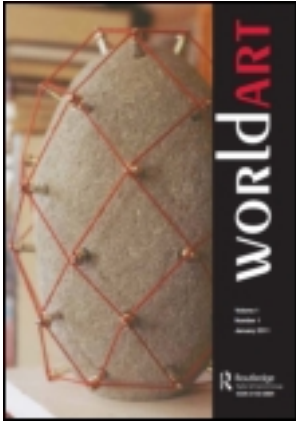


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World Art

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rwor20>

Editorial

Available online: 20 Feb 2012

To cite this article: (2011): Editorial, World Art, 1:2, 151-160

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21500894.2011.611415>

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Editorial

This issue centres on the imperative, identified by Ian McLean (pp. 161–169, this issue), that the journal *World Art* should maintain a close dialogue with current artworld debates about globalisation. In addressing notions of global art – or, art that engages the global and contemporary aspects of society and culture – matters of definition inevitably arise, as does a plethora of engaging analytical currents each meriting a full exploration. Global art is largely read as a contemporary phenomenon. Concurrent developments in politics, technology, display, criticism, and commerce have generated newly globalised phenomena, which pertain to the production, circulation and consumption of art. Previously, the interconnectedness of these areas had been assessed, in art historical discourse, according to the dictates of ‘universalising’ imperatives. But lately the global legitimacy of such approaches has been widely and rigorously questioned, disrupting the authoritative stance that universalism had assumed.

Proponents of the idea of global art as a phenomenon aim to re-orient the symbolic and material value of ‘the contemporary’ that take into account diverse fields of artistic expression within new matrices of contemporaneity (see Belting and Buddensieg 2009). These matrices are as transformative as the socio-political contexts that shape their emergence and that facilitate recognition of accompanying narratives and counter-narratives. Global art could, therefore, be interpreted as an extension, or a fluid re-working, of the tensions between, on the one hand, the western/universal configurations of contemporary art and, on the other, the post-western/multiversal re-configurations of artistic praxis in a global context. These tensions are of wide interest and topical relevance in world art studies. There is mileage, therefore, in the proposition that *World Art* should nurture wide-ranging and open responses to global art phenomena, as a means of facilitating and interpreting intersections, as well as exploring variations on shared themes.

Terry Smith's engagement (pp. 171–188, this issue) with the idea of world-making can be seen as one such exploration. This research article addresses artistic negotiations of what it means to be contemporary, in the sense of participating in (yet not necessarily speaking for) overtly worldly currents of meaning-making. These cross-currents arise as artistic and critical dynamics are re-positioned away from former centres of artworld power towards historically marginalised contexts and then back, both across pre-existing routes and into new spaces of self-articulation and coexistence. Global contemporary art practices can therefore be defined as having relational and shifting, rather than determined and fixed, coordinates. That these coordinates are constantly being un-made and re-made, within and across force-fields that assume global patterns, signals the need for engagements with *the where*, *the why* and *the how* of global contemporary art to be re-assessed.

The concept of force-field may usefully be adopted here from cultural theorists interested in the ethical dimensions of postmodernity, such as Diana Coole, who deploy it in studies of critical coexistence (2007: 26). In line with this thinking, Smith alludes to the strategic and interventionist dimensions of global art praxis. This enables him to question the uneven textures of historic events, discursive strategies, and creative circuits in distinct regional contexts, as well as their interplay. Such 'worldliness' is thus pitted against 'universal' practices and procedures as a means of highlighting the contemporary efficacy of global art. In responding directly to Smith's piece, Marsha Meskimmon (pp. 189–196, this issue) includes an array of provocations pertaining to artistic and global/contemporary subjectivity. She questions how global and other forms of contemporary art engage with facets of lived experience and of inter-cultural aesthetics that demand ethical attention.

As divergent positions have been taken up recently, in terms of the writing on, and display of, globalisation and art, our editorial emphases should be further contextualised. 'The Global Contemporary: Artworlds after 1989', an exhibition at ZKM (Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie; Centre for Art and Media) in Karlsruhe, Germany from September 2011 to February 2012 and curated by a team led by Hans Belting, Peter Weibel and Andrea Buddensieg, builds on their earlier definition of 'art without boundaries and without history' (Buddensieg 2009: 10). This approach, while grounded in recent history, severs, quite deliberately, any associations with former international art movements, cultural transactions or related phenomena – from migrations to trade

