

Rebecca BLOCKSOME

# Time and Territoriality:

## Delineating Place and Self

### in *Winter Stores*

*Ever since Albert EINSTEIN, we have known that time and space are inextricably linked. As the fourth dimension in a world where we are only capable of seeing three, however, it is often overlooked (literally) in our discussion of space and place. Nevertheless, time plays a major role in how we experience places, and our notion of the shape of time, whether linear or circular, has major implications for how we interact with others and with the world around us.*

*In this paper, we will discuss various conceptions of time and how they have evolved throughout human history, taking special note of the role of technology in shaping our notions of time. We will then explore these conceptions as evident in the exhibition *Winter Stores* by the Domestic Research Society at Škuc Gallery in Ljubljana. Building on Friedrich NIETZSCHE's theory of eternal return as modified into Gilles DELEUZE and Félix GUATTARI's notion of the refrain, we will focus on how repetition with difference builds time into abstract space to territorialise it.*

*Finally, we will note the importance of territory as “home” in constructing self-identity and making possible dialogue and interaction with the Other. The implications of modern technology's alienation of humans from time and space will be discussed; we will then consider the role of contemporary art in proffering territories and places in an increasingly placeless world.*

## I. The Shape of Time

The earliest notions of time were cyclical. Before technology enabled the precise measurement of time, humans' understanding of it was based on the rhythms of nature. The ancient Babylonians and Sumerians developed the calendar and the sundial to measure time based on the position of heavenly bodies, and even came up with the seven-day week in accordance with the seven visible planets of our solar system.

This notion of circular time was further reinforced in agrarian societies by the cycles of the seasons and the life cycle of plants and animals. The major ancient civilizations of Greeks, Hindus and Mayas independently developed the notion of time as a “great wheel”, with repeating patterns of recurring events<sup>1</sup>.

The idea of linear time took over with the rise of Judeo-Christianity, which posits a definite fixed point at which God created the universe, before which there was no time. Moreover, in Judeo-Christianity there is a definite end to time as well, which will take place at the Second Coming. This view of the world is built on a story, and thus on a *history*, which implies a linear, progressive view of time. Thus the study of time became quite central to the Church during the Middle Ages; scholars occupied themselves with computing the end of time and laying the groundwork for the discipline of historiography<sup>2</sup>.

As technology developed, it served to strongly reinforce the linear view of time. In particular, the mechanical clock, in combination with artificial light (starting with candles, and then electric lights) allowed time to be completely abstracted from the rhythms of nature. Time became something that could be measured in increments, added and subtracted, saved and spent – a quantifiable entity.

The Enlightenment, with its emphasis on understanding the world scientifically, further pushed time into the realm of linearity by propagating the theories of evolution and the “Big Bang” origin of the cosmos. Finally, technology itself was tied very closely to the idea of progress, of a clear development from one state to a different, better state as society perfected itself<sup>3</sup>.

1 LLOYD Andreas, *Technology and Western Perception of Time*. In HYPERLINK “<http://www.eskar.dk/andreas/Time%20and%20tech.pdf>” <http://www.eskar.dk/andreas/Time%20and%20tech.pdf>.

2 LLOYD Andreas, *Technology and Western Perception of Time*. In HYPERLINK “<http://www.eskar.dk/andreas/Time%20and%20tech.pdf>” <http://www.eskar.dk/andreas/Time%20and%20tech.pdf>. 2.

3 LLOYD Andreas, *Technology and Western Perception of Time*. In HYPERLINK “<http://www.eskar.dk/andreas/Time%20and%20tech.pdf>” <http://www.eskar.dk/andreas/Time%20and%20tech.pdf>. 3–4.

In response to this progressive dominance of linear time, some philosophers of the XIX<sup>th</sup> and XX<sup>th</sup> centuries mounted a resistance, seeking to restore a human or natural – i.e. cyclical – aspect to time. One of the most famous of these responses was the idea of *eternal recurrence*, or the notion that the universe has been recurring and will continue to recur in a self-similar form on and on to infinity. Arthur SCHOPENHAUER was a strong proponent of this idea, but it is perhaps Friedrich NIETZSCHE who is most famous for it.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, NIETZSCHE writes: “O Zarathustra, who you are and must become, behold you are the teacher of the eternal recurrence – that is your destiny! That you as the first must teach this doctrine – how could this great destiny not be your greatest danger and sickness too?”

