

# IKON

## Exhibition Guide

**Simon Blackmore *Weather Guitar***  
**28 September – 13 November 2005**  
**Tower Room**

Born in Devon, England in 1976, British artist Simon Blackmore works with sound, sculpture and 'robotics', the technology associated with the design of robots. His sculptural sound piece *Weather Guitar*, (2005), is installed in Ikon's Tower Room.

At first glance, *Weather Guitar* appears to be a musical instrument playing on its own accord, but quickly it becomes apparent that it is responding to variations in atmospheric conditions. Made from an acoustic, Spanish guitar, the instrument is fixed to a weather measuring system incorporating wires and hand-made wind sensors. The sensors rotate to monitor environmental changes such as wind speed, rainfall intensity and wind direction. This information is transmitted to the guitar through a series of electronic circuits. It is translated into a mechanical action by six small motors with plectrums attached, plucking the individual guitar strings.

*Weather Guitar* is conventional in many ways – the guitar is tuned as normal and is programmed to play within the key of C. The variations in external conditions result in a range of sounds, from tuneful harmonies to singular, repetitive, almost meditative notes. Wind speed and direction affect the rhythm and timing of the notes. The speed of a propeller in the measuring device determines the number of notes plucked per minute – one hundred revolutions of the propeller result in one hundred notes per minute.

Blackmore has taken great care to make the workings of *Weather Guitar* as flexible and modular as possible, allowing for it to be incorporated into a variety of settings. He has kept the level of electronics to a minimum and has left the inner workings exposed. The tangle of wires spilling out across the floor, the uncovered circuitry and do-it-yourself appearance makes the process clearer and gives the work an intentional, comical feel.

Music generated by natural forces is as old as mankind. One of the earliest examples is the Aeolian harp, an instrument which is played by the wind. Blackmore says, 'It is my hope that this lonesome guitar adds to this tradition in a humorous and playful way.'