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THE WORK OF TIME

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In 1928, economist John Maynard Keynes predicted that technological advancement would give people more free time and allow them to work just three hours a day. Oddly enough, almost a century later, it seems that time is actually under increasing pressure. Those who can't keep up are left behind. This results in restlessness, stress, and exhaustion, not only for ourselves, but also for the planet.

What does 'free time' mean when we prioritise efficiency and speed? If machines only need a split second to calculate everything we think, feel, and desire, is there any room left for slow human processes such as doubt, dialogue, or imagination? And what happens when we think on a radically different scale, such as geological time, which is characterised by extreme slowness? Current problems such as the climate crisis and nuclear waste management require urgent action, but also force us to move beyond our human understanding of time.

The *Work of Time* is a plea to break free from the constraints of time as we know it. The artists shift our attention to other dimensions, such as inner time, biological time, dream time, and the deep geological time of the earth. The installations focus on a different, more intense experience of time in which wordless conversations are depicted in sand, machines incite curiosity, the clock is translated into a space, and film inspires sleep.

CURATOR
ILS HUYGENS

DANILO CORREALE
NELLY BEN HAYOUN-STÉPANIAN
COMMONPLACE STUDIO,
JESSE HOWARD & TIM KNAPEN
ALEXIS DESTOOP
TEIS DE GREVE
ECOLE MONDIALE
HELGA SCHMID
JUDITH SENG
THOMSON & CRAIGHEAD
MAARTEN VANDEN EYNDE
ANDY WEIR

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[CHAPTER 1]

A TIME TO EXCHANGE: SCHOOL OF FLUID MEASURES

Standard measurements such as kilogrammes, metres, and hours suggest objectivity and independence from a given context. Nevertheless, their true meaning only unfolds in relation to a specific situation, object, space, or time.

Like social values such as freedom, individuality or safety, the interpretation of time is a construct based on the Western convention of clock time. What happens if we step away from the hours, minutes, and seconds that make up standard time and allow ourselves to be guided instead by our body, our experiences, our memories, and lived life?

School of Fluid Measures was designed by Judith Seng as a way to reflect on human value systems through embodied experience instead of theoretical thinking. In a series of performative negotiations, this installation can be perceived as a collective learning process. In *School of Fluid Measures*, knowledge unfolds over time, over the course of a conversation, and over the course of the exhibition itself.

1 JUDITH SENG Acting Things VII – School of Fluid Measures, Hasselt, 2020

Perhaps learning is less about knowing or memorising what something is than understanding how it continuously changes in relation to something else. In the *School of Fluid Measures*, fixed standards and positions are dissolved through scored interactions that leave traces in coloured sand. The patterns that emerge are an exploratory measure of the fluidity of meanings, and the colours represent exemplary social values as resources to debate, distribute, and fuse into new colours and values.

What is learning? That is the question Judith Seng explores in *School of Fluid Measures*. Perhaps learning should be less about knowing and memorising and more about understanding how everything continuously changes in relation to something else. This installation, which the artist describes as a school, explores the fluidity of fixed norms and values. According to Seng, social values – like quantifiable hours and weights – are fluid constructs. They vary in time and space and are dependent on specific physical actions.

Through an embodied process that surfaces situative intentions and relations, the sessions invite participants to negotiate the relationship between two colours and values. Viewed as a series, the sessions intend to explore ways of mediating, materialising, and notating the situated making of meanings and results in a manner that embraces the embodied fluidity of the constant socio-material becoming.

The participants' actions – scattering the sand, shifting it, spreading it out, blowing on it, or creating patterns

in it – play a crucial role. For Seng, they reveal how specific actions, interactions, and gestures can influence dialogue. She therefore regards this installation as a school that helps train the mind and that encourages us to reflect on the way we interact with the things around us.

1 JUDITH SENG Silent Negotiations

Would you like to experience a dialogue with sand and without words? In each of the 18 sessions, two people are invited to enter into a negotiation by choosing a pile of coloured sand and an associated value (freedom, responsibility, etc.). Each person chooses one value and together they define a situation before engaging in a wordless conversation.

After each negotiation a new pile of sand is created with a different colour and value. Seng presents the work as a series in which the different sessions explore how meaning is conveyed and how ideas materialise in actions and gestures. Each session is documented in video and images and with a small pile of sand as a physical remnant of the conversation.

