TELLING TIME

27 May – 27 September 2015

Curators: Chantal Prod’Hom and Fabienne Xavière Sturm
Scientific advisers: Karine Tissot and Arnaud Tellier

PRESS CONFERENCE: TUESDAY 26 MAY 2015 AT 10.30
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE CURATORS AND SOME OF THE CREATORS

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CONTENT
Press release p. 3-4
Book p. 5
Selection of works p. 6-14
List of lenders, designers and artists p. 15
Practical information p. 16
Partners of the exhibition p. 17

Mark Formanek, Standard Time, 2007. © Mark Formanek
In this 24 hours video that doubles as a clock 70 workers give the time in real time by assembling planks 1611 times over the course of 24 hours.
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The vocabulary of watchmaking uses poetic and evocative language to express the plethora of ways employed through the centuries to display the time – how about wandering hours, mysterious time, digital time, hands in the air or singing hours? Telling Time juxtaposes historic pieces and works by contemporary artists and designers, which all share the same desire to tell the time. The more recent creations often build upon and adapt the inventiveness of watchmakers of yesteryear. Artists and designers frequently depart from the classic way of telling the time, coming up with often witty variations. All these pieces mark the passing of the hours, and in doing so remind us of time’s inexorable onward march.

The mudac, which is the only design museum in French-speaking Switzerland, a region considered one of the global centres of watchmaking, decided to investigate the universe of timekeeping. It is the first design museum to take such a wide-ranging and cross-disciplinary view of watchmaking, bringing together in Telling Time the products of an internationally renowned tradition of fine watchmaking with the explorations of industrial designers and newcomers from the world of digital technology.

Although the tools we use continue to evolve, knowing what time it is and being able to measure its passage remain fundamental concerns; most people continue to carry something with them to help them tell the time. The exhibition underlines watchmaking’s enduring vitality after more than five hundred years, and demonstrates its extraordinary capacity to innovate and reinvent itself, producing timekeeping instruments that meet the needs of its particular era, from the invention of hands to the biometric sensors of the latest smartwatches. A series of chapters present some of the classic explorations of watchmaking, alongside others that are less obvious: daytime, night time, universal time, dials that show 24, 12 or even 10 hours, luminous hours, even secret hours.

Their features help us to draw parallels with contemporary designers and plastic artists whose works explore ways of prolonging, diverting or testing the display of time and the passage of time. Gianni Motti counts down the seconds to the time when the sun is expected to explode, in 5 billion years (Big Crunch Clock, 1999); Maartens Baas offers a video in which the time is displayed by people sweeping up rubbish, in real time (Sweepers Clock, 2009); John M Armleder reinterprets the idea of a memento mori in a contemporary watch (ART-DNA, Romain Jérôme, 2012); Ivan Argote counts off the hours and minutes in dollars or euros (Time is Money, 2007); Siren Elise Wilhelmsen measures the passage of time by the progress on the scarf knitted by her wall clock (365 Knitting Clock, 2010); Marti Guixé’s timepiece reminds us when it is time to eat by emitting food smells at the appropriate moment (Time to eat, 2011). Time is brought bang up to date, exploring the opportunities offered by ingenuity, wit, intelligent imitation and poetry. Canvases, one-of-a-kind or mass-produced items, projections and installations punctuate the itinerary through the exhibition, building up an unexpected and revealing panorama of our relationship with time and the way we tell it.

Each of these domains – watchmaking, art and design – brings its own particular resonance, its own poetry and aesthetic language. The exhibition builds bridges from one time to another, one subject to another, sometimes playfully, while highlighting the harmony and continuity between the past and the present. It is unexpected, curious and funny.

Telling Time brings together a considerable corpus of more than 150 objects from all over Europe. The historical pieces are from both private collections and major public repositories, including the International Museum of Horology (MH) in La Chaux-de-Fonds, the Uhrenmuseum Beyer in Zurich, the Musée d’Horlogerie – Château des Monts in Le Locle, and the Louvre Museum and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, as well as heritage collections from manufactures such as Vacheron Constantin, IWC and Jaeger-LeCoultre.

