Press Release

THE WIND

"THAT WHICH CANNOT BE PAINTED."

MuMa
André Malraux Museum of Modern Art, Le Havre

25 June to 2 October 2022
An "Un Été Au Havre"
(A Summer In Le Havre)
exhibition

François GÉRARD,
Flore caressée par Zéphyr, 1802,
Oil on canvas, 169 x 105 cm,
Musée de Grenoble, donated by Léon de Beylié in 1900

THE WIND

"THAT WHICH CANNOT BE PAINTED."

Since time immemorial, the wind has presented humankind with a challenge. How can you depict something that is invisible? This exhibition explores the means by which visual artists have tried to solve this conundrum and illustrates how depictions of the wind have evolved through the ages, as our understanding of the wind as a phenomenon has improved.

The invention of cinema, which made it possible to show movement over time, was crucial. Before that, the wind could only be depicted by means of a still image.

The exhibition itinerary features 170 artworks - paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, videos, glassware, etc. - by over 100 artists from classical times to the present day, including Dürer, Goya, Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes, Hiroshige, Hokusai, François Gérard, Turner, Corot, Hugo, Daumier, Millet, Nadar, Boudin, Daum, Monet, Renoir, Gallé, Steinlen, Anquetin, the Lumière brothers, Sorolla, Vallotton, Vlaminck, van Dongen, Raoul Dufy, Arp, Man Ray, Lartigue, Buster Keaton, Brassaï, Gilbert Garcin, Alexandre Hollan, Bernard Moninot, Corinne Mercadier, Philippe Favier, Éric Bourret and Jean-Baptiste Née, ...

How can "that which cannot be painted" be embodied - that which "eludes direct imitation and goes beyond the territory assigned to representation by combining inconsistency with invisibility"? Perhaps the answers featured in this exhibition will show us that "in painting, the wind appears miraculously, like a figurative epiphany, to prove the absolute sovereignty of art." (Pascale Dubus)

Exhibition Curators
Annette Haudiquet, Director of MuMa
Jacqueline Salmon, photographer
Jean-Christian Fleury, art critic

