Histories of Contemporary Art

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TO BAXTER, TALIA, HARVEY, AND RORY

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Introduction

anticipation and historicity

What does it mean to say, in the same breath, that contemporary art is an art to come and is also subject to—indeed, calls out for—historical interrogation? The title and subtitle of this book plunge us into the workings of a three-part dynamic that drives contemporary art today. Contemporary art is, pervasively, an art to come; it is—in various senses, and increasingly, perhaps infinitely—anticipatory (of a future, however, that is becoming ever more unpredictable). At the same time, it harbors, often to the point of saturation, unbidden memories and historical longings—resonances, residuals, recursions, repetitions, and reconstructions that revive times past as well as earlier art (both of which are growing in quantity, complexity, and interest, as researchers reveal more and more about them). Contemporary art also manifests a volatile ambivalence about what, on the face of it, is its main temporal location: the time when it is being made and the time that makes it. Moreover, these three temporalities do not coexist as roughly equal, parallel congeries. Rather, multiple futures, many pasts, and a plethora of presents subsist simultaneously, all moving in many different directions at once. The sense that time marches forward—from the past, through the present, to the future—seems old-fashioned. Faced with this constant

temporal conundrum, artists, critics, curators, gallerists, and collectors—even some theorists and historians—range wildly from a fulsome embrace of its dazzling disarray to a wary, total rejection of everything happening now, of all art that presents itself as being of this multilayered present.

Seeming contradictions abound, as do unseemly paradoxes. Let us confront them directly, starting with my opening question, the puzzle of why an art to come should be viewed through a historical lens. When those who would be historians of contemporary art search for its origins, when they look for signs of modern art becoming significantly contemporary, the more cautious favor decades as temporal markers: the early 2000s, say, or the 1990s, the 1980s, the 1960s and 1970s, or perhaps the 1950s. Bolder minds fix on specific dates: 2000, 1989, and 1968 (or, more inclusively, 1965). Each of these back projections is an attempt to understand the source of what counts most in art practice now. In 2000, for example, the congruence of several recent developments—among them, the market rebound of the 1980s, the eruption of groups such as the Young British Artists, exhibitions such as *Magiciens de la terre*, the proliferation of biennials during the 1990s, the pervasiveness of postmodern theories, and the spread of globalization—made 1989 seem a turning point in art as much as it was in world affairs. Late in the second decade of the twenty-first century, however, as the international order established in the postwar years so spectacularly unravels, 1945 looms as an important marker of the prehistory of the present, and the concerns of those years seem to many commentators to prefigure the challenges that preoccupy contemporary artists, as they do people everywhere.

The sheer scale, the overwhelming quantity, and the global propinquity of contemporary art—as well as, increasingly, its market prominence—has meant that historical approaches to understanding it have been rare, especially when compared to records of first reactions, attempts at neutral description, and promotional hype. In the last few years, however, some considered interpretations of the nature and development of contemporary art—covering between two to five decades of the past up until now and encompassing more and more of the globe—have been advanced. This sudden surge requires historical mapping, and each interpretation needs to be assessed as to its value as a historical hypothesis. Writing histories of contemporary art has itself become a subject for art-historiographical inquiry and reflection.

The chapters in the first part of this book are examples of how I have, since 2000, been consciously writing histories of contemporary art as it was happening and is happening now. Architecture and design are very much included as

major visual arts. Close studies of how the three-part temporal dynamic plays out within contemporary Chinese art and in Australian Aboriginal art are followed by examinations of crucial spatial thematics: placemaking, world picturing, and connectivity. The chapters in the second part are systematic proposals about how writing contemporary art's histories might—indeed, should—be done, including close assessments of how others (curators, critics, philosophers, artists, and art historians) are attempting to do so. All essays were written preparatory to, alongside, and after books such as *The Architecture of Aftermath* (2006), *What Is Contemporary Art?* (2009), *Contemporary Art: World Currents* (2011), *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (2012), and *Talking Contemporary Curating* (2015). Only two chapters (2 and 9) are reprints, five are extensively revised and expanded from earlier essays or lectures, and four were written specifically for this volume. Together, they profile how I have canvassed and continuously revisited a set of ideas about contemporary art, attempting to track its abrupt yet protracted birthing from within modern art; its fraught, uneven yet pervasive globality; and its complex, multiplicitous contemporaneity. Gathering these texts in this volume has enabled me to demonstrate this tracking as a work-in-progress, to reflect further on why and how I went about the work, and to suggest something about what will always remain to be done.

OUR CONTEMPORARY CONTEMPORANEITY

Today, everyone involved in the visual arts registers the intense presence of global forces within local situations, and many of us, in our travels, actively valorize signifiers of locality, working with and against the grain of both globalization and parochialism. We are inside what it means to be contemporary, where art is the art of our contemporary condition. I have argued for some years now that an expansive concept of *contemporaneity* is crucial to grasping what it is to live in the world today, and to make art within this world. Of course, most of today's conditions were shaped in earlier times: modern times, ancient ones, and those outside Western historical parameters. But some conditions are new in ways different from earlier differentiations. Yes, our present contemporaneity shares much with the self-evident facts of what it has always been like to be contemporary: immediacy (it is happening now), simultaneity (at the same time as something else), and coincidence (to more than one person, thing, situation). Emphasis on "the contemporary" in current art and theoretical discourse is, I argue, an acknowledgment of presentism—the prioritization of the present—as the contemporary lure. Use of this vague marker as the biggest

idea defining contemporary art and life, however, usually means falling into its self-deluding trap. In contrast, an acute understanding of our contemporary contemporaneity begins by recognizing that, unlike every earlier period, today no larger framework, no inevitable world-historical orientation, and no commanding narrative remains strong enough in its actual unfolding in the world to save us from having to find, with increasing urgency, our futures entirely within the resources available to us now. Our time, to which we necessarily belong, and which we share like it or not, is no longer a time *for* us. Naked to the present, we are obliged to understand our situation without illusion: "Contemporaneity consists precisely in the acceleration, ubiquity, and constancy of radical disjunctures of perception, of mismatching ways of seeing and valuing the same world, in the actual coincidence of asynchronous temporalities, in the jostling contingency of various cultural and social multiplicities, all thrown together in ways that highlight the fast-growing inequalities within and between them."[1] This description was italicized in my introduction to the 2008 volume *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity*, *Postmodernity*, *Contemporaneity*, in which several thinkers, using various perspectives, began to take on the daunting task of understanding how forces such as these were shaping contemporary life and art, and, indeed, had been doing so, throughout the world, since at least the 1980s.

