

Dan Karlholm

The 'now' and the 'then': Temporal implications of anachronic art history and presentism

A version of this text was first presented at the workshop *Turn back now? Anachronies, temporal, and chronological layering in visual arts*, and can be read as a response to the sentences of the blurb, in particular those referring to the 'now' and to presentism.¹ In what follows, I will discuss the double character of (the) now, the instantaneous and the extended, assisted theoretically by St. Augustine. I will also address how now inevitably relates to then, in part by returning to the more conventional temporal modalities of past, present and future. Further, I will discuss how heterochrony relates to works of art, how anachrony relates to the history of art, and how both connect with François Hartog's idea of "regimes of historicity" as contrary to modalities of temporality. With regards to the currently intensifying climate crisis, more than anything else defining our prevailing now, and in conclusion, I will argue that presentism is an inadequate formula for the present, at least for now.

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"The 'now' as an insoluble moment of time from which we perceive our world is a key element in the temporal structuring of experience."²

Rather than seeing the now as "an insoluble moment of time", it can be understood as dissolvable, not to say actively self-dissolving. It literally evaporates as soon as it is pronounced. Or, as my ancient philosophical supervisor on these matters, St. Augustine, in the eleventh book of his *Confessions*, put it: "the present has no extension whatever."³ This, however, is only one of the two major references to "now" or present, and not the one of interest to theorists of the contemporary. For them – for you, for us – the present is a stretch rather than a "moment of time", indeed a shorter *period*, quintessentially.

There are, thus, two different nows at play here, one instantaneous and literal, which has no extension and which disappears as soon as it appears, and the

extended or metaphorical version, which is not merely a momentary moment but a continuation or duration of some considerable length of time, usually spanning several years if not decades. According to Preston King, we are dealing with an "instantaneous" and an "extended" present: "If we write about the present, it cannot be the instantaneous present that we write about" but rather about the extended version, "a concept of the present as an episode which, if not 'enduring' at least persists..."⁴ Perhaps we could call the first now *now*, and the second now *the now*. And perhaps we could refer to the first or instantaneous now, which the Greek philosopher Zeno referred to in his famous paradoxes on movement, as a small now. In contrast to this, the now, the extended now of many presentists or contemporalists, the now "from which we perceive our world", to refer again to the workshop abstract, is a big now.

We do not have to dwell anymore on the first small flash-like now, which is immediately becoming past as it appears, or in which appearance and disappearance occurs simultaneously. What we need to reflect upon is rather the spandex quality of the big now, with its fuzzy borders that reach back in time or history, although it is not itself deemed historical, but only responding to what could be termed *the long contemporaneity*, thus not quite yet belonging to the realm of history or the past.

And what is the past? It is common to think of the past as receding, as events fade away, but I prefer to regard the past as accumulating, growing, amassing, akin to the piles of wreckage that Walter Benjamin saw in the terrifying gaze of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* or angel of history with his back turned on the future.⁵ The now has to be seen as occupying territories of the progressing past.



Abb. 1: Paul Klee, *Angelus Novus*, 1920

Perhaps a similar distinction could be made between *past* and *the past* as between *now* and the *now*: where *past* just refers to what is literally gone with the wind, no longer present, ex-present, etcetera. The *past*, on the contrary, is what remains from our shifting contemporary viewpoint; it is what we are left with and which we preserve – selections of – in literal and metaphorical memory.

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The *now* is a pop-cultural translation of the established concept of the present, which was taken to be preceded by the past, which must be understood as then or the then, to continue this manner of speaking. What makes the *now* phraseology complicit with the creeds of presentism, to be discussed in a minute, is that not only the past but the future too must be referred to as then or the then. A big *now* preceded as well as superseded by two thens adds weight, it seems, to the central referent.

Then – Now – Then

Past – Present – Future

What we can no longer perceive here is also the narrativity and tacit progressivism of the triad past-present-future. With the former phrasing, *now* sits

squarely right in the middle of the temporal spectrum, as if expanding sideways both left and right or centrifugally. The difference between past and future seems to be fading from view here, which is to practically conjure up presentism.