The scenography is a result of a partnership with the ECAL/Ecole cantonale d’art de Lausanne, and is the work of Iris Andreadis, Anna Heck, Pauline Lemberger and Jérôme Rütsche, all students on the Exhibition Design course led by industrial designer Adrien Rovero.

A book to accompany the exhibition has been produced jointly by the mudac and 5 Continents Editions (Milan). It includes all the works in the exhibition along with essays by the exhibition curators and experts in a variety of disciplines.

Telling Time will be presented at the Musées des Arts Décoratifs in Paris in 2016.
QUOTES BY THE EXHIBITION CURATORS

« L’heure est dans la vie humaine une mesure qui peut être un carcan ou un bonheur, c’est selon. Quoi qu’il en soit, l’heure est définitivement une unité de mesure, calculée par l’homme, affinée par les horlogers qui l’ont traduite en de multiples divisions au fil des siècles. Elle est à la fois une durée précise : l’addition de 60 minutes, et une perception intérieure individuelle, longue ou courte, insuffisante ou trop pleine… Si la montre l’est, l’heure, elle, n’est pas fonctionnelle comme peut l’être une chaise ; pour s’en servir, nous avons soit la liberté d’en définir l’usage, soit une contrainte de la remplir, et lui donner ainsi, des deux manières, sa fonction de repère. »

« L’Éloge de la minute mystérieuse
Cachée, parfois même absente, l’heure devient un secret. Souvent, on croit la saisir mais c’est un leurre. Par exemple, dans son avancée, l’aiguille flotte d’une minute à l’autre. Ce doux petit flou quasi imperceptible disparaît complètement dans l’affichage numérique, où le chiffre passe abruptement d’une minute à l’autre. Autrement dit, le digital nous met devant une information immédiatement définitive : il est 10:34. L’aiguille, elle, nous dit pendant 60 secondes : il est entre 10 h 34 et 10 h 35.
C’est précisément dans cet entre que se situe le mystère secret de l’exposition, et de notre intention…»

Chantal Prod’Hom and Fabienne Xavière Sturm

L’HEURE QU’IL EST: COLLABORATION WITH THE CACY

In parallel with the mudac exhibition, the Centre d’Art Contemporain d’Yverdon-les-Bains (CACY) is presenting L’heure qu’il est from 29 August to 1 November 2015.

At a time when watches are no longer needed – any mobile phone or computer can tell you the time – and the watchmaking industry nevertheless endures on the strength of its cultural, heritage and artistic value, it is only right that artists should be involved in furthering ideas in the field. L’Heure qu’il est presents contemporary pieces that are visually, metaphorically or philosophically poetic, whose function may be called into question in order to promote reflection on their nature.

The curator of the exhibition is Karine Tissot, director of the CACY and scientific adviser for L’Éloge de l’heure.

TECHNICAL PROFILE OF THE EXHIBITION

Curators
Chantal Prod’Hom, Director of the mudac, Lausanne
& Fabienne Xavière Sturm, Honorary Curator of the Museum of Watchmaking and Enamelware in Geneva

Scientific advisers
Arnaud Tellier, watchmaking historian, former director of the Patek Philippe Museum in Geneva
Karine Tissot, art historian specialising in contemporary art, Director of the Centre d’Art Contemporain d’Yverdon-les-Bains (CACY)

ECAL
Conception and execution of original scenography by Iris Andreadis, Anna Heck, Pauline Lemberger and Jérôme Rütsche, students, under the direction of Director Alexis Georgacopoulos and Adrien Rovero, industrial designer and head of the Exhibition Design course.
The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated book of over 200 pages, featuring essays by specialists in a number of disciplines. It is published by 5 Continents Editions (Milan).

The history of time display in the watchmaking industry is covered meticulously by Arnaud Tellier, who chronicles the different eras and their inventions, bearing witness to the prodigious imagination of watchmakers.

Artists, on the other hand, focus on the ‘freeze-frame’ aspect of telling the time; they take this concept and carry us beyond the bare fact of what time it is. Karine Tissot draws us into a wide-ranging panorama of the contemporary scene.

Lorette Coen, journalist and independent curator, concentrates on the work of one artist, Ivan Argote, and one designer, Maarten Baas, who are both featured in the exhibition, and shows the relevance of their voices and individuality.

