

Thoughts from Curator V

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– *HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE YOU TO ANSWER THIS E-MAIL?*

Curator I: 30-60 minutes

Curator II: 5 minutes

Curator III: Markus, I haven't done your thing but will as soon as I get a second. [Later reply: 15 min]

Curator IV: One evening, as I will be constantly interrupted

Somehow, at a very early age, we become competent in predicting time and estimating its passage. Numerous studies demonstrate the development of this ability, but as of yet, do not give a clear idea of how it works or where it comes from. It appears to be closely connected to the development of self and the capacity for remembering the personal past and imagining the future – that is, to the notion of a temporally extended self.

– *WHERE ARE YOU NOW? (NOTE: AS A HUMAN, YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO BE IN TWO PLACES AT ONCE, ONE IN BODY AND ONE IN SPIRIT)*

Curator I: Body – my desk in my living room/office; head – in the spaces at Moss

Curator II: At Moss

Curator III: Work/home/bar

Curator IV: I am staring out my office window and longing for a calm, warm near future

Some researchers say that a child's first sense of place is of the place in which it discovers the self. Our ability to develop and maintain a sense of place goes hand in hand with memory. To remember events, we rely on a strong sense of place, and in return, our relationship to places is influenced by our memories. Again, this is related to the notion of the extended self.

No clear conclusions have yet been drawn about the extent to which our sense of time and place is a set of learned behaviors or the manifestation of a combination of specific personality traits. This becomes even more complicated when the two factors in question turn out to be in constant evolution. The firmly fixed understanding of both time and place has been exposed as a social illusion, existing independently of any one individual's perception or experience. Still, its existence depends on individual human engagement. Little is known about the development of these abilities in light of the rapid and pervasive changes in our surroundings, and if or how they might influence them. On the other hand, one would imagine there to be a perceptible shift in the development of self when the concepts of time and place

open up to new dimensions, as we have experienced in recent decades. There's no need to list all the changes here, but they are mainly linked to the expanding realm of communication and mobility. As adults, we are torn between exhilaration and anxiety as we experience the unfolding of these new elements. In a nostalgic manner, we cling to the idea of being *in front of* the computer, when as a matter of fact we know that we are somewhere else entirely. Likewise, we wonder how peculiar it is that time seems to be running faster than before, when for all we know it actually is.

Newsf ashes circulated after the earthquakes in Chile, and more recently in Japan, describing how they shifted Earth's axis, thus affecting the planet's rotation. As a result, the Earth spins faster and the days have become shorter! Disquieting, until scientists pointed out that this happens all the time, with much greater effects, due to atmospheric winds and ocean currents. With or without earthquakes, Earth is spinning at its own tempo – and we along with it. The acceleration in our sense of time may furthermore be thought of as a typically Western phenomenon related to technological development. Knowing that it is rooted in our imagination, however, does not change the reality of our constant state of pressure and anxiety.

– IN TERMS OF THE EXHIBITION PROJECT IMAGINE BEING HERE NOW

A) *WHERE IS HERE?*

Curator I: Wherever the subject reading the title
is

Curator II: Being in front of the computer

Curator III: Wherever the interest lies

Curator IV: Here is the locality of the surrounding Now defined by our immediate and preceding experiences and horizons of expectations

B) *WHEN IS NOW?*

Curator I: Whenever the subject is reading the title

Curator II: When you step into the labyrinthine exhibition structure

Curator III: Whenever it happens

Curator IV: Now is the moment where Here is defined and experienced

Wasn't there once a distinct form of measurement for time and place? Perhaps that was when there was still a somewhere left unaccounted for. There used to be a North Pole at 90°N latitude, but later it was proved to be wobbling around an area spanning nine meters. Not to mention the magnetic pole, discovered wandering around, and currently located somewhere off Western Greenland at about 77°N 102°W, drifting northwest across the Canadian Arctic at an ever increasing speed of around 60 km per year. In an undertaking that would contribute to rendering nowhere extinct and changing our ideas about time and place, explorers set out to go see the North Pole and get a sense of the place. It is thrilling and terrifying to read about the voyage of the *Fram* and the ordeal of the Norwegian Arctic explorer Fridtjof Nansen in the late 19th century, when he attempted his journey to the North Pole. Not only did he set out for unknown territory on a new ship, designed by himself, hoping for ocean currents that would make it

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drift to the Pole, but when he noticed that the currents tended too far southwards, he jumped onto the ice and continued north on foot. Just as he was about to reach his destination at the middle of the Pole, having reached latitude 86°14' North, he decided to return so that he would make it back safely to civilization. His description of the place: “a veritable chaos of iceblocks stretching as far as the horizon”. On their way back, he and his comrade found that their watches had frozen still and they could no longer use estimated time and sextant observations to calculate their precise location. The two men got lost and ended up spending a year in the middle of nowhere before being rescued by a stroke of sheer luck – they were at the right place at the right time, so to speak.

