

A Sky Journal as an representation of the world: an exploration of a personal endeavour to understand the sky

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During the Summer of 2013 I kept a sky journal as to explore what I soon realised was my struggling relationship with the sky, that ever-changing canvas, from an artistic point of view. This paper records those sky explorations and musings. For comparison I looked at the works of English landscape painter John Constable, in particular his experiences with the sky. Over the course of that period of time I discovered how much the sky is in me and I am in the sky, an observation Tim Ingold also describes from a phenomenological point of view. Another context provides the introduction of mnemesthetic consciousness, an ability of your brain to perceive the transcendent quality of beauty as described by artist Robert Mueller. For illustration I added both my own pictures and sketches and those of John Constable, who was also struggling to put a multidimensional experience into two-dimensional artwork.

Introduction

A way of seeing the sky is as an ever changing canvas where light in all its facets is implicit, or as Tim Ingold states is 'luminosity itself.'¹ Observations of the sky reveal its on-going process of change. The English landscape-painter John Constable (1776-1837) coined the term 'skying' for monitoring the sky. ² Both Ingold and Constable touch upon the thematic contents of this paper to represent what experiencing the daytime sky encompasses and how to externalise the creative result. Therefore, as observer and experiencer, I seek to 'understand the sky' by free reminiscence on occurrences in the sky, in particular the manifold appearances of light in and of the sky, predominantly expressed in two-

¹ Tim Ingold, 'Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather,' *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13, Wind, Life, Health: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives (2007), [hereafter Ingold, Earth, Sky, Wind and Weather], p. S29.

² Leslie, C.R., *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable, Esq., R.A.*, Second Edition, London: Longman, Brown, Green, 1845 [1843],[hereafter Leslie, *Memoirs*], p. 92.

dimensional artwork. The substantiated result mirrors my direct and reflexive perspective of 'an elaborate venture' of the sky, as Clifford Geertz remarks.³ Furthermore, considering my question what and why art may evoke strong reactions in the mind, it can perhaps be answered from the idea of mnemesthetic consciousness, described by artist Robert Mueller as 'a complex re-enactment of the entire sense and sensibility of a past, conscious experience.'⁴

Academic Rationale

The reason for choosing this topic pertains to a mixture of philosophical and psychological considerations pondering the reasons to observe the sky, engage with it and manifest it as art. Constable embodied his observations of the sky in a way that Michael Kitson describes as 'no artist of his time more intensely concerned himself with the creative process - the act of painting - and none was a more sensitive craftsman.'⁵ As Ronald Rees puts it '[Constable's] approach to both the landscape and landscape painting was scientific; and much is known about his intellectual and artistic processes.'⁶ Constable's profound interest in the sky also encompassed the meteorological occurrences which account for the diverse phenomena in the sky, for example as his intensive studies of clouds in the period of 1821-22 testify.⁷ However, my notes do not gravitate towards scientific observations, rather the depiction of aerial phenomena is the focus and this choice outweighs the written content of the journal.

A brain faculty permits translating those impressions of the sky into a work of art, resulting in a potential conjoining of the perceiver and his object, which can be comprehended as the idea of 'mnemesthetic consciousness'.⁸ This also involves participation, and as the realisation emerges that the sky is not apart from the observer, Ingold's insights may elucidate the actual experience of being 'a sky dweller'.⁹

Research Methodology and Considerations

³ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 6.

⁴ Robert Emmett Mueller, 'Mnemesthetics: Art as the Revivification of Significant Conscious Events,' *Leonardo* 21 (1988) [hereafter Mueller, 'Mnemesthetics'] p. 191-192.

⁵ Michael Kitson, 'John Constable, 1810-1816: A Chronological Study,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 20 (1957) [hereafter Kitson, A Chronological Study] p. 338.

⁶ Ronald Rees, 'John Constable and the Art of Geography,' *Geographical Review* 66 (1976) [hereafter Rees, John Constable and the Art of Geography] p. 59.

⁷ John Thornes, 'Constable's Clouds,' *The Burlington Magazine* 121 (1979) p. 697.

⁸ Mueller, 'Mnemesthetics,' p. 191.

⁹ Ingold, 'Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather,' p. S34.

Charlotte Davies argues that to enter next into a dialogue with the sky, is facilitated by 'the relatively private, individualist and hence partially reflexive activity of a fieldworker keeping a journal.'¹⁰ In her view, reflexivity encompasses 'a turning back on oneself, a process of *self*-reference.'¹¹ The result can be described in terms of *self*-ethnography (my italics), being 'to refer both to a particular form of research and to its eventual written product.'¹² The latter involves the Sky Journal, in which during three months (May-July 2013) my entries evolved around the theme of a heightened awareness of the sky.

Concerning the first, with Davies's application of the 'self', social psychologist George Mead (1863–1931) discerns 'the Me' and 'the I' or ego; whereas the social 'Me' enables interaction with others in an on-going development, using symbolic forms and reflection upon actions, the active creative principle 'I', responds to the 'Me'.¹³ Therefore the 'Me' is Self as object, the 'I' is Self as subject. Moreover, as to reflexivity, Mead theorises that 'Reflexiveness ... is the essential condition, within the social process, for the development of mind.'¹⁴ Mead also posits that 'the individual mind can exist only in relation to other minds with shared meanings'¹⁵. In that sense 'the Me' provides access to other selves in other societies, cultures and times, as well as a rationale for introducing Constable and Ingold, juxtaposing their impressions with mine with reference to Mueller's idea of mnemesthetic consciousness.

