How to Construct a Time Machine is an exhibition of over 25 historical and contemporary artworks that explore how artists play with media in innovative ways to transform our experience of time.

What is time? How do we order the past, the present, and the future? Why are artists interested in time? How is art a machine, vehicle, or device for exploring time? How is art a means by which time 'travels'?

Consideration of these and other questions has provided the exhibition rationale for guest curator, Dr Marquard Smith, Head of Doctoral Studies/Research Leader in the School of Humanities at the Royal College of Art, London.

The show’s title is taken from an 1899 text by the avant-garde French writer, Alfred Jarry, written in direct response to H. G. Wells’ iconic science fiction novel The Time Machine (1895).

Wells invented and popularised a distinctively modern, fictional concept of time travel, with the time machine as a vehicle that could be operated ‘selectively’. Jarry’s response crafted a pseudo-scientific fiction that presents the time machine and time travel as an instance of ‘the science of imaginary solutions’.

Artists include: John Cage, Katie Paterson, On Kawara, Mark Wallinger, Nam June Paik, Catherine Yass, the Lumière Brothers, and many others.

Published on the occasion of the exhibition How to Construct a Time Machine at Milton Keynes Gallery, 23 January – 22 March 2015.