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Edited by Katherine Atkins and Kelly Kivland

Artists on Artists Lecture Series
Dia Art Foundation
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A Landscape of Time

A picture held us captive. And we couldn’t get outside it, for it lay in our language, and language seemed only to repeat it to us inexorably.
—Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations

METHODOLOGY

To begin, I would like to read a statement by Tom Burr that I think clearly situates both the intentions of Dia Art Foundation’s Artists on Artists Lecture Series as well as some of my own working methodologies, which to a very large extent work with an understanding of art as a form of art history.1 By reading this I will try to justify why artists commenting on other artists’ work is not entirely dissimilar to the work that they commonly do in their own studios.

Artists look at other artists. We hear ourselves across time and on the other sides of walls, working, not working, listening, painting, speaking, not speaking. We watch what we make and how we make it. We search for clues, for substance, for stimulation and connection. When we work out and through each other we tangle our language together and produce new sentences, distinct syntax. Our tendencies and our preferences, our ideas and various ways of placing those ideas, our styles even, seem to need the company of each other. There is a politics to placement, and alignment, and company. And there is a genealogy created out of manifestos, practices and love poems, out of close encounters in our immediate surroundings, and out of a trans-historical crush.2

Tonight’s talk will hinge on what Burr refers to as the entangling of languages, a poetic way of referring to the concrete consequences that

Louise Lawler, Still Life (Candle), 2003
I would like to focus on a lesser-known project by On Kawara—a series of impermanent installations and accompanying publications under the name of Pure Consciousness (1998–, see, for example, pp. 47, 55, and 57). Initiated in Australia for the Sydney Biennial, the project has since been enacted in twenty-four other locations. Each iteration includes seven paintings from Kawara’s Today series (1966–2013, see, for example, p. 49), which are placed on the walls of a kindergarten classroom. The installations vary in length from one day to approximately two months, during which no explanation is given to the children about the artworks. In fact, Kawara insisted that the paintings not be used as teaching aids, preferring instead that they merge with the young students’ “everyday existence.” Booklets that document these presentations feature black-and-white photographs of the chosen classrooms and inhabitants.

When I first encountered the photographs in a Pure Consciousness booklet, I felt disappointment. The project’s imagery of children paired with its title seemed a little too sentimental, as if its existence had been reduced to or domesticated the fantastic morbidity of the Today works. But after looking through each successive booklet, I have come to think of these installations as far more complex and unwieldy. Both funny and deadly serious, this particular series exhibits the deadpan humor characteristic of Kawara’s practice. Pure Consciousness also functions like an amplification, a further opening up of the Today series, raising new questions about his other serial works. The deployment of his paintings has been described as redemptive;
8.2.16
George Kubler’s father, Frederick William Kubler, was born in Akron, Ohio. In Germany, he studied art history with Riegl, Furtwängler, Vole, Vise, Lipz, Mukher, and Ranke. His dissertation was completed at Werts-Berg in 1906. Unable to find museum employment in the US, he moved to Los Angeles and established a manufacturing firm. George was born in LA in 1912, the year that Rudolph Schindler wrote his manifesto on architecture, in Vienna.

8.3.16
The infinite number of points from which a point in time in relation to another point in time (and space, this additional coordinate) can have a line drawn between.

8.8.16
“The discussion of ‘influences,’ however, sidesteps the principal aim of history: ‘to reconstruct the particular problem to which any action or thing must correspond as a solution.’ The subject of Kubler’s dissertation and its requirements for solid interdisciplinary foundations shaped both his methods and his vision of history. Indeed, he spent much of his career extending and clarifying questions raised by that first study.” Thomas Reese, ed., Studies in Ancient American and European Art: The Collected Essays of George Kubler (1986).

8.14.16
Searching Verbs.

“The lab we visited was devoted to . . . well, there weren’t verbs. I looked at things, watched consoles as they were poked and prodded, and nobody there, it seemed, could even begin to explain what it was I might be doing if I were to, uh, do one of these projects, whatever it was. It wasn’t writing, and it wasn’t directing. It was definitely something, though, and they were certainly keen to do it, but they needed
slowly transitioning from one image to another. I saw this scene one year prior to my introduction to Kawara’s work in 1996.

