**RACE AS TECHNO-
POLITICO-
AESTHETIC
CATEGORY IN
THE PAST AND
PRESENT
OF VISUAL
REPRESENTATION**

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This paper works towards developing a view of race as a “techno-politico-aesthetic” cultural category of analysis. By exploring the relationship between art, technology, and race in the history of visual representation, I show how race itself is both a descriptive fact, a ‘that’ of beings, but also a tool-being that does productive work (for better or worse) in a politics of aesthetics, that is, a space of dialogue in which the meaning of art is up for grabs. I claim that to have a “politics of aesthetics” that properly takes race into account in its techno-politico-aesthetic character, one must consider the Figure, as theorized by Deleuze, in its simultaneously representational and nonrepresentational aspects.

More specifically, this article extends the thought of thinkers such as Beth Coleman, Wendy Chun, Robin James, and Falguni Sheth, who argue that race is itself a kind of productive technology. I claim that material and epistemological developments in technology served not only to embed race within the Western subject of representation’s ‘enframing’ apparatus (early modernity and the dawn of industrial capitalism), but also served to reveal the embeddedness of race as such (late modernity, the worker’s movement, civil rights and the crisis of representation), thus making it possible to put race on display in the visual arts as a dis/assembling component of the social order.

To make my claims, I use Heidegger’s theory of the modern world-picture, which frames the limits of visual representation for the modern subject of representation (the European man); but against Heidegger, I claim that the technoscientific means by which the world-picture is developed are the same means by which race is rent from this frame to be critically disassembled during modernity’s crisis of representation. I argue that instead of Heidegger’s ontology of aesthetics, which understands art as a saving grace from the enframing of the modern world-picture, Deleuze’s ontology of the nonrepresentational Figure is preferable; with it, we can understand artworks which are race-critical as aestheticizing the forces of violence or joy from which the racialized Figure emerges.

Part 1. the inheritance of the frame

A good deal of art history, cultural criticism, and philosophy makes and supports the claim that the development of linear perspective, reaching its height in the Quattrocento of the European Renaissance, directly correlates with the development of colonial worldviews and subject positions.¹ Erwin Panofsky argues that aesthetic experiments in the artist’s workshop express in the visual realm what the work of natural philosophy achieves in the realm of thought. Specifically, the long art historical narrative of the shifting conception of space culminates with the “domineering unity” of space most completely manifested in the 15th century with the discovery of the vanishing point, typically attributed to Alberti and Brunelleschi’s architectural work. Panofsky contends that this “perspectival achievement is nothing other than a concrete expression of a contemporary advance in epistemology or natural philosophy” which results in “the concept of an infinity, an infinity not only prefigured in God, but indeed actually embodied in empirical reality.”² In other words, these expressions of epistemological advances are in a sense measures of the way European man’s understanding of the world develops, a testament to the development of the subject of representation. Each new epochal conception of space (Greek, Greco-Roman, Byzantine, Romanesque, high Gothic, etc.) presupposes the achievements of the last, either by affirming or reconfiguring them. What is significant for us here is the reciprocal influence between the natural sciences, philosophy, and art, which, impelled by a natural human curiosity, leads to the conception of space that is both perfectly unified and closed, yet extended infinitely.

The discovery of the horizon is a critical element in the story of perspective; for us, this discovery is significant because it introduces the matter of technology. As mentioned, the Greek conception of space and perspective was not as systematic as that of the Renaissance. But critically, the Greeks had what is called the astrolabe—potentially a tool which originated in the Islamic world—but which was a multi-purpose tool used in marine navigation. Sophistications in the development of the astrolabe facilitated

the expeditions of seafarers during the Age of Exploration. The astrolabe’s function relies on its ability to measure the distance between celestial objects by the arbitrary designation of a horizon, marked in the instrument’s version of a viewfinder. Steyerl claims the astrolabe and the discovery of the horizon for linear perspective are of a cultural piece; thus, the provenance of the colonial subject of representation begins, in part, here with the dynamic sociocultural interwovenness of art, science, and technology.³ This is where the question of race becomes salient for this study, but, as should become clear, it will take some work setting the scene to get there.

