



## MÁS ALLÁ DE LA HISTORIA UNIVERSAL DEL ARTE

*El museo global y la crisis del universalismo occidental*

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un proyecto de  
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El *Grupo de Investigación en Arte, Globalización e Interculturalidad* de la Universidad de Barcelona organiza una conversación abierta al público\* con el destacado historiador del arte y teórico de los medios Hans Belting.

En esta ocasión, nuestro invitado describirá algunos de los debates que se han suscitado recientemente entre los grandes relatos de la historia universal del arte y los así llamados Estudios del Arte Mundial (World Art Studies). Tomando como punto de partida la reciente edición del libro *The Global Art World. Audiences, Markets, and Museums* (Hatje Cantz-2009) editado por el profesor Belting y por Andrea Buddensieg, se abordará a su vez el impacto de la crisis del universalismo occidental en la institución museo.

### PROGRAMA

**Lunes 18 de Enero / 12-14 hrs**

Aula 302 de la Facultad de Geografía e Historia  
Universidad de Barcelona / Montalegre 5-6  
presenta: Joaquín Barriendos

coordinación  
Anna María Guasch  
Joaquín Barriendos

\* El taller se llevará a cabo en inglés / La entrada es libre / Los interesados deberán solicitar su inscripción enviando su CV al correo [info@culturasvisualesglobales.net](mailto:info@culturasvisualesglobales.net) (Plazas limitadas). Esta sesión forma parte de las actividades del Foro de Doctorandos *Negociando la Diferencia. Poéticas y Políticas de lo Diverso en el Arte Contemporáneo*.

**HANS BELTING** fue catedrático de Historia del Arte en las universidades de Heidelberg y Múnich. En 1992 cofundó la School for New Media en Karlsruhe (Alemania) y dio forma al Departamento de Teoría del Arte y Estudios de Medios. En 2003 asumió la Dirección Europea del College de France de París. Ha sido profesor invitado en las siguientes universidades: Harvard, Columbia University, Chicago/Northwestern, Washington y la Ecole des Hautes Etudes de París. Entre 2004 y 2007 dirigió el International Research Center for Cultural Science (IFK) de Viena. Es miembro de diversas asociaciones internacionales como la American Philosophical Society, la American Academy of Arts and Sciences, la Medieval Academy of America, la Academia Europea y el Ateneo de Venecia. Es miembro honorario de la London University. Sus libros han sido traducidos a nueve lenguas europeas y al japonés. Entre los publicados en lengua inglesa se encuentran: *The End of the History of Art?* (Chicago, 1987); Max Beckmann. *Modern Painting and Tradition* (New York, 1989); *The Image and its Public in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1990); *Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image Before the Era of Art* (Chicago, 1994); *The Germans and their Art. A Difficult Heritage* (New Haven, 2000); *The Invisible Masterpiece* (London, 2001); *Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights* (New York, 2003); *Art History after Modernism* (London, 2003); *Thomas Struth: Museum Photographs* (Munich, 2006); *Florenz und Bagdad. Eine westöstliche Geschichte des Blicks* (German original, Munich, 2008). De próxima aparición son, *Double Perspective: Arab Science and Renaissance Art*, título tentativo, Cambridge/MA); *Duchamp's Perspective: Duchamp. Sugimoto. Jeff Wall* (Cologne, 2009) *Bodies and Pictures. Toward an Anthropology of Images* (Princeton, forthcoming).



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## Hans Belting

### Contemporary Art as Global Art

#### A Critical Estimate

“Contemporary art has become a social phenomenon, a tool for communication. There is no point in comparing it to what we used to know, because it is dependant on the effects of globalization which we are only beginning to discover and whose impact we are still struggling to assess.”<sup>1</sup>

#### A Global Art Forum

In March 2007, the Dubai Art Fair, a subsidiary of Dubai’s International Financial Centre (DIFC), organized its first Global Art Forum in which the term global art simply was used synonymously with today’s contemporary art.<sup>2</sup> Some of the sections, as was to be expected, addressed issues like *Branding Cities through Culture* and *Building Future Art Cities*. One section, however, narrowed the spectrum by asking the blunt questions: “How will contemporary art affect the Middle East in the next 10 years?” or: “How will the Middle East affect contemporary art in the next 10 years?” Some of the participants objected that the two questions were not commensurable, and that they treated art as a matter of planning.

The creation of art markets in the Middle East is an economic project that will indeed affect Contemporary Art. Western auction houses are competing with one another in the region. Sotheby’s has opened a branch in Doha, Qatar, and Christie’s has chosen Dubai, Abu Dhabi<sup>3</sup> where the Louvre will send part of its collections. To this end it has commissioned a museum building by Tadao Ando. Besides, in Qatar the brand new museum of Islamic Art—designed by I. M. Pei—a museum of contemporary art is to open soon. Thus, the Middle East will indeed affect the global art world. Art museums, though still an unfamiliar institution in the region, are an obvious choice, and therefore quite a number of new museums are already under construction. In 2008, the Global Art Forum, this time with *The Financial Times* as partner, stated bluntly that “art is a business.”<sup>4</sup> The board of Cultural and Art Authority, on that occasion, explained their “agenda for a global art city.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, the Gulf States provide a test case for art’s globalization as an economic project.

But it is quite another matter to ask how art will affect the Middle East, as the first Global Art Forum did. Contemporary art, with its critical message and public visibility, bears the potential of conflicts with state control in censoring artists. China, after 1989, is an example of the price that has to be paid for a compromise between government politics and art trade. Only the economic elite of private

collectors and investors can afford the risk to own art of whatever intention. The Gulf States may apply more liberal principles than their Arab neighbors, but their experience with today's art is limited, if we leave aside Sharjah whose biennial is vividly described by Jack Persekian, Artistic Director of the Sharjah Biennial, in this volume. However, when looking to the artists' part, whether they still live in the region or work up road, we discover a new enthusiasm. It is precisely the economic prospect, enhanced by the global perspective, that opens unprecedented possibilities for them. Enrico Navarra, a Paris dealer, has even started a new distribution project for them by publishing book editions for artists who "are developing a new vision of the Arab world," as Jérôme Sans, the editor of the third volume in this series, writes.<sup>6</sup> The whole endeavor depends on whether artists will be given "independent spaces for looking and reading"<sup>7</sup> that are a novelty not only in art but concern social life in general. The aim is to create conditions artists can work under, despite the pressure of the business world they live in.

### **Global Art**

Twenty years after its first manifestations, the time has come to discuss the nature and purpose of global art that emerged, like a phoenix from the ashes, from modern art at the end of the twentieth century and opposed modernity's cherished ideals of progress and hegemony.<sup>8</sup> Contemporary art a term long used to designate the most recent art, assumed an entirely new meaning when art production, following the turn of world politics and world trade in 1989, expanded across the globe. The results of this unprecedented expansion challenged the continuity of any Eurocentric view of 'art.' Global art is no longer synonymous with modern art. It is by definition contemporary, not just in a chronological but also, as we will see, in a symbolic or even ideological sense. It is both represented and distorted by an art market whose strategies are not just economic mechanisms when crossing cultural borders, but strategies to channel art production in directions for which we still lack sufficient categories.

