

On Water

Fluid Perspectives

Water is ubiquitous: we drink it, bathe in it, encounter it as rain, ice, or river. And yet it remains contradictory—both familiar and strange. In the context of climate change, growing cities, and global inequality, it becomes a challenge. Water resists control and unsettles established practices. Rather than a passive object, it emerges as a dynamic element, one that calls for new scientific perspectives and forms of social negotiation. On Water. Fluid Perspectives brings science, art, and society into conversation, exploring a single element and the many ways of thinking with it. This book accompanies the exhibition On Water. WasserWissen in Berlin, presented at the Humboldt Labor and opened in autumn 2025, while extending its questions and perspectives. It brings together research from the Berlin University Alliance and asks, across disciplines, what we can learn from water: from its cycles, its adaptability, and its capacity to connect. Visual traces of the exhibition are interwoven with three essays by the editors and the anthropologist Veronica Strang (University of Oxford), as well as with voices of researchers from Berlin—all of which illuminate water as a compelling subject of inquiry.

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