This volume is dedicated to the interrelation between temporality and representation. It
presumes that time cannot be conceived of as an abstract chronometric order, but that it is
referring to materiality, being measured, represented, expressed, recognized, experienced
and evaluated, and therefore is always closely related to cultural contexts of perception and
evaluation.
The contributions from various disciplines are dedicated to the present and its plural condi-
tions and meanings. They provide insights into the state of research with special emphasis
on the global present as well as on art and aesthetics from the 18th century until today.
The anthology includes contributions by Mieke Bal, Stefan Binder, Maximilian Bergengruen,
Iris Därmann, Gabriele Genge, Boris Roman Gibhardt, Boris Groys, Maria Muhle, Johannes
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and transmedia processes especially in maritime spaces such as the transatlantic.

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Aesthetic Temporalities Today:
Present, Presentness, Re-Presentation

The present seems familiar to us, hardly worth mentioning. But, has it always been like this? And what does the present really signify, if we consider that its idea and meaning have shifted considerably since its emergence in the 17th and 18th centuries?

In recent years, the historicization of the concept of a present has gained momentum and its “birth” at the dawn of modernity increasingly been examined. A marked theorization of the present has also only recently been undertaken. As important as the orientation on the present has become for politics and business, for science and design, and many other social and cultural areas since then, it is no longer available seamlessly or unrestrictedly.

This is also particularly noticeable in art. If since the 1960s the term ‘contemporary art’ has proven to be a suitable vehicle to supplant the ideology of modernism and its associated idea of progress, this domination of the present is now itself coming under increasing scrutiny: the suggestion is that an ‘eternal

1| We would like to warmly thank Michael Bies and Michael Gamper for jointly preparing the conference exposé, which serves as the basis for this introduction.
4| Christine Ross, The Past is the Present; It’s the Future Too. The Temporal Turn in Contemporary Art (New York /London: Continuum, 2012); Juliane Rebentisch, Theorien der Gegenwartskunst zur Einführung
present,’ instituted by technical dispositifs, has now ousted the preserving of the present from the false promises of the future. Considering the media, technological, economic, and not least the political upheavals, more and more voices are proclaiming the ‘end of the present’ as a time we are familiar with and which can be interpreted and stabilized with the help of traditional semantics, while, in reference to art, the end of ‘contemporary art’ and a reorientation towards a ‘future art’ is demanded.

Closely connected to the notion of the present are concepts like presentness [Gegenwärtigkeit] and re-presentation [Vergegenwärtigung], both of which point to how the present is always also a phenomenon of perception and consciousness, one that implies a promise of contemporariness, i.e. a “shared time.” The fulfilment of this promise is yet to be achieved, although the globalization of the economy and the media seems to have long brought it about. Asking what it actually means to be ‘contemporary,’ how the present and presentness are even possible, and how and through which media, techniques, and processes they can be produced—these issues are virulent right now.

Right now? These perceptions of a globalized present provoke far more fundamental questions as to the functions ascribed to re-presentation in transcultural fields of reference. In recent disputes about the present, it has become clear that it can hardly be conceived of as a universal present because this would have to be coupled to a geopolitical opening, the establishing of contact, and the perception of relational authority.


bal and relational ‘contemporariness,’ then it stands obliquely to those theories which suggest a renouncement of historicity and anchor cultural alterity in the allochronic temporality of “presence cultures.”11 Belonging to the traditional residues of the metaphysics of presence is, for example, the “ethnological present,” the tense of the former conventional field research reports that undertook to describe the specific present of the other.12 Also of relevance here is the discussion, ignited by Michael Fried in the 1960s, about the concept of the “presence” of works of Minimal Art. Fried criticized as “presence” the experience of metaphysical, corporeal alienation, and thus an inappropriate—because it is “indeterminate, open-ended—and unexacting”—relation between the viewer and the work. However, “presence” advanced to an aesthetic category of performative art, allowing and generating materiality and resistance in art as ambiguous aesthetic experience of cultural alterity.13 In contrast, ideas of the present as shared contemporariness have been formulated by Bruno Latour and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro with their programs for a symmetrical anthropology, as has Achille Mbembe in his theses on the current time regimes of a “black” enlightenment.14

