

# Anachronic concepts, art historical containers and historiographical practices in contemporary art

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By their ability to resuscitate events, materials, memories and visual codes from the past, artworks do not necessarily strictly conform to conventional timelines and indeed are exceptionally well suited for confounding chronological sequences. This insight from Alexander Nagel's and Christopher Wood's book *Anachronic Renaissance* has proved as inspiring to the interpretation of pre-modern as of contemporary art.<sup>1</sup> Nagel's and Wood's concept comprises more than just artistic engagements with history by means of appropriation or representation. Artworks, according to them, can take on a more active role, generating art-historiographical models on their own accord and melding incompatible temporal modalities. By engaging with art history (and thus paradoxically engaging with a double perspective of history from both inside and outside<sup>2</sup>), art can become a historiographical instrument on its own accord, with a potential to create temporal models. This paper will trace the historiographical potential of contemporary art in light of its recent historiographical turn<sup>3</sup> by reconsidering some aspects of the contested relationship between art and art history. Its aim is less to ask who *writes* art history, as the considerable contribution of artists to art historiography has long been recognized. The questions pursued here are rather, how artworks may be envisaged to shape art historiographical models on their own accord and which (art historiographical) concepts have tried to take this contribution into view, which will allow a glimpse at the interrelations between artistic and art historiographical practices.

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, New York: Zone Books, 2010. Nagel has also expanded the concept of the 'anachronic' to the present; cf. Nagel, *Medieval Modern. Art Out of Time*, London: Thames and Hudson, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, the fundamental double nature of history which is both „event' and „narration' does not apply to art history alone, but to history in general (cf. Reinhart Koselleck and Wolf-Dieter Stempel, eds, *Geschichte – Ereignis und Erzählung* (Poetik & Hermeneutik V), Munich: Fink, 1973).

<sup>3</sup> As illustrated, among other texts, by Dieter Roelstraete, 'The Way of the Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary in Art', *e-flux journal*, no. 4, March 2009, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/04/68582/the-way-of-the-shovel-on-the-archeological-imaginary-in-art/> and 'After the Historiographic Turn. Current Findings', in: *e-flux journal*, no. 6, May 2009, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/06/61402/after-the-historiographic-turn-current-findings> (both last accessed on December 10th, 2016).

## Writing history, making history

Cultural and art historiographies have been fundamental to the development of historical thinking.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it may not be exaggerated to consider current art historiographical practices as instruments of new forms of historiography, even if the traditional distinction between art and art historiography, between those who make history and those who write it lives on. However, aspects of historicity have long been recognized as inherent to art practices, as confirmed by the long tradition of theories of emulation.<sup>5</sup> Still, modernity has tackled the problem in a much more ambivalent vein. Let us look at T.S. Eliot's often-cited view on the intertwining of artistic heritage and production:

‘The necessity that [the artist] shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them.’<sup>6</sup>

This passage encapsulates the idea of the reversibility of historical sequences via innovation while implicitly demonstrating the futility of reclaiming specific models of historicity for specific intentions. Obviously, Eliot's concept would have lent itself to a radical reversal and transformation of tradition, but, as is well known, he chose to pursue different ideas. His concept of depersonalized authorship entails the author's sacrificial self-effacement and his absorption by tradition. As artistic activity arises from the ‘ideal order’ of tradition, it – ideally – comes to rest there again. Thus, Eliot aimed not at a reversal, or modification, but at a continuation of tradition warranted by ‘the really new’ artwork, which, conversely, receives its valorisation only if it can be completely absorbed in the order cast by tradition.

George Kubler, of course, was well aware of Eliot's concept. He saw André Malraux's *Voix de Silence* as an illustration of what he termed the ‘Eliot effect’, ‘where major artists are represented as altering their respective traditions retroactively by their own novel contributions’.<sup>7</sup> Kubler's notion of ‘sequence’, central to his essay *The Shape of Time* (1962), was placed within a similar historiographical dynamic: important artworks are connected as being instances of ‘solutions’ to the same ‘problem’ within a ‘sequence’. ‘Every important work of art can be regarded both as

<sup>4</sup> Hans Robert Jauß, ‘Ästhetische Normen und geschichtliche Reflexion in der Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes’, in: Charles Perrault, *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes en ce qui regarde les arts et les sciences (Theorie und Geschichte der Literatur und der schönen Künste 2)*, Munich: Eidos, 1964, 23-33.

<sup>5</sup> For explorations of the term see, among others, Elizabeth Perry, *The Aesthetics of Emulation in the Visual Arts of Ancient Rome*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005; Thomas E. Crow, *Emulation. Making Artists for Revolutionary France*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> T. S. Eliot, ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’, in: T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*, London: Methuen, 1920, 39-49, 40.

<sup>7</sup> George Kubler, *The Shape of Time. Remarks on the History of Things*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962, 35, no. 5.

a historical event and as a hard-won solution to some problem.' Kubler distinguished between 'open' and 'closed' sequences: problems for which active solutions are yet to be found, lead to 'open' sequences; those that are (possibly temporarily) considered unproductive or obsolete form 'closed' sequences. There cannot be endless sequences, because 'each corresponds to a conscious problem requiring the serious attention of many persons for its successful resolution'. Also, their position within sequences determines the relevance of artworks: important artworks or 'primary objects' determine the artistic transformation (and thus the course of the sequence); others describe mere inevitable 'replica-mass' (although art historians may depend on them in their identification of sequences because of the loss of more significant historical material).<sup>8</sup> An artwork can occupy multiple sequences (it can work on multiple problems), possibly with different start and end points, speeds, highlights, breaks and pauses. An early solution to one specific problem may arise at the same time as a late solution to another sequence. The 'systematic' age of a work of art (the position it occupies within the sequence) is therefore more significant than its chronological age.

