

Time Again

Wherever anything lives, there is, open somewhere, a register in which time is being inscribed.

—Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*¹

Exploring the language of repetition, *Time Again* brings together works that destabilize conventional ways of seeing and considering what is past and what is present. Engaging gesture, image sequence, material affect, and displaced narrative, the works on view create disjunctions with the way the time of the present is experienced, challenging our understanding of what it means to be contemporaries.

Archival and historical settings are re-animated within the exhibition only to be undone, insisting on a gestural and affective working method. History is not engaged as stable and singular, nor is it a place of redress or amendment. Rather, it is an unfolding place to be occupied, used, redirected, and put back in motion. Contoured development and progress is replaced with the desire to be re-regarded, touched and felt. This is a place of lag, slip, and detour where the performing body and political subject present themselves via acts of estrangement, reversal, ritualized behavior, and fragmentation.²

In its insistence upon a temporal register, *Time Again* occupies a time-place akin to what Pamela Lee has termed ‘the middle condition’—an engagement with medium as a mode always and already in between, rather than a parameter based primarily on material properties or spatial considerations.³ Under the influence of such a condition, images and objects act as sequences and durational constructs, adhering to each other and playing up associative possibility. Here, abstraction reasserts a longstanding dialog with the place of iconography through modes of projection, superimposition, doubling, and the difference and variation that lies within repetition. Identification is allowed back into the act of viewing, in looking and looking again.

In Matthew Buckingham’s *Image of Absalon to be Projected Until It Vanishes*, 2001, a public that may never have existed is addressed through the artist’s fragmented portrait of the 12th-century Danish warrior-bishop Absalon, the quasi-mythic founder of the city of Copenhagen. Comprised of a single 35mm slide that depicts a 1901 equestrian sculpture of an axe-wielding Absalon rearing up in battle, the heat from the slide projector slowly dissolves the image over the length of the exhibition. The accompanying text describes the contested history surrounding the sculpture’s placement in the central Højbro Square of Copenhagen, and how Absalon used the wealth he plundered during the territorial expansion of numerous military campaigns

¹ Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, translated by Arthur Mitchell (H. Holt and Company, 1911), p. 17.

² In this regard, *Time Again* relates to the gap of meaning in Freudian parapraxis where convention and expectation lapse into errancy, revealing an involuntary disclosure, an anomaly, an overturn, a haunting.

³ Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (MIT Press, 2004), p. 51-52.

to fortify what is now Copenhagen, as well as his commissioning of the first written history of the Danish people, the *Gesta Danorum* or 'Deeds of the Danes.' The slow fade of Buckingham's time-based treatment of icon and image destabilizes the fixed nationalistic origin myth that Absalon sought to impose and which the monument commemorates. Left with an increasingly insufficient image, the viewer is asked to reassemble a more ambiguous historical understanding, and occupies the space that Buckingham has termed (after Walter Benjamin) the "vanishing point of history."⁴ From this view, the present moment is conceived as the point where history vanishes, reversing the notion of history as receding somewhere behind us, in a time that no longer exists.⁵

To reconsider past events and materials is to restage those events in the present in order to think about the here and now. It is in these efforts that the vanishing point surrounding us is revealed. Manon de Boer's film *Attica*, 2008, for example, captures a refracted consideration of the infamous 1971 prison uprising in the form of a musical performance. Composed of a single tracking shot, the black and white film captures a rendition of two 1971 compositions by American composer Frederic Rzewski—*Coming Together* and *Attica*—that responded to the politically charged events at Attica Correctional Facility in New York in the fall of that year. Following a violent takeover triggered by inmate demands for better conditions, Governor Nelson Rockefeller ordered an armed retaking of the prison, which resulted in 43 casualties, national controversy and political fallout. In de Boer's film, the basic canon structure of the title composition is performed by a quartet appearing before a white sheet. Moving slowly past the performers, the ten-minute shot blurs slightly as it proceeds to trace the contours of an empty industrial building, coming back into focus via a mirrored (and therefore reversed) reflection of the ongoing performance before eventually returning to its initial point of view. As the lead performer utters staccato words taken from a letter written by one of the leaders of the uprising, the historical event reverberates within the sustained duration of de Boer's auditory and visual echo.

