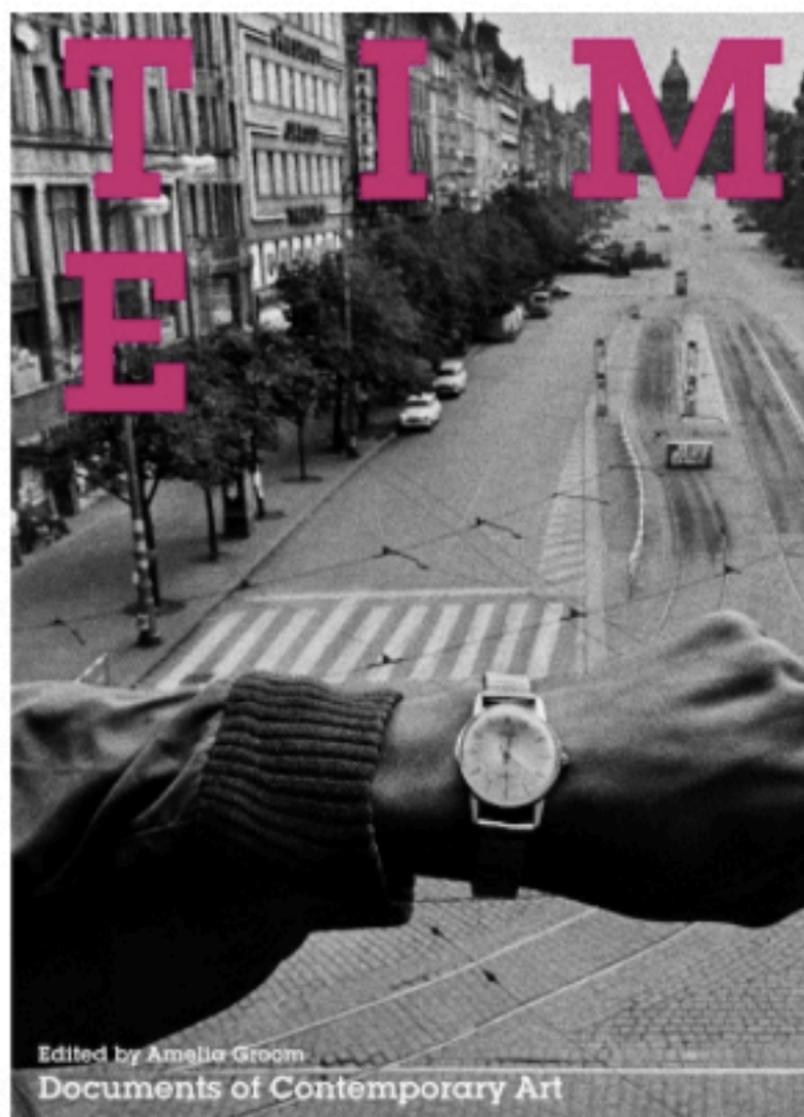


documents of contemporary art: TIME



Artists surveyed include: Marina Abramović // Doug Aitken // Francis Alÿs // Matthew Buckingham // Janet Cardiff // Paul Chan // Jeanette Christensen // Moyra Davey // Dexter Sinister // Olafur Eliasson // Bea Fremderman // Antony Gormley // Douglas Gordon // Tehching Hsieh // Toril Johannessen // On Kawara // Joachim Koester // Lee Ufan // Christian Marclay // nova Milne // Trevor Paglen // Philippe Parreno // **Katie Paterson** // Raqs Media Collective // Sylvia Sleigh // Simon Starling // Michael Stevenson // Hito Steyerl // Hiroshi Sugimoto // Time/Bank // Agnès Varda

Writers include: Giorgio Agamben // Emily Apter // Karen Archey // Augustine // Mieke Bal // Geoffrey Batchen // Hans Belting // Franco 'Bifo' Berardi // Henri Bergson // Daniel Birnbaum // Yve-Alain Bois // Jorge Luis Borges // Italo Calvino // Gilles Deleuze // Georges Didi-Huberman // Brian Dillon // Elena Filipovic // Elizabeth Grosz // Boris Groys // Rachel Kent // Rosalind Krauss // George Kubler // Quinn Latimer // Bruno Latour // Doreen Massey // Jean-Luc Nancy // Michel Serres // Michel Siffre // Mark von Schlegell // Nancy Spector // Jan Verwoert // Dögen Zenji

Amelia Groom

Introduction/[we're five hundred years before the man we just robbed was born]

It's time. It's about time. In time, on time. Time by our side, time on our hands. Take your time, take time out. Tell the time, time will tell. Spending time, timing it. A long time, a lot of time. In my time, at times, for the time being, all the time. Having time, keeping time. Killing time, wasting time, doing time. For a time, from time to time, at the same time, some other time. Time and time again, in no time at all. Turn back time, this time around. Set a time, serve your time, give someone the time of day. Work against time, be behind the times, fall on hard times. The times have changed, the time has come. Time passing, time running out. Time's up. Time's out ...

