





*** (s)twerH**







* (s)twerH



Andrew Maize

Lisa Hirmer

Pascal Dufaux

Sarah Wendt

sophia bartholomew

MACLAREN | **ART**
CENTRE





Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: *(s)twerH / Andrew Maize, Lisa Hirmer, Pascal Dufaux,
Sarah Wendt, sophia bartholomew.

Names: Container of (work): Maize, Andrew. Works. Selections.

MacLaren Art Centre, publisher, host institution.

Description: Catalogue of an exhibition held at the
MacLaren Art Centre from October 1 to December 23, 2022.

Includes bibliographical references and index.



Identifiers: Canadiana 20250323613






ISBN 9781987895315 (softcover)




Subjects: LCSH: Maize, Andrew—Exhibitions.

LCGFT: Exhibition catalogs.

Classification: LCC N6549.M35546 A4 2026

DDC 709.2—dc23





Curated by Lisa Daniels

Published by MacLaren Art Centre (Barrie, Canada)

Printed and bound by hand at PS Guelph



Book Design by Lisa Hirmer & Andrew Maize

Edited by Alison Kenzie

Cover Image by Andrew Maize

© 2025 Andrew Maize, Lisa Hirmer, Pascal Dufaux,
Sarah Wendt, sophia bartholomew

ISBN: 9781987895315



This publication was created in response to Andrew
Maize's exhibition **(s)twerH* at the MacLaren Art Centre
October 1 to December 23, 2022

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the:



Canada Council Conseil des arts
for the Arts du Canada






ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

an Ontario government agency
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario









“What is sure, predictable, inevitable—
the one certain thing you know
concerning your future, and mine?”

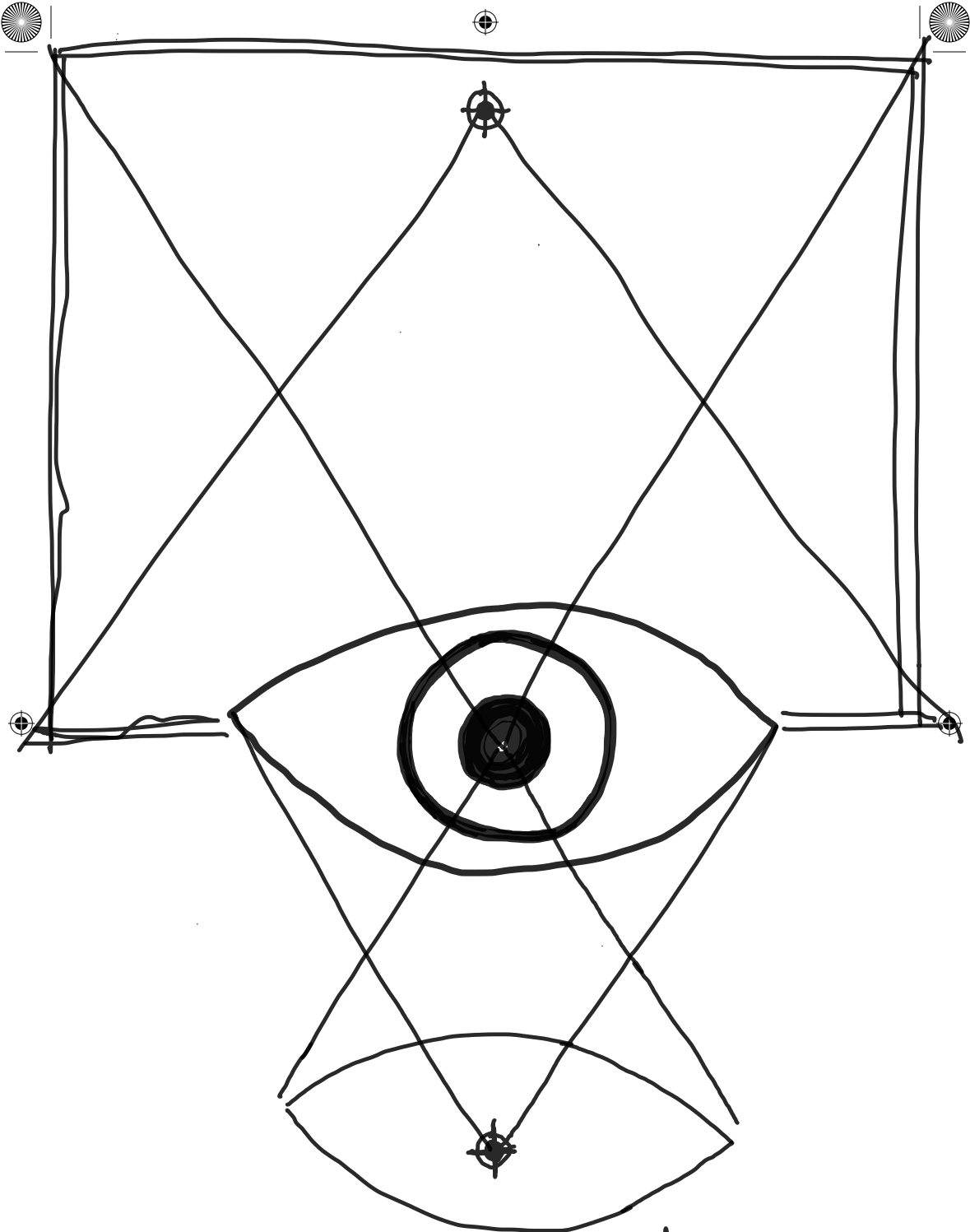
“That we shall die.”



“Yes. There’s really only one question
that can be answered, Genry, and we
already know the answer. . . . The only
thing that makes life possible is
permanent, intolerable uncertainty:
not knowing what comes next.”

- *The Left Hand of Darkness*
Ursula K. Le Guin





hock-eyed



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INTRODUCTION

Andrew Maize

I've lost count of the number of drafts and revisions that have gone into this text. I hadn't even finished writing the aforementioned line before I found myself chasing the word "draft" down ~~the~~ ^{an} etymological rabbit hole. This was supposed to be a short little compilation to reflect on my exhibition **(s)twereH* at the MacLaren Art Centre in 2022. Now, two years later, I'm writing the introduction. ~~Alas, we have a beginning!~~ *(and an ending)*

I wonder what kind of world it is where/when you're reading this? So much has happened since this project began in the early years of the Covid-19 pandemic. A few notable highlights* include the skyrocketing cost of living, food and housing insecurity, the tears of a weatherman on-air as he grieved the intensity of an unprecedented hurricane, to over ^{two} ~~a~~ years of a well-documented, scorched-earth genocide against Palestinians by US-backed Israel, which our mainstream news media and governments attempt to obfuscate through newspeak. And then there was the horrific pager incident in Lebanon in September. ^(September 19th 2024) Oh, and google "ocean current collapse."

It's hard to find the appropriate language to bear witness. So many words have lost ~~at~~ meaning, or/and feel futile in the face of ~~the~~ current moments.

* Also this list of "notable events" seems a hollow ^{gesture} in the wake of all that is in flux. ^{and insufficient}

I found the word **(s)twerH* during an etymological deep dive, and it became a carrier bag of theory¹ in which to move through these troubling times. The word's strange ambience gave me permission to lean in to the fact that I don't know what the hell I'm doing. ~~to~~ play, improvise, and experiment. Throughout the duration of the exhibition (which turned into a residency) the gallery space became an emergent research lab, where I used charcoal, fans, and ~~strange objects~~ ^{mylar blankets} to create ~~experimental~~ ^{strange} drawing apparatuses ~~that were~~ animated by the wind. Whether tethered or in free fall, these ~~dynamic~~ ^{danced} kinetic sculptures ~~moved in turbulence, leaving a carbon record of their movement in the space.~~

I extended an invitation to friends and collaborators to contribute to this text, and I'm grateful to sophia bartholomew, Lisa Hirmer, Sarah Wendt, and Pascal Dufaux for their thoughtful and heartfelt offerings. This book is a vessel to hold some of these conversations, loose ends, and endless tinkering. It was inspired by Francis Alys' *Tornado* book (free pdf on his website) and the writing and publishing of Paul Chan and Badlands Unlimited Press. Paul said in an interview somewhere that he wanted to produce books for people who didn't have the time or capacity to read. Short, spacious texts to pick up and put down. These essays essay.

¹ Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people to thank:

And patience!
→ My partner Halley for everything. To Leven for her unconditional reminders. My family for their love and support. I was blessed to have been in an MFA cohort with Chantal Khoury, Ella Gonzales, Meg Harder, Megan Feniak, Connie Wilson, and Emmanuel Osahor. To my advisor Kristie MacDonald, my committee, and the faculty and staff at U of G for their support. Thanks to Christina Battle for a wonderful seminar class. *that helped shape my thinking* To Sandra Rechico for introducing me to the work of Žilvinas Kempinas, and Connie Wilson for the introduction to Paul Chan. Thanks to Paul for taking a breather and writing about it.

This work may not have existed without the invitation of Damien Worth to take this ~~harebrained~~ idea and turn it into a thing. Oh, and Anna Sprague, nuff said. I have so much gratitude to the writers and thinkers who have helped shape ~~our~~ my relationship to the world (many are quoted herein).

Tyler Durban → Thanks to Rachel Deiterding, Abigail LaChapelle, Yasmeen Kazak, and all of the MacLaren staff for their patience in helping to shepherd this project through its various stages. I'm forever grateful to Peter Szegvary for saving my ass with a hair dryer. To Alison Kenzie for her detailed and thoughtful editing.

*what do we mean when we say "the world"?
Read Roy Scranton's "impassé"*

in the very same room where I
exhibited my first fan piece!

Preisler

~~Priester~~



Thanks to Sonia ~~Priester~~ and PS Guelph for printing this text. A big thank you to Prof. Philip Lavoie, for agreeing to come join in a public conversation about turbulence and the parallels (no pun intended) between working with unknowability in the arts and sciences.

To Lisa Daniels for taking a risk and giving me time/space to undertake these experiments. I'm so grateful for your continued support, encouragement and "So what?" (I still don't know.) (I still don't know!)

I am also indebted to these artists and albums that have helped me stay (somewhat) focused in writing:

Max Richter:

- *Sleep*
- *Recomposed: Vivaldi - The Four Seasons*

Jaimie Branch:

Fly or Die Fly or Die Fly or Die ((world war))

New Hermitage: *Unearth*

Prasant Radhakrishnan: *Ragas on Saxophone Vol. 1*

Okonski: *Magnolia*

Cots: *Disturbing Body*

Alabster DePlume: *Come with Fierce Grace*

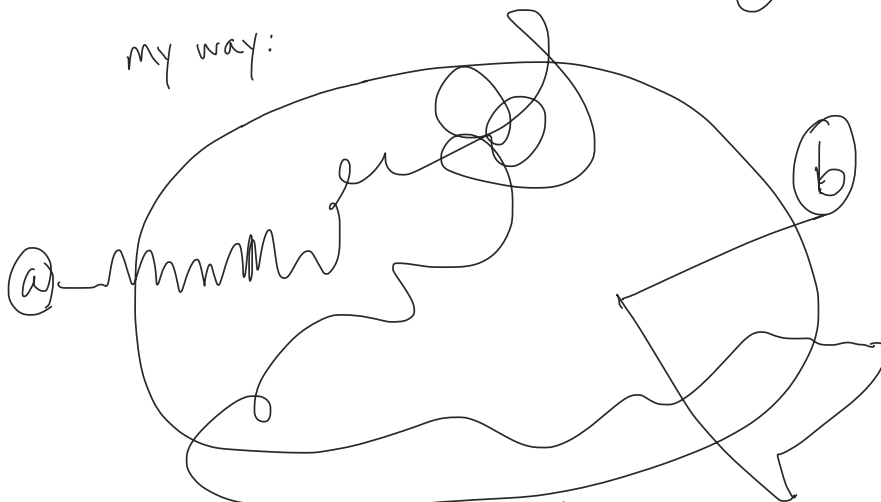
Makaya McCraven: *In the Moment*

I never liked doing things systematically. Not even my Ph.D. research was done systematically. It was done in a random, haphazard fashion. The more I got on, the more I felt that, really, one can find something only in that way—in the same way in which, say, a dog runs through a field. If you look at a dog following the advice of his nose, he traverses a patch of land in a completely unplottable manner (at least to human sensibilities). And he invariably finds what he is looking for. I think that, as I've always had dogs, I've learned from them how to do this.




the easy way:





my way:



(AFTER JOHN + NANCY LITTLE)



So you then have a small amount of material and you accumulate things, and it grows, and one thing takes you to another, and you make something out of these haphazardly assembled materials. And, as they have been assembled in this random fashion, you have to strain your imagination in order to create a connection between the two things. If you look for things that are like the things that you have looked for before, then, obviously, they'll connect up. But they'll only connect up in an obvious sort of way, which actually isn't, in terms of writing something new, very productive. You have to take heterogeneous materials in order to get your mind to do something that it hasn't done before.