As the Sky Journal progressed, I correspondingly realised that the sky as *an object* is reflected upon, and I reflect upon myself as an object as well, analogous to Mead's designation of the Self. Nonetheless, my observation requires intentionality, a phenomenological approach, defined as 'the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view, with the central structure of an experience its intentionality, its being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object,' as David Smith writes.¹⁶

¹⁰ Charlotte Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography, A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999) [hereafter Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*], p. 7.; Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*, p. 7.

¹¹ Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*, p. 4.

¹² Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*, p. 4.

¹³ George Mead. 'The 'I' and the 'me'', Section 22 in *Mind Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, ed. Charles W. Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934) [hereafter Mead, *Mind Self and Society*], pp.173-178.

¹⁴ Mead. 'The Relation of Mind to Response and Environment', Section 17, *Mind Self and Society*, p. 134.

¹⁵ George Mead, *The Individual and the Social Self: Unpublished Essays by G. H. Mead*. Ed. by David L. Miller. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 5.

¹⁶ David Smith, 'Phenomenology,' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia on Philosophy*, ed. E Zalta, 2011, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>, (accessed on 2 August 2013).

As the aim is to actively engage with the sky, I consequently needed to draw on another individual's perception of the sky for comparison, following Davies. Whereas Constable's is effectuated in his impressions on oil sketches and drawings, Ingold's narrative on the sky offers a phenomenological framework. Furthermore, I strived to achieve John McLeod's conception when looking at 'a qualitative research paper or monograph as a form of *representation* of the world.'¹⁷ A dialogue with the sky reflected in the Sky Journal is by its nature an inner and fragmented dialogue. Ergo, what Alan Bryman describes as the problem of 'anecdotalism,' in that fragments are not encapsulating the totality of experience, are recognised.¹⁸ Finally, I suggest that the sky journal is construed as a quilt-like 'set of fluid, interconnected images and representations' as belonging to the qualitative methodology of 'bricolage'.¹⁹

The Introduction of Mnemesthetic Consciousness

On the experience of perceiving art, Mueller introduces the term 'mnemesthetics' describing it as 'only pertaining to art'.²⁰ His rationale to set it aside from the classical 'aesthetic experience' is because the latter regards for instance a sunset as something beautiful, omitting the 'enhancement' of the artist. Consequently, it should be distinguished from ordinary consciousness due to its 'powerfully enhanced and vividly repeatable,' capacities and moreover, it can be collectively shared.²¹ It therefore is a unique event, and where ordinary memory is 'sketchy, symbolic, partial', the contrasting mnemesthetic event is 'vivid, alive, moving, complete'.²² He mentions the participatory element of the senses in the paradigmatic perception of a work of art, also emphasising the effect a metaphor induces'²³ Metaphors are classified as so-called mnemesthemes, meaning 'concretized, tense, almost transcendent reflections of experiences, generating the most vivid and therefore some of the most unusual and important consciousness events of the mind,' because their resonance evokes powerful emotions of easy

¹⁷ John McLeod, *Qualitative Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy* (London: Sage Publications, 2000), p. 153.

¹⁸ Alan Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), p. 77 in David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*, 4th Edition, London: Sage Publications, 2011, p. 20.

¹⁹ Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, 'Introduction' in ed. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks/London/Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 6

²⁰ Mueller, 'Mnemesthetics,' p. 191.

²¹ Mueller, 'Mnemesthetics,' p. 191.

²² Mueller, 'Mnemesthetics,' p. 192.

²³ Mueller, 'Mnemesthetics,' p. 191.

recognition and replay in the mind, as for example the sunset and the rainbow elicit.²⁴ The following sections seek to explore this idea, not prove the plausibility.

On the depiction of cloudy skies

Alexander Cozens (1717-86) is credited with being the first English artist to create cloud schemata.²⁵ Cozens' early method was already outlined in 1759, derived from Leonardo da Vinci's creed, who said that for inspiration, an artist should turn to old blotches, stains and crevices in old walls and stones.²⁶ Cozens transformed and perfected random inkblots on paper into features of landscape (see figures 1 and 2), and as Joshua Taylor comments, both the blot and the result stir the mind, because of their 'mindlessness' on which the spectator freely associates 'without prejudice or pre-existing rules.'²⁷ His approach was as revolutionary, as Constable's lifelike renderings, which Rees calls 'radical' in Constable's time, as he chose 'old brickwork, ploughed fields, rotting banks, and slimy posts,' instead of idyllic scenes.²⁸ Constable stated that 'the first thing I try to do is, to forget that I have ever seen a picture.'²⁹ On the other hand, being Cozens' keen and lifelong admirer, he imitated his' twenty 'Engravings of the Skies (1795),' based on his blotting techniques between 1812-14 (see figures 3 and 4), and to which Louis Hawes comments, with 'a variety of striking light and dark patterns that an artist can plausibly effect in terms of general cloud imagery.'³⁰ On its website, The National Gallery of Australia shows a late example of 'blot-like' drawing, his 'Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk' (c.1829-35) (see figure 5).³¹

²⁴ Mueller, 'Mnemesthetics,' p. 192.

