



Weather or Not

1 July – 25 September 2016

“Don’t you just love global warming,” Dutch people comment on a nice sunny day. Ten years after the apocalyptic message of *An Inconvenient Truth* (Al Gore, 2006), we seem to respond with pragmatism rather than fear. We separate our trash, put solar panels on our roofs and we just wait and see if there’s any need for more drastic measures. Our perspective on the climate and the weather has changed, however. In the MU exhibition *Weather or Not*, from 1 July to 25 September 2016, fourteen artists show recent and new works that zoom in on how we brave the elements.

Climate change is nothing new. During the last ice age, 110,000 to 11,700 years ago, the ocean waters were 120 meters below their present levels. Mammoths and humans were living where the North Sea now lies – land that disappeared once the



PRESS RELEASE

Opening

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Exhibition

1 July – 25 September 2016

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IMAGE:
Hanneke Wetzter

glaciers started to melt. And 5,000 years ago, the lush savannas of North Africa gradually changed into the largest desert on earth.

True: there is a difference. Five thousand years ago, 7 million people inhabited the earth and now they are 7 billion. A rise in ocean water levels of just one meter effects the lives of hundreds of millions of people worldwide. In *Water Chapters* Gideo Mendel captures communities that have been hit by floods. His videos inadvertently make you think of the biblical Deluge – which automatically brings up the next difference: the waters do not rise on Gods command, it is all our doing.

If we have to, we even make it rain. *Vapor – The Movability of Clouds* by Esther Kokmeijer shows the remains of a rocket used in China to shoot silver iodide into the sky where it condensates the clouds to make it rain. Alistair McClymont seems to take our control over the elements to another level. Raindrop, a motionless drop of water hovering in mid-air, elicits the eerie sensation that the laws of nature have been suspended. The title of the tornado he summons up in MU, *The imitations of Logic and the Absence of Absolute Certainty*, refers to the boundaries of what we are able to proof – even if it is true.

In 350 BC, Aristoteles – who else? – was the first to describe the hydrological cycle of sea water that is heated by the sun and evaporates, rises high up in the air where it cools down, condensates and returns to the earth as rain. The work *aKA, the 'cloud farming' solution* by Rihards Vitols happily uses these principles by sending balloons up in the sky to collect pure water that can serve as a source for irrigation in areas where the ground water has become too contaminated to use.

For nearly two thousand years, Aristoteles' *Meteorologica* served as an authority. This only changed with 17th-century inventions like the thermometer, the barometer, the hygrometer (humidity) and anemometer (wind speed) and with new theories about weather dynamics. By the 19th century, data collected with the new measuring instruments led to the weather forecasts and the weather charts with their high- and low-pressure areas, temperatures and wind directions that we still know today.

Dissatisfied with these abstract representations of weather conditions, several artists have been looking for more personal and poetic ways to interpret them. Alike van der Kruijs captures the rain on textile in *Made by Rain*. In *Weather or Not* she shows *Cumulonimbus – Hail*, a series of works brought about by hail. *Rain Works* by

About MU

MU is an adventurous guide in the suburbs of art of today and tomorrow, for a wide and mainly young audience.

MU offers breeding ground for hybrid talents. MU is an open and dynamic space. MU's program exudes the 21st-century practice of creative multidisciplinary collaboration.

Niels Bakkerus does exactly the opposite: he makes graffiti with an invisible, water repellent spray that only appears when it rains. David Bowen's *Tele-present Wind* records the movement of a dried plant stalk waving in the wind somewhere outside and passes it on to 42 mechanically driven stalks in the exhibition space.

The *Heliophone*, installed on MU's roof by Aernoudt Jacobs, tracks the sun and translates its light without any electrical amplification into sounds that are emitted by a large horn. And in the *Weather, Feathers and Frost* pavilion Martijn Koomen uses whirling eider down to turn information about temperature, humidity and wind speed into the visual equivalent of a snow storm.

Koomen's work seems to pay tribute to *Snow*, a 15 meter wide glass case that Japanese artist Tokujin Yoshioka filled with dwindling feathers to bring the experience of a snowy landscape into the museum in 2010. But it is also reminiscent of the famous painting *Hunters in the Snow* made by Pieter Bruegel the Elder in 1565. The people seem tiny and insignificant in the vast snowy landscape under a low grey sky, the hunt hasn't been successful by the looks of it and every detail in the work contributes to the feeling of a severely cold winter.

In music, the weather has been present at least since Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* from 1725. Keeping these compositions in mind might help you tune your ears to the work of Jelle Mastenbroek. In his installation *Ik ga weermuziek maken (I will make weather music)* a wheel harp is driven by the measurements from a weather station outside MU. Its tempo is determined by the wind, the rhythm by air pressure and the melody by temperature.

The recurrent tendency among artists to translate natural phenomena into works that provide people indoors with a sense of what is happening outside can at least partly be explained as a reaction to urbanisation and pervasive climate control in homes and offices. Without doubt, the trend reached its zenith in 2003 with *The Weather Project* by Olafur Eliasson, that emulated the sky and the sun in Tate Modern's immense turbine hall.

Coelux Systems 45 HC could be seen as its industrial counterpart. This artificial skylight, developed by professor Paolo Di Trapani of Italian company CoeLux, is indistinguishable from a real one. Regardless of the weather conditions outside, the sun is shining in MU. There are always clouds overhead as well, by the way, thanks to

Commonplace Studio's installation *Lumière* that consists of glass spheres filled with drifting skies.

Berndnaut Smilde reverses outside and indoors in the opposite direction with *Spectrum MU*, using a large prism to project a rainbow from inside the exhibition space onto the opposite Klokgebouw. And that leads us back into the open air, where Rob Sweere invites people to break free from their daily routine just by looking at the sky for half an hour, as part of his *Silent Sky Project*.

Weather or Not is like a weather station where measurements and observations are transformed into images, sound and movement. We follow the changes from moment to moment, while it slowly dawns on us that we humans are only a tiny factor in the unpredictable climate system. The consequences of what we set in motion obviously can't be overseen. Meanwhile, come rain or shine, MU keeps a weather eye on any relevant developments!

Editor's note

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