

# 1 Linear, Entangled, Anachronic

## Periodization and the Shapes of Time in Art History\*

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### Introduction

I perhaps am living in 1908, but my neighbour is living in 1900 and the man across the way in 1880. . . . The peasants of Kals [in the Tyrol] are living in the twelfth century. And there were people taking part in the Jubilee Parade [of Emperor Franz Joseph in 1908] who would have been considered backward even during the period of the migrations.<sup>1</sup>

Adolf Loos's famous comments in his essay 'Ornament and Crime' embody a widely held presumption: that human history consists of a progressive linear development. Loos's statement also illustrates its converse, that not all participated equally in this process. There were 'unmodern' people, he noted, 'even in the cities' of the Habsburg Empire, left behind in the onward march of progress.<sup>2</sup>

This teleological view of history long shaped how histories of art and architecture were written. The specific terms of that presumed development might vary from author to author, but the basic structure persisted, from Hegel's *Lectures on Fine Art* of the 1820s onwards.<sup>3</sup> Mention of Hegel reminds us of another facet of art historical narratives: the division of that linear development into stages or periods. In Hegel's case, these were the 'Symbolic', 'Classic' and 'Romantic', but, again, individual authors chose other periods.

In recent times, the idea of linear development and the division into periods has been criticized for misrepresenting the complexity of art's history. Periodization imposes artificial boundaries; as Susan Bassnett argues, 'it is virtually impossible to divide periods according to dates . . . human culture is a dynamic system'.<sup>4</sup> Art is too varied, even within a single culture, to talk of it following a single line of linear development. As a result, not only has the division of art into historical periods been challenged; in addition, various authors have advanced alternative models of time. In place of time as linear, it has been referred to as, amongst others, 'coexisting, collapsing, conjoined, crisscrossing, crumbled, deferred, discontinuous, disjunctive, disruptive, dissident, doubled, enmeshed, entangled, foreshortened, fractured, heterogeneous, interwoven, multidimensional, multidirectional, multiplanar, multiple, plural, simultaneous, stretched'.<sup>5</sup>

This is a general issue in the history of art, but it has particular importance for historians of the art and architecture of Central and Eastern Europe. Accounts of the latter have usually been compelled to fit into a univocal, linear narrative organized around privileged art centres such as Florence, Rome and, later, Paris, Berlin and New York. In histories of modernism, for example, the linear progression encompassing

Impressionism, Symbolism, Expressionism, Cubism and Constructivism, for example, has generally provided the standard against which the numerous modernisms of Central and Eastern Europe have been measured. As a result, the latter have almost invariably been cast as derivative and belated, for they have been forced into a temporal grid devised primarily to encompass artistic events elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> If we wish to counter this syndrome, it might be reasoned, the first step may be to adopt alternative models of time and discard the old linear model.

Although the question of time and history is of no small significance for the historiography of Central and Eastern European art, this chapter is less concerned with specific re-readings and new narratives of these regions' art than with the broader conceptual and theoretical questions raised by recent attempts to address this issue by rethinking time and periodization. For it argues that while the diverse array of temporal metaphors is enormously suggestive, they pose their own attendant problems. Indeed, the chapter suggests that talk of 'multidirectional' and 'fractured' time may, by placing the incommensurability of artistic cultures at its heart, undercut the very basis for making meaningful comparisons between them.

### Self-Criticism within the History of Art

Presumptions about the shape of time in art history were already being criticized almost a century ago. In 1926, the German art historian Wilhelm Pinder took issue with the idea of periods which, he argued, rests on a view of culture and time as homogeneous and as fitting into a single linear narrative.<sup>7</sup> Yet for Pinder any one historical moment is composed of multiple temporalities. Coining the concept of the 'non-simultaneity of the simultaneous', he asserted: 'There is no simple "present" because every historical "moment" is experienced by people with their own different senses of historical duration; each moment means something different for everyone – even a different time'.<sup>8</sup> At any moment, different generations of artists are working, each with a different historical trajectory (Pinder refers to this as its 'entelechy'). The late work of an older artist may *coincide*, chronologically, with the early work of a younger artist, but it has a different temporality, being rooted in a different historical experience. An artist such as Max Liebermann (1847–1935) continued painting Impressionist pictures into the 1920s because of the generation to which he belonged (we might note he was older than Gustave Caillebotte and only three years younger than Mary Cassatt), even though he was a 'contemporary' of many younger artists whose work was completely different.<sup>9</sup> If we focus on the lived experience of artists, Pinder was suggesting, it is clear that one cannot talk of the development of art in the singular.