Thus, the 'history of things' has its own logic beyond established historiographies imagined as a string of chronologically arranged epochs, and this has considerably contributed to its popularity among artists. But it makes less sense to describe it as 'non-linear', as is often done. In fact, viewed closely, Kubler's sequences run a strictly linear course: Every artwork has a fixed place on the problem-solving chain and 'reduces the range of possibilities in the succeeding position'.<sup>9</sup>

The importance of *The Shape of Things* lies elsewhere, namely in turning the relation between artefacts and 'their' time or epoch inside out. With a terminology strongly influenced by cybernetics,<sup>10</sup> Kubler turned against the biological metaphors that had dominated art historiography from Vasari to Winckelmann and could be viewed as continuing in art historical style analysis. While Kubler's 'sequences' are *embedded* in the course of history, they are *not identical* with it but shape their own, sometimes idiosyncratic timelines and historiographies – and this is, arguably, a point that has been made by different approaches criticizing an art history mainly busying itself with neatly categorizing artworks by the epochs they fit in, historical position and style explain and validate each other in an endless tautological circle.

Despite this crucial point, and despite his innovative engagement with anthropology and cybernetics, Kubler neither entirely abandoned art historical methodology or terminology. His description of the sequential model, for instance, is based upon central art historiographical terms such as 'tradition' and 'influence': 'Historically only those solutions related to one another by the bonds of tradition

<sup>8</sup> Kubler, *The Shape of Time*, 33, 38, 39.

<sup>9</sup> Kubler *The Shape of Time*, 54. From Kubler's point of view, the sequence chains narrowed in the contemporary present; this obviously heralded not only the end of history, but also the end of the sequence chains.

<sup>10</sup> Pamela M. Lee, 'Ultramoderne', or, How George Kubler Stole the Time in Sixties Art', *Grey Room*, no. 2, Winter 2001, 46–77; cf. Lee, *Chronophobia. On Time in the Art of the 1960s*, Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 1990, 218–256.

and influence are linked as a sequence'<sup>11</sup>. Additionally, his indebtedness to contemporary art history was indeed quite considerable, even if it remained widely unacknowledged. In *The Shape of Things* Kubler repeatedly stressed the importance of his teacher and doctoral supervisor Henri Focillon, whose publication, *Vie des Formes*,<sup>12</sup> had inspired the development of his sequential model. But he gave much less public credit to another one of his teachers, Erwin Panofsky, with whom he had remained in regular contact since his student days. Panofsky is briefly mentioned in *The Shape of Things*,<sup>13</sup> but mainly looms large as representing an overcome model of art historiography, as Kubler elaborated on his rejection of iconology. As he explained, iconology tended to neglect discontinuities, fractures and ruptures in art-historical timelines and, due to its text-based nature, was unable to grasp artefacts of pre-literate cultures.<sup>14</sup> This was an important argument, as Kubler's concern was to establish an historiographical concept capable of including non-Western artefacts.<sup>15</sup> This rejection of a dominant art historiographical model within U.S. academia in the 1960s hit a sensitive nerve and contributed to the book's ready reception. But, as already mentioned, the structure and terminology of Kubler's thinking was considerably shaped by art historical methodology – a paradox that many reviewers have since commented upon.<sup>16</sup> Also, iconology was still used widely in art history, as exemplified by the example of Meyer Schapiro, an art historian highly esteemed in New York art circles, who continued to build his methodology upon it, albeit in a modified way.<sup>17</sup> Kubler's rejection of art history (as exemplified by iconology) was arguably intended in a much wider sense than he himself was able to perform: he needed to make absolutely clear that his focus was not the *meaning* of artworks as

<sup>11</sup> Kubler, *The Shape of Time*, 33. Despite Kubler's rejection of stylistic analysis, his mode has parallels to Gottfried Semper's 'Stillehre', which would be interesting to pursue. Cf. Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten, oder praktische Ästhetik* [1860/63], Mittenwald: Mäander, 1977.

<sup>12</sup> Henri Focillon, *Vie des Formes*, Paris: Leroux, 1934.

<sup>13</sup> Kubler mentioned Panofsky with regard to his essay 'Über die Reihenfolge der vier Meister von Reims' ('On the Chronology of the Four Master Builder of Reims', 1927), which describes a case study of artistic anachronism in comparison to valid conceptions of style history. Cf. Kubler, *The Shape of Time*, 118. See also Erwin Panofsky resulting essay, 'Reflections on Historical Time', trans. Johanna Bauman, in: *Critical Inquiry*, no. 30, 4 (Summer 2004), 691-701.

<sup>14</sup> In the English original, the relevant paragraph is titled 'Iconological diminutions' (Kubler, *The Shape of Time*, 127), a direct attack on iconology that the German translation, 'Ikonographische Forschung' ('iconographic research') omits. Cf. Kubler, *Die Form der Zeit. Anmerkungen zur Geschichte der Dinge*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982, 64.

<sup>15</sup> See the references to Kubler in David Summers, *Real Spaces. World art history and the rise of Western modernism*, London: Phaidon, 2003. See also Kerstin Schankweiler, 'Brüche und Rupturen. Eine postkoloniale Relektüre von George Kublers 'The Shape of Time'', Sarah Maupeu, Kerstin Schwankweiler and Stefanie Stallschus, eds, in: *Im Maschenwerk der Kunstgeschichte. Eine Revision von George Kublers 'The Shape of Time'*, Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2014, 127-145.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Im Maschenwerk der Kunstgeschichte*. However, Focillon, not Panofsky was his dissertation supervisor, as is often incorrectly assumed.

<sup>17</sup> Jan Bialostocki, review of George Kubler's *The Shape of Time*, *The Art Bulletin* 47, no. 1, March 1965, 135-139.

cultural symbols but their coherence 'as a system of formal relations'.<sup>18</sup> As others, Siegfried Kracauer did not accept this as sufficient reasoning,<sup>19</sup> and indeed, his criticism calls attention to a discrepancy that Kubler himself seems to have felt. At least, he felt compelled to write to Panofsky, in light of the latter's repeated recommendation of his book,

[...] something which should be more clearly and prominently said in the book itself, namely, that the models of thematic study on which my idea about sequence rests, are the iconographic essays to which you treated us all in *Studies in Iconology*. It is this kind of alignment which I sought to extend to other domains. When the opportunity to do so presents itself, I shall make the point clearer in print.<sup>20</sup>

The opportunity did not present itself until more than a decade later.<sup>21</sup> But in 1961, Kubler had published a review of Panofsky's *Renaissance and Renascences* entitled 'Disjunction and Mutational Energy' with a detailed examination of the art historiographical and methodological arguments contained therein. As the title illustrates, he was interested in Panofsky's term 'disjunction' describing the divergence of artistic forms and cultural meaning, and in his methodology developed to describe formal change. In *Renaissance and Renascences* he found inspiration for the very issues that he was interested in, and tried to follow its trail up to establishing connections to contemporary art, very much against Panofsky's own wishes and intentions.<sup>22</sup> However, he mentioned this legacy in *The Shape of Time* only briefly.<sup>23</sup> It is an irony of fate that the sending of the very volume of *Art News* to Panofsky that contained Kubler's appreciative review of *Renaissance and Renascences* actually sparked the famous, heated argument between Panofsky and Barnett

<sup>18</sup> Kubler *The Shape of Time*, vii.

