

Surface Tension: Water, Waterways, and Art (Cleveland, 13 Oct 23)

Cleveland, Ohio, Oct 13, 2023

Deadline: Jun 30, 2023

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Water is a vital force, nourishing and connecting both human and non-human life across the globe. In the visual arts, water is frequently present as subject matter, serving symbolic, ritual, and narrative roles. Water can also function generatively as a material source and connecting current, or destructively, enacting ruin and loss on objects, architecture, and environments. Moreover, the current climate crisis, with its widespread and often cataclysmic impacts, has brought renewed attention to water as a threatened resource and potent signifier of ecological distress. Ubiquitous and essential, water nonetheless resurfaces in and out of focus in art historical discourse, a largely transparent substance that often evades direct examination.

The Department of Art History and Art at Case Western Reserve University invites graduate students to submit abstracts for the 2023 Annual Symposium, Surface Tension: Water, Waterways, and Art, by June 30, 2023. The Cleveland Symposium is one of the longest-running annual art history graduate symposia in the United States, organized by students in the Joint Program with the Cleveland Museum of Art. This year's symposium welcomes innovative research papers that explore water in and around the creation, reception, and circulation of the visual arts. Submissions may explore aspects of this theme as manifested in any medium as well as in any historical period and geographic location. Different methodological perspectives are welcome.

Potential topics may include, but are not limited to:

- The dependence of artistic production and practice on water
- Water in material processes and techniques
- Water as an eroding agent in art
- Aquatic materials in art (shells, coral, fish, sea mammals, etc)
- Water in ritual and religious art
- The art of human-made fountains, aqueducts, water vessels, etc.
- Water as cultural and artistic center
- The absence and presence of water
- Water and the diasporic experience
- Ecocritical art history and environmental equity with a focus on water
- Water's reclamation of human-made objects and places
- Visual representations of water
- Water as connecting agent through trade and transportation

Current and recent graduate students in art history and related disciplines are invited to submit a

350-word abstract and a CV to clevelandsymposium@gmail.com by Friday, June 30, 2023. Selected participants will be notified by the end of July. Presentations will be no more than 15- 18 minutes in length and accompanied by a PowerPoint. Presentations will be followed by a roundtable Q&A session to facilitate dialogue among panelists and the audience.

Reference:

CFP: Surface Tension: Water, Waterways, and Art (Cleveland, 13 Oct 23). In: Arthist.net, Jun 25, 2023 (accessed May 2, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/39633>>.