

Editorial by Julien Knebusch

The Perception of Climate Change

Western societies have progressively dissolved their ancestral link to climate, a link that was critical: the quest for food. This is largely a result of massive urbanization and the development of the modern lifestyle. It has been possible to observe a deterioration of sensitivity to meteorology and climate.

Today, very few professions still reveal a direct relationship to climate; our intuitive understanding of it is thus weakened. Artificial indoor climates have given us a sort of second skin but also leveled our general experience of climate. Until recently, in consumer societies, the weather forecast has mainly been used for the organization of one's leisure, and "talking about the weather" has a social function. It is no surprise, then, that the science of meteorology is still believed to be one of the last "objective" sciences.

From a scientific point of view, climate can be divided into a series of meteorological parameters such as temperature, air pressure, humidity, wind force, etc. However, climate seems impossible to conceive as a totality except in subjective terms [1]. Climate exists as such only for a corporeal and sensitive being and can be regarded, phenomenologically speaking, as a landscape.

Landscape does not exist in nature without the eye, which grasps an expanse of land as a landscape. Climate's existence is similar. The perception of climate is the perception of an arrangement, a configuration of the real. Climate is thus a multidimensional phenomenon in which are combined the contributions of nature, culture, history and geography, but also the imaginary and the symbolic.

Art could help us to question our perceptions and relationships to the climate and its changes. Artistic explorations should not be restricted to illustrating

our scientific discoveries, as is done in contemporary climate-change showcases. Art should instead help us to experience and reveal our inner participation with climate, the rupture of its balance and its meaning for our inner world, in the same way that landscape artists reframed the relationship of humans to their environment.

Over the past few years, Leonardo has been actively working with artists involved in work related to the perception of climate change. A number of texts have been published and a discussion list has been created to stimulate further discussion [2]. Recently in Valencia, Spain, Leonardo/OLATS co-sponsored the conference Expanding the Space, which included presentations on related topics [3]. Leonardo welcomes proposals for involvement in these issues, and the Leonardo publications are seeking to document the work of artists, researchers and scholars involved in topics relating to climate change.

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References and Notes

1. Gernot Böhme, "Das Wetter und die Gefühle. Für eine Phänomenologie des Wetters," in *Luft* (Bonn, Germany: Wienand, Schriftenreihe Forum Band 12, 2003) pp. 148–161.
2. The discussion list is hosted by the YASMIN network: <www.media.uoa.gr/yasmin/viewtopic.php?t=942>. For recent and forthcoming writing relating to climate change published by Leonardo/ISAST, see Andrea Polli, "Atmospheres/Weather Works: A Spatialized Meteorological Data Sonification Project," *Leonardo* 38, No. 1 (2005) pp. 31–36; Andrea Polli, "Heat and the Heartbeat of the City: Sonifying Data Describing Climate Change," *Leonardo Music Journal* 16 (2006) pp. 44–45; George Gessert, "Gathered from Coincidence: Reflections on Art in a Time of Global Warming," *Leonardo*, forthcoming.
3. See <http://www.olats.org/space/colloques/expanding-space/mono_index.php>.