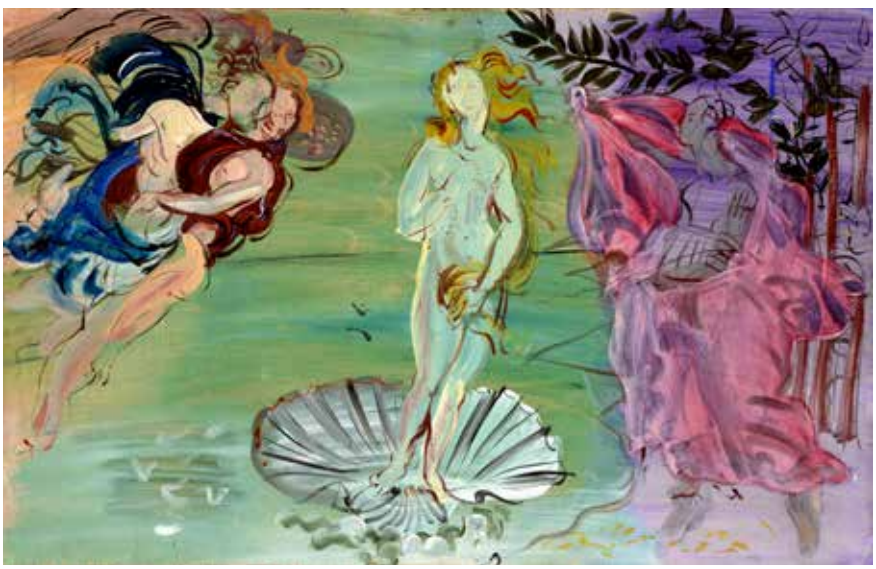
EMBODIMENTS OF THE WIND

In Book II of his *Meteorologica*, Aristotle writes that, after demonstrating that there were four elements, his predecessors identified four wind gods among the invisible forces governing the air. Vitruvius' *Architecture* (I,6), written two centuries later, includes a town plan that takes wind directions into account. Vitruvious worked from a description of the octagonal Tower of the Winds in Athens designed a few years earlier by the astronomer Andronicus Cyrrhestes: "He set up a bronze figure of Triton with a rod in his right hand. The engine was designed so that when Triton turned, he was always facing the wind that was blowing and pointing the rod in the direction from which it came." The Tower of the Winds is still standing. Carved on its sides are the oldest surviving depictions of the embodiments of the eight winds with their attributes. Each indicates one of the directions of the weather-vane. On the Athenian Tower of the Winds, science and personification are not mutually exclusive but comfortably rub shoulders.

The wind is embodied by deities in human form. For Alain Corbin, the imaginary conception of the winds based on wind-gods in Greek and Roman mythology and the narratives that stem from it, such as the *Odyssey*, and later on the Bible, endeavoured to make up for their inexplicability. The exhibition will explore early responses by artists to the challenge of representing the wind through narrative and personification, which lasted well beyond classical times and the Renaissance and featured characters such as Aeolus, Boreas and Zephyrus, Ulysses battling with adverse winds, and the four Angels of the Apocalypse.

Hendrick GOLTZIUS

Zéphyr et Orithye, les vents chassant la pluie, Seventeenth century,
Oil on canvas, 157 x 104.5 cm, Ajaccio, Palais Fesch,
Musée des Beaux-arts © RMN-Grand Palais / Gérard Blot



Raoul DUFY

Vénus Anadyomène d'après Botticelli, c. 1945,
Oil on plywood, 42.6 x 66 cm,
Paris, Centre Pompidou, MNAM/CCI, Bequest by Madame Raoul Dufy, 1963 © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Jean-François Tomasian
© ADAGP, Paris, 2022

HOW TO PAINT THE WIND?

During the Renaissance, artists tried to devise forms that were equivalent to nature as they observed it. Numerous treatises on painting were written, and the topic of how to depict storms was hugely popular. Leon Battista Alberti described the various movements that occurred when "hair, branches, foliage and cloth" were blown by the wind, warning that "all movements should be measured and easeful and should suggest grace rather than exciting admiration for the painter's labours." (*De Pictura*, 1441)

In the early sixteenth century, Leonardo da Vinci wrote several founding texts about air, storms, the wind, the flight of birds and so on. "The wind itself is not visible," he wrote. "In the air, we see not the movement of the wind but that of the things it carries away, and only these are visible." Short essays such as "How to paint the wind" and "How to depict tempests" offered painters practical advice. The question of how to depict the wind is approached via description: the blowing of the wind can only be perceived through its effects. Everything moveable - vegetation, especially trees, raging waves, the angle of boats' masts, figures battling the wind, and clothing - shows the unseen presence of the wind, sometimes frenzied gusts (there are countless references to "blasts of wind"), sometimes a light, caressing breeze, sometimes a Creator who brings sails and linen to life. These treatises set out rules for depicting the wind that were followed for at least three centuries.

Joseph VERNET

Paysage. Le Coup de tonnerre, c. 1763-1769, Oil on canvas, 50 x 64 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des peintures
© RMN - Grand Palais - Adrien Didierjean

Ludolf BACKHUYSEN

Marine, Second half of 17th century,
Oil on canvas, 84.5 x 97.3 cm,
Le Havre, MuMa © MuMa/Florian Kleinefenn

THE EPITOME OF ROMANTIC PAINTING

In the late eighteenth century, as Lavoisier worked to identify the constituents of air and the first hot-air balloons floated into the sky, there was a growing interest in landscape painting, nurtured by aesthetic theories of the picturesque and the sublime developed in England by writers such as William Gilpin and Edmund Burke. Raging winds and the havoc they wreaked produced the sensation of delicious horror that epitomized the sublime. Nature buffeted by stormy winds reflected the torments of the soul, and the wind became a topos of Romantic painting.

