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Dublin

Sarah Browne

Project Arts Centre

Sarah Browne's recent exhibition took its title from her work *Second Burial at Le Blanc*, 2011, which consists of a silent color 16-mm film projection and a glass-domed object, identified as a "ticker-tape countdown clock." The film documents an event staged by the artist in the French town of Le Blanc on April 1, 2011: Local residents carried the clock on a wooden bier, proceeding from the modern Hôtel de Ville to Château Naillac, a medieval castle that houses a small museum. The film ends with a close-up of the object in the museum, its ticker-tape in silent motion. In the gallery, where the clock sits spotlighted on a plinth, its mechanism was both clearly visible and occasionally audible above the whirring of the film projector. Drawing its information from a live currency feed via wireless internet, the ticker-tape tracks the shifting relationship between the euro and US dollar, printing out updates every five minutes. While such data is oriented towards the future, functioning as an aid to speculation, the printout also makes reference to other temporalities. Each update reiterates the rate of exchange between the franc and euro as it was fixed on the day France joined the single European currency, and lists the days, minutes and seconds that remain until February 17, 2012, upon which date the Central Bank of France will cease accepting francs in exchange for euros. This deadline is particularly pertinent to the town of Le Blanc, because it is home to a scheme that allows traders and artisans to accept francs as payment for goods and services. Established to generate publicity and income, the scheme is described in *On Hoarding, Accumulation, and Gifting*, 2011, a visual essay with text in both French and English, distributed by Browne in Le Blanc and Dublin.

The essay frames Browne's project both as a response to the current financial crisis in the eurozone and the outcome of a self-consciously anthropological approach to economics, informed by the ideas of Marshall Sahlins. Browne's text describes disparate traditions of ceremonial procession, from the spontaneous throwing of ticker-tape in New York at a parade celebrating the gift of the Statue of Liberty in 1886, to the practice of second burial in Madagascar. There families dig up their deceased ancestors, carry them publicly around the village as though they were alive, and then rebury them. Intended to benefit the family by transferring the spiritual worth of ancestors into the new generation, the ritual of second burial also sometimes involves a

communal feast so lavish it can result in bankruptcy, not unlike the potlatch of the Pacific Northwest. In transplanting elements of this tradition to Le Blanc, Browne acknowledges the pull of the past but also gestures towards a number of possible futures, without endorsing one in particular. The fact that the route of the procession leads away from the town hall and towards the old site of feudal power, now transformed into a museum, could simply signal the definitive end of the franc. But the prominent presence of the ticker-tape might mean that the clock instead charts an inexorable progression towards a different death: the failure of the single currency as a consequence of market speculation, and the resulting decline of the European project.

—*Maeve Connolly*