

MUST

MUSEUM STAVANGER

STAVANGER
KUNSTMUSEUM

IN THE CLOUDS

20TH OF MARCH TO 13TH OF SEPTEMBER 2020
STAVANGER ART MUSEUM, MUST

IN THE CLOUDS

Inger M. L. Gudmundson

We are, all of us, surrounded by clouds, both in the sky above and to an ever-greater extent by cloud computing. The exhibition In the Clouds presents works from the 1800s to our own time. Using diverse approaches to science and technology, many of the works reflect themes of current interest at the time they were made. They show, among other things, how clouds can be seen as carriers of dreams, ideas, freedom, myths, structures, threats and opportunities.

The clouds are named

In 1802 the English amateur meteorologist Luke Howard classified clouds according to scientific principles and gave them Latin names. Using Carl von Linné's system for classifying the plant and animal kingdom, Howard divided clouds into categories based on three basic forms: *stratus*, *cumulus* and *cirrus*. He then suggested a fourth combined form for rain clouds, *nimbus*, plus three sub-categories. Altogether, Howard classified seven types of clouds. He discovered that each type occurred at a different height in the atmosphere. *Stratus* clouds lie close to the ground and *cirrus* clouds are the highest. *Cumulus* clouds, however, have vertical qualities and can therefore move through all the three atmospheric layers used by meteorology. Howard observed that cloud formation was influenced by the temperature and the sun's location in the sky.

This new teaching on clouds influenced the work of several landscape painters. The Englishman John Constable and the Norwegian J. C. Dahl were two of the painters who, to the greatest extent, drew inspiration from Howard. Constable learned of Howard's theory in England, while it was the German author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe who indirectly conveyed the cloud classifications to Dahl. Goethe had been so enthusiastic about Howard's *Essay on the Modification of Clouds* that he translated it into German.



Luke Howard divided clouds into categories based on three basic forms: *stratus*, *cumulus* and *cirrus*.

Howard's teaching was also spread by the scientist and amateur painter Carl Gustav Carus. He wrote a theory of landscape painting that admonished painters to combine natural-scientific knowledge with an artistic sensitivity to nature. Carus was a close friend of J. C. Dahl, Caspar David Friedrich and several other artists living in Dresden.

Two circumstances were decisive for Dahl's view of art and science. The first was Carus's theory of landscape painting, the second was his Italian journey in 1820–21. In Rome and Naples, Dahl encountered a vibrant international circle of artists who were keen to observe nature and make oil studies outdoors. It was at this time that Naples was a 'hotbed' for the natural sciences. While there, Dahl met geologists who studied the volcanic activity of Mount Vesuvius. Both the smoke from the volcano and the clouds in the sky were observed closely. Dahl produced many cloud studies throughout his artistic career. These were not painted in order to be exhibited but as

preparatory sketches for larger paintings. Many of them include the name of the place, the date and the time of his observations.



Kitty L. Kielland, *After Sunset*, 1886

As the 1800s progressed, the connection between landscape painting and natural-scientific theories was toned down, but in practice, Dahl's work method was perpetuated. The painter Hans Gude was nicknamed the *Air Doctor* due to his teaching on atmospheric effects. As a professor at the art academy in Düsseldorf and the art school in Karlsruhe, he taught two generations of Norwegian artists. Two of these were Lars Hertervig and Kitty Kielland. In Hertervig's depictions of clouds, we sense a strong presence of poetic, transcendent and contemplative qualities. Poetic and evocative qualities are also found in Kielland's art. Her clouds play over Jæren's open landscape at midday. In evening light, they cast their reflections in quiet water in Eastern Norway's more closed landscapes. Prince Eugen's painting *The Cloud* can also be seen as a mood painting of a

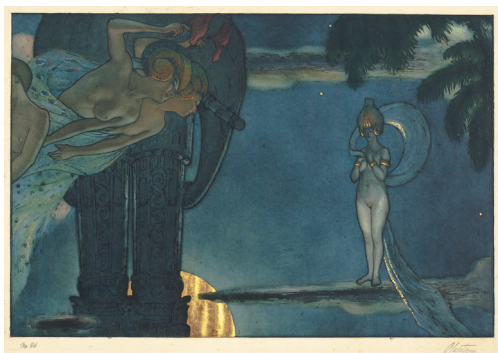


Lars Hertervig, *Cloud Study*, 1858

landscape. A rising *cumulus* cloud is its main subject. On the ground we see a path winding into pictorial space and up a hill. The path almost invites us to step into the cloud and ascend with it.