The notion of contemporaneity, understood in this expansive sense, pinpoints the dynamic at work *between* the many factors usually adduced as predominant explanations of what shapes the contemporary world: modernity, globalization, neoliberalism, decolonization, fundamentalism, terrorism, network culture, and global warming, among many others less prominent but just as profound, such as indigenization. Each of these terms cluster a particular set of world-changing forces into a configuration that, its discursive chorus claims, encompasses the others—in fact, in principle, or in the future. Yet none has succeeded in doing so, nor seems likely to succeed. Nor can any of these factors, singly or together, account for every aspect of contemporary life as it is experienced today. Nevertheless, their contention creates the divisive differentiations that define our contemporaneity—precisely those qualities of multeity, adventitiousness, and inequity that I list in the description just quoted—but it also generates counterresponses, the most important of which are an insistence on the value of place, the search for constructive world pictures, and the reach for coeval connectivity in all dimensions of our relationships with one another. All these are ongoing processes, feeding a historical condition that is in constant, contentious, unpredictable evolution. The *work* of contemporary art in these

circumstances, therefore, is not only to picture these divisive differences but also to counter their destructive effects by helping to build coeval connectivity. Tracking how artists are taking on the paradoxical challenges of our shared but divided contemporaneity is the work of the historian of contemporary art, and it is what I attempt throughout these essays.[2]

THE WORK OF CONTEMPORARY ART HISTORY

Many contemporary artists continue to believe, or at least hope, that they can make a constructive difference in these unpromising circumstances, and many attract the support of curators who share their optimism. Yet few commentators on the arts, and even fewer art critics and historians, see much evidence for such a positive outlook. Listen to their skeptical voices: You feel obliged to plot the history of contemporary art, as it is happening—that is your goal? You cannot be serious! *Histories*, perhaps, as a set of provisional, potentially historical prospects, but that, too, seems premature and a mistaken notion of what historical inquiry ought to be. How will you go about the research without being misled by proximity to your sources? What counts as an archive? Art being made today is just too unformed to be clearly understood, too unpredictable as to how it might turn out, too soon to tell. Give the art, and its interpretive apparatus, time to evolve; allow them their own unfolding; and let them work out their mutual accountability in due course.[3]

The skeptical voices continue to wail. Surely, they say, this enterprise should be discipline-wide; in fact, it would need to be an interdisciplinary effort, given that the leading art history institutes, and nearly all professional art historians, see themselves in embattled retreat from potential invasion by a younger generation dazzled by the art of their own times. Stop interfering; stay with writing art criticism—that, at least, might enable a few artists to see their trajectories a little more clearly and help your readers appreciate what those artists are trying to do. Who are you, anyway, to take on such a task? What gives you the right, in conscience, to speak on these matters, as a white male academic based in institutions in the United States, Australia, and Europe—in states, economies, and regimes whose developments have been based on exploiting the resources of their own Indigenous peoples and those of the rest of the world?

An implicated participant and a contrarian stranger in several art worlds, I constantly ask myself these kinds of questions. I answer them in two basic ways. First, I counter that to defer to such doubts means conceding the ground as is, leaving the prevailing art-world fictions in place, along with the iniquitous,

countercreative, and world-endangering social, economic, and political structures that currently sustain them. Retreat from responsibility by those of us who wish to work toward a better world permits the vast nonsense of promotional art babble to fill the available discursive space, which leads directly to my second answer: yes, one should honor the realism underlying these doubts, acknowledge the justified anxieties, absorb the obstacles, then just do it. Make the art. Say what needs to be said. Write the essays and books. Mount the exhibitions. Engage in the debates. Deliver the lectures. Teach the courses. Always and everywhere, face up to the test of critical accountability, which is to make a manifest, constructive difference in how the world is seen, and in how it might be occupied.

SEEING HISTORICALLY IN THE PRESENT

Historical understanding is necessary for achieving critical distance. It is the essential precondition—not sufficient, but absolutely necessary—during every stage of the process, from the doubts that pose the problems to the point when inquiry turns, as it must, into active agency. So, I have striven to maintain, always, at each instant and continuously, the necessity of taking a *historical* perspective on the present, as it is happening. Insisting on the historicity of the immediate slows down its durational mass, catches visible traces of its multiple movements, freeze-frames some of its specters, evaporates its most attractive mystifications, and points to aspects of its possible futurity. There is, as well, a welcome reverse effect. Seeing the present historically is disjunctive: it is freed from determination's concrete channeling, from the rolling thunder of inevitability, and from the subtler straitjacket of probability. It is aflame with the formative force of contingency, alive to the many temporalities that flow through each given present, one of which—or, more likely, a combination of some—will mold the moment. Our present contemporaneity demands this and eclipses all other frames, while including their persistence. As well, and as a consequence, historical perspectives on times past have changed accordingly: they have shifted from seeking out stories of, or lessons from, "the past" toward an engaged picturing of cotemporalities in particular places at specific times prior to the present. Everything, including all art made in the past, was once contemporary. Everything, including all art made in the past, is doubly so now.

Dichotomy, antinomy, and paradox animate all our relations today, not least in the discursive worlds in which contemporary art is produced and circulated: in art practice, of course, but also in art theory, architecture, art criticism, general art history, art historiography, as well as in curating, museum work, mar-

keting and collecting art, teaching it, and administering the arts and culture. Over the past few decades, without conscious planning, I have written books and essays seeking to map, occupy, and change orientations in one after another of these worlds, exploring the discursive strategies operative within each one, asking always how its self-descriptions appear when compared to those prevalent in nearby and distant worlds. I have taken special note of how each has negotiated the confused but epochal shift from modern self-conceptions to more contemporary ones; from modernity as the master narrative of how these worlds connect, through postmodernity as modernity's internal counternarrative; toward the current situation in which contemporaneities of difference prevail, proliferating multiplicity as the basis of constructive being. Meanwhile, earlier modes of world picturing vigorously push back, insisting on their universality, their fundamentalism, or, at least, their relevance.

These changes are taking place because contemporaneous differences abound in all the institutional and social settings in which each of these worlds is embedded, continuously challenging the habitus that incessantly seeks to structure them as worlds. Differencing and repetition: the dynamic interaction between these two deep impulses is what constantly constitutes our contemporaneity. It calls us to articulate it, most seductively in its own, relatively easy terms. Instead, I believe, we must acknowledge the salience of these terms for those who use them, but then rub them hard, against their grain, however variegated and elusive that might seem.

For these reasons, all the essays in this book—while being focused on accounting for the art under examination, and on mapping the contexts of its making—are art historiographical; that is, they are studies of aspects of contemporary art and architecture that explicitly highlight pertinent questions of art-historical method. Each particular inquiry is set directly and overtly in relation to relevant debates within the discipline—or, at least, the discipline as I imagine it to be, as it gradually, reluctantly, includes contemporary art within its purview. At the same time, in these essays I constantly question the standard assumptions of art history as a discourse, alert to its entanglement with the other discourses that surround the making, disseminating, and interpreting of art. I also strive to be alive to how art enters and leaves and reenters the many other ways of world making, placemaking, and connecting that constitute our contemporary condition.

