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*Handwritten text, possibly a signature or note.*

great deal has been written over the course of the last century about the relationship between time, space, and motion in both science and art. The Futurists' work was influenced by the fact that changes in technology have affected profound changes in our sense of time; their thoughts were reiterated and expanded by the Constructivists, principally Moholy-Nagy, Pevsner, and Gabo. Moholy's "Vision in Motion" is a manifesto for the necessity of dealing with the question of time in art. He succinctly stated, "There is clearly a recognizable difference between the visual ex-

shot of the camera more than the posed picture of the artist's studio.

The Cubists and Futurists may have been more direct in using time as the subject matter of their paintings, yet their works remain frozen in time, perhaps more frozen than the representation of an instant might have been. It was, at least in part, an understanding of this contradiction that led the Futurists to do performances.

If the Futurists and Constructivists were struck by the changes in our sense of time as a result of the Industrial Age, our sense of time only a few decades later

daily events of our lives which precipitates an altered time-space sense ever since the time of Boccioni and Marinetti. Keith Sonnier's multi-channel, multi-radio works and telephone hook-ups are very simple ways of pointing to normal experiences in simultaneity.

Video lends itself particularly well to such experiences, simply because it is possible to see a live transmission of image and sound and, by extension, multiple live transmissions of different places at the same time and place. Video is now having the same effect on art that the camera had a century ago:

playing simultaneously with tapes of reactions to the conversation in Moscow, New York, and other world capitals might come closer to the "reality" of the meeting: imagine a wall of monitors picking up simultaneous reactions all over the world.

It is not only the communications media which have altered our sense of time. When psychologists admonish us to live in the present, it seems only reasonable to determine exactly where that present might be. Paradoxically, we have to find the past in order to get rid of it. The past shapes the present through flux. Not a single event of my

## IN TIME, OF TIME

*The artist necessarily works in and of time — movement in space and time, recollection and advance in memory and history, passage of experience, and time as subject.*

**HERMINE FREED**



Hermine Freed, Art Herstory, 1974.  
(van Gogh, L'Arlesienne). Courtesy Castelli-Sonnabend Tapes and Films.

perience of a pedestrian and a driver in viewing objects."

The fact that there are now many artists working with time in different mediums is, in itself, an extension of the frustrations inherent in the making of still-frame art which became apparent with the invention of the camera. The Impressionists were the first to be influenced by the instantaneity of the camera, from Monet's fleeting moment (an awareness that the camera can literally capture a moment as paint and canvas cannot) to Degas' and Renoir's spontaneous images which resemble the candid

has accelerated to dizzying speeds. Instantaneity is the byword of our era: instant global communications, instant memory banks, instant computations, instant replay, instant foods. Implicit in the methodologies of instantaneity is simultaneity. We no longer live our lives as if the events in which we are engaged are the only events to consider. The simple act of changing channels causes us to be aware of multiple events occurring simultaneously. Add to the list multi-line telephones, intercoms, time sharing, monitor banks, etc., and we have the essence of the

now it is possible to record in time and space, with sight and sound, play it back immediately, or see it as it is happening, and, possibly, from a distance of thousands of miles. For anyone nurtured on TV news, the newspaper photograph seems absurdly understated low-level information. A photograph of two politicians merely shows that they were probably together in the place and on the date stated. A film or tape of their conversation would put the scene more in the context of a real event, yet we are still left without a sense of place. A tape of their conversation

past exists in actuality, yet it has shaped my life in the present. Just as the past exists in the present, the present exists in the past. Memory is constantly being altered by feelings and needs in the present. I am fascinated by autobiography because it is selected and altered memory. If I see myself positively, I will reinterpret my darkest moments as preparations for the present; if depressed, the greatest joys of childhood will disappear and I will remember only the sadness. Memory time is flat. It exists only in the present.

We may remember having

had feelings, but there is no way to actually recapture the feeling of those feelings. Fellini's *Amarcord* is about this distortion lens of memory. Certain events and people are blown out of proportion, partly because the grown-up world looks that way when we are young, partly because we remember things in proportion to our feelings about them. Resnais' *Last Year At Marienbad* was a film about the inability to rely on memory, not because our brains are poor tools, but because the past is simply not there to play back.

History is cultural autobiography, and it functions similar-

ly. We are constantly reinterpreting the past in order to have it conform to our concept of the present. Most of the past is gone to any memory. The history books are very selective, remembering, again through a distortion lens, only special events and people. Historians, too, are forever reinterpreting the past in order to have it fit their image of the present. My tape, *Art Herstory*, is about this sense of the distortion of the past through the process of history. The tape weaves events of the past with the present by using images from art history from the Middle

and present coexisting on the repeatable time of the tape.

