

UNIVERSAL TIMEPIECE: Versions 1-4

UNIVERSAL TIMEPIECE consists of four separate objects. Each of the versions explores a different aspect of the creator/object/viewer relationship through time.

Like the PETITION piece, the objects consist of nothing more than printed circuit boards, with the computer, electronics, and all necessary parts mounted directly on them. In their original installation, as documented in the video tape, each board was hung in an individual booth, with only one person allowed into a booth at a time.

In Version 1, the lifespan of the object has been set to 25 years. The computer in the artwork is counting down from there, relentlessly, while displaying the total time left. The only respite available is when the participant contributes some of their time by holding their finger on the object. This causes the count-down to be frozen, while encouraging sounds are made in response.

Version 2, like Version 1, has a fixed span of existence allotted to it. But in this case the span is measured in power (microwatts per hour) instead of time. So, in this case, the inevitable entropy can be halted by either the viewer using their finger to "conserve energy", or simply by shutting the object off.

In Version 3, the artwork takes on the role of a house plant, needing regular attention. The object must be touched at least once a week, or it will promptly self-destruct. Touching it causes the piece to reward the participant with a user number, user time-meter, plus statistics about the overall use of the object. And, of course, the "expiration date" of the object will be moved forward to a week from the date and time the piece is touched.

The final Version (4) of the timepieces has a meter counting my current age. This piece requires only one true act of participation from one viewer, which is to use the key in the lock to stop the meter when I die. If the key is used incorrectly before my actual death, the meter keeps running, and the object responds to the abuser appropriately.

Mark Madel

PETITION

PETITION is another piece that links the interaction of the audience to it's own eventual demise. But in this object, the viewer is openly encouraged to participate if they don't like the artwork.

The piece consists of a printed circuit board in the shape of a scroll. The computer and all associated parts, including the batteries, loudspeaker, and pen, are mounted directly on the board.

During standby, the object hums a song, similar to those heard often in elevators and supermarkets. The text displayed on the upper L.C.D. reads, "15,000 more signatures (or whatever the current total is) are needed to disable this object." The lower L.C.D. states, "Sign below if disappointed."

When the participant starts to sign with the pen on the conductive plastic, the computer changes the sounds being emitted and monitors the signature, accepting only those considered valid based on criteria set in the software. When a valid signature is received, the piece registers it's displeasure with sound, the "signatures needed" total is decremented, and the piece re-enters the standby state. Obviously, when 15,000 signatures have finally been collected, the object will cease functioning with an appropriate final message.

Mark Madel

IN GOOD TIME

IN GOOD TIME is the first piece I created exploring the concept that the interaction of the audience with the object will directly affect it's lifespan. It is also the first multi-lingual work I made, with the capability of displaying it's messages and text in 6 different languages. The later artworks also have this feature.

Physically, the object is a large metal-plated wood coffin with a plexiglass front. Inside the space is divided into two compartments, of which the upper one houses the small computer, and is accessible via a top panel. The bottom section, which holds the accumulating money (as described later), is sealed, so as to make it impossible to remove the money without breaking the sculpture apart. There is a board with gold-plated strips at the back of this compartment, which is attached to the computer, allowing it to sense the level of coins inside the piece.

In it's standby state, the object sits quietly while displaying alternately the time/date and the text, "INSERT COIN." The viewer may select, via a hole in the front, any of the possible languages before inserting a coin. Once a coin is put in, the computer inside will calculate, based on stored and current data, the remaining lifespan of the object itself. One of many messages is then displayed, conveying this information to the participant. In the future, when the coins inside the sculpture reach the highest allowed level, the computer will deliberately self-destruct. Thus, the amount of interaction with the object, or, in other words, it's "economic popularity", has a direct bearing on it's existence.

Mark Madel