Pinder was not without his critics. Erwin Panofsky, for example, held fast to the validity of art historical periodization.<sup>10</sup> In a postscript to a discussion of the dating of Reims cathedral, he responded directly to Pinder. He, too, acknowledged that the meaning of the art of any historical moment varies in relation to its cultural context or 'frame of reference'. Two artworks made at the same time, chronologically, may still belong to different, incommensurate historical contexts. Hence, 'the sixth decade of the fourteenth century . . . signifies something completely different for the historical, linguistic, and intellectual customs of Byzantium than it does for the West' and 'something different for Italy than it does for Germany . . . it even signifies something different for Cologne than it does for Schwäbisch-Gmünd'.<sup>11</sup> Recognizing the implications of Pinder's position, he asked, rhetorically: 'are we not then faced with a completely

inhomogeneous contiguity of such frames of reference . . . frozen in self-sufficient isolation and irrational specificity?’<sup>12</sup> He disputed Pinder’s conclusion, however. He suggested it was still possible to construct a ‘continuous temporal order of artistic phenomena’ by identifying the smallest possible frame of reference where the difference between natural (chronological) and historical time would be insignificant. One would consequently be ‘able to acknowledge historical dissimultaneity in the objectively simultaneous (and vice versa)’.<sup>13</sup>

This was hardly satisfactory, both because it was unclear what exactly he meant and also because it might apply to only a limited range of examples. Panofsky talked of comparisons between the sculptural groups of Reims cathedral of 1230 as an illustration, but art historians are seldom faced with such a tightly delimited set of groups. Moreover, as Fred Schwarz suggests, he was not really addressing Pinder’s argument at all. The latter was analysing a problem to do with historical *experience*, whereas Panofsky was treating it as a problem of epistemology (the relation between natural and historical time). Schwarz notes:

Panofsky ignores non-simultaneity as a problem of experience. He fails to register the fact that, as Pinder points out, history *feels* very different from the pictures we draw of it. Panofsky missed the subtext of the argument – that the present was experienced not as stability and unity but as conflict and confusion.<sup>14</sup>

Pinder seems to have drawn back from the consequences of his argument; he claimed that one could nevertheless identify ‘lawlike’ constants such as geography and national character that gave art history some kind of stability. In this sense he was not so different from Panofsky, seeking some axiological principle. Nevertheless, he posed significant questions about time and periodization.

We can find a parallel concern with temporality and experience in the work of his contemporary Aby M. Warburg, whose analysis of the persistence of Classical culture has come to be taken as having implications for this issue.<sup>15</sup> Central to his thinking was his description of this persistence as *Nachleben* or survival. Specifically, he claimed that Classical culture had survived not as some inert tradition handed down from the past, but as a set of memories of emotional trauma imprinted on its images and symbols: the work of art as a vehicle of collective memory. Moreover, he ascribed agency to images – especially those of the body – for they could awaken the irrational, psychological, emotional impulses of primitive prehistory, brought to life by the spectator’s capacity for empathic projection. *Nachleben* suggests that the meaning of an image is never settled; primitive memories can be suppressed but never entirely erased. The history of art is never a neat and orderly succession of art historical styles; any work of art may harbour a disruptive, atavistic, psychological and emotional force. As Georges Didi-Huberman has suggested, ‘No longer imaginable as an unbroken river, where accruals are carried from up- to downstream, tradition should, after Warburg, be conceived as a tense dialectic, a drama that unfolds between the river’s flow and its whirling eddies’.<sup>16</sup> A poignant example of this was anti-Semitic imagery. For Warburg, Renaissance stereotypic images of Jews engaged in child abduction or in blood sacrifice were never just historic documents; they fuelled anti-Jewish prejudice in the present, and he carefully documented the resurgence of anti-Semitic violence in his own lifetime.<sup>17</sup> One could not talk of culture as a straightforward path of progress, for it could always regress into some earlier primitive form of consciousness.

## Questioning Time

Although nearly a century old, the writings of Pinder, Panofsky and Warburg contain many of the basic conceptual conundrums that have motivated the more recent problematization of historical time. These include disputing the idea of art history as a linear progression and of any moment in time as a coherent, homogeneous totality, challenging the division of history into neatly bounded unities.

