



Monika Bravo, *An Interval of Time*, 2020

photo by Paul Bardagjy

Monika Bravo

Colombian, born 1964

AN INTERVAL OF TIME

2020

3-Channel Digital Animation

34 x 186 inches

Commission, Landmarks, The University of Texas at Austin, 2020

Location: Jackson Geological Sciences Building (JGB)

GPS: 30.286104, -97.735734

Monika Bravo is a multidisciplinary artist who lives and works in Miami. Her still and moving images, sculptural installations, and interactive digital animations explore reality as perceived through our relationship to space and time. According to Bravo, her works “decipher the laws of the universe,” and are informed by spiritual teachings such as Taoism, Buddhism, the Vedas, and evolutionary astrology. She creates environments that allude to recognizable landscapes but challenge traditional linear frameworks.

An Interval of Time chronicles the evolution of Bravo’s practice over the past decade and underscores her deepening interest in the interwovenness of metaphysical, spiritual, and scientific inquiry. A non-linear understanding of time guides the artist as she intertwines images, text, and codes to create multi-layered animations. Drawing inspiration from the primary elements that make up our planet—earth, water, fire, and air—Bravo invites the viewer to consider how we reconcile our knowledge of the natural world within our own lives.

An Interval of Time includes geological data layered with visuals recorded in locations such as Iceland, New Mexico, Colorado, and the artist’s native Colombia. These scenes are juxtaposed with imagery that includes numbers, satellite imagery, weather graphs, and poetry. Bravo’s animation links empirical data and science to ancient indigenous weaving practices—emphasizing the universality of storytelling—be it through mathematics, painting, speech, or other means of communication.

Lodged between the space of knowing and not knowing, between nature and fabrication, Bravo’s work has a liminal quality. By decontextualizing data and removing it from its scientific purpose, she creates a new symbolic language through which viewers are invited to reconsider their own relationship to time and the planet.

ACTIVITY GUIDES

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ESSAY

A native of Bogota, Colombia, artist Monika Bravo is a multidisciplinary artist who lives and works in Miami, Florida. Her still and moving images, sculptural installations, and interactive digital animations explore reality as perceived through our relationship to space and time. According to Bravo, her works “decipher the laws of the universe,” and are informed by spiritual teachings such as Taoism, Buddhism, the Vedas, and evolutionary astrology. She creates environments that allude to recognizable landscapes but challenge traditional linear frameworks.

Moving and still images have always been central to Bravo’s practice. Her work presents a complex interplay of medium and materiality that rouses contemplation and awareness. She uses visual imagery as building blocks to construct a new dream-like reality that evokes questions and explorations of consciousness. For Bravo, time functions as a theme, a concept, and as a measure crucial to the human condition. She states:

“I believe that canonical Western culture conceives time as a linear narrative that always has a beginning and an end. What I propose, then, is that time be perceived as a circular material, with intangible cycles that give shape both to time and to space. Based on this idea, time for me becomes an essential artistic material.” --San Martín, *ArtNexus*, 2017

This idea is a common thread in Bravo’s oeuvre, though her approach to recurring themes of time, space, and perspective varies. Her explorations of the scientific, philosophical, ancestral, or spiritual often reflect shifting viewpoints, but always feature the notion of duration at the core. Time is the catalyst for the manifestation of life, and her focus lies on what is beyond time, and how we, as human beings, approach these concepts universally.

In *Symphysis*, [simultaneous appearances], an installation from 2000, this idea is examined from a spatial perspective. The work places viewers in an “aquarium” where mirrors and light create a subjective sense of perception, inviting them to reflect upon and reconsider their reality. Bravo views her role as an agent who shifts paradigms of observation with works that open pathways to new possibilities.

