UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Matters of Time

THESIS

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MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in Art

by

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DEDICATION

To

Graciela Herrera Ramirez, “Ita”

Who better to grasp an understanding of time from than a grandparent?

During my grandmother’s time, in rural Sonora, MX, the highest level of schooling available for girls was the fourth grade. My love of learning and efforts towards higher education is dedicated to her memory. Thank you for being an enduring source of inspiration and strength.
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Matters of Time

By

Brianna Bakke

Master of Fine Arts in Critical and Curatorial Studies

University of California, Irvine, 2018

Professor Kevin Appel, Chair

A critical look at exhibition methods and artworks from the curated group exhibition titled, “Matters of Time” exhibited in the University of California Irvine Claire Trevor School of the Arts’ Contemporary Art Center Gallery January - February 2018. “Matters of Time” brought together works by four individual artists and two collaborative artists groups with the object of active viewing and querying of conventional notions of time and perspectives of progress, through interactions with time based media and time-contingent mediums.
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a critical response to the curated group exhibition, “Matters of Time,” exhibited during January and February 2018 in the UCI Claire Trevor School of the Arts Contemporary Art Center Gallery. “Matters of Time” brought together works, by six different artist and artists’ collectives, that variously “perform” temporality. These performances take place outside of time as it’s traditionally perceived, as either merely the duration of the work or as a sequential progression. The works themselves are not necessarily “time-based” and the exhibition itself leads us toward a more conceptual approach to time rather than its image, recording, or index within a specific medium or apparatus. The works exhibit different strategies in re-thinking the temporality of linear narratives, and these strategies—experienced in dialogue with other works in the shared exhibition space—re-orient one’s relationship to time, memory, and historical perspectives, disrupting notions of time as a linear progression. What does it mean to challenge time as a linear progression? The concept of time as a linear progression forces a single reading of a set of events, usually indicative of single perspective or ideology. By performing time non-linearly, these artists are working against ideology and forced perspectives. In fact, the artworks each enact a philosophy of time. The featured works share no overarching sensibility or aesthetic quality. They shared only a certain questioning relation to how temporality is constituted.

This exhibition was produced as a thesis requirement for the Critical and Curatorial Studies program in UCI’s department of Art at the Claire Trevor School of the Arts, but also as a response to its socio-political climate and with a strong consideration of the site and audience of the gallery.
“Matters of Time” was a group exhibition featuring the works of Neïl Beloufa, Samara Golden, Kameelah Janan Rasheed, Fern Silva, Pascual Sisto, MICA-TV (a collaboration between Carole Ann Klonarides, Michael Owen, Dan Graham, Dike Blair and Christian Marclay), and Los Angeles Contemporary Archive (a thematic selection of artists’ texts published by the LACA, directed by Hailey Loman). For each of the artists presented, time is not the simple linear progression we often suppose. It is complex, non-linear, constituted by a variety of narrative procedures that are often followed rather than questioned. Each question these narrative procedures, some directly, some indirectly. While not all the works in the exhibition are “time-based1,” as the term is typically used, they all question how a work might be based or contained “in time.”

I approached the site, the university gallery, with a number of experiences: in turn, as a visitor, an exhibitor, a student, a teacher, a mentor, and last but not least, a curator. I was acutely aware of its relation to the university student body and the surrounding public. I felt it was important to create an exhibition that allowed students to feel ownership over the gallery space and facilitate a sense of community. Such a sense of ownership and community could make the exhibition into something more than a display of works. In this specific setting, the exhibition could act as a discourse, particularly in a university art gallery where viewers could return multiple times, perhaps on their way to and from class. Discourse and opportunities for social activity and exchange felt particularly urgent following the political climate of 2017, with the exhibition opening at the beginning of the very next year.

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1 The Guggenheim defines time based media as “contemporary artworks that include video, film, slide, audio, or computer technologies… because they have duration as a dimension and unfold to the viewer over time”. "Time-Based Media," Guggenheim, August 30, 2017, accessed May 25, 2018, https://www.guggenheim.org/conservation/time-based-media.
In 2017, time itself was in crisis. Many felt that progress belonged to the past rather than the future. There were already countdowns for the remaining days in office, without knowing precisely what it was counting down to. As I watched and read the news, I saw how radically different stories and different histories were created out the same material, the same evidence, the same events, depending on the audience. What I rarely saw was these same audiences critically examining their own constitutive narrative procedures— the procedures that create the illusion of a simple story, a simple history, a simple succession of events. Works did not have to present political “content” in order to be political effective. I began to wonder about works that, instead, could make us more aware of how we construct these stories— even time itself. This would be its own form of political awareness, something that anyone who wandered into the university gallery might respond to, regardless of their background.

**CURATORIAL METHODOLOGIES**

Time and temporality are notoriously slippery topics. For all this slipperiness, they can also be fundamental to encountering works. This is why we often need a strong theoretical framework to structure the curatorial process, not simply in the selection of artists and artworks, but equally in considering how the temporality of the works will be encountered— the time required to view a work or how the pacing of the gallery affects how the works are put in dialogue with each other.

The exhibition document asks viewers to consider, “What can time tell? What can time heal?,” prompting them to re-examine the temporal issues of narrative often overlooked in our clichés and unconscious assumptions about time. For a truly philosophical investigation into time, we don’t necessarily need a text, author, or an explicit theory about time. We can turn to objects themselves, to a medium itself. The medium can embody and communicate a philosophy
of time simply through the experience of an artwork—often better than through a textual description. This medium-centric approach borrowed heavily from the thought of Gilles Deleuze and Vilém Flusser, who both write of the medium as philosophy and explicitly in relation to time. Deleuze’s *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* and Flusser’s *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* both feature the image’s potential to convey a philosophy of time, and in “Matters of Time,” these philosophies inform both the selection and the situation of the artworks in the exhibition.