These ideas were part of a much broader reflection on time in the early decades of the early twentieth century. Stephen Kern has explored how scientific and technological discoveries, as well as modernist literary and artistic practices, of a century ago led to a profound questioning of traditional notions of time and space.<sup>18</sup> Thinkers such as Henri Bergson, Georg Simmel, Martin Heidegger and Ernst Bloch made interrogation of temporal experience a central aspect of their thought. We might interpret such reflection as prompted by what Reinhart Koselleck has since spoken of as the accelerating pace of events in modernity, an acceleration that did not, however, occur universally at a uniform rate, leading to the chronological contemporaneity of those who were not 'politically or socially contemporaneous'.<sup>19</sup> As Bloch states, echoing Loos: 'Not all people exist in the same Now. They do so only externally, by virtue of the fact that they may all be seen today. But that does not mean that they are living at the same time with others'.<sup>20</sup> One can find an echo of this idea in Raymond Williams's subsequent distinction between the dominant, the residual and the emergent. Any particular cultural moment is marked not only by the dominant values and practices of the present, but also by nascent elements, that will become dominant in the future, and by residues of the past. He states:

[T]he residual . . . has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the culture process. . . . Thus certain experiences, meanings and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of the residue – cultural as well as social – of some previous social and cultural institution or formation.<sup>21</sup>

Panofsky's engagement with the question of temporality was, perhaps, an exercise in disavowal. For, as Schwarz has stated, he 'has no sense of the instability of history, the vertigo it creates, its disorienting tendency to move in one direction while one is looking in another. He has, in other words, no sense of the modern'.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, just as Panofsky was appealing to the possibility of anchoring historical events in natural, objective, time, his contemporary Walter Benjamin was arguing that the very idea of objective homogeneous time was socially constructed, a product of capitalist commodity culture.<sup>23</sup> In other words, natural time is historically generated. This idea has since become widely accepted. The historian and cultural theorist Harry Harootyan, for example, argues that 'with the production process and expanded reproduction and capital accumulation as its unlimited goals, time is submitted to strict measures of control by means of the clock, calendar, time-study regimes, and the like' and 'diminishes the differing temporalities by reducing them to simple distances'.<sup>24</sup> Capitalism imposes uniformity and objectifies time. Historians and cultural theorists have expanded on this point. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, for example, examined how the invention of the railway and the introduction of standardized timetables brought about the regularization of space and time; national time zones were created,

overriding older localized forms of time that followed the cycles of the sun.<sup>25</sup> It has also been pointed out how the different instruments and means of measuring time (clocks, calendars) have shaped perceptions of time; objective universal time is a cultural artefact.<sup>26</sup> European modernity was thus Janus-faced. On the one hand, social and technological change led to an accelerating pace of events that destabilized the experience of time. On the other hand, time was objectified, resulting in the creation of a homogeneous time and space.

The idea of time as a uniform linear progression was dependent on this homogeneous temporality. As the geographical horizons of theories of modernity have widened, so critical attention has also turned to the way this idea of time served other political and ideological ends, above all, legitimation of Western global dominance. Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other*, for example, argues that the objectification of time enabled anthropology, the 'science of other men in another Time', to place the cultures of the colonized at an earlier stage of the same developmental path, and hence categorize them as stagnant, underdeveloped and 'traditional'.<sup>27</sup> It is widely accepted that there has been an almost inescapable tendency to plot world history as a teleological process, the path of which has been traced back from European modernity as its *telos*.<sup>28</sup> Such a view saw the colonized as on the path of progress towards the same goal, but belatedly, rather like Loos's Tyrolean peasants, or indeed at some stage of arrested development. As Sebastian Conrad has recently observed,

the conceptual toolbox of the social sciences and the humanities abstracted European history to create a model of universal development . . . by imposing categories particular to Europe on everybody else's past, the modern disciplines rendered all other societies colonies of Europe.<sup>29</sup>

It is in the light of such critiques, too, that theorists such as Harootunian have emphasized the *unevenness* of time. Drawing on Ernst Bloch and Henri Lefebvre, Harootunian has argued that we should regard history as a 'locus of uneven rhythms', and as 'the scene where the ghosts of the past comingle daily with the living . . . in a habitus of a haunted house'.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, with her blunt assertion that 'history is not a box', literary critic Rita Felski has posited the need for 'models of textual mobility and transhistorical attachment' that emphasize the unevenness of the history of literature.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, the history of literature is nothing but the trans-spatial and trans-historical operations of networks of relations between literary works. Time

is not a tidy sequence of partitioned units but a profusion of whirlpools and rapids, eddies and flows, as objects, ideas and images and texts from different moments swirl, tumble and collide in ever-changing combinations and constellations. New actors jostle, alongside those with thousand-year histories; inventions and innovations feed off the very traditions they excoriate.<sup>32</sup>

A number of authors have tried to translate such metaphors and ideas into art historical inquiry. Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood's study *Anachronic Renaissance*, for example, argues that while an artwork is produced at a particular historical moment,

it also points away from that moment, backward to a remote ancestral origin, perhaps, or to a prior artifact, or to an origin outside time, in divinity. At the same

time, it points forward to all its future recipients who will activate and reactivate it as a meaningful event.<sup>33</sup>

