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Wed 21 October, 2026

Living Water: Poetry, Art and the Fight for Clean Rivers

Tue 21 April - Sat 5 December

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'Without living water, we die.'

These stark words from Anglo-Irish artist Barrie Cooke reflect his alarm at the growing pollution of the Irish rivers and loughs he loved. A leading expressionist painter, Cooke drew constant inspiration from the natural world and from his friendships with major 20th-century poets, including Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes and John Montague.

This exhibition uncovers a significant archive of letters, manuscripts and artworks that offers fresh insight into their creative dialogue across five decades. At its heart lies the shared landscape that sustained them, rivers that became both artistic touchstones and warnings of environmental decline.

Living Water is a partnership with Pembroke College, Cambridge and is curated by Dr Mark Wormald, Fellow in English at Pembroke College and award-winning poet.

Some of the artworks and manuscripts in the exhibition reference death, nudity and the objectification of women.

Also on show are works by acclaimed artist Susan Derges, inspired by the rivers and landscape of Devon. Visitors are invited to sit, pause, perhaps read a poem, while they contemplate these human-sized works which trace the presence and flow of water.

Cost: Free