“Det vanskelige kan man gjøre med en gang, det umulige tar bare litt lengre tid” [Difficult is what takes a minute; impossible is what takes a little longer]. In 1896 Fridtjof Nansen returned safely to Norway, where no word had been received from the expedition since it set out three years earlier. No wonder, after his heroic feat, that he was quoted as saying that he would manage the impossible, if granted a bit more than just a moment. It is fascinating to think that all this effort was spent on a single geographic place that could be thought of as a product of human imagination. And to realize that the whole endeavor was confounded because of the unforeseen lack of a way to measure time. This year is the 150th anniversary of Fridtjof Nansen’s birth. The Norwegian Government has declared 2011 the “Year of Nansen and Amundsen”, in honor of Nansen and another polar explorer, Roald Amundsen.

THOUGHTS FROM CURATOR V

– *FIND A STOPWATCH (ON YOUR PHONE, WRISTWATCH OR COMPUTER). AS YOU START THE WATCH, CLOSE YOUR EYES AND DO NOT OPEN THEM UNTIL YOU FEEL THAT ONE MINUTE HAS PASSED. WRITE DOWN THE TIME ON YOUR STOPWATCH AT THE MOMENT YOU OPEN YOUR EYES.*

Curator I: 34.8 sec

Curator II: I am at a café and find it a bit embarrassing ... so I’ll pass ...

Curator III: 35 sec

Curator IV: 52.5 sec

– *ANY THOUGHTS IN TERMS OF HOW ACCURATELY / INACCURATELY YOU ESTIMATED ONE MINUTE PASSING?*

Curator I: I guess the inaccuracy of mine has to do with the fact that I often have the experience that time flies, and that I am a time optimist – so trying to counteract that sent me off the charts completely.

Curator III: Stress

Curator IV: Surprisingly poorly. I felt one minute had already passed when I opened my eyes, but was much too early.

When curators from five different countries were invited to perform the all but impossible task of agreeing on a mutual artistic vision for the 6th Momentum Biennial, it was quite fitting that we were granted just a moment. Scarcely more than what could be called, to put it simply, too little time. Nansen’s no-nonsense approach (“difficult only takes a moment”) proved fruitful, and soon the group shared a vision for a project that would deal with the complexities of art and the experience

thereof in regards to place and time, with the extended footnote of the self. Over the last few decades, art has had a hand in revealing how the established notions of place and time are mere constructs of individuals and societies, so we as curators must ask ourselves how to tackle the issues of locality and temporality imbedded in the biennial construct. We invite people to show up in the provincial town of Moss, Norway at the beginning of the summer, after a string of international art events. Despite the philosophical and even scientific evidence for the relativity of time and place, we continue to work within a fixed venue at a particular moment. Still, we are eager to provide viewers with a range of *heres*, and an array of *nows* to delve into. Two constructs interpreted by fifty artists, five curators, and who knows how many visitors.

– HOW LONG DO YOU THINK IT WILL TAKE AN AVERAGE VIEWER TO EXPERIENCE MOMENTUM?

Curator I: 8 hours

Curator II: 2 hours

Curator III: 3 hours

Curator IV: How provocative to suggest that there is something average. I don't believe in average. Thus it fully depends on each viewer and how they want to experience Momentum. I hope that Momentum will be a set of surprises, made possible by our artistic work.

I wonder if you as a reader could estimate how long it will take you to read this text? This book? How long it will take you as a viewer to experience the exhibition? A

single work in it? As readers, viewers and listeners, we belong in the outer time of a work of art, but it may offer its own sense of inner time. It has been a while since we were told that a perfect play should unite place, time and sequence. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle wrote that the events described on stage should be part of a whole that would be concluded within the same day and on the same location, in keeping with the reality of the present spectators. In the spirit of ancient Greek aesthetics, James Joyce's *Ulysses* describes events that take place over a day, or eighteen hours – the same time it might take the average reader (no provocation intended) to get through the novel. Ultimately, with or without art, we are all constrained by the flow of night and day that holds us accountable to a universal rhythm, aren't we?

Artist Fiete Stolte wasn't ready to let Mother Earth rule his time of day, and set out to prove her wrong. Travelling around the world in one calendar week, he managed to capture eight sunrises and eight sunsets with his Polaroid camera. Stolte unashamedly cuts three hours out of every 24 and adds an eighth day to his week. Interestingly, if you happen to run into him as you are starting your day and he is having his nightcap, he might suggest that the two of you are not in the same place. No more than people trying to share a moment across time zones in different parts of the world. Another explorer chasing imaginary places, fixated upon the notion of time.