Lyotard’s essay “Presenting the Unpresentable: The Sublime” also confirms that “the narrative, urban, architectural, religious and ethical components of communities [of the Quattrocento] were given order on the pictorial plane by the painter’s eye,” and “in turn, the eye of the monarch registered a well-ordered universe all the way to the vanishing point” that, when the paintings were displayed in public quarters, “allowed every member of the community the same possibility as the monarch or the painter for an identity within and mastery over that universe.”⁴ In their visual essay *Ways of Seeing*, Berger et al. briefly explain this epistolary and sociopolitical function of painting, saying “perspective, which is unique to European art and which was first established in the early Renaissance” made it so “the visible world is arranged for the spectator as the universe was once thought to be arranged for God.”⁵ Taken together, these positions show that linear perspective was indeed understood to be a symbolic form constitutive of the pre-modern subject position.

Perhaps Heidegger most completely and rigorously articulates the relationship between the modern subject of representation and his picture of the world. In “The Age of the World Picture,” Heidegger claims that in the modern age (in contrast to the Ancient or Medieval ages, and likely, referring most centrally to his own age of machine technology⁶), “man becomes the relational centre of that which is as such” by getting into a picture of the world. The “world picture would be a painting”—a copy of what is there in the world—were it not for Heidegger’s own phenomenological understanding of the world: a “referential totality” that contains “what is, in its entirety, just as it is normative and binding for us.”⁷ Thus the world-picture consists in man’s ability to “set forth,” or, gather all around him, a systematic vision of what there is in the world, which is, crucially, a “decision” about what there is.⁸ As a result, out of this world-as-picture (versus a mere picture of the world), comes the subjectum or, the category of the individualistic subject who puts everything around him into objective measure, normatively, through a “moral-aesthetic anthropology.”⁹ This process by which man makes himself representative of the world he decides on is what Heidegger has in mind when he says the modern man alone is the one who has a world-picture.

For Heidegger, man’s essence is, in part, to enframe, or order natural reality in some way. Heidegger believes the earth, or nature, itself challenges man to order it through enframing. Thus the challenge to enframe is not a matter of technology itself, but rather of revealing. Technology is the means by which man orders the world to measure it. The world-picture derives from a measuring-ordering that is unique to modern machine technology as opposed to the originary meaning of technology, which derives from the Greek *techne*. *Techne* is an originary mode of revealing peculiar to, in the age of the Ancient Greeks, philosophy, handiwork and craft. For Heidegger, the (great) artwork is the chief site of revealing in this most originary mode of revealing, *techne*.¹⁰ In fact, revealing through the technological ordering of what is—through modern machine technology—‘endangers’ man from the truth of Being, whereas the revelation of what is through *techne*, rather than the setting-forth and challenging nature into appearance of technological enframing, causes the truth to unfold in the space of appearance of its own accord and on its own terms. This second version of enframing, Heidegger believes, can deliver mankind over from endangering enframing.

Thus, in effect, enframing itself can reveal the saving power necessary to rescue man from its own endangering quality. On the other hand, Heidegger keeps the technological enframing of modern science quite separate from the originary *techne* of art and handiwork. As is clear from the development of perspective (and thus the capacity to represent a world), technoscience is in an important sense constitutive of art.¹¹ In modernity, as will be shown, art’s saving graces are revealed through the nonrepresentative

paradigms of those movements that characterize what Ranciere calls the 'aesthetic regime of art.' And those nonrepresentative paradigms, themselves characterized by experiments in perspective, color, and so on, are, to a great extent, indebted to the developments of machine technology, specifically photography. Thus, those nonrepresentational capacities of modern artworks (that stand outside the challenging setting-forth of technological enframing), which Heidegger claims reveal the originary strife of a world, are themselves revealed through the further enframing of the world. In other words, non-representational, expressive art cannot be held separately from precisely the 'endangering' qualities of enframing that he claims art is to save man from. Art and technology are inseparable from one another.

