

K1 Curated Exhibition or Produced Substantial Public Event

The Trouble with the Weather: a southern response UTS Gallery 2007, co-curated by Norie Neumark, Jacqueline Bosscher, and Maria Miranda

Exhibition Catalogue ISBN 978-0-646-47771-8

Research Background

At a time when global warming was both urgent and overwhelming, there was a dearth of exhibitions dedicated to the issue that made room for audiences to engage in new ways. There was a need to bring together a range of art works that spoke to the issue, to an exhibition space, and to each other in ways that allowed people (new) ways to engage with global warming, to find their own ways of thinking and responding. As global warming was an emotionally and politically overloaded topic, there was a need for non-didactic exhibitions that opened thinking up as to how the uneasy relationship between technology, nature and culture was being unsettled once more.

Research Contribution

The artists in the Trouble with the Weather responded to weather events and to the weather as event -- psychically, 'pataphysically, emotionally and aesthetically in ways that opened the issue up for audiences. It featured a range of significant southern hemisphere artists including Elizabeth Day, David Haines & Joyce Hinterding (Aus), Jonathan Jones, Zina Kaye, Dani Marti, Janine Randerson, Te Vaka, John Tonkin and H J Wedge.

Research Significance

The importance of the exhibition (and its catalogue) was demonstrated by the funding it gained from Luca Belgiorno-Nettis, UTS, City of Sydney and the Australia Council for the Arts. It was featured and reviewed in SMH, RealTime and Loop Magazine. "Despite the undercurrent of urgency and desperation in the subject matter, many of the works took a whimsical approach, from Dani Marti's suburban kitsch sculpture made from pool noodles to Joyce Hinterding's beautiful ink splattered diagrams for cloud engineering and, of course, Neumark and Miranda's own contribution. Consequently, and without stridency, the overarching issues operate as a kind of climate in which the works can dwell and evolve." Gail Priest, **RealTime** 80, 2007. The catalogue was acquired by the Guggenheim Museum, NYC.

Exhibition Site: <http://www.weathertrouble.net/curators.html>

The Trouble with the Weather: a southern response

3 July - 3 August, 2007

Co-curated by Jacqueline Bosscher, Maria Miranda & Norie Neumark

Curatorial Statement

Jacqueline Bosscher, Maria Miranda & Norie Neumark

The Trouble with the Weather

"It was a dark and stormy night..." Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, *Paul Clifford*

Stormy weather. Sultry conditions. A blindingly bright sun. From art and literature to popular culture, the weather has painted the background, been a signal of the emotional climate or a portent of unsettling action to come. Meanwhile in the everyday, the weather has also been background noise -- the stuff of banal exchange -- smoothing contact between strangers, friends and others. But no more.

Now, in a time of changing weather and global warming, it is our relationship with the weather that has become stormy and disturbed. It is the weather itself that is the subject of our emotions.

The moment that we are now living in is full with not just global warming but its reverberations through every level of culture. Something has changed. Powerful elemental forces only recently thought to be knowable through our scientific and technological prowess seem now to be unpredictable and unleashed.

Of course, it's not that the weather hasn't been trouble before. But now the trouble is that we don't quite know what to make of it, and it feels urgent. The media, meteorologists, politicians, environmentalists are vying to shape our understanding and emotional responses to what we perceive and know. The uneasy relationship between technology, nature and culture is unsettled once more. Are we 'inside' nature or are we 'outside' it? Prey to nature's forces or affecting and controlling it? The very question of control is upset and upsetting.

Why a southern response as the basis for this exhibition? The South is an important idea in the history of the West. For many centuries climate has helped to define the South, offering a *natural* explanation for human diversity. With Western expansion into the southern hemisphere difference was measured by the norm 'back home'. The centre was elsewhere, the South Pacific was a periphery, and the periphery "was a place where distortions of human nature were associated with climatic excess."²

The Trouble with the Weather: a southern response brings together artists from the South Pacific, Australia and South America, working across media, to respond to global warming. Using humour and the absurd, displays of excess, sensual environments, intense imagination, and personal and emotional responses, the artists offer us new ways to engage with this politically overloaded and emotionally charged subject.