Now is, moreover, not just squeezed by a couple of thens here, it must be seen as dependent upon its other. As a linguistic shifter, *now* always inevitably refers to a then. No *now* without a then, and vice versa. *Now* is thus distinguished from then, but then is inconceivable without *now*, which means that the two terms are indeed *insoluble*. Thus, the couple is insoluble, but neither of them are, taken separately. This means that we may have to practice speaking of *now-then* or *then-now* with a hyphen, instead of then *and* now, *now and* then (the latter also meaning sometimes or occasionally). While the latter conventional bipartition may make linguistic sense, it contributes little to the understanding of *now* in the big sense, as in relation to the present time or contemporaneity. But when this big *now* is what we are addressing, it becomes obvious that such an extended *now* has an older and a more recent part, which means that each big *now* not only contains a multitude of small *nows* within itself but numerous thens within itself as well. St. Augustine again:

*“If any fraction of time be conceived that cannot now be divided even into the most minute momentary point, this alone is what we may call time present. But this flies so rapidly from future to past that it cannot be extended by any delay. For if it is extended, it is then divided into past and future.”*¹⁶

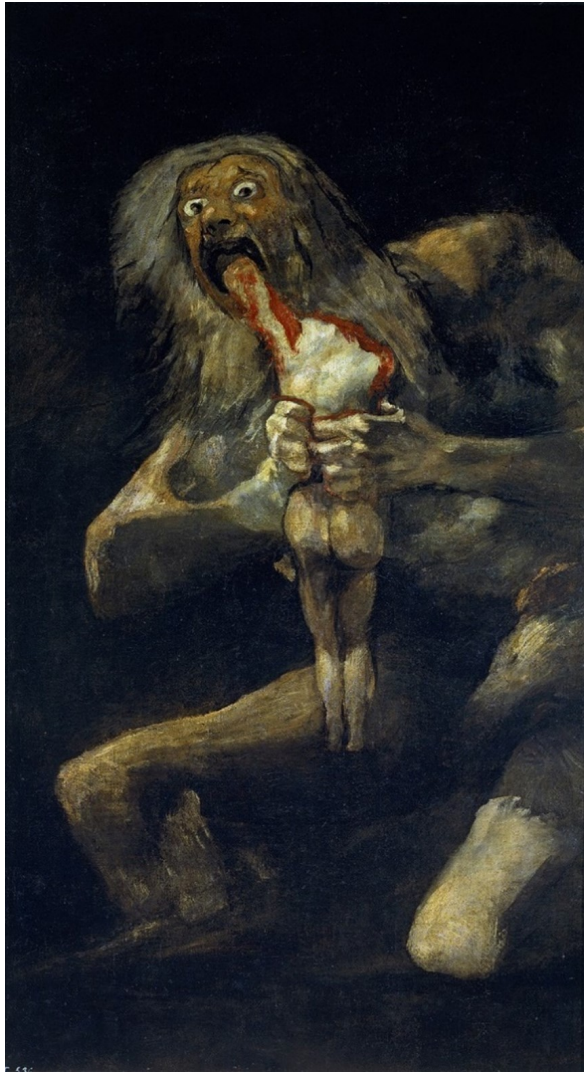


Abb. 2: Francisco de Goya, *Saturn devouring his son*, c. 1820-23

When a now gets old, it transforms into a then, in which case the multitude of small nows distributed over the extension of the big now are, in practice rather than theory, seen as thens. The small nows may flicker for a moment, sparkle but then they are gone. Left is a then. What we call the big now or contemporaneity, then, is like a sardine can densely packed with thens, albeit of the latest kind, from relatively to very recent thens. Maybe we should write *now/then* with a slash instead of a hyphen between them?

The present, accordingly, is not a pure now, but neither is the past a pure then. The past is obviously, again, and logically speaking: the summation now of the past (whatever content we stuff this bag with). In the past itself, so to speak, the past did not exist. The

past is always present. And the present, as it comes to presence, immediately becomes past.

