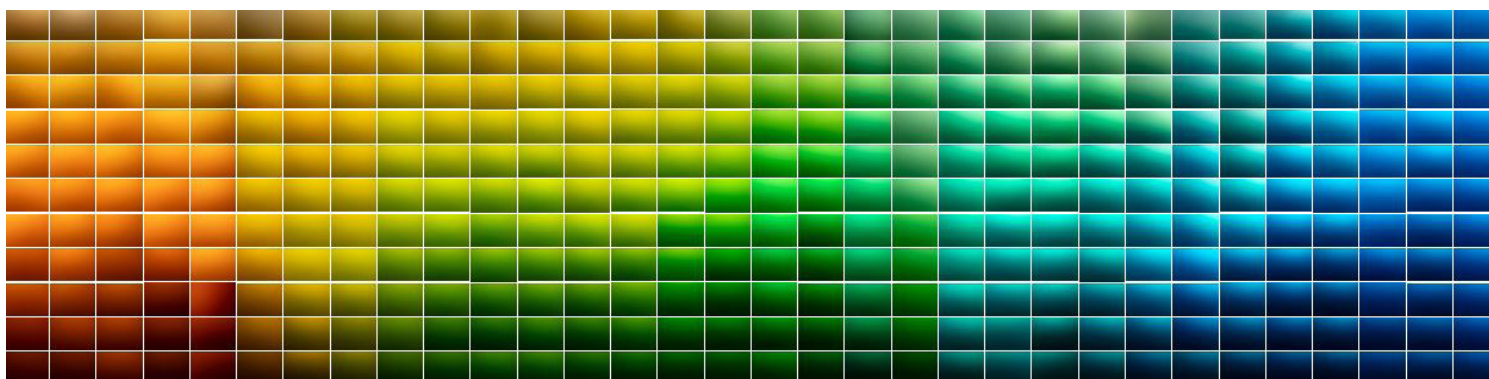




Nicolas Floc'h: Fleuves-Océan, Mississippi Watershed

AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO THE EXHIBITION

ON VIEW APRIL 25, 2025 – FEBRUARY 26, 2026

New Orleans Museum of Art

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ON THE COVER *The Color of Water, Water Columns:*
MISSISSIPPI RIVER DELTA, FROM EMPIRE,
LOUISIANA TO THE GULF OF MEXICO, 2022

EDUCATOR GUIDE OVERVIEW

The purpose of this educator guide is to support classroom investigation by K-12 educators and their students of the exhibition *Nicolas Floc'h, Fleuves-Océan, Mississippi Watershed*. This guide includes resources that can be used during a visit to the museum, as well as follow-up resources to help review and continue educational conversations regarding the exhibition and its themes. Materials within this guide include summaries about the exhibition, an introduction to the artist, guiding questions that encourage students to connect the subject matter and their lives, and classroom activities relating to the work that enable students to reflect while meeting core benchmarks and standards. Educators will also find works within the New Orleans Museum of Art that can connect with and deepen their connection to the work seen in *Fleuves-Océan, Mississippi Watershed*. Finally, links to interviews with Nicolas Floc'h can be found on the New Orleans Museum of Art website.



NEW ORLEANS MUSEUM OF ART LAND AND LABOR ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The area we now call New Orleans, also known as *Bulbancha*, a term from the Choctaw language meaning 'place of many tongues', holds a rich history. It is a land that has been traversed by the descendants of the Atakapa, Caddo, Chitimacha, Choctaw, Houma, Natchez, and Tunica Nations. The New Orleans Museum of Art recognizes and respects the past and present Indigenous people of this land for their stewardship and care.

The people of African descent who were brought to Louisiana as enslaved individuals were a diverse group, reflecting the global impact of slavery. They came from various geographic areas, including the Bight of Benin, Kongo-Angola, the Bight of Biafra, Caraba, Ibo, and Moko, Sierra Leone (the Kissy), the Windward Coast (the Canga), the Gold Coast, and Mozambique.

The New Orleans Museum of Art sits on land once part of the Allard Plantation. The museum acknowledges that this land's cultivation, financial growth, and ongoing cultural significance were made possible by the forced labor of Bambara, Mandinga, Wolof, Fulba, Nard, Mina Fon, Yoruba (Nago), Chamba, Ado Fon, Kongo, and their descendants during the brutal practice of chattel slavery, segregation, and beyond.

