

**EVERYBODY TALKS
ABOUT THE WEATHER**

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Sometime in the spring of 1968, a striking red poster by the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund appeared in the streets of West-German university towns. Sporting the trusted revolutionary triumvirate of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir Lenin, it defiantly declared that “everybody talks about the weather—we don’t.” The message broadcast by the Socialist German Student Union was clear: while other political parties engaged in idle chatter ‘about the weather’—i.e., inane niceties and innocuous nullities—, socialists (and leftists more generally) were committed to addressing the questions that *really* mattered to the people in the street: affordable health care and decent pay; equal opportunity and working-class pride. ‘The weather’—meaning, everything that was perceived to be without substance—was the last thing a true progressive spirit should be talking about.

Fifty years on, it is hard to imagine a more politically damaging slogan: ‘the weather’ is the single most important fact of life everyone is either talking about *already*—or *should* be talking about instead. And with the weather, we of course mean the *climate*: ‘everybody is talking about the weather’ for the simple reason that the current and ongoing climate crisis is the single greatest existential threat ever faced by humankind in its 100,000-year history. Yet it continues to be a subject that is oddly absent from the broad sweep of mainstream art world attention: ‘everybody talks about the weather’ alright—except for the art world, it seems. Indeed, the climate crisis has yet to spawn its first great corpus of critically acclaimed masterpieces, whether in the realm of visual art, literature, or cinema. The relative (and perfectly understandable) sense of powerlessness that appears to pervade the contemporary art world in particular when facing the challenge of this singular moment in time is one underlying concern of this exhibition, which partly takes its cue from Amitav Ghosh’s *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016)—much more pointedly titled *La grande cecità* (the great blindness) in its Italian translation. Whence this self-defeating blindness? The Venetian framework of this year’s Architecture Biennial seems a fitting context to raise this question; as the fastest sinking city in the northern hemisphere, Venice offers a particularly poignant platform for staging its asking.

Evidently, ‘everybody’ also ‘talks about the weather’ because that’s what people do, and have *enjoyed* doing since time immemorial because of the weather’s immediate physical impact on our daily lives. Not only is ‘the weather’ the most readily accessible and universal topic of conversation for friends and perfect strangers alike, it can also function as a metaphor for everything, from the economy and politics to art practice and our love lives. And most importantly: ‘everybody talks about the weather’ because it may well be the only way to talk about the *climate* without shutting down in despair and despondency. Indeed, the aforementioned ‘blindness’ is a partial function of the sheer *enormity* of the cataclysm at hand: the climate crisis is simply too paralyzingly vast a subject to wrap one’s creative brain around, the immensity of its challenges far too much for the futile powers of human

imagining—and, frankly, also much too depressing for your everyday art world. This exhibition's meteorological view of art suggests we *continue* to talk about the weather instead as one way of thinking the unthinkable, and of giving meaning to the bodily facts of our daily exposure to the natural world that is our only home.

THE EXHIBITION

The artworks assembled on the ground floor and first floor (*piano nobile*) of Ca' Corner della Regina are grouped in thematic clusters anchored by atmospheric agents (wind, snow, rain, heat, etc.) as well as topics such as desertification, migration, pollution, and rising sea levels.

Each artwork is accompanied by a number linked to a didactic panel that pairs information about the work in question with texts and infographics, developed with THE NEW INSTITUTE – Center for Environmental Humanities (NICHE) of Ca' Foscari University in Venice, which shed further light on the social and “climatological” context linked, however indirectly, with the artworks' production.

This guide contains texts that complement the information in the panels.

HOW DOES THE WORLD END (FOR OTHERS)?

The following excerpts from books and movies are part of the installation by Beate Geissler & Oliver Sann [artwork no. 66]. Numbers paired with texts match with those in the typewritten papers included in the exhibition.

[1] By the year 2022, overpopulation, pollution, and an apparent climate catastrophe have caused severe worldwide shortages of food, water, and housing. There are 40 million people in New York City alone, where only the city's elite can afford spacious apartments, clean water, and natural food, all at horrendously high prices, with a jar of strawberry jam fetching \$150.

The homes of the elite are fortified, with private security, bodyguards for the tenants, and usually concubines, who are referred to as “furniture” and serve the tenants as slaves.

Soylent Green (1973), directed by Richard Fleischer

[2] Beginning in 2024, society in the United States has grown unstable due to climate change, growing wealth inequality, and corporate greed. Lauren Olamina is an African American teenager whose mother's abuse of drugs during pregnancy left her with “hyper-empathy” or “sharing”—the uncontrollable ability to feel the sensations she witnesses in others, particularly the abundant pain in her world.

