

**THE WORK
THAT WORK
LEAVES
UNDONE**

Raymond Boisjoly

Forest City Gallery
May 11, 2012 - June 9, 2012

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“To Haunt All That Might Yet Come To Be”: Raymond Boisjoly’s Noises

By Henry Adam Svec

In 1948, the mathematician Claude Shannon publishes his influential theory of communication. Not concerned with particularly human problems, Shannon’s focus is technical, the communicative possibilities—*communication* here simply being the act of one machine touching another machine—of any given channel.

An important concept in the project is information, an often-reified resource: “Information is a good thing, the more the merrier.” Yet Shannon intervenes by defining information as a probability function—not a thing, but a constellation of potentialities, always delimited by a channel. The more the merrier? Only if chaos makes for merriment (which is not impossible), because as information increases so does uncertainty. Entropy.

To discover what this isn’t, yet might have been, and what, at a decisive moment, it failed to become without ceasing to exist altogether. A selfless endeavor, because the virtual is always just a little before us, before our selves. (It’s all around.) How can we archive the properties that *this* lacks? Do we have the bandwidth? The Dewey Decimal System will not be sufficient (the only certainty).

Yet all channels, the living and the dead, are happily buried under their own unsent messages. Infinity envelops the receiver, which is often unable to scream. What my poor voice might sing into a telephone, for instance, is of no consequence to the materials that must work towards transmission; whether I am practically silent or whether I am a fire alarm, we’ll have transduction. The information (in Shannon’s terminology) includes all the songs and stories, all the

quite unforeseeable bays and belches and bleeps, permitted to enter. No matter if they’re left unwritten for now—and there’s much my voice is unable to write.

In other words, the thing *this* is not is always already there. Boisjoly’s mere fictions, held up by colourful pages assorted like fish scales and taped to white walls, connected too to the digital media that made it all possible, expertly illuminate the principle. Immanent impossibilities wire together all channels through which, with a little patience, just about anything might force its way through (well, not impossible, according to Ernst Bloch, only Not-Yet). I am not Enrico Caruso, and was meant to be.

Still, from the point of view of the sender, the pure potentiality of an informational situation is never quite actualizable. In other words, machines break. *Gaps, omissions, and fragments come to haunt all that might yet come to be shot through time or space.*

Not everyone welcomes such disturbances. Shannon seeks to understand our channels’ capabilities, to command any and every medium, the enemy in this battle being noise—a byproduct of all transmissions. (For example, the slow curling of posted paper from the humidity in London, Ontario.) But the minimization of noise is a strictly mathematical procedure.

Warren Weaver tries to help Shannon along by translating his project for the general reader. Still, we must wonder what’s gone missing in Weaver’s supplementary essay. Don’t worry—it is always this way: LP grooves, cuneiform, autocorrected texts, radio waves, the Pyramids, tile printing. Like so many before him, the Raymond Boisjoly who tapes pages to the wall cannot be



sure if he's exactly in touch with the Raymond Boisjoly who composes texts with his computer's keyboard, because material carriers force themselves onto the data they seem only to be sending out or preserving.

Kafka communicates to his beloved: "The ghosts won't starve, but we will perish." The ghosts won't starve because messages tend towards missing the mark, which is good for the ghosts, at least. Good for our writing, talking, touching machines, too, and we should think of them from time to time. Noisy machines make us nervous—we are afraid they'll be unfaithful—but their licentiousness can signal new horizons, as Michel Serres has made clear. Boisjoly's leafy sheets, the merrier, also feed on this.

Works Cited

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Serres, Michel. *The Parasite*. Trans. Lawrence R. Schehr. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007.

Shannon, Claude and Warren Weaver. *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1963.









LIST OF IMAGES

All images courtesy of the artist and
Republic Gallery.
Photographs by Colin Miner

Page 4:
Detail, *Makeshift* and *Makeshift ii* 2010-2012
inkjet prints and painter's tape
approx 9 x 5'

Page 6:
Makeshift and *Makeshift i* 2010-2012
inkjet prints and painter's tape
approx 9 x 5'

Page 7:
Makeshift and *Makeshift ii* 2010-2012
inkjet prints and painter's tape
approx 9 x 5'

Page 8:
Makeshift and *Makeshift iii* 2010-2012
inkjet prints and painter's tape
approx 9 x 5'

Page 9:
Installation view: *The Work That Work Leaves
Undone* at Forest City Gallery
Makeshift and *Makeshift i, ii & iii* 2010-2012
inkjet prints and painter's tape
approx 9 x 5' each

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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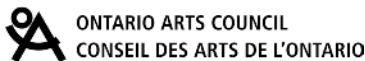
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258 Richmond Street
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HOURS OF OPERATION

Wednesday – Saturday 12pm to 5pm

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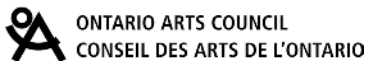
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