

The Time Discordance of Art Globalization [in] a[r]t Work[s]

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Some places seem to live at different times, at the same time. In global art history, the idea has good and bad sides.

On the good side of the thing, it reminds us that we cannot compare everything with just anything. As historian Christophe Charle pointed out in 2011, in *Discordance des temps. Une brève histoire de la modernité* (A Brief History of Modernity¹), one of the weaknesses of comparative global history is to study cultural globalization as if it were played out in a homogeneous space. He proposed to take better account of temporal and spatial discordances in history: these discrepancies produce permanent cultural misunderstandings. They can help us to better understand cultural rejections, as well as astonishing fashions and unexpected fads.

However interesting, the notion of “time discordances” risks supporting what Dipesh Chakrabarty denounced in the narrative of modernity: when we take as real the precedence of certain places or cultural spaces over others in cultural innovation. This idea is well summed up by the expression “first in the West, and then elsewhere”². It has a corollary: the binomial “centers and peripheries”, which is just as dubious and debatable as the idea of cultural hierarchies.

What is then the best way to use the concept of time-discordance? I argue that it is better used when we study it *at work and in artworks*, rather than if we use it as an axiological and evaluative interpretation grid.

What do I mean exactly with “time discordance at work and in artworks”? From the 1850s to the 1970s, cultural actors (artists in the first place) *experienced* the discordance of time between the spaces to which they had access - be they cultural or geographical spaces, or even social spaces situated in different aesthetic eras by their knowledge and tastes. Not only did people experience these cultural discrepancies, but also, they would play upon them.

In French, the expression “discordance of times” has an original meaning which can help us to understand what is at stake. “Discordance des temps” means, first of all, a “discordance of verbal tenses”. For instance you say “I thought I will be happy” instead of “I thought I would be happy”. To a native speaker, it sounds weird. To the person who doesn’t master a language, tense discordances produce the impression that people think your way of speaking is very basic, that your way of thinking is very basic. **The discordance of tenses is the problem of the subaltern. The discordance of times is also the problem of the subaltern.** But the subaltern is not stupid. She knows what happens in cultural difference, and she probably knows it much better than the person who doesn't speak any foreign language. **Through experience in interlinguistic and intercultural exchange, some people perceive that they also bring novelty to their interlocutor, and that they can play with that cultural distance. This is where “Time Discordances” can be put “at work” in artistic**

¹ Christophe Charle, *Discordance des temps. Une brève histoire de la modernité* (Paris : Armand Colin (Le temps des idées), 2011).

² Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 6.

globalization. My intention today is to dissect the modalities of this functioning, between actors' practices and representations; but also within the works of art.

To begin with, I will explain why the g discordance has wreaked a major damage in art history.

Then I will show how the idea that that live at different cultural times has always been a way for artists and their supporters to manipulate their audiences (including the art historians who are their first victims).

Finally, I will dwell on time discordance at work in art works – and more specifically in the works of certain artists who distanced themselves from the idea, after having suffered a great deal from it.

1. Ravages of the Discordance of Times

The historiography of modern art and the avant-garde has always had difficulty in emancipating itself from the value system of its own object. Its scale of values is systematically associated with a time scale oriented from the past to the future, the best being on the side of the future. In spite of the efforts to rehabilitate academic art (marked in France by the opening of the Musée d'Orsay in 1986 for instance), museums, art critics and the media world have not abandoned this scale of temporal values: to deserve consideration, the *pompier*s must be qualified as modern who ignored themselves.³ Even today in the art world, in spite of the multiple observations of "postmodernity", "**disruption**" and "**innovation**" remain the most appreciated terms.

The future-oriented narrative is **inseparable from a world hourly geography** structured into zones of past, present, and future. Pascale Casanova used the metaphor of the "Greenwich meridian" to designate the phenomenon in literature: generations of non-French-speaking writers passed through the French language to impose themselves in their national literary field in the 20th century.⁴ In art history too, many believe that the time of the future has been given by a few successive centers – Paris at the time of realism, impressionism, fauvism, cubism, abstraction and surrealism, New York since abstract expressionism. The trajectories of many artists would have endorsed this idea, designating Paris as the "world center of modern art" before 1945, New York after that date.⁵

This interpretative grid preoccupied artists from the "peripheries" at the end of the 1960s. Around 1965, a generalized rush against the so-called "center", New York art, emerged in Europe, in California and in Latin America. The international avant-garde was,

³ Two examples : *Alexandre Cabanel, 1823-1889. La tradition du beau*, exhib. cat. Montpellier, musée Fabre (Paris : Somogy, 2010) ; *Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904). L'histoire en spectacle*, exhib. cat. musée d'Orsay, J. Paul Getty Museum, and Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza (Paris : Skira/Flammarion, 2010).

⁴ Pascale Casanova, *La république mondiale des lettres* (Paris, Seuil, 2008).