The different ways in which we use the word should be enough to show that we don't have a precise definition for it. The most elusive of the seven fundamental physical quantities in the International System of Units, we don't really know *what* we think time is. Is it the condition for events or the result of events? Does it exist independently of space? Independently of the mind? Of experience? Should we equate it with *change* or is time, as the quantum physicist Richard Feynman has quipped, 'what happens when nothing else does'? Is there an atemporal eternity that is wholly separate to, or encompassing of, everyday duration? Are there times other than the present moment? Will it only ever move forward? Towards what? Could it slow down? Stagger? Split? Repeat or reverse? Would we notice? Why does it fly for those having fun but drag on and on for the bored, the infantile, and the stoned?

The writing compiled here provides little in the way of answers, but a whole lot in the way of more questions. Questions are more important to art than answers are anyway – and questions about time are evidently especially timely. Wasting and waiting; regression and repetition; non-consummation and counter-productivity; the belated and the obsolete; the disjointed and the out of sync – these are all familiar tropes in the work of contemporary artists, and point to a widespread questioning of the idea of time as an arrow propelling us in unison from the past into the future. While useful and necessary in certain situations, the notion of singular, flat, linear time is a culturally and historically specific construct, which, as will be made clear, remains ideologically grounded.

Once the twentieth century's fetishization of teleological progress is abandoned, history's time reveals itself as a concoction of chance encounters, arbitrary inclusions, systematic exclusions, parenthetical digressions, abrupt U-turns, inherited anecdotes, half-remembered facts, glossed-over uncertainties, and forgotten back-stories. As many have observed, the fragmentary experience of time that characterizes today's globalized geographic mobility makes it increasingly difficult for us to picture ourselves as centralized in any absolutist temporal model. Furthermore, the delocalization and non-fixity of networked digital space is both symptom and catalyst of the broken, multifarious time that we find ourselves in. Physics, of course, is miles ahead of us here, having over the last century repeatedly destabilized Newtonian absolute time and replaced linearity with more untidy models. Shortly after the passing of his lifelong friend Michele Besso, and less than a month before his own death, Albert Einstein famously wrote the following in a letter of condolence to the Besso family:

Now he has departed from this strange world a little ahead of me. That signifies nothing. For those of us who believe in physics, the distinction between past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.

This collection of texts is structured according to the illusory distinction of past, present and future, with its three sections titled *Before*, *During* and *After*. While the artists and writers surveyed veer away from linear conceptions of orderly chronology, their work is ordered here under the crude triad structure of then-now-later. In *Before*, Simon Starling's exhibition 'Never the Same River' restages multiple pasts in the present; Antony Gormley considers time and dynamism in contemporary and ancient sculpture; and Paul Chan emphasizes the Hellenic *kairological* temporality of his series *The 7 Lights*. *During* features Christian Marclay's *The Clock*; Sylvia Sleigh's 'history pictures'; On Kawara's *Today Series*;

Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Theatres*; Janet Cardiff's 're-composed digital present'; and Marina Abramovic's reflections on the long-duration performance works of Tehching Hsieh. The final section, *After*, includes Lee Ufan on infinity; **Katie Patterson's engagement with intergalactic time**; the aesthetics of anticipation in the work of Philippe Parreno and Doug Aitken; 'women's time' in Moyra Davey's photographs; and Raqs Media Collective's reflections on the economics of time, presented at the opening of the e-flux *Time/Bank* project.

