[*This is the Afterword to* Art and Globalization. *For more information see this page*.]

Afterword

James Elkins

This is such a difficult topic. We designed the inaugural Stone Summer Theory Institute as a convergence of people who do not always read one another's work: political and social theorists, art historians, curators, artists, postcolonial theorists, and art critics. As we had hoped, we got a week of unpredictable conversations. As my co-organizer Zhivka Valiavicharska says in her closing comments (Section 9 in the Seminars), the conversations "produced serious uncertainty." Yet the Assessments point to complexities even beyond the ones we encountered. I imagine the thirty-five participants in the Seminars will be surprised to see how negative some of the Assessments are: for some people, we produced no uncertainty at all. But for most, the Seminars provided at least a sounding for the most pressing issues around global art production.

Several of the Assessments develop particular concerns of the Seminars. Carolyn Loeb explores a theme that is related to Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann's interests, and so does Karl Eric Leitzel. Ján Bakoš, who works in Bratislava, says that Central European historians are unconcerned with globalization in the sense it is discussed in this book; he reports instead on a truly remarkable attempt in Central European art history to revive a former age of globalism under the fifteenth-century Jagiellonian dynasty, as a way of countering the usual narratives of East Central European art history.[1] I imagine that idea is off the map of most of our participants, except Tom Kaufmann. Other Assessments are not negative, exactly, but they decline to engage in theoretical debates. Several focus on case studies, which we didn't explore in the Seminars,

[1] "East Central European" is Bakoš's formula. See his intervention in *Is Art History Global?* and also *Minulost'v Prítomnosti: Súcasné umenie a umeleckohistorcké myty / The Past in the Present: Contemporary Art and Art History's Myths*, edited by Bakoš (Bratislava: Nadácia–Centrum Súcasného Umenia, 2002 [sic: 2003]).

and there was a sense among some contributors that without case studies, talk about globalism will not have purchase.[2] T. J. Demos begins with a useful summary of the Seminar's principal points, but mainly he finds the conversations lacking in references to contemporary art. Esther Gabara offers a discussion of an artwork's scale as an allegory for the book's preoccupations. She says her text is given in lieu of theorizing, although it strikes me that the artwork she mentions *is* a theory that declines to identify itself as such. Suman Gupta wrote a two-part Assessment: first he doubts that all the abstract thinking in the Seminars is useful;[3] and then he describes a case study, the strange and wonderful Bulgarian painter Zlatyu Boyadzhiev.[4] Demos,

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[2] As preparation for the Seminars, the participants read ten dossiers on individual artists, some of which are mentioned in the notes; those dossiers, prepared by graduate students, contained everything that had been published about the artists that had a bearing on globalization. We had originally planned to include the dossiers in this book, but most were a hundred pages long, and one was over three hundred pages. Most significantly, even though some dossiers were presented in the Seminars, our conversation seldom returned to them. I take that as a sign of the pleasure in theorizing, which went largely unremarked.

[3] In particular, he doubts the categories, dichotomies, and oppositions that structure the conversations in the Assessments, because they reproduce the modalities of power that they evoke. *Abstraction,* in my reading, is more a rhetorical covering term for such structures than a conceptualization of them. It would be good, ideally, to have an account of the full range of categories and other structures, and their relation to what is proposed as abstraction.

[4] In preparing this Afterword I had hoped to add a footnote to images of Boyadzhiev's paintings, but there are almost none. I find it delightful that a painter as interesting as Boyadzhiev has almost no web presence, so I can only recommend adding Plovdiv to your travel itinerary. (I was introduced to Plovdiv and Boyadzhiev by Zhivka Valiavicharska.) And I thank Gupta for sharing

Gabara, Gupta, and several others imply, or claim, that headway can't be made without case studies, so it is helpful to have some detailed examples in the Assessments.[5]

Aside from those reservations about the level of abstraction, the majority of Assessments are more or less strongly critical. A number, like Rasheed Araeen's, John Clark's, Tani Barlow's, Iftikhar Dadi's, and Anthony King's, are consistently critical and even polemical. Araeen's and Clark's Assessments are, I would say, not only irritated but sad, as if our conversations in the Seminars were so deeply misguided that they could not usefully be repaired.[6]

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his unpublished MS on Boyadzhiev, which includes a very welcome and unusual reception history of a "marginal" artist.

[5] Gupta objects to the Seminars' level of abstraction, and mentions unproductive dualities (some of which were certainly in play), he notes the self-affirming nature of the discussion (a point made more directly by John Clark), and he criticizes the lack of specific examples (as several Assessments do), but aside from those objections it isn't clear to me that conceptual analysis, even done at a consistent level of abstraction, is unproductive. (I am also puzzled because Gupta concludes by noting that the Seminars resonated with his current research.) My sense of things is more or less the opposite of Gupta's: I find an absence of abstract, analytic discussions about global art permits unexamined assumptions, received ideas, and inconsistently deployed concepts to remain intact.

