

INR 6607 • INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY • FALL 2026

After Certainty

Postmodernism as an International Relations school of thought

Seven centuries of painting, two world wars and the crisis of reason — read as a theory of world politics

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Modernism: breaking with tradition, betting on the new

- Born in the late 19th century, as Western culture changed: religion lost ground to secular life, and science gained authority.
- **A deliberate break with tradition**, and a restless search for new forms of expression.
- **Driven by urban-industrialization**, the twin growth of factories and cities: the factory becomes the new battleground, and Fordism its emblem. It was then recast by the political and geopolitical shocks after World War I.

Its political twin

Faith that reason could design order: the League of Nations (1920) and the first chair of International Politics (Aberystwyth, 1919). Modern IR was born as a modernist project, and postmodernism will question that faith.

Painting

Abstraction:
Kandinsky, Picasso

Literature

Stream of
consciousness: Joyce,
Woolf

Cinema

Montage: Eisenstein;
Expressionism: Fritz
Lang, *Metropolis*
(1927)

Music

Atonality and
twelve-tone:
Schoenberg

Dance

Modern dance:
Duncan, Graham

Architecture

Bauhaus, Le Corbusier,
Oscar Niemeyer:
Brasília (1960), the
planned city

Urban-industrialization: from the horse to the Model T



Fifth Avenue, New York, Easter morning 1900: horse-drawn traffic and only two motorcars • NARA (public domain)



Ford Model T (1908–1927), the car for the multitude • 1911 Tourabout, photo Ermell, CC BY-SA 4.0



Moving assembly line, Ford Highland Park plant, Michigan, 1913 • public domain

- **A dual process.** Industry pulls millions into cities, and cities feed factories with labor and markets. New York tops 5.6 million people by 1920.
- **The horse city.** Around 1900 New York ran on well over 100,000 horses. Manure, carcasses and congestion made it a public-health crisis.
- **Ford's answer.** The Model T (1908), the moving assembly line (1913) and the \$5 day (1914). Over 15 million cars were built by 1927.
- **Fordism** (Gramsci) means mass production for mass consumption. The factory is the new battleground: labor against capital at home, and industrial capacity deciding wars abroad.

***“I define postmodern as
incredulity toward
metanarratives.”***

— Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (1979)

SESSION ROADMAP

Today's itinerary

I

The gallery of world order

Botticelli to Dalí: canvases paired with turning points of the international system.

II

The rupture

Avant-gardes, world wars, Auschwitz and Hiroshima — then Pollock to Warhol: from late modernism to the postmodern turn.

III

The school

Core concepts, key thinkers, critiques — and Devetak's verdict.

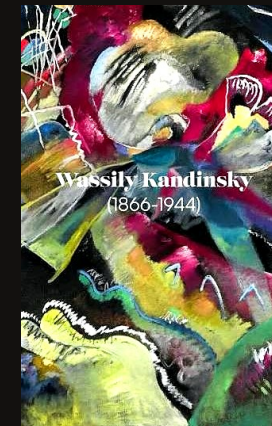
IV

Theory meets policy

Gulf War and 9/11, then Venezuela, Hormuz, Ukraine and NATO's eastern flank in October 2026.

Art as a seismograph of the international

Each canvas records how its age imagined order, authority and the subject — and each is paired with a turning point of world politics.



1484

Renaissance
Perspective;
Machiavelli

1642

Baroque
Westphalia 1648

1768

Rococo
Enlightenment,
ancien régime

1830

Romanticism
Nation & popular
sovereignty

1907

Cubism
Eve of the Great
War

1913

Abstraction
Balkan Wars;
Europe arms

1917

Dada
Total war, 1917

1936

Surrealism
Spain, collapse of
order

SANDRO BOTTICELLI (c. 1445–1510) • RENAISSANCE • c. 1484

The Birth of Venus: the rebirth of the measuring eye

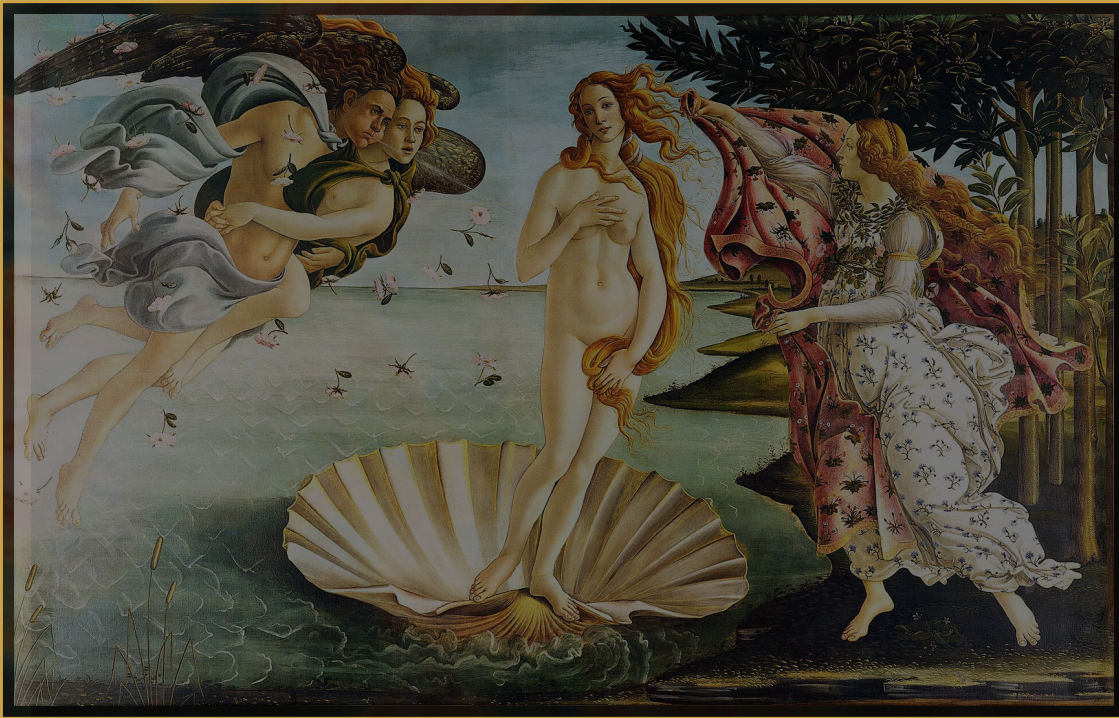
Classical harmony reborn — and with linear perspective, a single, centered viewer who orders the world.