In conclusion to this part, we could say that in two drastic senses or practically speaking, now does not exist, neither in its small sense, where it cannot come to presence before it disappears, nor in the big sense, where "it" actually refers to an outstretched period of time, filled to the brim with earlier now-points or, which is the same thing, then-points. According to Gilles Deleuze, drawing on Henri Bergson, we must think of the present as passing and of the past as present:

*"At the limit, the ordinary determinations are reversed: of the present, we must say at every instant that it "was," and of the past, that it "is," that it is eternally, for all time. This is the difference in kind between the past and the present."*⁷

The past, again, did not constitute the past to which this term refers. Only belatedly, in retrospect, can we conceive of past happenings as part of the past. The past is what remains now; it is what we are left with when looking back. In days past, other pasts presented themselves but that is not what we are referring to here.



Abb. 3: Philippe de Champagne, *Saint Augustine*, c. 1645-50

Francisco de Goya's painting *Saturn/Cronus devouring his son* (1820-23) can, among other things, be seen as an image of the past eating away at the present as soon as it appears (more or less). It is a deeply dystopian image of the progressive past devouring the present, thus the future. The words of St. Augustine seem anachronistically to comment on this future vision derived from antiquity: "The past increases by the diminution of the future until by the consumption of all the future all is past."⁸

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Logically speaking, the now or present or contemporary are all referents to what is not past and not future, that is: not *yet* past, referring to what continues to be, to that which is still ongoing. But if now is understood in terms of duration it appears arbitrary where to draw the line between before (back then), now and then, or past, present and future. Either the big now, a.k.a. the present, comes with blurry borders, as a sensation of recentness or a feeling of currency, in which case the now is not much more than a passing sensation, its limits prone to be adjusted in time and with reference to those who take an interest in this. Or its borders are neatly linked to big historic dates or crises, like the spring of 1968, the fall of the Wall in 1989 or the financial crisis in 2008. Such neon lit symbolic dates turn the now or present into a period/epoch/era of history. But if it is history, and not just some perpetual posthistory, it will not only come to an end followed by some new phase. It will also have to be seen as historical in the twin senses of being historically produced and of harboring a history within itself. Contemporaneity and history, accordingly, cannot be understood as opposed.

Importantly, to avoid misunderstandings, the adjective *contemporary* refers to contemporaneity and not contemporaneousness – the latter being a mere co-existence in time, an empty chronological synchronicity between any two actors or events. Contemporaneity or the now, refers, instead, to a timespace of issues, conflicts, drama and politics, to things, agents and phenomena deemed urgent, relevant, topical and so on. This timespace is older than we tend to think, older than the contemporaneity discourse of the last twenty some years, but it was not always around. It is a historical product, originating in and

with the European Enlightenment.⁹ And it never concerned all art, all new or recent art, but only an elite formation of high art – as is still the case today.

Contemporary art thus discriminates on the axis of time as well as the axis of space, by marking off, roughly, a realm of non-contemporary art in a historical or *vertical* sense, and by drawing a line between itself and non-contemporary art in the *horizontal* sense of the here-and-now. In fact, almost all art produced now, here and there or globally, is not deemed "contemporary" in the value-based sense in which many of us tend to use this concept. Contemporary art, in my definition, is actualized art, which points to our engagements and performative activities in the present present, involving the potential to contemporalize any art, no matter where or when it was once made.¹⁰

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The workshop *Turn back now?* emphasized the issue of temporality without evoking the notion of chronology, and wisely so, since chronology is not a problem, as such. We take it for granted and use it daily to cope with our activities in life. The problem, however, is that chronology, coupled with topology, is granted the power to define artworks. The most basic historical definition of art is thus *chronotopic*, whereby a timespace x marks the identifying spot which is held to determine what an artwork is – something which needs first to be located and dated. That is, its present being – its ontology – is determined by what and where it was. Art history's historical or traditional task is to account for what caused artworks to emerge, what their determining conditions were. Chronology is the main temporal framework of history (art history, too), conceptualized as a line of time, an "arrow" or as a circle, which unfolds its cyclic circularity along a line of development, giving way to the shape of a spiral.¹¹ This means that artworks are only granted a short grace period before they inevitably die and are relegated to the shadows of history. The work will not even live long enough to experience old age, it will never grow old, because it is born over a grave, to paraphrase Arthur Rimbaud, born to die, whereafter it can only be remembered as it was, or awkwardly resuscitated by reactionaries in the shape of its former glory. However, artworks are actually immune to dying; they age, unless completely destroyed or lost,

and it is up to us to access them where- and whenever they are, and in whatever way we find suitable. Theoretically speaking, artworks are undead, which invites a comparison between chronology and anachrony.¹²

