

PhotoForum Exhibitions

Exhibitions

Camus Wyatt

Francesca Ayers

Samuel Scully

Virginia Were

Sara Orme

Stefan Shen

Luke Foley-Martin

Ben Lowe

Jon Carapiet

Tracey Kearns

Tink Lockett

Essays

Lissa Mitchell

Matt Butler

Charlotte Huddleston

Natalie Robertson

Marian Macken

Theo Macdonald

Janine Randerson

Janine Randerson

On Jon Carapiet's Rainfade, or, Why is the rain remixing my tv?

- I. rain slides down the antenna
- II. leaks into cable cracks
- III. water streams, channels waver
- IV. lightning...thunder
- V. electromagnetic shock, the signal dances
- VI. strong winds, displaced aerals
- VII. disruptive companions
- VIII. heavy rain, signal noise
- IX. light rain
- X. resume.



Jon Carapiet documents telematic signal interference on his lounge tv (probably caused by heavy rain leaking into his aerial system). The photographs he takes are abstracted signals, stilled in time and remixed by weather; fractal glimpses of a papal inauguration, protestors disrupting the Tour de France, the weather blitzing of Trump's corrupted news, or merely ads which the artist describes as 'the phantasmagoria of late modern entertainment.'^[i] These are shattered TV signals – weather and tv – weather as news, weather fronts, systems in their undoing. Too much rain, too little rain, even in our couched homes we are water-dependent beings. As the reigning orthodoxies swing right, rain is a leveller. Flooding is water going where it wants to go, uninterested in human needs or wants. Mainstream media trades in spectacular images of flooding, politicians fast-track mining consents; networks and ecosystems are awash with contradictory signals.

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In a BBC signal troubleshooting guide the weather is acknowledged as a malignant force when combined with electromagnetism; TV signal reception is susceptible to various weather conditions, leading to disruptions ranging from minor inconveniences to complete signal loss. Rainwater enters through cracked or split cables. Wet leaves on nearby trees, water droplets in rain and fog can absorb and scatter the electromagnetic waves, resulting in signal attenuation. Thunderstorms compound the issue, with lightning producing electromagnetic interference that can further disrupt the signal. To worsen matters, wind can blow debris into the signal path, causing intermittent reception issues. Satellite television users also experience problems when very heavy rain interrupts the signal to and from a revolving satellite. The rain may be local at the point of uplink to satellite causing short-lived irregularities. Break-up or loss of channels occurs until the system dries out. [ii] Yet in *Rainfade*, the temporary rupture of the image exposes the media signal for what it is, a sign of converging political and climatic crises.

Ever-intensifying weather events cause TV signal failure, that in turn randomizes the image, breaking the fourth wall of our inured media consumption. Writer -film-maker and critic Chris Kraus (NZ/USA) quotes philosopher Jean Baudrillard; "Chance is a special effect that redeems the randomness of our lives" (the headline for a three day philosophy rave that Kraus organised, called "The Chance Event", at Whiskey Pete's Casino, Nevada in 1996).³ The 'cheerful nihilist with a genius for hyperbole,' reflected on the renewal of wealth cycles through the mirror of crisis: whether it be natural disaster, war, pandemic or climate crisis and the constant rebuilding. Satellite television and 'global warming' emerged in the 1980s era of hyperbole. In late capitalism, climate activists are sometimes pegged as centrist neoliberals while elected ministers cast themselves as provocateurs for free-market and militarised venture capital in a strange reversal. Kraus reflects on Baudrillard's faith that the chance event might redeem us, yet Carapiet recalls Walter Benjamin's dark prediction that humans are now capable of experiencing our own destruction as aesthetic enjoyment.[iii] At best, might the chance encounter release us (temporarily) from the flow of apathy peddled by the political and industrial elite? Is there potential for reversibility if we are woken by unexpected signals, such weather over-rides?

