

Nancy Constandelia
half past

It's half past eight in the morning. I'm on a ferry from somewhere to elsewhere.

You can be halfway between two points, like half past eight, a temporal position between eight and nine o'clock. This is the common use of 'half past.' But, what does it mean for the past to be halved? What is half of the past? The past can most basically be thought of as many present times that once occurred. Half of the past, then, is half of all present times that have occurred (not necessarily chronologically). Insofar as there exists a whole — that is, two halves — the other half of 'half past' is presumably the uncounted half. 'half past' might also be an incomplete recipe, though, like 'half water, half flour,' in which case the past is half of a combination of two things.

Half past, half past

Half past, half present

Half past, half future

Time is relative, and keeps accumulating. It was half past eight when I started writing this. *Was*, so now past. Each sentence I write similarly occupies the present and then shifts into the past. Or is it that time shifts into the future? Or both? Irrespective, present times continue to amass, ordering pasts and futures to do the same.

The ferry from somewhere is now closer to elsewhere. Eventually — over, and according to, time — somewhere will become elsewhere and vice versa. They will transpose. The ferry is moving, like time. And although the ferry's progressive transition from one location to the next can be measured by time, it is not the same as time.

Time is everywhere.

At each time there exists a past, present, and future, and time operates at and across them all simultaneously. Despite similar measurement, no precise moment in time can be repeated, and each time is multidirectional. Time is not singular like the ferry, or unidirectional like its movement.

Nancy Constandelia's paintings feature multiple present times (the present being current, immediate, or simultaneous time). Each is a procession of time, mapped by a thin veil of acrylic paint. It's possible for Constandelia to superficially illustrate the passage of time in a single veil by painting a gradient that blends colours. Instead, the paint is allowed to dry and becomes a layer, onto which subsequent layers are accrued.

Time over time over time.

The gradient now, like time, exists in each single layer as well as across the layers. It traverses the picture plane as well as the depth of stratified acrylic veils.

Time keeps happening. Or, more precisely, *times* keep happening. Time is plural. In Constandelia's paintings, we are reminded that time is multitudinous. Like time, each layer of paint represents mutability. Multiple layers multiply the possibilities of her compositions.

Constandelia's paintings are monochromatic. Each colour seemingly points to one total time. But the monochromes fade. Each single colour is used to create a gradient. Time is now in motion, changing at a rate determined by the paint on a brush in Constandelia's hand, which is moving. Time to dry, and then the process is repeated, inexactly. Now there are two gradated monochromes, one on top of the other. The process is repeated again. And again and again and again. Each layer of paint is thin enough to be transparent, producing a pentimento. Like light, the time-signalling layers are deliberately not opaque, contextualising rather than obstructing previous and subsequent iterations.

I'm reminded of George Brecht's *Three Lamp Events* (1963):

on.
off.

lamp

off. on.

All light we perceive is from the past. This delay is most evident with starlight, which must travel many light years before it is perceived. Given time, the history of Constandelia's paintings becomes perceptible, too. Like Brecht's score, they map and document a series of events.

The limit of each of Constandelia's paintings is the edge of the substrates they're painted on. Constandelia brings this delineation – a limit – into the composition, featuring a strip of linen in the picture plane. The linen is present and active, but different to the painted areas. Here, we find a relationship between time and no-time, which might be space. The linen, like space, is where time happens: somewhere, someplace; everywhere, everyplace.

There are multiple times, happening in multiple places. Time is everywhere but not everything.

Constandelia's paintings are her way of grappling with the multiplicity of time and space by indexing a selection as they happen. Yes, all paintings unfold over time. Yet, in the paintings of Constandelia, elapsing time is not merely a measurement, but rather the very subject and substance of her work. The painting's "substantive duration" and "testimony to the history which it has experienced" (to borrow from Walter Benjamin) represent both its context *and* content.

When I look at Constandelia's paintings, I imagine them as containers, rather than simply artefacts, of time. I wonder, if I shake hard enough, will time fall out?

The paintings in *half past* are documents of time, like photographs. If so, then Constandelia's paintings embrace and capture time in the way Hiroshi Sugimoto's 'time exposure' photographs do, with deliberate slowness. They are concomitant with time.

Painter-like or photographer-like, Constandelia redresses the bifurcation of these historically polarised modes.

It's half past eight (again but elsewhere). I'm thinking about how many times it has been half past eight, and the space-time between them. Time is a process and a measurement. The process is natural, the measurement a human construct (trees know time but not that it's 'half past eight'). Like trees, Constandelia's paintings unfold over time without measuring how much time is taken. Her paintings take as much time as is required to bloom like a flower, set like a sun, or crash like a wave, "until," as Benjamin describes, "the moment or the hour become part of their appearance."