“Behold, we know what you teach: that all things recur eternally, and we ourselves too; and that we have already existed an eternal number of times, and all things with us. [...]”

“Now I die and vanish (...) the soul is as immortal as the body. But the knot of causes in which I am entangled recurs and will create me again. I myself belong to the causes of eternal recurrence. I come again, with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this serpent – not to a new life or a better life or a similar life: I come back eternally to this same, selfsame life, in what is greatest as in what is smallest, to teach again the eternal recurrence of all things.<sup>4</sup>”

NIETZSCHE was content to put forth this idea without offering any philosophical defense of it, and indeed, it appears he feels that the thought of it is more real than the phenomenon itself. Nevertheless, his idea did gain some traction in the scientific community (although it is by no means accepted widely).

The defense put forth by NIETZSCHE’s followers combines statistics, physics and astrophysics to argue that time is infinite, but space and matter are finite. Therefore, even if matter can be arranged in an enormous number of permutations, that number is ultimately finite, and thus at some point in the infiniteness of time, those permutations must begin to repeat themselves<sup>5</sup>.

Whether or not this argument is scientifically defensible (which it is beyond the scope of this paper to determine), NIETZSCHE’s theory is intriguing at least at the philosophical level for its confluence of

time, space and identity. This nexus was further explored by Gilles DELEUZE and Félix GUATTARI, who, although not addressing its scientific merits, did put forth a much more elaborate philosophical analysis of eternal return under the name *refrain*.

## II. Repetition and Difference

DELEUZE and GUATTARI, whose work draws heavily on NIETZSCHE, put forth a theory of repetition with difference in their essay *1837: Of the Refrain*. For them, the *refrain* is the organising factor that differentiates between order and chaos, with order being understood as repeatability and chaos as uniqueness. Starting from the image of a young child humming to himself as he walks along in the dark, they note the power of a single repeated element to create a center of calm in the midst of a hostile place, threatening the ability of chaos to persist.

Going one step further, the refrain, if sufficiently potent, can create not just a centring point, but a “home” – a circle of order organised around the centre, keeping the forces of chaos at bay. Within this circle, it is possible to dwell, not just for a moment, but for an extended period of time; there productive work is possible, or if not productive, at least intentional, activity directed toward a particular end.

Crucially, this notion of refrain reconnects time not only to space, but also to *place* – to the territory, or lived space, as distinct from space as an abstract notion of space, which follows from the same technological and scientific developments as the abstraction of time. Thus, from the point of view of DELEUZE and GUATTARI, time is an essential element of place, and each place has its own time, or times, which both describe and constitute it. The territory, as the basic unit of space, corresponds with the refrain, as the fundamental unit of time, in the lived world.

Finally, after the circle has been established via repetition, it is possible for it to open a crack – not toward the outside where chaos reigns, but it a new direction, as if into the future. This is the difference in the repetition, which gives it its uniqueness, a linear quality in a circular world. To understand fully this concept, we must note that if the crack is not toward the outside as conventionally understood, then it must be towards another dimension – to the third dimension in a two-dimensional model, so to speak<sup>6</sup>.

4 NIETZSCHE Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (tr. KAUFMAN Walter). New York, 1995. 220–221.

5 GORFU G. E., *NIETZSCHE’s Eternal Recurrence*. New York, 2000. In HYPERLINK “<http://www.meskot.com/recurrence.htm>” <http://www.meskot.com/recurrence.htm>.

6 GOODCHILD Philip, *DELEUZE and GUATTARI: An Introduction to the Politics of Desire*. Thousands Oaks, 1996. 311.

These three stages – centre, circle, crack – together constitute the essence of the refrain as conceived by DELEUZE and GUATTARI. The key aspect of this refrain is its repetition, by which it begins to take on a rhythm; and this quality of rhythm is that which distinguishes ordered space from chaotic. It is the first step in domesticating the abstract.