An understanding of the present characterized by ‘present tense’ and ‘presence’ cannot set out relying exclusively on considerations about contemporariness. Rather, it also needs to be accompanied by reflections which more emphatically relativize their temporal perspective. The present could thus be sounded out with respect to its relationship to semantics of the historical, in so far as these semantics continue to have an effect in the present, disperse in the global or transnational conglomerate, and are exposed to other time forms and chronologies. But this would also entail opening these discontinuities of the present into the future, or “to puncture [them] with FUTURITY.”15


12 The concept was first critically examined by Johannes Fabian, Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes its Object (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 80.


15 Schwarte, Notate, 15.
Only when it is precisely analyzed on what the presentness of the present is based, is it possible to not only render present this present, but also to re-present it. A definition distinguishing between the neighboring phenomena of presentness and re-presentation needs to be drawn. Presentness is to designate the modus of a subjective or collective ‘being-in-the-present’, while re-presentation refers more to the media, techniques, and actions through which the present is respectively produced. In the process, the present, presentness, and re-presentation are to be examined as phenomena which are polychronic, which entwine a striving for duration and eternity with brevity and elusiveness, and which can stand out through a hypostasizing of the ‘now’, through a yearning for the ‘just-now,’ and the promise of the ‘immediate now’; but they are also phenomena which can be grasped as the results of particular temporal configurations and regimes, whereby these in turn mold specific times and temporalities, and not least structure understanding as to what characterizes the time “just right now” [Jetztzeit].

The present volume is divided into three parts. The first, “The Global Spaces of the Present,” examines positions in cultural studies and political science which call for definitions of the present in the nexus of globalization, post-colonialism, and transculturality. Pivotal here is the dimension of the geopolitical that, as a form for negotiating the social, necessarily shapes the present and coalesces with almost every experience and generation of it. The focus is on examining temporally induced patterns for the formation of collectives (contemporariness) as well as reflecting on philosophical postulates of (Western) Enlightenment or, respectively, the global South.

The second part, “The Present in Art: Perspectives from Art History,” deals with the present from a perspective that is markedly shaped by Art History, whereby its aesthetic ideologies of time and contemporaneity are considered. Put up for debate here are the demands for a spatial-temporal dissolution of disciplinary boundaries and the search for modern and current determinations of re-presentation, addressing in particular art and artistic practice. At the same time, forms of re-presentation and their anchoring in regimes of time are examined, so too articulations of a nomadic and transnational present and contemporariness.

The third part, “The Presentation of Presentness and Presence,” is devoted to the phenomenological perspectives on the act of generating a present, focusing especially on presentness and presence. Approaches from media studies and media philosophy serve as the subject area, which take into account the transposing and transforming effects of mediation and discuss their temporal implications. An important aspect of the aesthetic forming of presentness concerns language, whose phenomenological articulation of physical and psychological awareness, imagination and agency are reflected as expressions of temporality and historicity.

The concept of contemporary art has become a global-political challenge and provocation in recent years. Above all in art theory and philosophy, those conceptions of the contemporary, presence, and presentness, as well as their varied connections to questions of contemporaneity, are under discussion which put forward counter models to the economically- and politically-informed globalization discourse.1 Whereas the globalization in www appears to affirm a promise of copresence or inclusion, cultural theories point out polychronic temporalities and fractures: the present is defined as a fictional category that becomes discernible and visible in a specific way through art.

In the following, those processes of a gathering discussion about the present in art history will be examined; they range from anchoring the present in moder-
nity, its assuming independence as an epoch, through to its current dissolution and its new opening to the past for delineations of the present gained from the future.

