Global Art

Veranstalter: Sabine B. Vogel (AICA Austria) / Hildegund Amanshauser (Salzburg International Summer Academy of Fine Arts)
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Bericht von: Beata Hock, Center for the History and Culture of East Central Europe (GWZO) at the University of Leipzig

Art historical methodology, aesthetic categorization, practitioners and institutions of contemporary art, critical theory—these were the perspectives from which the symposium *Global Art* (re-)considered globalization: a phenomenon predominantly understood in terms of economics and geopolitics. Accordingly, the two-day meeting devoted sections to reviewing the new challenges globalization may pose to art history as a discipline; to capturing a kind of visual language or thematic agenda that may characterize „global art"; and to juxtaposing the parallel lives of transnational linkages and local cultural traditions. The symposium was held on July 30-31, 2011 as a joint event of the Salzburg International Summer Academy of Fine Arts and the Austrian and Swiss sections of AICA (Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art).

The panel on art history opened with HANS BELTING's lecture. A key author urging for a paradigm change within the discipline of art history (as well as the wider academic discourse), BELTING had been questioning Western cultural superiority and the legitimacy of its hegemony in scholarship. He now went on to assessing the possibility of an art history outside the Western master narrative. Such a model is needed as a kind of visual idiom called contemporary art is indeed being produced all over the world now. As Belting reported, in his preface to the Chinese edition of *Art History after Modernism*, he encouraged Chinese readers not to conform to Western models but to develop and theorize their own. He did this in recognition that Western culture is a local culture despite its totalizing claims. Acknowledging that art has been internationally linked for centuries, yet the universalizing underpinnings of writing its history have all along neglected the viability and actual existence of divergent developments, Belting asked if art as a preestablished notion possibly lends itself to a kind of understanding of the global in which multi-participation and transculturality indeed find a place.

MONICA JUNEJA revisited many of the discipline's now unsustainable tenets, and added further shades to Belting's argument about how the expanded scope of scholarly and institutional interest in world art may in fact continue a practice of exclusion and homogenization insofar as this interest still approaches and tackles its subject along traditional structures. Juneja persuasively argued that even many of the recently introduced, „reformed" categories of describing cultural phenomena in the so-called peripheries (such as „borrowing", „transfer" or „flow") are problematic as they are constituted on the same logic of diffusing „originals" and the need to catch up as the notorious concept of „influence" they had been summoned to replace. She then pointed to the fact that an analytical intent to revise the art historical discourse will not in itself resolve methodological difficulties or do away with solid geographical hierarchies. The visibility of the art of non-European geographical areas is no longer the issue (as later on GERARDO MOSQUERO and JITISH KALLAT confirmed: curators today can no longer afford to remain within the new York-London-Germany axis, the presentation of artists from all continents became a near must), but it is the conditions of visibility that needs to be critically interrogated. Besides generating more appropriate taxonomies, this would entail investing efforts in empirical investigation. I would imagine, multiple modernity is one of those concepts that have been offered and widely rehearsed, but the conceptual and methodological consequences of which have rarely been followed up. Juneja's proposition for a transcultural art history offered multilevel analytical frames instead of the blunt opposition of the global (as a force of cultural homogenization) and the local (as a site of resistance thereof) as well as a more dynamic relationship between aesthetics and politicized engagement by the simple token of sidestepping the frames of Western aesthetic theory.

In the panel discussion closing Section I, ar-

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tist PETER FRIEDL directed attention to the power relations operative behind a globalizing artworld, and from this perspective relativized the Western/non-Western opposition. If global art subscribes to the logic of a world trade market and the production of commodities, as Belting claimed earlier on, than an artist's self-positioning no longer turns on his/her place of residency, but on his/her relationship to this commodified context.

Section II set out to map what marks „global art"; whether it is a kind of widespread visual language (a period style, if you wish, just as we tend to see modernism), or it is a set of themes tackling various issues pertaining to globalization, or, perhaps, it is indeed a site where the theoretical promises of postcolonial criticism are now being fulfilled and where a multicentric perception of the world is now being instituted. Section I already prepared the ground for an understanding that sees global art not as a style but a *condition*. Opening this panel, NANCY ADAJANIA noted how attempts at paradigm change that have taken place outside the Western world, were ignored during the discussions so far. Referring to the global South, Adajania also stressed that internationalism has not been the monopoly of advanced industrialized societies. It can be, and is, exercised by those whose movement across the globe is not necessarily voluntary. After mentioning the extensive pre-capitalist networks of Asian dynasties, the speaker brought the Triennial of India as an example, and product, of a kind of internationalism (that of Nehru) that embraced non-aligned movements, esteemed multilateral interstate agreements and a mutual non-interference in domestic affairs. In Adajania's interpretation, this sort of internationalism introduced counter-models of cultural and social solidarity that superseded typically bipolar Cold War relations. Her own countermodel to a neo-liberal take on globalization is a kind of critical transregionality that observes ethical responsibility and draws on transformative aesthetics.

