When you bring your class to the museum, a trained docent will facilitate an interactive tour for you and your students using the following structure:

- **Visual Inquiry**
  The docent will ask your group a series of both open and leading questions to encourage students to articulate their first impressions and experiences with the artworks.

- **Introduction**
  The docent will offer the group some basic information about the artwork and the artist.

- **Interpretive Inquiry**
  Another set of questions will follow, designed to facilitate deeper interpretation of the artwork by the group.

- **Context & Cultural Connections**
  The docent will provide more detail about the historical and cultural context of the artworks.

- **Special Note**
  In this guide, the sections labeled **Context & Cultural Connections** include suggestions for reading and other activities that can be done in preparation for or in follow-up to your class’s visit.

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**Artist Profile**

Rivane Neuenschwander was born in 1967, in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, where she currently lives and works. She has exhibited internationally over the past ten years, including solo exhibitions and group exhibitions.

*Rivane Neuenschwander: A Day Like Any Other* spotlights her unique contribution to the narrative of Brazilian conceptualism and the legacy of Neoconcretism, revealing her wide-ranging, interdisciplinary practice that merges painting, photography, film, sculpture, installation, collaborative actions, and participatory events. Like her predecessors, Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, Neuenschwander creates a series of organic relationships that interweave themes of nature, language, temporality, and the poetry of the quotidian.

Neuenschwander’s work has been described as a form of “ethereal materialism,” which refers to the way in which she engages external forces to make art with sensuality and rigor, but also with the lightest possible touch. The works in this exhibition put emphasis on sensory experience and interactive strategies. Be prepared to make use of all five senses when looking at Neuenschwander’s work.

**Theme: Time as an Artistic Medium**

Time is a recurring theme in much of Neuenschwander’s work. It appears in a diversity of forms, as an abstract and mental construction, a poetic element, and an intangible phenomenon. Using simple materials and evocative titles, the works in this exhibition offer us opportunities to reconsider the ways in which we understand time and the multiple ways it affects our daily lives.

Neuenschwander’s participatory installations and films often require the viewer to conjure up memories or personal associations, in other works the artist investigates the different ways time can be measured (clocks, calendars, etc.), while in still other pieces she frustrates or attempts to suspend the passage of time.

**Goal for your Visit**

Looking at five interdisciplinary and participatory artworks, students will explore different aspects of time as addressed by the artist in this exhibition:

- **Cyclical Time**
- **Linear Time**
- **Suspended Time**
- **Time and Literature**
- **Time and Memory**
Learning Objectives for Class Visits

- Through guided discussion, students will be encouraged to interact with the artworks and openly discuss their impressions.
- The works in this exhibition provide a multisensory experience through which students will be encouraged to consider both concrete and abstract concepts of time. Students will also be prompted to think about how these concepts inform their own activities and day-to-day rituals.
- Participants will consider the broader context of these works, including the literary, filmic, and popular culture references in them, as well as connections to the work of other artists past and present.

Vocabulary

- **Installation** describes an artistic genre of site-specific, three-dimensional art designed to transform the perception of a space.
- **Participatory art** relies on the participation of the viewer in order to convey its full meaning.
- **Neoconcretism** is a Brazilian art movement (1959-1961) formed in reaction to Concrete art, a concept of geometric abstraction emerging in the 1930s and popular through the 1950s. Concrete art was based on systematic and rational principles, favoring clarity over symbolism or subjectivity. Artists such as Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, and Amilcar de Castro introduced subjective, organic, and participatory dimensions into their work, following the poet-critic Ferreira Gullares’s *Neoconcrete Manifesto* (1959).
- **Conceptual art** describes art produced from the mid-1960s in which emphasis is placed on communicating an idea or concept rather than producing a permanent art object.
- **Linear** is an adjective referencing processes that flow from one event to the next with a logical progression from past to present to future, but never in the reverse order.
- **Cyclical** is an adjective referencing processes that repeat themselves in a seemingly endless nature, rendering a linear understanding of time progression irrelevant.
- **Chronology** refers to the order of events according to dates based on established modes of time measurement such as the 60-minute hour, 24-hour day, and 365-day year.
- **Narrative** is the part of a text or film that represents the sequence of events, establishing connections between them, as distinguished from dialogue or description.