The book begins with the art historian George Kubler's arguments against definitive beginnings. His book *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (1962) challenged the linearity of established art-historical methodologies, and the discipline's persistent use of biological metaphors. When we talk about the 'birth' of an art, the 'maturation' of a style or the 'death' of a school, Kubler argues, we misread art as an autonomous organism; a self-contained system with successive developmental life stages. Progressive, uninterrupted, 'biological' time cannot account for what Kubler sees as the true intermittency of time. In order to account for art accurately as the multi-directional transmission of energy rather than a set of causally determined linear relations, he proposes that 'the language of electrodynamics might have suited us better than the language of botany; and Michael Faraday might have been a better mentor than Linnaeus for the study of material culture.'¹

In a number of his essays throughout the 1960s, the artist Robert Smithson heralded Kubler's ideas about time and history. 'A trans-historical consciousness has emerged in the sixties, that seems to avoid appeals to the organic time of the avant-garde', Smithson wrote in his text 'Ultramoderne' (1967),² later citing Kubler's remark that the history of art resembles 'a broken but much repaired chain made of string and wire', connecting 'occasional jewelled links'. Against the earlier twentieth-century military metaphor of the artistic 'avant-garde', and the modernist rhetoric of progress that it came from, Smithson looks at mirrors and mirroring across and between times, without any unified trajectories. Of the art of his day he writes, 'the *one line* of the avant-garde is forking, breaking and becoming *many lines*.' Published alongside a series of near-identical stills from Andy Warhol's resolutely uneventful eight-hour film *Empire* (1964), the article concludes: 'Nothing is new, neither is anything old.'³

The time of art moves backwards as well as forwards. Neo-Classicism retroactively created Greek sculpture as we now know it. Cindy Sherman doesn't simply respond to the Old Masters after the fact; she revises the lens through which we look at them. Cézanne can help us understand Cubism, while looking to Cubism can show us new ways of understanding Cézanne. In each case, notions of influence, legacy, causality and stylistic evolution should give way to an approach that acknowledges continuous dialogue – 'transfers of energy', in Kubler's terms – across times, in multiple directions at once. In her formulation of the 'preposterous' (literally 'pre' + 'post') nature of history, Mieke Bal treats art as an ongoing conversation between pasts, presents and futures. Specifically, she claims that by visually 'quoting' Caravaggio, a number of contemporary artists are forever changing the baroque master's work.⁴

Culture always reveals crisscrossing movements, and parallels without direct imitative interaction, which seriously challenge the teleological temporal schemas that have dominated western art history and its doctrine of 'genius'. Kubler uses the example of both Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace independently formulating the theory of natural selection

¹ George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (1962) (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008) 8.

² Reprinted in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996) 62–6.

³ Pamela M. Lee gives a detailed reading of the relations between George Kubler, Robert Smithson and Norbert Weiner's cybernetics, in 'Ultramoderne: Or, How George Kubler Stole the Time in Sixties Art' in her *Chronophobia: On Time In The Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2004) 218–58.

⁴ Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

in the mid nineteenth century; another classic instance is the apparent synchronicity of photography's multifarious origins. Geoffrey Batchen has reminded us that photography is an invention with no sole inventor or clear beginning, since 'at least twenty-four people from seven countries all came up with the idea of photography in the opening decades of the nineteenth century.'⁵

It is only with the safety and simplification afforded by hindsight that we can apply telos to an historical narrative. Likewise with creative acts. Stepping away from the worn paradigms of artistic ego and the individual intention of the (usually male) genius, we might instead conceive of time from the perspective of the artwork itself. Against the notion of artistic production as a conscious, heroic, step-by-step execution from an idea to a predetermined end, Jan Verwoert has considered the possibility that an artwork is finished when its beginning appears: 'when its very possibility emerges as an outcome'. Considering this retroactive temporal logic through the non-figurative paintings of Tomma Abts, he muses on the idea of latency within an image, which gradually becomes apparent to the painter as she paints. Reconsidering the temporal structure of creative production in this way, Verwoert observes, might make us revise our logic of linear development, and abandon the Hegelian schema of history as progression.⁶

Following Aby Warburg's dynamic and counter-chronological approach to images in the early twentieth century, Georges Didi-Huberman has in recent years defined art history as 'a history of polychronistic, heterochronistic or anachronistic objects'. In *Anachronic Renaissance*, Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood also set out to imagine new art-historical methodologies that might allow us to deal with the complex web of times that works of art move through.⁷ Their study reveals very different approaches to repetition, precedence, forgery, restoration, origins and authenticity during the Renaissance – leading them to conclude that approaching art from that era with any all-encompassing, one-directional model of time is inappropriate and misleading. In the *Before* section, these texts and others explore historicism and some possible futures for our engagement with the past.

