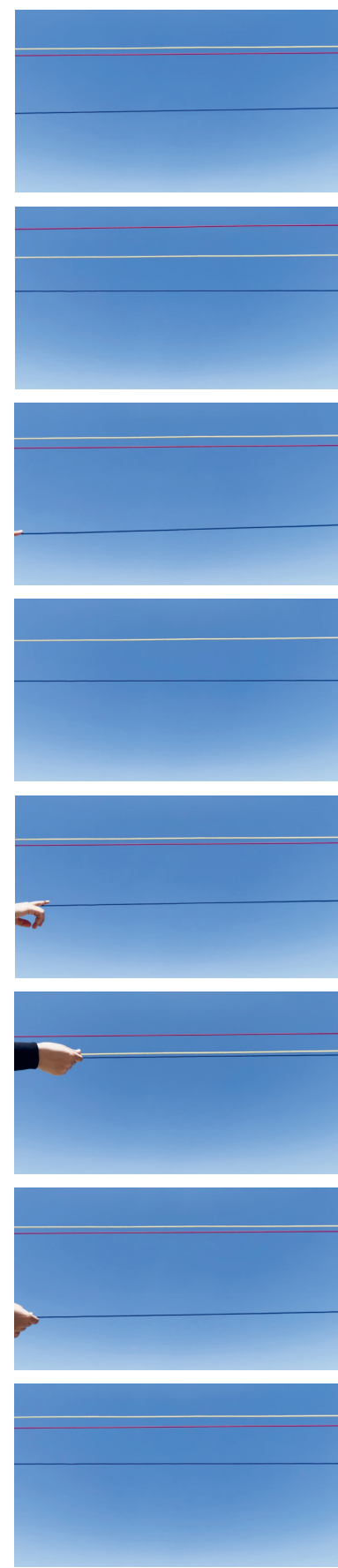




A WAVE TO THE WAVES

situation 008.1
moving moment 0032

- weather conditions
tide: low
wind: strong north-eastern or south-western
wetness: dry
temperature: any
- time and space
duration: variable 30-90 min.
location: close to the waterline
- who
individual and together
- tools
rolls of baking paper
- actions
→ handing a roll of baking paper
→ unfurling the roll in the wind, one by one
→ forming a long dotted line along the waterline
→ ironing the rolls with hands
→ rolling up the paper rolls



STRINGS ATTACHED

situation 008.2
moving moment 0033

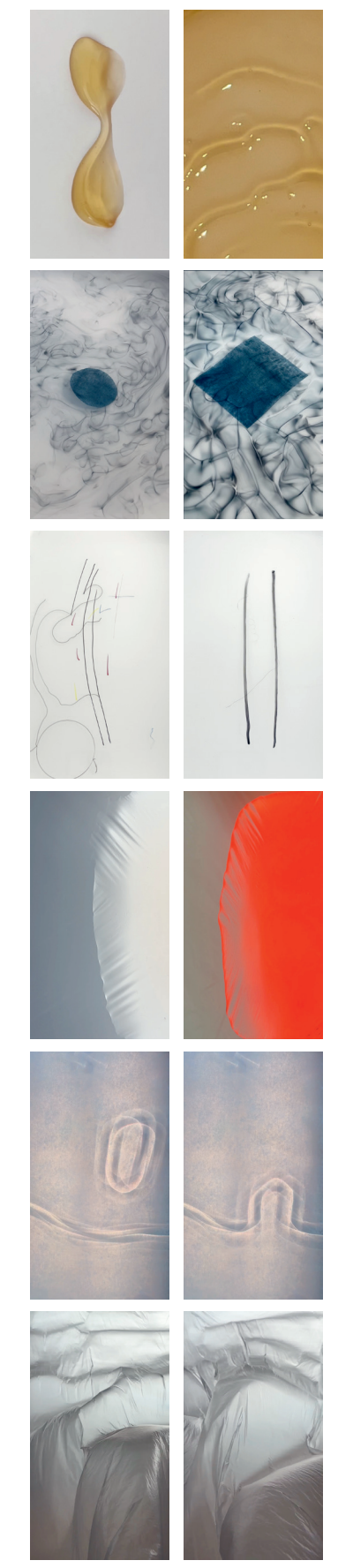
- weather conditions
tide: high and low
wind: calm
wetness: dry
temperature: any
- time and space
duration: variable 30-60 min.
location: close to the waterline
- who
3 together
- tools
colored elastic strings, sticks to attach the strings to
- actions
→ choosing a distance
→ holding strings in tension
→ playing strings with fingers
→ singing a sound, sharing a thought, maybe