⁵ Some examples Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Sarah Wilson, Éric de Chassey (ed.), *Paris: Capital of the Arts, 1900-1968*, exhib. cat. expo. Londres, Royal Academy of Arts (26 january -19 april)2002), Bilbao, Guggenheim Museum (21 may-3 september 2002) (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2002).

somewhat belatedly, became enthusiastic about Cuba and against US imperialism - a political option that could theoretically have come earlier, but was in fact nourished by the perverse effects of the new world system of art led by the North American market after 1964.⁶ Around 1970, New York conceptual art circles also began to reject New York. Anti-centralism was becoming a new fashion, all the more shared as it emanated from the so-called center.⁷ In 1974, Australian art historian Terry Smith, who was associated with the Art and Language movement, published his article "The Provincialism Problem" in *Artforum* : the situation seemed inextricable.⁸ Smith regretted the impossibility for artists far from New York to assert themselves with the same ease as those from the center. He expressed himself in a magazine that had moved to New York in 1967, five years after its founding in San Francisco.⁹ Smith appealed to everyone's responsibility, to ensure that the pressure to the take time in New York finally would cease to stifle contemporary artistic production.

Since the 1980s, the debate on the discordance of times and provincialism in art has been further nourished by postcolonial theories, and since the 2010s by decolonial theories.¹⁰ The difficulty of getting out of the interpretative scheme of the discordance of times and tenses is not removed, nevertheless. How can we integrate the peripheries of global cultural geopolitics, without the work of the artists concerned quickly appearing retarded, exotic or offbeat? The solution would be to adopt other ways of appreciating art; to value a multiplicity of time scales. Numerous projects are working on this, with varied methodologies. But the call to "decolonize" our rationalist ways of thinking¹¹ seems easier to make than to follow. Forcing ourselves to consider the periphery as the center is not more convincing: the strength of the canonical narrative remains, as long as its inconsistencies have not been demonstrated, and its mechanisms, dissected.

The idea of a *real* discordance of times in the history of modern art, is the result of a biased reading of historical phenomena. It is an ethnocentric historiographic trend, forged since the time of modern art. It has become generalized by research on sources limited to the so-called centers Paris and New York; research works that repeated each other and did not verify or question the global geopolitics of modern art. A simple example: Serge Guilbaut's book draws on sources from New York (the majority) and Paris (a slight minority). How can you talk about the global domination of "American art" (that is to say, actually, New York-based avant-garde)? One of the limits of our discipline is also that we have studied only a few cases that fed

⁶ Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, *Naissance de l'art contemporain. Une histoire mondiale, 1945-1970*, Paris, CNRS Éditions, à paraître.

⁷ Sophie Cras, « Global Conceptualism? Cartographies of Conceptual Art in Pursuit of Decentering », dans Thomas Dacosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel (dir.), *Circulations in the Global History of Art*, New York, Routledge, 2017, p. 167-182.

⁸ Terry Smith, « The Provincialism Problem », *Artforum*, 13/1, 1974, p. 54-59.

⁹ En 1965 déjà *Artforum* avait déménagé à Los Angeles. Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962-1974*, New York, Soho Press, 2000.

¹⁰ On this turn see Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, « Art History and the Global: Deconstructing the Latest Canonical Narrative », *Journal of Global History*, 14/3, 2019, 413-435.

¹¹ Boaventura De Sousa Santos, « Beyond Abyssal Thinking », *Eurozine*, <https://www.eurozine.com/beyond-abyssal-thinking/> (consulted 15 April 2020).

the axiology of the discordance of times, rather than considering these cases as exceptions in a world that was much more varied, unpredictable, and polycentric than our prejudices suggest.

Deconstructing the times-spaces of the history of modern art as a representation rather than as a fixed historical datum, is not sufficient. It is also necessary to confront the thesis of the discordance of times with measurable facts of history: dates, figures, objects in concrete circulation. Computational approaches erase the discordance of time and we should not fear that Paris, New York and the usual modern artistic canon might prevail in the game of historical comparison. The horizontalization and de-hierarchization of statistics make it possible to verify whether artists migrated more to this or that place; whether there were more so-called avant-gardes here than elsewhere; where modernist magazines and their illustrations circulated, etc. Paris is not the center of the world, nor New York, even for the history of artistic innovation.

It is also necessary to verify whether the works of such and such a so-called center were really *seen and recognized* throughout the world. What the actors of the so-called centers perceived as world domination. Baudelaire explained in 1855 that Paris had taken the place of Rome; Clement Greenberg proclaimed after 1945 the fall of Paris and the world domination of New York – but art and culture was not lived as such in their fantasized peripheries. I showed this for Paris in the inter-war period, and for New York after 1945.¹² The spaces and times of modern art have been experienced differently depending on the place. Even modernism was polycentric.

2. A commonplace and its practical uses

The discordance of times has always been the object of symbolic struggles; a perfect argument in manipulative discourses and ideologies of submission. This is why we can study it as **as a practice as much as a representation**.

From the 1850s to the 1970s, **as artists and their supporters *experienced* the discordance of time between the spaces to which they had access, some understood the productivity of these information discrepancies**. They took advantage of the collective feelings associated to it: inferiority complexes, nationalist jealousy, cultural contempt – they knew how to activate their public's pride or shame, in order to better valorize their own work.

