FrameWork 3/16

Georgina Jackson on Brian Groombridge

The White Rabbit

The White Rabbit in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) appears muttering "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!" The pervasiveness of his anxiety alarms Alice as he proceeds to jump down a rabbit hole, and, into Wonderland. Alice's White Rabbit clings to his pocket watch but the time is never right, it is always too slow.

Four Chairs

In Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965) the question of the veracity of the object and what constitutes its signifier destabilizes. Its description is as follows:

> A chair sits alongside a photograph of a chair and a dictionary definition of the word chair. Perhaps all three are chairs, or codes for one: a visual code, a verbal code, and a code in the language of objects, that is, a chair of wood. But isn't this last chair simply . . . a chair? Or, as Marcel Duchamp asked in his *Bicycle Wheel* of 1913, does the inclusion of an object in an artwork somehow change it? If both photograph and words *describe* a chair, how is their functioning different from that of the real chair, and what is Kosuth's artwork doing by adding these functions together? Prodded to ask such questions, the viewer embarks on the basic processes demanded by Conceptual art.

> "The art I call conceptual is such because it is based on an inquiry into the nature of art," Kosuth has written. "Thus, it is . . . a working out, a thinking out, of all the implications of all aspects of the concept 'art,' . . . Fundamental to this idea of art is the understanding of the linguistic nature of all art propositions, be they past or present, and regardless of the elements used in their construction." Chasing a chair through three different registers, Kosuth asks us to try to decipher the subliminal sentences in which we phrase our experience of art.[1]

However the division of the work into different categories within museum storage asserts a compulsion to cling on to these matters.

In Support

In her exploration of function, Céline Condorelli begins with Denis Vasse's "corporeality of speech," where "the voice is located at the articulation of body and discourse." It is this space where "listening's back and forth movement is made," which is crucial. She continues:

> Everything starts from this intuition: that what I define as support structures can release potential, and that support is not to be reduced to a reactive, symptomatic, and redeeming gesture, but that through its uttering we may be able to hear the unspoken, the unsatisfied, the late and the latent, the in-process, the pre-thought, the not-yet manifest, the undeveloped, the unrecognised, the delayed, the unanswered, the unavailable, the not-deliverable, the discarded, the over-looked, the neglected, the hidden, the forgotten, the un-named, the un-paid, the missing, the longing, the invisible, the unseen, the behind-the-scene, the disappeared, the concealed, the unwanted, the dormant.

[1] Publication excerpt from *The Museum of Modern Art, MoMA Highlights*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, revised 2004, originally published 1999, p. 257.

In order to follow this fragile lead in almost darkness, the unequivocal alternative is not to think about support, but—tautologically perhaps—be supportive to it, and think "in support." There can be no discourse on support, only discourse in support. This choice, taken without reservations, entails a rejection of survey, investigation, and analytical study (the study of a subject from a hypothetical outside which positions work on and about its subject but can never speak with it) for the performance of its primary proposition ('I support'), can only talk in action through the voice of support.[2]

24/7

In *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, Jonathan Crary refers to the plans of a Russian/European space consortium in the late 1990s to put orbit satellites into the sky to reflect sunlight back onto Earth. The plans were unveiled to outcries from environmentalists, scientists and astronomers on the multiple impacts of the absence of night. He continues:

> Defenders of the project, though, asserted that such technology would lower nocturnal use of electricity, and that the loss of the night sky and its darkness is a small price to pay for reducing global energy consumption. In any case, this ultimately unworkable enterprise is one particular instance of a contemporary imaginary in which a state of perpetual illumination is inseparable from the non-stop operation of global exchange and circulation.[3]

The division of time is critical. But as Crary states "[b]ehind the vacuity of the catchphrase, 24/7 is a static redundancy that disavows its relation to the rhythmic and periodic textures of human life. It connotes an arbitrary, uninflected schema of the week, extracted from any unfolding of variegated or cumulative experience."[4]
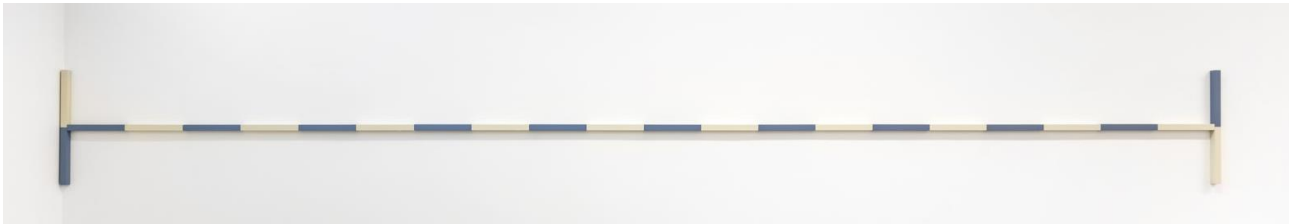
dd/mm/yyyy

Each of the works in the exhibition are titled *dd/mm/yyyy*. This standardized time, or is it, becomes a stand-in for alterations, switches from one medium to another. The silhouette of five divergent standard batteries with indecipherable codes stand out in grey with a yellow background. Their life span not denoted through their form and their structure exists as a temporal manifestation. Downstairs the division between an orange base and its supported object becomes moot, and in the corner a surveyor's line is broken into cream and blue but the measurement holds to no standard.

It is here where Kosuth's four chairs emerge into discussion, where time becomes what we need or think it to be, and where support structures have continual potential, we just need to follow the white rabbit.

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[2] Céline Condorelli, *Support Structures,* New York and Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2009, p.13
[3] Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, London and New York: Verso Books, 2013, p.5.
[4] Ibid., p.8/9

Susan Hobbs Gallery