

On Time: A SPILL Reader

With Alexandrina Hemsley, Bojana Janković,
Jasmine Shigemura Lee, Johanna Linsley &
Rebecca Collins (Stolen Voices), Lewis Church,
Liana Psarologaki, Madeleine Botet de Lacaze,
Malik Nashad Sharpe, Mary Paterson with
Anna Mortimer, Jonathan Boddam-Whetham
& Natalie Raven, Ria Jade Hartley, Robert Pacitti,
Season Butler with Umama Hamido, Shaun
Caton, Susan Elaine Jones, Tara Fatehi Irani and
edited by Diana Damian Martin.

ON TIME:
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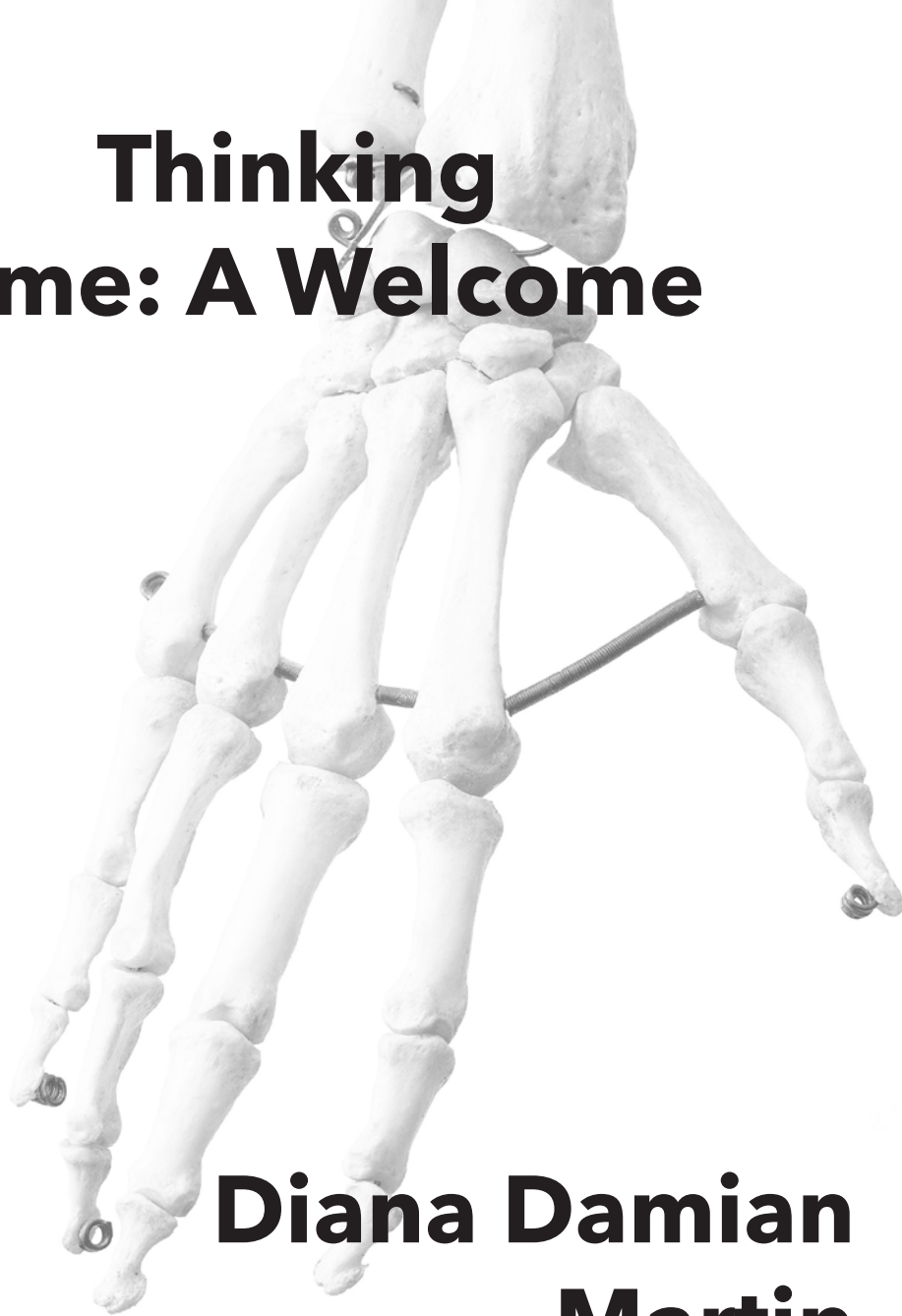
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Thinking Time: A Welcome



