

Antonio McAfee's *Afternoon of the Deluge (Ocean)* and *Evening of the Deluge (Standing on Water)*

art selection and comment by [Aaron Rosen](#) in the [November 2022](#) issue



(Images used by permission of the artist.)

Antonio McAfee's art addresses the complexity of representation, especially of African Americans, through restless formal experimentation. His previous projects have explored subjects including 19th-century labor movements and the history of R & B music, using techniques ranging from complex collages to anaglyphic 3D images.

In *The Deluge*, produced in 2022 during a residency on the coast of Maine, McAfee applies an acrylic gel to seascape photographs. The process lends the artist's images a bubbly, tactile quality, as if they are hovering on a tide pool. The series is inspired by J. M. W. Turner's atmospheric masterpieces *Evening of the Deluge* and *Morning after the Deluge* (both c. 1843), conceived as visual experiments exploring color theories of the period. McAfee stretches out the period covered by Turner's twin canvases, imagining the effects of light playing across the water from the first raindrops of the biblical flood to its surging waves and subsiding trickles.

McAfee is less interested in the severity of divine judgment than he is in the transformative potential of catastrophe. "This series," he writes in his artist's statement, "is very much about the resurgence that comes from resilience in light and darkness of tragedy. Within life-changing resets, how does one grow, survive and come out of it better than where they began?" The swimmers in McAfee's compositions are not doomed to drown like the masses in Turner's canvases. They are survivors, reaching for the surface.

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*The Deluge* is on display at the Dadian Gallery of Wesley Theological Seminary, in Washington, DC, through mid-December.