Part 2. the racialized object in the world-picture

Race is itself an intractable cultural category in this art-techno-science paradigm within the history of visual representation. Recall that the connection between painting and technology hinges around the discovery of the horizon and the vanishing point, a principle utilized in colonial exploration as in painting alike to found the "domineering unity" of space.¹² My claim here is that the visual arts and science draw from the same reservoir of principles and tools, putting them to different functions within the same culture. Thus, the discovery of European man's representative capabilities coincide with his hierarchizing judgments and pictorial orderings of racial difference.¹³ Race shows itself to be an intractable cultural category through this link between art, science, and technology, where raced others are put into the frame of Western modern man's world-picture during the Age of Conquest, a part of European man's "object-sphere."¹⁴

Several studies have been written to show the anthropological treatment of the racialized Other in the "object-sphere" of the modern world-picture. The narrative at stake is well rehearsed: the white, male, yet neutral subject of representation puts various figures in the frame as objects that it is his duty to arrange, order, and have domain over since, as we know, he has an understanding of space as a systematic and calculated unity, his own domain. These figures which become his duty are, for example, the female nude of any race, the enslaved African of any gender, the displaced refugee, the landless Aborigine, etc. Louis Agassiz's daguerreotypes of enslaved Africans are some of the earliest examples of the way modern photographic technology carried out the racist project of the modern world-picture. In 1850 Agassiz commissioned daguerreotypes of "seven enslaved men and women, among them two sets of Africa-born fathers and their US-born daughters, all meant to be 'pure,' unmiscegenated examples of the race."¹⁵ He intended for these images to "prove his claims that not all humans are of the same species and that the black race is inferior to the white one, alongside the transformation of these photographed people into illustrations for a scientific claim."¹⁶

Again, this visual ordering begins at least as early as the Enlightenment and represent the tenets of white ownership and ordering: of the enslaved, of land, of the conditions of subjectivity and objectivity. In her landmark essay, "Hegel and Haiti," Susan Buck-Morris argues that Hegel, being a freemason and a regular reader of and contributor to the political publication, *Minerva*, was well aware of the Haitian revolution at the time he began formulating the master/slave dialectic, yet curiously references the event only once over the course of his entire intellectual life. Buck-Morris convincingly argues, through readings of other Enlightenment thinkers like Locke and Rousseau that because the enslaved were seen to belong to the domain of the private, liberty was not a category of existence seen to apply to whatever remained in this realm; quite literally, the idea of a slave revolt occupied an unthought position in the Enlightenment man's imagination. The representation of black people as minor figures in the image of Dutch nobility Buck-Morris offers corroborates the fact that bourgeois artworks were used as a means to inscribe racist ideology: the enslaved are represented as meek, subservient figures, arranged into the shadowed background of the image, their faces obscured.¹⁷ The world-as-picture sets forth for the subjectum all that is, or rather, all that seems to be.

Part 3. the aesthetic regime of art and the negotiation of the racialized figure

I have argued that artistic experiments in perspective, colour, line and so forth, are made further possible only through the already endangering enframing of the modern world-picture. To better understand the consequences of this we must see how it is that the 'aesthetic' itself becomes a category of analysis in the modern age, since only through the aestheticization of art do these experimental practices come to have cultural purchase.

In "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger claims that "aesthetics is disposed, in advance, to view the artwork within the dominion of the traditional interpretation of beings in general."¹⁸ This is for Heidegger the "familiar mode of questioning". In his later essay "Question Concerning Technology," he says that the aestheticization of life in the modern world means that "the art work becomes the object of mere subjective experience, and that consequently art is an expression of human life."¹⁹ These claims about aesthetics as a form of familiar mode of questioning, or a mere subjective experience that expresses human life, tell us that for Heidegger, aesthetics are a part of the enframing mode of Being. In other words, aesthetics put the artwork in the realm of humanism, that "moral-aesthetic anthropology,"²⁰ and out of the realm of the sacral. The question of art's modernist break from Medieval and Renaissance ways of seeing and its consequences for politics has long been at the centre of European art historical discourse. I offer here some rudimentary context.

