

Durational Aesthetics

時延美學

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專題：行為表演轉向與當代藝術

Abstract

The recent resurgence of interest in, and exhibitions of, contemporary and historical works of performance art, coincides with emergent dynamics in the visual arts where persistent attention is being drawn to the temporal nature of art's production, existence and reception. This essay looks at the question of the temporality of art practices, in particular examining how one might think of their duration. Through analysis of historical works and numerous current examples of 'Durational Aesthetics' the essay investigates what it means for an artwork to present life, or to be a life, and what such formations might say about the conditions of lived experience in contemporary culture and society.

Keywords: durational aesthetics, performance art, time

摘要

近年來，對當代行為表演藝術與其歷史重要作品的展示和興趣，與視覺藝術中正在浮現的動力若符合節，持續的關注，正被導向藝術生產、存在與接受的時間性質。這篇論文著力於藝術實踐的時間性問題，特別檢視了我們可以如何思考藝術實踐的時延。透過分析「時延美學」歷史的重要作品與許多當代案例，這篇論文探問：一件藝術作品呈現給當下生活與呈現為當下生活，究竟意味著什麼，或者這些相關的做法對於當代文化與社會的生活經驗，可能在提供什麼樣的說法。

關鍵字：時延美學、行為表演藝術、時間

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The problem is how to make time explicit as it comes into being and makes itself evident, time at all times underlying the *notion* of time, not as an object of our knowledge, but as a dimension of our being.

Merleau-Ponty¹

The recent resurgence of interest in, and exhibitions of, contemporary and historical works of performance art, coincides with emergent dynamics in the visual arts where persistent attention is being drawn to the temporal nature of art's production, existence and reception. Rather than focusing on art's representational orders, its formation of subjects, of relations, or its use of space, what might be gained by thinking through its manifestations of time? What does it mean for an artwork to present life, or to be a life, or to remain in the present tense? How does the current proliferation of artworks of long duration relate to the histories of such works, and what might the forms of these new works be saying about the conditions of life in contemporary culture and society?

I. The Emergence of Duration

Long durations start to be deployed in the work of a few conceptual artists in the 1960s: Hanne Darboven and On Kawara immediately spring to mind. Darboven's pieces from the late 60s take the form of large hand-drawn works often involving elaborate numerical equations or systematic textual writings. As such, they are evidently engaged with laborious and repetitive processes of inscription that admit an extended temporal dimension into the creation of the work and its reception. Similarly, On Kawara's *Date Paintings*, which form part of the *TODAY* series stretching from 1966 to the present, also act as an index of time. These meticulous paintings, fully realized only within the date on which they are "inscribed," are part of an open series proceeding with an irregular frequency throughout the artist's life.

This notion of a life sentence traced within the limits of art was already being explored most strikingly in the work of the painter Roman Opalka. In 1965 Opalka dedicated the rest of his life to a single work *1965/1 - ∞* in which he would paint increasing numbers sequentially across serial canvasses of predetermined uniform dimensions. Opalka continued this monumental work until his death in 2011. In the resulting paintings, the softly striated white numbers appear at a distance as an organic waveform, due to Opalka's use of the duration of a brushstroke; the paint is loaded onto

1. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of the Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London; New York: Routledge, [1945] 2002), 482.

the brush and the stroke is continued until the paint reserve is almost exhausted. The brush is then re-dipped. These multiple, gestural, micro-durations of art matter, waning between appearance and disappearance, take their place against the accumulating magnitude of the work. Opalka's project was adjusted in 1968 when his backgrounds shifted from black to grey, and again in 1972 with the addition of a 1% whitening of his background per painting, so that the always-increasing count was set to blend into the context of its "inscription." Opalka also created other indexes of his labor: photographic portraits of his face on finishing each canvas and mesmeric sound recordings of his voice reciting the numbers of each piece, or "detail" as he wryly termed them.

