

Contemporary art is post-conceptual art

L'arte contemporanea è arte post-concettuale

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I am going to present you with a conceptual condensation – a kind of polemical out-take – of some work on the construction of a critical concept of contemporary art. This is a ‘critical’ concept, please note, rather than a merely descriptive or empirical one. It does not embrace all art that would call itself ‘contemporary’. Rather, it derives from, but nonetheless imposes certain *critical demands* upon, such art. Such a concept is thus to be constructed, rather than simply discovered. It achieves its most condensed presentation in the proposition that serves here as my title: ‘Contemporary art *is* post-conceptual art’. I offer this sentence to you as a philosophical proposition – or at least, a philosophical *interpretation* of a historical state of affairs, since, after all, what is philosophy but ‘its own time comprehended in thought’? More specifically, and perhaps disquieteningly, I offer it to you as a *speculative proposition* in the technical sense in which that phrase is used in Hegel’s philosophy. In this sense, the *movement* of thinking that establishes the identity of the elements within a speculative proposition is understood to destroy ‘the general nature of judgement’ based on the distinction between subject and predicate, such that, as a result of the speculative depth of the identity proposed, ‘the subject disappears in [or is exhausted by] its predicate’. The predicate itself thereby becomes the subject, inverting the proposition (‘Post-conceptual art *is* contemporary art’) and is consequently, as such, destroyed in turn. There is thus an infinite

movement of thinking between the two terms in a speculative proposition, in relation to which the proposition itself (predication) is, in Hegel's words, 'a merely empty form'.ⁱ

So the identity of elements, which destroys the propositional form, does not destroy the difference between these elements. Rather, it reveals the difference to be that of the movement of a certain 'unity' or 'harmony' that emerges out of the unification of the difference itself. It is via the experience of the speculative proposition (speculative experience) that – in a proto-early Romantic, non-propositional mode – Hegelian philosophy approaches the experience of art. It does so, however, only at *the end* of a very long process through which the meaning of the elements at issue – in our case here, 'contemporary art' and 'post-conceptual art' – are developed. I shall offer you a mere outline or a schema of such a process of constitution here.

My argument has two main and two subsidiary components. The main components are:

1. the contemporary – as idea, problem, fiction and actuality
2. art as construction/expression of the contemporary, or, postconceptual art

The subsidiary components concern a certain necessary

3. fictionalization of artistic authority

and

4. collectivization of artistic fictions.

These final two sections take the work of The Atlas Group (1999–2005) – Walid Raad in his guise as The Atlas Group – as an exemplar of their concerns. (Hence my opening image, from the 2005 Atlas Group video work, *We can make rain, but nobody came to ask.*) The overall idea, however, is to expound various aspects of contemporary art in their critical generality, as parts of an interpretative philosophical frame. So I will start at the highest level of abstraction,

and make way towards – without ever, here, finally arriving at – the concrete: from the abstract to the concrete, as Marx famously recommended in his methodological remarks in the Introduction to the *Grundrisse*. In this case: from philosophy to art.

1. The contemporary as idea, problem, fiction and actuality

Idea In its most basic form, the concept of the contemporary is that of the coming together, the unity in disjunction, or the *disjunctive unity* of times. More specifically, it refers to the coming together of the times of human lives within the time of the living. Contemporaries are those who inhabit (or inhabited) the same time. (Interestingly, the term ‘contemporaries’ is primarily used in conjunction with the past tense: ‘we *were* contemporaries’. The utterance ‘we *are* contemporaries’ is redundant, since it is performatively tautological.) As a historical concept, the contemporary thus involves a *projection of unity* onto the differential totality of the times of lives that are in principle, or potentially, present to each other in some way, at some particular time – and in particular, ‘now’, since it is the living present that provides the model of contemporaneity. That is to say, the concept of the contemporary projects a *single historical time of the present*, as a living present – a common, albeit internally disjunctive, historical time of human lives ‘The contemporary’, in other words, is shorthand for ‘the historical present’. Such a notion is inherently problematic but increasingly irresistible.

