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# 100 Ways to Consider Time

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From coast to coast, artists are exploring the meaning of time. At the Orange County Museum of Art in California, R. Luke Dubois' exhibit, simply entitled "Now," features digital portraits in which both the past and the present interact.

In Boston, at the Museum of Fine Arts, a woman sits at a desk in the middle of a room with a stark light reading about time. There are benches along the side of the room. People wander in and out and sit for various lengths of time. Strange. I (Ruth) stop and sit, mostly because my hip is killing me. What is going on? I wonder what is this craziness. Despite my doubts, the reading transports me to a day in July 1977 when I am living in three times. I was a Representative in the New Hampshire Legislature. The calendar date was late July but the Legislature had voted to stop the calendar because the budget, due on June 30, was not ready. In the chambers it was June 30th and would remain that date until agreement was signed.

I had produced a baby girl on July 12th. Somehow in the family planning it never occurred to me the calendar could stop and the Legislature would be still be in session. While my body and the baby's presence told me weeks had passed, the Legislature was still in session. The minority leader begged me to come for the vote. Although lived in another city, I agree to wait at my Mother-in-law's house a few blocks from the state house until minutes before the vote.

When called, I rushed to service, only to find the debate going on endlessly -- with the legislative clock stopped, there was no rush. As the hours passed my body and my baby's said it was time to nurse. Two calendars, two clocks, my head and my body were serving different time masters.

Suddenly I understood the exhibit, Marilyn Arsem: "100 Ways to Consider Time," the viewer inserts his/her self to find meaning. In a flash, the past became the present. Now it is my daughters trying to combine work and family. They are the lucky ones. Both have private nursing rooms at work and three months of paid leave. But they have had to return to work well before the milk supply is established and the baby is eating regularly.

Working women still struggle to combine the many parts of self, the worker, the mother, the person. I don't know if Marilyn had this in mind when she created this work of art, but for me, it is a timely political statement. Both our families and we ourselves struggle when our lives are governed by competing clocks.

Fortunately leading companies on Wall Street and in high tech are recognizing the importance of generous parental leave programs to attract and retain the best employees. Mark Zuckerberg plans to take two months of leave to share parenting with his wife Priscilla Chan, and he is expanding Facebook's parental leave policy to four months to all employees globally. Credit Suisse Group has announced that it is giving U.S. employees 20 paid weeks off to care for newborns, up from 12 weeks. Private equity firm KKR recently announced it would pay for employees to bring infants and nannies along on business trips during the baby's first year, a real breakthrough!

Let's hope that after nearly forty years of effort the clock will soon be reset to support all parents -- in balancing work and life. Now let's try to sync the paycheck and the cash register.

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