In Opalka's painterly work, number is transformed beyond its graphic determination into a sublime sea of shifted iterations. Whilst it is still framed as an indexical project rather than as a work of performance, this is perhaps the most powerful evocation of lived duration in conceptual work as a result of its consuming continuity. The addition of the existential traces of image and voice humanize and enrich what otherwise might appear as an invisible subjection to a narrowly rationalized and planar order. The fact of Opalka's death helps us to situate this work within the finite span of his life, a tie to a corporeal singularity that is sometimes lost when considering its titling with a lemniscate, or when standing (as Opalka did on a daily basis) to face the work's sublime aesthetic. This standing to account and to record does at least push Opalka's life out of the shadows in which Darboven and On Kawara linger, lending his oeuvre a certain testimonial weight.²

Long durations had also arisen in artists more associated with performance art and with body art: Vito Acconci was using duration in the late 1960s and early 1970s, if often intermittently, with longer continuous durations sometimes appearing in the work of artists such as Joseph Beuys, Chris Burden, Alastair MacLennan, Marina Abramović and Ulay. Abramović, for instance, had begun to extend the durations of her physically challenging performance works beyond the frame of the short sharp shock so characteristic of work in the early 70s. With her hair tightly bound into Ulay's, Abramović performed *Relation in Time* (1977) for seventeen hours, a durational unbraiding of two intimate bodies. In the early 80s the couple performed numerous renditions of the work *Nightsea Crossing* in which they sat opposite each other and in the presence of objects for daylong durations over periods between one day and sixteen days. Around this time Taiwanese-American artist Tehching Hsieh was enacting a now legendary series of one-year performance works. Each of these works, on

2. Much more could be said here, if space and focus allowed, about the testimonial dynamics of Opalka's work: the specific historical relation of the mark of number to orders of temporality (the durational and the recursive), and the resonance of the iteration of numbering in the European imagination in the wake of the social trauma of the Holocaust.

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which I have written extensively elsewhere, deployed a rule system that structured and restricted the artist's existence in a particular way throughout the year.³ As an evolving series of works requiring staggering discipline, personal risk and conceptual clarity, these pieces enact a sustained examination of questions of freedom and constraint, orders of time, existence and the outside, the nature of human relations and of art itself. Hsieh's long labors deployed the artistic subject's entire corporeal being, more thoroughly displacing the status of the artwork as instrumental, as a product of dexterous digital craft. For Hsieh the artwork is not just the *index* of a preceding and largely unseen duration: it *is* the lived duration itself, a lived time that includes numerous indexical forms and varying degrees of visibility.

These multiple interests in duration can be seen as both a reflection of and an address to wider cultural forces. They can also be placed in relation to previous formulations of temporality within the visual arts and in a dialogue with earlier philosophical precedents. In her study of the figurations of temporality in the art and art criticism of the 1960s, Pamela M. Lee traces the recurrence of what she terms “chronophobia,” an obsessive “uneasiness with time and its measure” throughout the period.⁴ For Lee manifestations of duration in the work of artists such as Andy Warhol and On Kawara presage an unsettling sense of infinity. These examples of what I have come to term ‘durational aesthetics’ are fairly inchoate at this historical point. Lee's reading of their forces and affects is particularly informed by the internal dialogue of art practice and art history, especially by a re-reading of Michael Fried's controversial and extensively discussed essay “Art and Objecthood.”⁵ Fried's polemical attack on minimalist art, whilst focusing its ire on minimalism's “theatricality”—as a form of corruption of principles of formal purity and a manifestation of inter-medial and interactive perversion—reserved its most profound objection for the phenomenon of duration. Duration is anathema to what Fried sees as the pinnacle of Modernist art's power, autonomy and self-criticality: its presentness. Fried's admiration is bestowed on an art for which, one could stress, “*at every moment the work is wholly manifest*.”⁶ Its privileged, jolting affect would then be one of “instantaneous” depth and meaning. Fried's exaltation of “the instant” takes its place within a set of associated predominant

3. Adrian Heathfield and Tehching Hsieh, *Out of Now: The Lifeworks of Tehching Hsieh* (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Live Art Development Agency & MIT Press, 2009).

4. Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2004), xii.

5. Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood” [1967], in *Minimalist Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 116-147.

6. *Ibid.*, 145. For a thoroughgoing analysis of the way in which this mythology of pure presence is later confounded by body artists, see Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 111-3.

temporal models—“the moment” and “the event” are equally paradigmatic—which can be seen as infrastructural terms of Modernity. Lee, elaborating Robert Smithson’s retort, sees Fried’s shuddering at endlessness as a manifestation of the fear of death and traces these articulations in relation to immanent systemic and technological transformations of contemporary art and culture, which for Lee open a perspective on infinity.⁷ However this association between a durational aesthetic and a sense of endlessness, which Lee affirms and pursues, is not secure when one considers later durational aesthetics from the 1970s onwards. Such durational works, as manifestations of corporeity, bring to the fore of the observer’s attention something resolutely material and fleshly, approaching, receding and continuing, whilst always being imbued with a sense of mortality and *finitude*. Moreover, endlessness can be seen as a culturally and ideologically manipulated phenomenon, when linked to and produced by technologies of Modernity and capital, whose vested interest is in the mythological maintenance of their own structures, as flexible forms of permanence.

