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## **Introduction**

Nowadays art biennials are organized in the farthest corners of the world.

Everywhere in Europe and America we see surveys emerging that include art works stemming from countries that were formerly excluded from the modern art scene: in addition to art from Europe and the United States we see contemporary art from China, Africa, India, the Middle East and Brazil. This globalization of the art world also manifests itself at the Venice Biennial and at Documenta in Kassel, the most prestigious international exhibitions of contemporary art. The amount of art works exposed to the public has in this way increased worldwide, with new paintings, sculptures, installations, photographs and videos becoming visible to an international audience for the first time. In short: art is becoming more and more international, more extensive and more diverse.

Together with this unstoppable development of global art and the global art market, the conceptual notion of contemporary art as used by the Western world is gradually changing. In the West this concept was not only related to modernity, but also to particular avant-garde and innovatory attitudes, with every period inventing its own visual and conceptual manifestation of this modernity. But recently, modernity has loosened itself from its inextricable bond with innovation and originality and is moving toward the embrace of a plurality of Western and non-Western artistic concepts, blended with important elements of local culture and tradition. A category of non-Western artists responds deliberately to the issue of globalization by criticizing the dominance of the Western art concept or the exotic way their work is being interpreted (Jimmy Durham, Roy Villevoy). Another effect is the hybridization of contemporary art, which originates from the mutual influences that contemporary artists from different cultural backgrounds have on each other's work (Shirin Neshat, Yinka Shonibare, Ai Wei Wei, Meshac Gaba, Chris Ofili ). Now that the world in this Information Age and Open Source Society is getting smaller all the time - a global village -, artists of non-Western countries have become well aware of Western art history and art theories. This syncretic art approach, expressed in a wide range of

different styles, is what we've recently started to define as contemporary global art or cross-cultural modernism.<sup>1</sup> This so-called *global turn* or *transnational turn* has questioned the validity of the all-encompassing Western interpretation models and vocabulary, that is to say Modernism, Avant-garde and Postmodernism. The interest in contemporary non-Western art can actually be seen as another aspect of the continuing process of the disappearance of the hierarchic art system since 1960's. It's not a coincidence however that this runs parallel with the growing criticism on modernist dogmas (feminist art theory, institutional critique, poststructuralist theory, post-colonial theory). From that time on it has become less apparent what belongs to the centre of high culture and what to the periphery.

Globalization in the art world mainly affects three areas: contemporary art, institutions and collections and academics. I will focus on how globalization affects this last area, specifically within the discipline of Art History.

On closer inspection the essence of this whole issue is the key-question what art is and who has the authority to determine it. The all-inclusiveness of this question, which touches upon historical and art philosophical aspects, makes this debate so complex and indefinite. It's not my intention to provide here an exhaustive overview of the existing definitions and origins of the concept art, but it's important to bear in mind that this plays a dominant but often hidden role in this discourse.

A large part of the debate about the new challenges, issues and problems accompanying globalization has been taking place in academia since the middle of the nineties of the twentieth century, and strategies developed here can turn out to be useful in other areas as well.<sup>2</sup> Within this discourse two problems need to be tackled. The first is the way the field can deal with the formation of a World Art History: is there a need to rewrite the history of art when we include non-Western art (or artefacts) made before the large scale globalization of the last 25 years and how can this be done? This problem I will discuss in part one and in part two I will delve into the second issue, which is how to respond as art historians to contemporary art made by non-Western artists in a globalized world. It's important to make a clear distinction between these two problems, because over the past 25 years the issues

involved with the international manifestation of non-Western art appear to fade away slowly but surely. Awareness of this ongoing process of mutual influences is even one of the promising developments in the present global art world. It goes without saying that non-Western art theorists/historians can have a rather different viewpoint. My hope is that by learning from each other's approaches we can develop satisfactory solutions.

# **Part I: Transgressing the borders of Western Art History**

## **Recent developments in globalizing Western Art History**

Confronted with a vast amount of art and artefacts from other countries, all with their corresponding histories and traditions, a growing number of art historians in the West no longer feel comfortable with the existing art historical methods and theories, which largely stem from a Euro-American nineteenth century tradition. The generation of art historians that grew up after the Second World War are generally only acquainted with the development of Western art from the Egyptians until now. In most art history books non-Western art was only mentioned when it was considered an important source of inspiration for Western art. A revealing example is the most influential survey *The Story of Art* (1950) – originally written as an educational art book for children – by the famous art historian E.H. Gombrich. His description of the evolutionary development toward realism, and its subsequent decline, has until recently been illustrative for the art historical discipline. In this narrative (clearly the only narrative, otherwise he would have called it *A Story of Art*) there is only one chapter about non-Western art: chapter 7 *Looking eastward, Islam, China, second to thirteenth century*.<sup>3</sup>

The growing interest in questioning the paradigms of Western art history didn't of course start with the recent interest to incorporate non-Western art in one way or another, but already started in the 1970's when art theorists used deconstructivist strategies to unmask the modernist parameters of Western art history. Especially feminist art historians and later postcolonial theory have contributed significantly to the unmasking of the modernist narrative. Now that the postmodern acknowledgement of a plurality of narratives is accepted as common sense, we can see that some major art historical textbooks have taken the first step toward a more global approach toward art history.

One of the pioneers in this reconsideration of the art historical discipline in a global context is the American art historian James Elkins. With his *Stories of Art* (2002) he

demonstrates his interest of thinking outside the Gombrich box.<sup>4</sup> By telling non-Western art histories, Elkins criticizes the standard Western narrative, which is largely limited to the story of the rise and fall of naturalism in Western art. Another example of rejecting the biased *Occidental Gaze* is Hugh Honour's and John Fleming's decision to change the title of their *The World History of Art* (1982) into *A World History of Art* in 1999.<sup>5</sup> The addition of the chapter 'Contemporary Art and Globalization' in the most recent edition of the widely read survey *History of Modern Art* (2010) by H.H. Arnason and Elizabeth Mansfield is another clear example of the inevitability to deal with the global art production.<sup>6</sup> The survey *Art History* (2010) by Marilyn Stokstad, where, in a chapter titled 'The International Scene since 1950', globalization is described as the most important and influential development in the 21st century.<sup>7</sup> Finally, I mention the recently published survey *Exploring Art. A Global, Thematic Approach*, written by M. Lazzari and D. Schlesier.<sup>8</sup> As their point of departure they take the stance that there isn't just one universal definition of art, but that this definition fluctuates according to place and time. With this starting-point they present a survey of art in all ages and cultures on the basis of themes that can be traced in all artistic expressions.

Besides these attempt to adapt the Western art historical narrative by injecting her with other narratives, there is another group striving to complete renewal of the theoretical apparatus of conventional art history: In *Mirror of the World, a new history of Art* (2007) Julian Bell tried to survey the development of the visual arts across time, space and the artificial boundaries of tribes, nations and religious sects;<sup>9</sup> John Onians attempted in *Atlas of World Art* to develop a new framework based on an interdisciplinary approach with a collaboration of specialists from disciplines such as art history, anthropology and archaeology.<sup>10</sup> Philosopher and art historian David Carrier has written *A World Art History and its Objects*, in which he explores the major questions in a philosophical fashion<sup>11</sup>; and David Summers' *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism* (2003) discards all the previous methodologies, even the most recent ones: 'formalist, contextual and post-structural approaches to art cannot provide the basis for a truly global and

intercultural art history'.<sup>12</sup> In a way these alternative art histories can't escape the use of certain criteria, sometimes even rather subjective, to select and interpret artworks. In addition to these surveys, over the past ten years we can see an explosion of discussions and writings about the way the art historical discipline should adapt its perspectives and approaches to new global thinking. Some of the most important books in this light are *Is Art History Global?* (2007) by James Elkins,<sup>13</sup> *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches* (2008) partly written and edited by Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme, *Changing Perspectives. Dealing with Globalization in the Presentation and Collection of Contemporary Art* and *Art History in the wake of the Global Turn*.<sup>14</sup> These books have contributed in an important way to the exploration of the possibilities and impossibilities of a global art history. Universities are also increasingly conscious of the problems connected to globalization and have founded special programmes. In the United Kingdom the University of East Anglia is a pioneer in this respect: they founded the School of World Art Studies and Museology in 1992.<sup>15</sup> John Onians, one of the leading figures in these debates and involved in shaping the East Anglia Programme, wrote an article in 1996 in which he as one of the first proposed the development of 'World Art Studies'.<sup>16</sup>

In this discourse we can find two main approaches: the contextual approach, which tries to view and understand art in its original context, and the universal approach, which departs from the assumption of the universality of the intrinsic values of art. By using these approaches as a frame of reference, and comparing them while examining related issues, they both function as a soundboard and as a means to detect problematic areas and pitfalls. Many debates are still ongoing and problems still need to be solved. Or perhaps we should in some cases admit that there is not one solution and that some issues tend to be in fact a 'self-imposed aporie'.<sup>17</sup>

## **The Western sense of guilt towards non-Western art and culture**

It occurred to me that the discourse about the re-evaluation or even transformation of the art historical discipline is dominated by the Western sense of guilt towards non-Western cultures. There seems to be a consensus – although the arguments can differ – that the Western approach towards non-Western art should be disapproved.