Art on a global scale does not imply an inherent aesthetic quality which could be identified as such, nor a global concept of what has to be regarded as art. Rather than representing a new context, it indicates the loss of context or focus and includes its own contradiction by implying the counter movement of regionalism and tribalization, whether national, cultural or religious. It clearly differs from modernity whose self-appointed universalism was based on a hegemonial notion of art. In short, new art today is global, much the same way the world wide net is also global. The internet is global in the sense that it is used everywhere, but this does not mean that it is universal in content or message. It allows for free access and thus for a personal response to the world. But it is for the same reasons that this

creates problems for political regimes that feel a need to control it, precisely because their problems are by definition local and therefore are threatened by a free flow of information and opinion that goes with uncensored creativity. It may be difficult for Western art criticism to accept the novelty (and not just the new geographical reach) of global art. It is, however, wishful thinking to keep it under Western guidance and within the precincts of familiar institutions.

But control is not only a political problem: it is also a concern of art criticism and aesthetics. Global art may be critical in political terms, but it is also critical in terms of art categories defined by inclusion or exclusion. New art often blurs any kinds of borders between mainstream art, on the one side, and popular art, on the other, and thus abolishes the old dualism between Western art and ethnographic practice by using indigenous traditions as a reference, as Justo Pastor Mellado has shown for Chile and Paraguay. Seen from a Western point of view, global art represents a geopolitical or even “geoaesthetic” brand, as Joaquin Barriendos explains in his contribution to this volume. It is symbolic capital whose value changes from one place to the other, even if Western revisionism tries to control its currency with its own exchange rates. Difference, with the label of a foreign culture, has become marketable and thus an entrance ticket for newcomers on the art market.

### **World Art**

Global art and world art are sometimes used synonymously. But world art is an old idea complementary to modernism, already developed in André Malraux’s postwar book on universal art without museum walls,<sup>9</sup> because or although it was mostly to be found in Western museums. It continues to signify art from all ages, the heritage of mankind. In fact, it made art from every possible provenance acceptable under the condition of excluding it from modern mainstream art—an old argument between art and ethnographic museums. Such significance is officially codified in international laws for the protection of art and monuments protection. The School of World Art Studies located at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, a novelty in the university realm and, offers a clear example for the discussion of world art today. Its origin was the Sainsbury Collection which the university inherited and whose items from Africa and Oceania were collected as art and juxtaposed with modern art, as was the custom in modern art’s formalism and universal aesthetics. It was in line with this concept that John Onians who taught at the school, edited his magnificent *Atlas of World Art* which reaches from the stone age to the present day, a project also accompanied by a World Art Library.<sup>10</sup> A similar program at Leiden University, is documented in the volume *World Art Studies* whose contributors are both art critics and ethnographers, i.e. groups which for a long time had belonged to different camps of thought and method.<sup>11</sup>

The idea of world art, in a sense, is held together by an art concept that is based on modernism's universalism and today looks somewhat odd, as it bridges a Western notion of art with a multiform, and often ethnic, production to which the term 'art' is applied in an arbitrary manner. It was a paradigm of modernist aesthetics to regard every form or work that humanity created, as art. World art—a kind of aesthetic appropriation of objects as pure 'form' or as proof of individual creativity on a universal scale—is best described in André Malraux's book on the "imaginary museum"<sup>12</sup> that is, in fact, a museum in the mind and therefore epitomizes world art, also a construct. World art never was the concern of ethnographers who dealt with local products in a culture-specific way and thus in most concrete terms. It may be admitted that labels such as 'ethnic' or 'primitive' are equally questionable but they are so for very different reasons. Sally Price brings the Western art appropriation to the point in her book *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, an acerbic account of the uncertainties surrounding artifacts and works of art.<sup>13</sup>

World art, in the meantime, matters for identity politics in cultures that had no previous share in modernism and therefore today insist on their own traditions and their own narratives in defining visual production as cultural practice. World art also receives a lot of attention due to the growing pressure of repatriation claims from former colonies. Metropolitan museums of the West, often accused of being outposts of empire and colonialism, today have to rethink their arguments in order to defend their collections. The British Museum is among them, and its director, Neil MacGregor, claimed his museum to be "not only a museum of the world but also a museum for the world."<sup>14</sup> In this sense, he opened a blockbuster show on the Chinese Terracotta Army that attracted large crowds in 2007,<sup>15</sup> thus ascertaining his claims not only to own, but also to promote, world art. A bookshop on Russell Street I came across at the time, unintentionally offered a telling case of the need for our distinction. The owner of the shop presented books on world art and others on global art, though both were about art from China, side by side in the same window display. The catalogue of the British Museum exhibition across the street shared the window with a book on contemporary artists from China that was dedicated to the new market presence of living *Artists in China* and thus would not have made any sense twenty years ago.

In 1982, Jean-Louis Pradel published one of the last books of this kind with the title *World Art Trends* for contemporary art; nevertheless most of the 23 countries represented were Western.<sup>16</sup> Today, however, world art is synonymous with the art heritage of the others, meaning art on a universal scale. World art encompasses most cultures beyond the West whose heritage was preserved in empire type museums.<sup>17</sup> In fact, world art for a long time was primarily owned by Western

museums, where it existed as an expatriated and contested treasure from colonial times. In order to protect their collections, directors of 18 Western museums recently signed a declaration in which they defended their institutions as “Universal Museums” that were created to serve the whole world and not a single country or nation.<sup>18</sup> Universal museums as an idea are a legacy from modernity’s claim to offer universal models for the whole world. Globalism, on the other hand, is a response to universalism and serves to propagate the symbolic capital of difference on the market. Global art, in fact, differs profoundly from world art in that it is always created as art to begin with, and that is synonymous with contemporary art practice, whatever the art definitions may be in the individual case.

### **World Art History or Global Art History?**

World art studies, it has been said, are usually concerned with an old topic that originated in the nineteenth century, but we encounter today a new debate about world art history, in the sense of a world wide competence of the Western type discipline of art history. This has been sketched out in David Summers’ book, in which *World Art History* is part of the subtitle, and then critically discussed by James Elkins, editor of *Is Art History Global?*<sup>19</sup> Whereas Summers claims a universal competence of art history for every part of the world, Elkins insists on “local practices of art history” that do not follow a single model. In his editorial *Art History as a Global Discipline*, he develops “five arguments against the idea that art history is, or could become, a single enterprise throughout the world.”<sup>20</sup> In my view, the problem, however, is one of the terms to be used, and terminology has to be taken seriously, when, in the meantime, global art is denoting a new geography of contemporary art hardly twenty years old.

‘Global art history’ is therefore a misleading term, since it is not concerned with global art, but only with art history and thus, with an altogether different matter of method and discipline in art writing. In other words, world art and global art differ so much in matters of contents or materials that they should not be used as synonyms. The debate, in my view, is one of world art history, as it is called in a recent book of David Carrier and a forthcoming book by Whitney Davis.<sup>21</sup> World art history, as a discourse or as a narrative, claims competence as being a method suitable for discussing art regardless of its age or provenance. Global art as contemporary art implies quite a different question. One has to ask whether global art of today still allows an art historical reasoning or rather represents a deliberate exodus from art history as narrative.

