

Tempo



Tempo

June 29–September 9, 2002

This exhibition focuses on distinct perceptions of time—phenomenological, empirical, political, and fictional. Contemporary artists from Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe map the show into five areas of multimedia installations that examine cultural differences in the construction of time.

In the first area, Time Collapsed, the systemic interfaces with the random in a cacophony of clocks, watches, and metronomes. Transgressive Bodies, the second area, probes the metabolic processes and erotic drives exercised by the body. The physical world involves a sense of evolution, but also impermanence and entropy; Liquid Time explores this ever-changing flow of time through images of water in a third section. Trans-Histories, the fourth area, addresses issues of postcolonialism, thus engaging the viewer's critical perception of the present through memory. Although seemingly static, the video and sculptural pieces in the fifth area, Mobility/Immobility, are in constant motion, destabilizing the viewer's perception of time; aspects of circularity, unending duration, and time arrested are experienced in this last section.



Louise Bourgeois. Untitled. 2002. Ink and pencil on music paper, 11¼ x 9" (29.8 x 22.9 cm). Collection the artist; courtesy Cheim and Read, New York



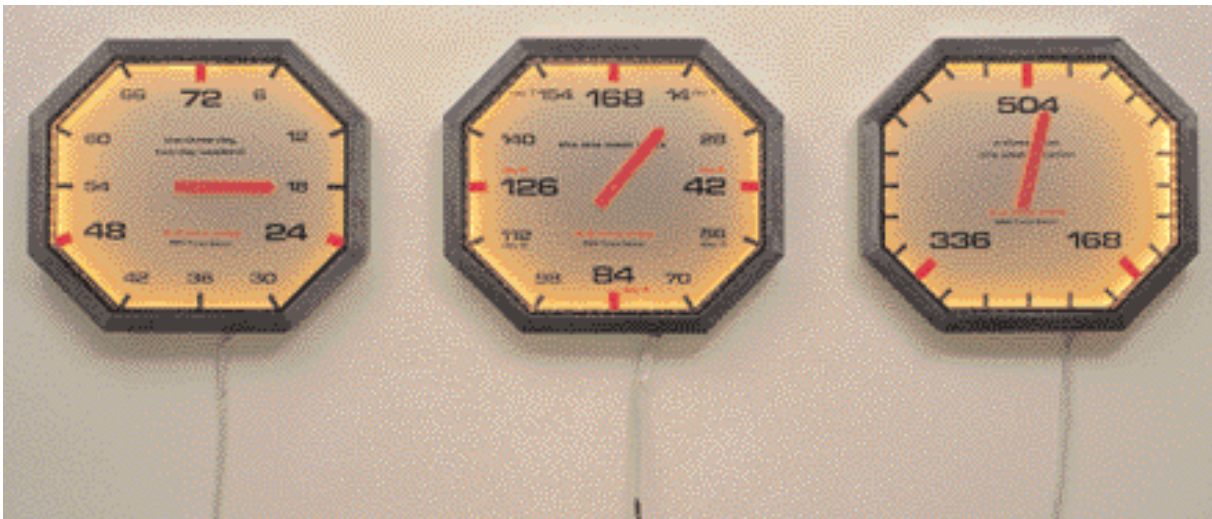
time collapsed

The quest for freedom is frequently a response to the necessities of today's society, called the "risk society" by German sociologist Ulrich Beck, in which social institutions once thought to insure our safety also exercise excessive power over our time. Rather than unequivocally conforming to traditional social norms, contemporary individuals opt instead for

alternative, more fluid and entrepreneurial, lifestyles designed to offer greater individual freedom from canonical time structures.

