

THE PRESENT IS A POINT JUST PASSED

Curated by Lizzie Hughes

The exhibition brings together works that record precise moments in time. Shown alongside the artworks are historical artifacts that could be seen as the raw data that the artists collectively share an interest in. Meticulously collating, analysing and visualising data are recurring themes and the singular objects, video and sound works are the result of the combined energy of a wealth of individual units of information. Whilst firmly rooted within an analytical framework, tender moments and a delicate splendor inevitably surface from the rigour of systems and theory.

The Present is a Point Just Passed is opening in the lead up to the Olympic Games where athletes and sportsmen will endeavor to outrun fellow competitors and break past records of human endurance - if only by a fraction of a second. In The Present is a Point Just Passed time can be seen broken into units each with an equal and invariable potential for change. The selected works deal with human endeavour and a desire to chart a world that often defies a comprehensible scale.

Clockwise from the door:

AARON KOBLIN (US)

Flight Patterns

(2005, HD video, 57 seconds)

FAA data was parsed and plotted to make a work which describes the paths of aircraft over North America on the 19th and 20th March 2005. The colours within the evolving structure represent individual models of aircraft.

Koblin is Creative Director of the Data Arts Team at Google in San Francisco. He is a graduate of UCLA's Design/Media Arts MFA program. His work is in the permanent collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, MOMA New York, and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris.

www.aaronkoblin.com

LIZZIE HUGHES (UK)

The Weather in Paris in 1909

(2011 and ongoing, found postcards)

The work seeks to bring together a series of consecutively dated postcards that were sent from and postmarked in Paris in 1909. The handwritten message on each card in some way refers to the state of the weather at the time of writing. Through customary casual reference, the work reveals an unintentional record of the daily atmospheric conditions from over 100 years ago.

In 2011 Hughes exhibited in *Concrete Poetry* at The Hayward Gallery, London and received a commission from Animate Projects and the Jerwood Foundation to make a film that was premiered at the BFI Southbank in December.

www.lizziehughes.net

JAN DIBBETS (NL)

(1969, photolithograph)

Untitled - Publisher: Seth Siegelaub, New York

Dibbets' work has been the subject of numerous museum exhibitions and can be found in collections including the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Tate Gallery, London and MOMA, New York.

Unknown photographer

(1908, photograph)

The Emlyn Chimney Falling

MARTIN JOHN CALLANAN (UK)

(2009, selective laser sintered nylon)

A Planetary Order (Terrestrial Cloud Globe)

The globe shows clouds from one single moment in time: 2 February 2009 at 0600 UTC precisely. Created from raw information, it is a physical visualization of real-time data. One second's worth of readings from all six cloud-monitoring satellites that are currently overseen by NASA and the European Space Agency were transformed into the delicate outlines and profiles of the clouds emerging across the surface of the sphere.

Callanan is an artist researching an individual's place within systems. His practice spans numerous mediums and engages both emerging and commonplace technology, which he uses to explore notions of citizenship, data, information and knowledge within the globally connected world. He is currently a Teaching Fellow at the Slade School of Fine Art.

www.greyisgood.eu

JONTY SEMPER (UK)

(2001, two audio CD's)

Kenotaphion

Produced as a result of researching, locating and anthologising all of the existing archive recordings of the two minute silences from the Armistice Day ceremonies at the Cenotaph, Whitehall, London dating back to 1926.

Jonty Semper lives and works in Poland.

Documents from: The Atlas of maps and seismograms accompanying the report of the State Earthquake Investigation Commission upon the California Earthquake of April 18, 1906

(Published by The Washington State Earthquake Investigation Commission, 1908)

A text by Diane Sims accompanies the exhibition, please take a copy.

Pointing at what isn't there

What if your passage through the world today was the only enduring evidence of what happened here? Would you change your route? Would you tread more purposefully, or more softly? Would you look up more often? Would you leave any breadcrumbs along the way?

I look for patterns in an infinite system of discrete events. As collectors, do we begin to restore the order of our measured universe, or do we endlessly accumulate a miscellany of stuff and nonsense? A catalogue may be more comprehensive than a memory, but is it any more true?

It's there, just peeping out from behind the clock tower, in the black and white photograph of Church Farm in the 1960s (the one with the blurry figure standing on the roof of the dairy, which Carole thinks is probably her father).

They say we are awash with data. We keep it in pools. Data that is open flows in streams, but the data that we hide away festers in stagnant pools, becomes unconsumable, a story (or many stories) left untold. Can we ever step twice into the same data pool? Do we change it by casting our own reflection on the surface, just by looking?

We can weave stories from our data, like knitting fog, or leave it to drip through our fingers.