Manmade clouds

While external reality provided the starting point for depicting clouds in nineteenth-century artistic directions such as Romanticism, Realism and Neo-Romanticism, there were other artistic directions that came to focus less on creating an illusion of the visible world. Such was the case with Modernist directions like Symbolism, Cubism and eventually Surrealism. For the Art Nouveau artist Olaf Lange, literary texts and emphasis on the pictorial plane were important. His colour etching *Urvasi* (1906) depicts an *apsara*, a female spirit of the clouds and waters in Hinduism and Buddhism. Lange found the story of the *apsara* Urvasi in Kalidasa's play *Vikramorvasi*, from 400 A.D.



Olaf Lange, *Urvasi*, 1906

About a century after J. C. Dahl painted the dramatic skies above Norway's high mountains, a permanent change was made to the landscape. In 1909 the rail line Bergensbanen opened, with Finse as the highest point. For the first time ever, it was possible to travel the entire route between Bergen and Kristiania (Oslo) by train. And no longer were drawing and painting the best means for documenting the landscape: photography had developed to the point where it could capture speed and ephemeral elements. The photographer Anders Beer Wilse doc-

umented the modern invention of a rotary plough that scooped up and threw snow away from the train tracks at the same time as the snow became mixed with the steam from the locomotive.

With industrialisation and new means of transportation, several new types of manmade clouds appeared. The war industry contributed the most threatening of all: the mushroom cloud. The USA dropped atom bombs on Japan in 1945. Since then, several nations have become nuclear powers, and the threat of total annihilation still hangs over us today. Artists have reflected over this in different ways. In this exhibition we present Per Kleiva's criticism of the Vietnam War in works that link the aesthetics of Pop Art to radical, left-wing political attitudes. Jone Kvie's sculpture of a mushroom cloud highlights an aspect of beauty in something horrific, communicating the nuclear age's version of sublime feelings. In Torbjørn Rødland's video *Between the Fork and Ladder*, the theme of clouds is dealt with from the perspective of power, with references to beautiful clouds, humanity's desire for the kingdom of Heaven, contrasts between Western and Eastern philosophy, and the so-called 'nuclear button', which is symbolized by a large Lego button and the meme-cartoon character 'Pepe the Frog' as a symbol of, among other things, the alt-right movement and Donald Trump's presidential election campaign on social media.

We live our lives to an ever-greater extent through social media and digital platforms. Programming, communication and the storing of data happens in 'the Cloud'. Cory Arcangel's *Super Mario Clouds* is an early example of an art work that comments on the computer-game and Internet culture. Arcangel has removed all elements except for the clouds in the popular computer game 'Super Mario Bros.' The cloud type is *cumulus*, seen in varying sizes. It is this type that is usually found in children's drawings, cartoons, and as an icon for downloading and storing data. The work can trigger thoughts about how newer kinds of clouds influence us as individuals and as a society. Such reflections are not least relevant when encountering Matt Parker's art

project *The People's Cloud*. In six short documentary films and one sound work, he explores the infrastructure of cloud computing. He interviews industry experts in an attempt to expose both an abstract and a physical infrastructure that affects the entire planet, but which is difficult to understand.

Sandra Vaka's works link together images of physical clouds and digital clouds. Her starting points are photos of clouds at sunset. The pictures undergo a long process: Using an analogue camera, she takes one to five photos of pictures she sees on a computer screen. On the screen, Vaka has sprayed or painted droplets of water. These function almost like a magnifying glass. Through the process, the motifs are transformed, such that the finished pictures become a combination of steam, water, light and pixels. Printed on aluminium sheets, bent by the body and hung on the wall or lying on the floor, they point to the transformation clouds undergo and to the filters through which we see and interpret the world.

From Anthropocene to Aerocene

The clouds in the sky consist not only of water vapor and ice crystals, but also of bacteria and polluting gases, says the narrating voice in Marte Aas's film *I Am the Weather*. In the film, weather is treated as an all-encompassing infrastructure, and meteorology is seen in relation to cloud metaphors from physical and digital reality. Humans not only leave their mark on the climate, but also try to influence the clouds. This is a theme Marie-Luce Nadal focuses on in the film *Make Clouds Cry*. Her approach is both scientific and imbued with emotions. The film's starting point is a tradition introduced in the 1950s in southern France, of 'cloud seeding' in order to keep hail clouds away from crops. At the same time, her approach to the theme of clouds in art is metaphorical because the 'attack' on the sky is intended to wound and induce tears. In another project, Nadal has tried to capture a cloud. To be more precise, in the installation *Open Window*, she has created a cloud that lives its own life inside an aquarium.