Selected Artworks

| Rain Rains, 2002 |
| A Day Like Any Other, 2008 |
| The Tenant, 2010 |
| One Thousand and One Possible Nights, 2008 |
| First Love, 2005 |

Themes

| Cyclical Time |
| Linear Time |
| Suspended Time |
| Time and Literature |
| Time and Memory |
**Rain Rains, 2002: Cyclical Time**

*Image of the installation: Aluminum buckets, steel cable, water, and ladder. Dimensions variable.*

**Visual Inquiry: Exploring What You See**
- Take some time to circulate through the installation and close your eyes to fully experience it.
- Describe the elements you see and share your first impressions: What do you feel? What do you hear?
- What shapes do you see recurring in this room? Where do they appear? (For example, circles appear repeatedly: edges of buckets, ripples, drops, and in other artworks such as *Walking in Circles*).
- Do you think the ladder is part of the work? What purpose does it serve?

**Introduction**
Artificial rain is generated by buckets suspended from the ceiling that are leaking water drop by drop into the buckets below on the ground. Every four hours, the water collected in the lower buckets is put back into the upper ones by museum staff to continue the cycle. The piece functions as an immersive installation that establishes a specific relationship with the viewer.

**Interpretive Inquiry: Exploring Meaning**
- What natural environment does the piece recall?
  - Brazil contains vast surfaces of tropical rainforest, and the country endures a harsh and intense rainy season. By closing your eyes, with the humidity and the dripping, you can imagine what it is like during this time and in this place, where buckets are a common sight.
  - But here, we're not outdoors; it's actually raining inside the museum. What do water drops usually mean when they're seen inside a building?
    - *Rain Rains* is a concert for architecture. Leaks are the bane of modern Brazilian architecture. Throughout the country, rainwater drips into public buildings, museums, churches, army barracks, theaters, private homes, and even schools of architecture. Many well-known Brazilian architects (Oscar Niemeyer, Alfonso Reidy, João Batista Vilanova Artigas) designed buildings that, over time, required buckets to contain leakage from rainwater.
- What can you say about the relationship to time in this piece?
  - The work expresses cyclical time. Approximately every four hours, museum guards need to refill the buckets to restart the cycle. The attendant is therefore both a caretaker and a conductor. The four-hour cycles evoke a Sisyphean circulation of time. The cycle cannot continue without human intervention, but this intervention is senseless and endless. This piece recalls water clocks, called clepsydras, that are the oldest time-measuring instruments. With clepsydras, time is measured by the regulated flow of liquid into or out from a vessel where the amount is then measured. As such, *Rain Rains* can become a time-measuring instrument, similar to an hourglass.

**Context & Cultural Connections**
- The title of this work refers to two well-known pop songs from Brazil: *Chove la Fora*, a melancholic bossa nova song by Tito Madi, and *Chove Chuva* (1963) by Jorge Benjor, a swinging tune with a similar melancholy: *Fall, rain. Endless rain. Please, bad rain, don’t dampen my life like this anymore.*
- Activity for home, classroom, or during visit: download the MP3’s of *Chove la Fora* and *Chove Chuva* and listen to them as a class. Compare the rhythms of these composed pieces to the rhythm of the drops.
you heard in the piece at the museum. Discuss any other rhythms or songs that come to mind (i.e., *Rain, rain, go away*) and consider what they may also have in common with Neuenschwander’s work. Consider creating a song or poem about rain that also mimics rain’s natural rhythm.

- This piece recalls American artist George Brecht’s *Drip Music* (1959), though Neuenschwander was not aware of the piece when she conceived her installation. *Drip Music* similarly depends on the sound of falling water, yet, in Brecht’s work, the participant is free to realize the piece in any way he or she sees fit. Brecht’s score reads:
  
  “For single or multiple performances.
  A source of dripping water and an empty vessel
  are arranged so that the water falls into the vessel.”

  - Activity for home or classroom: Brecht’s instructions are simple enough to try in your classroom or at home. Try it and see what you can observe. How many different ways can you find to perform this piece?
- Sisyphus: in Greek and roman mythology, Sisyphus was a king punished by the gods who forced him to roll a huge boulder up a hill only to have to watch it roll back down, and then repeat the action throughout eternity.

**Conclusion**

Beyond its exploration of cyclical time, this piece reflects meteorological and social realities occurring in Brazil by emphasizing different ways to consider water, both as a vital resource and a source of natural disasters. By incorporating sound, the piece also references the connection of time to rhythm and musical composition.

**Transition**

What are some other ways that we measure time? What kind of devices do we use?