[6] It could be argued that some of the Assessments achieve their polemical perspectives by offering homogenized readings of points that were actually articulated in the Seminars: but such an argument would have to posit an ideal level of reading or discourse. I prefer to take the Assessments as they are: each speaks in its own register, for its own purposes. The divergence in readings, and in reading itself, is a significant property of the current state of discourse on art and

I thought it might be helpful to assemble an list of ideas raised in the Seminars. Afterward, I will develop the question that I find most pressing: how to best write about the art of the last hundred years.[7]

The Seminars[8]

1. Nationalism

Section 1 of the Seminars came mostly from a session led by Fredric Jameson. Several assessors thought that Jameson's comments on the nation and nation-state were brilliant; others found them old-fashioned or unhelpful. Nina Möntmann's Assessment focuses on the distinction between the nation and the state, a division largely bypassed in our discussions. Saskia Sassen takes many of these concepts further, by developing her concept of denationalization in contrast to existing concepts of globalization, postnationalism, or transnationalism.[9] She is interested in particular in the the sub-national pockets, "localities," and fixed populations produced by the mobility and transnationalization, and how they actively participate in global constellations.

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globalization. As in the *Art Seminar* series, we hope these Assessments provide a sense of the full range of critical participation in the subject.

[7] This is my own interest, and it was not the preeminent concern of a majority of participants in the Seminars. Zhivka Valiavicharska read a draft of this Afterword extremely closely, comparing it with all the Assessments and Seminars, and she sent me extensive comments. As a result, many of the descriptions I offer are due to her careful readings, and some turns of phrase are, in fact, hers. That is not to say she agrees with either the framing or the content of this Afterword, and in particular the project I outline in the second half of the essay is entirely my own.

[8] In this list, shorter entries are not meant to imply that the themes of those Seminars are less important; but if the material is well developed in the Seminars, I only mention it briefly here.

[9] See for example Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy* (Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, 2006).

Most contributors do not develop specific concepts to do with nationalism, but instead focus on whatever might be an alternate or opposite to the increasingly uniform globalized economy, whether that global economy is conceived as empire (as in Hardt and Negri[10]), as transnationalism (as in Arjun Appadurai and others[11]), or as remnants or revenants of nationalism. For most writers, including Sassen, the subnational is an optimal concept, and the challenge is to elaborate it so that it can fit the problematics of contemporary art. I will return to this later.

Hungmin Pai, Blake Gopnik, Suman Gupta, and Caroline Jones all criticize Jameson for thinking that he can stand outside the conditions of production and reception of Wong Kar-Wai's film,[12] and several others fault Jameson for imagining that the film is as bound by its temporality and its place as he imagines: an idea that is only possible for someone who speaks from the global to the local. It is interesting to note Gopnik, the principal art critic for the *Washington Post*, is the only one of the assessors to say that the game of contemporary art—he thinks of it as

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[10] An interesting assessment of the English-language reception of Negri's works through 2008 is in the January 2009 *Bookforum:* Scott McLemee, "Empire Burlesque," online at www.bookforum.com/inprint/015_04/2973. See also *Debating Empire,* edited by Gopal Balakrishnan (London: Verso, 2003).

[11] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); also *Immigration, Incorporation and Transnationalism*, edited by Elliott Barkan (Somerset, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003).

[12] It is pertinent that the film literature assumes Wong Kar-wai's assimilation into global concerns. See for example Paolo Magagnin, "Lecture, relecture, réécriture: la littérarité des films de Wong Kar-wai," *Actes de la Journée Doctorale "Autour du cinéma, réflexions et études de cas,"* Université de Provence, Aix-en-Provence (France), June 12, 2008, available in the online journal *Lignes de Fuite* (2008), www.lignes-de-fuite.net/article.php3?id_article=10, accessed December 2008. My thanks for Paolo Magagnin for the full reference.

a game, like chess—is Western. I agree, but it's not a position that is common in academic discussions.

2. Translation

Translation a trope, a traditional subject when it comes to globalization. Translation studies came up again in the following year's seminars, and were criticized for being an unhelpful accompaniment to more pertinent discussions.[13] It would be possible to develop a rhetorical analysis of the ways translation is brought into conversations on art. Initially translation is said to be difficult and imperfectable, or, more provocatively, it is said to be impossible. Sometimes, too, it is said that translation's impossibility is built into language. Occasionally it is noted that mistranslations can be enabling. Those and other observations circulate, ending up as hedges to claims about the meaning of art that otherwise may appear too direct or universalizing. Translation, as a trope in art conversations, may function more as an acknowledgment of contingency and uncertainty than as an explanatory model.

We were lucky in this book to have the seminar on translation run by Shigemi Inaga, whose theory of translation is one of the most epistemologically radical. In effect his interventions and examples were aimed to deflect any optimism that conversations like the ones in this book, which are about practices that bridge different languages, can ever make sense. That is a theory—really, a practice—that calls for a strong answer, but we answered it mainly with our own guarded and unfounded optimism that visual meanings can be understood across cultures. In the opening of Section 9 of the Seminars) Zhivka Valiavicharska took this discussion forward by mentioning the possibilities that translation opens—its possibilities for communication, even if that communication is always imperfect and open to revision.

