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PABLO DAVILA

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In his multidisciplinary works, Pablo Dávila (b. 1983, Mexico City) takes as a starting point the traditional artistic media to question how they reflect the social construction of space and time. In his installations, the artist excavates a space for interference and ambiguity through forms both pared-down and rich with an immediate sensorial experience.

His practice explores sentience and subjectivity through investigations in perception, space and time consciousness. His practice takes many shapes-- encompassing video, electronics, light installation, photography, conceptual painting and site-specific interventions. His work traverses the space in between sensory perception and cognitive understanding. His poetic gestures trigger a questioning of our expectations in dealing with the passing of time, and the psychological lens with which we process events in our memory.

His work is informed by science, music, poetry, cognitive sciences and physical phenomena, so as to delve into notions of perception, the fleeting nature of time and historical interpretations.

PABLO DÁVILA

1983 in Mexico City. Lives and works in Mexico City.

Education

Vancouver Film School, Vancouver, British Columbia, CA

Solo Exhibitions

- 2023 *Time Moves In One Direction*, Memory In Another, MAH Genève, CH
It Comes Out Of Thin Air, Spreads, Shifts, Becomes Something Else, Galeria OMR, MX
- 2022 *Please Call If Anything's Unclear*, THE PILL, Istanbul, TR
- 2020 *But The Subject Is A Long One*, Salón ACME, Mexico City, MX
- 2019 *Under One Lamp by Day*, *Millions by Night*, THE PILL, Istanbul, TR
Senza Replica, josegarcia.mx, Mérida, MX
- 2018 *No title required*, josegarcia.mx, Mérida, MX
- 2017 *C,O,N,T,I,N,U,O C-O-N-E-C-T-A-D-O*, Travesía Cuatro, Guadalajara, MX
- 2016 *Available Light (Nubra)*, FF Projects, San Pedro Garza García, MX
All The Horses Share The Same Color, FF Projects, San Pedro Garza García, MX
Ladies & Gentlemen, We Are Floating In Space, CULT Aimee Friberg Exhibitions, San Francisco, US
- 2014 *Time Moves In One Direction*, Memory In Another, FF Projects, Monterrey, MX

Group Exhibitions

- 2024 *The Colour Out of Space*, cur. Jean-Charles Vergne, THE PILL, Istanbul, TR
- 2022 *Still Alive*, Aichi Triennale, Nagoya, JP
Form Follows Energy, OMR – LAGO / ALGO, Mexico City, MX
INDEX, Museo Marco, Monterrey, MX
- 2020 *OTRXS MUNDXS*, Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, MX
Instantanea, Guadalajara, MX
Recover/Uncover, MASA Galeria, Mexico City, MX
- 2018 *Cycles of collapsing progress*, Rashid Karami Fair, Tripoli, LB
10 minutes after the show, josegarcia.mx, Mérida, MX

Almost Solid Light: New Work from Mexico, Paul Kasmin, NY, US

Residencies

2016 Atlantic Center for the Arts, Florida, US

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WORKS AND EXHIBITIONS





Exhibited in the "Modern Landscapes" gallery on the Beaux-Arts floor, Dávila's two-piece installation questions the nature of time: "Senza Replica (2*88)" is a piano composition that explores the vertiginous nature of time. It activates a musical clock through an electronic system which puts all 88 piano keys in movement and creates a sequence of all possible combinations at the rate of one chord per second. Watching the piano in motion without human assistance evokes a sense of absence and raises questions regarding the notion of time.

The work's second component, "Transference Harmonies (4¹,146,880)" consists of a screen that randomly interprets an astronomical quantity of numerical data through shades of white, black and and gray. The images resulting from this complex process seem at first sight to be visual noise, however, by looking closely at the screen, a series of patterns emerge and recognizable images can appear.

MUSÉE

Il y a assiettes, mais aucun appétit.
Il y a anneaux, pas d'amour en retour,
et tout cela depuis trois siècles et demi.

Bon, l'éventail – mais où est la chaleur ?
Oui, des épées – mais où est le courroux ?
Et pas un son de luth à l'heure du crépuscule.

Faute d'éternité, on empila ici
mille choses plus anciennes les unes que les autres.
Un vigile moussu dort du sommeil du juste
les moustaches pendantes par-dessus la vitrine.

Métaux, ardoise, plume de paon
trionphent en douce sur le temps.
Seule ricane l'aiguille d'une espiègle Égyptienne.

La couronne tient, la tête n'est plus.
Le gant l'emporta sur la main.
Le pied céda au soulier droit.

Et quant à moi, je vis, c'est moi qui vous le dis.
Moi et ma robe, toujours coude-à-coude sur la piste.
Mais combien elle insiste !
Qu'elle tient à sa survie !

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MOMENT À TROIE

Voilà les petites filles,
maigres, et sans certitude
que leurs taches de rousseur disparaîtront un jour,

n'attirant l'attention de personne,
elles marchent sur les paupières du monde,

elles ressemblent à papa-maman,
elles en sont vraiment effrayées,

telles quelles, devant leur assiette,
devant le livre d'images,
devant la glace, parfois,
elles se font enlever à Troie.

Dans le spacieux vestiaire du clin d'œil
en belles Hélène elles se métamorphosent.

Dans le bruit de leurs traînes et de l'admiration
elles remontent l'escalier royal.