**A Day Like Any Other, 2008: Linear Time**

*A Day Like Any Other, 2008*
24 modified flip clocks (4 different models)
Various locations

**Visual Inquiry: Exploring What You See**

- Explore the relationship between this piece and its setting. Is this where you would expect to find a clock? Why or why not?
- What is it about this object that makes it look different or unusual?

**Introduction**

Neuenschwander’s clocks work normally, except that all the numbers are replaced by zeros. Multiple flip clocks are installed throughout the museum, in the galleries and in places where one would not expect to find them. Even though the visual representation of the passage of time has been reduced to a geometric abstraction (“0” or an oval), the internal mechanisms of the timepieces remain intact. Although most clocks follow a linear or progressive chronology, in *A Day Like Any Other*, time seems to stand still.

**Interpretive Inquiry: Exploring Meaning**

- Clocks conventionally measure time on a linear basis. By setting those clocks on 00:00, what, if any, influence did the artist exert on time?
- What idea do you think the artist seeks to convey?
• Have you ever wished your clock would stop, perhaps on a day you were running late or one that you wished would never end?
  o A Day Like Any Other disables the progression of time by putting viewers in a permanent state of frustrated expectation. The spectator participates in a confrontation. Everyday time is frozen, but we are also left with a heightened awareness of the passage of time whenever another zero flips.
• If we could suspend time, how would our lives be affected? What might you prevent if you could suspend time?
  o Suspending time, A Day Like Any Other also proposes the suspension of death. In the natural order of life, even death always arrives on a day like any other.

Context & Cultural Connections
• A Day Like Any Other is part of a history of questioning the possibility of nothingness in art that began with the Russian Suprematist Kazimir Malevich. “Science and art know no boundaries,” wrote Malevich in 1923, “because that which they seek to know is infinite, and incalculable equals zero.” At the imaginary and symbolic levels, Neuenschwander’s work engages this relationship between epistemology and poetics surrounding the Suprematist notion of degree zero.
  o Activity for home or classroom: for an in-depth look at how other 20th-century artists have embraced the theme of nothingness in their work, explore the exhibition The Big Nothing that was shown at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Philadelphia in 2004 by visiting this link: http://www.icaphila.org/exhibitions/past/big_nothing.php.
• American artist Bruce Nauman’s Days (2009) similarly deals with the passage of time that is both linear and cyclical. This work is a sound installation consisting of a continuous stream of seven voices reciting the days of the week in random order. Fourteen suspended speakers are installed in two rows with one voice emanating from each pair of speakers as the visitor passes between them. There are men’s voices and women’s voices, old and young. Some speak swiftly, others haltingly, each with his or her particular cadence. Similarly to A Day Like Any Other, the work invokes both the banality and profundity of the passing of each day, and invites reflection on how we measure, differentiate, and commemorate time.
  o Activity for home or classroom: visit http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_JRJiwkJII to see a video of Bruce Nauman’s work installed at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and compare and contrast it to Neuenschwander’s work.

Conclusion & Transition
By altering clocks, Neuenschwander makes use of a time measurement device to suspend, or at least call into question, its usual linear progression. Can you think of any other ways to suspend time?

The Tenant, 2010: Suspended Time

![The Tenant, 2010](image)
The Tenant, 2010
High-definition digital video, 10 min, 34 sec
Made in collaboration with Cao Guimarães
Soundtrack: duo O Grivo

Visual Inquiry: Exploring What You See
• What is happening in this film?
• After observing this bubble for a while, what impressions, memories, and feelings come up for you?
• What can you say about the soundtrack?
Introduction
The piece pays homage to the film *The Tenant* (1976), directed by Polish filmmaker Roman Polanski. Watching the video, we follow the trajectory of a big, round soap bubble inside an empty house in a state of renovation (it is in fact being converted into a studio by Neuenschwander). The soap bubble appears to be trapped inside the house, and circulates as if it was inspecting every room. Accompanied by a soundtrack of muffled household noises and menacing scratching sounds (composed by the duo O Grivo), the bubble drifts from one vacant room to the next, moving past windows that are covered over with paper. The place is empty, and there is no way out.

