

OR GALLERY

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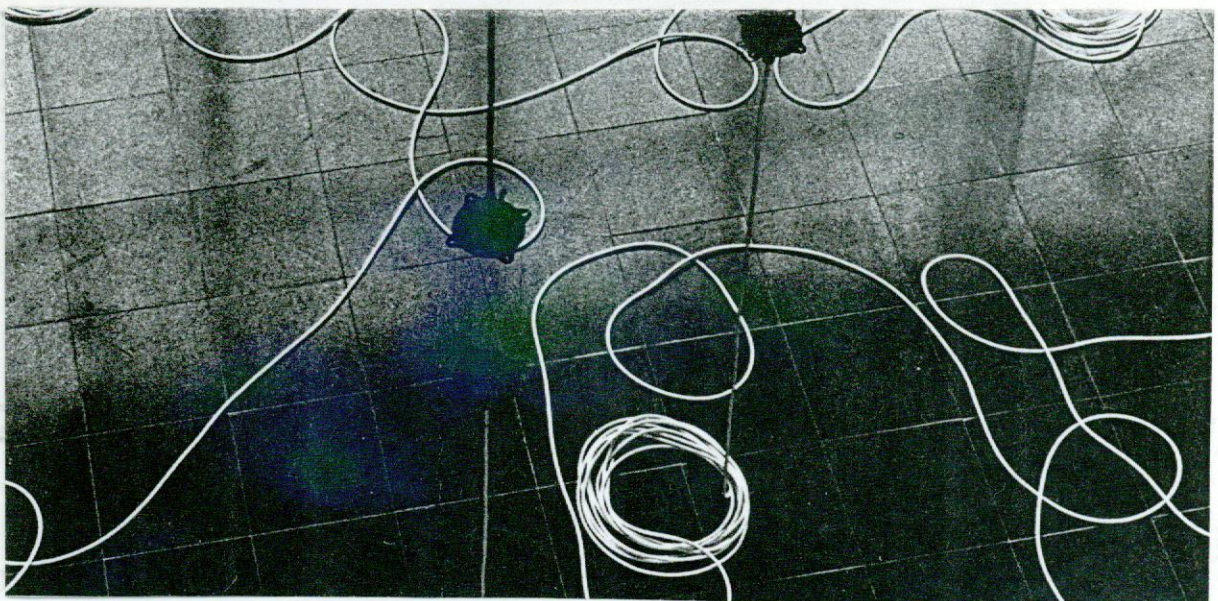
Paul Landon

Heavy Weather

MAY 12 TO 30, 1992

The Or Gallery completes its spring programming with an audio installation by Montreal artist and video maker Paul Landon. *Heavy Weather* makes reference to meteorological phenomena both as chaotic, natural events and as heavily coded cultural texts. Rather than considering weather reports as benign and necessary functions of the media, he suggests that their pervasive presence within the texts of radio and television exemplify the media's role in creating a dominant discourse that at once maps natural phenomena while ultimately defining and controlling our perception of it.

For the past two weeks Paul has been working within the gallery space recording and mixing sound tracks from various sources. The recorded elements of the installation include weather reports from the 'public' sphere of radio and television juxtaposed with a more personal spoken narrative. The physical structure of the exhibition allows the gallery visitor to enter into the space of media and move through different aural zones.



Paul Landon is currently teaching video at the Université du Québec à Montréal while completing his Master's degree in Communications at Concordia. In 1988 he finished a two year term in Audio/Video at the Jan van Eyck Akademie in the Netherlands.

***Heavy Weather*, an installation of new work at the Or Gallery, will be Paul Landon's first solo exhibition in Vancouver.**

OR GALLERY, 314 W. Hastings, PO Box 1329 Station A, Vancouver V6C 2T2, (604) 683-7395

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Heavy Weather

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In the paradigmatic model of modernist art, the cube is the world. All the devices of architecture and content are stripped bare to provide the open space, the clear space, the clean space, where anything exhibited under these conditions takes on a profound position of materiality (as in expense) and exquisite beauty (as in ironic criticality).