The Present and Modernity

The dispute igniting over the concept of the “present” in art history is far older than the idea of contemporary art and from the very outset is tied to the historical semantics of the “modern:” the dialectic between *modernus* and *antiquus*, which fixed the Christian present and pagan antiquity into a constant relation, intensified over the course of the 17th century into an extensive discussion on the possibility of defining a modern present as a simultaneous contemporariness, one that increasingly sought to bring the body and its senses into play and include sensory perception as an instrument of re-presentation. This can be traced in the *Oxford English Dictionary* since the 17th century, where the scope of the term not only describes a temporal togetherness and a contemporariness, but also takes up the epistemological questions deriving from them, including amongst others David Hume’s associational psychological thesis on the genesis of causation. “Contemporary” is assigned the meaning of a temporal belongingness: “1.a. Belonging to the same era or period as another person, thing, or event; living, existing, or occurring together in a particular period; coexisting”; but also an associative simultaneity: “2. Happening or taking place simultaneously; occurring together at the same time; simultaneous”; or a contemporariness: “3. Having existed or lived from the same date; equal in age, coeval.”

Similar contexts for perceiving the present and presentness are also demonstrable in the use of the German word “Gegenwart” since the 17th century, albeit, as Lehmann has convincingly shown, still without including the idea of a constantly changing and incomprehensible experience of the present:

“A temporalized present presupposes reflection on an internal and interconnected complexity, temporally dynamic and variable in social structure, that is also coupled to methods for rendering them visible and observable.”

Moreover, in 17th century France the perceived presentness had, in a particular way, contoured the concept of what is aesthetically modern in the context of the *Querelle des Anciens et Modernes*. As often related, the academics contended the aesthetic primacy of color as a contingent sensory appearance and the foundation

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of a new non-figural pictorial understanding, the “composition pittoresque,” which broke away from the rational fetters of the drawing or the emulation of antiquity and sought to take into account the political present of the age of Louis XIV in the academic discourse on art theory.\textsuperscript{4}

But the phenomenon of the present and its sensory requirements first become one of the most important desiderates of Enlightenment discourse in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, whereby this discourse now also names variable forms of experiences of temporality which accompany the increasing geopolitical expansion of the West through trade activity and colonial scientific exploration beyond the boundaries of Europe to Africa, the Americas, and Asia.\textsuperscript{5} Here a contemporariness seems to be in play that names acts of reciprocal perceptions and meetings, whereby the physical involvement also entails the emancipation from historical normativity and necessitates new ways of thinking the historical. They lead to identifying an experience of time wherein the subject is forced to move out of a familiar situating in a time, to seek distance to the time of a tradition, and to grasp the temporal present as one that conceives of the past anew and understands the future from anticipatory modes.\textsuperscript{6} Ideas of contemporariness are formulated anew in connection with a universal history governed by exclusions and inclusions, the establishing of contact verifiable mainly through travelogues or pictorial material, which construct cultural alterity as difference, but also allow for forms of political or social participation. Irruptions in the normative orders are thus discernible in these materials and their interpretation and they led to discussions, translation processes, and exchange. Not only a traceable iconographic pictorial program of cultural alterity develops,\textsuperscript{7} but also an ambiguation of the perceived, which opens up concepts of the subject, initiates exchange processes, and involves temporal obscurities and gaps. Exemplary here is the geopolitical entity of the Black Atlantic, wherein the economic regimen of the transatlantic slave and commodities trade generated radical upheavals in philosophical value systems. In this context, the political and


aesthetic imagination of a convergence between man and commodity objects becomes equally virulent, while Christian notions of God open up to the fetish, which now advances to become the epitome of cultural alterity. Temporal semantics step in to compensate, including the dynamic historical constellation of a “simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous.”

In the work of William Hogarth this aesthetic temporalization of the modern present is mediated in the ontological pattern of a “waving line,” which is believed to govern acts of perception in nature and art. As Hogarth indicates in his *Analysis of Beauty* from 1753, the dynamized line, as a category of beauty, underlies perception. This line even enables—taking the example of black skin color—the visual of physiological alterity that is yet to be specified in conceptions of race: blackness arises in the act of drawing crisscrossing lines, which the artist demonstrates in the engraved illustrations (fig. 1) to his theory of art. Presentness and modernity (still) seem to be intimately connected here.

