

WaterWays Statement Allena Brazier

My art practice is rooted in multiple layers of experience—family lineage, the landscapes of city and nature, social dynamics within built environments, and the profound significance of faith. I create an archive of learned knowledge and felt emotion, reflecting the complexity of my personal history and the communities I am part of.

Water is more than just an element; it is a geographical tool for navigating aspects of life: physical placement, memory, spirituality, and freedom. My draw to water began in my hometown along the Mississippi River, a site of industrial growth that also carries the weight of racial violence, segregation, and historical erasure, and has expanded through my travels to Alabama, Tennessee, and Kentucky. The rivers—vital to history and community—have shaped my work and understanding of water's cultural and spiritual significance and have inspired this body of work in *WaterWays* through painting, photography, sculpture, and text.

In my social practice, I engage with individuals and organizations who have knowledge of water, land, and historical restoration. In particular, my recent travels have embedded in me the way water transcends boundaries—across land, air, and time. On my trips to the Mississippi and Alabama Rivers, I felt a strong connection to the water as a geographical feature and as a living, active force that holds memory and meaning. Water also plays a crucial role in my faith. In 2024, I was baptized, marking a significant spiritual milestone in my life. For me, water is physical and spiritual; this spirituality is deeply rooted in the stories of people throughout generations with a traditional African approach to spirituality and Christian faith. Water can be considered a part of social happenings or navigating different circumstances while giving a sense of mind and physical body renewal. The scripture and lyrics accompanying the *Hymnal Painting* series are examples of enslaved Africans / African descendants using the gospel and water as a direct correlation between the biblical text and the reality of the social landscape. Each body of water that inspired *WaterWays*, from Alabama to the Mississippi to the Ohio River, holds a significant part of our nation's history.

I invite you to reflect on the waters that have carried you.