

**Art in America**  
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## There Will Be Time: A Conversation with Julieta Aranda

by *sarah hromack* 04/09/09

Opening tomorrow at the Guggenheim with an exhibition by Mexican artist Juliet Aranda, "Intervals" is an ongoing series of projects that engage with emerging practices in contemporary art; the second presentation, by Berlin-based artist Kitty Kraus, is planned for fall 2009, with further projects under development for 2010. In a recent conversation with *Art in America*, curator Nancy Spector considered the series as an alternative means of negotiating with Frank Lloyd Wright's iconic architecture by inviting artists to activate the building's interstitial spaces - or even to move behind its physical confines. Aranda's multi-part project occupies the triangular staircase next to the rotunda, utilized only twice before as a gallery space; once by Felix Gonzalez Torres, whose strings of light bulbs were installed there in 1995, and most recently during the "theanyspacewhatever" exhibition, wherein Liam Gillick's text pieces occupied its walls. Interested in hearing Aranda's thoughts on what has proven to be a very ambitious project, *Art in America* asked the artist to discuss her work in a recent online exchange.

**JULIETA ARANDA:** My project for the Intervals series is a group of four works, loosely titled "There Will be Time." The works deal with my interest in the notion of subject formation -- how this is tied to a politicized subjectivity and, in turn, to the assertion of one's dominion over one's time as a condition for individuation.

The show is comprised of the following: A camera obscura that has been integrated within the architecture of the building; a clock that notes time's passage according to my own physical responses; large and partially invisible wall painting (as it involves phosphorescence, it will be only visible under certain lighting conditions); and a sound key to the passage of twenty-four hours according to the same ECG that has been used to produce the clock, which plays from a transistor radio.

All of these elements are used to partially describe a sense of time's passage according to subjective experience, rather than subscribed to a strict system of measurement that assigns fixed durations to any given event. Although each element by itself fails to complete the task of providing a full picture of an alternative conception of time (which would in itself be rigorous, and therefore would defeat my purpose) I like to think that the group of works at least describes the possibility of claiming sovereignty over one's experience of time, and not to have it inexorably linked to an authority.

**SARAH HROMACK:** I'm particularly interested in the clock, which is calibrated according to your biorhythms - essentially, your body's physical response to the environment. Can you talk about the engineering of this work?

**JA:** The clock that you refer to has been programmed to "keep time" according to my heartbeat, which was recorded over the course of twenty-four hours using standard ECG long-term testing equipment. The data generated by this device forms a signal that runs the clock. Contrary to what it would appear in light of this particular work, I am not very technology-oriented. I found it much more challenging to devise a way to order my time into a coherent system, than whatever engineering it took to render this system into an operating clock.

**SH:** Tell me about your interest in the International Date Line and, most specifically, Kiribati, the South Pacific archipelago that elected to shift the IDL in 1995. Kiribati is the only place on earth where "today" and "tomorrow" are one in the same time.

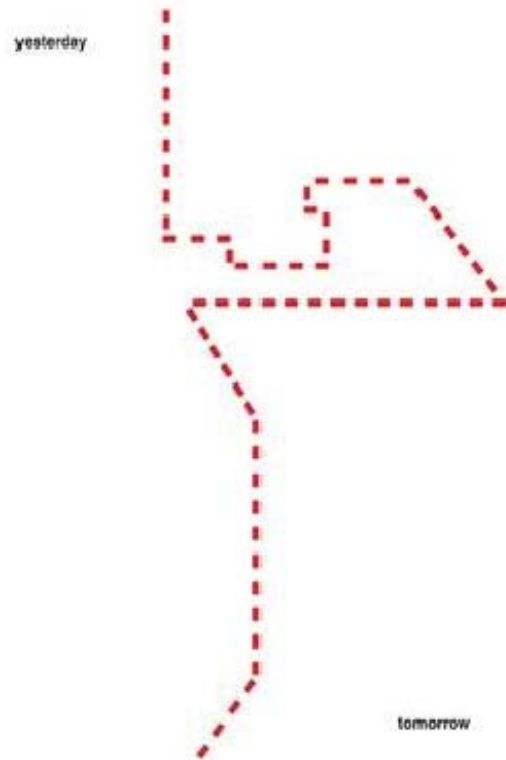
**JA:** Though we are conditioned to experience 'time' or the immaterial concept of time, as a linear passage - measured conveniently by clocks, calendars, and other devices, isn't it possible that the markers that we use to signal it: 'yesterday', 'today' and 'tomorrow' are an imposition? Can't we instead be the arbiters of our own experience of time? Can time be bent, sliced, poked through, stretched, flashed, collapsed?