Lauren grows up in the remnants of a gated community in Robledo, California, twenty miles from Los Angeles, where she and her neighbors struggle, but are separate from the

abject poverty of the world outside.

Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (1993)

[3] Dellarobia Turnbow is a 28-year-old discontented housewife living with her poor family on a farm in Appalachia. On a hike, Turnbow finds millions of monarch butterflies in the valley behind her home.

As the news of her discovery spreads, university professor Ovid Byron arrives to study the monarchs. He warns that, despite their beauty, they are a disturbing symptom of global climate change, displaced from their established winter habitat in Mexico, and that they may not survive the harsh Tennessee winter.

Barbara Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior* (2012)

[4] 74-year-old Mr. Geiser is in his Ticinese house during torrential rains. He is so bored that he tries making a pagoda out of crispbread and creates a taxonomy of thunder types: rolling thunders, banging thunders, etc.. His sole companion is his cat, as his wife died not long ago. There is a report of a landslide caused by the deluge, cutting off the valley. Fearing this landslide that would bury the village and man's knowledge, Geiser reads all his encyclopedia, the Bible, and history books. At first, he makes notes and tacks them to the walls; later he cuts paragraphs from the books and tapes them instead. Despite the weather, he hikes outdoors along diverging paths and notes his physical limits, and the limits of man's knowledge and importance. He recognizes man's insignificance and meaninglessness (man's appearance in the Holocene era is a very recent event in evolutionary terms), admitting that "der Mensch bleibt ein Laie"—man remains an amateur. He contemplates whether memory was necessary—"the rocks do not need my memory or not," as he suffers cerebral apoplexy that attacks his memory.

Max Frisch, *Man in the Holocene* (1980)

[5] Amid the modern wastelands and toxic factories of Italy, Giuliana desperately tries to conceal how tenuous her grip on reality is from those around her, especially her successful yet neglectful husband, Ugo.

Ugo's old pal, Corrado, comes to town on a business trip and senses Giuliana's anxieties. They begin an affair, but it does little to quell Giuliana's existential fears, and her mental state rapidly deteriorates. She tries to communicate her feelings to him, but he cannot understand her words. Acknowledging the reality of her isolation, she says, "We are all separate."

Red Desert (1965), directed by Michelangelo Antonioni

[6] In a not-too-distant dystopian future, when humanity's most precious resource—oil—has been depleted and the world plunges into war, famine, and financial chaos, the last vestiges of the law in Australia attempt to restrain a vicious biker gang. Max, an officer with the Main Force Patrol, launches a personal vendetta against the gang after his wife and son are hunted down and murdered, leaving him with nothing but his instincts for survival and retribution.

Mad Max (1979), directed by George Miller

[7] In 2030, drinking water has taken over oil as the vital commodity people and nations fight over, a situation brought on by drought and global warming. When a small, drought-stricken country in Africa finds, with the help of a pirated satellite picture, an underground water layer on its territory, it spells guaranteed survival! Guaranteed?

Not necessarily: the owners of the satellite, a large American consortium, claim possession of this water layer and will stop at nothing to get their hands on it. There are no holds barred on the political and military level, especially after an apocalyptic sect, the Divine Legion, gets involved. This sect sees the cloned son of the American C.E.O. as the incarnation of a new Messiah.

Jean-Marc Ligny, *Aqua™* (2006)

[8] When the California drought escalates to catastrophic proportions, one teen is forced to make life and death decisions for her family in this harrowing story of survival. The drought—or the Tap-Out, as everyone calls it—has been going on for a while. Everyone’s lives have become an endless list of don’ts: don’t water the lawn, don’t fill up your pool, don’t take long showers.

Until the taps run dry. Suddenly, Alyssa’s quiet suburban street spirals into a warzone of desperation; neighbors and families turned against each other on the hunt for water.

Neil and Jarrod Shusterman, *Dry* (2018)

[9] After climatologist Jack Hall is ignored by U.N. officials when presenting his environmental concerns, his research proves true. An enormous “superstorm” develops, setting off catastrophic natural disasters throughout the world.

The Day after Tomorrow (2004), directed by Roland Emmerich

[10] Michael Beard is a Nobel Prize-winning British physicist stumbling comfortably through middle age as a purveyor of expensive lectures, a member of prestigious boards and panels, and the titular head of a government-funded institute devoted to combating global warming with innovative “green” power technologies. Though Beard has little hope for these technologies, he’s happy to be paid for pushing them. The man is a cynic, by nature and by experience. His prominence, and the lifestyle it affords him, stem from a youthful scientific accomplishment that he never repeated and knows he never will. He is a five-times-married, childless, overweight, heavy-drinking, amoral solipsist who holds to the pre-Copernican belief that the cosmos revolves around his ego.

