

Identity representation within global exhibition-making (Nottingham, 7 Jun 24)

Bonington Gallery, Nottingham, UK, Jun 07, 2024

Caroline Fucci, University of Leicester

Symposium: Identity Complex: Identity representation within global exhibition-making.

AHRC Midlands4Cities-funded symposium hosted by the Bonington Gallery, Nottingham.

Identity Complex consists of a one-day symposium focusing on identity representation in the context of international, large-scale, survey exhibitions of contemporary art. It aims to provide new insights into the challenges involved in the staging of these exhibitions.

The symposium seeks to bring together renowned artists, curators, academics, and researchers across the Midlands and beyond to contribute to a growing body of research and curatorial practice relating to the relationship between identity, contemporary art, and globalisation.

When it comes to the representation of nations and cultures beyond the Western canon, exhibitions have played a key role in the promotion of contemporary art in a global context. While mega-exhibitions such as biennials, triennials and the quinquennial documenta are rooted in the celebration of ethno-geographic diversity, many exhibitions, museums, and collections have also attempted to capture the essence of national identity, addressing the complexities behind the definition and reaffirmation of identity, as well as advocating for singular, nationalist conceptions of contemporary art.

Influenced by postcolonial theory and decolonisation processes, exhibitions have sought to reverse Western hierarchies of visual qualities and categories, shifting the attention to contemporary art practices of previously colonised and marginalised nations.

However, as argued by art historian David Joselit, 'despite their undoubtedly good intentions, such exhibitions sever artists from their heritage in a superficial form of multicultural representation – or tokenism – that fails to do justice to their art's histories' (Joselit, 2020). Nevertheless, the question of identity remains relevant within global curatorial narratives, so much so that the title of the 2024 Venice Biennale is 'Foreigners Everywhere', alluding to the multiple ways artists can be considered foreigners.

How can we understand identity representation in a globalised world? Is it still sustainable to think about exhibitions grounded on a nation-based framework? How do we approach different epistemologies within global exhibition-making?

Drawing on these enquiries, the symposium aims to explore various perspectives on the subject

while fostering debate among artists, curators, academics, and researchers. The confirmed lineup includes:

Dr Shwetal A. Patel, writer and researcher working at the intersection of contemporary art and its production, research practice, and development theory, and founding member of India's first biennial, the Kochi-Muziris Biennale.

Sunil Shah, artist, writer, and PhD candidate at Central St. Martins, University of the Arts London (UAL) researching art and exhibition histories with a particular focus on Okwui Enwezor's Documenta11 (2002).

Dr Yaiza Hernández Velázquez, transdisciplinary researcher and lecturer in visual cultures at Goldsmiths, with a particular interest in the histories and theories of curating, archiving and museum-making and in the visual cultures of tourism.

Jessica Taylor, curator and deputy artistic director at International Curators Forum and curator of the Diaspora Pavilion at the 2017 Venice Biennale.

Abdulrazaq Awofeso, sculptor and installation artist living and working between Birmingham, UK, and Lagos, Nigeria.

Ibiye Camp, artist, architect, and fashion designer living between London and Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Agenda

10am-5:30pm BST

10-10.30 Arrival/Registration

10.30 - 10.40 Opening Remarks

10.40 - 11.00 Tom Godfrey (Director of Bonington Gallery, Nottingham Trent University)

11.00 - 1.00 Panel 1

11.00 - 11.30 Jessica Taylor (Deputy Artistic Director at International Curators Forum)

11.30 - 11.45 Morning Break

11.45 - 12.15 Ibiye Camp (Lecturer and Artist)

12.15 - 12.45 Sunil Shah (Curator, Artist and PhD Candidate at Central St. Martins, University of the Arts London)

12.45 - 1 Q&A Panel 1

1.00 – 2.00 Lunch Break

2.00 – 4.00 Panel 2

2.00 - 2.30 Dr Shwetal A. Patel (Writer and Researcher, Founding Member, Kochi-Muziris Biennale)

2.30 - 3.00 Abdulrazaq Awofeso (Artist)

3.00 - 3.15 Afternoon Break

3.15 - 3.45 Dr Yaiza Hernández Velázquez (Researcher and Lecturer in Visual Cultures at Gold-

