

Curatorial Text: Time After Time

Curators: Jaro Varga & Zuzana Jakalová

Opening: 24 November, 7 p.m.

Exhibition duration: 24 November 2016 – 8 January 2017

Artists: Manon de Boer, Kara Rooney, Ben Landau, Cristina David, Martin Vongrej, Marie Lukáčová & Jakub Roček, Viktor Frešo, Rona Stern, Khalifa Ababacar Dieng, András Cséfalvay, Caroline Kryzecki, Jaro Kyša, collaboration: Jonathan Ravasz

Text Contributors: Sarah Jones, Yonatan Raz-Portugali, Roswitha Schuller, Jaro Varga, Christina Gigliotti, Zuzana Jakalová

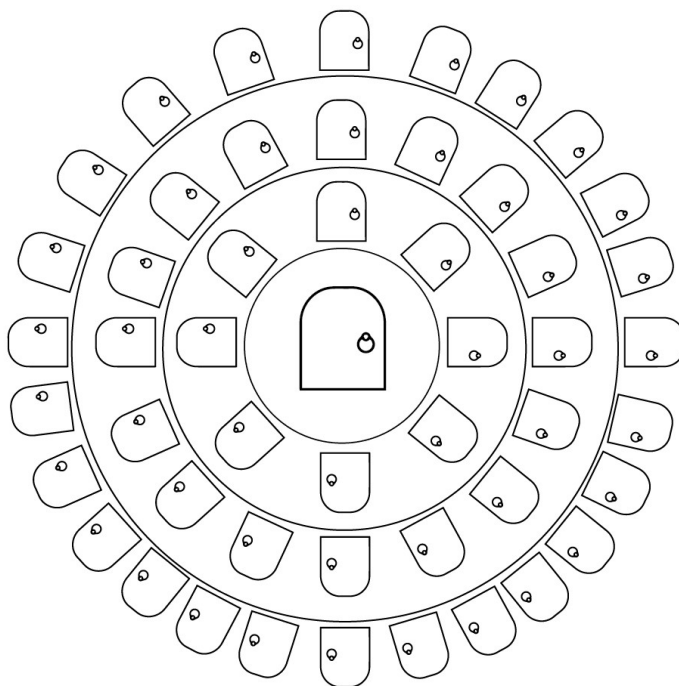
Nietzsche's concept of "eternal recurrence" became the opening idea of Milan Kundera's novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, as well as of Alan Lightman's *Einstein's Dreams*, or of the *Time After Time* exhibition. Time flows by in eternal circles and all keeps recurring forever, even the repetition repeats itself. We are convinced of the unique and individual quality of each moment, not knowing that we experienced it many times before and are going to live it again and again in the future. Each word will be uttered again in the same context and each sentence will acquire the same meaning. Eternal recurrence. We believe in the uniqueness of moments that disappear forever and will never come back. Forever we are caught in the illusion of the passage of time.



On 2012-12-21, the world came to an end. One month before that we still tried to quickly satisfy as many desires as possible, visit friends and we managed to say hello to our whole family. We ate everything in our fridge, paid all bills, honored our debts, cancelled our Facebook and Twitter profiles, terminated our employment, finished the texts we had started writing. There was no time for complex thinking. We intuitively discarded anything we wished to get rid of. We led lengthy discussions on which location would be the most proper for us to round off our existence: Stonehenge,

Egyptian Pyramids, Machu Picchu, etc. All the tried and tested destinations occurred to us. Finally though we abstracted away from this idea and decided in favor of a snowy hill on top of which we would build a snow pyramid. We would spread out around it in a circle and count seconds till the end. Meanwhile I read *Einstein's Dreams* by Alan Lightman and I learnt that we found ourselves in a similar situation also on 26th September 1907. We stood in the square in front of the Kunstmuseum in Bern, and made a big circle holding hands. At the present moment, not moving or speaking, in absolute silence we expected the last minute. What is the present moment? According to Derrida, the time dimension of the present is closely related to the belief in a "full" meaning. The meaning is intrinsically determined by the relation to another, which is not present, which is either a past or a future. The present moment is not original and independent, but just one moment in the space of repetitiveness. In the complicated network of representation (past and future), which the present is made of, we find nothing original (new). An escape is impossible, getting out of this mirror labyrinth and encounter the immediate, living present. The present is an illusion, a dream dreamt by the inhabitants of a labyrinth. It is always mediated by the past and the present, it is the future of its past and past of its future.