Western art history is seen as paternalistic, authoritarian, Euro-American centred, denigrating, and yes, neo-colonialist. The main point of critique is that the dominance of the *occidental gaze* seems to be the only fundament of the analytical apparatus of art scholarship. Again and again we can read that Western art history is full of blind spots, dogmatic in its points of departure and that it operates from a reductionist view of the concept of art.<sup>18</sup> If Western art history incorporates non-Western art in the existing surveys, it is accused of ‘appropriation’ of non-Western art and of lack of respect for the specificity of these art forms.

The West is accused of Western neo-imperialism: the West continues to perceive itself as the main supplier of art and art theories.<sup>19</sup>

If on the other hand non-Western art is interpreted from the anthropological viewpoint, that is to say in its social-cultural and religious context, we would inherently refuse to acknowledge it as ‘real art’. The West is by definition the bad guy.

The time has come to differentiate this post-colonial stance: instead of thinking in terms of offender and victim we should build a constructive dialogue. How can we overcome this impasse? This collective attack on the own historiography and its methods tends to be rather masochistic and therefore not a very fruitful way to solve the problems from an objective point of view. What’s the use of blaming the Western developments in history, art, art theories and aesthetics? Instead of discarding our own thinking and tradition we should think of meaningful changes and adaptations to the new global constellation. Another reason why the West shouldn’t be too hard on itself is that the effort to give non-Western art a place in the world history of art is initiated by, indeed, the West. Even the most idealistic observer can’t deny that most

non-Western countries don't have art historical surveys of their own history of art and the few that are written are based on Western approaches. James Elkins (again), who thoroughly explored the worldwide practices of art history, found out that there are no "conceptually independent national or regional traditions of art historical writing outside the West".<sup>20</sup> It seems to me that the whole debate about the new global methodology of art history comes in a different light when the sheer fact that there is no non-Western tradition of art history is taken into account, that is to say a tradition with its own theoretical frames and viewpoints.

One could also look at this issue from quite a different perspective. Why should the West write the non-Western art history? A real neutral and objective way to do this, where the 'contamination' of Western thoughts is banned, would be to let every country and culture write about their own history of art, based on their own methods and aesthetics. But in this time of globalization – if we are honest, for a large part a euphemism for Westernization - this seems a rather naïve and superseded mission. The best way to define a new art history is not by imposing radical solutions, but by gradually introducing new valuable changes, that follow from an open and critical mind. This proposal doesn't seem very sensational and even less revolutionary, but it does have more viability than constructing a complete new and universal framework that will release the discipline of art history from its problems in one stroke like a *deus ex machina*.

## Earlier attempts to develop World Art History (1880-1930)

Authors like David Summers and John Onians don't agree with such a step-by-step approach. Ironically, their aim to invent a totally new art history, freed from Western concepts, can be seen as a logic continuation of the Western tradition of the urge for innovation, not only in art but also in art theory and art history. They let us believe, after all, that they are the pioneers of a totally new art history by discarding all the former concepts and methods. Without doubt these studies are prominently erudite and innovative, but they lack methodological coherence and clear focus.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, on closer inspection, these approaches are not entirely new. Ulrich Pfisterer, who delved into the origin of the art history discipline in Germany in the period 1880-1930, revealed that the strive for a world art history and the accompanying theoretical discourse were already core business back then.<sup>22</sup> In order to relieve our current brooding on the subject, it's very clarifying and instructive to know about the debates that were going on during that time.

In the period 1880-1930 a large amount of *world art history* books were published, especially in Germany. Since the 1930s this global approach of art history had fallen into oblivion and non-Western art disappeared in the surveys. One of the main reasons for this is that after World War II this kind of historiography was considered an expression of colonial thinking. Of course it can't be denied that the expeditions to the colonies brought the West in direct contact with the original non-Western artefacts; this was even one of the important impulses for the development of a new academic discipline: cultural anthropology. However, Pfisterer proves convincingly that there are certainly also more philosophical and methodological considerations that can explain the large interest in the formation of a world art history.<sup>23</sup> When we compare the present enterprise to write a world art history with these first attempts, the similarities are remarkable. In the first period we can equally speak of two tendencies concerning the theoretical points of departure for the discipline of art history: *Kunstgeschichte* (art history) took as starting point the teleological concept of the history of art and was striving to fit non-Western art into this development. This

endeavour was hugely inspired by Darwin's theory of evolution. It wasn't taken into account that many non-Western cultures didn't have any historical consciousness and weren't familiar with the Western concept of art. The so-called *Kunstwissenschaft* (art science) on the other hand was more positivistic and believed in the possibility to design holistic models and laws from the conviction that creativity is an innate human feature.<sup>24</sup> They were not so much interested in the historical development itself, but more in the psychology of the creative man and even races (*Völkerpsychologie*) across time and place.<sup>25</sup> The human psyche is in essence always the same, but its manifestation changes through time, place and cultural traditions. Consequently they didn't believe in the existence of a single canon of aesthetic norms, that is to say, the Western canon. The universality of art made it realistic – following the natural sciences – to reach an overarching global framework in the study of art. By focusing on what was essentially artistic and visual, they even thought *Kunstwissenschaft* could become one of the leading 'human sciences' of the future.<sup>26</sup> After World War II when cultural anthropology and art history had become two strictly separated disciplines, art history started to exclude the non-Western art in favour of Western art. The breakthrough of modernism and modernity also accelerated this process of Westernization of art history. So Western modernism with its idea of autonomy and self-reflexivity became the specific and dominant narrative in the history of Western art.

## **The fascination of the avant-garde artist for non-Western art**

In the first three decades of the twentieth century the interest in non-Western art and cultures didn't only manifest itself in cultural anthropology and art history, but progressive artists let themselves get inspired by the otherness and strangeness of these cultures. The majority of the visual arts in the twentieth century can be characterized by a search to escape the former rules and values that had been imposed. Mostly this was found in artistic expressions that didn't conform to the accepted Western standard: non-Western cultures and work by psychiatric patients and children.<sup>27</sup> In the West we call this mentality 'primitivism'; this term alone is of course an indication of the Western internalization of the superiority of Western culture. The merging of Western and non-Western art in the twentieth century is identifiable in many different ways. Before World War II even the majority of the art movements and styles are clearly influenced – especially or even in most cases exclusively, in a stylistic way - by non-Western art: Japonism, expressionism, cubism, dada and surrealism. But also after the war primitivistic tendencies can be found. A clear example is Joseph Beuys who considered himself a shaman and The Wiener Aktionisten who performed primitivistic Dionysian rituals with naked bodies and blood. The Western artists were mainly attracted by the innocence and purity they felt to be the essence of non-Western artefacts. By integrating the stylistic features of non-Western work the visual language of Western art expanded considerably. This integration of non-Western elements didn't mean however that the Western aesthetic views were abandoned. On the contrary: the search for purity and the rejection of former styles was another expression of the urge for originality and authenticity.<sup>28</sup>

Not only artists were interested in the aesthetic power of non-Western objects, also the way ethnological and art museums started to show this work reflects this same fascination. An important impetus was the book *Negerplastik*, written by the German cultural anthropologist Carl Einstein that appeared in 1915. This book presented for the first time a rich overview of the visual African culture through the 119

photographs of African sculptures. Next to these examples his opinion that no one was entitled to discard these works - despite the strange and often disturbing character of these works - as non-art contributed to this aesthetic attitude. The rearrangement and the foundation of ethnological museums is a clear sign of this interest. In 1926 the ethnological museum in München was reorganized and in 1928 The Trocadéromuseum (renamed in Musée de L'homme in 1937). This tendency was continued after The Second World War. In 1957 The Museum of Primitive Art in New York opened its doors (Robert Goldwater, famous for his book *Primitivism in Modern Art* (1938) was the first director) and in 1960 the Musée des Colonies in Paris was redesigned and renamed in the Musée des Art Africains et Océaniens. In addition to this there were organized numerous exhibitions in the thirties in the Trocadéromuseum (by Paul Rivet and Henri Rivière) of non-Western objects, with a clear focus on their artistic features. But also museums of modern art paid attention before and after the war to so called primitive art: in 1935 Negro African Art and in 1946 Art of the Pacific Ocean in the MOMA and in 1954 Masterpieces of African Art in the Brooklyn Museum in New York.<sup>29</sup>

The exhibition Modern Art New and Old in 1955 in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam should be mentioned in this respect. For the first time Western and non-Western objects were shown in one exhibition, an approach that was considered as remarkably innovative in the exhibition *Magiciens de la terre* in the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 1989. The organizers of Modern Art New and Old, the director Willem Sandberg and curator Hans Jaffé, were inspired by the exhibition *40.000 Years of Modern Art* in London in 1948. Herbert Read and Roland Penrose intended with this exhibition to demonstrate the universalistic character of art and the permanent presence of artistic features that are now considered as modern.