Time-based media are certainly more satisfactory than the still frame for describing time. In both *Lives of the Performers* and *A Story of a Woman Who . . .*, Yvonne Ranier emphasizes the essential differences between the still frame of the photograph and the motion of the film by transferring the media. Performers take frozen poses, like photographs, but the fact that they are actually freezing themselves in time emphasizes the frozenness of the photograph. On the other hand, there are scenes in

ages to the present as the structure and superimposing over that structure the process of making the tape. I unfreeze the still frame of the paintings by playing the central role in each one and, at the same time, playing myself playing the role. The time period of the tape is either eight centuries or 2000 years, depending on whether you're counting from the time the paintings were made or from the time the depicted images may have taken place. The tape was made over a period of six months and lasts twenty-two minutes. These four time periods weave in and out of each other, time past

but they remain on the screen at the will of the filmmaker. The only change that takes place while we see the photos is in the sound track. Here, we are struck by the difference between looking at a still frame in our own time, as we are used to seeing it, and at the will of another. Ranier uses the written narrative as a device for forcing your sense of time. Occasionally, the narrative is on screen for too short a time for most people to read it. Occasionally, it is there too long. Occasionally, Ranier's voice is superimposed over the narrative, but the written image disappears before the voice has finished reading, or the "page" changes before we can check her out.

Michael Snow used a similar device in one segment of *Le Neveau de Rameau (etc.)*. We see a table with many objects on it and a pair of hands moving the objects. A narrative voice describes the movements. Occasionally it is in sync with the movements, but most often it is either ahead or behind. When the discrepancy is small, memory is brought in to try to "catch up" with either the voice or the motion. When, however, the two become far apart, the viewer relies on his knowledge of the process rather than his actual memory.

Working in "real" time is an elusive concept. I may record an event in the same sequence of time in which it happened, but the fact that the resulting image is isolated from its original environment alters the reality. Once it is played back, the time is changed. Just as you can't step into the same water twice, you can't relive the same moment twice. Several artists have worked with the elusiveness of time with devices such as simultaneity and time-delay. In a live time-delay work by Ira Schneider, a viewer walks past the monitor and sees nothing but the space in front of it. If he then stops, he will see himself walking in front of the space

and stopping. The image remains on the screen, but repeats again, three times, one on top of the other. It is very disconcerting to view yourself at such short intervals from the actual experience, as if you've escaped from your own body.

Lynda Benglis, too, layers time in her video work, but with quite a different method and meaning. An image is taped, played back on a monitor in front of which a similar or responsive image takes place, both retaped, and the activity repeated again. The result is several layers of time coexisting in the same time, simultaneous action and reaction, a situation dense with its own history. The entire psychology of a given situation is revealed in the sense that the situation presents itself as the experience and the memory of itself at once. For Benglis, "time exists in a work of art as an icon, i.e., as subject matter dense with energy." If, in her sculpture, the iconography is a function of meaning, in her video works that meaning is a function of time.

Beryl Korot's Dachau tape plays with time on many levels. It is a four monitor work, with the monitors in a wall, side by side. There are about twenty images throughout the duration of the tape—a barracks with a man visible walking through the windows, people milling in corridors, walking across bridges. At any given moment there are generally two sets of similar images playing simultaneously, repeated many times in different sequences of time. That is, there will be two simultaneous images of the same scene with an event taking place in two different sequences of time. Yet the most powerful time element in the work is not in the structure but in the content. We are seeing Dachau thirty years later with tourists surveying it with the passive interest with which they might survey a document. In the end we see the image of an oven repeated four times, twice



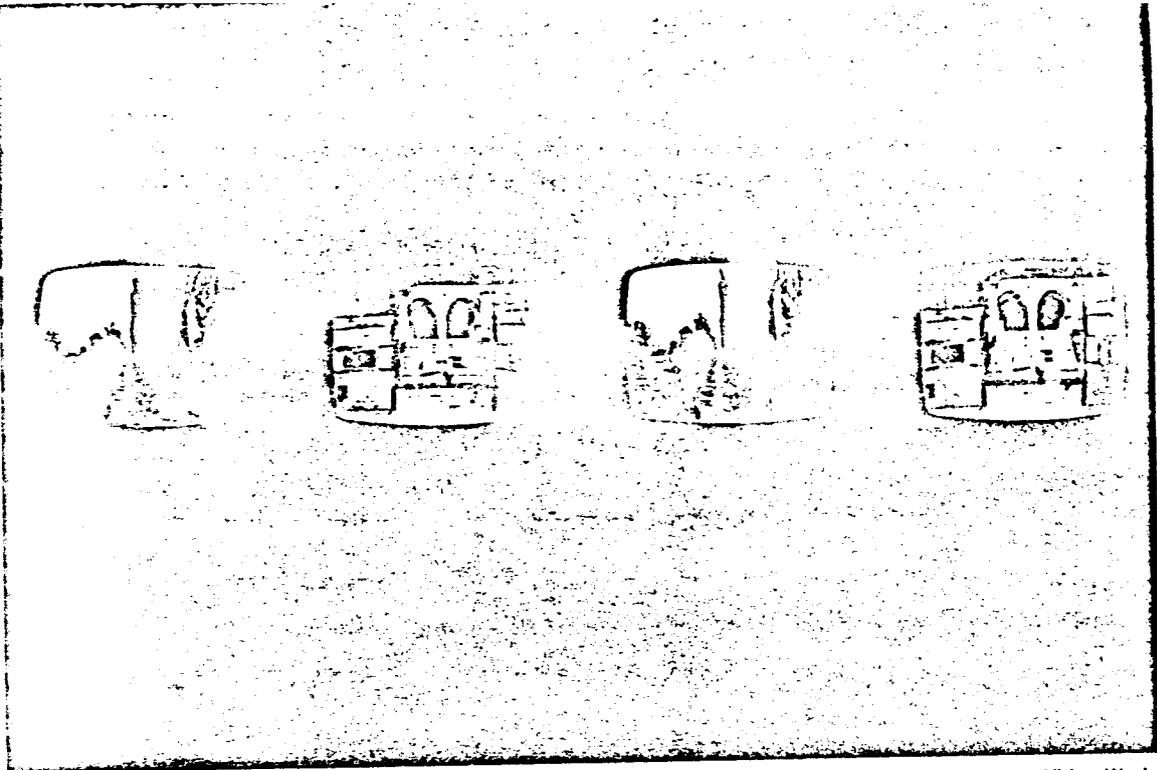
Ira Schneider, *Infinity Machine, Infinity Loop, Video Echo*, 1974.