W.G. Sebald, interview with Joseph Cuomo

OPINION
GUEST ESSAY

I Broke Down About Hurricane Milton on Live TV. What Happened Next Surprised Me.

OCT. 22, 2024



Show full article 236

Just before I went on the air on Oct. 7, the National Hurricane Center declared that Hurricane Milton had become a Category 5 monster. When I saw the barometric pressure numbers reported by a hurricane hunter aircraft, I did a double take.

The anchor introduced me, and then it was my turn to speak. I clenched my eyes. "It is an incredible, incredible, incredible hurricane. It has dropped," I said, my voice quivering. "50 millibars in 10 hours!" I knew it meant it was going to continue growing in strength, and rival some of the strongest hurricanes ever recorded. I paused, lowered my head and apologized for losing my composure.

"This is just horrific," I said.



A Klee painting named *Angelus Novus* shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, 1939



Similarly, the exquisite internal structures of turbulent weather phenomena (hurricanes, for example) are instances of order emerging out of chaos. But we are familiar with the destruction that hurricanes can bring about in their surroundings. They are a form of spontaneously emerging order, created at critical points in atmospheric flow, while at the same time they are a source of apparent disorder for other systems. We find a similar situation when we move (by analogy) to other forms of turbulence affecting warfare directly: the demographic turbulence produced by migrations, invasions or crusades, for example. Critical points in the growth of the urban masses are known to have played a role in triggering wars throughout modern history. Whether we consider demographic pressures as having 'creative' or 'destructive' effects will depend on our point of view.

Manuel De Landa, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, 1991

3:35

5G+ 76



mohammed_fayq
samyzyara · Original audio



**Structure without life is dead.
but life without structure is**



structure.

and through

unseen.



within

Pure

life expresses itself



John Cage, *Lecture on Nothing*








welcoming the fundamental agency of uncertainty



Andrew Maize



In the spring of 2020, airflow and aerosols, invisible vectors of transmission, became hot topics of discussion and debate. An underlying anxiety and heightened awareness shaped every experience of sharing time, space and breath with other human beings. Improvised barriers, hand drawn signs, and tape-lined floors emphasized and demarcated these new spatial relationships in an attempt to guide us through it.






On my return to the studio at the University of Guelph, six months after the pandemic forced its closure, I found the discarded head of an oscillating standing fan in the loading bay. The stand was nowhere to be seen. Without a body to orient the head, the fan was rendered useless. I plugged it in, it still blew, so I picked it up.





It was the start of my second year of my Master of Fine Arts (MFA) program, and I needed something to install for a group show. I decided to improvise using this fan and some black gaffer tape on the floor of the gallery*. The thing I made was unremarkable, but I'm glad I made it, because it prompted my friend Connie Wilson to suggest I check out the work of artist Paul Chan.




* the boarding house gallery,
which is now OPS Guelph's printshop!





Known for his ambitious large-scale multi-projection animation works, Chan hit “Peak Screen” in 2008. In a world where the iPhone ^{made} ~~was~~ ~~making~~ screens ubiquitous, Chan was unable to face the prospect of spending countless hours on a screen to make new work to be viewed on a screen. He quit making art.



Several years later, while visiting his friend Rachel Harrison’s studio, Chan noticed a broken fan facing upwards on the floor. It reminded him of the type used to inflate those whacky waving arm-flailing tube men found dancing and demanding attention in the parking lots of big box stores and used car dealerships. It was this broken fan and its potential to animate *off-screen* that drew Chan back to the studio after a six-year hiatus.¹ Chan began researching fluid dynamics and teaching himself how to sew, developing a process of “folk engineering” which led to a series of kinetic wind-inflated sculptures he calls “breathers.”²



I have been making and flying kites for many years ~~now~~, and ~~as a result~~, have spent a lot of time observing the wind. The kite as a technology is often considered archaic, unreliable, inefficient and risky. A mere child's toy. Kids love kites, kites like company and they are good at drawing and extending attention (such a precious resource these days). I feel a palpable sense of excitement as folks watch their kite take off into the air; the body arcs towards the sky, the inverse posture of the *on-screen* body. Time shifts. We begin to notice the clouds, the ways that poplar leaves tremble and the surface tension of water reflects the character of the wind. In the air, a kite takes on a life of its own, flying not with the wind, but in opposition to it. Kites fly on the grounds of a tenuous connection, a thin string tethered to some earthbound mass—us.



Working with the whimsical nature of the wind is what makes kite flying exciting. Especially when things go awry. Winds shift, kites tangle, strings break, trees grasp. Kites are akin to *kairos*,³ and it's in this indeterminate spirit of playfulness that we




learn to face risks and rise to challenges. ~~The wind~~
~~can also be hard to schedule, making for an~~
~~unreliable collaborator.~~ For many practical reasons,
I've wanted to find a way to harness this spirit, to
bring it *inside*, to enliven spaces that can so often
feel stagnant, controlled and dull. And ~~to remind us~~
that life still exists beyond the screen. ^{as a reminder,}
(and is incomplete and messy)

I decided to riff off of Chan's idea by attaching a
mylar emergency blanket to the centre of an ^{upward facing}
~~upraised~~ fan with a spinning lanyard clip. I turned
the fan on, and the blanket began to ^{spin} ~~dance~~. Around
and around and around it whirled, grasping for
some semblance of balance as it grappled with the
~~turbulence~~. ^{wind.} Unlike Chan's *breathers*, which are
tailored to move in specific ways with an interior
flow that provides stability, this spinning blanket
held its allure in a tornadic fashion by moving
precariously and unpredictably.









Later that afternoon, I had a studio visit on Zoom with my friend Damien Worth, who was curating projects for *Art in the Open* in Prince Edward Island. I spoke with him about a few potential ~~projects~~^{ideas}, and at the end of the meeting, I said “hold on, ~~you~~ want to see something fun? Check this out.” I turned on the spinning blanket.

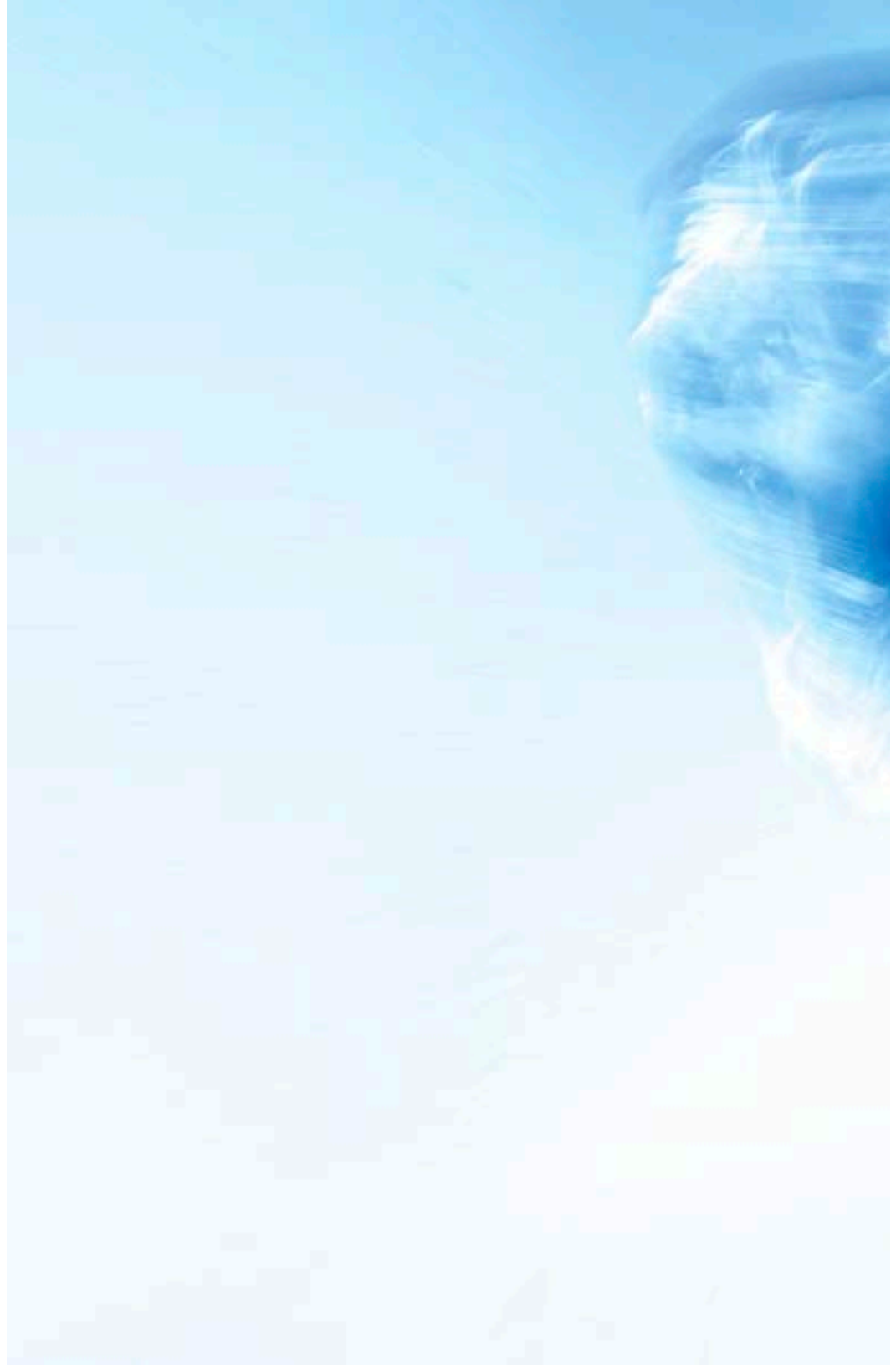
“Oh, cool . . . Let’s show that,” he said. (something like this)



