

# An Intersection of Space and Time

By Nathaniel Ancheta

My attempt in this short essay is to address the following question: what can history teach practitioners within a field when they seek to create social impact? Now this is a large question with many answers so I aim here to rephrase the question with the field of art. The question I pose is: how does understanding historical geography within the conceptions of space and time effect movement? Space and time have been consistent themes within the trajectory of art. Here I aim to address the political and social implications of time and space, and how historical geography allows us to see those structures and facilitate in the creation a political discourse within the field of art; producing autonomous objects that comment or criticize their effect and affect on the movement and the body.

I believe that it is an artists' responsibility to counteract capitalist accumulation. In order to do this one must explore how historical geography allows us to lift the veil on the structures of power that are constructed within the concepts of space and time. By studying historical geography of everyday life and social practices one may then be able to speculate and plan a novel solution to social problems that is more effective, efficient, and sustainable.

To begin one must understand the conceptions of space and time. It is understood that space and time are socially constructed and operate within objective fact and play a role in social reproduction, thus space and time have a direct relationship to processes of social change. That change can come from imperialist domination or from a conflict between environmentalist and economic decisions. David Harvey in his essay "Between Space and Time: Reflections on the Geographical Imagination refers to this as the "without" and "within." In the essay, he argues that historical geography of concepts of space and time has its roots in modes of production.

What is important about modes of production in the conceptions of space and time? To answer this one must first understand a little about Capitalism. Capitalism is not only an economic system but also a cultural system. For the sake of my argument I am going to focus on production and how the industrial revolution changed it. Before the industrial revolution you had mercantile capitalism. This form of capitalism was focused around primarily agriculture. Many of the commodities that were traded, bought and sold came from farm lands. In the construction of space and time there was more time between space. As the 19th century rolled around and the boom of the industrial revolution there was massive shift in production with ultimately effected conceptions of space and time. This era is commonly referred to as Industrial Capitalism. To describe Industrial Capitalism lets refer to Joyce Appleby's definition in which defines it as "An economic system that relies on investment in machines and technology that are used to increase production of marketable goods." So, what do we think about? What comes to mind is child labor, low wages, long hours, bad working conditions, and unemployment offices. As we can begin to see after this turn there is an acceleration of time creating new kinds of production and commodities. People began flocking to cities and leaving the farms. You can begin to see a fundamental cultural shift occurring due to the compression of space and time. Since the industrial revolution not much has changed in the system, but the speed has accelerated exponentially. Now that we have an understanding of space and time (broadly speaking) where does historical geography play a role?

Historical geography sits at the intersection of social and aesthetic theory. It allows us to track and trace the powers that be that govern and control conceptions of space and time, thus lifting the veil on the social process as well and the aesthetic traces that are left from historical periods. Historical geography allows a social entrepreneur to trace and track the economic structures of control that operate and govern our world. We may no longer succumb ourselves to ignorance and good intention to motivate social change for as we have learned that this does not create a novel solution but rather facilitates the problem it allows us to focus less on the product methodologies but rather the production methodologies. Thus, leading toward a novel solution that is more effective, efficient, and sustainable. This has been best expressed by Cedric G. Johnson and in critiques between Bruce Nussbaum and Emily Pilloton. Now it's important to notice here that these debates are centered around the field of Humanitarian Design. Questions that would arise for example whose solutions, what solutions, and most importantly what problems? So what does this mean in the context of art? what does revealing structures of power that influence our world.

Art has always mirrored the world. Arts ability to respond to the world yet remain autonomous from it giving it its value. Now since the about the 90's there has been a dramatic shift in the art world toward the dissolving of autonomous art. I as an advocate of this don't entirely agree with it. I find that the power in art comes partially from its autonomy but relies on conversation with the world. Architecture would be the obvious example here. So how do you engage in an artistic discourse that is involved in creating social impact yet produces autonomous objects? The answer is not stable and is different depending on one individual circumstances.

My attempt to reconcile this is from a structuralist lens. It is not enough today to look at the structure but to understand how we have reconciled concepts of time and space. Since time and space are part and parcel with social and political issues as well as aesthetic and artistic concerns. I believe that here is a place of potential.

Two artist that I find situate themselves in this space of potential are Renzo Martens and Liam Gillick. The aesthetics and artistic process are quite different but the discourse I find are quite similar. The similarity I refer to is in the structure of framing. In both of their work they frame the social concern by constructing a parallel autonomous narrative that reveals, through difference, a critique and or comment on the concern that the artist is attempting to reconcile with.

It's important to remember that societies change and grow. Conceptions of space and time are transformed from environmental and economic decisions that are influenced by the pressures to imperialist domination. It is of the utmost importance to look at historical geography, both immediate and past, in order to proceed. Not just in the field of art but in any project, that attempts to create social impact.

### Bibliography

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