routes, world's fairs to publications – which may or may not have provided 'art' with any worldly foundations. In doing so, however, ZKM's exhibition characterises 'World Art' as a colonial and ethnographic project which we, as editors of this journal, inevitably regard as a partial and problematic reading. (<http://www.global-contemporary.de/en/exhibition/128-3-qweltkunstq-die-wunderkammer-aus-postkolonialer-sich>) This indicates the complexity and potential range of current interpretations of globalisation and related trans-cultural flows in which we consider World Art to be a participant. 'World art' and 'Global art' are both terms which need constant re-examination, especially in the light of potentially different readings in local contexts, and what in our terms are the transformative and imaginative life-worlds and image-worlds which represent a new mapping of the art world. These are issues that Mclean (pp. 161–169, this issue) also address in terms of the vexed relationship between dominant and subordinate artworlds. McLean's artworld variants respond critically to the former universalism that alienated many local, alternative or marginal modernisms and, indeed, subsequent articulations of 'the contemporary' (see Flores pp. 215–234, this issue; Tomii 2009).

T.J. Demos and Alex Farquarson adopted a different approach in their 'Uneven Geographies' exhibition, held at Nottingham Contemporary in Britain during 2010. This explored in a conspicuously grass-roots way, artistic responses to globalised capitalism and world systems politics, and deployed 'visual and linguistic means to make the obscure and labyrinthine causalities of globalisation more visible and legible.' (Demos and Farquarson 2010: 3) There are no doubt numerous other modes and contexts in which globalisation is being explored, including art biennials (see Dimitrakaki 2003; Tang 2007; Anthes 2009; Davidson 2010; Papastergiadis 2010), which are relevant to the art world at large (see King 1990; Wilson and Dissanyake 1996; Joy and Sherry 2003; Ryoo 2004; Schueller 2009). For example, a small and select 'performative symposium' in 2010 in Bangkok organised by ArtHub Asia and funded by the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development based in the Netherlands, fostered new alliances and brought together existing networks of artists, critics, writers, in pursuit of 'The Making of the New Silk Roads'. Also, a 'Globalization' panel at the 2011 College Art Association conference in the United States, chaired by James Elkins and Thomas DaCosta Kauffmann, posed the question: is it possible to create a global history of art, and if so, what would it look like? Does globalisation call for new histories, or a

reconceptualization or re-evaluation of older histories (College Art Association 2011)? At the meeting, opinions were sharply divided between those who favoured the idea of meta-narratives, of a global-universal discourse, and those who preferred to imagine alternative worlds of accumulating and dispersing visions. Such worlds are typically populated by representational voices, images and articulations of less familiar geographical locations, and of more numerous political standpoints, than those the dominant art worlds have hitherto configured and/or assimilated. The globalisation panels attracted considerably larger audiences than sessions that addressed other histories, from precisely those seemingly less familiar locations, such as Oceania and East Asia. That may indicate a need for wider and more urgent dissemination of local and worldly discourses, as well as globalised ones, for the defining elements are shared, and often mutual and interdependent.

What is becoming increasingly evident is a realisation of new and multifarious subtleties which are required in understanding art across time and place, and between locations of culture and personhood. These disrupt Belting's characterisation of world art as the climax of 'world art heritage' (Belting 2007: 33). Suzana Milevska (pp. 273–279, this issue), for example, calls attention to the detail of localities, using the idea of reverse perspective as a means of re-evaluating important aesthetic developments in Byzantine art. This perspective becomes a paradigm for noticing the radical differences hidden in scholarly assumptions about cultural and historical understanding. At the heart of the matter are the difficulties associated with generating meanings, presenting interpretations and fashioning dialogic and inter-cultural coexistences, between the artworks, the interlocutors and the reader-viewers associated with the fields of world art and global art. In bringing these fields into a close dialogue, which issues are most at stake, in terms of the burgeoning parallel fields of world art studies and global art studies?

The very words at the centre of the debate are used differently, confer different resonances and can imply different concepts. People and art are of the world and in the world, as Smith discusses, but each entity cannot be described, in a parallel way, as being of or in 'the global'. World art studies is a discipline which can enhance a collective understanding of the ways in which people inhabit, elaborate and make art in the world, as both a singular and a plural entity, across both past and present life-worlds, body-worlds and object-worlds. It has the potential to represent those values and sensibilities that connect the embodied

and local life-worlds with more far-reaching, explorative, collaborative and contesting notions, of both connectedness and separation between regions, communities and ideas. Global art studies, however, is more specifically concerned with post-industrial, post-colonial, contemporary phenomena in art worlds informed and sustained by globalisation. It is necessarily bound up with communications networks, with values of speed, technological progress, internet dissemination, large-scale art venues, art commoditisation as well as the financial markets through which contemporary art is exhibited, circulated and consumed.