HOLDING STRINGS

situation 008.3
moving moment 0035

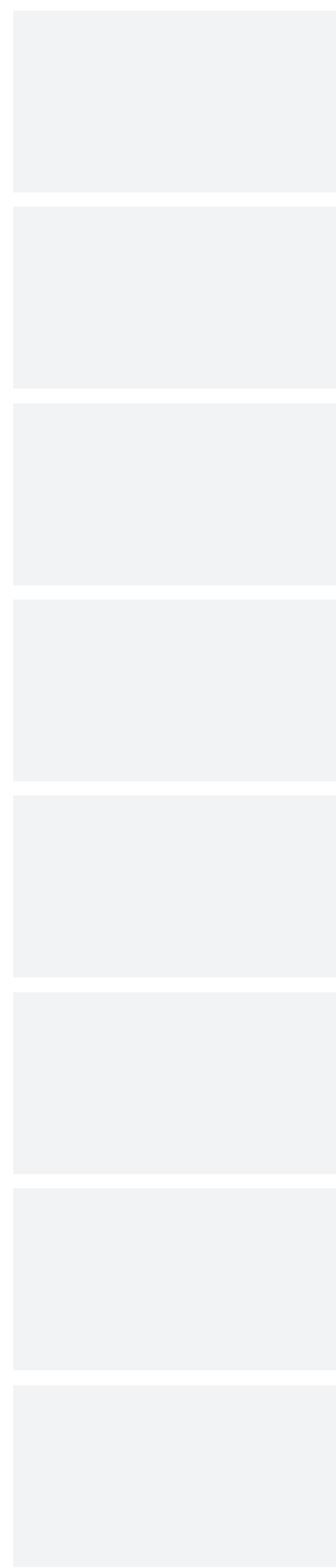
- weather conditions
tide: low
wind: medium to strong
wetness: dry
temperature: any
- time and space
duration: variable 30-60 min.
location: on wet sand
- who
individual and together
- tools
thin colored strings
- actions
→ choosing strings
→ holding strings
→ moving drawing



DISAPPEAR

situation 008.4
moving moment 0005
0010
0018
0050
0065
0068
0069

- weather conditions
tide: high and low
wind: any
wetness: rain
temperature: any
- time and space
duration: variable 20-60 min.
location: in toolbox
- who
individual and together
- tools
oven dishes, paper, pen, honey, straws, water
- actions
mm_0005
→ pouring honey on dish
→ blowing through a straw
mm_0010
→ filling dishes with water
→ adding pieces of paper
mm_0018
→ drawing on dishes
→ filling dishes with water
→ watching the flow