Concurrent with this thinking on non-linear readings of history, a number of exhibitions since the late 1990s – many of them curated by artists – have also facilitated symbiotic relations between artworks from dramatically disparate times, as I briefly survey in 'This is So Contemporary!', reprinted on pages xx–xx. Doing away with consensually agreed upon chronology and the confines of museological categories, these curiosity cabinet-like shows have played with the fact that – as the artist Maurizio Nannucci literally spelled out in neon lights in 1999 – *all art has been contemporary*. They affirm that the time and place in which a thing was made should not shut it off from other times and places. Works of art can bear witness to the context of their conception and fabrication, but to treat them as mere pedagogical historic documents is to suffocate them. In the author Jeanette Winterson's words, 'pictures and poetry and music are not only marks in time but marks through time, of their own time and ours, not antique or historical, but living as they ever did, exuberantly, untired.'⁸

Gone is the avant-gardist compulsion to kill one's forefathers and redefine the playing field from scratch. Last century's isms, manifestos and dreams of the *tabula rasa* are no longer viable – instead, by opening up alternate times onto each, artists in the wake of modernity's shortcomings can play with the construct of received historical narratives and

⁵ Geoffrey Batchen, 'Light and Dark: The Daguerreotype and Art History', *Art Bulletin*, vol. 86, no. 4 (December 2004) 764–76.

⁶ Jan Verwoert, 'Why are conceptual artists painting again? Because they think it's a good idea', lecture presented for the University of Glasgow and the Association of Art Historians as part of the 36th Association of Art Historians Conference (16 April 2010). See also 'Choosing to Choose: On the Paintings of Tomma Abts', in Jan Verwoert, *Tell Me What You Want, What You Really, Really Want* (Berlin and New York: Sternberg Press, 2010) 237–53.

⁷ Alexander Nagel's more recent book *Medieval Modern: Art out of Time* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012) also traverses times to show that the central tenets of 'modern art' – including collage, the readymade, seriality, site-specificity and interrogations of the nature of art and authorship – were all features of so-called 'pre-modern art'.

⁸ Jeanette Winterson, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), epigraph.

reveal their ongoing fluidity in the present. As previous volumes in this series on *The Archive*, *Ruins* and *Memory* attest, early twenty-first century art has seen a rising concern with *re-present-ing* the past. Many artists are embracing obsolete technologies, abandoned places and outmoded materials; resuscitating unfinished ideas; revisiting documents and testimonies; and restaging downtrodden possibilities.⁹ Rather than a winking postmodern pastiche of appropriated styles, or an earnest nostalgic immersion in a fixed, absent past, these new engagements with the remnants of previous times mark a thickening of the present to acknowledge its multiple, interwoven temporalities.

The artist Katie Paterson has approached temporal complexities and conundrums from a much broader scale, making small gestures towards infinity. For her 'lifelong project' *History of Darkness* (2010–), she has been making 35mm slides with images of imagelessness from around the cosmos, each one labelled with its distance from the earth in light years. The pictures have been acquired with the help of various telescopes, including the world's most powerful one at the W.M. Keck Observatory in Hawaii, which can see up to 13.2 billion light years away. Seemingly identical blank monochromes, Paterson's images in fact index various unthinkable enormous scales of intergalactic space and time that are beyond the limits of visibility. As rectilinear slices of apparent nothingness, they show us not how little there is to see out there, but how ill equipped we are (perceptually, technologically, cognitively) for grasping the spatial and temporal vastness that is around us.

Because light has a finite speed, we can all see the past. In fact, in purely optical terms we can *only* see the past, since there is always duration between a visible event and the arrival of its image on our retina. Looking into the night sky, we see images that are extremely old – stars as they were billions of years ago, which may well by now no longer exist, though their scintillating image remains in our visual present. Conceived of as an 'archive of darkness' spanning billions of years throughout the universe, Paterson's open-ended project is marked from the beginning by an absurd futility. To archive darkness is to subject the unknown to the systematization of knowledge. In the artist's words: 'There is never a way to represent, see or know all the darkness in the universe, so it's a kind of infinite journey, and a futile one, to try to capture it on a human scale, and make it an entity.'¹⁰ As with much of Paterson's work, *History of Darkness* poetically collides various incommensurable temporalities – cosmological time, which is inconceivably immense and always, for us, drastically tardy; the geological time of our tiny planet, from which we look out to all this ancient darkness that predates it; and the biological time of a fleeting human lifespan dedicated to an obviously unachievable project. Further aspects of Paterson's work are discussed in Rachel Kent's 'Marking Time' on pages xx–xx.