Let us first distinguish anachrony from heterochrony.¹³ The challenge of a heterochronic determination is that it upsets the chronological logic, by claiming in so many words that there is no single chronicity to account for. Save for the birth date of the piece, there are other temporal identities of the work, for example, how it is composed of materials of different ages and with different life expectancies, or how it refers to different temporalities in terms of its content, theme, sources or connotations, or in terms of how the work has been put to use by various agents, in various temporal environments. Speaking of heterochronicity, however, seemingly implies revealing our basic chronology as a kind of homochrony, which has awkward undertones when considering, for example, the critique from queer theory on both heteronormativity in general and chrononormativity, in particular.¹⁴ Maybe we should talk about the polychronic, instead?

With anachrony, the challenge is perhaps not so much on the level of the work but has more to do with how it relates to other works and the history of the work or its literal network. If anachronism is still a good term for a historical mistake, a mismatch between a historical work and a reading or interpretation of it from another historical viewpoint, anachrony is a non-mistake, a refusal to accept the mis- as in both mistake and mismatch. It is, indeed, a take and match between seemingly non-connected connectables or non-associated associates. It refuses to be confined to the one time/one place of the historical or chronotopic definition and is thus the perfect realization of a now-then/then-now structure. In other words, the now-then can be seen as the temporal template of anachrony.

Adopting an anachronic approach to artworks and their historical interconnections once they enter the world and their multiple relations with other agents and forces cannot, in principle, be determined. It will have to be attentive to ever further layers, experiences, readings, associations, becomings, etcetera – that is, with the idea of a non-permanent manifesta-

tion. The notion of anachrony is often related to individual, conceptually and semiotically slippery objects, but it might be more relevant when it comes to challenging and questioning a certain history of art. Hetero- or polychronic co-existing temporalities account adequately for two levels of relevance here: first, the actual ingredients, down to atoms, of the material work itself, and second, its semiotic utterances, formed contents and ideational shapes – a kind of “material semiotics” in the words of Donna Haraway.¹⁵ When anachrony is employed in Western historiography, it threatens to undermine the entire building, as it refuses to pay respect to chronological rationality and the idea that before or then always predates after and now – a now which is valued higher as a rule. This brings me back to the beginning, to the (big) now and the idea that the present is an -ism.

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French historian François Hartog’s definition of presentism is, in short, an order of time where the present is an experiential dominant (over the past and the future). All such orders comply to what the author terms “regimes of historicity”, that is, how the three temporal modalities are seen as structurally related during a certain period.¹⁶ An underlying idea behind this thesis is that each period is distinguished by a dominant temporal quality, although this is never explained or accounted for. In brief, this argument is that in premodern times, before the end of the eighteenth century, the prevailing time experience was one which favored the past (as an ideal or example to emulate), followed by modern times dominated by a new and accelerating experience guided by ideas and projections of the future. What distinguishes the present, after-modern period starting in 1989, is the sense and sensation that the now is all. The latter is supposedly substantiated with reference to the shift (in France, in particular) from history to memory and heritage (and identity) – all strongly anchored in a present management of the past. This leaves us (Westerners) with the temporal formula: pastism – futurism – presentism. To St. Augustine, however, writing in the Early Middle Ages:

“[I]t might be said rightly that there are three times: a time present of things past; a time present of things

present; and a time present of things future. For these three do coexist somehow in the soul, for otherwise I could not see them."¹⁷

This is a wonderful example of proto-presentism, but since referring to the (somehow eternal) soul, it seems obvious that this is not the kind of presentism where one out of three dominates the other until superseded by one of the others. The (extended) present is simply the precondition for registering a temporal mode or time at all.

