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SENSE OF DURATION

by

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SENSE OF DURATION:

Time in the sculpture and poetry by Lucie Noel Thune

**“A poet takes on Time like a man going into a knife fight....”
-Larry Levis**

The following writings contain different segments about the concept of time. To best describe certain feelings and thoughts concerning my ideas and work I have used poetry and short stories in a prosaic manner. I also felt it necessary to include some historic facts about the history of time and its measuring devices.

SENSE OF DURATION

The flow of time is something we are surrounded by and usually take for granted, although every so often one wishes to capture a moment of ecstasy or pause for a while to feel our own existence in time.

It is the complexities of time I am investigating in my work. On one hand you have the physical visual change of time evolving, one we can experience with our senses, see with our eyes, smell or hear. On the other you have the man-made knowledge of time, the measurement of a year, a minute or a millionth of a second. With both there is a beginning and an end, an interval separating two points on a continuum, a duration.

I have, for the past years, been interested in creating work that deals with these issues. By using materials that change slowly through a certain time span, I hope to convey the notion of time passing. On a philosophical note I feel a need to remind the viewer that time is always with us, that it is a motion, or pressure that pushes us, not through space, but through a dimension we can not see.

Sense of Duration

In a blink
of an eye
it appeared as though
razor blades
swept through
into sounds
of blades bumping into each other
in rhythmical orchestra
like wings of birds in takeoff
shimmer and flicker
flicker and clinker.
Movement of
sand shifting
drifting
then gone
into another dimension
leaving nothing
behind but the dust.

Marks and incomprehensible numbers

That morning,
she walked through the heavy snow
thinking about mark making.

The Norwegian Cephalopods fossils
were small sea creatures,
fragile, and short lived
yet the oldest mark on earth
six hundred million years
is an incomprehensible number.

Archaeologist had recently discovered
the oldest human footprint
transformed into a fossil at Capetown.
Two 2" deep and eight" long.
One hundred and seventeen thousand years ago.
The footprint was leading down towards the lagoon
to have a drink of water, perhaps?
Knowing nothing of it.

I see where I have been walking across a park after snow fall, my tracks
scuffed out in the snow on the path. I see the path continuing, awaiting my

footsteps. But are these places the past and the future? Returning to the path behind me, I encounter none of the events I entered a moment or a year before. There are trees, leaning branches, and birds singing, each ridged in space as before, but looking at my watch or hearing the clock striking in the Cathedral or knowing the day, I am forced to admit that this park of white hills and trees has drifted, or moved with the direction of time.

timeus

**The sensible cosmos
was created by Demiurge
and carefully patterned
after the eternal world
of intelligible essence.
Although the creator
wished to make the cosmos perfect,
whole and eternal,
no created thing
would last forever.
So, to establish order
in the chaotic heavens,
he made out of eternity
an image going according to number,
the moving image, the image of time.**

Plato's Timaeus was written between 27e and 39d. It is the first recorded theory of time in our western tradition, although Plato's admittedly unphilosophic account was written and understood as mythology. (Coveney 22)

In the history of philosophy the first discussion of time was not concerned with knowing, calculating or determining the time of the day, but rather in the larger matters of infinite versus the finite, or as Plato was concerned with it, eternity versus time (Aspects 21-25). In Lacanian terms, we might call this opposition: the Other versus the Self. It is what constitutes the ineffable that stands in contrast to our mortality. Ironically, it is our ego's briefness and the

**briefness of things that surrounds us in the world that illuminate the Other, as I
have tried to illustrate in my poem "immortality"**

immortality

**The skeleton of the Dinosaur lay in front of her
like a map of a forgotten planet
"Forget me not" it said in invisible letters.
There was a picture of a Sphinx
with its nose cut off
and a Viking Ship
preserved by the blue clay
of the earth,
an armature of a Sami sledge,
a picture of my great grandfather
at North Cape with a motor bike,
a room from my childhood,
a book of biology,
a seed,
an apple,
the light tap of a blue flower petal dropping to the ground.**

THE ICE MERCHANT

ephemeral gambler

**Whispering
and sound of bells from the monastery
at dawn,
he ties his tools to his body
and starts climbing.**

**The Himalayan mountains
elevates 87 degrees
upwards,
superior vertical lines
horizons at
9600 feet above the ocean.**

**This is where he travels
in the cold, dry and Arctic.
He selects carefully,
trips and falls
then carries
the heavy blocks on his back.**

**The Sun Bittern still in the air
watching the ice merchants
watchful movement of feet
downhill
while the sun is beating
knowing that
if his load is light at the first temple
he won't make it back in time.**

**(Sun Bittern. A crane-like tropical American bird is often spreading it's wings
and tail in a showy display. I am unaware of its existence in the Himalayan
mountains.)**

EPHEMERAL MATERIALS/time in movement rhythm and sound

I have focused on two types of knowledge that constitute ephemeral materials, the abstract knowledge of biology and the actual experience of touching and seeing what occurs. Both interact with a duration of time.