II. Cultures of Acceleration

By the late 1970s, the allied organizing kinetic logics of capitalized temporality—regulation and acceleration—were firmly embedded in the Western social and cultural milieu, and it is with these forces that durational aesthetics can be seen as being phenomenologically and discursively engaged. In the cultural logics of late capitalism, time itself is a commodity that must be exploited to its maximum potential. As Jean-Francois Lyotard noted: “Money is nothing other than time placed in reserve, available.”⁸ This “capital time” was very evident to artists in the 1960s and 1970s for whom the exploration and use of unregulated temporalities (chance operations, contingent forms and improvisations) was a means to assert “inassimilable” values. The technologies of communication and exchange that began to shape human interactions in capitalized democracies also operated through the most economical and productive means. The contraction of physical space (and of the size of tools) that characterized technological development was accompanied by an increase in speed. If an “object” of exchange could traverse space more quickly, then more exchange was possible. The contemporary milieu of global capitalism is organized around such crossings and contractions of

7. “What Michael Fried attacks is what he is. He is a naturalist who attacks natural time.” Robert Smithson, “Letter to the Editor” in *Artforum*, October 1967, reprinted in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 67.

8. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, [1988] 1991), 66.

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space; in order to link its diverse international agents and institutions the system must bridge the discrete temporalities of global subjects, pressing work life through social life and into worldwide simultaneity. High velocity has the primary value in late capitalist technological operations and communication itself is increasingly subject to acceleration.⁹ The time and the pace of technologies become habituated, through labor and use as human time, and they are assimilated into a subject's ways of being and physical rhythms. As such, acceleration can be seen as disciplinary operation whose very object is to be forgotten as an exterior order of time, to hide its active conditioning of the subject.

This objective and universal, regulated and homogenized ordering of temporality has frequently been distinguished in cultural and philosophical studies from subjective and experiential understandings of time. For the philosopher Henri Bergson, whose influential work on duration spanned a time of earlier acceleration - the turn of the nineteenth century - the deterministic scientific conception of time, of which "clock time" is an exemplary form, does not reflect and can only distort what he perceived as the inner experience of time. For Bergson this experience is resolutely inaccessible through thought and language, since it is composed of sensations, emotions and prehensions, by qualities (not quantities) in a constant and indivisible state of flux. In his early work on the subject, *Time and Free Will*, Bergson sought to articulate the experience of duration as a concrete, material and embodied phenomena. He termed this experience "Real" or "Pure Duration":

Pure duration is the form taken by the succession of our inner states of consciousness when our self lets itself *live*, when it abstains from establishing a separation between the present state and anterior states.¹⁰

In Bergson's thesis, though time is progressive, the past survives in the present and is only separated from it by thought. Immediate experience is a flowing form of radical heterogeneity, no sensation ever being the same as a previous sensation; *duration is a continuous movement of differentiation*. It

9. Paul Virilio has analyzed this cultural tendency toward speed in numerous publications, not only as a mechanism of capital, but as a function of the military-industrial complex and its mediatized extensions. See Virilio, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology*, trans. Mark Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), [1977] 1986); *Negative Horizon: An Essay in Dromoscopy*, trans. Michael Degener (London: Continuum, [1984] 2005). See also Peter Sloterdijk who defines the kinetic as an ontological and political project of modernity, stressing its creative and generative logics of dispersion and acceleration: Sloterdijk, "The Mobilization of the Planet from the Spirit of Self-Intensification," trans. Heidi Ziegler. TDR 50, no 4 (winter 2006): 36-43.

10. Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F.L. Pogson (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover, [1889] 2001), 100.

is this radical heterogeneity with which consciousness wrestles and upon which thought operates. For Bergson, the principal difficulty in the understanding and representation of duration was its continual suppression by space. He argued that all notions of temporality, as products of a reflective consciousness, could not deliver the lived experience of duration, since they themselves were always already spatializations (and thus reductions or containments) of its force. Moreover, to think duration was already to have ordered it through thought, to have attempted to make time an object or a thing, and thus to impose upon its complex flow a solidification, a stilling cut, a spatialization. As we shall see, the use of duration in works of performance brings to the front of aesthetic perception and understanding not only the sensate dynamics of temporality as it is manifested in human presence, but the radical heterogeneity of durations. As Briony Fer has noted, one unfortunate effect of Fried's opposition to duration was to lock it in an absolute opposition to presentness and to reduce its heterogeneities "to a singular and monolithic sense of duration."¹¹

III. Durational Aesthetics

These aspects and affects of duration can be seen as being variously deployed in works that move through lived duration as their material and content. Such works draw attention to the spatio-temporal limits of the artwork and privilege the making and unmaking of its meaning as a temporal matter. Durational aesthetics often establish a temporal measure against which the work can be interpreted, and deploy an alteration of its (culturally) ascribed terms. This may take many forms: counterpoint with cultural measure or tradition through the counter-scheduling or intervention of the work within temporally institutionalized contexts; proliferation, contraction or extension of the "proper" time of the work; variations or discordances in its conventional rhythm, punctuality and speed. The term "durational" is often used then to indicate an artwork that draws attention to its temporal constraint as a constitutive element of its meaning. The meaning of the word duration itself, evolving from the Latin *duratus* [to last], is bound into the notion of persistence, of remaining through time, and is separable from but shadowed by the term endurance, often associated with sufferance. "Endurance art" was frequently deployed as a nomination in relation to early performance and Body Art, with its use of the body *in extremis*, but appears somewhat overloaded if applied across the broad spectrum of contemporary durational aesthetics, as it assumes the experience of pain as a

11. Briony Fer, "Some Translucent Substance, or the Trouble with Time," in *Time and the Image*, ed. Carolyn Bailey Gill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 71.

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primary focus and suggests that this phenomenon is incorporated precisely in order to be overcome. Endurance, especially as it is used in relation to other human performances such as sport, is associated with heroism, and thus a set of narrative operations that are inherently critiqued in much durational work. Here, duration is often deployed as a means to disturb or suspend narrative resolutions and consolidated identities.

Long durations can be contrasted with the temporality of “eventhood” ascribed to much performance work (though they of course could never be free from its force). Extended duration lacks the distinction that separates the event from the mundane, the everyday: the bracketing off and casting out of experiences into the domain of the “uneventful” through which the event, as heightened experience, must necessarily be constituted. Resisting time’s spatialization in cultural measure, durational aesthetics deal in the confusion of temporal distinctions—between past, present and future—drawing the spectator into the thick braids of paradoxical times. Bergson’s distinction between the thought of time and its experience is powerfully operative here. For the spectator, an aesthetics of duration is marked by an engagement with phenomenological time, with time as it is felt as a force and product of relational and inter-subjective exchange. Crucially duration is a kind of entanglement (the very affect Fried found so distasteful in Minimalism—its inability to leave the spectator alone). As Mieke Bal notes, the quality of the visual object subject to duration is a kind of “stickyness”; such works stick around—they persist in time—and stick to their spectators, conditioning a tactile attentiveness.

One might say then that duration nearly always involves the collapse of objective measure. Whether it is short or long in “clock time,” its passage will be marked by a sense of the warping of time, an opening of regularity to other phenomena or inchoate orders. Duration will often be accompanied by the spatial senses of expansion, suspension or collapse or by reverential, chaotic or cosmic phenomena, as notions of temporal distinction are undone. Time arises in duration in its indivisibility and its incapacity to become an object of thought, analysis or representation. Durational works may then often manifest, prompt or even integrate a discourse on those necessarily failed forms of thought, memory, knowledge and representation that attempt duration’s resolution, stilling or fixing. Taking these affects into account, aesthetic duration might then be better defined as *a sense passage in which attention is drawn to (a) time reforming*. Duration, as perturbation, has the force to question the notions and senses of passage, succession and continuity, the integrities of the moment to moment,

that form the grammatical structure of commonsense understandings of time and hence its wider cultural rationalization. Taking time itself as a malleable phenomena and subject, the experience of durational works often makes us aware that time is in part a product of structures of thought; moreover, that our perceptions and understandings of time are a cultural construct, and as such open to revision.