The second section, *During*, opens with an excerpt from Giorgio Agamben's essay 'What is the Contemporary?'. Honing in on the apparent paradox that the con-temporary (literally 'together with time') is by its nature ana-chronistic (literally 'up against time'), he writes that those who truly belong to their time are those who 'neither perfectly coincide with it nor adjust themselves to its demands'. Our own epoch is completely distant from us, he says, and the 'true contemporary' is someone who can perceive the obscurity of the present. Since it is only through our untimeliness that we are equipped for grasping our time, we should, according to Agamben, court a relationship with the present that 'adheres to it through a disjunction'.

As a now that refuses its now-ness, this 'anachronistic contemporary' has several precedents. Agamben cites Roland Barthes' remark that 'the contemporary is the untimely', as well as Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations* (1873), in which he demanded the 'the capacity to feel *unhistorically*.'¹¹ (See pages xx–xx for Emily Apter's reading of Nietzschean untimeliness in Moyra Davey's photographs, and xx–xx for Quinn Latimer's take on the

⁹ See, for example, the 'Obsolescence' issue of *October* (Spring 2002), and Dieter Roelstraete's less-than-approving response to what he terms the 'historiographic turn' in art, 'The Way of the Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary in Art', in *e-flux journal*, no. 4 (March 2009). (www.e-flux.com)

¹⁰ 'Interview with Katie Paterson' at rhizome.org/editorial/2010/jun/16/interview-with-katie-paterson/ accessed December 2012.

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations* (1873–76); trans. R. J. Hollingdale, ed. Daniel Braezeale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 62.

contemporary anachronisms of painter Sylvia Sleigh.) Agamben's theories of time and history are also strongly indebted to Walter Benjamin, who, writing shortly before his death in 1940, called on us to stop 'telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary' and instead grasp 'the constellation' which the present forms with the past, in order to forge the revolutionary future. Benjamin's messianic *Jetztzeit*, 'now time', is not oriented towards a projected, indefinitely deferred saviour, but rather the notion of revolution as an ongoing latent presence. Instead of endlessly enumerating the causal links of historicism, he tells us we can 'blast open the continuum of history' and galvanize the present by finding out from time 'what it has in store'.¹²

The destabilization of teleological time has featured in various critical fields. From a postcolonial perspective, for instance, Dipesh Chakrabarty has 'provincialized Europe' through a nuanced critique of Western secularized historicism, which purports to objectivity and universality but cannot include the forms of memory and time that have long existed outside of its constructed linearity.¹³ Elsewhere, in the context of queer theory, Judith (Jack) Halberstam has shown how hegemonic time is thrown off course, by intent or by necessity, in queer cultures. Their book *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005) explores the disruptive temporalities that queer subjects develop outside the institutions of reproduction and family – and against organizations of time and space that are based on capitalist demands for propulsion and accumulation.

Feminist theory has also provided us with non-linear temporalities. In the late 1970s, Julia Kristeva posited (historical) 'linear time' and its nationalistic correlatives against (mythological) 'cyclical' and (Nietzschean) 'monumental' times for feminism after 1968, characterized by echoes across various contexts, without any progressivist notion of sequence.¹⁴ More recently, Elizabeth Grosz has defined time as an active force characterized by chance and unpredictability. In advocating the temporality of 'becoming' she argues that grasping the true indeterminacy of time allows us to approach change in less prescriptive ways. 'The force of time is not just a contingent characteristic of the living', writes Grosz, 'but is the dynamic impetus that enables life to become, to always be in the process of becoming, something other than it was.'¹⁵ Writing by Grosz appears in the final section, *After*, along with other texts that deal with change and futurity.

To disrupt the notion of a homogeneous, uni-directional time made from a string of separate instants is to undermine the hubris of the present. If time is considered to flow all at once, unstoppably and irreversibly like the hands of a clock, the 'now' thinks of itself as positioned at the head of a long line of developments and acquisitions, sitting at the brink of the future, and inevitably condescending to the past. For Michel Serres, the conception of the present time as an ongoing centre, with all past time behind it and all time to come in front of it, is akin to the ancient diagrams that narcissistically, and without any evidence, placed our planet or our galaxy at the centre of all things:

Just as in space we situate ourselves at the centre, at the navel of the things in the universe, so for time, through progress, we never cease to be at the summit, on the cutting edge, at the state-of-the-art development. It follows that we are always right, for the simple, banal, and naïve reason that we are living in the present moment. The curve traced by the idea of progress thus seems to me to sketch or project into time the vanity and fatuousness expressed spatially by that central position.¹⁶

Art can show us how our understanding of time has always been something fabricated and shifting rather than pre-existing or 'natural'. With linear perspective in

¹² Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1940), in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968) 253–64.