The meaning of an artwork is never constrained by the circumstances of its creation alone, a fact that contradicts the ordering of artworks into ordered temporal units and periods. Keith Moxey has likewise claimed that historical time is heterochronic; it moves at different speeds in different places. As a result, 'the history of art faces the disconcerting possibility that the time it imagines, history's very architecture, is neither uniform nor linear but rather multivalent and discontinuous'.<sup>34</sup> Warburg's idea of the disruptive agency of the work of art has taken on a renewed significance in this context. As María del Carmen Molina Brea has stated, '*Nachleben* anachronizes history. . . . The coexistence in an image of heterogenous times that are in tension . . . produces an anachronistic time, and an anachronistic image'.<sup>35</sup> It is with Warburg in mind, too, that Moxey has claimed: 'The aesthetic power of works of art, the fascination of images and their capacity to shape our response in the present, argues against treating them as if they were simply documents of particular historical horizons'.<sup>36</sup> A similar point has been taken up by Dan Karlholm, who has argued for the need to see artworks *anachronically*. Not just dead specimens belonging to the past, they 'demand to be actualized or realized anew with each attentive encounter'.<sup>37</sup>

### Other Art Histories

The critique of art historical time draws on an extensive body of social and cultural thought. What might an art history look like that was informed by these critical observations? Much critical interest has tended to focus on their role as a means of decolonizing art history. Partha Mitter, for example, has argued that the reliance of European scholars of Indian art on linear conceptions of time has led to important misunderstandings of its history.<sup>38</sup> Prior to British colonization, he states, members of Indian cultures had only a vague sense of the past as different from the present, and certainly not as an earlier stage of a linear development. In addition, time was seen as cyclical. Hence, if we view Indian art in terms borrowed from the history of European art, we misrecognize how artists and architects understood tradition, how they placed themselves in relation to it, and we may misinterpret their intentions and the meanings of the artefacts they produced. John Clark, writing in the same collection of essays as Mitter, has explored the implication of altered models of time for understanding the interaction between modern Euroamerican art and that of several Asian countries.<sup>39</sup> Asian modernism was not, he argues, simply the transfer of styles and motifs, as if catching up with and becoming integrated into the ever-expanding development of modern art from Paris. Rather, it was a series of points of contact between artistic cultures on different temporal trajectories. Locally, Japanese, Chinese or Thai art, for example, are organized around systems of periodization (based on political dynasties) that have little in common with those used in the history of Western art. This difference should inform how we view specific instances of cultural interaction, such as the adoption of figurative oil-painting in 1950s Indonesia, or the shift, in mid-nineteenth-century Siam, towards quotidian and mundane subject matter in art following encounters with American missionaries. They have to be understood in the context of local histories and temporalities and not as part of a single globalizing narrative of modernization.

Our concern is with its implication for central and eastern Europe, and it is not difficult to envisage the salience of the rethinking of time here, too. In relation to modernism, for example, a major starting point would be to stress the multivalent character of modernity. I have already stated that a notable flaw in histories of modernism has tended to be the laying down of a basic historical template, shaped by innovations and practices in the major art centres of Western Europe such as Paris, Munich and Berlin. Accepting this as a *generalized* model inevitably means that Central and Eastern European modernisms are relegated to the status of peripheries or satellites. Yet the possibility of another reading was already being highlighted by Carl Schorske in the 1960s, when he outlined the specific character of Viennese modernity (marked by a culture of aesthetic disenchantment and quasi-aristocratic withdrawal), how it differed from the traditional yardstick of Paris and how that explained the specific features of Viennese modernism.<sup>40</sup> A wide-ranging analysis is still lacking for the remainder of Central and Eastern Europe, but more focused studies have highlighted how this might inform our approach, such that we might also cease fitting artworks into a historical timeline that relates them to Parisian art and, instead, identify local historical trajectories. Czech Cubism is an instructive example. Cubist architects and artists in Bohemia and Moravia were informed by a historical sensibility (their paintings often included mythological subjects) that was completely absent in the contemporaneous works of Braque and Picasso. There may have been a superficial formal affinity, but artists such as Bohumil Kubišta, Emil Filla and Antonín Procházka radically reinterpreted its purpose and meaning. Following this argument, Cubism in Paris and Prague belonged in two different historical trajectories. The predominance of the still life in the Cubist work of Picasso and Braque highlighted the importance of the Classical tradition whereas, as Jiří Švestka has argued, Czech Cubism was in part an interrogation of the legacy of Baroque Bohemian culture.<sup>41</sup>

Jindřich Vybíral has suggested that the very term ‘Czech Cubism’ may be, for all its ubiquity, problematic, because it was, in certain respects, a *post hoc* invention; when the Prague-based art critic Vincenc Kramář published his study *Kubismus* – the first book on Cubism in any language – in 1921, not a single Czech artist was mentioned.<sup>42</sup> Not until the late 1920s was the notion coined in order to grant a place for Czech art and architecture in the wider landscape of European modernism. But in so doing, it unintentionally diminished Czech Cubism’s originality, casting it merely as a local, exotic variant of the Parisian originator.<sup>43</sup>

