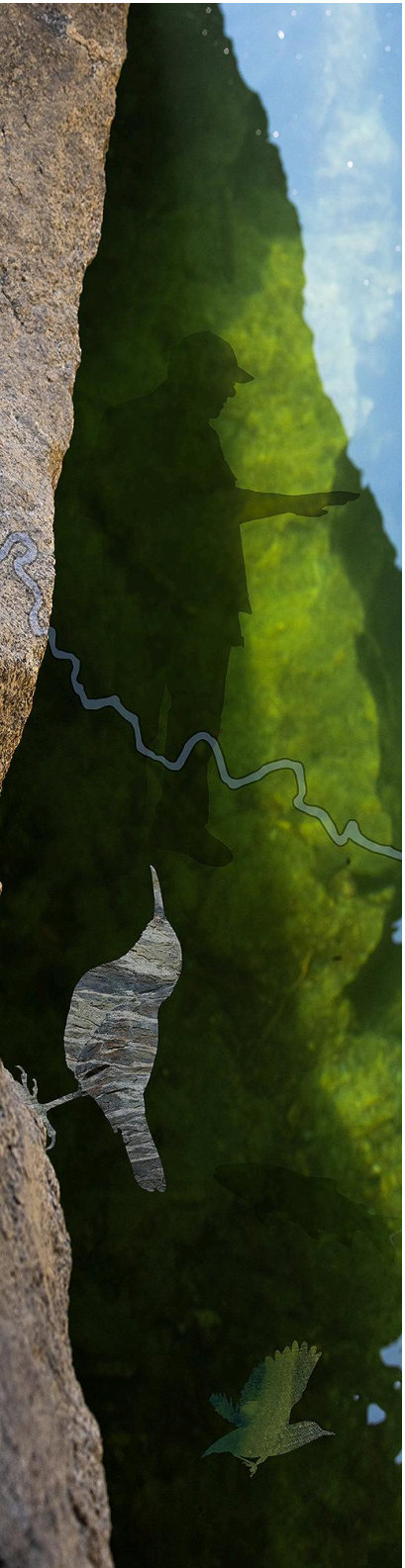
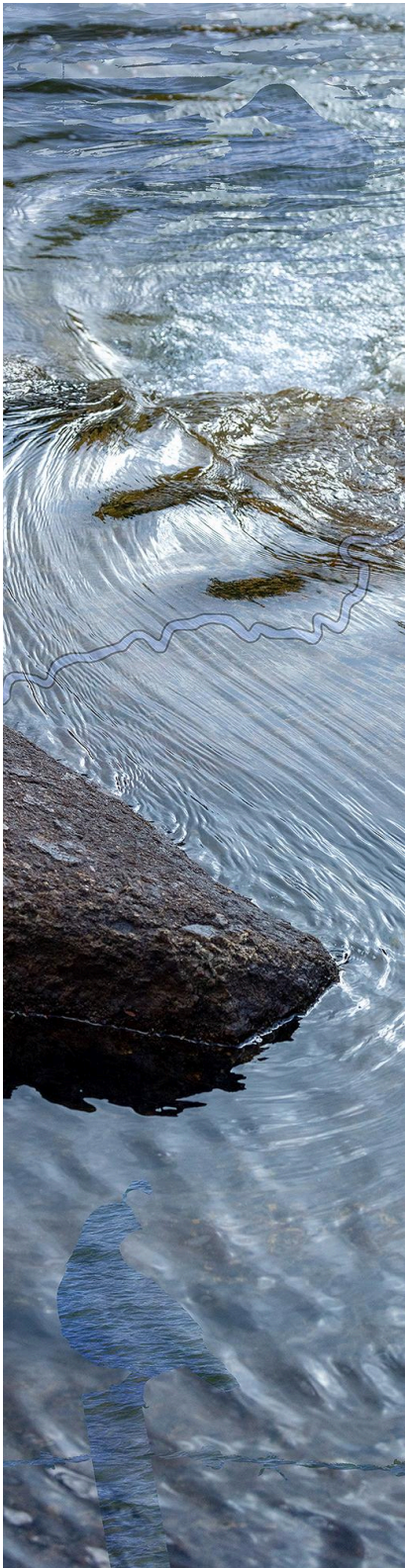
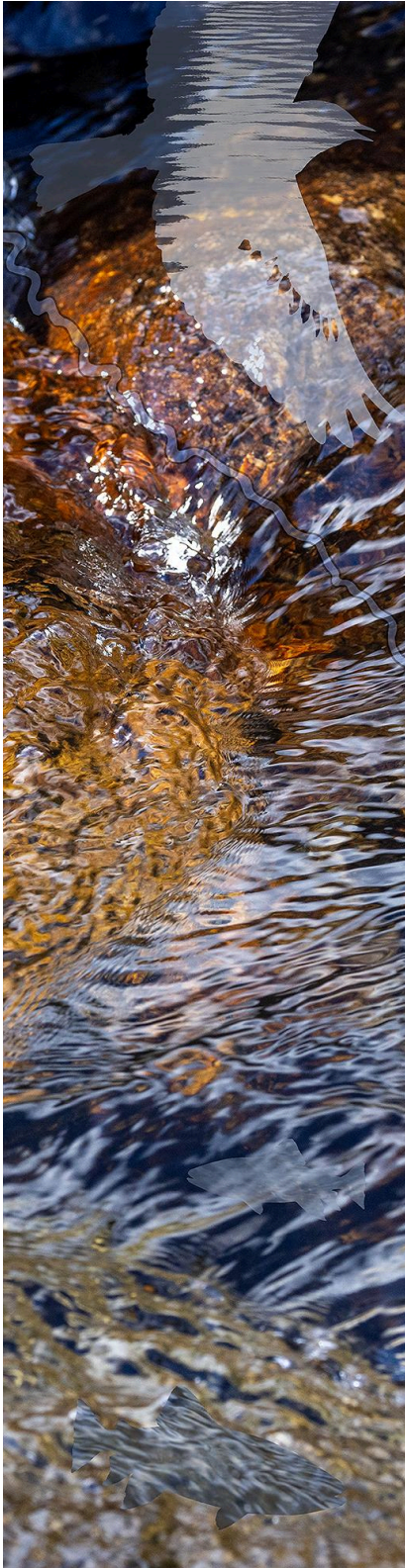