This land and labor acknowledgment is a living document we will continue to revise and strengthen in collaboration with descendants and community members.



Artist Nicolas Floc'h developed his own protective covering in order to submerge his camera under the waters of the Mississippi River.

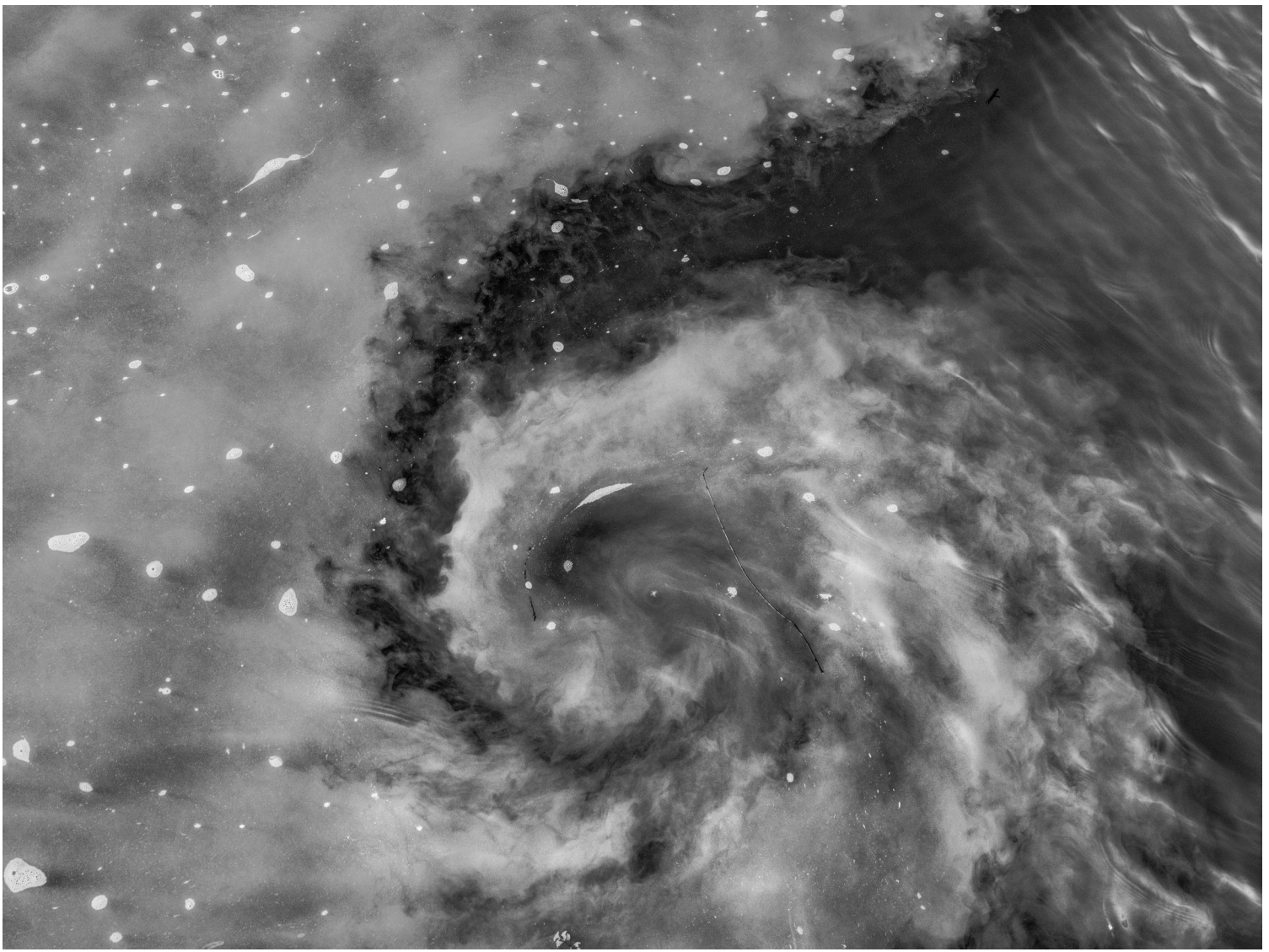
ABOUT THE ARTIST NICOLAS FLOC'H

As a multidisciplinary artist inspired by nature, scientific research, and human relationships, Nicolas Floc'h fosters opportunities for social engagement and awareness regarding environmental and economic issues. Floc'h creates installations, photography, sculptures, and performances that address history and its direct impact on the future and intentionally invites community participation and collaboration.