A similar questioning of historical frameworks has been proposed by Tomáš Pospiszyl in relation to Czechoslovak art from the 1950s and 1960s. At first sight it appears to be a slightly belated adoption of ideas to be found in American art of the same period, testament to the porous nature of the Iron Curtain. The sculptures of Jiří Kovanda bear formal comparison with American Minimalism, those of Eva Kmentová to work by Eva Hesse. On the one hand, this is an arresting similarity, since it reminds us that the border between the capitalist West and the socialist bloc of Central and Eastern Europe was permeable. Yet, Pospiszyl argues, Czechoslovak art cannot simply be ‘slotted in’ to a single narrative of post-war modern art, nor seen merely as a set of eccentric variations on a basically American theme, despite superficial similarities. For the work of Kovanda, Kmentová and others was the product of local genealogies and historical trajectories. Its meaning would be completely lost in an analysis primarily concerned with their relation to the dominant tradition of American modernist sculpture.<sup>44</sup> These are just a few of many examples where it becomes clear that local

trajectories and histories have to be mobilized to do justice to the art and architecture of Central and Eastern Europe and that if we do so, we become sensitive to specific meanings that would otherwise be erased by a single, all-encompassing narrative.

### Critical Observations

Multiple frames of reference, fragmented periods, disruptive artworks, uneven, discontinuous time and the simultaneity of the non-synchronous – such figures and metaphors have fuelled a growing interrogation of the way traditional art history has thought about time and temporality. Yet despite their importance, they are not all equally decisive, and have their own drawbacks. Before developing this latter point, it may be useful to summarize some of the principal arguments. We might do so as follows:

1. The division of art into periods simplifies cultures which do not, in fact, lend themselves to such generalizations.
2. Art is too diverse to be reduced to a single linear path or to be seen as developing towards a specific goal; such a view is not only simplistic, it also entails wilful exclusion of practices that do not fit into it.
3. The linear narrative of art privileges certain traditions (primarily those of Western Europe and North America) and categorizes divergent practices as backward and peripheral. It has therefore been one of the many instruments of Western symbolic domination.
4. The division of art into a succession of periods negates its dynamic character. It treats artworks as a sequence of ‘specimens’, whereas they exert a powerful emotional and intellectual hold long after the time of their creation. Artworks have a surplus that spills over the boundaries of rigid temporal categorization.
5. The linear history of art misrepresents the temporality of lived experience. This is particularly so in cultures where time is experienced as cyclical, for example, but it is a general issue. The experience of modernity was complex, involving experience of the intermingling of past, present and future, anachronisms and heterochrony.

The arguments revolve around two basic issues: adequacy (is this an accurate representation?) and the politics of representation (what interests does this serve?). Some of them involve both. The debate over linear art history, for example, involves questions of adequacy (e.g. did art really develop in *this* fashion? did it even ‘develop?’) and of ideology (e.g. to what extent does a linear view legitimize cultural hierarchies and make European culture normative?). Yet, although these issues are often overlapping, they are not mutually dependent. For example, the division of art history into periods is not a necessary consequence of a linear model of time. Moreover, if ‘individual period formulations always secretly imply or project narratives or “stories” – narrative representations – of the historical sequence in which such individual periods take their place’, to cite one author, these stories need not be linear narratives.<sup>45</sup> A cyclical history of art, for example, could equally be structured into periods, and, indeed, certain stylistic period terms – such as ‘modern’, ‘Baroque’ or ‘archaic’ – have been used in this way.

Pinder’s book on generations reminds us that the practice of periodization is one of the most commonly criticized aspects of art historiography, but though few would dispute that the use of ‘periods’ involves simplification, this does not automatically discredit their use. For, it can be objected, *all* art history involves simplification; indeed, simplification



is a necessary condition of historical representation, which involves making selections. Conversely, *lack* of selection leads to incoherence. This much was understood even in the formative years of the modern discipline. In 1886, Anton Springer complained:

[W]e accommodate far too many artists in our art history books; we fill them with so many names that there is no place left for the subject itself, namely, the depiction of the constant development of art and the narration of the great destinies of our past artistic life. . . . Art History only concerns itself with personalities who typify the dominant direction, or who influenced the course of development. How laughable it would appear if the political history of a century or of a nation also treated in detail the insignificant state formations, the rulers who had undertaken nothing and the silent, mediocre minister.<sup>46</sup>

The contemporary reader may demur at Springer's invocation of the idea of the 'dominant direction', although most art historians do indeed talk of the logic of particular historical moments, but his characterization pinpoints an important issue. Art historians make judgements about the relative significance of works of art in relation to one or other frame of analysis. Even if one makes a point of attending to 'marginal' artworks, this will be in the name of some larger narrative to do with marginality and will involve selecting from amongst the larger pool of such works. Since there cannot be a history of *every* artwork, individual examples are selected as representative of some larger conception or theme.

