

The Time Keeper: 3 artists explore about the concept of Time

An article by Silvia Bertoletti describes the traveling group exhibition about Time

A traveling group exhibition examining the presence of past, present and future... between St Petersburg, Brussels, Istanbul, Berlin and Brooklyn. Three artists developed the theme of Time in its different dimensions (the present, the past and the future): **Alexandra Dementieva, Anna Frants & Aernoudt Jacobs.**

About the show:

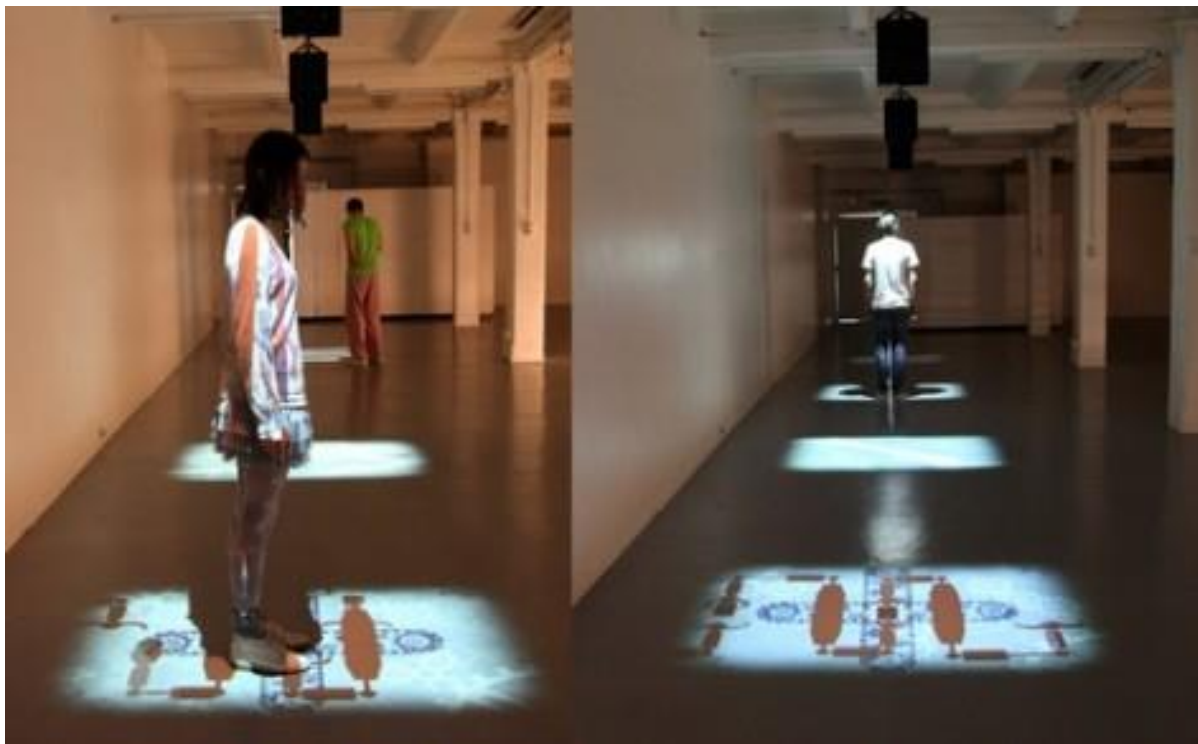
Unconditional and indiscriminating, "Time" is an impetus. It ignites one's obligation to a larger history, motivates to understand and be understood, drives to create something more meaningful than oneself, and defines purpose. Society universally recognizes all of this. How people internalize, distinguish themselves and communicate these concepts of "Time" makes them an individual.

Every inclusion in "The Time Keeper" communicates a different perspective of "Time" and gives insight into what makes that artist's view unique.

The installations:

As Silvia Bertoletti describes in her article appeared on Digicult:

*"Shadows is an installation presented by **Anna Frants**, a new media artist and curator living between Russia and New York. (...) The artist created a multi-sensorial environment, actively involving the audience in a visual and acoustic situation. The abstract idea of time becomes visual, developing in the viewer a personal and inner perception of it, aimed at showing that Time is definitely a subjective dimension."*



*“Breathless is the work of **Alexandra Dementieva**, an artist who mainly focuses her research on social psychology and perception in a multimedia arts context. The project presented here consists of three LED objects. Two of them, some sort of cylindrical spirals, are connected to a RSS feed on the web, while the third one, using airspeed and sound sensors, captures air and noise inputs coming from the surrounding environment. The PC searches the web for two different words at a time. The intensity of the light object increases according to their location on the www.*

The viewer can also interact and bring “more brightness” to the objects by blowing on airspeed senses located on them. There are three elements linked to the illumination pattern: human presence (breathing), external reality (environment noises) and virtual elements (words).”