Thus any territory, any lived place, is defined by a multiplicity of various shapes of time – linear, cyclical, helical, pointillistic – overlapping and interacting with each other in a complex dance. One might even say that *space* is colonised into place by means of time, by means of the narratives woven around and through it.

### III. Spaces and Places

To see how this might look in practice, it is worth considering a case study in territorialisation. At first glance, it might seem difficult to imagine a good site for this – in our day and age, most frontiers have already been closed long ago. Perhaps paradoxically, however, though very little natural space has escaped the marks of human civilization, we have actually come full circle and begun to manufacture spaces with the specific intent of making them as neutral as possible.

By this, of course, I am speaking of the ‘white box’ of the art gallery, deliberately designed to eliminate any possible narratives or associations, so that it is a blank space that effectively disappears, avoiding interference with the artwork displayed in it. This displayed work does not traditionally serve the purpose of territorialising the gallery; the gallery remains a non-place, the purest form of abstract space, disappearing into the background of consciousness.

The exception to this rule, however, is work which specifically calls attention to the gallery as a space and even as a place, with its own unique characteristics and its own marks of human settlement. In such instances, the artists could be said to have “territorialised” the gallery. For this to happen successfully, the artist must consciously – or even self-consciously – interact with the gallery space to engage it in the narrative of her or his work.

One interesting example of a show that takes this approach is *Winter Stores (Ozimnica)*, an exhibition by the collective Domestic Research Society (*Društvo za domače raziskave – DDR*) held in the *Cabinet* exhibition space of Škuc Gallery in Ljubljana from 17 to 27 July 2008.

DDR consists of two visual artists, Alenka PIRMAN and Damijan KRACINA, along with the art historian Jani PIRNAT. According to the Slovenia Cultural Profile (SCP) website, the group “documents, collects, researches and presents domestic phenomena as installations, exhibitions or web projects related to the field of culture, art, science, conservation, education and research.”<sup>7</sup> DDR developed the Cabinet gallery specifically to showcase their collections, so in terms of both history and intent of the group, it is a true example of the domestication of a territory.

The Cabinet space offers an interesting twist on the ‘white box’ by being, instead, a black box – or more precisely, three black boxes. Built into an abandoned building off the courtyard of Škuc, the space consists of three cubical modules approximately 2.5 meters on each side, arranged in an ‘L’ shape, with the facing walls knocked out to form a contiguous space. The interiors of the boxes are painted matte black.

The viewer enters the space through a doorway cut into the side of the first box; she or he then can scan most of the compact gallery with a single glance, starting with the vertical stroke of the L in which she or he stands, and continuing to the right at the far end of the room to make the horizontal stroke.

The “furnishings” are fairly simple at first glance. A single bare bulb lights the room, along with a dim filament directing light into the first corner. A faint red glow appears on one wall from an indeterminable source. There is also some ambient lighting from the artifacts themselves – a lighted display case on one wall, and no fewer than seven television monitors running simultaneously on the bookshelves set up in the third cube.

The bulk of the exhibition consists of pithy statements written in white chalk directly on the walls in block letters (primarily in Slovene, but with two or three English statements as well). Some of these statements are connected with arrows, highlighting the relationships between them; others, however, do not appear to have any particular rhyme or reason. A selection of the more interesting statements for our purposes runs as follows:

KO TO GLEDAŠ, NEKAJ ČASA SE TI ZDI DA PARADAJZ MIGA  
TO JE MOJ ZADNJI GOLOB

<sup>7</sup> Slovenia Cultural Profile (SCP). In HYPERLINK “<http://www.culturalprofiles.org.uk/Slovenia/Units/5803.html>” <http://www.culturalprofiles.org.uk/Slovenia/Units/5803.html>.