In *Fleuves-Océan, Mississippi Watershed*, Nicolas Floc'h traveled from the start of the Mississippi River to its end in the Gulf of Mexico, documenting the many colors of the river to reveal its history. Through this journey, the artist addresses the people and civilizations dependent upon the Mississippi River. Pairing the history of the river and those that inhabit its watershed and surrounding areas, Floc'h's work examines civilization's influence on this significant river and its impact on the world.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever opened your eyes underwater? What have you noticed?
2. What natural forces can we identify in these works of art?
3. How do rivers assist in the water cycle?
4. Who has lived near the Mississippi River?
 - 4.a. What is a watershed?
 - 4.b. How has the development of societies both influenced the land and water of the Mississippi River?
5. How do artists represent nature?
6. How does nature influence art?
7. How do these photographs discuss ecosystems and human influence on these ecosystems?



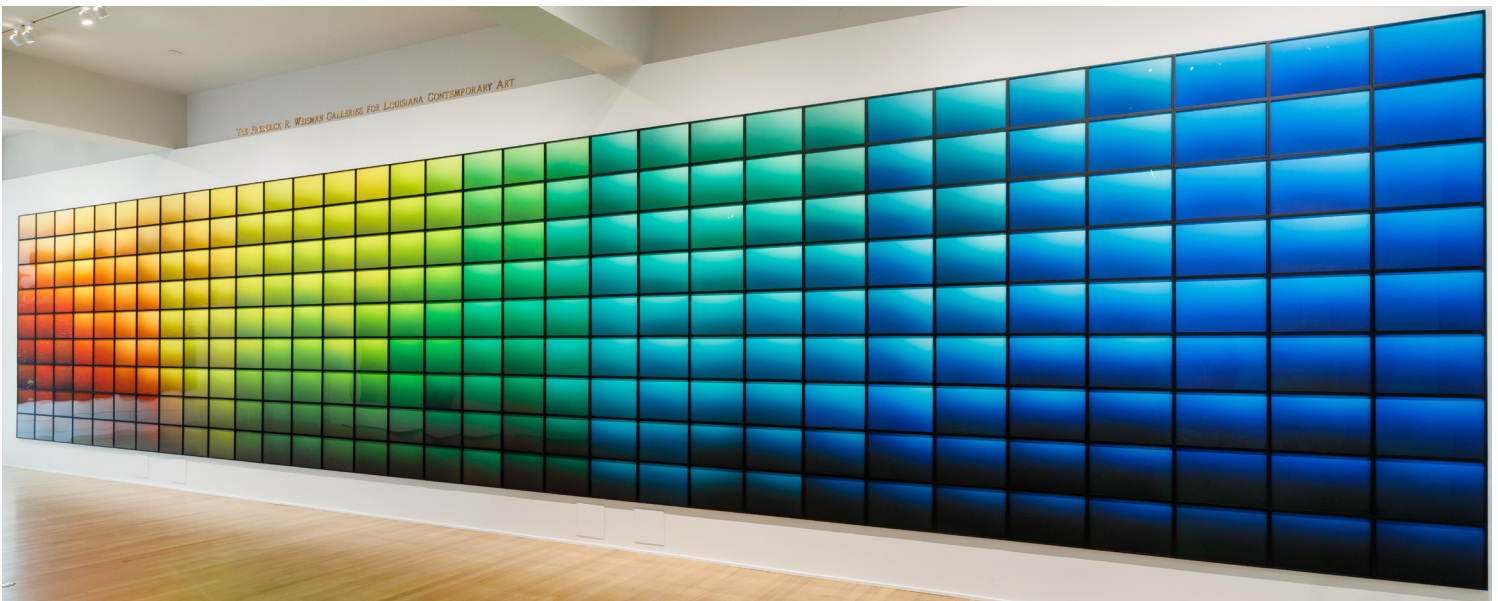
Vicinity of Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, 2022

The large photograph of swirling water, sediment, and plant matter on the surface of Atchafalaya Bayou, evokes the shape of a hurricane, an annual fact of life here in Louisiana. The reality of stronger and more frequent storms and sea level rise contribute to a sense of precarity in the region, and can require extreme measures like raising homes on pilings into the sky.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

All living elements on Earth are linked to water. Water works in cycles, from geological to chemical. From watersheds, tributaries, and our own Mississippi Delta, flowing bodies of water, and the environments in which they thrive, tell many histories of our planet and civilizations. Not only do the qualities of these water bodies change based on their location, but they can also be modified by outside influences, such as human beings. Rivers can reflect our relationship with our environment, as rivers provide a source of life for human beings. In turn, people have also changed the qualities of these bodies of water, as societies have been established and evolved.