Gerardo Mosquero reflected on the notion of anthropophagy (a kind of „cultural cannibalism" of other societies) that Latin-American critics developed to describe ways the continent withstood European colonial culture through appropriating the dominant culture for their own purposes. This sort of incorporation is an active process and lacks the moment of subordination. In the discussion that followed the section, MARIA LIND disapproved that previous speakers invested too much in theorizing, and art practice did not come first in their accounts. Nancy Adajania swift response was that, from their perspective, theorizing the unequal dynamics of globalization is part of a critically inclined creative practice. Relating both Mosquero's claim about colonial structures still being in place and Adajania's mention of also Eastern Europe among the regions that are to seek horizontal connections with each other, an audience number remarked the conspicuous lack of any representation of „Europe's other within" at the symposium, or at least an awareness that similar structures are at work in Eastern Europe today. While arrangements economically underdevelop the region and deepen its invisibility within the fields of culture and knowledge production in ways experienced in other extra-European locations, Western European intellectuals only share concerns with other continents' (post-)colonized subjects.

In addressing the relation of global art to regional developments, BASSAM EL BARONI elaborated on a distinction between fine art and contemporary art. In his taxonomy, the former refers to practices that rely on the „old", modernism-indebted universalism of art, and hence are incompatible with today's discursive and often analytical or political artistic trends. They are excluded from current transnational flows that have now established multiculturalism as a source and model of a new kind of universality. Although there is a grain of truth in pointing to how the globalization of cultural production sets forth novel forms of an unrelenting universalism, El Baroni runs the risk of proposing an ahistorical argument insofar as he conflates the discursive turn in art and the current „dictate" of paying at least lip service to cultural diversity.

SENAM OKUDZETO's talk at the end of the day was a perfect closure from two important aspects. On the one hand, the artist-activist offered a convincing example of what JUNEJA earlier called for: an implementati-

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on of both theoretical and methodological insights into practical work, be it academic research or art praxis. Starting out from the belief that art is a basic building block in forming social structures, AISS, an artist-run NGO Okudzeto funded in 2007 in Ghana, works to preserve the local community's creative resources for present and future generations. In a conscious attempt to evade self-colonisaton, NGO-members certainly do not aim at bringing global value to art made in Ghana. Their projects rather focus on bringing submerged moments of Ghanian history into public knowledge, or to forestall detrimental procedures that are likely to happen when e.g., oil is discovered on Ghanian territory. On the other hand, Okudzeto turned to a question that hitherto remained unaddressed, that of hybridity, while she herself claimed to have a transnational identity emerging both from her mixed family origin and current multiple residence. Talking about her related experiences, she noted how people are still not able to deal with—to envision and credit—an unproblematically inhabited global identity.

Although some speakers included interpretations of artworks in their talks, projected artworks as loosely connected background images, or presented their own creative practice, Maria Lind was right in that the symposium had a heavy theoretical leaning. But given the carefully balanced representation of voices from various continents, the conference *Global Art* created a rare setting in which the general professional expectation of downplaying one's geopolitical belonging was suspended; indeed, such belongings served as entry points to the discussion. An unsuspecting approach that freely relies on discussing images, while the notion of art/art history and the conditionalities of art making remain taken for granted, would have appeared at best naïve in this context. For those who would not forego theoretical considerations but are also eager to see art currently produced in various geographical locations, the exhibition *The Global Contemporary: Art Worlds After 1989* (ZKM, Karlsruhe, September 2011 – February 2012), for the preparation of which Hans Belting acted as scientific adviser, will certainly have a lot to offer.

Program

Welcome, Introduction: Hildegund Amanshauser, Sabine B. Vogel

1. Section: What is the history of global art, of international relations between different art worlds and what is global art history?
Hans Belting (Karlsruhe): World art and global art. A new challenge to art history
Monica Juneja (Delhi/Heidelberg): Art history's new atlas of belonging
Discussion: Hans Belting, Peter Friedl (Wien/Berlin/etc.), Monica Juneja
Moderation: Hildegund Amanshauser (Salzburg)

2. Section: What is global art? What are new chances? What is the new quality of global art?
Nancy Adajania (Bombay): In the age of Babel, the conspectual approach to global art can only be a vexed one
Gerardo Mosquera (Havana): Beyond anthropophagia: art, internationalization and cultural dynamics
Discussion: Nancy Adajania, Maria Lind (Stockholm), Gerardo Mosquera
Moderation: Sabine B. Vogel (Klosterneuburg)

3. Section: What is the relation of global art to regional developments (global local interdependence)?
Jitish Kallat (Mumbai): GPS Coding the imagination: can you tell where the artist is looking?
Bassam El Baroni (Alexandria): The art that does not make it internationally: key reasons revealed
Senam Okudzeto (Ghana/Basel): Art, ego and effectiveness: constructive challenges for social sculpture in the age of social networking
Discussion: Bassam El Baroni, Jitish Kallat, Senam Okudzeto
Moderation: Simone Wille (Vienna)

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