

Performing Space 2023 – Conference Proceedings

(2025)

PERFORMANCE & SPACE II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE PERFORMING SPACE 2024 CONFERENCE

PS

PERFORMANCE & SPACE II

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
PERFORMING SPACE 2024 CONFERENCE

Edited by

Pablo Berzal Cruz, Athena Stourna, Tyrone Grima, Alba Balmaseda Domínguez



University of the Peloponnese

2025

**Enacting Image (Denkraum) by the Wind:
Movement Depicted in Mavroidis' Landscapes,
Fassianos' Figure and Gyparakis' Breath
Installation**

Stella Christofi

doi: [10.12681/ps2023.8409](https://doi.org/10.12681/ps2023.8409)

51**Enacting Image (Denkraum) by the Wind:
Movement Depicted in Mavroidis' Landscapes, Fassianos'
Figure and Gyparakis' Breath Installation****Stella Christofi**

Visual artist, PhD Candidate A.S.F.A

Abstract

This research is grounded in contemporary scholarly discourse on the representation of wind as the “pathosformel,” a concept which moves the space of image, called “Denkraum” and its epistemological implications. The study aims to contribute to the field of critical iconology by exploring how weather phenomena, specifically wind, “move” and shape the Greek image. The wind as an invisible force plays a central role in the shaping of space of the image, acting as a dynamic and unseen reality. This paper will examine how the motif of air in its metaphysical and material form has become a privileged symbol that significantly influenced Greek art as well as its subsequent reinterpretations in contemporary artistic practices.

This research traces the historical trajectory of the air motif in past, modern and contemporary art, analysing works by Greek artists such as Mavroidis, Fassianos, and Gyparakis. The focus is on how air as a natural and metaphysical force moves and animates the inanimate, altering the function of the image and engaging both visual and tactile senses. This study posits that air and wind are more than mere background elements; they actively transform the space of the image, leading to a new understanding of iconology where meaning emerges from the performative interaction between body, culture, and image.

Keywords: denkraum, pathosformel, image acts, wind, greek art, movement.

Wind as Pathosformel

Warburg's concept of “pathosformel” refers to expressive gestures that capture intense emotional experiences. These “passion formulas” manifest bodily effects such as intoxication, ecstasy or pain, intensified to the extreme. Warburg's studies reveal how such effects are embedded in art across time (Schankweiler & Wüschner, 2019a). Wind, similarly

occupies a dual position of being both physical and intangible - simultaneously material and spiritual. It is therefore unsurprising that wind has long been associated with spirit, breath, pneuma, divinity, and shadow. This family of related concepts informs both the ontology and epistemology of air in art (Low & Hsu, 2007).

As a recurring motif, pneuma has been privileged in modern art for its ability to signify a state of being that is inherently tied to visual perception. This research explores the ways in which wind and air function as dynamic agents in Greek art, engaging both the visual and tactile senses, and thus creating a living presence within the image (Ionescu, 2023).

This work presents some of the types of transformations that the image has undergone in Greek art. The aim of these structures is general, not intended to explain exhaustively all the historical sources in which the wind is a central motif, but to negotiate how the motif transforms the function of the image. The general trajectory of this motif thus traces the visual representation of the spirit as an image with its tactile and bodily presence, with the sense that the living body can feel wind and air in a sensitive environment (Ionescu, 2023).

Research Questions

This study addresses the following questions: *How can wind be represented visually in art, given its invisible nature? How does air as a motif actively transform the spatial dynamics within the image (Denkraum)?*

Methodology

The research adopts an interdisciplinary methodology and relates iconology to other fields within and beyond the humanities and the humanities, such as weather studies. It draws from Warburg's *Atlas Mnemosyne*, focusing on tracing formal patterns across time and space to understand the symbolic power of wind and air in art (Schankweiler & Wüschner, 2019a).

Movement

For Warburg, the most fundamental pathosformel involves movement. His analysis of Botticelli's work emphasises the decorative movement in objects such as hair and fabric blowing in the wind (Warburg, 1893/2010). These "mobile accessories" or "Bewegtes Beiwerk"- fluttering clothes, waving hair, curtains - generate an illusion of liveliness in still art. Such movements, which Warburg refers to as "dynamograms" draw us in, combining the emotional intensity of affecting and being affected (Schankweiler & Wüschner, 2019a).