IN WORLD POLITICS

- Italian city-states invent resident diplomacy and the balance of power.
- Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513): politics as a technique of power, freed from theology — later claimed as realism's ancestor.

POSTMODERN READING

Perspective is a theory of the subject: one eye, one vanishing point. IR inherits this “view from nowhere.” Postmodernism asks **whose eye** stands at the center — and who is painted as myth, ornament or object.



Sandro Botticelli (c. 1445–1510), *The Birth of Venus*, c. 1484 • Uffizi, Florence

REMBRANDT (1606–1669) • BAROQUE • 1642

The Night Watch: arms and the coming of Westphalia (1648)

A civic militia steps out of darkness — armed, self-governing and theatrically lit.

IN WORLD POLITICS

- The Dutch Republic is still fighting Spain; the **Peace of Münster/Westphalia (1648)** recognizes it and ends the Thirty Years' War.
- **Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651)**: the sovereign as the answer to the war of all against all.

POSTMODERN READING

Westphalia became IR's founding story of sovereign equality. Osiander (2001) calls it a “**Westphalian myth**”: the treaties said little about sovereignty. Origins are written backward — a genealogy, not a fact.



Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669), *The Night Watch*, 1642 • Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

The Swing: pleasure on the eve of revolution

An aristocracy at play — gravity, balance and a hidden gaze in the bushes.

IN WORLD POLITICS

- After the Seven Years' War (1763): a European order of dynasties and the **balance of power** (Vattel, 1758).
- The Enlightenment's promise of reason and progress — **Kant, Perpetual Peace (1795)**.

POSTMODERN READING

The swing is a perfect image of the balance of power: a game that looks weightless until the rope snaps — in 1789. Foucault reminds us the Age of Reason was also the age of the **gaze, discipline and classification**.



Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806), *The Swing*, 1767–68 • Wallace Collection, London

EUGÈNE DELACROIX (1798–1863) • ROMANTICISM • 1830

Liberty Leading the People: the nation as allegory

The July Revolution personified: the people, the flag and a woman who is an idea.

IN WORLD POLITICS

- The age of **nationalism** and **popular sovereignty**; Belgium and Greece win independence (1830).
- Sovereignty moves from the king's body to “the people” — and to the nation-state.

POSTMODERN READING

The nation must be **represented** to exist: allegories, flags, maps. Benedict Anderson's “imagined communities” (1983): national identity is produced by images, symbols and stories.



Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Liberty Leading the People*, 1830 • Musée du Louvre, Paris



Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)*, 1936 • MoMA, New York

PABLO PICASSO (1881–1973) • CUBISM • 1907

Les Demoiselles d'Avignon: the death of the single viewpoint

Five figures seen from many angles at once; masks from Africa and Iberia break European canon.

IN WORLD POLITICS

- The Entente Cordiale between France and the UK (1904) grows into the Triple Entente (1907: France, the UK and Russia). The Second Hague Conference (1907) tries to codify war.
- Imperialism at its height: the colonial world enters Europe's museums and studios.

POSTMODERN READING

Cubism is **perspectivism on canvas** — there is no privileged vantage point. Ashley and Walker make the same move in IR: the “view from the sovereign state” is one perspective among many.



Wassily Kandinsky
(1866-1944)

WASSILY KANDINSKY (1866–1944) • ABSTRACTION • C. 1913

Kandinsky (1866–1944): the object disappears

No object, no horizon, no single viewpoint: color and line answer only to what Kandinsky called “inner necessity.”

IN WORLD POLITICS

- Balkan Wars (1912–13) and an arms race; months later, 1914. Kandinsky, a Russian in Munich, is expelled as an enemy alien.
- He teaches at the Bauhaus (1922–33); the Nazis close it and brand his work “**degenerate art**” (1937).

POSTMODERN READING

Abstraction marks the peak of modernism, and its trap. Kandinsky freed painting from copying the visible world. Yet *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911) promised a **universal language of the spirit**, one more grand narrative. The Nazis later branded his work “degenerate”, which proves Devetak’s point: **whoever names art also exercises power through knowledge.**

Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), abstract canvas of the Munich / Blaue Reiter period, c. 1913

Painting as music, art as spirit

- **Spirituality.** Against materialism, art must express “inner necessity.” Abstraction is a path to the soul, close to Theosophy. Painting becomes a nearly religious act.
- **Music.** Kandinsky is said to have “seen” colors while hearing Wagner’s *Lohengrin*. A Schoenberg concert in 1911 inspired *Impression III (Concert)*. Atonality and abstraction share one move: both drop the fixed center.
- **A musical vocabulary.** His works are *Impressions*, *Improvisations* and *Compositions*. Yellow sounds like a trumpet; blue like a cello or organ. *Composition VII*, his most complex canvas, took dozens of studies.

POSTMODERN READING

“Father” is itself a narrative. Hilma af Klint painted abstractions from 1906, and Kupka and Delaunay also claim the title. Canons crown founders much as IR crowns Westphalia: **a genealogy written backward.**



Composition VII (1913, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow) beside a portrait of Kandinsky

“Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings.”

— Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911)