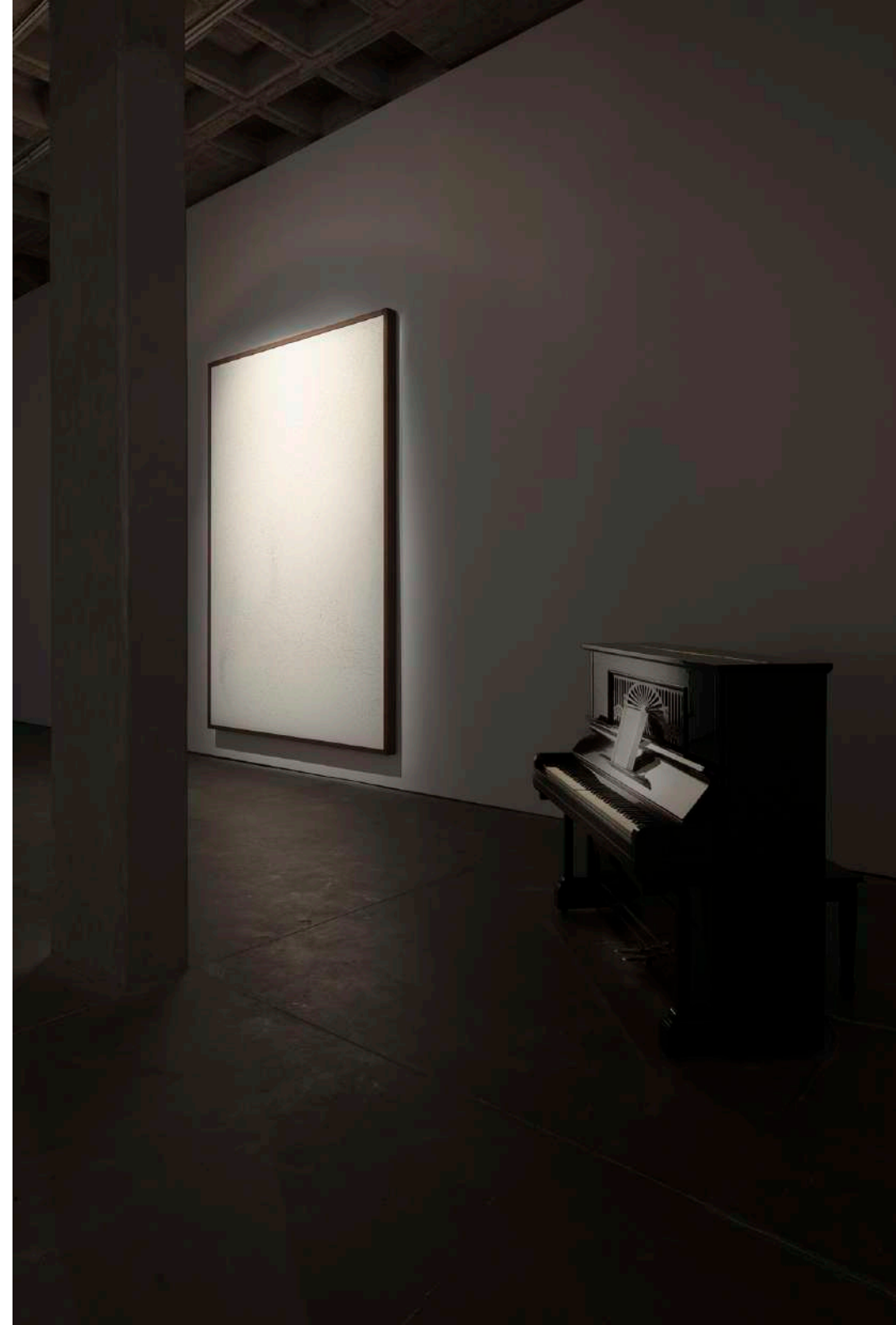
Si légères, elles n'ignorent pas
que la beauté est un repos,
que la parole épouse la forme des lèvres,

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"It. That's it. That started it. It is. Goes on. Moves. Beyond. Becomes. Becomes it and it and it. Goes further than that. Becomes something else. Becomes more. Combines something else with more to keep becoming something else and more. Goes further than that. Becomes something besides something else and more. Something. Something new. Newer still. In the next now, becomes as new as it now can be. Imposes itself. Flaunts itself. Touches, is touched. Catches free material. Grows bigger and bigger. Builds itself up by being more than itself, gains weight, gains speed, gains more in its rush, gains on something else, passes something else, which is taken up, taken in, fast laden with what came first, so randomly begun. That's it. So changed now that it's begun. So transformed. Already a difference between it and it, for nothing is what it was. Already time between it and it, here and there, then and now. Already the span of space between it and something else, it and more, it and something, something new, which now, in this now, already has been, in the next now is and goes on. Moves. Fills. Is already enough itself for inside to differ from outside. Plays, shifts, eddies. Outside. And condenses inside. Gains core and substance. Gains surface, refractions, passages, impediments, stimuli among separate parts, free turbulence. Takes a turn, a whole new turn. Turns and twists, is turned and twisted. And pursues an evolution. Seeks a form. Scans its past. Twist after twist takes a different twist. Is picked up to be dealt with again. Turn after turn is rephrased. Gains structure in its ceaseless search for structure. Variations inside fed on matter from outside. Changes character. Localizes needs, divides existing functions into new ones, functions so it can function. Functions so something else can function and because something else functions. In each function a need for new functions, new variations."

Excerpt from "it" by Inger Christensen.