For Gilles Deleuze, philosophies can take multi-medium forms, beyond the traditional medium of text (for example, schizoanalysis as a form of pathology-as-philosophy, abstract-painting-as-philosophy in his papers on Francis Bacon, and cinema-as-philosophy in the Cinema texts). In Deleuze’s *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Deleuze asserts that Orson Welles’ 1941 film, Citizen Kane is the “first great film of a cinema of time.” In Citizen Kane, we are reconstituting a past. However, Deleuze asks:

“What happens when we search for a recollection? We have to put ourselves into the past in general, then we have to choose between the regions: in which one do we think that the recollection is hidden, huddled up waiting for us and evading us? (It is a friend from childhood or youth, from school or the army . . .?) We have to jump into a chosen region, even if we have to return to the present in order to make another jump, if the recollection sought for gives no response and does not realize itself in a

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recollection-image. These are the paradoxical characteristics of a non-chronological time: the pre-existence of a past in general... It is a conception that can be found in the first great film of a cinema of time, Welles’s Citizen Kane.”\(^\text{7}\)

I would argue that Citizen Kane’s embodiment of the time-image occurs through several procedures at work both within the film and outside the film’s duration. The film’s activity as a philosophy outlasts its screening, presenting a new lens from which to view and consider not only other films or editing strategies, but also information, journalism, and public figures (such as William Randolph Hearst and even similar contemporary characters). The viewer’s journey through the film, following the investigative strategies of a journalist eager to solve the riddle of Kane’s mysterious last words, is far from a passive role. Instead, the viewer plays an investigator by proxy, integrating the varying perspectives and visual information from both the characters’ monologues and flashback scenes.

The active viewer here can register the final clue (the word “rosebud” spotted on a sled in the furnace of Xanadu) that the perplexed journalist could never access. This investigative viewing through the process of the journalist’s character is an empowering viewing process, which forever changes the viewer’s perception of narrative, whether it be noticing the logic behind edits and flashbacks in films, a new perspective on noticing the angles and subjectivity behind paper-selling headlines, or even an altered view of the psychological state behind those in power. This activity in shifting perspectives functions as a philosophy; it can be applied to other narratives and experiences outside beyond a present viewing situation, beyond what is contained in the film’s duration. As a time-image, it provokes one’s sensory motor skills to follow and locate the narrative’s jumping trajectory through an active viewing. The viewer is given more

\(^{7}\) Ibid.,99.
agency than conventional films where a direct storyline is conveyed through the perimeters of the director’s lens, the frame of the film, or an authoritative sequence of events. It is through methods of abstracting these invisible flows that the subjectivity of the narrative process is exposed. The gaps and the logic of the noticed and questioned.

Montage provides opportunities for viewers to fill such gaps with their own interpretations of the passage of time. When seamless, such gaps are filled without sensing a void. Disrupting such a flow exposes the subjectivity of the medium, as well as the subjectivity of the different characters being interviewed, and exposes in a way that can motivate movie-goers to question other sources and perspectives in the real world. Perhaps it was this counter-ideological function of the film that explains the attempts to have it banned during its initial release. While “Matters of Time” departs from the idea of time-image in the medium of cinema, the exhibition explores such operations in artists’ films like “Ride like Lighting, Crash Like Thunder” (2017) and “Wayward Fronds” (2014) by Fern Silva, and MICA-TV’s collaboration between Michael Owen, Carole Ann Klonarides, Dan Graham, Dike Blair and Christian Marclay, titled, “CASCADE / Vertical Landscapes” (1988). It can be extended to sculptural works and works in text and still image.

The “time-image” is an activity, not a portrayal, of time. Thus, the time-image need not be in a “time-based” medium or dependent on the duration given by a certain technical apparatus. In a tableau installation, for example, while there is no device determining a given duration to record a particular narrative, the viewer has the agency of investigating the scene themselves and extracting their own memories, connotations and narratives. Ilya Kabakov writes, “The main actor in the total installation, the main center toward which everything is addressed,
for which everything is intended, is the viewer… but this is a special kind of viewer.”

This is explored in the installations of Samara Golden’s “Missing Pieces from A Fall from Corners #3” (2015-2016) and a vignette of objects from Neïl Beloufa’s “catalog for a utopia”9 in his series titled “Democracy” (2016).

The exhibition also includes documentation, photo and text based projects, as in the installation of Kameelah Janan Rasheed, “Her Angel/Her Circuit” (2018). The exhibition’s direction shifts from considering pasts in the present to imagining our present in the future. The presence of an archive in the gallery introduces a future-ward orientation, namely future viewers. The archive here, is a collection of artists’ books and texts on a theme of temporality, published by Los Angeles Contemporary Archive. Pure presence, or what could be considered “the extant now,” is also raised in Pascual Sisto’s multimedia immersive landscape, “Aucuba Expanded” (2013).

Through these varied approaches, “Matters of Time” offers opportunities for multiple perspectives as the “special viewer” can engage in an active viewing, locating their orientations of past in the present and the present in the future. There is an invitation to participate in the artist’s philosophy, engaging with narrative in the coalescence with one’s own memory, or through locating the time-concepts in alternative modes of production and distribution. These philosophies, embodied in the artworks, guide the viewer past the clichés and traps of what “time can tell,” and toward a more active and conscious constitution of narrative, history, and temporality.