Fountain: meaning by institution

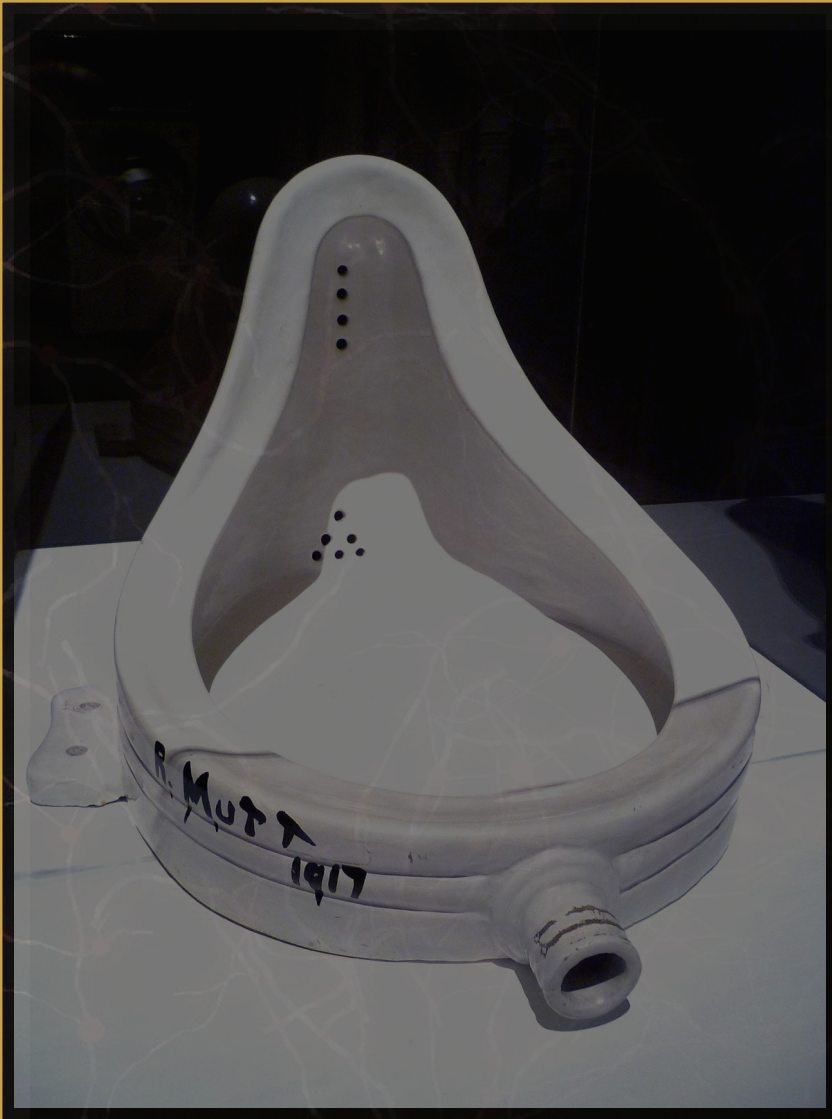
A urinal becomes art when it is signed, placed and named — the context makes the object.

IN WORLD POLITICS

- 1917: total war, and the US enters the Great War.
- **The Bolshevik Revolution** (October 1917): Lenin offers Marxism as the grand narrative of history. A year later Wilson's Fourteen Points (1918) answer with a liberal one: two rival metanarratives of world order.

POSTMODERN READING

Duchamp's ready-made anticipates **discourse theory**: things become "art," "states," "terrorists" or "threats" through naming and institutional authority. Change the frame and the object changes.



Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968), *Fountain*, 1917 (signed "R. Mutt"); replica, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art • photo Kim Traynor, CC BY-SA 3.0



Salvador Dalí (1904–1989), *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans (Premonition of Civil War)*, 1936 · Philadelphia Museum of Art

SALVADOR DALÍ (1904–1989) · SURREALISM · 1936

Premonition of Civil War: the political body tears itself apart

Painted months before July 1936: a monstrous body strangling itself under a calm sky. Annihilation as an end in itself.

IN WORLD POLITICS

- The Spanish Civil War; Non-Intervention fails; Guernica is bombed (1937).
- The League collapses; Carr's *Twenty Years' Crisis* (1939) buries liberal "utopianism."

POSTMODERN READING

Surrealism turns to the unconscious against rational control. Pair with Picasso's *Guernica* and Miró's *Still Life with Old Shoe* (both 1937): **reason has not prevented catastrophe — it is about to industrialize it.**

Breaking the frame: how early twentieth-century art fractured representation

1905

Fauvism

Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck

Color freed from nature: the painter's subjectivity over objective description.

1905

Die Brücke

Kirchner, Heckel, Schmidt-Rottluff (Dresden)

Expressionist angst; the alienated modern city and the anxious self.

1907–14

Cubism

Picasso, Braque, Gris

Les Femmes d'Alger (1907): many viewpoints at once — no single privileged perspective.

1909

Futurism

Marinetti, Boccioni

Worship of speed, machines — and war as “hygiene”: a warning about modernity's violence.

1911

Der Blaue Reiter

Kandinsky, Marc (Munich)

Toward abstraction: the inner, spiritual necessity behind form.

1916

Dada

Ball, Tzara, Arp, Höch; Duchamp

Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich: anti-art against the logic that produced the trenches.

1919–33

Bauhaus

Gropius, Klee, Kandinsky, Mies

Reason as design utopia — closed in 1933 under Nazi pressure.

