



On Slowness: Toward an Aesthetic of the Contemporary (Columbia Themes in Philosophy, Social Criticism, and the Arts)

Lutz Koepnick

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Speed is an obvious facet of contemporary society, whereas slowness has often been dismissed as conservative and antimodern. Challenging a long tradition of thought, Lutz Koepnick instead proposes we understand slowness as a strategy of the contemporary—a decidedly modern practice that gazes firmly at and into the present's velocity.

As he engages with late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century art, photography, video, film, and literature, Koepnick explores slowness as a critical medium to intensify our temporal and spatial experiences. Slowness helps us register the multiple layers of time, history, and motion that constitute our present. It offers a timely (and untimely) mode of aesthetic perception and representation that emphasizes the openness of the future and undermines any conception of the present as a mere replay of the past. Discussing the photography and art of Janet Cardiff, Olafur Eliasson, Hiroshi Sugimoto, and Michael Wesely; the films of Peter Weir and Tom Tykwer; the video installations of Douglas Gordon, Willie Doherty, and Bill Viola; and the fiction of Don DeLillo, Koepnick shows how slowness can carve out spaces within processes of acceleration that allow us to reflect on alternate temporalities and durations.

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