Looking up (detail)

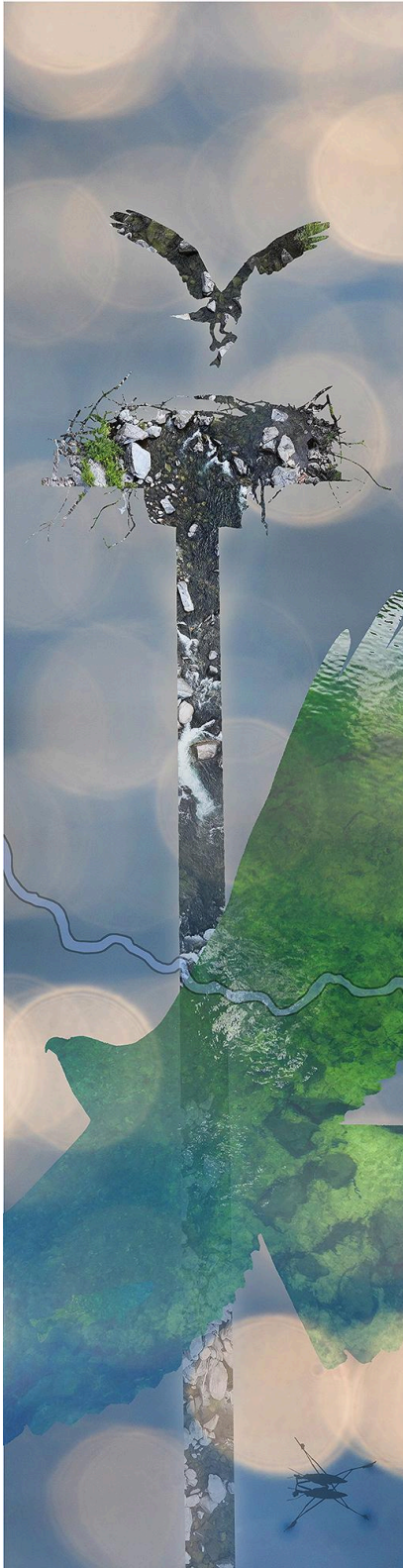


**ARTWORK PANELS**

**Panels 1 - 2 - 3**



Panel 4



Panels 5-6



Panel 7



Panel 8



Panel 9