3. The prehistory of globalization

We had very little agreement on this, but I am glad it was discussed at length, and taken up by several people in the Assessments. It is important that there is no agreement over whether contemporary globalization has a pertinent history: that indecision indicates how much work

[13] *What is an Image?,* co-edited with Maja Naef, vol. 2 of *The Stone Theory Seminars* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, forthcoming).

needs to be done on relevant intellectual and economic histories, and how little of that sort of work is done in the art world. Jameson's stand and Kaufmann's counter-stand have exemplary clarity, which should be helpful as conversations on the subject go forward. It is also here, in a discussion of globalization's history, that most of us—aside from Harry Harootunian—missed an opportunity to go in the direction Anthony King suggests: not toward art as "an occupationally specialized practice… produced or performed by designated individual artists" but as a matter of urban—that is, lived and inevitably material—contexts throughout the world.

4. Hybridity

Néstor García Canclini's informative Assessment revisits the concept of hybridity, bringing in recent research not mentioned in the Seminars. García Canclini is open about his own work and the need to consider different meanings of hybridity as just "a chapter of the multiple forms of intercultural studies." He seconds Darby English's prescient abstraction of the Seminar conversation (I will not paraphrase it: it is at the end of Section 4). Whatever hybridity will continue to mean after its canonical formulations by García Canclini and Homi Bhabha, it will probably be helpful to consider it under several registers.

My own interest in that conversation was to see whether hybridity functions as the principal word for the interest so many of us share in whatever is mixed, impure, in process, variably present, and otherwise detached from an unmediated sense of identity.[14] My sense of the Seminars and the Assessments is that hybridity does in fact often stand for the properties that interest us in art, and that it is therefore more important than ever to be careful about what it means—as García Canclini is. Partha Mitter's Assessment also points to the fundamental nature of the concept, and calls for new concepts to fit different Asian, African, and Latin American practices. Mitter's idea is in harmony with García Canclini's reservations about how widely hybridity can be applied: both their texts are an invitation to new work on historically and

[14] As Hans Belting puts it, "We therefore call anything in non-Western contemporary art that cannot be classified by Western notions 'hybrid.'" Belting, "Art in the TV Age: On Global Art and Local Art History," in *Transmission Image,* 176. On p. 179 Belting calls hybridity a "magic formula."

geographically specific concepts that could be alternates to hybridity. It would be wonderful to have such concepts, which would enrich the current discussion and also maintain its drive to specificity.

5. Temporality

For some people in the Seminars—and I am one of them—temporality is one of the most interesting ways to rethink certain problems in art history's representation of modern and postmodern art. The difficulty is knowing what senses of temporality are apposite. It was generally understood that certain senses of time can be associated with the global art market: Hegelian meliorist time, for example—what Dipesh Chakrabarty calls developmental time, the time of the "not yet."[15] The difficulty is in defining what should count as alternate forms of temporality. Chakrabarty's answer, the horizon of the "now," was not taken up in the Seminar, but its influence could be felt, perhaps most strongly in Seminar 6.

For some people, the conceptualization of temporality in the art world involves concepts of the everyday. Hyungmin Pai makes this connection, and quotes Zhivka Valiavicharska's question: "How can we think of possibilities to write art history through events, through alternative experiences of time, and through the ambiguities of the everyday?" (More on the everyday below, because it is associated with concepts of the local.) There are also "alternative experiences of time." The Seminar participants debated the idea that a study of temporalities might re-open discussions about marginal and "canonical" art that have either reached stalemates or been shuttled aside in favor of a euphoric pan-national art market. Before the Seminars, I was unsure of the utility of temporality as a way to re-conceive modernist problems of the sort I will describe in the second half of this essay. I thought that the theorization of temporalities was too abstract to be able to guide research on, say, Indonesian modernist painting or Estonian expressionism.[16] But the discussion was tremendously suggestive, and now it seems

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[15] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), especially the Introduction.

[16] Here I also want to acknowledge Jim Supangkat's very articulate "'Seni' [Art] Manifesto," which addresses marginalization and temporality in Indonesian modernism (personal

to me temporalities are a very promising was around the roadblocks of universalizing modernist descriptions. (More on this later, also.)

The principal alternate temporality in this book is a mixture of several sources, including de Certeau, together with artworld appropriations of his work, Harry Harootunian's senses of urban temporalities, Benedict Anderson's development of differential temporalities, phenomenological accounts of lived experience, and echoes of Chakrabarty's analysis. Perhaps an understanding that comes out of these discourses effectively *is* the temporality we would want to put against Hegelian and other totalizing temporalities.[17]

6. Postcolonial narratives

The original title of Susan Buck-Morss's seminar was "What Comes After Postcolonial Theory?" Inevitably, the conversation went in other directions, and the parts transcribed here do not directly address that question.

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communication, July 2009); and Lee Weng Choy's meditation on temporality, modernism, and Singapore, "Authenticity, Reflexivity & Spectacle: or, the Rise of New Asia is not the End of the World", in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critiques* 12 no. 3, special issue edited by Joan Kee (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). (I thank Nora Taylor for drawing my attention to Lee Weng Choy's texts.)

[17] The Seminar conversations tended not to include speculation on "the contemporary" or "contemporaneity." In winter 2009, *October* announced a questionnaire on the subject, which will serve to collect various senses of that subject in and around art history. There are exceptions, including Okwui Enwezor, Donald Kuspit, and Terry Smith. See Smith, "Contemporary Art and Contemporaneity," *Critical Inquiry* 32 no. 4 (Summer 2006): 681–707 (also on *Documenta Magazines* online journal, magazines.documenta.de), an argument for three senses of contemporaneity, related to one another less as dialectics than as antinomies.

