

During 2009, Every Ocean Hughes (b. 1977) photographed the remnants of the West Side piers along the Hudson River. The resulting series, *The Piers Untitled* (2009–23), captures an area that once served as a gathering spot for queer communities and a hub for underground cultures. Hughes, whose relationship with New York spans more than twenty years, considers the remaining pilings of the piers “unmarked memorials, found monuments, to the lives that needed that unregulated place. To those who died living queerly. Those who died from neglect, poverty, AIDS, violence, and politics. And to those seeking life by crossing West Street.” Sourced from more than one hundred of Hughes’s negatives, the photographs, collaged images, and printed murals on view here are resonant of the waterfront’s histories, the evolving use of public space at the intersection of cultural and geographical margins, and the relationship between personal and city cycles. Hughes titled the series to reflect the changing city and waterfront: “I wanted to address the piers historically and formally while also holding open the site as unfixed.”

*The Piers Untitled* is one element of Hughes’s four-part presentation at the Whitney, *Alive Side*, which also includes the artist’s multidisciplinary trilogy of works inspired by her training in death care. *Help the Dead* (2019), *One Big Bag* (2021), and *River* (2023)—newly commissioned by the Whitney—will all be presented in the Museum’s Susan and John Hess Family Theater during the exhibition. Together, the works of *Alive Side* connect Hughes’s long-standing interests in transitions, thresholds, kinship, legacy, and queer life.