According to Jonathan Crary, A much rehearsed view in art historical discourse is that the "modern" rupture with Renaissance paradigms of vision occurred because a vanguard of experimental artists (Manet, the impressionists and the post-impressionists) were able to invent a new way of seeing through painting.²¹ Critically, this new, experimental mode of seeing depended on the continued hegemony of realism through the development of photography and the cinematic arts. Thus, in modernity, because photography supercedes painting's ability to represent, or capture, the subject's world, the illusion is given that painting is freed up to reflect on the possibilities and limits of its own form;²² in other words, the painter can return to concerning himself [sic] with the unconcealing revelation of truths, in the mode of *techne*.

This view, that developments in technical reproduction, especially photography, eroded the mimesis of painting, was central to Benjamin's intervention in this debate with his *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. For Benjamin, changes in the dynamics of productive relations in an industrializing society could be imposed onto the realm of art; the development of techniques of mass production in the realm of labour translated in works of art as the loss of a work's "aura"—its sense of uniqueness and singular authenticity—when it became reproduced. For Benjamin, these developments fundamentally changed the purpose and function of art for capitalist society. Art no longer served a sacred purpose, and instead, the autonomous character of art became central to its function, as captured in the phrase "art for art's sake."

In a critique of the essay however, Peter Bürger notes that the binarism between "realism and experimentation"²³ that Crary points to is prevalent in Benjamin's work, because for Benjamin, the Dadaists 'had already, before film was discovered, attempted to create filmlike effects by the means used in painting.'²⁴ In other words, Benjamin's materialist argument for the origins of the bourgeois and "aesthetic" perception of art, its secularization and politicization, has a contradiction at its heart. Either the Dadaists pioneered an aesthetic perception, or new techniques of reproduction did.

Crary approaches this dilemma by using a Foucauldian analytic to emphasize that the so-called rupture of vision in modernity, while generally attributed to the innovations of a select few, can be traced genealogically to the ways in which nineteenth century technological developments (the camera obscura, but also the stereoscope and the phenakistiscope)²⁵ enacted the beginnings of a Foucauldian disciplining of the observer's psyche and body. This disciplining modulated the codes and norms of everyday modes of perception, and thus, modulated the beginnings of the properly modern political subject. Crary thus decenters Benjamin's emphasis on technological developments to emphasize the power of agents

in shaping the perception of and role for art, while not entirely relinquishing the necessary importance of technological developments.

Bürger's position is stronger than Crary's, arguing that developments in the social function of art during modernity had very little to do with technological developments than with the changing social order. Jacques Rancière's claims regarding the 'aesthetic regime of art' make a case much stronger than Bürger's for the social functioning of art, going as far as disavowing the classifications of 'modernity' and 'postmodernity' altogether.

For Rancière, the 'aesthetic regime of art,' is the "true name for what is designated by the incoherent label 'modernity.'"²⁶ Contrary to the belief that modernity is characterized by the old and the new, the figurative and the non-representative, Rancière claims that the 'aesthetic regime of art' is one historical moment of several regimes of art and is thus "first of all a new regime for relating to the past."²⁷ Thus any inventions and innovations specific to this regime are neither the result of technological determinism, nor of the free and spontaneous, revolutionary will of the people, but rather, the result of historicized collective disputes and negotiations over the status of art.

The aesthetic regime of art is thus, for Rancière, characterized by a "politics of aesthetics," which, at bottom, means that there is a continuous cultural negotiation of the elements, nature, and function of an artwork. For Rancière, that there is an artwork at all in the aesthetic regime of art means that there is also always an open space—a space of 'dissensus'—in which to continuously pose and re-pose the question, "but is it art?," and in which what would have been previously considered 'inadmissible' may assert and affirm its being within the regime as a political subject (that is, as one who is visible within the regime to be recognized and counted as such).²⁸

That there can be a cultural negotiation of this kind at all depends on the presence of a specific "distribution of the sensible." For Rancière, each regime of art is also characterized by a "system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it."²⁹ In other words, the distribution of the sensible particular to any historical moment determines what is visible and sayable, and provides its justification for this in certain of cultural codes and norms.