### Contemporary Art: A Questionable Epoch Concept

With the 19th century, in which aesthetic modernity became consolidated, aesthetic contemporariness, while albeit brittle had remained in place, was now finally dislodged and a shift ensued towards allochrony as a model in which cultural alterity was relocated into the anthropological and biological temporality of the primitive and race, i.e. a temporality of the ‘others,’ who Western historical thinking anchored, needing new ways of creating anthropological meaning, in a perpetual “ethnographic present.”

While modernity since the 20th century becomes verifiable as a universal epochal concept, which with its dialectic between autonomy and avant-garde, strong orientation on the future, and demand for ongoing progressiveness, represents the universalizing claims of the West, the promise of contemporariness and a shared notion of the present seem to be realized as soon as national institutions could confirm the participation of all as a civil right. After 1945, “contemporary art” is initially detectible in the founding of national institutes and museums, who

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combined with this title the presentation of art that was to be considered as the “most recent modern, but a modern with a moderated, less ruptural futurity.” As the counterpart to modernity and its ever increasingly rigid ideological narratives of high modernism, a contemporariness of art is evoked in response. However, the pleas for the “political participation” of art, which in conventional periodizations characterize the phases of the critique of capitalism, the renewal of the avant-gardist idiom, especially post-1945, in the 1960s, or the postmodernist criticism of modernism in the 1980s, mostly remain imprisoned in an universalistic idiom, whereby the regimens of temporality failed to impact on the Western chronologies established since the 19th century. Soon “contemporary” gained the status of an art epoch following modernism and postmodernism, was granted its very own place in the linear chronological order of Western museums. Since documenta 11, a broadened present of art also encompasses those non-Western actors who, as

the protagonists of a global present, could be included in contemporary art. The Brazilian curator Cuauthémoc Medina has described this concept of “contemporary art” as the “vague descriptor of aesthetic currency,” whereby its “lack of substance” can be seen as residing in the very “facility with which it lended itself to practical adjustments.” These periodizations of “contemporary art,” each of which makes phases of political emancipation into the catalyst of a contemporary consciousness discernible in art that constantly reshapes what is modern, can be conceived of and described differently. As early as the 1930s, a cultural counter-movement begins to form, paradigmatically in the Black Atlantic, that looked to supersede the temporal consciousness of contemporary art and its unvarying parameters of order. Beyond Western epochal models, the “contemporary” becomes a temporal model for art that replaced colonially-informed modernity with ideas of an aesthetic temporality and its traditions. Initiated by the Bandung Conference of 1955, a “Global South” soon began to articulate itself, and with further art biennales and conferences held at regular intervals it became a visible presence in the contemporary field and confronted the hegemonic “North,” compromised by the Holocaust and national racist political ideologies, with new conceptions of transnational emancipation and critical approaches to capitalism, but also with the cultural, philosophical, and geopolitical prerequisites for a new definition of contemporariness. That these actors remained unnoticed in contemporary art was due to the specific conditions of an aesthetic regimen that affirmed the epistemological conceptions of allochrony even when it, oriented on the precepts of Marxism, championed the causes of antiracism and humanism. The transnational collective of the South positioned itself on the other hand in a space outside the national institutions of the art discourse, i.e. outside academies, museums, and universities, and their temporalities, which organized forms of participation principally into modern conceptions of historicity and futurity.

“Contemporaneity” and the Aesthetic Experience of the “Present” in Art

The motives to examine the concept of the “contemporary” in the 21st century stem from the need to re-approach and understand the discourses, in the past only in part institutionalized, of a geopolitical opening and a new definition of participation in times of digital globalization. While this may be due to a wish for political equality, it misses the mark if it amounts to nothing more. The challenge of the contemporaneity of the present is exemplarily evident in the debates at the First Congress of Negro Writers and Artists, held in Paris in 1956 following the Bandung Conference. During the debate on how to characterize transnational African contemporaneity, Richard Wright referred to Léopold Sédar Senghor’s conception of a “culture négro-africaine,” describing it as “a poetic world, rich, dynamic, moving, tactile, rhythmic,” while also not sparing his doubts as to its inappropriateness:

“This is not hostility; this is not criticism. I am asking a question of brothers. I wonder where do I, an American Negro, conditioned by the harsh industrial, abstract force of the Western World that has used stern, political prejudices against the society (which he has so brilliantly elucidated)—where do I stand in relation to that culture? [...] The modern world has cast us in the same mould. I am black and he is black; I am American and he is French, and so, there you are. And yet there is a schism in our relationship, not political but profoundly human.”

