



### Artist Statement

The *Biological Regionalism: Niagara River, Western New York* project started in 2017 when I presented a lecture about my work at the Saturn Club in Buffalo, New York. Following that presentation, there was interest to have me create a specific body of work about the Niagara River. Soon afterwards, I developed the initial project concept and continued researching the Niagara River's rich history, environmental diversity, and the challenges that burden it. There are an inexhaustible number of themes associated with the Niagara River that could have been investigated.

In 2021, I presented an initial proposal to Michael Beam and Mary Helen Miskuly at the Castellani Art Museum (CAM). After subsequent meetings to refine the installation, we scheduled the exhibition. As with all my past projects, the research is the foundation to the artwork. Being intellectually engaged and connected to the issues investigated is very exciting and feeds my aesthetic process. In my past work, I often used a single object or scene as a metaphor for the issues that I examined.

For this exhibition, however, I wanted to construct a narrative using the process I used when creating abstract paintings, not unlike my 1987 work titled *Transition*, currently on view in the CAM's Abstraction Gallery. After completing research on an issue, I would arrange all the images, shapes, texts, stories, and data floating in my mind. Once I started the painting, those elements came together in an intuitive story-telling process. As each element was layered into the work, the composition changed and the next step was exposed. This process continued until the aesthetic narrative was completed.

To reiterate my earlier statement, there is no shortage of issues that could have been addressed in this exhibition. I have concentrated my efforts on a few select narratives that I found most interesting and enlightening. My hope is that museum audiences will find these topics to be just as engaging and thought-provoking as they were for me.

**Alberto Rey**  
October 2022

**Image Credits:** (above) *Biological Regionalism: Niagara Falls*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, wax pencils, Gouache, and charcoal.

### Exhibited Artworks

**Biological Regionalism** paintings are all on 300 lb. Lanaquarelle paper on board.  
All works are courtesy of the artist and Meibohm Fine Arts.

*Artpark Along Path*, June 5, 2022, 1:59 p.m., marker on paper, 5-1/8 x 8-1/8 in.

*Biological Regionalism: Artificiality of the Niagara Falls*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, and charcoal, 42 x 72 in.

*Biological Regionalism: Artpark on the Niagara River, United States of America/Canada*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, wax pencils, gouache, acrylic marker, and charcoal, 42 x 72 in.

*Biological Regionalism: Birds of the Niagara River*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, wax pencils, gouache, and charcoal, 42 x 72 in.

*Biological Regionalism: Fish of the Niagara River*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, gouache, and charcoal, 42 x 72 in.

*Biological Regionalism: Niagara Falls*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, wax pencils, gouache, and charcoal, 42 x 72 in.

*Biological Regionalism: Soundscape*, 2022-2023, unedited audio recordings.

*Biological Regionalism: Tuscarora Tradition of Sturgeon Spearfishing in the Niagara River, United States of America / Canada*, 2023, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, wax pencils, gouache, acrylic marker, and charcoal, 42 x 72 in.

*Biological Regionalism: Underground Railroad of Niagara River*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, gouache, and charcoal, 42 x 72 in.

*Biological Regionalism: Water of the Niagara River*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, acrylic marker, pastels, gouache, and charcoal, 42 x 72 in.

*Biological Regionalism: Whirlpool Rapids and Whirlpool of the Niagara River, United States of America / Canada*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, wax pencils, gouache, acrylic marker, and charcoal, 42 x 72 in.

*Boba Tea Café, Niagara Falls, NY*, January 20, 2022, 3:51 p.m., marker on paper, 5-1/8 x 8-1/8 in.

*Devil's Hole, Niagara River*, January 20, 2022, 2:21 p.m., marker on paper, 5-1/8 x 8-1/8 in.

*Near Main Street and Elliot Street, Youngstown, NY*, June 8, 2022, 12:44 p.m., marker on paper, 5-1/8 x 8-1/8 in.

*Niagara Falls, NY*, January 20, 2022, 9:33 a.m., marker on paper, 5-1/8 x 8-1/8 in.

*Niagara Falls, NY*, January 20, 2022, 9:47 a.m., marker on paper, 5-1/8 x 8-1/8 in.

*Whirlpool Park, Niagara River, NY*, January 20, 2022, 1:51 p.m., marker on paper, 5-1/8 x 8-1/8 in.

### Acknowledgements

*Biological Regionalism: Niagara River, Western New York* by Alberto Rey was curated by Michael J Beam, Curator of Exhibitions and Special Projects and produced by the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University. For more information, please visit [castellaniartmuseum.org](http://castellaniartmuseum.org). Appreciation goes to Mary Helen Miskuly, CAM Registrar, for bringing this project opportunity to the CAM.