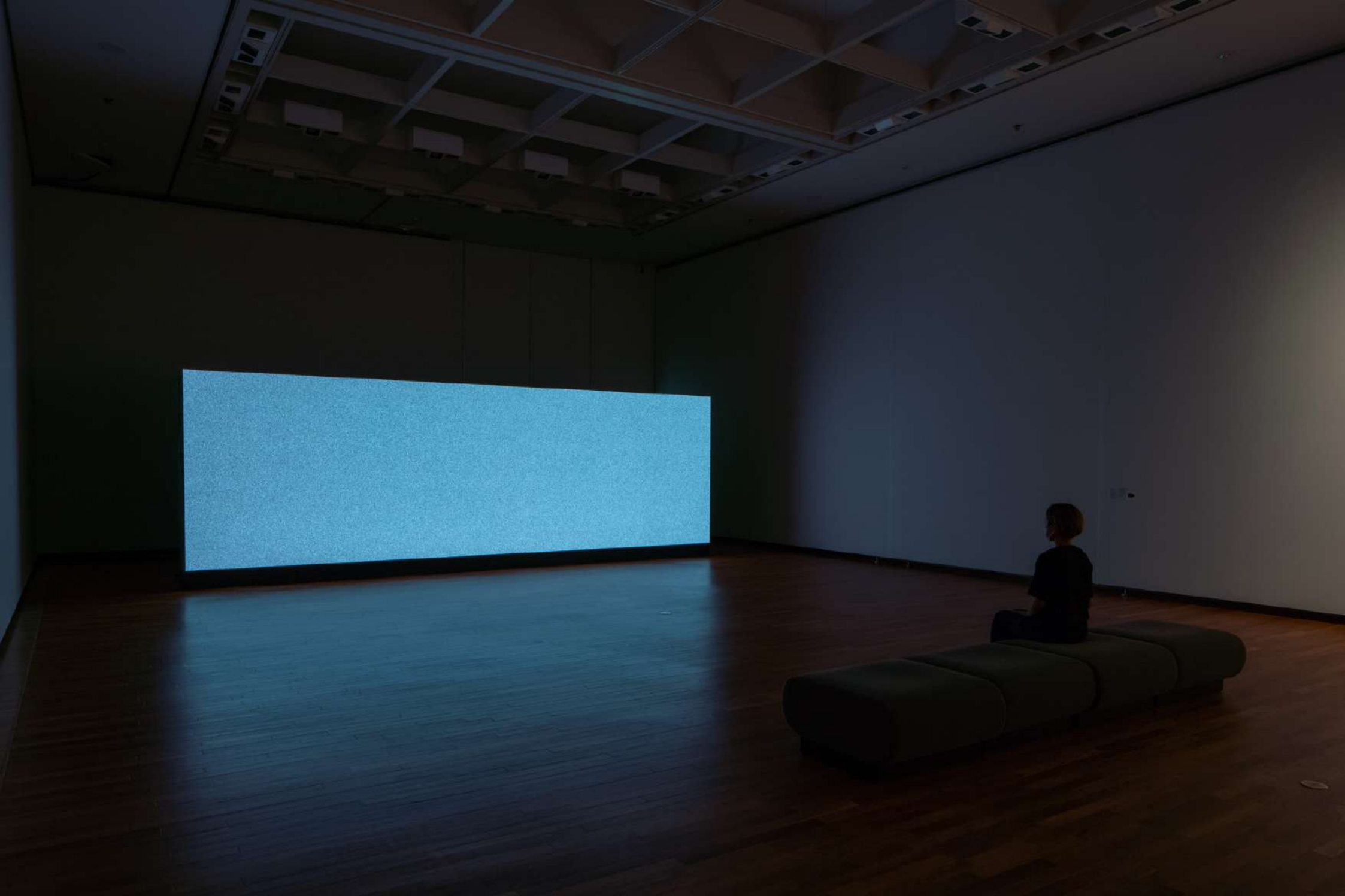
The three works exhibited at Aichi Triennale 2022, evoke an awareness of various kinds of time, ranging from 1/30th of a second to astronomical scales of time of over 10 billion years.

In Transference Harmonies (Armonías de transferencia) (2022), located at the back of the exhibition gallery, a vast number of randomly generated numbers are converted into patterns in white, black, and two types of gray, which move continuously on a 2.2 x 7.2 meter LED screen. The high resolution is 1800 pixels in height x 5000 pixels in width. Dávila sees this as a film, which shows all possible combinations of the patterns as long as they can be displayed on the screen. The probability of recognizing some image or other, however, is extremely low, and we do not know when it will end. If we take one of these numbers to be our life, and position it within the time of the universe that began with the Big Bang 14 billion years ago, we arrive at the realization of what a minuscule instant it represents.

A friendly reminder (2022), on the other hand, consists of analog tape cut into two-second segments and stitched together, allowing us to hear a repetition of stringed instruments and female vocals. In this work, we are made conscious of the time it takes for a human being to take a single breath.

Elsewhere, the two-dimensional work *Phase Paintings (the natural flow of forgetting) (2022)* depicts a minimalist image created by scorching the canvas with a laser and making holes in it. This work visualizes the effects of the wind, clouds, rain, and tornadoes through a particle system used in computer graphics, and expresses movement itself by superimposing a succession of moments on each other.

This exhibition, in which digital and analog, the body and the universe, the momentary and the eternal, and other opposing concepts are fused into a single space, can be seen as a space for quiet contemplation and meditation on our individual existence.