1924

Surrealism

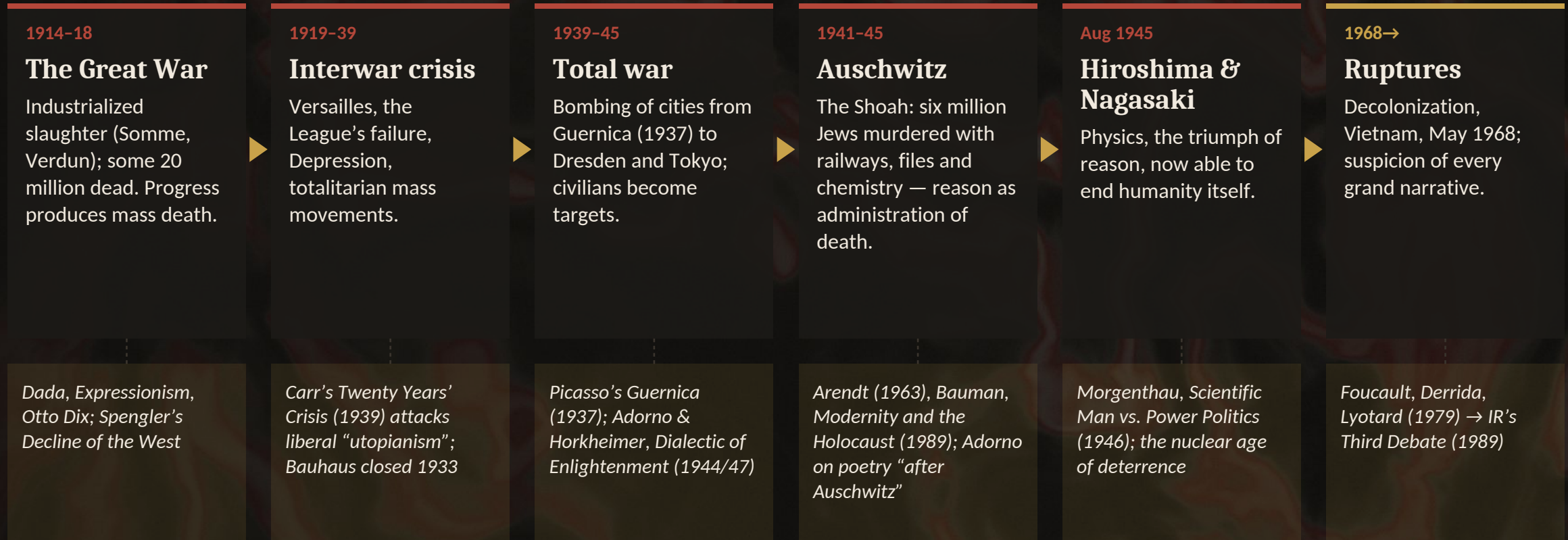
Breton, Ernst, Dalí, Magritte

The unconscious against rational control; Magritte's image that is “not a pipe.”

Background: Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), *Guernica*, 1937 • Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid

From the trenches to Hiroshima: a causal chain toward the postmodern

“Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.” W. B. Yeats, The Second Coming (1919)



The thesis: the catastrophes were not failures of modern reason but, in part, its products. Realism (Carr, Morgenthau) and postmodernism share this wound — realism concludes “be prudent with power,” postmodernism concludes “distrust any total story, including realism’s.”



Main gate of Auschwitz I, "Arbeit macht frei" ("Work sets you free"), Oświęcim, Poland. The camp complex was liberated on 27 January 1945. Photo: Matello (2018)

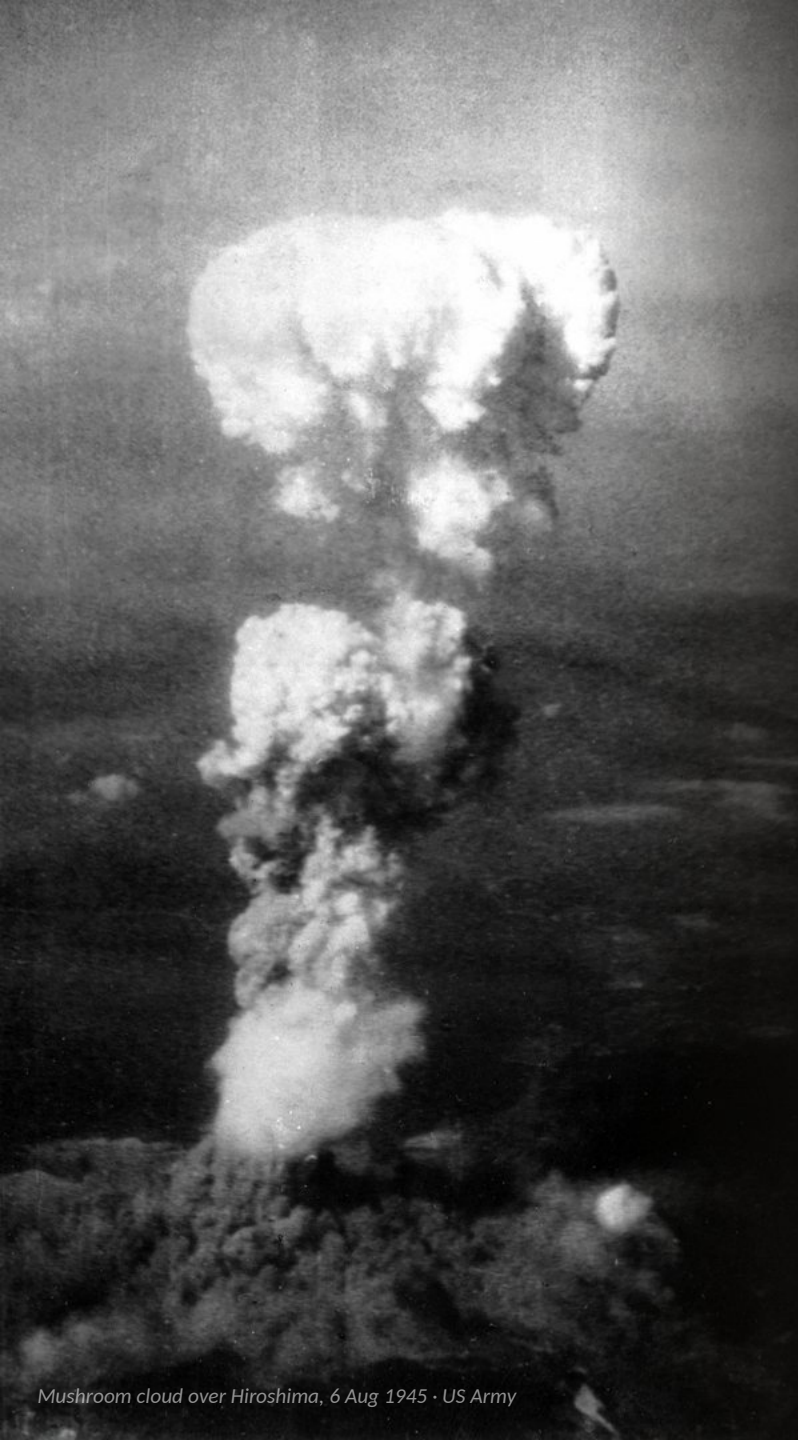
Auschwitz, 1945: modernity's unfinished project meets its abyss

Soviet troops liberated Auschwitz on 27 January 1945. Some 1.1 million people were murdered there — about one million of them Jews.

- **Reason as administration of death.** Railway timetables, card files, chemistry and bureaucracy — modern instruments turned to genocide (Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 1989).
- **The dialectic of Enlightenment.** Adorno & Horkheimer: instrumental reason can revert into domination; Arendt names the "banality of evil" (1963).
- **The symbolic landmark.** For Lyotard, "Auschwitz" refutes the grand narrative of progress; for Habermas, it is why modernity must be completed — under democratic, communicative control.
- **In world politics.** The Nuremberg (1945–46) and Tokyo (1946–48) tribunals put "crimes against humanity" on trial. Then come the Genocide Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).