8 Ilya Kabakov, "О тотальной" инсталляции / Илья Кабаков = "On the Total Installation“ (Bielefeld: Kerber Art, 2008), 256.
Flusser’s *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*\(^{10}\) notes the different proximities of the image to the actual, and its many possible perspectives, in relation to a given event or moment. The image articulates— or even documents— an event always within the boundaries of perspective, be they technological or psychological. Here is Flusser on the medium of photography:

“The act of photography is divided into a sequences of leaps in which the photographers overcome the invisible hurdles of individual time-and-space categories. If they are confronted with one of these hurdles (eg. on the borderline between close-up and long-shot), they hesitate and are faced with the decision about how to set the camera. (...) Each time photographers are confronted by a hurdle they, discover that the viewpoint they have adopted is concentrated on the ‘object’ and that the camera offers any number of different viewpoints. They discover the multiplicity and equality of viewpoints in relation to their ‘object’. They discover that it is not a matter of adopting a perfect viewpoint, but of realizing as many viewpoints as possible. (...) 

[The] Photographer’s practice is hostile to ideology. Ideology is the insistence on a single viewpoint thought to be perfect. Photographers act in a post-ideological way even when they think they are serving an ideology.”\(^{11}\)

This passage, and its proclaimed “hostility” to ideology, is particularly relevant in our contemporary political climate, in which the relation of the image to the actual is hotly and continually debated. This also greatly influenced the curatorial decision-making in “Matters of Time,” in its selection of works whose hostility to ideology went past film, past cinema, to the


\(^{11}\) Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, 37-38.
image, text, and tableau. The intentions of this exploration were also informed by the logic of Deleuze’s noted operations of the “time-image,” in particular its phenomenological operations, activating an association beyond the visual and audible, to a more complicated level that engaged the viewer’s sensory motor skills. Time here is not only seen, or communicated, but sensed, felt. So commenced a search for artworks that not only indicated an intrinsic relationship to time, as indicated by the work’s duration, but rather embodied an active sense of time, which dislocates past, present and future.

These time-image-viewing temporalities were also kept in mind when considering the pacing and distribution of works throughout the gallery. Each of the works was an installation. Each work has its own temporality. They needed to be space and place carefully to be in dialogue rather than in conflict with one another. There were sculptural objects, tableaux, film with the hard-copy materiality of 16mm projectors, as well as sound, digitized film, photographic interventions and text-based works. The temporal contingencies and pacing of these different proximities at play in the exhibition is also considered in the inclusion of a “reading room” positioned in (as opposed to outside) the gallery. Having a reading room in the gallery complicates the space. It is no longer a predictable walkthrough; the viewer is invited to loiter and reflect. There are no explicit entrance-exit, beginning-ending indications in this layout. The inclusion of the reading room within the gallery, in fact, leads to open-ended engagement with the physical space as well as the narratives at play. A custom communal table and chairs—reminiscent of studio furnishings—creates an additional distance from the gallery and works, pointing to unfinished work on our part, still left to be completed or considered. It is situated within a mise en abyme by Pascual Sisto and across from text-based installation by Kameelah

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12 Reading room tables and shelves designed specifically for the site by artist, Caleb Engstrom.
Janan Rasheed. Even by sitting alone, the viewer resists the compulsion of most galleries or museums to move through and along. The logic in this shift-in-pace of the gallery structure is consistent with the curatorial queries at work in the exhibition.

This open-endedness was also extended through weekly programming with artist talks, such as Samara Golden’s Visiting Artist Lecture, a series of talks and lectures led in collaboration with peer studio MFA graduate students, Sasha Bergstom-Katz, Amy MacKay, and Nicolas Miller, as well as a listening of time-based media work by Martine Syms and Paul Cowan\textsuperscript{13}, published by Mixed Media Recordings (2014). Peer-led lectures created opportunities for participants to hear how artists relay these strategies in their own practices and research queries. Amy MacKay mentioned her thesis project in which she questioned authorship and temporal space of event and depiction in painting, with live-painting by multiple collaborators and edits as a post-production process in her studio\textsuperscript{14}. Miller responded to Golden’s work by sharing research on architecture, in particular its histories and legacies in the home and distinguished spaces of domesticity\textsuperscript{15}.

**EXHIBITION DOCUMENT [CURATORIAL STATEMENT]**

Matters of Time


Pascual Sisto . MICA-TV . Los Angeles Contemporary Archive .

Curated by Brianna Bakke

January 13 - February 10, 2018; Opening Reception January 13th, 2-5pm


\textsuperscript{14} Amy MacKay, "Amy MacKay" (lecture, UCI Contemporary Art Center Gallery, Irvine, January 30, 2018)

\textsuperscript{15} Nicolas Miller, "Nicolas Miller" (lecture, UCI Contemporary Art Center Gallery, Irvine, January 23, 2018).
What can time heal? What can only time tell?

Matters of Time positions the group exhibition form as a locus to challenge conventional concepts of time as a linear progression. This exhibition features artwork that materializes the durational in a way that does not render a moment, but translates a semblance of time, an image that evokes a sensorial response activating an awareness of shifting conditions. Moments are suspended rather than depicted, moving us to consider wider contexts of before, after, and consequences.

The artworks, which span multiple generations of artists, approach modes of forgetting, entropy, and history from a variety of different vantage points. To examine these interludes and markers of memory the exhibition takes a tripartite approach to situating strategies in temporality: [1] the event revisited [2] the image re-ordered [3] the enduring archive.

Samara Golden’s Missing Pieces from a Fall of Corners orients a tableau distinct from space-time continuum. Pascual Sisto extends a mise en abyme looping observations of real and synthetic growth. Neïl Beloufa’s life-scale drawing vignettes fuse image and object together, negating their chronologies. Kameelah Janan Rasheed abstracts photographic images through processes of facsimile, exposing what is lost in translation; a gesture critiquing hierarchical ordering of histories and experiences. Fern Silva conflates fact and fiction with a 16mm film exploring the sublime requisites of the Hudson River School together with the legend of Rip Van Winkle, recorded on location with a motif of the hand of time.

In CASCADE / Vertical Landscapes, MICA-TV (Michael Owen / Carole Ann Klonarides) collaborates with artists Dike Blair, Dan Graham and Christian Marclay merge
found sound, painted advertisements and scrolling location shots in a culture jam montage, layering connotations and memories.