Stéphane Bonvin, journalist, takes a closer look at the zeitgeist, focusing on the accessories that embellish our daily lives and shape our attitudes and behaviour.

Joël Vacheron, sociologist, is on the search for new-age utopias. He sends us into a future that the designers of The Clock, a ‘slow attitude’ icon designed to run for 10,000 years, have no doubt awaits us.

André Wyss Ph.D. invites us to explore literature and listen to the voice of the poets. He reminds us that time only has any meaning in terms of relationships within a community and the actions that take place there.

The longstanding quest of journalist Luc Debraine is to examine those periods when time is frozen by a natural disaster or historic event, making them an important component of memory.

Finally, the Director of the ECAL/École cantonale d’art de Lausanne, Alexis Georgacopoulos, comments on the challenges the students faced when designing the scenography for the exhibition, and its result.
Michael Sans, Cuckoo Clock, 2008
© Dominik Butemann

The last call of the cuckoo, crucified on the altar of digital technology…

Bertrand Planes, Live clock #2, 2008
© Lucille Blanche

The watch mechanism has been slowed down to 1/61320th of normal speed; the numbers now show the years.

ECAL/Fiona Krüger, Black Skull, wristwatch, 2014
© Cédric Widmer

Memento mori wristwatch by John Armleder,
ART-DNA for Romain Jérôme, Genève, 2012
© Romain Jérôme

Memento mori watch in the shape of skull, Vienna, c. 1820
© Musée de l’horlogerie Beyer Zurich
Wristwatch with hours, fives of minutes and tens of seconds displayed in jumping Arabic numerals through apertures in the dial. Girard Perregaux, La Chaux-de-Fonds, 1935
© Girard Perregaux. Photograph David Baumann

‘Wandering hour’ wristwatch. Hours from 6 to 12 and 1 to 6, minutes from 30 to 0 and 5 to 30, all in Arabic numerals, Le Phare SA, Le Locle, 1971
© Musée de l’horlogerie Château des Monts, Le Locle. Photograph David Baumann

Jumping hours wristwatch with Arabic numerals displayed in a window at 12 o’clock, and five-minute index markers around the edge. Vacheron Constantin, Geneva, 1995
© Vacheron Constantin

ECAL/Nicolas Le Moigne, Horloge, wall clock, 2004. © ECAL
Time on demand. A successful marriage of traditional practice and the virtual world: the random images on the iPad coalesce to display the current time when the key is turned or the cord is pulled, just as clocks were wound in the past.
Samuel Betts round watch with engraved ribbing, argent, London, c. 1650
© Musée International d’Horlogerie (MIH), La Chaux-de-Fonds

Bina Baitel, *Lash Clock*, wall clock, 2014
© Bina Baitel

The time is read off by means of slots that part the ‘lashes’, thus forming a negative image of hands pointing to the hour and minute.

Perrin Frères pocket watch with sector display, Neuchâtel, early 19th century
© Fondation Edouard et Maurice Sandoz. Photograph Renaud Sterchi

Alicja Kwade, *Gegen den Lauf*, wall clock, 2014
© kamel mennour. Photograph Fabrice Seixas

On this clock the hands remain fixed and the dial turns with the seconds.
Ressence ZeroSeries wristwatch with co-planar dial, Benoît Mintiens, Anvers, 2012
© Ressence

Officine Panerai, *Luminor 1950 8 days GMT*, wristwatch with Arabic numerals and luminous hands, date at 3 o’clock, seconds and 24 hours at 9 o’clock, 8-day power reserve at 6 o’clock, Neuchâtel, 2006. © Officine Panerai

Seiko, watch with radio and television receiver, Japan, 1982
© Musée International d’Horlogerie (MIH), La Chaux-de-Fonds

Hublot, wristwatch MP-05 *LaFerrari*, 2013
© Hublot
New stitches are knitted as time passes.

As the paper roll unwinds the time is printed, minute by minute. On the hour, a cuckoo ‘sings’ on the paper.
Humans since 1982, *The Clock Clock AP2*, clock, 2010
© Tim Meier

24 analogue clocks are arranged together to form a ‘digital’ display.