Alberto Rey is represented by Meibohm Fine Arts. Limited edition prints of the works featured in this exhibition are available upon request. For more information, please visit [meibohmfinearts.com](http://meibohmfinearts.com). Rey's gratitude goes to his wife, Janeil Rey, for proofreading and steadfast support of his artistic career. The artist also acknowledges the support of Joseph Rickard, Neil Patterson Jr., Brennen Ferguson, Pete Bissell, and Vince Schiffert for providing valuable information about the ongoing cultural practices by Tuscarora people on the Niagara River. Rey would also like to recognize his studio assistant Erin Ruffino and her dedication to this project.

*Biological Regionalism: Niagara River, Western New York* by Alberto Rey is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.



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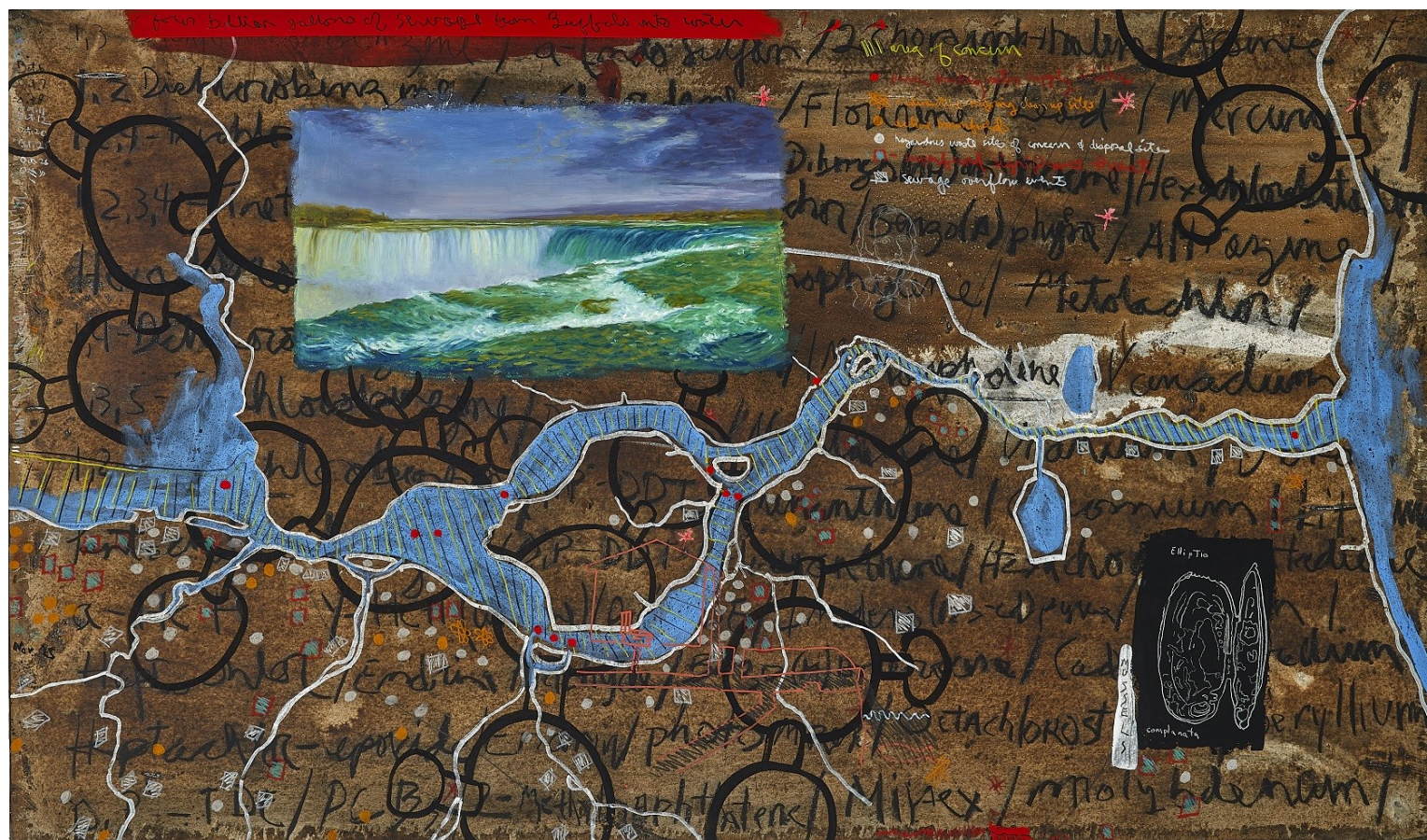
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**The Castellani Art Museum is a free admission art museum. Donations welcome.**