Nicolas Floc'h's underwater landscapes that make up *Fleuves-Océan, Mississippi Watershed*, observe the productivity of the Mississippi River, the environmental balance it provides, and how it changes as it travels throughout the United States of America. For months, Floc'h traveled across the second-largest river system in the country, documenting this series of underwater landscapes, capturing over a thousand different colors, results of the various mineral elements from sediment to vegetation, and the impact that humans and their developing societies had on the ecosystem.



The Color of Water, Water Columns: MISSISSIPPI RIVER DELTA, FROM EMPIRE, LOUISIANA TO THE GULF OF MEXICO, 2022



Obtaining the images exhibited in *Fleuves-Océan, Mississippi Watershed* was no easy task. To protect his camera, Floc'h utilized a waterproof box. Placing his camera inside, then submerging it from his inflatable canoe, the artist was able to document the river's colorful transformation, from the river's humble beginnings in Northern Minnesota, to its completion into the Gulf of Mexico, off the Louisiana coast. He pairs these colorful findings with black wln each photo, Floc'h traces the movement of water through its various forms (solid, gas, liquid), and at times the absence of water from dry reservoirs and creek beds.

BEFORE YOU VISIT

ASK

- How has the Mississippi River shaped the development of our nation?
- How has the Mississippi River affected your life?

EXAMINE

- The history of civilizations and how the Mississippi River shaped them. The partnership between humans and the river is a constant in the history of this land we call home.

EXPLORE

- The various climates and landforms surrounding the Mississippi River and its watershed. How does the location impact the river?

QUESTIONS

- How has the river influenced the development of civilizations?
- How has the historic partnership changed civilizations and the Mississippi River itself?
- How does the geographical location impact the river?

CONCLUSION

- Make a list of indigenous groups that lived and thrived due to the Mississippi River.



The Color of Water, Nicolas Floc'h, Mississippi River Headwaters, Minnesota 6548
Fleuves Océan Mississippi, 2022, ©Nicolas Floc'h-ADAGP Paris 2025



The Color of Water, Lake Itasca, Mississippi River Headwaters, Minnesota 5134
Fleuves Océan Mississippi, 2022, ©Nicolas Floc'h-ADAGP Paris 2025



Alfred Boisseau, *Louisiana Indians Walking Along a Bayou*, 1847, oil on canvas, The New Orleans Museum of Art: Gift of William E. Groves, 56.34

The Choctaw people were one of the first groups forced to migrate during President Jackson's Removal Act of 1830. They originally lived along the south eastern portion of the Mississippi River, which supported their strong agriculture.

This painting above, completed by Parisian artist, Alfred Boisseau, was completed as a result of his two-year stay in New Orleans, where he first interacted with the Choctaw people as they traveled through Louisiana.

INDIGENOUS INVOLVEMENT AND RELATIONSHIP WITH THE RIVER

Following the end of the Ice Age, the Mississippi **watershed** was home to many Indigenous civilizations. The word "**Mississippi**" is derived from the French rendering of the **Ojibwe** name for the river, which means "great river" or "gathering of waters." The Ojibwe (meaning "first people" in the **Algonquian** indigenous language), also known as the **Chippewa** or **Anishinaabe**, primarily inhabited the Great Lakes area. For thousands of years, Indigenous people who lived in what we now call the United States of America used the Mississippi River and its **tributaries** for transportation and food. Many civilizations lived in the surrounding watershed, some practicing **nomadic** lifestyles, employing several **agricultural** techniques to grow a variety of food. Native civilizations inhabited the shores of the entire Mississippi River and the surrounding watershed!