Problems It is problematic, first, theoretically, because it is an idea, in Kant’s technical sense of being an object beyond possible experience (the total conjunction of present times).ⁱⁱ Second, even more fundamental, are *temporal*-philosophical reasons of an early Heideggerian kind: namely, that ‘the present’ itself, by itself, in its presentness, is not given in experience as such, since it only ex-ists as the differentiation or fractured

togetherness of the other two temporal modes (past and future), under the priority of its futural dimension.ⁱⁱⁱ

The concept of the contemporary thus projects into presence a temporal unity that is in principle futural or horizontal and hence *speculative*. Finally, third, empirically, the relational totality of the currently coeval times of human existence remains, fundamentally socially disjunctive. There is no thus *actual shared* subject-position of, or within, our present from the standpoint of which its relational totality could be constructed as a whole, in however temporally fragmented or dispersed or incomplete a form.

Fiction Nonetheless, the idea of the contemporary functions *as if* there is. That is, it functions as if the speculative horizon of the unity of human history had been reached. In this respect, the contemporary is a utopian idea, with both negative and positive aspects. Negatively, it involves a disavowal; positively, it is an act of the productive imagination. It involves a disavowal – a disavowal of its own futural, speculative basis – to the extent to which it projects an actual conjunction of times. This is a disavowal of the futurity of the present by its very presentness; essentially, it is a disavowal of politics. It is a productive act of imagination to the extent to which it performatively projects a non-existent unity onto the disjunctive relations between coeval times.] In this respect, in rendering present the absent time of a unity of times, *all constructions of the contemporary are fictional*. More specifically, the contemporary is an *operative* fiction: it *regulates the division* between the past and the present (via its sense of the future) within the present. Epistemologically, one might say, the contemporary marks that point of indifference between historical and fictional narrative that has been associated, since the critique of Hegel, with the notion of speculative experience itself.^{iv}

It is the fictional ‘presentness’ of the contemporary that distinguishes it from the more structural and durational category of modernity, the inherently self-surpassing character of which identifies it with a permanent transitoriness, familiar in the critical literature since Baudelaire. In this respect, the contemporary involves a kind of internal retreat of the modern to the present. As one recent commentator has put it, contemporaneity is ‘the pregnant present of the original meaning of *modern*, but without its subsequent contract with the future.’^v This fictive co-presentness of a multiplicity of times associates the contemporary – at a deep conceptual level – with the theological culture of *the image*. In Michael Fried’s famous phrase – from which all sense of the imaginary, fictive character of the experience is absent – ‘presentness is grace’.^{vi}

If modernity projects a present of permanent transition, the contemporary fixes or enfolds such transitoriness within the duration of a conjuncture, or, more broadly, the envelope of a life. Such presentness finds its representational form in the annihilation of temporality by the image. It is in the photographic and post-photographic culture of the image that the contemporaneity of the contemporary is most clearly expressed. The image interrupts the temporalities of the modern and nature, alike. It is with regard to these normative rhythms that the contemporary appears as ‘heterochronic’: an ‘abnormal’ time of irregular occurrences, or in Nietzsche’s term an ‘untimely’ (*unzeitgemässe*) time. Heterochrony is the temporal dimension of a general heteronomy, or multiplicity of determinations. It marks both the moment of disjunction (and hence antagonism) within the disjunctive unity of the historical present and the existential disjunctiveness of presentness itself.^{vii}