The negotiations are guided by a Z33 staff member. To register for a session, visit www.z33.be/judithseng

2 MAARTEN VANDEN EYNDE Half Life, 2019

Half Life consists of a series of nine sculptures that represent storage containers for radioactive waste. The largest sculpture is a life-size copy of a real nuclear waste container. The second sculpture is exactly half the size of the first, the third half the size of the second, and so on until we reach the very last sculpture. At just a few millimetres, this smallest sculpture is practically invisible to the naked eye. This installation visualises the half-life of nuclear radiation. The shrinking of the containers represents the decrease, or half-life, of nuclear waste over time.

Maarten Vanden Eynde created the containers out of Boom clay, which comes from strata of clay between 200 and 400 metres below the surface of the earth. Belgium is testing this clay layer as one of the possible geolocations for storing its nuclear waste in the future.

The artist used this natural material to craft a capsule that will one day be used to store nuclear waste in the same underground location from which it came. In this way, Vanden Eynde symbolically merges form and content, and interchanges above and below ground.

Half Life was co-produced by Z33 with the support of Fabrique Ceramique, NIRAS/ONDRAF and SCK•CEN, Sundaymorning@EKWC and Wienerberger

[CHAPTER 2]

A TIME TO EXPAND: LEARNING FROM DEEP TIME

What would happen if we thought about time in terms of deep time, or geological time? What do human knowledge, language, and symbols mean in light of time that extends thousands and hundreds of thousands of years into the future? Could this new understanding help us rethink our own place and role in the current planetary crisis?

This part of the exhibition is the result of a long-term exchange between artists and nuclear scientists in Belgium. The resulting works reflect on the theme of the nuclear in relation to the notion of deep time in an attempt to visualise the unimaginably long lifespan (up to thousands of years) of radioactive waste. They explore the (in)feasibility of building eternal infrastructures and question how we can pass down information about dangerous places to future generations.

Learning from Deep Time cleverly confronts us with the limits of human knowledge and technology. In addition to engineering and science, there is a need for a broader cultural, societal, ethical, and philosophical perspective. Artists too can play a role in this as storytellers, image-makers, and creators of new myths that can connect the past and the present with the distant future.

3 THOMSON & CRAIGHEAD Temporary Index, 2016 – 2017

These vertical clocks with decorative numbers count down the seconds how long it will take for a nuclear waste site to be safe again. The document on the table describes the location each countdown clock refers to, which ranges from underground repositories to places where nuclear disasters took place, such as Chernobyl. The latest addition to this series is the clock for the Category A site in Dessel, where low-level nuclear waste will be stored as of 2024.

Data collected by scientists working at each site was used to accurately calculate the half-life of the radioactive materials at the site. The installation reveals that we measure time through the process of image and language and encourages reflection through the direct representation of deep time or geological time. *Temporary Index* transcends the human lifespan to offer a glimpse of the staggering timeframe that makes up our universe.

4 ALEXIS DESTOOP Hourglass, 2019

This digital composition consists of a series of photographs taken in HADES, the research laboratory located some 300 metres underground in Mol.

The photographs depict organic and geological elements encroaching on our human environment, which may one

4day overtake it completely. We see water seeping through cracks, clay forcing its way in, and concrete rusting in the presence of oxygen. Instead of focusing on the ingenuity of this unique feat of human technology and engineering, the work emphasises the impossibility of designing buildings that can last for eternity.

The other elements refer to the slow, geological processes of rocks, stones, and minerals. The slow time of these geological transformations makes our human passage on earth seem almost insignificant.

4 ALEXIS DESTOOP Chronos, 2020

The second part of this work focuses on the human dimension, on the impossibility to comprehend the breath-taking scale of geological transformation or to grasp it through human language, images, or intellect.

4 ALEXIS DESTOOP Untitled (Naji), 2017

In the Aboriginal creation story (Dreamtime), the Naji play an important role as the creators of humankind. These mythical creatures live in the sea and occasionally assume a solid form to roam the land.

Joined by members of the Gool-arabooloo community, the artist followed one of the few remaining living songlines, or ancient Aboriginal walking trials. In these songlines, the landscape is more than just lines on a map – it is where places, rivers, or caves come to life in mythical stories that help pass down knowledge over generations.

