

KÖNIG GALERIE



ON KAWARA, PETER DREHER, ALICJA KWADE MEASURE BY MEASURE

KÖNIG SEOUL | 11 NOVEMBER 2022 – 20 JANUARY 2023

KÖNIG SEOUL is pleased to present MEASURE BY MEASURE, a unique exhibition featuring works by On Kawara, Alicja Kwade, and Peter Dreher, which tackle, each in their own respective artistic languages, the enigma of time and the desire to figure its passage in otherwise temporally static works of art. The show includes important contributions by these three artists that put the immeasurable transience of time into concrete form. For Kawara, three of his "Date Paintings" will sit alongside the series "Day by Day Good Day" by Dreher, punctuated by Kwade's "CC In-Between" collage series, made with hands from found pocket watches. In addition, three sculptural works by Kwade made of time pieces and the pulverized elements that make up a lamp are included.

Kawara, who passed in 2014, is most remembered for his TODAY series, which the artist started constructing on 4 January 1964. Each work belonging to this series was painstakingly rendered in acrylic layers until a dark hue was reached, with the exact date of the work's construction stencilled in white lettering over top. The appearance and language of each date was determined by the particular location where Kawara painted it, and each example conformed to a horizontal presentation in one of two primary formats (e.g., 10x13.5 inches or 13x17 inches), with a few rare exceptions. The process of constructing the dark underlayers of Liquitex paint took roughly eight hours to complete – the length of a standard working day – and Kawara destroyed any work that could not be completed by midnight on that given day: nothing of the work could be determined outside of the twenty-four hours of the calendar day on which it was executed. Later, Kawara began constructing small boxes to house each individual TODAY work, with small cut-outs from local newspapers, effectively collapsing world-historical time into its standardized format. What is conspicuously absent from the TODAY series is any evidence of the vagaries of Kawara's lived experience, however significant or insignificant. The dedication to these paintings is remarkable for exactly what it does not present, deploying a standardized language for representing time without ever breaking through with the inclusion of any trace of Kawara's personal experiences.

Dreher similarly dedicated himself to a near-monastic practice by painting the exact same glass of water in his studio every day, beginning in 1972, works that he collectively named, DAY BY DAY GOOD DAY. Each work is a singular representation but nevertheless connects to a larger endeavour that cannot be framed by one single painting. The result displays a hyperawareness of the act of painting and its unique materiality, acknowledging the near impossibility of ever coming up with one adequate depiction of something that exists already in the world – a simple empty water glass, and like Kawara, always in the same format: 10x8 inches. Dreher of course created many other works in his lifetime (he passed in 2020), but this act of committing himself each day to the same task is a powerful one – as if he were saying, "today I will paint, and I know what I paint but not how I will paint it." Each painting in the series records a stretch of moments in time, in which what appears is not something novel as a subject, as the larger process that organizes Dreher's workday is already determined ahead of time. The results of this process, however, are not. Time

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EXHIBITIONS

ALICE ANDERSON
Biophilia
KÖNIG GALERIE
26.11.2022 – 08.01.2022

MONA ARDELEANU
Polymorph
KÖNIG GALERIE
26.11.2022 – 08.01.2022

MICHAEL SAILSTORFER
KÖNIG GALERIE
20.01. – 05.03.2023

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Tue – Sun 11 AM – 7 PM

passes not through the ups and downs of a life, but within the forms of a painterly practice that puts strong limitations on what is to be done.

In her CC IN-BETWEEN works, Kwade highlights the arbitrariness and playful absurdity of ways of keeping and marking time by removing the hands from pocket watches and repurposing them as collaged elements. This gesture foregrounds the essential contingency of methods of measurement by calling attention to the context in which inert, tiny pieces of metal could either tell time, on which so much of the world depends, or simply become something altogether different: their purpose and use is what comes into focus. The reverse of this equation is explored in INFLUENCE, 2015, in which Kwade constructed a clock of her own out of found elements, whose placement in particular arrangements is directly linked to the index of a particular time of day. As the saying goes, even a broken clock is right two times a day. In SCHWERE ELEMENTE (HEAVY ELEMENTS), 2015, two alarm clocks are set side-by-side, one tells the time, the other is encased in lead. The leaden of the two speaks both to the use of the alarm clock and to its encrustation in time, preserved as an object, a work of art. Seen together both of these "elements" link to a larger continuum of temporality in which one can exist in tandem with the other.

The selection of these works by three artists from different continents and generations puts each not only in dialogue with the others, but also offers a focused point of entry into their radically different methodologies of art making. What Kawara, Dreher, and Kwade share, however, is the desire to highlight art's relationship to the culturally-specific systems designed to measure time – historical, personal, mechanical – through a self-conscious reduction of the tools at their disposal. This should not be seen as diametrically opposite to an idea of artistic practice as self-expression. On the contrary, what MEASURE BY MEASURE presents is the other side of the expressive coin: holding back, constraining oneself in order to let the larger temporal horizon of the world appear anew.

Alicja Kwade (b. 1979 in Katowice, Poland) lives and works in Berlin. She earned a BA from the University of the Arts (UdK) in Berlin in 2005. Kwade investigates and questions universally accepted notions of space, time, science, and philosophy by breaking down frames of perception in her work. Kwade's multifaceted practice spans sculpture, installation, video, and photography. The artist's works often utilize the alchemical properties of her chosen materials to reveal the nature of systems used to understand the world.

Peter Dreher (1932–2020) studied at the State Academy of Fine Arts at Karlsruhe from 1950 to 1956, and was Professor of Painting at the State Academy, Karlsruhe, from 1968 to 1997. Solo exhibitions of his work have been presented at institutions internationally including Milton Keynes Museum, UK (2013); Landesvertretung Baden-Württemberg, Berlin (2012); Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva (2011); Museum Erfurt, Germany (2008); Athens Biennial (2007); and Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (1977), among others.

On Kawara (1932–2014) started exhibiting in Tokyo in the early 1950s. His works have been included in numerous conceptual art surveys including the landmark exhibitions, "Information", The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1970); and "1965-1975: Reconsidering the Object of Art", Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1995). Major solo exhibitions took place at the Kunsthalle Bern, CH, and the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (1974); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (1980); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1991–3); and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2015), among many others.

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