The question, in other words, is whether global art today still feels obliged to a notion of art history that was guiding modern art both in the camps of the avant-garde and their conservative opponents. Art history, as I have suggested upon

various occasions, was a local game even when the subject was world art. It was designed for modern readers who wanted to study art via a history of art forms. But *Art History after Modernism*, which is how I rephrased the title of the various editions of my book originally titled in German *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte?* [*The End of the History of Art?*], suffered a crisis even in Western confines.<sup>22</sup> As was the case with Hervé Fischer—who performed the message of his book *The End of the History of Art*<sup>23</sup> in 1979 at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris—artists deliberately left the master narrative of art history whose claims they rejected. The cult of objects considered works of art shifted to the experience of events in time and space that escape a linear art history with the nineteenth century idea of evolution. The globalization of art, meanwhile, represents a new stage in art's exodus from the patronage of art history. Global art flourishes in parts of the world where art history has not been a concern at all.

On the other hand, it is quite uncertain whether and how Western museums will represent art history in the future. The permanent exhibition at the Tate Modern replaces the narrative of art history with “alternative ways of looking at art,” as Frances Morris explains in *Tate Modern: The Handbook*.<sup>24</sup> So-called “viewpoints” such as “Poetry and Dream” allow for “multiple readings” of the collection in order to respond to “an open and fluid situation.”<sup>25</sup> Flow charts in the hallway, though, carry on MoMa's old genealogical trees of the thirties that, however, no longer hold for contemporary art. The Tate curators cannot be blamed for making obvious what art history has come to. They invited visitors to “fill in the blanks” and to write their own “viewpoints” on a postcard. Art history has been out of control, ever since late modern art undermined the claims of a linear history, as it was offered by the majority of museum exhibitions.

Efforts to globalize art history often borrow the current discourse of cultural theory where post-colonial debates of identity and migration are prevalent. A conference held at the University of Binghamton as early as 1989 criticized art history's dependence on the terminology of cultural theory. As Anthony King states in the introduction to the conference papers: “No contemporary question is more urgent than the need to explore alternative ways of conceptualizing and analyzing issues related to the ‘globalization of culture’, frequently perceived, in popular terms, as cultural homogenization on a global scale.”<sup>26</sup> The art historians at the conference responded to the gatekeepers of cultural theory and demanded a new debate that actually catches the significance in the change of the art world.

But the crisis of the master narrative does not help the former periphery countries to reinvent an art history on their own or to replace it with something else. Art history, thus, has a different calendar among Chinese artists and collectors. Zhang

Xiaogang's picture, *Birth of the People's Republic of China* (1992) also alludes, tongue-in-cheek, to the birth of Chinese contemporary art, an art without roots in the modernist tradition. The '85 movement was a "rebellion against the state ideology and the institutional apparatus of art" including a "philosophical discussion on modernity" in more than 80 unofficial art groups.<sup>27</sup> The climate changed when the *China/ Avant-Garde* exhibition at the National Art Gallery, China was closed permanently in February of 1989 using bomb threats as an excuse.<sup>28</sup> In the following years, the acceptance of art shifted to the market and cut off the artist' from political influence. It was then that political pop and cynical realism reached an international audience.

The second panel of GAM's platform in New Delhi in the fall of 2008 discussed the question *How Global is Art History Today?*. In the debates, the global competence of an implanted model of Western art history was denied in the case of India.<sup>29</sup> The debates touched on several trajectories that today are controversial in India. Counter-narratives increasingly replace narratives of Western modernism with different concepts such as the return to national narratives of Indian art. There was agreement among the participants that colonial history still unduly dominates the cultural topics in India and guides the attention to long time experiences with foreign art, while native traditions and aesthetics have little space in today's art history. The crisis of art history based on colonial concepts favors the decision for a new variant of visual studies which, following the model of Goldsmith College, London, dominate curatorial education today, and as a different paradigm, replace art history with its transdisciplinary aims.

### **The MOCA as a Symbolic Site**

Global art production operates in a counterposition to art history, as it aims to reclaim equality without the former borders separating 'art' from indigenous or popular production. It is in this spirit that museums in other parts of the world represent diversity in appearance and content even in their permanent art collections. By implication, also Western art collections suddenly may look 'local' in a new and unwelcome sense. In order to create closer links with their local audiences, museums in a non-Western context in fact are tempted to follow a national or community line in their acquisition policies and thus aim at being site specific in terms of a given cultural tradition. They have every reason for rethinking their part in the promotion and choice of what they consider as art. They may host international exhibitions, but recently biennials that have spread all over the world, have taken over their old role of exhibiting and organizing avant-garde art.

Museums of contemporary art are no longer built with the idea of exhibiting art's history, but make the claim to represent an expanding world in the mirror of contemporary art. Their boom does not mean that they continue the Western idea of an art museum. Rather, they differ more in what they consider to be art than they do in their architecture, which is easier translatable from one place to another. After globalization has decentralized the world, the 'free trade' ideology of the 'new economy' offers the rhetoric of 'free art' that no longer provides obliging models, as it is free in every direction to the degree that the market allows freedom.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, the label Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) is being replaced more and more by the brand name Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). The majority of MOCAs are situated in the US where the Los Angeles MOCA and the MassMOCA are the best known of its kind. But museums bearing this name are also to be found in Montreal, London, Lyon, Kagawa and Shanghai, and there is even a National MOCA of Korea. The MOCA is by implication global, as it celebrates contemporary production as an art without geographic borders and without history in terms of Western modernism. The art market followed when Christie's and Sotheby's in recent years introduced 'Contemporary' and 'Postwar' as new categories in their auction catalogues that replaced Modern as the familiar trademark of Western art.

In Asia, art museums are being built at the same speed at which biennials were founded in the two preceding decades. Their boom is unprecedented, but their destination is far from clear. In Japan, the trend favors "a certain type of regional (Prefectural) museum" which lacks a collection and does not employ a curator, but accommodates "group exhibitions organized by the local artists" themselves. Masaaki Morishita calls them "empty museums" that serve temporary exhibitions like "Kunsthallen," as they are called in German. "Museum," under such premises, is a symbolic name for symbolic sites where art is expected to be shown even in the future. Museums are built like airports awaiting the arrival of international art. What looks like a contradiction between boom and crisis (the boom of museum buildings and the crisis of their meaning), in fact reveals a different relation to new audiences that are mostly unfamiliar with museum visits. Collectors with a market competence (a kind of VIP in the art world) do not need museums for themselves or are building museums on their own that, however, leave a gap for local audiences with no art experience at all.

In addition to art collectors, local administrations fill the gap and introduce ambitions of their own in 'developing' art in an urban frame and in creating so-called "cultural districts." Oscar Ho describes the Hong Kong project of huge malls with art museums that are also expected to attract a mass audience. In

Shanghai, the authorities are constructing 100 new museums by 2010: “They are opening up more museums than Starbucks.” But such museums “have little linkage with the cultural experience of the general public” they are meant to attract. In their search for a new audience, museums soon may be forced to give up the competition with collectors’ museums and to make a decision whether to favor international tourism or to address a local audience with an alternative to mainstream art such as visual culture or popular production from their own environment.