The chapters are arranged in two parts, each organized chronologically. The first tracks key steps in my journey since 2000 toward a theory of contemporary art within the conditions of contemporaneity, as I sketched its vital

elements through public lectures, panel papers, journal articles, and occasional essays. In the opening chapter, I present the occasion in early 2001 when my core views on these topics first came together in a systematic way. The next chapter is one of the many summaries of my views that I wrote during the subsequent decade; it condenses the accounts offered in the books mentioned earlier. In chapters 3 and 4, I ask whether contemporary architecture and design are evolving in parallel to the currents within contemporary art, and what concurrences exist between these visual arts today. The next chapters present, in turn, my views on contemporary Chinese and Australian Indigenous art, while the final chapters of part I explore the key themes that, I claim, are being addressed by contemporary artists everywhere: placemaking, world picturing, connectivity, and planetarity. Part II begins with an essay written in 2010 about the challenges of thinking contemporary art in historical terms. I discuss the awkward emergence of contemporary art history as a field of study, then comment on the ideas about contemporary art offered by some philosophers whose theories have been taken up within art discourse, and on the approaches of the few art historians and the even fewer artists who have suggestions about how contemporary art might be approached historically. Aimed primarily at professional readers, these essays are more explicitly art historiographic than those in the first part.

Transmediality in contemporary art practice, and interdisciplinarity in the interpretive discourses around it, both gathering pace since the 1960s, have, I believe, opened up the prospect of a genuinely contemporary art–historical profession. This would be a discipline that approaches art from everywhere, and from all times, with the presumption that the starting point is to discern—sensitively, accurately, and on the evidence—the contemporaneity of that art. The field's subject would be the various temporalities present within each work of art, the materialities employed during its making, the symbolic orders the art deploys, and its actual effects within the worlds where it first appeared and circulated. As well, a fully contemporary art–historical inquiry into past art would not hesitate to find ways to demonstrate when and how that artwork, or that kind of art, has achieved contemporaneity since then—at later times, and in other places, including, but not privileging, right here and right now. Once we see these interests driving art-historical inquiry into past art, we also see that taking an art-historiographical approach to the art being made today is the other side of this same methodological coin. We may be a long way from achieving a kind of art history that is contemporary in all these senses, but that fact only increases the urgency of bringing it into being.

Chapter 1, "Contemporary Art, Contemporaneity, and Art to Come," is the first public statement of what I had come to see as the outlines of an overall idea—not yet a set of historical hypotheses, much less a theory—about the nature of contemporary art. For a host of reasons, including those voiced by the hypothetical skeptics above, the question "What is contemporary art?" seemed, to many people, a strange one to pose in May 2001, when I used it as the title of a lecture "Contemporary Art, Contemporaneity, and Art to Come." The occasion was my farewell lecture as the Power Professor of Contemporary Art at the University of Sydney, before taking up my position at the University of Pittsburgh. I had held the title for five years and had been teaching courses in modern and contemporary art for decades. Yet, like my academic colleagues all over the world who did the same, I would regularly resile from offering overviews of what was, then, unacknowledged as a period within the history of art and, thus, was institutionally impossible as a field within the discipline of art history. My reluctance went beyond caution in the face of the pragmatics, prematurity, confusions, uncertainties, and challenges of sorting the actual from the dazzle within the booming market for contemporary art, as well as the implications of the explosion of art from everywhere, a profusion that seemed, during the last decades of the twentieth century, to be expanding faster than could ever be knowable and diversifying in unprecedented, quite unpredictable ways.

For decades, scholars committed to critical practice in art making, writing, curating, and theoretical work agitated against the use of generalized descriptors to perpetuate established power and hierarchical values—against, that is, the master narratives of great art, by great men, at great centers of great civilizations. Since the 1980s, we had also contended against the rapacious commercial greed of the burgeoning art markets, promoted largely through a language that appropriated art-historical scholarship mixed with excited, uplifting, but profoundly conservative fables about aesthetic feeling. Our critiques created within art history as a discipline a tendency often labeled "the new art history," but what I call "radical revisionism," an approach subjecting the insights of the discipline's founders to those arising from New Left politics, feminism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism, each of which constantly revises itself and its adjacent critiques.[4] This array of critical theories became prominent in universities, art publications, some museums, and many contemporary art spaces. Focused on the heroic story of dissident avant-gardists and the rise of modernism

during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in certain cities in Europe and North America, radical revisionism was mostly blind to modern art created elsewhere in the world. And it tended to regard contemporary art as the current phase of a debased modern art, basically complicit with capitalism and thus in inevitable decline, an art most suited to its moment—one dominated by the requirements of a rampant, globalizing neoliberalism.

During the 1990s, however, it became increasingly obvious to some of us that none of the approaches under the umbrella of radical revisionism was capable of providing an adequate account of the new kinds of art being made throughout the world, and that these approaches were starting to fall short as pathways toward completely understanding the art of the past. By 2000, I was fed up. Faced with the odd task of having to give a farewell lecture without having given an inaugural one, I cast around for models, starting with that of my predecessor, Bernard Smith, first director of the Power Institute, who, in 1969, outlined his vision for the teaching department and the collection of contemporary art then being formed. Strikingly, he profiled John Power, doctor, painter, and philanthropist, as "an unconventional, restless, alienated spirit," and the institute therefore as "a kind of institutionalization of restlessness, the gift of an alienated man, a gift for the promotion of change."[5] I was equally fond of Michel Foucault's scintillating mapping out of how he would tackle "The Order of Discourse" at the Collège de France in 1970. It was the prolegomenon to a new interdiscipline: discourse studies.[6] I found a pathway between them in George Steiner's "What Is Comparative Literature?," an inaugural lecture of 1994 which, it seemed to me, both defined his field in fresh terms—"Comparative literature listens and reads after Babel"—and boldly insisted that it be pursued in a completely contemporary way: "Comparative literature is an art of understanding centered in the eventuality and the defeats of translation."[7] Each of these men offered a unique answer to the same question: How might an essentially deinstitutionalizing practice be taught within one of the oldest, most flexible yet insistently self-sustaining human institutions, the university?

In the 1939 will that founded the Power Institute, its donor specified that it "make available to the people of Australia the latest ideas and theories in plastic arts by means of lectures and teaching and by the purchase of the most recent contemporary art of the world." During my directorship, the mission expanded beyond this much-needed but nonetheless one-way exchange. It became "to develop the latest ideas and theories concerning visual art and culture—past,

present, and future—and to communicate them, both nationally and internationally."[8] The first chapter in this volume is one attempt among many during those years to do just that: reverse this flow. By 2000, it was obvious that many Australian artists and some curators were contributing to the burgeoning circulation of international art, that original thinking by Australians was enriching critical theory in multiple languages, and, less obviously but insistently, that Indigenous artists had been making unique kinds of contemporary art for decades (perhaps millennia). These factors shaped my experience and my thinking, as did years of effort, following John Power and the instincts of my generation, to assist in the internationalization of Australian art.

