

PRESS RELEASE

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AMNESIA

FELIX GONZALEZ-TORRES, ON KAWARA,
and a FILM AND VIDEO PROGRAM curated by
Rebecca Cleman and Josh Kline of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI)
December 11, 2010 – January 22, 2011

“I used to come home very late at night and watch TV to forget the daily specials before I’d work on any art. I’d scan the channels. There’s really not much to see. Everything boiled down to the same low level of meaninglessness. Everything was a fragment of a total spectacle: the most horrific news next to the most glamorous gold ring next to the most glamorous celebrity next to cooking oil. News, events, fiction, data, scandals, starving children, etc., are all collapsed into a level of historical inaction—a dark landscape, sterile, meaninglessness . . .”

-Felix Gonzalez-Torres, interview with Tim Rollins, 1993

Amnesia is a condition marked by gaps, lacunae in the fabric of memory, missing pieces from a continuum. As a medical condition, amnesia afflicts individuals who cannot recall specific events and times. As a metaphorical condition, amnesia can afflict countries and societies with a collective forgetfulness. History is not the continuous, linear narrative of the past, but rather, a continually shifting collection of fragments held together by those pieces we prioritize and those we choose to forget, a kind of dark matter filling the space between what is desired or allowed to be visible at any given moment. These gaps, however, do not represent loss, but rather discontinuity.

“I die once so I have only one life. Literally speaking, continuity means nothing and discontinuity means existence.”

-On Kawara in conversation with Lucy Lippard, 1974.

Andrea Rosen Gallery is truly excited to present an exhibition of three remarkable projects, Felix Gonzalez-Torres’ “Untitled” (It’s Just a Matter of Time), 1992; a singular masterpiece, a set of 12 On Kawara date paintings from his *Today* series comprised of one canvas from each month of a single year, and an extensive and complex film and video program expressing a multivalent reading of amnesia curated by Rebecca Cleman and Josh Kline of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI).

While many artist’s work can be said to describe the phenomenon of social amnesia, the three components of this exhibition were selected because they all seem to embody a deceptive sense of continuity—the billboards always have the same text, Kawara’s canvases give the appearance of always looking identical, and film and video have a sense of being a stagnant record forever embedded in the medium—but at their root and as the projects are used in this exhibition, they all convey an overt sense of inherent discontinuity providing us an opportunity to experience the works intellectually and viscerally. The video and film program curated by Rebecca Cleman and Josh Kline serves as a crucial link in the exhibition and foregrounds the underlying interest in media in both Gonzalez-Torres and Kawara’s practice. Inherent to the physical properties of film

and video is a material degradation and far from serving as an accurate record or recording, all videos and film, no matter how documentary, are ultimately subjective. Cleman and Kline have created a multifaceted program exploring several different themes and types of amnesia, with the content dynamically changing throughout the course of the exhibition. When one stands in front of the nine monitors, they become a manifestation of the collapsed, simultaneous experience Gonzalez-Torres describes in his quote about television.

Both Kawara and Gonzalez-Torres' work is initially deceptive in seeming to be mostly about the passage of time and our existential relationship to it, however, both slowly reveal themselves to be equally if not more so about our shared historical condition of amnesia and how place alters content. First exhibited at the Kunstverein Hamburg in the 1992 exhibition *Gegendarstellung: Ethics and Aesthetics in the Age of AIDS*, "Untitled" (It's Just a Matter of Time) features the text of the work's parenthetical title in the original German in white, Gothic font set against a black background. That the billboards continue to persist and be exhibited in new contexts and places makes the purposefully contradictory and multivalent meaning of the text more powerful. Kawara's works similarly become more and more expansive as time goes on. Each canvas represents the intense labor of a full day of painting and mark not only a moment in time and place, but become linked both backwards and forwards to Kawara's ever expanding, unparalleled lifelong project. It is surprising when seeing all twelve Kawara canvases together, and against one's immediate assumption, one sees how the formatting of the painted dates subtly shifts based on the local standard where the works were produced. For this exhibition we have chosen to exhibit the handmade boxes lined with a newspaper clipping from the day the work was produced. Seen from a distance, it is possible to apprehend all of the canvases at once, but it is only possible to view the boxes up close, mimicking the public address of the canvases and the seemingly private nature of the boxes. As if capturing a random frame in one of the television screens, the newspaper clippings are merely one part representing a whole. There is no formula for what is selected from the newspaper and Kawara's particular framing of that day's events point not only to what is being displayed, but the magnitude of what is unknown and forgotten.

