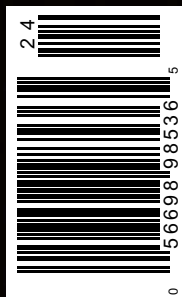


Cabinet

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INTRODUCTION

Rome was not built in a day, but could a magazine be produced in twenty-four hours? This was the question that the current issue of *Cabinet* was designed to consider. Inspired by literary precedents such as automatic writing, by the resourcefulness of the bricoleur making do with what is at hand, and by the openness toward chance that all artistic production under severe constraint must necessarily incorporate, the themed section of this issue includes contributions by twenty-four artists and writers who were given twenty-four hours—exactly—to complete a project that responded to a prompt sent to them by the editors.

On the one hand, this may seem like an exercise in editorial sadism, further exaggerating the time crunch faced by working artists and writers. Nothing could be further from the mission of a benevolent non-profit whose brief is purportedly to create the conditions for considered reflection. On the other hand, unburdened from some of the usual parameters for both evaluation (and self-evaluation), there is a kind of paradoxical freedom that accompanies such a radical constraint, one that encourages unorthodox forays in both subject matter and style.

Given the mechanical nature of the conceit behind this issue, it was clear that a set of loosely framed questions around daily time would be useful starting points, both for the contributors and for our readers. The staggeringly diverse responses to our prompts (reproduced at right) can be found on the following pages.

Dear "24 Hours" issue contributor,

Choose one of the three prompts below as the starting point for your project. Bear in mind that all kinds of approaches and subject matter are equally welcome, including those that draw on historical, scientific, personal, literary, phenomenological, philosophical, sociological, medical, legal, economic, anthropological, spiritual, zoological, and botanical perspectives and/or artifacts, just to mention a few!

As stated before, contributions that use text, image, or hybrids of the two are all acceptable, as are unorthodox formats, including diaries, charts, graphs, receipts, calendars, advertisements, budgets, menus, correspondence, and lists.

1. Consider different ways in which daily time is kept or administered—from the daily planner to the structure of mealtimes, from the ringing of church bells to our hygiene habits—and how they form and inform our experience of day and night. Specific episodes or incidents are as welcome as broader or more speculative considerations.

2. Depict a day in which dayness itself—its temporal structure, its specific length, form, or limits—was specifically brought to the fore. This can be a day from the past, or the very day on which you are doing this project. Feel free to draw on your personal life or on historical materials.

3. Choose one of the four following divisions of a given 24-hour period—morning, afternoon, evening, night—and create a project that considers or inhabits its particular "being" or "mood."

We look forward to receiving your projects.

Cabinet



Blue eyes, blue skies. Cover of Frank Sinatra's 1958 album.

I know a man Tom who has a hat. I don't know him well, so some of what follows will be conjecture, but I did get a good look at the hat. It's a nifty blue number, straw, with a dented crown and a narrow brim, the brim turned up at the back and down in the front to make a shallow visor. Where is it from? Who manufactured it? I'm not sure; I didn't get a look inside. But I did cop a feel while it lay on the table beside us. (Tom's manners are unfussy but sure, and he doesn't wear the hat indoors.) The straw is surprisingly supple, almost like felt. Around the base of the crown runs a narrow band of fabric, with horizontal stripes in contrasting colors, browns and oranges.

It's the kind of hat that I believe is called a trilby. Trilbies these days mostly pass as fedoras, a label that has become a catchall, but the brim of a trilby is narrower and more steeply raked, back to front. The trilby has some currency in Brooklyn and in LA (where Tom lives), and in plenty of other places where they dream of Brooklyn and LA. The more stylized versions—the brim very narrow, the rake very steep, the whole hat worn a little small and high on the head—are self-consciously hip. Tom's is more relaxed, more like the trilby of the 1950s that was a favorite of Frank Sinatra's. It might have been made recently or it might just be well taken care of, an LA hat like an LA car that doesn't see much rain. If I'm right about the name, it has a long history, back to the first London production of a play called *Trilby*—an adaptation of George DeMaurier's 1894 novel about Trilby O'Farrell, a half-Irish working-class artist's model and laundress in the Bohemian Paris of the 1850s. Apparently, the hat was worn by the actress who played her.

The trilby comes from all those times, the 1890s, the 1950s, the 2000s. (And others: Chiang Kai-shek wore one too, before it was ousted by Mao's revolutionary caps.) When Tom got up to leave, it rode out the door over his blue cotton shirt, a shirt with an open collar and some colorful stitching down the front, untucked over tan slacks. A shirt you could have seen a lot of in the 1970s? Perhaps: my eye for these things is not actually so good, my curiosity notwithstanding. But it wasn't out of date, and it paired well with the hat. Tom himself must be in his seventh decade, with a thick brush of white hair that needs no covering. He would have come of age in the 1960s, just as President Kennedy was giving the nation's men permission to leave their hats at home. I don't know if Tom held onto his hat then in spite of the decade's drift, or if he came later to the whole hat business.

Nor do I know where Tom was going next. Out to the parking lot, it is safe to infer, and now my patchy recall gives way to pure guesswork. I imagine him getting into a vintage convertible, maybe a '64 Imperial Crown.

It was a cool day yesterday, not ideal for having the top down, and for all I know he could have folded himself into a new Kia, but still I see him guiding the big Imperial one-handed onto the 10. The hat would be on the passenger seat with its prow facing forward. Maybe you could have confirmed all this if you had been standing at the guardrail on one of the freeway overpasses, looking down—you would have seen a lot of time, a lot of times, rushing underneath you, 1964, 1894, 2011, and summer, with the open top, all the summers you remember.

Which is how time comes at us pretty much all the time, because—as Hegel and the hipsters both know—history is a matter of style. You might think of yourself as knowing history because you know some names and dates. But the feel for history is all brims and tail fins and flying buttresses, in all their typical variety. It is style that sorts the countless times around us into some kind of receding sequence, and simultaneously makes us aware of how they loop back through the present. It is style that lets us live in our own moment, or in some accidental or some curated past, or in all of them at once. Forget about clocks and calendars. Style is one of the basic ways that we tell time and it is just about the only way we tell history, or at least the only way that we perceive history around us. Without style, history is just a story.

Living among all these styles, these different times, places a certain burden on us. We don't admire anyone for having *style*s. What we admire is having *style*, pulling all those styles together into a here and now. If it doesn't work, you're wearing last season belted around ten years ago with a misbegotten tomorrow over your shoulder. The elements of your style are showing, and you are at the mercy of diagnosticians who can tell you where you got everything and will give you credit for none of it. But if it *does* work—then you have a style, your style, and everything fits. Fits now, and more importantly fits into the future. There are lots of little decisions in life about what to wear and what to read and what to drive and what company to keep, and any one of them can stop you cold. Having a style gives you some answers in advance. It helps you know where and when you are (not to say who you are) and it keeps things moving along.

Tom moved to LA a couple of years ago. I am pretty sure that's where he grew up, and I know he had wanted to move back for a long time. He finally did when he got divorced, after being married for many years to a younger woman. He looks right, to my eye, in his old city, with its pastel palette and its big blue skies. The blue hat suits them both. It looks sharp, with that prow pointed forward into the wind we always make with our walking into it.