

# MSU BROAD

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## **New Exhibition by Oscar Tuazon to Launch Michigan “Water School,” Addressing Environmental Issues, Sustainability, Water and Land Rights**

East Lansing, MI – The year 1968 was a turning point in history. Social and political upheaval rocked nearly every corner of the world map, fueled by civil unrest and new forms of social consciousness. This moment also gave rise to the modern environmental movement. With the recent transmissions of the first images of Earth from outer space, human society was forced to confront itself as a singular whole, a global society, rather than a fractured collection of nation states. As R. Buckminster Fuller wrote at the time, “We are all astronauts on a little spaceship called Earth.”

That same year, engineer and inventor Steve Baer self-published the *Dome Cookbook*, a treatise on mathematics, do-it-yourself architecture, and off-the-grid living. Three years later, Baer further pushed his zonohedral designs to create his Zome Home in the foothills overlooking Albuquerque, New Mexico. The house remains one of the earliest modern examples of passive solar architecture, storing the sun's energy in drums of water installed in large window bays of the home. Part of a larger countercultural movement, Baer continued to advance his ideas and spread information through informal networks and different publishing platforms, like the *Whole Earth Catalog*.

This lineage of thinking around the interconnectivity and complexity of whole earth systems form the basis for artist Oscar Tuazon's current conceptual and material research. His forthcoming exhibition at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (MSU Broad) further builds on these ideas, as well as the importance of indigenous forms of knowledge and perspectives, in order to implement the newest iteration of Tuazon's “water schools.” The exhibition will be a space in which to explore the intersection of art, architecture, environmental issues, sustainability, and water and land

rights, all with an emphasis on water as a sacred element in the support of life on Spaceship Earth. *Oscar Tuazon: Water School* will run from January 26–August 25, 2019.

Part of the artist's long-term effort to create a permanent water school in the American Southwest, Tuazon has partnered with the MSU Broad and Michigan State University to advance his project by engaging the immediate natural and intellectual resources of the region to inform his process. Three modules of Tuazon's major sculpture-as-architectural form, *Zome Alloy* (2016), will be erected in the museum's galleries and create a space for both formal and informal learning opportunities to specifically address water and land rights, sustainability, and other environmental concerns—connecting local issues with national and global concerns. To this end, various faculty, researchers, student groups, and other communities will occupy this space and activate it through interaction and the exchange of ideas.

Tuazon has also embarked on the development of a new "water window" prototype, based on the work of architect and inventor Steve Baer, who has been an influential figure for the artist throughout his career. This prototypical passive solar architectural form will be developed in conversation with different MSU-affiliated entities, thereby leveraging the resources of the museum and University to propel the artist's research further to create a new, potentially revolutionary design with wide-ranging repercussions.

Tuazon also continues to develop his series of *Water Maps* and will focus specifically on local and regional waterways—including the Great Lakes, the largest body of freshwater in the world—tracing the different watersheds, lakes, and river systems. These maps simultaneously highlight the abundance of water in each locale for which they are made, and the ways such systems shape and define the ecosystems around them. Other sculptural works in the exhibition point to Tuazon's long-standing engagement with the work of Steve Baer, referencing his inventions and speculative designs. More recent sculptures also point to the water schools Tuazon has founded in other locations in the United States, connecting the conversation in Michigan with the artist's schools in California and Minnesota.

In addition to the work by Tuazon, and taking into account the university, academic setting, part of the exhibition will also be dedicated to research and archival materials related to the overall project. Many of these materials concern the countercultural DIY architectural movements of the 1960s and 1970s, of which individuals like R. Buckminster Fuller, Steve Baer, and Stewart Brand were key figures. Much of the activity at this time centered around the formation of a commune at Drop City, Colorado, as well as the now infamous Alloy Conference that Baer helped organize in Alamogordo, New Mexico, in 1969. Such research and archival materials have long informed Tuazon's practice, and provide a historical basis for his current interests and various artistic manifestations.

The opening weekend of *Oscar Tuazon: Water School* will include an evening opening reception, followed by a daylong program of community conversations and art-making activities:

**Friday, January 25, 6–8pm**

Opening reception with the artist.

**Saturday, January 26, 12–7pm**

**Water School: In Session**

We're setting the stage for an experiential day of learning, art making, and community building. Each of us have a relationship with water, whether sacred, political, recreational, or purely functional. What is yours? Join MSU Broad guest artists, architects, engineers, and activists in this day-long, communal exchange to explore our many faceted relationships with water and the land.

*Oscar Tuazon: Water School* is organized by the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University and curated by Steven L. Bridges, Associate Curator. Lead support for this exhibition is provided by Guardian Glass LLC and the MSU Federal Credit Union. Additional support is provided by the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and the Eli and Edythe Broad endowed exhibitions fund.

**Oscar Tuazon** is a sculptor living and working in Los Angeles, CA. Tuazon studied at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, New York, NY (1995–99), the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Studio Program, New York, NY (2001–03), and at The Cooper Union School of Architecture, Architecture/Urban Studies Program, New York, NY (2002–03). In 2007, he co-founded the collective-run artists' gallery, bookshop, and publishing house castillo/corrales in Paris. His work has been shown extensively in galleries and museums throughout the world, including at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and in the 2012 Whitney Biennial, The Whitney Museum of American Art, NY. He was also a participant in the 54th Venice Biennale (2011). He has had solo exhibitions at The Institute of Contemporary Art, London; Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland; The Ludwig Museum, Cologne; and Public Art Fund, Brooklyn Bridge Park, NY. Among other accolades, the artist was recently awarded a prestigious Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant (2013).

**Steven L. Bridges** is Associate Curator at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University. Most recently, Bridges co-curated the major exhibitions *Michel Parmentier* and *Michigan Stories: Mike Kelley and Jim Shaw*. Other exhibitions include solo presentations by artists Matthew Angelo Harrison, Michael E. Smith, Kathryn Andrews, and Daniel Baird; the collection shows *Andy Warhol: A Day in the Life* and *The Transported Collection*; and *Beyond Streaming: A Sound Mural for Flint*, a residency project for which artist Jan Tichy was invited to respond to the Flint water crisis. Previously, Bridges was the Curatorial Assistant at the MCA Chicago, where he curated solo exhibitions of the work of artists Faheem Majeed and Jason Lazarus. He also assisted the major retrospective exhibition of the work of Doris Salcedo, which traveled to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and the Pérez Art Museum Miami. From 2011–15, Bridges also co-curated the annual Rapid Pulse International Performance Art Festival in Chicago. His essays and articles have been published in numerous journals, exhibition catalogues, and other online and print media. In 2017 he was named a curatorial fellow at the FACE Foundation.

**The Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (MSU Broad)** is a dynamic contemporary art museum that serves as both a teaching institution and a cultural hub for East Lansing and the region. Opened on November 10, 2012, the museum was designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Zaha Hadid and named in honor of Eli and Edythe Broad, longtime supporters of the university who provided the lead gift of \$28 million. In 2017, the MSU Broad was awarded \$1 million from MSU Federal Credit Union in support of the Art Lab, an expansion across Grand River Avenue that provides increased access to and research of the permanent collection.

**Michigan State University** has been working to advance the common good in uncommon ways for more than 150 years. One of the top research universities in the world, MSU focuses its vast resources on creating solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges, while providing life-changing opportunities to a diverse and inclusive academic community through more than 200 programs of study in 17 degree-granting colleges.

Image: Oscar Tuazon, *Zome Alloy*, 2016. Courtesy Galerie Eva Presenhuber Zurich/New York. © Oscar Tuazon. Photo: Stefan Altenburger Photography

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