Matters of Time presents a deeper look at the image's capacity for developing retention, its proximity to everyday life and temporal relationships. Through the pause of the photographic frame, recapitulation of vernacular objects in true scale, fractures of montage, eternal notions of the lm loop, and preservation of the archive -- impressions of past, present and future dissolve. A space is created for our own associations and interactions to question both individual and dominant narratives and their relativities.

Los Angeles Contemporary Archive will present a number of artist books and textual projects published by LACA, the exhibition will feature a reading area that serves as a space for convening and dialogue as well as review of materials. In further response to these queries, a number of scheduled events will take place in conjunction with the exhibition. For a full list, please check updates on the event Facebook and UAG web site. All events are free and open to the public.

**SAMARA GOLDEN: MISSING PIECES FROM A FALL OF CORNERS #3**

Hanging on the wall, like a clock, a table is set with a breakfast banquet. Artist-made foods with glistening resin present an excess that reminds one of a hotel breakfast. Each setting with multiple glasses and plates of pancakes with butter that seems just soft enough to slide off the stack, french toast, sunny-side up eggs, cornflakes bobbing in a bowl of milk, a platter of bacon, half drunken mimosas, red wine, and four empty country spoked chairs sporting ribbons spread out from the table, evacuating this seemingly pleasurable scene.
The absence of figures here creates a conflict in the work, where the viewer is bound to conjure up a kind of “who done it” scenario. The scene with its excess of foodstuffs likewise provides an excess of narrative possibilities. Golden’s abstraction of time and narrative, and our uncertainty whether the frozen scene exists in the past, present, or future, suggests a scenario that could occur with any and all tenses. The table is open for any number of reads one may associate with the many signifiers at hand. Scenarios of community, luxury, leisure, domesticity, science fiction, utopia and dystopia, the starkly post-human and everyday observations like “I love breakfast” (a quotation from my teenage cousin) are all welcome. The freedom of this open narrative is one that transforms Golden’s work from viewing to experiencing. There are opportunities for viewers to have a place at the table, and not just in its presence. Viewers can also wonder about the magical quality of the installation (like how the table hangs, a party trick where nothing is falling from the tablecloth). Although we are unable to physically sit in the work, it stirs an experience and active conversation in the room. The disbelief of this feat of anti-gravity introduces viewers to different possibilities within the work and different temporal abstractions at work with neighboring artworks.

Its sculptural play on perspective gives it a magical mirage-like quality, a quality that interrupts its ready-made aspects. It is a mirage in so far as it seems familiar and attainable yet recedes as a mere fantasy. The mass-produced materials used in the setting have the familiarity of the readymade—the ersatz glasses and cutlery—yet point to a world more bizarre, one that defies gravity. They are cheap replicas, a simulacrum of luxury. Disposable luxuries. Simulacra of bone china. Faux crystal glasses. Plastic silver.

We behold different worlds in juxtaposition: the dream-like world of this anti-gravity brunch is not totally concocted by the artist’s hands, but as much by obscure fantasies we
encounter in our everyday life. Their presence within this surreal work presents an additional temporal element, a juxtaposition of two worlds. The artist’s surreal world and our own world, with its systems of mass produced cheap imitation luxury items. I now think of Samara’s worlds whenever I come across a plastic spork or a fake champagne glass. It brings the uncanniness of the real world into perspective. Golden reconstituted everyday materials to produce a more complex image of two worlds.

The setting allows for a multitude of reads, perspectives, scenarios and episodes. The nature of the table setting also brings to mind the art historical concept of the memento mori. Memento mori scenes display a palpable absence of figures, very similar to the evacuation in Golden’s scene. The meaning of memento mori— “life is short”¹⁶— makes viewers think about the shortness of life, motivating them to make the most of it with typically moral themes of not being able to take riches to the grave. Empty tables will display a half-empty glass of wine, food half-eaten, or fruit at its most ripe or half-consumed. An hourglass, time-dial, or clock is a common addition to the tableau, and some scenes may even dramatically add a human skull to the tableau to explicitly emphasize mortality. Table-settings have, then, long represented time and its passage, particularly along themes of the shortness of human life and the vanity of power and riches. This is the arrested temporality of much of Golden’s installations.

**NEÏL BELOUFA: VIGNETTE FROM DEMOCRACY**

When thinking of works that abstract from conventions of linear time, any time-line whatsoever is inherently problematic. It forces events to adhere to a singular trajectory, which itself forces a singular perspective. Traditionally in art, we think of perspective in terms of space. We think of

¹⁶ As translated from Latin
lines converging to a single point, learned when mastering the fundamentals of drawing. When we follow these conventions, these methods, the result will seem truthful, accurate, and to scale. Every medium has its own rules of perspective, from painting to photography to film renderings.

Beloufa’s three-dimensional drawings from his installation for his 2016 “Democracy” exhibition complicate the orientation of the drawn line, as well as our ability to read it. Beloufa’s drawings are rendered to scale with steel rebar, a construction material typically used to frame and support concrete. The rebar gauge here is thin enough to remind one of a drawing with a No. 2 pencil in a sketchbook. The lines are welded together only at necessary points of intersection. Accents of colored resin serve as visual cues of the objects reality, adding some context to the skeletal “bare bones” of the object’s definable contours.

The objects present in “Democracy” form a “catalog for a Western utopia,” reminiscent of the catalogue and showroom scenes from a well-known Scandinavian mass-produced home-furnishing outlet. The artist takes postmodern and post-international design principles to an extreme. Minimalist design principles are borrowed to focus on utility and purpose, shedding any ornamentation or index of class, heritage, culture, or location. Only here, it’s abstracted to bare bones signifiers.

The 3-D drawings allow for multiple perspectives. One can walk around such “drawings.” One can also see through them, creating associations to fill in the voids, reading between the lines and locating the gaps, discerning between the information that is present and the information that is absent.