Please call if anything's unclear





Pablo Dávila
Dead man sings, 2022
Surround system, shelves, desk
Variable dimensions

EPILOGUE

lined with respect not to each other but to absolute space was mirrored in the notion of rights defined for each citizen with respect to an unchanging absolute background of the principles of justice.

General relativity moved physics to a relational theory of space and time, in which all properties are defined in terms of relationships. Is this mirrored in an analogous movement in social theory? I believe that it is and that it can be found in the writings of Unger and a number of other social theorists. These explore, in the context of social theory, the implications of a relational philosophy according to which all properties ascribed to agents in a social system arise from their relationships and interactions with one another. As in a Leibnizian cosmology, there are no external timeless categories or laws. The future is open, because there is no end to the novel modes of organization that may be invented by a society as it continually confronts unprecedented problems and opportunities.

This new social theory attempts to refashion democracy into a global form of political organization able to guide the evolution of the burgeoning multiethnic and multicultural societies. This refashioned democracy must also be up to the task of making the necessary decisions to survive the global crises posed by climate change.

Here's my understanding of what democracy looks like from the relational perspective of the new philosophy. Remarkably, the same ideas provide an understanding of how science works. This is important, because the challenge of climate change requires the interaction of science and politics.

Both democratic governance and the workings of the scientific community have evolved to manage several basic facts about human beings. We're smart, but we're flawed in characteristic ways. We're able to study our situation in nature over a single lifetime and accumulate knowledge over many lifetimes. But we have also evolved a capacity for thinking and acting at the snap of a twig. This means we often make mistakes and fool ourselves. To combat our propensity for error, we have evolved societies that embrace the contradiction between the conservative and the rebel in the service of future generations. The future is genuinely unknowable, but one thing we can be fairly sure of

WORKING IN TIME

Our descendants will know a lot more than we do. By working in communities and societies, we can achieve much more than we can as individuals, yet progress requires individuals to take great risks and test new ideas. Scientific communities, and the larger democratic societies from which they evolved, progress because their work is governed by two basic principles.⁹

- (1) When rational argument from public evidence suffices to decide a question, it must be considered to be so decided.
- (2) When rational argument from public evidence does not suffice to decide a question, the community must encourage a diverse range of viewpoints and hypotheses consistent with a good-faith attempt to develop convincing public evidence.

I call these the *principles of the open future*. They underlie a new, pluralistic stage of the Enlightenment—a stage now arising. We respect the power of reasoning when it's decisive, and when it isn't we respect those who in good faith disagree with us. The limitation to people of good faith means people within the community who accept these principles. Within such communities, knowledge can progress, and we can strive to make wise decisions about a future that is not completely knowable.

Even given perfect adherence to the principles of the open future, science is unlikely ever to solve some of the questions we'd most like the answers to.

Why is there something rather than nothing? can't imagine any-thing that would serve as an answer to this question, let alone an answer supported by evidence. Even religion fails here, for if the answer is "God," there was something—God, that is—to begin with. Or, if *time has no beginning, do all causes recede into the infinite past?* Is there no final reason for things? These are real questions, but if they



Pablo Dávila
Principles of an open future, 2022
Oil on canvas
Variable dimensions



Into The Past →

Into
the
Future



Into Space →



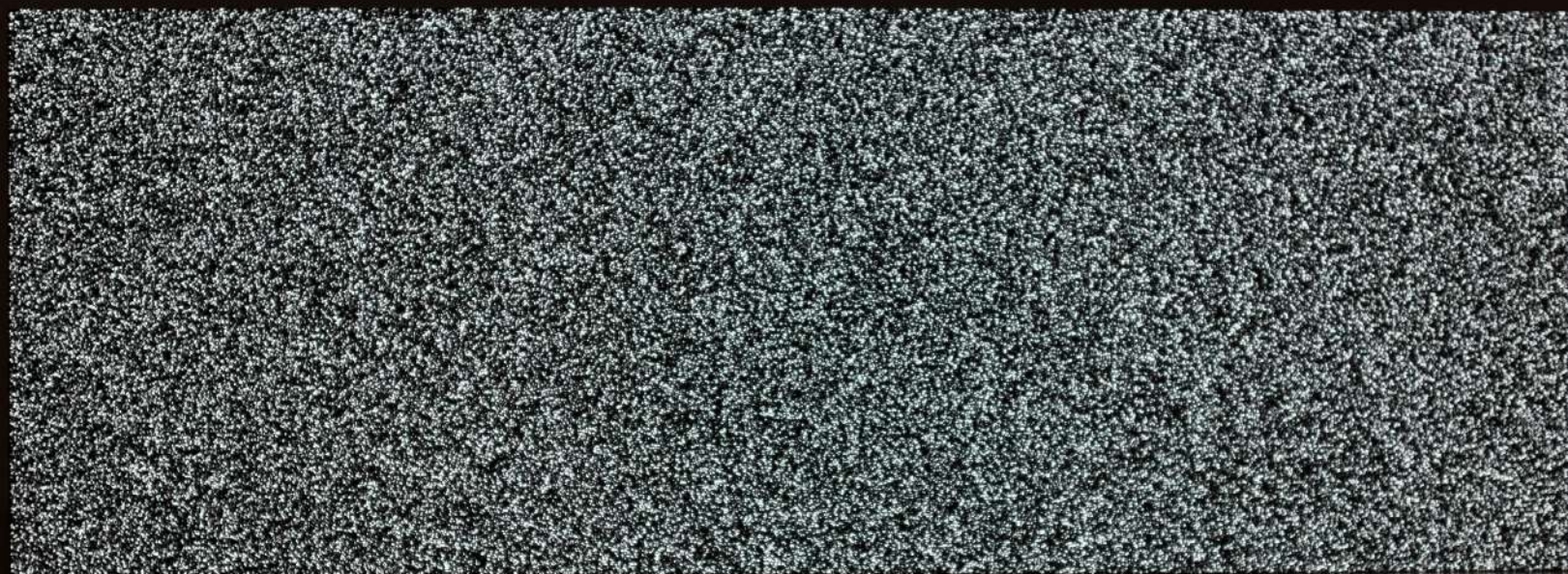
Pablo Dávila
Stories of nearly everything, 2022
Obsidians
200 cm