Throughout Indigenous history, many groups developed along the Mississippi River. The **Chippewa** and **Menominee** established communities at the beginning of the river in Minnesota. In what is now the state of Illinois, the Illinois **Confederation**, which comprised roughly twelve tribes, resided in the **Mississippi River Valley**. As the river snaked its way to Western Tennessee, the **Chickasaw** lived on the eastern side of the river. At the same time, the **Wichita** inhabited the western watershed and, from Northern Louisiana to the Gulf of Mexico, the **Choctaw**, **Tunica**, **Natchez**, **Muskogee**, worked with the moving river to plant maize, beans, squash, and melons.

Many of the photographs included in *Fleuves-Océan, Mississippi Watershed* document many of the Indigenous communities that currently live along the Mississippi watershed. Observe the many works that include these communities in their titles, as the artist photographed many of the landscapes along Native Land and Reservations.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY#1

MAP OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND ITS SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

Using a map of the United States of America, provided on the back of this Guide and included in the exhibit, students will identify the Mississippi River, noting the watershed areas. Students will draw regions surrounding the river based on indigenous groups who inhabited the area. Students can then color those areas using the colors documented by Nicolas Floc'h in *Fleuves-Océan, Mississippi Watershed*, having the colors match the locations on the map.

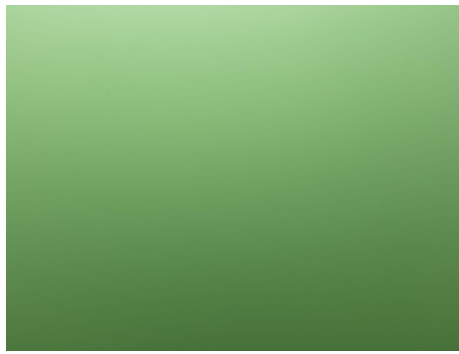
This activity can be elevated and elaborated upon to engage students from grades 3-8.

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

- 3-5.SP2 Use a variety of primary and secondary sources to:
 - a. Analyze social studies content.
 - b. Explain claims and evidence.
 - c. Compare and contrast multiple sources.
- 3.19 Create and use maps and models with a key, scale, and compass with intermediate directions.
- 3.20 Describe the geographic features of places in the United States of America.
- 4.6 Create and use geographic representations to locate and describe places and geographic characteristics, including hemispheres; landforms such as continents, oceans, rivers, mountains, and deserts; cardinal and intermediate directions; climate and environment.
- 4.7 Use geographic representations and historical information to explain how physical geography influenced the development of ancient civilizations and empires.
- 5.13 Describe the geographic, political, economic, and cultural structures of Indigenous civilizations of the Americas.
 - a. Identify and locate the geographic features of the Americas, including the Andes Mountains, Appalachian Mountains, Great Plains, Pacific Ocean Mountains, Gulf of America, Rocky Mountains, Atlantic Ocean, Mississippi River, Amazon River, South America, Caribbean Sea, North America, Yucatan Peninsula, and the Central Mexican Plateau.
 - b. Explain the effects of geographic features on Indigenous North American cultures (Northeast, Southeast, and Plains), including clothing, housing, and agriculture.
- 6-8.SP2 Use a variety of primary and secondary sources to:
 - a. Analyze social studies content.
 - b. Evaluate claims, counterclaims, and evidence.
 - c. Compare and contrast multiple sources and accounts.
 - d. Explain how the availability of sources affects historical interpretations.
- 6.5 Use maps to identify absolute location (latitude and longitude) and describe geographic characteristics of places in Louisiana, North America, and the world.



The Color of Water, Mississippi River, Ohio River Confluence, Fleuves Océan Mississippi, 2022, ©Nicolas Floc'h-ADAGP Paris 2025



The Color of Water, Lake Itasca, Mississippi River Headwaters, Minnesota 5134 Fleuves Océan Mississippi, 2022, ©Nicolas Floc'h-ADAGP Paris 2025



The Color of Water, Gulf of Mexico-7558, Fleuves Océan Mississippi, 2022, ©Nicolas Floc'h-ADAGP Paris 2025

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

* The French and Indigenous definitions and translations of some words are included.

1. Agriculture

- French: *l'agriculture*
- Algonquin: The science or practice of farming, including cultivation of the soil for growing crops and the rearing of animals to provide food, wool, and other products.

2. Algonquian

- Denoting, belonging to, or relating to a family or North American languages formerly spoken across a vast area from the Atlantic seaboard to the Great Lakes and the Great Plains
- Relating to the Algonquin people

3. Anishinaabe

- Translates to "original people" or "the good humans"
- A group of culturally and linguistically related First Nations living in Canada and the United States of America, mainly around the Great Lakes.