*"... they're betting on amnesia. That's what they're counting on. They're counting on that you all forgot."
-Barack Obama, Democratic National Committee event, August 2, 2010*

If we are prone to amnesia, we can also be saved by it. Without forgetting, there is no remembering and without gaps, there is no need to construct histories to fill them. Gonzalez-Torres and Kawara both made works that affirmed their own existence and each artist's deep sense of responsibility to knowing his society make the seemingly mundane act of living miraculous and consequential. A billboard appears, a day is lived and remembered, a video is recorded and broadcast. It's only a matter of time. I am still alive.

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BILLBOARD PROJECT

Felix Gonzalez-Torres "Untitled" (It's Just a Matter of Time), 1992

AMNESIA

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, On Kawara
and a FILM AND VIDEO PROGRAM curated by
Rebecca Cleman and Josh Kline of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI)
December 12, 2010 – January 22, 2011

Appearing in the most unexpected places, seemingly without explanation, the billboard works of Felix Gonzalez-Torres illustrate the artist's central interest in the spatial and conceptual division between the public and the private. It is our great pleasure to be able to present the work "Untitled" (It's Just a Matter of Time), 1992. The billboard consists of a black background with white text in Gothic typeface reading "Es ist nur eine Frage der Zeit." As the parenthetical title of the works suggests, the text translates as "it's just a matter of time." Not only was the work originally exhibited in Germany in the 1992 exhibition *Gegendarstellung – Ethics/Aesthetics in Times of AIDS* at the Kunstverein Hamburg, but the relationship between the typeface and the language used is particularly relevant.

Like almost all billboard works by the artist, there is a requirement that whenever the work is publically exhibited, it must also be accompanied by a number of outdoor locations. Normally these locations are situated in and around the city of the exhibition. Responding to Kawara's remarkable and continuing project, the *Today* series, for this exhibition we have chosen to exhibit the billboard in all of the cities in which Kawara produced the canvases being shown with the Gonzalez-Torres billboard work: Dusseldorf, New York, Paris, and Tokyo. This exhibition, ostensibly about the malleable nature of time, history, and memory is also very much about powerful interactions and slippages between place and time.

The work so clearly illuminates how location and time of the billboard's installations gravely alter the work, its meaning, and to what the text might refer. It is interesting to note that in 2002, purposefully following the events of September 11, this piece was poignantly installed in 14 locations in 13 countries. While the typeface remained the same, the work was translated into the local language of each location, emphasizing both the shared experiences and deviations in experience in this increasingly global work. Reflecting the conflicting and multiple meanings of its text, the work's continued resonance is both an indictment of how little progress has been made, a reflection of our shared condition of historical amnesia, and a symbol of a promise fulfilled.

List of locations on reverse

Special thanks to Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York and Hiromi Yoshii Gallery, Tokyo for their assistance in this project.



Pempelfort and Venloer Str. 1,
Dusseldorf, Germany



Kita-Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo,
Japan
(Near Gaien-mae station of Tokyo
Metro)



142 avenue Michelet Rue des
Rosiers Quartier des Puces, Paris,
France



Gavin Brown's Enterprise,
Leroy Street at Washington Street,
New York, NY



Westshore Expressway/Route 440,
south of Arden Ave, Staten Island,
NY



Kings Highway and Farragut Road,
Brooklyn, NY

FILM AND VIDEO PROGRAM



AMNESIA

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Amnesia forms a vast territory of disintegrating or disappeared information. In an effort to map this Sargasso Sea of the mind, this media program explores four major themes related to the loss of memory and history. These themes are: natural amnesia, the kind brought about by damage to the brain or the decay of materials; willed amnesia, the deliberate suppression of memories by a person or society; forced amnesia, an imposed loss of memory on a group; and a fourth type that is the inevitable outcome of the other three - historical amnesia, the loss, confusion, or alteration of a culture's record of itself. Drawing from a wide range of moving image works, including artist's film and video, Code-era Hollywood films, exploitation cinema, and amateur footage of historical events, these nine monitors will display a cavalcade of images lost in time. Over the course of this exhibition, the content will change unpredictably, mirroring the effects of amnesia's ceaseless destruction.