A problem with Hartog's temporal analysis is how to balance order and regime with experience. The latter notion seems derived from Reinhart Koselleck's famous formulations on a widening distance or break in modernity between "spaces of experience" and "horizons of expectations".¹⁸ This analysis, shared by Hartog, necessitates an understanding of a continuous line of historical development without which something like a temporal break or "gap", in Hannah Arendt's phrase, would be inconceivable.¹⁹ In this dissociation between experience and expectation, the big now seems to be expanding in both directions: "The present has thus extended both into the future and into the past." This characterizes "our time", according to Hartog: "To characterize the present, I have used the term presentism throughout and primarily in opposition to futurism, which had long dominated the European scene."²⁰

In another, much referred to definition of presentism, one which seems to sum up its problematic nature, Hartog states that it is "the sense that only the present exists, a present characterized at once by the tyranny of the instant and by the treadmill of an unending now." The term is linked with capitalism's constitutive short-sightedness, or more periodically put, short-termism. This is clearly paradoxical, since it would appear that this particular regime or construction was all about *non-historicity*, a refusal of history in the sense of the account of important events in the past (determining the academic discipline of history). It would also seem to disclose a disinterest, even inability, to historicize the current present. Presentism could be viewed as an experience of *temporality*, although this notion is explicitly avoided by Hartog since it, allegedly, refers to an external time measure-

ment, by which I presume he refers to clocks, calendars and the like.²¹ But temporality is not dependent upon external time references; it can easily refer to an inner time consciousness or temporal sensitivity as well as include multiple even mutually contradictive time notions (like heterochrony, polychrony, anachrony and so on). The latter, especially the issue of anachronism (not to be equated with anachrony), is especially important here, since this, I would argue, is what nullifies the idea of an all-dominating present.

In a critique of Hartog's presentism, historian Chris Lorenz claims that there are actually two mutually incompatible definitions of presentism at play in his work. One refers to a historical, chronological stretch of time – what I have referred to as an -ism or a period – and the other is a mere "heuristic tool" (Hartog) to be used independently of a particular time and space.²² In a later text, Hartog talks about an early Christian apocalyptic presentism, which, thus, dates presentism historically (if roughly), and uses the notion analytically about a considerably distant period.²³ This might suggest that Lorenz' critique on Hartog's double talk is not the biggest problem here. Rather, contrary to orders of time underlining the past or the future, presentism asymmetrically totalizes and homogenizes all the three orders of time by simply absorbing them: "...the past and the future have become mere extensions of the present", in Lorenz's summary.²⁴ Such a historiography is not compatible with the idea of one and only one temporal dominant. If presentism has consumed the other two temporal modes, it ought to be very difficult to hold that one is still "dominating" the other two. Three different times have become one. This kind of time is certainly "monstrous" (Hartog), not because the now is the relative dominant, whatever that would mean, but because the now lays claim to covering everything, thus neutralizing or disarming the power of the progressing past as well as the threatening future (the inversion of a goal to reach, as in futurism). Presentism pretends to be the pantemporal end station or terminal where all the clocks have gone defunct, and no one knows whether the trains are leaving or arriving and what the difference between the two might be.

Presentism á la Hartog can be compared to the arguments presented in connection to the events of

1989 and which were summarized with etiquettes like *posthistoire* and *the end of history*.²⁵ What connected the analyses of this moment was Hegel's philosophy of history, most notably his determination that the logical outcome of History had reached its teleological end point in actual or factual history – a combo, accordingly, of real chronotopic emergence and ideal philosophical realization of the way of the Spirit. This argument, which was conceived in *Phänomenologie des Geistes* and concerned the battle of Jena, was cut and pasted (anachronistically put) onto the demolition of the Berlin Wall ending, or so it would seem, the Cold War. What it also seemed to do was to affirm the many postmodern projections from various thinkers of the previous couple of decades. This postmodern discourse shares some traits with the one on presentism, although the latter is no longer marred with the pure negativity of what is no more and what is lost. Presentism has made itself quite at home in the new homelessness, from where other temporal dimensions seem to be fading from view. We are, allegedly, no longer on some frontline of a future development (a basically neutral term that is nevertheless distorted by centuries of modernity to imply improvement, progress and emancipation). Instead, we appear to dwell in a temporally neutralized timespace, where the digital revolution (just around the corner from the events of 1989) gives us the illusion of being able to access any kind of timespace, which is to take the virtual for the real and the time machine as the perfect substitute for irreversible historical difference.

