

How does the passage of time correlate with our emotions? The exhibition Subject Seconds explores this question by juxtaposing Yu Nishimura's portraits with Magnus Frederik Clausen's representations of time. At first glance, the choice to place a portrait next to a painting of a clock may seem simple, its repetition throughout the exhibition even monotonous, but with each new combination of both artists' works, something transformative happens, opening up a third dimension between the two paintings, actively connecting them in space. Placed side by side, these two motifs, with their distinct pictorial qualities, arouse small fictions. With casualness and ease, they explore how time shapes our emotions and, conversely, how our actions infuse time with meaning, as an inseparable pair.

Yu Nishimura's portraits, painted mostly in oil, are restrained in detail. A few schematic strokes are sufficient to make a face appear on the canvas. With heads framed tightly, often to the point of being cropped by the edge of the painting, the canvases capture almost life-size facial features. Yet these are not standard portraits, but rather depictions of characters caught in a moment, reminiscent of animated film stills. Nishimura employs a variety of techniques to bring them to life: from brushing over freshly painted marks, to repeating shapes that suggest movement. Thus, the facial features appear somewhat blurred, as if in motion. This effect is enhanced through the use of diluted colors, heightening the sense that the figures are active, thinking, expressing concern, or lost in contemplation...

A moment that could last a minute, an hour, or an eternity – Magnus Frederik Clausen's paintings strangely materialize this halt within time, fixing a precise moment: 12:15; 6:26; 9:35. The impression is that time is afloat within the canvas, in the way that the gentle, almost hazy brush strokes merely suggest a form, reminiscent of Nishimura's painting approach. Dials, hands, and numbers appear more as abstract signs than concrete figures. Clausen's series was primarily conceived as a conceptual project: the Danish artist delegated the making of these paintings of time to third parties, providing only two or three simple instructions. The varied interpretations, the imperfections in depiction, reflect the style and skill of each individual contributor, bestowing upon each work a unique character, as if possessed by its own life.

In some respects, the head-shaped "clocks" echo the simplified forms of Nishimura's human heads. Further strengthening these formal connections, visual links between Clausen's and Nishimura's work materialize not only in terms of their brushwork and shape but also in size and color. It is precisely in this play of similarities and contrasts that a mental mechanism is set into motion: time and face begin to mirror each other, expressing a shared inner state, or even similar emotional tones. Each pairing suggests a different sketch, conveying a feeling shared by both works, in scenes of anxiety, melancholy or tranquility. Time, embodied by these clocks and their imperfect hands, reflects the emotions of the portraits, while the faces, in turn, seem to give emotional life to the hours, imbuing each moment with its own pulse, as if time itself were alive, evolving with human emotions.

Thus, the exhibition Subject Seconds suggests how time, both eternal and fleeting, flows not only around us but through us, shaping what we feel. It reminds us that time and emotions are inseparably linked, two rhythms moving together and shaping one another.

- Oriane Durand