Brief meeting

**At 0° celsius
the hexagon water molecule develops
in a pattern of six.
Like a beehive of frozen water.
Each group of cells creates six new cells
which gravitate towards each other
to again reach a larger formation,
until the water surface is covered
with a thin blanket of ice.
A garden pulled out of the water
by the cold.
Equilibrium is sustained.
For a moment,
a year,
a millennium perhaps.
Until again,
the unforgiving law of celestial existence
penetrates the atmosphere,
and the pattern erupts.**

In the beginning it was the movement that these materials trigger, their natural change over time, the physical change we can witness with our eyes, that fascinated me. When something transforms from solid to liquid, as with ice to water, there is a movement of mass from one place to another, a decrease of shape at one point and an increase of growth at another. This transformation is not only an action in real time, but a physical movement of materials in space.

After observing the materials' natural movement I was led to explore the possibility of controlling the materials by controlling their circumstances.

Mechanical devices like water pumps and refrigeration units became practical tools in my investigation. It allowed me to use materials in unexpected ways and

to create illusions for the senses with light, movement, heat, cold, smell and sound.

It is in the marriage between materials and images that I find (what I call) visual rhythm. I look for rhythm in the action of the materials I use and in the different stages in the temporal development. I use repetition of motifs, images, materials or symbols, or a slight repetition of shapes. If I have a pattern of similar shapes and add alternation in different quantities I get a pattern of flow, a pattern of stress, and unstress which creates a contrast.

Sound and rhythm are both tools I use to orchestrate my work. Because my materials are so specific, I like to think that they speak for themselves. I choose them for what they have to say and my role is to discover their potential and highlight it. If the things I choose to use make a sound, I incorporate it in my work, like the sound of water dripping. Although sounds are a frequency which can be understood by hearing, I think of sounds as color. The intensity of sounds that we surround ourselves with every day but never really hear, as with mechanical devices, can be quite effective when singled out in a gallery situation. Then there are red sounds, sounds that penetrate our nervous system and take hold of our senses. Like the sounds of crickets in late August. The gradual intensity of dark orange, red and deep red, intervened with silence only to let you know how loud it was. All types of sounds are influencing our state of mind, creating atmospheres or moods like colors in a large painting. In part I feel this is how a landscape of associations, moods or feelings can be manipulated.

WATER CLOCKS / CLEPSYDRAS, water thief.

Much of the history of time is the historical development of devices which measure it. Sand, water, burning incense, candles, melting of ice, shadows, the sun, the moon and the stars, all of these have been used as devices of measurement (Cowan i passum).

water thief

(There was nothing to it, but....)

**One large stone vessel
filled with water to the rim
two girls pulling a monkey
three hands writing geometry
four boys at the well
five holes in the bottom of the vessel
allowing
six millimeters decrease
of water level to drop
seven old ladies shaking their heads
complaining "water thief"
eight eyes watching form a ship near by
nine wooden dowels holding the vessel in perfect upright position
ten voices celebrating
wine to their lips
eleven watch keepers circulating, meditating, contemplating
twelve engravings on the inside wall of the vessel.
One for each hour of the day
two smaller one for every half hour
three for night time
four for seasons
five for leap year
six for holidays
seven for harvest
eight for full moon
nine for solstice
ten for good luck
eleven for new year
twelve for each month of the year.**

**Water for wine they said...
water for wine.**

Water clocks or Clepsydras, as the ancient Greeks called them, was also referred to as water thief. (Cowan 58-9) The Greeks called their water clock this because it offered them the concrete image of time, it became regular and even. It became mathematical and independent of nature, stolen out of the current of events.

Today we are dealing with a different type of measurement, we have a global time system that offers us an exact knowledge of time anywhere in the world we might be. The focus of time has shifted from measuring time with the help of celestial bodies to a stable electronic system and yet further as dividing time into fractions. The advantage of a stable time apparatus is vital to the globalization, the electronic network, military forces, science and so on. Although we like the illusion of longevity and gain of time in a day, the knowledge of time belongs to the practical world. As in the world of art, time becomes stagnant, sterile and invisible during the realm of creation.

atomic age

**Ladies and Gentlemen!
They found out that atoms and molecules sing.
Their resonance absorbs and emits electromagnetic radiation
at its own characteristic frequencies.
How lucky!
They could find a use in singing after all,
taking music to a higher level.
This was in fact a new music of the spheres,
because the resonances were inherently stable
over time and space.
How wonderful!
Today's singing atom is exactly like the one
a million years ago or in another galaxy.
This meant that the singing atom was a potential "pendulum"
with a reproducible rate
that could form the basis for an atomic clock.**

Progress.

**The singing atom became the new international unit of time.
The second was defined as exactly 9, 192, 631, 770 cycles
of the atoms resonant frequency.**

**This would replace the old second
that was defined in terms of the earth's motion.**

**Ladies and gentlemen,
here was a singing cesium atom
the new time standard that would keep time
to about one-millionth of a second per year.**

But, wait a minute.

**Dear Highest of Judges,
what happened to dramatic pause?**

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Note on Poems: These poems have been composed over the last months by me. Much of their information has come from the text I have listed above, however, I did not directly cite every source I made in the poems back to my research. I felt this would damage the lyrical aspects of them.