*“The third artist was **Arnaud Jacobs**, a Brussels based musician and artist. His main interest lies in the different modalities of field recordings, often in association with an experimental context. The installation presented for Time Keeper is **Glaz-Maton**, a sound work based on the musical box technology, basically an acoustic version of it, since the box around the instrument is a simple acoustic resonator, with nothing electronic.”*

The melody is unique for each visitor, because they are a sonorous synthesis of a biometric snapshot of the visitor, registering 3 personal attributes: colors of the iris, the heartbeat rate and the humidity of the hands. This data is synthesized into unique melody. The iris reader determines the pitch of notes, a tool for tracking the heartbeat rate modifies the tempo, the humidity sends the pauses between the notes.



Read the full article:

<http://www.digicult.it/news/the-time-keeper-a-traveling-group-exhibition-examining-the-presence-of-past-present-and-future/>

Read about the Brussels exhibition that took place in June 2012 at Imal Center:

<http://www.imal.org/en/activity/time-keeper>

Learn more about the artists:

Alexandra Dementieva: <http://www.alexdementieva.org/>

Anna Frants: <http://www.annafrants.net/>

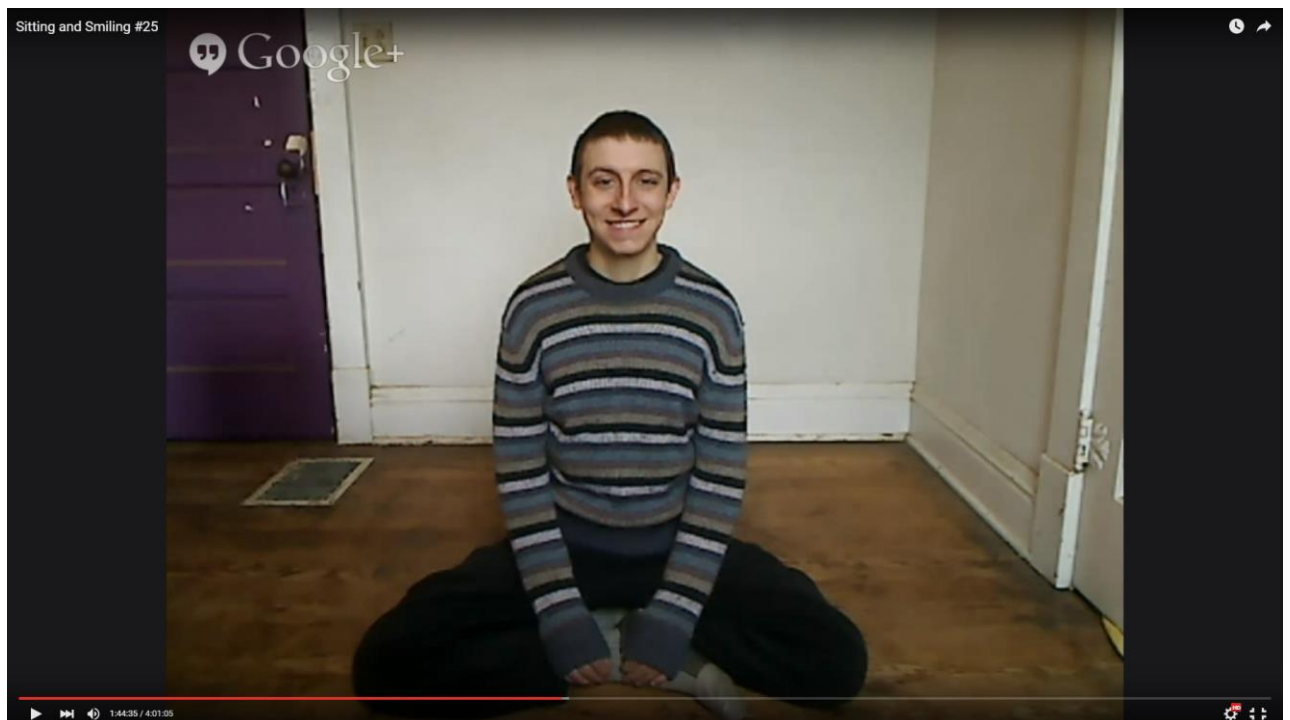
Aernoudt Jacobs: <http://www.tmr.org/>

Art That Makes You Experience the Pain of Passing Time

Real-time broadcasting can be soothing, or surprisingly creepy.

