

The Clock**Nominated by: Ben Davis, art critic.**

I'm not sure that Christian Marclay's *The Clock* really needs any more praise. But you also can't deny it: No single work of visual art of the recent past even comes close to having the same impact. Last year, when it debuted at the London gallery White Cube, it attracted blockbuster crowds. At Paula Cooper in New York, people camped out to experience the full sweep of the 24-hour video installation. "The Clock" has become an immediate touchstone, snapped up by the country's major museums—LACMA, MoMA, the MFA Boston—and drafted into service at international art spectacles in Japan (the current Yokohama Triennial) and Italy (the Venice Biennale, where it won the Silver Lion for best work on view earlier this year). Evidently, *The Clock* is capable of touching a truly broad and popular audience as well as the cognoscenti, not something you can say about just any old work of contemporary art.

In essence, *The Clock* is a single-channel video, usually shown on a large cinema screen, comprised of thousands of short clips from film history—from [High Noon](#) to [Pineapple Express](#)—stitched together into one epic, free-associative montage. What makes this more than just an overgrown YouTube video is the narrative that unites it all: time. Each clip has been selected because it somehow features a temporal reference, usually in the form of clock somewhere on-screen, with the moment on-screen syncing up to the moment in real time, as you watch it. Thus, as a viewer, you schizophrenically leap from one universe to the next, from drama to horror to comedy and back again, never settling down—but always aware that each moment is chained to the relentless beat of the present. The effect is almost magical: *The Clock* is both cerebral and visceral, both a mammoth work of pop art and almost spiritual in the way it puts you in touch with time. As a creative achievement, it feels at once completely contemporary but also—to be cute—completely timeless.