

Following a Wind Line: a situated practice, an ecology of breath

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FOLLOWING A WIND LINE: A SITUATED PRACTICE, AN ECOLOGY OF BREATH

Following a wind line means entering a movement without a centre. No direction prevails, no form imposes itself: it is a way of approaching a territory through the forces that traverse it. The wind has no place of its own, yet it renders visible the forces that structure a space. It circulates across harbours and dunes, turbines and birds, cables and particles. It links what industry tends to separate: infrastructures and living beings, matter and memory, air and ground.

It is within this circulation that *A Wind Line* took shape, in the industrial and coastal landscape of Eemshaven, in the north of the Netherlands. Here, the wind is at once an energy resource, a technical constraint and a felt presence. It crosses a territory where every breath of air is counted, converted, rationalised. The project situates itself as an attempt to observe what the wind carries — energies, voices, dust, stories — and what it lets escape.

In this context, the wind is not an object of study but a working partner. It conditions gestures, sets the tempo of research and orients the composition. It connects and dislocates images, lets the narrative drift, redistributes attention. The artistic practice becomes empirical, compositional and critical — it exceeds the frame of representation. Knowledge is formed in passage, in contact with flows that make it possible. *A Wind Line* explores this regime of attention — a way of thinking and making with the wind.

EEMSHAVEN AND THE WADDEN SEA

The landscapes of the north of the Netherlands are horizontal, open, apparently empty. Yet they concentrate industrial, ecological and technological forces. In the port of Eemshaven, the installed capacity is about 8,000 megawatts, a significant share of national electricity production. On the surface, wind turbines line up along the seafront; beneath the ground, pressure accumulates.

The cross-border gas extraction project led by One-Dyas, approved in 2024 by the Dutch and German governments, seeks to tap billions of cubic metres from deposits near the Wadden Sea. This

sea, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, hosts millions of migratory birds every year and is one of the most fragile ecosystems in northern Europe.

Between wind farms, gas plants, data centres and protected areas, Eemshaven concentrates a geographical tension: that of a territory where every breath of air is counted, then converted into an energy or financial unit. There, the wind carries pollen and salt as well as cable vibrations, flows of data and fossil particles. It connects machines and living beings, renewable energies and those of the subsoil, promises of transition and logics of extraction.

In this flux-saturated space, the wind acts as a revealer: it makes perceptible how the territory breathes, constrained by its infrastructures. On another scale, and in echo to what Malcom Ferdinand¹ names the colonial fracture of the Earth, this energy landscape is not isolated: it participates in a longer history in which seas and winds have served trade routes and regimes of appropriation. Contemporary infrastructures extend these logics of capture and circulation, transposed into air and energy networks. Breath runs through domestic circuits. In 2024, Belgium imported 5.9 terawatt-hours of electricity from the Netherlands.² A fraction of this current likely feeds the screen on which this text is written.

THE WIND AS METHOD AND ECOLOGY OF MAKING

A Wind Line develops from fieldwork, in direct contact with the wind. The aim is not to represent it, but to experience its effects: speed, direction, resistance, interruption. These phenomena become the conditions of filming and listening. Walking, filming, recording, writing: each gesture responds to the situation. The wind is not backdrop but engine — a tempo given to practice. This approach takes root in a controlled territory, shaped by hydraulic engineering, energy industry and spatial optimisation. Here, the wind is captured, transformed into measurable power. Eemshaven condenses this paradox: air is at once resource, threat and infrastructure. Working with the wind means opening a breach in calculation, introducing unpredictability at the margins.

In the field, the method is not written in advance: it is adjusted to the site. We find here the kind of attention formulated by Isabelle Stengers³: accepting to be obliged by what exceeds us, learning to “make do” and “make with”. In her ecology of practices, Stengers refuses the idea of stable

knowledge or a controllable framework. She describes instead a field of experimentation where practices compose with heterogeneous powers, without seeking to unify them.

A Wind Line recognises itself in this movement: filming, recording, drawing, writing become gestures of adjustment rather than exercises in mastery. Images, sounds and tracings bear witness to this cohabitation with air, place and matter. This ecology of making exposes itself to its conditions rather than controlling them. Between field and studio, the practice circulates without fixed order: this back-and-forth maintains continuous attention to the world, where traces become material to be taken up again. Working from margins means keeping circulation open, where phenomena impose their rhythm.