Like everyone else, I was responding to the eruption of contemporary art into museum and market prominence during the 1990s, and to its growing role within the spectacle economy of late capitalist modernity. I sought first to understand this art in its own stated or implicit terms: these had to be at least part of what would become, in time, an art-historical understanding. Yet I was impatient with its frequent refusal, in the name of an "anything goes" postmodernism, to exercise critical judgment, its ironic yet feeble embrace of this economy of excitement and distraction. Instead, I identified a particular "constellation of problems and possibilities," detailed in chapter 1, which, I argued, artists of the day must embrace as their problematic or otherwise fail to be contemporary artists. I also drew on conversations with Jacques Derrida, as we tested the idea of contemporaneity evoking the internal multiplicity of contemporaneous immediacy, and puzzled over whether, in such situations, awareness could take form and art could be made—or would all art, from now on, be anticipatory, each work an instance of one among many kinds of "art to come"?[9] For explanations of the overall world (dis)order, including the cultural logic that it engendered, I continued to rely on the critical theories of postmodernity, especially those of David Harvey and Fredric Jameson.[10]

Critical postmodernity, deconstruction in its most engaged and encompassing forms, the most spectacular but also the most self-searching and socially conscious contemporary art—these were the most advanced, subtle, and searching forms of geopolitics, philosophy, and art. In chapter 1, I discuss examples of all of them. They should, I initially thought, add up to the best explanation of the current state of play between each of these worlds. But they did not, which raised some questions. Do we need improved versions of each of these, or a different mix of politics, theory, and art practice? Or has the time of total ideologies, overarching explanations, and dominant period styles passed?

In our daily lives, as we strive to reconstitute normalcies and adapt to unpredictable circumstances, we confront a present in which many distinct and mutually incompatible pictures of future worlds compete, none of them carrying the conviction once won by the now-discredited master narratives of the world's uneven but inevitable modernization. The possibility arises that no overarching world picture will ever again achieve anything approximating the kind or degree of consent once won by modernity. Okwui Enwezor, Nancy Condee, and I, along with many outstanding thinkers, first examined this sense of contemporaneity in detail at a 2004 conference exploring the implications of a loaded question: *In the aftermath of modernity, and the passing of the postmodern, how do we know and show what it is to live in the conditions of contemporaneity?*[11]

I have devoted much of the first decade of this century and since to developing answers to this question, especially to showing how it was shaping the practice of contemporary artists all over the world. These answers appear in polemical form in my book *What Is Contemporary Art?* (2009), which traces the struggles of major European and North American museums, mostly dedicated to modernism, as they face the challenges of contemporary art and of mass spectatorship; the effects of burgeoning high-end markets on contemporary art practice and discourse; the rise to prominence of art from third and fourth worlds, especially through the second wave of biennial exhibitions, such as the Bienal de la Habana, peaking in Documenta 11 (2002); and the emergence of a generation of artists exploring the nature of time, place, mediation, and mood in what they are experiencing as a world undergoing unprecedented, largely incomprehensible change.[12] Written as an introduction to the topic for a general readership, *Contemporary Art: World Currents* (2011) highlights the contemporary elements in mid-twentieth-century late modern art in Europe and North America; the postmodern return to figuration in the 1980s; the contemporary art boom in subsequent decades; the transitions from national modern arts to contemporary art in Russia and (east of) Europe, South and Central America, the Caribbean, China and East Asia, India, South and Southeast Asia, Oceania, the Middle East, and Africa; and the ways in which artists all over the world are working on world picturing, making art political on issues such as climate change, and navigating the complexities of multiple temporalities and social mediation.[13]

Chapter 2, "In a Nutshell: Art within Contemporary Conditions," is a summary of the main arguments of these books. It responds specifically to *October*

editor Hal Foster's concern, expressed in a 2009 questionnaire, that "much present practice seems to float free of historical determination, conceptual definition, and critical judgment," and that "such paradigms as 'the neo-avant-garde' and 'postmodernism,' which once oriented some art and theory, have run into the sand, and, arguably, no models of much explanatory reach or intellectual force have risen in their stead." He went on to ask, "What are some of its salient consequences for artists, critics, curators, and historians—for their formation and their practice alike?"[14]

Reacting to these questions, I set out, succinctly, the core elements of my argument about how contemporary art arises in the conditions of contemporaneity as I define them. After profiling the limits of art-world discourse on these questions, I suggest that three broad currents may be discerned in art today, each quite different in character, scale, and scope. They are, I argue, the manifestations in art practice and discourse of the major currents in global geopolitics, cultural exchange, human thinking, and geophysical change. They have taken distinctive forms in the many art-producing centers throughout the world since the 1950s, thus patterning the shift from modern to contemporary art that, in my view, is the defining art-historical fact of the recent past and the present. The first current prevails in the metropolitan centers of modernity in Europe and the United States (as well as in societies and subcultures closely related to them) and is a continuation of styles in the history of art, particularly modernist ones, in the form of various remodernisms. The second current arose from movements toward political, economic, and cultural independence that occurred in the former colonies of Europe, and on the edges of Europe, and then spread everywhere. Characterized above all by clashing ideologies and experiences, this "transitional transnationalism" leads artists to prioritize the imaging of both local and global issues as the urgent content of their work. Meanwhile, increasing numbers of artists working within the third current explore concerns—about self-fashioning, immediation, precarity, futurity, and climate change—that they feel personally yet share with others, particularly of their generation, throughout an increasingly networked world. Taken together, I suggest, these currents constituted the contemporary art of the late twentieth century, and their unpredictable unfolding and volatile interaction continue to shape art in the early twenty-first.

The novelty of these ideas as an art-historical hypothesis deserves, perhaps, some remark. They stand in sharp contrast, for example, to the promotional pluralism that still pervades markets, museums, and public art writing in the major art centers, and to the binary oppositionality or recalcitrant parochialism that

constrains even critical regionalism elsewhere. They contrast, too, with other understandings of the main thrusts and broad developments of contemporary art, such as the de facto position of not yet taking a position embodied in the editorial program of the journal *October*. Founded in 1975, *October*'s brilliant coterie of editors made it the leading US journal for detailed, empirical histories and innovative, theoretical explorations of modern art, mainly the early twentieth-century European and US avant-garde and their neo-avant-garde successors of the 1960s and 1970s. Art from elsewhere was rarely examined in *October*, unless it bore a direct relation to that of the Western centers. Nor was art from any other time, including the present, examined in the journal, with occasional exceptions for studies of artists' work deemed to have continued to confront the issues tackled by the neo-avant-garde. Not until 2009 did the editors of *October* directly invite commentary on a set of broad-scale questions about contemporary art, a step that has been rarely followed up (Foster being an exception to this rule). In the first edition of their textbook, *Art since 1900*, the *October* editors embraced the idea of treating past art in terms of its contemporaneity in their historical perspective on modern art. Rather than offer an integrated historical narrative, each editor introduced a partial perspective, a method for reading aspects of modern art—psychoanalytic, structuralist, poststructuralist, and sociological—with the implication, but not the claim, that they added up to a sufficient whole. In the main body of the book, the contributors vividly discussed each artwork, exhibition, event, or publication in the context of its year of origination, but they made or suggested few links. The authors held back from anything more than provisional sketches of contemporary art.[15] The updates in the second and third editions, mainly written by David Joselit, continued this almanac format but also floated some suggestions about the nature of broader global flows.[16] I discuss the *October* approach in more detail, along with several others, in the art-historiographical studies that constitute the second part of this book, particularly in chapter 11.

