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**Weather and Atmosphere Panel, Art & Environment Conference, Tate, Saturday 26
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"Air has no Residence, no Neighbor

No Ear, no Door

No Apprehension of Another

Oh, Happy Air!"

Emily Dickinson. c. 1865, Poem no. 1060

Emily Dickenson's atmospheric musings were by no means typical, views about air and atmospheres in the late 1800's were undergoing significant reassessment with the establishment of observation networks; air was becoming implicated in a number of scientific theories that organised the atmosphere into a site of meteorological happenings, industrial regulations, and forecasting potential. But Emily was reportedly a weather watcher and it is the conceptual side of Dickinson's poem that I want to attend to, to discuss: the traversal issues between weather imaginaries and the abstract construction of climate; the 'new residencies' of the atmosphere; and the representational problems of climate change.

In 1865, Europe's weather observation network boasted 59 stations. At the time of the industrial revolution, air was a *screen* of good and bad industrial practices. "An imperial affliction

Sent us of the air" ED. Air was understood to be circulatory, but ephemeral. Today, the archiving capabilities of Antarctic and Greenlandic ice, which preserve ancient atmospheres, tell us differently. In the twenty first century air returns as a *screen*

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through the physical archive of ice and the scientific practices of rendered air bubbles through ice coring. So the question might be; how do we "see" and understand these residences of air as weather and as climate? What are the challenges to art of these occupancies of air? What is the political praxis for these aesthetics of climate change?

The traversal between weather and climate is not an easy one. Oh happy air, oh catastrophic climate. It is a journey between the actual and the abstract, between something present and something absent. This can be understood in terms of the space-time of the encounter, the conflict between two different forms of sensibility and the designation of two different spaces of doing and making.

I would argue that the aesthetics of climate change are such that work has to attend to this dialectic otherwise it becomes either propaganda ("communication of messages") or naïve gestures (which actively promote misunderstanding). We might think that art practice need not do more than work with weather, because all around us the skies have become laden with the foreboding aura of climate change (through scientific visualisation to disaster movies), and thus weather has become a changeling in the contemporary imagination, so perhaps a legitimate site of inquiry? But, this is to in some way misunderstand the dialectic between the skies and their screen, to ignore the representational problems of climate change that hold within them pressing questions about ethics and the human condition and about *representation as a political category* (whose interests are represented by renderings of climate change, what communities become invisible or absent) and *representation as a practice* that attends to the rendering of relations and space, the framing of people and places. While there are clear representational issues between global models and local equivalents and between the production of emissions and their effects, these asymmetrical configurations are not what snag on our senses.ⁱ Images on the other hand do not derive their power from being representative, in the sense of the resemblance of form, but by being representative in the resemblance of force.ⁱⁱ Not so much something that looks like (resembles), rather something that pushes like (quasi-visible, in motion). Sometimes this pull is in the opposite direction, so there is friction, a snag. One image working on the assemblage of others ('a visual unconscious'), pulling in a

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different direction, dragging against, like a ship working its mooring, until it discretely breaks free into another possibility, hitherto unimaginable. This is arts political praxis.

What remains with us (as sensation, echo, thought) is that which *resists* interpretation most; the unspeakable; the gesture; the irreducible that is not anything so clumsy as a message (and here is weather's allure). It is in this resistance that we find art that bends, shapes, and configures new thoughts of the possible. In this sense art is like weather, not climate; it is a force that holds many pressures, storms, lights and moods. It can beat down and rip at your core, it can surround you and it can disperse you into a million shards of light. "There's a certain slant of light...When it comes, the landscape listens, Shadows hold their breath;" ED. Weather is always proximate, even as it portends to the possibilities of the day. Bad weather on the horizon, high pressure, clear blue skies, fog, hail, rain, then, sun burst. Weather is presence. Michael Taussig suggests that weather forms a "bodily unconscious," "connecting the tiny human body to the cosmos at large, the writhing storms over the Sahara... the explosions on the sun, and the steady, dissolute gray drizzle that makes for misery and romance in London."ⁱⁱⁱ While weather connects us to specific sites, it also opens us onto global phenomena that we experience on an affective level. Climate, in contrast is configured through its absence, nowhere fully itself; abstract and constructed through the calculations of mean temperatures, it denies full presentation and attribution. It is an act of translation, across temporal and spatial domains. No proximate sweaty day, no weather of the mind. Only detached records, routinely given, temperature rise and fall, synoptic measurements across data points. Climate is an average, a flattening out. 30 years of weather. The casual result climate a "thing" that is made through good record keeping. We might think of climate and its discontents.

This "relationless relation" (Ranciere 2009 [2004], 5) between weather and climate^{iv} is such that weather makes climate, but climate is not the weather, until it is too late. The futurity of climate change is such that we cannot wait until weather becomes climate. Climate is a technical device, weather its emergent property. Yet, weather

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represents the social space within climate, its visibility, its immediacy, and its presentation in the world. So as we take up the representational challenges that climate change presents to make new residencies of air, I urge that we think carefully and *provocatively* about what traverses need to be made between weather and climate, between corporeal sensation and mathematical calculation. And how we make the passage from the status of spectator of the weather to actor in climate change and in the reconfiguration of places.⁹ The challenge is to reconfigure the "places" within climate change, to think about how *more* social spaces can be prised open within climate change practices. These new places, I would argue, constitute the possibility of an ethical and democratic regime of climate change, and in this aesthetic space we face our challenge to shape new residencies of air.

ⁱ As Susan Sontag's said, *Where the Stress Falls* is everything.

ⁱⁱ "Art is not, in the first instance, political because of its messages and sentiments it conveys concerning the state of the world. Neither is it political because of the manner in which it might choose to represent society's structures, or social groups, their conflicts or identities. It is political because of the very distance it takes with respect to these functions, because of the type of space and time that it institutes, and the manner in which it frames this time and people in space." (Ranciere 2009 [2004], 23)

ⁱⁱⁱ Taussig. *My Cocaine Museum*, 46

^{iv} or rather what are the asymmetrical relation between weather and climate?

^v "passage from the status of spectator to that of actor, and a reconfiguration of places" (Ranciere 2009 [2004], 24)

Excess

Political praxis of representation of climate change?

The passage from the status of spectator of the weather to actor in climate change and in the reconfiguration of places.^v

Where are the residencies of air?

What kinds of residences does weather/air make in climate? What are the implications of this for the praxis of practice?