In William E. Jones' video *Berlin Flash Frames*, 2010, the force with which repetition can undo context and open up interpretation is directly archival. Parceling out footage from an unedited film produced by the U.S. Information Agency and found in the U.S. National Archives with the provisional title 'Berlin 1961,' Jones' video features distanced shots of the Berlin Wall under construction by the U.S. military alongside a propagandistic scenario featuring a main actor on stage sets and in the street. Devoid of sound, the proximity of a historical barrier under construction and a silenced piece of propaganda is exploited to expose gestural affinity. A journalistic photo-op of then Mayor of West Berlin (and future Chancellor of West Germany) Willi Brandt and an African delegation visiting Checkpoint Charlie is countered with an in-

⁴ In a 1935 letter to Max Horkheimer detailing the approach taken in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin writes: "The issue this time is to indicate the precise point in the present to which my historical construction will orient itself, as to its vanishing point." *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 509.

⁵ Mark Godfrey offers a keen and thorough consideration of many of Buckingham's works and his engagement with the writings of Susan Buck-Morss and Walter Benjamin in "The Artist as Historian," *October*, (Issue 120, July 2007), p. 141-172.

the-field shot of German citizenry waiting in line for relocation to what is now West Berlin. Moving between highly constructed scenes and seemingly offhand footage, Jones' emphasis on the footage's flash frames (whereupon a sudden flare of light occurs is captured in between shots) begins to take precedence. The overexposed frames are coupled with the idiosyncratic dipping motion of the cameraman at the end of takes, which provide a rhythmic repetition in Jones' editorial sequencing, collapsing context and preventing an explicit or discursive reading. As Jones writes within this publication, "a wall is constructed, but so is an image." The narrative certainty of the wall as a clearly conceived historical signifier is thus displaced and unsettled. In its place, a time, Berlin 1961, and the fabrication of image, boundary, and worldview.

The indirect portrait of Cairo observed in Rosalind Nashashibi's film *This Quality*, 2010, is likewise a tightly framed view of a city, sequenced via observations of likeness and variation. Opening upon a young woman with lucid, pale eyes seated before the camera, sounds of traffic, voices, and birds punctuate four different close-ups. Recalling the format of Warhol's *Screen Tests*, 1964-66, the woman's placid gaze is refocused outward to a variety of striped fabric car covers found in the streets of Cairo. Ranging from light blue to vibrant pink and purple to grey offset by brown and burgundy to completely tattered, the variety of covers take on a subdued anthropomorphic humor. The banter of a sidewalk café, the furtive glance of boys passing before the camera, an afternoon call to prayer, the varying strides of passersby unfold around a makeshift yet universal sign of abstraction hereby made familiar and human.⁶ Evoking what Gilles Deleuze termed the "out-of-field" principle of the moving image, that which "refers to what is neither seen nor understood, but is nevertheless perfectly present," Nashashibi allows the city and the presence of history in through focusing on a seemingly arbitrary signifier.⁷ In dwelling upon a covering up, the place of Cairo opens into a disjunctive yet familiar space where similitude and recognition replace the imposed abstraction of a mapping of streets and delineated districts.

The out-of-field principle evoked by the self-conscious gaze toward the camera and the subsequent leap from car to car—a mode aptly called "eyeballing" by Nashashibi in a separate film—betrays an awareness and anticipation before the camera that Giorgio Agamben identifies as definitive of cinema, namely a re-inscription of gesture that calls attention to its vitiated cultural status. As he writes: "In the cinema, a society that has lost its gestures seeks to reappropriate what it has lost while simultaneously recording that loss."⁸ For it is the sphere of the rehearsal, outtake and episode that differentiates cinematic time from theater, ritual, and

⁶ The improvised signs that arise in navigating the density of a city recall both Michel de Certeau's notion of "spatial stories" in his essay "Walking in the City" (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press, 1984) but also Sigfried Kracauer's incisive comment that "the position that an epoch occupies in the historical process can be determined more strikingly from an analysis of its surface-level manifestations than from that epoch's judgments about itself." Sigfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament" in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 75.

