

Rivers flow along serenely and silently until they do not. These multifaceted bodies of water functioned historically as points of entrée for exploration, trade routes, centers of commerce, and as generators of fertile agricultural regions. Like all great rivers, those in America carry the residue of past and present cultures as well as the metaphorical burden of human projection and reflection.

Most riverine myths and beliefs focus on destruction and salvation. Such myths are rooted in the delicate balance between punishing floods that wreak havoc on those living nearby while simultaneously replenishing water habitats and soils. Never the same from one moment to the next, these flowing wellsprings of life have a unique ability to both connect and divide humanity. These connections and divisions are the subject of *Breach*, a 2015–2016 body of work by the Los Angeles-based artist Alison Saar.

Throughout a career spanning more than three decades, Saar has consistently hewn to the 1960s-era slogan “The personal is political.” Ever the visual storyteller, the artist traverses both terrains—the personal and the political—by incisively drilling into issues such as identity, motherhood, feminism, race, and politics. In *Breach*, the artist’s well-known practice of synthesizing disparate ideologies, histories, and cultural signifiers coalesce into a timely conversation that asks us to consider todayn

## ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF BREACH & THE GREAT MISSISSIPPI RIVER FLOOD OF 1927

To start at the beginning of this particular tale, Alison Saar was one of twenty-four Joan Mitchell Foundation grant recipients selected to participate in the Joan Mitchell Center's 2013 Artist-in-