CONTEMPORARY DIFFERENCE

The dawning realization that our contemporaneous differences not only were defining our present but would also, most likely, fill all imaginable futures was confirmed, dramatically, on September 11, 2001. For some time before then, my thinking about contemporary art had extended to architecture, because the convergences evident between the various visual arts required explanation, as did the striking role spectacular buildings were playing within the larger

economy. In those days, buildings such as Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, were routinely referred to as "iconic." The word was overused, as if anything could become iconic if it attracted enough attention and pushed everything else that was anything like it into invisibility. But that was part of the illusion. A long-term process was at work: a logic of repetition, absorption, and exclusion elevated one structure to symbolize an entire category, a period, a regime, a country, a continent, an idea, or a value. During tourist promotions for the Sydney Olympics, for example, the Opera House replaced the Harbour Bridge in symbolizing Australia in general, while Uluru (Ayer's Rock) evoked Aboriginal Australia: come to the city, visit the outback. Gehry's museum, at the time, stood for architecture itself, or at least architecture's contemporary possibilities, fully realized at Bilbao in what seemed an unmatchable way. The ubiquity of standard images of these few structures and places secured their status, kept competitors at bay, and sustained their preeminence. I thought of this circulation of images as an economy of images, an "iconomy," and wondered if this idea opened up a way to contribute to the emerging work on visual cultural studies by augmenting Guy Debord's famous theory of "the society of the spectacle," which was central to the field.[17]

Osama bin Laden was way ahead of me and most everybody else. He knew that images were not simply symbols but were also targets; that icons were invested with enormous inherent power, so that obliterating them—even wounding them—exposed the fragility of the worldviews of those who believed in them. Iconic structures seemed permanent, but they could be damaged; the violence inherent in architectural expressions of power could be made visible by a contra-violence, by destroying the structures that embodied that power. An ancient logic of violence renewed itself on 9/11, revealing its global reach. It erased, in an instant, the post-1989 American autumn, the nation's brief reign as an unchallenged hyperpower. To many in the West, the events of 9/11 seemed to abruptly, and radically, realign the distribution of difference in the world, but in fact, that difference was making itself known in unmistakable terms to those who would deny it. The specter of mutual destruction shadowed what we shared as a species. The closeness of our contemporaneous differences suddenly became the most important fact about our existence.

My response to this realization was the book *The Architecture of Aftermath* (2006).[18] Its first half, "Dispacing Time," considered architecture before September 11, 2001, in chapters devoted to Gehry's museum at Bilbao; its chief precedent, the Sydney Opera House (compared and contrasted to Uluru); the museum's competitor, Richard Meier's Getty Center, Los Angeles; and Daniel

Libeskind's Jewish Museum, Berlin, a museum of an earlier and still resonant aftermath. In the second part of the book, "Targets and Opportunities," I explored the displacements in which the World Trade Center was grounded and out of which it was conceived and built; argued that the unconscious of architecture was revealed in the discursive responses to the attacks; and traced the mixture of shock, defiance, hope, and denial in the designs for the destroyed site. Chapter 3 in this volume, "Contemporary Architecture: Spectacle, Crisis, Aftermath," introduces the analyses and arguments I advanced in that book, situates them in relation to debates within architectural theory and history about whether and how modern architecture has become contemporary, and pursues the responses of architects in many parts of the world to the symbolic and social centrality of their profession during those years. As I show, architects were deeply affected by the larger lessons of 9/11 but struggled to find forms appropriate to its complex aftermath. Chapter 4, "Concurrence: Art, Design, Architecture," focuses on another aspect of contemporary architecture's contemporaneity: its close relationships, intense often to the point of saturation, with contemporary art's imagery, styles, ideas, and practices.

NO END TO HISTORY

Being shocked into acknowledging one's contemporaneity with otherness is the enduring legacy of 9/11. We can regain a sense of its full impact on sensibilities widely held in the West if we return to a moment before the attacks. In a landmark 1989 article, political scientist Francis Fukuyama argued that "a remarkable consensus concerning the legitimacy of liberal democracy as a system of government had emerged throughout the world over the past few years, as it conquered rival ideologies like hereditary monarchy, fascism, and most recently communism," and that "liberal democracy may constitute the 'end point of mankind's ideological evolution' and the 'final form of human government,' and as such constituted the 'end of history.'"[19] In his 1992 book, *The End of History and the Last Man*, he argued that liberal democracy—by which he meant representative government combined with a free market economy—however imperfect its current instantiations may be, could not be improved on as an ideal and was, for that reason, being adopted "throughout the world," suggesting that "it makes sense for us once again to speak of a coherent and directional History of mankind that will eventually lead the greater part of humanity to liberal democracy."[20] Although Fukuyama would retreat from these views as the world rapidly became a very different place, they typify hardcore Western

self-centeredness in its late twentieth-century forms: the presumption that the kind of social organization that had developed in Europe and then the United States in recent centuries was natural to all proper human association, that actually existing societies had caught up with its historical inevitability, and that it would become universal, from now until forever. In these senses, neoliberal democracy was the outcome of a world-historical victory over all opponents as well as transcending history by precluding change in any other direction. History had reached its own goal or was on its way to doing so; life need only go forward in the ways that it would; historical consciousness was no longer necessary.

A similarly blinkered perspective appeared within art discourse in the major museum and market centers during the postwar years. It retreated during the 1960s and 1970s—the years of decolonization in much of the world and of crises of legitimacy in the main centers—but roared back in the 1980s, claimed confirmation in the events of 1989, and was buttressed by the neoliberalization of most economies until the global financial crisis of 2008. Since then, the high end of the art world has become a rare bastion of the .01 percent, perpetuating the unthinking acceptance of whatever appears in top-end galleries and auction houses as viable contemporary art, there being no point to thinking critically and historically about this art. No accident, then, that during this period, those of us committed to securing global recognition for the art being produced outside these centers framed our presentations in historical and political, rather than purely aesthetic or only art-historical, terms. Curator Okwui Enwezor, for example, positioned art created in Africa and by members of the African diaspora as a powerful force within contemporary art through exhibitions, such as *A Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945–1994* (2001–2), that instructed audiences in Europe and the United States about the dynamics of claiming historical agency on the African continent, and by exhibitions in Africa itself, notably *Trade Routes: History and Geography*, the Second Johannesburg Biennale (1997), that emphasized the necessities of international connectedness for art made everywhere. Even more ambitiously, he sought, through the five "platforms" that made up his Documenta 11 (2002), to apply this postcolonial critique of what he calls "Westist" globalization to the entire international art world. Such efforts have earned much admiration and attracted considerable criticism, both attesting to their efficacy. Exhibitions of this kind have profoundly influenced how traveling shows, biennials, and even museum-based survey exhibitions are conceived today. In a complex dance of complicity and resistance, as neoliberal globalization spread through many parts of the world, such exhibitions became the major vehicles through which

the contemporaneous differences within the world's art could show themselves to one another, could switch and bait their local imperatives, renovate their traditions, and subject themselves to necessary change.[21]