"A change in the weather is sufficient to recreate the world and ourselves."

Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*

1 Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, *Paul Clifford*

2 Lucian Boia, *Weather in the Imagination*

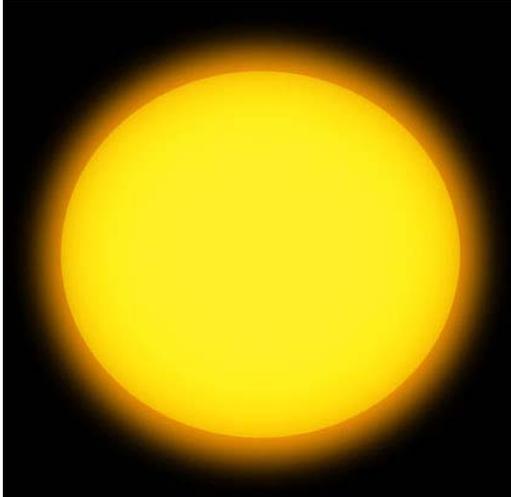
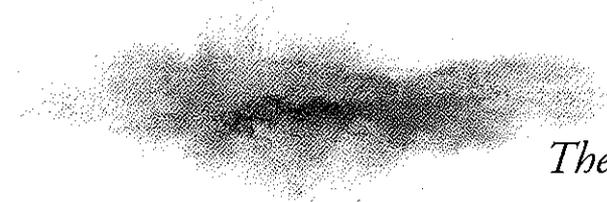


image: David Haines *Study for Hydrogen Alpha Series*, 2007, digital image.

Courtesy of the artist

120 x 120 cm



The Trouble with the Weather: a southern response

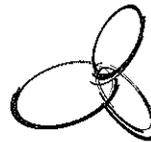
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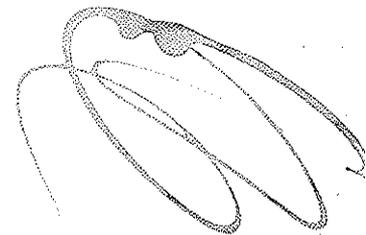
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Hotter summers, more storms, water restrictions, devastating droughts and other signs of global warming would appear to have finally catalyzed an increased awareness of the changing condition of our planet.

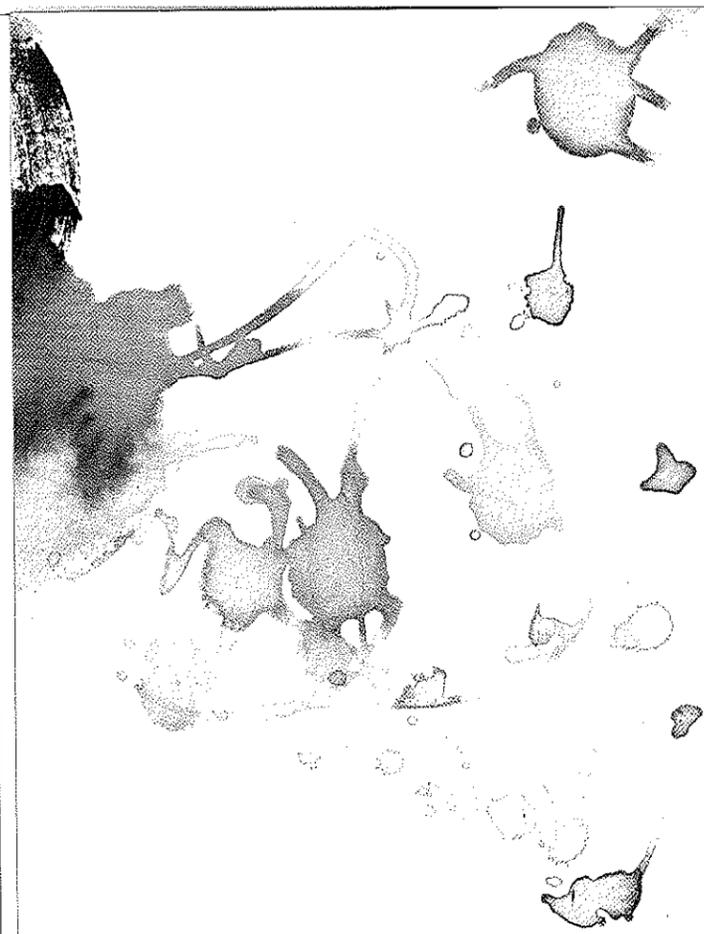
To have effect, this awareness needs to be continually raised and re-enforced. UTS is proud to host the exhibition *The Trouble with the Weather: a southern response* as part of a broader Environmental Sustainability Initiative (ESI) being undertaken at the university. We hope that through the ESI the university can make significant environmental sustainability contributions to the community at large, as well as increase awareness of the issues at hand. The ESI will focus on coordinating information and activities taking place at the university that pertain to water, energy, transport, recycling and waste management, buildings and procurement - all in an effort to reduce our environmental impact on the planet.