<sup>19</sup> In a letter to Panofsky, Kracauer showed himself surprised at Kubler's emphatic rejection of iconology, pointing out that he could not see how a form class could forgo investigating the *meaning* of the artistic problem from which it arises (Siegfried Kracauer to Erwin Panofsky, 31 March 1962, in: Volker Breidecker, ed, *Siegfried Kracauer – Erwin Panofsky, Briefwechsel 1941-1966*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996, 68).

<sup>20</sup> George Kubler to Erwin Panofsky, 15 May 1962, in: Dieter Wuttke, ed, *Erwin Panofsky, Korrespondenz 1910-1968*, Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 2011, vol. V, 227.

<sup>21</sup> In a 1975 essay Kubler stressed the use of iconological methods as well as the importance of Panofsky's *Renaissance and Renascences* for his research: George Kubler, 'History – Or Anthropology – of Art?', *Critical Inquiry*, no. 1, 4, June 1975, 757-767.

<sup>22</sup> See the enlightening article by Regine Prange, 'Ein Zeitgenosse wider Willen: Panofskys Witz und die Ikonologie der Moderne', in: Peter K. Klein and Regine Prange, eds, *Zeitspiegelung: Zur Bedeutung von Traditionen in Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft (Festschrift für Konrad Hoffmann zum 60. Geburtstag am 8. Oktober 1998)*, Berlin: Reimer, 1998, 331-345.

<sup>23</sup> See the interview with George Kubler conducted by Richard Candida Smith and Thomas F. Reese in the series 'Interviews with Art Historians 1991-2002' by the Getty Research Institute. Cf. the discussions dated 30 March 1991 (1.20/X) and 18 November 1991 (1.21/XI), in which Kubler notes his broad agreement with Panofsky in the major methodological and theoretical issues, particularly in the early 1960s – the time of the publication of *Renaissance and Renascences* and *The Shape of Time*: KUBLER: 'My thought at that time was molded by his.' [...] SMITH: 'On the use of iconology, too.' KUBLER: 'Yes.'

Newman over a misprint in the edition of the journal, which has been interpreted as an exemplary failure in communication between the young New York art scene and the European-dominated academic art history.<sup>24</sup> The on-going conflict fuelled by the growing importance of artists-theorists in the 1960s shed negative light on an art history uninterested in contemporary issues (Panofsky himself quite happily taking pride of place among its prime representatives) and instead proposed art theory (led by artists-theorists) as a new model to engage with contemporary art practices.<sup>25</sup> The delicate battle lines between art and art history, through which Kubler, it may be supposed, had to navigate with considerable skill, have since remained more or less intact, at least in theory. While scholarly and artistic practices may interrelate, a refusal of art history and its methodology is still *bon ton* among artists, not least in the context of artistic research, even if they freely contribute to, or borrow from it.

The issue in question here is not whether Kubler strategically concealed his art-historical roots, even if it is obvious that the enthusiastic reception of his essay within the New York art scene certainly did not suffer from its negligence. Beyond instances of mutual personal distrust between artists and art historians, from an art-historical viewpoint it is certainly regrettable that the institutional dominance of an art history defensive against or ignorant of contemporary art on the one hand, and art theory on the other has led to the paradoxical situation that innovative art historiographical concepts have regularly been introduced *against* art history as an academic discipline, instead of with and motivated through it. Not even the – obviously – immense contribution of art historians to historiographical concepts has been able to change this (despite the popularity of Aby Warburg's or Georges Didi-Huberman's models). As an academic discipline, art history has probably benefited more than suffered from this criticism. And even according to the most conservative historicist criteria, a historiography uninterested in the present, unaware of contemporary issues, can not be considered relevant.

### **Chains, loops, folds, cracks: the anachronic**

Indeed, Georges Didi-Huberman's engagement with Aby Warburg's concept of iconological analysis has opened up a broad horizon for current research on non-chronological temporal models. Instead towards a 'great chain' of masterpieces Warburg's interests were rather oriented towards a 'great chaos of being' (Thomas Carlyle): not towards the inscription of artworks into stable timelines, but towards their heterochronic afterlife. Warburg's pursuit of the 'memory of forms' is open to the 'impurity of time' which cannot be clearly divided, directed, or categorized.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Beat Wyss, *Ein Druckfehler. Panofsky versus Newman – Verpasste Chancen eines Dialogs*, Cologne: König, 1993. Wyss's accusation that Panofsky failed to engage in a dialogue with the New York art scene at two opportunities (once with Kubler, once with Newman) is due to a misrepresentation of the relationship between Kubler and Panofsky, which possibly stems from the fact that Panofsky's correspondence had not been published at the time.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. in this context the debate about Hans Belting's *The end of the history of art?*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.