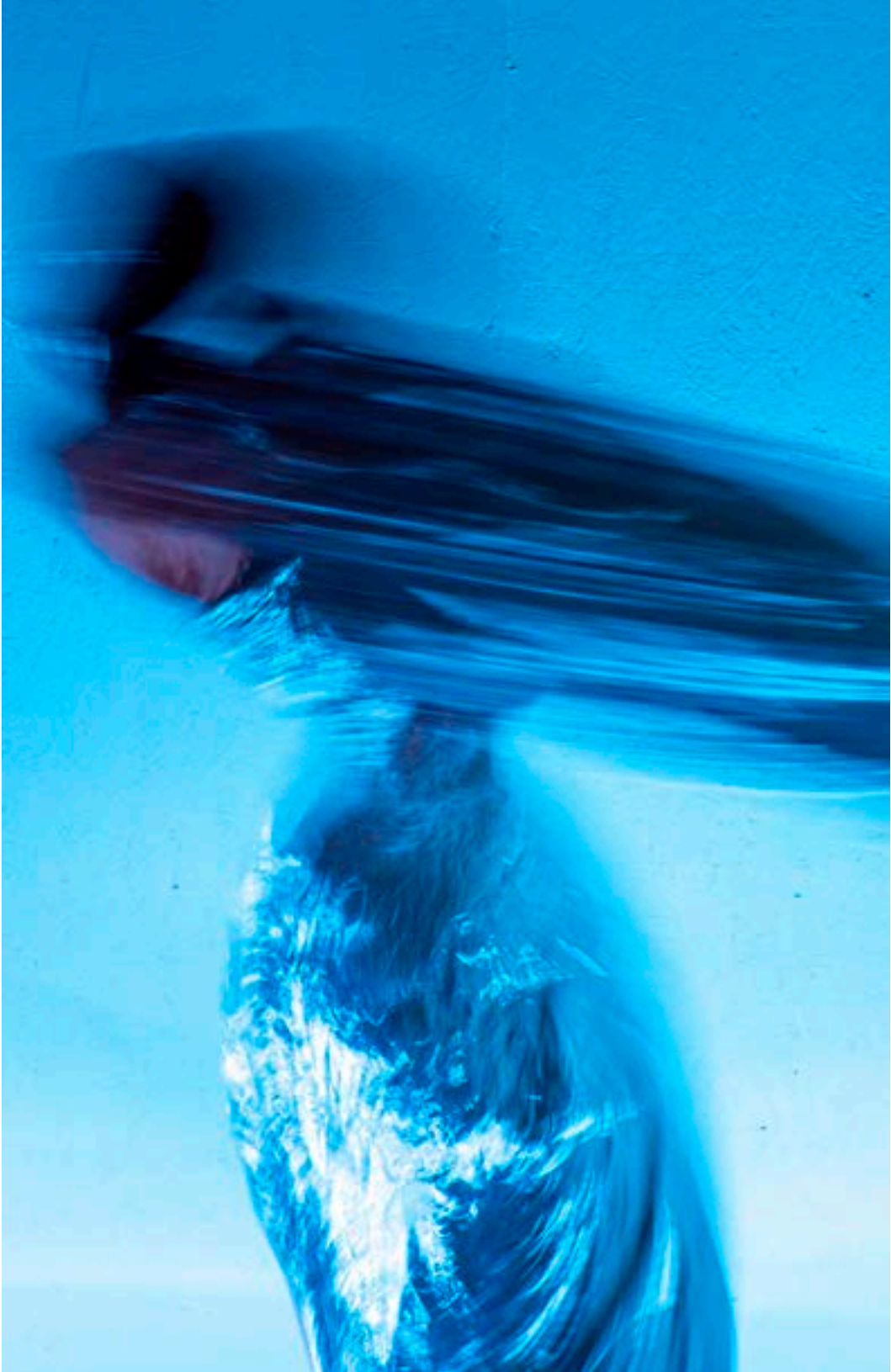
Without really thinking, I replied “OK.”



I didn’t really know what these spinning blankets *were*. They were exciting, but they also felt a bit gimmicky. But it was a curious enough thread to follow, and so I did.





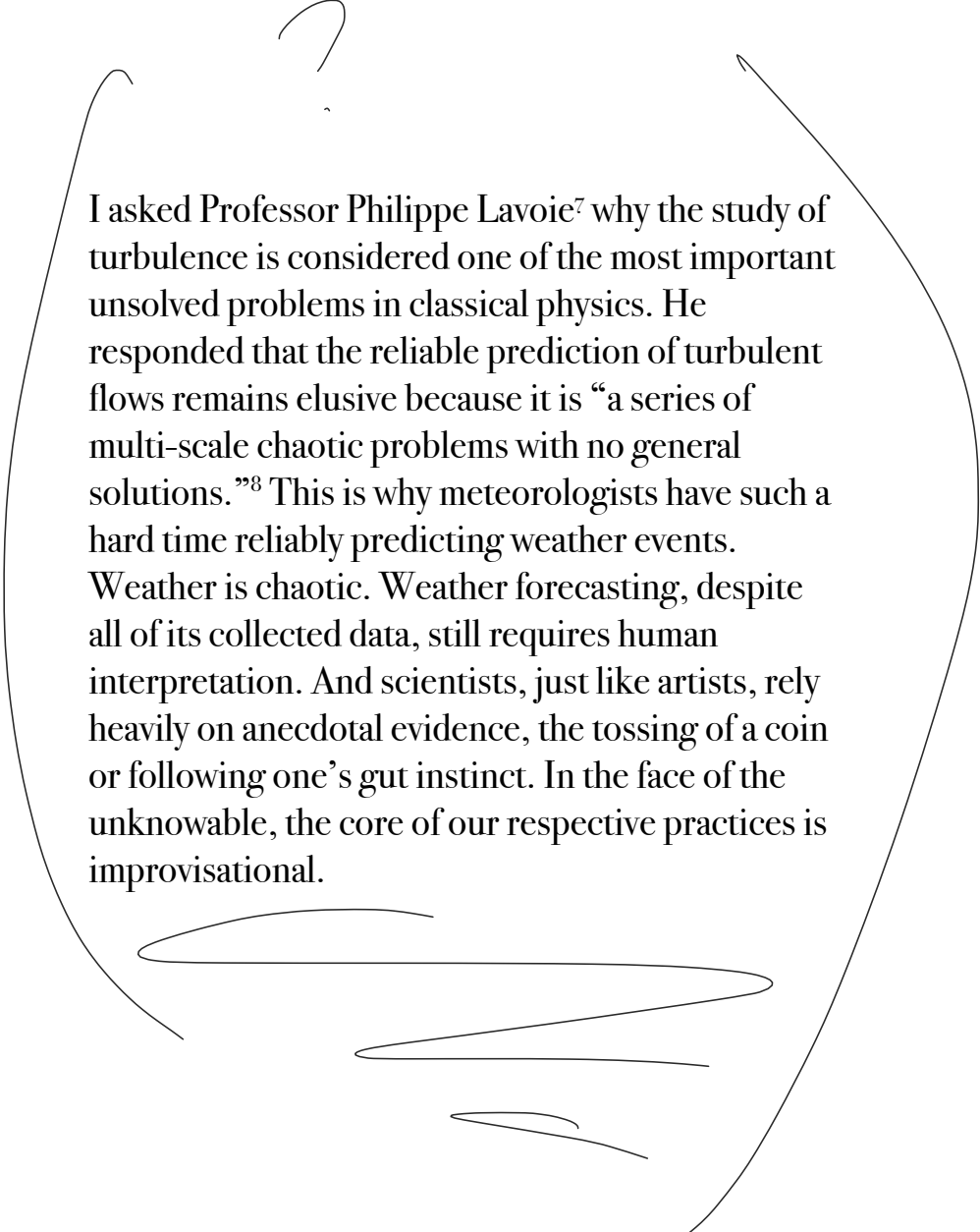


~~I thought it would be a good idea to share these spinning blankets with some scientists who study wind. I was curious if they found any of this interesting, and wanted to use the opportunity to learn more about fluid dynamics in order to get a sense of what might be possible.~~

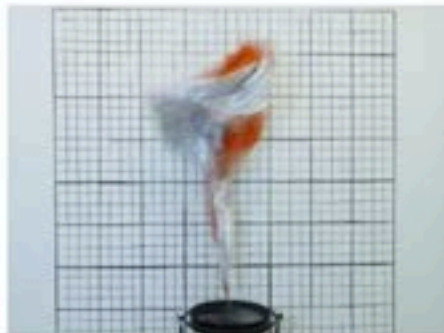
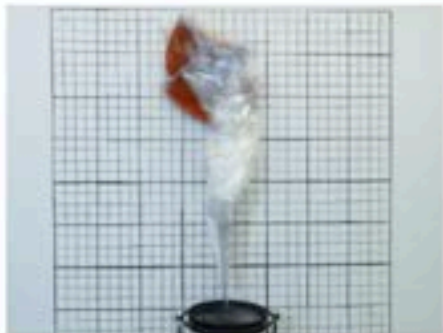
~~In conversation with Professor David Lubitz, I learned about the difference between laminar and turbulent flows and the shape of the wind cone created by the fan. Lubitz and I discussed different ways to keep the blanket spinning, as it would inevitably twist and fall off of the wind cone and into the inflow of the fan.~~

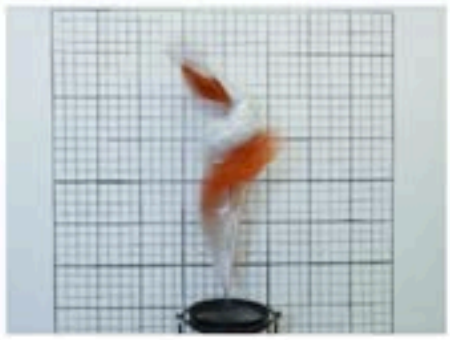
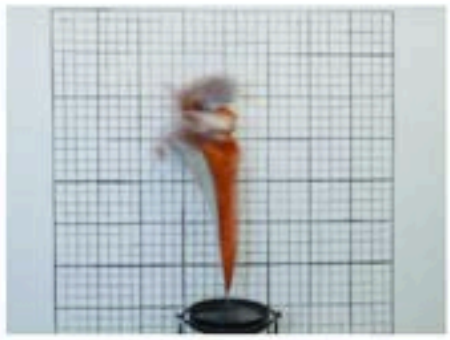
(flush out)




Lubitz also noted that my approach to this research was unconventional. In a typical experiment, say with an aircraft wing, researchers want to see how the wind flow interacts with the surface of the object in a controlled environment. By adjusting the parameters of wind speed and direction, they test how these changes affect the flow. But Lubitz acknowledged that outside of the wind test chamber such control is impossible. The wind is inherently uncontrollable.⁵ My approach, on the other hand, was to set up a chaotic environment, for it was in turbulence that the blankets' movements became compelling.⁶



I asked Professor Philippe Lavoie⁷ why the study of turbulence is considered one of the most important unsolved problems in classical physics. He responded that the reliable prediction of turbulent flows remains elusive because it is “a series of multi-scale chaotic problems with no general solutions.”⁸ This is why meteorologists have such a hard time reliably predicting weather events. Weather is chaotic. Weather forecasting, despite all of its collected data, still requires human interpretation. And scientists, just like artists, rely heavily on anecdotal evidence, the tossing of a coin or following one’s gut instinct. In the face of the unknowable, the core of our respective practices is improvisational.







A couple of months later, in the summer of 2021, I was faced with the decision of what to present for my online thesis exhibition and defence. My MFA was a messy meandering experience. I was ^{← almost} constantly experimenting, and in following every tangent, my days were full of loose ends, deep dives, divergences. I felt the need to focus in order to find a way to encapsulate my research. And I was running out of time.⁹



I booked a two-week slot in Zavitz Gallery and I bought six floor fans from Princess Auto.¹⁰ I decided to follow the dopamine.¹¹ Improvise and play.