Interpretive Inquiry
- How do you understand the presence of this bubble? Considering the title of the piece, do you think it’s an intruder or a guest?
  - The bubble’s perfect geometry and autonomous movements may suggest a nonhuman intelligence. The bubble reflects the gaze of the camera, while the strange quality of the soundtrack makes it seem as if the listener is not hearing so much as existing inside of the sound.
  - By its orb-like shape and independent moves, the bubble becomes the main protagonist in this film, and we are transformed into voyeurs. We follow the bubble in suspense, wondering what it will run into in each new room and when it will finally pop. Like many cinematic thrillers, Neuenschwander’s film evokes a sense of paranoia and anticipation.
- After watching the film for a while, consider how the bubble affects your perception of time. What device did the artist use to instill a sense of anticipation?
  - Neuenschwander’s film is edited so that it runs as a continuous loop. The bubble appears in a permanent state of suspension. Contrary to its fragile and predictable nature, the bubble never bursts. The eerie soundtrack also evokes a sense of uncertain expectation. As the bubble twirls and dips, it appears to contain all that it reflects, like a vessel composed of air and dreams. This state of suspension, both literal and figurative, allows us to project our own fears and memories onto the screen.

Context & Cultural Connections
- Roman Polanski’s film *The Tenant* is a quasi-absurd tale of the nightmarish alienation of a Paris immigrant who is the victim—or believes himself to be—of a conspiracy by his neighbors to drive him to suicide. *The Tenant* is also an apartment drama, in the spirit of other closet dramas from the ‘70s such as *Last Tango in Paris* (1972), in which Marlon Brando and Maria Schneider look for a place to rent, or Luchini Visconti’s *Conversation Piece* (1974), in which a retired American professor living a quiet life in Rome is forced to rent a room in his palazzo to a strange, erotically charged family.
- In 2000, Neuenschwander produced another film with Cao Guimarães entitled *Inventory of Small Deaths (Blow)*. This film tracks the slow progress of a large, single bubble as it drifts across a tropical landscape. Played in a continuous loop, the film shows the bubble billowing in the wind and shifting shape, but never popping. The climax of the bubble’s demise is eternally postponed, granting permanence to the bubble’s fleeting nature.
- *The Tenant* may also call to mind the delirium of Hieronymus Bosch’s *Garden of Earthly Delights* (1500-1505) and the many spheres and perfect circular shapes that he employs to depict a world brimming with erotic derangement, voyeuristic pleasure, and symbolically intoxicated liberty.
  - For a high-quality image of this painting, visit the Web Gallery of Art at [www.wga.hu](http://www.wga.hu) and search by artist. Consider both the image on the outside of the closed triptych as well as the colorful painting itself when looking for the recurrence of the bubble-like images.

Conclusion & Transition
In *The Tenant*, Neuenschwander makes a direct reference to a narrative movie and an implied connection to one of her previous films. She also makes references and connections to literary narratives in her works. Let’s think about how Neuenschwander investigates time as both a theme and a device in literature.
One Thousand and One Possible Nights, 2008: Time and Literature

Visual Inquiry: Exploring What You See
• What do these panels evoke for you (individually and as a group)?
  o This artwork initially appears to be a group of photographs of galaxies or nebulae, a starry night, or constellations.
• If you step closer, what do you see? Can you imagine how these panels were created?
  o Consider the possibility of hole punches, and notice the fragments of text.

Introduction
To create each collage, Neuenschwander scattered a constellation of confetti—made by taking a hole-puncher to the pages of the book Arabian Nights (also known as A Thousand and One Nights)—over a black background. The compiled tales in Arabian Nights are framed by the story of Queen Scheherazade who tells them to her husband and captor. As his way of exacting revenge on womankind for the adultery of his first wife, he seeks to marry as many women as possible and kills each new wife after one night. Scheherazade schemes to tell stories that are captivating enough to make her new husband stay her execution in order to hear more stories night after night.

Neuenschwander groups her images in grids that resemble the orientation of a monthly calendar page. Each framed collage represents a night, and each grid a month. The number of nights represented matches the total number of days this exhibition is open, 95 days. When the exhibition travels to the next venue, the number of collages will change depending on the duration of the installation.

Interpretive Inquiry: Exploring Meaning
• Discuss and explore the story of Scheherazade. How might it relate to an understanding of this artwork?
• Why do you think the artist chose to make the text unreadable?
  o Here, as in The Tenant, Neuenschwander evokes narrative through nonverbal means. Scheherazade used fiction as a weapon to save her life, which is a strong statement about the relationship between art and life, fiction and reality.
• Neuenschwander’s reference to Scheherazade connects storytelling to the passage of time. Also consider the visual representation—what does it resemble (calendar, chart of constellations, etc.)? By rendering visible the lifespan of the exhibition in this way, what might this work tell us about the exhibition itself as a narrative that changes with each day’s stream of visitors?
• How else does this work relate to the rest of the exhibition?
  o Neuenschwander’s One Thousand and One Possible Nights complements the title of the exhibition (A Day Like Any Other). The evocation of nighttime and daytime calls to mind both cyclical and linear time.
  o Arabian Moons (2008) is a companion piece. To make this work, Neuenschwander punched 1,001 holes in a 16mm film reel.
Context & Cultural Connections