PARAZITIZEM, SIMBIOZA, MIMIKRIJA, DOMESTIKACIJA,  
POSTDOMESTIKACIJA, EVOLUCIJA  
ZBIRATELJ ZBIRA ZBIRKO / A ZBIRKA IZBERE ZBIRATELJA  
NEKATERE JEDO, SPET DRUGE SO JED  
TOREJ KONJEV IN MOTORJEV, OBOJIH NAM JE TREBA  
ELIMINIRATI MRTVI ČAS  
KOLIKOR DALEČ, PAČ LAHKO SEŽEMO  
ENI MORAJO UMRETI, DA BI DRUGI ŽIVELI  
TREBA JE MNOGO VAJE IN POTRPEŽLJIVOSTI  
ZBIRKE SO NEKORISTNE, A POMEMBNE  
LANSKI MATERIJAL JE ŽE ODVEČ  
PREPOVEDANA JE NABAVA VSEGA OD SVINČNIKA NAPREJ  
ŠE SE DRŽIMO  
V BODOČE BOMO MORALI ŽIVETI OD LASTNIH SREDSTEV,  
NE PA OD ZUNANJE POMOČI  
V ODLAGALIŠČU SE NIČ NE DOGAJA, ZATO SE TUDI NE  
MORE NIČ POKVARITI  
POTEK REŠEVANJA  
NAJVEČJA SKRIVNOST VIDNEGA USPEHA JE TEHTNO IN  
ENOSTAVNO NAČRTOVANJE

In addition to these writings, which dominate the space visually, a lighted display on the wall adjacent to the door lists the steps of the artistic process in graphic form, starting from APPEARANCES and TRIGGERS, moving to a point at the centre, DECISION, from where it widens out again, running through CONCEPTUALISATION to FIELD WORK, ITEMS, TRANSFORMATION, PRODUCTS, and ultimately SIGHTINGS.

The next stimulus to hit the “viewer” is not visual, but auditory. A woman’s voice breaks in, repeating words without context, quite emotionless and nearly robotic. She speaks almost entirely in English: DREAMS – BLACK HAND FALL – DREMATI – JUMBO – ALLIANCE – LITTLE BOY – FIFTY-FIFTY – PLAYBOY – FEELING – CRETE – WINDOWS KISS.

The list is repeated immediately afterward, with all the same words, but clearly not a mere repetition of the first recording, because small differences in pronunciation are discernible. The first reading also has a faint musical accompaniment, which the second reading lacks. The whole piece (two readings together, back-to-back) is repeated at approximately ten-minute intervals.

The litany draws the spectator’s attention to the auditory



environment, where a few other sounds begin to enter the consciousness. A small electronic ‘blip’ drones on in the background. Alongside this, a human voice can be heard speaking from one of the television monitors, drawing attention to the final corner of the room left to be explored. In addition to the voice from the television, another voice can be heard faintly emitting from a pair of headphones lying on the rough wooden bookshelf containing the monitors. The voice in the headphones, ostensibly that of the artist, describes some of the considerations that went into the work.

The other six television monitors show silent pictures – the one in the top left corner displays a man weaving baskets and then lining them up and stacking them, and then removing them. Underneath it, a larger screen (with sound) shows images of roads and maps under the title *Black Hole Sun*. A slightly smaller screen below it has images of Slovenian casualties in World War I, followed by a lengthy discussion of the carrier pigeon and its role in the war. A very small monitor below this shows a series of black boxes, as geometric forms, morphing into various formations by adding, subtracting, stacking and turning them.

Moving to the right half of the bookshelf, the top small monitor shows images of a large pot cooking over an outdoor fire with a pair of antlers on the ground next to it, presumably the aftermath of a hunt. Below it, a larger screen shows anatomical drawings of insects, reptiles and birds, as if for a zoology textbook. Interspersed amongst these technical drawings, however, are artistic illustrations and woodcuts of griffons, dragons and other mythical creatures.

Finally, it moves on to photographs and images of mammals, including dogs and horses, in a clear “evolution” if not a scientifically accurate one. The small bottom monitor contains just three lines of credits, a still image which flickers gently on the screen. All of the monitors are in black and white, except for the one with roads and maps.

A few other items adorn the shelves to round out the collection: a few books and papers on the highest shelf; a scale model of the Cabinet gallery itself with some woven baskets inside it; the four black boxes shown moving in the video; a dried flower, tulip-like, contrasting starkly with its rough metal display case; a stack of family pictures, tied into two bundles with brown string; and a large black wooden boat inscribed with the word *Kabinet* on the side.