Chapter 5, "Background Story, Global Foreground: Chinese Contemporary Art," plots these transformational energies as they have played out in China since the late 1970s. Chinese contemporary art is a recent phenomenon, which exists alongside artistic practices in China that are conducted by many more practitioners, within massively larger support structures, and with much greater official and popular approval. These traditional practices include ink painting, modern figurative painting and sculpture, calligraphy, and many crafts, all of which continue to evolve, as artists renovate their traditions. In contrast, contemporary artists, critics, and curators were initially inspired by intense desires to break from the historical weight of these practices and to catch up with what were perceived as the greater innovative energies of artists elsewhere, from the early twentieth-century European avant-gardists to the then-contemporary British retro-sensationalists. I discuss the phases through which art in China has passed since the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1978, noting highlights such as the *China Avant-Garde* exhibition (1989), curated by a team led by Gao Minglu. We can review these developments in such a structured way because each exhibition, action, and event was accompanied by not only manifesto-like statements and vigorous publicity, but also careful record keeping and exhaustive historical accounting. Artists, as much as curators and historians, are committed contributors to this process of incessant self-documentation, taking it to be an international norm (which, indeed, it has become). As a result, contemporary Chinese art may be the most historicized of all recent art movements. In my chapter, I read the various historical framings offered by Chinese critics, curators, and art historians alongside and against the model of changes in contemporary art on a worldwide scale that I have been mapping.

The movement known as contemporary Aboriginal art is an art-historical development even more unpredictable from Eurocentric perspectives than the emergence of distinctive kinds of contemporary art in China. Artistic exchange was an element in many of the contacts between Indigenous Australians and white settlers, beginning soon after British colonization of the continent in 1788. Although sporadic, such contacts increased in frequency and intensity until, in the decades since 1970, they have come to constitute a density of aesthetic exchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples that is not matched elsewhere in the world.[22] In chapter 6, "Country, Indigeneity, Sovereignty: Aboriginal Australian Art," I analyze this phenomenon by

rhetorically posing the question of whether art by Indigenous Australians can be categorized as (neo)traditional, modern(ist), or contemporary. I argue, instead, that many Indigenous artists, working in remote communities and in the urban centers where most Australians live, have succeeded in creating kinds of art that, like innovative art made anywhere, deserve understanding on their own terms—specifically, the art is concerned above all with country, indigeneity, and sovereignty. I show this to be the case in the work of artists such as Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Turkey Tolson Tjupurrula, Gordon Bennett, and Warlimpirrnga Tjapaltjarri, among others. Considering the circumstances in which most Indigenous Australians are obliged to live, and the racist screen through which they are mostly viewed, this level of achievement has been hard won and sustained against great odds. I explain these odds in some detail and track the evolving understanding of this art by multiple commentators, critics, anthropologists, and, recently, art historians. The art and the commentary on it are transcultural phenomena: the art reaches out from inside Indigenous knowledge to both defend secret, sacred knowledge and invite access to nonsecret aspects of this knowledge, while the writing about this art, mainly by non-Indigenous authors, marks pathways toward it while warning of the harmful effects of misplaced expectations, greed, and bad faith.

I have frequently claimed that placemaking, world picturing, and connectivity are the distinctive concerns of contemporary art because they are the definitive challenges facing those of us living in the world today. Chapter 7, "Placemaking, Displacement, Worlds-within-Worlds," examines how various artists are showing how they, or peoples they represent, seek to establish a sense of place in world conditions that increasingly tend toward disruption and dislocation. Artists imagine other ways of living in these conditions, ranging from warnings that they could become worse to constructive, sustainable alternatives. Thinking about place includes traditional settings, such as those provided by family structures and social organizations (e.g., cities and governments), as well as the opposite, dislocation, which is being experienced by record numbers of people throughout the world, especially in regions experiencing long-running civil wars, such as Syria, continuing colonization, such as Palestine, and famine and corruption, such as many central African states.

Chapter 8, "Picturing Planetarity: Arts of the Multiverse," charts some of the ways in which artists are closely observing the earth's processes to learn more about our place on this planet and in the universes of which it is part. These explorations are tentative, glimpses of elemental movement and differential temporalities that usually remain invisible. Such interests indicate the

emergence of a consciousness that might become, at last, truly worldly and fully contemporary.

INSTITUTIONAL ART HISTORY: ADVANCE AND RETREAT

The second part of this book begins from the question, Why have professional art historians offered so few historical overviews of contemporary art until very recently? One core reason is institutional reluctance. The "schism" between art-historical research, teaching, and publication devoted to the art of the past and that concerned with contemporary art is one of the most readily observable facts about the state of the profession today, in institutional terms. Fifteen years ago, in many university departments, graduate schools, research institutes, professional representative organizations, and most publications claiming a discipline-wide scope, contemporary art was treated as an afterthought—gestured at in the concluding lecture in a modern art survey, accorded one session via a visiting critic in a graduate seminar, allotted some low-key slots on the annual conference schedule, and given a review or two at the back end of the peak professional journals.

Since then, however, in most parts of the world, universities and colleges that offer art-historical studies are seeing increasing numbers of graduate applications to study contemporary art. Today, these match those wanting to work on modern art, the two fields outshining all other periods and areas of study.[23] Undergraduate student interest also intensified, until these areas commanded a majority of new appointments in university art history departments, colleges, and art schools. Specialist contemporary art journals proliferate; markets have ambiguous but undeniable influence; stories about contemporary art and artists abound in newspapers and in fashion and lifestyle magazines, in print and online; while museumgoers flock to exhibitions of contemporary art in new or expanded museums. Curators have been active in the field for decades, museums regularly publish art-historical reflections on recent and current art in their catalogs, textbooks have expanded to cover the new developments, and academic publishers have reoriented their lists. Attention is shifting, and resources are following, with seeming inevitability. Yet these changes have been met with considerable resistance—some active, mostly passive—by research, teaching, and representative institutions, especially in leading world centers, where they are most densely concentrated.