Ian McEwan, *Solar* (2010)

[11] Daniel lives with two clones. He is a successful comedian who can’t seem to enjoy life despite his wealth. He gets bored with his hedonist lifestyle but can’t escape from it either. In the meanwhile, he is disgruntled with the state of current society, and philosophizes about the nature of sex and love.

His two clones live an uneventful life together as hermits, in a post-apocalyptic future. They live in a time where the human species is on its last legs, destroyed by climate change and nuclear war. Scattered around are the remnants of tourist resorts, cities and consumer items and some natural

humans living in small tribes without any knowledge of the past, or of civilization.

Michel Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island* (2005)

[12] In a future America, society is strictly stratified by class. Long-abandoned urban neighborhoods have been repurposed as high-walled, self-contained labor colonies. The members of the labor class—descendants of those brought over many years earlier from environmentally-ruined provincial China—find purpose and identity in their work providing pristine produce and fish to the small, elite, satellite charter villages that ring the labor settlement.

Chang-rae Lee, *On Such a Full Sea* (2014)

[13] The year is 2052. Climate change has had a predictably devastating effect: Venice submerged, cyclones in Oklahoma, megafires in South America. Yet it could be much worse. Two decades earlier, the global protest movement known as the Upheavals helped break the planet's fossil fuel dependency, and the subsequent Nuremberg-like Toronto Trials convicted the most powerful oil executives and lobbyists for crimes against the environment. Not all of them. A few executives escaped arrest and went into hiding, including pipeline mastermind Robert Cave.

Now, a Pacific Northwest journalist named Jack Henry who works for a struggling media company has received a tip that Cave is living in Mexico. Hoping the story will save his job, he travels south and, using a fake identity, contacts the fugitive. The two men strike up an unexpected friendship, leaving Jack torn about exposing Cave—an uncertainty further compounded by the diagnosis of a life-threatening illness and a new romance with an old acquaintance.

Jonathan Raymond, *Denial* (2022)

[14] In 2054 things have clearly gone awry. The vegetation and the ground are colored with unnatural shades of red and grey, people are facing different pandemics and their repeated waves—with many living in isolation, by choice or owing to the growing paranoia—and deep fakes are so widespread that no one believes in anything. In fact, in this society, images are considered mere comfort objects to be experienced through holograms or sophisticated retinal chips. Three friends go on a road trip into the past. On their journey, they rediscover lost biodiversity. How could this all have disappeared?

Everything Will Change (2021), directed by Marten Persiel

[15] Bea's five-year-old daughter, Agnes, is slowly wasting away, consumed by the smog and pollution of the overdeveloped metropolis that most of the population now call home.

If they stay in the city, Agnes will die. There is only one alternative: the Wilderness State, the last swath of untouched, protected land, where people have always been forbidden to go. Until now.

Bea, Agnes, and 18 others volunteer to live in the Wilderness State; guinea pigs in an experiment to see if humans can exist in nature without destroying it. Living as nomadic hunter-gatherers, they slowly and painfully learn to survive in an unpredictable, dangerous land. But as Agnes

embraces the wild freedom of this new existence, Bea realizes that saving her daughter's life means losing her in a different way.

Diane Cook, The New Wilderness (2020)

[16] The UK has been decimated by epidemic, quarantined by the outside world, flattened by storms, cut off from all but online contact with the rest of the world and the occasional aid package dropped by drone. It's a world where traditional markers of progress such as education and technology provide no protection from danger and deprivation.

Against this backdrop live the Polenskys. The parents are transplants from an age we're familiar with, activists who welcomed decisive action on climate change and fought corporate domination by Amazon. The kids are independent and ambitious, exploring freely across the territory around their home, working online for Chinese companies who pay them in education and medical security, happy to cooperate with government rules that their parents find stifling.

Clare Morrall, When the Floods Came (2015)

[17] Two teenage sisters live alone in their remote Northern California forest home.

30 miles from the nearest town, and miles away from their nearest neighbor, they struggle to survive as society begins to collapse around them. No single event precedes society's fall. There is talk of a war overseas and upheaval in Congress, but it still comes as a shock when the electricity goes out and gas is nowhere to be found. The sisters consume the resources left in the house, waiting for the power to return. Their arrival into adulthood, however, forces them to reexamine their place in the world and their relationship to the land and each other.