I suggest that in the aesthetic regime of art, or, modernity, race and racialized persons have been, until very recently (and in some cases continue to be) inadmissible as political subjects. As regards technology, my position is stronger than Bürger's, but weaker than Benjamin's, in that I hold that technological developments would have served to augment already existing logics of racism and racialization, as exemplified in the example of Agassiz's daguerreotypes. Another key example of the manner in which the distribution of the sensible in the aesthetic regime of art renders the naturalization of colonial racial hierarchies unsayable is Albert Camus' infamous work, *L'Étranger*. In that book, though there are several indications that Merseault is in Algeria during the French occupation, this setting becomes unremarkable and somehow ubiquitous. The victim of Merseault's murder, the unnamed Arab, is a faceless, nameless Other set forth in a colonized domain. Just as Hegel would have known of the Haitian Revolution, Camus would have been aware of France's dealings in Algeria.³⁰ Why does the text obscure the fact of the occupation? Moreover, how do we make sense of the push beyond representation, the push for the freedom and resistance of modern art, which coincides with the continued unfree representation of those others long depicted as mere figures set forth in the space of great works?

As a cultural artifact, Degas' 1879 painting "Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando" is a good example of the way the push towards nonrepresentational painting and the anthropological gaze come together in one image, revealing . The painting—which is one of if not the only painting by Degas featuring a racialized subject—features the circus performer, Miss La La.³¹ In the painting, Miss La La hovers high above, in vertical perspective. The invisible spectator gazes on her from below. Miss La La's head is thrown back and obscured behind her right shoulder, clenching a rope between her teeth, the only means by which she has been hoisted tens of feet into the air. The invisibility of the spectator, and the aerial positioning of Miss La La's suspended body make her, to use Lacan's terms, the given-to-be-seen for the invisible

gaze; awe-inducing and miraculous, empowered in some measure by the extraordinariness of her performance, while simultaneously alienated by precisely this extraordinariness. Though the painting is clearly experimenting with perspective, colour, and composition, there is still the sense of "domineering unity" of space which Panofsky claims the impressionists had not yet cast off.³² It is curious then, to consider that Degas went to the circus as a site for his studies in perspective—a place known almost exclusively for its shows of freakishness and novelty, providing an atmosphere of heightened sensation and excitement and, in Miss La La's case, a scene impelled by the risk of a fall.

Part 4. Falling out of the frame: race as techno-aesthetic category

The crisis of representation that arises during modernity and the industrial revolution pries open a space to reveal race itself as a kind of modern enframing technology. The events of 1968, the civil rights movement, the Birmingham school, the poststructuralist turn and the restructuring of the academy are all factors which aided to conceptually unmoor race, like gender, class and other identity categories from discourses of naturalization, becoming a destabilized and politicized site of agitation for human rights within the Western world-picture. To return to Heidegger, developments in the modern world cause race to "fall out" of the frame of the world-picture into the space of unconcealment, revealing itself as a techno-politico-aesthetic category.³³

By techno-politico-aesthetic, we mean that race is no longer a natural or positivist trait to be observed, measured, and represented via scientific regimes of truth; rather, race itself is revealed to enter into the dissensual domain of a "politics of aesthetics," appearing as itself a tool or means by which the terms of the configuration of the racialized figure are negotiated for a people with a common aisthesis, or, "horizon of affects."³⁴

Erica Lord's artworks are a case in point. Daniher argues Lord's works utilize the pose in photographic self-portraits, and various installation practices, to bring to light the ambiguities and paradoxes of colonial practices of measuring, ordering, and marking the racialized other: "if Lord's photography explores the external, visual construction of race and racialized identities (phenotype), her installations move inward, interrogating the non-visible and disembodied."³⁵ For example, in her work "The Tanning Project," Lord plays on the double meaning of tanning hide in traditional Indigenous craftwork, and tanning as a "fairly standard ritual of white beautification,"³⁶ to put on display, or deconstruct, the process by which brown skin is made to refer to settler colonial practices of land theft and bodily subjugation. Likewise, her work that makes "recourse to blood through installation poses blood quantum definitions of Indigenous identity against genealogical definitions of Indigenous identity in order to critique the former as an inherited system of colonial racial governance." In these instances, Lord points towards both the fact of race—that it is there, being-there-in-the-world—and its mutability: that race is functional.