²⁵ Louis Hawes, 'Constable's Sky Sketches,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 32 (1969), [hereafter Hawes, *Constable's Sky Sketches*], p. 349.;

²⁶ Joshua Taylor, 'A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape,' in *Nineteenth Century Theories of Art*, ed. Joshua Taylor, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987) [hereafter Taylor, *Nineteenth-Century Theories of Art*], p. 62.

²⁷ Alexander Cozens, *A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape* (London: J. Dixwell, 1785), p.; Taylor, *Nineteenth Century Theories of Art*, p. 63.

²⁸ Ronald Rees, 'Constable, Turner, and Views of Nature in the Nineteenth Century,' *Geographical Review* 72 (1982) [hereafter, Rees, 'Views of Nature'] p. 257.

²⁹ Leslie, *Memoirs*, p. 307.

³⁰ Hawes, *Constable's Sky Sketches*, p. 350.

³¹ John Constable, 'Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk (c.1829-35)', National gallery of Australia online <http://nga.gov.au/exhibition/constable/Detail.cfm?IRN=143196> (accessed 31 July 2013).



Figure 1 Alexander Cozens -38. [title not known], from *A New Method for Assisting the Invention in the Composition of Landscape*, 1785. Aquatint on paper. Width 30 cm, height 22,5 cm. Photo: Tate London.



Figure 2 Alexander Cozens -39. [title not known], from *A New Method for Assisting the Invention in the Composition of Landscape*, 1785, Aquatint and etching on paper; Width 30, height 22,5 cm. Photo: Tate London.

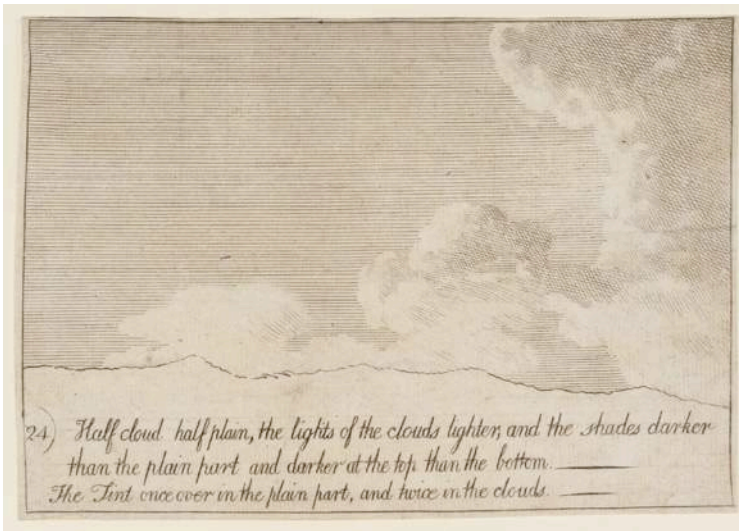


Figure 3 - Alexander Cozens, *Engravings of Skies no. 24*, 1785, Etching on paper, a compilation of twenty engravings from his *A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape*, (1785-86) Width 16 cm, height 11 cm. Photo: Tate, London.

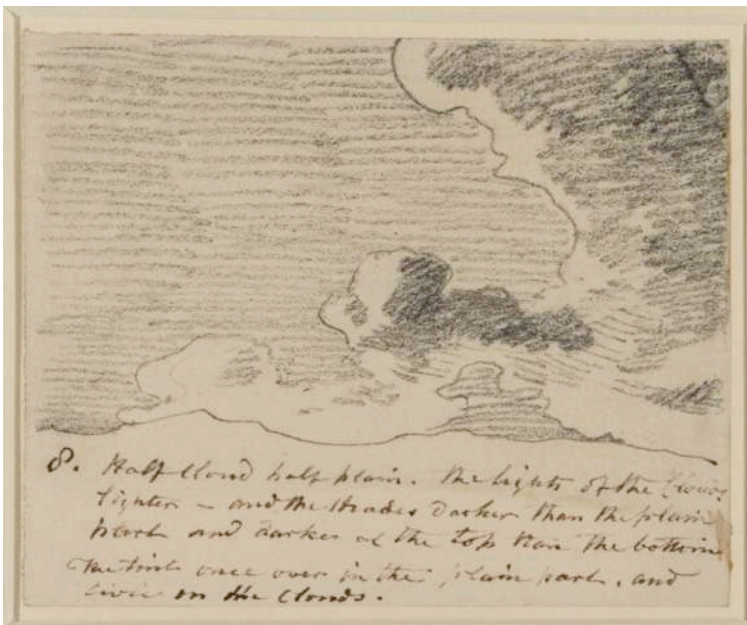


Figure 4 – John Constable, *Cloud study* (after Alexander Cozens' *'Engravings of Skies'*), 1812-14, graphite on paper, height: 9.4 cm; width: 11.5 cm; The inscription reads: 8. Half

cloud half plain. The lights of the Clouds lighter - and the shades Darker than the plain part and darker at the top than the bottom The tint once over in the plain part, and twice on the Clouds. Photo: Courtauld Institute of Art, London.



Figure 5 John Constable- *Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk with a double rainbow* c.1829-35. Iron-gall ink wash and pencil; Width 16,5 cm, height 12,2 cm. Private collection. Photo: The National Gallery of Australia.