The rupture in the analysis of the present, described here by Wright as a “schism,” marks the unmanageable constellation of a present that ultimately stems from the historical time regimens of the transnational spatial entity of the Black Atlantic, and which the advocates of Négritude were subjected to no less so than their transatlantic contemporaries.

The “splitting of times,” which encompasses anachronies, delays, standstills, traumata, anticipations, and temporal remnants, needs to be approached and understood as the challenge of global contemporaneity. The failure of shared chronologies becomes particularly tangible in Wright’s querying of the construct of Négritude which Senghor had presented publically for the first time at the conference. Senghor had drawn on a philosophy of black African culture which he then, employing a seemingly essentialist reading of Henri Bergson, sought to move beyond the racist Western allochronies. He took La philosophie bantou as his orientation, reflections on African philosophy by the missionary and Franciscan pater

Placide Tempels published in 1945 that had caused a furor. Still influential in debates today, Tempels’ work is based on an idea of a time intrinsic to Africa, based on the animistic postulate that the whole universe is a dynamic spiritual community of humans, their ancestors, animals, and plants, and in which a secret powerful energy is at work. The complex order of this closed society must necessarily—so the thesis—remain incomprehensible and alien to the West. Senghor complemented this ontology with a reading of Henri Bergson, the concept of the “force vitale” and its inherent idea of rhythm flowing into the text of his lecture. Senghor’s physiopsychological self-description of ‘the negroe’ made use of ethnological conceptions of ancestry as well as totemic and astral cosmologies, all of which Richard Wright, the radical author of the African-American civil rights movement, considered—understandably—to be obsolete. But encapsulated in this was not just Senghor’s strategy of a return to a “Graal-Négritude” already left behind in 1949. Only slightly modified, the same theses were published the same year under the title *L’esthétique négro-africaine*, now directing attention more intensely on his real interest, the case for an aesthetic temporality that he had described in 1939 exclusively on the basis of an analysis of “art nègre.” From the poetry of the ancestors and the “art nègre,” violently wrested away in the traumatic events of deportation and colonialism, as well as the prehistorical rock paintings of Africa, a rhythmic and mystical pictorial concept is to be garnered, for which he formulated the term “image idéogramme” as a structural element of abstract temporal experience. This “image idéogramme” first found its material correlate in the painting of the French artist Pierre Soulages, whose discovery Senghor described as a “shock,” as a reenactment of Pablo Picasso’s discovery of African art in the Musée de Trocadéro, moving him in a way similar at the sight of a Dan mask. If Picasso had
celebrated the incursion of an allochronic temporality of the primitive, for Senghor, Pierre Soulages becomes the guarantor of an overlaying new idea of the image, one in which the temporality of the ancestors can also be visualized. As Soulages himself had revealed, the aesthetic of an “art contemporain” becomes apparent in the “image idéogramme.” The genesis of the painted black image signs on a yellow to white background in the works of Pierre Soulages, one of which Senghor purchased (fig. 2), furnishes in turn an insight into a time-specific constellation of the postwar West, wherein consideration and reflection on the experience of the present is of particular importance. Comparable to Hannah Arendt’s conception of a crisis of the present, embroiled in a struggle with the past and the future, the artist had only first gradually—via obstructed pictorial architectures—found his way to the large-format signs which Senghor understood as ideogrammatic pictorial representation.


