



Let Everything Be Temporary, or When Is the Exhibition? at Apexart

What do a bar of hairy soap, an unraveled roll of paper towels and a pile of take-a-number tickets have in common? Aside from being familiar trials faced by the impatient and the fed-up, they're all works in *Let Everything Be Temporary, or When Is the Exhibition?* The show, curated by **Elena Filipovic**, is on view through February 17 at New York's Apexart.

Oksana Pasaiko's *Short Sad Text (based on the borders of 14 countries)* (2004–05) dissipated long before this exhibition. After she mapped the contours of former Eastern Bloc countries onto a bar of soap with strands of hair, Pasaiko abandoned the soap to its fate in an Oslo bathroom. Between *Short Sad Text's* creation, its probable demise and its arrival at Apexart on the postcard bearing its original likeness, more than two years have elapsed. When, then, might the exhibition have taken place?

In keeping with this confounding of certainty about time, many of the works in *Let Everything Be Temporary* shift their shapes in minutes or even seconds as a result of visitor interference. Viewers participate in some works intentionally (e.g., by taking a piece of candy from **Felix Gonzalez-Torres's** *Untitled* pile) and in others accidentally: **Joëlle Tuerlinckx's** rectangle of confetti on the floor (*Particles*

particles and objects, objects objects and particles, 1994) doesn't announce itself as art, and many a viewer has shuffled through and blurred its contours unaware.

Another viewer-vulnerable work, **Michel Blazy's** *Rosace* (1993), began as a roll of paper towels. Blazy unrolled it completely and shaped the sheets into a perfect, scalloped white spiral—like a *Spiral Jetty* by the Brawny man. Over the course of the exhibition, air currents and visitors' movements cause the sheets of paper towel to warp and collapse. If the whole thing falls, someone rebuilds it with a fresh roll. When I saw *Rosace*, it was sturdy but partially crushed: a wilted paper cabbage. The effect was of a nuisance—rolls of paper towels always unravel at the worst possible moments—turned into fun, as if someone, in the middle of cleaning up a mess, started building something instead. (A note on the "I" above: shape-shifting art sabotages more than just museum custom. The eternal-present tense of the art reviewer must also reveal itself as an overly confident sham; just as sheets of paper towel give way to chance breezes, "the work is" must yield to "I saw.")

This narrowing of experience (from the disembodied and the permanent to the time-specific and the personal) is a tidy, if artificial, compression of the way time renders all art impermanent. Carried to its logical conclusion, *Let Everything Be Temporary* challenges us to own up to so-called permanent art's vulnerability to age (the effect of dirt and residue on pigments) and chance (the effect of **Steve Wynn's** elbow on Picasso's *Le Rêve*). In staging its own demise, the exhibition quickens the pace of change and undermines the possibility of pinpointing the space-time coordinates of art. If dog years fly by compared to human years, art years are slow creepers; conservators speak in centuries, after all. *Let Everything Be Temporary* acts as a corrective—a necessarily temporary one—that knocks the average artwork's lifespan down to just below glacial.

The subject of many of these works is, aptly, waiting. In *The Recurrence of the Sublime* (2003), **Gabriel Kuri** uses a food-prep trick to routinize a monumental event: the moon landing of 1969. In the piece, three avocados (which ripen faster in newspaper) are wrapped in pages from a paper dated July 21, 1969—the day of the lunar landing. New avocados replace the old in successive sheets of the same edition of the paper, which are stacked under the avocados. Kuri's reliance on food trivia—you have to know what newspaper does to avocados for his competing messages about time to track—makes *Recurrence* more arbitrary than astute.

In *Untitled* (2007), Kuri's playfulness comes through much better. At the entrance of the gallery, viewers may tear off a number from a wall-mounted take-a-number machine. They're given no instructions about what to do with it—or what they're waiting for—but many viewers choose to deposit their numbers between the petals of a store-bought glass thistle on a pedestal in the middle of the room. The rounded points of the slips mimic the shape of the thistle's shiny, immobile spikes, and the paper sweeps over them in defiant disarray, overwhelming and taunting the frozen flower with their free movement. The viewers seem to be charging this tchotchke with waiting on their behalf—a fitting fate for the kind of object normally locked inside a glass case.

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