As early as the 1850s, the discourse of time discordance recurs in the writings of those who claim to be at the right time, for instance when Champfleury defended Courbet in the 1850's.¹³ **The metaphor takes on the character of a commonplace in the 1880's**: those who considered themselves "avant-garde critics", like Théodore Duret, defended those, like the Impressionists – I quote: "who have not yet arrived at the place that the future certainly holds for them"¹⁴. In the literary field, where the same critics often crossed paths, the tendency was

¹² Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, « Provincializing Paris. The Center-Periphery Narrative of Modern Art in Light of Quantitative and Transnational Approaches », *Artl@s Bulletin*, 4/1, 2015, p. 40-64, online: www.artlas.ens.fr/bulletin; B. Joyeux-Prunel, « Au-delà d'un Paris-New York », art. Cit.

¹³ Jules Champfleury, *Le réalisme*, 1855 (Geneva : Slatkine Reprints, 1967).

¹⁴ Théodore Duret, *Critique d'avant-garde* (Paris : Perrin, 1885) ; (Paris : École nationale des beaux-arts, 1998, p. 47-48)

similar. In 1889, Charles Morice defended « la littérature de tout à l'heure¹⁵ » ("the literature of just now") – symbolism, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Rimbaud or Verlaine, writers of the future at a time supposedly bogged down in tradition.

To make the genealogy of this commonplace is not my objective here; even if it should be mentioned that these vocabularies were invented as early as the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, and chiseled in the Romantic period. I rather wish to further characterize the uses of metaphor among modern artists, and the socio-historical profile of those who used it. Is it only a source effect? The time-discordance rhetoric unfolds above all in the printed press. We do not find so much it in *private* correspondence, for the good reason that it was a public statement, in and for the artistic and cultural field of the time.

The reference to a present future allowed artistic groups claiming to be innovative to underline their discordance with their competitors. In 1883, Émile Verhaeren wrote in the aptly named *Jeune Belgique* in favor of the Groupe des Vingt in Brussels: the poet placed his painter friends ahead of the realists who had until then occupied the place of the moderns: « À jeune, jeune et demi¹⁶. » “to each young, a young and a half”. The age of the individuals was not the issue: In 1912, the critic André Salmon called Odilon Redon the "prince" of *La jeune peinture française* - Redon was 52.¹⁷

Until the 1920s, in Europe, it was common among groups with modern pretensions to assert their youth over their contemporaries – I already talked about French “jeune peinture”; for Germany we can think of the *Jugendstil* and the magazine *Jugend* (1896-1940) of the late 1890s; or the artists' group *Junge Rheinland*, founded in 1919. The adjective "new" became more important than the word "youth" in the inter-war period; it can be found in the titles of several magazines claiming to be avant-garde: *Neue Jugend* (Berlin, 1916-1917) was supposed to be new among the young; same for the *Neue Blätter für die Kunst und Dichtung* (Dresden, 1917-1919), *Les écrits nouveaux* (Lausanne, 1917-1922), *Le nouveau spectateur* (Paris, 1919-1921), *Esprit nouveau* (Paris, 1920-1925), *The New Coterie* (London, 1925-1927), *The New Cow* (New York, 1927), or *New Verse* (London, 1937-1939).

In parallel with the diffusion of the commonplace of the discordance of times, we see the conscious expression of an awareness of it: and the claim to change things for a better national place. In 1899, the German art critic Julius Meier-Graefe condemned the "epigonentum" of German art in relation to French painting. He encouraged Berlin to update itself and take the leading role.¹⁸ Among the Secessions, these modern groups and Salons founded in the 1890s in Germanic and Central Europe, there is none whose foundation was not

¹⁵ Charles Morice, *La littérature de tout à l'heure* (Paris : Perrin/Didier, 1889).

¹⁶ Émile Verhaeren, « Chronique artistique. À Messieurs les artistes de l'Union des Arts », *La jeune Belgique*, 28 April 1883, p. 232 (*Écrits sur l'art*, Édités et présentés par Paul Aron. T. I : 1881-1892, Brussels: Éditions Labor, coll. Archives du futur, 1997, p. 84).

¹⁷ A. Salmon, *La jeune peinture française* (Paris : Société des Trente, Albert Messein, 1912), avant-propos, p. 7.

¹⁸ Julius Meier-Graefe, « Epigonen », *Dekorative Kunst*, II, 4/10, 1899, p. 129-131.

justified by the rhetoric of lost time compared to more advanced neighbors.¹⁹ The same rhetoric also recurs in modern circles in Paris : The Société nationale des beaux-arts (1890), was inspired by the Salon des Vingt, created in Brussels in 1883. The founders of the Parisian Salon d'Automne in 1903 justified the opening of a new modern Salon as a response to competition of the German Secessions in the autumn season.