In *A-Z Time Trials* of 1999, Andrea Zittel manipulates the construct of time, from pre-determination to free will, in an attempt to distend the scope of deep-rooted behavioral patterns. Five octagonal clocks sport customized numerical systems that short-

circuit the image of standard time. In this case, the plurality of times registered reflects the owner's own needs. Each clock performs specific tasks: one measures a whole week; another, three days and a two-day weekend; yet another, three weeks and a one-week vacation. Similarly, Alighiero e Boetti's *Watches* of 1977–94 comprises sixteen wristwatches that measure time in



Andrea Zittel. *A-Z Time Trials* (detail). 1999. Five clocks, wood and steel frames, clockworks, and electric motor, each 26 x 29⁹/₁₆ x 2¹/₂" (66 x 76 x 6 cm). Collection Burton S. Minkoff, Miami; courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York



units of consecutive years rather than of seconds. As in the anecdote about a person asking for directions being pointed simultaneously to the right and to the left, Peter Regli's paired clocks in *Reality Hacking #147* of 1998 run in synch—one forward and the other backward.

Although challenging scientific postulates, the question remains as to whether such experiments offer a sufficient margin of freedom from canonical time structures, since eventually they become the actual ground for new standards. This was pointed out by the French mathematician and physicist Henri Jules Poincaré in his book *Science and Hypothesis* (1902), where he explained

that any standard is not the truest unit of measure, but the most convenient. In other words, a standard constitutes a relative model, and is the result of conventions that may appear to be empirical but are in fact suppositions that scientists treat as categorical definitions.

The notion of relativity is essential in examining experiential differences in the

construction of time. In *Fontes* of 1992, made up of four clocks with misplaced as well as missing numbers, Cildo Meireles questions the logic of fixed time-space coordinates. Something similar happens in Klaus Rinke's installation *Albert Einstein! When Does Baden-Baden Stop at This Train?* of 1989–90. Consisting of a double-faced 1930s railway clock mounted on actual metal rails, the work and its nonsensical title refer to Einstein's slip of the tongue when making an inquiry during one of his trips. In *Work No. 189. thirty-nine metronomes beating*



Cildo Meireles. *Fontes* (detail). 1992. Four clocks, each 8 1/4" [22 cm] diam. Courtesy the artist, Rio de Janeiro



Martin Creed. *Work No. 189. thirty-nine metronomes beating time, one at every speed.* 1998. 39 mechanical Malzel metronomes, each 9 x 4½ x 4½" (23 x 11.5 x 11.5 cm). Private collection; courtesy Gavin Brown's enterprise, Corp., New York

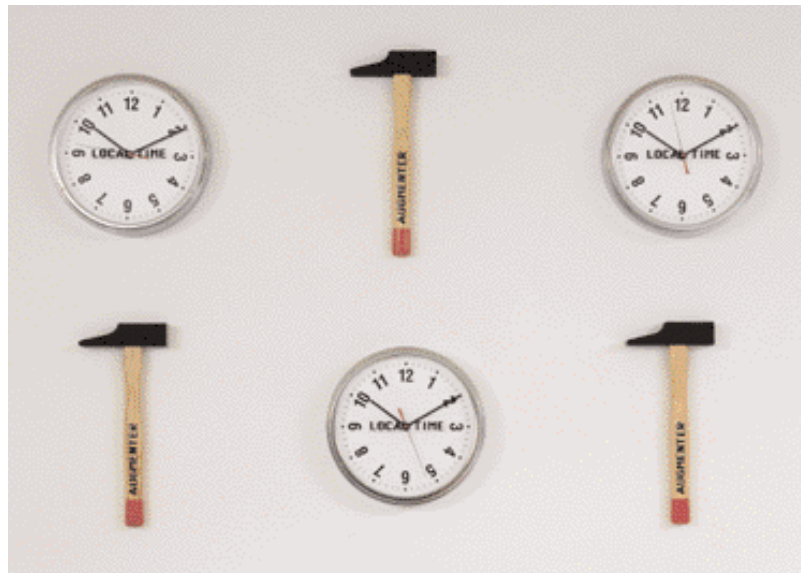
time, one at every speed of 1998, Martin Creed explores the relation of systemic and random temporalities. The artist has crafted an arrangement of thirty-nine mechanical wind-up metronomes, each adjusted to play at one of the metronome's thirty-nine speeds, and each unwinding at a distinct time. Music is thus implied through rhythm, beat, swing, a certain to and fro, and pause. Yet, at the same time, the metronomes' concerted cacophony collapses the devices' structuring order.