Chapter 9, "The State of Art History: Contemporary Art," was commissioned by editor Richard J. Powell for the *Art Bulletin*, the field's leading profes-

sional journal in the US, and was published in that journal in December 2010.[24] Part of a long-running occasional series surveying subfields in the discipline, the December 2010 issue was the first to treat contemporary art as such. I open the essay by highlighting the excitement among younger art historians; then point out the license suggested by the art-historiographic interests of certain prominent artists, such as Jeff Wall, Tacita Dean, Josiah McElheny, and Josephine Meckseper; and chart how, in art-world nomenclature, the quantitative incidence of the word "contemporary" has come to almost entirely eclipse that of "modern" when referring to art of recent decades and the present. Under the heading "The Prehistory of the Contemporary," I trace the various meanings of the terms "modern," "contemporary," and "contemporaneity" as used in artists' statements, museum and artist organization missions, art-critical writings, and curatorial discourse, from the French realists to contemporary Chinese artists. Postmodernism, I argue, was a symptom of the arrival of contemporaneity, not a period in itself nor an entirely adequate theory of late capitalist modernity. A brief survey of how regularly updated undergraduate textbooks deal with the art of recent decades reveals a profile in cautious confusion. Newly minted textbooks fare little better. In contrast, since the mid- to late 1980s, certain curators have led the way in struggling to grasp the larger flows shaping contemporary art, especially those operating regionally and worldwide. A few historians, such as Alexander Alberro, and maverick philosophers, such as Peter Osborne, offer tentative but promising suggestions.

I remain reluctant to regard contemporary art as a period within the history of art precisely because contemporaneity, as I understand it, doubts modern assumptions that history unfolds through successions via rupture, and, more specifically, doubts that art will continue to develop in epochal stages, one art movement succeeding another, each originating at a center of economic, cultural, and political power, then disseminating outward. I also wonder how long the already dispersive diversity of both contemporary art and contemporary life will permit us to read it as having a predominant, or core, character—even one as close to the bone as its "post-conceptuality."

Several unresolved issues, like anxious interrogators, continue to attend my ongoing efforts. The first set focuses on questions of method. Is art-historical methodology, no matter how radically and subtly revised, adequate to the task of tracing the extraordinarily complex shifts from modern to contemporary art, and from modern to contemporary regimes of visuality, that have occurred in recent decades—changes that are not only worldwide and culturally specific, but also ongoing and unpredictable? If contemporary art today is arguably

more atomistic, elusive, and dispersed than in any prior period, are art criticism, curating, art theory, and visual culture studies more appropriate than art history as interpretive disciplines? Contemporary art and visual culture are changing so quickly and so profoundly that even these disciplines require radical revision to cope with the interpretative challenges being thrown at them. Perhaps even they are being found wanting. New discursive forms must be created.

What are the chances that art history as a discipline might embrace a truly radical approach to writing histories of contemporary art and take up the challenge of reinterpreting the art of the past (including modern art) in terms that acknowledge its inherent contemporaneity, that of its originary moment and that which pertains to now? In a 2015 survey of institutes for art-historical research in the United States, most of which were founded by private philanthropy during the 1980s and 1990s, Elizabeth C. Mansfield argues that they have evolved from offering havens to art historians during the "culture wars" toward watching with some dismay what she characterizes as the "civil war" between art historians concerned with "traditional" subject areas and those committed to the study of contemporary art.[25] She begins from the premise that "as privately-financed organizations with explicit or implicit mandates to promote advanced research on canonical Western art history, these institutions have contributed to a scholarly economy in the United States that has, until recently, turned on monographic and collections-based studies in areas deemed culturally important by America's Gilded Age collectors and philanthropists," a situation in which "the exclusion of contemporary art from the original research programs of the Getty, CASVA and the Yale Center for British Art helped to create a disciplinary rift that would have major repercussions for art history in the early twenty-first century."[26] After a useful portrait of the far-reaching, and mostly positive, effects of the Getty Research Institute, the Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts (CASVA), the Yale Center for British Art, and the Clark Art Institute on art-historical research, publication, career development, and teaching (in the United States especially, but also elsewhere), she concludes by noting that—led by the Clark, then the Getty most ambitiously, and CASVA tardily—all now facilitate some programs supporting scholarship in contemporary art. Within the discipline, however, she believes that a "mutual sense of alienation threatens to harden into antagonism" and suggests that the institutes actively bring "historical and contemporary scholars together for residencies, symposia, and other programs," thus functioning as "a kind of academic Switzerland," which would, she hopes, help prevent "a fatal disciplinary secession."[27] Bringing scholars together, however, is exactly

what these institutes have always done, choosing them, as far as possible from among those who apply, to echo the entire history of art in each cohort. Even when a theme is announced, wide scope and agnostic pluralism are usually preferred to anything as programmatic and metadiscursive as rethinking divisions within the discipline. Many, if not most, traditional art historians remain unconvinced that contemporary art is a viable subject for art-historical research, and to them it remains outside the proper purview of the discipline. Recently, their resistance has been lowered, less by a convincing picture of how art history could include contemporary and past art, and more by the influence on their students of external factors—market buzz, museum attendance, and wide public interest—as well as, more deeply, their students' search for a profession relevant to their lives.

The overall picture, however, is that historical approaches to contemporary art—which, after all, has been with us for at least forty years, some would say sixty—remain rare. There are many reasons for this rarity, not least the realization that modern modes of historical knowledge are no longer appropriate to these times. Modernity is now our past, but it is not our antiquity; reviving it will not lead to a contemporary renaissance. A new kind of historical thinking is needed to track the traces of contingent connectivity, parallel differencing, and lateral networking that together create the seemingly infinite complexity of our relations—a watchful inquiry into history as it is actually happening, while remaining always open to its unpredictable yet constrained futurity.

In 2010, when I wrote the article that begins the second part of this volume, only a tiny minority of historians offered perspectives of this kind. I was hopeful that more of my peers would attempt to do so, not only because the art called on us to interpret it to its various audiences, but also for the sake of providing guidelines and acting as targets for the flock of younger scholars enthusiastically entering the field. Some scholars have since taken up the challenge. In chapters 10 and 11, I consider the contributions of several key philosophers, theorists, artists, critics, and historians to the understanding of contemporary art today. I critique placeholder concepts such as "the contemporary," and half-formed gestures toward "the postcontemporary," an as-yet-empty signifier. Some steps are being taken toward detailed empirical work on contemporary art and artists, and on the histories of the multiple platforms that together constitute the contemporary visual arts exhibitionary complex.[28] I welcome them. Their work does not threaten anything like the presentist takeover that established art-historical institutions seem to fear. Yet disciplinary anxieties and institutional politics of these kinds are fleeting phenomena. The important goal

before us is to account for contemporary art within the conditions of contemporaneity more fully, more fairly, more accurately, and in radically rethought critical and historical terms. This task awaits those to come whose minds bend toward thinking historically, synthetically, and critically about *their* art, that is, about art to come—as it is now, as it was, and as it might be.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1 Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor, and Nancy Condee, eds., *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity*, *Postmodernity*, *Contemporaneity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 8–9.

2 For a preliminary outline of contemporaneity in its philosophical and geopolitical dimensions, see my "Defining Contemporaneity: Imagining Planetarity," *Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 49–50 (2015): 156–74, and "The Contemporary Condition: Composition, Planomena, World Picturing," European Graduate School Video Lectures, August 23, 2016, video, 53:32, January 11, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=durNqyZPx-g.