All this gives an indication of the strategic utility of the discourse of discordance. Whatever your period of specialty, you will find the same phenomenon. No assertion of delay or spatiotemporal advance is separable from a strategy of self-promotion. When Julius Meier-Graefe deplored the Epigonentum of German artistic circles, it was to pose as a privileged informer of the foreign artistic situation, capable of discerning which direction would help Germany. Six decades later, the Argentinian collector Guido Di Tella did the same, to show the civic role of his teams in the promotion since the turn of the 1960s of a hard avant-garde trend in Buenos Aires:

We took up impressionism when it was finished in Europe ; we did cubism a couple of decades later , but we did geometric art only a little later and some say we did it a little before Europe ; informalism, two or three years later and the pop movement two or three hours later .

For many groups that proclaimed themselves avant-garde, the rhetoric of discordance was efficient in making people accept not so much their belonging to the future, but the idea of their good reception in centers considered more advanced. This supposed foreign reception meant that locally one had to, one must recognize these artists. Even if nobody knew, in fact, if their foreign reception was real. I have shown, for example, that the alleged foreign reception of Picasso the Cubist was in fact a reception of his Symbolist, Post-Impressionist and Cezanian paintings until at least 1912. Still, Apollinaire continued to write about Picasso: « ... "No man is a prophet in his own country".²⁰ Actually the Prophet when abroad showed a very gentle modernity.

The argument about a so-called discordance of times could work because of a compartmentalization of information between places. Artists and their friends could say they were misunderstood here, received there. This was the case for Impressionism, Symbolism, Cubism, etc.²¹ No one could really check what was received abroad. Similarly, an alleged foreign reception legitimized surrealism. The prophetic rhetoric justified the need for a reception here because of a so-called reception there; the reception here was not long in coming – and a virtuous circle could start. It reinforced the informal Parisian movement, just as it did for Abstract Expressionism and New York pop art in their respective local markets.²²

¹⁹ See Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, *Les avant-gardes artistiques, 1848-1918. Une histoire transnationale*, (Paris : Gallimard, 2015).

²⁰ Guillaume Apollinaire, « Peinture espagnole moderne », *Les Arts*, 6 juillet 1914 (Apollinaire, *Œuvres en prose complètes*, vol. II, Paris : Gallimard, Pléiade, pp. 809-810).

²¹ Joyeux-Prunel, « L'internationalisation de la peinture avant-gardiste, de Courbet à Picasso : un transfert culturel et ses quiproquos », *Revue historique*, 644/4, 2007, p. 857-885.

²² Catherine Dossin, *The Rise and Fall of American Art, 1940s-1980s: a Geopolitics of Western Art Worlds* (New York: Ashgate, 2017); B. Joyeux-Prunel, *Naissance de l'art contemporain*, *op. cit.*

My books explain this in more details. **The strategy that I have called “detour abroad”, *detour par l'étranger*, is common for artists from regions considered peripheral as well as for those from so-called centers. It has always worked thanks to the spontaneous comparisons, jealousies, and inferiority complexes of international cultural circles in relation to each other. It has been fed by information deficits between countries and cultural scenes. This compartmentalization has often been maintained by those usually designated as the greatest mediators of artistic modernity between countries, – especially art dealers.** The ethnopolitical effects of the discordance of times are still alive today: international comparison remains an everyday sport. Even the Internet hasn't totally abolished the empty zones of cultural exchange. Internet has neither suppressed the possibility of non-transfers, nor the possibility of sense manipulation and resemanticization in the transfer.

By playing this game, artists and their promoters maintained, and still maintain the bad conscience of their close audience. They also maintain a spontaneous jealousy between artists, between local and national scenes. For the logic of the “*No man is a prophet in his own country*” has a corollary: “*The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence*”. What an astonishing anthropological constant of the moderns, the modernists, and the so-called post-moderns, this anxiety to be overtaken, the conviction that the other is ahead, and the compelling need to act because of that. ***The anxiety to catch up seems to me even more decisive than the famous Anxiety of Influence highlighted for literature by Harold Bloom.***²³ It is a major spring in the history of artistic modernity, as well as in the progressive elaboration of its narrative of centers and peripheries. The rhetoric of the discordance of times feeds and feeds on the fear of the other, on the desire to be more like them. It gives strength to mimetic desire mechanisms, which maintain the idea of belatedness by ricochet.²⁴

3. Discordance and its Malaise

Art works, still, show that artists could not follow this permanent overbid. The speculative bubble began in 1909. Seen from the studios, the discordance of times became a pressing issue for the avant-garde after the explosive publication of the Futurist manifesto in February between France, Italy, Rumania, and soon the whole continent, Russia included :

Nous sommes sur le promontoire extrême des siècles !... À quoi bon regarder derrière nous, du moment qu'il nous faut défoncer les vantaux mystérieux de l'Impossible ? Le Temps et l'Espace sont morts hier. Nous vivons déjà dans l'absolu, puisque nous avons déjà créé l'éternelle vitesse omniprésente²⁵.

“the eternal speed omnipresent ...”

The Futurists suddenly relegated everyone to the past. They also delegitimized the so-called centers of modernity - Paris first: travelling around Europe by car, they didn't stop in any capital more than any other. They recognized no place but their vehicle, which could take them at full speed to the unknown destinations of the future. Their proclamation of a "death of Time

²³ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

²⁴ On mimetic desire see the seminal book by René Girard, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (Paris, Pluriel, 2011 [1961]).