After the breakdown of the Japanese economy around 1990, local governments started to revitalize city centers with museums as a tool. Since 1955, 200 public museums have been built all over Japan. Department stores began to open museums on their own grounds in order to attract clients with the exhibition of exceptional art works. The Mori Art Museum in Tokyo is a corporate institution that is located on a few floors in a skyscraper where it offers new models for combining business with culture.<sup>31</sup> In China, the museum boom has only begun recently but will surpass anything ever seen in the museum scene. The international success of contemporary Chinese artists has led museum officials to discuss the construction of public institutions for their representation at home.

It is along the same line that Fan Di’An has announced the opening of a new wing of the National Art Museum of China (founded in 1958) with a location near the site of the Olympic Games. In a recent interview, he regretted the lack of international art in Chinese collections and complained about the scant interest the general audience shows for visiting museums.<sup>32</sup> In part, he says, the collectors are responsible, after collecting has become a business rather than an interest of the community. Chinese artists are usually better known abroad than at home where people joke that they “are not making, they are making prices.”<sup>33</sup> In the mean time, single artists take action. Thus, Cai Guo-Qiang started in 2001 his series of mostly ephemeral MOCA’s whose aim, as he wrote, was “a rebellion against the current system of MOMAs and MOCA’s that have become detached from the public.”<sup>34</sup> QMoCa, planned for his native town Quanzhou, is a collaborative project with Foster and Partners. The model was shown at the Guggenheim New York and at the National Art Museum of China in 2008.

Another project is the Art Museum of the ‘iconic painter’ Yue Minjun, located in the Sichuan province near the Qingchen Mountains and designed by the Beijing-based Studio Pei-Zhu, responsible for Digital Beijing.<sup>35</sup> With its space of about 10,700 square meters, the museum will house the work of Yue Minjun when it opens in 2009. It will be one of 10 new museums on the same site, each dedicated to the work of a single Chinese artist—such as Zhang Xiaogang and Wang

Guangyi. The project being developed by the local government of Dujingyan, realizes an idea of Lu Peng, professor at the China Central Academy of Fine Art in Beijing. The new building, in the midst of nature, looks like a space ship that is landing with a cargo of one painter's art that carries a global branding. Its shape of an oblong sphere, with curvilinear walls, is inspired by a river rock and according to the architect aims to be both futuristic and very natural.<sup>36</sup>

### **Global Art and Modern Art**

The success of modernization has favored the export of Western art to other parts of the world where the corresponding urge to join the 'developed' countries prepared the ground. Modern was a 'project' that was shared and imitated by new political and economic elites who in the postwar years hurried to catch up with the West, after the US had served as a guide for joining formerly European modernism. The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York, still a recent institution in the war years and shortly thereafter, became a symbol for successful competition with Europe in cultural respects. The building of Museums of Modern Art in Brazil (1948) and Japan (1951), later in India, reveals a general rivalry with European leadership in the arts. But the real problem remained with the definition of 'what is art and what is not,' for the continuing hegemonial modernism still demanded the exclusion of artists other than Western. The only alternative was an excessive nationalism in the representation of modern art in order to counterbalance the colonial definition.

Modern Art at the time was distinguished as 'modern form' in art, which could even mean 'only form' without any subject matter, when abstraction in the 1950s was recognized as a universal style, a 'world language,' to use the rhetoric of those years.<sup>37</sup> The difference of global art, given this background, is all too obvious, for it lacks any common idiom in terms of 'style' and does not insist any longer on form as a primary or independent goal. Rather, art is distinguished by new proof of professionalism such as contemporary subject matter and a contemporary performance, usually a mixture of film, video and documentary materials. As a result, participation in the art world does not require the old entrance ticket of formal novelty and purity, as proof of advanced art. It is rather the conscience that matters, preferably understood as a critical analysis of today's most debated (or neglected) issues. Originality, once expected from the artist's self expression, has become a way to take position in contemporary issues. This also applies to the claim of identity other than Western that lives from an old resistance against modern hegemony. Inclusion and visibility are the new battle cries when artists from formerly neglected cultures enter the stage.

Self performance, rather than self expression in an art work, has become a strategy for a new visibility with one's own ethnicity. But performance needs a public stage, in other words, an art institution that in many countries has not yet been available. This necessity calls for the art museum even where the museum either lacks any history or suffers from the 'wrong' history of colonialism. Current 'museum theory' which has become a favored academic subject, helps little to address this situation, because it is still a Western game and also because it usually neglects case studies of today's 'museum practice,' especially in countries without a proper museum tradition. "Rethinking the museum," a slogan to be encountered in a vast number of publications, is usually a topic for Western societies where migration and multiculturalism demand a visible museum presence. But the same discussion applies to the crisis of exhibition art, as it was practiced in high modernism. It has become a new problem of art museums where objects ('works') are replaced by installations and events.

Will art museums retrace their historical role to offer a context for art, even where art takes new, unexpected roads? In modern times, art was usually defined by an institutional framework. 'Art was what you saw in art museums.' It is for this reason that museums often became the target of an institutional critique, as artists called for a different kind of museum. 'Museum was context' or provided a context. But museums have lost their former authority as a given context, and the art market does not offer an alternative context. The result is a dangerous and far reaching 'de-contextualization' of art to the degree that art works are being sold even in places where they have no local meaning and cannot translate their message for new audiences, but serve the taste of collectors who anyway operate in their own world. There remain the biennials. Though they create the dominant art discourse today, they cannot offer a context beyond the event (in fact, they live from a traveling clientele). The loss of context leaves the museum again as a possible choice for 're-contextualization,' though with a new idea of what an art museum is to be. Seen in this light, even museums without a collection may become a context in places where art needs an institutional presence. But instead of representing a nation's or a city's art treasures, the idea of a forum waits for non-Western art museums to discover their new role. A forum offers a site for the debate of what a community is ready to accept or to reject as art. We often forget that art museums, in the West, were created from early on in order to shape or even to invent a proper art audience. This task today waits for them in many new places.

But there is one other role to be considered here. *Art Museums, in the past, were not just displaying art but were narrating art history or presenting art in the mirror of its own history.* An official narrative helped to situate each work of art in space and time. Already art critics like Julius Meier Graefe or Herbert Read have propagated modern art as the spearhead of (Western) art's constant and linear progress.<sup>38</sup> The term 'avant-garde,' with its military overtones, makes the idiomatic nature of this master narrative clear.<sup>39</sup> But history, in the guise of art history, followed an argument of its own when it was defined both in terms of 'invention' and of 'deconstruction.' Creative invention, in the hands of an individual artist, was the 'never seen.' Deconstruction, on the other hand, liberated art from the 'too much seen.' In both cases, it was new art that counted. But this argument suffered damage in the 1960s when the much lamented "death of the avant-garde" confirmed the loss of art's claims to go ahead on a preconceived path.<sup>40</sup> The artists themselves broke with an ideal of history that also had provided a matrix of timeless values. One generation later, the problem of valuing art within the frame of its history increases with the globalization of art.