During this journey along the coast of North-Western Australia, Destoop became fascinated by the many brain coral they found washed ashore. These ancient and fragile life forms, which can reach the age of 900 years old, are under serious threat of climate change. Destoop collected these abstract skeletons and transmuted them into sculptures made of precious metal. In this installation, they appear as mysterious beings that emerge from the oily depths that contain them.

5 ANDY WEIR Pazugoo, 2020

How can we share our knowledge with the hundreds and thousands of generations to come? How can we tell them they're standing on a repository for nuclear waste? These are just some of the questions Andy Weir poses in his research project *Pazugoo*.

He was inspired by local myths and legends, many of which have been passed down from generation to generation for hundreds of years. This results in new archaeological figures (*Pazugoo*) that bear a message for the future. The

figures, like the myths that accompany them, can be passed down for generations. Used to mark potential repository sites, they are intended as archaeological artefacts for generations to come.

Pazugoo stems from Pazuzu, the Mesopotamian demon of dust and contamination. As a god, he straddles two worlds, issuing a warning and offering protection at the same time. His likeness was often buried near entryways or worn as an amulet.

The artist infuses each exhibition with local stories, imbuing the universal message of *Pazugoo* with local myths and legends. This installation features a new prototype, which the artist created based on his research on the nuclear sites in the Mol and Dessel area. The winged *Pazugoo* was given a new shape in this context, inspired by ancient meteorites and local elements from the Kempen landscape, such as ancient burial mounds and the many legends and stories inspired by this mythical blue stone known as 'Blauwe Kei'.

[CHAPTER 3]

A TIME TO UNWIND: UNLEARNING CLOCK TIME

Minutes, hours, and days fly by. The clock ticks away and time is money. This last chapter of the exhibition explores the paradoxes and conflicts of our contemporary perception of time. The artists and projects in this final installation shift the focus from acceleration, fragmentation, and efficiency to slowness, duration, rest, and even sleep. In this sense, A Time to Unwind is a place to both learn and unlearn what we know about time. It offers a rediscovery of the meaning of free time, which is central to the original Greek meaning of σχολή (skholè) or 'school'.

To the Greeks, this word referred to the absence of 'work time'; to a time in which economy and politics were set aside and the focus shifted to collective studies. These days, school time is increasingly defined by measurability and efficiency; however, these works highlight other time dimensions, such as non-Western time, biological time, sleep time, or dream time.

In conjunction with each other, the two opening exhibitions *The Time of Work* and *The Work of Time* explore the relationship between space and time in Z33 as a home for the arts. Can art, or an exhibition create a shared time-space for attention, learning, and dialogue? And can a building, with the tactile and austere qualities of Francesca Torzo's design in mind, facilitate the transition from the business of daily life to an open and public learning environment?

6 COMMONPLACE STUDIO JESSE HOWARD TIM KNAPEN A Commonplace Book, 2018 – 2020

A Commonplace Book is an open information machine that combines the pleasures of note-taking, curiosity and sharing knowledge. The work is devoted to a topic that concerns us all: how we understand, perceive and deal with time. On one side of each table a selection of time-related objects is presented to spark curiosity. On the other side sits a mechanical drawing machine which produces excerpts, drawings, quotes or anecdotes that further challenge our understanding of time.

Visitors are invited to compile their own book with the fragments presented to them here, but also to continue filling the blank pages with their own thoughts, notes or research. The result is a personal book that is not published in a traditional form, but is composed in many different iterations.

7 ECOLE MONDIALE Fieldstation: Time, 2020

In 1905, King Leopold II laid the foundation stone for his Ecole Mondiale building project in Tervuren. This school provided training for businessmen, adventurers and explorers who aspired to a colonial career. The École Mondiale mainly intended to prepare the students for the exploration of new regions.

Today, we don't have to go and explore the world anymore, but perhaps we should learn how to take better care of it. That is what the Ecole Mondiale (EM) of Filip Van Dingenen and Ive Van Bostraeten aims for. They create an alternative teaching method for their 'school' that searches for middle ground between thinking and doing, between knowledge and practice, between art and learning. The school is always set up in temporary environments, like here at Z33. The activations of EM are called Fieldstations.