Also on the shelves, nearly overlooked at first glance, are two

white paper sacks filled with small white stone chips that spill out of a hole in the corner of one of them. The exposed surfaces of the sacks are covered with blue and black ballpoint pen, scarcely legible, lists and diagrams. The centre of one sack features a rough sketch of a clock face with the hands pointing to 7:10. Suddenly, here on this paper sack, the key to understanding the whole exhibition, the *territory*, becomes apparent.

## V. Lines and Circles

Four arrows radiate from the clock face, more or less in the cardinal directions. To the left, a new list is topped simply by the word TIME, which is then subdivided into LITERARY and CYCLICAL. Under literary time are listed TECHNOLOGY and COUNTING; cyclical time encompasses NATURE and ETERNAL RETURN. Finally, two arrows under these divergent lists point back towards the common space, with a smaller clock face also set to 7:10.

To the right, the arrow leads to CALIBER, which is divided into MECHANICS, and under this CHRONOMETER; and METAMECHANICS, and under it ÆSTHETICS and ETERNAL RETURN again, ironically enough. Straight up from the clock face, the arrow points to a dollar sign circled, with a question mark next to it. Above it is written USE/ÆSTHETIC VALUE. Below the clock, the arrow points to the word COUNTER, followed by another arrow leading to the word STYLE.

The second bag contains more ruminations on the same subject, emphasising TRANSCENDENCE, and from there moving to EVERYDAY LIFE and TO RECORD THE ABSURDITIES OF LIFE. Among potential forms taken into consideration are RECIPES, DICTIONARY/DIALECT and STORIES. Together, these two sacks are like pages torn from a sketchbook, giving a unique insight into the minds of the artists. And from them it becomes clear that *time* is the organising principle of this exhibition, in all its complex and contradictory forms.

## VI. Time as Form

To begin studying the use of time in constructing this space, we can commence by taking the two most common “shapes” of time – linear and circular – and analysing their formal use in this exhibition. Linear time is progressive; it moves from point A to point B and generally implies some sort of development between these two

points. There are many examples of linear time in this exhibition, starting with the statements written on the walls.

Especially on the first two walls, these statements are frequently connected with arrows, explicitly drawing linear logical connections between them. The setup of the gallery reinforces this linearity, as it is “read” both literally and figuratively from left to right. The statements frequently wrap around the corners of the walls, drawing the eye along in an orderly fashion. They are all written in straight lines parallel to the floor, so there is no attempt to diminish or negate this inherent linear property of text in any way.

The display case with the creative process interrupts this flow, as it is a sort of self-contained island on the wall; within its borders, however, it also presents a linear view of time (as any process must), emphasised by the triangular forms in the background. And six of the television monitors, while not employing arrows, also tell their stories in a linear fashion, as is standard for time-based media.

As for circular time, those same television monitors loop their programs, so after you have moved through the linear narrative once, it is transformed into a circular meta-narrative. Likewise, the main audio loop (*Dreams*) is an example of circular time, although with much less internal cohesion. It, however, lacks the simultaneous linear structure of the films or the writings on the wall, because the words are not sentences and have no logical linear connection.

Two unique examples fit neither into linear nor circular forms: the television monitor which shows only a flickering still image with production credits, and the insistent electronic “blip” in the background. These two examples are fascinating precisely because they contradict the forms of their media.

By showing a still picture on a time-based medium like film, the image effectively freezes time and holds it in an eternal instant. Similarly, the “blip” cannot be said to have any kind of narrative qualities, as it never changes; like a single point that has no spatial dimensions, a blip with no semantic content nor external reference is just a blip, serving only to draw attention to that particular instant in time, discrete and isolated from all other particular instants.

## VII. Time as Matter

Moving on from the formal aspects of time’s presentation, we can also look at how time is presented through the subject matter of the exhibition. As noted above, many of the statements written on the walls deal directly or indirectly with the topic of time. Many reinforce

the linear concept of time: “When you look at this, sometimes it seems to you that Paradise beckons.<sup>8</sup>” This statement parallels the Judeo-Christian narrative of progress towards an eventual Utopia. “The course of salvation”, whether intentionally or not, mirrors and reinforces this same utopian narrative of progress.