Jean-Luc Vilmouth's tongue-in-cheek motif of one hundred pairs of clocks and hammers in his mural-scale installation *Local Time* of 1987–89 addresses the politics of time. This piece alludes on the one hand to the utopian agenda of revolutionary Soviet society, with its five-year plans, and on the other to capitalism's early modern machines and large-scale mass production. Both systems demonstrate the notion of mechanistic efficiency, aligning art with progress. Significantly, the French word *augmenter*, meaning "to increase," is printed in red on each of the one hundred

hammers. Vilmouth presents a diagram of time and labor based on increased productivity as against idle, empty time that needs to be "killed." As the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has shown, the link between time and power is evinced by the capitalist tactics of adjourning, deferring,

delaying, and controlling the consumer's sense of fulfillment and expectation, or conversely, by anticipating, rushing, and taking the consumer by surprise. Thus, within the system of labor, temporal power can be seen to measure individual aspirations and expectations.

Jean-Luc Vilmouth. *Local Time* (detail). 1987–89. 100 wall clocks and 100 hammers, each clock: 25" (63.5 cm) diam.; each hammer: 12¼ x 5½ x 1¼" (31.5 x 14 x 3 cm). Collection Caisse des dépôts et consignations, Mission Mécénat; on deposit at Musée d'art moderne, Saint-Étienne





transgressive bodies



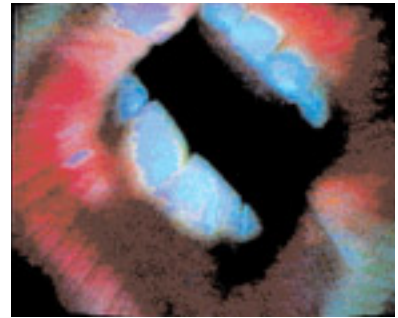
Erwin Wurm. *One Minute Sculpture*. 1997. C-print, 17 1/8 x 11 1/8" (45 x 30 cm). Courtesy the artist and Art : Concept, Paris

of unconscious drives, Douglas Gordon addresses the succinct and abrupt interval between living and dying. His installation *30 Seconds Text* of 1996 consists of a darkened room furnished on one wall with an account of an experiment performed in 1905 by a French doctor, who attempted to communicate with the severed head of a guillotined criminal, and a lightbulb set on a timer that goes on and off every thirty seconds. The experiment, which sought to find proof of consciousness after death,

The temporal ideas of clock makers and empirical scientists are Cartesian constructs that measure reality into exact units. One way to circumvent this view is to rethink the agency of the body by considering the antinomies between strict biological time and the body's libidinal experience of duration. Pipilotti Rist captures the undertow of bodily drives in her video installation *Mutaflo* of 1996. Projected
6 directly onto the floor, the image shows the

artist sitting naked in an empty room, surrounded by oranges, limes, and croissants. She gazes at the camera, opens her mouth, and the lens zooms in. An instant later, the image zooms out from her dilating rectum. This playful back-and-forth passage from mouth to anus is intended to mark erotic pursuits as well as the metabolic desire to consume and expel.

While Rist's video installations exude a fascination with the unbound cyclical time



Pipilotti Rist. Still from *Mutaflo*. 1996. Video installation, dimensions variable. Courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York, and Galerie Hauser & Wirth, Zurich



Damien Hirst. *Liar*. 1989. Drug packaging and cabinet, 54 x 40 x 9" (137 x 102 x 22 cm). Courtesy The Brant Foundation, Greenwich, Connecticut

lasted between twenty-five and thirty seconds. Connecting the sensation of the beheaded body of the criminal to the sensation of the reader of the text, Gordon equates the interval between life and death with the time it takes a person to read the notes on the experiment.