²⁵ Federico Tommaso Marinetti, « Manifeste du futurisme », *Le Figaro*, 20 Feb. 1909, p. 1.

and Space" forced their entire generation to reformulate their relationship to time, past, present and future, as well as their relationship to space and global cultural geopolitics.

We can detect this change in artistic production throughout the reception of the Italian movement - not only in the 1910s, but also in the 1920s, when Marinetti's tours went as far as Latin America. Avant-garde artists suddenly felt collectively compelled to show through and in their works that they were always beyond the space-time and horizons of expectation of their time. Hence the success after 1910, of paintings representing fast means of locomotion such as the train, the airplane, the car. Artists simply applied the equation "vehicle = speed". The original idea was not innovative: the development of transportation had been creating a new dimension of time for many years.²⁶ But the works of art echoed this with a delay. As with the Italian Futurists, many works by the Parisian Cubists, London Vorticists or Russian Rayonists depicted speed after 1910, when it had not been a subject until then. Artists' fascination with airplanes has been the subject of detailed studies.²⁷ The bicycle races and automobile competitions of Parisian cubists, Russian rayonnists and their international colleagues would deserve the same type of studies. It should be added that the works were often backdated, to support the idea that they were already the future in the past (figure 1).



Figure 1. Luigi Russolo (1885-1947), *Automobile in Corsa (Composition, Dynamism of an automobile)*, 1912-1913. Paris, Centre Georges-Pompidou, backdated (signed « Russolo, 1911 »).

In the 1920s, the race continued, with an iconography of airplanes, automobiles and now, ocean liners - particularly in constructivist magazines. In Argentina, the manifesto of the journal *Martín Fierro* (1924) paraphrased the Futurist Manifesto's ode to the "roaring automobile [...] more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace": quote : "*Martín Fierro* is more at home on a modern transatlantic liner than in a Renaissance palace, and believes that a beautiful Hispano-Suiza is a much more perfect work of art than a Louis XV chair..."²⁸ »end of quote. In



Figure 2 : Vassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), *Trame noire*, 1922, huile sur toile, 96 x 106 cm. Musée d'arts de Nantes.

26 Christophe Studeny, *L'invention de la vitesse. France, XVIII^e-XX^e siècle* (Paris : Gallimard, 1995).

27 Françoise Lucbert, Stéphane Tison (dir.), *L'imaginaire de l'aviation pionnière. Contribution à l'histoire des représentations de la conquête aérienne, 1903-1927*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2018.

28 « Manifesto », *Martín Fierro*, Buenos Aires, n° 4, 15 mai 1924. Disponible on: *Documents of 20th-Century Latin American and Latino Art, a Digital Archive and Publications Project at the museum of fine arts, Houston, ICAA-MFAH*,

Vassily Kandinsky's painting *Trame noire* (Figure 2), the boats that struggled with the unleashed elements in his 1910s Apocalyptic Compositions give way to the decided direction of the transatlantic liners. The modernity of the liner goes along with the constructivist grid. At the same time, a young man entering the field of the avant-garde, Salvador Dalí, painted ocean liners in his half-Cubist, half-Return to Order compositions.²⁹ In the spring of 1927, Dalí praised the machine that "changed everything" ; he criticized his friend García Lorca for not introducing aeroplanes into his poetry.³⁰

Futurism suggested that modernity was perhaps no longer so much a matter of keeping a watch on time, or choosing the right meridian, as a race of speed between groups located in multiple places on the planet. No matter what time or place one started from (after all, the Futurists had started from Neo-Impressionism or even Impressionism): what mattered was to go faster than the others, and to make it believed.

The space-time of modernity was advancing constantly. We can understand the need for certain Parisian circles to get out of this exhausting logic by following closely in the footsteps of Henri Bergson and his criticism against the mechanic notion of space.³¹ Picasso, for his part, mocked slogans such as "Our future is in the air". And when his colleagues ran after the daily press in search of the next scoop, he recycled press clippings and made the news the concrete material of his work.³²

Others noted that the requirement to keep moving forward obliterated the destination. In 1911, Wassily Kandinsky explained "the question of form" as follows:

In practical life it will be difficult to find a man who, wanting to go to Berlin, gets off the train in Regensburg. In the life of the spirit, getting off at Regensburg is commonplace. Sometimes even the locomotive engineer does not want to go any further and all passengers get off at Regensburg. ...] How many people who were looking for art have been trapped in a form that an artist had used for his own purposes, be it Giotto, Dürer or Van Gogh³³ !

Kandinsky was older than his fellow artists. He was coming from the world of economic analysis. he was an experienced cosmopolitan traveler. He was perhaps more aware than others

<http://icaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/THEARCHIVE/FullRecord/tabid/88/doc/732817/language/en-US/Default.aspx?>

29 Par exemple Salvador Dalí (1904-1989), *Venus et Marin*, 1925, hommage à Papasseit, huile sur toile, 216 x 147 cm, Shizuoka, Ikeda Museum of 20th-Century Art ; Id., *Composition avec trois personnages (Académie néo-cubiste)*, 1926, huile sur toile, 200 x 200 cm, Barcelone, Museo de Montserrat.

