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Time, And Again

SITE Santa Fe exhibition loops past, present and future.

Matthew Irwin

Moments into a media walk-through of SITE Santa Fe's exhibition Time-Lapse, I'm mentally preparing to retract comments I made about the absence of active culture in museums [The Curator, Nov. 9, 2011: "Where Culture Happens"], when a SITE employee approaches.

Artist Mary Temple has been explaining her process for the installation Currency. Every day, she draws a portrait of a public figure from online news, then presents the image on a white square with text combined from the headline and the photo caption. The squares hanging together form a calendar; each event seems relegated to a single day, rather than part of a cumulative dialogue. Moreover, I feel the imposition of global affairs on everyday events—public affairs enter a private record of remembrance and reminder. Temple placed her last entry 30 minutes before we arrived, she says.

As I note this, the SITE employee nears, and I know she's going to tell me not to lean on the wall. I smile politely and stand up straight. But then she tells me that ink pens are not allowed in the museum. I look at her with contempt and take two steps forward, my mind now preoccupied with another SITE opening when, at closing time, that very same employee rushed me out the door. This is why culture doesn't seed in museums, I thought at that time: strict rules and condescending staff.

Refocusing on the present, I recall, with a sense of irony, Director Irene Hoffman's introduction to Time-Lapse, given in the lobby: SITE, she says, hopes the exhibition invites visitors to return. Consisting of four central artists, a performance space and a web project, the exhibition changes constantly. Cameras document all the activity and replay it on monitors. I think this is creepy, so the point has been made: We relinquish privacy in public places, especially when viewing high-value items such as art.

The tour group enters the Time Capsule Lounge, a performance space that forces me to acknowledge the exhibition's potential to go on endlessly. I resolve to follow Time-Lapse on Twitter and SFR's blog, then summarize it in a future column.

Still left on the tour: Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's audience-participation pieces (Microphones and Pulse Index); Eve Sussman/Rufus Corporation's experimental film whiteonwhite:algorithmicnoir; the web-based March 2012 project.

I cruise through them, promising to return, but then stop at Byron Kim's Sunday Painting. Weekly, Kim prepares a one- to two-line diary entry over a painting of the sky. The canvases hang side-by-side in the gallery, a length of wall waiting for updates. Digesting one entry about a domestic quarrel, my mind returns to Temple's work. If Currency imposes the public on the private, then Kim's elevates the private to the universal.

Next to me, a board-member-type woman with a SITE name badge tells a man with a name tag not to lean on the wall, saying she wouldn't want him to dirty his jacket. He says that it's old, and he doesn't care. In my notebook, I write these words: "In what time do we exist if our minds are not with our bodies?"

Tralfamadore, Buddhism, that SITE employee.” I’m obsessive.

Returning to the lounge, I find Meow Wolf performing on the subject of lag—by the time an experience registers, it’s already gone. The artistic duo SCUBA breaks down paper with water on a transparency projector, the images dancing with the shadows of modern dancers. The space-time films *A Trip to the Moon* and *La Jetee* screen on the wall next to them.

The crowd becomes another performance piece, which I title “The Santa Fe Scene You Never Knew Existed.” Maybe it’s the free wine, but I’m falling in love with the diverse and lively crowd at SITE Santa Fe—with the culture, in other words.