# Biological Regionalism Niagara River, Western New York Alberto Rey

April 20, 2023 - February 25, 2024



**CASTELLANI  
ART MUSEUM  
OF NIAGARA UNIVERSITY**



*Biological Regionalism: Niagara River, Western New York* explores the complexities of the Niagara River's past and present. Using lushly illustrated narratives, Rey capitalizes on his distinctive visual language to speak to the importance of the Niagara River in American popular culture and how that has changed over time. These large-scale paintings reflect on the river's historical significance to the Underground Railroad and to Native American culture, along with the pollution of the river and communities along its banks.

Rey's *Biological Regionalism* is representative of his 40-year artistic journey documenting human relationships to natural waterways and how these relationships have a direct effect on the flora and fauna across the globe. Building on past, present, and future, this work is guided through what he has termed, "a devotional painting approach."

For this large-scale installation, Rey turns his attention to the Niagara River and the unique attributes of the Niagara Gorge. Each bespoke painting explores facets of the Niagara River's rich history and challenges it faces, past and present.

This exhibition follows the trajectory of Rey's previous *Biological Regionalism* projects including *Critical Endangered Palms of Cuba* (2021-22), a project that explored the endangered native palm species of Cuba; *Oswego River and Lake Ontario* (2019-2022), which examined the history of the Oswego River, its challenges, and the prospects for improvement in the future; *The Lost Beauty: Iceberg Series* (2021), an investigation into the disappearing glacial patterns around the Icelandic region and its relationship to climate change; and *Biological Regionalism: Bagmati River, Kathmandu Valley, Nepal* (2016) explored the most sacred and polluted river in Nepal.

**Michael Beam**  
Curator of Exhibitions and Special Projects

**Image Credits:** (cover) (detail) *Biological Regionalism: Artificiality of the Niagara Falls*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, and charcoal; (above) *Biological Regionalism: Water of the Niagara River*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, acrylic marker, pastels, gouache, and charcoal.



**"It is crucial to inform the public about the importance of the Niagara River in America's cultural and natural heritage and the challenges that the river faces."**

Alberto Rey



**Image Credits:** (clockwise from top left) *Biological Regionalism: Birds of the Niagara River*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, wax pencils, gouache, and charcoal; *Biological Regionalism: Artpark on the Niagara River, United States of America/Canada*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, wax pencils, gouache, acrylic marker, and charcoal; *Biological Regionalism: Underground Railroad of Niagara River*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, gouache, and charcoal; *Biological Regionalism: Whirlpool Rapids and Whirlpool of the Niagara River, United States of America / Canada*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, wax pencils, gouache, acrylic marker, and charcoal; *Biological Regionalism: Artificiality of the Niagara Falls*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, and charcoal; *Biological Regionalism: Fish of the Niagara River*, 2022, Niagara River water, walnut ink, oils, pastels, gouache, and charcoal.



### Alberto Rey Abbreviated Biography

Alberto Rey was born in Havana, Cuba in 1960. He received political asylum through Mexico three years later, soon after Fidel Castro's take-over of Cuba. Rey's family first moved to Miami, Florida and eventually to Barnesboro (Northern Cambria), a rural coal-mining town in Western Pennsylvania, where he grew up. Rey relocated approximately 20 times throughout the Northeast United States before settling in Western New York in 1989.

Rey is an artist, potter, videographer, writer, Orvis-endorsed fly fishing guide, founder/director of a youth fly fishing program, and a retired distinguished professor. His artwork has explored a wide spectrum of issues related to the Cuban diaspora, American popular culture, art history, contemporary art, ecology, conservation, water issues, climate change, economics, and urban migration. He has participated in over 200 exhibitions at commercial galleries and museums across the United States, Chile, Mexico, Nepal, and Spain. Rey's artwork is in the permanent collection of over 20 museums.

Rey has written and/or illustrated five books: *Complexities of Water: Bagmati River, Kathmandu Valley, Nepal* (2016); *The Extinct Birds Project* (2018); and *Lost Beauty: Icebergs Project* (2021); *Lost Beauty II: The Art of the Museum Stories* (2021); *Biological Regionalism: Oswego River and Lake Ontario, Central New York, USA* (2022). He was the co-writer and co-illustrator of the *Survey of Canadaway Creek in Western New York* (2021).

Rey is presently providing programming and documenting projects for the United States Forest Service and The Native American Fish and Wildlife Society.

To learn more about Alberto Rey, please visit his website at [albertorey.com](http://albertorey.com).

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