All the Beauty of the World.The Western Market for non-European Artefacts

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The conference brought together researchers and museum experts from all over the world to discuss highly topical social questions within the contextual framework of origin and transfer of non-European artefacts in Western collections.

It began with an evening keynote lecture by cultural historian Timothy Brook (Vancouver). Brook's presentation dealt with aspects of trade and taste in Ming China, and addressed a slightly earlier period than that of the conference whole, to lay the grounds for the understanding of a market that the Europeans met when they entered China in the mid 19th century. His lecture detailed the relationship between Chinese artist and collector Li Rihua and his main supplier, Xia. Li is an example of a Ming China elite who kept record of his daily activities in a diary. This book highlighted market activities, taste shaping and questions of authenticity in 16th and 17th century China. The analysis of Li's diary reflected the existing body of research on social and economical aspects of art trade in Ming China, as thoroughly discussed and well described by Craig Clunas in 2004 [1]. Additionally, Brook discussed different methods of collecting art in China and Europe based on a comparison of Li and Portuguese merchant-banker Manuel Ximenez. Brook ended his talk by drawing attention to questions of changing economic and power relations between China and Europe, not only in the global art market, but also in the global economy.

A trailer to Jackie Chan's 2012 movie "Chinese Zodiac" functioned as an introduction for Savoy and Guichard into the highly political field of looted art and caught the attention of the audience in the nearly full auditorium on Friday morning. They posed a critical question, asking, "How does the art market change its objects and environment?" Once objects are put to market, systemic rules and market forces are prevalent. Indeed, anyone can buy works of art in the marketplace. In such a realm how does the intrusion of art markets shape the values of artefacts? And how did the non-European artefacts, which flooded the European market from the 18th to the 20th century, shape existing ideas of aesthetics and beauty? This symposium was convened expressly to shed new light on shifting regimes of value, the transnational circulation of artefacts, and the juridical question of objects in a larger socio-political context.

The first series of papers presented focused on varying types of markets for non-European artefacts. Noémie Etienne (Bern) presented a case study on Monsieur Fayolle, a French collector who built his collection mostly within a private network. Etienne not only talked about the transactions

in the loosely defined informal art market, but also discussed questions of perception, translation and customisation of these foreign objects by their new owners. Using the example of two major port cities, Hamburg and Bremen, Talip Törün (Bremerhaven) explored the relationship between maritime infrastructures and the market for collectors of non-European goods in 19th century Germany. In the context of the development of global maritime infrastructures and new marketing strategies of shipment companies, museums were founded. A development, which also played a crucial role for society, offering benefits in a number of ways (establishment of a cultural life, enhancing the attractiveness of the city, etc.). , In his presentation, Törün, focused on describing social and urban development, without, however, entering into the details of how far technical development affected the art market.

In the afternoon, Manuel Charpy (Lille) presented a paper on the construction of a new marketplace and public space for exotic goods in Paris, London and New York in the 19th century. He continued in the contextual framework of embedded markets (Section 1) while also linking to the topic of the 2nd section, which revolved around the marketing of objects. Yaëlle Biro (New York) discussed the reception of African art in the 1920s using the collection of John Quinn, an American lawyer and patron of the avant-garde. After Quinn's death, his large collection was dispersed through public and private sales, revealing not only a great fluctuation of prices, but also certain dualities of the market. On the one hand, African objects were valued as works of art. Yet, these objects were also considered ethnographic documents. This was the primary explanation for huge price variations on the market. Moreover, African art was incorporated into modern and avant-garde art, arguably functioning as a means of bringing about artistic modernity. Elodie Vaudry and Léa Saint-Raymond (Paris) followed with an ambitious empirical analysis of the actors in the French market for pre-Columbian artefacts. These actors were discussed alongside the market of "primitive" art in the interwar period at the end of the 19th century. By revealing both a taste preference by European collectors for pre-Columbian art, and also the role of women as key actors in the exotic goods market, their data lead to new insights to the French art market.