It may be useful to ask what an art historical period is. Fredric Jameson's much-cited characterization of a period as a notional span of time in which 'everything becomes so seamlessly interrelated that we confront either a total system or an idealistic "concept" of a period' hardly encompasses the many and varied ways in which periods have been used.<sup>47</sup> In some cases, periods are defined in terms of chronology (e.g. the nineteenth century), but others are defined by a historical relation (e.g. the Archaic, the Middle Ages), by an aesthetic or sociocultural concept (e.g. the Enlightenment, modernity, the Baroque), by a historical event or process (e.g. interwar, pre-Columbian) or even in relation to a person or dynasty (e.g. Habsburg, Ming). Some periods are not even defined by temporal markers at all, or are so loosely defined (e.g. early modern) as to make it difficult to pinpoint them to a specific chronological moment in the way Jameson suggests.<sup>48</sup> Artworks can also belong to several different periods at the same time. It is instructive here to consider Robert Bagley's discussion of style and periodization in relation to the Louvre. He notes that it can be described alternately as Classical, by reference to other Classical and non-Classical buildings, as French, in which case it is discussed alongside examples of French architecture to which it possesses salient similarities, as well as Baroque, which would be to note that

it has borrowed from seventeenth-century Italian buildings some of the qualities that distinguish them from sixteenth-century Italian buildings. To call the building French is to direct attention to qualities that distinguish it from Bernini's designs; to call it Baroque is to say that Bernini and Perrault have something in common.<sup>49</sup>

It can also be designated as Perraultesque, which conjures up a series of other comparisons or frames of reference, placing it in the context of other buildings by the architect in question.

For Bagley the conclusion is clear: there is no single definitive characterization of *the* period style of the building, for it is ‘not a property of single objects considered in isolation. It is a way of talking about one object’s relationships with other objects’.<sup>50</sup> Periods serve the heuristic function of shaping how historical relations between works of art are posited, but a single object may be described in terms of several different historical frames of reference at the same time, depending on which aspects are brought into focus. Artworks are produced either at the same time or in chronological succession, and art historians posit relations between them, bringing into consideration, too, various aesthetic and sociohistorical categories. Different temporal scales may also be invoked, from the *longue durée* to a single day or hour. It is also possible to identify what Foucault would later refer to as ‘discursive regularities’, that is features shared by large numbers of artworks that, where deemed salient, may lead to generalizations about art in a particular place and time. To state that we cannot dispense with such ‘regularities’ is not simply to be resigned to the notion that periods are ‘necessary fictions’.<sup>51</sup> The term ‘fictions’ implies a reluctance to accept their legitimacy. Rather, periods exemplify a wider phenomenon, namely that art history necessarily involves schematizations and simplifications. The problem with periodization, therefore, may not lie in the division of art history into periods per se. Instead, it may be found in the situation described by Bagley with regard to style, namely when it ‘becomes a metaphysical entity with a life of its own, a life that unfolds independent of individual caprice . . . a phenomenon that precedes and shapes the objects’ in which ‘artists are the instruments through which it acts’.<sup>52</sup> In addition, problems arise when the criteria of periodization remain opaque or, indeed, when traditional practices of periodization are reproduced by force of habit or in reference to arbitrary frames of reference, including chronological dates.

We might explore the implications of its converse: what might an art history look like that resisted generalizations, including periodization? Moxey has argued that ‘the requirement to relate historical developments to one another and to attribute them to a common source obscures the particularity of the local for the sake of the universal’.<sup>53</sup> We might be sympathetic to his attitude towards the imposition of *universal* frames of reference, but it is difficult to make out what kind of art history it would be that refused the requirement to relate historical developments to each other. It would be denuded of any means of determining the significance of singular artworks. Just as the meaning of the individual terms of a language is dependent on their relation to others, so judgements of art historical significance – and hence principles of selection – are always relational.

At this point it is pertinent to turn to the topic of time. For it has been suggested that we rethink the shape of time. Yet for all the suggestive nature of the metaphors proposed, time, strictly speaking, has no form at all. It is neither discontinuous nor entangled, neither linear nor uneven, nor fractured, circular, heterogeneous, multidirectional or plural. As George Kubler notes: ‘We know time only indirectly by what happens in it: by observing change and permanence, by marking the succession of events among stable settings, and by noting the contrast of varying rates of change’.<sup>54</sup> Things can be organized *within* time, but not time itself.