World Art journal is intended precisely as a forum for these debates across the diverse knowledges, practices, techniques, languages and display strategies that characterise worldliness in artistic, and in wider cultural and global, contexts. Certain currents are considered priorities. W.J.T. Mitchell (2007), for example, introduces the cultural lives of terms that exponents of world art studies or historians of global art frequently invoke. By unpacking 'world' as *wer-eld* (life of humankind), or 'global' as *globus* (collective body), he helps to identify their semantic layering and potential interpenetration (2007: 51-53). His work also highlights the divergent value systems, intellectual histories and spiritual coordinates that these and related terms have signified. Of these, world-view, the New World, cosmopolitanism, bio-pictures, regional imaginaries, planetary distance, 'whirled' order, etc., are featured. The impact of Mitchell's overview in relation to *World Art* will become increasingly relevant as the inter-cultural heritages of the terms become more visible, especially in relation to their translation between either linked or de-linked sites of expression.

The signification of the world/globe as 'cosmos', for example, as communicated through everyday notions, such as cosmopolitanism (world-politics, global-polity, etc.) is highly suggestive, especially when it is addressed from counter-hegemonic positions. Consider the world-picture that Rabindranath Tagore had in mind when he inaugurated the *Visva Bharati* (a pro-independence university in West Bengal, India) in 1917. This is translated as 'where the world meets in one nest'. The notion of 'world' here becomes operative across an inter-cultural cosmology/axiology, which combined Tagore's humanism, anti-imperialism and *swadeshi* (self-reliant) spirituality and paved the way for Indian modernist expression in the visual arts (see Rycroft 2006; Watson 2008). As Mitchell suggests, 'cosmopolitan' views often supersede those of the 'global', given their intellectual and ethical disposition to make visible, rather than suppress, the tensions that govern humanity (2007: 52-3). Whereas Mitchell interprets this

disposition solely in terms of imperialism or rationalism, Tagore's approach provokes other worldly engagements that are also deemed to suit studies of world art (see also Gills 2005). Whilst their worldliness may be relevant to current sociological debates, for example on critical cosmopolitanism (see Mignolo 2000; Roudometof 2005), it is their ethical vision that may be more far-reaching.

For Ian McLean (pp. 161–169, this issue) worldliness is a question of shifting emphases and power-relations. The idea of world art, therefore, becomes instrumental in a strategy of un-ravelling the globalist conceits of the artworld whilst also identifying de-provincialising manoeuvres. World art achieves visibility as a counter-discourse that rejects the perpetuation of neo-colonial concepts, such as those binaries that can become operative in the dichotomisation of the global and the local, the universal and the particular, the west and the non-west, etc. If contributors to studies in world art are to apprehend the force-fields of global art worlds, their critical engagement with the political and philosophical ramifications of their shared intellectual and creative process could become a priority. If, as McLean suggests, the genealogy of 'world art' intersects with dominant and subordinate art worlds, it may prove worthwhile to consider how, as a more plural set of genealogies, they also intersect with the multiple histories and genealogies of cosmopolitanism. This may generate an awareness of the linkages between the worldly aspects of art (i.e. world art) and the cross-currents that define the writing and curation of global art. This implies that a rich and infinite variety of responses and interpretations may be brought to the study of world art, global art, and their spaces of interdependence.

Such shifts have been explored, for example, by Kobena Mercer (2005), in terms of 'cosmopolitan modernisms', and by Meskimmon (2011), as the interconnections between cosmopolitan imaginaries. In each case, the cosmopolitan is configured through its demands for an ethics of worldliness and through its capacity to re-situate or re-world trans-cultural aesthetics. In this issue Darren Jorgensen, an exponent of inter-cultural art history, examines the economic and cultural coercion that has brought about the closure, in an almost neo-imperial mode, of the prospect of interchanges between indigenous (Aboriginal Australian) communities and global art worlds. The author assesses why the possibilities for contemporary aboriginal artists to generate inter-corporeal coexistence with their environmental and intangible heritage have been curtailed (see also Seppä 2010). Coiley Campbell, the artist at the centre of Jorgensen's enquiry, is forced (ironically

perhaps) to make the pictorial signs of his Aboriginality more visible through the idioms of dot painting and dreamtime. It seems that the ethical dimensions of Jorgensen's paper are as integral to the research article as is the art historical analysis.

