



## THE WORK OF MEMORY COLLAPSES TIME

A reponse to the exhibition *THE TIME TRAVELLERS*

by Janique Vigier

"[For] At the hour of death you become a celebrated film star," writes Clarice Lispector in her final, consummate novel *The Hour of the Star*. Here she presents a strange paradox: one falls out of time while simultaneously transcending it. Time doesn't change, but our relationship to temporality changes through death. In death one becomes defined as a historical object, while at the same time haunting the future as pure image. By becoming an ever-returning, timeless image, one achieves the distributed subjectivity of celebrity. Lispector's claim is close to Andy Warhol's famous dictum, "in the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes", but ultimately Warhol and Lispector's concerns are opposed: he with life, and she with death.

In *The Hour of The Star*, as with all of her novels, Lispector grapples with time's implications for language and the construction of identity, and struggles toward their expression: How can we account for the lapse between experience and perception? Can we ever experience the present, or only ever the memory of it? The narrator, Lispector's male alter ego, frequently pauses the narrative to remind us of the passing of time, or to chastise himself for failing to capture the momentary, Lispector's long-lived obsession.

*The Hour of The Star's* narrative—through which the self-reflexive Rodrigo S.M. tells both his own story and that of Macabea, a poor, giftless female urchin from northern Brazil—is made up of instants and moments. The fragmentary structure of the text (and of its narrator, who frequently describes himself as such) grafts experiential time to narrative time, breaking with traditional temporality. Time is taken as the basic category for human experience—not only as constituent of the physical world, but also through the myriad ways by which humans use it regulate their lives. However, in Lispector's view, in order for time to endure, it must do so in all time: the past, present, future. All of these are equally "real," or in other words, happen simultaneously, forming an organic whole. Lispector, then, does not interpret time as either unidirectional nor as an irreversible flow. Time for her is "agua viva"; it lives and moves like a moving stream, because it is not only the object of experience in a constant state of flux, but also the experiencing subject.

*THE TIME TRAVELLERS* presented at PLATFORM centre for photographic + digital arts, questions and challenges the idea of time as unidirectional and irreversible. Through photography and video, artists Sarah Crawley, Annie MacDonell, and Mandy Malazdrevich present a variety of temporal perspectives in which time appears as prismatic and internally dissident as we intuitively understand it to be.

Time travel—a narrative strategy typically reserved for Nicolas Sparks novels and tired science fiction plots—has the potential for hokeyness, and is, as such, easily dismissible. However, at its best, it provides an alternative to the straight line of time's narrative; a space to explore the fissures and lacunae of time.

Whether for revenge or regret, time travel always attempts to fulfill the desire to change the past. Sarah Crawley's series *The Dead Album*, an empty photo album with only the images' accompanying captions left on the pages, implicitly engages with the desire to restage the past. Here, the viewer becomes composer, re-creating the image in the frame based on the caption—a theatre of the mind. This form of engagement mimics the act of reading a novel, in which words conjure images, each image particular to the reader's own subjective imagination. Crawley eschews the physical photograph and simply presents photography's framing accoutrements. Each viewer fills in the void of the past with their own imaginative caprice.

"Confusing signals, the impurity of the signal, gives you verisimilitude," said Donald Barthelme of the use of juxtaposition in his fiction, which he thought of as collage. The regimented chaos of his work holds its own internal logic, each fragment dispatching multiple presents. Mandy Malazdrewich's *Family Histories* submits the banal family photo to a series of material re-interpretations. The artist manipulates old family photographs, first by hand altering and removing the figure of each, then by placing them within different contexts, re-photographing them using a pinhole camera. This methodical and complex process ensures that the once-familiar points of reference and relationships are skewed.

Annie MacDonell's video *The Fortune Teller* is an intimate look at time as it passes. The work's subject and object, an antique fortuneteller hand, immediately conjures a series of question related to time, speculative possibilities and future(s). The futurity implied by the object stands somewhat counter to the work of repair and conservation shown throughout the video. One of art's main occupations is resisting the flow of natural time. Museums and collections select and uphold certain objects—artworks—taking them out of public use to protect them from the deleterious forces of time. The fortuneteller hand is strange and even funny in this context because of its divinatory status.

It is no surprise that photography and video, intrinsically time-based but not time bound, are the mediums taken up within this exhibition. Photography's perfection of a reality effect, its ability to produce images as preserved indexes of "real" time, forced a long-overdue recognition: reality is not the same as realism. By exploiting the inherent tensions between objects and image, the works in *THE TIME TRAVELLERS* mine the gap between the reality of time and our experience of it. Like Lispector's celebrity, these images are displaced in time.

**Sarah Crawley** is a visual artist who lives and works in Winnipeg. In her art practice she works with ideas generated from lived experience using different photographic technologies and materials. She is currently interested in the impact that place has on identity and has been using pinhole photography, with its long, slow exposures to explore this complicated relationship. Landscape, climate, seasonal changes and quality of light as well as built environment and cultural history together shape her investigations as they all subconsciously play a role in the development of identity. Sarah Crawley has exhibited across Canada in solo and group shows as well as internationally and is recipient of many grants and awards.

**Annie MacDonell** is a visual artist whose practice includes film, photography, sculpture, installation and sound. Her work deals with exhausted ideas and images, and the conventions of display as they exist in relation to art and the space of the gallery. She earned a BFA from Ryerson's School of Image Arts, in Toronto and an MFA from Le Fresnoy, in Tourcoing, France. She has shown work and screened films internationally. Currently, she teaches in the photography department at Ryerson University.

**Mandy Malazdrewich** is a visual artist, working predominantly in photography. She is also an archivist with a particular interest in photographic records. Though firmly rooted in contemporary photographic practice, her work often engages with historical images and also involves the use and consideration of historical photographic approaches and processes.

**Janique Vigier** is currently the curatorial assistant at Plug In ICA and an independent writer and curator, having most recently curated the exhibition *Instructions for 59 Drawings, Raymond Roussel with Jeff Funnell* at RAW Gallery (Winnipeg). She is currently working with Chris Kraus to present a performative lecture and seminar. She is interested in the use and meaning of language, and the translation of this process into visual art. She currently resides in Winnipeg, frequently found in the homes of others.

## THE TIME TRAVELLERS

Sarah Crawley  
Annie MacDonell  
Mandy Malazdrewich

Curated by Collin Zipp  
Written Response by Janique Vigier

## EXHIBITION

15 April - 28 May 2016

## OPENING RECEPTION

Friday 15 April | 7 PM

## ARTIST TALK BY ANNIE MACDONELL

Sunday 28 May | 2 PM

**IMAGE** | Mandy Malazdrewich, *Family Histories*, 2015, c-print

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