⁷ Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 1. *The Movement-Image*, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1986), p. 17.

⁸ Giorgio Agamben, "Notes on Gesture," *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience* (Verso, London and New York, 1993), p. 137.

bourgeois custom. Existing forever alongside a time of whole and unitary performance, cinema both mourns and ridicules linearity, duration, and continuity. And yet, as Agamben further intimates, perhaps it is exactly the phenomenological gap opened by the moving image that maintains a reserve of mimetic capability for our contemporary time that was long exhausted in the still image's embedded subservience to logo, slogan, and column.⁹

In Emily Roysdon's *Untitled (David Wojnarowicz Project)*, 2001-2007, the still image serves to respond to and redirect the late artist's work *Arthur Rimbaud in New York*, 1978-79, itself a partially borrowed stance. In a series of twelve photographs Roysdon's female friends wear a David Wojnarowicz mask in various sites around New York, forcibly comparing the two times. Fashioned from a seemingly photocopied mask of the French poet, Wojnarowicz's original version of the *poète maudit* poses in late 70s urban New York. Scenarios are taken from Wojnarowicz's routes through the city—buying a ticket at a porn theater, riding a graffiti-laced subway car, in bed with a lover, shooting up in a derelict squat. Roysdon's sequence, on the other hand, flirts with the isolated figure of the tragic poet while also leaning toward a queer collective memory. The mask is passed around and mnemonic gesture is shared.¹⁰ In both projects, the masks underscore an implied but fragmentary narrative, extending the out-of-field into a cinematic sequence of still images.

The dynamic of a mask acting as an immobilized gaze that withholds identity while immediately proposing an affective identification with persona is choreographed repeatedly in Rosemarie Trockel's work. With the ceramic wall sculpture *Mars*, 2006, for example, the immobilized gaze is meant to be the return of one's own visage. But when a viewer looks closer to find their reflection, the luminous platinum glaze disperses light and gives back a blurred impression. The mirror on the wall does not play according to the rules of identification, refusing to return a stable representation, offering instead the tiny deportations and tactile gleam of a cracked surface. Trockel exposes the social codes and clichés that underscore our need for empathic identification while also giving form to the lack that arises in its place. Her video *Goodbye Mrs. Mönipaer*, 2003, is a pantomime that explores the psychologically fraught role-playing that can emerge between artists and gallerists, studio and market concerns, and private and public selves. A first view introduces the distanced view of a Modernist lakeside bungalow with wall-sized windows and the artificial sound of waves lapping against a shoreline, while a second more voyeuristic view reveals two women reviewing a series of portrait paintings propped against the glass. The two women—one in bikini and heels, the other in a bathrobe—are wearing photocopied masks bearing banal facial expressions. After the woman in bathrobe

⁹ Ibid., p. 140.

¹⁰ As art historian Johanna Burton writes, "Roysdon's desire to inhabit another time and/or another artist is layered, and it exceeds the subject it evokes: Roysdon *occupies* Wojnarowicz and is simultaneously *occupied by* him—not to mention *pre-occupied with* him." Johanna Burton in "New York, Beside Itself," *Mixed Use Manhattan: Photography & Related Practices, 1970s to the Present* (MIT Press, 2010), p. 201.

departs with a handshake, the scene is repeated with a suited man wearing sunglasses. Reduced to empty gestures, Trockel's facsimile personae parody the Ur-scene of making a deal as the video ends with the dealer character pacing back and forth gesticulating into her cell phone. In place of an explicit critique, role-playing reveals a rupture, as the desire to seize a stable representation of the self becomes a masquerade.