This observation has a number of implications. If, like Pinder (and Schwarz), we argue that the art historical division into neat sequences or periods fails to capture the temporality of lived experience, we do so by relying on generalized abstractions (mobilizing concepts such as ‘the temporal horizon of modernity’, ‘the Indian

experience of time'), positing a collective historical subject that is assumed to stand, metonymically, for the culture as a whole. Yet the meaning of this is not clear. To take Koselleck's discussion of modernity, one may notice events taking place at a certain rate, that innovations occur at an accelerating pace, and the difference between the new and the old may be more jarring, but this is distinct from the claim that time itself is experienced in a certain way. Indeed, Jameson argues that the subjective experience of historical individuals simply cannot be represented, leading him to the conclusion that 'the narrative of modernity cannot be organized around categories of subjectivity . . . only situations'.<sup>55</sup>

A central point here is the relation between natural and historical time. For Panofsky the distinction was fundamental, and it is so for Koselleck, too, who has argued that 'natural time, with its recurrence and its time limits, is a permanent premise both of history and of its interpretation as an academic discipline' since 'even seemingly general patterns of explanation inevitably refer to chronological succession, without which every history would be not only meaningless but impossible'.<sup>56</sup> For Benjamin, Harootunian, Moxey and others, however, there is no form of time that is not a social construct. For Moxey and Karlholm, one of the fundamental questions of art history is the following: 'Can the different scales of qualities of time that have marked the world's cultures be reconciled with one another? If times are to be made commensurable, by what standard are they to be translated?'<sup>57</sup> It is notable that they are not talking in terms of differing interpretations of the historical relations between events *in time* but, rather, differing *qualities* of time itself. The precise meaning of this is not entirely clear, but they appear to have erased the difference between natural and historical time.

The difficulty here is that this manoeuvre removes the grounds on which judgements of cultural unevenness, synchronicity/asynchronicity and so forth can even be passed. Moxey and Karlholm are right to inquire as to what might be the common point of reference, but they are describing an impossible comparison. For if it were the case that it was 'qualities of time' that were being compared, there would be no answer to their question since there really would be, as they imply, no way to compare them. In fact, we might better describe the problem of commensurability not in terms of how *time* is organised but of how relations between events are described and organized in different cultures.

We might approach this in the light of the philosopher Donald Davidson's comments on the idea of conceptual schemes. Davidson points out that experience cannot be organized, only experiences:

We cannot attach a clear meaning to the notion of organizing a single object (the world, nature etc.) unless that object is understood to contain or consist in other objects. Someone who sets out to organize a closet arranges the things in it. If you are told not to organize the shoes and shirts, but the closet itself, you would be bewildered.<sup>58</sup>

As with experience so with time. Events *in time* can be organized, but not time itself. Indeed, it is difficult to grasp what it might even *mean* for time, rather than the relations between objects and events, to be described as entangled or asynchronous. Understood as a matter of the commensurability and inter-translatibility of different ways of describing temporal relations between events, it then becomes a different kind of problem, but one that can be resolved.

## Conclusion

We might conclude by asking how this theoretical debate can be translated back into the concerns of art history. At the heart of the recent interventions about time and periodization is the question of the temporal schemas we construct when we describe the relations between works of art. If we focus on the specific topic of modernism, the source of most examples discussed, the debate revolves around the implications of a unitary, linear model of time for the kind of relations traditionally posited between artistic practices in Prague, Paris, Berlin, Budapest and Bucharest, to name but a few examples. The argument of this chapter is that approaching this issue in terms of different temporalities hardly resolves the question. It would instead place us in the situation described in Davidson's discussion of conceptual schemes. Like the closet in his analogy, it would be like inquiring not into how to organize the relations between modernist artworks and practices across Europe but, rather, into how to organize modernism itself.

One can emphasize (rightly) the plurality of historical trajectories of modernist art across Europe (and globally) without having to invoke metaphors of multiple temporalities. For without some common background – the 'natural time' of Koselleck – it would be impossible even to begin that task of mapping out relations. Talk of multiple, incommensurable, temporalities potentially obscures rather than illuminates analytical judgements and ends up being counterproductive, since it undercuts the grounds or common frame of reference on which the judgements of difference can be made.

This touches on the question of periods, too. For if we are to heed Bagley's comments, the problem may not lie in referring to periods, which serve an important heuristic function and which are, in any case, considerably more flexible than critics would admit. Rather, it may lie in the reliance on reified notions of periods – or of 'modernism' in this case – which thereby cease to serve the purposes of the interpreter and become, instead, a fixed grid imposed on singular practices, objects and images.