4. Chickasaw:

A member of a North American people formerly resident in Mississippi and Alabama, and now in Oklahoma

5. Chippewa:

Also known as Ojibway or Ojibwe, live mainly in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Ontario.

6. Choctaw:

A member of a North American people now living mainly in Mississippi

- The Muskogean language of the Choctaw is closely related to Chickasaw

7. Confederation

- French: *la confédération*
- An organization that consists of several parties, groups, or tribes in an alliance or league

8. Ecosystem

- French: *l'écosystème*
- The complex of a community of organisms and its environment functioning as an ecological unit.
- Something considered to resemble an ecological ecosystem, mainly because of its complex interdependent parts.

9. Erosion

- French: *l'érosion*
- The action or process of eroding or the state of being eroded
- An instance or product of erosion

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY #2

CHEMICAL/COLOR REACTIONS FROM THE MISSISSIPPI WATERSHED

Sediment and outside factors can change the color of water by making it appear green, brown, or yellow, as the suspended particles in the sediment and vegetation scatter light and affect how it interacts with the water, often caused by soil runoff after heavy rain or **erosion** from riverbanks.

Students will work in groups of 2 or 3 to collect soil and vegetation samples from outside the classroom. In one clear, plastic cup, students will collect a small amount of local sediment, filling half the cup, and in another, grass, weeds, or leaves, gently crushed by hand. Once the samples are collected, water can be added to the cups, filling them about two-thirds of the way. While the materials are mixing, students will hypothesize about the colors observed in the cup, if at all. In two days, students will place the cups by a light or window, observe any color changes to the water, note color shifts, and discuss the reason. Students will observe, share their findings, and document them on the handout included.

This exercise can be directly linked to the artwork presented by Nicolas Floc'h in *Fleuves Océan, Mississippi Watershed*. This activity can be elevated and elaborated upon to engage students from grades 3-9.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

2 plastic cups per group

Sediment

Vegetation

Water

Included Resource Handout

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

LOUISIANA STANDARDS FOR SCIENCE

- 3-LS3-2 Use evidence to support the explanation that traits can be influenced by the environment.
- 3-LS4-4 Make a claim about the merit of a solution to a problem caused when the environment changes and the types of plants and animals that live there may change.
- 4-ESS2-1 Plan and conduct investigations on the effects of water, ice, wind, and vegetation on the relative rate of weathering and erosion.
- 4-ESS2-3 Ask questions that can be investigated and predict reasonable outcomes about how living things affect the physical characteristics of their environment.
- 7-MS-LS2-4 Construct an argument supported by empirical evidence that changes to physical or biological components of an ecosystem affect populations.
- HS-ESS2-2 Analyze geoscience data to claim that one change to Earth's surface can create feedback that causes changes to other Earth's systems.
- HS-ESS2-5 Plan and investigate the properties of water and its effects on Earth materials and surface processes.

NATIONAL CORE ART STANDARDS

Visual Arts: Creating

- Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work
- Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work

Visual Arts: Presenting

- Anchor Standard 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work

Visual Arts: Connecting

- Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and work with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

* The French and Indigenous definitions and translations of some words are included.

10. **Menominee:** A member of an Indigenous people of northeastern Wisconsin and northern Michigan.
11. **Mississippi River**
a. Algonquin: *missi-ziibi*
b. Meaning "great river" or "gathering of waters"
c. The primary river of the largest drainage basin in the United States of America. It flows 2,340 miles through 10 states, from Lake Itasca in Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico.
12. **Mississippi River Valley:** Encompasses the area drained by the Mississippi River and its tributaries and includes parts of 13 states in the United States of America of America of America of America. It is historically significant for transportation, agriculture, and commerce.
13. **Muskogee:** A group that spanned the majority of the Southeastern United States of America of America of America and were not one tribe, but several. They were known for their successful governance and earthen pyramids, which they built alongside the rivers where they lived.
14. **Natchez:** This group inhabited the Lower Mississippi River Valley and was known for their agricultural practices and interactions with early French settlers.
15. **Nomadic**
a. French: *nomade*
b. Algonquin/Ojibwe: *kusi*: To roam about from place to place, to move camp, and have no fixed residence.
16. **Ojibwe:** This group is a part of the larger Anishinaabe people, who inhabited the Great Lakes region near the start of the Mississippi River. Also known as the Chippewa.
17. **River**
a. French: *la Fleuve*
b. Algonquin/Ojibwe: *sipi*: a large natural stream of water flowing in a channel to the sea, a lake, or another such stream.
18. **Sediment**
a. French: *le sédiment*
b. The matter that settles to the bottom of a liquid
c. Material deposited by water, wind, or glaciers
19. **Tributaries**
a. French: *les affluents*
b. A stream feeding a more significant stream, river, or lake
20. **Tunica:** A group part of the Tunica-Biloxi tribe of Louisiana, located in the Lower Mississippi River Valley region. They were known for their adaptability and ability to trade.
21. **Vegetation**
a. French: *la végétation*
b. Algonquin: *ohkehteau*
c. Plant life or total plant cover
22. **Watershed**
a. French: *le bassin versant*
b. An area or ridge of land that separates waters flowing to different rivers, basins, or seas