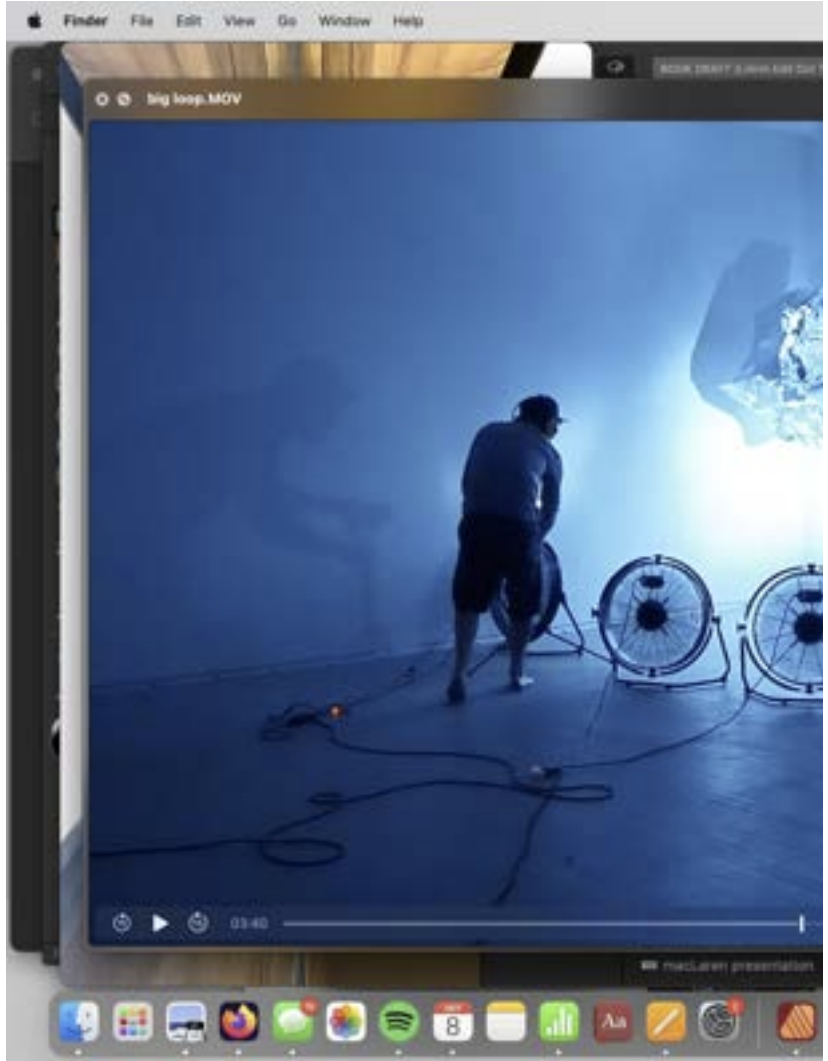
I spent the next week experimenting. The reflectivity of the mylar blankets offered some promising possibilities, and I played with projection, lighting, and shadow. I also captured the blankets' spinning motion through long exposure photography against a grid, which offered some stunning images and some analysis of their movement.¹²

~~And then I wondered, could I keep the blanket aloft
in the corner of the gallery?~~

I set up five fans in a quarter circle pointing towards a corner of the room. I turned the fans on and placed a blanket in the wind. It took off into the corner, shot up the wall, and across the ceiling and out over top of the fans. I then made adjustments to the speed of the fans and their distance to the corner, creating the conditions which kept the blanket consistently aloft inside ~~of~~ the area of the wind dome. The blankets' movements were ~~beautiful and~~ alluring. They reminded me of the floating plastic bag in the movie *American Beauty*, and yet, somehow, seemed a little contrived.

(which, of course, it was!)

After a week of these experiments, nothing felt like it was quite *enough*. I knew that, in any nascent project, there are many paths to follow. Which one should I take?



I was documenting my research process, as I knew that it was going to be primarily experienced by folks online through photos and video. How would any of this noisy kinetic installation translate to a screen? Are there other ways to depict the blankets' movements?



I grabbed some electrical tape and attached homemade charcoal to the four corners of a blanket, and set it free in the corner.






Heurēka! I3







I did a giddy little dance. What the heck is this thing? I made this?








The blanket had morphed into something uncanny. Its movements became unfamiliar and haunting as it hovered and grasped ~~to~~ the drafts of the gallery walls. It shifted from being a loose plastic membrane blown by a fan to something *strange*. It had a sense of animacy. It looked like a flying squirrel. The additional weight of the tape and charcoal created a ballast, allowing the blanket to billow and capture the wind with dynamic movements like a kite while trying to negotiate an unstable and precarious environment. I felt sorry for it when it got stuck in the corner. I marvelled at its acrobatics. I was drawn in.





And it also drew on the wall.












In his 2019 Lecture *The Bather's Dilemma*, Chan talks about the power of friendship, which he describes as pleasure turned outwards, towards pleasing others. Chan discusses how its effects heighten our senses and support *homeostasis*.¹⁴ He goes on to suggest that sometimes, when he uses an outward-facing approach when making art, his original intentions become de-centred, allowing the materials and processes to take on a life of their own, becoming something beyond the material thing he made—into a thing that he has built a relationship with. And therefore, like any friend, art has the power to challenge the way we think, make, and experience the world.



This may seem like pretty basic stuff. And it is. But it is also a reminder of the profound ways that art can shift our relationships to the world. If, of course, we have the capacity to be open and receptive to engaging with it.






American scholar and ecofeminist Donna Haraway suggests that the essential challenge of our time is to learn how to become capable, response-able, together, in order to stay with the trouble. Haraway explains that the word “trouble” takes its origins from “a thirteenth-century French verb meaning ‘to stir up,’ ‘to make cloudy,’ ‘to disturb.’”¹⁵ I stumbled upon the term **(s)twērH* while researching the etymology of the words “disturb” and “turbulence.” A root word in the Proto-Indo-European language (which is a hypothetical language with no direct evidence of existence that is “reconstructed by comparing similarities in languages . . . assumed to be related to each other”),¹⁶ **(s)twērH* is believed to mean “rotate, swirl, twirl, move around” and is at the root of many words, including “disturb,” “turbulence,” “tumult,” “turmoil,” “turbine,” “storm” and “crowd.”







DRAW
YOUR
LAST
BREATH





* *(s)twerH* is also what I decided to call this nascent body of work that emerged out of an exigency to pivot during the turbulence of the pandemic, and it is in this spirit of indeterminacy that it continues to plumb. I'm still not sure how to pronounce it, and I haven't felt the need to figure it out. I like the fact that I can't articulate the name of a thing that desires to remain unfathomable.



Working in such indeterminacy is familiar territory for artists and scientists, who have long been drawn to the unknowable and chaotic. When shit hits the fan, we are often the first ones in the room to admire the pattern that it left on the wall and couch.

* *(s)twerH* is a reminder that the future is not predetermined. Shit will hit the fan, how we respond is what matters. Perceiving the world in this way offers a sense of humility, wonder, and ease. We can still cheat fate. Together, we can adapt, take care of each other, and respond to the next crisis.




Welcoming the fundamental agency of uncertainty.





Notes



1. Chan has called his hiatus a “breather” . . . and during this time he founded the Badlands Unlimited Press, which is really worth checking out.
2. For a discussion of these terms, see “Berkeley Talks transcript: Artist Paul Chan on the Bather’s Dilemma.” Accessed at <http://news.berkeley.edu/2020/01/03/berkeley-talks-transcript-paul-chan/>.
3. *Kairos* is an ancient Greek word meaning “an opportune or critical moment.” It is used in contrast to *chronos*, which is linear sequential time. *Kairos* can be described as the experience of indeterminate or “stretchy time,” when the outcome of events is unknown and ripe with opportunity. *Kairos* is often experienced in moments of great joy, crisis and revolution.
4. Professor Lubitz is Associate Professor, Environmental Engineering at the University of Guelph.
5. Turbulent flow is much more common in nature than laminar flow, which generally occurs only on small scales and in controlled environments.
6. Only once have I had the blanket spin in a uniform way: it twisted itself up into an expanding spiral shape, and spun in a corkscrew fashion for about eight minutes. I showed the video to Professor Lubitz, and he said it reminded him of an Archimedes screw, which he studies as a possible form of hydropower generation. The blanket’s uniform movement was much less exciting than its usual maelstrom.
7. Professor Lavoie runs the Experimental Turbulence Lab at the University of Toronto’s Institute for Aerospace Studies.
8. I couldn’t think of a more succinct way to describe the general state of the world.



9. The pandemic was an exacerbating factor, and like so many other people, I found my mental health deteriorating and experienced my first panic attack. I struggled with the pressure to present well-articulated and neatly packaged work for end-of-semester critiques. I was a mess and making one, too. I felt I graduated without a strong body of work, but instead, a repertoire of rambling research and a hot steamy compost dump of ideas. Which, to this day, continues to be generative.

10. Princess Auto has a “no-questions-asked” return policy.

11. Perennial advice from my dear friend, editor and mentor Anna Sprague.






12. Harkening back to early photographic experiments of Eadward Muybridge and Etienne-Jules Marey, who were trying to capture and depict the movement of animals such as humans and horses. The depiction of turbulence as such has been a longstanding muse of artist and scientist as both try to understand this most stubborn problem of classical physics.

13. “I have found it!” Is what Greek mathematician and physicist Archimedes is believed to have exclaimed when he realized a method for determining the purity of gold while watching the displacement of water as his body entered the bath tub.



14. *Homeostasis* is the desired state of equilibrium within a living system. Chan references our nervous system, and how pleasure refreshes our capacity to perceive the world, so we are better able to make decisions in response to the challenges we face.

15. See Haraway’s Introduction to *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2016), 1.

16. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-European_language.






Big whirls have little whirls
which feed on their velocity,
And little whirls
have lesser whirls
And so on to viscosity







who has seen the wind
neither you nor i
but when the trees
bow down their heads
the wind is passing by











I heard a rumor once about how a mother and child survived Hurricane Katrina in 2005. They were stranded on a rooftop as the floodwater rose. The child knew he was in danger, but wasn't old enough to make sense of what was endangering him, and why. He became withdrawn, paralyzed with dread.

The mother realized what was happening, but couldn't stop what threatened them both. So she did the only thing she could: she told him a story. The story was an adventure about two heroes, her and him. The mother recast what was about to engulf them from all sides into an adventure that they—the heroes—had to endure if they were to win the day, and survive.





As the child listened, he gradually became more present and engaged. Nothing changed except how he saw things. But that made all the difference. The child began to cope, and even took some pleasure in helping his mother figure out how to get rescued. He found his wits again, which helped him rekindle the will to be present, and be someone.





How we think about what we're doing changes how we do it, and ends up reshaping us in the mix. This dynamic, where entities mutually change each other through engagement, is referred to as a species of thinking known philosophically as dialectics.

I learned about dialectics through art. It was the experience of making work that taught me how the work I make remakes me as much as I make it. I feel I'm never quite the same after making what ends up mattering most. This is why I find pleasure in the notion that art is a form of self-expression only if the self is as dynamic and surprising as the expression itself.



The practice of working artists at whatever station in life is, at best, uncertain and precarious. There is no recipe for making good work. But generally, artists learn to recast their lot to suit how they need to express what it means to be someone. Making art is also where artists learn that aesthetics offers more nourishment than mere taste-making, if the practice of making work is treated like an adventure.

Paul Chan
Letter to Young Artists During a Global Pandemic

turn
around
around
around
you
may
come
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here
again



no
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far
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gone
you'll
always
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around










Fiona

Sarah Wendt



My father and his partner Sherry live on the Gairloch Rd. in eastern Prince Edward Island, a rural dirt road that is still mostly inhabited by people who moved to the island in the 60s as part of the “Back to the land” movement. Their project involved buying wooded lots, and trying to relearn lost skills of previous generations, such as milling local wood for building, weaving and small-time farming.

On his small acre, my father, a part-time conceptual artist and retired art teacher, spends his time (when he is not reading or making art) sculpting the little forest around his house. He is preoccupied with sweeping and raking the abundance of moss, and cutting back the undergrowth to create long lines of sight between the trees. This manicuring turns it into an extended living room; a kind of comfy, airy salon with soft green upholstery.










In September 2022, the region was hit by the post-tropical storm Fiona, which was one of the most devastating natural disasters to hit Canada in recorded history. In Prince Edward Island, many of the white sand beaches were washed away and so many of the trees came down in the capital city of Charlottetown that people are saying it's unrecognizable now. In particular, many of the older trees were lost, and more than one year later, we are hearing stories about people still searching for available workers to fix their damaged roofs. The eastern part of the island had some of the strongest winds and some of the worst damage.