Historians of modern Central and Eastern European art have understandably been wary of narratives privileging the modernisms of Paris and Berlin. Yet positing a variety of different metaphors of time arguably does little to address the basic issue: namely, how to construct a framework for the analysis of modernism that problematizes the arbitrary hierarchies that have governed discourse hitherto. Indeed, the invocation of multiple, non-commensurable temporalities avoids the issue entirely. Unless one is to discard the idea of modernism – an implausible solution given the profound ways that a self-consciousness of being 'modern' shaped the course of art in the twentieth century – it will be impossible to avoid describing in some way the relation between the different modernist practices, of Central, Eastern and Western Europe, and one in which 'modernism' functions as a meaningful heuristic term. The debate over temporality merely betrays the fact that we have yet to devise better terms of comparison and analysis.

## Notes

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1 Loos, 'Ornament and Crime', 21.

2 Ibid., 21.

3 Hegel, *Aesthetics*.

- 4 Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 41.
- 5 Friedman, 'Alternatives to Periodization', 388.
- 6 The problems of interpreting Central and Eastern European modernism in relation to that in France or Germany are eloquently described in Elkins, 'Review of Mansbach, *Modern Art in Eastern Europe*'.
- 7 Pinder, *Das Problem der Generation in der Kunstgeschichte*.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 10 Panofsky, '"Renaissance": Self-Definition or Self-Deception?'.
- 11 Panofsky, 'Reflections on Historical Time'.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 697.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 700.
- 14 Schwarz, 'Ernst Bloch and Wilhelm Pinder: Out of Sync', 68.
- 15 See for example Didi-Huberman, *The Surviving Image*; Beyer and Bredekamp, eds., *Bilderfahrzeuge*.
- 16 Didi-Huberman, 'Artistic Survival: Panofsky vs. Warburg and the Exorcism of Impure Time', 273.
- 17 This is documented in Schoell-Glass, *Aby Warburg und der Antisemitismus*.
- 18 Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880–1918*.
- 19 Koselleck, *Sediments of Time*, 91.
- 20 Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, 97
- 21 Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 122.
- 22 Schwarz, 'Ernst Bloch and Wilhelm Pinder', 69.
- 23 Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History', in *Selected Writings 4: 1938–1940*, 389–400.
- 24 Harootunian, 'Some Thoughts on Comparability and the Space-Time Problem', 45.
- 25 Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*.
- 26 Birth, *Objects of Time*.
- 27 Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 143.
- 28 Pomeranz, 'Teleology, Discontinuity and World History'.
- 29 Conrad, *What Is Global History?* 4.
- 30 Harootunian, 'Remembering the Historical Present', 478.
- 31 Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, 154.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 158.
- 33 Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 9.
- 34 Moxey, *Visual Time: The Image in History*, 1.
- 35 Del Carmen Molina Brea, 'Rhizomatic Mnemosyne', n.p.
- 36 Moxey, *Visual Time*, 139.
- 37 Dan Karlholm, 'Is Art History to be Closed, Saved or Restarted? Considering Efficient Art History', in *Time in the History of Art*, eds. Karlholm and Moxey, 21.
- 38 Partha Mitter, 'Colonial Modern: A Clash of Colonial and Indigenous Chronologies – The Case of India', in *Time in the History of Art*, eds. Karlholm and Moxey, 62–78.
- 39 John Clark, 'Time Processes in the History of the Asian Modern', in *Time in the History of Art*, eds. Karlholm and Moxey, 45–61.
- 40 Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*.
- 41 Švestka, 'Czech Cubism: The Dilemma of the Nascent Central-European Avant-Garde'.
- 42 Kramář, *Kubismus*.
- 43 Vybíral, 'Český kubismus na trhu symbolických statků'.
- 44 Pospiszyl, *An Associative Art History*.
- 45 Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*.
- 46 Springer, *Bilder aus der neueren Kunstgeschichte*, 396–97.
- 47 Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 28.
- 48 On this see Brown, 'Periods and Resistances'.
- 49 Bagley, *Max Loehr and the Study of Chinese Bronzes*, 123.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 124.
- 51 Perkins, *Is Literary History Possible?* 65. Perkins states: 'we require the concept of a unified period in order to deny it and thus make apparent the particularity, local difference, heterogeneity . . . that are now preferred categories for understanding any moment of the past'.
- 52 Bagley, *Max Loehr and the Study of Chinese Bronzes*, 125.

- 53 Moxey, *Visual Time*, 26–27.  
 54 Kubler, *The Shape of Time*, 13.  
 55 Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, 57.  
 56 Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History*, 109.  
 57 Moxey and Karlholm, ‘Introduction: Telling Art’s Time’, in *Time in the History of Art*, 3.  
 58 Davidson, ‘On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme’, 14.

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