(The year following our Seminar, this theme was also taken up by the Third Guangzhou Triennial.[18] Postcolonial theory is often put to one side when the political context is not itself postcolonial; that point is made in this book, for example, by Nestor García-Canclini. An analogous argument is made by Gao Shiming in relation to the Guanghzhou Triennial.[19] Sarat

[18] See *"Farewell to Post-Colonialism": Querying the Guangzhou Triennial 2008,* edited by Sarat Maharaj, *Printed Project* 11 (2009), published by Visual Arts Ireland. The Third Guangzhou Triennial was held September 6 to November 16, 2008, and was curated by Gao Shiming, Sarat Maharaj, and Chang Tsong-zung. Their opening objection was that postcolonial theory has become "increasingly institutionalized as an ideological concept" (from their statement). Maharaj's essay in *Printed Project* makes

[19] Gao Shiming's essays, such as one presented at the Global Art Museums Platform III conference at the Goethe-Institut Hong Kong, May 21, 2009, raise the objection that postcolonial studies is, prima facie, inapplicable to political situations such as China. Gao goes on to argue that "the concepts of identity, hybridity, and diversity have gradually evolved into high-sounding political statements" without critical purchase. The general position in this book is that such concepts have developed multiple uses and that what is needed is slow dissection of their individual uses, rather than the formulation of new contexts or an overall critique of the theory that supports the concepts. If postcolonial imagination seems to be "just… introspective" or "another form of dominant power discourse," that may be less from lack of new material or what the organizers of the Triennial call "new modes of thinking and fresh analytical tools for today's world" than it is from lack of careful analytic studies of the particular uses of individual concepts. I thank Gao Shiming for sharing the Triennial position paper and his own unpublished papers, "The Forthcoming History: On the Deconstruction and Reconstruction of the "Local," which is forthcoming in the GAM series; and "Observations and Presentiments: 'After

Maharaj has enumerated other reasons to be skeptical of postcolonial theory including its institutionalization in academic discourse.[20] But it is an open question whether postcolonial theory's shortcomings have been effectively addressed; postcolonial theory appears throughout the texts associated with the Guangzhou Triennial.)

Buck-Morss's project on Hegel and Haiti, and her amazingly energetic description of it in her seminar, were examples of what cultural scholarship could look like. We talked around a number of questions that would be fundamental to any future practice: the quality of attention to the local, the nature of interdisciplinarity, affect in historical writing, and the place of images. A problem, for some people present in the Seminar, was that Buck-Morss's writing is unique: it is not available as a model. In the Assessments, it is García Canclini who says the most about what might follow postcolonial theory. He is careful and exact about the inappropriateness of postcolonial theory in parts of Latin America. "Understandably," he writes, "postcolonial thinking is more useful when analyzing countries that attained their independence fifty years ago, while for Latin Americans the main question is how to reorient modernity." As in the case of hybridity, García Canclini's intervention leaves an open door for regionally specific alternates to postcolonial theory. The final assessment, by Joaqín Barriendos, considers decolonial theory and "the decolonial turn" in the light of what Barriendos calls "geoaesthetic thinking." These are

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Postcolonialism,'" also unpublished. The previous two quotations are from these two papers, respectively.

[20] In addition to noting that postcolonial theory's "blanket application [is] questionable," Maharaj says postcolonial theory's "academic-cultural institutionalization [has] dulled its investigative tackle"; that "the postcolonial kit" of concepts such as "center/periphery, N/S divisions, migrant/citizen, colonizer/colonized, authentic/derivative, authority subordination, self/other" is "bogged down in new versions of the original deadlock"; and that it is "more a reactive than [an] affirmative stance." (Marharaj, "Counter Creed: Quizzing the Guangzhou Triennial 2008 According to James Joyce's 'Catechetical Interrogation,'" in *"Farewell to Post-colonialism,"* 5–11, quotations on p. 5.)

initiatives that aim to rethink postcolonial theory for Latin American and other contexts by emphasizing regional differences, especially as those are expressed in the "imaginary" of museums.[21]

(These branching terminologies also suggest that it might be promising to begin from a discourse analysis of postcolonial theory and its descendants. Patrick Flores suggests as much with a tripartite division of the literature into "chronicles of emergence,"[22] "modalities of transfer,"[23] and "theories of art."[24] Perhaps in future the diverging lines of postcolonial discourse will become clearer.)

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[21] In addition to the sources cited by Barriendos, see Enrique Dussel, "World-System and 'Transmodernity,'" *Nepantla: Views from the South* 3 no. 2 (2002): 221–44; and Barriendos, "Global Art and the Politics of Mobility: Transcultural Shifts in the International Contemporary Art System," in *Art and Visibility in Migratory Culture: Enacting Conflict and Resistance, Aesthetically, 2009,* edited by Mieke Bal and Miguel Á. Hernández-Navarro (forthcoming).