¹³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

¹⁴ Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time' (1979); trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, in *Signs*, vol. 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1981) 13–35.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Sydney/Melbourne/Auckland: Allen & Unwin, 2005) 8.

¹⁶ Michel Serres and Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture and Time*, trans. Roxanne Lapidus (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1995) 48.

European Quattrocento painting, for example, a vector connected an imagined supreme seer – with an artificially fixed, unifocal position in space and time – to a designated vanishing point. Previously arranged on a single plane without any attempted depiction of depth, static objects in perspectival painting invited us to approach them successively, through quantitatively measurable units – with past, present and future times neatly lined up. In her essay on the multiplication and decentralization of space in images today, on pages xx–xx, the artist Hito Steyerl looks at the gradual breakdown of perspectivalism since the nineteenth century. The nominally objective and scientific worldview of perspectival painting, she says, was intrinsically tied up with the thinking that enabled colonialist expansion. Concomitant with this measurable, absolute space was the new conception of time as unified and linear, enabling projection onto a future that is subject to ownership and control. In Steyerl’s analysis, it ‘helped set standards for marking people as other, thus legitimizing their conquest or the domination over them’.

Introducing the ‘timeline of timelines’ he compiled with Sasha Archibald for *Cabinet* magazine, Daniel Rosenberg reminds again us that all conceptions of historic time are historically specific constructs (see pages xx–xx). Before the idea of a ‘line of time’ started to be naturalized in the nineteenth century, the concept of mapping *time* – something that doesn’t have any spatial substance – was strange and difficult.¹⁷ The assimilation of this counterintuitive notion of linear, progressive, divisible ‘monochronic’ time coincides with, and facilitates, the rise of capitalism. The historian David Landes has traced the development of the mechanical clock and the twenty-four-hour-day system after the thirteenth century in Europe as a precondition for the development of the free market, which is possible only after units of duration (as well as those of weight, length, area and volume) are standardized.¹⁸ E.P. Thompson has also shown how universal observance of clock time is a consequence of the industrial revolution; and argued that the creation of the modern state would not have been possible without the imposition of what he terms ‘time discipline’.¹⁹

As a sign, money is perfectly empty. Neutralized and neutralizing in its supreme non-specificity, money is abstraction par excellence – and it goes hand in hand with empty, abstract time. After Benjamin Franklin’s credo that ‘time is money,’ the philosopher Éric Alliez has traced a history of European philosophical frameworks that shaped what he considers to be the modern temporality of avarice. He writes:

If money bears within itself an ineffaceable debit, it is because time, converted into the money form, is discovered as an empty *form*, a pure order of time, quantitative and differential, measurable and coinable, which nothing can come to fill. The time without qualities of a future-oriented humanity that cuts time into segments of linear duration that are put to profit in order to realize investments and ‘accumulation’. And so time itself is ‘invested’: there is no advance but in time, no payment due that is not temporal.²⁰

In his polemic against what he termed ‘the tyranny of the clock’ in 1944, the anarchist George Woodcock argued that prior to industrialization, time was understood only through the natural cyclical passages of day to night and season to season (see pages xx–xx). Once time was homogenized and mechanically measured, the worker’s body was forced to internalize its persistent ticking. The clock, according to Woodcock, ‘was the means by which the regularization and regimentation of life necessary for an exploiting system of industry could best be attained’. Some of the most iconic images that encapsulate the general anxiety surrounding the clock’s tyrannical demands for punctuality and productivity are to be found in interwar cinema. In Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927), the hero Freder desperately grapples with the overpowering hands of a huge factory clock, ultimately assuming the position of

¹⁷ See also Daniel Rosenberg and Anthony Grafton’s *Cartographies of Time: A History of the Timeline* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010).

¹⁸ David Landes, *Revolution in Time: Clocks and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000).

¹⁹ E.P. Thompson, ‘Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism’, *Past and Present*, no. 38 (1967) 56–97.

²⁰ Éric Alliez, *Capital Times: Tales from the Conquest of Time* (1991); trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 12.

crucifixion across it. Charlie Chaplin's Little Tramp also suffers the physical and psychological effects of inhuman and inhumane acceleration at the factory assembly belt in *Modern Times* (1936). This is a film about a body tragically out of sync with the mechanized reality around it, and its opening credits are set against an ominous close-up of an incessantly ticking clock.