### **Modern Art's Double Exclusion**

The definition of modern art, however, was based on a double exclusion. First, the paradigm was reserved for Western art whose confines were to remain clean and protected. 'Making art' was tantamount to 'making modern art.' Artists unwilling or unable to follow this axiom, did not fall under the category of art at all. But even those who were modern in their art but lived outside the West, were not admitted to the ranks of official art history. Hence today the retrospective effort to retrace modern art in other parts of the world and thus to fill in the blanks in written art history. The discussion of 'forgotten' or 'lost' avant-gardes currently serves the reconstruction of the history of modernism but they were not 'forgotten;' they were rather dismissed in order to keep the picture of modernism clear. Rasheed Araeen has started to reclaim a share in the history of modernism that for a long time was denied to artists with a different provenance.<sup>41</sup> *The Other Story*, as Rasheed Araeen entitled an "exhibition of Afro-Asian artists in postwar Britain" at Hayward Gallery in 1989, pointed to "the absence of non-European artists from the history of modern art."<sup>42</sup> The recovery of neglected names was an appeal to rethink modernism. Their absence in a way made the narrative of western modernism possible. The recovery of missing chapters in modernism was the reason for Araeen to create the periodical *Third Text* in 1987. Recently, Patrick Flores curated a travelling exhibition with an alternative history of Asian art where Cubism was introduced as a symbol of modern style.<sup>43</sup> Cubism's appropriation was "complex and differed with time and region."<sup>44</sup> When cubism was reused in order to tell the

“visual narratives of myth and religion” in Asia, it turned modernism against its own purist and universalist claims. Exclusion also went with the politics of Western art schools that mediated a canon of modern art by initiation in order to be accepted as professional artist. Thus, colonialism was a driving force in the spread of modern art though it often met with the accord of those who wanted to become modern.

But modern art also excluded ethnic artifacts that were looked at in the distorting mirror of colonialism. Ethnic craftsmen were thought of as living in a time outside history, much as the colonies were removed by Hegel out of a history that for him was a Western prerogative. The dualism of ‘art history’ and ‘ethnology,’ two old academic disciplines, was represented as well by two different, even opposite types of museums which testified against each other and yet complemented one another like the two sides of the same coin, as is the case in Paris with the Centre Pompidou and the Musée du Quai Branly. Primitivism, the famous appropriation of ethnic art by Picasso and other modernist artists, was celebrated for the last time in William Rubin’s 1984 show<sup>45</sup> at the MoMA, New York in the spirit of the old distinction of ‘art’ and ethnic ‘influence’ on art. In the meantime, the former dualism has lost any clear boundaries. On the one side, ethnographic museums have begun to collect or even to commission contemporary art in their collections in order to cover their cultural geography with living art, as Claude Ardouin explains the situation in the British Museum. Art museums, on the other side, are expected to open their Western collections for today’s global art. The roles of ethnographers and art curators seem to be exchanged. The former increasingly curate contemporary art, and the latter as well are studying art with a cultural geography that had been for a long time the discussion of ethnography. At the same time, the difference between historians and anthropologists is shrinking, as the new fields of ethno-history and historical anthropology prove clearly. Ethnography lost its momentum when modernization transformed (or destroyed) the traditional societies of their ‘field work’ and also interrupted or exhausted the continuity of ‘ethnic’ arts and crafts that nicely seemed to represent the behalf of Western colonies.

### **Post-ethnic and Neo-Ethnic**

It is a result of contemporary art’s globalization that non-Western artists reject the label ‘ethnic’ and discover their ethnicity as a personal identity that is no longer encumbered by racial bias. At the same time, artists in the West reject the label art history as their frame of reference which had reduced them to descendants of a linear course of ‘art history.’ The late modern discourse of ‘post-history’ may have been a catalyst for both parties to meet on common ground. Arthur Danto was

one of the first to discover “the visual arts in a post-historical perspective.” “The Post-historical period,” as he writes “means the end of a certain narrative, under the terms of which making art was understood as carrying forward” art history. But “the master narrative of Western art is losing its grip, and nothing has taken its place.”<sup>46</sup> Likewise, I have repeatedly discussed the crisis of art history (the “end of art history”) as an outmoded model that is no longer appropriate for dealing with the art of our time.<sup>47</sup> The notion ‘post-ethnic’ offers itself by analogy with the notion of post-historical. Much as their ethnic origin presents a problem for the one party, a given place in history has become an unwelcome burden for the other. Artists are redefining their ethnicity as a personal role, and as a migration experience, that leads to multiple identities in the sense that V. S. Naipaul has described his own persona 1987 in his autobiographical novel *The Enigma of Arrival*.<sup>48</sup> It is a post-ethnic position to perform as an ‘artist from Africa’ rather than to suffer the label of an ‘African artist.’ Chéri Zamba, the artist from Zaire, offered a pertinent example when he created the ‘post-ethnic’ role in a self portrait as professional artist for Jean-Hubert Martin’s Paris exhibition *Magiciens de la terre*, the first event of global art, in 1989.<sup>49</sup> The self-portrait is more than that, as it is a painted program that defines his departure from Kinshasa to Paris as a symbolical change of roles, from the ethnic role as African artist to the global role with an African ethnicity. The closed cage of his native environment opens up when the airplane brings him to international presence or visibility. He poses in the picture not just with his likeness but with the performance of his artist self, an old privilege of Western artists. At the same time, he applies the visual language of popular media from his native Zaire to make his new claims.

Holland Cotter speaks of “a paradigm shift in contemporary art.” The *Freestyle* exhibition at the Studio Museum in Harlem used the label “postblack art” in the same sense that David A. Hollinger uses the term post-ethnicity.<sup>50</sup> The movement of multiculturalism in the 1990s, as Cotter states, has been followed by a liberation from ethnic identity that defines ethnicity as a role rather than as a rule. The crisis of history, on the Western side, opened the road for abolishing history’s counterpart, the exoticism of ‘the other.’ History, for a long time, divided the world, but contemporaneity makes the claim of crossing this division. Also geography used to separate ‘art,’ as a Western possession, from the ethnic, its counterpart in the colonies. Primitivism was a Western attitude that, even in its most idealistic formulation, was based on the cliché of the ‘primitive’ or the primordial that had become a matter for nostalgia in modern times.