18 “Post-international” meaning a after the ubiquity of International Style as it pertains to the architecture and design.
Objects selected from this “catalogue for utopia” for “Matters of Time” form a unique selection that present a vignette from the original, fuller installation. For “Matters of Time,” the selection is a trio of a bench, box and legs, which are situated between Golden’s table piece and Fern Silva’s films. Their placement between the two works—a film that features montages of settings and a still setting on the wall—presents a different pace in temporality as the viewer trespasses through these strategies to completely walk around Beloufa’s work.

This ability to walk and stand next to these true-to-scale objects adds an additional temporal element to the exhibition, triggering the body’s memory and sensory motor skills in recognition and placement, further complicating narratives and association at work in the installation. “Legs” holds a vital stance in the gallery. It punctuates a point of palpable absence from Beloufa’s neighboring empty objects, Golden’s evacuated work, and Silva’s many scenes of empty landscapes and neglected spaces. The figure here is poignant, in a classically relaxed contrapposto posture, apparently fully functioning despite its lack of mind and heart, a native to the setting of catalog consumption, in an installation originally entitled “Democracy”.

As much as these delicate traces are to be looked at, the gaps in the space draw out possibilities of what may be missing. The vignettes coalesce in this other world, in a way that brings to mind the artist’s filmic works with science-fictional narratives of dystopian scenarios that seem plausible, in a world not too distant from our present. The scenarios of technology, war and social issues are slightly more chaotic. The narrative and filmic style produces a quality that seems like a sort of “sci-fi vérité”\(^\text{19}\)—a believable future, warning of alarming outcomes that should nonetheless be considered. While Beloufa’s time-based-media works traverse pasts and

\(^{19}\) This is less an attempt at coining a term than it is noting how Beloufa’s sensibility, as seen in films like “Tonight and The People” (2014), “Kempinski” (2007), and “Data for Desire” (2016), seem to bring together the strategies of science fiction with the qualities of cinéma vérité.
futures in a more direct manner than his sculptural installations, the subversion of conventional circuits of time are not supplementary, but explicit in his sculptural practice. When thinking of an image of time, the bare components of the contoured lines held together at necessary joints, with added selections of fragile color signifiers, creates a situation for us to read the information present and relay it to our bodies, memories, and mind.

**FERN SILVA: WAYWARD FRONDS**

Artist and filmmaker Fern Silva utilizes the medium of 16mm film, almost exclusively, to produce specifically filmic narratives. The use of 16mm operates on levels other than an aesthetic or material assessment; it introduces layers of temporal strategies and certain mitigations of the real that reveal a tactile quality in the operation of documentation, footage, the collection and ordering of frames, exposing seams and gaps that contemporary technologies of digital filmmaking and post-production techniques work to conceal. Because we as quotidian media viewers are trained in the concealing practices of digitized filmmaking, Silva’s 16mm films call for a more explicit orientation of our time and place in relation to what we see. When one is presented with the 16mm material, one cannot help but assume a certain vintage. We confuse its temporal position: the medium of 16mm has an aesthetic connection to the past.

Silva’s 2014 film Wayward Fronds, exploits this assumption and utilizes fissures in contemporary signifiers in sound and imagery to examine gaps in temporality. Wayward Fronds, a 13 minute film, examines the current state of the Florida Everglades, in a moment where efforts are being made to restore and preserve its ecosystem after years of urban sprawl and pollution from encroaching theme parks, zoos, urban development and even the introduction of foreign invasive species altering both the natural and constructed landscapes. Fern’s footage of the
Everglades also brings to mind the landscape’s relationship to cinema, its history as a stand-in for the Amazon and non-descript jungles for narratives that pin humans and civilization against nature.

It is this confusion that gives the images in this film an additional temporal dissociation, not only with the past (due to the aesthetic of 16mm and the occasional pre-historic vistas of alligators leering through murky waters), but also with the future, conjuring post-human narratives with images of nature fighting through the boundaries of civilization. Trees grow out of kitchen-sink pipes. The outside fights its way inside. Burmese pythons (an invasive species that has increasingly become an issue for the Everglades since the 1980’s) are filmed overtaking domestic spaces, congregating in beds, watching a television, or slithering down hallways. Impressions of a past or future are interrupted by a brief scene of a dance club where shadows jump and sway to Kelly Clarkson’s 2011 pop ballad, “Stronger (What Doesn’t Kill You),”20 betraying the index of the actual time frame. The perceived exterior of the nightclub is a mural of an illustrative landscape, covering the entire facade of the building with a nature scene that does not mirror the landscape of the Everglades, but is a mock-up of nature, a poor flat rendering of stone walls and an open field. This panorama is a confused simulacrum of a natural or fictional landscape. We are in the midst of temporal paradox; past, present and future are either difficult to parse or poorly defined.

Silva’s works function as time-images, as they seduce us out of our modes of default understandings of cinematic language, a language built upon crescendos and resolutions. Silva’s images prompt us to reorient our own positions, recollections and understanding of time. They prompt us to question our connections to the real and to what is being imitated or simulated. His

20 Kelly Clarkson and Jason Aldean, writers, Stronger (What Doesn’t Kill You), 19/RCA, 2011, MP3.
works present temporal gaps that allow a viewer’s individual memories to convene with the contexts. Perceptions of past and future are interrupted with contemporary signifiers that prick our individual memories and temporal markers. What does it mean, we might ask ourselves, to perceive a past or a future?