The television works of German novelist and filmmaker Alexander Kluge are a departure point for the program. Produced for broadcast on German public television in the 1980s, Kluge's series critiques developments in the 19th and 20th centuries by overlapping historical images and references culled from cinema, advertising, political propaganda and high culture. The effect of watching them is like having a fever dream of relics from the past; resonating with the Gonzalez-Torres billboard piece, these works are remarkable for Kluge's ability to have them air on national television, especially since the programs drudged up memories that might otherwise be buried.

Kluge's eclectic montage of references will be amplified across the monitors. Code-era Hollywood films, bleached and sparkling, will play alongside exploitation films that depict the very subjects and cultures that were cleansed by the Hays Code. Film and video works by artists including Dan Graham, Kevin Jerome Everson, Peggy Ahwesh, Takeshi Murata, Ant Farm, Margaret Lee and Joan Jonas, among others, will play alongside haphazard footage found on the Internet, of significant events like the moon landing, the Chilean miner rescue, or the Beijing Olympics, or of fan-generated discussions around recent pop-culture obsessions with history and memory, notably Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* and Christopher Nolan's *Inception*.

Taken together, the spectacle of these monitors will serve as a striking marker of what has been forgotten over time, or what will be forgotten in time.

--Rebecca Cleman and Josh Kline

WEEK	12/11 - 12/24	1/4 - 1/8	1/11 - 1/15	1/18 - 1/22
Monitor 1	Trailers: <i>Donnie Darko/ Total Recall/ Indiana Jones Crystal Skull/ Inception</i>	Trailers: <i>A Night to Dismember/ Top Hat</i>	Trailers: <i>The Lost Continent/ Basterds</i>	Trailers: <i>United 93/ Starship Troopers/ WTC</i>
Monitor 2	Joan Jonas: <i>Double Lunar Dogs</i> (1984)	Kevin Jerome Everson: films	Kluge: <i>Eiffel Tower, King Kong, and the White Woman</i>	TBA
Monitor 3	Found Footage: Moon Landing	Code-era: Love in Wartime	Lynda Benglis: <i>Now</i> (1973)	Kluge: <i>Antiques of Advertising</i> (1988)
Monitor 4	Alexander Kluge: <i>Blue Hour Tango Time</i> (1988)	Ant Farm: <i>The Eternal Frame</i> (1975)	Found Footage: Oil Spill	Artist TBD
Monitor 5	Takeshi Murata: <i>Infinite Doors</i> (2010)	Found Footage: Beijing Olympics	Code-era Hollywood: Propaganda	Code-era: Nostalgia for the Past
Monitor 6	Exploitation Films: Sex Madness/ Ten Minutes to Live	Exploitation: Doris Wishman, <i>Nudes on the Moon</i>	Spencer Williams: <i>Blood of Jesus</i> (1941)	Peggy Ahwesh: <i>Beirut Outtakes</i> (2007)
Monitor 7	Code-era Hollywood: Dancing the Depression Blues Away	Hannah Wilke: <i>Intercourse with...</i> (1978)	Ken Jacobs: <i>Perfect Film</i> (1986)	TBA
Monitor 8	Margaret Lee: <i>This Is It</i> (2010)	Paul Slocum: <i>You're Not My Father</i> (2007)	TBA	Found Footage: Memorials
Monitor 9	Dan Graham: <i>Past Future Split Attention</i> (1972)	Kluge: <i>Changing Time Quickly</i> (1988)	Harun Farocki: <i>Inextinguishable Fire</i> (1969)	Exploitation: <i>Double Deal</i> (1939)