Whereas old frontiers begin to waver, new ones are coming into sight. Neo-ethnic movements challenge art’s globalization with a highly political tribalism in

countries like India where Hindu sects use them for their nationalistic claims. The polemics against global art (and its lifestyle connotations) is as obvious as the revival of traditional aesthetics with religious connotations. A Neo-Hindu sect with about 3,000 centers in every part of the world, opened a temple district at Akshardam, on the outskirts of New Delhi, in 2005 with the participation of 7,000 artists who created traditional sculptures in a revival style designating 'true Indian art' as a timeless style. This Neo-Ethnic movement operates outside the art world, but makes the double claim to represent art and to globalize Indian art.<sup>51</sup>

### **New Media on the Eve of Global Art**

It appears in retrospect that globalization in art had several premises among which, in the first place, the electronic turn deserves our attention. 'New media' caused a revolution of what had been considered as art up to then. The reign of the White Cube, with its immaculate exhibition concept, suffered damage when video and installation art invaded the art space with the technologies of mass media that increased the presence of art and crossed its borderline to every day media experience. Suddenly, art seemed to enter the realm of public communication. But it transmitted private statements that carried the voice of a single artist to a single viewer. Art's new media were global in a way that painting or sculpture had never been. They offered global tools before artists on a global scale got hold of them. The medium, to modify a famous definition, carried a global message, as it removed not only geographical but cultural distance between center and periphery. Film and TV, with their plain narratives, made art democratic for the viewer. Art shared the working tools or visual language with mass media but differed from them in its critical message. 'Contemporary' already was the electronic performance. The step to global art was taken when artists introduced statements that were rooted in their world experience and cultural background. The global uniformity of the new media was soon counterbalanced by art's multiform messages that represented the global universe in local views. This usage explains why global art does not look the same everywhere.

Nam June Paik (1932–2006), the Korean born 'father of Video Art,' took the first steps around 1960 when he transferred his training in electronic music to Electronic Art in Germany. In the beginnings, he cunningly subverted the mainstream TV programs and turned them into 'abstract images' that simulated 'art' with TV technology. He soon also became a forerunner of global art when he challenged the Western art scene with the utopian vision of art's global communication via satellite TV. Thus, on New Year's Eve of 1984 he staged "celestial duets" of artists "through electronic contact simultaneously in New York, Paris, Seoul and Cologne"<sup>52</sup>. In Martin's Paris exhibition of 1989, he

participated with a drawing of a grid of empty TV frames that recalls his TV-project *Bonjour, Mr. Orwell*. The TV frames are set against a center where their arbitrary images are circulating with the label *Wrap Around the World*.<sup>53</sup> Paik in a way succeeded in a personal globalization when he performed ubiquity as an artist, but he only could defend his artistic self by contrasting it with the ‘noise’ and emptiness of the global imagery of the mass media.

The anthology *Video Art* from 1976, which was the first of its kind, represented the visions offered by the new technology in an euphoric spirit. Its aim, as we read, was to “create works of art that directly acknowledged both complicity with and critical distance from popular culture.”<sup>54</sup> The main attraction for the audience was the double impact of immediacy (live images) and intimacy (monitor) which seemed to eliminate the distance usually felt in the face of art with an aura. Video installations, in turn, created ‘immersive’ rooms where visitors forgot the museum and enjoyed a kind of TV experience in a dark room with sound and moving images. The democratization of art which Walter Benjamin once expected from photography and film,<sup>55</sup> was accomplished instead by technologies such as video. The new working tools were to change the art scene forever. Artists who until then had been forced to attend an art school in the Western tradition, suddenly could work with low cost video cameras that became available around the globe.

### **Pop Art and its Legacy**

Another premise of art’s globalization may have been the global success of Pop Art whose popular face contrasted with the aristocratic, hermetic canvases of Abstract Expressionism. ‘Vernacular’ and mass media images that Clement Greenberg had banned from abstract art like an Old Testament prophet<sup>56</sup> now populated large scale paintings that superficially resembled vulgar public advertisements. Reality had become tantamount to the reality of the media world and its clichés, and therefore Pop was misunderstood when it was first perceived as ‘critical’ in Europe. American Pop even repudiated art as a personal creation and ventured into a playful competition with mass media. With its attack on art’s autonomy, Pop had been one among several competing art currents in the West. In the new art geography, by contrast, it was welcomed as an easy entrance ticket for global art in joining Western art. Pop imagery seemed to promise a shared mirror in which the world looked ‘flat’ everywhere. In the meantime, the pendulum swings back when the West adores a Chinese Neo-Pop that surpasses anything ever seen in familiar Pop. This also applies to the Chinese recycling of Andy Warhol’s old Pop icon of Mao that in the Seventies had recycled China’s political icon. In the meantime, Chinese Neo-Pop has eclipsed the prices of Western art on the global market.

In April 2007, Sotheby's sold nine Mao portraits of Zeng Fanzhi (b. 1964) at its Hong Kong branch. In the evening sale on October 19, 2008, the London branch sold the complete set of Warhol's Mao screenprints (1972). Two weeks before, at the evening sale of October 4, 2007 in Hong Kong, Sotheby's offered a major work by the same Zeng Fanzhi with the title *After Long March Andy Warhol arrived in China* 2005. The work is regarded as neo-expressionist but the artist who had painted the companion piece *Chairman Mao with Us* in the same year, chose Warhol's private visit to China in 1982 as his subject. Warhol, still largely unknown at the time in China, travels with a 'Shanghai Forever' bicycle through China. The artist Ai Wei Wei has commented as well on this journey in the book *Andy Warhol – China 1982*.<sup>57</sup> In the Sotheby's catalogue it is regarded as "a founding moment for the idea of a Chinese contemporaneity." The Chinese, it continues, had not yet undergone "the capitalist spectacle out of which his art has grown."<sup>58</sup>

### **Contemporary Art's Market History**

Christie's and Sotheby's started a new marketing strategy when contemporary art, as distinct from mainstream modern art, was first auctioned in the Seventies.<sup>59</sup> The boom of contemporary art reached a first climax in November 1988, when private collections, not just famous artists, achieved record prices.<sup>60</sup> In the postwar years, the market was still struggling with the predominance of old masters whose market success was for a long time unbroken even on the heyday of modernism and always pops up when, like today, the contemporary market undergoes a crisis. Marlborough Fine Arts was the first to introduce marketing strategies in promoting recent art when it opened a New York gallery in 1963. In the same year, Sotheby's New York branch took over the distinguished auction house Parke Bernet where it not only changed the rules but also the character of the works for auction. But it was not until the spring of 1965, with the sale of the Dotremont Collection, that contemporary art was first auctioned on large scale by Sotheby's.<sup>61</sup> What may look like a long time for some is like a memory from yesterday in a historical perspective.

When the Yen currency was upgraded in 1985, the Japanese drove the prices to an unprecedented level and, in their excitement, dismissed the rules and the rituals that had been agreed upon between the former insiders. The apogee of the Japanese art market ended as suddenly, as it had begun, but it changed the game forever.<sup>62</sup> It is precisely the fact that all art markets are cyclical that increases the appetite for the game more than art does as an attraction by itself, and it is not the permanence of art's quality but the newness of art's performance that gets attention. The economic cycle, as Robert Brenner described it in his book *The Boom and the Bubble*<sup>63</sup> finds a more spectacular stage in the art trade. Around 1990, "the

bubble that burst was pricked by the sudden withdrawal of Japanese buying from the market.<sup>64</sup> Other recessions have followed. The famous Damian Hirst sale in London, on September 15 and 16, 2008, where the artist bypassed his gallerists, began a few hours, before the credit markets in New York started to collapse. It seems like a coincidence but it may not be. As a matter of fact, the sale had been prepared on a global scale with previews in other parts of the world also including a show in a five star Hotel at New Delhi.<sup>65</sup>

### **Auction Houses**

The event character of public auctions mobilizes outsiders, as does the seeming transparency that encourages newcomers without prior art experience.