The Color of Water, Water Column 30: Rum River, Mississippi River Confluence, Anoka, Minnesota, 2022

“Rivers, concentrates of history of people and civilizations, they become one of the main vectors of the diffusion of pollutants, a symbol of our excesses and our inverted relationship to the world.”

—Nicolas Floc’h

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The Mississippi River has affected multiple communities in the United States of America. New Orleans and the surrounding areas have developed and thrived due to their proximity to this dynamic waterway. New Orleans, dubbed “The Crescent City” due to the curve the river takes as it snakes its way through the city, profited explicitly from its placement near the river. As the Mississippi River was a primary transportation route when the town was founded in 1718, New Orleans blossomed into one of the nation’s most prominent port cities, contributing to the rich culture New Orleans is known for.

While the city is strategically placed close to the river’s mouth, far enough from the dangers of the open gulf, life in this region has been challenging due to the mighty Mississippi River. As the river naturally changed its direction and flow as it made its way to the Gulf of Mexico, cities like New Orleans that depended on the river flowing a certain way built a series of levees and pumps to prevent the river from moving and flooding the area. Channelization of the river allows it to be controlled and also prevents the Mississippi River from naturally rebuilding coastal lands through sediment deposits, which is problematic for Louisiana’s disappearing coastline.

AFTER YOU VISIT

ASK

- Did you observe and note the changes and progressions in Floc’h’s photographs?
- What changes throughout the body of work?
- Why do you think the artist pairs the color photographs with the gray-scale landscapes?

EXAMINE

- The work of Nicolas Floc’h’s *Fleuves-Océan, Mississippi Watershed* studies and celebrates the Mississippi River. There are two other pieces in the New Orleans Museum of Art’s Besthoff Sculpture Garden: Elyn Zimmerman’s *Mississippi Meanders* and Maya Lin’s *Folding the Mississippi*. Please visit them and see not only how they relate to our community, but how these artworks relate to Floc’h’s collection of photographs.
- Discover your own proximity to the Mississippi River. How does it impact your life? Does it change the way you travel from place to place?

CONSIDER

- How can our actions help preserve the Mississippi River and its watershed?
- What actions can citizens take to help rebuild and preserve Louisiana’s coast?

RESOURCES

Online

- villa-albertine.org/va/residents/nicolas-floch/
- www.thecreativefactor.co/articles/nicolas-floch-gallery.lib.umn.edu/exhibits/show/exploring-mississippi/the-native-americans
- www.mississippiriver.org/mississippi-river-network
- mmh.mdah.ms.gov/
- www.algonquincollege.com

Books

- We Are Water Protectors*
by Carole Lindstorm
- Where is the Mississippi River*
by Dina Anastasio
- The Great River: The Making and Unmaking of the Mississippi*
by Boyce Upholt