Pablo Dávila
Container, 2022
Glass and video projection
190 x 135 cm



Pablo Dávila
Transference Harmonies (4¹, 179,648), 2020
LED screen, computer and customized software

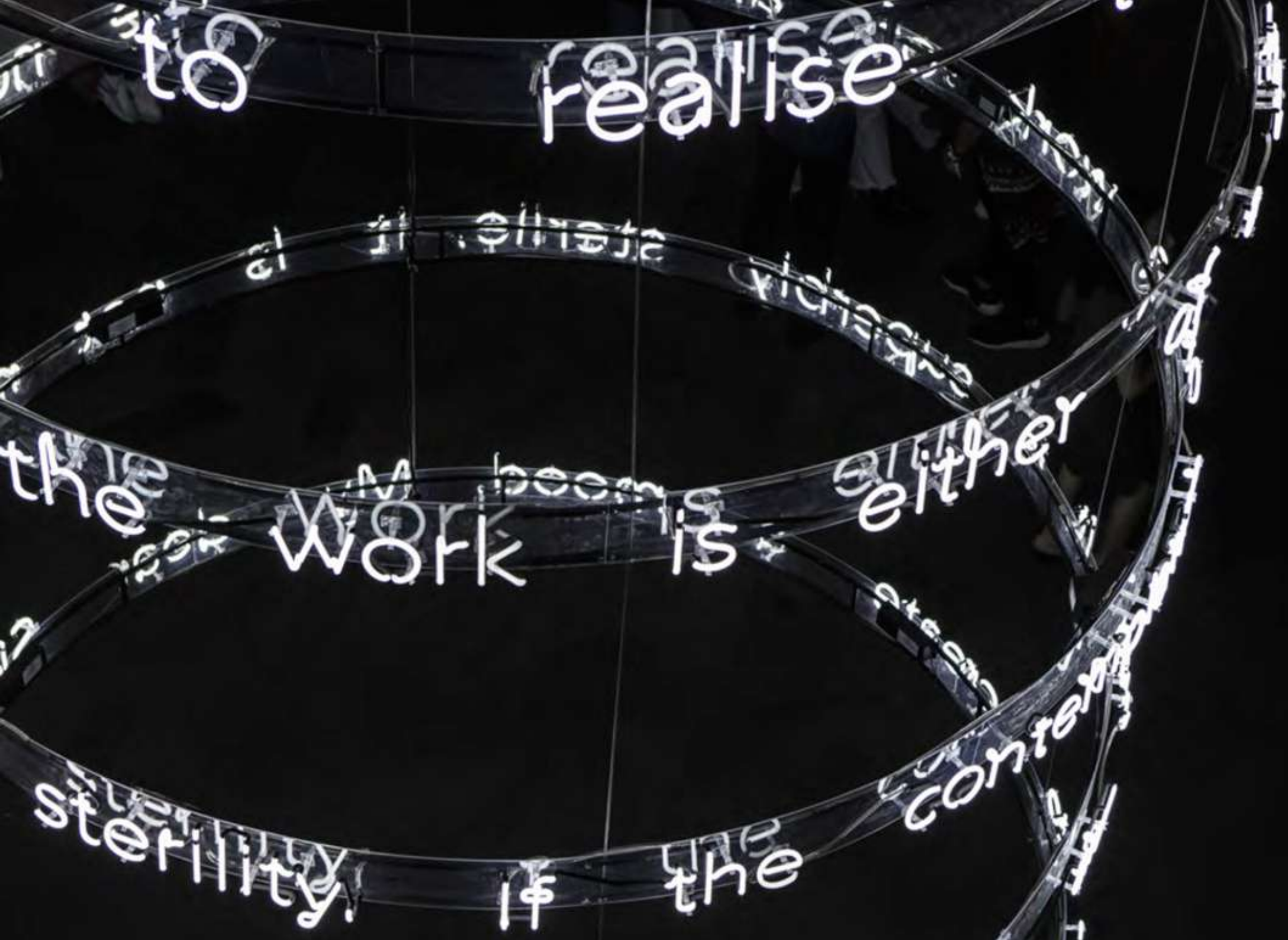




In the preface to his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, published in 1890, Oscar Wilde proclaimed that “all art is quite useless”. Intrigued by the statement, Oxford student Bernulf Clegg wrote him a letter asking him for more details regarding that declaration. Wilde responded with a letter where he included some of his thoughts revolving around the function and the futility of art.

But The Subject Is A Long One is a textbased light installation featuring the letter Oscar Wilde would write to Bernulf Clegg. The text is only revealed when walking around the work, as due to its dimensions and materials, the light and the text are transformed into space. Likewise, the spatiality transcends the realm of physicality, when becoming a testimony of the correspondence established by these two characters and that would continue for a few years. The text also reflects on a specific context held within the XIX century decay; a generalized skepticism that would permeate every sort of artistic expression.