Constable realised that when an artist draws a sketch from an existing painting, thus in an already *experienced* picture, it differentiates in that ‘a sketch of a picture will not serve more than one state of mind & will not serve to drink at again & again.’³² I conclude this section by arguing Constable displays here an important aspect of mnemesthetic awareness, namely the fact that a genuine artwork after even repetitive seeing it never bores.

On the creation of a depiction of cloudy skies

Creating such genuine artwork may encompass Constable’s sky sketches using oil on paper (see figures 6 and 7). However, a sky in constant flux poses

³² John Constable in Ronald Brymer Beckett, *John Constable and the Fishers: The Record of a Friendship*, (London: Routledge and Paul, 1952), p. 149 in Kitson, ‘A Chronological Study’, p. 349.

challenges in imaging cloudsapes. A first issue is the transient atmospheric character of their forming and disintegrating, rendering depiction difficult. Clearly, my intention is directed towards representing the *actual and authentic* cloud formation in colour sketching (see figures 8, 9 and 10). However, experimenting with the second medium, photography, enables me to acquire an actual picture of the sky (see figure 11). This medium I then solely apply 'as itself', meaning not as an example for modifying it into a drawing. Whereas sequencing demonstrates the varying effects sunlight displays (see figures 12 and 13), the creation of visual effects, is another application as photographing a sunset from a speeding car (see figure 14) shows. I note 'a linear quality, encompassing now the setting sun in between the trees and reflecting in the water of the Tjeukemeer.'³³



Figure 6 - Cloud study- 1822-John Constable, Oil on paper; height: 30.5 cm; width: 49 cm; Photo: The Courtauld Gallery, London.

³³ My translation: 'een lineaire kwaliteit, omvat nu de ondergaande zon tussen de bomen en reflecteert in het water van het Tjeukemeer.'



Figure 7 -Cloud study-1822-John Constable, Oil on paper laid on canvas. height: 30.5 cm; width: 50 cm. Photo: Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut.



Figure 8- Dronten, 10 May 2013-Land, Lake, Sky, oil pastel on paper, width 19 cm, height 20 cm.



Figure 9 – Dronten, 27 July 2013 –I Cloud study, oil pastel on paper.³⁴

³⁴ My translation: 'Studying the clouds, fast moving high cloud, which falls apart just moments later into three parts.'

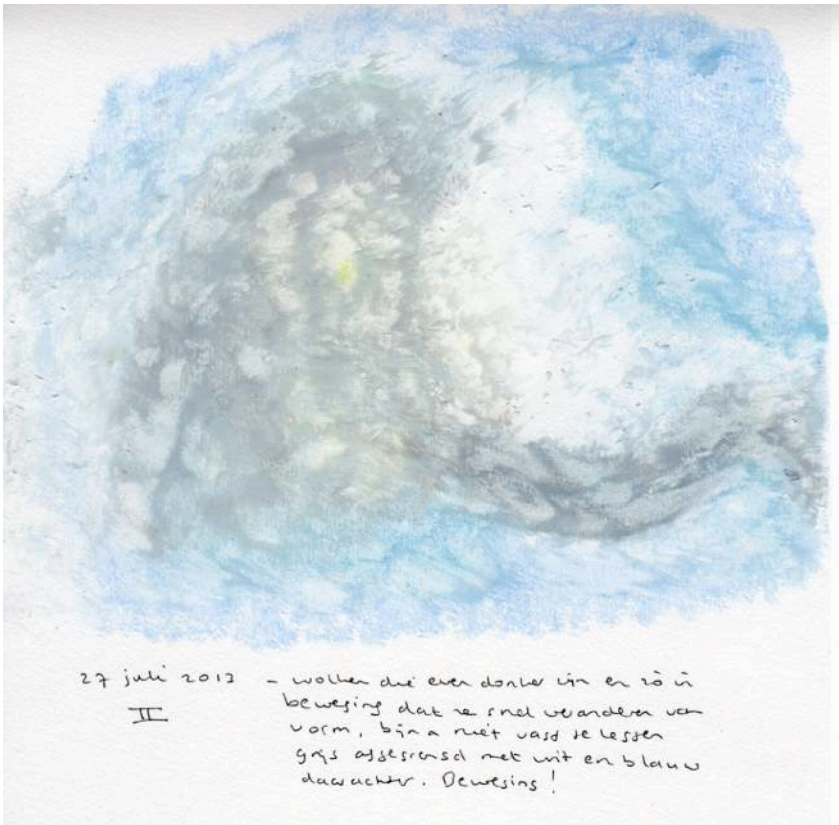


Figure 10 – Dronten, 27 July 2013 –II Cloud study –Oil pastel on paper.³⁵

³⁵ My translation: 'clouds that are dark for a moment and so much in movement that their form changes fast, almost impossible to record, grey bordered with white and blue behind. Movement!'



Figure 11- Swifterbant-23 May 2013, 16.02 hrs. Robert Morris Observatory. Photo: author.



Figure 12 Swifterbant-23 May 2013, 16.07.12 hrs. Robert Morris Observatory with the sun shining through the clouds. Photo: author.



Figure 13-Swifterbant-23 May 2013, 16.07.19 hrs. Robert Morris Observatory with the sun obscured by the clouds, photograph taken seven seconds later than figure 11. Photo: author.