In particular long durational works such as those of Hsieh and Abramović can be read through what Lee acutely identifies in the closing passages of *Chronophobia* as an “ethics of slowness,” a laborious commitment in a cultural context of acceleration to a different pace and understanding of creative generation.¹² For if speed is the principle order of energetics in an advanced capitalist economy, stalling the instantaneity of relations between artistic intention and effect, act and representation, the passages of the work and thus of its reception, becomes a primary means through which to question the values that are embedded and concealed within such passages. The social powers that order and maintain cultural knowledges and experiences of time inevitably try to hide and naturalize their force, to make invisible their operations upon the social body. The accelerated temporality of late capitalism is now deeply inscribed in Western social practices and relations, the entire cultural-technical milieu and in the very being of subjects. De-naturalizing and de-habitualizing perceptions of time, durational aesthetics are a vital means through which the nature and values of these powers may be opened, their regulatory grip loosened. In their attention to and playful subversion of the orders of time, durational aesthetics give access to other temporalities: to times that will not submit to Western culture’s linear, progressive meta-narratives, its orders of commodification, to the times of excluded or marginalized identities and lives, to times as they are felt in diverse bodies. Time, then, as plenitude: heterogeneous, informal, multi-dimensional and multi-faceted.

IV. Contemporary Durations

Looking across the diverse scenes of contemporary performance and the current proliferation of artworks that deploy long durations, a number of distinct trajectories within durational aesthetics can be identified. The first trajectory coheres around works that deploy acts of writing and reading in extended durations, and thus have a particular address toward the cultural situation of textuality, narrative organization and the force of the poetic. I am thinking of works such as Fiona Templeton’s

12. Lee, op. cit., 307.

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Cells of Release (1995), sited in an abandoned panopticon-penitentiary in Philadelphia, in which Templeton worked in a long residence over six weeks, writing in relation and response to the site but also to actual cases of unjust imprisonment; each cell being dedicated to a particular prisoner of conscience, each cell being occupied by the artist for a day. The exhibition is simultaneous with the work process, which involves a stream of consciousness poetic meditation expressed through a continuous line of paper woven through the prison space: a line of conscience and consciousness connecting separated cells, incarcerated bodies, historical locations to present elsewhere.

Illustration 1

One can see strong correspondences here with a more recent work like Barbara Campbell's *1001 Nights Cast* (2005-2008), a net-based instructional performance, taking place over the duration of 1001 nights. The artist organized a series of writers who responded to a painted prompt of a phrase taken from the artist's daily reading of Western print news on the Middle East. Contributors were charged with writing a responsive 1,000 words story within the day, which was then performed at sunset on that day by Campbell and broadcast live over the web. A large network of writers was engendered by the project, which was oriented towards creative relay and re-invention as a mode of interdependence and survival. Similarly invested in narrative and fictive structures, Forced Entertainment's often repeated 6 hour performance *And on the Thousandth Night ...* (2000 but still being shown) is a durational work in which a large group of performers play a game of improvised story telling in which the only rule is that you must continue with your story until another performer tells you to stop. The work builds up a vast inter-textual edifice in which rhetorical strategies and metaphoric assertions are tested, in which micro-narratives interrupt, reference and transform each other over time. Each of these works deploy lived relation as a mode of co-authorship and the opening of certain textual conventions, undoing narrative integrities and closures through their extension, multiplication, and dissemination. Each explores what duration gives to the textual, and in particular the implicit ethical contours of this opening of writing to sustained enunciation and social dissemination.



1 Fiona Templeton, *Prison Sentences*, 1995. Courtesy the artist and Bill Jacobson. Photograph © Bill Jacobson

Illustration 2

The second trajectory concerns artists whose early work has been associated with Body Art, with the exploration of the body as art matter, its opening and mutation in order to challenge conditions of subjectivity and identity. In such works the individuation of bodies—and consequently of subjects—is often dissolved through the sensory appreciation of corporeal co-presence, and acts of carnal misuse and expropriation come to usurp some of the automatism of the body's biologically and socially designated functions. Recent works of these artists have however, moved away from the shocking instance of a sacrificial act towards contemplative sensory works of sustained duration. In Julie Tolentino's *A True Story About Two People* (2009 Essen) the artist dances barefoot and blindfolded for 24 hours continuously on a square of grass, inside a small semi-mirrored booth, supported or unsupported by the arms of participants. The action is reminiscent of the dance marathons of the great depression and the booth in which this action takes place echoes sex work booths, but perturbs their scopical regime. The frame bisects the dancing figures, inside the space of the dance the walls are mirrored glass reflecting back to the performers swaying and distorted versions of their coupling unseen by spectators.



