

Zirkon Compass

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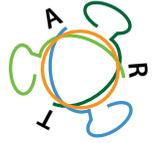
Filled with different zircon sands from all the continents of the world, the work "Zirkon Compass" consists of sixteen hourglasses that are suspended from the ceiling.

Positioned at eye level, the hourglasses are arranged in a circle, each located at one of the points of a 16-point compass rose. A thin steel rope is mounted on the narrowest point of each hourglass, balancing them in horizontal equilibrium.

Zircon minerals are the oldest known materials on Earth. Resistant to chemical changes, they offer a window onto time as far back as 4.4 billion years ago. Zircon is omnipresent in all stones and contains the radioactive elements uranium and thorium in minute amounts – the clock within the zircon. With the passing of time, it converts to the element lead.

In the work, both the semiotics of the hourglass as a metaphor for vanitas and the use of the hourglass as a scientific instrument are transformed. Instead, the sand forms a seemingly stable horizon: a layer, the oldest layer we could hypothetically stand on. While the hourglass thus loses its function, the zircon clock invisibly continues to transform –

Art at work



subconsciously reminding the viewers of their precious, yet transient, time on earth.

Metaphorically, zircon resembles the element of time: being the oldest material on the planet, it establishes an abstract meaning of time that is limited by our current possibilities of scientific research. It thus inherently addresses the relative stability of scientific knowledge, which depends on technological progress and the creation of measurement methods, enabling us to expand our limited horizon.

Paradoxically zircon is used to create storage vessels that might be durable enough to contain the radioactive waste products of our species – the future fossils of the anthropocene.

But even zircon is not eternally durable. Everything eventually decays, and even permanence becomes relative.