– HOW LONG IS A MOMENT?

Curator I: 5-20 seconds

Curator II: 7 seconds

Curator III: As long as it is between its beginning and end

Curator IV: Time has a spatial code, which makes a moment immeasurable. Moments are fractions of the indefinite continuum of existence and the entity of fluxing past-present-future.

“A moment lasts five minutes,” according to seven-year-old Nathalie, interviewed in Klaus Kjeldsen’s film *A Moment* (Klaus Kjeldsen, *Et øjeblik*, 1999). Appropriately, the experimental documentary lasts five minutes. The director asks children to define a moment and gets insightful answers reflecting the fact that at an early age children are aware of people’s fickle relationship with time. Jesper, for example, has realized that for his father, “just a moment” may last up to half an hour!

A friend who is experiencing relationship stress is convinced that all the struggle in people’s everyday lives can be traced to how differently people perceive time. The fundamentally different experience of predicting time and estimating its passage. Both are elements without which a person could be clinically diagnosed with autism, but there seems to be no standard for measurement in the more common cases when you do possess these abilities. There are fashionable terms floating around out there, like polychronicity and monochronicity, men are from Mars and women from Venus, A and B types, etc., but they offer little comfort if you cannot reconcile these differences. Results from research into our different senses of time do suggest that people rely on sensory input to augment their sense of the pas-

sage of time, and that this may vary considerably among people. For example, the Kappa effect has been defined as the measurable difference in people’s experience of time depending on their relationship to distance. We use all our senses to take in different information about our surroundings and employ them to calculate time passing. This spontaneous evaluation differs from one situation to the next and from one person to the next.

Think of Fridtjof Nansen’s camp in the middle of the Arctic ice, where he and his partner passed an entire winter with nothing but a sailing almanac and navigation tables to read. They had relied on the precise calculation of time passing in order to stay on track and find the way to their destination. Without the precision of a single moment, they were doomed to a whole year in a shelter built of rocks, ice, and hides, eating seal blubber and polar bear meat. Deprived of the contemporary luxury of a relative conception of time and place, they were stuck, frozen, in their glacial here and now.

– ON THE SCALE OF 1-5 (1 BEING NOT AT ALL AND 5 BEING A LOT)
HOW MUCH DOES IT MATTER WHERE MOMENTUM TAKES PLACE?
COULD YOU ELABORATE?

Curator I: 3

In terms of its “tradition”, history, and where it originates from and is funded from – Moss is central. Outside of that, our concept could work in many other places, and is not tied down to or dependent on Moss in any way. It’s a bubble, taking place in Moss every other year, and is governed

by a bunch of rules and restrictions that are not specified or declared by the city of Moss, but by the generic expectations and “needs” defined by different players in the contemporary art field, including us, the curators.

Curator II: 1

Curator III: 5

In essence, the exact same object on display under the exact same conditions could be recreated almost anywhere else. The location of this exhibition could matter very little if the urge to recreate it was strong enough.

Curator IV: Firstly, Momentum takes place physically as an exhibition in Moss, Norway and around other cities and countries. It also takes place as a part of the continuum of Momentums, taking over from the previous Momentums and opening the way to the next Momentum. Additionally, Momentum takes place in all of our (co-curators’, artists’, Punkt Oe staff’s, etc.) horizons of experience and will continue to exist as a personally and professionally influential episode. Secondly, to approach the question, a scale of importance is impossible to define. I would say that it is relevant, and matters a lot, where each individual locates their experience of Momentum

and what Momentum will offer for the continuum, or should I say entity, of Momentums. Thirdly, for Momentum, as an art event, it is important that it also exist in the current landscape of contemporary art. This existence will be defined by the above-mentioned factors and contributions.

Artist Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir explores new territory in her work as “The Performance Call Girl”. She remains alert online in case someone anticipating a web performance calls her up on Skype. Again, no destination without time: “Sundays at 6-7 pm Icelandic time, 1-2 pm New York time, 10-11 am Los Angeles time, 7-8 Berlin time”. Each viewer gets a special treatment, a spontaneous, dreamlike moment, invoking questions of the when and where of the art experience. Performance art offers a chance to obfuscate inner and outer parameters of time and space in the work of art, where the realms of artist and viewer may merge completely but still remain worlds apart. The immediacy of information technology is sometimes said to have disrupted our sense of time and place. However, art constantly offers a reconstruction of our understanding of both.