Since presentism first arrived on the field of historical theory, from where it has travelled speedily to other domains, such as the contemporary artworld, a thorough change has happened, so much so that this shift has been theorized as one of “unprecedented change”.²⁶ Another name for some or major parts of these happenings is the Anthropocene, referring both to a new geological epoch and an umbrella term for a number of historical, humanist and artistic responses to devastating climate change and increasing global warming.²⁷

Western modernity, following Hartog in 2003, “has spent the last two hundred years dancing to the tune of the future – and making others do likewise”. Now, however, he goes on, “the future is perceived as a

threat not a promise”, which was spot on, even prophetic. Further, “The future is a time of disasters, and ones we have, moreover, brought upon ourselves.”²⁸ Without mentioning the Anthropocene (or any contending etiquette), this is, of course, what he is talking about. Lingering on this specific temporal phenomenon, however, as the suggested name for our current geological epoch, terminating the Holocene (our most recent epoch), ought to make clear that the very idea of “a treadmill of an unending now” is wishful thinking, to put it mildly. Today it seems likely that the Anthropocene and its concomitant outcomes of species extinction and environmental disaster, among others, will usher in a new definition of history and historicity, and thus of temporality. The notion of presentism will not do, however, since as we run on our treadmills (a metaphor for meaningless waste of energy in the rich world), tolerable living conditions on the planet are being ruined. If our present regime of historicity is incapable of realizing this, by toying with the “sense” or hallucination of an ever-present present, then it needs changing. The logic at stake is not presentist but anachronic and spectral; we are determined by effects of the past that will at some point in the future present themselves – and for many less fortunate, this future is already reality.²⁹ As a regime of historicity, “determined by nothing other than itself”,³⁰ this kind of presentism appears like a somewhat dislocated elderly person, all dressed up in contemporary costume but blind to its anthropocentric narcissism, someone or something which we must now try to gently return (turn back) to a historical nursing home.

Endnoten

1. “Turn back now? Anachronies, temporal, and chronological layering in visual arts”, research workshop at the Institute of Contemporary Arts and Media, KU Linz (Austria) and via Zoom, September 24, 2021.
2. Ibid.
3. St. Augustine, *Confessions* (Book 11), trans. Albert Cook Outler, New York 2000, p. 226.
4. Preston King, *Thinking Past a Problem: Essays on the History of Ideas*, London & New York 2000, pp. 29ff.
5. Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History”, in: *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. and trans. Hannah Arendt, New York 1968, p. 257f.
6. St. Augustine 2000, *Confessions*, p. 226.
7. Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism* (1966), trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, New York 1988, p. 55.
8. St. Augustine 2000, *Confessions*, p. 236.
9. Cf. Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?”, in: *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, Harmondsworth 1991.
10. Most of the statements regarding contemporary art derive from Dan Karlholm, *Kontemporalism. Om samtidskonstens historia*