Pierre-Henri DE VALENCIENNES

L'Orage au bord d'un lac also known as *L'Orage au bord du lac*, c. 1782-1784,
Oil on paper glued to cardboard, 40 x 52 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des peintures © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre) / Adrien Didierjean

Victor HUGO

Arbre couché par le vent, c. 1866,
Drawing, 21.8 x 29 cm,
Maison de Victor Hugo, Paris / Guernesey © CCØ Paris Musées / Maisons de Victor Hugo Paris-Guernsey

Julius BALTAZAR (known as Hervé LAMBION) and Michel BUTOR

Sur la galerie supérieure, l'auteur des Travailleurs de la mer, 2013,
Inkwash on paper, 33 x 51 cm, Paris / Guernsey, Maison de Victor Hugo © Paris Musées, Maison de Victor Hugo, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Image Ville de Paris © Julius Baltazar © ADAGP, Paris, 2022

A WORLD IN MOVEMENT AND A HOMELIER WIND

The mid-nineteenth century saw advances in meteorology and changes in artistic practices. Painters left their studios to paint outdoors from life. The wind was no longer just an effect they attempted to depict in order to make a scene more dramatic: it was something they physically experienced. Gustave Geffroy met Claude Monet on Belle-Ile-en-Mer in September 1886. He describes the artist as “dressed like coastal dwellers, wearing boots, smothered in jerseys and wrapped in a hooded oilskin. Gusts of wind sometimes [tore] his palette and brushes from his hands. His easel [was] fastened down with ropes and stones.” Open-air painting meant simultaneously experiencing pure movement and attempting to capture its fleetingness in an image that was intrinsically still and framed. Painters tried to find new visual equivalents such as wavy brushstrokes to suggest duration or dissolving shapes that alluded to the notion of the “powderiness of the world”.

Now that the wind was real to artists, it was depicted in more homely, less epic terms - playing with washing that had been hung out to dry or adding movement to a scene of a day in the country. It could also be transgressive, lifting ladies’ skirts or making a mockery of decorum and appearances.

Claude MONET

Effet de vent, Peupliers series, 1891, Oil on canvas, 100 x 74 cm, Musée d’Orsay © RMN-GP (Musée d’Orsay) / Adrien Didierjean

Denis ETCHEVERRY

Coup de vent à Trouville, before 1907, Oil on canvas, 110 x 115 cm, Paris, Musée d’Orsay © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d’Orsay) / Hervé Lewandowski

Thibaut CUISSET

Grand Est. Haut-Rhin, région du Sundgau, Dannemarie Campagnes françaises series, 2016, RC colour print, RA-4 process, 64 x 86 cm, Courtesy Galerie Les Filles du Calvaire, Paris © ADAGP, Paris, 2022

IMAGES FROM THE FLOATING WORLD

Encounters with Japanese prints rooted in a very different tradition of depictions of the weather from Western stereotypes probably contributed to this change. Artworks by Vallotton, Rivière and Daum show their influence, with striking, highly simplified depictions of weather phenomena, which are often more intense in Japan than in temperate climates.

Louis ANQUETIN

Bourrasque sur le pont des Saints-Pères, 1889,
Watercolour and gouache, 66 x 53 cm,
Private collection © Galerie de la Présidence

Félix VALLOTTON

Le Vent, 1910,
Oil on canvas, 89.2 x 116.2 cm, Collection of Mr and Mrs Paul Mellon, National Gallery of Art, Washington
© Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington

Hiroshige UTAGAWA

Shôno [L'averse]. Les « Cinquante-trois relais du Tôkaidô » 45e relais,, 1833 or 1835, Polychrome woodblock print, 24.3 x 36,5 cm, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France © BnF, Paris

Louis LUMIÈRE

Le Repas de bébé, 1895,
Black and white film, 41 seconds
© Institut Lumière

CINEMA CAPTURES THE WIND

However, it was the invention of the cinematograph shortly afterwards that made it possible to capture the wind by adding the element of duration to the image.