30 Ian Gibson, *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí* (New York: Norton, 1997), p. 200.

31 See Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993); Id. and Patricia Dee Leighton, *Cubisme et culture* (Paris: Thames & Hudson, 2002).

32 Brigitte Leal, *Picasso, papiers collés* (Paris : Réunion des musées nationaux/Seuil, 1998). Sur Picasso's reaction to the 1912 polemics see Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, *Nul n'est prophète en son pays ? L'internationalisation de la peinture des avant-gardes parisiennes, 1855-1914* (Paris : Musée d'Orsay/Nicolas Chaudun, 2009, chap. 12).

33 Vassily Kandinsky, « Sur la question de la forme », in Id., Franz Marc, *L'almanach du « Blaue Reiter » (Le Cavalier bleu)* (French version Paris, L'Esprit et les Formes, 1981), p. 192 -.

of the impasse to which the constant demand for innovation had led his generation. He left the race, or rather he went in a different direction: preferring blue horsemen to red automobiles, and ending up abandoning figuration.

Others were not too quick to affirm their solution. Blaise Cendrars' *La prose du Transsibérien*, written in 19-13, marks the astonished awareness of the new spatiotemporal regime of art, and the contrasting emotions - even anxieties - that it aroused.

Je suis en route
J'ai toujours été en route
Le train fait un saut périlleux et retombe sur toutes ses roues »

Modern went gone mad, like Cendrars's somersaulting train. I could quote much more of the poem – let me just translate some last lines:

“Say, Blaise, are we very far from Montmartre? »

But yes, you're getting on my nerves, you know it, we're a long way off.

Overheated madness buzzes in the locomotive

The plague and cholera are rising like ardent embers on our road [...].

We are the legless of space

We are rolling on our four wounds

Our wings have been clipped

And then the poet goes on :

The modern world

Speed can't help but

The modern world

The far away are too far away

[...]

There are trains that never meet each other

Others get lost along the way

[...]

For the universe overflows me

Because I neglected to insure myself against railway accidents

Because I don't know how to go all the way.

And I'm afraid

I am afraid

I don't know how to go all the way

4. Ending up on a Bicycle

How to be more modern than the modern? When everything seemed to have already been done? There is a passage that is rarely commented on in the Futurism Manifesto, and that particularly struck me: The Futurism Manifesto was born from an accident, after an animal race in a car. Let me read this in the original version of the manifesto:

Nous nous approchâmes des trois machines renâclantes pour flatter leur poitrail. Je m'allongeai sur la mienne... Le grand balai de la folie nous arracha à nous-mêmes et nous poussa à travers les rues escarpées et profondes [...] Donnons-nous à manger à l'Inconnu, non par désespoir, mais simplement pour enrichir les insondables réservoirs de l'Absurde !

Comme j'avais dit ces mots, je virai brusquement sur moi-même avec l'ivresse folle des caniches qui se mordent la queue, et voilà tout à coup que deux cyclistes me désapprouvèrent, titubant devant moi ainsi que deux raisonnements persuasifs et pourtant contradictoires. Leur ondolement stupide discutait sur mon terrain... Quel ennui ! Pouah !... Je coupai court et, par dégoût, je me flanquai dans un fossé...

The accident that led to the Futurist Manifesto was actually caused by something slower than a car: a bicycle.

There is an artist who was a particular victim of the race of space-time set up by Futurism: Marcel Duchamp. In 1911 he took the train of the avant-garde - always after the others, as Thierry de Duve pointed out.³⁴ The *Jeune homme triste dans un train* (1911-1912)³⁵ depicts his fate as an unfortunate cadet, always following in the footsteps of his colleagues and even his two older brothers who went over to fauvism and cubism before him. The Salon des indépendants of 19-12 sealed Duchamp's misfortune: his *Nude descending the staircase* risked to prove that the Parisian cubists were imitating the futurists who had exhibited with fanfare a few weeks earlier at the Bernheim-Jeune gallery.³⁶ Duchamp reacted with disgust. In April 1912, he made the drawing *Le roi et la reine traversés par des nus vites* (The King and the Queen Crossed by Quick Nudes): it questions the difficult chess game where speed clouds the slow reflection of intelligence. Duchamp eventually left the French art scene and its patriotic Cubist heralds (such as Robert Delaunay), to take a breath of fresh air in Munich with an old friend. I have shown elsewhere that in Munich he actually found what he was running away from: Parisian avant-garde art ; the paintings of the cubist Delaunay were exhibited in the neighborhood where he was dragging his disappointment.³⁷ Duchamp saw even more; he witnessed a cultural transfer in which discordance was at its peak: Parisian cubism, proclaimed

³⁴ Thierry de Duve, *Nominalisme pictural. Marcel Duchamp, la peinture et la modernité* (Paris : Minuit, 1984).

³⁵ Marcel Duchamp, *Nu [esquisse], jeune homme triste dans un train*, 1911-1912, oil on cardboard, 39 3/8 x 28 3/4 inches, New York, Guggenheim Museum, Peggy Guggenheim Collection.