We would like to welcome you to a highly creative, and hopefully emotive, exhibition responding to the impact of global warming on the weather and ourselves.

Sincere thanks to the artists, curators Jacqueline Bosscher, Maria Miranda and Norie Neumark, and exhibition sponsors Luca and Anita Belgiorno Nettis.

Patrick Woods

Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Vice-President (Resources) University of Technology Sydney



Curators:

Jacqueline Bosscher

Maria Miranda

Norie Neumark

www.weathertrouble.net

Artists

Isabel Aranda

Peter Bennetts

Vera Biggetti,

Elizabeth Day

David Haines & Joyce Hinterding,

Niki Hastings-McFall

Jonathan Jones & Jim Vivieaere

Zina Kaye

Dani Marti

Maria Miranda & Norie Neumark

Jason Nelson

Regina Pinto

Janine Randerson

Te Vaka,

John Tonkin

H J Wedge

Catalogue Illustrator/Designer

Yiyi Lu





The Trouble with the Weather: a southern response

"It was a dark and stormy night..."¹

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Jacqueline Bosscher, Maria Miranda & Norie Neumark
Curators

¹ Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, Paul Clifford

² Lucian Boia, *Weather in the Imagination*

³ Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*

16 Theses on Meteorological Art

Sean Cubitt

Kant noted that innocence was a splendid thing, but didn't keep well, and tended to be misled. We cannot afford to be innocent about the weather, but we do not know where to go for wisdom. The blasphemous desire to see the spectacular extremes of weather is not innocent, but neither is it wise.

There was a collective sigh of relief breathed in the middle of the nineteenth century when Sir Thomas Huxley, the doyen of British science, announced that the oceans were to all intents and purposes infinite. We might take from and dump into them as much as we wanted: they would be forever fecund and forgiving. It took the spectacular collapse of the Atlantic fisheries, even more than the near-extinction of several species of whale, to persuade anyone otherwise.

Water and air: the facts of the south are oceanic. As refugees from the dead Atlantic ply further south to feed the gourmets of Paris and New York, what

price our islands and shores, what price our ice and swelling El Niño?

The iconic weather maps with their sweeping curves decorated with triangles and semicircles were inspired by maps of battlefields. The language of 'fronts' comes from the same source. The weather, for almost as long as there has been anything like a science of meteorology, has had its metaphorical roots in war. The satellite technology we use now puts the weather under surveillance. Defence against the elements: we have made the climate in our own image, and it has become our enemy.