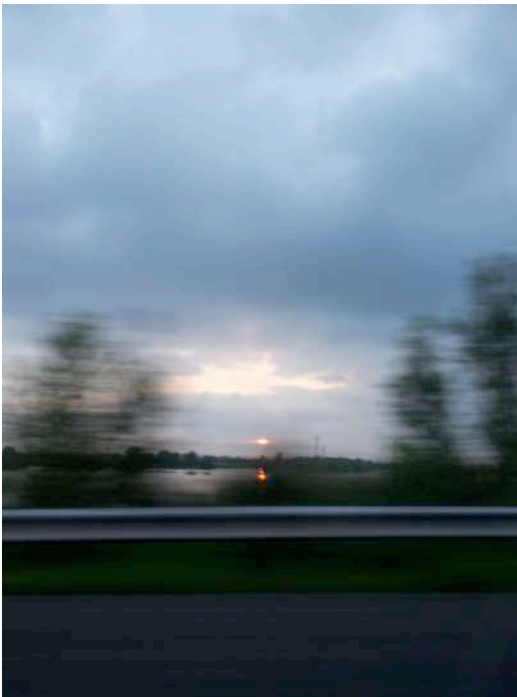


Figure 14-29 May 2013, 21.32 hrs- Tjeukemeer, Friesland- the sky as photographed from sitting in the passenger's seat in a car driving at 130 km/h on the motorway A6. Photo: Author.

My next issue is in depicting the entirety of the sky. Constable argues that 'I have often been advised to consider my sky as *'a white sheet thrown behind the objects'*.'³⁶ Representations in two-dimensional art are challenged by the fact that the sky is observed in 3D, where techniques to enhance it into a 3D-experience such as linear perspective, nevertheless force the artist to determine its 'role'. Constable acknowledged imaging skies pose substantial difficulties, writing to his friend and biographer John Fisher that 'because, with all [the skies'] brilliancy, they ought not to come forward, or, indeed, be hardly thought of any more than extreme distances are.'³⁷

I notice depicting the sky involves creating a representational 'part' with the intentional act of deciding which part, whether in drawing or in photography. I notice as well the 'urge' to 'frame the sky', to enclose a drawing within a pictorial frame. The first notion echoes the perceptual ability of seeing-in, meaning in philosopher Richard Wollheim's words ' a natural capacity we have ... so that, on the one hand, we are aware of the differentiation of the surface, and, on the other hand, we observe something in front of, or behind, something else.'³⁸ As the description in the framed sketch of Cozens shows (see figure 3), he refers to 'plain part' twice, indicating the outlined section. Constable's panoramic cloud study sketches of 1822 still represent a part of the sky without an pictorial frame (see figures 6 and 7).

In photography, a panoramic view offers opportunities for registering colouring effects on the sky during a sunset (see figures 15 and 16), whereas a close up reveals the sun disc amidst flaming colours (see figure 17).

³⁶ Leslie, *Memoirs*, p. 92.

³⁷ Leslie, *Memoirs*, p. 92.

³⁸ Richard Wollheim, *The Mind and Its Depths* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) [hereafter Wollheim, *The Mind*], p. 188.



Figure 15- Swifterbant-13 May 2013, 20.09 hrs. Sunset and large portion of the sky photographed on bridge to Robert Morris Observatory. Photo: author.



Figure 16- 28 May 2013, 21.45 hrs-Sunset with a band of clouds on the horizon, photographed en route from Dronten to Swifterbant on the N309. Photo: author.



Figure 17- 22 July 2013, 21.00 Sunset close-up, photographed between Dronten and Swifterbant. Photo: author.

Thirdly, in capturing the interactive quality of the sky, I find visual awareness is extended by other bodily sensory perceptions. I see it exemplified in Ingold, describing it as 'the light of the sky is experienced as a commingling of the perceiver and the world without which there could be no things to see at all. As we touch *in* the wind, so we see *in* the sky.'³⁹ There is an on-going interplay between the perceiver and the environment. With Constable this becomes clear when he refers to painting which is to him 'but another word for *feeling*,' the memories of his childhood in the Stour region 'made me a painter, and I am grateful; that is *I had often thought of pictures of them before I ever touched a pencil*.'⁴⁰ I partly italicised his quote because of his other referral, ascribing to the sky 'the

³⁹ Ingold, 'Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather,' p. S29.

⁴⁰ Leslie, *Memoirs*, p. 93.

chief organ of sentiment.’⁴¹ Mueller suggests that the recurrent character of encounters with a painting borne out of a undefinable need, may sprout from its personal importance to me.⁴² At every glance, aspects of the painting are memorised gradually and during the immersion in the painting, additional categorical information from books or the media, is ‘completing the picture,’ and demonstrates a renewed, enriched state, until it has become a mnemestheme. ⁴³



Figure 18-21 July 2013-Biddinghuizen. Oil pastel on paper, width 15 cm, height 17 cm.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Leslie, *Memoirs*, p. 92.

⁴² Mueller, ‘Mnemesthetics’, p. 193.

⁴³ Mueller, ‘Mnemesthetics’, p. 193.

⁴⁴ My translation: ‘Cycling through Flevoland. The sun has almost reached its zenith, Burning sun, a cooling breeze, the windmills turn. Straight blue sky. The oats are already high. The Sunday feeling of Summer.’

