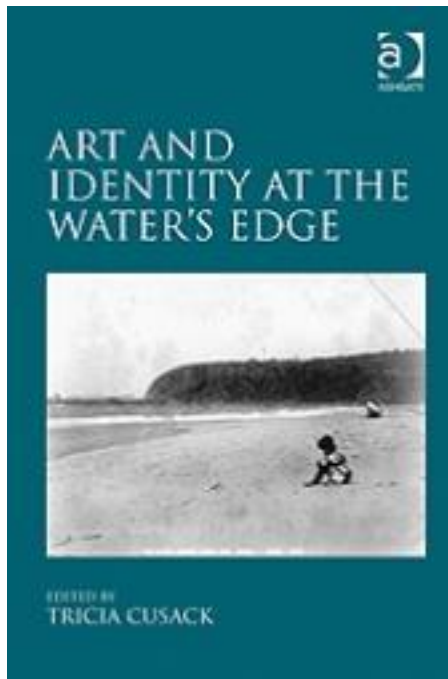


Art and Identity at the Water's Edge, ed. By Tricia Cusack. Ashgate, July 2012. 270 p. ill. ISBN 9781409421214 (cl.), \$124.95.



How does a person know or recognize New York City? Is it the shape of Manhattan Island? The city's skyline? Perhaps it's the Statue of Liberty standing at the cusp of the Atlantic? Political, cultural, and social factors naturally define identities of "place," however, visual representations often determine the character of "place" and are critical in the formation of personal and cultural identities.

Expanding upon *Riverscapes and National Identities* (2010), Tricia Cusack has formulated a collection of thirteen essays that reach beyond the river to the seas and seashores to continue exploring the interdisciplinary paradigms of how the water's edge shapes local and national identities worldwide. Cusack's introduction creates a sturdy foundation where authors add layers of supporting evidence for her hypothesis. Five thematic sections: "Nation at the Edge," "Heritage by the Coast," "Conflicts of Identity at the Water's Edge," "Regions of Liminality," and "The Edge as a Tourist Setting" provide compelling, global perspectives on how the water's perimeter acts as a catalyst to form personal and national identities through visual representation. Although liminality is at the heart

of this text, the breadth of content offers a glimpse into the limitless possibilities of the cross trajectories of such scholarship.

From Britain's esteemed Royal Navy and Poland's seaside resorts to Australia's coastal heritage museums and the beaches of Durban, the book investigates the socio-cultural contexts of how the water's edge manifests itself to shape identity. Authors provide delineative historical, political, and cultural background and then utilize visual works of the waterline to illustrate the effect of art on identity. Several essays utilize the role of architecture in forming regional and national identities, from the architectural style of buildings to its function within particular geographies. Teresa Costa's essay "To the Lighthouse: Sentinels at the Water's Edge" investigates the evolving functions and symbolism of the lighthouse, an architectural form that once served to survey and protect people that has increasingly turned into cultural heritage objects and tourist destinations. Chapters are followed by rich bibliographies and include an index and list of illustrations. Although supporting images are diverse and range from photographs, paintings, postcards, book illustrations, and etchings, the small size and lack of visible detail of black-and-white reproductions detract greatly from the richness of the text and leave the reader with more to desire.

Despite the abundance of literature on bodies of water, this particular area of scholarship is extremely limited, and thus Cusack's book is a welcome addition to most major research libraries. *Art and Identity at the Water's Edge* will be a valuable resource for scholarly academic libraries that support cross-disciplinary research in art, architecture, history, cultural studies, national identities, and land studies.

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