Furthermore, this disjunctive, antagonistic unity of the contemporary is not just temporal, but equally – indeed, in certain respects primarily – spatial. This is the second main aspect of the theoretical problematicity of the contemporary: the problem of the disjunctive

unity of social times is the problem of the unity and disjunction of social space – that is, in its most extended form, the problem of the *geo-political*. The idea of the contemporary poses the problem of the disjunctive unity of space-time, or the *geo-politically historical*. The temporal dialectic of the new, which gives qualitative definition to the historical present (as the standpoint from which its unity is constructed), but which the notion of the contemporary cuts off from the future, must be mediated with the complex global dialectic of spaces, if any kind of sense is to be made of the notion of the historically contemporaneous. Or to put it another way, *the fiction of the contemporary is necessarily a geo-political fiction*. This considerably complicates the question of its periodization, or the durational extension of the contemporary ‘backwards’, into the recent chronological past. This durational extension of the contemporary (as a projected unity of the times of present lives) imposes a constantly shifting periodizing dynamic that insists upon the question of *when the present begins*. And this question has very different answers depending upon *where* you are thinking from, geo-politically.^{viii}

So, one might say, ‘To Each Present, Its Own Prehistory’: meaning, to each *geo-politically differentiated construction* of the present, as a whole, its own prehistory. For despite the theoretical problems of the fictive character of unity and spatial standpoint, constructions of the contemporary increasingly appear as inevitable, because growing global social inter-connectedness gives meaningful content to these fictions, filling out their speculative projections with empirical material (‘facts’), thereby effecting a transition from fictional to historical narrative. In this respect, the concept of the contemporary has acquired the regulative necessity of a Kantian ‘idea’. Increasingly, ‘the contemporary’ has the transcendental status of a condition of the historical intelligibility of social experience itself.

Actuality: the contemporary today, or, the global transnational Increasingly, then, the fiction of the contemporary is primarily a global or a planetary fiction. More specifically, a fiction of a global transnationality has recently displaced the 140-year hegemony of an internationalist imaginary, 1848–1989, which came in a variety of political forms. This is a fiction – a projection of the temporal unity of the present across the planet – grounded in the contradictory interpenetration of received social forms (‘communities’, ‘cultures’, ‘nations’, ‘societies’ – all increasingly inadequate formulations) by capital, and their consequent enforced interconnection and dependency. In short, today, the contemporary (the fictive relational unity of the historical present) is transnational because our modernity is that of a tendentially global capital. Transnationality is the putative socio-spatial form of the current temporal unity of historical experience.

As Gayatri Spivak has argued, what Toby Volkman, Program Officer at the Ford Foundation describes as ‘demographic shifts, diasporas, labour migrations, the movements of global capital and media, and processes of cultural circulation and hybridization’ have rendered the twin geo-political imaginary of a culturalist postcolonial nationalism and a metropolitan multiculturalism at best problematic and at worse redundant. Rather, Spivak argues,

What we are witnessing in the postcolonial and globalizing world is a return of the demographic, rather than territorial, frontiers that predate and are larger than capitalism. These demographic frontiers, responding to large-scale migration, are now appropriating the contemporary version of virtual reality and creating the kind of parastate collectivities that belonged to the shifting multicultural empires that preceded monopoly capitalism.^{ix}

Territorial frontiers or borders (basically, nation-states) are subject to erosion by ‘globalization’ in two ways. First, they have an increasing albeit still restricted physical

'permeability'. 'Borders are easily crossed *from* metropolitan countries, whereas attempts to enter from the so-called peripheral countries encounter bureaucratic and policed frontiers, altogether more difficult to permeate.'^x People mainly cross borders from the so-called periphery to the metaphorical centre only as variable capital – including as art labour. (Art is a kind of passport. In the new transnational spaces, it *figures* a market utopia of free movement, while in actuality it embodies the contradiction of the mediation of this movement by capital.) Second, informational technology makes possible the constitution of new social subjects, and the maintenance of the unity of fragmented older ones, across national frontiers, in a new way.

But how is this geo-politically complex contemporaneity to be experienced or represented? And in particular, how is it to be experienced through or as art? The issue is less 'representation' than 'presentation' (less *Vorstellung* than *Darstellung*): the interpretation of what is through the construction of new wholes out of its fragments and modalities of existence. This is as much a manifestation of the *will* to contemporaneity – to forcing the multiplicity of coeval social times together – as it is a question of representation.