Almost all of the trees surrounding my father's house came down during the storm. My father now describes his home as a "shack in the middle of a clearcut."





In the spring of 2022, I lost my nephew Felix to suicide, about one month before the end of his first year of university, and after struggling with the effects of multiple concussions, the Toronto COVID shutdowns and the lack of in-person classes at his university. When Fiona hit the island—my and Felix’s childhood home—six months later, it felt impossible to process this secondary grief. No longer a P.E.I. resident, I still haven’t seen any of this damage in real life, but my head is full of images of carved-out coastlines, fallen trees, and shacks in clearcuts. I sometimes wonder if the dread and the anxiety I feel is worse in the anticipation, because I have known about the destruction for all these months, but have had no connection to the place and to the possibility of witnessing the rebuilding and regrowth.










Through my art practice I am exploring ways to process grief and climate grief, both for the public to potentially experience, but also for myself: as a way to find healing through the creative process. Triggered by these personal losses I am reflecting on my own practice in somatic and improvisational “ways of knowing”; of finding sense and form out of chaos. I’m curious how I might transfer this knowledge to others and how it could be used as a way to support collective grief.



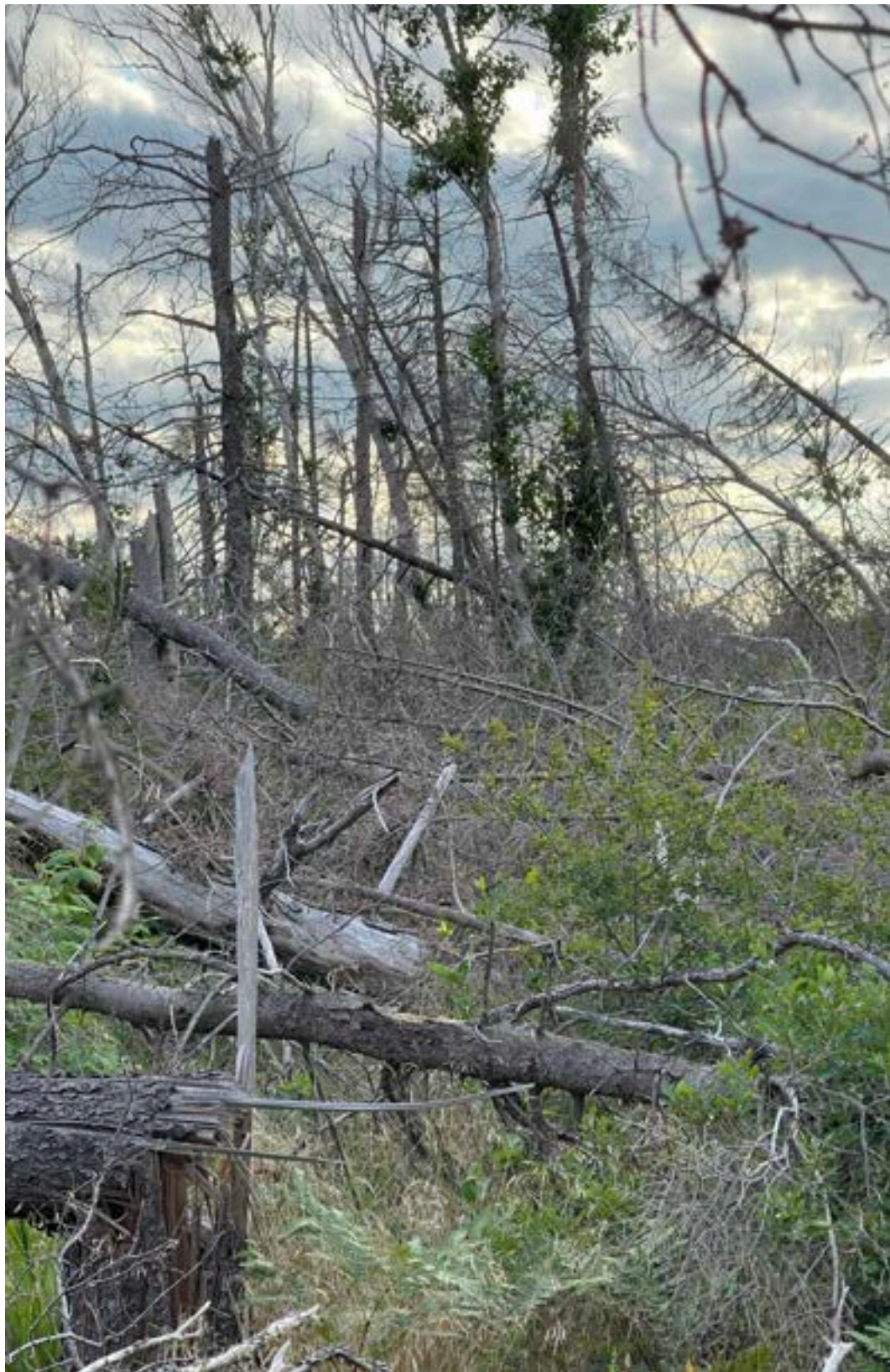
One of my ongoing projects involves leading disco dance workshops. One of the skills I teach is how to find the downbeat of a song and how to dance collectively to it, agreeing on this downbeat. This simple skill of finding agreement within a very open structure can create spontaneous choreographies in duos and groups. It feels cathartic: it moves and energizes, almost the complete opposite of how my body feels when I am overwhelmed by grief and anxiety.



When I speak with people these days, what seems commonly experienced is an overwhelming feeling of paralysis in the face of climate change. What can we do, how should we think, feel, act? We fear what we don't know in the future, the very definition of anxiety, and we are paralyzed in a state of in-action. Perhaps, in my experiments with collective finding of the downbeat, I am searching for a score for action, for movement towards something that makes sense of this chaos.


















one
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That the world is stable and its order fixed is perhaps the most persistent human delusion. How many errors have been made on the assumption that what was is? To a young child the house he lives in is permanent and unchanging, an eternal verity. But it is clear to the man who keeps the house that if it is treated as an eternal verity it will soon perish altogether. Against the constant jeopardy of decay there is the necessity of constant renewal. And there are, of course, the maxims to the effect that you cannot go home again, or step into the same river twice...



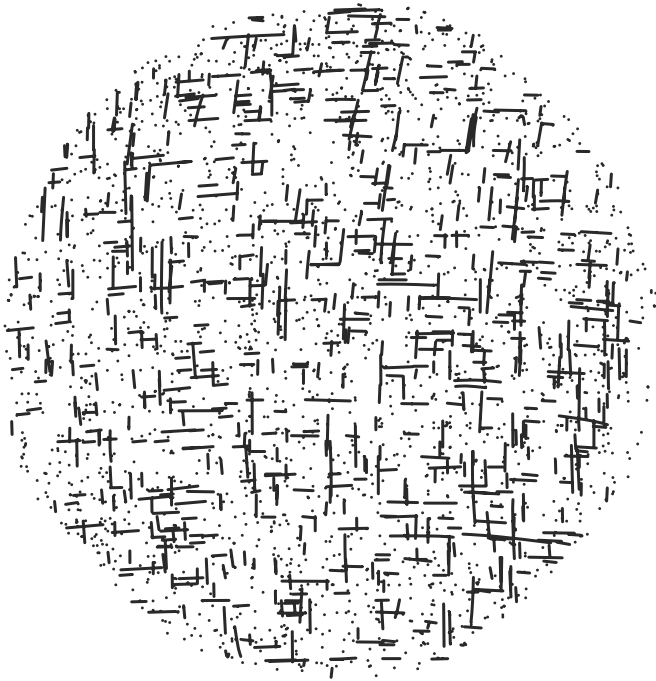


No place is to be learned like a textbook and then turned away from forever on the assumption that one's knowledge of it is complete. What is to be known about it is without limit, and it is endlessly changing. Knowing is therefore like breathing: it can happen, it stays real, only on the condition that it continue to happen. As soon as it is recognized that a river—or for that matter, a home—is not a place but a process, not a fact but an event, there ought to come an immense relief: one can step into the same river twice, one can go home again.



Wendell Berry, *The Unforeseen Wilderness*

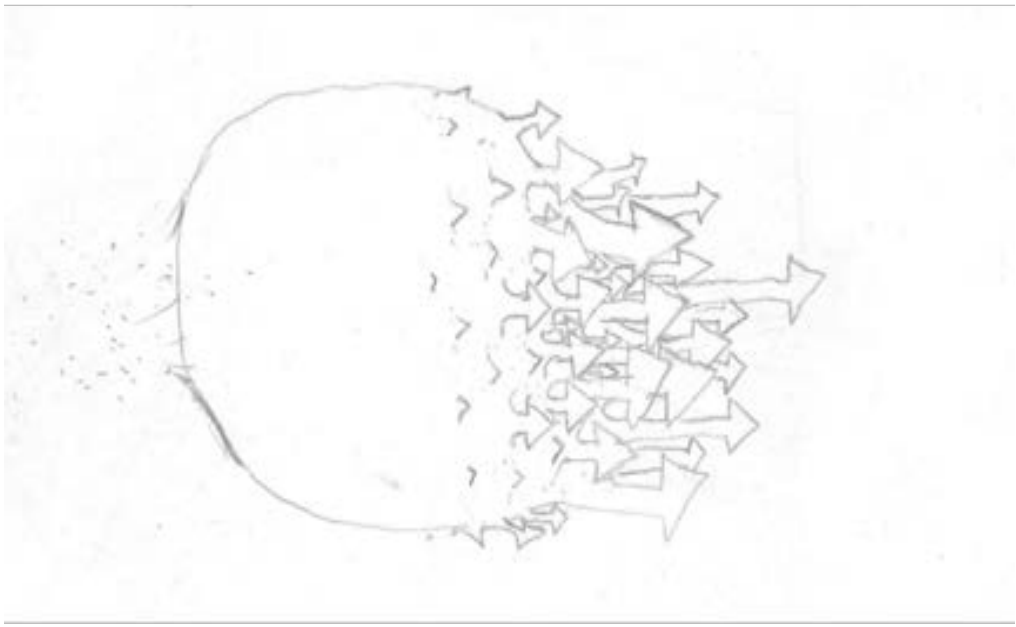
We hear about precarity in the news every day. People lose their jobs or get angry because they never had them. Gorillas and river porpoises hover at the edge of extinction. Rising seas swamp whole Pacific islands. But most of the time we imagine such precarity to be an exception to how the world works. It's what "drops out" from the system. What if, as I'm suggesting, precarity is the condition of our time—or, to put it another way, what if our time is ripe for sensing precarity? What if precarity, indeterminacy, and what we imagine as trivial are the center of the systematicity we seek?



Precarity is the condition of being vulnerable to others. Unpredictable encounters transform us; we are not in control, even of ourselves. Unable to rely on a stable structure of community, we are thrown into shifting assemblages, which remake us as well as our others. We can't rely on the status quo; everything is in flux, including our ability to survive. Thinking through precarity changes social analysis. A precarious world is a world without teleology. Indeterminacy, the unplanned nature of time, is frightening, but thinking through precarity makes it evident that indeterminacy also makes life possible.



Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing,
The Mushroom at the End of the World








Eyes closed: tactility of the wind

Pascal Dufaux



If I lost my vision, would I still be able to make sculpture?

As a young art student, I remember being preoccupied with thoughts about vision and sculpture: what forms would my work take if I became blind? What shape will I be satisfied to engage with using only my hands? What is space when you cannot perceive its dimension? As the name suggests, the Visual Arts is linked to the eye, to vision, and yet reality exists far beyond its visuality: with my eyes closed, my body feels the breath of the wind.