UNFORESEEN

situation 008.5
moving moment 00__

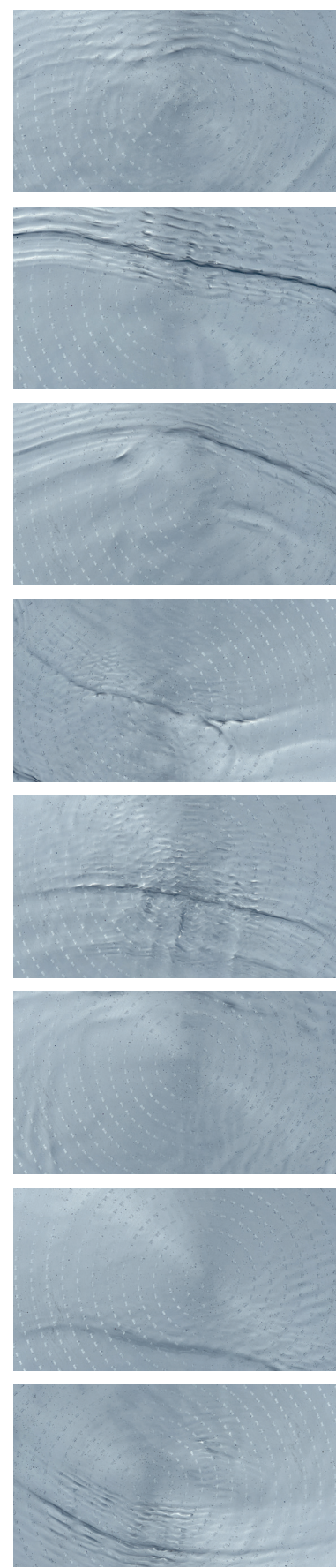
- weather conditions
this situation takes place in unforeseen circumstances and will be applied the moment itself spontaneously
- weather conditions
tide:
wind:
wetness:
temperature:
- who
.....
- time and space
duration:
location:
- tools
.....
- actions
→
→
→



DRAW A LINE

situation 008.6
moving moment 0103

- weather conditions
tide: high and low
wind: calm
wetness: dry
temperature: any
- time and space
duration: variable 30-60 min.
location: on the sand
- who
individual and together
- tools
black and colored ropes
- actions
→ unknitting the ropes
→ throwing the ropes in the air
→ writing drawing, drawing writing
→ making a sign of solidarity



TREMBLING

situation 008.7
moving moment 0098

- weather conditions
tide: any
wind: calm to medium
wetness: rain
temperature: any
- time and space
duration: variable 30-60 min.
location: anywhere outside
- who
2 together
- tools
large cooking pan, buckets
- actions
→ gathering rain in buckets
→ pouring water in the pan
→ pushing, turning, drumming the pan



WEIGHT ON ME

situation 008.8
moving moment 0088

- weather conditions
tide: high and low
wind: calm
wetness: dry
temperature: any
- time and space
duration: variable 8-88 min.
location: on the sand
- who
together
- tools
red rope
- actions
→ unrolling the red rope
→ making a ∞ shape with the rope
→ weighing on the rope
→ balancing together

ON CAPTURING THE INTANGIBLE

Mieke Mels

The attitude that I take is that everyday life is more interesting than forms of celebration [art], when we become aware of it. The when is when our intentions go down to zero. Then suddenly you notice that the world is magical.

— John Cage in conversation with Michael Kirby & Richard Schechner, in: *The tulane drama review* 10/2, 1965.

Gwendolyn Lootens is a visual artist. Her work unfolds in drawings, reliefs, collages and video works, but perhaps the most important medium the artist employs is 'time'. After all, for the artist, a drawing using pen, ink or pencil on paper is the result of an experience within a certain time span. Her ultimate goal? To let go of time and experience actions freely. What remains are solidified actions left on a surface as a witness to something that 'was'.

Entering Gwendolyn Lootens' studio feels like entering an archive room. We see cabinets with different drawers and compartments in which the captured movements are archived, nicely divided into different categories. This 'archival reflex' is remarkable because the artist Gwendolyn Lootens thereby tries to connect two extremes: the intangibility of time is brought inside these filing cabinets and labeled as memories. Suddenly, I am reminded of the *Flux Cabinet* (1975–77),



a tall wooden chest of drawers in which various fluxus artists have collected a variety of objects. Each drawer contains a memory of something that 'was,' an action, an event. Just as the *Flux Cabinet* brings together shared actions of the artists involved, Gwendolyn Lootens likewise collects movements and memories of herself and others. Indeed, her archive of time and movement is not only composed of isolated actions in which the artist is working alone in the studio. The

essence of Gwendolyn Lootens' work lies in 'shared' time. Strongly driven by a social commitment, she gathers people around her with whom the time and movement of those actions can be shared. This is also the case in *you give it a blow and it's gone* (2024), where the artist reaches out to the beach of Ostend and responds to the volatility of actions and images. Here the **sea, the waves, the wind and the beach provide an ideal context** and the many hikers and beachgoers an ideal audience.