1962: the year of the Cuban missile crisis, also saw the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, the book that launched ecology as a global political movement. In less than fifty years, we have moved from the fear that politicians would annihilate us through their actions to the fear that they will annihilate us through their inaction.

The Saturday papers in late May 2007 carried a brief notice of the opinion of a group of researchers that the terrestrial biomass may have passed the point at which it is capable of sequestering the carbon that the human population produces. The catastrophe may already have happened, while we dickered over blame.

Even as the Weddell Sea divulges a hundred new species in the dark depths below the ice, the ice is melting and their habitat expiring. Was our species the only great experiment of consciousness? Will the universe bother trying it again?

A catastrophe is not a crisis. It occurs as often as not quite quietly, while we walk the dog, or pickle lemons. It is only days, weeks, months later that you realise that somewhere back in the past the crucial nail fell out of the roof, the vital pipe began its slow leak. A crisis, by contrast, is a sudden loss: we recognise a crisis because, suddenly, the

news reports have no images to show us. A crisis is a moment for which the response is pure action. There is no ecological crisis: only a catastrophe. Now is not the time for action. Now is the time for talk. And for images, songs, perfumes, pretty clothes and good cuisine.

Political inaction may have brought about this state of affairs, but political action is probably the most dangerous of all possible tools to apply to rectifying it. Ecofascism is also fascism.

It is enormously difficult to see the planet, even with our iconic photograph from the Apollo moon lander (the last true photograph ever taken in space). "Free the human six billion" is not a slogan that will rally the world. The portentous music and slick graphics of news programs on TV are there to persuade us that the world is knowable, exactly because in our hearts we know that it is not.

Weather is definitionally what we cannot know as a whole: this is why it is the commonest example of emergent behaviours in chaotic systems. We consider the butterfly effect, and begin to retrace its logic: how does a hurricane in New Orleans effect the butterfly in China? (If Milton Friedman had read Kipling's *Butterfly Who Stamped* instead of *The Wealth of Nations* (things might have gone better, or at least otherwise). The interconnecting turbines of the four southern oceans are as unknown to us as galaxies on the far side of space, but no longer so distant.

Because the weather is our enemy, we have been covering in artificial caves for millennia. We have the technologies that would allow us to turn our houses inside out, to publish

our intimacies in ubiquitous networks. Instead we have invested in smaller artificial caves with wheels, which we use to transport the three-piece suite of the frightened living room around streets on which we no longer care to walk because of all the other frightened caves rolling around them. In the age of instantaneous communication, we sit gridlocked and fuming.

In the information economy, human creativity is held, like Huxley's oceans, to be effectively infinite. No matter what we dump in it, and how much we extract, will it forever produce energy and ideas from calories? Creativity may yet turn out to be a finite resource. We must nurture it, because we do not know what it is for. This is not an analogy with Huxley's oceans: it is the same case.

We do not know what oil is for. In 1856, then aged eighteen, William Henry Perkin extracted the first aniline dye from coal tar. We have no notion what riches, what cures, what marvels lie hidden in the long-chain organic compounds formed in the Earth's crust. So we set fire to it. Saddam Hussein merely cut out the middleman.

Climate change has become the cause célèbre of our times, so much so that politicians can reanimate what we all had hoped was the decaying corpse of nuclear power. I write this sentence of a machine whose built-in obsolescence would have embarrassed Detroit in 1962, and which is destined for the miserable recycling villages of the Philippines. "Kyoto" has become a slogan for the ecofascist tendencies of the society of control. The only way to avoid catastrophe is to want less. Art is not very good at that. Art is not a way of avoiding catastrophe, but a way of defusing crisis.

"A poem should begin in delight and end in wisdom" wrote Robert Lowell (the best thing he ever wrote). What we call creativity is the struggle between reality and the imagination. To the extent that that struggle has no end, it will never achieve wisdom. It may never escape from innocence. But without creativity's start in innocent delight, we will never truly recognise the dangers of innocence.