2. Art as construction/expression of the contemporary, or, postconceptual art

What, then, of 'contemporary art'? Art is a privileged cultural carrier of contemporaneity, as it was of previous forms of modernity. With the historical expansion, geo-political differentiation and temporally intensification of contemporaneity, it has become incumbent upon any art with a claim on the present to situate itself, reflexively, within this expanded field. The *coming together of different times* that constitutes the contemporary, and the *relations between the social spaces* in which these times are embedded and articulated, are the two main axes along which the historical meaning of art is to be plotted. In response to this

condition, in recent years, the inter- and transnational characteristics of an art space have become the primary markers of its contemporaneity. In the process, the institutions of contemporary art have attained an unprecedented degree of historical self-consciousness and have created a novel kind of cultural space – with the international biennale as its already tired emblem – dedicated to the exploration through art of similarities and differences between geo-politically diverse forms of social experience that have only recently begun to be represented within the parameters of a common world.

More particularly, international art institutions are the cultural representatives of a market idea of a global system of societies. They mediate exchange relations with artists via the latest cultural discourses of ‘globalization’, in order to put the latest version of the contemporary on show. By virtue of their power of assembly, international biennales are manifestations of the cultural-economic power of the ‘centre’, *wherever* they crop up and *whatever* they show. In short, they are a Research and Development branch of the transnationalization of the culture industry. The new international biennales are emblems of capital’s capacity to cross borders, and to accommodate and appropriate cultural differences. Art labour is variable cultural capital. Furthermore, currently, it is *only* capital that immanently projects the utopian horizon of global social interconnectedness, in the ultimately dystopian form of the market.

Nonetheless, for all these social determinations, it is still the art-character of the works on show – their particular ways of showing, their individual lack of self-evidence – that makes all this possible, and raises it above the status of an extended series of world exhibitions. In particular, it is the ultimate *extra*-territoriality of art (which is part and parcel of its illusion of autonomy) that makes the recent multiple and complex territorializations of art institutions possible. If art is to function critically within these institutions, as a

construction/expression of the contemporary – that is, if it is to appropriate the de-temporalizing power of the image as the basis for new historical temporalizations – it must relate directly to the socio-spatial ontology of its own international and transnational sites and relations. It is at this point that the critical historical significance of the transformation of the ontology of the artwork, effected in the course of the last 50 years, from a craft-based ontology of mediums to a postconceptual, transcategorical ontology of materializations, comes into its own.

This leads me to my main thesis: **it is the convergence and mutual conditioning of historical transformations in the ontology of the artwork and the social relations of art space** – a convergence and mutual conditioning that has its roots in more general economic and communicational processes– **that makes contemporary art possible**, in the emphatic sense of an art of contemporaneity. These convergent and mutually conditioning transformations take the common form of processes of ‘de-bordering’: on one hand, the de-bordering of the arts as mediums – the emergence of genuinely *transcategorical* practices opening up the conceptual space of a ‘generic’ art – and on the other, the de-bordering of the previously national social spaces of art. This has been an extraordinarily complicated historical process.^{xi} Nonetheless, its result may be summarized, in brief, as the immanent appearance within the work of art of the global socio-spatial dialectic of *places, non-places* and *flows* in the form of a dialectical constellation of the *aesthetic, conceptual* and *distributive* aspects of art. It is this dialectical constellation that constitutes what I call the ‘post-conceptual’ character of contemporary art.

Such art has six main features:

1. A necessary – but insufficient – conceptuality. (Art is constituted by concepts, their relations and their instantiation in practices of discrimination: art/non-art.)

2. A necessary – but insufficient – aesthetic dimension. (All art requires *some* form of materialization; that is to say, aesthetic [= spatio-temporal'] presentation.)

3. An anti-aestheticist use of aesthetic materials. (This is a critical requirement of art's necessary conceptuality.)

4. An expansion to infinity of the possible material means of art. (Transcategoriality)
This is the liberating significance of the 'post-medium' condition.