The Representation of the Wind in Greek Art (1980-2012)

Mavroidis' painting *Meltemi* (1980) serves as a key example of wind's representation in modern Greek art (Figure 1).

Figure 1

"*Meltemi*", 1980. Oil on canvas. 40 x 60 cm. Giorgos Mavroidis.



The swirling brushstrokes in this painting capture the disorderly movement of the wind on an Aegean island, blurring the boundaries of houses and landscape, allowing the viewer to experience the force and chill of the Meltemi - a characteristic summer wind. We feel the fury of the wind and the chill that a Meltemi causes on our bodies, as we walk through the streets of an Aegean island. Here, the painter is an observer of this moment and invites the viewer to enter the image space and watch this scene. In this abstract way he visualises the wind, which we cannot see, but can imagine and feel. This breeze, the Meltemi, is a frequent summer phenomenon in the Aegean islands, where the images of wind-blown waves, rough seas and the roar of the wind change the environment into a cold scene that changes the summer.

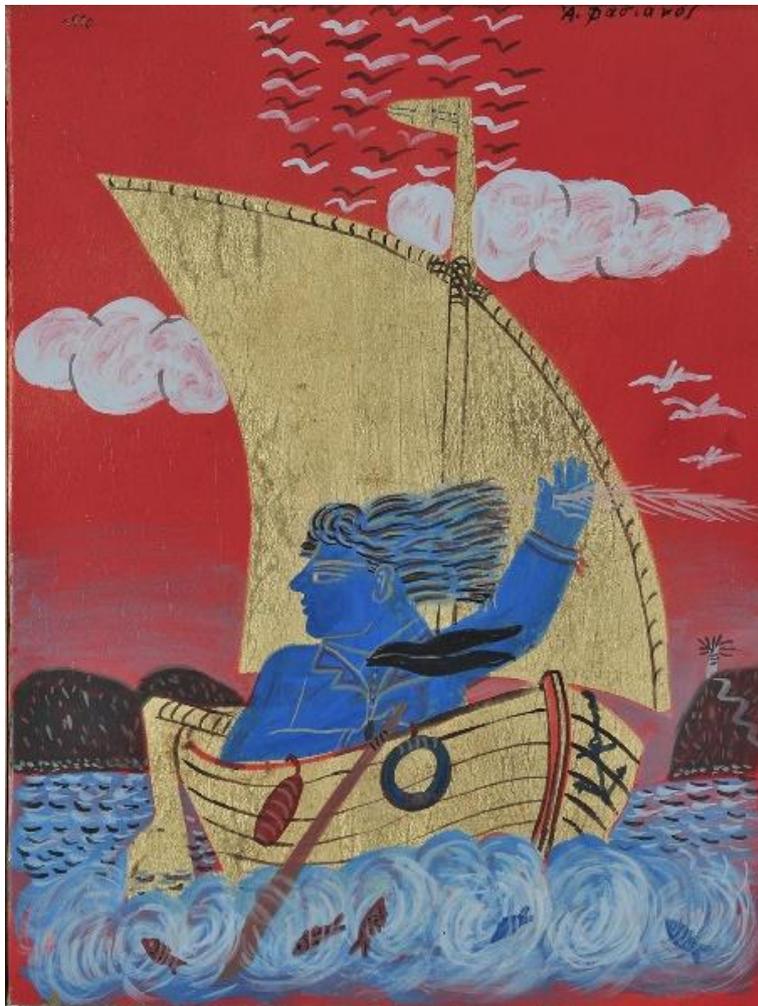
Similarly, in Fasianos' *The Boatman* (1980) (Figure 2), the wind shapes the composition, driving the movement of hair, a shawl, and the boat itself. The force of the wind is visible in the tilted angles of life jackets and anchors, while clouds and fish swirl under its influence. Here, the wind is not just a background element but the primary agent moving the entire

scene, as observed in the fluttering hair, shawl and feather held by the blue figure, as is the force exerted on the boat, shown in the right-facing angle. The waves in the sea are swirled by the gust of wind and the fishes swim in different directions, while the clouds in the sky and the birds move schematically in curved lines.