For *Fieldstation: Time*, EM collaborated with two artists from Lubumbashi (Democratic Republic of Congo): Alain Nsenga and Jean Katambayi. The installation investigates how the concept of 'time' is experienced and thought about differently in different cultures. Several ideas, voices and sounds come together here. Contemporary artists and leading 'time' philosophers like Borges and Einstein come into contact with the absent voices of our shared colonial history. In this way, Ecole Mondiale tries to develop alternatives for the dominant Western concept of time.

7 **ECOLE MONDIALE**
Re-enactment of the 2nd Pan-African Congress, held in August-September 1921 in Brussels + EM Alumni

In this EM set up, the central space in the monumental hall of Z33 is interpreted as an agora. This central square of ancient Greek cities was a place where Greeks spent their free time conversing and learning together. A re-enactment of the second Pan-African Congress, organised in Brussels in 1921 with Paul Panda Farnana as one of the main figures, is re-enacted around a tapestry of sand.

In Swahili, 'kumbuka' means the act of remembering, which plays an important role in this *Fieldstation: Time*. Without navigating ideological waters and judging history by today's standards, a number of key figures such as Paul Panda Farnana, Albert Kudjabo, Paul Otlet, Jessie Fausset, Bergson, Borges, Einstein and the participants of the Pan-African Congress are brought to the stage. Surrounded by hourglasses, we hear a fragment of Albert Kudjabo, a Congolese volunteer who fought in the Belgian army during WWI. It is the oldest recorded and preserved voice of a Belgian war veteran.

7 **ECOLE MONDIALE**
Jean Katambayi, Plasma-Plasmodium

Jean Katambayi Mukendi mixes his practice as an artist with a fascination for mathematics and electromechanics. Contemporary life in Congolese society, colonial history, personal experiences and absurd coincidences are the ingredients for complex formulas and algorithms that he devises and extensively calculates. He then incorporates these inimitable but intriguing theories into imaginary sculptures or drawings.

This drawing is an abstract translation of a formula where Katambayi started off from the collision of the plasma of the world with Plasmodium, the microorganism that is one of the carriers of the malaria virus. Subsequently, African dictator Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo and French president Macron were also introduced as elements in the formula. The formula led Katambayi to discover what he describes as 'malaria politique'.

7 **ECOLE MONDIALE**
Lubumbashi Tijd – Temps de Hasselt

Although time is perceived differently in every place and at any moment, the time we experience is always the same, here and in Lubumbashi. By seeing time as something equal, as something we share, our perspective changes and we realise that not only time, but also the political use of time is a construction, which could be looked at differently.

The three sound fragments in this installation each invite us to listen to 'other' experiences of time with narrators Pie Tshibanda, and Walter Mignolo, and a collection of sounds from Lubumbashi.

8 **NELLY BEN HAYOUN-STÉPANIAN**
I am (Not) a Monster,
Feature-length Film, 2019

What is knowledge and who has control over it? In times when Marine Le Pen and Donald Trump are so popular, this question is more urgent than ever. It is necessary to understand why such people do well, and why people tend to return to authoritarian regimes over and over again. That is why Nelly Ben Hayoun-Stépanian takes the writings of the German philosopher Hannah Arendt as her starting point. The fact that Hannah Arendt is regarded as the most important political philosopher of the twentieth century is partly due to her analysis of totalitarian societies and her characterisation of 'the banality of evil'. By this she meant that people can become monsters the moment they stop thinking. Unlike Arendt, Ben Hayoun-Stépanian regards knowledge and thinking as the same, and involves cultural contexts all over the world.

On the basis of Japanese puppetry and interviews with, among others, Noam Chomsky, Pussy Riot, Magid Magid, *I Am (Not) A Monster* brings the legacy of political thinker Hannah Arendt to life and goes in search of the origins of knowledge and the state of ideology in our contemporary society.

The artist has created a most urgent film, unravelling some of the reasons why Trump, Le Pen and others have captured people's imaginations by reviving past ideologies. From dangerous plots to dangerous actions, you will hear about our collective fears both past and present but also encounter the contemporary monsters and actors of the future: the humanoids. Your guide in this adventurous journey is the alternative educator Nelly Ben Hayoun-Stépanian who, armed with puppets and dressed as Hannah Arendt, teases the greatest thinkers of our age whilst challenging them to an impossible pursuit: the search for the origins of knowledge.