While Daniher's thesis is not explicit about the race-technology link, there is a rich body of literature and compendium of thinkers doing this work.³⁷ Wendy HK Chun's introduction to the "Race and/as Technology" special issue of *Camera Obscura* explains that understanding race as an enframing technology is to move away from race as a category of representation or verifiable knowledge, including considerations of how technologies utilize conceptions of race to confirm presupposed truths about 'marked' others.³⁸ Rather, race as technology asks after the productive work that race does to inform discourses about the nature or truth of race as either biological or cultural. In this way, race is understood to be real, a descriptive element of existence, unlike those who argue race is a cultural and linguistic construction, but still unlike proponents of racial science who argue there are immutable, genetic elements of race provable by scientific method. Race is utilized to order communities of individuals, inform identifications, subversions, or governmental forms of power, but the ordering process itself—the way things come to be—is entirely contingent and a matter of human chance and decision.³⁹

In the next and final section, I put these considerations back into conversation with the matter of perspective. I claim that the age of information technology is one characterized by the perspective of the

free fall and ask: how do art and aesthetics address race as both function and fact in the history of colonial violence?

Part 5. In free fall, a racial aesthetics of politics considers the Figure

The age of information technology is styled after a sense of free fall.⁴⁰ There is a sense in which the vertical perspective of Miss La La's world has been realized, and what Heidegger feared most is unfurling: that man is now "pursuing and pushing forward nothing but what is revealed in ordering," turning everything into a standing-reserve with potential to be challenged forth, until the point that even man is a standing-reserve to be challenged forth and ordered himself.⁴¹ Information technology—the human-machine-network relation—if it takes over any function, seems to be that of speed of calculation at the same time that it opens up the realm of the incalculable; there is the sense that the world-picture has been shoved back, falling onto a horizontal plane, its subjects/objects falling blindly and freely into the vanishing point of an invented infinity. The affective turn in intellectual discourse seems to emphasize the loss of the representational in exchange for the embodied and sensed. In terms of race, this lens often maps onto the interest to push towards the post-racial.

As Wendy Chun argues through her reading of the 1997 MCI "Anthem" commercial, the development of information technology appears on the scene as a potential redemption from the racial injustices and violences of the everyday. Yet, by claiming to turn the "Other" into a superuser who passes from visibility to text, thus flying under the radar of the ordering visual gaze, the advertisement implies that it is always preferable to be the neutral, unmarked (white) subject of representation. Such campaigns that seduce the Other into consumption code difference as something to be eschewed and cast off.⁴²

The push for postraciality in the affective turn conveniently but disingenuously circumvents the mess of grappling with race as an ongoing site of political, epistemic and aesthetic struggle. However, with race falling out of the frame, conceiving of race as connected mainly to identification through historical remembering and colonial violence alone also does not do justice to its role as techno-politico-aesthetic category. What, then, can affect offer the techno-politico-aesthetic understanding of race in art? For this, we will turn to Deleuze.

For Deleuze, art elicits a different sense of falling. In his work *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze offers singular readings of Francis Bacon's paintings to describe how the Figure of painting can be thought nonrepresentationally. Such an endeavour involves theorizing how Bacon paints—makes visible—the invisible, infra-rational forces of sensation that configure the sense of the world, common to all beings. Taking the notion of the fall seriously, he says that sensation itself is characterized by the descent of the fall, an active force, not a passive or reactive one: "[the descent] is the active that descends, that plunges. The active is the fall, but it is not necessarily a descent in space, in extension. It is the descent as the passage of sensation."⁴³

