

Rhythm, Duration, Presence

MH Editors

This issue has been in the making for some time now; the essays were first presented at *Modern Horizons'* 9th conference held in Toronto, ON in October 2019. Between then and now, the rhythms of life have changed, have been disrupted in many ways. *Modern Horizons'* conferences and issues seek to think from our present perspective in order to examine how and why art and ideas both past and future matter to us now. Following our 2018 theme "Senses of Architecture," where the texture of form was of particular concern, *Modern Horizons'* 9th annual conference addressed questions of tonality, rhythm, and forms of time in literature, art, cinema, music, and dance. The essays in this issue continue that discussion in a more focused, attentive form.

If, for Andrei Tarkovsky, cinema is the art of sculpting time, and sculpture, provisionally, captures time's form and freezes the shape of its movements, what can be said about time and presence in other media that "capture," such as photography? How does the image--moving or still--relate to and inform duration? What do we mean, and what's at stake, when we say *the image has a presence of its own*? In terms of movement and the body, Marina Abramović explores ritual and gesture, while the choreographer and dancer Pina Bausch combines improvisation and repetition. Do these more ephemeral art forms also endure? How so? Some literary genres – oral poetry, song, theatre – exist as both archive (as text) and as event (as performance). Do their rhythms and lifespans shift with each mode? Can a static text or image have a morphological life? How can one think these physical and corporeal movements alongside Paul Valéry's claim that likens poetry to dance? In terms of prose, for Marcel Proust the drawn-out sentence is an immanent form of writing that endures and discovers minutiae's rhythms. And to return briefly to the visual arts, sculptors and painters such as Alexander Rodchenko and Jackson Pollock explore rhythm and movement in their immobility.

In music, one thinks of Glenn Gould's mastery of the contrapuntal, or Björk's rhythmic melding of nature and technology. Theodor Adorno laments the division of labour in music, the separation of rhythm, melody, harmony, and counterpoint. Could this critique of specialization be applied to other art forms, such as those mentioned above? Singling out any of the three terms in the issue's theme narrows thinking; each in their own way, the essay herein explore how rhythm, duration, and presence interact and interdepend.

Along with these spaces and forms, there are the rhythms of everyday life, the habits we survive on and the ones we try to break, the temporal structures that shape our existence, and how presence or being present attunes us to time. The body's presence to our own selves and to others is often shown in patterns and cycles: birth, death, sex, ageing, conversation. And what to make of the living body's endurance beyond materiality, in memory for example? Perhaps more abstractly, but no less vital for life, thinking and thought ought to be considered as well. Ideas can be nurtured over time, may seem to surge unannounced (as genius, say), or recur throughout history; every thought has its own rhythms and ways of enduring just as one specific idea's presence can take on a different meaning in varying traditions. What is brought to ideas of

rhythm, duration, and presence when they are thought of spiritually? One thinks of the patterns of daily life, such as those in monastic idiorhythmic communities – the possibilities and limits of which Roland Barthes explored in his Collège de France lectures in the latter half of the 20th century – or, following grander time scales, the importance of ritual and ceremony.

The essays in this issue engage with ideas of rhythm, duration, and presence in life, thought, and art; the issue also serves as a return to some form of singularity or regularity for *Modern Horizons* after an unfortunate yet necessary pause.