

Nicholas Maloney - *paper, stones*

A four-channel sound installation

**The Installation:**

*Paper, stones* is a quadrophonic installation that explores the unique relationships between the manmade and natural world through the sonic properties of stones, “paper stones,” and the environments from which they originated. Four speakers each emit a different audio track chosen at random with each speaker transitioning to a new track at a different time from the others. The audio tracks that are selected originate from various sources related to the stones and paper stones. Eight tracks were created by rubbing, handling, and improvising with a pile of stones in various ways. The stones were collected from the beach near Castlefreke and a stream at the foot of Torc Waterfall in Killarney National Park. Field recordings were made at both of these locations on the day the stones were collected. The sounds include ocean waves crashing upon the seashore, recordings of Torc Waterfall and the stream at the foot of the waterfall, as well as hydrophone recordings of various segments of the stream. “Paper stones” were created by cutting, folding, and taping rectangular sheets of construction paper into shapes that roughly resembled the stones. This paper stone construction process was recorded via omni directional microphones and edited down into eight separate tracks. Four recordings were also made of the sound of printers in the Boole Library at UCC to capture a sonic environment related to the paper. All of these recordings form the sonic basis for the installation.

**The Mechanics:**

When the installation is started, audio tracks begin to play from each of the speakers. Audio is selected at random from a collection of 30 prerecorded tracks (described above) to be transmitted

from each speaker. Each speaker emits a new track once every two minutes. The start time of each track is offset by 30 seconds from the previous track so that no two speakers transition to a new track at the same time. Each audio track is roughly two minutes in length and some include silence at the beginning or end. Four of the tracks are left completely silent to create a greater contrast between active and quiet moments as well as a sense of spaciousness. All four speakers will not necessarily be emitting sound simultaneously at all times. The installation is run by a Max/MSP patch on a laptop which is outputted to a soundcard routed to the four speakers. Once the speakers are configured, the Max patch (provided) is opened and the sound will automatically start playing. If the installation is to be continuously running over a period of several weeks it might be more suitable to use a series of four CD players in place of the laptop. If this is the case, the 30 audio tracks are to be burned onto four disks to be played from the CD players. The players should be set to continuously shuffle playback the tracks and should be started one after the other, waiting 30 seconds to start each new CD player. Two stereo amplifiers will need to be provided as each CD player will be assigned to one channel of each of the amps.

### **The Layout:**

The four speakers are positioned in four corners of a square room facing inwards. The size of the room does not matter, though for larger rooms the gain will need to be set at a higher level. A rectangular room is also acceptable though the speakers will still need to be placed at equal distance from one another (creating a square), preferably on the opposite side to the entrance of the room. In the center of the room is a small, white pedestal on which the collection of stones and paper stones are arranged. Alternately, if no pedestal is available, the stones may be placed

in the center of the room on the ground or scattered about the room. Visitors are encouraged to pick up the stones and paper stones to explore their sonic properties while the installation is sounding.

**Layout Sketch:**