<sup>26</sup> For his work on Warburg, see Georges Didi-Huberman, *The surviving image: Phantoms of time and time of phantoms: Aby Warburg's history of art*, trans. Harvey Mendelsohn, University

Let us stress this fundamental point, which was also crucial for Kubler:

‘Tradition, for Warburg, was not a stream on which events and people are born along. Influences are no matter of passive acceptance but demand an effort of adjustment, ‘eine Auseinandersetzung’ as Warburg put it, which includes that of the present with the past.’<sup>27</sup>

This observation by Gertrud Bing leads to a key methodological limitation of style analysis that Kubler wished to reject as clearly as Aby Warburg did: ‘As soon as an artistic manifestation is considered in the light of its individual setting, criteria of style lose their fixed meaning.’<sup>28</sup> A truly historically informed analysis of forms undermines any style analysis. Hubert Damisch’s analysis of iconology in *Le Jugement de Pâris*, has delved right into the centre of this problem, criticising the use of time as a ‘container’ into which the artwork simply needs to be placed by the historian:

A relation conceived of as being quite simple, rather like that of a container and what it contains: history and the story unfolding in time, inscribing itself and developing within it. [...] Whereas it is, quite obviously, the object under study [...] that produces the time, the very duration within which it is inscribed, and within which it must of necessity be known and studied. [...] art (to say nothing of the unconscious, which Freud maintained has no ‘history’) seems to go about its business quite heedless of such questions, as well as of comparable scruples; it takes its materials wherever it finds them (which is not the same as saying haphazardly) and uses them in accordance with its own ends, diverting them, often quite deliberately, from their original contexts.<sup>29</sup>

A similar, just as crucial point was made by Walter Benjamin in *Rigorous Study of Art* (1933), a review of the first volume of *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen* published in Berlin in 1931 under the direction of Otto Pächt, with an opening essay by Hans Sedlmayr which Benjamin set himself to review. He considered the project a result of the endeavour to answer to that lack of ‘systematic’ aesthetic analysis of artworks represented, in his view, by Heinrich Wölfflin: of an academic art history overly focusing on biographical or historical research instead of an analysis of artworks. The new publication, Benjamin saw, might lead to a

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Park, PA 2017; *Confronting Images. Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, trans. John Goodman, University Park, PA: The Penn State University Press, 2004 and ‘Before the Image, Before Time. The Sovereignty of Anachronism’, in: Claire Farago and Robert Zwijnenberg, eds, *Compelling Visuality. The Work of Art in and out of History*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003, 31-44.

<sup>27</sup> Gertrud Bing, ‘A. M. Warburg’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, no. 28 (1965), 299-313, here 310.

<sup>28</sup> Bing, *A. M. Warburg*, 307.

<sup>29</sup> Hubert Damisch, *The Judgment of Paris*, trans. John Goodman, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, 145-146.

'new type of study [that] [...] is concerned with the correlation that gives rise to reciprocal illumination between, on the one hand, the historical process and radical change and, on the other hand, the accidental, external, and even strange aspects of the artwork.'<sup>30</sup>

The hallmark of the new type of researcher is not the eye for the 'all-encompassing whole' nor the eye for the 'comprehensive context,' (which mediocrity has claimed for itself) but rather the capacity to be at home in marginal domains'.<sup>31</sup> Again, we have a model of art historiography posited within the gap opening between formal and historical analysis, or, as Benjamin noted from Focillon's *Vie de Formes*, 'L'état de la vie des formes ne se confond pas de plein droit avec l'état de la vie sociale. Le temps qui porte l'oeuvre d'art ne la définit pas dans son principe ni dans la particularité de sa forme.'<sup>32</sup> Similar observations have led Gottfried Boehm in his introduction to the German edition of Kubler's *The Shape of Time (Die Form der Zeit*, 1982), to state: 'The task of writing art history ends in a paradox: either art, but no history – or history, but no *art* history'.<sup>33</sup> But this succinct observation rather describes the pitfalls of artistic practice and art historical writing if considered separate domains than the actual constitution of artworks. Theodor W. Adorno's dialectical concept of the double nature of artworks which, by a 'latent collectivity' that is not subsumed by subjectivity or intentionality, encompass elements of 'sedimented external history' even while remaining autonomous 'monads', can plausibly be posited against an alleged irreconcilability of art and history, while retaining a fundamental understanding of their non-coherence.<sup>34</sup> Adorno also offers a highly charged concept supplementing Kubler's notion of 'sequences' and radically correcting Eliot's 'ideal order', by linking the chains formed by artworks not via their similarity or kinship, but rather via mutual criticism ('each artwork is the mortal enemy of the other').<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'Rigorous Study of Art. On the First Volume of the *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*', trans. Thomas Y. Levin, *October*, vol. 47, Winter 1988, 84-90, here 88-89. Benjamin considered Riegl's methodology as preparing this 'new type of study'. Levin describes his translation as „interpolating both the first (unpublished) and the second (final) version' of *Strenge Kunstwissenschaft. Zum ersten Bande der Kunstwissenschaftlichen Forschungen* (published on July 30, 1933, in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Jg. 78, Nr. 561, 2. Morgenblatt, Literaturblatt Nr. 31, S. 5 under Benjamin's pseudonym Detlef Holz.

<sup>31</sup> Benjamin, 'Rigorous Study of Art', 90.

<sup>32</sup> As cited in Walter Benjamin, 'On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress', in: *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1999, [N19a,1], 487.

<sup>33</sup> Gottfried Boehm, 'Kunst versus Geschichte: ein unerledigtes Problem', in: Kubler, *Die Form der Zeit*, 7-26, here 13. A reassessment from the US perspective can be found in Rosalind Krauss's presentation of Georges Didi-Huberman to the American public, in which she evokes a continuation of Robert Morris's critique of the methodological approaches of art historiographical representations: Rosalind Krauss, 'Critical Reflections: Georges Didi-Huberman', *Artforum*, January 1995, 64-65 and 103-104.

<sup>34</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, London and New York: Continuum Books, 1997, 86.

<sup>35</sup> Adorno 1997, 35, 112 (quoting himself).



The frictions and incongruences between art and history may best be grasped via a historiographical term that focusses on the crucial point of how artworks are positioned on timelines: the *anachronic*. In their already mentioned co-authored *Anachronic Renaissance* (2010) Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood have introduced this concept in order to describe the temporal mobility of artworks based on displacing chronology.<sup>36</sup> Just as chronological time has led to its own apparatus (clocks, calendars, annals and chronicles), artworks may produce similar figurations on their own accord: repetitions, regressions, distensions, duplications, folds and bends, while the anachronic quality of artworks describes not only these formations, but rather their ability to keep incompatible models of temporality in suspension<sup>37</sup>. This observation is crucial, as it makes clear that artworks do not freely form own temporal spaces outside of, or apart from, history – and, it should be added, neither are they alone in shaping anachronies against an otherwise homogeneous flow of time. But artworks are ideally suited to producing temporal incongruities and heterogeneities and observing them in other domains of life.