[22] Flores defines this as "art history within an interdisciplinary frame," and names John Clark; Nora Taylor's "Why Have There Been No Great Vietnamese Artists?" Michigan Quarterly Review 44 no. 1 (2005): 149–65; Ahmad Mashadi's "Moments of Regionality: Negotiating Southeast Asia," in *Crossings: Philippine Works from the Singapore Art Museum* (Singapore Art Museum and Ayala Museum, 2004); and T. K. Sabapathy's "Trimurti: Thoughts on Contexts," in *Trimurti and Ten Years After* (Singapore Art Museum, 1998). I thank Flores for sharing a copy of his "Field Notes on an Art World: Interest and Impasse," forthcoming in Global Art Museums [ ], vol. 3.

[23] These are "specific ways in which techniques of making art are received and transformed," and include Apinan Poshyananda, "'Con Art' Seen from the Edge: The Meaning of Conceptual Art in South and Southeast Asia", in *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s–1980s* (Queens

7. Neoliberalism

This Seminar was led by Zhivka Valiavicharska, who has presciently focused her own scholarship on the way depoliticized contemporary cultural production participa"tes in neoliberal development in Bulgaria and other Southeast-European countries. the limitations of neoliberal discourse. She finds that the relatively sudden prohibition of Marxist discourse following the decline of Soviet influence—it was expelled from academia and intellectual discourse, and suppressed in progressive politics—enabled an influx of neoliberal discourses, which these countries adopted on the road to joining the European Union. In the Seminars, discussion turned to the ways that the contemporary art world can be understood as an integral part of neoliberal processes, and the way neoliberalism serves as a precondition for the art world's sense of nationalism, democracy, and other foundational concepts. Here we were touched on the material dimensions of globally functioning institutions, for example how they may be participating in newly emerging inequalities and geographies of power—as in Valiavicharska's and Milevska's comments. We also raised questions about how globally positioned contemporary art practices bring into being new kinds of subjects through new mechanisms of power. If there was a limitation to our very interesting exchanges on neoliberalism, it was the point T. J. Demos productively developed in his critique—that we certainly did not give satisfying and rigorous analyses of how actual contemporary institutions, biennials, and art practices take part in these processes. And while exploring questions of subjectivity and power, we did not leave any time to

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Museum of Art, 1999); and Julie Ewington, "Five Elements: An Abbreviated Account of Installation Art in South-East Asia," *Art and Asia Pacific* 2 no. 1 (1995).

[24] These are texts "that offer an alternative to 'aesthetics' and 'art'"; for Flores they include Stanley J. O'Connor's pathbreaking essay "Art Critics, Connoisseurs, and Collectors in the Southeast Asian Rain Forest: A Study in Cross-Cultural Art Theory," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 14 no. 2 (September 1983); and Jim Supangkat's "The Emergence of Indonesian Modern Art," in *The Birth of Modern Art in Southeast Asia: Artists and Movements* (Fukuoka Art Museum, 1997).

ask how these various institutionalizations, while being integral to neoliberal development, also delineate radically conditioned terrains of agency.

8. Four failures of the seminars

This was from the five-hour closing public roundtable, at which I tried to arrange a discussion of things we had not managed to analyze. I won't enlarge on the first three points.[25] The fourth was the fact that most of the week had been devoted to finding oppositional concepts and practices, instead of understanding the current shape of the market.[26] C. J. Wan-Ling Wee notes that in the seminars, "the biennialization of the world appears primarily in a negative light, and does not entirely take into account the positive opportunities for representation that accompany it." I was surprised, throughout the event, at the lack of interest in modernist and contemporary art that does not do appreciable work of political resistance. This is a constant in the Assessments also, from Nina Möntmann's concern about an "institutional avant-garde" that can intervene in the logic of the national representation, to Rasheed Araeen's complaint that we had not done enough to avoid complicity with the usual self-regarding self-description of the art market. Yet most work in biennales, the majority of work in art fairs, and the overwhelming majority of work in commercial galleries throughout the world is not about resisting capitalism or nationalism. It seems to me that if we are to understand globalized contemporary art I think

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[25] From the introduction to Section 8: (1) The slightly suspicious ease we experienced in talking about contemporary art, as opposed to the difficulty of talking about history and our place in it; (2) contemporary art practices that are excluded by the international art market; (3) whether or not there are emergent histories of art that are structurally different from the one developed in North America and western Europe.

[26] An important source, omitted in the discussion, is Hal Foster's discussion in *Art Theory,* edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 1037. Foster makes a similar distinction between complicit and resistant postmodern art. A recent text that also sees contemporary art as "a *critical* answer to globalism" is Hans Belting's "Art in the TV Age," 172.

we need to take this seriously. In the Seminars, I proposed—following an idea of Benjamin Buchloh's—that uncritical celebratory art is the obverse of politicized, avant-garde art, so that they are two sides of the same phenomenon. In that case—although Buchloh does not draw this conclusion—our work is incomplete because it gravitates to just one side of the dialectic of resistance and complicity.[27] It could even be argued that biennale and art fair culture are