In these post-war years the book *Le Musée Imaginaire* written in 1947 by André Malraux highly influenced this attitude. To Malraux it was impossible to trace the original meaning of artworks and the only thing we really have is the experience in the here and the now. Furthermore, by photographing artworks and displaying them in museums the works are taken out of their context, whereby exclusively the stylistic

characteristics remain. This makes it possible to make a personal and associative combination of different works without taking into account their cultural background.<sup>30</sup> A contemporary example of such an attitude is the emplacement of the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury collection in the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, that is associated with the University of East Anglia in Norwich. It's of course no coincidence that this is the University where John Onians wrote his keywork, the above mentioned *Atlas of World Art* (2004). A new impulse to the debate concerning the relation between modern art and non-Western art was given by the ambitious exhibition *Primitivism in 20th Century Art, Affinities of the Modern and Tribal* in 1984 at MOMA in New York, organized by William Rubin and Kirk Varnedoe.<sup>31</sup> This exhibition, where for the first time an overview was presented of all Western art movements and artists that were influenced by non-Western art, demonstrated an explicit modernist perspective by focusing exclusively on formal aspects. Artefacts and tribal objects were solely shown as formal sources of inspiration for modern masterpieces, without providing the socio-historical context of these objects. However, one of the most remarkable outcomes of this exhibition and research is the clear omnipresence of the influence of non-Western art on 20th century Western art, be it in material or immaterial sense. *Primitivism in 20th Century Art* may have been the first large-scale overview on this theme, but at the same time it ushered in the era of postcolonial thinking; the exhibition was sharply criticised for its formalist approach that didn't do justice to the singularity of non-Western art. Five years later Jean-Hubert Martin tried to correct the former 'colonist' and modernist mentality with the highly original exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* at Centre Pompidou in Paris. Martin's intention was to present an equal juxtaposition of Western and non-Western art. He avoided the word art because of its problematic connotations in different cultures and he replaced it by the concept magic. All artists were so to say *magiciens*. But a striking similarity with *Primitivism in 20th century art* was the absence of any cultural and anthropological clarification. Despite his endeavour to treat all participating artists equally, Martin too was accused of cultural imperialism. The main criticisms were directed at his pretention to be able as a white connoisseur

to select non-Western artists and his lack of sensitivity toward the unequal economic and power relations between the West and the rest of the world. The result was that the exhibition in a way was still divided in a section with rather stereotypical non-Western art and a section with sophisticated conceptually-based Western art. Rasheed Araeen lucidly criticized the exhibition exactly for its lack of theoretical and conceptual framework to link the different art works stemming from different cultures. He pointed out that Martin used different criteria for non-Western art and Western art: 'While African and Asian artists are identified by their own cultural roots (Martin speaks of art without 'Western contamination', H.B), Western artists are recognized by their concern for cultures other than their own.' Araeen's question was why Martin not also looked for folk or traditional art in Western culture.<sup>32</sup> Even though the non-Western art was presented in a decontextualized manner, this exhibition is generally seen as a landmark in the changing Western mentality towards non-Western art.<sup>33</sup> The exhibition actually functions as an early example of the universalistic view on art, with its interest in art's intrinsic qualities (beauty, balance, imagination, power of expression).<sup>34</sup> The innovative aspect of Les Magiciens de la Terre was not so much the combination of Western and non-Western art, but the fact that for the first time contemporary non-Western art was displayed next to contemporary Western art: a first sign that non-Western contemporary art was taken seriously by the Western art world.

## Best of both worlds

The embrace of non-Western art by Western artists and art historians before World War II tells us something about the affinity that was felt. Recognition at least, of the uncorrupted purity, call it the essence of art, they thought to find in non-Western art. In a way, in this interest lies a hidden belief in the universality of art. This doesn't mean necessarily that art always looks the same. The essence manifests itself in different guises, dependent on time, place and tradition. I wonder what fruit it would bare to deny that a comprehensive understanding of the intentions and meanings of certain art forms can be achieved without the study of the culture it arose from. To me it seems one can choose for the best of both worlds: a complementary mixture of the contextual approach and the universalist approach. What is the sense of excluding one or the other? It is good to note that when I refer to the universalist approach I'm certainly not referring to the now popular Darwinian aesthetics that seeks to explain the art-making impulse in evolutionary psychological and biological terms. Within this method the existence and origin of human creativity is reduced by two main Darwinian paradigms: natural and sexual selection and survival of the fittest. These neurobiological explanations seem to me quite predictable and simplistic and furthermore they never get specific.<sup>35</sup> Closest to my ideal of combining these seemingly oppositional approaches comes intercultural studies.<sup>36</sup>

Intercultural studies takes as its starting point that it should be possible to develop a conceptual apparatus that is 'culturally neutral'. One of the main notions is therefore that the capacity to transform visual media in order to attract the beholders attention through shape, colour and line as well as through subjects and meanings is something human and universal. This endeavour to discover the fundamentals of human artistic behaviour also explains the renewed interest for the study of the origins of art over the last decade.

This intercultural comparative analysis is most fruitful when a clear starting point is defined, the so-called *tertium comparationis*. All sorts of themes and issues, ranging from pure tangible and material to the conceptual can be brought into the comparison.

The intercultural study will increase transcultural understanding by highlighting both the differences as well as the discovered universal patterns. I sympathise with the view of Wilfried van Damme, who states that this method may open up a whole range of fundamental questions concerning the place and role of the visual arts in human existence: ‘...studying traditions’ artistic and aesthetic vocabularies and the conceptual frames in which they are embedded may provide a fascinating entry into other cultural worlds, throwing a unique light on the creation, use, and experience of the visual arts in varying semantic and affective universes’.<sup>37</sup> On the one hand we should expand our study of the different non-Western cultures and on the other hand a multidisciplinary approach, including disciplines as sociology, psychology, semiotics, anthropology and neurosciences, will increase a mutual understanding of each other’s art.<sup>38</sup>

Still, I’m convinced this can’t be done by discarding the Western concept of art completely. It seems to me even rather naïve to think it’s possible to fully discard your own frame of reference. Without this framework it will be sheer impossible to make a selection of the objects we consider worth investigating. Though, this doesn’t want to say that the art historical canon is static and carved in stone for ever, because history has demonstrated that this is constantly expanded and interpreted from different perspectives. This already started in the 60’s and 70’s when the feminist movement managed to include more women in the canon. This was followed in the 80’s by the unmasking of modernist dogmas from postmodernist and poststructuralist viewpoints. And lastly, from the nineties on there is an ongoing debate how to fit in non-Western artists in the canon.

Marlite Halbertsma has a point by stating that although the art historical discipline is being attacked from all sides and the Great Narratives have worn out, the Great Masters, old and new, remain. So the search for art works that represent in a certain way an irrefutable standard (the literal translation of canon), that can be a source of inspiration and model for others is still vital. So notwithstanding the current non-hierarchical and pluralistic palette of movements, styles and artistic intentions, the art historical practice is in a way still rooted in canonical thinking- be it often in an

unconscious way. She shows in her overview of the origin and development of the concept canon (Pliny the Elder was the first to mention the idea of canon in *Naturalis Historia*, AD 77) that there were from the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on two often interconnected approaches of what the canon stood for: the classical and the romantic canon. The classical canon is based on the belief in the existence of objective quality that can be determined and appreciated by everybody and in all times. The romantic approach criticized this Western-oriented idea of culture that was directed towards linear progression and perfection. Also non-Western people reflect in their artistic expressions the norms and values of a certain culture.<sup>39</sup> It doesn't seem too far-fetched to suggest that especially in this globalized world these two perspectives are playing their role: the art historical theoretical framework is becoming a mixture of defining a more or less objective quality and the acknowledgement this isn't confined to a specific culture.

