



Call for Papers – International Conference

## Sensory Histories of Water

2-4 April 2025, Museu Marítim de Barcelona, Spain

**Submissions deadline** 30 October 2024

**Confirmation of acceptance** 15 November 2024

**Date** 2-4 April 2025

**Location** MMB – Museu Marítim de Barcelona  
[Av. de les Drassanes, s/n, Ciutat Vella, 08001 Barcelona, Spain](#)

**Organisers** Dr **Antonio Arneri**, UAB – Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona  
Dr. des. **Tin Cugelj**, IMS Study Group Auditory History  
Dr **Alexandros Maria Hatzikiriakos**, University of St Andrews

**In association with** University of St Andrews, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, International Musicological Society Study Group *Auditory History*, Sound and the City Research Group, UAB, Museu Marítim de Barcelona

Water as an elemental force has shaped human experience across millennia. Its physical properties and omnipresence in daily life have made it an object of profound sensory engagement, influencing cultures, environments, and social practices. In this way, humankind has interacted with water both in its natural form - e.g.. seas, lakes, rivers, springs, rain, dew, or fog - and through its transformations, such as wells, drainage and irrigation systems, water mills, fountains, baths, and steam.

The multifacetedness of water is perfectly portrayed in Tvedt's nine-volume *History of Water* series, capturing the complex relationship between water and society (Tvedt, 2006-2016). Additionally, other studies have focused on various historical encounters of humankind with water from technological (Menga 2018, Ipšić and Lazarević 20219), geopolitical (Horden and Purcell 2000, Solomon 2010, Wagner 2013), environmental (Dobrin 2021, Borroni 2024), literary (Mentz 2009, Mentz and Helms 2024), philosophical (Illich 1986), and ethnographic perspectives (Classen 2017). Furthermore, a whole sub-discipline that foregrounds human relationship with water, i.e. *blue humanities*, illustrates the potential of research on water cultures (cf. Mentz 2023).

However, building on the existing body of knowledge, this conference seeks to explore sensory experiences of water across the globe, from antiquity to modernity, through various approaches and within a transdisciplinary context. Within the framework of sensory history, we aim to

explore how the presence of water and interaction with it has affected and shaped human communities, spaces, knowledge, and identities. To foster cross- and interdisciplinary conversation, we invite scholars from all relevant fields of research to propose papers for a three-day conference at the Museu Marítim de Barcelona. Papers may, but are not limited to, include and engage with the following overarching themes:

- **Water as a sensible matter:** visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, and/or olfactory experiences of water(s); how they are discussed and represented by different cultures.
- **The sensory experience of water** of individuals and/or continental and waterfront communities; sensing water as a means of exchange, contact, and friction; emotional responses to water.
- **The sensory impact of water on humankind:** its influence on community formation, social practices, traditions, cultural productions, and/or rituals; water and well-being.
- **Water and identities:** the perception and uses of water in communicating and forming individual, social, gender, religious, and cultural identities.
- **Water and space:** the perception of water informing experiences of shared, individual, public, and private spaces, their usage, and definition.
- **Water epistemologies:** sensing water as a means of generating knowledge and cultural meaning; water symbolism, water in alchemy, science, magic, mythology, and folklore.

We encourage scholars from all relevant disciplines to apply. Please send an abstract of a maximum of 300 words (for a paper of 20 minutes and questions) to **sensorywaters2025@gmail.com** no later than **30 October 2024**. The language of the conference is English.

- Borroni**, Massimiliano. 2024. *Connecting Water Environmental Views in Premodern Arabic Writings*. Venice: Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari.
- Classen**, Albrecht. 2017. *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature: Explorations of Textual Presentations of Filth and Water*. Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter.
- Dobrin**, Sidney I. 2021. *Blue Ecocriticism and the Oceanic Imperative*. Routledge Environmental Humanities. Abingdon, Oxon-New York, NY: Routledge.
- Holden**, Peregrine, and Nicholas **Purcell**. 2000. *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*. Oxford, UK; Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell.
- Illich**, Ivan. 1986. *H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*. Ideas in Progress. London: Boyars.
- Ipšić**, Irena, and Ivana **Lazarević**. 'Water in the Urban Space of Dubrovnik'. *Povijesni Prilozi* 38/56 (2019): 181–98.
- Mentz**, Steve. 2023. *An Introduction to the Blue Humanities*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Mentz**, Steve. 2009. *At the Bottom of Shakespeare's Ocean*. Shakespeare Now! London: Continuum.
- Mentz**, Steve, and Nicholas Helms, eds. 2024. *Water and Cognition in Early Modern English Literature*.
- Menga**, Filippo. 2018. *Power and Water in Central Asia*, London-New York: Routledge.
- Solomon**, Steven. 2011. *Water: The Epic Struggle for Wealth, Power, and Civilization*. HarperCollins.
- Tvedt**, Terje et al., eds. 2006-2016. *A History of Water. Series I-III*. London: Taurus.
- Wagner**, John R., ed. 2013. *The Social Life of Water*. New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books.