[27] Speaking of the world art market since the 1990s, and in reference to my mention of Central Asian painters, Iftikhar Dadi writes: "In Central Asia… painters appear to have become more isolated. But one wonders why that medium should continue to be valorized today; especially by artists possessing Soviet-era training that shaped their artistic consciousness accordingly (by bestowing upon Central Asian peoples a secularized, bureaucratized modernity, while denying them mobility). If artists working in older modes have suffered isolation, important work in newer media that reimagines Central Asia as a region and a crossroad is also emerging." This, I think, mistakes the cause of painting's decline. It implies painting has been marginalized by cultural and political conditions. But painting has also been marginalized by the very international art market that privileges new media, and therefore by arguments like Dadi's. The different values placed on painting and new media are not intrinsic to those media, but to the discourse that supports or critiques them. All the more reason to consider both old and new media: some work in new media takes an optimistic, internationalist look at Central Asia, and some painting reflects a more isolated culture, but that does not mean that a critic interested in political realities should care which is valorized.

primarily composed of uncritical work, so that from a sociological point of view it makes sense to take that art seriously.[28]

This theme also occurs in Caroline Jones's lead-off Assessment (first in the book because it was first received). Jones opens with a distinction between the words *globalism* and *globalization*. She proposes the former as a good name for the condition in which an artist can react to the state of the world, "mining… widely shared references, against which he or she might pose the strangeness, wonder, resistance or irritation of local residues." The latter "suggests the artwork's helplessness, its inability to avoid translations, transactions, transportation and transformation by pervasive processes of globalization." *Globalism* in this sense harbors emancipatory potentials, and *globalization* a sad fact of the current art market.[29]

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[28] Caroline Jones misunderstands my idea of "statistical" work: I don't mean we should adopt the methods of social scientists: I mean we should consider our obligation to be interested in work that is uncritical and unchallenging. She also misconstrues my interest in Kazakh artists: I don't want to rediscover them for art history—I want to point to their difference without marking it as some new peripheral radicalism.

[29] It is helpful to add two more terms here: *world art* and *global art*. Hans Belting's essay "Contemporary Art as Global Art" uses *global art* to denote a new kind of institutional art that has developed from the worldwide practice of art; he opposed it to *world art,* which involves a universalizing claim and is a traditional subject of the discipline of art history. Because Belting is not primarily concerned with critical or resistant practices, his *global art* includes both Jones's *globalism* and *globalization*. For Belting, *world art* entails ideas of heritage and nationalism, as in UNESCO World Art Heritage sites and internationally visible national museums such as the British Museum. Belting, "Contemporary Art as Global Art," *The Global Art World: Audiences, Markets, and Museums,* edited by Hans Belting and Andrea Buddensieg (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009), 38–73.

She is right that the conversation veered between those alternates, although I think that was recognized in the Seminars. Most of her Assessment is to do with Hélio Oiticica as an example of an artist who negotiated between the two. Her conclusion is that "unless the art historian can use the objects under study to explore modes of subjectivity we are experiencing under globalization, then they are of no use to our study of the global." Art objects that can't be used to study subjectivities under globalization "will lay the groundwork for Kazakh studies, or the basis of sociologies of kitsch, but they will not have bearing on our histories from the present." For me, this raises the question of who "we" are. Jones is interested in whatever impinges on "our study of the global" and "our histories from the present." But when I encounter an older Central Asian artist who is making Sufi paintings on *suf* (Arabic wool), I consider him very much part of "our histories from the present" if not "our study of the global." His work speaks in exactly the way I wish history to speak: not mirroring my own concerns, and not presenting itself as an instance of a pressing and therefore familiar current interest. The *suf* painting is not a space of resistance—and in fact it is not concerned with either reisistance or celebration. Nor is it kitsch (or more accurately, camp), except outside its contexts of production and reception.[30] And it is not, in any simple art-world sense, either belated or avant-garde. It is, in short, a genuine problem—a *historical* problem, a problem for history.

I love Mark Jarzombek's formulation: "Nothing has been better for the global expansion of art history than the globalized claim for a local resistance to globalization." That is wonderfully put, and it's so true: resistance has become a trope in art writing. The converse is that local acquiescence to globalization has become wholly invisible. And I especially like T. J. Demos's objections. He says that questions about contemporary art rarely come up in the

[30] The normative judgments and presumptions about history and geography that are involved in the judgment of a work as kitsch are powerless when it comes to understanding what the work communicates in its context. *Camp* instead of *kitsch,* because the latter is an historical category of mass-produced art together with its projected values, and the latter is a judgment—as Susan Sontag famously elaborated—rendered against kitsch and other practices, which sees them as ironic and therefore entertaing.

Seminars, and when they do they are "met, for the most part, with untenable generalizations: artists are merely the instruments of capital, we are told; biennials and the art market are simply the affirmative expressions of neoliberalism." Chris Berry is also concerned about the lack of attention to resistant practices. But Demos's and Berry's point is that biennale culture does permit local practices, those that are "indigenized" in Arjun Appadurai's expression. I wouldn't ask whether artists who are represented by commercial galleries are "merely sell-outs, devoid of any resistant agency," because most commercial galleries don't look for "resistant agency." Demos is right that our conversations minimized those possibilities in a wash of pessimism—but it's also the case that resistant work is a tiny fraction of the art market. Beyond the few successful interventions, and the many less successful attempts at opposition, is the uncharted ocean of "ordinary" art: unresisting, belated, complicit, celebratory, oblivious, confused, undecided.