Likewise, “Parasitism, symbiosis, mimicry, domestication, post-domestication, evolution” also describes progress by means of process. Interestingly, it introduces the idea of *post-domestication*, emphasising the continuity of the evolutionary process beyond the point where we actually are right now – a bit of a jolt, as we tend to think of evolution as a process that has already culminated, however scientifically unsupportable that stance is.

Other statements deliberately try to play with linear logic, folding it back on itself and exploiting ambiguous relationships between cause and effect, in a circular logic reminiscent of circular time. Among these statements, “The collector collects the collection, yet the collection chooses the collector” stands out. Another reference to circular time, taking a different approach, is “Many exercises and patience are needed,” which emphasises the value of repetition. From there it is only a short step further to static time: “Still we remain” seems to defy both linear and circular time, to create a moment completely outside it.

Perhaps the most interesting statements, though, are the ones that deal with technology and its implications. Normally these would be classed under the heading of linear time, as technology is very much part of the narrative of progress that drives society today. Many of these statements, however, seem to have an ironical touch, calling into question this narrative of progress: “Therefore horses and motorcycles, we need both of them.” Superfluity figures highly in these narratives: “Last year’s material is already too much”; “Purchases are prohibited, everything from the pencil onward”; “Nothing happens in the landfill, therefore you cannot break anything.”

The influence of technology on the perception of time can hardly be overestimated, which makes these statements particularly meaningful. As noted, technology influences the general shape of time, favouring a linear perception over a circular one. Technology tends to remove repetition from everyday life, as routine tasks become automated. Furthermore, even within linear time, technology alters the shape by altering the speed – it compresses time, speeding up the pace of society and humans within it, and fundamentally alters the

<sup>8</sup> All translations are the author’s.

perception of space, allowing us to cover more territory in less time.

In this respect, perhaps the most clever element of the exhibition is the repetition of the earlier phrase “Therefore horses and motorcycles, we need both of them,” which appears for a second time on the very last wall of the room, half hidden behind the television monitors. It is slightly modified, however, in form: “Therefore horses and motorcycles, we need both of them, the more the better.” This manages not only to take aim at utopianism and overabundance at the same time, but its repetition in an altered form (the only repeated statement in the show) sets up the remaining time-form, the refrain.

This refrain is carried over into the video content, which explores the more complex forms of time, as is only possible in time-based media. Particularly interesting in this regard is the monitor showing the four boxes moving into various permutations; these rearrangements are shown from an oblique view and a top view simultaneously, side by side, giving an oddly disconcerting effect of being dislocated in space and time.

The true confusion in space and time, however, comes from watching the video in conjunction with the four black boxes stacked on the shelf beside it. In a flash of recognition, it becomes apparent that the boxes on the shelf are the same boxes appearing in the film – making them both present and past (already recorded) simultaneously. Again, this is repetition with difference, which imbues the forms with a parallel feeling of recognition and estrangement.

Taking it one step further, the eye is drawn to the miniature model of the gallery space – three black boxes stuck together in an L shape – on a higher shelf. The four black boxes below resemble the basic units of construction, thereby creating a link between the boxes, the video and the model, not to mention with the physical gallery space in which they all reside. On top of this, upon closer examination, it is apparent that the woven wooden forms inside the gallery model are miniature versions of the forms being woven in the video next to it, once again playing mind games with time and space.

Furthermore, although not all viewers of the show would necessarily know it, the video and the woven forms are remainders from an earlier show by the same group in the same space. Likewise, the video showing the cooking with the antlers nearby refers to another earlier show, also by the same group in the same space, and some of the writings on the wall refer to the same show. Even the title of the show, *Winter Stores*, refers obliquely to the same concept, indicating a thing or things put by at an earlier time to be benefited from later on.

All this manipulation of space and time, the endless repetitions and alterations, create the meta-narratives characteristic of the refrain in DELEUZE and GUATTARI’s terms. By using self-referential objects and videos in unexpected ways, the artists bring the third dimension into the two-dimensional world – or in this context, the fourth dimension into the three-dimensional world. The reference to previous “lives” of the gallery space gives it a history both linear and cyclical, a specific identity and personality that would otherwise be lacking.