Taking as a standpoint Wilde's letter, a concrete poem of sorts was created featuring quotes by other writers, theorists, poets and artists, who would also think of art as rather useless space. The poem, which is a text with no beginning and no end, contains quotes by John Ruskin, Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, Marcel Duchamp, William Morris, Groucho Marx, Anish Kapoor, Michael Smith, John Everett Millais, Walter Benjamin, Ben Vautier and other authors. This investigation is an attempt to continue Wilde's letter in different contexts and epochs and keep the correspondence with Wilde. After all, the letter's final sentence is “But the subject is a long one”.



to realise

the work is either

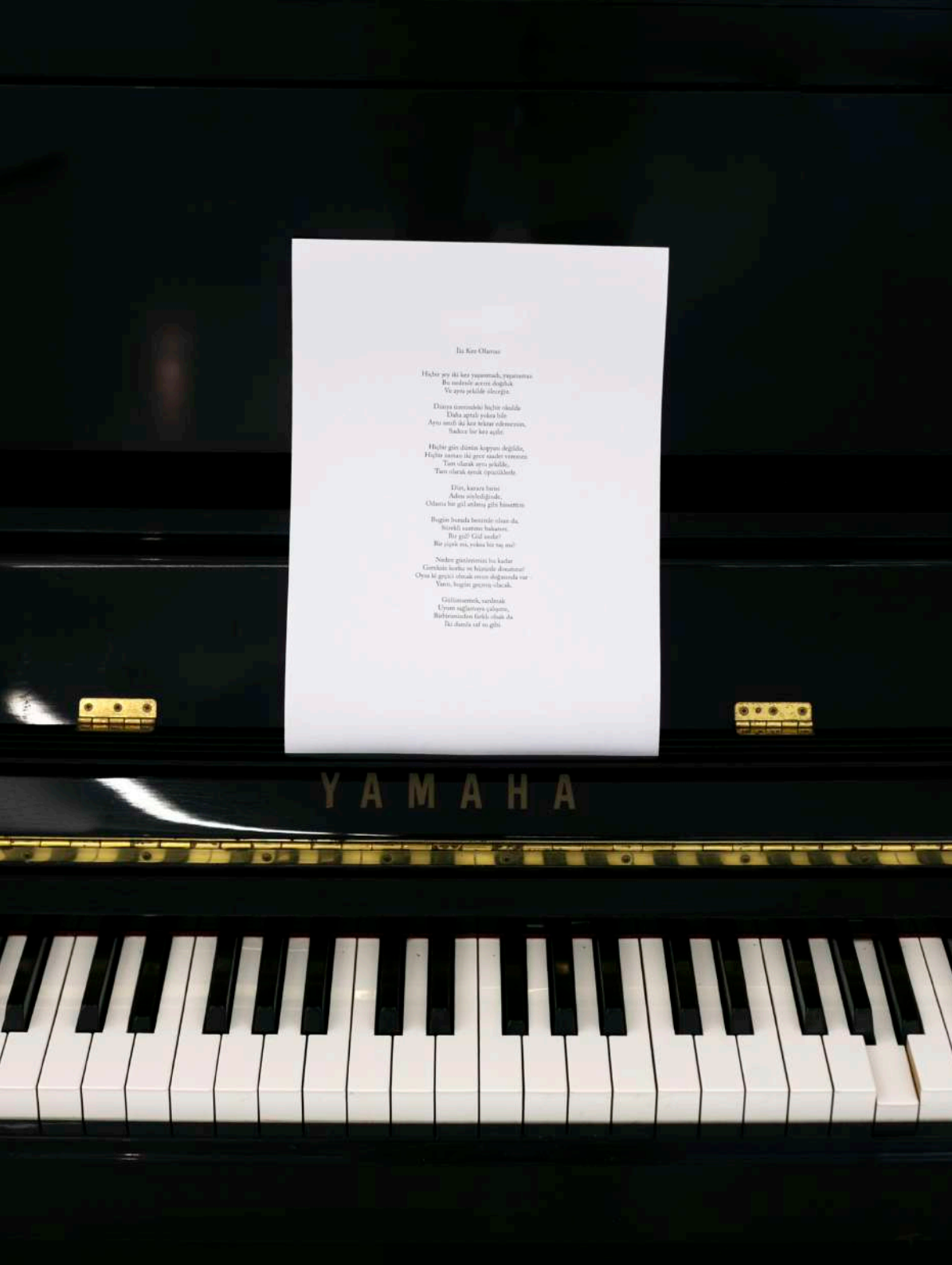
sterility. If the context





Pablo Dávila
Let us go then, 2019
38 violin bows
270 cm





Senza Replica (2*88) -1 is a composition for piano that makes a poetic exploration around the nature of time. It stems from a mathematical yet quite simple question: How many chords (key combinations) are theoretically possible on a 88-key piano keyboard? The answer is replied by the instrument which plays a chord every two seconds: $(2*88) - 1 = 309,485,009,821,345,068,724,781,056$

To put into perspective the amount of possible combinations contained within the piano; if we were to play each chord for a second it would take 9,806,988,168,344,393,728 years to be entirely played; that's approximately 711 million times the current age of the Universe. No living being could ever listen to it as a whole.

Senza Replica toys with temporary limits and bonds; with the endless possibilities enclosed in an object, with the fleeting nature of time and with the uniqueness of the instant. While listening to every chord, the vastness of time appears while simultaneously the unrecoverable loss of each moment becomes evident. As recalled by Lee Smolin: 'the past was real but is no longer real [...] the future does not yet exist and is therefore open'.

