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[Pagurek's photographs dance on water](#)

Peter Simpson

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A photograph from *State of Flux*, by Cheryl Pagurek at Patrick Mikhail Gallery in Ottawa.

What & where: *State of Flux*, new works by Cheryl Pagurek, [at Patrick Mikhail Gallery, 2401 Bank St.](#)

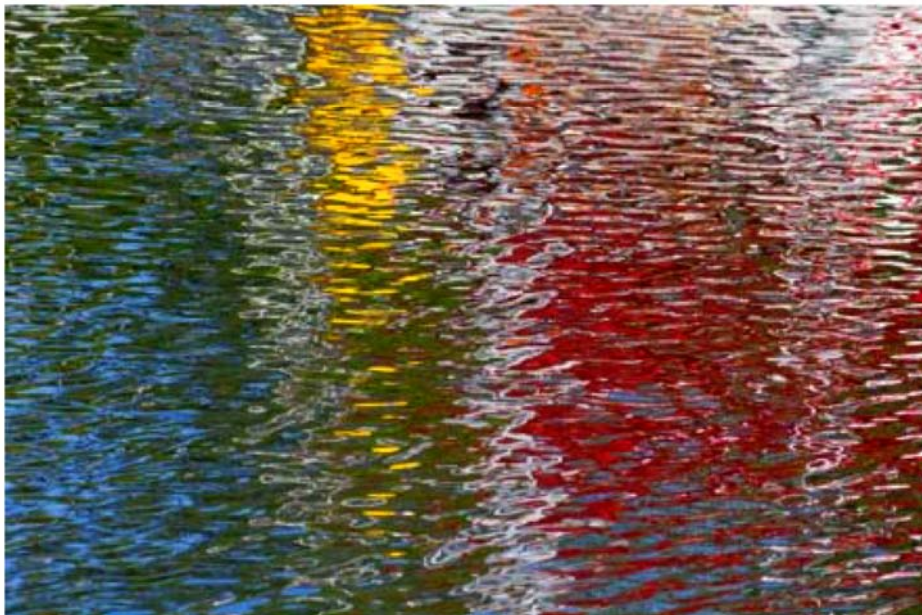
When: Jan. 9 to Feb. 9, vernissage 5:30 to 9 p.m. Jan. 11.

I grew up on an island, and by I've wondered if all people, including the landlocked, have the same relationship with water.

Once or twice each year I'll sit on the south shore of P.E.I., gaze over the water and think about days past and days to come (one hopes). I do this an hour or two before leaving the island and returning to Ottawa. Sometimes the moment is joyful, sometimes maudlin, but always essential, a ritual. Something about that water — in the eternal ebb and flow of its tides, in the relentless forward motion of its waves — speaks about time and place. We grow, we move, we succeed, we fail, and always the water is there, flowing, rising, falling, giving life and sometimes taking it away.

State of Flux is the title of Cheryl Pagurek's new exhibition of photography and video at Patrick Mikhail Gallery. It's a study of water, in close-up shots that make it both universally recognizable yet somehow abstract,

as if Pagurek has captured something that is always in the water but rarely seen.



A photograph from *State of Flux*, by Cheryl Pagurek at Patrick Mikhail Gallery in Ottawa.

The photographs were taken near man-made structures, so the colours and forms of human life are reflected in the water and distorted by the surface's constant motion. The colours are brightly lustrous and shift like amoeba, as if metallic, viscous liquids have been poured into the water.

The images “evoke the cultural realm of modernist painting in their engagement with surface and abstraction of shape and form,” Pagurek says. “I found that I was less interested in reflections of natural forms but rather concentrated on sites where the built environment abutted with bodies of water, so the reflections showed a coming together of natural and man-made.”

The exhibition was not yet up when I wrote this column, so I've only seen photographs on my computer screen, which is enough to be affected by them. The contoured patterns on the surface create a sequence with more variety than might be expected from such a seemingly singular idea. In one photograph a rich band of gold lazily divides the frame, in another bands of blue, yellow and red are like a spectrum. In one the water looks as if its covered in a paisley pattern.

Pagurek is known for her work with water, and her most widely-seen piece must be the video installation [*Currents, at the Market Place transit station in Barrhaven*](#), which mixes footage of water with historical images. In *State of Flux* she focuses on the water itself, as a sort of mirror that vaguely reflects human busy-ness as a metaphor for the passage of time.

The centrepiece of *State of Flux* is a 12-channel video that, even seen on a regular computer screen, is captivating. The frames are arranged in a grid and each fades in and out over a soundtrack of construction work — hammering, sawing. Pagurek has synced the sound and image. As the video frames flicker in and out the water surfaces change in colour and direction, creating real tension. It's fascinating and invigorating, a highly original and worthy beginning to a new year in fine art in Ottawa.