Berndnaut Smilde also tries to capture physical clouds. His approach draws on the Romantic painters' project: to grasp the intangible and preserve the ephemeral. Smilde does this by making clouds inside various rooms and in outdoor environments. Since they only exist for a moment, he uses photography to make them last in a different form. But while Smilde tries to bring clouds down to earth, Tomás Saraceno argues for a life up in the clouds.



Berndnaut Smilde, *Nimbus Atlas II*, 2016

In the exhibition, we present Saraceno's *Biosphere*, which has been in Stavanger Art Museum's collection since 2010. At that time Saraceno said: 'Imagine there are no roads and that we travel through the air in large balloons operating only on solar energy and wind.'¹ This statement stands in a tradition relating to Leonardo da Vinci's artistic and scientific practice. What at first sounds like a utopia, can, in the next instance, become a reality. After Saraceno established the interdisciplinary community Aerocene, this development has progressed further. On 28 January 2020, Aerocene broke its own world record in balloon flying. Never before has a balloon that is powered solely by wind and the sun taken a person to such an altitude (272.1 metres), for such a distance (1.7 kilometres), and for such a duration (1 hour and 14 minutes). Saraceno and Aerocene develop sculptures operating on solar energy – so-called *aero-solar sculptures*. These are metaphors for new ways

1 Interview with Tomás Saraceno in Weekendavisen, Copenhagen, no. 48, 27 November 2009 (quote translated from Danish).

of living and traveling. Through natural-scientific research and artistic practice, they seek to influence society's development and to nudge it in a sustainable direction.

Saraceno and Aerocene's activities are a step in the effort to shift from the Anthropocene epoch to an 'Aerocene epoch'. The concept 'anthropocene' is usually used to refer to the geological time period that began with the detonation of the first atomic bomb in 1945. Humanity's impact on nature has become so great that it has created long-lasting changes in the earth's surface. Saraceno's art can be interpreted as a critique of the Anthropocene epoch. At the same time, Saraceno and Aerocene want to do more than create political symbols. With the balloon flights, the important message is that it is possible to float in the clouds and return safely to earth *without* polluting the air or intervening in the environment. In sum, it is about being inspired by the movement of clouds: to be able to float freely without national borders and only with the help of nature's own forces.

In the Clouds presents works from Stavanger Art Museum's own collection as well as works lent by other collections. Along with the exhibition, we launch the book *Silver Linings*, which contains 27 chapters written by artists and academics from Europe and North America. The contributions are the result of a research workshop the museum organised in collaboration with The Greenhouse, University of Stavanger, and which received financial support from the Research Council of Norway. A programme for the public has been created for the exhibition, through collaboration between Stavanger Art Museum, the Cloud Appreciation Society and the multi-disciplinary association Aerocene, which was founded by the Argentinian artist Tomás Saraceno.

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CURATOR: *Inger M. L. Gudmundson*

EXHIBITION DESIGN: *Marte Moen Danielsen*

EDUCATION: *Katharina Ueland*

JOHAN CHRISTIAN DAHL (1788–1857)

- 1 ***The Ruined Church at Karmøy, 1820***
Oil on canvas
23,5 x 33,5 cm
The National Museum, Oslo
NG.M.00767
- 2 ***View from the Hills above Castellamare at Naples, 4 September 1820***
Oil on canvas
15 x 28,5 cm
National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen
KMS3466
- 3 ***Eruption of the Volcano Vesuvius 1820, 1821***
Oil on canvas
98,3 x 137,5 cm
National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen
KMS871
- 4 ***The Elbe Valley near Dresden, 1823***
Oil on canvas
13,7 x 23,2 cm
National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen
KMS3437
- 5 ***Clouds in the Evening, 1823***
Oil on paper attached to paperboard
16,5 x 21 cm
The National Museum, Oslo
NG.M.00426-008
- 6 ***Smoke from Cannon Shots, 1831***
Oil on paper attached to paperboard
10 x 21 cm
The National Museum, Oslo
NG.M.00426-012
- 7 ***Stormy Sky above Poplar Trees by the Elbe, 1832***
21,5 x 26,5 cm
Oil on paper attached to paperboard
The National Museum, Oslo
NG.M.01530
- 8 ***Storm Clouds with Rain, 6 August 1833***
Oil on paper attached to paperboard
19 x 24 cm
The National Museum, Oslo
NG.M.01733
- 9 ***Cloud Study with Sunbeams, 1836***
Oil on paper attached to paperboard
18 x 22 cm
The National Museum, Oslo
NG.M.00426-031
- 10 ***The Elbe in the Evening, 22 August 1845***
Oil on paper attached to paperboard

