

## Time & Technology

### Series of exhibitions and events

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|------------------------|---|
| 26.11.2011 - 15.1.2012 | <b>Gretta Louw: <i>Controlling Connectivity</i></b><br>(Performance and exhibition)           |
| 27.1. – 11.3.2012      | <b>Sophia New &amp; Daniel Belasco Rogers</b><br>(plan b): <i>Navigating the Everyday</i>     |
| 23.3. – 29.4.2012      | <b>Belinfante &amp; Lewandowski/ Shlomit</b><br><b>Lehavi: <i>Fantastic Time Machines</i></b> |
| 31.8. – 14.10.2012     | <b>Yasuhiro Sakamoto/ David Hebb</b>  |

## Time & Technology – Some Theoretical Considerations

**Time & Technology**, the series of exhibitions and events presented by *Art Laboratory Berlin*, set up a discourse on highly relevant and current topics of *technology and time (perception)* in connection with artistic production.

The development of new technologies over the last 25 years has substantially influenced our lives: from the personal computer and its *graphic user interface* (GUI) to the phenomenon of the Internet to the latest technical possibilities of mobile phones – all of these structure our current forms of work and communication in a fundamental way. *How much do these technological achievements effect our sense of time and our temporal perceptions?* On one hand, the latest technologies have designed cheaper and more effective ways of communication; on the other hand, in many countries employee work hours have increased, and the boundaries between work and leisure have clearly become more diffuse. Computers do work processes in microscopic time scales that are almost unimaginable to the human mind. The latest advances in genetics have changed the rate of evolution. *How will such technological developments impact on our perception of time?*

Within the format of the **Time & Technology** series *Art Laboratory Berlin* is interested in artistic works that deal with precisely these technological changes and our changing perception and use of time. Which conflicts exist between the different forms of time – from the subjective to the objective, the social to the purely factual? What are the current relationship between space and time – between haptic and virtual space, and between actual and virtual time?

Besides the fact that our lifestyles today have changed radically in parallel with rapid technological developments, *Art Laboratory Berlin* is also interested in a thorough investigation of our perception of the temporal. In this context, it is essential to reflect on different categories of time: according to Siegfried Zielinski, it is the category of time – as a chronological phenomenon – that is to be distinguished between time's progression and the moment. From ancient Greek mythology, we have the concepts of *chronos* as physical time and historical entity (i.e. "history"), and *kairos*, as momentariness, which is strictly a function of the particular system ("proper time")<sup>1</sup>. How the temporal manifests itself in the course of cultural history, has to do, according to Zielinski, not least with the so-called media machine in *timing* events (for example, exposure in photography). No doubt an active form is also meant, which can be rephrased as the individual *setting of time*.

This brings us back to a reflection on our present life structures, which are directly influenced by intensive multi-sensory perception. The fact that using the latest technologies in various fields and functions *simultaneously*, as well as for communication, not only makes life more complex, but it applies an inevitable form of simultaneity to our actions. According to Zielinski this phenomenon creates technologies of the *timeliness*, "that are able to address the individual on the level of his/her existential consciousness: the sense of time"<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Siegfried Zielinski, "Chronos und Kairos. Theorien zu medieninduzierten Zeitereignissen". Vorlesung UdK 2009, Online

<sup>2</sup> ibid.

Starting with the concept of *sense of time*, different contemporary forms of dealing with time as well as different units of the *sense of time* can be found: the capture of time (digital forms of the temporal and the temporalised); the production and overproduction of repositories of time (the omnipotence of *memory storage!*); and finally, the interest and testing of different possibilities for measuring time.

### **Time & Technology and the artists exhibited**

Highlighted here are art works that deal exactly with these essential and very current themes. Among the works that were initiated by *Art Laboratory Berlin's* international *open call* of 2010, are several examples which prove particularly valuable and symptomatic, and which form part of ***Time & Technology***: these works deal with aspects such as memory (storage, archiving, memory), the ephemeral nature of the temporal (short-lived) in respect to an overproduction of temporal archives and not least the measurement of the temporal, which adopts its own forms of playfulness.

### **Perception of time in the context of digital communication technologies**

Use of the Internet and the other digital communication technologies has significantly changed our perception of time. This was the central theme of the exhibition project *Controlling\_Connectivity* by the Australian artist **Gretta Louw**.

During the 10-day online performance, that laid the basis for an exhibition, the artist lived in the gallery space in complete isolation. Her sole contact with the outside world was via permanent online contact: through various social networking sites she was in constant contact with internet users (including both a general public and media specialists). Her performance *Controlling\_Connectivity* was a self-experiment resulting in an exhibition with screen capture and text excerpts of her online encounters. The artist, who also has a degree in psychology, based the project on the following theses: the pervasiveness of internet-based social networking, and the obligation/opportunity for constant connection with these platforms can be understood as a paradigm for a severe and systematic disruption of normal, socially accepted patterns of life and interpersonal interaction. Thus the artist examined how extreme internet use, and our reliance on online connectivity could affect psychological functioning and time perception. Finally a publication "Controlling\_Connectivity: Art, Psychology, and the Internet" was published documenting the project.