The complexities involved in mankind deserting the idea of Newton’s time and embracing Einstein’s time become clear as soon as two people set out to do something together, let alone five. The curatorial team has been forced to synchronize its watches in order to cope with distances, time differences, strict deadlines and busy schedules. The group is scattered over five countries, so there can be only one meeting point, on Skype. Prepara-

tions for Momentum have been one big experiment in finding common ground in terms of time and place.

Human attachment to place is fascinating, defined by ideas, memories and emotions as much as by geographic points. It surpasses the material environment and can reside in the realm of imagination, in unexplored dimensions, in virtual reality and in art. Together with his co-explorer, Fridtjof Nansen spent eight months in the same camp on a block of ice. They had plenty of food with the wildlife around, but repetition and boredom was killing them. In his diaries from the middle of nowhere, Nansen wrote down lengthy recollections of home, describing his house in detail. Our dual spatial sense, our ability to be in one place – here and now, yet elsewhere in our minds – may have made it possible for the two men to survive the isolated and monotonous ordeal. Nansen also describes how his camp, primitive as it was, oddly became homelike.

– OFF THE TOP OF YOUR HEAD, HOW MANY SQUARE METERS DO YOU ESTIMATE THE FOLLOWING EXHIBITION SPACES TO BE?

A) GROUND FLOOR GALLERY AT KUNSTHALL MOSS

Curator I: 200 m²

Curator II: 600 m²

Curator III: 200 m²

Curator IV: 376 m²

B) CENTRAL GALLERY ON UPPER FLOOR AT F15

Curator I: 80 m²

Curator II: 200 m²

Curator III: 100 m²

Curator IV: 33 m²

In the same era when Fridtjof Nansen set out on his voyage to the North Pole and humanity was about to grasp the full scope of Earth's space as places defined by human experience, the foundations of known reality were questioned. The theory of relativity emerged, and suddenly time was no longer fixed and stable. The hypothesis of continental drift swept the ground out from under people's feet, and everything they had strived to map, time and categorize needed to be questioned. No sooner had the Internet opened a whole new dimension of space than ideas came about for creating a new way to measure time. Internet time is still running on the home page of the watchmaker Swatch, since 1998. The time when this is written is @ 977 beats. Be that as it may, we still find ourselves in need of the concepts of time and place to develop a sense of self.

Art, much like other fields of human activity, has taken part in the game of setting forth new realities only to find them dismantled and replaced by others. Modernist art attempted to state a precise meaning beyond the apparently instable rubric of place and time. Today, on the other hand, art is defined in terms of Terra Incognita, unexplored territory that has no definition until it becomes part of human experience and memory. Just like the North Pole a century ago, it is an illusion of time and place, floating somewhere on an ocean of possibilities. Works of art seen as imaginings and ideals that we collectively and individually act on and give credence to. Artists explore various ties to places near and far in time as well as space, both geographical and intangible. Through their work they convey an idea of how a nondescript area becomes a place, and suggest

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that someone must experience it before we can recognize it as such. “There is no there there,” to borrow Gertrude Stein’s analogy. Not yet, that is. As aspiring nomad artists, globetrotter curators and itinerant institutions, we set out to explore it, claim it, tame it – regardless of whether it may turn out to be no more than “a veritable chaos of iceblocks stretching as far as the horizon”.

We rely on the work to define our here and now and to stimulate our ever-changing self. Art becomes a destination in and of itself, regardless of the geographical or architectural context, where our sense of time and place must be reinvented for each occasion.

– *WHAT TIME IS IT NOW – HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO REPLY THIS EMAIL? ANY THOUGHTS IN TERMS OF HOW ACCURATELY / INACCURATELY YOU PREDICTED TIME?*

- Curator I: 14 minutes. I overestimated my engagement in this questionnaire – I’m hungry and dinner is waiting.
- Curator II: 4 minutes. The matter of interest is only the sense of time it creates, accurate or not.
- Curator III: 11 minutes. Stressed by all the email “plings” heard while filling out this form.
- Curator IV: 68 minutes. I thought it would take longer to answer your exacting questions. However, I was not as thorough in replying as the questions would allow for. One could spend innumerable hours thinking about the relevance of the location of an art event or how to define such an existential, phe-

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nomenological, structural and spatial issue as time. Luckily, our curatorial endeavor responds to these questions in actuality.

“That’s all, folks! Time sure flies when you’re having fun!” (The lead singer of Aerosmith, Steven Tyler, in a concert in the early ‘80s, taking leave of his audience. The group had jazzed up the tour program and replaced the second number with one that was usually their encore. Somewhat in his own world at the time – others might say tipsy – Tyler thought the show was over and left the stage after only two songs.)