11,5 x 15,5 cm
The National Museum, Oslo
NG.M.02445

PEDER BALKE (1804–1887)

- 11** *Northern Lights above Four Men in a Rowboat, undated*
10,5 x 12 cm
Oil on paper
The National Museum, Oslo
NG.M.04272

KNUD BAADE (1808–1879)

- 12** *Cloud Study, 1838*
19 x 25 cm
Oil on paper
The National Museum, Oslo
NG.M.02657

HANS GUDE (1825–1903)

- 13** *Landscape with Cattle and Waterfall, 1852*
Oil on canvas
99 x 88 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
RKS.1874
- 14** *Norwegian Highlands in Sunrise, 1854*
Oil on canvas
100 x 163 cm
The National Museum, Oslo
NG.M.04186
- 15** *Norwegian High Mountains, 1856*
Oil on canvas
88 x 126 cm
Deposited at Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
- 16** *Sunrise on the East Coast of Norway, Fresh Breeze, 1866*
Oil on canvas
39,5 x 71 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
SG.0052
- 17** *Air Study, 1873*
Oil on canvas attached to paperboard
35,5 x 23 cm
The National Museum, Oslo
NG.M.04248

LARS HERTERVIG (1830–1902)

- 18** *Landscape near Düsseldorf, 1853*
Oil on canvas
42 x 60,5 cm
Deposited at Stavanger Art Museum, MUST

19 *Rullestad Gorge, 1855–1856*

Oil on canvas
131,5 x 113 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
SG.0651

20–31 *Cloud Studies*

Watercolour on paper
6 x 11 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
SG.273, 274, 276, 277, 279, 280, 282, 283, 285,
286, 287, 288A

32 *Flat Landscape at Jæren*

Watercolor on paper
6 x 11 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
SG.278

33 *The Tarn, 1865*

Oil on canvas
46,5 x 63 cm
The National Museum, Oslo
NG.M.01028

34 *Old Pine Trees, 1865*

Oil on canvas
64 x 74,5 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
SG.0659

35 *Corner Cabinet with Six Decorated Fields, 1866*

Oil on paper attached to wood
19 x 20 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
SG.0661

36 *Landscape, 1867*

Oil on canvas
45,5 x 61,5 cm
Deposited at Stavanger Art Museum, MUST

37 *Marine Painting, 1867*

Oil on canvas
52 x 63 cm
Deposited at Stavanger Art Museum, MUST

38 *The Island Borgøya, 1867*

Oil on canvas
61,5 x 69,5 cm
The National Museum, Oslo
NG.M.02890

39 *Coastal Landscape, ca. 1870s*

Watercolour and pencil on paper
15 x 19,9 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
SG.0307

- 40 *Landscape***
Watercolour on paper
19 x 14 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
SG.0311
- 41 *Landscape***
Watercolour on tobacco paper
17,5 x 25,3 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
SG.0303
- 42 *Landscape, ca. 1870s***
Watercolour and gouache on tobacco paper
33,5 x 50 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
SG.0304

KITTY L. KIELLAND (1843–1914)

- 43 *After Sunset, 1886***
Oil on canvas
80 x 115,5 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
SG.0242
- 44 *Landscape, 1889***
Oil on canvas
46 x 64 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
SG.0875
- 45 *Summer Night at Sandviken, 1891***
Oil on canvas
101 x 151 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
RKS.1873
- 46 *Peat Bog, 1895***
Oil on canvas
82 x 107 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
SG.0243

PRINCE EUGEN (1865–1947)

- 47 *The Cloud, (1896) 1928–1935***
Oil on canvas
120,5 x 110,5 cm
Prince Eugen's Waldemarsudde, Stockholm
Inv. Nr. WE534

OLAF LANGE (1875–1965)

- 48 *Urvasi, 1906***
Colour etching
41 x 60 cm
Stavanger Art Museum, MUST
SG.0575

ANDERS BEER WILSE (1865–1949)