The composition reminds us that nothing really transcends time. It's in its nature not to stay:
Today is always gone tomorrow.**

14

as

far

This image shows page 14 of a musical score. It features multiple staves with handwritten musical notation, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The word "as" is written in a large, elegant script across the middle of the page, and the word "far" is written in a similar script further down. The page number "14" is visible in the top left corner.

15

from

beyond

This image shows page 15 of a musical score. It continues the musical notation from the previous page, with multiple staves and handwritten notes. The word "from" is written in a large, elegant script across the middle of the page, and the word "beyond" is written in a similar script further down. The page number "15" is visible in the top right corner.





Phase paintings (The natural flow of forgetting) is a series that delves into the notions of time and movement, or rather, movement in time. Every painting depicts two instances that when overlapped and translated into visual terms generate a third moment of difference, interference and disruption. The discrepancy of the image is no other than the visibility of the passing of time, and along with it, the memory, perception and the trace that leaves behind. The image evidences both the presence and the absence of a representation within the span of a second.

Pablo Dávila
Phase Painting, 2019
Perforated canvas
130 x 100 cm

Pablo Dávila
Phase Painting, 2019
Perforated canvas
130 x 100 cm







Rhythmic Field

... And that question is this: when we look around the world, as scientists have done for the last hundred years, there appear to be about 20 numbers that really describe our universe. These are numbers like the mass of the particles, like electrons and quarks, the strength of gravity, the strength of the electromagnetic force — a list of about 20 numbers that have been measured with incredible precision, but nobody has an explanation for why the numbers have the particular values that they do. And the wonderful thing is, if I had 20 dials up here and I let you come up and fiddle with those numbers, almost any fiddling makes the universe disappear.

Brian Greene

These 20 numbers set the rules for our universe, and within these set of rules there are (close to) infinite combinations, if we would look to the tiniest of the tiniest particles in our universe, we would find individual strings that vibrate in different frequencies and forms that combined with others eventually form our universe. Every single thing is made up of the combination of different rhythms, every person and every thing we know has its own set of rules, characteristics and clocks, societies, cities, planets etc. are formed with these individual “clocks”, ... we are the result of millions and millions of combinations.

In this work, the 20 metronomes that rest on top of a mirror, are set ticking at their slowest setting (40bpm), set in motion randomly, generating a soundscape that will eventually end everyday, and then set again in a completely different pattern than the previous one based on chance timing and certain individual decisions, thus the infinite combinations of rhythmic patterns are set in motion. The universe is a symphony of different clocks, and we are nothing but melodies.



Pablo Davila
Rhythmic Field, 2018
Metronomes, radios and mirrors
Variable dimensions



In 1722, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) compiled the first part of 'The Well-Tempered Clavier.' Conceived as a didactic piece, Bach said that he created it '»for the profit and use of musical youth desirous of learning, and especially for the pastime of those already skilled in this study» is composition by Bach signalled an essential change in the way we think about and create music; since its confection, specific parameters were unfolded, unifying the way instruments are tuned in the West and, hence, marking a new era. From that point on, instead of tuning instruments according to direct mathematical proportions, tuning focused on the human ear and on the relationship between the notes. Ergo, it broke the rigid mathematical link and placed the senses of human beings—listening—in the center of priorities. is way complex ensembles with different instruments, just like in an orchestra, were able to be created.

sin necesidad de título is a project that takes up the different and endless possible interpretations of Bach's piece by way of a chain of events and intentions that is based on instinct and individuality. Dávila recorded hour-long sessions in which piano students played a piece that each one of them selected from 'The Well-Tempered Clavier.' The conglomeration of audios recorded is simultaneously played in an installation of mirrors placed horizontally on the floor of the gallery, ensuring that different voices try to speak one language.