5. A radically distributive – that is, irreducibly relational – unity of the individual artwork across the totality of its multiple material instantiations, at any particular time. (An ontology of materializations.)

6. A historical malleability of the borders of this unity.^{xii}

It is the conjunction of the first two of these features that leads to the third and fourth, while the fifth and sixth are expressions of their logical and temporal consequences, respectively.

In sum, contemporary art is 'post'-conceptual to the extent that it registers the historical experience of conceptual art, as a self-conscious movement, as the experience of the impossibility/fallacy of the *absolutization* of anti-aesthetic, in conjunction with a recognition of an ineliminably conceptual *aspect* to *all* art. In this respect, art is post-conceptual to the extent to which it reflectively incorporates the *truth* (which itself incorporates the untruth) of 'conceptual art': namely, art is necessarily *both* aesthetic and conceptual.

The spatial character of this dialectic of the aesthetic and the conceptual – and its ontological and social significance as an artistic expression of the dialectic of places and non-places – appears most clearly in the art of late 1960s and early 1970s in the practices of its *textualization* and *architecturalization or environmentalization*. This was a dual practice conceived by Robert Smithson at the time as a dialectic of site and non-site. Its more recent

transformation, via the further complication of this dialectic by the emergence of a new 'space of flows', appears in the process of art's *transnationalization*. This reveals the process of transnationalization to be occurring, most fundamentally, at the level of art's historical ontology – its being as art – and not just at the level of its forms of distribution.

In this respect, transnationalization represents a fourth stage in a historical narrative of the expansion of the spatial range and conception of 20th-century Western art, which can be summarized as follows: the Euclidian spatiality of objects to the speculative spatiality of planetary relations.

1. The environmentalization of painting and sculpture, from Matisse to Kaprow, via muralism, and on up to the minimalists' investment of negative space. (This is a movement still grounded in the interior, in relations between objects and rooms.)

2. The textualization, architecturalization and expanded environmentalization of art, and the constitution of a generic concept of art, via the exploitation of the constitutive ambiguity of the design/building or conceptualization/materialization relation. (This is the moment of Lewitt, Bochner, Graham, Smithson and Matta-Clark – and indeed Hans Haacke.)

3) The post-architectural urbanism of various kinds of project work and the functional redefinition of site, based on an awareness of the constitutive role of non-sites. (Mark Dion and Réne Green might serve as examples here.).

4. The transnationalization of art via its production for and inscription within a transnational art space that mediates the global dialectic of places, non-places and flows, via the institutional forms of the *large-scale international exhibition*, the *market* and the *migrancy of artists*. (This is the moment for which I will be taking The Atlas Group as my exemplar.) It is a profoundly contradictory process in which artists and art-institutional and market forms negotiate the politics of regionalism, post-colonial nationalism and migration,

overwriting the general spatial logic of post-conceptual work with global political-economic dynamics.

So how can 'art' occupy, articulate, critically reflect and transfigure so global a transnational space? Only, I think, if the subject-position of its production is able to reflect – that is, to construct and thereby express – something of the structure of 'the contemporary' itself. The work of The Atlas Group is emblematic here because it draws attention to two distinctive and related aspects of this process: *fictionalization* and *speculative collectivization*.

3. The fictionalization of artistic authority (anonymity and the author-function)

In the work of The Atlas Group, fictionalization works at two levels and takes two main forms: the fictionalization of artistic authority or what, adapting Foucault, we may call 'the artist-function', and the fictionalization of the documentary form, in particular, the archive. Such fictionalization corresponds to and renders visible the fictitiousness of the contemporary itself. It also renders explicit a certain general fictitiousness of the post-conceptual artwork, which is an effect of the counter-factuality inherent in its conceptual dimension, and imparts to it a structurally 'literary' aspect. Each materialization can be understood as the performance of a fictive element or idea. In this respect, the generic post-medium concept of art reincorporates 'literature', returning it to its philosophical origins in early German romanticism. *Post-conceptual art articulates a post-aesthetic poetics*.

