



<http://always.otdac.org>

Opening Times: For your work *Always*, a clock sits in a stand-alone website, continuously counting on from the moment the Opening Times websites launches. What's the thinking behind that?

Ruth Proctor: I came to the idea through thinking about a website as a space - or a spatial location - for my work, and especially how the work and website would be launched at the same time and therefore became intrinsically linked together. Having never worked on anything web-based before, the idea of permanence, and what 'permanent' can mean for me in this intangible setting, kept cropping up. I've also been working on another very different but permanent work simultaneously, which was also making me question this idea of permanence within my own practice, as I more often than not work with the idea of the ephemeral. I had the feeling that I want to resist this somehow and to allow the work to exist as something that's always in the present moment, not the past. So 'time', and this idea of always being caught in-between a never ending shift of present moments, became something I wanted to work with. A clock is an obvious mechanism for visualising the passing of time, it's something we all recognise, it is measured and mechanical and regulates our lives, and a construct that is also inherently repetitive, so I wanted to create a clock that openly measures the time of it's own existence, which, in opposition to a normal clock, hasn't much of a practical use. As if it's constantly viewing it's own reflection counting onwards and onwards towards the unknown. It's also a bit of a play on the 'Opening Times' name as well, marking the ongoing and gradually increasing distance from its moment of being revealed...

OT: But, in *Always*, you can click a button that creates a frozen moment. The precise 'present' that you do so exists as a screen grab that downloads to your browser. That then becomes a record of the past...

RP: Yes, so as well as the fact that this clock continuously counts itself onwards, regardless of who is looking or not, I wanted to play with the way we view the work and how each person will have a different experience somehow. In reflection on how we view the web everyday, from different places and on different devices, but in general it's done mostly on our own as a personal and individual process. The act of clicking on a button that generates a captured image of the precise moment of that click, allows each viewer to make a trace of their own action, recording that intangible shift between present and past. It's both a moment captured and another way

of visualising this idea of the present, something that is forever slipping through our fingers. It's a form of reproducing the individual experience - it's always the same process but never the same outcome. No one recorded moment will be exactly the same, the colour of the screen changes randomly each time it is opened or refreshed so there is an element of chance and the uncertainty alongside the familiar and certain. Even if two people act at precisely the same second, it is highly unlikely that the screen will look the same to each of them, so creating multiple alternate presents or pasts... like the possibility of time travel.

OT: And think of all the different screens, from all the different brands and sizes of computer, to the different devices and tablets... all of a sudden, this artwork, an artwork that can be viewed by anyone, anywhere, at any time, feels very different depending on who's looking, when and where. That's not something I tend to think about when viewing a work online...

RP: Exactly, it exists as many things at once and in a relation specific to each particular viewer, there can be infinite ways in which the work is seen and it has great potential as a work that keeps on producing unique moments. So for instance, each click will create a screen grab of a particular time/event, created at random by the audience and then saved as an image, downloaded to their device and at the same time archived as a mass collection as part of the work. Creating in the long run a growing compilation of these different existences, continually expanding as time goes on, an archive of infinite as yet unknown outcomes....

OT: It does make me wonder... "If a tree falls..." blah blah blah - if a clock counts down on a website and no one is around to see it, does it keep on counting?

RP: Who knows! Is anything concrete and as we perceive it? Is blue the same to you as it is to me? It's a question of what is reality, and that can be a metaphor for everything we encounter everyday. Outside of that there is a slippage of meaning, does the meaning of an object vanish if there's no knowledge of that object? The tree falling and the clock counting by our very thinking of the question enter into another realm of an imagined space that relies on previous knowledge, if we don't know it's there, maybe it's not. Perception activates reality, this clock... is definitely counting, but where and how it exists is purely reliant on who's looking... other than that, perhaps it's not really there at all.