Czesława Kwoka (1928–1943), prisoner 26947, photographed on arrival at Auschwitz by prisoner-photographer Wilhelm Brasse; murdered aged 14. Right: colorized by Marina Amaral • © Marina Amaral / Auschwitz Memorial



Mushroom cloud over Hiroshima, 6 Aug 1945 · US Army



6 AUGUST 1945 · 8:15 A.M.

Hiroshima

The end of reason.

Physics, the crown of modern science, turned on a city. Some 70,000–80,000 people died instantly, and as many as 140,000 by the end of 1945. Three days later came Nagasaki.

World War II: 70–85 million dead. “The banality of evil”: Arendt coined it for Eichmann (1963). It names an age in which ordinary people carry out catastrophe through orders, procedures and machines.

Hiroshima after the bombing; the Genbaku Dome at center · US Army

Modernism, modernity and the “unfinished project”

*Aesthetic **modernism** was modernity’s internal critic: it attacked the rationalized, disenchanted world from inside.*

Modernity as promise

- **Kant (1784):** Enlightenment as humanity’s exit from self-incurred immaturity.
- Progress, universal reason, science, sovereignty and rights — the metanarratives of the West.
- **Weber:** rationalization, disenchantment and the “iron cage” of bureaucracy.

The rupture

- The avant-gardes fractured perspective, narrative and form — the crisis of representation began on canvas.
- **Habermas (1980):** modernity is an *unfinished project*; repair reason through communicative action.
- **Lyotard (1979; 1982):** the grand narratives have lost credibility — the postmodern is the modern facing the “unpresentable.”

The core dispute: is the answer to modernity’s failures *more and better reason* (Habermas) or *suspicion of reason’s totalizing claims* (Lyotard, Foucault, Derrida)?

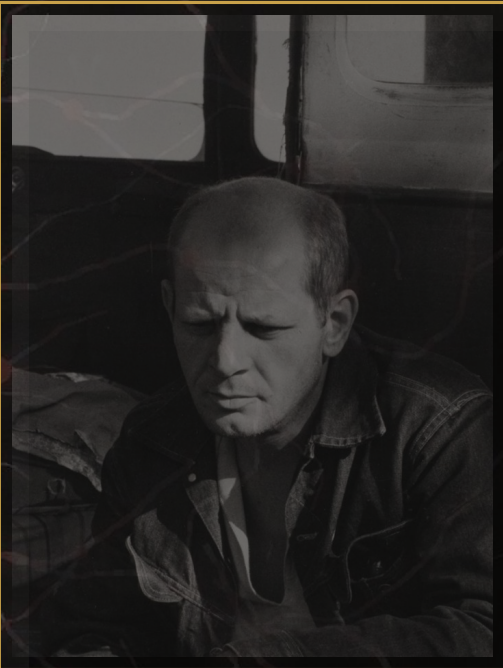
Jackson Pollock: the drip and the Cold War

Canvas on the floor, paint poured and flung: gesture, chance and the body replace the brush and the image.

- **High modernism.** Painting reduced to its essentials: the flat surface, pure gesture and color. With Abstract Expressionism, New York takes the “idea of modern art” from Paris.
- **In world politics.** Early Cold War. MoMA touring shows (*The New American Painting*, 1958–59) and the CIA-funded Congress for Cultural Freedom presented it as the art of “freedom” against Soviet socialist realism (Guilbaut 1983; Saunders 1999).

POSTMODERN READING

Even “pure” abstraction carried a message. The most apolitical painting became **soft power**: taste, knowledge and power are entangled.



Jackson Pollock (1912–1956), 1951 • photo Hans Namuth (public domain)



His paint-spattered studio floor, Springs, NY • Rhododendrites, CC BY-SA 4.0



Convergence (Number 10), 1952
Buffalo AKG Art Museum

Also project: *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)*, 1950 • Metropolitan Museum of Art; *One: Number 31*, 1950 • MoMA

Andy Warhol: modernist or postmodernist?

Modernist traces

- Flat, frontal grids: the modernist picture surface
- Heir to Duchamp's ready-made (1917)
- The artist still a signature, a brand-genius

Postmodern turn

- Silkscreen, series, “the Factory”: the author fades into the machine
- Erases the wall between avant-garde and kitsch
- Images of images: Baudrillard's simulacra; Jameson's “depthlessness”

VERDICT

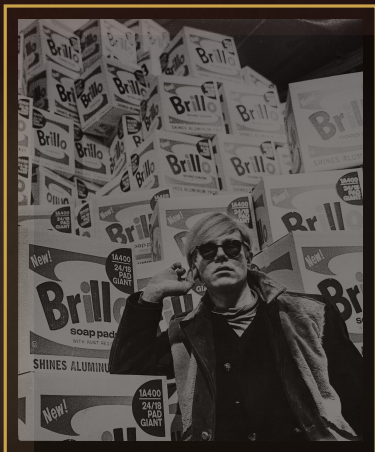
The hinge: modernist in lineage, postmodernist in meaning. Jameson (1991), Baudrillard and Danto, on the *Brillo Box* as the “end of art” (1964), read him as the first great postmodern artist.

IN WORLD POLITICS

Mao (1972), made the year Nixon went to Beijing: a revolutionary icon turned into a commodity. Cold War ideology flattens into a consumer image.



Andy Warhol (1928–1987), *Campbell's Soup Cans*, 1962 • MoMA, New York • photo Brandon Fick (public domain)



Warhol among his *Brillo Box* sculptures, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 1968 • Lasse Olsson / Pressens bild (public domain)

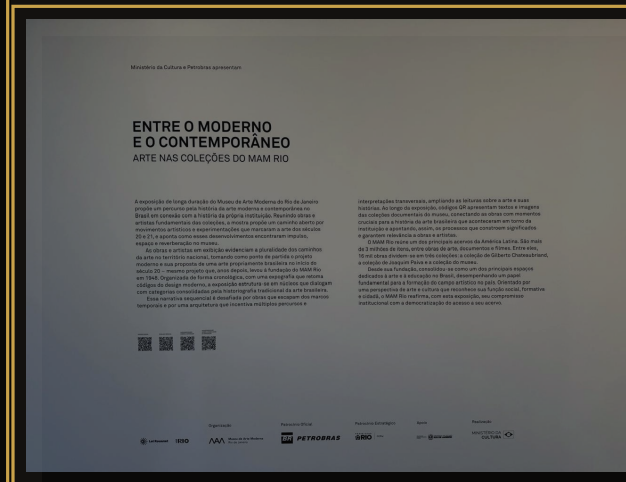
Also project: *Marilyn Diptych* (1962, Tate) • *Mao* (1972)
• the *Death and Disaster* series (1962–63)

