

= Weather Machine =

Weather Machine is a lumino @-@ kinetic bronze sculpture and columnar machine that serves as a weather beacon , displaying a weather prediction each day at noon . Designed and constructed by Omen Design Group Inc . , the approximately 30 @-@ foot (9 m) tall sculpture was installed in 1988 in the northwest corner of Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland , Oregon , in the United States . Two thousand people attended its dedication , which was broadcast live nationally from the square by Today weatherman Willard Scott . The machine cost \$ 60 @,@ 000 .

During its daily two @-@ minute sequence , which includes a trumpet fanfare , mist , and flashing lights , the machine displays one of three metal symbols as a prediction of the weather for the following 24 @-@ hour period : a sun for clear and sunny weather , a blue heron for drizzle and transitional weather , or a dragon and mist for rainy or stormy weather . The sculpture includes two bronze wind scoops and displays the temperature via vertical colored lights along its stem . The air quality index is also displayed by a light system below the stainless steel globe . Weather predictions are made based on information obtained by employees of Pioneer Courthouse Square from the National Weather Service and the Department of Environmental Quality . Considered a tourist attraction , Weather Machine has been called " bizarre " , " playful " , " unique " , and " wacky " , and has been compared to a giant scepter .

= = Description and history = =

Weather Machine is a lumino @-@ kinetic bronze sculpture that serves as a weather beacon , designed and constructed by Omen Design Group Inc . Contributors included Jere and Ray Grimm , Dick Ponzi , who won a 40 @-@ entry international competition to design the machine for Pioneer Courthouse Square (1984) , and Roger Patrick Sheppard . The group described their efforts as " collaborative " , but Sheppard considered Ponzi the " maestro " of the project . Ponzi did the engineering and hydraulics , and the machine was assembled at his vineyard near Beaverton . The sculpture was inspired by Portland @-@ born @-@ and @-@ based writer Terence O 'Donnell , who suffered from osteomyelitis during his childhood , and his " funny Irish jig " . Weather Machine , which took five years to plan and build and cost \$ 60 @,@ 000 , was installed in the square in August 1988 . Today weatherman Willard Scott broadcast live from the square to dedicate the sculpture on its August 24 opening . Two thousand people were present as early as 4 a.m. for the dedication . Financial contributors included Pete and Mary Mark , the AT & T Foundation , Alyce R. Cheatham , Alexandra MacColl , E. Kimbark MacColl , Meier & Frank , the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality , David Pugh and Standard Insurance Company . Information about the donors was included on a plaque added to the sculpture 's stem in the weeks following the dedication .

Each day at noon , the columnar machine performs a two @-@ minute sequence that begins with a trumpet fanfare of the opening bars of Aaron Copland 's Fanfare for the Common Man , and produces mist and flashing lights . It eventually reveals one of three metal symbols : a stylized golden sun (" helia ") for clear and sunny weather , a blue heron (Portland 's official bird) for drizzle and transitional weather , or mist and a " fierce , open @-@ mouthed " dragon for heavy rain or stormy weather . The fanciful symbols change at the same time every day , representing weather predictions for the following 24 @-@ hour period . " Helia " , described as " gleaming " , was designed by Jere Grimm ; her design would later be applied to one of her husband 's pots , exhibited in 1989 . The trumpets are allowed to play at noon due to a waiver of Portland 's noise ordinance for that time period . Ray Grimm constructed the blue heron symbol , and the group collaborated on the dragon symbol based on his drawings . In order for the machine to display an accurate weather prediction , as reported by The Oregonian in 1988 , employees of Pioneer Courthouse Square contacted the National Weather Service each morning at 10 : 30 a.m. for the forecast , and then entered information into the machine 's computer , located behind a nearby door .

The machine , whose height is reported to be between 25 and 33 feet (7 @.@ 6 and 10 @.@ 1 m) , includes two bronze wind scoops that turn in opposite directions . It also indicates the temperature

(when 20 ° F or above) via vertical colored lights along the sculpture 's stem . Measured by an internal gauge , the machine displays blue lights for below freezing , white lights for above freezing and red lights to mark every ten degrees (° F) . Referring to an additional light system (below the stainless steel globe) that indicates air quality , The Oregonian reported in 1988 that a green light indicates good air quality , amber reflects " semismoggy " air and a red light indicates poor air quality . However , in 1998 one writer for The Oregonian warned : " you don 't want to breathe so much when the white light is on " . Pioneer Courthouse Square employees enter air quality information into the machine 's computer following routine checks with the Department of Environmental Quality .

In addition to its pre @-@ dawn dedication on national television , Weather Machine had a public dedication at noon on August 24 , attended by Mayor Bud Clark and other city officials . On that day , the machine displayed the sun symbol and a green light for good air quality , and indicated a temperature of 82 ° F (28 ° C) . Following the fanfare , known officially as " Fanfare for Weather Machine with Four Trumpets " , jazz singer Shirley Nanette led the crowd in a rendition of " You Are My Sunshine " . Portland had good weather in the days following its dedication , preventing visitors from seeing all three symbols for an extended length of time (though all three symbols are displayed briefly during the daily two @-@ minute sequence) . This prompted the executive director of Pioneer Courthouse Square to consider altering the machine 's schedule so that the public would have a chance to see all three symbols . The sculpture maintained good health until winter 1995 , when its mechanical performance temporarily began deviating from noon and the temperature gauge had difficulties working properly . In 2012 , the machine malfunctioned and stopped operating for about a week .

= = Reception = =

In the weeks following Weather Machine 's dedication , an estimated 300 to 400 people gathered at the square daily to witness the noon sequence . Following the dedication , The Oregonian published : " It takes nothing from its fascination to know that a human on the staff of the square will be making the daily phone calls to the Weather Service and the Department of Environmental Quality , and pushing the necessary buttons to cue the pillar 's performance ... They have given Portland an attraction no other city has . We 're going to like it . "

Ponzi described the machine as " light @-@ hearted . . . active , distinctive ? and fun " . O 'Donnell , who inspired the sculpture , called it a " gentle spectacle " and described the work as " a cartoon contraption , an odd little thingamajig . It has bells and whistles and other mechanized wonders that confirm rain sometime after the downpour and proudly announce sunshine in the bright light of day . " In 1994 , The Oregonian reported that O 'Donnell regarded Weather Machine with a " mixture of wonder and embarrassment " and stated that he " [didn 't] think it 's all that attractive " . The publication 's Vivian McInerney said of O 'Donnell and the machine : " Practical people may wonder why the square needs such a silly weather machine when a glance out the window works as well . . . And these practical people may be the very ones who make the world go ' round . But it is the less practical people , the dreamers like O 'Donnell , who make it worth going ' round . "

In 1995 , The Oregonian 's Jonathan Nicholas wrote , " To this day , nobody is exactly sure what happens when the thing sounds off each day at noon . It 's like having a governor in blue jeans . We can 't really explain it : It just happens . " Grant Butler of The Oregonian gave the machine 's trumpet fanfare as one of three examples of ways in which people could be certain it was noon in Portland .

The machine is considered a tourist attraction , recommended in visitor guides for Portland and included in walking tours . One travel contributor recommended a visit to the sculpture for people with children seeking a " perfect family day " . Weather Machine has been compared to a giant scepter and has been called " bizarre " , " eccentric " , " playful " , " unique " , " wacky " , " whimsical " , " zany " , and a " piece of wizardry " .