

CALL FOR PAPERS

Theme: Water
Esse arts + opinions no. 109
Deadline: April 1, 2023

Send your text in US letter format (1,500 and 2,000 words, doc, docx, or rtf) to redaction@esse.ca before April 1, 2023. Please include a short biography (45 words), an abstract of the text, and postal and email addresses.

We also welcome submissions (reviews, essays, analyses of contemporary art issues) not related to a particular theme. An acknowledgment of receipt will be sent within 7 days of the deadline. If you have not been notified, please contact us to ensure your text has been received.

WATER

Water is the very source of life. It both defines us and is vital to us, even though, paradoxically, it is currently threatening the survival of humankind. As climate change gains momentum, unprecedented rises in water levels and flooding are putting the lives of almost half the people living on Earth in peril, as 60 percent of the world's population now live less than a hundred kilometres from a coastline. A paint company has named its 2023 colour of the year "Melt Water," and the irony of this label quickly becomes apparent given the sad reality that, around the world, seven people die every minute for lack of access to potable water. Bottled in the very plastics that pollute it and strangle its ecosystems, what has been dubbed "blue gold" is now the prize in global conflicts. Access to it is negotiated behind the closed doors of multinationals and governments, to the detriment of the most fundamental rights of those who live on its shores and who, too often, pay the price of an insatiable thirst for power and wealth with their health, and their lives.

Recent history has shown, once again, that Indigenous peoples are at the forefront of struggles to defend and safeguard water, as its integrity is closely linked to Indigenous self-determination, sovereignty, culture, and autonomy. Drawing on ancient knowledge regarding the curative properties and sacred nature of water, certain Indigenous traditions ask us to honour it, reminding us of our responsibility to protect it and to come up with creative and powerful responses to the oft-demonstrated inertia of legal, governmental, and corporate measures. This is so for Indigenous—and other—artists who reflect on the relations among ancestral knowledge, memory, and the sacredness of water. They reverse the hierarchical and extractivist relations between human beings and the land to propose embodied ways of being with nature and return agency to rivers and oceans despoiled by centuries of colonialism.

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For water holds within itself an energy that is indomitable and mysterious. Covering 70 percent of Earth's surface, water conceals secrets in the darkness of inaccessible ocean trenches, and memory of the very history of humanity is preserved in the froth and backwash of its waves. Today, perhaps more than ever, the seas and oceans are the crucible for migratory flows, both human and nonhuman—millions of lifeforms negotiating the future of civilizations on and under their surface. As the sociologist and historian Paul Gilroy tells us, taking the Atlantic Ocean as his theoretical and practical underpinning, water is also a privileged space of creation and resistance, a site of reinvention and of connection with the self and the other. In response to the looming rise of fascist politics and forms of nationalism that harden senses of identity, Gilroy proposes, rather, that the ocean be apprehended as a fertile space for an intrinsically intermixed and plural culture, a place where hybrid and poetic thought is articulated, connected, in a way, by water. This desire to reflect from a fluid position is also at the heart of "tidalectics," a transversal and postcolonial philosophy proposed by the Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite that abandons a dialectic of fixity, linearity, and appropriationism for a transformative, interrelated body of thought that flattens the hierarchy of knowledges.

If "we are bodies of water," as the ecofeminist philosopher Astrida Neimanis so aptly puts it, reflecting on water through art is, above all, invoking a poetry of embodied critical thought. In continuity with research already launched by Blue Humanities, an emerging area of research that shifts cultural history from a terrestrial context into an oceanic one, Neimanis's hydrofeminism promotes our familial connection with water and proposes trans-corporeal and trans-species alliances, combining different currents of wisdom to better respond to the intersectional challenges facing the future of humanity.

Esse arts + opinions therefore invites authors and artists to submit texts that explore these intricacies of the aquatic world and reflect its infiltration into recent art practices. To what extent does water—as material, political subject, or philosophical entity—encourage us to rethink our relationships with the body, the environment, colonialism, and capitalism, and even with representation itself? Its multiple, unstable, and ephemeral states make its exhibition impossible or, at least, complexifies mechanisms by engaging both museums and spectators in forging new alliances. How does water irrigate the development of a new body of critical thought based on care, decolonization, and feminisms? All of these questions, and others, will be featured in this thematic section.

EDITORIAL POLICY

1. Published by Les éditions Esse, *Esse arts + opinions* is a bilingual magazine focused mainly on contemporary art and multidisciplinary practices. Specializing in essays on issues in art today, the magazine publishes critical analyses that address art in relation to its context. Each issue contains a thematic section, portfolios of artworks, articles critiquing the international culture scene, and reviews of exhibitions, events, and publications. The esse.ca platform also offers articles on contemporary art and an archive of previous issues of *Esse*.

2. Submissions are accepted three times a year: January 10, April 1 and September 1. The texts can be submitted for one of the following 3 sections:

Feature: essays between 1,500 and 2,000 words. The guideline regarding the theme is available online 4 to 6 months prior to the deadline: <http://esse.ca/en/callforpapers>

Articles: essays, articles or interviews between 1,250 and 2,000 words.

Reviews: reviews of exhibitions, events or publications (maximum 500 words, without footnotes, or 950 words, with one or two footnotes maximum). You can find guidelines for reviews here: <https://esse.ca/en/publishing-guidelines>

3. With the exception of the expressed consent of Les éditions Esse, the writer agrees to submit a previously unpublished, original text.

4. All articles are reviewed by the Editorial Board, which reserves the right to accept or refuse a submitted article. Selection criteria are based on the quality of the analyze and writing, the relevance of the text in the issue (in regards to the theme) and on the relevance of the chosen artworks and artists. Selection of articles may take up to 6 weeks after submission by the writer. The Board's decision is final. A refused text will not be re-evaluated.

5. With the exception of the expressed consent of the Board, the Board does not consider articles that may represent a potential conflict of interest between the writer and the content of the article (i.e., a text written by the curator of an exhibition).

6. The writers whose pieces are selected commit to format their text according to the typographic standards of *Esse*, following the guidelines sent to them with the publishing contract.

7. With the respect to the vision and style of the writer, the Board reserves the right to ask for corrections and modifications to be made to ensure overall clarity, and coherence of an article.

8. Conditionally accepted articles will be up for discussion between the writer and the Board.

If changes are requested by the Board, the writer will have 15 (fifteen) days to carry these out.

9. All costs of typographical correction of the author's text shall be borne by Les éditions Esse except the author's corrections, if applicable, which shall be borne by the author.