Ben Bennett

Sitting and Smiling



Video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrs8omWYN_0&feature=youtu.be

"Sitting and Smiling #25," in real time, but I couldn't do it, and I ended up skipping around in it looking for any change, for hints that the video might be a loop, for some explanation of its purpose. I saw him sniff once. I saw the corner of his mouth droop slightly and rise again. If I paid close attention, I made out his chest and shoulders contracting and expanding with his breath, and sometimes saw the vibrations of his head and neck as he strained to keep them straight. For the whole thing there was no sound, just the silence of a webcam recording: a slight buzzing, or scratching, as if it were imitating a vinyl record still spinning after the album has finished.

Bennett has quite a long performance history, mostly in improvised percussion. There are videos of him dragging chairs around a room and banging drumskins against skirting boards. However for his series of "sitting and smiling videos are all at least four hours long.

His biography, on the page of one concert listing, says that his music is **“fully-improvised, with an emphasis on remaining as receptive as possible to the limitless possibilities of any given moment.”**

None of this seems to explain why he has spent more than 186 hours sitting still and smiling.

By making the videos borderline unwatchable, Bennett suggests that experiencing time in a way that is unmediated, focused, and 'real' is impossible. I wondered how he keeps track of the time. Is there a clock on top of the camera? Is he watching the seconds creep by, one by one?

Despite its weirdness, I see Bennett's videos as engaging with widespread cultural concerns about our ability to appreciate time. The rise of various technologies that change our relationship with time—clocks, wristwatches, railways, telegrams, telephones, and the Internet included—has provoked anxiety about our ability to exist in the present moment. This is reflected in a whole host of ways: the rise in the West of ideas about mindfulness, fears that Internet-addled children have diminished attention spans, and the hyper-attention to the banal and mundane in the works of writers like Karl Ove Knausgaard.

Tehching Hsieh

One Year Performance 1980-1981 (*Time Clock Piece*)

It is a performance art piece: Hsieh punched a time clock every hour for a year, and the photos of each stamp have been collected together and made into a film. This much awareness of the passing of time can be painful, crushing even. And makes the viewer painfully aware of the passing of time.



Video link: <https://youtu.be/tvebnkjwTeU>

Compare to Time Clock Piece, *Sitting and Smiling* lacks progression. This makes the experience of watching Bennett's work distinct.

The lack of progression makes it unwatchable, and the act of watching it is almost as much of a feat of endurance as the performance.

These are four hours of almost absolute stasis, repeated over and over again. There are no details to observe, no slight changes or unexpected happenings (with the exception of #5, in which a stranger enters the house, opens the door a little, says "Hello," and leaves without being seen), no slow movement toward a goal. "Sitting and Smiling" forces the viewer into a cruel awareness of the passing of time, time that passes so slowly that it doesn't seem to move at all. It is not the mirror of a moment, not an unmediated representation of the passing of time as it happens to some object or person, not soothing or calming or soporific: It is one moment stretched for four hours across a rack.

Sitting and Smiling is, therefore, an extreme version of engagement with the present. It takes concepts like mindfulness (it is perhaps not coincidental that Bennett's cross-legged pose recalls the stance of meditation), attention to the present, and discomfort with the speed and busyness of modern life and pushes them to until they are unpleasant, even unbearable. Watching them is only tolerable if the viewer skips across the videos, the bar at the bottom reminding her of all the time she is jumping over, or if she is distracted, watches the videos with one eye on her phone and another on the old man walking by outside the window, neither eye on the video itself. By making the videos borderline unwatchable, Bennett suggests that experiencing time in a way that is unmediated, focused, and 'real' is impossible. But, of course, Bennett manages it, smiling the whole time.

One change is apparent across the videos, although it is a change in the viewer's perception, not in what is happening on the screen: Bennett's smile gets creepier and creepier. What would be wholesome, even charming, in a still or for a second becomes terrifying after four hours. The smile becomes a leer, or a mask. It is unnatural. It shouldn't be extended this long.

Maybe it is better to be distracted.