### **Memory-Storage (Remembrance)**

The interest in preservation of the temporal – be it in pictures, movies, or written word – has not only risen immeasurably in recent years, it has also developed different practices and long since spread from the professional arena into private areas of life. Using the latest technology has made it easier to capture, archive and reproduce time. The (personal and collective) memory has changed its format, and its manner of transmission has changed. The newest technologies also have a significant stake of their own in how we deal with our memory: we are constantly recording time and archiving the traces of our time on so-called *memory sticks*, *memory cards*, mobile phones or filming devices. Capturing memories has evolved in Western civilization into a well-known and extensive practice. And new technologies have accentuated this phenomena through increasing speed and the joining of time and space.

For several years the British artist duo **Sophia New** and **Daniel Rogers** (*plan b*) have artistically investigated the technical archiving of their movements; they record their everyday progress via GPS. All aspects of their digital communications (for example, mobile text messages) are evaluated and processed artistically – their videos, installations, objects and performances reflect and manifest this virulent aspect of the digital and precise archiving of their lives in an impressive manner.

The Israeli artist **Shlomit Lehavi** also critically examines forms of temporality in combination with use of the latest technologies: in her multimedia installations, she combines collected footage in the form of video projections and stages various layers of time. The narrative structure is altered (or created) by means of viewer interactivity – by touching and moving various projection surfaces in her installation *Time Sifter*, the visitor is allowed to take part in a seductive form of participation.

### **The Ephemeral Nature of the Temporal / Time vs. Technology**

The currently perceptible tendency towards overproduction and over-storage of data does not lie all that far from the erasure of this data: a single mouse click, for example, can delete an entire year's image archive. Many of the first examples of artistic approaches to the medium of the Internet (e.g. so-called 'net.art') can already no longer to be seen – the rapid developments of software and hardware have

overridden their early codes – as a result they have become invisible. New technologies often disappear despite their speed, or perhaps even because of their speed, and are overtaken by more recent developments – time turns out to be the greatest enemy of technology!

*Monitor* by the American artist **David Hebb** shows exactly this phenomenon when technical innovation overtakes itself. In this video work a CRT monitor, from the 'technical Garden of Eden' is banished and literally cast into nature – the video shows a now obsolete, aging monitor no longer subject to the principle that 'time is progress', but rather condemned to the eternal natural rhythm of the seasons.

### ***Measuring the Temporal / Playing for Time***

The long history of measuring time is (especially regarding the criteria described above) particularly relevant today. Since the dawn of mankind's existence, the measurement of time has been considered an important parameter, from sundials to church tower clocks and up to the pendulum - temporal dynamics always was and is the centre of daily life. Today, however, the measurement of time has few remaining secrets. Nevertheless, the creation of new instruments to redefine and reinvent our relationship to time is a promising field of research. It is all the more interesting to turn to the artistic positions dealing with this subject – as testing grounds with a playful potential: to extend time, to subvert its course, to go backward, to rewind, to slow things down.

For example, in their complex installation *The Reversing Machine (A Theatre of Cairo & Chronos)* the British artists **Simon Lewandowski** and **Sam Belifante** experiment with the passage of time. Their *time machine* attempts to manipulate the perception of time within the exhibition space; recordings of the space and the visitors literally create a work of layered time, which playfully and in a process oriented manner explores this superimposition of time. Here you can encounter a contemporary expression of Jules Verne's idea of the time machine. Seen historically this classic time machine experiences a significant structuring through the specific phenomena of Modernism: the aesthetics of the cinema - editing, cutting and pasting - are according to Lev Manovich (*The Language of New Media*) the basic elements of digital technologies. In this context, one can understand the artistic works of Belifante and Lewandowski as a questioning of temporal perception.

A remarkable form of temporal structuring is also evident in the artistic work of the Japanese artist **Yasuhiro Sakamoto**: in the installations of the artist, media scholar and computer scientist the spatial configuration of time is investigated by means of music. His precisely composed Rube Goldberg-esque (marble) runs can be understood as *time sculptures*. He has developed a non-textually oriented system of notation for his machine to anchor and mark the form of time in music pieces, and make it understandable to the viewer. Sakamoto's devices also question how we can use the latest technology to capture musical time. The works are sculptural algorithms which explore musical canon, one of the most complex time constructions, dealing with *theme and variation*, structures of repetition and finally the simultaneity of the past-present-and-future.

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