The above sketch (see figure 18) may serve as an example, for it encompasses the impressions of a particular cycle tour, externalised in a sketch drawn after the event, accompanied by observations which result in 'a Sunday feeling.' My intention is to capture precisely that feeling. When I only look at the sketch, I discern something happens when I picture 'Me' as the latter cyclist, then I relive that particular cycle-tour, not as a memory-image but as a fragmented *actual* experience with the sensory input included and I can zoom in closer ,conjuring up detailed information about what I heard, saw, smelled, thought, felt. In short, I am in the process of developing a potential mnemestheme.

Also, the next drawing may demonstrate this potentiality (see figure 19). In the third drawing (see figure 20), I depict the sun in a frame. I observe that I consider the luminaries as belonging to 'here' and not 'out-there' where the stars and planets reside. Ingold notes the texturing of sky, or rather its absence on a Summer's day and he discerns that the earth's texture is designated 'as what we usually call ground, whereas the sky above is perceived as vacant space without limit.'⁴⁵ Likewise, the use of frames might be elucidated by Ingold, pointing out that 'the sky can be described only *within a picture of the earth* conceived as the ground of human habitation ... the sky belongs ... to the world as it is presented to experience - to the phenomenal rather than the physical order of reality.'⁴⁶ By contrast, Mueller explains a frame is denoting 'the place of art' as it accentuates our mnemesthetic abilities and aids in the perception of visual art.⁴⁷

With the Sky Journal advancing, I became inquisitive as to whether the visual stimulus of a sketch or photograph can evoke such strong associations, whereby one may undergo again the qualities that belong to the time-frame of capturing the sky in image. In an mnemesthetic event, the evanescent clouds come and go, or in the beauty of a sunset, both gaining more qualitative stamina when assigned characteristics and then can be referred to as 'that cerulean sky' or 'that crimson sunset'. Overall I notice the gradual immersion in the processes that allow for the ability to represent the outer sky as well as the inner externalisation of the sky. In the next section the operation of that immersion is elaborated on, and finally to evaluate the experience of mnemesthetic consciousness.

⁴⁵ Ingold, 'Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather,' p. S26.

⁴⁶ Ingold, 'Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather,' p. S25.

⁴⁷ Mueller, 'Mnemesthetics,' p. 194.

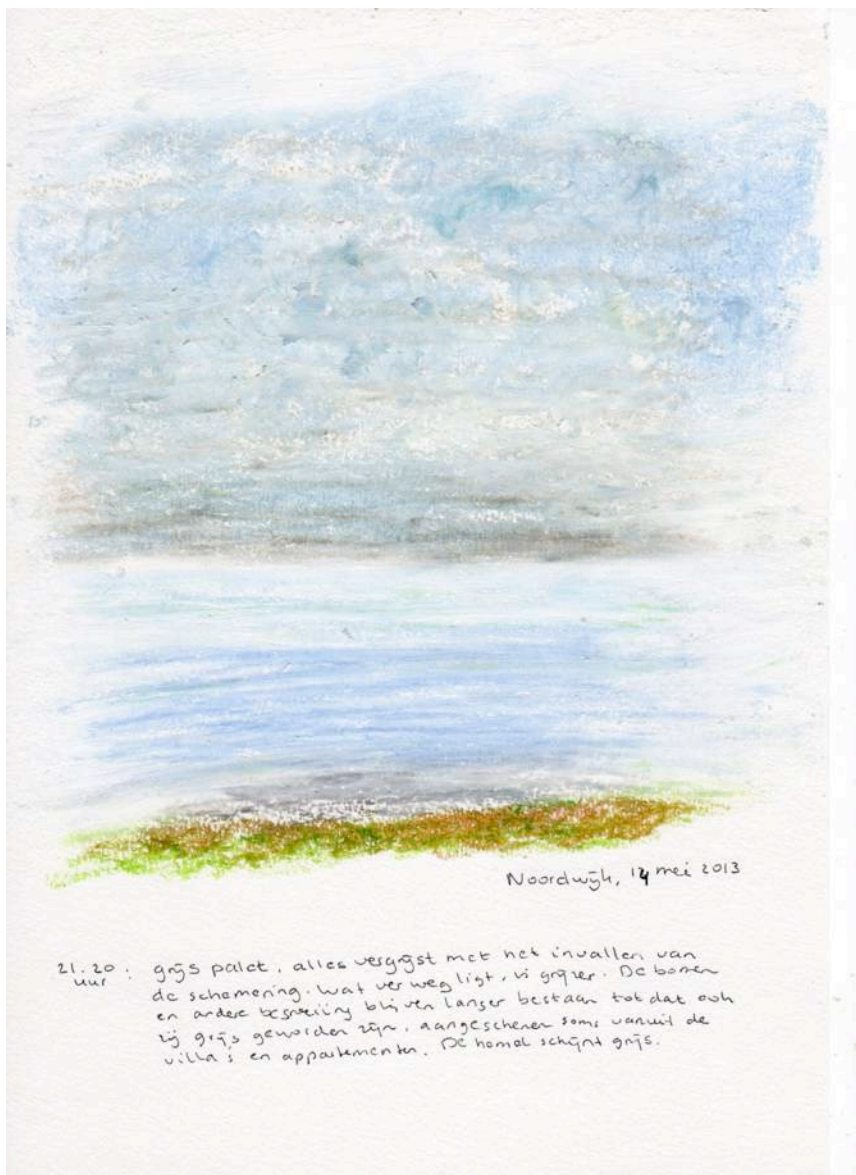


Figure 19-Noordwijk, 14 May 2013-seascape. Oil pastel on paper, width 21 cm, height 30 cm.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ My translation: 'Grey palette, everything greys with the onset of the twilight. What is far away, is more grey. The trees and other foliage last longer until they too have become grey, lightened by the villa's and apartments. The sky shines grey.'



