

# South Parade

## Doing Time

The great Russian film director Andrey Tarkovsky described his art as sculpting in time. The ancient Hebrew poet asks rhetorically, "help us rightly to number our days". How much time do we have? How should we use it? How can it be recorded and recollected? Is there a realm of experience beyond time?

The title of this exhibition derives from an ambiguous expression that the anthropologist and cultural theorist, Tim Ingold, uses for the title of his discussion of the work, or more precisely life work of Tehching Hsieh. It is life work, as he himself is the work. "I have been working hard at wasting time", Tehching Hsieh declared after the end of one of his year-long, self-imposed, time frames, perhaps best exemplified by the second in which he took a photograph of himself inserting a punch card into a machine on the hour, every hour for twelve months.

But are we not living even when, by other's dubious standards, we might be wasting time? Are animals wasting time when they are resting? Tehching Hsieh is questioning the nature of time that escapes purpose, and by implication the distinction between art time and life time.

Doing Time which is considered negatively in confinement might also be positive when the awareness is of human duration and creativity. **Melanie Smith's** video presents a curious choreography of more than three thousand students in the Azteca stadium in Mexico City. There is a perfect sense of anticipation. The boards that each student carries and must hold above the head to create a composite image, are not perfectly coordinated. Only the solo guitarist in the almost empty stadium holds their attention. Was this a rehearsal for the big match later in the week? Was it done for the benefit of the artist? The megaphone used by the organiser is thrown on the grass. Even he has lost interest and wanders off the pitch. We see a placard. "The Revolution will not be televised". The irony turns on itself. This is far from being the preparation for coordinated political action - demonstrating the icons of Mexican revolutionary history - but it is being recorded. For what purpose, the artist makes us wonder.

**Lucía Vidales** is a Mexican artist whose work is saturated in time and history: Mexico's troubled colonial history, with periods of chaos and disaster alternating with hope and purposeful reform. *When I am Gone* projects the artist into her own future absence. Multiple bodies are shadowed and recede, as if they have been conjured up from an imagined underworld. Odysseus had to visit the underworld and realm of the dead in order to obtain guidance for the successful continuation of his journey. It is as if the terrible deeds of the past need to be gathered and understood before further progress is possible. Vidales's colours and paint, like a libation, bring the dead to life, even as they have been subject to violence, injury and sacrifice.

**Stephen Polatch's** painting is located in a similar mythic world of imagination and desire. Human life and animal life are equally present. The myth to which his picture refers is not self-evident, but we are drawn into a world flowing, flowering and ripening. In myth, which the French anthropologist Levi-Strauss described as a 'machine for the suppression of time', there are continuities and established relations between the human and non-human worlds. It is the beginning of time when passing time does not exist.

**Tristan Higginbotham's** work points to an evolutionary time - in which creatures from a distant past are exhumed and juxtaposed. The small sculpted creatures are grounded in the geology of their existence. Different life forms - the diversity of life - need time to emerge. Evolution by natural selection only became coherent when it was fully understood that the geological record was far more complex and extended than previously imagined.

**Georgina Hill** works with stained glass - outlines and shapes that the coloured glass requires for positioning and strength. But in *Woman on sofa* and *Boy at airport* the expected outlines and shapes become distorted, and the expected features are squeezed, tightened and swollen. It is as if the constraints of an ancient craft, and a craft with a time-honoured tradition, have burst their boundaries. Anything is suddenly possible.

**Garrett Lockhart** is fascinated by the passing of time. His collages are carefully recorded and dated; the objects are contextually annotated. The c-prints seem to envelop the objects in an abstract dimension which displaces the life of their use. The feeling of home is a combination of different moments and histories. Objects in the house have their own purchased moment and henceforth remind one of their entry, arrangement and purpose. Textures, grains and blurred images in the artist's work stand for the different processes of time and how they might weigh on us.

In 2012, **Juan Betancurth** asked Benjamin Fredrickson to go to Colombia and photograph Betancurth's mother handling a set of sculptures he had made for her. Betancurth, who was then living in New York, had not been home for eight years. His mother is holding the sculptures as if they were a surrogate for her absent son. Her touch is tentative and meditative; but the sculptures are erotic and perhaps even menacing. They have the familiarity of household utensils but with the suggestion of fetish toys. The distance from which the artist conducts the encounter is a metaphor for the time that he has been away and remote from his mother. The experience is vicarious for both mother and son.

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