

TERRITORIES OF TIME

Ignasi ABALLI

ABSALON

David CLAERBOUT

Lieven DE BOECK

Sofia HULTÉN

Alfredo JAAR

Bruce NAUMAN

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"The act is virgin, even when repeated", wrote René Char in his prose poems Feuilletts d'Hypnos. This aphorism, which is both simple and concentrated, casts a helpful light on the works exhibited in Territories of Time which deal, each in their own way, with the concept of repetitive time.

Despite the habits which inevitability dictate our everyday life, there is not one instant that is identical to another.

Everything is always new. Life is a constant flow of imperceptible instants that our intellect is constantly attempting to isolate in order to make it easier to designate and understand them.

In this exhibition which brings together seven artists, the repeated image is depicted and observed with intensity, absurdity, melancholy, violence and one can discern a profound process of reflection about what constitutes Time, its "substance" and its territories.

Left-hand room

In his installation *Opus 1981 / Andante Desesperato* (1981), the New York-based Chilean artist **Alfredo Jaar** (1956) is showing a video inspired by a Susan Meiselas photo taken in Nicaragua during the Sandinista revolution. The picture shows guerrilleros sheltering behind a bank of sandbags while, on the left-hand side, a man in battledress is standing up playing the clarinet. This image, full of paradoxes, made an impression on Alfredo Jaar, to the point that he decided to draw inspiration from it to make the film *Opus 1981*. The video shows him blowing, repeatedly and forcefully, into a clarinet, until he no longer has any breath left. His filmed performance ends with an exhausted, dramatic and desperate sound. In this work, Jaar seems to be trying to say that people should never give up hope, that one must always start again and again in the fight against enslavement, and that the values of rebellion and freedom are inseparably from any poetry.

Right-hand room

With *Arena* (2007), Belgian artist **David Claerbout** (1969) is projecting over 180 viewpoints of a single moment in a basketball match in the form of a very slow slide show. The artist has chosen a paroxysmal moment: the precise moment when the ball is about to enter the basket (or not). Having positioned a large number of cameras, all the tension of the instant is captured by Claerbout from a multiplicity of viewpoints, which involve all the "stakeholders" in the match: players, coaches, referee and spectators. Using thousands of shots, the artist produces a complex work which may be perceived as a real painting of suspended time. The intensity of this instant makes this vision reminiscent of Baroque works in the way it captures movement, colours, and the theatrical staging.

David Claerbout stops time, to scrutinise its substance, as well as opening up a process of reflection on watching the watchers, and sporting spectacle as a moment of theatre. He literally dives into the instant, and fixes this time which is changing incessantly. Paradoxically, by giving so much detail of this multitude of viewpoints of a single instant, Claerbout confers on *Arena* an aspect of eternity.

Alcôve

In his one-second film, *signature / one second of eternity* (2010), Belgian artist **Lieven de Boeck** (1971) provides a complex vision of the erasure of identity. An obvious reference to "Une seconde d'éternité" (1970) by Marcel Broodthaers who filmed his signature "M.B." in one second, the film by Lieven de Boeck turns the idea around by erasing his signature "lDb" in 24 images (24 frames per second). The film starts with his signature written in ink, which disappears into a flawed white background, spattered with stains and dust particles. This 16 mm film highlights the artist's signature, or rather his "un-signature", symbolising his existence, while emphasising the inevitable dissolution of his presence. Nothing can take away our memory of our condition. The artist has also made 31 prints of his film, one to be projected on every day of the exhibition. Given that the film is very short, the film is in danger of burning due to the effect of the heat generated by the projector. The threat of this potential destruction reinforces the continual disappearance of the signature and nobody knows in advance how many reels will be rescued at the end of the exhibition.

