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Peter B. and Tim V.

Art 105

21 September 2015

Art 21: Time

Time was expressed in very different manners and perspectives among the artists introduced in the Art 21 program. They're expression ranged from sculpture to using found video footage, but ultimately it all tackled the theme, with some work expressing the theme much more obviously than others.

Martin Puryear, wood sculptor, creates large, sometimes surrealistic pieces. One such example is one of his most famous works, "Ladder for Booker T. Washington". It's a 36 foot ladder suspended above the ground with a "forced perspective" as Puryear puts it, in other words the ladder seems to go farther away in the distance than it would if it were a uniform ladder. The ladder is representative of time in that Booker T. Washington was fighting for racial equality, but he knew it'd be a long time before they ever reached it. The ladder appears to have no end, symbolizing the lengthy climb that the advocates took to reach that goal.

Paul Pfeifer, among other talents, is a video artist. His means of capturing and using time stands out to me as truly unique. He takes found (or personally recorded) footage of an event such as an NBA game or an awards ceremony. He takes a scene no longer than 5 seconds, and rewinds and repeats it so it's a continuous scene. These scenes within their own context are moments of importance, most commonly associated with emotion. What is even more interesting is that he'll give titles to his repeating video clips that don't pertain to the actuality of the events, but what emotion the loop itself conveys. An example of this is a loop called "Race Riot" in which a basketball player is on top of another player on the opposing team while other people join in to try and break them up.

Vija Celmins is an artist known for her hyper realistic, grayscale paintings of natural environments and phenomena such as the ocean and spider webs. What makes her stand out is the amount of time she puts into each small painting, such as her piece, "Starfield", a depiction of a night sky with an abundance of stars varying in tone to give a sense of distance, which took her over a year to paint. Superficially, the paintings she makes seem straight-forward and not entirely exciting, but it's when one gets up close that they become immersed. One could argue that the paintings are themselves almost therapeutic to gaze into. They're serene, a visual ambience, allowing one's mind to drift in and out of the depths and fine details of the scene, and this is all due to Celmins' dedication and time that has been passionately entwined within each painting.

All of these artists approached the theme of time in their own individualistic manner, and they were all interesting. Some had to do with a long progression of time while others had to do with a certain moment in time.