**Diana Damian
Martin**

On Time: A SPILL Reader brings together artists, writers, activists and other cultural workers to explore the multiple terrains of meaning within works in the SPILL Festival of Performance 2018, in the current political moment.

The book was produced ahead of the festival and as such, it is a work of critical speculation. It places the festival in relation to multiple experiences, histories and practices, considering how these constitute different ways of thinking in time, with time, and over time. The *SPILL Reader* gathers nonconforming texts that work with criticism, fiction, poetics, testimony, documentation and performance to follow the resonances of a festival to be, now. That now-ness is temporary, but also hopeful.

...

The question of time, and of performance, is reconfigured during a moment of profound changes, from the local to the planetary. The transitional period marked by UK's vote to leave the European Union has manifested multiple political times: porous, fictional, legislative, civic. It has shaped profoundly different lived experiences of contemporaneity, occluded past histories entangled within these, and produced a wave of coexistent futures. Often, the present is relegated as futurity, even when it is imminent, or already underway. In this period of transition, time is both suspended and fugitive.

We are also experiencing a new geological era, an interval of time referred to as the Anthropocene, one characterised by unprecedented human impact on the planet. This has invited new ways of thinking about time and its multiplicity, on a planet whose life is dwindling. In this political ecology, time is slippery: it is lived, traded, measured, broken up, predatory and slowed right down. It is colonial, patriarchal, oppressive, but it is also nonconforming, intersectional, multiple and resistant.

In this time, which is not ours, but in which we dwell, the ‘richness of biological knowledge’ to borrow from Donna Haraway, is precarious and overflowing. In fights to move beyond ‘the dubious privileges of human exceptionalism’ as Haraway points out, and decolonise structures of thought and modes of being together, of moving through, of belonging, we find a different time, discordant and collective.

For its ninth festival, SPILL approaches the question of time by means of strands of programming that foreground place and heritage, sound and music, nonconforming art practices and activism, body-based work, screen-work and work for kids, public rituals, wellbeing and care, and other interventions. SPILL is situated in Ipswich’s public spaces: Christchurch and Holywell Parks, the Town Hall, the Waterfront, in shopfronts, on the facades of buildings and

on its streets. It features a monument, parades, processions, wanderings, portraits, parties, gigs, actions, rituals, talks, meditation, screen-based, performative and sonic interventions. It explores identity, race, citizenship, youth, gender, queer histories, touch and sense, folklore, living and dying; it features works that reimagine, break, chronicle, perform, portray, transcend, question, move, invite, sound out and intervene. A festival is both a mark in time, and of time: it creates a frame in which many political realities become entangled. A festival invites journeys that find a temporary commons across seemingly discordant histories; journeys that invite multiple times to exist concurrently, to rub off against each other, to conflict in ways that might, even temporarily, make way for an alternative visibility of that which is rendered marginal.

Time is in the duration of a festival that creates an alternative cultural cartography, in the multiple encounters that its performances make possible, in the brief intersections with accidental audiences and the porousness of actions that intervene, in the historical imprints of war and its forgotten or silenced memories, in sonic landscapes melting into water, or in the heat of a flaming pyre. The *SPILL Reader* wraps itself around a festival as it unfolds, committed to thinking some of the futures that lie within. This book might be in your hands, or you might be scrolling across its pages. It might come out of your bag on your way

to a performance, or you might find it later, on a bookshelf or in the kitchen, as you recall a festival now past. It might act as your temporary presence within the festival, or as a collective memory to inhabit. You might find within it stories that meander into your own experiences and encounters in the festival. You might read a sticky line, or inhabit a dialogue about a work you have not yet seen. You might find it years later, in an archive, or a shop, at a talk, in a conversation.

