



House Sculpture [detail] Rachel Whiteread © Richard Glover/CORBIS

I also have a great fascination for Installation art, such as that of Rachel Whiteread. Whiteread creates sculpture or casts from the negative space within or surrounding an object to suggest the real space that the object occupies, and the spatial language she uses is another great example of looking closer at something to see beyond the expected. Had I a tin-opener close by (not to mention a few extra pages) I would probably open a whole can of worms about using space as a method of communication. I haven't though, so I won't. Besides, the whole issue of time is much more interesting and so with time in mind I'll move swiftly on.

Before I can talk about the works of artists whose use of time I find inspirational and thought-provoking, I guess I must first try to describe what I find so intriguing about the concept of time itself. Whilst I don't let myself lose sleep over it, the whole concept of time poses so many unanswerable questions that I find completely fascinating. How do we understand the notion of time, when we can't see it or feel it? Why does a minute go faster when you're having fun than when you're waiting for a bus? Is time elastic, able to be stretched or otherwise manipulated? What kinds of relationships exist between time and space?



Fading Ad Campaign © Frank Jump; www.frankjump.com

Apologies if you think that last bit got a bit heavy, but stick with me and I'll see if I can explain what I mean. Of any roll of film to come out of my camera, at least four or five shots will invariably be of rusting signs, derelict shop frontages or similar urban typography, so when a friend introduced me to the work of Frank Jump I felt an immediate empathy. Jump is a photographer whose work (www.frankjump.com) concentrates on the ageing ads painted onto the sides of factories or shops around his native city of New York, and reveals a shared preoccupation and fascination with found imagery, typography and urban architecture.

But more than that, the work also relies inherently on the influence of time, and as such provokes thought and begs the question: what story do they tell about the building/advert/product? Is it art or is it graphic design? If it's an advert, then it must be graphic design, but these pieces are often selling products that are no longer on sale and are complete strangers to today's world of commercialism, so surely they must be art? If they are art, how much of their beauty is a result of their age? What did they look like a year ago? A decade or a century ago? Would they have been considered beautiful then?

Jump isn't attempting to answer these questions, but instead just trying to get the viewer to ask themselves the questions it provokes. A couple of paragraphs ago I proposed the question "How do we understand the notion of time, when we can't see it or feel it?" In this case we can visualize time by its effects on the ageing sign, but we can't see time itself – only a vehicle or language that visually represents it. Of course, you could argue that a clock is an adequate way to see time, but even then we are using numbers, in standard measurements of hours, minutes and seconds, as a means to visualize it. And besides, how accurate is a clock as a way of seeing time (they run fast or slow, or stop completely – time never stops, does it?).

With his lover dying of AIDS, and acutely aware of the limited time that they may have together, Cuban New Yorker Felix Gonzales-Torres created *Untitled (Perfect Lovers)* – a work consisting of two clocks, side by side and synchronised to the same time. Placing a set of used batteries (a metaphor for the dying condition of his partner) into one of the clocks, and a fresh set (a metaphor for his own state) in the other, the artist created a piece that would continually change its visual state and meaning as time went by.

The aspect of the work that I find so interesting is that the artist has found a means to question our understanding of how we interpret time. Of course the clocks should run in synch, but for one, time is going slower, even though in reality it isn't! And even the clock that was running on fresh batteries is now running on dying batteries, and so how accurate is that as a true reflection of time? Look deeper and the