This attention extends into the exhibition space, where the logic of field becomes that of the device. *A Wind Line* does not seek to represent the wind: it receives it. Conceived as a circulating milieu, it is organised around shifting relations between image, sound, textile and architecture. The viewer is not in front of a work, but inside a milieu traversed by breath, light and vibration.⁴ The installation becomes a testing ground for this ecology of practices: each element retains autonomy while composing with others. Film, sound, voice and textile veils coexist unsynchronised. Each follows its own duration and displacement: sound continues when image interrupts; light drifts across printed textile without coinciding with narrative; the voice appears in interstices. These gaps establish an equality between media: none dominates.

A set of suspended surfaces — veils, screens, sound planes — compose an open space. Silk veils, printed from drawing-maps, extend the logic of the wind into vibrating material: they translate atmospheric flows recorded in the field. Their lightness makes the passage of air perceptible; their transparency links planes of the work — between film, sound and architecture. Nothing is frontal: each element functions as a layer of air.

The film extends the idea of a montage shaped by currents. Scenes follow one another not through narrative continuity but through pressures and releases. Digitally modelled objects — a propeller, an axe, a horse, a coffee pot, bones — appear as fragments of fiction suspended in the dynamics of the edit. Their milky material refers less to technique than to drawing: folded, fragile forms, ready to dissolve into the air. They illustrate nothing: they are acted upon by the wind. Light, oscillating

between sunrise and fire, establishes a state of chromatic ambiguity: an unstable orange, neither bright nor dark. This hue links threat, beauty and alteration. It carries the memory of Turner's skies⁵ — *Calais Sands at Low Water* (c. 1830–31) — where light becomes combustible. Landscape is no longer motif, but traversed matter, consumed from within.

Dienne's musical piece extends this instability. The work grows from experiments with sound elements that are shaped yet do not compete; each follows its own duration and logic. A sustained flute tone stretches and unfolds into overtones; silence loops, each repetition carrying an almost imperceptible shift, a variation. The wind appears in long tones while revealing a hidden rhythm. The piece forms a sound field that orients the visitor's movements and opens a permeable field of listening.

To this composition is added another presence: the voice of Tara McKenna, carrying the poetic text *Following a Wind Line*. It forms a fourth material of the device. Independent from film and music, it follows a duration of its own. Its suspended diction turns the text into part of the work's weaves, sonic as much as graphic. It makes heard: "The line traverses all hexagonal borders. It simply does not notice them."

The whole rests on a cohabitation of materials: image, sound and textile coexist. The wind acts as a partner, circulating between media and tying the sensible to the political. The installation does not seek a unified gaze, but a dispersal of perception — disturbance itself becomes a principle of attention.

This dispersion engages the gaze as much as the body: the viewer is no longer facing an image, but immersed in a field of moving elements — surfaces, breaths, sounds, lights. As Dominique Païni⁶ has shown, the passage of cinema from auditorium to museum has transformed the spectator, from fixed gaze to wandering, recomposing the work in rhythm of movements. *A Wind Line* inscribes itself in this continuity: a breathing space one traverses. The experience becomes that of a climate to undergo, where the wind is both ally and principle of shared perception. In the exhibition space, this wind — physical and figurative — circulates, reminding us that every work lets something escape.

WIND, ETHICS AND POETICS OF BREATH

The wind moves through Eemshaven's tensions: it links logics of exploitation and those of survival, and makes audible the contradictions of a territory attempting to reconcile so-called clean energy with fossil inheritances. There, the air carries both industrial flows and bird migrations, salt and cables, electrical vibrations and fossil dust. It brings into relation what coexists.

Among the thinkers that have oriented our attention, Isabelle Stengers remains in the background. She invites us to think practices not as systems to be mastered, but as gestures exposed to forces that traverse them. We no longer live in a stable world, governable from a fixed point, but in an "intrusive" world: that of Gaia, an earthly power obliging us to compose without guarantees.

We approached the wind of Eemshaven through this proposition: not as a docile element, but as a force capable of shifting the hierarchy between humans, machines and atmosphere. Allowing the milieu to intervene means accepting that no decision is purely human, that thought forms in the entanglement of environments. This stance, close to the ecology of practices, engages an ethics of making-with — a way of inhabiting the complexity of the site rather than reducing it. In a territory saturated with forces and calculations, this ethics becomes political: it reminds us cohabiting does not mean consenting, but recognising shared conditions of existence.