In his performance series titled *One Minute Sculptures*, begun in 1997, Erwin Wurm challenges behavioral norms, sixty seconds at a time. Each of his time-based sculptures consists of an instruction that can take the form of a drawing—often with a list of the items involved, or with a written proposition, such as “Hold your breath and think of Spinoza.” Instructing the public on how to lie on oranges without touching the ground, or on how to hold pencils in their nostrils, the artist creates experimental situations in

which unorthodox action and the structure of time form the work. Also probing behavioral patterns in Western consumerist society, specifically, the desire for immortality, Damien Hirst’s drug cabinets include stimulants, sedatives, antidepressants, and vitamins that can alter, save, or prolong life and that can stretch physical limits.

Matthew Barney shares with Hirst the desire to escape from any form of temporal, spatial, social, behavioral, or sexual constraint, and moreover, from the Freudian contention that biology is destiny. Barney treats the body as a malleable, structurally modifiable field that can be turned inside out and worked upon to transgress its own limits. Interlocking the experiences of athletic training and technological streamlining with the psychology of self-imposed discipline, Barney presents the body as a force without form but of infinite possibilities. His photographic and sculptural works make reference to athletics and fashion, two disciplines that promote the image of the redesigned body.

Matthew Barney. *Pace Car for the Hubris Pill*. 1991. Internally lubricated plastic, Teflon fabric, cast glucose capsule, and cast sucrose wedge, 53 1/2" x 6' 1/2" x 48" (135.2 x 194.3 x 121.9 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired from Werner and Elaine Dannheisser



Antoni’s artistic production is comparable to Barney’s insofar as both artists explore the body’s limits and push it to physical extremes. But *Wean* of 1990, which Antoni describes as her first “breakthrough in



Janine Antoni. *Wean*. 1990. Plaster, 12 x 38 x 2" (30.5 x 96.5 x 5.1 cm). Collection Craig Robins; courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York

thinking about the body," is not so much about the body per se as about bodily absence. It is, first, about the stages of separation from the maternal body and, second, about the distancing from one's own body as one enters the cultural world. *Wean* consists of a series of negative imprints in a wall:

forms of the artist's breast, her nipple, three latex nipples used for baby bottles, and finally the molded packaging from the latex nipples. The sequencing from natural to artificial form, or to a prosthetic surrogate, follows the course through which substitution takes place, from oral desire and the infant's

nurturing pleasure in sucking to the oral power of speech, signifying the entry into society. For Antoni then, the body becomes an instrument that can register time, from early preoedipal stages of psychic development, dependent on oral drives, to the weaning into culture.



liquid time

Bodies of water, regarded in many cultures as natural metaphors for the passage of time, are represented here in works that engage viewers' temporal, visual, and spatial perceptions. Executed in various mediums, the works question artistic hierarchies and disrupt totalizing narratives. In Kim Sooja's video *A Laundry Woman* of 2000, the artist stands still in front of the Yamuna river in Delhi, India. Seen from the back, she faces the flowing river, as by-products from a crematorium float past and birds fly overhead. The image, projected life-size on to a wall in a darkened room, places the viewer in the position of both observer and participant, as the artist's vantage point becomes the viewer's own. Kim's video suggests the tension between the notion of water as a universal symbol of the passage of time and culturally specific temporal perspectives.

In the series of photographs *Still Water* [*The River Thames, for Example*] of 1999, Roni Horn similarly explores subjective experiences of nature and mortality. The

images are close-up renderings of undistinguished sections of the Thames, so that if not for the title they could be images of any body of water. At the margins of each print are footnotes that question visual perception and metaphorical constructs, or that allude to unidentified individuals' perceptions of water as a site of danger and absence:

"My gaze alights on the water... I feel time stop. It isn't a moment of indecision. I don't want to jump. I just want to watch."