The restrictions of the Western perspective can be overcome by getting a hold over its own assumptions, blind spots and preoccupations. Through a critical and conscious attitude towards the own position and the acquaintance with other cultures and the way they are studied, the existing scholarly practices can be adapted.

## **Part II: New Perspectives on Global Contemporary Art**

### **The incompatibility of the cyclic and progressive approach of time and art**

As I mentioned in the introduction the influence of globalization doesn't only affect the academic Art History discipline, but has clearly changed current global art practices. In the following I want to share some thoughts about the way we can look upon the contemporary art (world). It occurred to me that in discussions about the formation of world art history all non-Western art is treated alike. This obscures the differences between contemporary global non-Western art and non-Western ethnographic artefacts that is solely rooted in local traditions. The latter category contains ethnographic artefacts that played, or sometimes still play, a ritual and religious role in societies and therefore they can't possibly be compared in any way with contemporary global art, made by either Western or non-Western artists. Actually, absolutely the same can be said for the way Western art before the romantic period relates to modern and contemporary art. Like is the case with traditional non-Western art, the art concept as we know it from eighteenth century Enlightenment didn't exist as such. In that period for the first time a clear distinction was made between the fine arts and other artistic activities like craft and popular entertainment. At the end of that age this resulted in the romantic notion of art, which until this day provides the fundament for our explicit or implicit criteria for art making and art reception. The artist was not defined by his or her abilities as a skilled craftsman but above all the artist was defined by his or her originality, individualistic, autonomous and innovative nature. From that time on the belief in progress and individualism have been the main reference points of Western culture: originality, innovation and change have been so strongly internalized that another approach is considered incomplete and obsolete.

Most traditional non-Western artefacts have on the other hand hardly changed in time, because these artists were following the example of their predecessors. In most

non-Western cultures time isn't considered evolutionary and progressive but cyclic. In the West excellence in technical skills and a capacity for making impeccable imitations are not so much considered an expression of artistic quality, but more as an acquired capacity. It's true, the producers of these objects don't see themselves so much as artists, they originally weren't even familiar with the concept of art, but as artisans. In the West these works are therefore largely shown in ethnographic museum or as inspiring examples for the Western masters in museums of modern art. Of course this doesn't mean that people before that time and outside the influence of the Western notion of art were not making art, they were simply not conscious of it. It goes without saying that imagination, skill, creativity and aesthetic taste weren't invented in the eighteenth century. It's of course no coincidence that the history of Western art is mainly focussed on artists (think of among others Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphaël, Rembrandt, Vélazquez, Titian, Vermeer) who demonstrate exactly these characteristics rooted in the Romantic concept of art and the artist.<sup>40</sup>

One should therefore think that it isn't impossible to write a history of art (of the past) that comprises the non-Western world. In both hemispheres the concept of art as we know it now didn't exist yet. Of course it would be quite inappropriate to hold on to the division between the modern and dynamic West and the traditional static non-Western world, the so-called 'other'.

In the twentieth century, and especially during the 1960's, the conceptual character of art became extremely dominant, even to the point that the actual making of the work was seen as irrelevant. It's not an exaggeration to say that since then Western art started to become quite similar to philosophy.<sup>41</sup> Western modern art is disturbing, critical, questions social injustices and, in its most reflective form, poses questions about its own identity. This autonomous and conceptual approach to art doesn't seem to have any connection whatsoever to traditional non-Western cultures, which are based on the continuation of traditions and handicraft, as I already stated. The two art concepts are so fundamentally different that they can't be interpreted and appreciated on the same theoretical and contextual basis. More interesting is the question if, and

if so, how the criteria to value *contemporary* artworks with a non-Western background should be adapted - or changed completely.

## Now Western and non-Western art come together

For the invention of a better quality assessment, we should first specify how non-Western art manifests itself. A distinction can be made of three different attitudes towards the Western culture. The group of artists that is almost completely under the radar are those that hold on completely to their own traditional culture without any Western influence. They don't take part whatsoever of the international art-circuit and are only locally known. This category will diminish and most probably will cease to exist at all by the inescapable influence of the West. This work will still mainly be interpreted in an anthropological way by focusing on the social, ritualistic and religious context of the work.

The largest group however exists of artists who incorporate in a conscious way the artistic Western aesthetics without at the same time denying their own culture. In that sense I don't think this problem is so urgent anymore. The difference between Western and non-Western contemporary art is namely getting smaller and smaller, because of the interconnectedness of images, ideas and theories worldwide. Since the 1990's a growing number of non-Western artists started to discover Western art and Western aesthetics. Through the exchange of knowledge and images new hybrid art works emerged with a mixture of local and Western views; a phenomenon we call *glocal art*. These different *glocal art* forms are now also often referred to as 'other modernities'. A lot of non-Western artists are even opposed to their own traditional culture, and are distancing themselves from these ethnological artefacts. This 'post-ethnic' movement shows that the need to adapt and adopt Western art concepts and art manifestations is not so much imposed upon, but stems from the artists themselves. Of course the academic world invented a new name for that too: self-colonization.

It's the post-colonial thinker Homi Bhabha who in his book *The Location of Culture*, published in 1994, stated that cultures are not static, but constantly changing by multiple exchanges. In other words, cultures are and always were by definition hybrid. But he also wants to point out that the colonial oppression has caused several

mutual cultural stereotypes. This has led in his view to a fundamental inequality in the sense that the West expects the non-Western artist to stay the enigmatic and exotic 'other'. But on the other hand, to be noticed at all and truly appreciated the non-Western artist should also adapt himself to the Western taste and rules. The complete assimilation is to his mind even experienced by the Westerner as a threat of his dominant position. This opinion resembles what Edward Said already posed in his influential book *Orientalism*, that appeared in 1978 and is considered as the starting-point of Post-colonial theory. Said criticized the West for romanticizing the Eastern culture (Africa, Asia and the Middle-East) and by doing so at the same time guaranteeing its social, economic and cultural hegemony. Whereas Homi Bhabha believes in the cross-fertilization of cultures, Said sticks to the strict dichotomy between the paternalizing West and the subordinate East.<sup>42</sup> These theories about 'otherizing' and 'orientalizing' the non-Western artist have certainly affected the Western approach on non-Western art since the nineties. It seems to me noteworthy that the non-Western background of artists in the 60's, 70's and 80's who took part of the international art world (that was then completely Western-centred) was hardly taken notice of as an essential element of their work. One can think here of renowned artists like Nam June Paik (South-Korea), Yoko Ono (Japan), Yayoi Kusama (Japan), Ana Mendieta (Cuba) and Marlène Dumas (South-Africa). In hindsight this work could be interpreted as hybrid and glocal as well, but these notions were not part of the modernistic jargon.

However, the incredible complexity of the whole process of globalization is additionally illustrated by the simultaneous increase of the emergence of a patchwork of different views and images rooted in an indigenous context. This third group of contemporary non-Western artists are in a way already rediscovering their local cultures and traditions, which are considered as a fertile ground for their production of art works. But at the same time – at least somewhere in the background – the global perspective on art can be seen to influence the creative process. A fruitful way to understand this kind of work is to not only to assess the autonomous artistic qualities of this work, but also take into account how this work relates to its societal,

historical and cultural context. We should approach these artists with an open mind by not denying them their urge to be individualistic and make highly autonomous art, but at the same by not imposing upon them this originally Western attitude. For the simple reason that not all non-Western artists have the same mind set.<sup>43</sup>

It's by the way interesting to realize that *glocal* art isn't a phenomenon that arose over the past 25 years, but in fact had a significant longer incubation period. Recent art-historical research demonstrates that in the former colonies before World War II, we can see a tremendous influence of Western modernism, which has been adapted to local tradition.<sup>44</sup> These artists had gone to the West for their art education, or they had become acquainted with Western art through magazines, books and art collections. Also after World War II we can observe the influence of modernism in non-Western countries (except for communist countries such as China, the USSR, Eastern-Europe and North-Korea). One could say that modernism was the first real relatively global movement.<sup>45</sup> Post-colonial theorists consider the proliferation of modernism as nothing more than cultural colonization. This denies to my mind the need that colonized people themselves felt to become modern and to profit from the technological, scientific and cultural innovations.<sup>46</sup>

That modernism had been an international phenomenon for a long time was clearly revealed at Documenta 2 (2007), curated by Roger Buergel and Ruth Noack. Here, to the surprise of many visitors, works from movements such as Conceptual Art, Minimal Art, Performance Art, Earth Art and Feminist Art from the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's were presented, all originating from Africa, South-America, India, South-East-Asia and Eastern Europe.