Sho Konishi's article (pp. 235–256, this issue) also treats the issue of history and political stance (in this case 'anarchy') through artistic expression. But unlike the hyper-visibility attributed to Coiley Campbell's Aboriginality, it is through the subdued nature of commentary and activism in Usen's art, rendered legible through transformations of the everyday and village life. In this case, the author reveals how the work of Usen and his contemporaries comments on (global) human progress from a consciously bottom-up, non-hierarchical and entirely 'revolutionary' perspective. Usen's art was 'produced by and for the people' and sought to destabilise state-led and élite-bred aesthetics. No stranger to art and/in politics, Stephen Eisenman (pp. 281–298, this issue) is highly sceptical of 'global unities', of the possibility of shared visions and of art history's embrace of cultural relativism. Instead he offers a scheme for diagnosing things that should be considered in a world history of art. The key criteria are historical 'salience', contemporary relevance and relative opacity to interpretation. It is in the shoe (and its manifestations) that he finds a comparative unit of analysis, which provides, not coincidentally, the footing for exploring various ethical and aesthetic concerns of making, using, and valuing (art/material culture/the shoe). In doing so, he subverts and revisits familiar modes of classification. The scheme, to be sure, turns on irony, but the model serves both to recognise and forecast the unpredictable relations between central concerns (e.g., 'criteria') in the content of any future art history.

Allie Biswas' visual essay on the work of Subodh Gupta develops an instructive analysis. The piece questions how Gupta's use of both organic and industrial materials engages the idea of India across divergent registers of intimacy and distance. It renders visible the effects – in terms of individual, artistic and social existence – of the national, the local and the international. Patrick Flores productively complicates an understanding of related issues, in a Southeast Asian context. He interrogates how the effects of being 'contemporary' and 'global' engulf the social, professional and personal worlds of I Nyoman Masriadi, a Balinese artist working in Indonesia. Introducing the concept of the 'Masriadi effect', the ethical and economic fields that incorporate the whole 'affective industry' of global art are apprehended. The concept highlights the inhabitations, markets and shifting

intellectual and ideological parameters of a particular world art artworld (to borrow McLean's phrase), thereby drawing attention to the tensions that unsettle Masriadi's visibility as a global artist.

Through creative curation, contemporary art practices globally become, in Flores' terms, re-fried (*goreng-goreng*). They may combine to form new inter-regional geographies, ecologies and histories. The re-configurations demand our collective and critical attention. Given the inter-disciplinary, inter-cultural and inter-temporal scope of *World Art*, the difference it can make is to encourage its contributors to become more cognisant of the historical and ethical nuances that underpin contemporary art worlds. This could be achieved by making the subtleties of the 'interworlds' – of embodiment, circulation, consumption, display, performance, etc. – which global contemporary art helps to articulate, more central and more conspicuous, and hence more distinctively visible at the cusp of global art and world art fields. So what other areas might contributors to *World Art* become responsive to, if they are to further probe the development, history, curatorship and practice of art in global contexts? They might unravel the complexity of interaction between artists, producers and critics with education systems, modes of reception and audiences. What one could identify as the more specifically vernacular aspects of these force-fields, which artists either have associated themselves with or consciously disassociated themselves from, have, generally speaking, not yet entered into dominant art historical or historical narratives. This is a critical area that contributors to *World Art* can pro actively address.

There is both a threat and an opportunity here for the political and artistic relationships to be articulated and institutionalised afresh and differently, either through localised art criticism, globalised knowledge economies and/or critical pedagogy. The interactions between different understandings of global art and world art might enable artists and their commentators, interpreters, respondents, etc. to find voice and presence through practices of mediation and both individual and collective strategies of ideation. As Rustom Bharucha (1999: 8) notes, 'The ubiquity of global capital compels the interculturalist to negotiate different systems of power in order to sustain the exchange of cultures at democratic and equitable levels.' As will become evident through this volume, the inter-culturalism of contemporary art commentators demonstrates how knowledge channelled through the vectors of world art can become transformative in relation to multilateral demands for human coexistence and equality.

Visual artists make some of the most enduring contributions without words or, using Stephanie Radok's terms, in a 'sublingual' mode (Radok 2011). Gérard Mermoz's images of object juxtapositions bear directly on issues of great complexity, of balance and of tension, between theoretical perspectives and visions of power, and the uncertainties of scale. William Kentridge's cover image, chosen and commented on by Smith (pp. 171–188, this issue) stresses similar concerns, exemplifying both the absurdity of a singular 'world picture' (Mitchell 2007: 50) and the hubris of a history too readily imagined (see Peffer 2003). *World Art* is only beginning to bring such engagements to the fore. But through our contributors' reflections, and by weaving together both the visual and the verbal text and images, the journal has attempted – and will continue – to reconceptualise the relationships in and of the world and between globalisation and art.

The Editors

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