The role of the viewer is also an integral part of Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *Untitled* of 1991, a transient work consisting of paper sheets, printed with a black and white image of water, that are steadily replaced



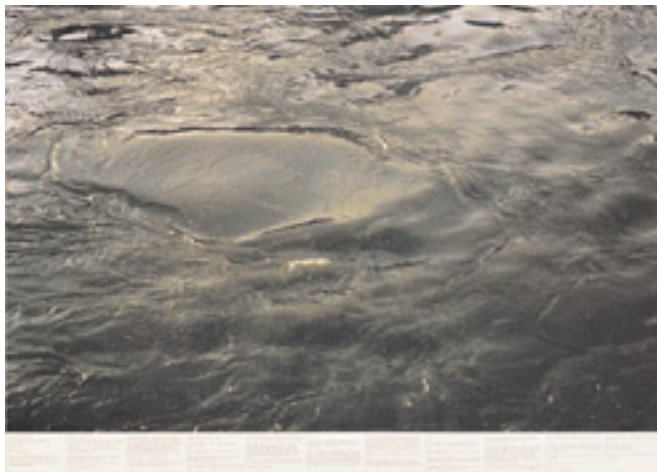
Kim Sooja. *A Laundry Woman*. 2000. Single-channel video projection. Courtesy the artist and The Project, New York, Los Angeles

Adriana Varejão. *Tiles (Azulejões)*. 2000. Plaster on canvas, painted in oil; site-specific installation, dimensions variable. Installation view at Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, 2001. Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York/Galeria Fortes Vilaça, São Paulo

as viewers, by invitation, take them away. The circulation of the image counters traditional notions of the value of singular works of art. Vija Celmins's *Untitled (Ocean)* of 1970, one of a series of images of water, is rendered in infinitesimal points that call attention to the process of drawing. The image, which could be confused with a black-and-white photograph, suggests the play between mimetic representation and subjective perceptions of nature.

Adriana Varejão draws upon Baroque archi-

Roni Horn. *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)—Image B*. 1999. Offset lithograph (photograph and text combined) on uncoated paper, 30 1/2 x 41 1/2" (77.5 x 105.4 cm). Courtesy the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery, New York



tectural ornamentation from Brazil in her installation *Tiles (Azulejões)* of 2000, a grid of individual canvases layered with plaster and paint. In an earlier series, Varejão created

"tiles" incorporating Catholic iconography and New World allegories of America disrupted by gesso forms emerging from the canvases like flayed flesh. In *Tiles*, the repertoire of European decorative motifs, religious iconography, and allegorical images of nature that was brought to Brazil by the Portuguese and presented in Baroque architectural settings, usually in the form of painted tiles for the exteriors of buildings, is similarly disrupted, as its conventional vegetal and abstract motifs are fragmented and rearranged. Curvilinear blue and white patterns span two walls of canvases, creating a potentially infinite space. The grid of tiles engulfs the viewer in a virtual ocean created within the museum setting.

IV

trans-histories



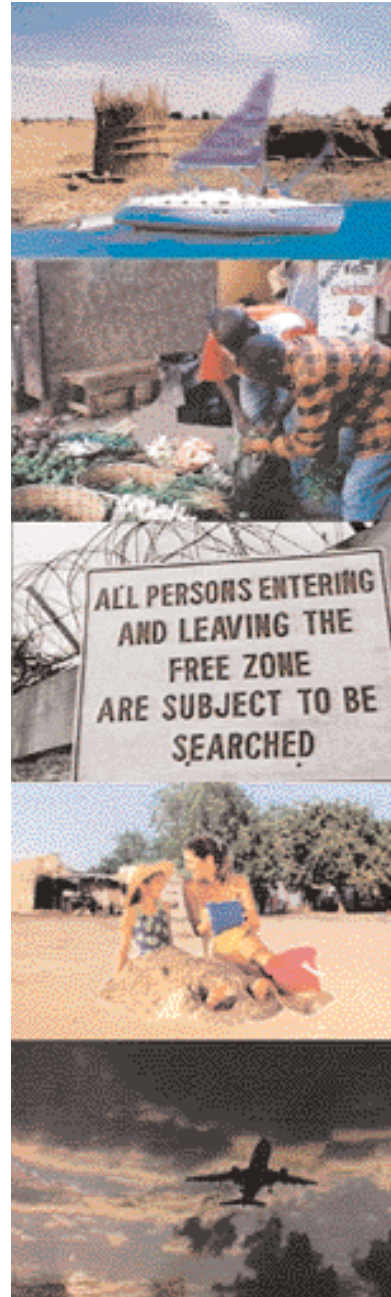
The history of the African diaspora and how it has influenced experiences of labor and leisure is presented here in works that explore how our perceptions of historic events are shaped by recent technology. Glenn Ligon's print portfolio *Runaways* of 1993 is a series of contemporary portraits that comprise images and typography drawn from advertisements in nineteenth-century newspapers calling for the capture of runaway slaves. For the portfolio, Ligon commissioned written descriptions of himself from friends, creating juxtapositions