That the purchase of an artwork can become a social occasion for disguise and assertion of power is nothing new. Indeed, the dissembling guise of an artwork acting as an extension of social reach is ancient. In the Vedic tradition of Hinduism, for example, it is an "avatar" that cloaks the manifestation or appearance of a deity. An *avatāra* of the deity Vishnu, for example, might take the form of a boar-like creature or a half-man, half lion, appearing as an unlikely shape-shifter that paradoxically restores cosmic order. Today, the term avatar also conveys an online username, persona, or virtual self, while also being the title of the highest grossing Hollywood film to date. Rachel Harrison's *Avatar*, 2010, plays off a concatenation of these associations and more. Bright drips, whorls, and washes of paint color a pedestal that plays host to a draped piece of camouflage clothing and a framed picture. The shape-shifter within the frame is a half figure made up of a cutout torso of the heavy metal singer and reality television casualty Ozzy Osbourne collaged over the body of a tattooed native on a river raft. Harrison's skewed perspective puts a quasi-semiotic dynamic in motion as cast-off consumer products and popular imagery are recombined to both imply and defer symbolic meaning.

In Troy Brauntuch's *Stamps*, 1975-2007, a reliquary of analog avatars is comprised of a collection of handmade rubber stamps. Deployed in his collages over the past 30 years, the assembly of effigy-like forms are placed within an alcove and shown alongside a selection of collages from the same period. Together, they expose the source/image relationship in Brauntuch's work that ranges from public and historically charged imagery to sentimental images taken from personal experience. As with the opacity of Brauntuch's conté crayon on canvas works, the anonymity of everyday life colludes with historical imagery from various periods to offer a spectral view of experience. Brauntuch challenges the viewer to look and look again, mimicking the efforts to conjure an image from memory.

Memory tricks and sleight-of-hand procedures populate Aurélien Froment's installations and performances, a focus that includes an abiding interest in mnemonic devices of the past. *Rabbit*, 2009, is a silent video that shows two hands demonstrating how to tie a bowline knot, accompanied by subtitles that recount the procedure. The text invokes the traditional maritime rhyme of a rabbit circling a tree before he dives back into his hole, a gesture that illustrates a technological memory, reconstructing the movement of a nautical past and the story that still adheres to it through embodied information.

In the protean practice of Steve Roden, painting, drawing, film, and sound and sculpture installations transpose performative actions, as well as literary and art historical references, into an idiosyncratic score-based approach to generating abstraction. In his silent film *striations*, 2011, Roden performs an intimate eulogy to

his grandmother. Through improvised interactions with unfinished stone carvings and images found in her sculpture studio upon her passing, *striations* recalls New York School composer Christian Wolff's 1968 score:

Make sounds with stones, draw sounds out of stones, using a number of sizes and kinds (and colors); for the most part discretely, sometimes in rapid sequences. For the most part striking stones with stones, but also stones on other surfaces (inside the open head of a drum for instance) or other than struck (bowed for instance, or amplified). Do not break anything.¹¹

Layered together with cutout images of landscapes surrounding Henry Moore's public sculptures—an orienting influence for his grandmother's artistic practice—and direct drawing onto the footage, Roden converses with deeply personal yet unfamiliar objects, enacting a gestural and silent threnody.

The playful silence of Thea Djordjadze's *Deaf and Dumb Universe (Gerüst)*, 2008, positions the pliable nature of paper-mâché, plaster, and clay objects against a framework that references the design style of international modernism made skeletal and absurd. Undermining the look of sleek and functional design, the support structure displays talismanic curiosities that appear coarse and unfinished as if awaiting further transformation. Mute yet entreating, Djordjadze's forms resemble the residue left behind after a ritual or cryptic game.

In contrast, the plaster relief forms of Ull Hohn's *Untitled, 1988*, are coated with a dark brown gloss that gives them a still responsive, malleable appearance of just having set. Reminiscent of John Miller's fecal reliefs, Hohn's tactic is one of pacing movement between forms rather than a collapse of products into sameness as in Miller's work. The viewer is invited to observe the variation of each tablet-like piece in Hohn's sequence, drawing out a visceral response. Ull Hohn (1960-1995) studied with Gerhard Richter in Düsseldorf before moving to New York in 1985, and the reliefs are part of his efforts to re-occupy the place of painting and abstraction as a mode of critique within the highly contested gender and identity debates of the moment. His insertion of a *l'informe* painting style into post-conceptual approaches demands a reconsideration of the terms of institutional critique prevalent at the time.