- och framtid, Stockholm 2014, of which a short abbreviation is available as Karlholm, "After Contemporary Art: Actualization and Anachrony", in: *Nordic Journal of Aesthetics*, 2016, p. 51.
11. Cf. Stephen Jay Gould, *Time's Arrow, Time's cycle: Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Geological Time*, Cambridge, Mass. 1987.
 12. On this argument, cf. Karlholm, "Is History to Be Closed, Saved, or Restarted? Considering Efficient History", in: *Time in the History of Art: Temporality, Chronology, Anachrony*, eds. Dan Karlholm and Keith Moxey, London & New York 2018, pp. 13-25.
 13. On this distinction, cf. Keith Moxey, *Visual Time: The Image in History*, Durham and London 2013; Eva Kernbauer, "Anachronic Concepts, Art Historical Containers and Historiographical Practices in Contemporary Art", in: *Journal of Art Historiography*, vol. 16, 2017, pp. 1-17.
 14. As a conceptual contender to chronology or chronicity, heterochronology seems to "out" chronology as dependent on one singular, selfsame homogenous time conception but perhaps monochrony would be a preferable term to use. On chrononormativity, etc, see Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, Durham 2010.
 15. Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham 2016.
 16. Francois Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time* (2003), trans. Saskia Brown, New York 2015.
 17. St. Augustine 2000, *Confessions*, p. 229.
 18. Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (1979), trans. Keith Tribe, New York 2004, pp. 267-88.
 19. Hartog 2015, *Regimes of Historicity*, 3-7; Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, New York 2006.
 20. Hartog 2015, *Regimes of Historicity*, p. 196.
 21. Hartog 2015, *Regimes of Historicity*, p. xvi.
 22. Chris Lorenz, *Out of Time? Some Critical Reflections on Francois Hartog's Presentism*, in: *Rethinking Historical Time: New Approaches to Presentism*, eds. Marek Tamm and Laurent Olivier, London 2019, pp. 23-42.
 23. Hartog, "Chronos, Kairos, Crisis: The Genesis of Western Time", in: *History and Theory*, vol. 60 no. 3, Sept 2021, pp. 425-39.
 24. Lorenz 2019, *Out of Time?*, p. 25.
 25. Cf. Lutz Niethammer, *Posthistoire: Has History Come to an End?* (1989), London 1992; Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, London 1992.
 26. Zoltán Boldizsár Simon, *History in Times of Unprecedented Change: A Theory for the 21st Century*, London 2019.
 27. A good overview is Eva Horn and Hannes Bergthaller, *The Anthropocene: Key Issues for the Humanities*, New York 2020. For the scientific debate, cf. *The Anthropocene as a Geological Time Unit: A Guide to the Scientific Evidence and Current Debate*, eds. Jan Zalasiewicz, Cambridge 2019.
 28. Hartog 2015, *Regimes of Historicity*, p. xviii.
 29. On spectrality and historiography, cf. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (1993), trans. Peggy Kamuf, New York 1994; Ethan Kleinberg, *Haunting History: For a Deconstructive Approach to the Past*, Stanford 2017.
 30. Hartog 2015, *Regimes of Historicity*, p. 204.

Abbildungen

Abb. 1:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paul_Klee_-_Angelus_Novus_-_1920.jpg

Abb. 2:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francisco_de_Goya_-_Saturno_devorando_a_su_hijo_\(1819-1823\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francisco_de_Goya_-_Saturno_devorando_a_su_hijo_(1819-1823).jpg)

Abb. 3:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Philippe_de_Champaigne_-_Saint_Augustine_-_LACMA_-_with_frame.JPG

Zusammenfassung

A version of this text was first presented at the workshop, "Turn back now? Anachronies, temporal, and chronological layering in visual arts", and can be read

as a response to the sentences of the blurb, in particular those referring to the 'now' and to presentism. In this essay, I will discuss the double character of (the) 'now', the instantaneous and the extended, assisted theoretically by St. Augustine. I will also address how now inevitably relates to then, in part, by returning to the more conventional temporal modalities of past, present and future. Further, I will discuss how heterochrony relates to works of art, how anachrony relates to the history of art, and how both connect with François Hartog's idea of "regimes of historicity" as contrary to modalities of temporality. With regards to the currently intensifying climate crisis, more than anything else defining our prevailing now, and in conclusion, I will argue that presentism is an inadequate formula for the present, at least for now.

Autor

Dan Karlholm is Professor of Art History at Södertörn University in Stockholm. His research is devoted to the theory and historiography of art, temporality and repercussions of the Anthropocene. His latest books are *Kontemporalism. Om samtidskonstens historia och framtid* (Axl Books, 2014) and *Karlholm & Keith Moxey (eds.), Time in the History of Art: Temporality, Chronology, and Anachrony* (Routledge, 2018). His latest research projects are "Reclaiming the Unformed: A Study in Political Aesthetics", with Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback and Gustav Strandberg (2021-2023) and "Extreme Weather Painter Marcus Larson", based at the Stockholm Nationalmuseum (2022-24).

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