between the anachronistic format and the recognizably contemporary person described, and suggesting the persistence of racial categorization linked to the history of slavery. Similarly, in her site-specific installation *The Rich Soil Down There* of 2002, Kara Walker employs cut paper silhouettes—a format with anachronistic associations—to render scenes depicting masters and slaves, as a means of underscoring the psychological effects of the history of slavery for contemporary viewers.

Marc Latamie's installation *Casabagass* of 2002 brings a shack housing a sugarcane grinder into the museum context, emphasizing individual labor and consumption. Part of Latamie's ongoing investigation of the historic and economic circuits through which the African slaves who processed sugar crossed the Atlantic, *Casabagass* reverses the usual flow of sugar from Caribbean cane fields to Wall Street's

Above: Marc Latamie. *Casabagass*. 2002. Installation with wood shack, sugarcane-juice machine, and video, dimensions variable. Commissioned by The Museum of Modern Art, New York; courtesy the artist

Right: Fatimah Tuggar. *Meditation on Vacation*. 2002. DVD projection/video collage, 4 min., 38 sec. Special commission by The Museum of Modern Art, New York; produced by Binta Zarah Studios, New York, and Art + Public, Geneva



trading floors, where it becomes an abstract commodity. Vik Muniz's series *The Sugar Children* of 1996 explores the mechanisms of photographic representation in portraits of sugar plantation workers' children, in St. Kitts, the West Indies, rendered in sugar. The grainy quality of the images, a visual pun on the dots that make up newspaper and magazine photographs, also recalls the process of developing an image on photographic paper. In contrast to photojournalistic or anthropological conventions, which render workers as types, the close-up appealing expressions and anecdotal titles bring to light the particularity of each child's personality.

Investigating the idea of leisure time, in which natives of wealthy nations intersect with those of "developing" countries, Fatimah Tuggar's video *Meditation on Vacation* of 2002 spans the typical Western tourist's trajectory, from arrival to departure. Deploying montage to explore disparities in the effects of globalization, Tuggar creates juxtapositions between images of Caribbean vacation venues and local labor, along with images taken in Nigerian towns that underscore the uneven flow of immigration, labor, capital, and tourism. In an accompanying voiceover, the artist employs both her own and appropriated texts. The natives of tourist locales, she says, "envy your own ability to turn their own banality

and boredom into a source of pleasure."

Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle and Nadine Robinson explore the events of September 11, 2001, focusing, respectively, on the perceptions fostered by real-time technology and on the experiences of immigrant and African American workers at the World Trade Center. In Manglano-Ovalle's night-vision-enhanced real-time video projection



Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle. *Nocturne (white poppies)*, 2002. Night-vision-enhanced real-time video projection of artificial opium poppies (*papaver somniferum*) with live audio. Commissioned by The Museum of Modern Art, New York; courtesy the artist and Max Protetch Gallery, New York

Nocturne (white poppies) of 2002, a camera equipped with motion sensors films artificial opium poppies. The viewer is incorporated into the work through the process of moving within the darkened space, and is drawn toward the projected image of the flower. The video, with its now-familiar greenish hue of a television screen dissolving into pixels with the word *LIVE* in one

corner, recalls coverage of the war in Afghanistan, in which state-of-the-art infra-red camera technology, used by the media and the military since the Gulf War, encouraged television viewers to have the impression that they were eyewitnesses to breaking news in real time. The technological, temporal, and perceptual links between the presentation of media images as unmediated reality and the transformation of public spaces into sites of surveillance emerge as the viewer is drawn toward the immediacy promised by the projected image, while becoming a part of it.