According to Hans Belting the exclusion of most non-Western modernist movements from official Western art history is not caused by ignorance, but rather by a conscious choice to keep the image of modernism as a Western invention pure. The history of modernism is in his view based on a double exclusion. In the first place making art was equated with making *modern* art, which by definition was reserved for Western art. This implied the second exclusion: Those who made modern art outside the Western world were not included.<sup>47</sup> Therefore he typifies the notion of 'modern' as a

historical definition that has lost its authority as a universal model. Because of this loss of a so-called universal historical narrative, he coins this globalized world as *post-historical*, that is to say the definite end of the occidental self-universalization. But at the same time he also perceives the waning of the belief in the existence of authentic, ethnic cultures: thereby entering a *post-ethnic* stage.<sup>48</sup>

## **The emergence of the transnational art world**

In other words, the globalization of the art world has been going on for quite a long time, but up until recently, the West had been blind to it - or rather - not interested in it. The difference with the previous period however, is that it's now taking place on a much larger scale. This is the outcome of the increase of multicultural societies, the growing intercultural communication over the internet and through the world-wide spread of capitalism and liberal democracies – especially after the collapse of the Berlin wall in 1989.<sup>49</sup> In Europe and America we see a large increase of non-Western students at the academies. In fact, these students swiftly familiarize themselves, at an amazing speed, with art practices and theories that developed slowly in the West for over two centuries. In this way, Western art students come into direct contact with a large diversity of different artistic views and traditions of other unknown cultures. All in all, in comparison with the largest part of the twentieth century, the current exchange of cultures is not only much larger in scale, but also much more equal. We can now really speak of a two-way process of artistic exchange. This equality manifests itself among others in the fact that these non-Western artists are now shown in museums of modern art, and no longer exclusively in ethnographic museums. In a way, this is comparable with the Hellenistic period, in which a merging of Greek and eastern elements took place on a very large scale. In this day and age artists from all over the world have an inexhaustible arsenal of images, modes of expressions and art theories at their disposal.

The recent unprecedented degree of cross-fertilization has created a unified transnational institution of art. Artists from all over the world take part in the transnational network of museums, galleries, biennales, art fairs and art manifestas. The emergence of curators who are constantly in search of new, preferably non-Western, artists has been a major factor as well in the vast construction of this cosmopolitan art world.

Not only the considerable growth of possibilities of communication and distribution (e-mails, social media, dvd, You Tube etc.) have contributed to the interconnectedness

of the art world, but also the media contemporary artists are working with today make a global distribution easier and cheaper. Most art works shown at important international exhibitions are video, film, photography, installation pieces (often multimedia), pertaining to Conceptual Art, (video recordings of) Performance Art, Relational Art, Digital art and Internet Art. Painting and sculpture are proportionately a clearly observable minority. These mechanically and electronically reproducible media are easily exhibited without major costs of transportation and insurances, and the works can even often be shown at several places at once.

Transnational art can not only be recognized by its vast and easy distribution and the appropriation of new media and technologies, but also - and perhaps even more importantly - by a shared idiom and discourse. Artists, curators, critics and art lovers have the same artistic framework in mind, enabling coherent conversations and a shared code to deciphering the works. One of the remarkable recurring concerns and preoccupations in this new republic of art is progressive politics, like post-colonialism, feminism, LGBT-liberation, global inequality, the oppression of free expression, identity politics and general anti-establishmentarianism. The overarching critique is of course directed against the capitalist system, which after 1989 seems to triumph worldwide. So the politically-engaged subject matter has turned global as well, particularly in the urban centres, where similar problems and conflicts are experienced across the global board. But not only the themes are part of this transnational art family, also the formal strategies that are used seem to evolve in a certain transnational vocabulary. To name a few of these formal devices: juxtaposition of opposite or incongruent images (for example high and low art, local and modernist features), defamiliarization and decontextualization of objects and images, documentary iconography and more generally, the interest to communicate and activate the viewer -or rather participant 'citizen'. This shared vocabulary and mentality doesn't necessarily create one cohesive global art language. In contrast to the universalist strivings of modernism, in this time we see that local and traditional elements are not excluded, on the contrary these 'new' contributions are very much appreciated.<sup>50</sup>

The French curator and art theorist Nicolas Bourriaud doesn't see an opposition between the global (that is imbued with Western ideas and forms) and 'the other' that is represented by non-Western artists. He discerns two main consequences of globalization: the tolerance toward a uniform culture on the one hand and a claim of origins and descent on the other: 'I think we are arriving at a historical moment where artists no longer start with their specific culture, but with a culture that is already globalized. The work is more about starting from this globalized culture and arriving at the specifics than working from one's identity of origins, which leads the artist to become the logo for his own culture.'<sup>51</sup>

Bourriaud connects this to the concept of 'altermodernism', a neologism that he coined in association with the Tate Triennial (London) in 2009, which he curated. An altermodern artist in his view can be understood as being nomadic. This can be in the literal sense of the word, or it can mean a certain 'mental nomadism'. The point of departure is always global culture.

Hans Belting clarifies this new situation with the metaphor of the Internet: 'both (internet and global art) are global in the sense that it is used everywhere, but this doesn't mean that it is universal in content or message. Like internet there is the possibility for free access and for a personal reaction and viewpoint.'<sup>52</sup> He goes on with an excellent analysis of global art of the present by stating that we now live in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand globalization causes a loss of context because the entire world has become accessible, while on the other hand this access provides a new context: the whole planet. This decontextualization of art causes the final and definite break with modernism, which claims to have developed a universal art language.

Five years after the prediction of Bourriaud and Belting that the local and traditional culture won't play an essential role anymore in favour of a globalized culture we can say they were only partly right. Because it so seems that these days artists from non-Western origin once more start to focus on their indigenous culture as a way to stay true to themselves and to escape conforming to a prevailing art world fashion.

Ethnological museums also show this interest in contemporary 'indigenous' art by inviting non-Western artists to produce work that connects with the collection. A new development is that the artistic aspects of this work are considered as important as its local function. So we see in this sense a blurring of the borders between ethnological museums and museums for contemporary art.<sup>53</sup>

Furthermore, more in general it occurs to me that the reason why it's now still more difficult for a non-Western artist to enter the transnational art world is not because there is no interest in this work, but this is primarily due to the defective artistic infrastructure in those countries. In many cases the development of institutions for art education, museums, art history and art criticism and an art market have only just started recently. This situation is not only historically grown, but also has everything to do with the lack of financial means.

## **The global art market and the danger of homogenization of art.**

This expansion of the art world sounds very positive, but the emergence of a transnational art language can also be seen as the cause for homogenization of the world cultures. Particularly the immense influence of the global art market, dominated by a couple of super rich collectors, tempts non-Western artists to adapt themselves to the mainstream of the Western art world. Only work by Western artists or fully integrated artists from non-Western background is seen as prestigious and is being purchased.<sup>54</sup>

There's still one important factor in the globalization of the art world that forces itself on this debate: the huge influence of the global art market. It has caused a rather paradoxical situation in the art world. It has given a growing number of non-Western artists the opportunity to take part in the global avant-garde circuit, as I already pointed out before.<sup>55</sup> But it can also result in the dominance of only one type of art form or style, the new mainstream. This process has been going on for quite some time now. If we look at the most wanted and bought artists, they evoke the so-feared image of homogenization of art; a kind of *cultural Esperanto* without any reference to the authentic culture. It's now quite normal to describe the present art world as the *MacDonaldization of culture*.<sup>56</sup>

The art sociologist Diana Crane has shown this convincingly with her elaborate research on the implications of the global art market on culture.<sup>57</sup> She concludes that the global art market has accelerated the process that art works are less evaluated by aesthetic elements and more and more by their high prices and the resulting notoriety. Could it be a coincidence that this is happening exactly in a time in which the fusion of cultural value systems has made the determination of artistic quality rather precarious?

Until the 1990's the financial value of an artwork was of less importance than her consecration by the official high art world, that is to say the prestigious museums and galleries. The sheer existence of this coherent and elite art world implied a consensus about what was considered good art. This closed circuit even opened itself for new

groups of artists with different artistic criteria. These avant-garde movements offered the very welcome additions to the existing artistic mores. By contrast, in the last two decades auction markets, international art fairs and biennials seem to now determine which art trend and which artist belongs to the avant-garde. Museums don't strictly follow the international market, but at the same time they lack the financial means to purchase important contemporary art works. In fact, the global art market is now centred around an extremely restricted circuit: four major international art fairs (The Armory Show, New York, Frieze Art, London, Art Basel, Basel and Art Miami Basel, Miami), three auction markets (Sotheby's, Christie's London and Hotel Drouot, Paris) and of course let's not forget the booming biennials (there are now 112 biennials for contemporary art in cities around the world).