Sean Cubitt
Program Director and Chair of Media & Communications,
University of Melbourne



Dialogue on a new world view

Jade Herriman & Stuart White

The world is but a perennial movement. All things in it are in constant motion – the earth, the rocks of the Caucasus, the pyramids of Egypt – both with the common motion and with their own

- Michel de Montaigne

In 1543 Nicolaus Copernicus's book *On the Revolution of the Heavenly Spheres* was published, challenging the long held view that the earth stood still at the centre of the universe and that all heavenly bodies revolved around it.

Galileo's *Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems*, Ptolemaic and Copernican (1632) outlined his theoretical considerations, astrological observations and methodological analysis, supporting a sun-centered view of the universe. It also triggered his trial by the Roman Catholic Inquisition in 1633 and resulted in his condemnation as a heretic and the banning of the book. Although this is often discussed as an example of church – science conflict, many theorists observe that in fact he had clergymen amongst his supporters and scientists taking the opposite side, therefore this might more accurately be considered a split between progressive and conservative attitudes, and the episode illustrates the interaction between science and politics, between science and society and between individual freedom and institutional authority.

"We ought not to be too anxious respecting the opinions of others. ... Those who are bold enough to advance before the age they live in... must learn to brave censure."

- Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

For a century and a half the relative merits of the two views of the solar system were under debate. The change in thinking was slow, and the debate was controversial and highly charged. This is the history behind the current day almost universally held understanding that the earth, along with other planets is in orbit around the sun.

Is this similar to the change that is currently taking place in our thinking about climate change?

"We are entering the Oh Shit era of global warming."

- *Rolling Stone Magazine*, 3 November, 2005

There has been a view that people could use and change any aspect of the planet as they wished and it would improve our lives. The thinking was that the world was predictable, manageable and controllable. This view is being challenged. The world is a complex system with feedback loops, and change can be unpredictable.

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward let us range,

Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change."

- Alfred Tennyson

And yet, is it all bad news? Some remind us that if we as a species are capable of creating the technology and impetus that can change the weather in 200 years, we are surely also capable of dreaming up and bringing into being a suitable response that reflects a new world view.

Scientific American columnist and skeptic Michael Shermer recently commented:

[D]ata trump politics, and a convergence of evidence from numerous sources has led me to make a cognitive switch on the subject of anthropogenic climate change. ... Because of the complexity of the problem, environmental skepticism was once tenable. No longer. It is time to flip from skepticism to activism.

The future depends entirely on what each of us does every day ... a movement is only people moving."

- Gloria Steinem

So yes, we know what needs to be done. The solutions are staring us in the mirror. It is us that have constructed this path that is being followed, and it is us that can choose to strike out on a new one. On that new path lies a different range of uncertainties and opportunities, and a different set of possible futures. Those futures will be more equitable, more gentle on the planet and inspire hope rather than encourage fear.

They will be the realization of a different world view.

In two or three hundred years life on earth will be unimaginably beautiful, astounding. Man needs such a life and if it hasn't yet appeared, he should begin to anticipate it, wait for it, dream about it, prepare for it. To achieve this, he has to see and know more than did his grandfather and father."

- Anton Pavlovich Chekhov

Jade Herriman &
Stuart White, Director
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The trouble with the weather – a southern response