49–53 *Rotating Snow Plow, the Bergen Railway, Myrdal, Aurland, 1908*

The National Library of Norway: www.nb.no/items/URN:NBN:no-nb_foto_NF_W_08786

Snow Blowing, the Bergen Railway, Myrdal, Aurland, 1908

The National Library of Norway: www.nb.no/items/URN:NBN:no-nb_foto_NF_W_08785

View seen from the Bergen Railway, Finse, 1910

The National Library of Norway: www.nb.no/items/URN:NBN:no-nb_foto_NF_W_11212

Rotating Plow in Action, Finse, 1910

The National Library of Norway: www.nb.no/items/URN:NBN:no-nb_foto_NF_W_11220

Finse Railway Station, 1910

The National Library of Norway: www.nb.no/items/URN:NBN:no-nb_foto_NF_W_11216

The exhibited photos are printed by Bitmap
The original photos are in the collection of the
Norwegian Museum of Cultural History

PER KLEIVA (1933–2017)

54 *Letters from the Diary of Imperialism I, II and III, 1971*

76 x 70 cm

Serigraphy 19/40

Stavanger Art Museum, MUST

SG.967, 968, 969

ANTONY GORMLEY (B. 1950)

55 *Broken Column, 1999–2003*

23 identical sculpture placed between Stavanger
Art Museum and Natvigs Minde outside the city
centre of Stavanger

Sandblasted steel

H: 195 cm

Stavanger Art Museum, MUST

RKS.2083.023

MARI SLAATTELID (B. 1960)

56 *Landscape near Düsseldorf, 2002*

Acrylic on paper

100 x 173 cm

Stavanger Art Museum, MUST

RKS.1776

MARTE AAS (B. 1966)

57 *I am the Weather*, 2018

HD video, 13 min.

Courtesy of the artist

TORBJØRN RØDLAND (B. 1970)

58 *Between the Fork and Ladder*, 2018

HD video, 5:20 min.

Stavanger Art Museum, MUST

SKMS.2018.0115

JONE KVIE (B. 1971)

59 *Untitled*, 2002

220 x 80 x 80 cm

Stainless steel

Private collection

TOMÁS SARACENO (B. 1973)

60 *Biosphere*, 2009

Elastic rope, nylon thread

Diam. 300 cm

Stavanger Art Museum, MUST

SKMS.2010.0013

PHILLIP ANDREW LEWIS (B. 1973)

61 *Southeast 5:01–7:02*, 1999

Photo on aluminium sheet

75,6 x 101 cm

Stavanger Art Museum, MUST

JGS 30

62 *Southeast 2:24–5:18*, 1999

Photo on aluminium sheet

75,6 x 101 cm

Stavanger Art Museum, MUST

JGS 29

CORY ARCANGEL (B. 1978)

63 *Super Mario Clouds v2k3*, 2002

Handmade hacked Super Mario Bros. cartridge,
Nintendo NES video game system, artist software.

Dimensions variable

Ed: 1EP of 2EP

CA 2002–2001 © Cory Arcangel

BERNDNAUT SMILDE (B. 1978)

64 *Nimbus Atlas II*, 2016

6 HD slow-motion videos

300 fps

Location: Schram Studios, Amsterdam

Camera: Danny Noordanus

Courtesy of the artist and Ronchini Gallery

65 *Nimbus De.Groen, 2017*

Photo

125 x 166 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Ronchini Gallery

66 *Nimbus de Toekomst 2, 2019*

Photo

125 x 182 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Ronchini Gallery

SANDRA VAKA (B. 1980)

67–70 Four works with identical titles, techniques and sizes:

Clouds, 2020

Archival pigment print, aluminium, bent by body, epoxy drops

100 x 160 cm

Courtesy of the artist

MARIE-LUCE NADAL (B. 1984)

71 *Make Clouds Cry, 2017*

HD Video, 6:30 min.

Courtesy of the artist

72 *Open Window, 2019*

Installation

Supported by Climagin'air and Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie (ZKM)

Courtesy of the artist

MATT PARKER (B. 1984)

73 *The People's Cloud, 2012–2020*

Documentary films

Episode 1: What is the Cloud vs What Existed Before, 9:04 min.

Episode 2: Working out the Internet: It's a Volume Game, 9:29 min.

Episode 3: The Submarine Cable Network, 12:40 min.

Episode 4: How Much Data Is There? 7:04 min.

Episode 5: Convergence, 8:55 min.

Episode 6: Archive Empire, 11:44 min.

Courtesy of the artist

74 *KEF201C, from The People's Cloud (original soundtrack), 2016*

4:30 min.

Courtesy of the artist

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ISBN 978-82-93594-01-7