And yet, in Eemshaven, "making with" does not suffice: exposing oneself to the wind also means encountering capture and separation already inscribed in the landscape. Malcom Ferdinand's analyses describe these logics as the colonial fracture of the Earth: the division between those who extract and those who endure, between zones of production and zones of life, between free breaths and compressed breaths. This fracture is not of the past: it is replayed in contemporary dispositifs of control — energy infrastructures, data networks, technologies of capture. Eemshaven is one of its configurations: a recent port, yet inscribed within the same rationality as ships, polders and plantations — the rationality that turns the world into an exploitable surface.

The voice that moves through the installation carries a trace of this: it recalls that "our seas are charted, carved by naval routes, labelled with dotted lines, numbers, coordinates". These lines of navigation, of cables and borders extend into sea and atmosphere the same logic of grids.

Ferdinand's writings have served as a guide to situate these lines: not to illustrate his thought, but to

take seriously what our walks skirted along — fences, channels, access roads, prohibited zones. The aim was not to replay the romantic figure of the artist-wanderer, but to recognise every step occurs in a mapped, hierarchised, unequally ventilated landscape.

In *A Wind Line*, this continuity becomes perceptible without being laid out as demonstration. The device does not seek to denounce, but to make felt: it lets appear, in the trembling of air and vibration of surfaces, the persistence of a regime of appropriation shifted from ground to atmosphere. Where wind turbines capture the wind, the installation lets it circulate. Where data centres enclose it to cool their machines, the work exposes it to light and passage. Images, sounds and textiles intersect some of Ferdinand's stakes by making sensible the political dimension of air, now a field of tension between extraction and respiration.

What circulates in air is not abstract: it is matter loaded with memory — that of machines, voices, particles, forms produced and abandoned. The digital objects, displaced from interior space into the flow of air, float like residues, witnesses to an energy economy that has lost its centre. Their whiteness makes them available to other regimes of meaning: neither artefacts nor waste, but atmospheric objects, caught in the same becoming as the breath that traverses them. Here, the wind acts as critical diplomacy: it redistributes perception and reminds us all knowledge is constructed in common air.

Thinking with the wind means accepting drift as a condition of attention: a vulnerable, situated knowledge, alert to what mingles and persists. It also means recognising that air itself is a territory unequally breathable. Sea and atmosphere may be read as archives of the world — they retain the memory of bodies and matters displaced by systems of exploitation. This perspective accompanied our choices of shooting and editing: to inhabit breath is to recognise the debt that binds us to what has been burnt, extracted, transformed. Air is not transparent: it is a historical substance, traversed by asymmetries of power and memory of fractures.

To think the wind is to think the world as atmosphere: not as backdrop, but as a field of relations in movement. In *A Wind Line*, this poetics of breath is not an aesthetic supplement, but an ethics of cohabitation. Air, like the sea that borders it, is a common milieu, saturated with traces: flows of

energy, birds' cries, industrial heat, grains of salt. Breathing means taking part in a web of exchanges where the sensible and the political become indistinguishable.

This poetics of breath has been shaped in contact with Stengers and Ferdinand, whose works have shifted our ways of walking, editing and writing. They remind us thought is constructed in the ordeal of the real, in contact with what displaces it. This perspective calls for attention to the milieu as a condition of knowledge: what we do or perceive remains traversed by traces of past gestures and wounds. *A Wind Line* seeks less to conclude than to maintain contact: to let thought slip away where the work comes to an end.



Notes

1. Malcom Ferdinand, *Une écologie décoloniale*, Paris, Seuil, 2019.
2. Elia Group, “*Electricity Mix 2024 – Press Release*”, 13 January 2025.
3. Isabelle Stengers, *Au temps des catastrophes. Résister à la barbarie qui vient*, Paris, La Découverte, 2009.
4. Jakob von Uexküll, *Milieu animal et milieu humain*, Paris, Rivages, 2010 [1934]. The term *Umwelt* refers to a lived, relational milieu, distinct from a measurable environment.
5. Joseph M. W. Turner, *Calais Sands at Low Water* (c. 1830–31), Bury Art Museum, Art UK.
6. Dominique Païni, *Le temps exposé. Le cinéma, de la salle au musée*, Paris, Cahiers du cinéma, 2002.