Cast Political activist Noam Chomsky, Pussy Riot's Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Hannah Arendt's students Arjun Appadurai, Leon Botstein and Richard Bernstein, nonsense artist Nobumichi Tosa of Maywa Denki, robot maker Hiroshi Ishiguro, Japanese Living National Treasures: Bunraku puppeteer Kanjuro Kiritake II, kimono master Takayuki Takahashi and Noh Theatre master Hisa Uzawa, the Lord Mayor of Sheffield Magid Magid, cyborg artist Neil Harbison and many more – students, alternative schools and brilliant thinkers.

8 **NELLY BEN HAYOUN-STÉPANIAN**
Hannah Arendt Handmade Doll

This Japanese Banraku doll of Hannah Arendt as well as her kimono were handmade by the artist according to traditional Japanese techniques. As the protagonist of the film, and together with her sister, the doll of Pussy Riot's singer Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, she travels around the world in search of knowledge.

8 **NELLY BEN HAYOUN-STÉPANIAN**
I Am (Not) A Monster -
Limited-edition record

Nelly Ben Hayoun-Stépanian proposes a new model, in which her film *I Am (Not) A Monster* is distributed on record in collaboration with The Vinyl Factory. In her own words: 'As we develop further narrative formats and structure, we – content creators, directors and independent filmmakers – have the power to modify the way that industries interact with each other.'

With a pluralistic philosophy in mind, it makes so much sense to integrate more industries into release plans so we can connect younger audiences, music lovers and vibrant nightlife supporters with cinema lovers and academics.'

9 **HELGA SCHMID**
Circadian Dreams, 2020

Circadian Dreams was developed by Helga Schmid as part of her ongoing artistic research on Uchronia (defined as temporal utopia). In this installation the space acts as a clock. Twelve minutes represents one circadian day of 24 hours, each minute representing two hours. A light and sound scape relates to your body phases, with a bright blue tone that activates you, an intensive red-orange which makes you sleepy, and darkness which brings you to a sleep/dream state.

The work investigates an alternative time system in relation to the human body clock by investigating the topic of time through an interdisciplinary approach of design, chronobiology and chronosociology. The Uchronia Manifesto defines the ideas and intentions behind this new temporal approach, which opens up possibilities for a new politics of time.

Please come in, feel the influence of sound and light, listen to your body rhythm and the whispering voices, and dream about other ways to spend your time.

In collaboration with Piotr Ceglarek (sound and light) and Mále Uribe Forés (space). The project is kindly supported by Savoir Beds and Led Flex.

10 **DANILO CORREALE**
No More Sleep No More
2014 – 2016

Throughout his artistic practice, Danilo Correale has been interested in looking at sleeptime or unproductive time as one of the last possible sites of resistance to the capitalisation of time in the 24/7 society. The colourful and dreamlike imagery of the film is the result of a period of sleep deprivation the artist experienced himself. The images are juxtaposed with a series of conversations with various experts on sleep, including a doctor, anthropologist, sociologist, as well as feminist and post-colonial studies scholars. Throughout these conversations, Correale's sensorial essay investigates the corporal, social and political dimensions of sleep. The installation invites the visitor to lie down, take a rest and let themselves be overtaken by the flow of images, sounds and voices in this four-hour-long video marathon.

11 **TEIS DE GREVE**
A Ditto, Online Device, 2020

With *A Ditto, Online Device* De Greve investigates the contrast between the constantly changing flow of online data and a slow medium such as print. The installation consists of two desktop printers which were hacked so that they can decipher words. The printers are set to not work with blank sheets of paper, only with pages that already have content. Visitors can feed paper into the printer. The installation scans the pages and searches for related content on social media and online news feeds. The printers start from a glossary of topics and concepts related to time and the current time crisis.

The result appears in real time on the existing text, but can be different each time, depending on what is 'trending' that day. Because the information on Instagram or Twitter is constantly changing based on algorithms, the printers never give the same information twice. With this machine, De Greve wonders what happens to knowledge in a time where data is constantly traced and measured, where everything is cut up into words, tags, search terms and in which algorithms learn to understand our thoughts, feelings and desires ever better.

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