September 2025: I'm in Seoul at the Nam June Paik museum playing with a magnet that is causing the scan lines on a boxy CRT television to bloom into RGB-coloured shapes. Like Carapiet, Paik saw TV signals as aesthetic material. Paik's techno-optimism saw nature and technology as one ecology, saying, "...TV (its random movement of tiny electrons) *is* the environment."^[iv] He fuses elemental media: water, fish, plants, lunar and weather cycles and satellite rotations with television screens. Later, I'm at the Seoul Mediacity Biennale called 'Séance: Technology of the Spirit' watching Jane Jin Kaisen's video *Sorrow Waters this Land* (2024). Shape-shifting nature spirits, Dokkaebi, dance in heavy rainstorm in an overgrown and abandoned holiday resort on Jeju Island. Only the troublesome spirits are left after the dark waters rinse away failed development.

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The rainstorms evoked in Carapiet and Jane Jin Kaisen's artworks are increasing in strength and frequency: in only the last few months in Jamaica, the Philippines, Sumatra, and our Moana nui a Kiwa, rain and wind have fomented slips, floods and terrestrial instability and loss of life. Super-typhoons such as Fung-Wong and Cyclone Senyar destroy on a mass scale. Deforestation, carbon emissions create *a likely returning tragedy* where the numbers of human and animal lives lost or evacuated are staggering in their millions.[v] Our government has lowered our climate emission targets.

– how will humanity and our co-species survive this? When we are constantly distracted.

The flux of rain, politics and the televisual dwell in the same public space. In *In the Flow*, Boris Groys reflects on how politics and art are part of a shared ecology and digital space. He notes that political action must be efficient and transform social life in an instant (the first 100 days in office!), while art defunctionalizes tools, in this case TV image signals.[vi] Political practice shapes the future by disappearing, while art attenuates the moment. Groys writes, "The artist accepts [this] infinite violence of the material flow and appropriates it, let's himself be infected by it. Then he lets this violence infect, destroy, make his own art ill." [vii] His analysis of contemporary art resonates with Carapiet's practice of 're-photography' which has long operated by wrenching existing image signals from the world, anticipating the scraping of AI.

Art dissolves finite projects, exposing the cracks in the rhetoric of targets, results and consequences. The rain unsteadies the image, pointing to the fragility and susceptibility of pictures and the illness of current political representation. There are enough photographs already, Carapiet says; by destabilizing their meaning he somehow amplifies the messages sent by rain and electrons, the convergence of polity and hydrosphere.

[i] Jon Carapiet, phone conversation with Janine Randerson, November 5th, 2025. Jon Carapiet's Rainfade series was first exhibited at Hum Art Salon, Grafton bridge, Tāmaki Makaurau in Photofest, 2019, yet its continues in digital and printed form seven years later, long after the televised moment, and perhaps live television itself, has faded.

[ii] BBC Reception Help Guide. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/reception/help-guides/everything-else/how-does-bad-weather-affect-my-television>.

3 Reported by Chris Kraus from Baudrillard's keynote lecture, accompanied by a live band in "The Chance Event," at Whiskey Pete's Casino, Nevada (1996). Social Practices. Semiotext(e) Active Agents series, (South Pasadena, CA: 2018), pp 25- 27.

[iii] Walter Benjamin, cited in Susan Buck-Morss, Aesthetics and Anaesthetics, Part I: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered (December, 2013) <https://www.susanbuckmorss.info/text/aesthetics-and-anaesthetics-part-i/>

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[iv] Seongeun Kim, "Man-Machine-Nature, from Critique to Composition: Bruno Latour, Nam June Paik and Ecological Thinking." NJP Reader #2, (Nam June Paik Art Centre, Yonjin: 2011), pp. 30- 50. (my emphasis).

[v] Dian Fiantis, Frisa Irawan Ginting, Budiman Minasny, "How Deforestation turned a cyclonic storm into a likely recurring tragedy."The Conversation, December 4, 2025. <https://theconversation.com/sumatras-flood-crisis-how-deforestation-turned-a-cyclonic-storm-into-a-likelyrecurring-tragedy-271302>

[vi] Boris Groys, In the Flow, (Verso, London, New York: 2018). p. 47.

[vii] Groys, *In the Flow*, p. 73.

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