slightly closer than the other. Its two arched doors are open. The arch repeats eight times, iconized. Church bells peal in the background.

To exist in time is not necessarily to be about time, but certain works of art definitely rely on the time element for either their existence (as do films and performances) or their understanding. There are those works which are themselves static but which require the time-motion of the viewer to be experienced. Certain sculptures by Bruce Nauman, Richard Serra, and Robert Morris can only be intuited without the experience of moving through them. The sense of disorientation that results from moving through Nauman's spaces is lost if they are viewed as objects in themselves; the essence of the work is not formal but rather experiential. The reports of those who have been through Morris' *Labyrinth* are far more interesting than the drawings and photographs of it.

I am not certain that the time element is a primary concern to most conceptual artists, yet their art exists in time rather than space. Joseph Kosuth's exhibitions explicitly require that you spend a great deal of time with the work. I complained to him that I wanted to take the show home with me because I like to read in bed, not in galleries. He was reorganizing my sense of time in a gallery situation. Art had always allowed us the freedom to make our own choices where time is concerned; one can look at a painting for an hour or a minute and report that it has been seen.

In many cases, performance art arranges a specific time slot for the work so that the viewer puts himself in a theatrical context. So long as a contract is made between the performer and the viewer to spend time, there seems to be no anxiety about it. Performance art in a gallery context is frequently more anxiety-producing on the part of the viewer than the other art forms which demand time, but



Beryl Korot, Four Monitor Video Work.

for other reasons. It is the anxiety of confrontation with the performer, doing his act, whether or not you are prepared for it, the constancy of the performance, apparently whether or not there is an audience. Chris Burden's recent work at the Ronald Feldman Gallery emphasized this anxiety. The exhibition appeared to be a minimalist-type platform crossing the corner of the room above eye level. The essence of the work, however, was believing that the artist was on that platform and would be there for a duration of twenty-two days with none but the most absolutely essential of his bodily functions being cared for by the gallery. It is an extreme sensory-deprivation situation, as there is no room for him to move and nothing for him to eat or do except listen to the comments of the viewers (which is actually a rather insidious and reverse form of voyeurism). The most important element of the work is the time spent there. The viewer's time is almost incidental, a check that all is progressing. It is, rather, the knowledge of the total duration that gives credence to the work, the stamina to withstand the deprivation for

an extended period of time.

Performers working in time make their work temporary, and that very fact that a work cannot be preserved in time (allowing the fact that a tape or film of a performance is a translation of the piece, not the piece itself) is essential to many performance artists. Out of context, the argument goes, the work loses its meaning. Paintings by Leonardo still can be seen but I have no way of knowing how they looked when the paint first dried nor the lighting conditions and context of their original setting. Out of context, form and meaning change. So many Greek vases and prehistoric paintings, despite all attempts of historians to the contrary, have nonetheless been imbued with meaning from the point of view of the present interpreting the past. Performers attempt to bypass this misinterpretation by making works which disappear, but they will be misinterpreted in the future nonetheless.

Aside from the Dadaist period when the visual object was a compromise and frequently incidental to the ideology, this may be the first time in history when work that exists in time is the most important art work to be pro-

duced, as a whole. Artists working in other disciplines are often finding more success among artists than in their own arenas. Musicians like Phil Glass, Steve Reich, Dick Landry, and Charlemagne Palestine perform in galleries and museums and frequently distribute their work through galleries. Landry and Palestine make videotapes which force the line of distinction between music and the visual arts. Dancers like Yvonne Rainer, Lucinda Childs, and Meredith Monk have always operated in the art world. Joan Jonas walks on the tightrope between the two. Her videotapes are unquestionably works of art, her performances on the side of dance. She herself does not feel that her work ought to operate merely in the art world, yet there is no question that it does. The work of Mabou Mines presents itself as theater, but it is surely more comprehensible to an art audience than it would be in a Broadway theater. Perhaps I am now speaking of the time of popularization, yet the fact of artists working with time does push at the boundary of theater which has, after all, always existed in time.