As innumerable viewers have discovered, Christian Marclay's looped twenty-four hour video work *The Clock* (2010) is in fact a clock. With its thousands of fragments of found footage from the history of cinema containing references to the time all properly synchronized, Marclay's work reveals itself as an accurate *timekeeper*. These popular movies invited us to languish in the dark and be temporarily and temporally transported, but *The Clock's* rearrangement of them prohibits such escapism by endlessly pointing out how much of our own time we are spending in front of the screen. The writer Lynne Tillman describes the anxiety she experienced seeing the work:

It was Thursday – 3:15pm, 3:16pm, 3:17pm – I was watching time pass. My time. It was passing, and I was watching it. What is this watching, what am I watching for? I wouldn't, couldn't, wait for the end.²¹

But *The Clock* is also more than a clock. Within the overarching apparatus of this accurate but entirely false 'day', there are different parallel and intersecting times occurring. In her response to the work, reprinted on pages xx–xx, Rosalind Krauss points out that the intended temporal structures of the original films are thrown out of joint within the new assemblage: 'the suspense unreeling inside the screen is not synchronized with the suspense unfolding in the viewer's real time.' A mind-bogglingly laborious gesture of remixing hundreds of readymade times into a neat twenty-four hours, the work artificially unifies on-screen and off-screen time. As a result, it reveals that experienced temporality is in fact anything but unified.

The Clock wasn't the first attempted meeting of depicted celluloid time and literal experienced time. One precedent is Agnès Varda's film *Cléo from 5 to 7* (1962), where reel time is opened on to real time as we spend an hour and a half with a woman waiting for the results of a medical test that may or may not confirm a diagnosis of stomach cancer. Coming at the height of the French New Wave, the film eschews flashbacks and plunges us into a shared present tense – one that necessarily includes all of life's inconsequential moments of boredom and banality, which the compressed and intensified time of commercial cinema would normally edit out. The film shows how states of anticipation and apprehension suspend the present for anyone who is waiting. As with *The Clock*, the recurring references to the time in *Cléo from 5 to 7* ultimately reveal the discrepancies between objectively measured 'clock time', re-constructed cinematic time, and the more fluid and unpredictable times of lived, subjective experience.

Varda's work has often reflected on time. Her documentary *The Beaches of Agnès* (2008) is a sort of self-portrait, in which the eighty-year-old filmmaker revisits various dormant pasts and playfully remixes the movements of time in the present. There are several shots of her awkwardly walking backwards in a human imitation of the cinematic 'rewind', and throughout the film her dyed hair grows out to reveal her now-signature grey roots – only the amount of growth goes back and forth, disrupting any pretensions to sequential time in the finished film. Like her possibly terminally ill character Cléo four and a half decades earlier, the aged Varda in this documentary is obsessed with time because she is thinking about mortality. She rues history's relentless onward march, and when a friend gives her a broken clock without hands she likes it because it shows no evidence of time passing. She goes to the seaside, where the perpetual tidal cycles are out of sync with the time kept by clocks, and no evidence of history's developments can be found. 'Time always passes except on beaches', she says.

Defying time's persistent passing in a very different way, the Taiwanese artist Tehching Hsieh staged a series of year-long performances after arriving in New York as an illegal immigrant in the late 1970s. *Time Clock Piece* saw him punch a worker's time clock in

²¹ Lynne Tillman, 'Marking Time', *frieze*, no. 15 (March 2013) 21.

his studio, every hour on the hour, day and night, from 11 April 1980 to 11 April 1981. This is a work of monumental monotony, where tautology ensures against teleology. The whole deadpan performance unfolded as a self-perpetuating reiteration of the same, like one big *etcetera*. Unable to work legally in the US, he dressed himself in a worker's uniform and enacted labour without production or product. 'Clocking in' is the start of the worker's day: by isolating the act and repeating it on loop, Hsieh suspended commencement – stretching it out over a whole year in a grand defiance of progressive time. Here, diligence and punctuality carried out to the extreme amount to an elaborate emblem of inefficacy. The artist has named Sisyphus as an early influence on his practice.

In his text on Hsieh, Adrian Heathfield considers the collapse of objective temporal measurement that occurs in extremely long performances: 'duration deals in the confusion of temporal distinctions – between past, present and future – drawing the spectator into the thick braids of paradoxical times.' (See pages xx–xx) Heathfield refers here specifically to Henri Bergson's notion of *la durée pure*. Formulated at the turn of the twentieth century, the Bergsonian philosophy of 'pure duration' was wholly at odds with the cultural construct of quantitative clock-time, where temporal units are abstracted and lined up in sequence. While clocks artificially spatialized time, making it divisible and successive, Bergson understood the time of our lived experience as a ceaseless and indivisible flow. '[E]very duration is thick', he wrote, 'real time has no instants.'²²

