Nosbaum Reding
Luxembourg | Bruxelles

Reality is uncertain

04.27.2016 - 06.11.2016

Artist
Markus Hoffmann

Reality is uncertain
Exhibition View
Nosbaum Reding, Luxembourg, 2016

Gallery Nosbaum Reding
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?Time is out of joint: it is off the hinges assigned to it by behaviour in the world, but also by movements of world.? (1)

Our personal memory of the past is a prerequisite for us to be able to imagine the future. Intellectual time travel is fuelled by autobiographical remembrance, which is why young children and people with Alzheimer?s disease find it harder to envision potential events to come. (2) Somewhat analogously, rock sediments are retentive witnesses of a geological past. A profile cut from stone allows us to access the planet?s past and, consequently, to make predictions for its future.

Fuelled by today?s paradigmatic desire to control our environment, we are not satisfed with merely forecasting the future. We aim to design it ? be it in terms of experience, biochemical and social life, or our planet?s climatic atmosphere. Whether the deliberate life-altering technologies modifying our physical and psychological selves, or the involuntary (yet not innocent) reconfgurations changing the Earth irreversibly and heralding in the era in which human-made impacts affect all aspects of life around us: Our choices today impinge on our tomorrow. All the same, the effects of our decisions ? whether desired or accidental ? can only be anticipated through analogies of past in uences and their impacts operating in our present.

One of the past thinkers (and, in the wider sense, designers) foreseeing the increasing influence humans would have on their lebensraum was Nikola Tesla. In 1916, he wrote: ?But the time is very near when we shall have the precipitation of the moisture of the atmosphere under complete control?. (3) While his intention was to praise the ?medium of electricity?, today we understand that Tesla?s hunch was indeed a precise, if rather sinister, premonition.

Admittedly, we may acknowledge the principle, yet the concrete causal chains of action and reaction seem to remain diffcult for us to understand. Reason may be the vastly different time scales of our own individual lives (and that of humankind) compared to the age of the planet (and of the universe). When making that profile cut of a rock, fossil witness of diachronic time, in the here and now, the picture we receive will only move beyond partiality when seen in conjunction with past events. Today?s visible structure of our rock is only readable in relation to its past and to various points on that diachronic timeline. And so zircon minerals, the oldest matter presently found on Earth, may shed light on past processes oscillating between steadiness and decay. Yet their relative time continues to pose challenges for our anthropomorphic perception of chronology, confrming our incapacity to fully grasp ancestral eras. While zircon may be extremely durable ? suffciently so to store radioactivity ? eventually it will fall into decay.

Not least since the advent of photography do we know that the human eye (and brain for that matter) cannot be trusted. The eye cannot discern infnitely small nanoparticles, just as the brain cannot grasp infnitely large lapses of time. Thus applying the technological prostheses we have available while twisting their use to make the effects of time perceptible through laboratorial acceleration ? or radioactivity through human-incubated mushrooms ? may be our best shot at approximating knowledge of the past to conceive possible scenarios for the future.

? Stefanie Hessler

(1) Gilles Deleuze?s quotation from ?Hamlet? in Cinema 2: The Time-Image, 2005, originally published 1985, London / New York: Continuum, p. 39.
(2) Donna Rose Addis, Alana T. Wong, Daniel L. Schacter, ?Age-related changes in the episodic simulation of future events?, Psychological Science, 2008, 19(1): 33-41.
(3 Nikola Tesla, ?Wonders of the Future?, in Collier?s Weekly, 2 December 1916.

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