Entre o Moderno e o Contemporâneo: modernism seen from the South



At MAM Rio: Affonso Eduardo Reidy's concrete building (1950s)

Permanent exhibition, MAM Rio



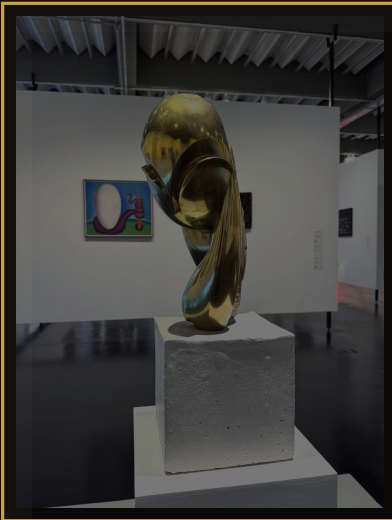
Curatorial wall text: a non-linear route through the collections

- The museum. Founded 1948. Reidy's building and Burle Marx's gardens face Guanabara Bay. It holds over 16,000 works in three collections: Gilberto Chateaubriand, Joaquim Paiva and the museum's own.
- The exhibition runs chronologically, then lets works "escape the time markers": a modern route that questions its own linearity.

GLOBAL SOUTH LENS

In Brazil, modernism was a **state-building project**: MAM (1948), Brasília (1960), developmentalism. The periphery used the modern to claim a seat at the center. The museum is itself an IR text about who gets to be "modern."

Moder—nismos: devouring the European avant-garde



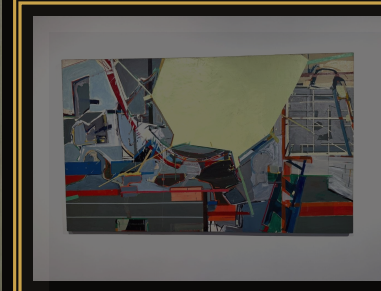
Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957), bronze; behind it, Tarsila do Amaral (1886–1973), *O Ovo* (Urutu), 1928



Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966), bronze, before the Sugarloaf and Burle Marx's gardens



Cícero Dias (1907–2003), the Pernambucan modernist, oil on canvas



Abstraction in the collection

- Plural “modernisms.” Malfatti, Di Cavalcanti, Portinari, Tarsila and Vicente do Rego Monteiro, in dialogue with Brancusi, Giacometti, Léger and Arp.
- Anthropophagy. Oswald de Andrade’s *Manifesto Antropófago* (1928): devour Europe, digest it, make something Brazilian.

GLOBAL SOUTH LENS

Anthropophagy is a theory of **the periphery answering the center**: neither copying nor rejecting, but digesting. It is a Brazilian forerunner of the decolonial critique (Quijano, Mignolo): there are many modernities, not one with copies.

Carnaval como método: the popular as knowledge



Entrance to Carnaval como método, MAM Rio



Monumental figures from the carnival exhibition



Brass sculpture in the collection galleries

- **Carnival as method**, not folklore. Samba-school craft, costume and procession enter the museum as ways of making and thinking.
- **Mirrors and gold** stage excess and inversion: Bakhtin's carnival, where hierarchy is turned upside down.

GLOBAL SOUTH LENS

Who decides what counts as art, or as knowledge? Carnival, Afro-Brazilian and popular forms **contest the Eurocentric canon from within its own museum**. That is Devetak's point again: knowledge and power, now seen from Rio.

Four concepts that do the work

1

Discourse & power/knowledge

Foucault

Discourse sets what can be said and done. Labels like “failed state” or “narco-state” authorize responses.

2

Deconstruction

Derrida

IR rests on binaries: inside/outside, order/anarchy, civilized/barbarian. Each “superior” term depends on the one it excludes.

3

Genealogy & intertextuality

Nietzsche → Foucault

Ask how the “natural” became natural: sovereignty, borders, Westphalia. Every text quotes earlier texts.

4

Simulation & hyperreality

Baudrillard

Images can precede events: the 1991 TV war, deepfakes, algorithmic feeds. Legitimacy is performed for audiences.

Three key thinkers

Entry into IR: the “Third Debate” (Lapid 1989) and the ISQ special issue “Speaking the Language of Exile” (Ashley & Walker 1990).

Richard K. Ashley

“The Poverty of Neorealism” (1984): realism is a self-confirming tradition that turns history into timeless “laws.” His “double reading” of the anarchy problematique (1988) shows that realism produces the sovereign state it claims only to describe.

R.B.J. Walker

Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory (1993): the line between domestic justice and international power is drawn, not found. IR theory is a discourse of sovereignty that reproduces the borders it claims to explain.

Cynthia Weber

Simulating Sovereignty (1995): interventions such as Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989) do not restore sovereignty; they **write** it, deciding who counts as the legitimate sovereign. That is a key lens for Venezuela 2026.

Critiques — and the postmodern replies

THE CHARGE

THE REPLY

“Relativism: anything goes.”

Rejecting a single foundation is not denying facts; it asks how facts are selected, framed and made to matter.

“No research program.” (Keohane 1988)

Hansen and Weber built explicit, replicable methods of discourse and visual analysis.

“Obscure, self-referential prose.”

A fair charge at times; but plain language also carries assumptions — clarity is not neutrality.

“Performative contradiction.” (Habermasian)

Critique needs no final foundation, only a situated, reflexive standpoint that admits its own politics.

“Politically paralyzing.”

Exposing contingency shows that what was made can be remade — an ethic of openness to the Other (Levinas, Derrida).

“

*Postmodernism remains among the most controversial of theories in the humanities and social sciences. It has regularly been accused of moral and political delinquency. Indeed, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, some commentators went so far as to blame postmodernism. In a time when moral certitude appeared to be necessary, postmodernism was charged with a dangerous tendency towards moral equivocation or even sympathy towards terrorism. If nothing else, these absurd allegations served to prove a central claim of postmodernism, **that knowledge claims are intimately connected to politics and power.***

RICHARD DEVETAK · “Postmodernism,” in Burchill, Linklater et al., *Theories of International Relations* (Palgrave Macmillan)

Read it as evidence

The 9/11 backlash is itself a case study: a struggle over who may speak legitimately about terror — and what kinds of knowledge count as patriotic.