A generation before Hohn, Blinky Palermo (1943-1977) inserted his own provisional formalism into the problematic place of advanced abstraction in the painting, sculpture, and design dialog. Borrowing from the continued auratic potential of an icon's placement, Palermo animated geometric abstraction as a mode of possible institutional critique while also luxuriating in the facture of its surface pleasures. As Lynne Cooke writes, "In contrast to the approach to seriality explored by his generation—by Ryman, say, or even Donald Judd (who famously described it as 'one thing after another')—Palermo allows repetition to encompass difference to the point where it strains that very notion, morphing seriality into a cryptic mode of

¹¹ Christian Wolff, 'STONES,' in *Prose Collection, 1968-74* (Frog Peak Music, 2007), p. 9.

sequencing.”¹² In *Projektion*, 1971, Palermo presents an image of a two-paneled red and blue *stoffbilder* (“cloth picture”) transposed into a photographic slide projected onto a window surface so that it appears to adorn a building facade opposite. Shown as a four-color offset print, *Projektion* compresses Palermo’s sequencing procedure into a single enigmatic image. The language of abstract painting is untethered, extending itself into photography, architecture, and beyond.

This tacking back and forth between styles is familiar to Richard Aldrich’s stagecraft. Ranging from gestural abstraction to incipient portraiture, from dusty-hued patinas and faint washes to crudely collaged canvases and densely layered corners, from monochromatic stand-ins to cut paintings, Aldrich’s image repertoire evinces a whimsical amusement and quizzical remove. Neither parodic nor engaged with endgame dialogs regarding the oft-heralded demise of painting, Aldrich’s gamesmanship is joyful but nonetheless harmonized with doubt. *Angie Adams/Franz Kline*, 2010-2011, finds Aldrich quoting in equal parts jest and earnestness the spontaneity of a bygone era, while *Zig-Zag Cubism*, 2011, parcels out the remnants of one of his own compositions for wry commentary on failure. Aldrich’s work is propelled by the readings between compositions and second thoughts that take on a ruminative ambience.

Evincing a shallow, palimpsest-like approach, Charline von Heyl’s paper works insist upon unexpected encounters between digital reproductions and archaic precursors such as hand-carved woodcuts, stencils, lithographs, and screen prints. Perceptual tricks of abstraction—receding depth, the inversion of a gestural underpainting perceived as overlay—are paired with an acute understanding of popular iconography as outline, shadow, and apparition. Resistant to facile representation, von Heyl emerges with paintings and prints that negotiate a roughhewn symbolism. *Untitled*, 2011, uses acrylic, spray paint, charcoal, photocopy, lithograph, and silkscreen on mylar and paper to collage together a fragmented, oscillating visual narrative of descent, fire, and retinal quiver that borrows whatever it desires, holding the viewer hostage to its erasures and repetitions.

Laure Prouvost’s *It, Heat, Hit*, 2010, likewise assails the viewer with seduction and dismissal as her video inter-cuts a barrage of fast-paced moving images (taken by the artist) with textual directives and warnings that beseech the viewer to stay with the frantic pacing. Cooing one moment with placid words and entreaties only to rail against the viewer to pay attention and remember everything the next, Prouvost’s narrator is both sinister and comic, while close-up imagery (a swimming frog, car wheels burning rubber, needles in a mouth, red hot coals, to name a few) and percussive commentary bear out an intense lyricism that contradicts the contemporary malaise of a surfeit of information images. Making an unforgettable poetry of emphatic repetition, gestural affect, and confrontational address, Prouvost replaces narrative expectation wholesale with editorial acuity and associative imprint.