3 In Richard Meyer's book *What Was Contemporary Art?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), he poses these questions in a vivid way, through anecdotes about his own practice and those of earlier scholars of the art of their times, from Alfred H. Barr Jr. to Rosalind E. Krauss. He argues, as I do, that "contemporary art is not simply a function of the current moment or the immediate past. . . . [It] is also a relation between an ever-shifting present and the volatile force of history," and he usefully advises us to "slow down" and pay attention to this relation (280–81).

4 For a prefiguration of more extensive consideration of these topics, see Terry Smith, "Rethinking Modernism and Modernity Now," in "Modernism Revisited," ed. Aleš Erjavec and Tyrus Miller, special issue, *Filozofski Vestnik* 35, no. 2 (2014): 271–319.

5 Bernard Smith, "The Role of an Institute of Fine Arts in the University of Sydney," *Arts* 6 (1969): 17.

6 Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 215–37. See also the translation by Ian McLeod in Robert Young, ed., *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 48–78.

7 George Steiner, "What Is Comparative Literature?," in *Comparative Criticism: Spaces: Cities*, *Gardens*, *and Wildernesses*, ed. E. S. Shaffer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 164–65.

8 See "About Us," Power Institute, University of Sydney, last updated May 8, 2009, http://sydney.edu.au/arts/power/about/index.shtml.

9 On Derrida's core concept of "democracy to come," see his *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt*, *the Work of Mourning*, *and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), and *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

10 The classic texts here remain David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), and Fredric Jameson's essay "Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" (1984), in his book of the same title (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 1–54.

11 The papers of the conference appear in Smith, Enwezor, and Condee, *Antinomies of Art and Culture*.

12 Terry Smith, *What Is Contemporary Art?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

13 Terry Smith, *Contemporary Art: World Currents* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011).

14 Hal Foster, "A Questionnaire on 'The Contemporary,'" *October*, no. 130 (Fall 2009): 3.

15 Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, and Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, eds., *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004).

16 Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, and David Joselit eds., *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, vol. 2, *1945 to the present*, 3rd ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2016).

17 Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967; repr., New York: Zone Books, 1994).

18 Terry Smith, *The Architecture of Aftermath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

19 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), xi. The article "The End of History?" was published in the *National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989): 3–18.

20 Fukuyama, *End of History*, xii.

21 For an exacting, conscientious exploration of the successes and shortcomings of these ambitious projects, see Charles Green and Anthony Gardner, *Biennials, Triennials, and Documenta: The Exhibitions That Created Contemporary Art* (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 155–64, and chap. 6.

22 Ian McLean, *Rattling Spears: A History of Indigenous Australian Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), is the latest, most comprehensive and searching examination of this topic.

23 The College Art Association annually lists US and Canadian dissertations completed and in progress, under headings such as "Eleventh to Fourteenth Century/Medieval," "Twentieth-Century Art," and "Twenty-First Century Art," the last further broken down into various mediums. See "Dissertations," *caa Reviews*, accessed December 11, 2017, http://www.collegeart.org/news/2017/12/11/explore-the-2016-dissertation-list/. This usage follows that of the Library of Congress in its subject headings.

24 The *Art Bulletin* essay was intended as a modest echo of a major art historiographic precedent: Paul Frankl's *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), which, under Franz Philipp's guidance, I read as a student at the University of Melbourne shortly after its publication. Also relevant as distant inspirations dating back to those student years are Heinrich Wölfflin's dissertation, "Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture" (1886), translated by Henry Francis Mallgrave and Elerftherious Ikonomou in Robert Vischer, ed., *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873–1893* (Santa Monica, CA: Getty, 1994); and Erwin Panofsky's early methodological writings.

25 Elizabeth C. Mansfield, "From the Culture Wars to a Civil War: Institutes of Art Historical Research in the United States," *Perspective* 2 (2015), posted online December 7, 2015, http://perspective.revues.org/5958. Elizabeth C. Mansfield is currently at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. A historian of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century art, she is editor of two anthologies on the history of art history: *Art History and Its Institutions: Founda-*

tions of a Discipline (New York: Routledge, 2002) and *Making Art History: A Changing Discipline and Its Institutions* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

26 Mansfield, "From the Culture Wars to a Civil War," 4.

27 Mansfield, "From the Culture Wars to a Civil War," 12.

28 On the visual art exhibitionary complex and related ideas, see Terry Smith, "Mapping the Contexts of Contemporary Curating: The Visual Arts Exhibitionary Complex," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 6, no. 2 (2017): 170–80.

1. CONTEMPORARY ART AND ART TO COME

Chapter 1 is based on a lecture given at the University of Sydney on May 1, 2001. This text is a reduced version of one originally published as *What Is Contemporary Art? Contemporary Art, Contemporaneity and Art to Come*, Critical Issues Series 6 (Sydney: Artspace, 2001). Certain passages echo strongly in some of my later publications. They are the first formulations of a kind of contemporary thought that is always, if it remains true to its subject, a thinking to come.

1 I elaborate on this idea in "Enervation, Viscerality: The Fate of the Image in Modernity," my introduction to *Impossible Presence: Surface and Screen in the Photogenic Era*, ed. Terry Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 1–38.

2 Adrian Lewis, cited in Rita Hatton and John A. Walker, *Supercollector: A Critique of Charles Saatchi* (London: Ellipsis, 2000), 191.

3 Tate Modern, "Tate Modern, May 2000–May 2001, A Summary of the First Year," press release, May 11, 2001, http://www.tate.org.uk/press/press-releases/tate-modern-may-2000-may-2001, accessed June 18, 2018.

4 Iwona Blaswick and Simon Wilson, eds., *Tate Modern: The Handbook* (London: Tate Publishing, 2000).

5 Norman Rosenthal and Michael Archer, *Apocalypse: Beauty and Horror in Contemporary Art* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2000).

6 For more positive perspectives on the import of Koons's work, see Jeff Koons, *The Jeff Koons Handbook* (London: Thames and Hudson, Anthony d'Offay Gallery, 1992); and Robert Rosenblum, *Jeff Koons: Celebration* (New York: Abrams, 1996).

7 Rosenthal and Archer, *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection.* For archival material relating to the Brooklyn Museum version and the controversy, see "Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection," Brooklyn Museum, October 2, 1999–January 9, 2000, http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/exhibitions/683/.

8 Brian Kennedy, then director of the National Gallery of Australia, emphatically denies that he sought ministerial protection in backing out of the commitment to show *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection* and argues that the Council of the National Gallery decided to cancel the exhibition in November when its entanglement in commercial gallery support became evident. See his "How Much Do We Care about Museum Ethics?," *Artonview* (the gallery members' magazine), no. 23 (Spring 2000): 3–5. His letter of September 29, 1999, to Senator Richard Alston describing the *Sensation* exhibition