

## From Images to Music (online, 17 Oct 25–22 May 26)

Online, Visual Contagions Project, University of Geneva in Switzerland, Oct 17, 2025–May 22, 2026

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Culture, Art, & Globalization Seminar: Program 2025-2026. From Images to Music.  
Fridays from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM (Central European Time).

The Monthly Online Seminar "Culture, Art, and Globalization" is organized by Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel (Digital Humanities), Ludovic Tournès (Global History, UNIGE), and Catherine Dossin (Purdue University).

The seminar is organized in the frame of the Visual Contagions Project, hosted at the University of Geneva in Switzerland.

It is open to every one and will take place online. Please find session links via <https://www.unige.ch/visualcontagions/seminars/culture-globalization/culture-globalization-2025-2026>

This seminar aims to explore new approaches to the historical phenomenon of cultural globalization. Culture here is understood as the entire range of practices and representations associated with knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, and customs within societies, at both individual and group levels. Moving beyond the simple observation of convergences or divergences in cultural practices on global, regional, national, or local scales, historiography is increasingly attentive to the social life of objects (A. Appadurai), the circulation of forms (images, sounds, texts, and words), as well as the technical, gendered, and ecological conditions of the global circulation of cultural objects since the late 18th century. However, in light of the overdevelopment of "cultural data analytics" for contemporary culture, we must ask whether, how, and under what conditions it is possible to include cross-sectional studies of older cultural forms, their potential convergence, and how these can be articulated with non-computational historical perspectives.

1. 17 October 2025: Is There a Culture of the Global South?  
2:00–4:00 PM (Geneva) / 8:00–10:00 AM (New York)

With Paula Barreiro López, Professor of Contemporary Art History, Université de Toulouse

For this session, we propose to examine the notion of the Global South through the lens of cultural history. The history of cultural connections between the Souths is a particularly challenging subject, insofar as sources are often lacking—especially when the aim is to bring to light connections that did not pass through the Norths. When, then, did relations between the Souths begin to take shape? Are they merely a reaction to Atlantic colonialism?

Paula Barreiro López (Université de Toulouse): Which Cultures Cross the Global South?

This lecture examines the Global South as a transnational and imagined space shaped by decolonization, tricontinentalism, and cultural resistance. It highlights how artists and intellectuals contributed to a shared anti-colonial project that blurred disciplinary and national boundaries. At the same time, it reflects on the methodological challenges of studying these intersections today, from fragmented archives to the need for transnational and transdisciplinary approaches.

2. 21 November 2025: Music in the 20th Century. A Global Market?

2:00–4:00 PM (Geneva) / 8:00–10:00 AM (New York)

With Anaïs Fléchet, Professor in Cultural History, Sciences Po Strasbourg.

This session, focused on music, raises three key questions: 1) the issue of the de-Westernization of cultural globalization, particularly through the growing role of non-Western countries in the process, while acknowledging that the channels of diffusion are still predominantly controlled by Western countries; 2) on a broader level, initiating a comparison between the processes of globalization in the field of music with those occurring in cinema and visual arts, specifically to explore whether a global field of music exists, similar to the international fields of publishing (as studied by Gisèle Sapiro) and art (as examined by Larissa Buchholz); and 3) how to incorporate the question of imagery into the discussion, for instance, by considering the global circulation of album covers and their visual impact.

Anaïs Fléchet (Sciences Po Strasbourg). Travelling pianos. The global musical instrument market and the rise of the music industry in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Ivory and tropical woods sawn in European factories, pianos exported as far as Oceania, collections brought back from the colonies: the market for musical instruments went global in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The rise of trade routes and steam navigation hastened the globalization of markets of the raw materials used in making instruments, which became an industrialized, mass-production process.

From the early 19th century onwards, the Americas were a key export market for European piano makers. In New Orleans, Cuba, and Rio de Janeiro, instruments which had been designed mostly in English and French workshops, and occasionally in German and Austrian ones, found their way into elite households. As symbols of European civilization, pianos served to reinforce social, racial, and gender hierarchies in patriarchal societies that were still largely shaped by slavery. Pianos also served as gateways to new repertoires, ranging from compressed works of art to popular dances. Furthermore, they played a leading role in the genesis of the new African-American urban music.

But how were these pianos transported and played so far from their place of production? My research, based on the Érard, Pleyel, and Broadwood archives, traces instruments on both sides of the Atlantic through serial numbers and sales records to understand how the piano went global and gave birth to a new musical industry.