Similar to Claude Lévi-Strauss’ description of the bricoleur who always “references some extraneous movement: a ball rebounding, a dog straying, or a horse swerving

¹² Lynne Cooke, “Introduction,” *To the People of New York* (Dia Art Foundation, 2010), p. 17.

from its direct course to avoid an obstacle,”¹³ peripheral discord is brought into syncopated focus in Elad Lassry’s pictures. Building a recursive kinship between once utilitarian prompts and the exhausted staging of product and audition scenarios, Lassry evokes the loss of image efficacy in our increasingly cross-referenced, sortable digital age. Context, source and circulation are ghosted into background concerns. Placeholders meant to be readily legible lapse into a stuttered motion as the conventions of studio photography are collaged and recast. Unmoored from illustrative fidelity—a shift accentuated by the pull toward sculptural objecthood in their framing and deliberate left to right pacing—Lassry’s image sequences depart from the marketing diegesis of advertising and Hollywood public relations that it trades upon. Erstwhile protagonists, often collaged from or modeled upon Lassry’s predilection for 1970s pop culture ephemera provoke a range of moods and expressions decoupled from plot and target audiences. Lassry traffics in a secondary register of lesser fame, familiarity, and circulation to uncanny effect.

Moyra Davey’s photographic work evokes a very different critical trajectory even as it relies upon associative sequencing and a de-contextualizing of familiar settings. Prone to a matter-of-fact intimacy and diaristic approach, Davey mines the behavior of domestic space and urban routine. *50 Photographs*, 2003, for example, is a bloom-like sequence of images that peers into the worn languor of melancholia and fetish. Close-up and distanced views frame much-loved objects and the residual underpinning of daily life: a bare light fixture, an empty liquor bottle, stacks of analog stereo equipment, books and records everywhere, the needle of a record player, the recurrent imposition of a pillar, a hallway scorched with sunlight, dust under a dog’s paw. Tracing the cultivated acts of reading, listening and collecting, Davey’s photographic space is an interior removed from the vérité promise of street encounter or figurative subject. *50 Photographs* is not staid but associative in recording a pre-digital view of absence and the material affinities of a life unfolding. As George Baker writes, “Davey shows us that an attachment to loss—of the photographic medium to its own loss—has become a space of possibility for contemporary photography. Far from a pathological fixation, such melancholia should be understood as a space of opening (an open wound, if you will).”¹⁴ Perhaps less a wound than a space of attentiveness, the gaps in between images as much as the pictures themselves convey a state of mind, a mood, and a structure of feeling.

In the spirit of analogy and return within the exhibition, *Novel*, a project founded by London-based editors and curators Alun Rowlands and Matt Williams, organizes a display of work within *Time Again*. A publication project that takes up experimental writing as a parallel practice to art-making, *Novel* draws on politics, poetry, theory, and storytelling to explore the possibility of a new critical fiction. Each iteration of the project is accompanied by what its editors call the “fictioning of a scenario” that includes a display of art works, readings and screenings. Here, that scenario takes the form of *Novel* revisiting past collaborations with Ed Atkins, Marc Camille Chaimowicz, Steven Claydon, Sergej Jensen, R.H. Quaytman, and Josef Strau. Inviting the artists to present works that play off of repetition and return, *Novel* acts

¹³ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1966), p. 19.

¹⁴ George Baker, “Some Things Moyra Taught Me,” *Frieze*, April 2010, Issue 130, p. 19-20.

as a speculative force within *Time Again*, meanwhile editing a special section of this catalog.

In reconsidering his text, "The Non-productive Attitude" (previously published in the second edition of *Novel*), Josef Strau alights upon a willingness to return to one's own work at the risk of uncertainty and doubt, but also with the possibility of gaining experiential exposure. As he writes in his piece "What Should One Do," "the only way or step out would become the productivity of confessional self-exposure." Thus the only way out is in the space between the self and others, in the vanishing point of history that one must enact, in the object that looks back, in the image that moves, in the words that open space, in the time that is again, here and now.