As a fact of the intensive nature of sensation, the fall is not to be understood as representable pictorially, but rather, it is painted as the active rhythm which, interacting with the passive, reactive, and attendant rhythms, deform the body to reveal the Figure of painting as its own matter of fact. For Deleuze, that the Figure is a matter of fact is an asignifying, universal trait of painting as a medium. As such, the logic of sensation grounds an understanding of the emergence of the Figure para-ontologically. While Deleuze's logic of sensation romanticizes the formation of the Figure as common to any human suffering, his work nonetheless offers us a point of entry into a politics of aesthetics that engages race. Earlier we mentioned that a politics of modern aesthetics is characterized by a zone of indiscernibility where real 'dissensual' dialogue can happen about the status of art. Crucially, in his work *The Emancipated Spectator*, Ranciere extends his insights of the dissensual zone of indiscernibility to the figure itself. Instead of eschewing the figure altogether in highly abstract, nonrepresentational movements, new technologies allow "a new status of the figure" that "conjoins two [logics] of expression, without homogenizing them."⁴⁴ For example, the pictorial photograph holds elements of painting (composition, colour) and mechanical

reproduction in tension together, perhaps where they do not belong, to produce the image. Vasulka's video art generates new interpretations of events that frame our Western sociopolitical reality, instead of producing a radically new artwork, which video art was doing at the time of its introduction. By combining mediums and tearing figures that have acquired well-worn meaning from their context, the inherited significance of these figures are transformed.⁴⁵

In our age of information technology, the artwork, contra Heidegger, does not reveal new worlds and truths; instead, the artwork is a part of the "closed but unlimited cosmos" of radical immanence à la Deleuze, expressing the forces of the fall. Race as techno-politico-aesthetic is a highly productive and unavoidable aspect of culture; as such, a politics of aesthetics that engages race introduces a new status of the Figure, one in which the common forces working to deform, and/or otherwise produce the marked body are put into the aesthetic distribution of the sensible as a matter of politics.

An excellent example of this is Gary Simmons' 1992 "Black Chalkboard (Triple Eye Maestro)." In it, Simmons draws the image of what appears to be a cartoonish minstrel figure in chalk on a blackboard. He then uses his hands to push the chalk lines in several directions away from the figure, presenting the impression of movement and, simultaneously, erasure. It is indiscernible whether the Figure is representative of minstrelsy, but the hints are there, making it a kind of pensive image in Ranciere's sense of the "new status of the figure." Yet as a cartoonish line drawing, on its own and not set in any perspective, the Figure is singular; its markings allow us to meditate on the way race potentially signifies in the image as extensive and intensive forces of violence—forces which are part and parcel of the aesthetic distribution of the sensible. We know something of what the Figure means, and not enough at all; crucially, the Figure's movement impresses a sense of agitation and frenzy that speaks to a commonness (a 'fact') without sanitizing the matter of race. Thus, a contemporary and politics of aesthetics concerning race considers the force of the fall in the construction of the Figure, and the way that race as techno-aesthetic motivates this process.

- 1 See also Samuel Y. Edgerton, *The Mirror, The Window, and the Telescope: How Renaissance Linear Perspective Changed our Vision of the Universe* (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2009); Milton E. Brener, *Vanishing Points: Three Dimensional Perspective in Art and History* (London, McFarland & Company, 2004)
- 2 Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (New York, Zone Books, 1997), 65.
- 3 Hito Steyerl, "In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment in Vertical Perspective," in *e-flux* 24 (2011), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/24/67860/in-free-fall-a-thought-experiment-on-vertical-perspective/>
- 4 Jean-François Lyotard, "Presenting the Unpresentable: The Sublime," *Artforum* 20, no. 8 (1982): 64-69.
- 5 John Berger et al., *Ways of Seeing* (London, Penguin, 1977), 16
- 6 Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York and London, Garland Publishing, 1977), 127, 128.
- 7 Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," 129.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 130.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 133.
- 10 Heidegger, "The Origin of the Artwork," in *Martin Heidegger: Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge UP, 2002).
- 11 Shannon Bell. "Kira O'Reilly: Techne of Anxiety" in *Kira O'Reilly: Untitled (Bodies)*, eds. Harriet Curtis & Martin Hargreaves (Live Art Development Agency and Intellect Books, 2017), 115.
- 12 Panofsky, *Perspective*, 42.
- 13 Of course, the leap from ordering to capturing, as occurred during the period of trans-Atlantislavery also has much to do with religion, and in this way, it may not be quite so accurate to say that there is, as Hegel claimed, a true separation between Art and Religion during the Enlightenment since representation would have been understood as a god-given capability, permitting a specific god-given positioning of the colonial subject in the world with a god-given right to accumulate wealth via enslavement. Deleuze reminds us that "it is with God that everything is permitted...since acts of violence and infamies always find a holy justification" (*Logic of Sensation*, 10).
- 14 Heidegger, *Question*, 120.
- 15 Christina Sharpe. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Duke University Press, 2016.
- 16 Azoulay, qtd. in Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 43.
- 17 Edward Said's *Orientalism* is of course one major example of the ordering and framing of the racialized other. See also, Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis, 2014) and the works of Frantz Fanon.
- 18 Heidegger, "Origin," 18.
- 19 Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," 116.
- 20 Heidegger, "Question Concerning," 133.
- 21 Jonathan Crary. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. MIT Press, 1992. 4-5.
- 22 See Benjamin, Walter. *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction* (Penguin UK, 2008). Deleuze also attributes this view, partly, to Malraux, though he claims clearly to oppose the position. Nb. Francis Bacon: *Logic of Sensation* (London, Continuum, 2003), 10.
- 23 Crary, *Techniques*, 4.
- 24 Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. University of Minnesota Press, 1987. 29.
- 25 Crary, *Techniques*, 14.