For the time being (1998) is a time-based work that explores the extent to which we fill our surroundings with meaning and interpretation, given our emotional states. Over the course of a year, Bravo filmed with a static camera the same view from her Brooklyn apartment window. She captured storms, air, and light, juxtaposed poetically against the emblematic Brooklyn Bridge. The installation also includes Bravo’s recitation of verses from Ecclesiastes (3:1–8), affirming that time is not always defined or filled by what we see but how we see it. The meaning that we give to it is informed by our personal experiences.

Another time-based work, *Landscape of Belief* (2012), is a sculptural installation that calls into question how we construct our lives according to our belief systems. Animated skylines of recognizable cities, composed of the entire text from Italo Calvino’s book *Invisible Cities*, are projected and floated diaphanously on glass panels. With carefully overlapped surfaces, the sculpture presents nothingness as an object, a metaphysical challenge to the viewer.

Urumu, *Weaving time*, and a later work, *Arche-Types the sound of the word beyond sense*, are interconnected by the importance of language as abstraction. *Urumu* (2014) is inspired by the landscapes, natural environments, and indigenous populations of Bravo’s native Colombia. Rooted in ancestral knowledge and textiles, it places viewers in an immersive technological environment where snippets of language are animated and layered to mimic the process of weaving. The work began with Bravo’s two-year residency with the Arhuaco people of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, in which she decoded weaving practices.

For Bravo, technology serves as a vehicle for translating all the information she processes as an observer of life. In *Urumu*, Bravo draws upon ancestral traditions through practices of weaving and at the same time, reimagines them within a contemporary mode of abstraction through the usage of the technology. There is a direct relation between the binary systems of the loom and the computer, exemplified by the Jacquard machine that attaches to a loom in order to simplify textile production.

Arche-Types (2015) continues, albeit from a different angle, with the deconstruction of language as a metaphor. Commissioned by the Vatican Pavilion for the 2015 Venice Biennale, the installation draws on the first verses of John’s Gospel, “*In The beginning there was the word*,” and also from *Zaum*, which is an experimental poetic language developed by Russian Futurist poets that is characterized by indeterminacy in meaning.

An abstract interpretation of the Gospel in classic, cryptic Greek appears on monitors and floating glass supported by six colorful wooden panels, presenting text as form. This creates a non-narrative visual interplay where images of landscapes are combined with slow moving animations that quote Kazimir Malevich, a Russian Suprematist artist. In his manifesto, he declares: “Under Suprematism I understand the primacy of pure feeling in creative art. To the Suprematist, the visual phenomena of the objective world are, in themselves, meaningless; the significant thing is feeling, as such, quite apart from the environment in which it is called forth.” Through *Arche-Types*, Bravo aims to create space for giving meaning to the “Word” beyond language, exploring how we interpret the texts apart from their religious aspect and defying the idea that the sublime can only be reached through text.

An Interval of Time, commissioned for the Jackson School of Geosciences, is lodged between the space of knowing and not knowing, between natural phenomena and scientific inquiry. By drawing inspiration from the primary elements that make up our planet—earth, water, fire, and air—Bravo invites the viewer to consider how we reconcile our knowledge of the natural world with our anthropocentric lives. In turning to the geological, she alludes to a complex process of transformation occurring at rates invisible to us. The installation features geological data layered with visuals recorded in locations such as Iceland, New Mexico, Colorado, and her native Colombia. Animations—running on what the artist refers to as “circular canvases”—are displayed on three flat-screen panels. Streams of numbers, satellite imagery, seismic and weather graphs, and mineral geometry are combined with poetry that pays tribute to the earth. In a process of abstraction similar to *Urumu* and *Arche-Types*, Bravo decontextualizes the data by removing it from its scientific purpose and creates a new symbolic language.

First begun in 2010, Bravo’s newly completed project for Landmarks chronicles the evolution of the artist’s practice over the past decade and underscores her deepening interest in the interwovenness of metaphysical, spiritual, and scientific inquiry. With *An Interval of Time*, she has created a mesmerizing ode to planet Earth.