Historically, the fictionalization of the artist-function is, of course, not an uncommon authorial strategy. It represents an extension of both the strategy of pseudonymity (prevalent under conditions of censorship and the need for social dissimulation of various kinds) and the 'impersonality' of an Eliottian modernism. Theoretically, it is best conceived, I think, in terms of Foucault's analysis of the author-function, which was itself in many ways (like

much of post-structuralism) a theorization of the implications of the practice of the modernist avant-gardes. For Foucault, the replacement of the concept of the author by that of the author-function was ‘a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analysing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse ...[by] grasp[ing] the subject’s points of insertion, modes of functioning, and system of dependencies’.^{xiii} The construction of an artist-function named ‘the Atlas Group’ is in many ways a precise application of the terms of this analysis to the production of artistic authority. Its primary characteristic is its dissemblance of a documentary practice.

This is dependent upon, first, its creative use of anonymity, within pseudonymity, via the Group form (pseudonymity, one might say, is a condition of *historical* fictionalization); and second, the exploitation of the documentary, simultaneously, as indexical mark and pure cultural form. More deeply, it relies for its productive ambiguity upon a general ambiguity in the relationship between fictional and historical narratives themselves – an ambiguity that finds its point of indifference in the concept of *speculation*, through which it achieves both its philosophical and political force. On the one hand, this ambiguity is constitutive of a practice that uses fictional narratives for critical historical ends; on the other hand, a rigorous internal demarcation between the indexical and purely formal – that is, fictional – use of documents is marked by systematically aberrant chronologies and narrative contradictions – a procedure that is at times applied to the narration of the formation of The Atlas Group itself, variously specified as 1999, 1977 and 1986 – 1999. (1999 was the actual year). It is in the relation between the anonymous collectivity of the fiction of the Group itself and the national specificity of its fictions (‘Lebanon’) that both the *transnational* character and the political meaning of its practice lies.

4. The collectivization of artistic fictions (or, the speculative collectivity of the transnational)

Artist collectives (fictional and actual) are fashionable once again. They are proliferating like wildfire through the international art community, whether in singular ('Claire Fontaine', for example) or explicitly collective guise (Raqs Media Collective). And there is a new, revisionist historiography of their recent past.^{xiv} There are a variety of reasons for this, mostly to do with the attempts to refashion the modes of effectivity of the relations between politics and art. My thesis here is that artistic collectivism has a new function here tied to its fictionalization, at the moment of global transnationalism, of which the recent spate of collectives (fictional or otherwise) is a generally unconscious register.

The collectivization of the fictionalization of the artist-function works, once again, at two levels: the collectivity of the Group, and the collectivization of authority inherent in the (in-this-case-fictionalized) documentary form – at its limit, the material 'collectivity' of indexicality itself, the signifying power of nature. The link is anonymity. It is through the combination of anonymity and reference inherent in the pseudonym 'The Atlas Group', with its global connotations, that its fictive collectivity comes to figure the *speculative collectivity of the globally transnational* itself.

I claimed earlier that currently it is only capital that immanently projects the utopian horizon of global social interconnectedness, in the ultimately dystopian form of the market: only capital manifests a subject-structure at the level of the global. Yet, capitalist sociality (the grounding of societies in relations of exchange) is essentially abstract; it is a matter of *form*, rather than 'collectivity'. Collectivity is produced by the interconnectedness of labours, but the universal interconnectedness and dependencies that capital produces exhibit the structure of a subject (the unity of an activity) only objectively, in their product, separated

from individual subjects and particular collectivities of labour, in the self-development of the value-form. Historically, of course, nationalism (the cultural fiction of nations) has filled this lacuna. Nations ('imagined communities') have been the privileged social subjects of competing capitals. But the subject-structure of capital no longer corresponds to the territorially discrete entities of nation-states, and other societies outside the nexus of global capital are being drawn inexorably into it. In this respect, the immanent collectivity of capitalism remains, and will always remain, structurally, 'to come'. Hence, the abstract and wholly formal character of its more recent anticipation as 'multitude'.