At the time, asking myself those questions meant trying to imagine the possibility of another relationship with the world, an obscure and unimaginable world, so dominated by the visual experience was my relationship with things and space. In his





book *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*,¹ Juhani Pallasmaa explains how the predominance of sight to the detriment of the other senses has led to a general impoverishment of our built environment, and of our spatial experience of architecture. Since the publication of this text in the 90s, the impoverishment Pallasmaa describes has accelerated with the rise of digital technology and the omnipresence of screens. It's becoming urgent to learn to feel the world beyond the activity of the optic nerve, knowing that our eye movements on screens are now closely tracked and that our visual attention has become the main resource of techno-capitalism. Investing our other senses therefore becomes an essential political act, a form of resistance to the economic exploitation of our sensorial relationship with the world.



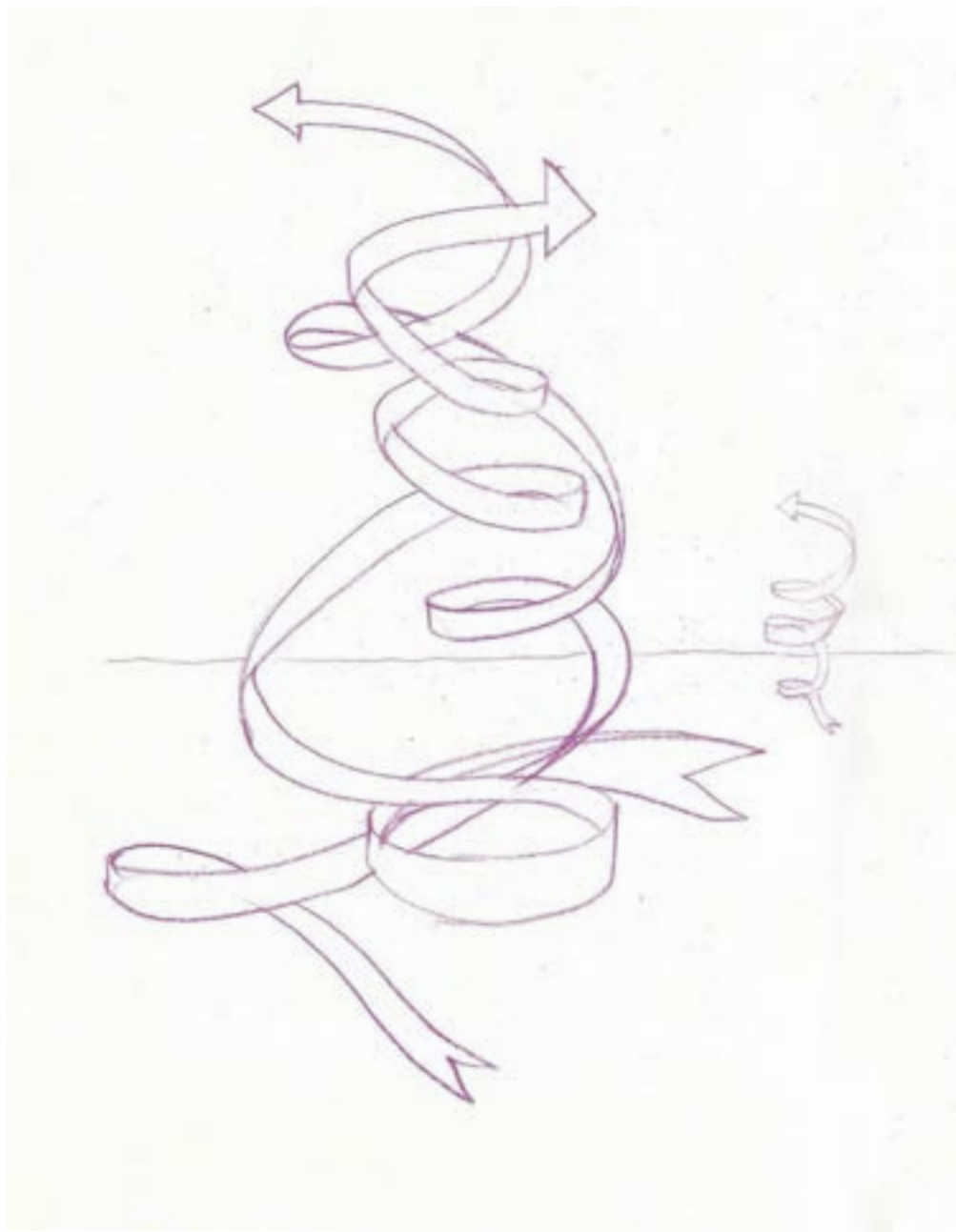
Recently, I collaborated in Hamburg with a group of artists from diverse practices and sensory perception abilities. Sophia Neises, a visually impaired choreographer, led us through sensory and spatial exercises using blindfolds. Without access to my sight, I






noticed other dimensions of space: textures, sounds and epidermal relationships to ambience and materials, the warmth of light, and so on. I felt a sensual relationship with things, allowing my hands, nose, ears and skin to become the main receptors informing my relationship to the world and to others. Strangely, I almost felt closer to the other people around me. Of course, the gaze brings the beauty of colours and light into my brain, but it has also been an instrument of judgment, a channel that often kept me at a distance from the object I'm looking at. It's through vision that I determine whether something is beautiful or ugly, desirable or repulsive. If sight is somehow, by default, the source of my critical thinking, could it be that tactility is my personal source of inclusion and of greater resonance with the world?





The touch of my hands builds in my brain the mental image of the shape I'm feeling. In the darkness, an object appears, a sensitive, tactile materialization. This invisible object acquires a meta-visibility. Produced in the half-light, its psychic materialization is akin to ectoplasm—in literal terms, that which





grows outside the body.² So, when a shape is caressed rather than seen, it becomes what the hands imagine, an infinitely expansive form, solid where I am touching it, fractal and expanding as I let it go. A constantly metamorphosing thing, never in stasis, full of future potential; like the wind.



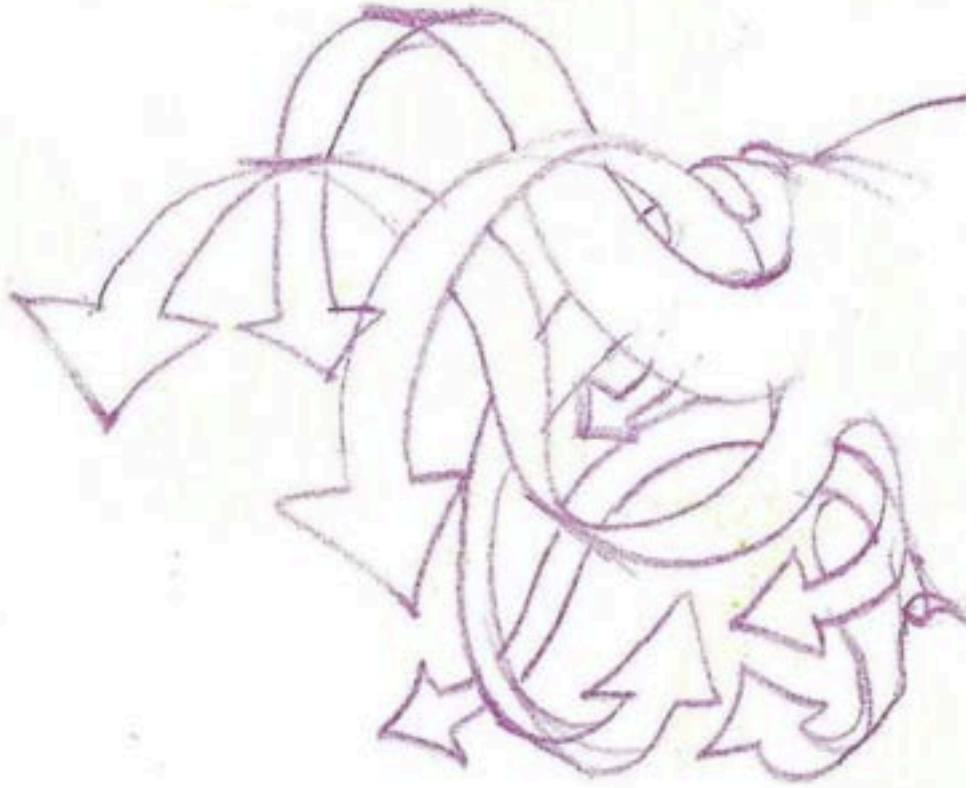
Today, I want to approach wind as a sensory, tactile environment, and therefore as a means of resistance to the determinism of the hyper-normalization of our sensory relation to things. With **(s)twerH*, we have been meeting, experimenting and creating multi-sensory devices that explore the tactile potential of the wind. Here, the wind inspires the possibility of an atypical sensory perception of space and time.

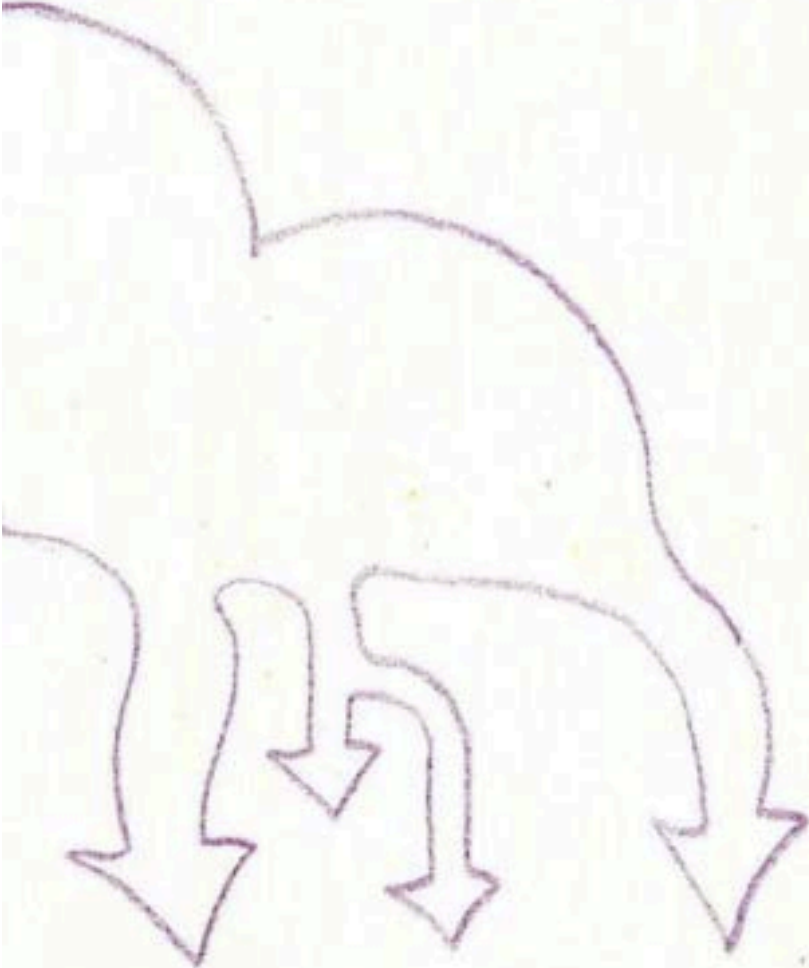
Here, I am slowly learning to perceive the world not only through its optical radiance, but also through the infinite swirls of winds that circulate at its surfaces.

