

#116: Deirdre Macleod and William Mackaness: Black Square (2019)

'In trying desperately to free art from the dead weight of the real world, I took refuge in the form of the square.', Malevich (1915)

'In Zen they say: if something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring try it for 8, 16, 32 and so on.', Cage (1961)

Black Square asks you to make repeated, and increasingly lengthy, observations of small, everyday geographical spaces.

The first observation is for two minutes; the second is for four minutes; the third is for eight minutes; the fourth is for sixteen minutes and the fifth and final observation is for thirty two minutes.

The performance draws inspiration from several geographical and artistic ideas. We seek to make an explicit connection between physical space and abstraction in contemporary art. We also draw upon ideas of 'the sublime' in abstract art and in geography: in particular, the sense of awe that comes from specific, usually large-scale, spaces in the physical world.

Black Square can be performed during the day or at night. It is up to you.

Instructions

You will need a black square frame measuring around 40cm x 40cm on the inside. This can be made quickly and easily be made by cutting a 40cm x 40cm square from a large piece of black paper or card.

You also need a watch or a timer to help you keep time. It might be helpful to take a companion with you, to help you keep time, but this is not absolutely necessary. You can make this performance on your own, or you can make it with a group of people sharing the view within a black square frame.

Take your black square frame and place it on any piece of ground, indoors or outdoors. Try to place it arbitrarily, without selecting too carefully the piece of ground you will be looking at. From our experience of making these performances, it is usually best to choose a public area which is not too busy with pedestrians, to avoid distractions and questions. You might want to place a couple of pebbles on the edges of your frame to stop it blowing in the wind.

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Stand comfortably.

Start your timer and look into your frame for two minutes.

Try to lose yourself in the small space within the frame and let your thoughts drift.

Then, take a break for 30 seconds.

Start your timer and look into the frame for four minutes.

Then take a break for 30 seconds.

Start your timer and look into the frame for eight minutes.

Then take a break for 30 seconds.

Start your timer and look into the frame for sixteen minutes.

Take a break for 30 seconds.

Start your timer and look into the frame for thirty two minutes.

This is the last observation.

Relax and reflect upon your experience of this way of looking intensely at the ground.

When you performed this work, please don't forget to send a response (text, photo or video, whatever you choose) to **done@theconceptbank.org**.

We will archive it (anonymously) and we will also forward it to the artist.

Thanks and we hope you will visit us again.

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