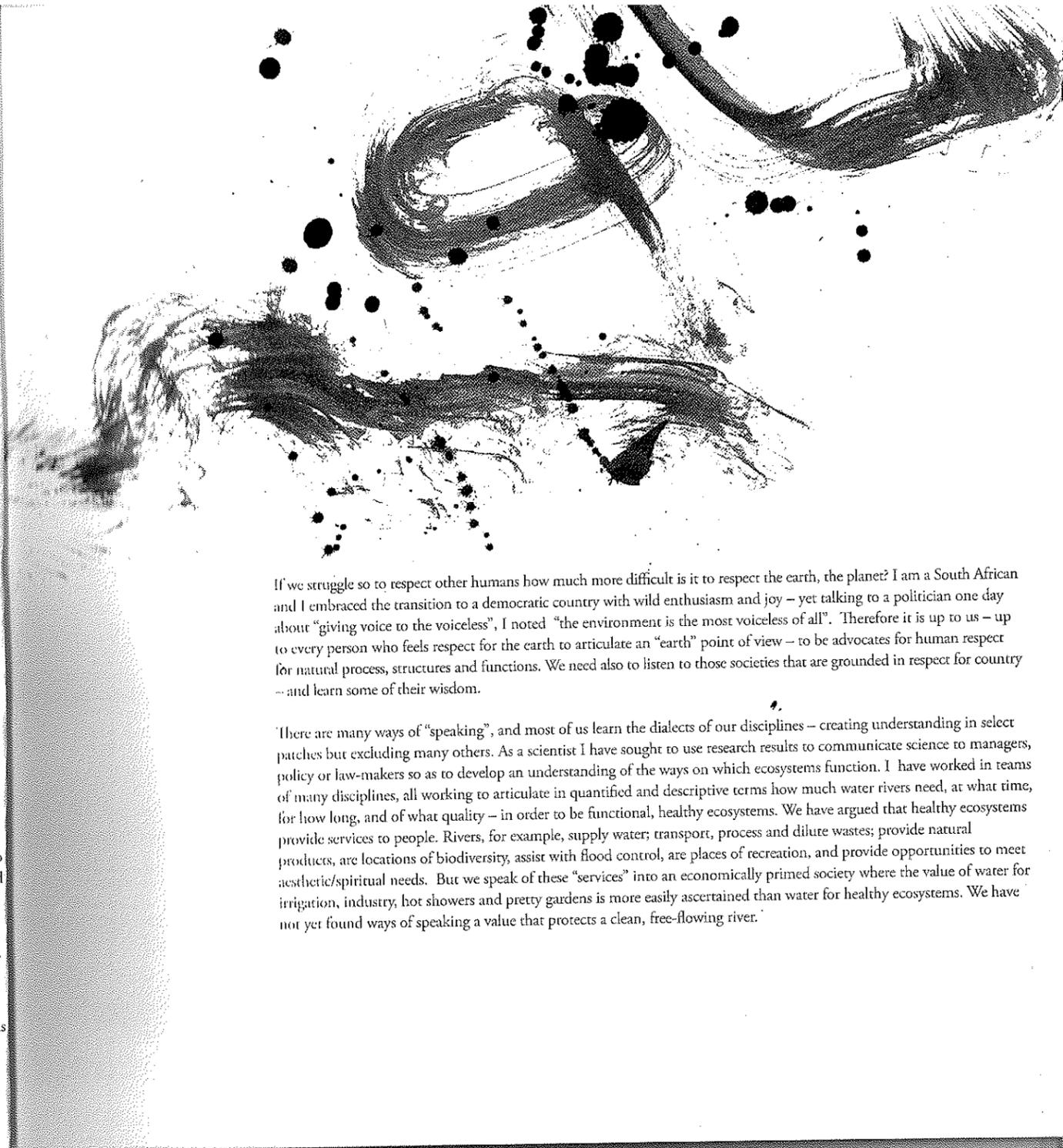
Tally Palmer

Take a globe and look at it from the bottom, from underneath, from below – from the south. A great ice-covered landmass spirals out into connected oceans, with fingers of land trailing in. The thin curl of Tierra del Fuego, land of fire and ice, the southern tip of Africa, Australia – the “southern land” itself – and scatterings of islands. This southern perspective is ocean driven – and it is the great ocean currents that drive the world’s weather.

The weather is that ultimate panacea of human conversation – something universally understood, and of universal concern – whether driving survival or fashion design, the weather is always interesting. Over the last years the weather has made it increasingly into the headlines, moving from individual to global conversation. There is a rising tenor of concern and even an undercurrent of fear. Global warming climate change, drought, storms, social and economic patterns driven awry by – nature?