I would like to pause and share a few stories. I was a freshman in college when I first learned about Conceptual art. It was 1982, and I was intrigued by works like Alice Aycock’s *Maze* (1972, p. 119) and *Project Entitled “Studies for a Town”* (1977) or Gordon Matta-Clark’s *Conical Intersect* (1975), which were relatively new works that pushed the boundaries of architecture and sculpture. I thought, “You can do that?” and switched from graphic design to sculpture. Later, while enrolled in graduate school at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, I was introduced to African American artists working with installations, performances, and other conceptual processes through the exhibition *Art as a Verb: The Evolving Continuum* (1988–89). Organized by curators Leslie King-Hammond and Lowery Stokes Sims, the show included art by eleven women—Maren Hassinger, Candace Hill, Martha Jackson Jarvis, Lorraine O’Grady, Senga Nengudi, Howardena Pindell, Adrian Piper, Faith Ringgold, Betye Saar, Joyce J. Scott, and Kaylynn Sullivan—as well as two men—Charles Abramson and David Hammons. At the time, I was finding more representations of Black life in literature than in visual art, and in response to that fact, I used text as image in my work. Learning about the artists featured in *Art as a Verb* and seeing their works (see, for example, p. 117), I realized that I was and continue to be a part of this continuum.

In 1990 I went with a friend to a moon-blood workshop, where a facilitator recommended that we keep a record of our menstrual cycles in a circle. That advice launched the series Drawing Blood (1990–99, p. 117), for which I engaged an I-Ching symbol of receptivity as well as two gourds from the Yoruba tradition: the material and spiritual worlds. For the last three years of the series, I produced a cumulative drawing of the whole year rather than a single month. At that particular
By the way, what did you mean by sense? Did you mean something like our senses of perception?
Sincerely.

January 16, 1966

“Janine came to my studio.”

Dear Mr. Kawara,
Was it a studio visit? If so, was it helpful? If so, was she late? I have issues with being on time, so I’d rather be forty-five minutes early than five minutes late. I’ve found that only a few people can correctly calculate traffic or subway times. It’s half an hour minimum and then you go from there. You factor in “due to an earlier incident,” which adds maybe fifteen or twenty minutes. Anyway, I hope things went well.
Sincerely.

January 18, 1966

“I am painting this painting.”

January 20, 1966

“I have decided to be alone.”

Dear Mr. Kawara,
I think I know what you mean. I think everyone knows what you might mean. Still, I’ll assume that this statement’s genesis concerns being an artist. Can an artist be alone? There are too many calls to make an appearance. Isn’t it also true that a work is a vehicle for a relationship? I imagine you’ve been successful. Not in necessarily being alone, but in creating an ideal amount of space for yourself. I admire that and I envy you. I can’t explain it, but the deeper I go, the further I want to retreat.

When I think about artists who deal with this and present a way of moving, I think of you, Cady Noland, and David Hammons. But it just isn’t practical anymore, right? No interviews. You don’t go to the openings. I get it. In Dia Art Foundation’s archive, I found a
1:53 PM
Time is a fundamental factor of artistic practice. The duration required to execute an artwork may be set in advance or result from a spontaneous decision made during the working process. This time frame is often affected by material and technical properties like drying times for paints, exposure times for photographs, and setting times for clay and plaster. When works are developed over a long period, their parameters may remain constant or be altered as the works pass through various phases.

This text pairs On Kawara’s Today series (also referred to as his Date Paintings, 1966–2013, see, for example, p. 197) with my World Time Clock series (2008–, see, for example, pp. 193, 197, and 201), two bodies of work in which temporality is inscribed into their execution. Conceived as lifelong projects with unchanging parameters, Kawara’s paintings and my photographs both stretch the timescale of production and furthermore address time as a theme by reflecting the moment, the present, the elusive perpetual now.

1:54 PM
Kawara followed a precisely defined time for executing his Today series: either completed before midnight or destroyed, each painting was made in the course of one day. After starting the series in the mid-1960s, he continued to focus on the day as a unit of time for the remainder of his life.
Silence continued to accompany many of the slides. The postcard images included several views of a Coca-Cola billboard in Times Square.

Coca-Cola.

Cityscapes, some repeated, and a couple bullfighting images appeared with a sequence of Kawara’s Date Paintings. The sequence concluded with the postcard of the fox.

Next, Steinbach recited a few lines from Beckett’s “What Is the Word.” His voice ranged in volume with a cadence that shifted between steady, matter-of-fact moments to sing song declarations. Long stretches of silence broke up the statements. Steinbach’s recitation was accompanied by images of Quito, a fox, and the Statue of Liberty, and several Date Paintings.