



Water seeks water, finding its own level as it flows. Our bodies, being mostly water, are sensitive to the call of the source. A longing for reunion pulls one to the edge of the level surface, only to recognize our reflection in its mercurial mirror. Like Narcissus, we find it hard to look away. We learn about ourselves when we contemplate water. Its essence pervades our physical life, our spirituality and our imagination. Water forms cultural ties that bind people, and informs our stories, myths, beliefs and customs.

STUART REID, PRIMING THE SOURCE: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION

Water has long played a role in the historical artworks of the West through pictorial representation, including in the Classical mythological narratives of the Greeks and Romans and later in Christian religious imagery. Eventually, following the Baroque, modern artistic developments and aspirations made water a subject addressable through means that emphasized its complexity, so it could be thought about non-metaphorically: in terms of socio-politics and technology. Eventually, the term *environmentally* also had to be appended as another way to frame considerations of water.

A more geopolitically widespread acknowledgement of water in the history of visual culture includes vast numbers of works contemporaneous with the art of the West: 17th-century Mughal painting in India, and Japanese ukiyo-e prints of the same era, are examples. Such inclusions indicate that water has been an ostensibly “ubiquitous” presence in art around the globe for centuries. Whether represented in its relationship to human culture, as fundamental within nature or for other more arcane reasons, water is, was and continues to be in the picture.

PATRICK MAHON, PICTURES, TIME, COLOUR AND APOLOGY: SOME TERMS OF ADDRESS IN ART ABOUT WATER



... changes in the composition of the global atmosphere have caused enough warming to change the rate and manner in which water moves through the global hydrological cycle. While we know that hydrological conditions on this planet have always been changing, we have been fortunate to have had a century or so of relative hydro-climatic stability. That era, however, is over. The long-term hydrologic stability of the climate we experienced in the past will not return during the lifetime of anyone alive today. This is a huge new concept – a societal gamechanger – and it is going to take time to get our heads around it. This, I offered, was why, as much as any other time in the past, we now need the perceptual leadership that only art can offer. We need art, I said in conclusion, to help show us the way to hope.

ROBERT WILLIAM SANDFORD, WATER AND HOPE: FACING FACT AND INSPIRING OPTIMISM IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