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TEXTS AND CATALOGUES

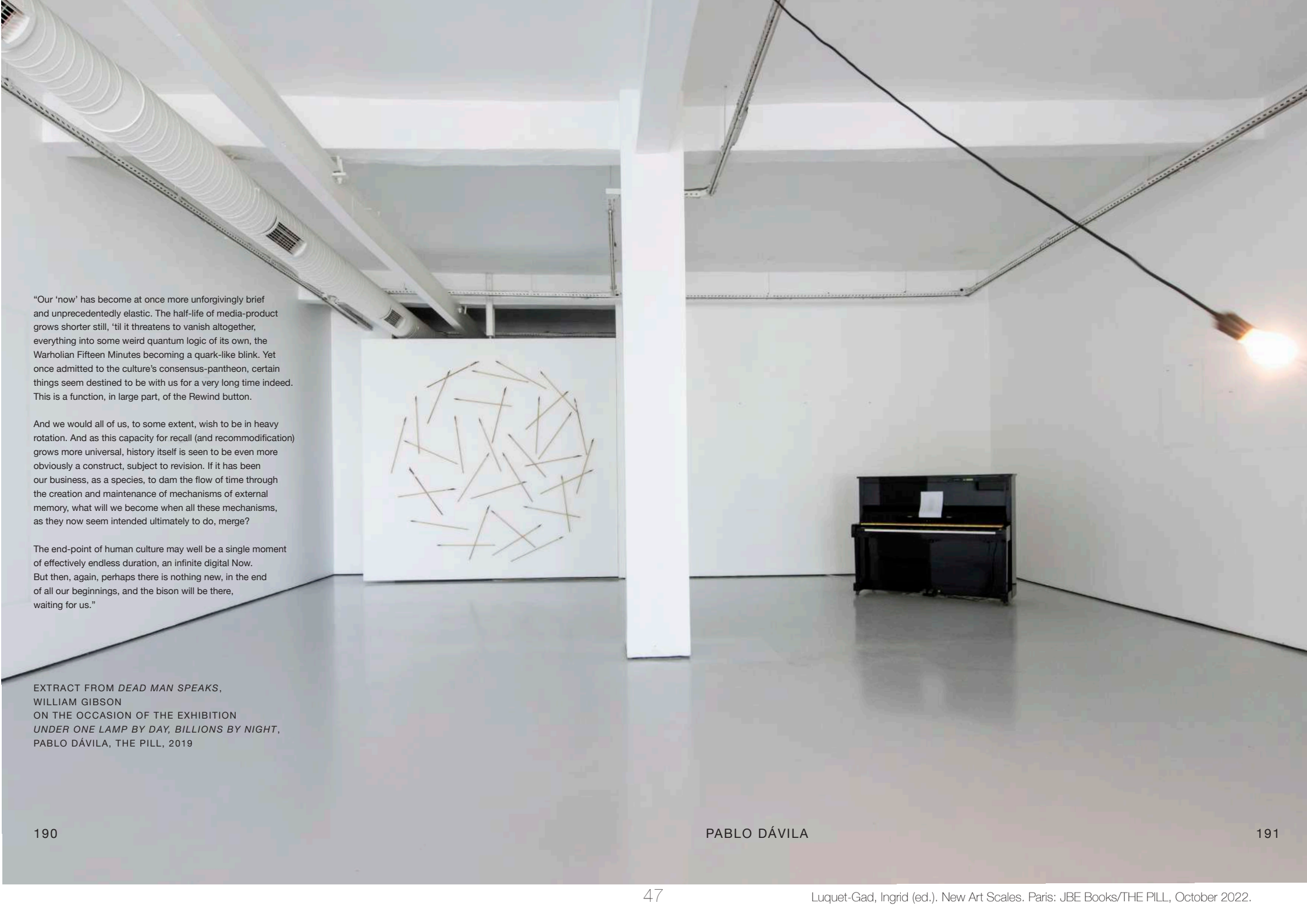
Perceiving After the “End of History”: Pablo Dávila’s Sensorial Reworking of Duration

← **SENZA REPLICA (2019) - 1**
YAMAHA DISCLAVIER
PIANO, MIDI SYSTEM,
CUSTOM MADE
COMPUTER CODING
VARIABLE DIMENSION
2019

In his multidisciplinary works, Pablo Dávila takes the traditional artistic media as a starting point to question how they reflect the social construction of space and time. In his installations, the Mexico City-based artist excavates a space for interference and ambiguity through forms both pared-down and rich with an immediate sensorial experience. *Senza Replica* (2019) exemplifies such a task: a custom programmed piano plays a composition, keys moving untouched, as a musical clock controls their motion. The sequence develops through an algorithm ensuring that no key combination of an 88-key piano keyboard is played twice, evolving towards an asymptotic, and seemingly infinite point at the rhythm of one chord per second. At first, when experiencing the work’s transient presence between presence and absence, one could think of hauntology, a term that entered popular discourse in the 2000s to describe the paradoxical nature of being in time: that of a temporal disjunction characteristic of our “end of history” era. However, Pablo Dávila’s own investigation goes a step further, as it is not so much haunted as it is in perpetual evolution. Time is out of joint, but it has always ontologically been so, only obscured by our faith in History as a linear progression. The artist anchors his work *Senza Replica* inside the philosophical tradition of duration, from Aristotle to Bergson. Thus, duration emerges as an experience of pure mobility, evolution and multiplicity, detached from any determinism. It calls for a reversal of our habitual modes of thought, and to let go of our preconceived patterns of perception. Dávila renders such a vital task perceivable, as he holds the viewer captive inside a mesh of dynamic entanglements, objective description slowly melting away as each new chord arises.

PABLO DÁVILA

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"Our 'now' has become at once more unforgivingly brief and unprecedentedly elastic. The half-life of media-product grows shorter still, 'til it threatens to vanish altogether, everything into some weird quantum logic of its own, the Warholian Fifteen Minutes becoming a quark-like blink. Yet once admitted to the culture's consensus-pantheon, certain things seem destined to be with us for a very long time indeed. This is a function, in large part, of the Rewind button.

And we would all of us, to some extent, wish to be in heavy rotation. And as this capacity for recall (and recommodification) grows more universal, history itself is seen to be even more obviously a construct, subject to revision. If it has been our business, as a species, to dam the flow of time through the creation and maintenance of mechanisms of external memory, what will we become when all these mechanisms, as they now seem intended ultimately to do, merge?

The end-point of human culture may well be a single moment of effectively endless duration, an infinite digital Now. But then, again, perhaps there is nothing new, in the end of all our beginnings, and the bison will be there, waiting for us."

EXTRACT FROM *DEAD MAN SPEAKS*,
WILLIAM GIBSON
ON THE OCCASION OF THE EXHIBITION
UNDER ONE LAMP BY DAY, BILLIONS BY NIGHT,
PABLO DÁVILA, *THE PILL*, 2019

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*For inquiries
contact@thepill.co*

+90 212 533 1000 | thepill.co

Mürselpaşa Caddesi No:181 34087 Balat-İstanbul