The sensory effects of wind are tactile, thermal, and occasionally auditory (Diaconu, 2013). The wind, while invisible, can transform our perception of an environment through its tangible impact on everything it touches. This movement often carries connotations of both vitality and destruction, evoking stories of shipwrecks and danger, as well as adventure and resilience (Velonis, 2022).

Figure 2

"The boatman", 1980. Oil on canvas. 44,4 x 33,5 cm. Alekos Fassianos.



Breath and air go together (Velonis, 2022). Breathing creates and ensures the continuation of life and this has been consistently taken as evidence of divine presence, or the gift of life, by every kind of culture. Wind touches and is felt, from the inside out (Low & Hsu, 2007). Even our own body produces and inhales wind. Wind is related to the breath

that goes in and out of our bodies and even the gases that our organs emit (Baert, 2015). In the Greek philosophy of Aristotle (384-322 BC), the concept of spirit is central to both breath and pneuma. This vital energy is received at birth and is constantly renewed through breathing (Baert, 2015).

In Gyparakis' sculptural installation *The Thinker* (2012), breath and air become a central element (Figure 3). The artist's own breath animates the conch connected through a bronze funnel to his body, producing sound and linking the sculpture to the physical presence of the artist. This work exemplifies how air can be "captured" and transformed into a performative act, where the artist's body and the wind come together in the creation of sound and movement (Ionescu, 2023).

Figure 3

"The Thinker", 2012, Epoxy resin, marble, copper. Giorgos Gyparakis.



The soul depends on the body as much as the perception of the wind depends on an instrument to "capture" its movement and translate it into music. Accordingly, the soul becomes like a body that circulates wind? within and can be released? in different ways: as continuous breathing, irregular breathing or taking air, as relaxed breathing or rapid breathing (Burchert, 2018). The artist is no longer limited to feeling the wind or observing its effects, but uses devices that mediate between the body and the wind (Diaconu, 2013).

Conclusion

In each of these works, air and wind shape fundamentally artistic representation, highlighting the shifting relationship between body, culture and image. Mavroidis and Fasianos incorporate wind into their paintings as a material force, while Gyparakis takes this relationship further by engaging the viewer in a performative experience that bridges the tactile and visual senses. The motif of wind, as a natural force that transcends visibility, offers a powerful metaphor for the movement of images and their epistemological transformations. Ultimately, this study suggests that the iconological concept is not fixed but emerges through the interaction of body, culture and image.

References

- Baert, B. (2015). *Pneuma and the Visual Medium in the Middle Ages and Early Modernity: Essays on Wind, Ruach, Incarnation, Odour, Stains, Movement, Kairos, Web and Silence*. Art & Religion 5. Peeters.
- Burchert, von L. R. (2018). *Review: Pneumatology. An Inquiry into the Representation of Wind, Air and Breath* (Iconologies, Bd. 3) by Vlad Ionescu. *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*. Deutscher Kunstverlag GmbH Munchen Berlin. 81(3), 611-617.
- Diaconu, M. (2013). Grasping the Wind? Aesthetic Participation between Cognition and Immersion. *Contemporary aesthetics*, 11.
- Ionescu, V. (2023). The pneuma in contemporary art. From representation to presence and concept. In J. Ninagawa (ed.), *The imagery of wind*. Sangensha.
- Low, C., & Hsu, E. (2007). Wind, life, health: anthropological and historical perspectives- Preface. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 13, SI-SI. 10.1111/j.1467-9655.2007.00426.x
- Schankweiler K., & Wüschner, P. (2019). Images that move: Analyzing affect with Aby Warburg. In A. Kahl (Ed.), *Analyzing affective societies: Methods and methodologies*. Routledge.
- Schankweiler, C., & Wuschner, P. (2019a). Pathosformel (pathos formula). In J. Slaby, & C. von Scheve (Eds.), *Affective societies*. Routledge.
- Velonis, K. (2022). *Wind Methodologies. The Anemophily Network Around Hydra Island*. "Sensory Ecologies" workshop with the Athens School of Fine Arts (ASFA) & the École Supérieure d'Art & Design TALM - Angers, (Professor Vanessa Theodoropoulou), Hydra Island.