## VIII. Putting down Roots

If we go back to our sketch of time on the paper bag, then, we can see time in all its various manifestations here: literary (linear) in the form of technology, and cyclical with the references to nature and eternal return. But while both appear, cyclical time appears to ultimately dominate in its modified form as the refrain. This refrain defines the gallery as a *place* instead of a space, gives it a connection to human life and lived experience.

The distinction is not strictly academic. Indeed, *placelessness* is one of the chronic afflictions of modern society. The Turkish aesthetician Jale ERZEN, writing about the aesthetics of placelessness, argues that a basic sense of place or territory is fundamental for human beings to be able to meet and interact with the “Other”; place is a fundamental category, necessary for the human being (or culture, speaking in collective terms) to form a sense of self-identity.

ERZEN writes: “The idea or notion of identity is profoundly related to sameness of a thing with its context. More specifically, it is related with the sameness or similarity of man with his environment. Identity is the forming of character and behaviour and culture through contact with place or contact with what one belongs to; this relationship which renders identity to the subject and to place is a contract the human makes with the earth. Identity grows with roots.<sup>9</sup>”

Conversely, the lack of roots has grave implications for human subjectivity. As ERZEN notes, “Not being able to relate becomes a malfunction of social life. De-territorialisation becomes the cause of de-personification, the effacement of the self.<sup>10</sup>” This de-territorialisation can be largely attributed to the effects of mass technology in distorting our sense of time, and by extension space,

9 Jale Erzen, *Aesthetics of the Placeless*. In *Proceedings volume of the intercontinental conference Frontiers of Transculturality in Contemporary Aesthetics*. Torino, 2001. 288.

10 ERZEN 289.

by forcing it into a linear model, compressing it and eliminating the routine habits and rhythm which define our day-to-day existence, our sense of familiarity in the world.

“When a certain balance is upset, a certain measure is not reached, or when there are too many relationships creating fragmentation, too many and too fast goings away and too many intakes or too much giving out, then the identity changes, or simply is erased,<sup>11</sup>” ERZEN writes. “Speed and mechanical manipulation over matter seem to free one of any local pressure, gravity or dependence.<sup>12</sup>”

All hope is not lost, though. ERZEN believes that there is hope to put the sense of place back into human experience, to restore a sense of self and identity to the anonymity of modern life; and she believes in particular it is the role of contemporary art to address the phenomenon of placelessness. “The awareness of contemporary art about creating relationships between the artefact and the observer is rooted in an ethical sense and social engagement,<sup>13</sup>” she writes.

From this aspect, *Winter Stores* goes beyond being a clever and thoughtful rumination on the notion of time, to being a tangible reminder of the value of rootedness in human experience. Ironically, it transforms the abstract, timeless space of the gallery into a place more time-full than most of us experience in our modern homogenised day-to-day lives. To spend an hour in that territory is to renew one’s awareness of one’s environment, one’s life and ultimately, one’s self.

Andrea JÁGEROVÁ

# By-names and other Mockeries of Slovak Towns and Villages

## I. Why do we Use By-names?

One of the main signs of an ethnic community is its name, which is developed within the internal and external frames of this ethnic community. The difference between the unofficial and official names is twofold.

First, on the one side the official names are valid and recognised in the whole state; and second, the unofficial are characteristic of smaller districts and the users are local inhabitants. The official name, however, does not correspond to the unofficial one, which is mainly used by members of a different ethnic group.

The name of the village, town or region is a distinguishing sign, by which the inhabitants of one area are differed from those of other areas. The choice of the name is directly related to different communication situations and its identification needs.

Unofficial names of towns, villages or deserted dwellings were one of the basic identifiers of each local area in Slovakia. They were and are alive as songs, music and dances, but not as much attention has been paid to them as to other folk expressions.

They are a way of identification at different places, occasions, and in certain areas they are more important and used than the official names. They are a hidden source of interesting information about the people, their culture and lifestyle, and many of them still remain in daily communication throughout Slovakia.

An example: “Where are you from?” “From Korytárky.” “Ah, so you are a scales-person” (due to the scales produced in the area.)

There is a rich system of unofficial names. Most of them are sayings bound to the local common knowledge. In informal communication

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<sup>11</sup> ERZEN 287.

<sup>12</sup> ERZEN 290.

<sup>13</sup> ERZEN 289.