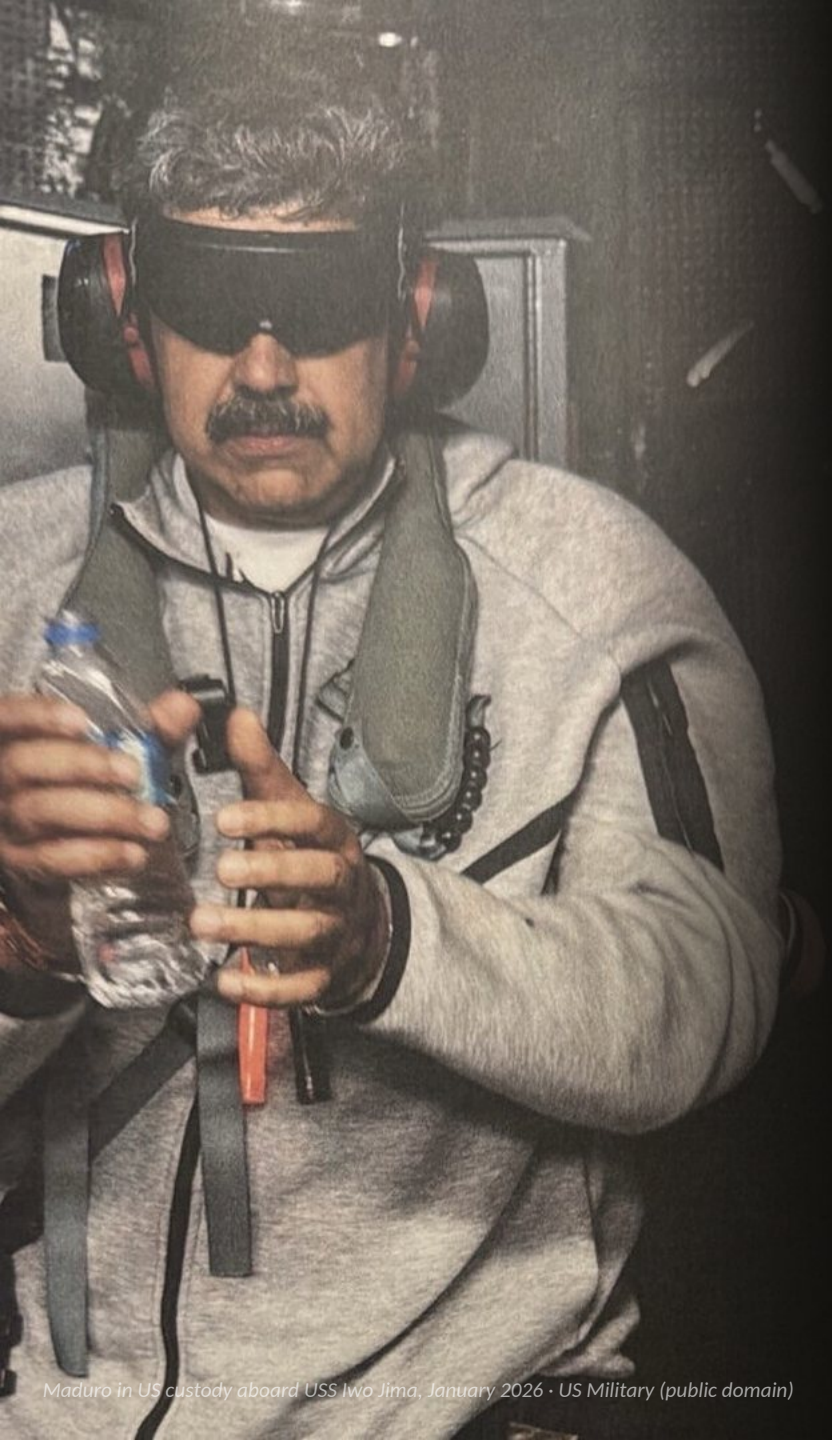
The Gulf War and 9/11: two classic readings



- Night-vision footage and nose-cone video made the war watchable, bloodless and “surgical.”
- Baudrillard: the event Western publics consumed was a media simulation, not the lived war of Iraqi conscripts and civilians.
- The birth of “virtuous” high-tech war: killing at a distance, presented as clean.



- “Axis of evil” and “with us or against us” restored a sharp self/other binary after the Cold War.
- The end of reason, faith and the moral compass.
- The “War on Terror” rewrote American identity as much as it targeted an enemy.

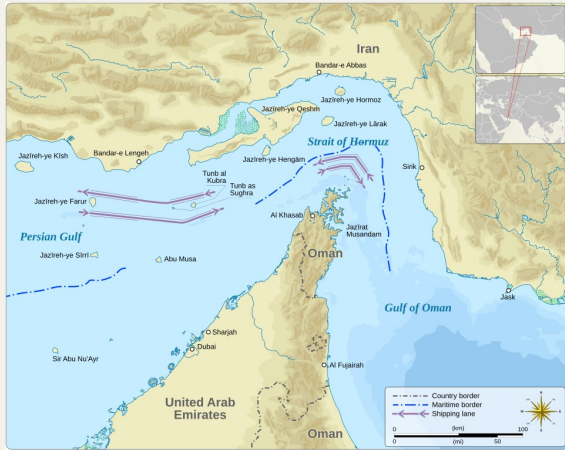


Venezuela 2026: simulating sovereignty?

- **The facts.** On 3 January 2026, US strikes hit Caracas and Maduro was captured and flown to the US on narcoterrorism charges; Delcy Rodríguez became acting president; Washington recognized her government in March and reopened its embassy.
- **Weber's lens.** *Simulating Sovereignty* studied Panama 1989 — the capture of Noriega. Intervention “writes” who the legitimate sovereign is, then presents the result as restoration.
- **Discourse lens.** “Narco-terrorism” fuses two discourses of danger; the label moves the case from law enforcement to war.
- **Decolonial lens.** The language of “running” another country until transition revives older hemispheric hierarchies.
- **Policy question.** Who authors legitimacy in the Americas now — Washington, Caracas, the OAS, oil contracts, or the Venezuelan electorate?