The wind began to feature in cinema footage as early as 1895. In fact, it is so prevalent that it seems to express the substance of the medium. “The wind and cinema… are both absolute movement” writes Benjamin Thomas, emphasizing that “the apparatus that was heir to the study of movement was bound to aspire to the spellbinding beauty of the free variations of the elements” and that “‘becoming wind’allowed [the cinema] to reveal itself completely and instantaneously as the pure, formless movement it was.”

THE WIND IN CONTEMPORARY ART

The fact that the cinema had provided a technical solution to the problem of how to depict the wind did not stop artists from wanting to pit themselves against it and explore its expressive, poetic potencies. Video, more than cinema - where the wind is often subjected to a narrative - gives the artist licence to treat the wind as a subject in its own right, as in artworks by Caroline Duchatelet or Manuela Marques. But other, more traditional media lend themselves equally well to reinterpretations of historical works such as Corinne Mercadier's take on Jules Marey or Julius Baltazar's revisiting of works by Victor Hugo, and to novel experiments that enlist the wind and other weather phenomena to play a part in the artwork, as in the work of Bernard Moninot and Jean-Baptiste Née.

Patrick DAMIOLINI

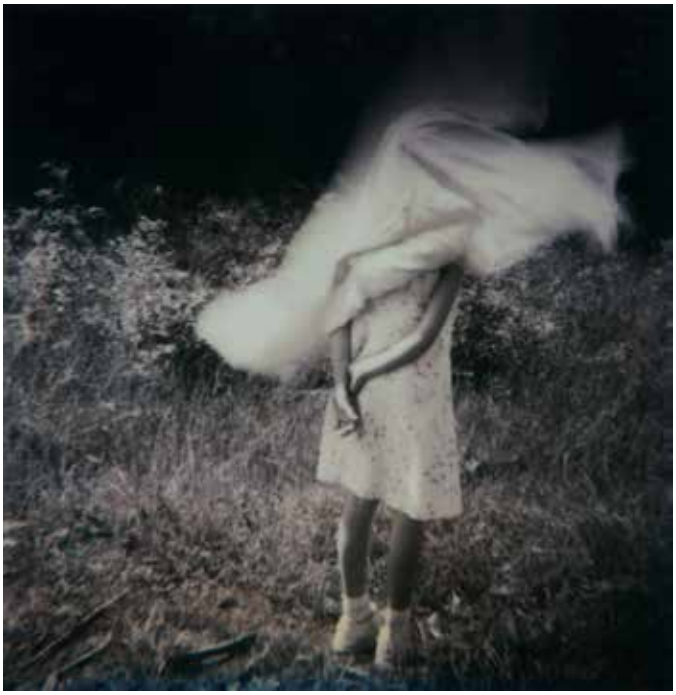
Hommage au vent, 1983,
Pastel on Arches paper, 64 x 49 cm,
Collection of FRAC Normandie
© Patrick Damiolini / Pascal Victor

Éric BOURRET

Primary Forest – Les Açores 2019, 2019,
Exhibition print inkjet on mat paper,
140 x 210 cm, © Eric Bourret

Véronique ELLENA

Les Aigrettes de pissenlit, 2013,
Chromogenic photograph from negative 4/5,
print 1/5, 50 x 62 cm, Private collection
© Véronique Ellena



Corinne MERCADIER

Une fois et pas plus 33 - 34 - 35 - 43

2000-2002, Photographic print from Polaroid SX70, 50 x 50 cm,
Courtesy Galerie Binôme, Paris © Corinne Mercadier, Courtesy Galerie Binôme

MuMa – an ideal setting for an exhibition about the wind

MuMa - the Musée d'art moderne André Malraux - was the first French museum to be rebuilt after World War 2. It was opened in 1961 by André Malraux. From the moment it was decided to rebuild the museum, the building was designed to be both a showcase for the collections and a viewing point from which to contemplate the landscape, as shown by its transparent glass walls and superb position overlooking the sea and the harbour entrance. This dual purpose facilitates and enhances visitors' appreciation of the artworks, most of which illustrate the nineteenth-century predilection for landscape.

