

## MOVING PICTURES

*Tell me the difference between soul and wind.* Michel Serres, The Five Senses (2008: 172)

The 'wind' has been treated by artists, both historically and more recently, to draw attention to a weather phenomenon that poses questions about representation and representability, often through works which invoke a fleeting quality or a sense of danger. Important among such images is Jeff Wall's large-scale photographic transparency, *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)*, (1993), which plays off of the Japanese ukiyo e woodcut, *A Gust*

*of Wind at Ejiri*, (ca.1832), by Katsushika Hokusai. Together the two works describe a small and particular history of modern picture making, while seeming to 'discuss the weather.'

From a scientific and engineering standpoint, the wind is also important; it is regularly subject to 'testing' which involves attempts at making the invisible visible for pure research purposes and to ensure the structural integrity of proposed buildings and other constructions. One might speculate that the latter practice is increasingly necessary in our times.

The exhibition, "A Gust of Wind," brings



Tegan Moore. *Everything but free air itself*, video still, 2015

together a group of Canadian artists and one Norwegian artist to highlight ideas and approaches that engage with wind via the metaphorical, the physical, the phenomenological, and the poetic. At the conceptual centre of the exhibition is a selection of artifacts that help to locate the project in proximity to a nexus where artistic concerns and technological experimentation meet. A vast archive of miniature plastic and Styrofoam buildings used at the *Boundary Layer Wind Tunnel* at Western University are installed here to educate us, while also producing an inanimate spatial poem. Gathered together on large tables, the installation suggests two unlikely if geometrical

'islands' that point to human aspirations and vulnerabilities regarding powerful physical forces—the wind and the weather—that bear on life on the planet.

In this brief commentary, I want to consider the idiosyncratic collection of art and artifacts in the exhibition with reference to Jeff Wall's photograph, in light of the ideas foregrounded in Laura Mulvey's article, "A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai): from After to Before the Photograph," (2007).<sup>1</sup> Here I am responding to the fact that in the article Wall's picture is examined partly for its relationship to the Hokusai print as a pictorial antecedent, and specifically because the author sees



Francine Savard. *Le Devoir*, Montréal, samedi 18 septembre 1999, 2015. Photo: Guy L'Heureux. Courtesy Galerie René Blouin and Diaz Contemporary