Section 3 examined the effects of an increasing demand from the Western market on the valuation of those objects and the production patterns in their markets of origin. Philip Jones (Adelaide) presented a paper on a survey of Aboriginal artefacts in the international market (1880s-1930s), addressing the circulation and marketing of objects from their point of origin to their eventual destinations in European museums. He discussed the role of collectors as tastemakers and the attributes of objects they found desirable. In showing those Aboriginal objects that adopted European traditions, he demonstrated that the two cultures had a mutual curiosity about one another. Jonathan Fine (Berlin) examined the strategies by which artists from the Bamum Kingdom (Cameroon Grasslands) sought to adapt to changing Western tastes in African art, especially those espoused by early 20th century European and North American collectors. These individuals even created shopping lists for their dealers based on their assumptions about what kinds of objects most resembled traditional African art, establishing peculiar ideas about "authenticity" for works from Africa. Fine labelled this the first paradox of the Bamum art market. The second paradox related to the concern collectors had about buying fake objects. Their intent of not collecting fakes turned exactly to the production of fakes, and in this regard also demonstrates a shift of power that took place. By the 1920s, those in Bamum could decide what objects to sell and Western collectors surprisingly became situated as underdogs in this relationship – depicting the notion that markets can work quite well. Fine's research brings new elements to

light, obtaining a better understanding of how ideas about authenticity took little account of changing tastes, changing patronage and the transformations of colonial politics in the colonialized countries themselves.

Saturday started with a series of papers on exceptional collectors and dealers who shaped the art market (18th-20th c.). Nélia Dias (Lisbon) began with a presentation on Christophe-Augustin Lamare-Picquot, a wealthy pharmacist, traveller and collector of mostly Indian antiquities, natural history specimens and artefacts from South Africa, Madagascar, and the Pacific Area. Lamare-Picquot's ambition to collect was, amongst other factors, driven by the idea of establishing a scientific department for Indian art in French collections, as well as social recognition for his collecting practices. Although the French government did not acquire his collection, there have been scholarly debates about the status of the objects he acquired, and also the most appropriate setting for his collection.
Ting Chang (Nottingham) followed with a paper examining the work of Émile Guimet, founder of the famous Musée Guimet in Paris, and his network for collecting Asian objects, consisting of international agents, dealers, scholars and government officials who helped him build up his collection of non-European artefacts.

The 5th section was devoted to the function of art markets during or following wartime. Christine Howald (Berlin) presented a paper on the Chinese Imperial Summer Palace Yuanming Yuan, which was plundered by French, British and Indian army regiments in 1860. In this much-examined field of research, she gave answers to new issues by comparing the French and the British marketplaces, offering analysis on legitimization, re-contextualization, and integration of the Imperial artefacts. The final presentation by Felicity Bodenstein (Paris) compared the English, German and French art markets for royal objects from the Edo Kingdom's Treasure, today known as Benin City in Nigeria. Using five Benin sculptures, she described specific issues related to the dissemination of these objects, and additionally considered the fluctuation of the market value for these pieces.

The conference ended with a panel discussion [2] on the highly emotional topic of non-European cultural heritage in Berlin collections, soon to be shown in the newly constructed Humboldt Forum. It became clear that we are facing a huge challenge in trying to deal fairly with our colonial history coming to life in the reconstructed Berlin City Palace. The exchange on the subject appeared to be an indication of a desire for a constructive dialogue on the issue, where there is no single solution. The participation of Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung at least provided the opportunity for a countryman (Cameroon) to speak in a field that is still dominated by European researchers and scholars, and limited by a strong Eurocentric perspective.

The conference made a successful start in raising questions on problematic cultural heritage in Western collections, which is an issue more alive than ever. Furthermore, discussion provided an excellent overview on a manifold and far-reaching field of research affecting many different countries. The next steps would be to conduct deeper analysis of specific regions of origins and in that case to integrate more non-Western researchers and scholars, as the organisers of the symposium initially planned to do, which ultimately failed due to the low number of applications received. Further research should actually include the non-European dimension in the discussion, and taking it into consideration. Cross-cutting themes should be at the centre to establish a unified

research framework and to engage in as open a mutual dialogue as possible. It is important, however, to learn from history, put those lessons in practice in order to get going again, and not to repeat past mistakes.

Website: https://www.fokum.org/conference-2016/

[1] Craig Clunas. Elegant Debts. The Social Art of Wen Zhengming, 1470-1559. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004.

[2] The discussion had been broadcasted on November 27th, in the weekly feature "Das Forum" at Inforadio/rbb.

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