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Bored with history: Art and post-modernism

In *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* Fredric Jameson opens with a description of postmodernism as a concept that attempts “to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place” (ix). He points towards a privatization of experience in which the subject of history is located outside historical narratives (real or mythological). Reflecting this relationship, contemporary art has developed a very problematic relationship with this idea of ‘think historically’, at once failing to appreciate the role of history in current practice and attempting to turn the present into history. The result seems to be a sense of being bored with history. This paper considers the work of several contemporary artists whose practices question the historical, including the Date Paintings of On Kawara, David Diao's series on Barnett Newman and Sheila Ayearst's works on Giotto and Leonardo da Vinci. My presentation will argue that contemporary art appears to be bored with history, and this boredom is a key feature of art's current sense of its own historicization.