You give it a blow and it's gone embraces the changeable and unpredictable weather conditions of the **sea**. Unable to predict what kind of weather is coming our way, Gwendolyn Lootens creates eight different 'situations' that take place on the beach. Using abstract lines, bright color surfaces, moving shapes, surprising materials and actions, the artist takes us along, driven by the weather conditions of the moment. *You give it a blow and it's gone* is a project that fully responds to a shared experience of 'time'. The artist invites intentional spectators as well as casual passers-by to realize a number of interventions together on the beach. On a windless dry day, *sit_008.2 strings attached* can be created, an action in which two people connect using one or more strings. How tight or how loose the strings are stretched is up to the participants to decide.

How long they perform this action is also up to them. When a strong northeast or southwest wind blows, *sit_008.1 a wave to the waves* can be realized. The more people who participate in this together, the more powerful the creation of this image and this experience can potentially be. Each participant is given a long piece of baking paper in their hands, and in a row behind each other at the tide line, these rolls are waving onto the wind together, by way of greeting the foamy crest on the waves.

To participate in a project like *you give it a blow and it's gone* is to take time to 'be,' to 'experience,' to 'live.' What Gwendolyn Lootens wants to create with these actions is a pure, intangible but essential movement between the human, the **sea** and the abstract visual language the artist uses. Each intervention is meticulously recorded by her on video and archived as a 'moving moment'. I imagine there will be an archival drawer in the studio with a sticker on it: *sit_008.1 / sit_008.2 / ...*

The whole concept of *you give it a blow and it's gone* (and by extension the artistic practice of Gwendolyn Lootens) reminds me again of the fluxus artists who were looking for a way to make art and life coincide. To change the course of art, they had to first look at life in a different way. The fluxus artists looked at the world from the point of view of movement, a constant flux that causes things around us to be in constant evolution (whether visible or not). To understand this properly we should fall back on our intuition rather than logic and reason, and from that intuition, experience nature as a 'process.' Art, according to the fluxus artist, had to be in harmony with nature and its constant changes. Coincidence and change were part of this, both of nature and of the artistic process. Allowing 'chance' into the artistic process could free the artist from taste, habits and ego.

You give it a blow and it's gone thus connects the dialogue and interactions between people with the reality around them. Gwendolyn Lootens plays the role of catalyst, inspirator and facilitator, but does not impose herself as 'the artist' in this story. She develops the instructions of the situation and then leaves the action open for interpretation. The participants determine the rest, together with the weather conditions. Coincidence creeps in and the artist becomes an observer. John Cage pointed it out above: everyday life is more interesting than art, if only we become aware of it. For me, therein lies the essence of what Gwendolyn Lootens wants to pursue in her artistic practice: *The when is when our intentions go down to zero. Then suddenly you notice that the world is magical.*

Mieke Mels is an art historian and curator/researcher at Mu.ZEE.

THE BOND BETWEEN THE SEA AND ME

Marine Severin

I need the sea because it teaches me. I don't know if I learn music or awareness, if it's a single wave or its vast existence, or only its harsh voice or its shining suggestion of fishes and ships. The fact is that until I fall asleep, in some magnetic way I move in the university of the waves.

— Pablo Neruda, excerpt from: The **sea**, in: *On the blue shore of silence*, 2003.

Have you ever asked yourself: *what does the sea do to me? what do I think and feel when I am at sea?* For decades the coast has been sought out as a place for leisure and relaxation. It is only until recently that scientists are exploring the positive interactions between the ocean and humans. Although it may appear common sense to some, being in contact with the coast is shown to positively affect our health and well-being. Visiting the coast can trigger a range of positive emotions, as well as more ambiguous feelings. As society is becoming more and more disconnected from nature, it is vital to remedy and encourage a healthy relationship between us and the **sea**. But how do we do so? Humans are social beings. Utilizing everyday materials and creating situations, in which people can playfully interact with coastal elements and each other, is likely to close the emotional gap between humans and the **sea**.