Films and Shorts

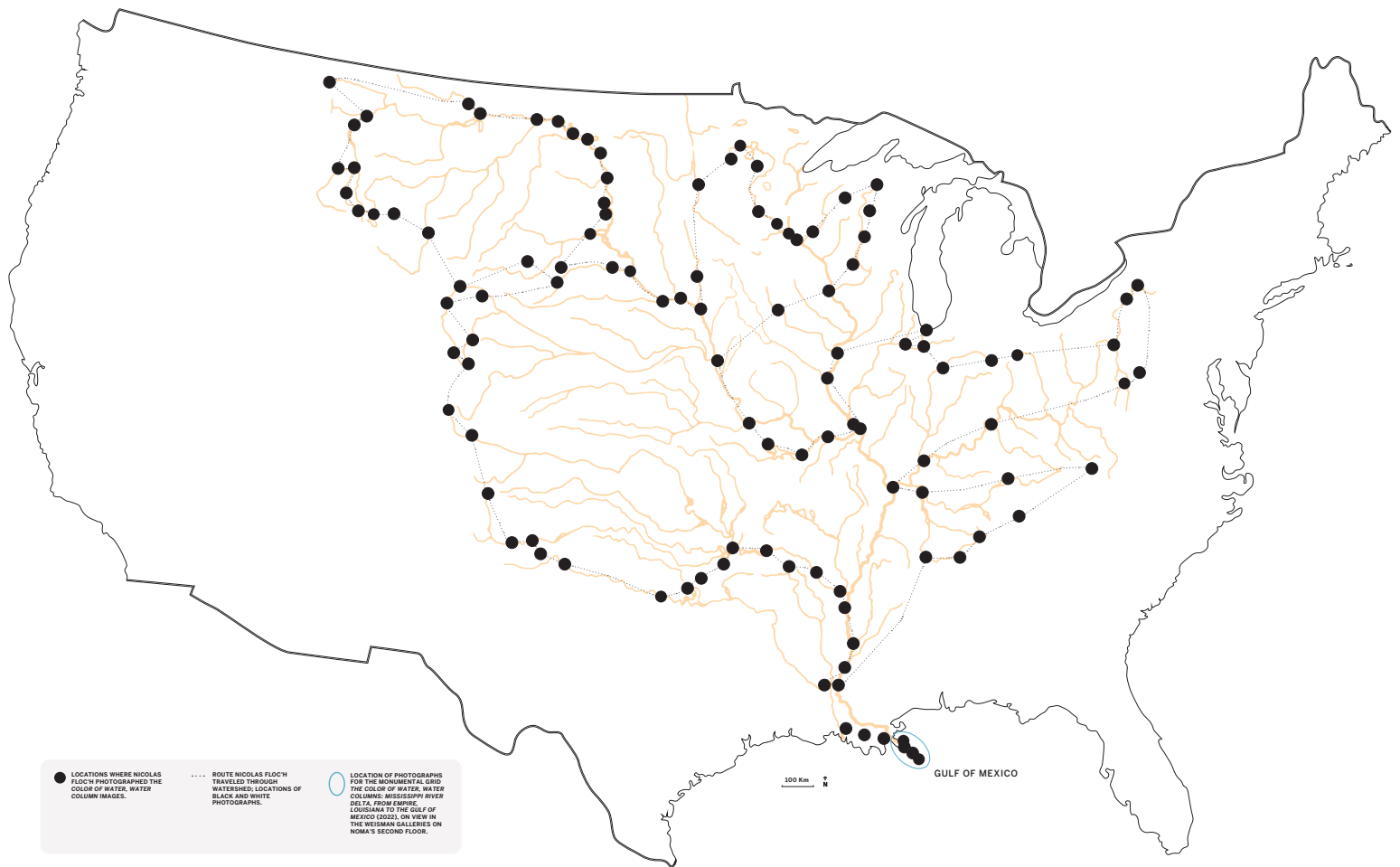
- hollowtreefilm.com/
- Link to NOMA interview with Floc’h (once available)

Classroom Activity #2

See attached handout.



Nicolas Floc’h, *Atchafalaya Basin, Louisiana*, 2022, Pigmented Ink Print, Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Maubert, Paris, France



The Mississippi River watershed includes all or part of thirty-one states and two Canadian provinces, drawing water from over one million square miles. In 2022, Nicolas Floc'h traveled over 13,000 miles throughout the entire watershed, photographing the colors of the water at over 224 locations. In between each of those sites, Floc'h photographed the landscapes and built environments nearby those waters. The entire project consists of more than 2,000 underwater images and over 500 landscape photographs.

This map represents the web of water that extends across the Mississippi River Basin, and the places where Floc'h made both kinds of photographs. The Mississippi River and its tributaries are represented here in an earthy yellow, as opposed to a more traditional mapmakers' blue, to better reflect the actual color of inland waters. On the index below, "CDL" stands for *Colour de L'eau*, or color of water.

New Orleans Museum of Art