Viewers witness an evidence of neglect in the works of Fern Silva. As one walks away from the sculptural works of Golden and Beloufa, toward Silva’s, they are met by the apparatus of the 16mm film projector, situated on gallery pedestals with a looping adjustment making the continuous strip of 16mm film visible. The apparatus of the projector adds a soundtrack to the whole gallery, the ticking of material running though reels in between the light projected on the gallery wall. This sort of apparatus evokes nostalgia for some. For others—those too young to remember—it has the feel of an artifact. Either way, the medium cannot escape its vintage connotations. The technology is dated, phased out for decades, and seldom used, held or seen in the 21st century. The material is loaded with assumptions of the past prior to even reviewing the images at work. These presumptions and associations of history present a loaded context which draws Silva to work almost exclusively with this dated medium of film.

He accomplishes this by methodical use of montage. What may look like found or approximated footage is actually shot by hand, revealing the fact that creepy, strange, or embarrassing cultural issues are not at the comfortable viewing distance of older ethnographic footage or documentation. The viewer is robbed of the relief one might feel while observing something in the past that has since been altered and overcome. He uses audible and visual cues to relocate these contexts into our present, pricking our bubble of nostalgia or sense of the past, to incriminate us in the present. Silva’s body of work uses these visual conflicts and presuppositions of time, putting past and present into conflict to address social issues, and
systemic power structures. Surveillance and infrastructures of mass incarceration are explored in his film “Panopticon film;” neglect and time, in his version of the Rip van Winkle tale, which also displays old and new histories of Hudson River Valley. Wayward Fronds touches upon contemporary issues of resorts’ damage to the landscape and shows many scenes of the bizarre boundaries between civilization and nature. The motif of a Burmese Python and other reptiles are present in several scenes of human absence, occupying domestic spaces, slithering past mausoleums: is this prehistory or post-human?

**KAMEELAH JANAN RASHEED: HER ANGLE/HER CIRCUIT**

Parts of the exhibition expose the moving image of film; in other parts, we move through images themselves. Kameelah Janan Rasheed’s text-based installation presents additional strategies of time in the exhibition, presenting temporal pluralities through experience and presence. Here, Kameelah uses both text and image installed in a way that engages the eye and body to string together new potential readings of the work. The installation takes place in a large 9 x 9 foot square painted black, in sharp contrast to the gallery’s white walls. This gives the appearance of a portal of sorts, with the scale similar to a large door or portico. Rasheed incorporates strategies of montage in her juxtaposition and spacing of text and image spread throughout the space like a poetic “evidence wall.” A small piece of paper anchors the left of the composition. One must bend over to read it as a Xeroxed page cut with only the text of a corner noting “33,” indicating a page number. This indicates pages are missing. Text is abstracted. Pages are subtracted. Sentences are in disorder yet organized methodically in a visually communicative manner, creating opportunities for multiple scenarios. The details are read through processes of accumulation and synthesis rather than by following a simple linear progression.
Rasheed’s text-based work breaks from the linearity of literature’s beginning-middle-end formatting to a spread of pages abstracted through facsimile, poetry, photographs, prints and ephemera spread over the gallery wall. Syntax is usually forced into a line; here, it is created through the play of space. A blurred photo of a crowd attending a Stevie Wonder concert shows a slightly noticeable grid. The image has been duplicated and printed as a pattern, an image on repeat. Above this image rests a print with geometric text stating, “NO NEW (theories).” The images and elements appear in different layers and textures, bringing more attention to some than others, as a form of form or framing or visible selectivity, which is precisely Rasheed’s point: that this selectivity is always at play in assembling histories, canons, or even readings.

Flusser writes of the abstraction of linear text, its distance from an event, and its abstraction of truth through the force of a singular author’s perspective. He also writes of the potential of further abstraction of text by the text itself—what he calls “textolatry”. Textolary is analogous to idolatry, in which a surfeit of texts pointing to other texts overwhelms the reader, dazzles them, as with weighty or foreign words or texts laden with footnotes, an abstraction of text comprehensible to only a select few. As Flusser warns:

“Writing itself is a mediation—just like images — and is subject to the same internal dialectic. In this way it is not only externally in conflict with images but is also torn apart by an internal conflict. If it is the intention of writing to mediate between human beings and their images, it can also obscure images instead of representing them and insinuate itself between human beings and their images. If this happens human beings become unable to decode their texts and reconstruct the images signified in them.”

Rasheed’s poetic abstractions of text seem to avoid textolatry and rather break and liberate language in a way that allows the viewer to form their own readings and opinions of the information-as-image and information-as-text. Her work provokes a renegotiating of the meditations between text, image, event and experience. This exercise in reading through synthesis opens up opportunities for multiple perspectives and exhibits a discourse around the gaps and narrative missing and absent from the singular perspective of the line.

The poetic operations here lyrically challenge the eye’s dexterity of seeing and reading, in a manner similar to reading sheet music, following registers that move through different lines as notes punctuate multiple stanzas. A radical reading of authorship visualizes multi-perspectival readings and multiple “angles,” and bridges the gaps between image, pages and organized terms.

**MICA-TV: CASCADE / VERTICAL LANDSCAPES**

The artistic collaboration under the moniker of MICA-TV — Michael Owen and Carole Ann Klonarides, Mi - CA, a portmanteau of the collaborators names (also like the layered strata of a mica rock22)— collaborated with many peers working in contemporary art, such as Richard Prince and Cindy Sherman, on an episodic TV series in the late 70s and through the 80s. In 1988’s CASCADE / Vertical Landscapes, Klonderides and Owen collaborate with artists Dan Graham, Dike Blair and Christian Marclay. This work is dominated by an unusual use of vertical panning. Montage is used in both visual and audible ways in a break from our conventional horizontal orientation— typical for reading text, scanning images, and televised ratios— by a perspectival subversion through its vertical orientation. In film, slight vertical pannings are typically only used in location shots to set a context for a narrative that is about to take place.