3. 23 January 2026: Marketing African Artifacts

2:00–4:00 PM (Geneva) / 8:00–10:00 AM (New York)

With Yaëlle Biro, Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris, France

Yaëlle Biro (INHA): African Arts' Secondary Market: Market Definition and Networks in the Early

## 20th century

The first two decades of the 20th century constitute a pivotal art historical moment for the reception of African arts in the West. It continues today to largely define the discourses constructed around African objects and their commercial appeal. This presentation will focus on the secondary market for African works, after their removal from their original context in Africa—an often violent phenomenon that went hand in hand with the conceptualization of “African art” in Europe. I will demonstrate that the definition, promotion, and circulation of African objects as works of art was the result of deliberate, concrete actions instigated by a narrow circle of individuals, who may be considered the principal European protagonists of the creation of the market for African arts before 1920. The exhibitions they organized, the works they published, and the aesthetic judgments they advanced, all had a lasting impact on the works’ definition as “art,” the establishment of their market values, the making of “authenticity,” and the construction of the canon of classical African arts.

### 4. 20 February 2026: The Global Author

2:00–4:00 PM (Geneva) / 8:00–10:00 AM (New York)

With Gisèle Sapiro, Ecole des Hautes-Etudes en Sciences sociales, Paris, France.

Gisèle Sapiro (EHESS Paris): Internationalization, transnationalization and globalization: three configurations of the transcultural literary field in the XXth Century

In *Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur mondial?* (Gallimard/Seuil/EHESS, 2024), three historical configurations of the transcultural literary field were distinguished. Internationalization accompanied the construction of national identities in the interwar period: during this period, national identities became an category of classification of literary works and their authors in the book market. After the Second World War, a transnationalization occurred thanks to the formation of networks of publishers (gathering at the Frankfurt book fair and a few others launched then) and the growing importance of transnational recognition (such as literary prizes for foreign literature) in promoting world authors. Starting in the 1980s, the globalization era was marked by the proliferation of book fairs, and later literary festivals, around the world, and by a diversification of world authorship which became more inclusive of non Western cultures.

### 5. 20 March 2026: Data Centers

2:00–4:00 PM (Geneva) / 8:00–10:00 AM (New York)

With Monika Dommann, University of Zurich, Switzerland

### 6. 17 April 2026: Orientalism and the Wild West. Connected Histories?

2:00–4:00 PM (Geneva) / 8:00–10:00 AM (New York) || [Session Link](#)

With Dalila Meenen, Centre André Chastel, Paris, France

### 7. 22 May 2026: Hip Hop

Exceptionally 4:00–6:00 PM (Geneva) / 10:00–12:00 AM (New York) || [Session Link](#)

With Alice Aterianus-Owanga, Université de Neuchâtel, Suisse and Eric Charry, Professor of Music, Wesleyan University, USA

- Alice Aterianus-Owanga (Université de Neuchâtel): From hip-hop to afropop : postglobal infrastructures and pirate economies in ntcham popular music

African hip-hop has often been understood as at once a symptom, a testimony, and an analytical lens for the forms and meanings of globalization in postcolonial contexts (Ntarangwi 2008; Charry 2012; Shipley 2013). In this contribution, I propose to examine how other popular music scenes that emerged in the aftermath of rap in Africa reflect the reconfigurations of economies, infrastructures, and aspirations in post-global African cities. Building on the literature on post-globalization (Olaniyan 2016; Pype et al., forthcoming), I explore how contemporary African youth cope with the failures of democratization, the disillusion of “modernity,” and unmet growth expectations, while developing creative practices of innovation, débrouillardise, and agency beyond the state and official institutions.

I will focus on the case of Gabonese ntcham, a musical and dance movement born in Libreville at the intersection of the rapid rise of digital distribution tools, the deep political and economic crisis of the final years of the Bongo regime, and the entanglement of state actors with shadow economies. Gabonese ntcham relies on pirate digital and social infrastructures to circulate ironic and disenchanting narratives of everyday hustling in Libreville’s popular neighborhoods, often framed through references to drug dealing, robberies, or petty crime. Drawing on the ethnography of these pirate urban music networks at the intimate scale of everyday urban socialities, I will show how they are intertwined with both the mechanisms of globalized digital capitalism and the informal systems of urban solidarity and hierarchy (notably based on elderness, gender and class).

- Eric Charry (Wesleyan University): Global Hip Hop

Rap music and its broader hip hop culture began to globalize within months of the release of “Rappers’s Delight” in fall 1979. Within two decades, original transformations of the style were firmly rooted in dozens of countries and languages. By its fourth decade (2019) global hip hop—in its most inclusive sense (e.g., rappers in K-pop groups)—had become one of the most audible musical styles on the planet. How do rappers negotiate the dynamic tension between its origins in African American urban youth culture and its primary tenet of representing oneself and one’s own locale? How can hip hop be a catalyst for cultural self-reflection, revival, and renewal wherever it has travelled? I frame this phenomenon in conversation with other globalized musical styles, including classical musics in the worlds of Islam and of Europe, as well as recent popular musics, and present case studies from France, England, and China.

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Reference:

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