Left-hand room

In her video *Fuck it up and Start again* (2001), Berlin-based Swedish artist **Sofia Hultén** (1972) smashes up a guitar in an immaculate room. Seven times, in seven successive sequences. After each destruction, this guitar is patiently repaired, off-camera, and glued back together by the artist. The sequences follow on, and show the artist hell-bent on smashing the instrument to pieces. The violence of this act is counter-balanced by the calm required to meticulously re-assemble the instrument. As the sequences progress he guitar breaks more and more easily since the makeshift repairs have made it more fragile as it is repeatedly broken. The abundance of energy necessary to destroy the instrument the first time is totally incomparable with the easyness with which the artist destroys the instrument in the final shot. In her work, Sofia Hultén devises a typology of rehabilitation of the object, and relies on repetitive processes to make and unmake, re-make and re-unmake.

Right-hand room

With *Violent Incident*: (1986), American artist **Bruce Nauman** (1941) reveals an intimist moment of violence that we witness as voyeurs. This scene forms part of a larger suite of twelve videos, each of which deals with this same scene of domestic violence. That suite belongs to the Tate Modern in London. Here, we see the segment *Man-Woman*, showing the scene in a loop. The appeal of this sequence does not only lie in the content, but also in the fact that it shows that Bruce Nauman, who made 16 mm films at the end of the 1960s, then turned to videotape experiments. The technology available to the artist at the time did not allow the tape to be played in a loop, as it could today on DVD players. So Nauman copied this scene many times over onto the video tape to achieve a final duration of 30 minutes. So the scene is repeated unrelentingly throughout that period, with an ambiguous picture quality that is entirely intentional.

Wunderkammer

In the wunderkammer, you can see the very poignant video *Bruits* (noises) by Israeli artist **Absalon** (1964-1993). Filmed in the year of his death, this video shows the artist's face in close-up. Throughout the duration of the film, the artist yells to the point of exhaustion. This dramatic performance shows a man shouting out his anger, to "purge" his anguish. Absalon made this self-portrait shortly after having learned that he had contracted HIV. He died as a result of that illness when he was not even thirty years old. All of human despair is visible and audible in this fear of death.

Videobox

In the videobox, *Próxima Aparición* (2005) by Spanish artist **Ignasi Aballí** (1958) is a work that tackles the issue of unsatisfied expectations and the frustration of a promise not kept. The terms *Próxima Aparición* refer to "Coming soon", which normally precedes a film trailer at the cinema. The trailer for a film that is coming soon puts cinema-goers in a state of expectation. They anticipate the picture that is about to be shown, and prepare themselves to receive visual information. Although it is said to be coming soon, the picture never actually appears. All that is shown is the words *Próxima Aparición*. Only the viewer who has watched this text for thirty minutes will have the benefit of seeing these words disappear, not to make way for the pictures that have been anticipated for so long (don't they become "longed-for" after such a protracted period?) but all that replaces it is instead a laconic *Próxima Desaparición* (going soon), which also lasts thirty minutes. What is going? The picture that never appeared in the first place? The text that we are reading? The expectancy? Or should it be given a more existential interpretation? Our own disappearance? Or more apocalyptic still ... disappearance of the world? The situation is even more absurd in one knows that the artist really filmed the texts during an hour, and did not realise this through the use of a computer. His relationship with time is primordial in this film, and it was evident for Aballí to film and not to have a numeric file. After all is said and done, this film creates a feeling of frustration, because there is never a good time to see it. On the other hand, this work offers, in its extreme simplicity - black screen and light lettering - a trailer that has a wealth of potential.

Alfredo Jaar, *Opus 1981, Andante Desesperato*, 1981, videotape, colour, sound, 7' 15"

David Claerbout, *Arena*, 2007, video, projection, custom HD, colour, silent, 33'32"

Lieven de Boeck, *Signature / A second of eternity*, 2010, 16mm, B&W, silent, 1"

Sarah Hultén, *Fuck it up and start again*, 2001, DVD, colour, sound, 7'

Bruce Nauman, *Violent Incident: Man woman segment*, 1986, videotape, colour, sound, 30', private coll.

Absalon, *Noises*, 1993, colour, sound, 2' 27", coll. Josée and Marc Gensollen, Marseille

Ignasi Aballí, *Próxima Aparición*, 2005, DVD, colour, silent, 60'