It is a long time since natural processes featured much as the drivers of human planning. We have long since “tamed” the jungle – and coping with the weather has become the domain of design, with clothes, houses, offices and cars all designed to keep us “comfortable” and “in the zone”. In our cities we have found comfort and convenience, but we have lost respect; and with that, lost curiosity; and with that lost sensitivity to warning signals; and with that, we have courted disaster....

What is respect? Increasingly I believe that respect is the cornerstone of good relationship. Respect means looking at “the other” wholly and honestly, seeking to recognise similarity and difference, to learn the other and to share the self, and to use a richness of senses to understand the space between self and the other. (Benedictines are called to “listen with the ear of the heart”.) It is in that space that respect is given, received and grown. This works between individuals in regard to all the separating and identifying features we recognise as distinguishing ourselves from another. People of different ages, gender, race, tribe, sexual persuasion, belief, colour, and even political views can, through respect, engage in building relationship. As humans we have language and image to explore notions of respect, and yet even with these powerful tools we fail dismally. Out of disrespect grows oppression, discrimination, resentment, rebellion and ultimately, war.



If we struggle so to respect other humans how much more difficult is it to respect the earth, the planet? I am a South African and I embraced the transition to a democratic country with wild enthusiasm and joy – yet talking to a politician one day about “giving voice to the voiceless”, I noted “the environment is the most voiceless of all”. Therefore it is up to us – up to every person who feels respect for the earth to articulate an “earth” point of view – to be advocates for human respect for natural process, structures and functions. We need also to listen to those societies that are grounded in respect for country – and learn some of their wisdom.

There are many ways of “speaking”, and most of us learn the dialects of our disciplines – creating understanding in select patches but excluding many others. As a scientist I have sought to use research results to communicate science to managers, policy or law-makers so as to develop an understanding of the ways on which ecosystems function. I have worked in teams of many disciplines, all working to articulate in quantified and descriptive terms how much water rivers need, at what time, for how long, and of what quality – in order to be functional, healthy ecosystems. We have argued that healthy ecosystems provide services to people. Rivers, for example, supply water; transport, process and dilute wastes; provide natural products, are locations of biodiversity, assist with flood control, are places of recreation, and provide opportunities to meet aesthetic/spiritual needs. But we speak of these “services” into an economically primed society where the value of water for irrigation, industry, hot showers and pretty gardens is more easily ascertained than water for healthy ecosystems. We have not yet found ways of speaking a value that protects a clean, free-flowing river.

In the third of four quartets – The Dry Salvages, T.S. Eliot wrote”

*I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river
Is a strong brown god — sullen, untamed and intractable,
Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier;
Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce;
Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges.
The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten
By the dwellers in cities — ever, however, implacable.
Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder
Of what men choose to forget. Unhonoured, unpropitiated
By worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching and waiting.*

The poet caught much of what scientists went on to describe for many subsequent decades. Humans use natural resources for social and economic benefit, but most resource-use damages ecosystems. We are less good at knowing when to be restrained, when and what to protect, nurture and value, than when to exploit. We resist the notion of intrinsic value, except, perhaps, of human life. In the next decades the huge challenge will be to transcend boundaries, to speak in and to hear many languages and voices and to become conversant with different ways of speaking and hearing. This exhibition challenges us. The images and sounds break into our senses, perhaps more clearly than other, more linear ways of understanding. These luminous works call out for adventure, courage and a willingness learning new ways of thinking. New ways of tackling this trouble with the weather....

Climate change puts everything under more pressure. Possibly the most difficult pressure is the uncertainty. Weather, like all natural patterns, is variable – this makes it more difficult to detect change. Was Katrina just another cyclone? Are the poles just unseasonally warm? Is Al Gore right with his maps of drowned coastal cities? Is this just another drought? – or is it the start of a new system of weather? We don't know yet – but if it is a change, then more than ever we need to review our value systems and find ways to protect ecosystems.

