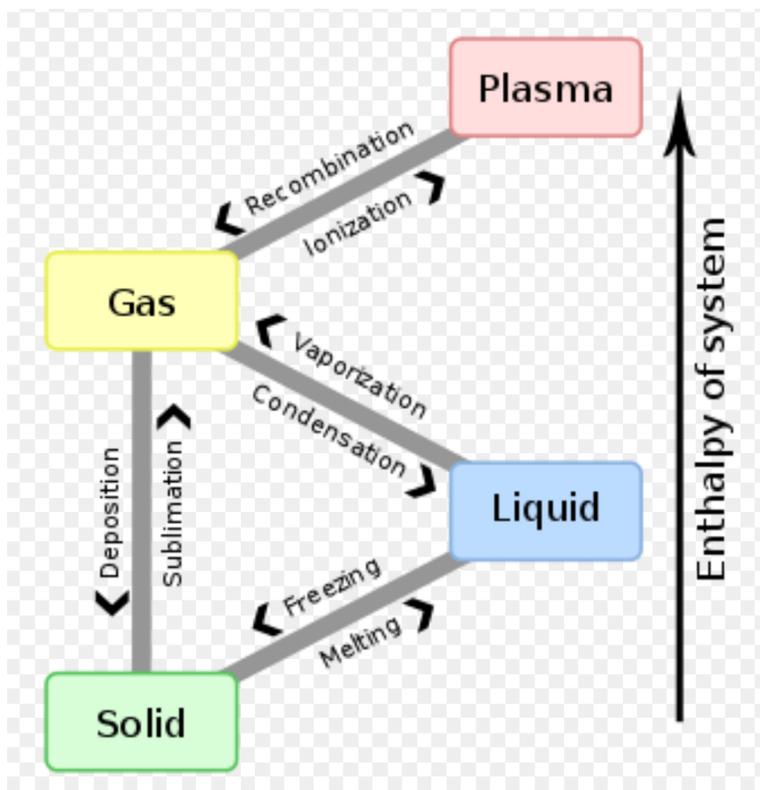


“Nowadays, fully stocked supermarket shelves, constant energy supplies, and measures in place to ensure us against any conceivable act of nature all *trick us* [emphasis mine] into thinking that we no longer rely on our ancient bond with the natural world.” -Peter Wohlleben, *The Weather Detective* (2018)

Weather is strangely one of those things that people find predictable, despite unforeseen forecasts. German forester turned “nature whisperer” Peter Wohlleben notes that weekly forecasts accurately predict 70% of the time, whereas daily forecasts prove 90% correct. These days people plan their day around accuweather.com’s hourly forecasts, even as televisions broadcast images of weather’s historically-unimaginable destruction. Scientists coined the term “climate surprise” as a way to evaluate people’s reaction to “extreme climates,” whether catastrophic storms, hurricanes, cyclones/typhoons, and tornados.

Wohlleben’s *The Weather Detective* presents itself as a “guide” to “nature’s secret signs” offering tips for “decipher[ing] the vast quantities of information you can glean from your local environment and especially your garden.” Given the book’s title, and chapter headings such as “What Will the Weather Be Like?,” I imagine it too doubling as a forecasting tool.

Rather than take a stand regarding people’s fears associated with “wild weather” or “climate change,” “Climate Surprise” pairs Isabel Fredeus and Kaat Van Doren, whose temperature-sensitive works not only depend on weather fluctuation, but they react in ways that defy expectations. “Climate Surprise” conveys temperature’s counter-intuitive influence on materials, as well as the rise of extreme and even unpredictable climate events. During this exhibition’s four-month run, the works will experience temperatures ranging from 0 to 20 °C in this unheated gallery. To emphasize temperature’s role, the exhibition will change: 2 February, 17 March and 3 May, transforming “climate surprise” into an artistic practice all its own!



During the first phase of “Climate Surprise,” cooling effects (freezing and condensation) are front and center, while warming effects (melting and vaporization) occur in the rear. In the cold streetside vitrine, *Under the Weather 1 and 2* (both 2018), Fredeus’ storm-glass sculptures that visibly react to wintry temperatures, intermingle with three *Never-Ending*, Van Doren’s temporarily-hard, bitumen blobs. Unlike water that flattens as it freezes, bitumen becomes a super-reflective craggy chunk.

Fredeus' storm glasses prefer shade, which winter light affords, though their floating crystals strangely drop as they cool. By contrast, Van Doren's light boxes feature photos culled from her series *32 Bitumina* (2017), 18 of which are on view. They capture "sun-loving" bitumen's frozen glassy facets, tinged with golden sheens. To create *Mirror Noir (10092017) 13:06*, Van Doren photographed an abandoned gas station, that had been coated with liquid bitumen per her instructions.

Despite *Mirror Noir's* matte surface, it gets sticky in summer, as depicted in *Mirror Noir "Inside" (17092017) 11:18*, which evokes chocolate bars melting in a bain-marie. Moreover, Van Doren's station massively reflects sunlight as depicted in *Mirror Noir "Inside" (12112017) 16:46*, which recalls gold foils lining lux chocolates. The randomly dispersed beads of water suspended atop Fredeus' *Water in Progress* (2015/2019), a canvas sited on the floor, evaporate over time. *Under the Weather (Autumn)* (2018) features her dynamic sculptures, on view at Middelheim Museum through 15 January, reacting to warming temperature fluctuations during the day.

It's worth noting that Fredeus has adapted a 19th century tool, originally developed to help ship captains predict storms; while Van Doren experiments with *Mirror Noir* (originally known as *Claude glass*), a late 18 century tool used by painters to simplify the landscape's color range. Both Fredeus and Van Doren employ temperature-sensitive materials to prompt discussions about fossil fuels' relationship to climate change.