9. Universality

This was also from the closing roundtable. Universality was a concept chosen by Valiavicharska. After a great deal of thought—all week she and I had been wondering how to structure the closing roundtable—she decided that universality had emerged in our discussions as a crucial concept for understanding the globalization of art. Here again it was especially interesting to have Susan Buck-Morss on the panel, because she was working on a radical sense of universality, one that could articulate some of the hopes of art-world discourse. It was a fitting last topic, because the exact nature of "universal" communication in art, and the difference between that "universal" and the "particular" that art continues to call upon, are deftly avoided in contemporary writing. Several people who wrote Assessments responded to Valiavicharska's exposition. Ming Tiampo, for example, refers to Valiavicharska's citing Ngugi wa Thiong'o's skepticism about universality; Tiampo prefers an historically specific response to transnational phenomena. Yet this tension between the two universalities—the imperial one and its radical reformulations—persists relentlessly throughout the Assessments as well.

Four options

Those are the leading themes of the Seminars. The Assessments raise and develop other themes. Here I will focus on an issue that is developed in a number of Assessments, and is, I

think, the most pressing and also furthest from resolution: what kinds of accounts of modern and contemporary art are being constructed now, how those accounts might be related to one another and to past accounts, and what the most interesting options currently are. I will mainly be drawing on contributions to this book, but the literature is growing quickly, and several new sources are also crucial, including an exchange with Partha Mitter in the *Art Bulletin,*[31] and new

[31] The exchange with Partha Mitter is one of the *Art Bulletin's* "Interventions." It begins with Mitter's essay "Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery," and includes responses by Alistair Wright, Rebecca Brown, Saloni Mathur, and Ajay Sinha. See *Art Bulletin* 90 no. 4 (December 2008): 531–48 (Mitter's essay), 549–54 (Wright's response), 555–57 (Brown's response), 558–60 (Mathur's response), 561–67 (Sinha's response), and 568–74 (Mitter's reply). I will cite these as *Art Bulletin* "Intervention."

essays by Hans Belting, Iftihkar Dadi, John Clark, Suman Gupta, David Carrier, Whitney Davis, Hiroko Ikegami, and Dipesh Chakrabarty.[32]

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[32] Iftikhar Dadi reviews Mitter's *Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1922–1947* in *Art Bulletin* 90 no. 4 (December 2008): 652–54. As of August 2009, Hans Belting has published three essays from his ongoing international project on Global Art and the Museum (www.globalartmuseum.de/site/home). One, "Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age," is cited in Section 4 of the Seminars; the second is Belting, "Art in the TV Age: On Global Art and Local Art History," in *Transmission Image: Visual Translation and Cultural Agency*, edited by Birgit Mersmann and Alexandra Schneider (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 169–82; and the third is "Contemporary Art as Global Art," *The Global Art World: Audiences, Markets, and Museums,* edited by Hans Belting and Andrea Buddensieg (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009), 38–73. An unpublished paper by Chakrabarty, "Belatedness as Possibility," was given at a symposium organized by Christopher Pinney at Northwestern University, May 21, 2008; I thank Dipesh Chakrabarty for sharing the MS. Clark is at work on a MS provisionally titled *Modernities Compared: Chinese and Thai Art in the 1980s and 1990s;* I thank him for sharing the table of contents. Gupta graciously shared chapters from an unpublished MS, co-written with Milena Katsarska, on the Bulgarian painter Zlatyu Boyadzhiev. David Carrier's *A World Art History and Its Objects* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2008). I also thank Whitney Davis for sharing two drafts of chapters on the subjects of world art history and perspective; and Hiroko Ikegami for sharing material from her *The Great Migrator: Robert Rauschenberg and the Global Rise of American Art, circa 1964* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, forthcoming), which promises to be an interesting contribution to the conversation about world art concentrating on a moment in the dissemination of North American modernism from a

What I have in mind is a very provisional "state of the art" essay on the optimal strategies for writing about the art of the last hundred years.

Before I begin I want to acknowledge a tremendously useful distinction made by Itfikhar Dadi, between the first phase of international modernism and a second phase that has obtained in the world art market roughly since the 1990s. In my reading of Dadi's distinction, the first phase includes high modernism and its many forms around the world, but the second phase is not exactly a symmetrical complement: it includes not so much postmodernism and poststructuralism, as much as the the economic and institutional structures that enable contemporary international art. This is helpful because the first phase presents very different problems. Some otherwise intractable differences among scholars evaporate when it comes to the more recently globalized world, as Caroline Jones describes it. The first phase is articulated quite differently: painting is exemplary, resistance is not a central concern, and there is a much deeper uncertainty about how the art should be interpreted in current scholarship. What I have said so far in summarizing the Seminars pertains mostly to the second phase; what I want to explore now is mainly a concern when it comes to the first phase.

I will organize this exposition into four options for current scholarship on modernism in the visual arts. Three options came up at the end of Section 5 in the Seminars: writing that sees itself as contributing to a cumulative account of world art under the name *art history*; writing that concentrates on economic, political, and identity issues, and often strays from the concerns of art history in favor of postcolonial theory and other strategies; and writing that presents itself as outside of academic concerns, often by experimenting with new kinds of narrative.[33] It fits the

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post-revisionist perspective. As I write this (February 2009), I have just found out about a PhD dissertation, "The Globalization of Contemporary Art," by Lotte Philipsen (Aarhus University, 2009), which takes as its point of departure the Institute of New International Visual Arts conference *Global Visions* (1994).