Being at the coast can generate complex and ambivalent emotions, notably the emotions of awe and nostalgia. Awe is experienced when a person perceives something as bigger than themselves. This doesn't necessarily translate to something physically large (although the vastness of the **sea** is often referred to as a source of awe), but can be a stimulus that is mysterious, fascinating, and immersive. Feeling awe often leads to a feeling of smallness, which helps us gain a wider perspective, a sense that our daily worries might not be so important in the end. This is ultimately shown to benefit our well-being. The **sea** is often referenced to creating nostalgic feelings, as its timeless nature allows



reflection of the past and its meaningful memories. These feelings are characterized by a sense of loss, but accompanied with gratitude that whatever that was lost still remains in memory. A similar experience may arise when reflecting upon what the **sea** gives and what the **sea** takes. Waving to the waves reinforces the feeling of nostalgia which is shown to engender a feeling of connection with the natural world. Furthermore, a prominent component of the project is providing opportunities for play that is suitable for everyone, and that may help people reconnect with their 'inner child'. The inherent social and intergenerational value of the coast is maximized through the playful nature of the situations.

Another need that is conveyed in the wish for release, whether it be or cognitive. Indeed, research the coast is an ideal place unraveling of bottled-emotions, whether they be positive or negative, and for letting go of stressful feelings and preoccupations. Moreover, a source of mental ill-health is intolerance towards uncertainty. While holding strings, the person ultimately relinquishes their control and lets the unpredictability of the wind create their shapes on the sand. Letting coastal elements take the reins is a common experience while surfing, which in itself is increasingly being used as a form of therapy. By allowing the waves to guide your movement, you surrender yourself to the **sea's** natural flow. A final need that is fulfilled is the demand for trust. Trust in yourself, in each other, and in the **sea**. Most likely the situations create trust and balance that can be redirected toward the **sea**, acknowledging a sensation of mutual understanding with the present setting.

Throughout the project, we notice a palpable similarity between the processes of you give it a blow and it's gone and human psychological states. For example, just like our emotions often fluctuate with the weather, the situation that is taking place is dependent on weather conditions, such as rain, sunshine, or wind. A similar analogy can be found with the plasticine reliefs that modulate according to the weather, curling up or standing straight, just like how our mental states can react to changes in our environment. The extent to which our environment influences our mental and physical health is likely to be as significant as intra- and interpersonal factors. The project's dependency upon unpredictable weather mirrors a coastline that is continuously changing and yet remains as a place of comfort and familiarity ever fixed in time.

Marine Severin is an environmental psychologist and researcher at VLIZ – Flanders Marine Institute.

SEA, IMAGE, GESTURE

Gawan Fagard

Let us be kindhearted! Take me to the sea at dusk. Let me hear what the sea tells you when it returns to itself in peace. I won't change. I will embrace a wave and say: Take me to the sea again. This is what the fearful do: when a burning star torments them, they go to the sea.

— Mahmoud Darwish, excerpt from: *The stranger's walk, in: Unfortunately, it was paradise. Selected poems*, 2003

How to meet the **sea**? The **sea** carries her meaning in the bosom of her waves. She hosts understanding in her silent and wordless way.

Where the worlds of everyday whims and wants and won'ts are silenced in sudden gusts, the coming and going of tides, the infinite expanse of surface, one tends to become aware of a sense of belonging.

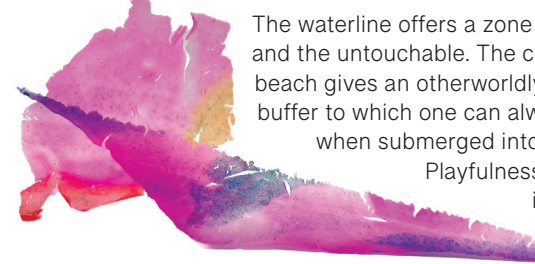
To greet the **sea** calls to accept the miracle of being within the existence of emptiness. The **sea** gives a space of projection, a fundamental dimension to think about the self as part of these flowing waters. The **sea** and the sky—two mirrors between which emotions reverberate towards elusive depths.