A decisive factor for this is the increase of an enormous amount of disposable wealth that is being created in the global economy, much of which is concentrated in the hands of a small group of businessmen and entrepreneurs. The very wealthy collectors belong to this new class, the super-rich. The taste of the global art market is in this way determined by these mega-collectors, who generally haven't got much knowledge about art. For this type of collectors, art works are seen as luxury items comparable with jewels, yachts, fancy cars and haute couture. They are said to represent 80% of recent buyers of contemporary art. In the period before the 1990's collectors didn't belong to the business elite, but they were psychiatrists and lawyers, who established long-term relationships with dealers. Today's mega collectors tend to purchase art works very rapidly, often without having seen more than a digital version. They can also afford to finance galleries and invest in the production of art works by leading artists. To compensate their lack of knowledge and acquired taste, they often have teams of experts and advisors who assist them with their purchases and sometimes they even build museums to house their own collections. A remarkable new development is that the amount of collectors who come from non-Western countries is growing, especially from China, Russia and the Middle-East. A returning subject in the art works that are purchased by these mega-collectors is the presence of popular images. In these works we find a magical fusion of entertainment

and art, an art that Pop artists (Warhol) mastered so well. Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons are examples *par excellence* of this attitude. Hirst's work 'For the love of God' (2007), the skull covered with diamonds, has been sold for 78 million pounds and is the most expensive artwork in the world. Koons, who is called 'the superstar of kitsch', presents his gigantic reproductions of toys and naked women from Playboy. This type of successful artists does not so much belong to the avant-garde (let alone to experimental art), but are actually more related to entrepreneurs who are capable of running a healthy business on the global market. Another example is the Japanese artist Takashi Murakami, who just like Hirst and Koons has his own company with around 100 assistants producing the actual works. Many artists don't even possess the technical skills that their works ask for. Damien Hirst himself admits he's not preoccupied with being original, but all the more he's interested in branding his works that represent a 'trademark' style.

A striking example of this new tendency is the collecting policy of sheikha Al-Mayassa of the oil-state Qatar. According to the Power 100 list edited by the American art magazine *Art Review* she is the most influential art person in the globalized art world. The main focus of her purchases is on the usual suspects in the Western art world: Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons.

## Conclusion

Despite of this last trend one is still almost tempted to conclude that it's just a question of time before the different global artworks will be accepted and appreciated automatically in their countries of origin and the West alike. It seems as if the Western artists are once more inspired by non-Western art. These mechanisms of cross-fertilization appear inevitable and irreversible; they seem futile to resist. I strongly feel that history is repeating itself here: the art of 'the other' is once again capable to breathe new life into our own culture and fills a certain void by offering interesting new images and refreshing viewpoints.<sup>58</sup>

Many non-Western artists stand out for their honest urgency to express themselves about social and political abuses. In the West social engagement often gives the impression of being brought into play to compensate for art's incapacity to be meaningful, with engaged art serving as an artificial refuge to fill up the artistic emptiness. After all, the overwhelming excess of artistic possibilities that the postmodern artist can choose from without obligations, it seems as if the decadence of the art business has become one of the main subjects of art. Another reason why most non-Western artists are so appreciated is because their work really can have a direct impact on society. In the West provocative artists are immediately welcomed in the art system and thereby rendered harmless. In many non-Western countries art hasn't got the meaning of *l'art pour l'art*, but is inextricably connected with society and its religious and political rituals. For this reason art is taken much more seriously, entailing restrictive consequences such as censorship and sometimes even physical capture. The example par excellence is Chinese artist Ai Wei Wei, who became world famous for his artistic protests against the Chinese regime. The Chinese government considers him a threat to the social and political stability and tries to eliminate his expression in all kinds of ways. The Western artist in a way sees the realization of the avant-gardist ideal to connect art and life in the role that art plays in these undemocratically-governed countries.

I can't help noticing that, ironically enough, in the West we valorise the contemporary non-Western artist for his or her input of original imagery, honesty and true social and political engagement. In a nutshell *the* aesthetic criteria of modernism. One of the most obstinate obstacles to invent or rethink a new concept of art in the West is that the internalization of the whole set of characteristics involved with the art concept is such that any kind of change would be experienced as an *Umwertung aller Werten*. Although there's a growing awareness that our idea of art is no more than a historically-grown construction, it almost seems impossible to discard criteria like originality, innovation, authenticity, self-criticism, conceptuality as obsolete. This perhaps also explains why despite the manifold convictions that the West should expand its theoretical framework; that there should be a dialogue; that originality and modernity are relative notions and that there are different simultaneous canons, that it has proven to be very hard to find convincing solutions. So it seems to follow that only corrections and no alternatives are offered. One could also ask the question whether this search for new models is in essence a new phenomenon. Can't we speak of a constant search, especially from the Romantic period onward, for new artistic solutions? The multiple artistic approaches and solutions in the nineteenth and twentieth century show clearly that art can have different faces.

Like I said before the problem will probably solve itself: the already ongoing appearance of non-Western art in the global art world makes a forced redefinition of art superfluous, because the adaption will happen quite naturally and organically.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Belting, H. 2007. Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age, in *Contemporary Art and The Museum. A Global Perspective*, edited by Belting, H., P. Weibel & A. Buddensieg. Ostfildern : Hatje Cantz Verlag.

Hans Belting, Andrea Buddensieg and Peter Weibel have edited from 2007 on four important books about the globalization of the art world and its influence on art, the art market, museums and audiences:

Belting, H., Buddensieg, A. and Weibel, P. 2009. *The Global Art World. Audiences, Markets and Museums*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag.

Belting, H, Birken, J., Buddensieg, A. and Weibel, P. 2011. *Global Studies. Mapping Contemporary Art and Culture*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag.

Belting, H., Buddensieg, A. and Weibel, P. 2013. *Global Contemporary Art and the Rise of New Art Worlds*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag.

<sup>2</sup> In the Netherlands this discussion began already from the mid 80's at The Tropical Institute (Het Tropeninstituut) in Amsterdam. Studies were published and symposia were organized around the subject:

In 1985 en 1992 The symposia 'Hoe hang je het op?' (how do you present it)? were organized in the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam. The debate was about the presentation of contemporary non-Western art in Museums: Can it be presented without context, should the work be treated as an ethnological object or as an art object?

Lavrijsen, R. (ed.) 1993. *Diversity in the Arts , Art Politics and the facelift of Europe*. Amsterdam: Tropeninstituut.

Leyten, H. and Damen, B. (ed.). 1992. *Art, anthropology and the modes of re-presentation – Museums and contemporary non-Western Art*. Amsterdam:Tropical Institute.

Lavrijsen, R (ed.).1998. *Global encounters in the world of art – Collisions of tradition and modernity*. Amsterdam: Tropeninstituut.

Lavrijsen, R. (ed.). 1999. *Culturele diversiteit in de kunst*. Den Haag: Elsevier bedrijfsinformatie.

In april 1994 the symposium 'A New Internationalism' was held at the Tate Gallery in London. The papers are collected in the book: Fischer,J.1994. *Global Visions. Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*. London: Kala Press.

<sup>3</sup> Gombrich, E.H. 1995 [1950]. *The Story of Art*. Londen: Phaidon.

<sup>4</sup> Elkins, J. 2002. *Stories of Art*. Londen: Psychology Press.

<sup>5</sup> Honour, H. & Fleming, J. 2005. *A World History of Art*. London: Laurence King Publishing.

<sup>6</sup> Arnason, H.H. & Mansfield, E. 2010. *A History of Modern Art*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.

<sup>7</sup> Stokstad, M. 2010. *Art History*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.

<sup>8</sup> Lazzari , M. & Schlesier, D. 2012. *Exploring Art. A Global, Thematic Approach*. Wadsworth: Cengage Learning.

<sup>9</sup> Bell, J. 2007. *Mirror of the World, a new History of Art*. London: Thames & Hudson.

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<sup>10</sup> Onians, J. 2004. *Atlas of World Art*. London: Laurence King Publishing.

<sup>11</sup> Carrier, D. 2008. *World Art History and its Objects*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press.

<sup>12</sup> Summers, D. 2003. *Real Spaces. World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism*. Oxford : Phaidon.

<sup>13</sup> Elkins, J. 2010. *Is Art History Global?* New York :Routledge.

<sup>14</sup> Zijlmans , K. & Damme, W. van (eds). 2008. *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*. Amsterdam: Valiz.

Horst, M. ter (ed). 2012. *Changing Perspectives. Dealing with Globalisation in the Presentation and Collection of Contemporary Art*. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers.

Casid, J.H. & D'Souza. A. (eds). 2014. *Art History in the wake of the Global Turn*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press.