Jean Hegland, Into the Forest (1998)

[18] After an unprecedented series of natural disasters threaten the planet, the world's leaders come together to create an intricate network of satellites to control the global climate and keep everyone safe. But now, something has gone wrong: the system built to protect Earth is attacking it, and it becomes a race against the clock to uncover the real threat before a worldwide geostorm wipes everything and everyone out.

Geostorm (2017), directed by Dean Devlin

[19] To fight desertification caused by global warming, human beings developed special chemicals that promote the reproduction of plant cells. This accidentally activated plant stress systems, awakening a new plant intelligence. Rapidly proliferating plants quickly attack humans and engulf cities. A global green tide with the potential to cause the disappearance of human civilization is about to strike.

Restart the Earth (2021), directed by Zhenzhao Lin

[21] Amid an apocalypse, a man struggles to reach his pregnant wife thousands of miles away.

How It Ends (2018), directed by David M. Rosenthal

[23] Ever since the Switch, when oxygen levels plummeted and most of humanity died, survivors have been protected in glass domes full of manufactured air. Protected or contained?

The world has no air. If you want to survive, you pay to breathe. But what if you can't? And what if you start to think everything could be different?

Sarah Crossan, *Breathe* (2012)

[24] In 2074, after the passage of a bill banning the use of fossil fuels anywhere in the United States, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Texas secede from the Union, starting the "Second American Civil War." South Carolina is quickly incapacitated by a virus, known as "The Slow," which makes its inhabitants lethargic. Texas is invaded and occupied by Mexico, while the remaining "Free Southern States" Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia continue to fight.

Omar El Akkad, *American War* (2018)

[25] In the late 21st Century, a series of violent and prolonged solar storms lasting several years enlarge the Van Allen belts and diminish the Earth's gravitational hold upon the outer layers of the ionosphere. Solar radiation bombards the planet, causing temperatures to rise and a global tropical climate to form. The polar ice caps melt, causing sea levels to rise. With most of the planet no longer habitable for humans, the survivors migrate to the newly hospitable poles.

J.G. Ballard, *Drowned World* (1962)

[28] China in 2098. Tao hand paints pollen onto fruit trees now that the bees have disappeared. When Tao's young son is taken away by the authorities after a tragic accident—and is kept in the dark about his whereabouts and condition—she sets out on a grueling journey to find out what happened to him.

Maja Lunde, *History of the Bees* (2015)

[29] Doc Labyrinth fears for the safety of the fragile works of high culture, particularly classical music, in the event of the apocalypse. He orders a machine to be built that transforms musical scores into animals capable of surviving on their own. His machine successfully transforms several composers' works into various animals—Bach pieces into little beetles, Schubert songs into a lamb-like creature, and so forth. The joyous Doctor releases them into the world; but when he finds them later, they have evolved. They have claws and stingers and have fed on one another. When the Bach beetles are fed back into the machine, the resultant musical scores have also changed, become wild and chaotic, all their beauty and harmony lost.

Philip K. Dick, *The Preserving Machine* (1969)

[30] On a beach in Antarctica, scientist Adam Leith marks the summer solstice. Back in Sydney, his partner Ellie waits for the results of her latest round of In vitro fertilization treatment.

When that result comes, it will change both their lives, and propel them into a future neither could have predicted. In a collapsing England, Adam will try to survive an apocalyptic storm. Against a backdrop of growing civil unrest, Ellie discovers a strange affinity with beekeeping. New connections will be formed from the most unlikely beginnings.

James Bradley, *Clade* (2017)

[31] Connie Ramos had been recently released from a voluntary stay in a mental institution after an episode of drug-related child neglect, which led her to lose custody of her daughter. After being unjustly committed to a mental institution, she is contacted by an envoy from the year 2137 who shows her a utopian future of sexual and racial equality and environmental harmony.

But Connie also bears witness to another potential outcome: a dystopian society of grotesque exploitation. One will become our world.

Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976)

[32] New York City, the near future. Mitchell Zukor, a gifted young mathematician, is hired by a mysterious new financial consulting firm called Future World. He is asked to calculate worst-case scenarios in intricate detail, which are then sold to corporations to secure them against legal liability in future disasters. This is the cutting edge of corporate irresponsibility, and business is booming. As Mitchell immerses himself in the mathematics of catastrophe—ecological collapse, global war, natural disasters—he becomes obsessed by the culture’s fears. Just as Mitchell’s predictions reach a nightmarish crescendo, an actual worst-case scenario overtakes Manhattan.