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Here, in CASCADE, we watch a seamless scroll of vertical pans that exaggerate the verticality of the shot, from ground to sky in an unworldly levitation. It is an experiment in verticality: vertical landscapes, cityscapes, skylines, skyscrapers, architecture selected based on the outdoor-indoor pastiches typical of 1980s modern architecture such as the work of Philip Johnson and Peter Eisenman.

A dystopian feel rises with the scrolling view of many buildings located in New York City and Los Angeles in a seamless vertical scrolling of juxtaposition, offered by a special camera with a “mechanical brain,” able to adjust the changes in light to the aperture when moving between ground and sky (technically difficult to achieve even 30 years later). The collaborative nature of the work complicates the film even further by adding multiple authors, and hence multiple perspectives.

The rising and falling effects of the scrolls create an otherworldly component to the work. At one frame, the film is edited to give a falling feeling where the film has been edited upside down, showing a scene of figures walking on the ceilings and plants defying gravity. These scenes are ethereal complements to Golden’s work. Klonarides and Dan Graham’s selection of locations traverse time and distance. The “outdoor-indoor” architecture creates an “anywhere-anytime” by a constant loop of the scroll. Locations of both Los Angeles and New York City buildings seem unreal with this levitating motion, and Graham himself makes some cameo appearances in the scenes, just for scale. The figure’s added presence brings a believability to the floating environments that conflate outdoors with indoors, with their heavily-considered design of social space, indoor gardens, sitting areas and passageways. The Bonaventure Hotel’s outdoor elevators are featured, and the seamless scroll of up and down, out and in, remind one of the Bonaventure’s notoriety as a paragon of postmodern architectural design.
Dike Blair’s contribution to the collaborative work features digital illustrations of consumer products falling, a tongue-in-cheek poke at the medium of television, its association with Hollywood procedure being subverted in the early age of video art\textsuperscript{23}. For instance, they also critique its association with advertising, in particular television commercials. In an interview\textsuperscript{24}, Klonarides talks about the new trend of falling food to advertise Taco Bell tacos, where falling food would explode and expose ingredients, a visual trick that required expensive production and quickly became a trope. In a poke at the extravagant and bizarre motif in advertising, Blaire chose to have highly advertised consumer products fall from the skies of vertical landscapes: Diet Coke, Marlborough cigarettes and McDonald’s french fries all fall from the edges of the buildings. Blair chose objects not only highly consumed, but also highly addictive and problematic in their consumption for their lack of necessity\textsuperscript{25}. An additional temporal element of the work is the score composed by artist Christian Marclay, which incorporates found-sound with motifs that remind one of the circular nature of carnival rides, such as a carousel. The score, too, adds a vertical aspect, pitching high and low, in audible crescendos amplifying the sense of falling from the CASCADE.

\textbf{LACA READING ROOM}

Los Angeles Contemporary Archive (LACA) is an artist-run, non-profit, non-circulating archive which preserves and displays ephemera from exhibitions, performances, artists’ books and creative materials and projects by contemporary artists, writers and researchers based in Los Angeles, California. LACA, spearheaded by artist Hailey Loman, brings to mind similar operations of MICA-TV’s artist role as “producers,” in another exploration of alternative modes

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
of distribution of art and art practice, as well as creating alternative models to the hierarchies of the art world. For LACA, the artist becomes archivist, preserving ephemera from studios, events, and research, not just archiving finished products. This nuance in archival practices creates a broader scope of aesthetics, activities and spaces in Los Angeles. From the “established” to emerging artists, the archive encompasses materials typically not presented or published in finished drafts or final edits, preserving not just finished artworks, but ways of graphing unfinished material, queries, procedures and experiments. Viewers can observe what we might learn from studying the indices rather than final outcomes, as when scholars and historians study the notes or unpublished papers of authors. There is a split role in engaging with the works in the archive. They are projects and provocations made in the past, which we handle in our present with an awareness and speculation of their function and preservation for the future. Individual works are also viewed within the framework of an archive. We are careful with these contents, keeping their purpose of preservation in mind—a double awareness of their temporal functionality. LACA’s mission:

“Challenging established concepts of the archive and art space, LACA sustains a unique experimental environment for critical inquiry, artistic research and public dialogue. The Archive houses and catalogues art-related objects, with a special focus on ephemeral materials that might otherwise fall between the cracks.”

History, as it’s normally created and relayed, depends on preserving one set of plot points and suppressing others. LACA, by re-presenting these other plot points, otherwise lost, allows us the readers to create and relay other historical trajectories, to connect the dots in other ways.

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This process of introducing new content in an alternative form from its accepted mode of legitimization is present in the gesture of artist collaborative work of MICA-TV, syndicating artists’ content in a medium that is otherwise supported by popular ratings-driven audiences and corporate sponsorship. Los Angeles Contemporary Archive generates an alternative archive to preserve artist’s textual projects and written materials in LA— an archive of self-published artists’ ephemera which can be difficult to access outside of any distribution opportunities or book fairs. LACA creates a space to preserve and legitimize under-represented artists who may have difficulty accessing formal publishing or sponsored projects. The self-publishing aesthetic varies in design and concept. Some artists’ texts appear unfinished, and perform as a marker in the artist’s ongoing practice. Such texts leave opportunities for ongoing inquiry; they are not presented in a book cover, but rather as folded pages, like a leaflet or a reader. The form does not attempt to imitate a traditional book, but rather prioritizes the need for the dissemination of concepts.

What makes LACA stand apart from other archives and more aligned with artists’ projects is its reflexive nature. It is an archive aware of circumstances, boundaries and issues that allow some stories to be told and others excluded. Inviting a self-aware archive to the space of the exhibition extends opportunities for a self-reflexivity that operates more explicitly than the actual artworks included in the exhibition and the artworks mentioned in the artist texts. The decision to include the archive as a port to the exhibition— annexed to the gallery’s entrance and exit— is a decision to extend this self-reflexive view of time.