Figure 20-Dronen, 26 July 2013-Depiction of the sun in the sky above the ground.⁴⁹ Oil on pastel; width 15 cm, height 23 cm.

⁴⁹ My translation: 'I know that the sky knows not of boundaries, but the sun, how do I render the sun when I look into it, I don't perceive boundaries then, I see boundlessness. It seems that boundaries are indicated by other boundaries. Boundaries of the earth, of the atmosphere, and frames like I have set in this picture.'

On the observation and depiction of a double rainbow on 8 May 2013

Due to inexperience with photographing a double rainbow, I opted for a snapshot (see figure 21). After taking the picture, I wrote a factual comment, closing with ‘what a curious phenomenon when you look at it and wonder about the scientific explanations for such an occurrence.’⁵⁰

Constable’s first known sketch of a double rainbow (1812) (see figure 22) reveals he omitted the dark band in between the two arcs, Paul Schweizer notes, and similarly in the ‘Sky Study with a Rainbow’ (1827) (see figure 25); he by then was regarded as having knowledge of geometric optics, but still painted ‘the inner area of the primary arc ... with a blue-gray wash which is darker than the tones on the outer red side of the bow’.⁵¹ My curiosity piqued, I scanned my photograph to verify Schweizer’s claim and concluded he is right (see figure 24). Constable’s friend Edward Verrall Lucas (1868-1938) stressed that he ‘insisted so often on the importance of working on the spot and being authentic.’⁵² However, as Rees points out, despite Constable’s focus on ‘painting is a science’, it can be suggested his aesthetic view was more important to him than his scientific view.⁵³ Wollheim affirms that pictorial meaning generally is dependent ‘on fulfilled intention.’⁵⁴ In this light, Constable’s spiritual personality outshined both views, Rees states.⁵⁵



Figure 21-Dronen, 8 May 2013, 20.00 hrs. A double rainbow arching the sky. Photo: author.

⁵⁰ My translation: ‘Een merkwaardig verschijnsel als je het ziet en je afvraagt wat de wetenschappelijke verklaringen zijn voor zo’n gebeurtenis.’

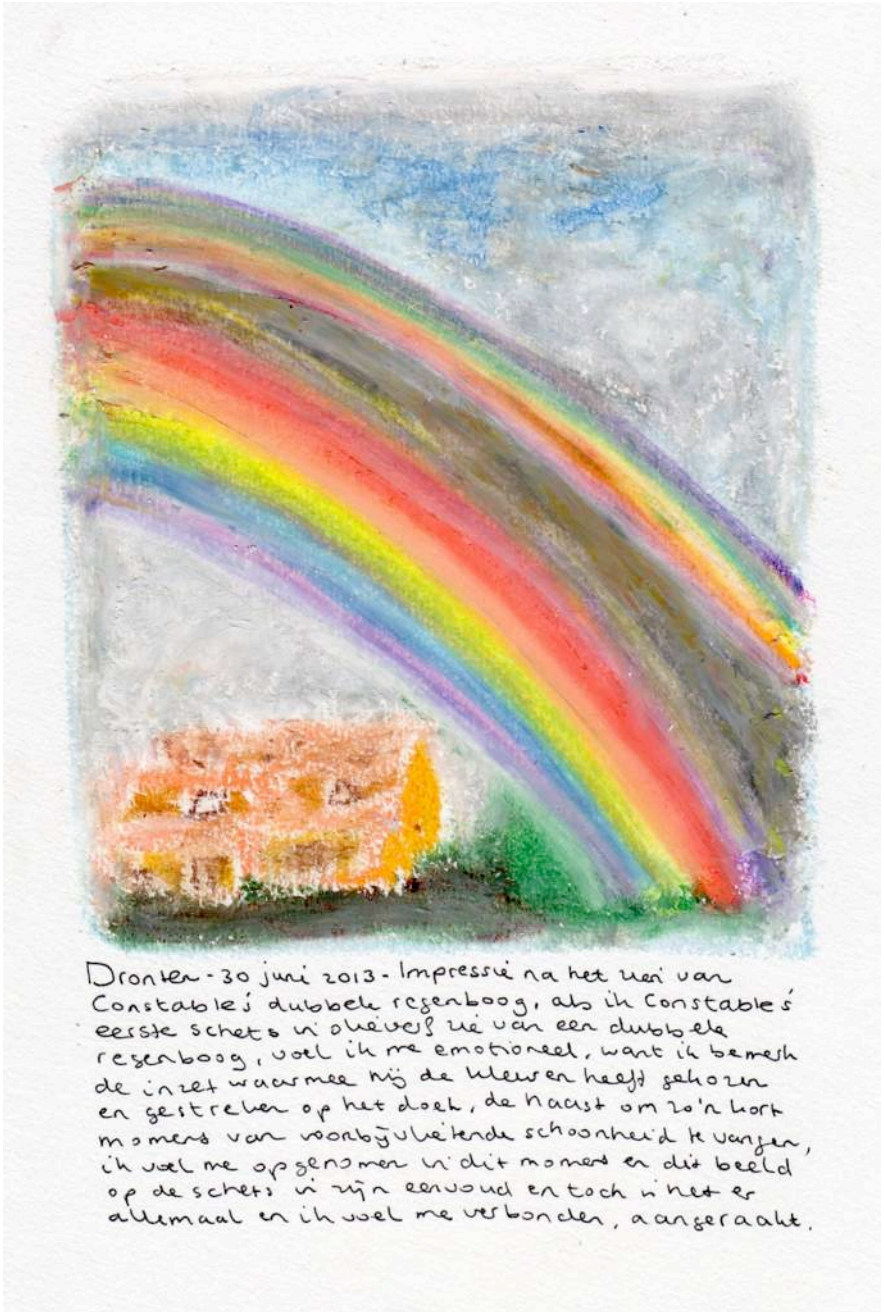
⁵¹ Paul Schweizer, ‘John Constable, Rainbow Science, and English Color Theory,’ *The Art Bulletin* 64 (1982) [hereafter Schweizer, ‘Rainbow Science,’], p. 435.