Nathaniel Rich, *Odds Against Tomorrow* (2013)

[33] In LaGrange, Ohio, Curtis LaForche has apocalyptic dreams and hallucinations of rain “like fresh motor oil”, swarms of menacing black birds, and being harmed by people close to him. He hides all of this from his wife Samantha and their deaf daughter. He channels his anxieties into a compulsive obsession to improve and enlarge a storm shelter in his backyard. However, his strange behavior causes tension in their marriage and the surrounding community.

Take Shelter (2011), directed by Jeff Nichols

[34] In a futuristic world ravaged by global warming, people have lost the ability to dream, and the dreamlessness has led to widespread madness. The only people still able to dream are North America’s Indigenous people, and it is their marrow that holds the cure for the rest of the world. But getting the marrow, and dreams, means death for the unwilling donors.

How to take refuge from the so-called “recruiters” who seek them out to bring them to the marrow-stealing “factories”?

Cherie Dimaline, *The Marrow Thieves* (2017)

[35] Global hysteria ensues after a mysterious catastrophe wipes out all electronics and takes away humanity’s ability to sleep. Scientists race against the clock to find a cure for the unexplained insomnia before its fatal effects eliminate humanity. When Jill, a former soldier, discovers her young daughter may be the key to salvation, she must decide whether to protect her children at all costs or sacrifice everything to save the world.

Awake (2021), directed by Mark Raso

[37] Area X has been cut off from the rest of the continent for decades. Nature has reclaimed the last vestiges of human civilization. The first expedition returned with reports of a pristine, Edenic landscape; all the members of the second expedition committed suicide; the third expedition died in a hail of gunfire as its members turned on one another; the members of the eleventh expedition returned as shadows of their former selves, and within months of their return, all had died of aggressive cancer.

This is the twelfth expedition.

Jeff VanderMeer, *Annihilation* (2014)

[39] In 2145, Dr. Robert Kerans is part of a scientific survey unit led by Colonel Riggs sent to catalogue the flora and fauna of a lagoon, located within what was once the city of London. The members of the expedition begin to experience strange dreams.

J.G. Ballard, *Drowned World* (1962)

[41] Sixteen-year-old Lalla was “born at the end of the world” in London, sometime in the not-too-distant future. Food is tinned or dried. Floods and fires have caused devastation; parks are now shanty towns and the dispossessed have taken over the British Museum. Nothing grows; the seas no longer support life. Cannibalism exists in parts of the world and people breed algae in urine to eat.

Antonia Honeywell, *The Ship* (2015)

[45] After a nuclear World War III has destroyed most of the globe, the few remaining survivors in southern Australia await the radioactive cloud that is heading their way, bringing certain death to everyone in its path. Among them is an American submarine captain struggling to resist the knowledge that his wife and children in the United States must be dead.

Neville Shute, *On the Beach* (1957)

[46] The year is 2393, and the world is almost unrecognizable. Clear warnings of climate catastrophe went ignored for decades, leading to soaring temperatures, rising sea levels, widespread drought and—finally—the disaster now known as the Great Collapse of 2093.

The disintegration of the West Antarctica Ice Sheet led to mass migration and a complete reshuffling of the global order. Writing from the Second People’s Republic of China on the 300th anniversary of the Great Collapse, a scholar presents a gripping and deeply disturbing account of how the children of the Enlightenment—the political and economic elites of the so-called advanced industrial societies—failed to act, and so brought about the collapse of Western civilization. Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *The Collapse of Western Civilization* (2004)

[47] Ecotopia was founded in the year 1975 when northern California, Oregon, and Washington seceded from the Union to create a “stable-state” ecosystem: the perfect balance between human beings and the environment. Now, forty-seven years later, this isolated, mysterious nation is welcoming its first officially sanctioned American visitor: *New York Times* reporter Will Weston.

Skeptical yet curious about this green world, Weston is determined to report his findings objectively. He's alternately impressed and unsettled by the laws governing Ecotopia's earth-friendly agenda: energy-efficient "mini-cities" to eliminate urban sprawl, zero-tolerance pollution control, tree worship, ritual war games, gender fluidity and a women-dominated government that has instituted such peaceful revolutions as the 20-hour workweek and employee ownership of farms and businesses. His old beliefs are challenged, his cynicism replaced by hope. He meets a sexually forthright Ecotopian individual and undertakes a relationship whose intensity will lead him to a critical choice between two worlds.

Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia* (1975)

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