- 26 Jacques Ranciere, "Artistic Regimes and the Shortcomings of the Notion of Modernity," in *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. New York: Continuum, 2011. 24.
- 27 Ranciere, "Artistic Regimes," 25.
- 28 Jacques Ranciere, "The Aesthetic Revolution and its Outcomes," in *Dissensus* (London, Continuum, 2010), 115-133.
- 29 Jacques Ranciere, "The Distribution of the Sensible: Politics and Aesthetics", in *The Politics of Aesthetics*. 13.
- 30 Credit for this observation to Ann Laura Stoler during her talk, "Interior Frontiers: Concept Work on Rough-Ground" delivered at York University in Toronto on March 7, 2019.
- 31 In his experimental short story "Acrobatique" in *Counternarratives*, John Keene speculates on the elements of Miss La La's life from the first person perspective, annotating the fragments of archival information available about her. This is a move, I think, to put the racialized other into the position of the subject of representation and rescue her from the oblivion of the archive.
- 32 Panofsky, *Perspective*, 45.
- 33 Heidegger explains that the root of the word "cause" is *cadere*, meaning to cause to "fall out," in the way the silver chalice is caused to fall out of the process of making. See "Question Concerning Technology," 7.
- 34 Ranciere, *Dissensus*, 2.
- 35 Collen Kim Daniher, "The Pose as Interventionist Gesture: Erica Lord and Decolonizing the Proper Subject of Memory," 8.
- 36 Daniher, "The Pose as Interventionist Gesture," 11.
- 37 See Beth Coleman, "Race as Technology," in *Camera Obscura* 24, no. 1 (2009): 176-207; Felguni Sheth, "The Technology of Race: Enframing, Violence, and Taming the Unruly," in *Radical Philosophy Review*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2004) 77-98; Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*. Duke University Press, 2015; Safiya Umoja Noble. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. NYU Press, 2018; Lisa Nakamura. *Cyber-types: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet*. Routledge, 2013.
- 38 Surveillance biometric technologies of race show the effort to put racialized others into the count of Ranciere's police. See Browne from note 32. Browne discusses how biometric technologies have been in place since slavery. Technologies such as the ledger, the whip, the bit. Other examples of this include migrant fingerprinting systems. These are all ways to frame the 'thingness' of the Other.
- 39 Arun Saldanha. *Deleuze and Race*. Edinburgh University Press, 2012
- 40 The inspiration for this claim comes from Hito Steyerl's essay "In Free Fall." The idea is these technologies are superimposed on the chaos-loving energy of capitalism. Playing at capitalism is like lumbering in the dark along a sinking mesh-like safety net with body-sized patched and unpatched holes scattered along it randomly
- 41 Heidegger, "The Question," 26-27.
- 42 Wendy HK Chun. *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*. MIT Press, 2008.
- 43 Deleuze, *Logic of Sensation*, 80.
- 44 Jacques Rancière. *The Emancipated Spectator* (Verso Books, 2014), 121-122.
- 45 Ranciere, *Emancipated*, 130.