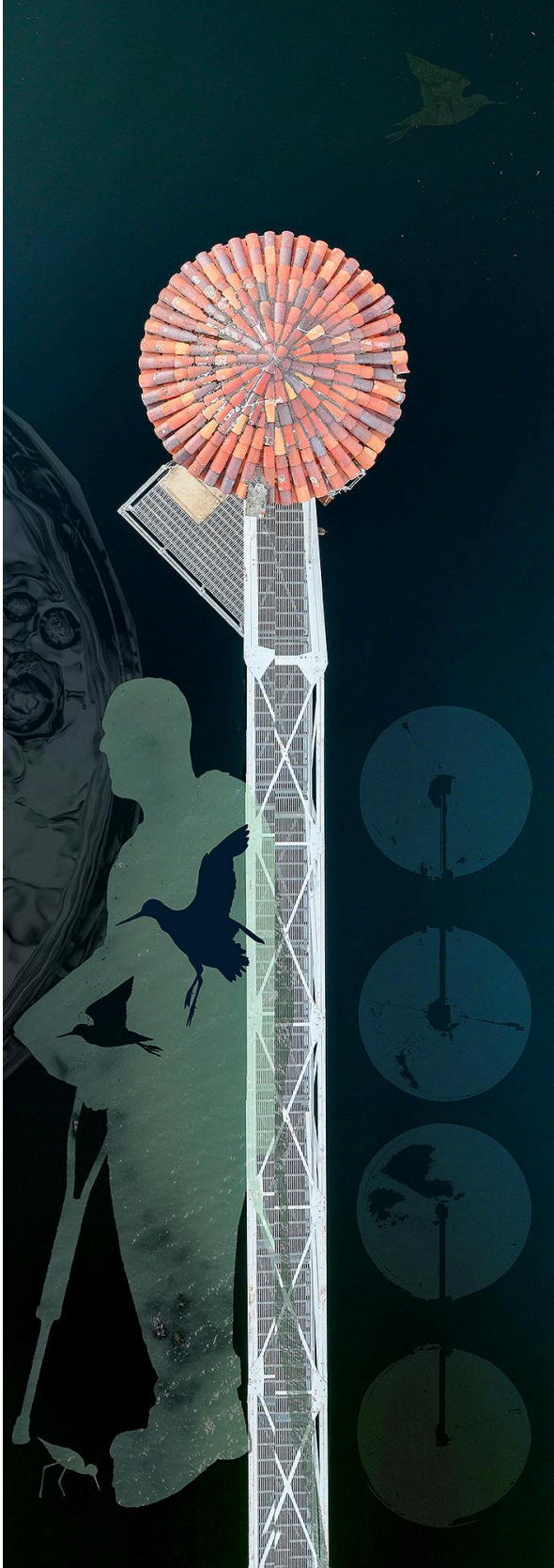
Panel 10



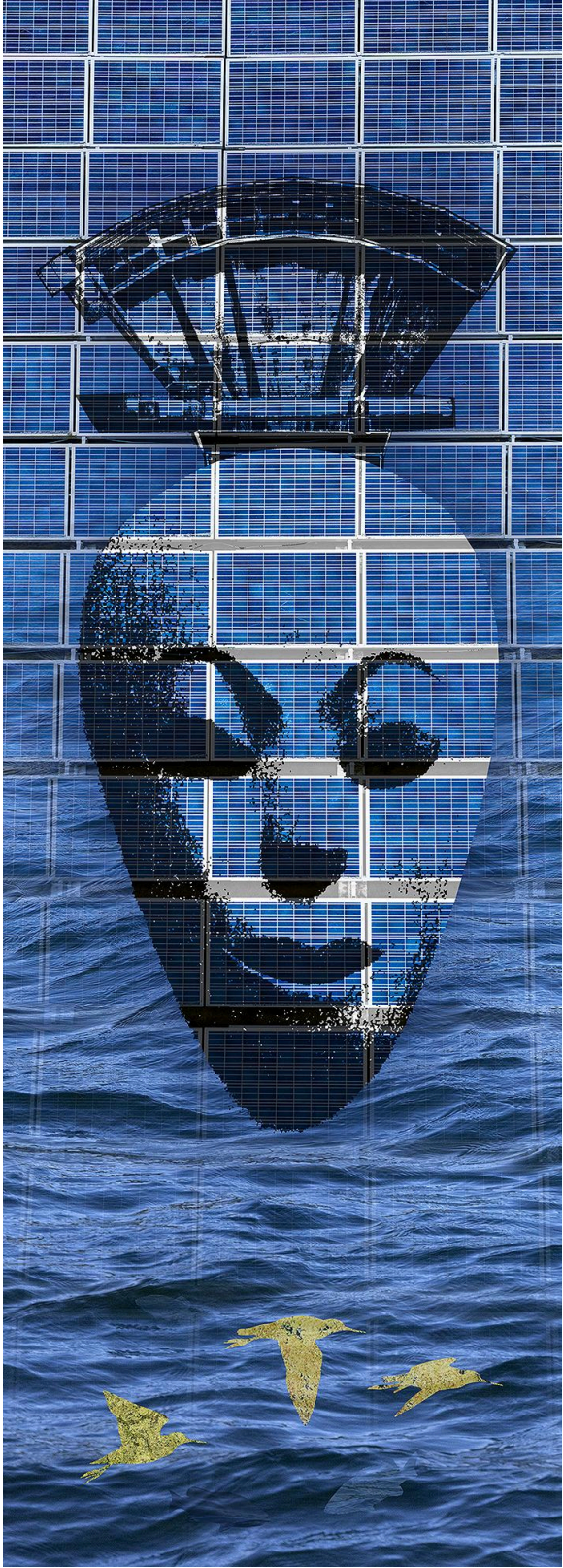
Panels 11 - 12



Panels 13-14



Panel 15



Panels 16-17-18



Panel 19