- Arabian Nights is a collection of folk stories that served as source material for this piece. As discussed above, the story itself has an intimate and urgent relationship to the passage of time, but the history of the collection is also important. There is no known “original” version of the story, so neither an original author, of which there are most likely several, or even an original language can be determined based on the multiple translations and retranslations that exist today. The stories lack a clear point of inception, and even the story of Scheherazade, the link between all the tales, has no final ending.
  - Suggested reading: The Arabian Nights, selected and edited by Daniel Heller-Roazen, translated by Husain Haddawy, based on the text edited by Muhsin Mahdi. This is the 2010 Norton critical edition and includes a preface explaining the history of collecting and translating these tales, as well as several other writers’ perspectives on the work.
- Arabian Nights was a favorite of influential Argentine poet Jorge Luis Borges, who claimed its title was “one of the most beautiful in the world. In this, there is another kind of beauty. I think it lies in the fact that for us the word ‘thousand’ is almost synonymous with infinite. To say a thousand nights is to say infinite nights, countless nights, endless nights. To say a thousand and one nights is to add one to infinity.”
- Another story that shares similar themes with A Thousand and One Nights is the story of Penelope, the wife of Ulysses in Homer’s Odyssey. Penelope had many proposals of marriage during Ulysses’s long absence, so she made the promise that once she finished weaving a shroud for Ulysses’s father, only then would she accept any one of her suitors. Each night she would unravel her work for the day so that the shroud was never finished; thus she remained faithful to Ulysses.

Conclusion & Transition

Memory is also an important theme in much of Neuenschwander’s work. The artist is interested less in precise recall than in the act of recollection and the recognition of lived experience.

First Love, 2008: Time and Memory

Visual Inquiry: Exploring What You See

- What do these drawings on the wall remind you of?
- How do you think they were made?
- Have you ever tried to draw a picture of a friend or family member from memory? What was that experience like?

Introduction

In First Love, participants are asked to describe their “first love” to a forensic sketch artist. The use of a sketch artist—someone usually hired to draw and identify criminals or missing persons—creates a powerful tension between the nostalgic remembrances activated by the individuals and the forensic drawings that are devoid of sentimentality. The idea of love itself is one of conflicting emotions. We might fall in love numerous times over the course of our lives, but first love often possesses an extraordinary place in our hearts and minds.
Each session takes at least two hours, resulting in an intense, often emotional exchange between the participant and the sketch artist. These “conversations-made-into-drawings” will remain on display in the gallery for the course of the exhibition.


**Interpretive Inquiry: Exploring Meaning**

- Neuenschwander has said, “It is a long way from the memory, which is already distant in terms of time, to the point that the pencil reaches the paper.” What is the work’s relationship to memory and temporal perception?
  - Activity for gallery or classroom: in partners, attempt to draw a portrait based on your partner’s description of a special person—grandparent, old friend, even a pet—whom they have not seen in at least a week. Back in the large group, share your drawings and try to articulate the experience of drawing from memory, as well as the feelings that accompanied your own attempt to describe someone close to you.
- There is often a contradiction between the image of the person produced and the language used to create it. What does this tell us about memory and its relationship to reality?

**Context & Cultural Connections**

- Many writers, philosophers, and artists have sought to capture varying responses to one’s first love.
  - In the catalog accompanying this exhibition, author Rachel Thomas references British prime minister Benjamin Disraeli, who mused, “The magic of first love is our ignorance that it can ever end.” Playwright George Bernard Shaw noted, “First love is only a little foolishness and a lot of curiosity.”
  - Irish author Samuel Beckett’s novella *First Love* (1946) was an acknowledged source for the title of Neuenschwander’s installation. In this short story, the narrator muses about his youth occasioned by his visit to his father’s grave. Memory is at the heart of this tale at Beckett investigates the extremes of human emotion.
  - Suggested readings:

**Conclusion**

Much of Neuenschwander’s work involves a play of time, memory, language, and social exchange. Her seemingly simple materials and participatory installations explore nothing less than human experience, provoking us to consider, in both playful and provocative ways, the profundity as well as minutia of human nature.