Not moving or saying a word, in absolute silence, at the present moment we awaited the last minute. the following morning we experienced a feeling of rebirth and total mutuality. The end seemed to be postponed forever. Let me go back to Derrida who says that the dependence of the present on the future is given by the supplementary representation. This supplementary representation points at other representations and is ever being postponed. In order to set this never-ending deferral of meaning in motion, our consciousness must focus on something fictional. By this focus on a fictitious meaning the consequences of practicing this attitude are being corrected. Our fictional idea of the end connected with the correction of results that will happen in the near future and are after all responsible for the endless deferral of the meaning – for the never-ending postponement of the end.



Pedro Damián in Borges' story *La otra muerte* behaved like a coward in the Battle of Masoller, devoting the rest of his life to atone for that shameful moment of weakness. From the bottom of his soul he kept saying to himself: If the fate had it and got me into the battle again, I would know what to do to deserve the chance. With indistinct hope he kept waiting for forty years for his "battle" to come and was finally granted it in the hour of his death, in the form of a feverish hallucination. In agony, Damián lived his battle again, leading the last charge and a bullet hit him straight in his chest. Redeemed by his long suffering, in 1946 he fell in the lost Battle of Masoller, which actually happened at the turn of winter and spring in 1904. According to Borges, a change in the past does not mean just changing a single event or happening. It is impossible to delete a remote past without cancelling the present at the same time. Yet it means to cancel the aftermath of the past, which has the tendency to multiply ad infinitum. Borges thus creates a double history. In the first one, Damián died in Entre Ríos in the year 1946, while in the other he fell at Masoller in 1904.

Ancient Egyptians had quite a different perception of time. Instead of the past – present – future they applied a dual time, *neheh* and *djet*. Our current language lacks words that would approximate these meanings. *Neheh* was a cyclic time, related to the Sun God *Ra*, who each morning rises above the horizon and sinks below it at evenings. In the symbolic sense, this kind of time represented repetition, return, rebirth, the never-ending cycle of Nature. Every evening the Sun dies and returns into the Underworld, to come to life again the following day. The Egyptians understood this concept of time in a broader context, likening Death to the setting Sun which will be born again, not necessarily in its original substance, but maintaining the eternal principle, represented by the Sun God *Ra*. *Djet* was, in contrast to the moving time *neheh*, unmoving, static, lasting forever. *Djet* represented the dead Osiris, the ruler of the Underworld. While *neheh* was the solar time, *djet* was a time called "chthonic" (subterranean). *Djet* did not represent linear time. It was a time finished in the past yet existing at the present simultaneously. For instance the Egyptian Pyramids and mummies should prevail forever in their absolute (once achieved) state, the state of *djet*. *Djet* might stand for the present filled with the "full" meaning that is not being postponed again and again, forever.

I must go back to the story beginning and make some corrections. On 2012-12-21, the world came to an end. One month before we still tried to quickly satisfy as many desires as possible, visit friends and we managed to say hello to our whole family. We ate everything in our fridge, paid all bills, honored our debts, cancelled our Facebook and Twitter profiles, terminated our employment, finished the texts we started writing. In the hope that the world end might not happen after all, I hesitated for quite some time whether or not to cancel my Facebook profile. Although I knew that all my friends cancelled it I just suspended it temporarily to reactivate it in case the end of the world would not come. I had a panic fear of terminating my whole Facebook life. Next morning, when we experienced a feeling of rebirth and total mutuality, I pretended joy, but I was in fact haunted by remorse that I had deceived all my friends. I left for a while and deactivated my profile permanently hoping that nobody would notice. Similar to Damián, I too was given the chance to cancel the consequences of my past and prevent their endless multiplication. Should I like to associate my banal Facebook example with *neheh* and *djet* then *neheh* would stand for the endless cycle of logging in and out of the social network. While the temporary deactivation, which I

did in order to save my profile would represent “that” deferral of meaning, so characteristic of our perception of the present. *Djet* would stand for the permanent deactivation of my profile, achieving the state of quiescence, invariability and eternal nonexistence. Thus achieving the real end, which lasts.

Right now when finishing this text I am convinced that new sentences and paragraphs sprang up but what I actually did was reducing the text, deleting, so it was gradually disappearing before my eyes until it totally vanished. My memory of the blank page before I started writing was in fact a foreboding of the future. My time flows like a movie running in reverse. Here all memories are forebodings and forebodings are memories. I remember almost nothing but I can foresee the future. The memory, on which I build the meaning of the present moment, is empty. My intuition, quite on the contrary, is full of images.

Jaro Varga

The part of the exhibition is a special project *Pivot* by Markus Hanakam and Roswitha Schuller at Kostka Gallery.

Open daily 1 – 8 pm and according to the evening program. Voluntary admission fee.

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