³⁶ Marcel Duchamp, *Nu descendant un escalier*, 1912, oil on canvas, 146 x 89 cm, Philadelphie, Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection.

³⁷ Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, « Géopolitique des premiers readymades », *Revue de l'art*, 85/3, 2014, p. 27-33.

patriot in Paris, figurative, antifuturist, took on the contrary, in Munich, a cosmopolitan, fraternal, non-figurative clothes, close to the futurist reflection on the movement.

Back home, Duchamp stopped painting; he also made an astonishing gesture: planting an upside down bicycle wheel by the fork on a stool. The 1913 wheel monkeyed Robert Delaunay's *Wheels*; it mocked, above all, the work on pure speed, on light and the chromatic prism. Marcel Duchamp's *Wheel* creates speed more efficiently than an oil painting imitating chronophotography. This is the "eternal omnipresent speed" - without moving. A short, efficient reply to the Futurist Manifesto – with a bicycle : the very machine that put Marinetti in a ditch.

Let me introduce here the reflection of the philosopher Hartmut Rosa, who re-reads the history of modernity in the light of the notion of acceleration.³⁸ Whether it concerns technical innovation, social change or the pace of life and its leisure time, acceleration is self-feeding rather than freeing up time to live and feel alive. One of its main effects is simply suffering - depression and demobilization of the actors. It is indeed a loss of taste that emanates from Marcel Duchamp's works and texts after the spring of 1912. What can be called *acedia*.³⁹ What Duchamp's work at that time says is also that the injunction to constantly accelerate was already undermining the project of modernity - that of autonomy through art, as well as that of new plastic possibilities. Duchamp's work pointed out the link between incessant acceleration and alienation.

Would Duchamp have been told in 1913 that his *Bicycle Wheel* would obviously lose or win at the run of the avant-garde? It was not the point. The 1913 wheel was so out of focus that Duchamp does not even seem to have shown it to his comrades. It was only considered art in the surrealist circles of the interwar period, to whom Duchamp had transmitted a photography. In the 1950s, on the other hand, it was considered to be a work "ahead of its time," at a time when the history of Dada's disruption was being written.⁴⁰ The duchampian proposal was reintegrated into the gears, with the complicity of Duchamp himself. In the meantime, Duchamp had taken a transatlantic liner, a real one. He had reached New York. He had enjoyed the discordance of time between the two sides of the Atlantic, and started to use it for himself. As if out of a history machine, he saw in 1917 the creation of a *Salon des Indépendants*, with New York taking up the admired example of Paris. Duchamp, who had felt rejected by the Paris Independents in 1912, did not hesitate to introduce his grain of sand into the overly well-oiled mechanism of modern New Yorkers. He had been solicited as a juror for the new salon. Did the organizers believe that with his collaboration, they gained the legitimacy of a Parisian coming from a more up-to-date center? He sent a urinal to the Independents under a false name

38 Hartmut Rosa, *Accélération. Une critique sociale du temps* (Paris : La Découverte, 2013).

39 On *acedia* and avant-garde see B. Joyeux-Prunel, *Les avant-gardes artistiques. 1848-1918, op. cit.*, p. 655-676.

40 See the exhibition *Dada* organized by Duchamp at the Sidney Janis Gallery from 15 April to 9 May 1953 ; and in Europe the exhibitions *Dada. Dokumente einer Bewegung*, cat. expo., Düsseldorf Kunsthalle (5 September-19 October 1958), Düsseldorf, Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, 1958 ; *Dada. Zürich, New York, Paris, Berlin, Köln, Hanover*, exhibition catalogue, Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum (23 December 1958-2 February 1959), Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum, 1958. On dada's reception in the United States see Judith Delfiner, *Double-Barrelled Gun: Dada aux États-Unis (1945-1957)*, (Dijon: Presses du réel, 2011).

- we know the story. New York was suddenly propelled into the hour of Dada - at least this is what people saw and said when the time came to write this story in the 1950s.

Back in Paris in the early 1920s, then again in New York, sometimes passing through Berlin, Duchamp the "anartist" would play again on the gaps between metropolises whose elites were anxious to be at the time he brought - but a time and an hour which he could invent at his leisure. Through his works that never really were, his contempt for technical progress as well as his break with the expectations of his time, Duchamp would unfold in his life and work the antinomies of modernity, and the productibility of the time and space discrepancies.

