

Clark Conference 2011

Clark

In the Wake of the "Global Turn": Practices for an Exploded Art History without Borders

A Clark Conference

Conveners: Jill Casid and Aruna D'Souza

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The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

This Clark conference on art history in the wake of the "global turn" takes up, and yet departs from, decades of the critique of Eurocentric priorities and presumptions of the discipline of art history. What would it mean to understand the global turn as something that does not merely expand but potentially explodes the borders between fields and even the discipline itself? The conference, then, aims to address methodologies, research practices, and models for not just a de-centered but also a reoriented practice of the global, one that reckons with radical difference, unevenness, and even the untranslatable. And it will do so from an eccentric, agonistic position. Rather than seeking a unifying conceptual term or method that merely expands the discipline as we know it, the conference starts from the position that confronting the challenge of developing practices of and for "the global" necessarily involves learning how to engage with a range of irresolvable frictions, disunities, and incommensurabilities. Pushing beyond the questions that have arisen over whether there is or even could be a global art history or histories, the conference is dedicated to developing practices of and for a fractured conception of the global.

The first of the key issues to be addressed is not just what geographic and cultural areas should be addressed by a "global" art history, but the far more vexed and complicated problem of what is the relation between these geographic and cultural fields. Should, for example, the discipline pursue a radically de-centered or polycentric art history or one re-centered around a different locus, such as Africa rather than Europe? And what, exactly, does thinking the "global" in "global art history" entail? The conference takes issue with the "global" as merely a synonym for "greater coverage." Instead, we assert that accommodating

the “global” raises methodological and theoretical questions that demand the shift of prevailing assumptions of art history itself, even the art history of “canonical” fields. And we seek to develop practices of “the global” that do not depend on the creation of a new, assimilationist universal but are rather capable of acknowledging and working with deeply conflictual concepts, narratives, and methodologies that put into question the notion of art history as a unified field.

The second key issue is how the global may be reconceived as a new regionalism in practice. The breaking up of the monolithic, expansionist version of the “global,” the challenge to the political presumptions of national schools of art, and the shift toward the study of “regions” (which are themselves subject to interrogation) raises the related problem of the ways interactions between regions are conceived, as well as the potential for certain versions of regionalism to become their own reifications or even chauvinisms. Thus, the conference will also ask for proposals that think about the benefits of a new regionalism in relation to other ways of reconceiving the art historical map such as thinking in terms of “area studies,” hemispheric models (the Western hemisphere), trade routes (the Silk Road, the spice trade, the Triangular Trade), bodies of water (the Atlantic World, the Mediterranean World), linguistic affinities (Francophone, Anglophone), and religious ties (Jewish Studies, Abrahamic religions, Islamic art). At the same time, it seeks to raise questions about the potential downsides of such methodological shifts in the conception of geography and the place of culture – not only what is gained but also what is lost.

This is not merely another conference about the geo-politics of art history. The third key issue addressed by the conference will have to do with necessary confrontation of the intersections of space and time in developing practices of and for the fractured global. Postcolonial theory in the past 15 years has raised questions about how time is conceived within and between art historical fields and how assumptions about the nature of historical time drive research practice, analysis, and narrative. Thus, participants will also be asked to address the problematic of time and related issues such as how we understand influence in and over time. Critical attention to the asymmetries and discontinuities of time may offer ways of countering narratives of how artistic development and even historical time itself have been diversely attributed to geographies and cultures. It might also provide ways of radically rethinking the history in art history from the eccentric position of sustained grappling with the deeply divided global.

We invite proposals for papers on the above topics for presentation at the conference and subsequent publication in the series “The Clark Studies in the Visual Arts.” Please submit a 1-2 page abstract, brief

c.v. (2 pages max), and full contact information by January 15, 2011 to jhcasid@wisc.edu and adsouza@clarkart.edu.

Reference:

CFP: Clark Conference 2011. In: ArtHist.net, Oct 27, 2010 (accessed Dec 19, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/33036>>.