Nadine Robinson examines the tension between the use-value of labor and the lived experience of individual workers. *Tower Hollers* of 2002 is an installation consisting of a grid of 455 white canvases with speakers wired to record players, and expands upon an earlier version that was created during a residency at the World Trade Center World Views program. Two records play at once: a work holler, or tune sung by African American prisoners, and a melody that is familiar to anyone who heard the piped-in "elevator music" at the Twin Towers, which, according to Robinson, belongs to the genre of music designed to increase worker productivity. The two songs evoke the labor of workers, and the grid of speaker paintings represents the number of tenant firms at the World Trade Center.

V

mobility/ immobility

In the second half of the twentieth century, modernism's cult of instantaneous time was replaced by more layered, often more analytic, references to temporality that alluded to deceleration, immobility, unending duration, and circularity. Watching a Ceal Floyer video, focusing on a Douglas Gordon altered-speed projection, looking at a Hiroshi Sugimoto photograph, engaging in a Gabriel Orozco game structure, or exploring a Tatsuo Miyajima light-emitting diode installation requires a modified attentive state in which perception and memory perform unequivocally in the experience of the work.

Floyer's *Ink on Paper* of 1999, a video that seems to stand still, is in fact a loop of interminable duration. The image shows the artist's hand holding a marking pen against a white sheet of paper. Over the course of one hour, the pen imperceptibly leaks its ink, leaving a perfect circular pool on the paper. Surprisingly, even though the ink is spilled out in real time, the pace at which

the action unfolds is of such extreme slowness that it is futile to try to detect the increments by which the circle expands. Duration abolishes the notion of time as change. Similarly, in Angelika Middendorf's video piece *Outer Space* of 1999, a woman swimming against a strong stream in the high-tech training pool of the Sportforum,

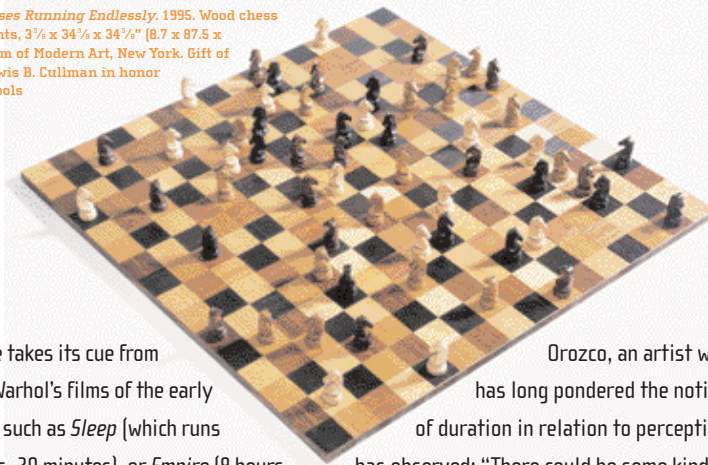
the Olympic Training Center in Berlin, is paradoxically perceived to be immobile. In this case, speed is converted into stasis.

Gordon's *Monument to X* of 1998 records a long, passionate kiss made epic by virtue of its length. Although edited down to fourteen minutes, the footage of the kiss lasts fourteen hours. Gordon's idiosyncratic approach



Ceal Floyer. *Ink on Paper*. 1999. Video, 1 hr. Courtesy the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

Gabriel Orozco. *Horses Running Endlessly*. 1995. Wood chess board and 128 knights, 3 1/4 x 34 1/4 x 34 1/4" [8.7 x 87.5 x 87.5 cm]. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Agnes Gund and Lewis B. Cullman in honor of Chess in the Schools



to time takes its cue from Andy Warhol's films of the early 1960s, such as *Sleep* (which runs 5 hours, 20 minutes), or *Empire* (8 hours, 5 minutes). The viewer becomes fascinated with the minimal, infinitely slow shots in these works, and with the "eternity of the moment" in which anything seldom happens.