⁵² Edward Verrall Lucas, *John Constable, The Painter*, (London: Halton & Truscott Smith, New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1924), p. 16.

⁵³ Leslie, *Memoirs*, p. 350 ; Rees, ‘John Constable and the Art of Geography,’ p. 69.

⁵⁴ Richard Wollheim, ‘On Pictorial Representation,’ *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998), pp. 226.

⁵⁵ Rees, ‘Views of Nature,’ p. 260.



Dronter - 30 juni 2013 - Impressie na het zien van Constable's dubbele regenboog, als ik Constable's eerste schets in olievezel zie van een dubbele regenboog, voel ik me emotioneel, want ik bemerk de inzet waarmee hij de kleuren heeft gekozen en gestreken op het doek, de haast om zo'n kort moment van verbijuterende schoonheid te vangen, ik voel me opgenomen in dit moment en dit beeld op de schets in zijn eenvoud en toch in het er allemaal en ik voel me verbonden, aangeraakt.

Figure 22-Dronter, 30 June 2013-Impression after viewing Constable's double rainbow (translation of text is incorporated in body text on page 25)

In the Sky Journal on 30 June 2013 (see figure 23) I write that ‘When I look for the first time at Constable’s first oil sketch of the double rainbow, I am moved, for I sense the vigour with which he has selected and brushed the colours onto the canvas, the haste to capture a short lived event of such evanescent beauty, I feel absorbed into this moment and the view on the sketch in its simplicity and yet it’s all there and I feel connected, touched.’⁵⁶

Mueller presumably would qualify my interaction as a potential ‘mnemesthetic reaction’. Finally, it can be posited that Constable’s sketches of nature in her truest sense, reflect mnemesthemes: it is tangible in his landscapes, cloudscares and his depiction of the (double) rainbow. Schweizer calls the rainbow ‘Constable’s personal emblem’ and it can be presupposed his characterisation fits the description of Mueller’s mnemestheme remarkably well.

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Figure 23 –John Constable, ‘*Landscape and Double Rainbow*’ 28 July 1812, oil on canvas, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

⁵⁶ My translation: ‘Als ik Constable’s eerste schets in olieverf zie van de dubbele regenboog, voel ik me emotioneel, want ik bemerk de inzet waarmee hij de kleuren heeft gekozen en gestreken op het doek, de haast om zo’n kort moment van voorbijvlietende schoonheid te vangen, ik voel me opgenomen in dit moment en dit beeld op de sketch in zijn eenvoud en toch is het er allemaal en ik voel me verbonden, aangeraakt.’

⁵⁷ Paul Schweizer, ‘John Constable, Rainbow Science, and English Color Theory,’ *The Art Bulletin* 64 (1982), p. 425.



Figure 24- Detail of figure 18. Photo: author.



Figure 25-20 May 1827 *Sky Study with a Rainbow*. Watercolour, New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

Conclusion

The question remains whether understanding the sky equivocally refers to 'truly seeing the sky'. The three months of keeping the journal demonstrate a fragmented array of reflections on an intentionally heightened awareness of aerial phenomena represented in oil pastel sketches and photographs. It can be suggested the comprehension is vitalised by this profound engagement with the sky, which Ingold names 'the feel' of the sky with physical touching *in* the sky. Mueller's idea of mnemesthetic consciousness may perhaps be paralleled to reaching into those aerial phenomena as a genuine and recurrent act of nature, but only when an artist's intensive and authentic commitment is simultaneously conjoined with his imagery of for instance a double rainbow, thereby stimulating a re-enactment in both allusions, namely that of an optimal participator and of a co-creator with the sky in art. Mnemesthetic consciousness allows perhaps to access this particular experience of a rainbow in a way that transcends boundaries of culture, time and space. This occurs with an initial impact, and can be replayed endlessly, keeping the particular complex experience of the artwork and the universal of a rainbow alive, thus temporally bridging the gap between 'the Me' of the Self and the other, and equalling my initial perception of Constable's first sketch of a double rainbow. I realise this is what comprises Constable's gifted artistry and contributes to my potential 'grasping' of the sky. Concluding, I venture that, residing on the earth involves dwelling in the sky as well, involving participation and 'skying' as reflected in the Sky Journal's purpose of 'a representation of the world', to coalesce into a deeper understanding of the sky and me'.

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