The fictional collectivity of *The Atlas Group* and its narrative 'characters' is a stand-in for the missing political collectivity of the globally transnational, which is both posited and negated by capital itself. As such, it corresponds, at a structural level, to the work of such 'authors' as Luther Blissett and Ming Wu in the field of literature. Politically, one might say, such work represents, by virtue of its effective relations to the philosophical history of capital, the continuation of the intellectual tradition of Marxist internationalism by new transnational artistic means. The Atlas Group could be construed as the artistic representative of a kind of 'First Transnational'.

But what then of the specifically *national* focus of the Group's work, its exclusively Lebanese fiction? My claim here is that the fictionalization of 'Lebanon' – through the fictionalization of the evidence of its existence – effects an emblematic fictionalization of the national itself. Furthermore, this fictionalization of the national acts as the *de*-nationalizing condition of its *transnationalization*; a transnationalization that is effected via the socio-spatial structure of the artwork/world. This is not transnationalism as the abstract other of the nation, but transnationalization as the mediation of the nation form with its abstract global other. On the horizon of this movement, we can glimpse something of the radical-democratic aspect of

Foucault's projection of a possible replacement of the author-function by some form of anonymity. It evokes the rhetorical question that closes Foucault's famous essay: "What difference does it make who is speaking?"^{xv}

Notes

This lecture draws on material from my forthcoming book, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*; and in particular, from passages in the essays 'The Fiction of the Contemporary' (forthcoming in A. Avanesian and L. Skrebowski, eds, *Aesthetics and Contemporary Art*, Sternberg Press, Berlin and New York, 2011) and 'Where is the Work of Art? Contemporary Art, Spatialization and Urban Form' (in E. Whittaker and A Landrum, eds, *Non-Site to Celebration Park: Essays on Art and the Politics of Space*, Bath Spa University, Bath, 2007, pp. 13–32)

ⁱ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paras 60–66.

ⁱⁱ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 394–408.

ⁱⁱⁱ Temporality, for Heidegger, 'has the unity of a future which makes present in the process of having been.' Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (1927), trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Blackwell, Oxford, 1962, p. 374.

^{iv} See Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume 3*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988, Pt IV, Section 2, 'Poetics of Narrative: History, Fiction, Time', pp. 99–240. Despite the volume of his writings on time and history, Ricoeur nowhere thematizes the concept of the contemporary. The closest he gets is his brief discussion of "'Our' Modernity' in *History, Memory, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2004, pp. 305–314.

^v Terry Smith, 'Contemporary Art and Contemporaneity', *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Summer 2006), pp. 681–707, p. 703.

^{vi} Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood' (1967), in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998, p.168. I discuss the theological character of the photographic image in Peter Osborne, *Philosophy in Cultural Theory*, Ch. 2, 'Sign and Image'.

^{vii} See Miguel Ángel Hernández-Navarro, 'Presentación. Antagonismos Temporales', *Heterocronías: Tiempo, Arte y Arqueologías del Presente*, CENDEAC, Murcia, 2008, pp. 9–16.

^{viii} See, for example, Luis Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation*, Texas University Press, Austin, 2007.

^{ix} Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003, pp. 3 and 15. The quotation from Volkman is from Toby Alice Volkman, *Crossing Borders: Revitalizing Area Studies*, Ford Foundation, New York, 1999, p. ix.

^x *Ibid.*, p. 16

^{xi} For brief preliminary accounts of aspects of this process, see chapters 6–9, above.

^{xii} Cf. Peter Osborne, 'Art Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Criticism, Art History and Contemporary Art', *Art History*, Volume 27, no. 4, pp. 651–670, pp. 663–5 for an earlier attempt to formulate these constitutive features.

^{xiii} Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', (1969), in Josué V. Harari, ed., *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1979, pp. 141–60, p. 158.

^{xiv} See, for example, Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, eds, *Collectivism After Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination After 1945*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2007.

^{xv} Foucault, 'What is an Author?', p. 160.