The term ‘anachronic’ is meant as a differentiation from ‘anachronistic’, which indicates the incorrect positioning of an event in the course of time (envisaged as a stable, reliable criterion). Nagel and Wood have drawn upon Jacques Rancière’s early, historiographical text *The Concept of Anachronism and the Historian’s Truth*, as well as the cultural history of anachronism sketched by Margreta de Grazia.<sup>38</sup> Rancière’s starting point is anachronism as a tool of historiographical interpretation, which he describes as encompassing more than just the incorrect dating of events: Identifying anachronisms subjects history to a ‘regime of probability’ and immunizes it against ‘impossible’ ideas, events or actions. The anachronic, on the other hand, a term he developed in this article, but did not always use in later writings, is aimed to defend the incongruity of ideas, events, actions against their obliteration via historiographical thinking. If these do not fit on their respective timelines – into their respective ‘containers’, in Damisch’s terms – they do not become atypical, and therefore, insignificant for historiography, but rather set history in motion. The anachronic therefore does not constitute an ‘alternative’ to historical models, it is neither un-historical (as the anachronistic), nor a-historical, nor does it simply transcend timelines, but it is a historiographical instrument designed to activate the agential potential of ideas, events, actions. The anachronic is necessary to make history (if viewed as a characteristic of history), and historiography (if viewed as an element of historical thinking) possible at all. Thus, it is indeed a tool of

<sup>36</sup> Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*; previously, ‘Interventions. Towards a New Model of Renaissance Anachronism’, *Art Bulletin*, no. 87, September 2005, 403-415.

<sup>37</sup> Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 18: ‘The ability of the work of art to hold incompatible models in suspension without deciding is the key to art’s anachronic quality’.

<sup>38</sup> Jacques Rancière, ‘Le concept d’anachronisme et la vérité de l’historien’, *L’inactuel* 6, Fall 1996, 53-68, trans. by Tim Stott as ‘The Concept of Anachronism and the Historian’s Truth (1996)’ in: Tim Stott and Noel Fitzpatrick, eds, *The History of the Present*, (= *InPrint* 3, 1, June) Dublin: ARADICUL/Dublin School of Creative Arts, 2015, 21-48, and Margreta de Grazia, ‘Anachronism’, in: Brian Cummings and James Simpson, eds, *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, 13-32.

historiography, apt to sharpen historiographical thinking as well as socio-political interpretations of artworks.

The notion of the 'anachronic' was not new in the Renaissance, as Nagel and Wood have stressed, but it is particularly interesting to follow it in this context in order to problematize the emergence of the performative models of authorship located therein. Authorship is a concept of originality and innovation. In accordance with the concept of authorship, the art-historical flow of time is clearly divided into a 'before' and an 'after' the introduction of a new artwork.<sup>39</sup> Nagel and Wood have supplemented this performative concept by that of substitution. The logic of substitution describes the potential of new artworks to stand for old ones, to be understood as 'old', making it possible that an artwork belongs simultaneously to more than one era.<sup>40</sup> An artwork can unite more than one temporality. 'Interferences' between the concept of performative authorship (where repetitions can only be perceived as fakes or copies) and that of substitution are characteristic of the modern era, as they write, while modernism has pushed authorship models to the extreme.<sup>41</sup>

In *Renaissance and Renascences*, Panofsky had developed the importance of cognitive distance from the past as necessary to be able to mimic younger or older styles into an analogy between the development of a central perspective and the 'historical perspective' of the Italian Renaissance with regard to antiquity.<sup>42</sup> Nagel and Wood disagree with such a 'total and objectivized view'<sup>43</sup>. Such thinking, they say, inadequately captures the complex structure of historical references in the Renaissance, and it leads to distinctions between 'good anachronisms', such as the establishment of authorship by references to antiquity or the possibility of the meaningful use of stylistic languages on the one hand, and incorrect dating, fakes and anachronisms on the other. To be sure, Panofsky would not necessarily have been the strictest defender of stylistic conceptions. Against the argument that the anachronistic love of the Renaissance for antiquity was nothing more than superficial costuming, he offered an example that actually brought him close to the concept of substitution developed by Nagel and Wood:

One of the leading anti-Renaissancists has recently dismissed the relevance of the 'rinascimento dell'antichità' by the following simile: 'A girl of eighteen, dressed up in the clothes which her grandmother wore when a girl of eighteen, may look more like her grandmother as she was then than her grandmother herself looks now. But she will not feel or act as her grandmother did half a century ago.' Taking up this simile, we may answer: If this girl decides to adopt the clothes of her grandmother for good and wears them all the time in the serious conviction

<sup>39</sup> Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 15.

<sup>40</sup> This leads to a turn away from singularizing image practices, cf. David Ganz and Felix Thürlemann, eds, *Das Bild im Plural. Mehrteilige Bildformen zwischen Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Berlin: Reimer, 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 403.

<sup>42</sup> Erwin Panofsky, 'Renaissance and Renascences', *The Kenyon Review*, no. 6, 1944, 201-236. Parts of these concepts can already be found in his earlier essay 'The First Page of Giorgio Vasari's "Libro"' (1930).

<sup>43</sup> Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences*, 225.

that they are more appropriate and becoming than those she used to wear before, this very decision not only induces but actually presupposes a change in her whole personality and way of life – a change not sufficient to make her a duplicate of her grandmother [...], but basic enough to make her ‘feel’ and ‘act’ quite differently from the way she did as long as she believed in slacks and polo shirts.<sup>44</sup>

Reading such a simile, one wonders how Panofsky could conceive of such a knot of anachronisms without a break away from chronological historiographies, without giving up ideas such as ‘cognitive distance’ or ‘symbolic form’. As an exemplary instance of art historiographical mobility, it illustrates that challenging established art historiographical models have long been embedded within the discipline.

