

Changing Global Hierarchies of Value? (Copenhagen, 20 Aug 18)

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Changing Global Hierarchies of Value? Museums, artifacts, frames, and flows

Museums are said to classify the world; but the world is changing, and so are the museum worlds and the worlds of arts and artefacts. This conference explores how the world is imagined and classified through the presentation, interpretation and classification of artifacts; and how the global hierarchy of value (cf. Herzfeld 2004) might be changing in through these flows and circulations.

In 2007, the German art historian Hans Belting coined the term “global art” to indicate that contemporary art was no longer the province of artists in the Global North, thus signaling a sea change in the international art world (Belting, in Weibel and Buddensieg 2007). Art historians, prior to Belting had long stipulated that the birth of modern art in 19th and 20th century Europe was partially predicated on inspirations from outside Europe in the guise of Orientalism, Chinoiserie, Japonisme, or “primitivism,” yet these modern artists were almost exclusively from Europe and – later – North America. Non-European artists went largely unnamed and unrecognized, as French surrealist poet André Breton’s famous *mur d’atelier* revealed. Modern art from the Global South or rapidly modernizing states in Eurasia and East Asia, was often dismissed as derivative of Western art, while contemporary traditional art was considered inauthentic (cf.

Kasfir 1992). Simultaneously, anthropologist Michael Herzfeld (2004) coined the term “global hierarchy of value” to denote the global cultural asymmetry that constituted the cultural successor to the political and military domination of European colonial systems. In the arts, early partial exceptions were Latin America, which – as the historical product of creole nationalisms (cf. Anderson 1982) and hence as a “pseudo-Europe” – saw the emergence of successful artists like Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo and of movements like Brazilian modernism and neo-concretism; and Japan, which experimented with locally inflected, but modern, architecture. The imbalance in the Euro-centered art world changed when the *Magiciens de la Terre* exhibition was held in Paris (1989) and featured contemporary art by both Western and non-Western –and named - artists in equal numbers, albeit without implying an equal hierarchy of value.

The *Magiciens de la Terre* exhibition marked the coming out of contemporary artists from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Oceania on the global arts scene, and brought out in their participation in numerous exhibitions such as the *Modernités plurielles* at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, but also in biennales, art festivals, art fairs, and auctions around the world. Simultaneously, art institutions and events outside of Europe and North America gained in global prominence, by adopting the cultural forms, classificatory devices and exhibitionary technologies developed in Euro-America and applying those in their own contexts and for their own purposes. One could say that while

the modern period witnessed the emergence of a global Europe, the current “post-postcolonial” period is marked by the globalization of the other continents – at least in terms of the arts: in that sense it is increasingly possible to speak of global Asia, global Africa, global Latin America as geographic entities that challenge the global hierarchy of value.

At the same time, recent decades have seen the unfolding of increasingly interconnected global networks of production, labor, consumption, and capital accumulation, a process broadly known as globalization. But can we also talk of a globalized taste regime or set of preferences à la Bourdieu? Are recently booming or expanding global players in Asia, Africa, and Latin America reconfiguring the relative value of styles, objects, or traditional artifacts, thereby challenging the old Eurocentric order and organization of the good and the beautiful? Even if the West remains the universal unmarked, attention should be given to the ways in which it is now often amplified, mocked, or ironized by non-Western masters of its artistic, architectural, or artisanal forms. How is globalization affecting existing or emerging museums as economic and commercial players in a world of accelerating mass tourism and brand fixation? How is the complex past of European interaction and Eurocentric notions of cosmopolitanism rethought and exhibited today in postcolonial theaters of historical encounter, exchange, or conflict?

This is the final conference of the project ‘Global Europe: Constituting Europe from the Outside In through Artefacts’ (see <http://globaleurope.ku.dk/>). The Global Europe project explores how the collection, circulation, classification and museum exhibition of objects define Europe from the outside in during Europe’s present loss of global hegemony – especially in relation to Japan and four non-European BRICS countries (Brazil, China, India, South Africa), in comparison with the early modern period of European ascendancy. This ‘Changing Global Hierarchies of Value?’ conference invites both paper proposals on a range of topics that explore global networks of valuation and validation and their local forms and entanglements in the current period. The papers are expected to be empirically grounded, and may – but do not have to – refer to the five countries targeted by the Global Europe project.

The keynote speech titled Museum Transactions: Negotiating Knowledges, Governing Cultures will be presented by Professor Tony Bennett of the Institute for Culture and Society of the Western Sydney University in Australia. Tony Bennett is the author of – among many other works – *The birth of the museum: history, theory, politics* (1995), *Pasts beyond memories: evolution, museums, colonialism* (2004), and *Making culture, changing society* (2013); and he currently leads the project ‘Museum, Field, Metropolis, Colony: Practices of Social Governance’. For more information, please see https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/ics/people/researchers/tony_bennett.

The conference is convened by Prof Oscar Salemink, Amélia Siegel Corrêa PhD, Jens Sejrup PhD, Caroline Lillelund and Vibe Nielsen, who make up the research team for the Global Europe project.

Please send your abstract (300 words max) and short bio (300 words max) to Marie Yoshida marie.yoshida@nias.ku.dk before April 1st, 2018. For inquiries, please contact Oscar Salemink o.salemink@anthro.ku.dk.

Reference:

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