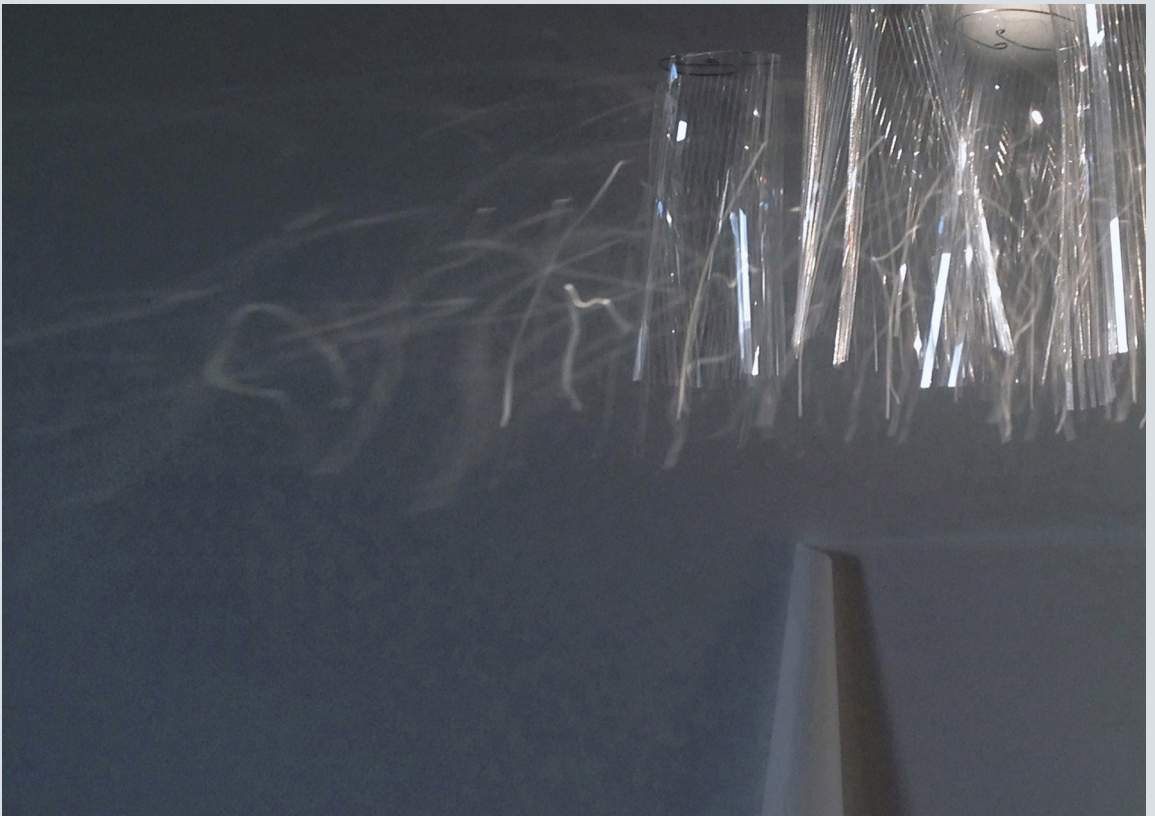


David Merritt. *untitled (oh)*, 2013. Photo: Dave Kemp

Wall's wind image alluding to a history of analogue photography in anticipation of the digital. In context of this, and also because I do not want to disregard the simultaneity we observe concerning dramatic shifts in communication technologies and contemporary climatic conditions, a curious question arises. It asks whether contemporary digital and digitally inflected artworks about the weather should be understood to operate according to new paradigms of representation and viewership, in the twenty-first century.

In response to the query, I want to suggest that the works of the artists in "A Gust of

Wind," speak from within a (digitalized) world marked by movement and flux, offering us an analogous relationship to the one linking Hokusai with Wall. Utilizing apparently familiar art mediums – painting (Savard), video (Linge; Merritt; Moore), printmaking (Caulfield, Mahon), and sculpture (Fuglem), the artists nevertheless propose shifts and disruptions that invoke the feel, the pace, and the texture of the contemporary world—hovering as it does betwixt the touch of the analogue and the zeros and ones of the digital. Taken together, their works show that picturing the wind today calls up a lineage that Hokusai and Wall helped to establish, showing



Karilee Fuglem. *I find it so natural not to think, that I sometimes start laughing all by myself* (study), 2015. Video still: the Artist. Courtesy Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain

contemporary visual art expression as ever in transition. These artworks image the weather in ways that are novel and necessary, offering complex and sometimes new perceptual experiences consciously situated amidst the gusts of our times.

## FLEETING IMAGES<sup>2</sup>

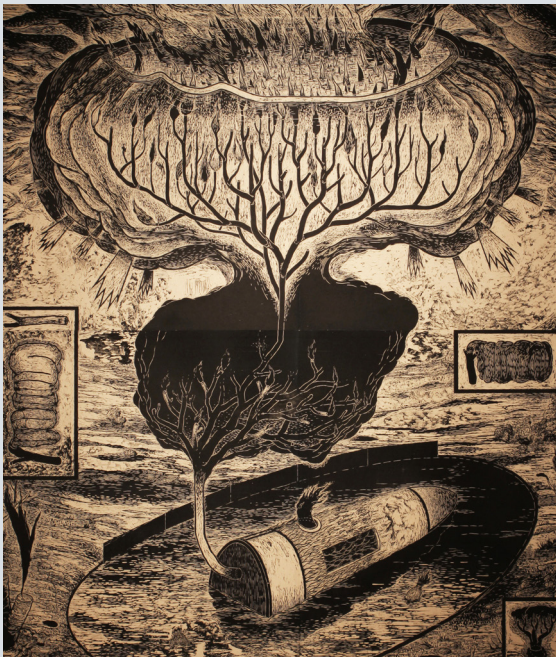
Sean Caulfield: “In my graphic woodcuts, I draw on a passage of text from Dante’s *Purgatory* that describes earthquakes as ‘wind’ below the ground...this was a common belief in medieval Europe.”

Karilee Fuglem: “When I can’t trust words

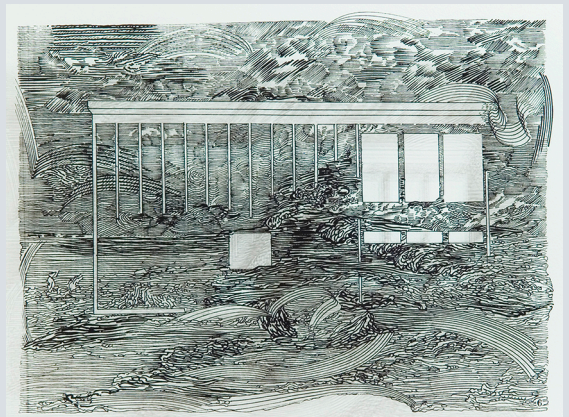
to convey meaning, gesture and touch fill in the gaps, deepening my trust in subtle clues. Coaxing me along is the ungraspable world that refuses to hold still.”

Elida Brenna Linge: “These fragments define my impression of my surroundings. It is the wind with its unpredictability that helps me try to get an overview. If it is strong, I see more. If it is weak, I see nothing.”

Patrick Mahon: “I situate a turning, Modernist house in a roiling nineteenth-century-like landscape that appears in a state of devolution. I want to envisage



Sean Caulfield. *Burning Cloud*, 2013. Photo: Akiko Taniguchi



Patrick Mahon. *Baker Lake House*, 2009. Photo: Kim Clarke. Courtesy Katzman Contemporary