In the Water: Visual and Material Culture (Kalamazoo, 13-15 May 27)

Kalamazoo, MI, May 13–15, 2027
Deadline: Sep 15, 2026
icms.confex.com/icms/2027/prelim.cgi/Session/8276

Cecily Hughes

62nd International Congress on Medieval Studies:
Hybrid Session (#8276)– In the Water: Visual and Material Culture in the Interconnected Nordic World.

Organized by:
Cecily Hughes, Case Western Reserve University (cecily.hughes@case.edu),
Dr. Justin Kroesen, University of Bergen (justin.kroesen@uib.no),
Dr. Gerhard Lutz , Cleveland Museum of Art (glutz@clevelandart.org).

From fjords to hot pools, from baptismal fonts to aquamanilia, water was a pervasive presence in both the ecological and religious landscapes of the medieval Nordic world. In addition to providing sustenance, the element enabled swift and extensive travel, thereby facilitating wide-ranging commerce and exchange—whether in the ink of illuminated manuscripts or through entire wooden altarpieces shipped across the seas in the holds of Hanseatic cogs.

Separated from mainland Europe by expanses of sea, Scandinavia, Iceland, Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), Finland, and the Faroe, Orkney, and Shetland Islands were historically perceived as peripheral by Western scholars, and their artifacts, art, and architecture as less deserving of study than those from “centers” of civilization. Yet these places were a thriving, interconnected part of the Middle Ages, with water at the heart of their networks and bounty. Furthermore, in light of current ecological and geopolitical challenges, it is becoming increasingly important to understand the dynamics and cultural implications of past human interactions with nature, which often transversed conventional boundaries.

This session taps into recent scholarly currents focused on environment and interconnectivity by welcoming papers that consider how water acted as a formidable force that helped shape the visual and material culture of Nordic latitudes.

Please contact the organizers with any questions. All abstracts should be submitted by September 15, 2026 through the ICMS Confex portal: https://icms.confex.com/icms/2027/prelim.cgi/Session/8276

Reference:

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