

MORGAN LEHMAN

526 West 26th Street, 4th Floor, New York, New York 10001



HiLo Art: “Temporality – The Process of Time,” Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Rockland, Through February 23

By Alan Crichton on January 28, 2020



Installation in the CMCA galleries featuring works by Grace DeGennaro and Carly Glovinski

The planets have spiraled throughout the universe for trillions of years and will for trillions more, whether we humans care, or exist, or not. Feels overwhelming at times, how small we may seem in all this — specks within specks within specks — but don't be discouraged about it. Don't let it get you down. Amazingly, we get to be here!

Without us deciding to measure these planets' speed and persistence, one could actually say that there is no time per se; there is just spiraling motion of objects in endless space. Time only occurs when we sentient beings observe and measure their rates and revolutions and steadily record their progress with pendulums, wristwatches, even atoms. We call that time in the general sense, and, interestingly, we create it freshly every day.

Solar and lunar calendars, the three interlocking cycles of the ancient Maya, the Egyptians shooting for eternity, and then our current calendar, established somewhat arbitrarily in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII, reveal an abundance of workable postulates that space and particles will persist. Sounds a bit like art to me.

And that brings us to the exhibit "Temporality — The Process of Time," currently at the Center for Maine Contemporary Art. Beautifully assembled by Associate Curator Bethany Engstrom, Temporality is the second in an ongoing series of exhibits addressing current themes in contemporary art, alternating years with CMCA's Biennial.

The 14 artists here approach and interact with the progression of time, whether by marking or creating or observing it — methodically, lyrically, anonymously, abrasively, solemnly, joyously.

In Amy Stacey Curtis's fascinating video "Visage II" (2016), larger-than-life, superimposed faces of 99 friends and the artist herself calmly, rhythmically count from one to 100 over two minutes and 44 seconds. The composite face with its soft edges and voices forms a sort of compressed community creating one gray and vibrating being, speaking number after number almost in unison with 99 others. Quickly grasped as an idea, the impact only really sinks in by stopping to listen and watch the chorus run its inevitable course. There is humor and humanity plainly hidden in this compact package of time.

Gideon Bok's paintings beautifully record the constantly changing studio activity from his viewpoint at the easel. Color-piled palette and turpentine bottle occupy the bottom foreground, while a ghostly electric guitar and random people suddenly appear, then fade back into the paint. LP record covers strewn about the floor evoke songs the paint has heard. "Uncle Charlie," a full skeleton and comical memento of mortality, lounges in a rocking chair, sometimes cradling a small, white sleeping dog. Time has engagingly seeped into all Bok's paintings, several of which titled "Work in progress" may change again.

In multimedia artist Astrid Bowlby's project, "Sample(d)(r)," 13 pairs of almost identical 9-by-9-inch pieces, each representing the same quilt-like sampler, vary slightly by the time and specificity of their making. Finding the mates on the wall, walking back and forth to unlock the variations, reveals the personal nature of the artist's process: the essential simplicity of the original idea, the density of marks building the experiences in time, the methodical duplication, the discovery of unexpected pleasures as system becomes expression.

Caleb Charland's ethereal photographs reveal prismatic rainbow separations of light deriving from his overlapped common daily motions of sunset or sunrise over familiar Maine waters. The resulting colors and geometries, however, are otherworldly. With colors as delicate and transparent as spirits, they feel as transcendently cosmic as they are scientifically earthy.

Carly Glovinski's "Pressing" is a poignant tribute to the 31 victims of the El Paso and Dayton mass shootings that occurred this past August. Twenty-two large paper morning glories and nine Queen Anne's lace flowers, cut in mid-blossom, lie on the concrete floor. Viewers must lower eyes and bow heads to experience the fallen, lushly painted blooms. The flatness of paper evokes found flowers pressed into memory in thick books from years gone by, for years to come.

Danica Phelps' large ongoing project "Income's Outcomes" (2013–2019) continues her life's work since 1995, in which her elegantly beautiful line drawings of the everyday things she buys form an aesthetic system tracking the art's sales dollars (vertical lines in multiple greens) alongside the subsequent outflow dollars for the things she needs (vertical lines in multiple reds). In a careful investigation of income, expenditures, values and right livelihood, Phelps records every transaction and connection as integral to her art and traces every sold drawing for up to 20 generations of re-sale. Recently, she has turned this practice to social justice concerns — \$20,000 from sold drawings have gone to 41 different organizations working for human rights.

Curator Engstrom says, "Some of the artists worked right up to the day of installation and only saw their completed works for the first time then. If this show encourages viewers to slow down and enjoy thinking about what they see, if it raises more questions than it answers, that's a good thing!"

I wish I could speak to more of the artists in this exhibition, but time has its limits. In fact, the exhibit closes in just a month, so why not create a few hours to go, be slow, and enjoy it.