Don Thompson complains about the investment value of the new trade where collectors, as he quotes the art dealer Mary Boone, “buy art like lottery tickets.”<sup>66</sup> And, yet, the new clientele makes it difficult to judge their interests with the former value system of art collecting, when lifestyle matters more than connoisseurship. Auction houses, with their new branches, have become the most important agent of the global turn. They today attract a clientele even from countries where art collecting has had no tradition at all. The secondary market, thus, changes contemporary art more profoundly than the primary market of galleries could ever expect. Today, the art market reaches a clientele from 58 countries, as compared with 38 in 2003, as Christie’s announces.<sup>67</sup>

A German Newspaper took the new state of matters for granted when it wrote in the fall of 2008 that “the Chinese avant-garde is firmly established but German art is still very strong,” or that “Phillips goes its own ways by throwing Russian art on the market.”<sup>68</sup> The new clients were encouraged with the offer of guarantees, as they were not ready to take the whole risk but feared the unpredictable mood of the art community. But the guarantees in turn contributed to the losses of Sotheby’s and Christie’s liquidity in the November 2008 sales. In fact, the guarantee practice, at the moment of its failure, reveals a new feature of the art trade, as art no longer promises success on its own but rather, instead of individual quality, like everything else depends on the general rules of the market.

It is not the presence but the difference of the art market that matters here. A new class of investors not only introduces new money but also a new taste which makes the whole game unpredictable. The gap widens between the small circle of global players who bid on auctions, and the general audience whose art experience depends on exhibitions. Collectors’ names that are of no interest for a museum audience, offer a better branding on the market than artists’ names whose value appears uncertain. Lately, Sotheby’s and Christie’s have started to indicate the importance of a former owner. Thus, one reads “Property of a distinguished

collector” or “Property of an important European collection.” It is remarkable that the nationality of the former owner, rather than that of the artist, receives the most attention. The speed with which collections are resold, clearly proves that art collecting has become an investment and speculation issue.

The so-called Estella Collection, an arbitrary name for “the most important collection of contemporary Chinese art,”<sup>69</sup> was brought together for three investors by the Manhattan dealer Michael Goedhuis who once had dealt with old Chinese and Persian arts and crafts. Shortly thereafter, the project took another direction, and Goedhuis exhibited 84 “museum quality masterworks” from the collection in his own name at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark in spring 2007. The museum produced the large size catalogue *China Onward* whose cover presented one of Zhang Xiaogang’s Bloodline series.<sup>70</sup> When the exhibition reached the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, another Manhattan Dealer, William Acquavella, bought the collection off the museum walls in August 2007. Half a year later, the new owner joined forces with Sotheby’s which offered the first part of the collection for sale in the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center on April 9, 2008. After the collection had been shown in previews in Beijing, Shanghai, New York, Singapore and Taipei, its first half brought nearly 18 Million US-Dollars. In total, Sotheby’s sold works for 51.77 Million Dollars on that day, an unsurpassed record in Chinese contemporary art.<sup>71</sup>

Although art’s complicity with the market is manifest, the exhibition practice of museums continues to simulate an immaculate picture of art’s independence and creativity. The illusion that art is just a personal matter of creation and self-expression is protected by art collectors and nomadic curators who keep their economic experience as a secret in the face of the general audience. In fact, the museum space leaves the audience unaware of the economic conditions behind the works in an exhibition. The art trade seems to leave no trace on the surface of the works which you become to see. Some artists however start to counteract this ritual when they lift the veil from art’s involvement with the market. “The problem is no longer that art works will end up as commodities, but that they will start out as such,” as Thomas McEvilly wrote already in 1991.<sup>72</sup> But today, some art museums begin to reveal art’s economic backstage, whose existence has been obscured by the labels beside the works for a long time. The Whitney Museum show *The Price of Everything* from 2007 is a case in point. “Taking its title from Oscar Wilde’s definition of the cynic as *a man who knows the price of everything but the value of nothing*,” as the introduction explains, “the exhibition explores how artists have responded to the distinction between price and value, or to the erasure of that

distinction.” In pursuing this goal, the exhibition “deals directly with the economic conditions of art’s production, reception, and circulation.”<sup>73</sup>

One of the pieces in the exhibition, Elmgreen and Dragset’s *Prada Marfa* (2005) features a display of the fall collection of Prada shoes and handbags, but seals the shop and locates it in the desert outside of Donald Judd’s Marfa in Texas. The work “suggests that the dislocated art works can just as easily become sites of fashionable consumption for the growing field of *art tourism* and its itinerary of art fairs.” The installation-photo-edition of the two artists may be “interpreted as making the point that commercialism has outpaced any activity that does not have market value” On the other hand, the work allows for the reading that “a mock store with a sealed entrance dislocates not only the artwork but also the actual market place, the store, to an abandoned site. Rendering its commercial function useless,” the site represents “a desolate ruin of yesterday’s fashion.”<sup>74</sup>

### **Collectors’ and Corporate Museums**

Collectors’ and corporate museums are a further premise in our context. They promote a personal taste as a new standard for the art experience of an urban or national audience. In some places, they alone control the access to national or international art. Two examples reveal an opposite evaluation of modern viz. contemporary art. At Istanbul, the three respective museums, all private or corporate, have opened in the last ten years. They preferably present modern art, but not necessarily international art. Istanbul Modern is one of them. The museum is beautifully situated at the Bosphorus where it is a neighbor of a nineteenth century mosque and thus mirrors the dualism in modern Turkey. It was founded by the Eczacıbasi family who strictly guide the exhibition policy of the museum. The Pera Museum, opened in June 2005, is controlled by the Suna and Inan Kirac Foundation. A third museum, the Santral Istanbul, in fact is an energy museum and does not start with an art collection of its own. Thus, 20 years after the opening of the first Istanbul Biennial,<sup>75</sup> contemporary art does not figure prominently in any of the existing museum collections. In an exhibition of the Santral Museum from the fall of 2007 and dedicated to the history of twentieth century Turkish art, a wall panel informed the visitor that “curators responsible for organizing international exhibitions added Istanbul to their itineraries, as artists registered success in the international milieu. Using new image technologies and the resources offered by the new media,” some artists “placed the museum, as also art history and the art curating under their magnifying glass,” while others questioned “the inclusion of Turkey in the global art network.”

The other example is to be found in India. Private collectors have an increased influence in countries where national or urban museums have failed to promote

living art. In New Delhi, the National Museum of Modern Art (1954), a response to India's independence, no longer attracts an audience that anyway regards museums as a colonial memory. Instead, the young generation flocks to the Poddar collection, comprising more than 2000 works that include "commissions and folk art."<sup>76</sup> The Devi Art Foundation whose collector, Anupam Poddar, also acts as director, is situated in Gurgaon, a global city hardly ten years old with golf precincts and shopping malls on the outskirts of New Delhi. The city is the scene of Aravind Adiga's much debated novel *The White Tiger* about the new India. The collection addresses an emerging upper middle class with an offer of international life style in art collecting. The opening exhibition of contemporary Indian art, on an international level, attracted the visitors also with its domestic choice of subject matter.<sup>77</sup> It is quite symbolic that the museum was still a construction site when it opened its doors to the public in August 2008. In the catalogue *Still Moving Image*, the collector explains his decision for National Indian artists who however soon will be joined by artists from the whole of the sub-continent.