The “image idéogramme” realized the claim to a specific (African) experience of time that Senghor’s critical contemporary and cofounder of Négritude, Aimé Césaire, had put forward in a letter announcing his resignation from the French Communist Party the same year. A singular historical experience, which was separate from those “awful avatars” belonging only to them, was to be included into the present and considered for future political and cultural action.²⁷ No longer able to find a place in an international political utopia, this could only occur by embarking on their very own path.

Four years prior to the congress, Frantz Fanon had countered Senghor’s aesthetic vocabulary with a phenomenological “objecthood” of the black body, describing it as the uncircumventable and enforced experience of physical presence in the context of the politics of racist exclusion.²⁸ Then at the congress Fanon reiterated his critique of a specific essentialist African temporality of the culture, whereby in his view the relationship to the present could not be retrieved through aesthetic experience.²⁹

All the numerous voices of a common experience of the present in the Black Atlantic are searching to transgress a universal time concept of modernity, discernible in conceptions which combine philosophy, aesthetics, and politics in new and unconventional ways and utilize fragments of Western epistemologies, at times paradoxically, for their interests. Their methods are comparable to similar interpolations of the historical in the experience of the present in Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt, and they share their plea for the interpenetration of political measures, semantics, and material-aesthetic practices of temporality.³⁰ They bring the phenomenological concept into play, evoking the flesh of words or the presence of images, but also a history of living ancestors, who deconstruct metaphysical, allochronic correlates of the aesthetic and thus cultivate fundamental framings and obstacles to contemporariness.

The claims placed on the complex discussion of contemporaneity were first described by Terry Smith and Peter Osborne in the context of a global, i.e. transnationally conceived artistic field, emerging in the mid-1980s and becoming virulent

²⁹| Frantz Fanon, “Racisme et culture,” in Le 1er congrès international des écrivains et artistes noirs, 122-131.
as postmodernism receded. Here Osborne draws on Heidegger’s formulation of an “ekstatic character of temporality” or a “primordial outside of itself,” which ties the condition of this contemporaneity to a “temporality” lying outside subjective experience, deriving the anticipation of something future from the experiences of something past:

“Having-been arises from the future, in such a way that the future that has-been (or better ‘is in the process of having-been’) releases the present from itself. This unified phenomenon of the future that makes present in the process of having-been is what we call temporality.”

Osborne examines the associated meaning forged by the temporal experience and its metaphysical correlates in relation to a historical hermeneutic, one that now mainly challenges art in its fictional re-presentation of history and the accompanying anticipations. “Contemporaneity” is now the new task of contemporary art:

“This is of particular concern because what seems distinctive and important about the changing temporal quality of the historical present over the last few decades is best expressed through the distinctive conceptual grammar of con-temporaneity, a coming together not simply ‘in’ time, but of times: we do not just live or exist together ‘in time’ with our contemporaries—as if time itself is indifferent to this existing together—but rather the present is increasingly characterized by a coming together of different but equally present ‘temporalities’ or ‘times,’ a temporal unity in disjunction, or a disjunctive unity of present times.”

The challenges it places on art are quite obvious: as the fictional entity of a connectedness between everyone, who however can never be mutually present, there nonetheless exists the expectation not only to be able to bring about this coming together, but also to deal with all the related problems. The fiction of a transnational contemporaneity demands renouncing a clearly-defined shared future, it looks for new formulations of the past, which without a political imperative nonetheless assembles and merges the various times of the respective actors, unhinges the universal, and simultaneously makes links visible.

And yet gaps remain here too: Osborne’s exclusive consideration of a “post-conceptualism” is scarcely able to provide transcultural approaches to an aesthetic temporality that would do justice to its demanding and ambitious task—to formulate “prehistories” of geopolitical constructions of the present from a dispersed contemporariness. As touched on above, engaging the temporal ex-