The photographer Sugimoto, although dealing with the primary medium for recording reality at a given point in time, also uses long exposures to question the assumption that what gets recorded by the camera is even a moment at all. In his photographic series *Interior Theaters* and *Drive-In Theaters* of the 1990s, Sugimoto left the aperture of the camera open for the duration of the film screening, resulting in the erasure of the fast-moving image. What remains is just a luminous white screen. The decelerated temporality of Sugimoto's pictures proposes a model of recording reality that probes the conventions of both cinema and photography, by way of conjugating time as indefinite duration.

Orozco, an artist who has long pondered the notion of duration in relation to perception, has observed: "There could be some kind of resemblance between what I'm doing and John Cage's recordings, but Cage's work has so much to do with chance, whereas I'm really focusing on concentration and intention." As a chess player, Orozco often refers to time-based games, yet invariably subverts their systemic order. A case in point, his piece *Horses Running Endlessly* of 1995 takes its vocabulary from the traditional chess game, yet the deviant four-color board with 256 squares—instead of the usual 64—features only knights that move across squares to make a series of circles among themselves. The viewer is invited to enter an implausible situation, lacking a defined set of rules, that is calculated to defer the game's logical development with each move.

A similar rationale is at work in Steven Pippin's punning installation *Fax 69* of 1999, in which two "desiring" fax machines





Steven Pippin. *Fax 69*. 1999. Office desk, two fax machines, and polycarbonated plexiglass, dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, Corp., New York

Zhu Jia. *Forever*. 1994. DVD video, 27 min. loop. Courtesy the artist, Beijing



continuously fax each other blank messages on a single loop of paper. Similarly, in his video piece *Forever* of 1994, Zhu Jia portrays the city of Beijing in a dizzying spin of circular patterns by strapping a camera to the rotating wheel of a bicycle. Turning to the endless digital time of the computer age, Miyajima also explores notions of looping, repetition, and cyclical

time. His *Counter Spiral* of 1998 is a revolving, light-emitting diode structure comprising numbers counted forward and backward simultaneously from 1 to 99, but never including zero, which would indicate an end. The speeds at which the numbers are changing vary, articulating the relative and indefinite character of time. Temporal relativity is suggested here within a single visual zone.

PUBLICATION

Tempo

Paulo Herkenhoff, Roxana Marcoci, and Miriam Basilio

The concept of time has been discussed by philosophers throughout the ages. What does time signify? Is it a cultural construct? How does one represent it? Artists, especially, have addressed the experiential aspects of temporal perception. This catalogue, which accompanies the first temporary exhibition at MoMA QNS, features works by forty-five contemporary artists from five continents. Conceived as a lexicon, the texts explore distinct ideas and terms relating to time, and a full-color plate section includes multimedia work by such diverse artists as Janine Antoni, Matthew Barney, Louise Bourgeois, Vija Celmins, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Douglas Gordon, David Hammons, Damien Hirst, Roni Horn, Kim Sooja, Guillermo Kuitca, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, Vik Muniz, Gabriel Orozco, Paul Pfeiffer, Charles Ray, Pipilotti Rist, Fatimah Tuggar, Adriana Varejão, Kara Walker, Erwin Wurm, and Andrea Zittel, among others.

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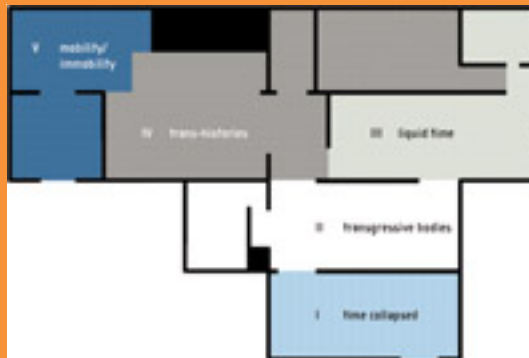


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Front cover: Douglas Gordon. Video still from *Monument to X*, 1998. Courtesy the artist and Gagosian Gallery, New York