The cube owes as much to the idealism of the transparent jewelers box as it does to the revolution (as in perpetual). And in this world (as in heaven) all things (as in material) are beautiful. But even in the most beautiful of worlds a little rain must fall, a little heavy weather.

Paul Landon's installation *Heavy Weather* creates a negative landscape, a pastoral, a landscape implied but never seen, never materialized but inferred, where we hear whispering of the guilty secrets outside of the pensive protection of these 'white walls'. The landscape is resplendent, grounded by the cube. Speakers hang floating in cumulus groups over the gallery floor. A small metal transformer box placed asymmetrically in the corner houses a tape machine, and acts as the source of carefully haphazard wires which lead across the floor to the walls where they disappear in the transparent wires suspending the speakers. Centered in the gallery umbrellas shapes made of brushed steel with antennae replacing handles converge in a cluster. Some suspended, others placed on the ground, they become satellites hovering over their earth-bound counterparts which sit receptive and accepting of the transmitted information emanating from the cyclopean eye in the sky. Kronos for the memories.



The weather of this landscape becomes a disruptive and anomalous force within the aesthetic composition of the artwork. Information hovers over and displaces the serene materialism of the installation. Intangible sound bits undermine the importance of composition and aestheticism in a constant chaotic dull roar.

Information, in a McLuhanesque sense, is the commodity of the global village, the real material of the technological world. Information is that stuff that land once was—*the real thing!*—and the most ubiquitous of this information is the information about weather. The most important, the most congenial and the most trusted, despite its constant failure, is the weather forecast. The most hysteric, the least understood and the most manipulated, is the weather forecast.



Heavy Weather as installed at the Or Gallery

Consider that in the last twenty years three types of catastrophe theory centre on our way of looking at weather:

- 1) nuclear winter, the big freeze after the inevitable confrontation, a new ice age where glaciers will once again creep over the earth threatening our existence.
- 2) global warming, the destruction of the ozone layer. The ice caps melt, and the grain belt dries into a desert under the unrelenting rays of the sun. The 'outside' will become unbearable for all but the hardiest creatures.
- 3) the destruction of the world as we know it from giant meteors that may at any time strike the earth and destroy us as it must have destroyed dinosaurs millions of years ago. Fantasy to keep us enthralled in the potential crises; weather is uncontrollable and ever present.

The weather falls from the speakers as a recording of rain, sound transmitted from the floating umbrellas is a conglomeration of weather reports. A banal format of news, information out of chaos. Easy to test (it is either raining or not raining), important to know, (what should I wear) a fulcrum of communication (how's the weather? Fine, how's the weather there?). We are seduced by this benevolent mediation, comforted by 'the watch' and the expectation of doom.

Softly mixed within the ubiquitous hysteria of the weather forecast is *Heavy Weather's* counterpoint, the staffing of the landscape. Mingled in the loops of recorded rain and descriptive bumf is the voice, a way out from underneath the bombardment of information, outside of the hyperbole of weird science. Voices reading from journals are acts of empowerment. A simple act of observation is subversive, because it is an act of question and evaluation, a speaking to experience, a position of authenticity, a deconstruction of hierarchic structure. And within this simple act is shelter from the overwhelming frenetic authority of information or the profound materiality of the 'world'—a little shelter from the heavy weather.

—Phillip McCrum

Paul Landon is currently teaching video at the University du Quebec a Montreal while completing his masters degree in Communications at Concordia. In 1988 he finished a two year term in Audio/Video at the Jan Van Eyck Akademie in the Netherlands.

Phillip McCrum is an artist and writer living in Vancouver.



Or Gallery

314 West Hastings Street, P.O. Box 1329 Station "A", Vancouver, B.C., CANADA V6C 2T2

Gallery hours: Tuesday to Saturday 12 to 5 PM

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the City of Vancouver, the Canada Council, the Province of B.C. through the Ministry of Tourism and Ministry responsible for Culture