I have been intrigued by the International Date Line for a while, and particularly about the Kiribati adjustment. The IDL is an imaginary line on the globe that separates two consecutive calendar days and indicates the boundary between today and tomorrow. Despite its name however, the precise location of the IDL is not fixed by any international law, treaty or agreement (though it is commonly identified on maps as being 180 degrees longitude from the 0 meridian located in Greenwich, England). The peculiar course of the International Date Line in fact bends forward a day and back across the South Pacific archipelago of Kiribati, causing an aberration in our assumed time-space continuum (in 1995, the archipelago decided to move the date line so that its territory would no longer be split between 'today' and 'tomorrow').

This temporal spasm in the IDL, and Kiribati's power to literally 'move time' becomes the blueprint for several of my installations, and the basis for a configuration of both narrative and abstracted elements including wall drawings, diagrams, models and props, and a newspaper designed after Kiribati's own (NEWSTAR) which brings together a collection of articles that cover the subject from several perspectives from the 1920s until today.

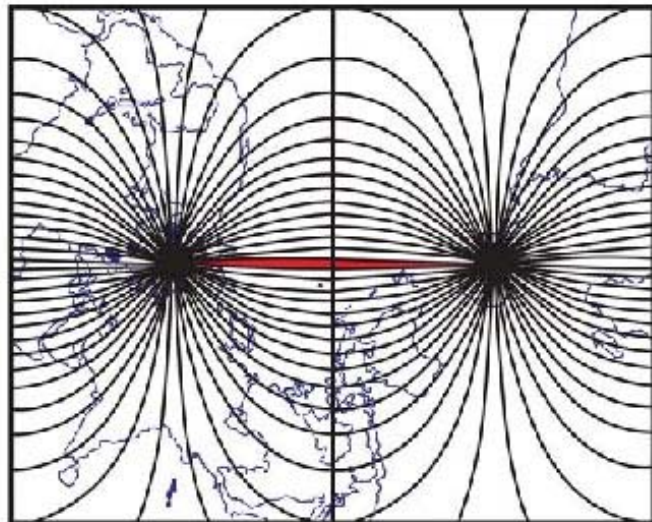
Central to my work is the inquiry into the idea of a politicized subjectivity and the power over the imaginary: how a little known, impoverished country like Kiribati -- save for when used for nuclear test-bombing by global powers, or when pilfered for phosphate -- has the power to choose its own substantive experience of time and cause global temporal disturbances and inaccuracies. There are actions that take place in the political arena, but their poetic reverberations carry them much further than that. Did one of the most significant political and poetic acts of the last century go completely unnoticed?

**SH:** You've installed a camera obscura in the gallery. While the camera obscura certainly alters one's perception of space, do you see a correlation between the images produced by such a device and the perception of time? If so, how?



**JA:** I actually don't see a direct relationship between the images produced by a camera obscura and the perception of time. I think that this my work is not so much focused directly on perception (there are other artists like Carsten Holler or Olafur Eliasson that are very excellent at this) but rather in an investigation of our ontological relationship to time and on the possibility of claiming a measure of control over our experience as part of the process of asserting autonomy.

My choice of using a camera obscura has to do with the quality of the image that it produces, which is rather ghostly and ethereal, somehow resembling more of a trace or a memory than a photographic image. And of course I also like the way in which the image is produced within a camera obscura, somehow jumping over the optical processes as we understand them, and making a bit of a paradox in the process of reproduction.



**SH:** I understand that you're including some sort of hourglass as part of this project? Do you see a connection between the visible measurement of time -- the passing of time made manifest in matter (sand) -- and more ephemeral indicators of time, such as the International Date Line. We can't see the IDL, obviously -- save for lines drawn on a map.

**JA:** The flow of the hourglass is what is seen in the camera obscura. I like simple hourglasses because of their relative lack of precision (compared to Swiss clocks, by example!) But I am not drawing a connection here towards my interest on the time line based on the material presence (or lack thereof) of the objects and systems involved on the measuring of time.

*From the top: You Had No Ninth of May (Moebius strip), Graphic, variable dimensions, 2007; Clear Coordinates for Our Confusion, 2008, Vinyl drawing, dimensions variable. All images courtesy the artist and the Guggenheim Museum.*