### What are the chronopolitics of art?

The belief in the capability of a quasi-perspectival overview is a founding myth of art historical thinking, originating in Renaissance art historiography. But if the art-historical merit of Renaissance concepts no longer depends on their ability to establish perspectival, imaginary historiographical lines, then art history as a discipline is challenged as well. As Hal Foster has pointed out,<sup>45</sup> postmodern deconstructions of authorship are closely related to Nagel’s and Wood’s authorship models. Indeed, a reading of *Anachronic Renaissance* may even be useful to rethink the handling of authorship models in the context of 1980s Appropriation Art and resulting art theoretical concepts of appropriation. The act of appropriating – as an artistic strategy – suggests control over how authorship is being established, not least via a deceptively clear separation between a ‘before’ and an ‘after’ of the act of artistic production. But appropriation may describe not merely an individual’s ‘inscription’ into the chain of authorship, but also its interruption, leading to a much more complex undermining of art historiography than is, hitherto, entailed in most art theoretical concepts of appropriation. But before developing this thought, it may be useful to look at the current state of historiographical art practices from a wider perspective.

If we accept that art follows its own specific courses of history, we should look at Robert Jauß’s dictum, ‘that the claim of the sentence that men make their own history most likely acquires evidence in the arts’.<sup>46</sup> As stated before, this is a highly ambiguous obligation. Jauß has emphasized the significance of art historiography for the development of historical understanding, and its enormous contribution to that decisive moment of ‘formation of historical insight within

<sup>44</sup> Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences*, 229-230. Lynn Thorndike had used the example of the eighteen-year-old girl to substantiate his argument that there was no fundamental break between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

<sup>45</sup> Hal Foster, ‘Preposterous Timing’, *London Review of Books*, no. 34, 21, 8 November 2012, 12-14.

<sup>46</sup> Hans Robert Jauß, ‘Geschichte der Kunst und Historie’, in: Koselleck and Stempel, *Geschichte: Ereignis und Erzählung*, 175-209, here 175. See a similar observation in Hans Blumenberg, *Säkularisierung und Selbstbehauptung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974, 43.

Enlightenment thinking'.<sup>47</sup> He goes on to muse 'whether the history of art, which is usually regarded as dependent upon and a 'poor relative' to history in general, was not once the crucial part of a possible paradigm of historical knowledge, and might be so again'.<sup>48</sup> An engagement with the anachronics of art and art history can benefit from pre-modern conceptions of history, from their belief in the autonomy of art and of the rich philosophical knowledge of the existence of incongruous, but not incompatible logics of time.<sup>49</sup> But if the emphatic use of art as an instrument of historiography is exemplary at all for such a phenomenon, then this process must happen under different circumstances from those that Jauß has sketched: today, this would imply a more critical attitude towards the enlightened claim of making history through art; and a deeper interest in decentred practices that make it possible to perceive art as embedded in the sediments of history, and, as such, connected to social issues.

As art becomes increasingly conscious of its own historicity, the interlacing of artistic and art-historical practices is a recurrent topic, touching upon the concept of the contemporary and its relation to history, especially in the light of a rewriting of modernism; on the plethora of artistic approaches to historical material: appropriation, referentialism, repetition, re-enactments and so forth. A historiographical approach to these practices would lead to reconsidering and potentially expanding the prevalent art-theoretical categories dominant in this field. Projects as diverse as, for instance, Kerry James Marshall's on-going project of inscribing black history into the political consciousness of the United States, Kader Attia's post-colonial 'Re-Appropriation' of the relics of Colonialism, or Paulina Olowska's resuscitation of the legacy of the Modernist engagement with folk culture (as in *Collaged Stryenska*, Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin, 2008) could be recognized as contributions to art historiography.

While artistic practices exploring (art) history are numerous, it is hard to establish general guidelines to distinguish 'good' from 'bad', 'interesting' from 'uninteresting' strategies. Not surprisingly, those more radical examples that tend to activate the past and destabilize established knowledge are usually held in higher regard.<sup>50</sup> Conventionality is always suspicious, as it contributes to the production or conservation of myths (in Roland Barthes's sense) rather than historicizing them. But there are other 'propagandistic, decorative, affirmative' practices<sup>51</sup> that tend to caressing the objects of their historicizing desire to death rather than reviving them; or practices that seem to entail little more than referential name-dropping both helpful in the context of networking and as economical strategies in the face of digital overproduction.

Obviously, many of the practices connected to historiography bear the hallmarks of an art shaped by academic art education. Taking art historiography

<sup>47</sup> Jauß, *Ästhetische Normen und geschichtliche Reflexion*.

<sup>48</sup> Jauß, *Geschichte der Kunst und Historie*, 178.

<sup>49</sup> See, for instance, in Siegfried Kracauer, *History. The Last Things Before the Last*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969, or de Grazia, *Anachronism*.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Sven Lütticken, 'Secret Publicity. The Avant-Garde Repeated', in: *Secret Publicity. Essays on Contemporary Art*, Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005, 21-42, here 23.

<sup>51</sup> David Geers, 'Neo-Modern', *October*, no. 139, Winter 2012, 9-14, here 13.

into one's own hands can point to a ready demonstration of artistic professionalism useful on the art market as well as in wider informational contexts. And, while such a skill can be articulated practically just as well as theoretically, the break with artisanal and artistic traditions accomplished in the 1960s<sup>52</sup> may have contributed to the fact that historical ties are being formulated more explicitly than ever before. One may ridicule such learned self-historicisation, as, for example, Sven Lütticken has done regarding the 'unique' art historian-artist Jeff Wall,<sup>53</sup> who skilfully weaves theoretical and practical articulations of historical references into one another. Such ridicule, however, is perhaps aimed less at the seamless transition between the artist and the art historian (as these have arguably been interconnected for centuries), than at the laughable caricature of an artist fitting himself neatly into art historical traditions instead of bringing them into disarray.