Sources: Wikipedia, “2026 in Venezuela” (accessed Oct 19, 2026); Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty* (Cambridge UP, 1995).

Wars of naming and attribution



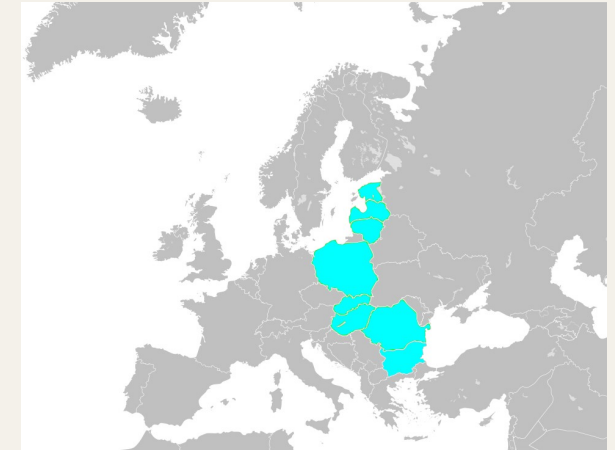
Strait of Hormuz

Iran has repeatedly declared the strait closed during the 2026 US–Iran confrontation; fuel prices and LNG flows have been hit from Pakistan to Michigan. One side speaks of “freedom of navigation,” the other of “resistance to aggression.” **Whose word becomes the legal fact?**



Ukraine & sanctions

Washington waived Russia sanctions in mid-October; Zelenskyy offered elections in exchange for a 60-day ceasefire; talk of a Trump–Putin–Xi summit on Ukraine’s fate. **Peace, appeasement or realism?** The naming is the policy.

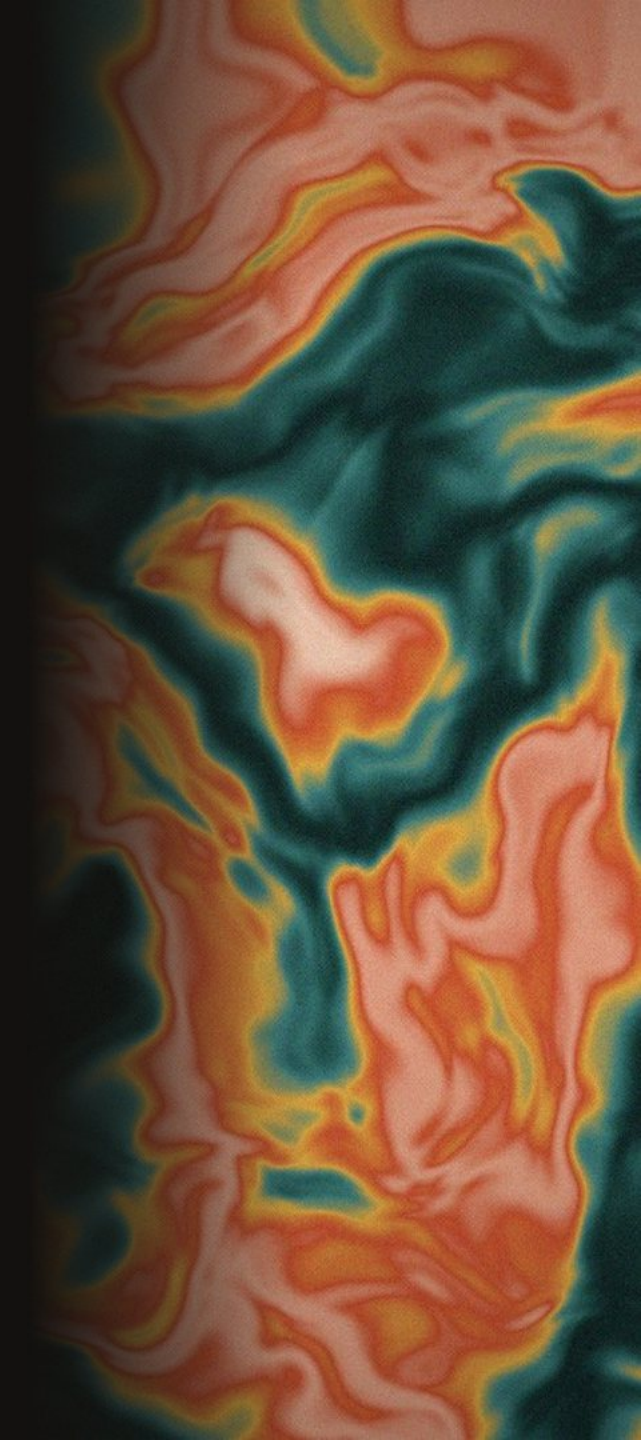


Drones “of unknown origin”

Incursions over Poland, Romania and the Baltic states. Attribution is not only forensic — it is a **political act** that triggers or avoids Article 4/5 consultations.

A practitioner's toolkit: seven moves

- 1 Interrogate the frame**
Before solving “the problem,” ask who named it and what alternatives the name rules out.
- 2 Trace the genealogy**
Find earlier uses of the key terms in doctrine, speeches and media.
- 3 Map the binaries**
List the oppositions the text depends on (us/them, order/chaos) and test each one.
- 4 Recover silenced voices**
Who is spoken about but never speaks — migrants, Indigenous peoples, local civil society?
- 5 Practice attribution humility**
Separate evidence from narrative; state confidence levels explicitly.
- 6 Audit the images**
Which photos, maps and videos carry the argument? What do they crop out?
- 7 Stay reflexive**
Name your own institutional position and incentives — the analyst is inside the discourse too.





Thales Castro, *Carnival Festivities*, March 2008 · acrylic on canvas · Recife. Reproduced in *GROSSO MODO: The Fine Art of Transgression*

EPILOGUE · THE AUTHOR'S OWN CONTRIBUTION

GROSSO MODO: The Fine Art of Transgression

A Philosophical Essay as a Means of Neoabstract Realism: an ebook of 33 paintings by Thales Castro.

- ***Carnival Festivities* (2008)** is one of five key works that prepared the collection: a carnival of red, yellow and blue from Recife, the city built between rivers.
- Its single center **splinters into competing nodes**, a painted counterpart to a non-centric reading of world order. Like Rio's *Carnaval como método*, the local becomes method.

Every map of the world is also a decision about it.

“Theory is always for someone and for some purpose.” Robert W. Cox (1981)

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