The self-published texts, with their low-budget production and do-it-yourself aesthetics, shows an urgency for a physical and visual connection to artists’ ideas, a connection to concepts rather than disembodied text online which can be lost in the prejudice of algorithms and amnesia.
of the “feed.” The very physicality of these texts preserve these concepts both as objects and as conceptual projects.

“The struggle of writing against the image — historical consciousness against magic — runs throughout history. Thus with the invention of writing, human beings took one step further back from the world. (...) Texts do not signify the world; they signify the images they tear up.”

REFLECTIONS [Placed into Abyss]

Gallery layouts nudge visitors toward a certain pre-defined sequence, a narrative with a specific entrance and exit, a specific beginning and an end. “Matters of Time” intentionally avoided this imposition of sequence. No work was curtained or cordoned off from the others, as one might expect with the inclusion of time-based media, each with its own separate lighting, sound and space. The reading room, as well, was situated inside the gallery in dialogue with the other works, rather than compartmentalized with its own temporality, as is often done in most museums, where the library, reading rooms, or even bookstores are set aside precisely for their different pace from the gallery. The exhibition was also punctuated with additional events and programming, themselves curated to create an atmosphere of inquiry rather than presentation. The inclusion of the reading room as a site of engagement with the LACA archival materials, as well as an additional space to host discussions and lectures, created an open-ended model, in parallel with the philosophies embodied in the artworks. Instead of singular histories formed from the singular perspectives of singular authors, the layout of “Matters of Time” nudged the visitors to see histories and perspectives pluralistically and in the process of formation.

27 Vilém Flusser, Towards a Philosophy of Photography, 11.
This open-endedness is crystallized in the visual vocabulary of Pascual Sisto’s “Aucuba Expanded”, a multi-medium installation consisting of this very plant in several forms: its organic actual, its image, and its digital renderings in a 3D model video display, creating a life-size and multiply-scaled mise en abyme in the gallery. This mise en abyme stretches from the south wall out to the middle of the west gallery space, in the middle of the Reading Room table. Visitors both view and situate themselves within the work.

On the table sits the plant itself; its image, displayed in a large flat wallpaper directly on the gallery wall; its 3D digital rendering on a screen, rotating as if on a “Lazy Susan.” The Pollock-esque drip patterns of the Aucuba Japonica’s leaves catch the eye in all three, creating something of a visual echo across all three components. Nicknamed the “gold dust plant,” these yellow speckles on dark verdurous leaves— on the living leaves of the plant, on the wall painting, and on the screen— uncannily resemble the night sky, a large celestial pattern found on a small terrestrial being. This movement from microcosm to macrocosm unmoors us from our human-centric scale, and Sisto uses this unmooring to shift us between different “kinds” of space. The components sit closely together, whereas usually renderings take the place of the originals; only one version is usually required. As an ensemble, however, they force us to distinguish the differential relations to time and space.

Sisto’s “Aucuba Expanded” is perhaps the clearest example of a philosophy of time embodied in the medium of a work. The variations in the medium itself forces us to reflect on how time operates or is being constituted— despite the fact that the work is not time-based in the usually sense. Like the time-image of Citizen Kane, the work does not dictate to us any particular philosophy of time. Rather it creates gaps and fissures, between its own components, that we the

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28 Mise en abyme’s literal French translation, translates as “placed into abyss”. 
viewers must ourselves integrate through our own philosophy of time, in experiencing the work. Though perhaps clearest in “Aucuba Expanded”, this embodiment of a philosophy of time is operating in each work. Nevertheless, the motivation behind the exhibition was not merely to examine time in and of itself, as a metaphysical question alone. How we constitute time—or how aware we are of the ways we constitute time—affect how create histories, perspectives, and any form of narrative. Time itself may be a perennial philosophical issue, but a deeper understanding of time has, for this particular historical moment, taken on an added urgency.


APPENDIX A: EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

[Listed counter clockwise from gallery entrance]

1. Los Angeles Contemporary Archive, Selected LACA Publications (See Archive Checklist). Courtesy of LACA, Los Angeles.


5. Fern Silva, Ride Like Lightning, Crash Like Thunder, 2017. 8.5 min., 16mm film, sound.


APPENDIX B: LACA CHECKLIST

[ All texts published by Los Angeles Contemporary Archive. ]

Kelman Duran, Post Genocide Archive 2017 - Pine Ridge Indian Reservation
Patricia Fernández, Points of Departure: Five Walks
Nick Flessa, Case Number 87-447
Jeremy Kiracofe, Newsletter: Volume I
LACA Course Reader I: Tony Bennett, Hal Foster, Benjamin Hutchens, Hans Haacke
LACA Course Reader II: Tara Hart, Marina Mauhler, Declan Schweitzer, Charles Merewether
Monica Rodriguez, Las Antillas Para Los Antillanos
Ezequiel Olvera, Jeroglíficos Mojados
Kim Zumpfe, Astral Projections

APPENDIX C: LIST OF EXHIBITION PROGRAMMING

[Events]

Samara Golden, Artist Lecture:

January 18th, 6:30 - 7:30pm, installation artist, Samara Golden will give an artist lecture in conjunction with UCI Visiting Artist Lecture Series. CAC Colloquium, Room 3201 (located on the third floor, above gallery).

Martine Syms: Most Days

February 8, a listening of artist Martine Syms’ Mundane Afrofuturist narrative, “Most Days” vinyl record. 6pm in the gallery.
Lunch&Lecture:
A series of talks led by UCI MFA Candidates in conversation with the curator will occur on Tuesdays at noon, throughout the exhibition. Food is permitted in the gallery only during lecture hour. Tuesdays @ noon (unless otherwise noted) in the gallery.

LACA Reading Room:
The archive portion of the exhibition will feature a reading room that is open for the public to gather and exchange ideas throughout the course of the exhibition. Please review the exhibition hours to use the space for research, reflection and convening.