Irrevocably, time had evaporated on the shore of daily concerns. Time had withdrawn, had made itself inaccessible far on the horizon, beyond the reach of sight. Standing by powerless, clothed in desolation. Yet time retraced its steps, made itself available again, like the tides rising, faithfully repeating its natural movement, a circular motion of time taken and time given. Clouds moving on water. Foams, apprehended as blank unwritten flakes, an ephemeral mass.

Billions of grains of sand that have no choice but to be tossed back and forth by the rolling waves of the **sea** on the one side, or the bulldozers of the land on the other. The great expanse of the shore is a peace made of restlessness.

Fragile bodies are terribly dependent on the goodwill of these waves, with whom one needs to befriend oneself in order not to be swallowed by them. The wellness that the **sea** is able to offer, is guaranteed by one's readiness to fear her and therefore to care for her. The **sea** demands healing and obliges resilience in the same measure as she requires protection. The **sea** is the accumulation of alterity, the space where the other becomes magnificently present. One cannot stand in front of her as in a house made of self.

The sublime landscape as a frame framing the endlessness of horizon. To the right stretches a steel blue sky, to the left a heavy pregnant mass of clouds carrying thunder, in between an array of shades of grey, clear shapes, shapeless forms. Each situation carries both sides, the visibly bright where everything goes according to plan and where others show appreciation. They will say: *the weather is nice, today everything is fine, there is not a cloud in the sky!*—evoking a certain idea of perfection, a longing for innocence, a stagnation of sorts. While on the other side there is a potentiality of depression, seeking shelter, in need of raincoats, covers, roofs; a potential for transformation. Fragile existence like a thin skin between the self and the clothes covering it.



The waterline offers a zone between the mundane and the untouchable. The commotion of the beach gives an otherworldly comfort, a frivolous buffer to which one can always safely return when submerged into a **sea** of memories. Playfulness reigns where nothing is a duty. Inclined to play dancing in the wind, run after a rapidly fleeting shadow of a cloud, narrow one's eyes against the light to read the waiting lines of a book. Thoughts are carried away, senses breath fully, hands draw the purest gestures in the sand.

The **sea** is exhausted and angry. Humankind has been endeavoring to know what is beyond the horizon of her endless waters. People have been sailing to faraway lands, they have established colonies and exhausted other peoples. Only to encounter themselves again in the face of others on other shores. They have left waste, a trail of carelessness, marks of shame. They have returned, battered and deprived and found themselves trapped, surrounded by the shadows of their imagination. Her generousness squandered and majestic force drained, the filthy **seas** have become the site of potential revenge. Slowly, while life in the waters is threatened, they have struggled for restoration navigating on small ships of hope.

Yesterday, today and tomorrow many have met the **sea** as a border, despite these attempts of rescue and reconnection. A wall of water and air patrolled by watchmen, soldiers, traffickers and activists—a battlefield

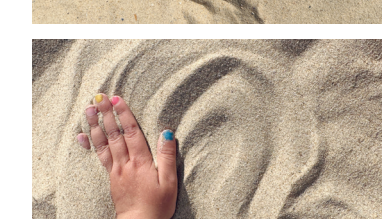
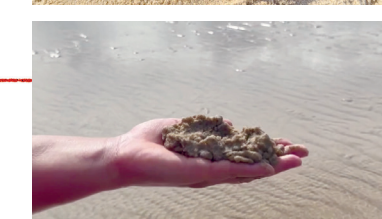
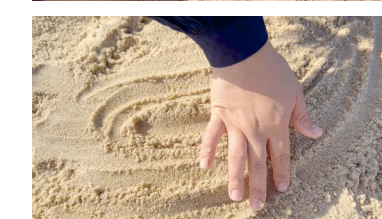
of human morality. A source of endless waiting, trying, suffocating, repeating, hoping. As much as the waters help to heal and restore, they also destroy and swallow lives in their spiral. Sourcing from an inner stream, survivors build themselves up again, forwards, towards a new beginning.