2 Forced Entertainment, *And on the thousandth night...*, 2000.
Courtesy the artist and Hugo Glendinning. Photograph © Hugo Glendinning

Illustration 3

Distorted intimacy is also apparent in Ron Athey's *Incorruptible Flesh: Dissociative Sparkle* (2006) a six hour durational work in which the artist is pinioned and penetrated: his eyes and cheeks pulled open into a startling grimace at sparkling disco balls orbiting above whilst he is firmly lodged on a baseball bat for the duration. The concatenation (and inseparability) within the figure—of the bat in the rectum and the over-opening of sight - suggest a certain relation between pleasure, violence and enlightenment. Spectators are invited to ease Athey's transit by giving massage. Kira O'Reilly's *Stair Falling* (City of Women Festival, Grubar Palace, Ljubljana 2010), in which the artist takes 6 hours to fall in exquisite slow motion down a long staircase, is a performance whose muscularity, control and analytic physicality suggests the exact reversal of this very gendered fall: falling as a careful labor of assent and ascent. Each of these works is concerned with the choreography of relations in duration and with what one might think of as a resistance to the kinetic fate of the subject. They each deploy duration to inhabit a sensory field of co-being within a suspended and extended movement relation: the long dance of meeting and parting. Stillness and stuckness are counterpointed with the dynamic movement of touch and enlightenment; the feeling of falling is held together and turned upside down.

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3 Julie Tolentino, *A True Story About Two People*, 2009. Photograph: Adrian Heathfield

Illustrations 4 and 5

The third trajectory - traced very briefly here as space is short - coheres around the exploration of duration in film and digital media. One might draw some genealogical lines from Warhol's locked-off, flat documentary 16mm films of still moving figures and architectures in works such as *Sleep* (1963 5hrs 21 mins) and *Empire* (1964 8hrs 5 mins), through Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* (1993), to more recent 35mm works such as those of Sharon Lockhart in *Teatro Amazonas* (1999 40 mins). In the latter an immobile camera in an ornate theatre in Manaus, Brazil records the attentive co-presence and collective choreographic restlessness of an audience listening to a piece of minimalist music. From there the genealogy might arrive at a work such as Christian Marclay's *The Clock* (2010 24hrs) a digital montage composed of thousands of diverse length and genre film clips, all of which contain references or relations to time. Marclay's work is entirely synchronous with clock time: it works indexically as an accurate clock, moreover it is time-specific (it is only ever shown, even if portioned, in synchrony with the actual time in the location of its exhibition). Marclay's work has a hypnotic effect in part because it suspends and warps one's sense of time passing even as it constantly and repeatedly points towards the actual time. Part of this temporal warp is due to the work's constant paradox of fractured consistency: the image insistently leaps eras of production, genres, fictional situations and locations, whilst it is carefully edited to preserve certain continuities of action, figural relation, space, and most importantly sound. Amidst the formal mash up, actions, objects, sentiments, tensions and affects are seen to congregate around certain times: they are exposed as productions of the arbitrary formal construct of clock time. As a projection of an impossible continuous present the film makes felt the incommensurability of the social convention of time and the sensate flow of affects in duration.

Whilst these contemporary works take the aesthetics of duration in quite different directions, in common with the earlier works with which they correspond, they generate temporary zones of alternate attention, where habituated cultural temporal orders and rhythms are suspended, and where there is a sensorial



4 Ron Athey, *Incorruptible Flesh: Dissociative Sparkle*, 2006. Courtesy the artist and Julia Hipp. Photograph © Julia Hipp



5 Kira O'Reilly, *Stair Falling*, 2010. Courtesy the artist and Nada Zgank. Photograph © Nada Zgank

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opening of possibilities for other temporalities of being.¹³

Biography:

Adrian Heathfield is a writer and curator working across the scenes of live art, performance and dance. He is best known for his essays and books including: *Perform, Repeat, Record*; *Out of Now*; *Live: Art and Performance*; *Small Acts*; and *Shattered Anatomies*. He co-curated the *Live Culture* events at Tate Modern (2003) and a number of other durational events in European cities over the last ten years. He is Professor of Performance and Visual Culture at the University of Roehampton, London. www.adrianheathfield.net

13. Some portions of this essay appeared in an earlier form in my writing in *Out of Now*, op. cit.