Often everything has to change for nothing to change. In the 1950s, the mad rush of the avant-gardes came back at full speed. And at global scale. Already, rivalries between artistic groups had become exasperated when the market for abstract painting resumed in the early 1950s. The development of European highway infrastructures and then of transatlantic airlines accelerated communications between artistic scenes. After 1955, and even more so after 1960, there was a resurgence of competition between cultural capitals for international cultural domination: Paris' place had to be taken, and the United States was not alone in doing so. In most democratic countries, local audiences began to expect more and more from artists, to embody the country's advance in cultural geopolitics. We see, then, like a return of the same: the artists' ardent use of the machine to do more and better, faster and before others. The question of movement came back in art works, starting in 1955 with the exhibition *Le mouvement* by the Denise René gallery, which traveled between Paris and Northern Europe. In 1958 the exhibition in Paris of one of the best students of the avant-garde of that time, Yves Klein, was entitled *Vitesse pure et stabilité monochrome*. Future new realists in Paris, the ZERO group in Düsseldorf, the Nul group in the Netherlands, then soon the kinetics and optics of the GRAV - in the early 1960s artists were all working on movement. The art of the time had exchanged ocean liners for Sputnik - silver spheres, slender antennas -, futuristic architectures for structures of fire and air. At the same time books and exhibitions devoted to Dada and his actors⁴¹ nurtured a historiography of the avant-garde as disruption, as a rejection of everything that had been done before. Artists then began to claim their precedence. They filed patents for invention. Soon airplanes and automobiles were also back in artworks, with New York pop art after 1962.

It was at this time that old Duchamp took out his bicycle. He produced a "third version" in 1951, kept by the merchant Sidney Janis who was going to associate it with Dada. It is now at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The reception was immediate in the losing circles of the avant-garde of the time. A wheel appears in a photograph of Robert Rauschenberg's studio around 1953, after the Dada exhibition at the Janis Gallery.⁴² It returns as an old tire in other compositions of the late 1950s, when Rauschenberg was still waiting his turn behind the abstract expressionist generation.⁴³ In 1964, in the midst of the triumph of pop art and its superheroes driving their dazzling cars, Duchamp rebuilt the wheel, in several copies marketed by the Schwarz Gallery in Milan. Admittedly, there was now a market for the readymade, and Duchamp was always in need of money. But the bicycle wheel also supported the choices of

⁴¹ *Dada 1916-1923*, New York, Sidney Janis Gallery (15 April-9 May 1953). Curator : Marcel Duchamp.

⁴² Allan Grant, Robert Rauschenberg in his studio, 1 October 1953, Time Life Pictures/Getty Images.

⁴³ Robert Rauschenberg, *Monogram*, 1955-1959, Stockholm, Moderna Museet.

artists who were not satisfied by the game of the future and the clean sweep of the past. It justified an aesthetics of recycling, of waste as well as of creative destruction, going back years of avant-garde pretensions to reinvent everything.

Broken cars of Caesar or Chamberlain, tire wrecks of Rauschenberg, stationary machines of Jean Tinguely - for a part of the avant-garde, speed became impure, instability polychrome. Old objects spoiled the aesthetics of presentism. Once again it had to be said, or rather made to be felt, that movement for movement's sake led to nothing - if not to anguish, acidity, acedia, and even suicide. It had to be reiterated that constantly going beyond the horizons of expectation of the time produced nothing but pontificacy, artistic *clichés*, suffering, and alienation. The aesthetics of recycling and assemblage also pointed out, by choosing scraps rather than new, that the possible future of art is only a present built on a past. Elements from the field of experience must be combined to produce the new - if only to respond to the injunction of the new. The aesthetics of the old bicycle wheel was the announcement, and the proof, or even the history, since 1913, that the possible combinations of tomorrow's art are indeterminate. And that from the relics of the past, from lost time and reinterpretations of history from one place to another, magic always emerges.

Conclusion

Acceleration has come back recently; contemporary artists are making artificial intelligence, and making us go towards a future even more mythical than that of the futurists. Does this mean that the current state of art is not much better than the crises of the 1910s or the 1960s? that it is even harder to innovate today because everything seems to have been done? Does this mean that artists will always need to show a temporal discordance in order to prove an artistic existence, and that we are decidedly entangled in the modern system of art making? Above all, I would like to remember the despair that is brewing here, and which as historians we must take into account: the discordant times of artistic globalization create uneasiness, unhappiness - not just beautiful success stories. I like the way artist Grégory Chatonsky points the issue at stakes, when he speaks of “disnovation” – and when he quotes Jean-François Lyotard : “Dans le cynisme de l’innovation se cache assurément le désespoir qu’il n’arrive plus rien” – Hidden in the cynicism of innovation is certainly the despair that nothing more will happen.

As far as the work of the historian is concerned, I will remember one simple thing: A cultural object (a work, possibly, but also a style, a biography, an artistic trajectory), depending on how it is approached, and where it is seen, reveals the simultaneous presence of multiple temporalities.⁴⁴ Beyond the artists' speeches and strategies, the discordance of times has to be considered as an interlacing of representations and practices that feed off one another. “Time discordances” then becomes a very useful analytical concept to better understand the processes of globalization, and more generally to understand the driving forces behind artistic and cultural circulation. From this point of view, we can keep in mind the permanent indeterminacy of space-time in the history of art: which means abandoning the hierarchies that the idea of the

44 Hervé Mazurel, « Présences du passé, présences du futur », *Écrire l’histoire*, 11, 2013, <http://journals.openedition.org/elh/310>

discordance of time according to place seems to impose; forgetting the stories of precedence and the myth of perfect innovation. Farewell, the meaning of history. In contrast to the modern relationship to time and its evolutionism, the history of art is not, has not been and will never be a linear process.