Allowing to let the **sea** drift, to let the ocean invade, give the senses time to feel its high and low tides, makes one realize how the crisis of selves dissolves within the waves of connectedness. Is the **sea** a source of longing? A place where lifelines touch? Where encounters last?

Gawan Fagard is a writer and researcher in film, art and philosophy.

Every movement in the universe is constrained by another one. The sea wave has a range that ends when a new wave comes. There is no absolute freedom. Even volcanoes and winds are limited, and so is the freedom of the human. Free verse is a provocative name, as if measured verse is not free. When you write a poem of free verse, you need time, a hand, a pen, and a paper. All those are restrictions. You also need an idea and a language. And a language is grammar. Without it, it breaks down. The question is what you do with restrictions. If the poet masters them he becomes free. If the restriction is in you and you have mastered it, then you are freed. Poetry has its restrictions, but those become tools of liberating cultural consciousness.

— Samih Al-Qasim in conversation with Khaled Furani, in: *Silencing the sea. Secular rhythms in Palestinian poetry*, 2012.



A HAND TO THE SAND

COLOPHON

moving moment 0042



list of works by gwendolyn lootens

moving moments: hd video, 16:9 vertical and horizontal, color, loops of ca. 1-5 minutes, 2023–2024

moments: variable sizes, plasticine and clay, 2023–2024

situations: variable sizes and durations, 2023–2024

presented by

de langste dag, kaap & mu.zee, all day 29 june 2024

neem me mee, theater aan zee, daily 3-10 august 2024

ensor24, city of oostende, 21 september 2024

a project by

gwendolyn lootens

artistic coordination
gawan fagard

artistic advice
mieke mels, rolf quaghebeur

publication
gawan fagard, editor
lien van leemput, graphic design
gawan fagard, mieke mels, marine severin, mervat abuamro, therese nitschke, gwendolyn lootens, a.o.

situation team
batul h., lubnan al wazny, marine severin, mervat abuamro, therese nitschke, gwendolyn lootens, a.o.

image
gwendolyn lootens, concept
ismael iken, camera
xander vanhoutte, gaëtan gysbrechts, aerial images
diren agbaba, advice

partners
kaap; rolf quaghebeur, merel vercoutere, ruth dupré mu.zee; mieke mels, ilse roosens, joost declercq, dominique saveklout theater aan zee; cindy godefroi, boy rabaey, carla beeckmans thermae palace; olivia van moerkerke, paco velghe, ken debusschere vliz; gert everaert, marine severin, a.o. cinemamaximiliaan; annabelle van nieuwenhuysse, alicia carson, a.o. ckv; jan stuyck, nele luyts twee-eiige drieling, tobias van royen resealience

helping along
ahmed rzgar, annelies doom, anne marie jacobs, dalia hourani, els wuyts, emma van der put, fatma o. dea, kinshuk surjan, majdi abuhastira, maryam khameghar, roberta gigante, rudi salomon, sabrina seifried, zazie fagard

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YOU GIVE IT A BLOW AND IT'S GONE

you give it a blow and it's gone is part of ensor 2024, the multifaceted city festival featuring numerous exhibits and high-profile events in honor of the 75th anniversary of the death of artist james ensor.

de langste dag is a happening from sunrise till sunset organised by kaap & mu.zee referencing jef cornelis' live broadcast from 1986. the happening includes works by younes baba-ali, nienke baeckelandt, boegbeeld, elen braga, buren, laurie charles, leo copers, marjolijn dijkman, pieterjan gincxels, francesca grilli, samahi hijawi & erika spreij, gwendolyn lootens, katja mater, studio michiels and vansteenikste & lisa van der aa, wendy morris, ria pacquée, sofie anny nicea, myrthe van der mark

for more info @ gwendolynlootens