We welcome you here, with all the entangled temporalities this encounter carries. There are many durations to difference.

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This *SPILL Reader* holds three sections, each pertaining to a different way of approaching time in relation to the festival. In *Civic Time*, we think about the fictionality of memory, mental illness as resistance and anger as an ally in Season Butler and Umama Hamido's dialogue about the artist's work *On Akka's Shore*, and undertake an astrological journey through works in the SPILL Open with Madeleine Botet de Lacaze. We think about the relationship between SPILL Festival and Ipswich in our current political moment in Bojana Janković's piece, and approach the fourth dog perspective as a way of exploring how we sense the

architectural, the material and immaterial world in Liana Psarologaki's text that thinks about Byron J. Scullin, Hannah Fox and Thomas Supple's large-scale sonic artwork *Clarion Call*, and On/Off's cinematic experience *Kopf Kino*. We think about the fictionality of memory, mental illness as resistance and anger as an ally in Season Butler and Umama Hamido's dialogue about the artist's work *On Akka's Shore*.

Bodies of Time begins with a sonic fiction by Johanna Linsley & Rebecca Collins (Stolen Voices) that takes in questions of time, history and aurality, and continues with a piece by Tara Fatehi Irani that examines what might be found in re-imagining how we work, conceive and mishandle archives, thinking with *The Mirror* by People Like Us and its collage of Western blockbuster movies and top of the charts songs. Malik Nashad Sharpe asks how choreography can reimagine representations of Black bodies by means of what they term to be technologies of contagion and proliferation, entering in dialogue with Jade Montserrat's work *Revue*. Mary Paterson with Jonathan Boddam-Whetham, Anna Mortimer & Natalie Raven, ask questions about how language emerges from events, and how language might describe the event which constituted it, through a collaboratively written text composed only of questions.

The final section, *Sensing Time*, opens with a text by Alexandrina Hemsley that dialogues with Jodee Mundy,

Michelle Stevens and Heather Lawson's *Imagined Touch*. The text considers ecologies of touch and their enmeshment with power relations dictated by white supremacist patriarchy, asking what can be restored through, and because of touch? Lewis Church explores artist-led support structures, looking at instances of collaboration, cohabitation and their relation to subcultural practices in Live Art, whilst Ria Jade Hartley explores the politics of care in their examination of the *ecologies of care* initiative, thinking with and by decolonial practices. We end the section with Jasmine Shigemura Lee's dialogue with Vivian Chinasa Ezugha's *Uro-(clay)*, a text that spends time with the materiality of clay, its relation to skin, locality and the body.

Opening this book is Robert Pacitti's text which thinks with memories, encounters and place to consider time in an age of great threat, finding hope in collective acts of remembrance and resistance: bursting the membrane of the present to find a different future. Intervening throughout the book are short texts titled *Out of Time*, which explore: our encounter with the body and death in Susan Elaine Jones' text, the photographer of the skeleton present throughout the *SPILL Reader*, the performativity of vintage photographs in Shaun Caton's collection of images, and my index on time, exploring time's presence in the language of the SPILL programme.

The texts gathered here explore temporality thematically and formally, weaving their way through different modes and genres of writing: they are nonconforming texts that accompany the festival. The *SPILL Reader* wraps itself around, dialogues with, and departs from, a number of works in the festival, but it also considers its curatorial journeys, thematic intersections and political avenues in relation to time, history and the (dissonant) contemporary moment. The *SPILL Reader* is also an experiment in how to be with time: how critical writing might encounter performance and its many proximities and peripherals outside of liveness.

What does it mean, we ask, to be with a festival in anticipation of it; whose roots, process, works and journeys we can follow, trace and think with? What kind of knowledge might we find in bodies, documents, texts, accounts and how should that be opened and not owned, appearing and still in process? What critical hope might be found in the work of speculation? In this way, this *SPILL Reader* is its own marker in, through and of time: a spending of time, together.