On the other hand, referential artworks may fall prey to an aimless acquisitiveness, presenting scattered findings and documents to a confused public – but at least, such works may plausibly expect compassionate or even appreciative responses from art historians. Instead of recommending engagements within positivist terms, one should rather warn artists of the affective power of history. It may be revealing that, with the emergence of historiographical thinking in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, connoisseurs and 'antiquarians' (i.e. amateur historians) were warned against excessive and passionate collecting. In his *Dictionnaire général et curieux*, published in 1685, César de Rochefort described (*curiosité*), in spite of the title of his own publication, among other things, as a 'ravenous appetite for useless, unusable and misused things', and, further on, as a damnable disease, an itching ulcer, greedy leeches, a gnawing worm and so on.<sup>54</sup> Another amateur, John Evelyn, was led by his own curiosity to lament that 'God has given enough for use, not for Curiosity, which is Endless'.<sup>55</sup> It may not be utterly false to identify the extensive, sprawling passion for collecting that can sometimes be found in current referential practices, with the outmoded term 'curiosity'.<sup>56</sup> And indeed, in the face of overpowering imperatives for review, reflection and activism attributed to artistic work, it is astonishing how rarely symptoms of fatigue and overwork are acknowledged both by artists and viewers.

The engagement of contemporary art with modernism alone, to take one specifically productive area, can lead to quite different phenomena and

<sup>52</sup> The art and language artist Ian Burn understood the 'de-skilling' of artistic production in the 1960s as a break with history: '[S]kills are not merely manual dexterity but forms of knowledge. [...] Thus deskilling means a rupture with a historical body of knowledge – in other words, a dehistoricization of the practice of art.' Quoted in Thomas McDonough, 'Production/Projection. Notes on the Capitalist Fairy Tale', in: *The Art of Projection*, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009, 124-140, here 126.

<sup>53</sup> Sven Lütticken, 'The Story of Art. According to Jeff Wall,' in: Lütticken, *Secret Publicity*, 69-82.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. César de Rochefort, *Dictionnaire général et curieux*, Lyon: P. Guillimin, 1685, 93-94.

<sup>55</sup> John Evelyn, quoted in Walter E. Houghton, 'The English virtuoso in the seventeenth century', *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, no. III, 1942, 51-73, 190-219, here 51.

<sup>56</sup> This wonderfully playful, passionate and intellectually productive term would deserve re-activation however, especially in the context of art practice, as regularly demonstrated by *Cabinet Magazine*.

interpretations: as an artistic-scientific sundering of the great narratives of the twentieth century, as a postcolonial re-appropriation by the former colonial laboratories of Western modernism, or as a neo-formalist return to a golden age.<sup>57</sup> Examples of the latter, obviously, can hardly claim plausibility outside a politically extremely limited view even within US-American history. Instead, modernism shows its traces rather in the form of a trauma asking to be described in Freudian terms such as 'deferred action' or as a cultural-psychological 'afterlife' in Aby Warburg's sense, as Georges Didi-Huberman has proposed it: as a 'non-natural' process, which depends on artificial revivals and is not to be equated with a resurrection or a 'survival', but produces a peculiar kind of undead.<sup>58</sup>

Art historiographical practices thus lend themselves to quite different chronopolitical approaches. Historical consciousness has traditionally been viewed as a main ethos of self-recognition, especially in Western, specifically European philosophical thought, and is, in art-historical terms, deeply connected to the project of institutional critique, designed to consider the historical, social and political conditions of art production and defying the blindness of one's own contemporary position. As an artist of exemplary art-historical passion, Florian Pumhösl, who has a long-standing body of work exploring art and cultural history, has aligned himself with the philosophical stance of claiming that it is necessary to understand one's own historical position in the present in order to innovate in an early interview,<sup>59</sup> and it may be assumed that his then interview partner Juliane Rebentisch agreed, as she has recently confirmed this view: 'in order to determine the historical site of the present, you have to set the present in a relationship to the past, in such a way that the present receives a direction through this relationship – the direction of historical development'.<sup>60</sup> But, as exemplified in the tradition of the Frankfurt School, not only innovation, but also criticism is deeply tied to an engagement in the past, and thus, considering one's own position within art history, and one's own active contribution to this positioning, entails, at least for artists actively working as their own agents, theorists and critics today, not more than self-criticism in the continuation of institutional critique.

But ethical as well as socio-political pitfalls loom even in the most engaged and critical forms of historiographical engagement. As art theorist Helmut Draxler has written, the idea of history as an open process points to a Western activist paradigm that stipulates that history can be 'made' and projects an imaginary power to dispose over past, present and future.<sup>61</sup> This historical consciousness that ties action to reflection is 'a sign of the modern',<sup>62</sup> of a modernism oriented towards

<sup>57</sup> Geers, *Neo-Modern*.

<sup>58</sup> Didi-Huberman, *The surviving image*.

<sup>59</sup> Florian Pumhösl interviewed by Juliane Rebentisch, in: *Wachstum und Entwicklung*, Innsbruck: Galerie im Taxispalais, 2004, n. p.

<sup>60</sup> Juliane Rebentisch, *Theorien der Gegenwartskunst. Zur Einführung*, Hamburg: Junius 2013, 13.

<sup>61</sup> Helmut Draxler, 'Was tun? Was lassen? Passivität und Geschichte', in: Kathrin Busch and Helmut Draxler, ed, *Theorien der Passivität*, eds, Munich: Fink, 2013, 197-215, here 209.

<sup>62</sup> Nicholas B. Dirks, 'History as a Sign of the Modern', *Public Culture*, no. 2, Spring 1990, 25-32.

the past and the future alike. And it is a traditionally Western – if not European – value (as the saying goes: ‘History is what the West does to the Past’). Negotiating a place within this history can be a political project, one that must be opposed (in E.P. Thompson’s words) to the ‘enormous condescension of history’<sup>63</sup> specific to Western historiographical concepts. Such chronopolitics are based on the same geopolitics that have denied the ‘Other’ both a place in history and in contemporaneity, as one of the foundations of colonialist discourse.<sup>64</sup> Considered against such a backdrop, engagements with history may easily be upset outside the safe haven of Western thinking, and as deeply opposed to interests in geopolitics. This is illustrated in a conversation between artist Doug Aitken and film director Claire Denis: as Denis tells Aitken,

My parents travelled a lot. My father was born in Bangkok. Traveling was their life. They built their life around moving across the surface of the globe. [...] Growing up, my father always said to me, ‘In life you have to choose between history or geography.’ As a child I was always attracted to geography more than history. I wanted to be like my father. I wanted to be able to read maps like he could. He would test me, ‘Where is north, where is south?’ I still play this little game whenever I arrive in a new city that I have to find north as soon as I get there.<sup>65</sup>

This anecdote, in which the rejection of history is based upon family tradition, opens up a distinct conflict of interests between mobility and historicity, a conflict already developed, albeit from a different angle, in Hal Foster’s *The Return of the Real* (1996).<sup>66</sup> While Foster’s book was primarily dedicated to a discussion of the recurrence of modernist strategies in the neo-avant-garde, it also pursued the question of how contact with the past can lead to the development of new practices in more general terms. To illustrate the starting points for such a debate, it may be sufficient to point to the formal/diachronic line of art theory emphasized by Clement

<sup>63</sup> E. P. Thompson, quoted in Dirks, *History as a Sign of the Modern*, 26.

