

Mary Giehl

State University of  
New York at Oswego  
7060 State Route 104  
Oswego, NY 13126  
[www.Oswego.edu](http://www.Oswego.edu)

# Ebb & Flow

**TYLER *art* GALLERY**

Kim Waale

**This event is free and open to the public. For additional information about this exhibition call the Art Department at 315.312.2113. Persons with disabilities needing assistance to attend this exhibition, please call in advance.**

**Funds provided by ARTSwego and the Student Association through the Student Art Exhibition Committee. Graphic Design by Kelly Brodeur.**



September 6th – October 5th, 2013



# Ebb and Flow

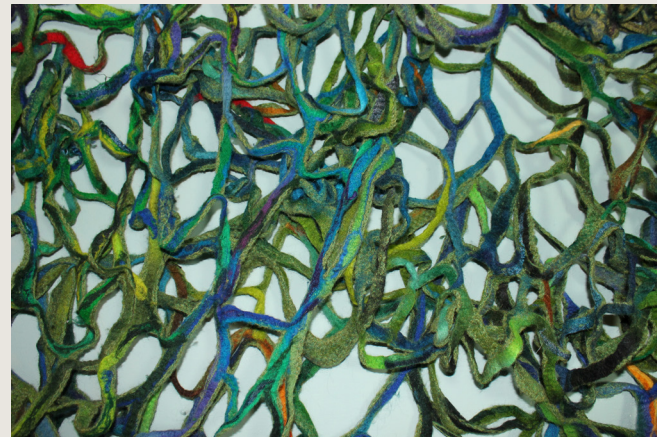
{Water is} the one substance from which the earth can conceal nothing; it sucks out its innermost secrets and brings them to our very lips.

- Jean Giraudoux, *The Madwomen of Chaillot*, 1946

In the course of artistic careers exploring a wide range of imagery, Mary Giehl and Kim Waale have independently arrived at the same well. Each recently began using water as a source of inspiration but toward widely divergent ends - in the process revealing both the fragility and mutability of this most vital of resources.

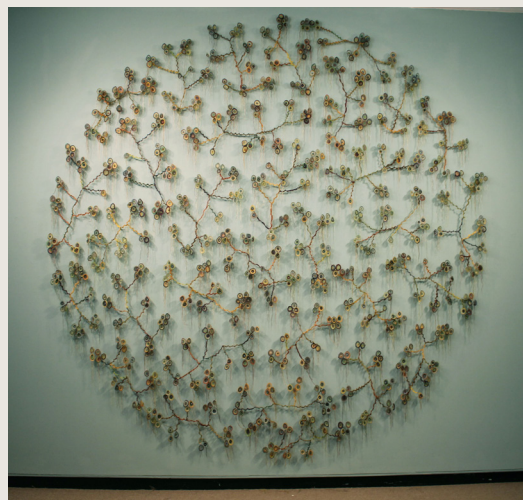
Mary Giehl's earlier career as a registered nurse in a pediatric intensive-care unit left an indelible mark on her career as a visual artist. A strong empathy for her young patients compels her to advocate for children in all her artwork. This commitment, rather than any one medium or style, has been the unifying element in Giehl's work. Many of her works directly confront the myriad perils facing children, especially child abuse. Giehl's recent work in *Ebb and Flow* magnifies the microscopic organisms that contaminate the drinking water of many of the world's children, claiming thousands of young lives each day.

*A Functioning System*, 2012, was inspired by viewing the magnified micro-organisms present in water. A dark blue-green, interlocking organic web is the result of a labor-intensive process of crocheting and felting variously colored fleece. In the past Giehl has employed materials like cast sugar or soap that, in their child-like innocence, belie the hidden dangers represented in the work. At first glance, *A Functioning System* may seem as innocuous as a fuzzy, unraveling floor to ceiling sweater. Its extreme tactility creates a strong desire to touch it. With further viewing, the interlocking system of webs seems caught in the



Mary Giehl, *A Functioning System*, 2012, crocheted, felted and dyed fleece, variable dimensions.

process of growing across the wall, capable of multiplying endlessly. The experience is at once ominous and vaguely humorous. Giehl consciously entices the viewer with humor, visual rhythm and a quirky beauty while the deeper message may only be discovered later. The pale blue-green gallery walls enhance the claustrophobic, submerged sensation created by the all over web pattern.



Mary Giehl, *Systems Through A Microscope*, crocheted thread, 2013, 10' 6" dia.

Furthering the idea of magnification, *Systems through a Microscope*, 2013, is contained within a wall-filling, precisely measured circle alluding to microscopic observation of *Rhizidium* parasitizing the *Chlorophyte Pseudosphaerocysts*. The diminutive, crocheted circular forms here have delicate flagella, giving them the illusion of self-propulsion as they appear to swim upward. Like the natural forms they mimic, they are uniform though each is unique. Their concentric rings of warm coloration were inspired by dyes used to accent

organisms for more efficient microscopic viewing. These colors contrast pleasingly with the cool wall color and the craftsmanship is a marvel.

Kim Waale is well aware of the influence of her proximity to rivers. Her installation *Rivers*, 2013 was inspired by the familiar Red Lake and Thief Rivers near her childhood home in northern Minnesota and the West Branch of Limestone Creek bordering her current home in Manlius, New York. She is especially interested in how humans "re-present" nature in a detached, subjective and ultimately inaccurate way. Appropriately, maps that in effect freeze forever the ever-changing path of a river are the basis for her three-dimensional drawings.

In a nearly opposite way to Mary Giehl's microscopic view, Waale recreates models of rivers based on maps (originally created using macroscopic, aerial views) to reveal falsehoods in our attempts to capture nature. To insure the viewer doesn't regard the sinuous streams as accurate depictions of the natural world, Waale suspends the rivers in hanging clumps that recall Eva Hesse's suspended forms of the 1960's. Their seemingly freely-drawn, expressive lines are actually painstakingly copied from enlarged maps and carefully cast in durable, pliable rubber. This ironic sense of materials and process is something Waale has used effectively before as in a recent realistic, super-sized spider web fashioned from hand-spun kitchen plastic wrap.



Kim Waale, *Rivers*, 2013 (detail) rubber, metal, variable dimensions.

Though at the heart of Waale's works is a serious questioning of our very relationship with nature, it is balanced by a sincere interest in the inherent poetic beauty in her natural forms. Translucency, subtle color variation and line quality are illuminated and emphasized by the act of hanging them. These rivers present a glass-like vulnerability; describing water in subtle colors from a nearly clear aqua to a mud-choked brown. Waale realizes that, though the water lines are not personally revealing, they are inherently expressive.

To add another layer of complexity to her very tangible representations of rivers, Waale traced her river maps onto four vertical batik silk panels covering the gallery windows. The off-white rivers barely stand out from the faint washes of green and tan that suggest forests and grasslands below. While materials and strongly vertical format create the impression of an Asian scroll painting, with its landscape perspective, the actual aerial point of view creates a disjunctive jolt. Simultaneously, the sheer silk allows us to see the actual landscape beyond, providing yet a third spatial reading of the piece.

Michael Flanagan, Director  
Tyler Art Gallery

Funds provided by ARTSwego and the Student Association through the Student Art Exhibition Committee. Graphic Design by Kelly Brodeur.



Kim Waale, *Rivers*, 2013 (detail) dyed silk, variable dimensions.