What then is the special role of the southern perspective? Well, in this half of the world there is more ocean, less land, fewer people, more stars. We have the milky-way and the southern cross. With this alternative view, with these special attributes, can we inspire a new perspective, can we give the earth a powerful voice through image, sound, words, and action?

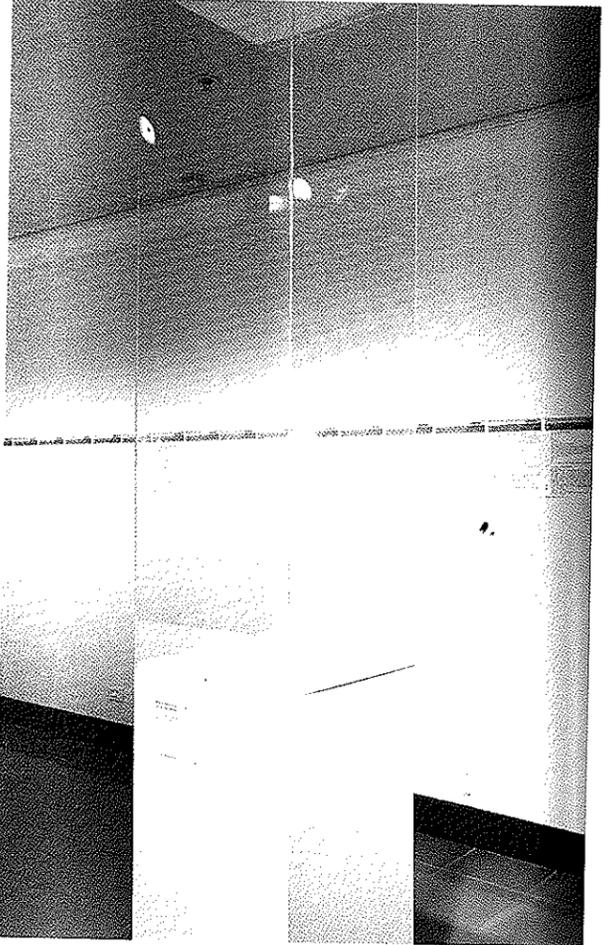
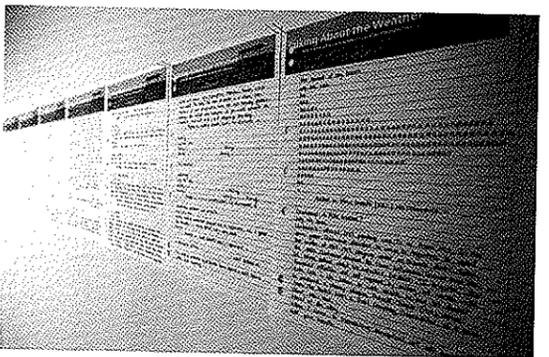
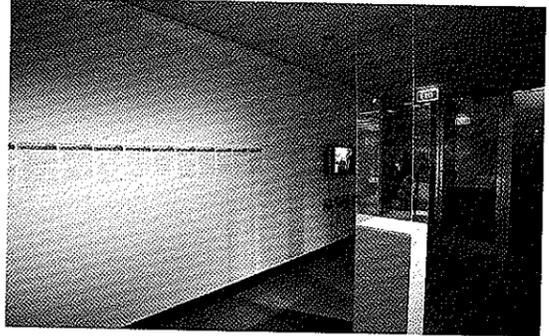
Tilly Palmer
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www.out-of-sync.com



Sound/Video breath: collected on the streets in northern and southern hemisphere

Facing Page:
Text breath: collected on blog www.scanz.net.nz/weathertalk
Selections from Southern Hemisphere Breath Collection



Talking about the Weather, 2006-7

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