

Call for Abstracts for Issue 15 (Autumn 2023)

Present Futures

The present is great with the future.
—Gottfried Leibniz, 1703

In times when the present seems to be facing an imminent – and immanent – crisis, we want to take a step forward and investigate how various concepts and imaginaries of the future can be made fruitful for the present. The 15th issue of *On_Culture* seeks to explore forms of present futures – futures that manifest in the present and affect it – to provide new approaches and critical perspectives to thinking about the future in the study of culture.

European modernity has understood time teleologically according to the paradigms of the industrialized nation-states. Predictive techniques, forecasting, and an instrumental mastery over things to come dominate understandings of the future. While within a (Western) modern framework, the future is tied to progress, continuation, and openness for possibilities that cannot be foreseen or accessed, recently, various disciplines have attempted to conceptualize the future in different ways and have challenged a linear understanding of the future.

For instance, thinking within the framework of affect theory, Brian Massumi (2010) observes that the fear of a future threat has a significant impact on the present as this fearful anticipation shapes our present actions – even if this fear never actually materializes in the future. Thus, future threats surpass linear time and exist in a perpetual circle of fear of the what-will-have-been. In a similar vein, the act of imagining futures relies heavily on the resources of the past. Historical sources are often drawn on to legitimize actions in the present and to fashion a certain image of how the future is going to unfold in light of past developments. Historiography is thus bestowed with an immense power which becomes critical when authoritarian states exploit the past for the creation of loyalty to a current regime while vilifying opposing views and framing a unilateral image of the future.

For queer studies the future is also often regarded as problematic. Some queer studies scholars (most notably Lee Edelman) reject the future altogether on the grounds of it being a facet of 'straight time' that represents a heteronormative and reproductive imperative. Nevertheless, others (like Jose Esteban Muñoz) oppose this view and regard queerness as situated within the future as the present holds no place for the queer subject and rather stress the future potentiality (also linked to Franco Bifo Berardi's notion of futurability) of a queer collective utopia. Similarly, recent strands of black feminist theory (e.g. Tina M. Campt) have argued for refusing the status quo of the present and advocate for performing the future we wish for in the here and now. For colonized peoples, imagining and creating a future represents an act of decolonization in itself because colonialism has excluded them from the future by representing them as the extinct inhabitants of a bygone past. Thus, afrofuturism and Indigenous futurism have emerged in order to challenge this colonialist temporality and envision alternative futures. Indigenous conceptions of time propose modes of living in the present that are sustainable and include not only the knowledge passed on by past generations but also consider the well-being of future generations and the planet. A planetary approach and emphasis on creating a sustainable present to ensure that there will actually be a future also lies at the core of an ecocritical thinking about the future.

This issue of *On_Culture* wishes to engage with such debates and interventions (both past and present) related to present futures across disciplines. How are futures and their a/effect on the present conceptualized in different disciplines and time periods? What role does the concept of future enact in different *dispositifs*? How do cultural artifacts (works of art, film, literature, popular culture) and social practices set to work particular understandings of the future? What cultural climates and historical circumstances have motivated, and currently motivate, specific understandings of the future and how these relate to the present?

Contributions can address, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- Systematic approaches to future in the humanities and social sciences (e.g. art, visual culture, literature, history, philosophy, etc.)
- New critical methods and approaches for the study of the future
- Queer notions of future(s) and present(s)
- Decolonial future(s)
- Black (feminist) futurity
- The relationship between future and affect theory
- Theoretical and historical critiques of concepts of the future (e.g. Marxist, poststructuralist, psychoanalytic, etc.)
- The performative dimension of particular understandings of the future
- Commodification of future projections
- Sustainable present(s) and future(s)
- Conceptual proximity to other concepts (such as projection, expectation, prefiguration, prevision, anticipation) and constraints/critiques of their mechanisms

If you are interested in having a peer reviewed academic article featured in this issue of *On_Culture*, please submit an abstract of 300 words with the article title, 5–6 keywords, a short biographical note, and your email address to content@on-culture.org (subject line “Abstract Submission”) no later than **October 15, 2022**. You will be notified by **November 1, 2022** whether your paper proposal has been accepted. The final date for full paper submissions is **February 15, 2023** and the issue will be published in **Autumn 2023**.

Please note: *On_Culture* also features *_Perspectives*, a section devoted to shorter, creative pieces pertaining to each issue topic. These can be interviews, essays, opinion pieces, reviews of exhibitions, analyses of cultural artifacts and events, photo galleries, videos, works of art... and more! These contributions are uploaded on a rolling basis and can be connected to every one of *On_Culture's* issues. We are especially inviting *_Perspectives* for Issue 14 on “CODES: Power and Subversion.” You find the CfA [here](#). Interested in contributing? Send your ideas to the Editorial Team at any time: content@on-culture.org

About *On_Culture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture*

On_Culture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture (ISSN: 2366-4142) is a biannual, peer-reviewed academic e-journal edited by doctoral researchers, postdocs, and professors working at the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC) at Justus Liebig University Giessen. It provides a forum for reflecting on the study of culture. It investigates, problematizes, and develops key concepts and methods in the field by means of a collaborative and collective process. *On_Culture* is dedicated to fostering such engagements as well as the cultural dynamics at work in thinking about and reflecting on culture.

The journal consists of three sections: peer-reviewed academic *_Articles*, as well as *_Essays*, and the aforementioned *_Perspectives*. *On_Culture* brings new approaches and emerging topics in the (trans)national study of culture ‘on the line’ and, in so doing, fills the gap__ between ‘on’ and ‘culture.’

There are numerous ways of filling the gap, and a plurality of approaches is something for which the journal strives with each new issue.

Please note: As a commitment to the open access to scholarship, *On_Culture* does not charge any Article Processing Charges (APCs) for the publication of your contribution.

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