By rejecting instants, Bergson also famously rejected photographic 'snapshots'. In *Creative Evolution* (1907), he argued that since such images cut into continuity by isolating specific moments from the perpetual flow of time, they were incapable of capturing the true nature of reality. But a closer look at photographs can reveal that they also have duration inscribed in them. For his series *Theatres* (1978–), Hiroshi Sugimoto makes 'movies' still by keeping the shutter of his camera open in front of a film for its entire running time, resulting in pictures of blank white screens as the total sum of the projected images. (Hans Belting's reading of this series appears on pages xx–xx.) Sugimoto's exaggerated long exposures challenge the established notion of photography as a sharp slice into time.

Even photos that were taken very quickly do not simply freeze the flow of things. Josef Koudelka's iconic image from the Prague Spring, which appears on the cover of this book, records the exact time that the Warsaw Pact troops invaded the Czechoslovakian capital in August 1968. In the midground, a group of tanks can just be seen rolling in to the apparently vacated city street. But besides indexing a specific point in time, it has also become, over time, an image of the dramatic weeks that followed this moment. A photograph of that which history has told us is about to arrive, its time is latent – but retrospectively so. (This is the same 'anterior future' Roland Barthes is 'punctured' by when he sees a photograph of his deceased mother as a child, and registers that she is both *dead* and *going to die*.²³) Initially appearing as a precisely time-stamped, instantaneous *snap*, the temporal complexity of Koudelka's historic documentary image is further affirmed by the way it implicates our present. Looking at any depicted time involves convergence with real time, and here the arm showing us the time becomes our arm – its position forces us to embody it, so that *what was* is anachronistically entwined with *what is*.

Collaborating with each other in the present, the husband-wife duo Stephanie and Richard Nova Milne (who currently go by the moniker nova Milne) have for several years been making anachronistic video works through retroactive collaborations with former selves. Mining their personal archives, they insert footage of their adult bodies into childhood home movies and facilitate implausible new axes of disconnected times. *Love Cats* (1991/2007) has 29-year-old Richard join 10-year-old Stephanie on screen for a solo dance she performed at school assembly; and *Frame Drag* (1988 / 2009) sees grown-up Stephanie share a tender moment, and a cigarette, with her 11-year-old to-be-husband in the past. While Marclay's *The Clock* is a masterpiece of editing – with individual shots carefully selected and lined up in sequence – nova Milne's videos are made by layering different moments of time onto the

²² Henri Bergson, 'Concerning the Nature of Time', in *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and John Lullarkey (New York and London: Continuum, 2002) 205–23; 210.

²³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982) 96.

same space. The post-production edit is replaced by re-production folding; with superimposed verticality instead of horizontally juxtaposed shots. The time is thickened, and sequence is eclipsed.

Colliding two available temporalities to visualize unavailable encounters between them, nova Milne's titles always carry dual dates – with the year of the original material and the year of its later reworking. Their text on pages xx–xx is dated 1988/2012, acknowledging the input made by a child version of Richard. Once linear time is escaped, *befores* interact freely with *afters* and – as with Einstein's message of condolence – the predicament of mortality no longer separates the living from the dead. In 2011 the artists travelled to Los Angeles to meet with Tessa B. Dick, the widow of sci-fi writer Philip K. Dick, and made a four-channel video installation that reunites the two in a densely layered time of looped suspension. Described by nova Milne as gestures of 'domestic sci-fi', these works are unapologetically sensual, even sentimental. But beyond impotent nostalgia, they mark a hypothetical liberation of archived memories into living, infinitely re-workable possibilities. 'The past is never dead', William Faulkner wrote, 'it's not even past.'

The title of this introduction, *we're five hundred years before the man we just robbed was born*, is robbed from Terry Gilliam's 1981 film *Time Bandits*. Here, six delinquent dwarfs treat time like a Contiki Tour, making brief, inebriated and opportunistic stops all over it. Because the Supreme Being, their former employer, has left holes in his spacetime fabric, the bandits can forge new paths through it, inadvertently redistributing Napoleon Bonaparte's riches to Robin Hood along the way. Chronology does exist, but the stuff it's made up of is riddled with gaps and can always be revisited. This is the sort of temporality proposed by this book – where linearity is just one amongst many co-existing, often conflicting, times. Every anthology editor faces the task of contriving a semblance of order from disparate bodies of work; the hope here is that unexpected interactions will refract across the provisional artifice of that deceptive sequence: *Before, During and After* ...