

ANDY PATTON grew up in Winnipeg and has lived in Toronto since 1977. He represented Canada at the Biennale of Sydney in 1984, and has exhibited at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) and the National Gallery of Canada. During the 90s he made wall paintings in abandoned factories and concrete framing silos. His works are in many major collections, among them the AGO, the National Gallery, Museum London. He is represented by Birch Libralato Gallery. With the poets Roo Borson and Kim Maltman he was part of Pain Not Bread, the poetry collaboration that wrote *Introduction to the Introduction to Wang Wei* (Brick Books, 2000.) He is currently pursuing a PhD in Art and Visual Culture at the University of Western Ontario, studying the calligraphy of the Northern Song period in China and its aesthetic, political, and religious contexts. Patton was written criticism since the late 70s; it has been crucial to his practice.

KAREN HENDERSON is a visual artist working in time-based media, photography, sculpture and site-specific installation. Henderson grew up in Scotland, leaving there to attend the Central School of Art and later Camberwell School of Art in London, England after which she completed her MFA at the University of Victoria, British Columbia in 1988. She has lived and worked in Toronto since 1989 and has exhibited work in Canada and internationally at various galleries including the Art Gallery of Ontario and The Power Plant.

KAREN HENDERSON'S TEMPORAL OBJECTS

BY ANDY PATTON

1. Blocks of Time

Karen Henderson once told me that she thought her work was about the «here and now.» But I wonder now, if that «now» hasn't become her real subject, eclipsing even the «here» that is still so crucial to her.

I keep thinking of her *Treacle Wall* (1988); I wish I'd seen it. A wall is just there, taken for granted except perhaps by architects, a way of defining space—but Karen's work seems to have been a way of creating time. She covered a wall with treacle: it must have filled the gallery with that odd off-putting sweet tar-y smell. It didn't dry. It slumped down, almost imperceptible, slowly puddling where the wall met the floor. We count on walls to be static, but here the wall—an object—slowly puddled into time. I imagine the *Treacle Wall* as an ally of Robert Smithson's *Asphalt Rundown*, that slump of tar in a dump outside Rome, an object that continued slowly to flow and bend over the rocks, gravel, and dirt, seeking its shape even when it seemed to be fixed in place.

Other, later works of Karen's compress time into an object. *Ink Drop* (2007) could be thought of as a fossil moment made from sequential images of a single drop of ink entering a pool of water, dispersing, diluting, finally blurring away. The work was produced by recording the ink drop on video; from the video, six consecutive stills were made, and each of those printed onto a clear sheet of Plexiglas. The six sheets were then sandwiched together in that consecutive order, the first closest to us, the last furthest away. Distance functions as an analogy for time: encased in its block of plastic, the single drop of ink drop funnels out, away from us in space not time.

8 minutes of skylight (2010) is another dense block: twenty-two images shot over eight minutes of blazing light seen while looking vertically up at a skylight in Melbourne. Here again, the earliest image, the one most

distant in time from us, is presented furthest from the front of the work. *Supernova* (2006) is another block of sequential images, of a supernova that appeared and disappeared over five months, the oldest image once again furthest away. The image grows in strength, then fades, the record of a stream of photons that reached us, signals of an event three and half billion years in the past, before any life had emerged on this blue sphere.

Each of these blocks could be understood as a kind of memorial to the technology of films—that series of separate but almost identical images, which, when set in motion and projected, produced the illusion of motion. But here, they're stilled, all presented at once; the images no longer separated by intervals of time. The illusion of motion is replaced by the illusion of all-times-at-once: the flower-like funnel of a drop of ink that we never could have seen that way. In a brief expanse, a moment, time is collected, summed and exchanged for space.

2. Slow Pans

She showed *Slow Pans 10am to 5pm* at Akau in Toronto in 2009—just two photographs, one installed on each wall of the gallery that the sunlight could reach. Each photo looked almost blank; each simply an image of the white gallery wall on which it now hung, a record of the light and shadow that had fallen across the wall and slowly traversed it.

But each photograph wasn't a *single* image of the wall, one portrait of one instant. Instead, each was made up of fifteen different shots of the wall: one photo every half hour from 10am to 5pm, the business hours that Akau was open. Each photo shown in the gallery was stitched together from that series of images. What appeared to be one thing, one image—one photo, of one wall, at one moment—was knitted from a multiplicity.

In the morning, the shoot began with the camera pointing at the left side of the wall. After taking an image, the camera was

panned a bit to the right to set up the next shot, and thirty minutes allowed to pass by. By five o'clock, the camera was viewing the right side. After the shoot, the fifteen different images of light and shadow on the wall were digitally assembled to make a panorama of the blank wall. Because the shoot went on from morning until the end of the business day, each finished photo was a panorama of time as well as space, a record of the light's slight shiftings, its brightening and diminishing.

Slow Pans 10am to 5pm, then, contained a record of both time and movement in space. But the movement was tiny, just a small shifting of the camera to cover a slightly different area of the wall. The time was much more expansive: a whole working day. When time and space were combined in the final print, they seemed incommensurate: a lot of time mapped onto a much smaller amount of space. It's as though the work began the job of separating time out from space.

I keep imagining what it might have been like to make *Slow Pans*, to spend all day in the empty gallery with its sunlight and shadow. To take a photo every half an hour, then pan the camera on its tripod, then wait again. If that piece in its finished state displays the gap between so much time and so much less space, then the making of it must have involved Karen in another gap too, the gap that opens gap between casual time and administered time.

The work was produced during the administered time of Akau's working hours; it required the subdivision of time in equal units, an image taken every half hour. An administration of time must have been used so that time could be shown as separated from her, from her subjectivity, her moods, her distractedness. Perhaps it's only in this way that an image of time itself could appear. Or perhaps we can only believe that an administered time is real.

And between images—what? Did she read a book? Sip tea? Stare at the wall? In between, in the intervals of a program for time, between the times when each separated image must have been taken, is casual time, which doesn't appear. De Certeau writes that this is «The time that passes, interrupts or connects (and which no doubt never been thought) is not programmed time . . . Casual time appears only as the darkness that causes an 'accident' and a lacuna in production. It is a lapse in the system.» In this work it's the time in which no image is taken, the time which is not recorded. Perhaps casual time can't appear because it is a hole in our organization of time, an administration on which our production of wealth depends.

But Karen's work required deliberately taking up this administered time; *Slow Pans* was based on the found object of Akau's business hours. The division of time into its half hour slices is also a found time. She made herself subject to these found «objects» to produce the work—though this is to imagine that someone could be perfectly free, or could be free enough to choose how they live time.

I often think artists appear to make works—objects, events, images, installations—but that what they really make are ways of paying attention. Modes that train us, for instance, in intense concentration (Cezanne) or in the distraction on which contemporary multi-tasking depends (Liam Gillick). Perhaps Karen's work is to train us in some way of fluctuating between casual time and administered time—that organization of time that this society requires of us and which it molds us to fit, and that other time which empties, frays, or disorganizes itself as the very smallest freedom, and which doesn't get to appear.