

Deep-Time Construction
Curatorial Statement

Two preoccupations have sustained our efforts throughout *Deep-Time Construction*. First is the building of a show and catalog we believe in, filled by the imagination and ideas of people we look to for guidance in our understanding of art. Second is the pressing of the instrument of time in the ongoing continuum of crisis.

It is a bit of a simulacrum to examine the construction of time, deep-time in a time-based exhibition. People of the future, present, and past: we feel beholden to a simulacra, is this too conditioned within geological measurement?

Deep-time is the western scientific term for the Earth's existence, denoting its geological epoch. The Earth is 4.55 billion years old. The notion of time is naturalized, standardized, and theorized. It is introduced in lower level physics courses that time used to be a destabilized object, accounted by everything from the moon, to water, and then not at all. It is introduced in history books that time became economically standardized in the

United States and Europe with the advent of trains. Etiquette courses remind us keeping time and being on time are moral issues, signs of respect for ourselves and those around us. Do not be late. To meetings, with deadlines, for the revolutions.

And of course there is Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, Karl Marx's labor time, and Stephen Hawkings's bets on the possibility of time travel that continue to captivate us. Space-time, deep-time: measurement devices are amplified, engulfed. Space and its timeline; the earth as a measurement device.

Deep-Time Construction brings together artists who create images and texts, and use archival material to compose films that consider the fabrication of time: the forging of coloniality, the continuous uprisings and the many more to come, and the potential spaces in between. The exhibition features works by **Basel Abbas** and **Ruanne Abou-Rahme**, **Lida Abdul**, **Sky Hopinka**, **NIC Kay**, **Asma Kazmi**, and **Amanda Russhell Wallace**.

Playing with this notion of a *settled* time, the time in which settlements continue to be built, the artists featured in this exhibition strain familial forms of apprehension. The six time-based works demonstrate the potential and longing for durational experience—as movement, as a distillation, as configuration—to the reconfiguration of colonial time and measurement.

A series of commissioned essays is also part of the exhibition, with some texts relating to the specific works on view and others relating more thematically. **Nazik Dakkach, Sean D. Henry-Smith, Lindsay Nixon, Meganne Rosen, tamara suarez porras, and Leila Weefur** contributed on the work of individual artists, while **Aruna D'Souza and Jennif(f)er Tamayo** contributed thematic essays. All of the writing is co-published by *contemporary* and the Wattis, and appears on both organizations' websites.

Deep-Time Construction presents a fissure in thought and perception, reorienting the framework of revolutionary ecologies that condition the

appearance and disappearance of striated spaces and structures. Instead we witness and experience these ecologies, these forms, these other worlds, as they amplify the force of a language, a movement, a landscape, a ruin, a life felt without this time, not a time that we know but a time that we get to know, that we get to feel, that we get to live in, if just for a second. Here rhythm, frame, color, sound, the cuts, the intervals, the monologues, the picture, the word, the silence saturates the instant with breath, keeps beat with the now and what's to come. But these pieces don't let us forget what came before us, what exists without us, and what will come after us. What these works show us is not an alternative to time. We're not waiting. Something else is at work. *Deep-Time Construction* grapples with what situates us in time, how we come to embody its cadence, and yet transforms this experience into one that is felt out of synch and at another register. Transformation is real, imaged, and envisioned. The intensity of this is located from within the experiential, the embodied, the felt, the poetic gesture, the aesthetic logic. The encounter is tender yet bold. Generative but subdued.

We can't speak of time without speaking of space, and this exhibition offers a platform where we are able to process, question, and think about the urgencies that time-based videos are able to showcase. And to speak of space materially, it is no accident that *Deep-Time Construction* was commissioned and exhibited at the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, one of the few non-collecting contemporary art spaces in the United States. While we are not identical structures, we are in agreement that art spaces could enact the hope non-permanence might offer: we do not settle here. *Deep-Time Construction* and its space don't allow for this type of relation with land, with space, with frame. The works in *Deep-Time Construction* were imagined to enter, exist, and exit the structures of the Wattis; the Wattis constructed against the strictures of the encyclopedic mausoleum becomes the space in which we were able to grapple with better questions: How does deep-time reconstitute the possibility of noncolonial space? How does the image return us to a place we want to know, we dream of loving, we think of as home?

In A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging, pivotal poet and writer Dionne Brand most profoundly queries the politics of settlement and belonging. Citing Eduardo Galeano who wrote, “I’m nostalgic for a country which doesn’t yet exist on a map.” Brand responds, “Dear Eduardo, I am not nostalgic. Belonging does not interest me. One is misled when one looks at the sails and majesty of tall ships instead of their cargo. But if it were a country where you were my compatriot, then I would reconsider. And think of the things we should have to sort out.”

Brand’s text has been an anchor for our writing, thinking, editing, process. Her searing and loving critique of venerable late journalist Eduardo Galeano became a model for how we might think about the curatorial process, the “think of the things we should have to sort out” with the people we care for yet have disagreements with. Her articulation against nostalgia, against the waiting for the place to come, is a guiding political horizon. In the sourced simulacra from which we began and continue, we capitulate only belonging and venture all else.