Notes

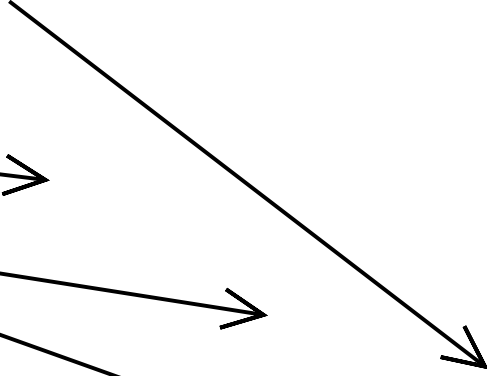
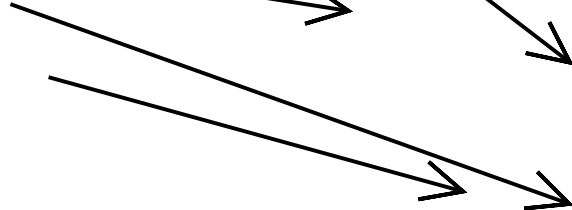
1. See Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 3rd edition, 2012).

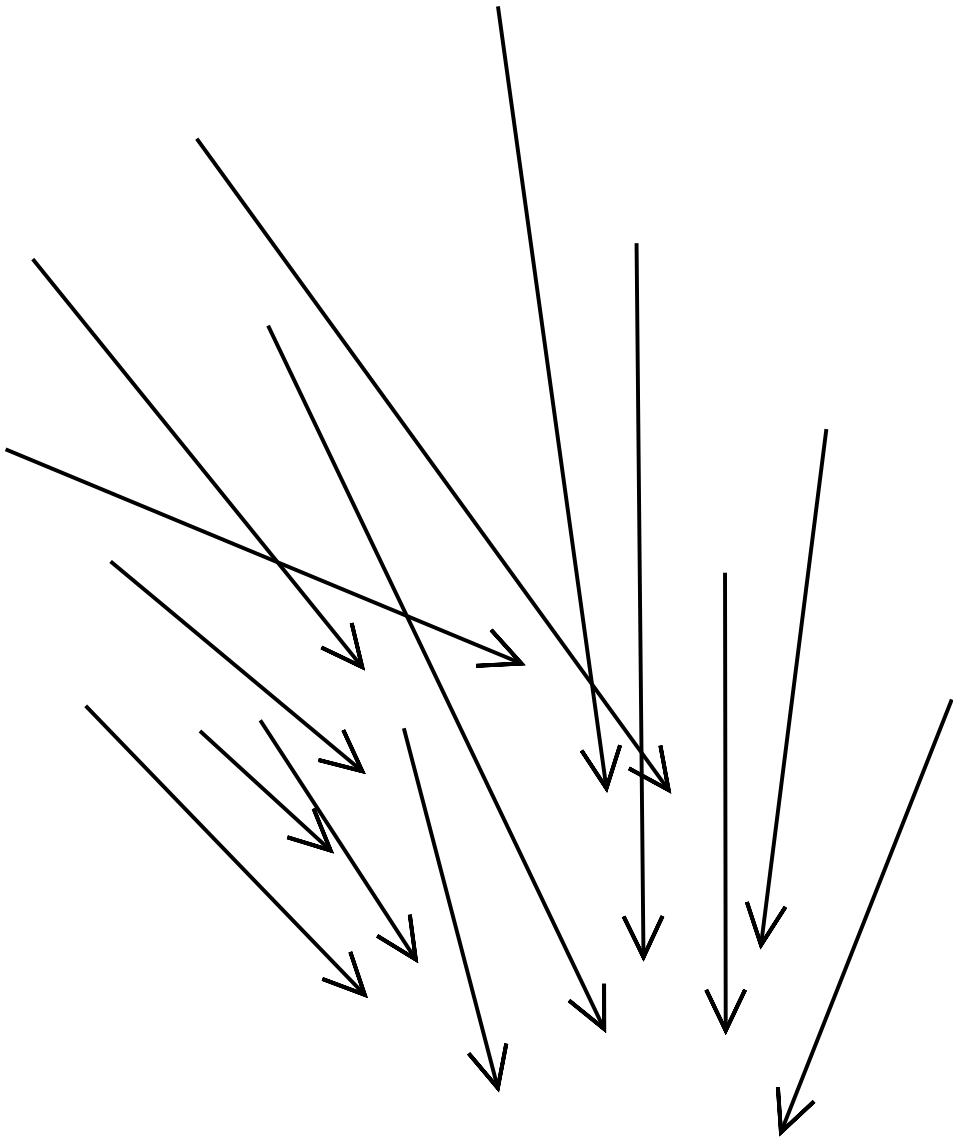
2. "Ecto" comes from the Greek *ektos*, meaning "outside."
"Plasma" literally means "something that forms."








i am feeling







under the weather.

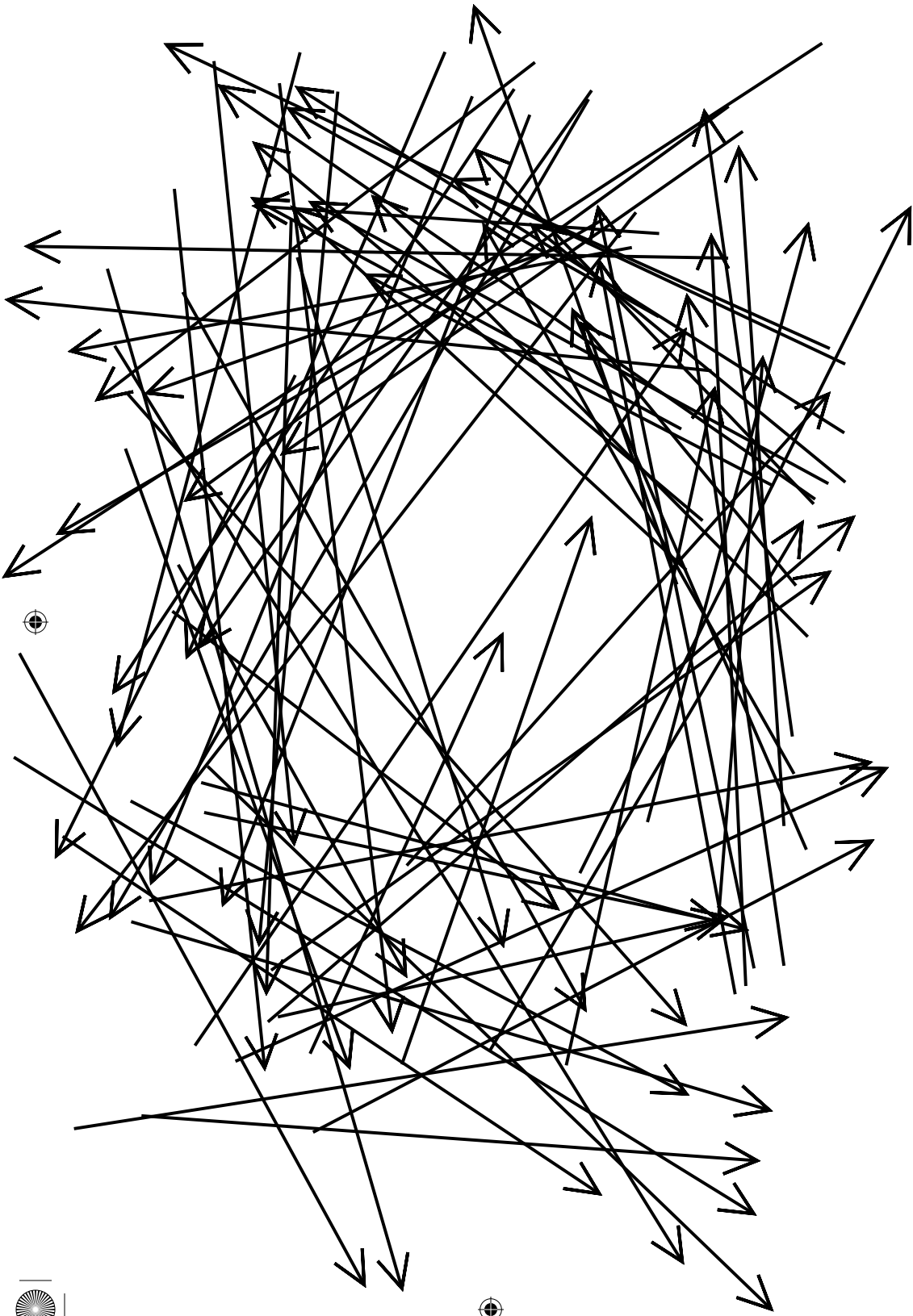
GRASP






Breathing the air, we also perceive in the air; it is not just that we would suffocate without it, we would also be struck senseless. Normally, we cannot see the air, though sometimes we can – as in the mist, or in the rising smoke from fires and chimneys, or in light snow when flakes, in their feathery dissent, pick out the delicate tracery of aerial currents. Yet it is precisely because of the transparency of this life-sustaining medium that we can see. Moreover, in its vibrations, air transmit sound waves, so that we can hear, and then the freedom of the movement it affords, it allows us to touch. Our perception, then, depends upon it. In an airless, solidified world, perception would be impossible. Thus our very existence as sentient beings is predicated on our immersion in a world without objects, a weather world.





Tim Ingold, *The Life of Lines*



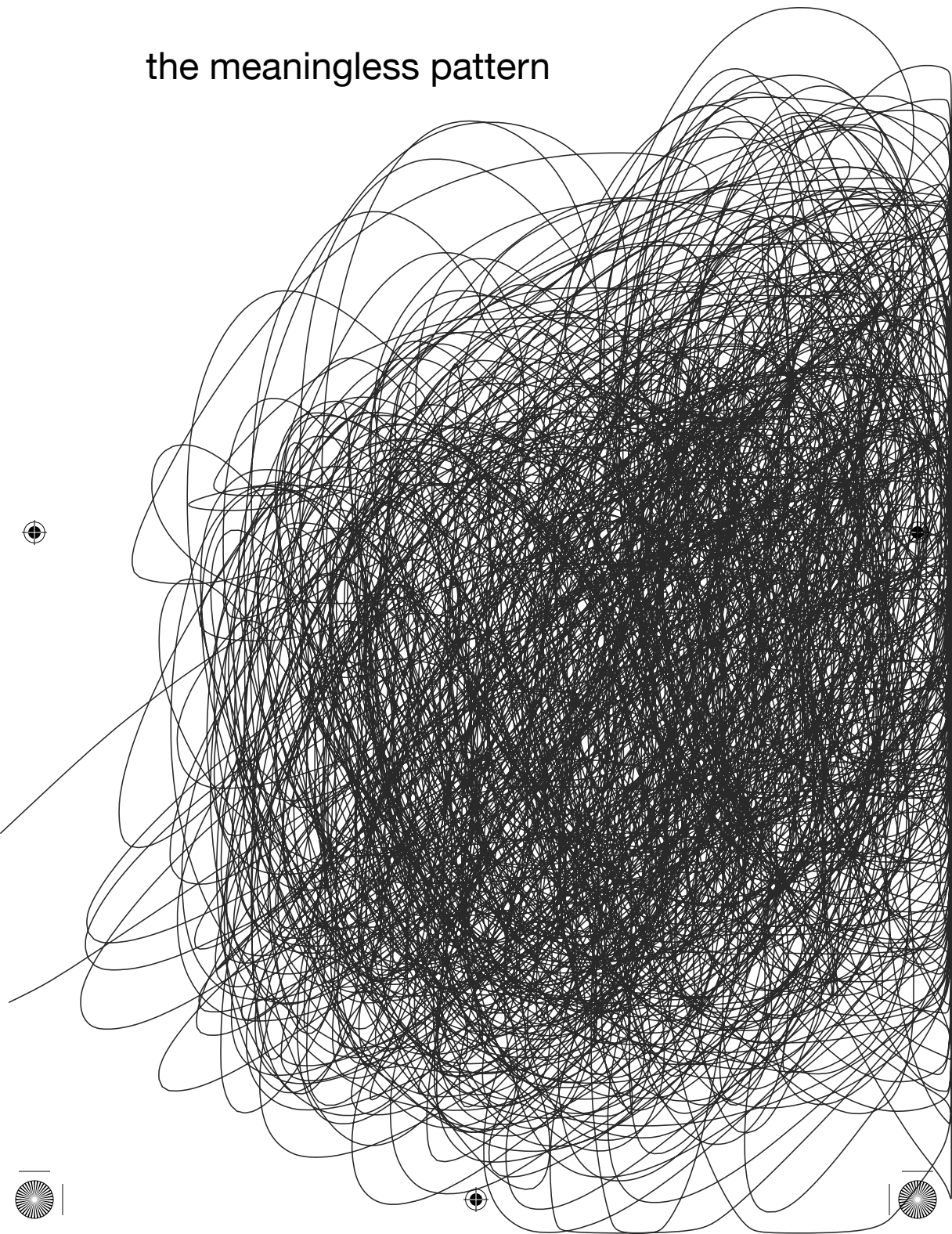


Data abounded. The problem was how to interpret it. Thus was, in fact, the ongoing problem of weather forecasting—the very thing that made the science of meteorology, despite its high-tech profile, lists heavily toward the suspect realms of anecdotal experience, toward the realm of the hunch, the educated guess, the coin toss. For meteorology, unlike most of the sciences, was grounded in—and by—humility, its entire history a concession to the abiding fact that, weatherwise, nobody knew for certain what was going to happen next.



