

The Time Machine: a Multiscreen Generative Video Artwork

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Abstract

‘The Time Machine’ is a multi-screen, high-performance, generative video art installation based around multiple low-cost computer platforms. Using algorithmic selection of palindromic loops of timelapse video the work contrasts the external, machine perception of time with our internal, phenomenological experience of it. The video feeds, recorded from around the world, tick and tock backward and forward creating a polyrhythmic, 12 screen time-piece. The images loop back and forth on each screen of the installation, creating a large polyrhythmic clock of high definition, full-color motion. Each screen detailing a passage of time from around the world, captured, frozen, forward and reverse. The time-lapse loops slowly switch, selected from over a thousand separate pieces by generative algorithms on each host computer. Creating a Time Machine reflecting the world, gently rocking back and forth with a myriad of sub-cadences, confronting the viewer with the unanswerable challenge of comprehending time.

Introduction

The work uses looping time-lapse video shot in locations around the world to engage the viewer with a discussion on the experience, rhythm, repetition and flow of time. Running across multiple monitor screens the installation senses the audience and in response creates palindromic video loops from high resolution time-lapse video. The video feeds, recorded from around the world, tick and tock backward and forward creating a polyrhythmic, multi-screen time-piece, a video-clock locked in receptive, slowly evolving loops. A Time

Machine reflecting the world. The backward and forth looping of the video feeds engage the viewer with both the reassurance and the discomfort of seeing the world as “clock-time.” The mechanistic vision that time is something created and measured, governed and ruled externally to ourselves and external to our experience.



Fig 1. *THE TIME MACHINE* 2017, Daniel Buzzo multi-screen generative video installation, Copyright the author.

The piece is a companion to the 2016 dual screen installation “What Do We Know Of Time When All We Can Know For Real Is Now?” [1] [2] Exhibited at events such as “Digital Futures,” Victoria & Albert Museum, Computer Art Congress 5, Paris ACM MM at OBA in Amsterdam.

The work “The Time Machine” contrasts the external, machine perception of time with our internal, phenomenological experience of it. The notion of ‘clock time’ is a powerful and extremely widely adopted metaphor for what can be argued as the most fundamental element of experience. [3] Time links all things we see and perceive, from our earliest awareness of our own physical growth and mortality to more

subtle realizations of the narrative procession of events and even the concept of causality. [4] The complexity of dissembling what this experience means has been wrestled with for millennia, as Augustine of Hippo asked in 400AD

"What then is time? If no one asks me, I know: if I wish to explain it to one that asketh, I know not." ^[1]_[SEP] St Augustine's *Confessions*, Book IX

The model of time we have in daily life treats the ideal of "Now" as a special moment, though this may be particular to humans. It gives the notion of the "unfolding" of the universe and shows time as a continuum. [5] Human convention may dictate we travel along this because, as Augustine of Hippo postulated in 400AD, humans have fallible perception and cannot see the world as it truly is. Augustine argues, how can that which is not real (*the Future*) become real (*the present*) and then become unreal again (*the past*)? The evidence and the balance of the philosophical argument is for procession and flow. What Heraclitus, and subsequently Nietzsche described as *all is chaos and becoming*. However, clock time, an external mechanical, industrial notion of time, has become dominant since the turn of the last century. [6] The patterns and rhythms seen are considered cyclic, oscillating and reciprocating like the cogs and gears in a clock. Even the movements of stars moon and planets around us are considered as an orrery, a child's instructional toy to describe the universe.

This work presents this mechanical clock fiction direct to the viewer. Folding half a dozen different types of time together in a multi-screen video form. Time lapse video from different time zones shifted and collated together, sunshine alongside moon light, dawn next to the falling of dusk. The video loops back and forth on each screen of the installation, creating a large polyrhythmic clock of high definition, full color motion. Each screen detailing a passage of time from around the world, captured, frozen, forward and reverse. The time-lapse loops slowly switch, selected from over a thousand separate pieces by generative algorithms on each host

computer. Creating a slowly evolving and changing time machine. Gently rocking back and forth with a myriad of sub cadences, confronting the viewer with the unanswerable challenge of comprehending time.

References

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Biography

Dr. Daniel Buzzo is a media artist, interaction designer, researcher and senior lecturer in Digital Media and Creative Technologies in UK, Netherlands and Hong Kong. He is a founder member of the Creative Technologies Lab at the University of the West of England and program leader of the Master program in Creative Technology.

His experimental interactive media art work is intimately bound in time, temporality and lens-based visualization. He constructs and uses experimental cameras and data visualization systems for urban imaging, street photography and visualization.

He publishes and presents widely and his work has been shown at international exhibitions, galleries and conferences including Digital Futures at Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Computer Art Congress, Paris; International Symposium of Electronic Art (ISEA) Colombia; DataAesthetics at ACM MultiMedia, Amsterdam; GENART XX, Italy; and Carbon Silicon at Oriel Sycharth Gallery.