<sup>64</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology makes its Object*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, 73, 144.

<sup>65</sup> Claire Denis, in: Noel Daniel, ed, *Broken Screens. 26 Conversations with Doug Aitken*, New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2006, 96-101, here 99.

<sup>66</sup> Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real. The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996. Also in the later essay, *Archives of Modern Art*, Foster grapples with the question of the apprehension and transformation of art history under modernism, arranged in several dialectically conceived positions ranging from the historical up to the present day, which investigate artistic references to art history at the interface between (among other things) such aspects as museum and personal memory structures, reification and revival, completion and fragmentation. See Foster, ‘Archives of Modern Art’, *October*, no. 99, Winter 2002, 81-95, in conversation with Michael Fried, ‘Painting Memories. On the Containment of the Past in Baudelaire and Manet’, *Critical Inquiry*, no. 10, vol. 3, March 1984, 510-542, and Foster, *Manet’s Modernism. The Face of Painting in the 1960s*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998.

Greenberg and Michael Fried, who were guided by the logic of genre specificity,<sup>67</sup> as well as to a 1977 essay by Benjamin Buchloh, which undertook a division between present-oriented, formalistic or tautological American art on the one hand, and, on the other, European art engaged with matters of historicity via the emergence of institutional critique.<sup>68</sup> Buchloh's preferences were clear, and they have proved clairvoyant, in some sense, as the legacy of institutional critique has become arguably one of the guiding principles of critically ambitious art practices. Foster's text proposed a complex model of historical engagement that shows some indebtedness to this legacy, namely an interweaving of 'horizontal' (social) and 'vertical' (historical) axes in artistic practices. Engagements with history should not be viewed as quests alongside formal genealogies, but as apt to recover new political and social material, as those sediments of history that may actually act transformative on the present. Artistic practices that develop out of such an engagement combine modes of collecting and interweaving, expanding artworks in depth as well as in width.<sup>69</sup> Just recently, David Joselit's description of contemporary artistic strategies used for the reformatting and restructuring of content has illustrated the impossibility of a clean break between 'vertical' and 'horizontal' axes.<sup>70</sup>

Browsing through history rarely leads to fixed objects and facts, rarely gets you 'to trace something unknown back to something known', as Nietzsche, who in a rather positivist strain, identified the past as a terrain of established and familiar knowledge, suspected.<sup>71</sup> As it is the case with travelling, if you delve into history with an open mind, you may not only find what you already know or what you have been looking for, but may jeopardize your views on the present (or, in the travelling metaphor, your views on home). Past and present may oscillate and transform each other. Artistic engagements with history, therefore, do not necessarily express, in a literal sense, 'conservative' positions, but often are aimed at rewriting history and changing established views on the present alike. A few years ago, German cultural theorist Hartmut Böhme has introduced an inspiring concept of transformation that takes into account this mutual destabilization of past and present: In the course of the creation of the 'new', the past is 'formed, modelled,

<sup>67</sup> Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting' (1960), in: John O'Brian, ed, Clement Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 4, *Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993, 85-93; Michael Fried, 'Three American Painters: Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella', in: Fried, *Art and Objecthood. Essays and Reviews*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998, 213-265.

<sup>68</sup> Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Formalism and historicity – changing concepts in American and European art since 1945', in: *Europe in the Seventies. Aspects of Recent Art*, ed. Anne Rorimer, exhibition catalogue, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1977, 82-111.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Sabeth Buchmann, 'ProduzentInnen im Vergleich', in: *The Artist As...*, ed. Matthias Michalka, Vienna: MUMOK, 2006, 13-32, and Craig Owens, 'From Work to Frame, or, Is There Life After 'The Death of the Author'?', in: Scott Bryson, Barbara Kruger et al., eds, *Beyond Recognition. Representation, Power, and Culture*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992, 122-139.

<sup>70</sup> David Joselit, *After Art*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, 34-38.

<sup>71</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, New York: Penguin, 2003, 62.



modified, enriched, but also negated, ostracized, forgotten or destroyed'. Böhme proposes describing the on-going mutual updating of the past and the present with the concept of *allelopoiesis*, which denotes the 'mutual creation of recording culture and reference culture'.<sup>72</sup> The correlation of past and present becomes a deconstructive process that can lead to the distortion and even to the complete obliteration of both.<sup>73</sup>

Considering these chronopolitical aspects may be useful to reconsider a number of questions that linger within the 'historiographical turn' in contemporary art and to broaden concepts of appropriation: How do art practices challenge or counter historiographical models, not only within historical scholarship, but also within popular or politically dominant formats? How can the strained relationship between artistic practices and art history be re-evaluated in the light of current surges of artistic historiography? To which historiographical methods and figurations do artistic engagements with history lead? How can we do justice to the subjectivity, originality and criticality of historiographical practices in a way that overcomes post-modernist diagnoses of 'post-historical' relativism? This question would necessarily lead to a long overdue reconsideration of appropriation's postmodernist legacy, which is sorely in need of a more nuanced use in contemporary art criticism, both regarding concepts of authorship and the entanglements of historicity and originality. As a case in point, the convenient separation between art practice and art historiography deserves a radical reconsideration in order to give both their due.

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<sup>72</sup> Hartmut Böhme, 'Einladung zur Transformation', in: Hartmut Böhme and others, eds, *Transformation. Ein Konzept zur Erforschung kulturellen Wandels*, Munich: Fink, 2011, 7-37, here 8, 9.

<sup>73</sup> Peter de Bolla, 'Disfiguring History', *Diacritics*, Winter 1986, 49-58, here 57.