Mark Svenvold, *Big Weather: Chasing
Tornadoes in the Heart of America*

the meaningless pattern





is beautiful.












sophia bartholomew



being






I'm standing in the kitchen bathed in the soft orange-pink of the street lights, and I'm staring at the red numbers on my digital clock. I've slept for four hours, but I wake up thinking that I've slept through the night. The hot water radiator has swarmed, swelled, and is sweltering the front room full of heat cooking the air so I crack open the windows and mix the cold with the warm air, like bathwater. A car sits idling outside, blasting music though its body. The sounds are vague, dampened by the steel and the glass and plastic, the upholstered-foam seating.



At three or five in the morning I'm sure I can hear an animal in the wall, scratching, though perhaps I'm dreaming, always dreaming, again and again. It's like the sound of singing, muffled but audible from the other side of my friends' closed door. I open my eyes.





As I speak it aloud, the word "friends" feels strange inside my mouth. The shape of it is always changing. The variables keep moving around. The threads between people can feel fragile, strong, but sticky like a spider's silk, or else tangled together like the fibres of something felted. Sometimes knotted or woven, broken. Revelry, unravelling.



The goddess Freyja, an almost-homonym for the word “fraying”, governs sex, love, lust, beauty, and fertility, and also death, war, and an old form of magic known as *seiðr*.

Etymologically *seiðr* means “thread” or “cord”, and the practice of this magic was understood as a form of spinning, with “spirits sent forth in the shape of threads in order to attract things.”¹ And while the noun fray might indicate some central form of action – defined as “a usually disorderly or protracted fight, struggle, or dispute” – the verb, the action of fraying happens along the outer edges of the fabric. It happens on the fringe. It happens on the threshold of being and not being, becoming something else.





¹(1) Eldar Heide, “Spirits through respiratory passages” in *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Icelandic Literature: Sagas and the British Isles*, ed. John McKinnel, David Ashurst, and Donata Kick (Durham: University of Durham, 2006), 350–58.





sophia bartholomew

and not being



My body makes heat in the room during the night, in the dark. With the air conditioner turned off this floral nightshirt I bought at Walmart gets scrunched up and stuck to my lower back with sweat. When I wake up the sheets are creased against my face, damp with drooling, and you're not here beside me. I breathe but the water wells up inside of me during the day, spilling over.

Sometimes I can't hear what's being said over the roar of the waves. I push the words out of me, out over the edge of me, balanced by the weight of their ballast. I try not to count the days but I notice all of the things that will still be here after you're gone: the coffee filters you bought, the flour, the rice, the salt, the bruise under my big toe nail that hasn't grown out yet, the meat in the freezer, the cans of beans, the paper towels. In the PDF I read about preparing for MAID I get stuck on the word "remains."





sophia bartholomew



becoming something else

Some small measure of time flickers inside me and I press my wet face against it. The grit of it comforts me, the grain, the friction. I am lying awake at night to the sound of small stones. I am lying face down, feeling the sand running all over my knees and through my cupped hands. Feeling my hot heart running through my chest and all the words crumpled up at the front of my forehead.






the
shows
just
close
the
we













wind
us
how
to
edge
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That the challenge of describing the austere sensuality of living outdoors in a harsh climate and possibly radioactive desert under a spectacular sky, of doing so while contemplating the fate of the earth and playing tag with assorted armed authority figures, called for a great collapse in category for me. I realised that in order to describe the rich tangle of experience there, I needed to describe, to analyze, to connect, to critique, and to report on both international politics and personal experience. Since then, I have been fascinated by trying to map the ways that we think and talk, the unsorted experience wherein one can start by complaining about politics and end by confessing about passions, the ease with which we can get to any point from any other point. Such conversation is sometimes described as being “all over the place,” which is another way to say that it connects everything back up.





The straight line of conventional narrative is too often an elevated freeway permitting no unplanned encounters or necessary detours. It is not how our thoughts travel, nor does it allow us to map the whole world rather than one streamlined trajectory across it. I wanted more, more scope, more nuance more inclusion of the crucial details and associations that are conventionally excluded. The convergence of multiple kinds of stories shaped my writing in one way: this travelling by association shaped it in others. Early in my history of walking, I wrote that if fields of expertise can be imagined as real fields, fenced off and carefully tilled, then the history of walking is a path that trespasses through dozens of fields. So are most unfenced lines of inquiry. I learned two kinds of trespassing at the test site, geographical and intellectual.



Rebecca Solnit, *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics*







six thoughts about the indeterminacy of clouds while living inside climate change

Lisa Hirmer

1: a cloud edge



A cloud is a mass of particles—usually water droplets or ice crystals, but sometimes other things, like smoke—suspended in the atmosphere, which scatter the sunlight travelling through them, creating a thing visible to our eyes below as fluffs or wisps or whatever other cloud form you see looking up from the surface of this planet.

The edge of a cloud is the transition between the air that is laden with cloud and the air that is not. And so, the edge is a zone of change, something indeterminate, which is itself constantly changing as moving air pulls or pushes, stretching, folding, or compressing, the cloud. Where exactly a cloud edge is cannot really be determined, though there is a space of cloud and space that is not cloud. The edge, like any in-between space, is a place of constant mixing.



2: in atmosphere

The cloud hangs in the atmosphere, suspended there with cloud particles held in the gasses that make the atmospheric layer surrounding Earth. We could say that the cloud is part of the atmosphere, that it *is* atmosphere.

It would be like being in a fog, which is a sort of low-lying cloud. You and I would breathe in the fog that hangs between us, and breathe out into the fog with our cloud breath. In and out, cloud in, cloud out, hanging in cloud, pulling in cloud, part of the cloud.

Because we, too, are atmosphere. Made of it, made in it, making it around us, always, with the turn of a car key, a tensed muscle glance, and always the simplest fact of life, breathing, in and out, thousands of times each day made by the rotation of the planet.



3: climate change

We, by which I mean us planetary beings, are living inside an atmosphere of climate change where the predictabilities into which we grew into being disappear.

It's impossible to say that any one storm, any one hot day, any one fire, any one flood is caused by climate change. We can only say that on this warmed planet this storm was more likely to have happened and that more storms like it are happening now and more storms are likely to happen in the future.

But the storm did happen, with its basement sog and torn out trees, the same way the cloud does hang in the atmosphere, making a space of cloud and of not cloud, like we hang in the atmosphere, a generation laden with climate change.







4: named clouds

In 1803, Luke Howard developed a system of classifying clouds while trying to understand the relationship between the countenance of the sky and present and ensuing phenomena.¹ In his system, the infinite possibilities of clouds are organized based on their altitude in the troposphere and their form (similar to Linnaeus' classification of animals and plants), so clouds become something like cloud-species.

Wispy feathers sparkling twelve kilometres into the atmosphere would be named "cirrus." A warm front could approach and thicken the clouds into a gauzy veil. They are now "cirrostratus" and rain is likely within the day.


Like all naming systems, Howard's clouds are an imperfect capture, useful for the sake of convenience,² a shorthand to make the sky intelligible and discussable between us, all while suspended droplets of cloud drift across and through the sky above.






5: the unpredictable movement of turbulence

In turbulence a calm, predictable state of flow is disturbed by some force that causes multi-sized unsteady eddies to appear. Interacting with each other, these turbulent vortexes are highly irregular; they can't be predicted with precision. Instead, they must be treated statistically, where it is impossible to say that this will happen exactly now, only that this is more or less likely to happen.



Think of a fallen leaf or discarded snack package dancing wildly in an air current, its unpredictably making it seem as if it is haunted by some living thing.³



This turbulence isn't an inherent property of the air, or whatever substance; this complexity, this turn to unpredictability, is a property of motion.

Atmospheric turbulence—most commonly felt on airplanes by (some) humans as they hurl through the sky—is one of the most unpredictable of all the weather phenomena. It is important because it mixes and churns our atmosphere, circulating air, moisture, heat, the stuff of life.



6: problems with no general solutions

Intractable difficulties that have no general solutions⁴ work against certainty. But it is not that we don't know that the cloud is or the storm is or that climate change is. It's just that the laden air is always moving and mixing, and the ice crystals are drifting, and we breathe in the fog. The storm was wilder than predicted, and everything is moving, moving and resisting determination as ensuing phenomena. And we, laden with climate change, as the atmosphere is laden with us, live in the unsteady, multi-scaled turbulence of all things.





Notes




1. Luke Howard's "Essay on the Modification of Clouds," first published in 1803 by John Churchill and Sons (London). Howard's cloud nomenclature system was similar in strategy to Linnaeus' species classification system published in *Systema Naturae* (1735). Darwin himself went on to say in *Origin of Species* (1859) that the term species is "one arbitrarily given, for the sake of convenience."








3. Another fine example: Andrew Maize's **(s)twerH* at MacLaren Art Centre (Barrie 2022), where fans bring mylar blankets into movement.






4. Term of Professor Philippe Lavoie mentioned during the "Talking Turbulence: multi-scale chaotic problems with no general solutions" panel talk at MacLaren Art Centre (2022) with Andrew Maize and Lisa Hirmer.





In the midst of calls to "get back to normal," this book was written in *Kairos* for *Kairos*—for a vanishing window in which the time is ripe. In any moment, we can choose whom and what we perceive as existing in time, just as we can choose to believe that time is the site of unpredictability and potential rather than inevitability and helplessness. In that sense, changing how we think about time is more than a means for confronting personal despair, in a catastrophic meantime.








It can also be a call to action in a world whose current state can't be taken for granted any more than it's actors can remain unnamed, exploited or abandoned. I believe a real meditation on the nature of time unbound from its every day incarnation, shows that neither our lives, nor the life of the planet is a foregone conclusion. In that sense, the idea that we could "save" time—by recovering its fundamentally, irreducible and inventive nature—could also mean that time saves us.





Jenny Odell, *Saving Time*





Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed. Not indeed that we personally are needed. Others would meet the case equally well, if not better. To all mankind they were addressed, those cries for help still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. Let us make the most of it, before it is too late! Let us represent worthily for one the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us! What do you say? It is true that when with folded arms we weigh the pros and cons we are no less a credit to our species. The tiger bounds to the help of his congeners without the least reflexion, or else he slinks away into the depths of the thickets. But that is not the question. What are we doing here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in the immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot...



Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*






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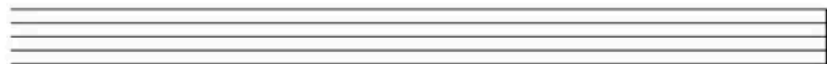
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