We are still thinking in Western categories of a public museum controlled by a body of experts in its acquisition policy. But the lack of any such control in other territories invests a private collector with a lot of power in creating a local art audience just by himself.

Collectors in the meanwhile form a kind of global body for the development of a local art market. Thus, 100 collectors from all over the world were invited to attend, in November 2008, the Gulf version of French art fairs, the Art Paris, in Abu Dhabi that is supported by the authority for culture and heritage. Their tourist program included a visit of the crown princess's collection of some 400 contemporary art works from the Middle East, mostly acquired at the local art fairs. The gallerists, meanwhile, were appeased with the information that the local museums that are under construction, "will be buying art at a future date."<sup>78</sup>

But public museums, if they can afford to bid at auctions at all, are not always welcome on the market, since permanent collections stop the free flow of the art trade. Museums cannot be sold and resold. They only can be opened or closed. Besides, museums are not built for accepting everything as art, unless they risk giving up the definition of art altogether. Rather, they have to decide whether to go with the market or to counteract the market. They do not sell but they have to explain. But explain what? And to whom? The temporality of museums, so distinct from the flux of everyday time, was for a long time tantamount to the history of their collection or to a history that is manifested in their collection. Today, they must rethink their mission when they are expected to represent the rapidly changing world in the mirror of single art works. Their fate is still with their

audience whose identity claims have become the main concern in cultural terms. They need the presence of history, to be sure, of history that matters for a local community or a nation. History, however, has to be represented or rediscovered, and sometimes reinvented, as it is threatened by a global traffic of goods and ideas.

### Conclusion

The changing art world does not allow any longer the disregard of globalization as a mere fashion or as a phantom. Yet the term global art still meets with reluctance, although globalization is the single most important event in today's art scene, even eclipsing the appearance of new media art a generation ago. But global art carries an internal antagonism with it, as it strengthens resistance and turns identity claims against the 'free' flux of media and markets in the age of "hypermodernity."<sup>79</sup> Marc Augé speaks "of the utter newness of the present situation."<sup>80</sup> "The world's inhabitants have at last become truly contemporaneous, and yet the world's diversity is recomposed every moment. We must speak, therefore, of worlds in the plural, understanding that each of them communicates with the others." The planetarization of information may have removed old borderlines but the same media make old and new contrasts even more visible.<sup>81</sup> This antagonism also applies to art museums which continue to be 'site specific' not only as architecture, but also by their audience. They are born as places for representing the local situation in the face of global art traffic. The global, for any audience, adopts a local significance. In this respect, museums continue to be symbolic sites and outposts of a given culture or a community living in a foreign culture. The task is to balance the sharing with the owning. The sharing may be global, but the owning inevitably remains local.

Global art did not come overnight or as a mere "accident" but had a long incubation period whose results have only become visible now. Its history is intimately linked to the political and economic changes that made art a symbol of global free trade. To quote Julian Stallabrass, "the global events of 1989 and after—the reunification of Germany, the fragmentation of the Soviet Union, the rise of global trade agreements, the consolidation of trading blocks, and the transformation of China into a partially capitalist economy—changed the character of the art world profoundly"<sup>82</sup>. With the establishment of a 'new world order', "the art world swiftly reconfigured itself. A rash of art events peppered the globe, while artists of many nations, ethnicities, and cultures long ignored in the West were born to critical and commercial success." The rise of multicultural art shows "exactly coincides with the end of the cold war ". London and Paris, two cities with a colonial history, saw in 1989 the first shows of this kind. One of them was Jean Hubert Martin's legendary exhibition *Magiciens de la terre* which was both hailed

as “the first global exhibition of contemporary art” and criticized as a false start in that it was tempted “to exoticize Third World artists.”<sup>83</sup>

Global art often escapes the arguments of art history, as it no longer follows a master narrative and contradicts modernity’s claim to be or to offer a universal model. It is therefore noteworthy that two new books on global art have chosen another discussion of the present state of art. Julian Stallabrass whose title *Art Incorporated* is significant enough, analyzes in one of his chapters the “new world order” and in another chapter the impact of our “consuming culture” on new art.<sup>84</sup> Charlotte Bydler, uses in her book the even more explicit title *The Global Art World Inc.*<sup>85</sup> In fact, she analyzes two issues which are not common in art criticism. These are, on the one hand, institutional history and, on the other hand, the dissolution of a mainstream concept of art. Thus, these two books make it evident that global art has continued art’s exodus from art history.

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1 Enrico Navarra, “In the Arab World... Now”, interview by Henri-François Debailleux, in: Fabrice Bousteau (ed.), *In the Arab World... Now. Made by...*, 3 vols, Galerie E. Navarra, Paris, 2008, vol. 1, p. 15.

2 DIFC Global Art Forum, available online at: <http://www.dubaiartfair.com/global-art-forum.html> (access February 13, 2009).

3 Antonia Carver, “Middle East. Sotheby’s picks Qatar. Auctions to be held from 2009,” in *The Art Newspaper*, 196, (November) 2008, p. 67.

4 Program Brochure to *The Global Art Forum 2008*, p 2. Available online at: <http://www.artdubai.ae/downloads/GAF2008.pdf> (access February 13, 2009).

5 Ibid., p. 4.

6 Jérôme Sans, “Diary of Fast Moving Lands,” in: Fabrice Bousteau (ed.), *In the Arab World... Now. Artists, Galleries, Museums, Collectors, Architects, Designers, Fashion, Media, Lifestyle & More*, 3 vols, Galerie E. Navarra, Paris, 2008, vol. 3, pp. 15.

7 Ibid.

8 Here, in fact, I elaborate on an argument of my earlier essay “Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age,” in: Peter Weibel, and Andrea Buddensieg (eds.), *Contemporary Art and the Museum. A Global Perspective*, Hatje-Cantz, Ostfildern, 2007, pp. 16–38. It was the first volume of the project GAM preceding the present publication.

9 Cf. André Malraux, *Museum Without Walls*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1967 (first published in Paris 1948 bearing the title *Le musée imaginaire*).

10 John Onians, “A New Geography of Art Museums,” in: Peter Weibel, and Andrea Buddensieg (eds.), *Contemporary Art and the Museum*, Hatje-Cantz, Ostfildern, 2007, pp. 124–38; John Onians (ed.), *Atlas of World Art*, Laurence King, London, 2004. This is a book with 68 contributors that intends to cover the whole history of human picture production.

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- 11 Kitty Zijlmans, and Wilfred van Damme (eds.), *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, Valiz, Amsterdam, 2008.
- 12 Cf. Malraux 1967.
- 13 Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1985.
- 14 Cf. Belting 2007, p. 33.
- 15 *The First Emperor. China's Terracotta Army*, British Museum, September 13, 2007 through April 6, 2008.
- 16 Jean Louis Pradel, *World Art Trends*, H.N. Abrams, New York, 1982.
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