Was it there when I fell off my bicycle on Hart Street? I still have the scar. I know the exact spot. I remember the dip in the pavement, the green bicycle, the gravel that ended up in my knee, the torn trousers, but not that...

I try to pinpoint the moment when things changed - the fork in the path. But it's like splitting photons. I am ill-equipped. But some things I am sure of.

I know that I slept soundly on the night of Wednesday 9th March 2011. I have a graph to prove it. A single flat line amongst months of turbulence, the peaks and troughs of many restless nights, recorded by a smartphone app. The data knows I finally slept that night, but it does not know why.

I know that it snowed on my seventh birthday, in the last days of April. This is beyond doubt, because I remember it. This year our local newspaper decreed it to be the first snowy April for so-many years, but I knew that the numbers didn't add up. All my life I have been the girl who had snow for her seventh birthday. I'm not about to stop now.

It's there on the wall of the dental surgery, where I ended up after losing half a tooth on my most recent birthday. I'm no longer seven years old, and I've been away a long time. But it's there, sharing a photograph with White Hart Drive, which was still fields when I was a child. This suggests a date much later than I had presumed.

I know that there was a heavy storm on Jina's journey from Boulogne to Paris. She saw magnificent lightning from the window of the train. I know this because she sent a postcard from Paris on 27th April 1909 to Mrs Kirley of County End, Lees, Oldham. "It seems years since I left", she said. But the data doesn't tell us when, or if, she returned home.

It was here when Cherry moved to Newsome in 1978. We talked about it on the way home from the allotment.

I know that there was torrential rain during the Armistice Day silence in 1982. I know the cloud formations at 6am Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) on 2nd February 2009. I know there were 19,126 planes in the sky over North America at 4.01pm Eastern Standard Time on 20th March 2005. I know where a particular gesture was made on Friday 9th May 1969. X marks the spot. I know what the California Earthquake of 18th April 1906 looks like, as recorded by smoke and pendulums - a fine wire inscribing a record of the earth's motion onto a smoked glass plate.

I know that the first public exhibition of a Foucault's pendulum (demonstrating the rotation of the earth) was in February 1851 in the Paris Observatory, 3 months before the Great Exhibition.

I know the acoustic shape of a particular person's footsteps vibrating through a particular spiral staircase in a particular room on a particular day, perhaps in 1996. Again, the data is incomplete.

It should be there in my memory, but it isn't. Long gone, yet not so long. Some of the bricks could be propping up a shelf in a nearby cellar, or be built into someone's foundations, stepped over obliviously every day.

Does summer fall neatly either side of the solstice, the day when the sun stands still, or does it arrive on a day of its choosing, with the first smell of the elder blossom? The meteorologists say neither.

Our data has many moments. Today we measure earthquakes with the moment magnitude scale. Subatomic particles have magnetic moments, tiny magnetic fields generated by a particle's spin. A mathematical moment is a way of measuring the shape of a set of points. The moment is also now.

Where did its shadow fall? Did it stretch as far as my mother's house. Was it there towering over us when we walked up the garden path in the snow on my seventh birthday? Where was I when it fell?

Runners may be separated by a fraction of a second, yet the first man over the line knows in that instant that he has won the race. It is certain, quantifiable. Even before he breaks his stride. So how is it that we cannot even recall the year of momentous events? How is it that everyone knew the story of Joseph Beuys and the vanishing blackboard, but no-one could place it accurately in time?

Without the data, the story retains its weight. But data is smoke without the storytellers. So we must make our own records. Begin our explorations. Unearth the data. Stitch together a story from the fragments of each moment. We must look for the evidence (deliberate or accidental) and seek out the anomalies within it - and the gaps between it. That's where the stories are.

Was there a day in 1909 when no-one sent a postcard from Paris?

Are the pencil marks still there in the margins of Four Quartets in the UCL Library?

Astronomers in search of the oldest galaxies in our universe are looking for light sources that disappear (or "drop out") when recorded at a specific wavelength - they must look for what isn't there in order to find out what has been here all along.

Why do galaxies huddle together across space and time? Why do we?

One day the chimney at Newsome Mill wasn't there any more. We have lost the moment when it fell. Was it cloudy that day? Who felt the earth tremor as it hit the ground? Did anyone look up (or down) or make a gesture? Was there a thoughtful silence? Did anyone send a postcard or press record? Was there a smell of elder blossom in the air?

Maybe there is data out there somewhere, a pool of knowledge that can flow into the gaps and somehow make it all add up. The dark matter of memory.

Look away from the universe for a second then turn back. What's missing?

(The moment has passed.)

Diane Sims {72prufrocks}

25th May 2012, 11.40pm & 27th May 2012, 11.11pm British Summer Time (Greenwich Mean Time +1hr)