Nazar Sigaher, *Meyer Frame Clock*, wall clock, 2009

© Darren Almond. Courtesy Galerie Xippas

Christiaan Postma, *Time Pattern*, wall clock, 2008
© Christiaan Postma

Large monochromatic display where each small ‘hand’ turns independently, with the current hour appearing in letters.
Maarten Baas, Grandfather Clock, from the series Real Time, video installation, 2009.
Left: detail
© Carpenters Workshop Gallery. Photograph Adrien Millot

Eight-day watch with sliding strut-cover, Cartier, Paris, 1931
Eric Sauvage, Collection Cartier © Cartier

Pocket watch displaying daytime hours in Arabic numerals from 6 to 12 and 1 to 6 against a white background; night time hours are in Roman numerals from VI to XII and XI to 6 against a black background. Arabic minutes at 6 o’clock.
© Musée International d’Horlogerie (MIH), La Chaux-de-Fonds

Maarten Baas, Grandfather Clock, from the series Real Time, video installation, 2009.
© Carpenters Workshop Gallery. Photograph Adrien Millot
Ivan Argote, *Time is Money*, 2007. This video displays the time in real time using bank notes (here: 10:41.59) © Galerie Perrotin

Gianni Motti, *Big Crunch Clock*, wall clock (countdown from 5 billion years to the explosion of the sun), 1999
LENDERS, DESIGNERS AND ARTISTES

INSTITUTIONS
Musée international d'horlogerie, La Chaux-de-Fonds
Musée d'horlogerie du Locle – Château des Monts, le Locle
Musée de l'horlogerie Beyer Zurich
Fondation Edouard et Maurice Sandoz, Pully
Ville de Genève
Musée du Louvre, Paris
Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris
CNAP – Centre national des arts plastiques, Paris
FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims
Collection Province de Hainaut/Grand-Homu
Triennale Design Museum, Milan

WATCHMAKING PATRIMONIAL COLLECTIONS
Patrimoine Vacheron Constantin, Genève
Manufacture Cartier, la Chaux-de-fonds
Collection Privée Piaget, Genève
Patrimoine Audemars Piguet, Le Brassus
Patrimoine Jaeger Lecoultre, Le Sentier
Compagnie des Montres Longines Francillon SA, Saint-Imier
IWC Museum, Schaffhouse

WATCHMAKING BRANDS
Bell & Ross, Paris
Hermès, Paris
Hublot, Nyon
MB&F, Genève

ARTISTES AND DESIGNERS
Joëlle Aeschlimann, Mathieu Rivier, Pauline Saglio / ECAL
Darren Almond
Franz Alöy
Iván Argote
Thorunn Arnadottir
François Azambourg
Maarten Baas
Benoît Billotte
Pierre Junod, Bienna
Benoît Mintiens pour Ressence, Anvers
John Armleder pour RJ-Romain Jerome, Genève
Félix Baumgartner & Martin Frei pour URWERK, Genève & Zurich
Samsung Electronics Switzerland
Sony, Tokyo
Hannes Wettstein pour Ventura, Zurich
Kari Voutilainen, Môtiers

GALLERIES AND DESIGN EDITORS
Carpenters Workshop Gallery, Paris
Established&Sons, Londres
Frith Street Gallery, Londres
Peter Kilchmann, Zurich
kamel mennour, Paris
Galeria Millan, São Paulo
Galerie Perrotin, Paris
Galerie Xippas, Genève

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS
Aaron R.
Arnaud Tellier
A l’Emeraude, Lausanne

EXHIBITION DESIGN
Iris Andreadis, Anna Heck, Pauline Lemberger et Jérôme Rütsche, étudiants du cours Exhibit Design de l’ECAL/Ecole cantonale d’art de Lausanne, mené par Adrien Rovero

15
PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Public opening

Tuesday 26 May 2015 from 18.00

Dates & hours

27 May – 27 September 2015
May, June and September: Tuesday-Sunday 11.00-18.00
July and August: Monday-Sunday 11.00-18.00
Open on every bank holidays, Mondays included
Free admission on the first Saturday of the month and throughout the year for the
Friends of the mduac

Contact

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Visuals

High-resolution visuals available at www.mudac.ch/press
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