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33 | Heidegger, Being and Time, 300.
34 | Cf. Peter Osborne, Anywhere or Not at All, 17.
35 | “The historical motto, ‘to each present, its own prehistory,’ must thus be interpreted to mean: to each geopolitically differentiated construction of the present, its own prehistory. In this respect, we can distinguish the subject of the contemporary (the contemporary’s ‘I’) from that of a classical modernity.” Osborne, Anywhere or Not at All, 25.
perience of the present and its historical condition took place prior to the time of concept art initiated by the West; it begins—amongst others with an African and African-American critique of modernity—not least with the artistic positioning in the context of Négritude. In Achille Mbembe’s vision of the “contemporary,” the “prehistoric” temporality is the result of an enlightened “black reason” that seeks to apprehend the “facticity” of a conception of Africa in the primitive. The allochronic time concepts, which in The Postcolony Mbembe also describes in reference to their aesthetic forming in the “grotesque” and the “fetish,” simultaneously furnish the starting point for a messianic promise that Mbembe has characterized as “time in the state of becoming.” In this he is also averting the “dialectic disappearing” that shadows numerous African epistemological conceptions of “contemporaneity” since the 1960s: under the suspicion that the so-called Afrocentric conceptions would bring forth a black, racist metaphysics of presence, from the Western perspective they were regarded as ideologically compromised needing to be disavowed.

Mbembe’s description of a global future of “Afropolitanism,” distilled from polychronic models of the present in the Black Atlantic, indirectly takes up Neil Beloufa’s video work Kempinski from 2007 (fig. 3): with a group of amateur actors Beloufa staged the spectacle of an Afro-futurist journey in the nighttime darkness of a meadow in the suburbs of Bamako. As imaginary informants of a distant future, herdsmen, in the light of their technoid neon tubes and accompanied by the acoustic signals of an invisible space shuttle, tell of wondersome, absurd, and inconsistent experiences, wishes and hopes, which are already realized. In the ethnographic temporal modus of the present tense, the figures emerging out of the

37| Cf. Mbembe, On the Postcolony, 11, 102f. Mbembe is here probably drawing on Derrida’s conceptual use of “messianicity:” “Messianicity (which I regard as a universal structure of experience, and which cannot be reduced to religious messianism of any stripe) is anything but utopian: it refers, in every here-now, to the coming of an eminently real, concrete event, that is, to the most irreducibly heterogeneous otherness. Nothing is more ‘realistic’ or ‘immediate’ than this messianic apprehension, straining forward toward the event of him who/ that which is coming.” Jacques Derrida, “Marx and Sons,” trans. and ed. Kelly Barry, in Ghostly Demarcations. A Symposium on Jacques Derrida’s Specters of Marx, ed. Michael Sprinker (London/ New York: Verso, 1999), 213–269, 248.
38| Diagne, African Art, 31f.
39| Cf. Wilder, Freedom Time, 8: “Scholarship long promoted one-sided understandings of Césaire and Senghor as either essentialist nativists or naïve humanists. Tied to the territorialism that dominated histories of decolonization, Negritude, whether embraced or criticized, was treated as an affirmative theory of Africanity rather than a critical theory of modernity.” Cf. Wilder and Watson, The Postcolonial Contemporary.
shadows also recall prehistoric imaginations: life in animal communities, telematic experiences of time, and scenarios of a dissolution of the boundaries of time and space. As an impossible and simultaneously already materialized form of futurity, this African scenario conveys a global vision of technoid progress that has currently come to a stagnation: “The film exposes the lack of alternatives and a difficulty to envision a framework for being together in a way that isn’t customary, yet urges that we need to nevertheless continue seeking what means are necessary to move out of the stand still of the contemporary.”

Figures

Fig. 1  William Hogarth, Analysis of Beauty, pl. 2, 1753, copper plate, and engraving, 37.2 x 49.0 cm, British Museum London; qtd. from Robert Paulson, Hogarth’s Graphic Works (London: Print Room, 1989), no. 196.

Fig. 2  Pierre Soulages, Peinture 81 x 60 cm, 3 décembre 1956, 1956, oil on canvas, 81 x 60 cm; qtd. from Hans Belting, and Andrea Buddensieg, Ein Afrikaner in Paris: Léopold Sédar Senghor und die Zukunft der Moderne (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2018), 135, fig. 25; © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2020.