<sup>15</sup> *More about World Art Studies*, Website of the University of East Anglia, <http://www.uea.ac.uk/art/moreabout>.

<sup>16</sup> Onians, J. 1996. World Art Studies and the Need for a New Natural History of Art. *The Art Bulletin* 78 (2): 206-209.

<sup>17</sup> Pfisterer, U. 2008. Origins and Principles of World Art History: 1900 (and 2000), in *World Art Studies*, edited by K. Zijlmans & W. van Damme. Amsterdam: Valiz: 85.

<sup>18</sup> The protagonists of this critical approach to the so called appropriation of the West element of other cultures (the appropriation of 'The Other'), are: E.W. Said, *Orientalism*, Harmondsworth/Middlesex 1978. He was the first who pointed to the phenomenon of 'self-colonization'. ; Rasheed Araeen, 'New Internationalism, or the Multiculturalism of Global Bantustans' in: Jean Fisher (ed.), *Global Visions: towards a new internationalism in het visual arts*, London 1994, p.10 (He states:"We know that independence from colonialism did not end the hegemony of the West. If anything, the West's hegemonic position and its institutions were reinforced through its increased economic, political and cultural domination of the postcolonial world."); Homi Bhabha. For him hybridity is a process linked to power relations between the coloniser and the colonised. Peter Cilds and Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, Harlow 1997, pp. 122-123; Debora Root, *Cannibal Culture. Art, Appropriation & the Commodification of Difference*, Oxford 1996; Okwui Enwezor (the organiser of Documenta 11) et al. (eds.), *Créolité and Créolization*, Ostfildern-Rui 2003.

<sup>19</sup> This point of view can be more or less confirmed by the fact that only recently a research-project called *Reference Cultures* has started at the University of Utrecht. A reference culture is a culture or society that assumes a dominant role in the international circulation of knowledge and practices. In other words they impose a model that others imitate, adapt or resist. The aim of the project is to explore how reference cultures and 'asymmetrical encounters' function. The West is seen as the reference culture of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

<sup>20</sup> James Elkins, 'Art History as a Global Discipline', in James Elkins: 2010, pp. 19-20.

<sup>21</sup> For a more elaborate review on Summers's *Real Spaces* it is advisable to read: Elkins, J. 2010. On Davids Summers's *Real Spaces*, in *Is Art History Global?*, edited by J. Elkins. New York: Routledge: 41-73.

<sup>22</sup> For the history of the origin of the forming of a world art history in Germany I gratefully made use of the detailed study of Ulrich Pfisterer, Origins and Principles of World Art History: 1900 (and 2000), in Kitty Zijlmans & Wilfried van Damme(2008:69-89).

<sup>23</sup> It would be getting too far off the subject to elaborate on all the different causes fort this collective oblivion of these interesting art historical developments in Germany. The dominance after World War II of the Anglo-American approach, that is based on the unilinear and evolutionary thinking has overruled the earlier more universalistic approaches. One can think of the popularity of anthropologists like Edward Tylor,

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James Frazer and Franz Boas. But also the rise of nazism has nipped the scientific activities of the cultural relativists in the bud. You can read more about it in the fore mentioned article of Pfisterer.

<sup>24</sup> Recent historiographic analyses make it clear that within the framework of *Kunstwissenschaft* the study of visual art was much more globally oriented and was more multidisciplinary than previously has been thought. For a detailed study of this subject: Halbertsma, M. The many Beginnings and the One End of World Art History in Germany 1900-1933, in Zijlmans & Van Damme ( 2008:91-105).

<sup>25</sup> The founders of *Völkerpsychologie* were the philosopher and psychologist M. Lazarus and the linguist H. Steinthal. Their programme of a 'psychic ethnology', developed during the 1850's, was based on a systematic research into language, religion, mythology and art. They argued that only these manifestations of collective genius offered the clue to the driving forces and governing principles of various historical trajectories. Pfisterer: 2008.

<sup>26</sup> In the two different terms World Art History ( or Global Art History) en World Art Studies we can discern a same separation between on the one hand the more historical approach of *Kunstgeschichte* and on the other hand the multidisciplinary approach of the more universalistic oriented discipline *Kunstwissenschaft*.

<sup>27</sup> There have been written several studies about the influence of non-Western art on Western art since the 1980's, among which the following: Goldwater, R. 1986 [1938]. *Primitivism in Modern Art*. Harvard: Harvard University Press; Rhodes, C. 1994. *Primitivism and Modern Art*. New York: E.H. Gombrich, E.H. 2002. *The Preference for the Primitive: Episodes in the History of Western Taste and Art*, London: Phaidon.

<sup>28</sup> And not to forget the following influential artists: Paul Gauguin, Paul Klee, Pablo Picasso, Henri Moore and Alberto Giacometti.

<sup>29</sup> Konijn, F. 1992. A universal language of art. Two exhibitions of non-Western art in Dutch museums of modern art, in: *Anthropology and the mode of representation. Museums and contemporary non-Western art*, edited by H. Leyten and B. Damen. Amsterdam: Tropical Institute, pp. 23-31.

<sup>30</sup> Idem, note 29.

<sup>31</sup> Rubin, W. 1984. *Primitivims in 20th Century Art. Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*. New York : Museum of Modern Art.

<sup>32</sup> Araeen, R. 1989. Our Bauhaus Other's Mudhouse. *Third Text* 3 (6): 3-14.

<sup>33</sup> Martis, A. 1998. Expressie en primitivisme, in: *Expressionisme en primitivisme in de beeldende kunst van de twintigste eeuw*, edited by A. Martis & M. Rijnders. Heerlen: Heerlen Open Universiteit.

<sup>34</sup> See for more information about these exhibitions: Greenberg, R. 2005. Identity Exhibitions: From Magiciens de la Terre to Documenta 11. *Art Journal* 64 (1).

<sup>35</sup> Deresiewicz, W. 2009. Adaptation: On Literary Darwinism. *The Nation* may 20  
In this article Deresiewicz criticizes that Darwinian theories are becoming the most dominant in the academic world, first in the social sciences and more recently the humanities are attracted tot this all-encompassing thinking model. He states that this appeal of evolutionary thinking is opposing against the intellectualistic deconstructivist theories that coloured the eighties and nineties.

<sup>36</sup> Wilfried van Damme points out that art historians, anthropologists, archaeologists and other scholars already have made substantial contributions, although this may well have gone unnoticed outside art history, due to the lack of an overarching global framework in the study of art. Damme, W. van. 2008. Introducing World Art Studies, in K. Zijlmans and W. van Damme (2008: 28).

<sup>37</sup> Idem, p. 48.

<sup>38</sup> Wilfried van Damme has contributed to the anthropological approach of aesthetics in an important way already in 1996 with his study *Beauty in Context: Toward an Anthropological Approach to Aesthetics*, Leiden 1996. This is the first study to survey the field of the anthropology of aesthetics, which during the last

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few decades has emerged on the cross-roads between anthropology and non-Western art scholarship. He elaborates on a central thesis which concerns the relationship between aesthetic preference and sociocultural ideals. Drawing on empirical data from several African cultures, he demonstrates that varying notions of beauty are inspired by varying sociocultural ideals, thus shedding light on the phenomenon of cultural relativism in aesthetic preference.

<sup>39</sup> Halbertsma, M. The call of the canon. Why art history cannot do without, in Mansfield, E. (ed.). 2007. *Making Art History: A changing Discipline and Its Institutions*. New York: Routledge: 16-31.

<sup>40</sup> In general there is a consensus about the idea that in the West the origin of art as a distinct categorie can be situated in the eighteenth century.

Clowley, D. 2011. Definitions of Art and Fine Art's Historical Origins. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 69 (3).

<sup>41</sup> Danto, A. 1992. *Beyond the Brillo-Box, The Visual Arts in Post-historical Perspective*. New York : University of California Press.

<sup>42</sup> Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The location of culture*. London.

Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*, London.

<sup>43</sup> Lavrijsen, Ria. 1998. *Global encounters in the world of art. Collisions of tradition and modernity*. Amsterdam: Tropeninstituut, 9.

<sup>44</sup> A clear example of this interest is the exhibition *Beyond the Dutch* in the Centraal Museum in Utrecht in 2009/10. Remco Raben, Meta Knol, cat. *Beyond the Dutch*, Centraal Museum Utrecht, 2009/10. This exhibition presented the interaction between Dutch and Indonesian art from 1900 until now.

In my research project *The Outskirts of Modernism* at the University of Utrecht the forgotten modernisms in non- Western countries are being investigated.