The museum's exhibition programming is partly guided by its collections and the highly novel attention paid to their relationship with the setting. Following on from the previous exhibitions "Waves", *The clouds over there... the wonderful clouds and Impression (s): Sun*, this summer, MuMa presents "The Wind. 'That which cannot be painted.'", an exhibition about a weather phenomenon whose real effects visitors can observe from behind the glass of the museum's windows in all their varying strengths, at the same time as taking the opportunity to examine their depictions in the pictures by artists such as Boudin, Courbet and Renoir hanging in its galleries.

"Scholars began to understand the wind during the nineteenth century. Until then, this sonorous emptiness was merely experienced and described via the set of feelings it induced. Inconsistency, instability and evanescence defined this invisible, continuous, unpredictable flux. Because of the wind's fleeting quality and the vastness it conveyed, people did not really know where it came from or where it went," writes Alain Corbin.

From the beginning, the wind has been all around us, subjecting us to its power and terrifying rages and offering us its benefits. And from the beginning, humankind has wondered how to conceptualize and depict this familiar yet elusive element. Like air, the wind is invisible. We can feel it, but we perceive it only through the effects it has on the visible world. Even as it shapes and deforms the landscape, the wind continues to elude our sight.

This major exhibition asks how the wind can be painted - how something that is by its very nature invisible can be depicted. It encompasses artworks from a wide range of disciplines - painting, drawing, printmaking, archaeology, photography, glassblowing, sculpture, cinema and video - spanning the whole of history in a way that illustrates the continuing fascination of the challenge to depict what cannot be seen and the poetic power of the wind.

This exhibition is presented as part of the sixth edition of

UN ÉTÉ AU HAVRE

A follow-up exhibition consisting mainly of contemporary artworks, entitled *Météores* (Weather), which will take place from 19 November 2022 to 5 March 2023.

Catalogue

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Abécédaire du vent
Jacqueline Salmon, photographer

Des vents et merveilles
Daniel Kunth, astrophysicist at the Institut d'Astrophysique de Paris and CNRS research director

À tous vents
Gilles A. Tiberghien, Lecturer in Aesthetics, Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne

Comment représenter le vent, de la Renaissance à l'âge classique
François-René Martin, Teacher of Art History at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Paris

Du drame à la dramatisation. Le motif de la tempête dans la littérature artistique de la Renaissance
Pascale Dubus †, Lecturer in History of Modern Art, member of the Institute of Modern and Contemporary History (IHMC) University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne & École Normale Supérieure

"…La voile agitée par le vent, la fumée qui ondoie, la feuille qui frissonne… ". Représenter le vent au XIX^e siècle
Annette Haudiquet, Director of MuMa - André Malraux Museum of Modern Art

Jacques-Henri Lartigue : un vent de modernité
Jean-Christian Fleury, art critic and exhibition curator

Au vent se meuvent les images. Le cinéma, art anémophile
Benjamin Thomas, Lecturer in Cinema History, Strasbourg University

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THE WIND

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Exhibition dates: 25 June-2 October 2022
With the exceptional support from the Musée d'Orsay

Coming soon: A programme of arts events linked to the exhibition will shortly be on line at muma-lehavre.fr

Opening days and times
Tuesdays to Fridays, 11:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M..
Saturdays and Sundays, 11:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M..
Tickets €10/€6
Exceptional 14 July opening (admission-free) made possible by arts funding from Matmut.

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