



SITE Santa Fe Exhibit Focuses on Time

Pasatiempo, The New Mexican

Michael Abatemarco

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Current events: *Currency*

For New York-based artist Mary Temple, the passage of time is punctuated by a daily ritual she has been engaged in, without missing a single day, for more than five years. Her project, *Currency*, is about time and specifically about our time now, today. The somewhat ambiguous title carries with it a sense of time in its present moment and a sense of the political arena that forms the backdrop for the global financial market. Should you walk into the space housing Temple's daily drawings, each a portrait derived from news stories circulating on the internet, the most recent is dated within a day of your arrival. Working in the evenings and then sending a digital scan of the image to SITE, where it is printed and added to a grid on the wall, is a commitment in itself. To engage in the project for the length of time that Temple has takes discipline.

"Most things that are worthwhile are also very difficult," she told *Pasatiempo*. "It is really difficult, particularly when I travel. But when I'm in the studio for a good block of time, I don't find it at all burdensome. I love having a small amount of time each day where I know what the direction is going to be in the studio. I find that very grounding. The rest of the day is up in the air – what might happen, what might fall apart."

Temple's project deals with time in a matter-of-fact way. The drawings are arranged chronologically in a calendar grid, separated by month. The calendrical arrangement begins with Nov. 1, 2011 because of space considerations. By the end of the project's run at SITE, it will chronicle nearly seven months in the political life of the world. Each drawing takes up only a fraction of the paper it is drawn on, and the drawing's placement relative to the top or bottom of each page is a subjective choice that depends on whether Temple feels the story conveys a sense of hope for humanity at large. Less hope, the further down on the page. One notices that images of Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad are often placed near the bottom.

"Attaching oneself by your artwork to something that's exterior, like a news project, can bring much to the table," Temple said. "I see my project as responsibility. I am going to bear witness today, and I take that very seriously." Temple is careful not to allow her work to become satirical in tone or her drawings to become caricatures of the people (mostly politicians) who are her subjects. The commitment to honest portrayals means separating facts from ideological slant. Though her titles are an amalgam of the caption of the photo her drawings are based on and the news headline, Temple avoids sensationalist viewpoints. "I confess to being a liberal, but when I read something that's conservative it will sometimes temper my thoughts. I try to really take in both sides."