<sup>45</sup> The postcolonial art-theorist Rasheed Araeen was a pioneer in the rediscovery of neglected non-Western modernist artists with the exhibition *The Other Story*, where for the first time work was shown of Afro-African artists in postwar Britain at Hayward Gallery in 1989. This was for him also the reason for the foundation of the periodical *Third Text* in 1987, that pays attention to non-Western artists.

<sup>46</sup> James Elkins has recently published a study about the way how modernist painting outside the West could be studied.

Elkins, J. 2010. *Writing about modernist painting outside Western Europe and North America*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

<sup>47</sup> Belting, H. 2009. Contemporary Art as Global Art. A Critical Estimate, in *The Global Art World*, edited by H. Belting and A. Buddensieg. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag: 12.

<sup>48</sup> Belting, H. 2007. Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age, in *Contemporary Art and the Museum: A Global Perspective*, edited by P. Weibel and A. Buddensieg. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag: 22.

<sup>49</sup> The historian Francis Fukuyama talked in this context about the end of history. This means that after the fall of communism the all-encompassing ideologies don't exist anymore, but that the mechanism of the free market, and liberal democracy have triumphed.

Fukoyama, F. 1989. The end of History. *Quadrant* 34 (8). He developed this concept in the book 1992. *The End of History and the last Man*. London: Free Press.

<sup>50</sup> Carrol, N. 2007. Art and Globalization: Then and Now. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65 (1): 131-143.

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For the above mentioned notions that the now used new media are in itself emblematic for the emerging transnational artworld and that we can now speak of a globally shared art language and themes I have thankfully used Carrols above mentioned analysis of the difference between the globalization in former times (before 1989) and now.

<sup>51</sup> Christophe Gallois, 'An archipelago of local responses. Nicolas Bourriaud on the Altermodern', *Metropolis M* 1 (2009), p.79.

<sup>52</sup> Belting 2009: 2.

<sup>53</sup> See for the present interest of the anthropological discipline and anthropological museums in contemporary non-Western art:

Layton, R. 1991. *The Anthropology of Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge Press.

Marcus, G., Meyers, F. 1995. *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*. Berkeley: University California Press.

Schneider, A and Wright, Ch. (ed.). 2005. *Contemporary Art and Anthropology*. Cambridge: Berg Publishers.; Scheider, A. and Wright, Ch. 2010. *Between Art and Anthropology: contemporary ethnographic practice*. Oxford: Bloomsbury Publishing.

<sup>54</sup> Crane, D. 2009. Reflections on the Global Art Market: Implications for the Sociology of Culture. *Sociedad e Estado* 24 (2): 331-362.

<sup>55</sup> There are two main probable causes for the origin of the global art market. Big cities all over the world use art exhibitions to improve their image (citybranding). A more important influence however is the enormously increased wealth in the global economy.

<sup>56</sup> Two recent books that delve into the influence of the art market and consumerism on a global scale are:

Julian Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated. The Story of Contemporary Art*, Oxford 2004.

Charlotte Bydler, *The Global Art World Inc: On the Globalization of Contemporary Art*, Uppsala University Press 2004.

<sup>57</sup> Diana Crane, 'Reflections on the Global Art Market: implications for the Sociology of Culture', *Sociedad e Estado* 24 (2009) 2, pp. 331-362

<sup>58</sup> This reminds me of Jean-François Lyotard's theory about what he calls the 'secret of artistic success'. In his view 'this resides in the balance between what is surprising and what is well-known'. Lyotard: 'This is how innovation in art operates: one re-uses formulae confirmed by previous success, one throws them off balance by combining them with other, in principle incompatible formulae, by amalgamations, quotations, ornamentations, pastiche'. Lyotard, J-F. 1991. *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*. Stanford: Polity Press: 106.

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- Hans Belting, Andrea Buddensieg and Peter Weibel have edited from 2007 on four important books about the globalization of the art world and its influence on art, the art market, museums and audiences:
- Belting, H., Buddensieg, A. and Weibel, P. 2009. *The Global Art World. Audiences, Markets and Museums*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag.
- Belting, H, Birken, J., Buddensieg, A. and Weibel, P. 2011. *Global Studies. Mapping Contemporary Art and Culture*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag.
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## Summary

Nowadays art biennials are organized in the farthest corners of the world.

Everywhere in Europe and America we see surveys emerging that include art works stemming from countries that were formerly excluded from the modern art scene: in addition to art from Europe and the United States we see contemporary art from China, Africa, India, the Middle East and Brazil. This globalization of the art world also manifests itself at the Venice Biennial and at Documenta in Kassel, the most prestigious international exhibitions of contemporary art. Never before have so many countries taken part with their own independent exhibition. The amount of art works exposed to the public has in this way increased worldwide, with new paintings, sculptures, installations, photographs and videos becoming visible to an international audience for the first time. In short: art is becoming more and more international, more extensive and more diverse.

Because of this unstoppable development of global art and the global art market, the conceptual notion of contemporary art as used by the Western world is gradually changing. In the West this concept was not only related to modernity, but also to particular avant-garde and innovatory attitudes, with every period inventing its own visual and conceptual manifestation of this modernity. But since recently, modernity has loosened itself from its inextricable bond with innovation and originality and is moving towards the embrace of a plurality of Western and non-Western artistic concepts, blended with important elements of local culture and tradition.

Now that the world in this Information Age and Open Source Society is getting smaller all the time (let's say, a global village), artists of non-Western countries have become well aware of Western art history and art theories. This syncretical art approach, expressed in a wide range of different styles, is what we've recently started to define as contemporary art.

This is also the reason why the Western art world is starting to ask itself the question if the all-encompassing Western interpretation models, that is to say Modernism, Avant-garde and Postmodernism, are still topical and to the point. Over the past twenty years this development has caused an ongoing debate between cultural anthropologists and art historians about the way non-Western art should be interpreted and judged and in what way it can take part of the Western art world. Globalization in the art world mainly affects three areas: contemporary art, institutions and collections and academics. In this book I will focus on how globalization affects the discipline of Art History. New challenges, issues and problems accompanying globalization demand new approaches and perspectives in the field. Within this discourse two problems need to be tackled. The first is the way

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the field should deal with the formation of a World Art History; the second is how to respond to contemporary art of non-Western artists that is made in a globalized world.

The generation of art historians that grew up after the Second World War are generally only acquainted with the development of Western art from the Egyptians until now. In most Art History books non-Western art was only mentioned when it was considered an important source of inspiration for Western art. Now that the postmodern acknowledgement of a plurality of narratives is accepted as common sense, we can see that some major art historical textbooks have taken the first step toward a more global approach towards Art History. A short overview is given of the main art historical surveys of the last few years that have incorporated non-Western art.

In addition to these surveys, over the past five years we can see an explosion of discussions and writings about the way the art historical discipline should adapt its perspectives and approaches to the new global thinking. In this discourse we can find two main approaches: the contextual approach, that tries to view and understand art in its original context, and the universal approach, that departs from the assumption of the universality of the intrinsic values of art.

The discourse about the re-evaluation or even transformation of the art historical discipline is dominated by the Western sense of guilt towards non-Western cultures. Western Art History is seen as paternalistic, authoritarian, Euro-American centred, denigrating, and yes, neo-colonialist. The main point of critique is that the dominance of the *occidental gaze* seems to be the only fundament of the analytical apparatus of art scholarship. The time has come to differentiate this post-colonial stance: instead of thinking in terms of offender and victim we should build a constructive dialogue. It occurred to me that in the discussions about the formation of World Art History all non-Western art is treated alike. This obscures the arguments, because it so happens it's of essential importance to make a clear distinction between the contemporary global non-Western art and the non-Western art that is solely rooted in local traditions. The last category contains ethnographic artefacts that played, or sometimes are still playing, a ritual and religious role in these societies and therefore they can't possibly be compared in any way with the contemporary global art, both made by a Western or non-Western artist.

The difference between Western modern art and non-Western contemporary art is on the contrary not so big at all, because here we can find a considerable influence of Western ideas. Since the 1990's a growing number of non-Western artists started to focus on Western art and Western aesthetics. So Western art is now for a change in a way a source of inspiration for non-Western artists. Through the exchange of

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knowledge new hybrid art works emerge with a mixture of local and Western views; a phenomenon we call *glocal art*.

Another important factor in the globalization of the art world is of course the huge influence of the global art market. It has caused a rather paradoxical situation in the art world. It has given a growing number of non-Western artists the opportunity to take part in the global avant-garde circuit. But it can also result in the dominance of only one type of art form or style, the new mainstream. Still, the ever-expanding world of contemporary global art will, hopefully, in the long run function as an antidote for the homogenization of the commercial art world.