[33] Like most other things in this book, that schema draws on other material that isn't included in this book, but is presupposed in the discussion. In addition to sources cited in the Seminar, there is Review of Steven Mansbach, *Modern Art in Eastern Europe,* in *Art Bulletin* 82 no. 4 (2000):

Assessments better if I interpolate a further option, which I will put just between the second and third: writing that avoids global themes, concentrates on particular contexts and places, and treats individual artworks, their makers, and their publics. Such writing is engaged in an ongoing project of acknowledging and reading multiple histories of modernism, in ways that art historical writing (the first strand) and postcolonial theory (the third strand) may not.

The four options are a productive and flexible way of thinking about the current directions of scholarship on modernism. They correspond to four degrees of skepticism about the appropriateness of art history for the project of understanding the last hundred years of art production around the world. Beginning with art history, the options move through postcolonial theory and related efforts, to writing that declines theories in favor of specific historical examples (the third option), and finally to writing that attempts to speak from outside academia altogether. In addition—and at the risk of making this analysis a bit too elaborate—the four options articulate three dialectics: a dialectic that binds and differentiates art history and postcolonial studies (the first and second options); one that ties and also distinguishes global concerns with local ones (the first and second in relation to the third); and one that relates academic historical accounts and any and all other historical accounts (the first three in relation to the fourth). Here are the four options, along with some of the questions that were raised in the Assessments.[34]

1. Write about modern art in such a way that the scholarship builds a cumulative account of world art under the name *art history*.

781–85, and "Response [to Anthony Alofsin's letter regarding the review of Mansbach's *Modern Art in Eastern Europe*]," *Art Bulletin* 84 (2002): 539.

[34] J. Wan-Ling Wee says the three-part schema "repeats an old argument that the creation of modern culture came about without any cultural or other interaction with the economic periphery or the colonial-era frontier." I don't feel this is my argument: my purpose here is to make all the possibilities, including the received idea of an independent European modernism, as clear as possible.

There is a substantial academic industry devoted to building, critiquing, and elaborating the existing Euramerican sense of modernism and postmodernism so that it can account for practices around the world: perhaps that needs to be said, because there are no representatives of that perspective in this book. It is a sign of the current distress of art history in the face of global issues that there is little similarity among attempts to expand and rethink art history. Some are attempts to encompass art made outside Europe and North America.[35] Others are attempts to revise art historical understanding without looking beyond Europe and North America. In *Art Since 1900,* the few references to non-Western art, colonial art, or anything outside a few countries in Europe and a few states in eastern North America demonstrate that the project of continuing a geographically limited art history still has critical purchase.[36] The same has to be said of the many PhD theses written in Europe and North America that rework our understanding of the canonical figures and issues of modernism and postmodernism. The contributors to this book are all more or less committed to writing about art and issues outside those canonical walls. As Iftikhar Dadi says, "canon formation is linked to global power imbalances, capitalist accumulation, and institutions in complex ways that require analysis rather than tacit acceptance of its a priori status." In this book and in an article in the *Art Bulletin,* Mitter proposes "a radical decentering of the avant-garde canon," and in that he speaks for a large number of scholars. But I don't share even Mitter's very guarded optimism that such a decentering can be accomplished mainly by the accumulation of studies of the "margins," unless the new scholarship also does its work of decentering by addressing the coherence of the old work. Mark Jarzombek, for example,

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[35] Examples include Carrier's *World Art History and its Objects,* John Onian's *Atlas of World Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and his *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), and, in a different vein, David Summers's *Real Spaces;* my review of that book, reprinted in *Is Art History Global?,* is meant to ask about the nature of "art history" when it is expanded in that fashion.

[36] *Art Since 1900* is also the starting point of Partha Mitter's "Intervention," which is perhaps the most extended recent attempt to expand art history in this fashion. See Mitter, "Decentering Modernism," especially 531.

makes the excellent point that non-European modernist architecture can be not only "a fundamental challenge to the European nation-state model" but one that is legible within art history. But it is not easy to move a conceptual apparatus as heavy as art history. I think of it as steering a bulk ore carrier, so heavy and slow-moving that it can hardly be stopped.

Of the many issues here, *belatedness* has emerged as the exemplar, the synecdoche. Any account of modern art that tries to keep itself connected to existing narratives in art history will need to acknowledge the belatedness of many modernist practices in relation to western Europe and North America. Belatedness is a prickly concept: it forecloses sympathy and prohibits dialogue by offering a value judgment as a description. It trails a string of problematic concepts with normative implications, including the avant-garde, influence, originality, and precedence. All these, and especially belatedness, have been the subject of concerted critiques. Yet I am not fully convinced by the strategies that have been suggested to adjust or abandon belatedness or its enchained concepts. The most direct approach, taken by Charles Green, Chris Berry, and others, is not to critique the concept, but to enumerate examples where the West was belated. After a while, it can seem as if Europe learned as much from other parts of the world as vice-versa, and that can suggest several things: the provincializing of Europe (as in Dipesh Chakrabarty's work), the weakness of distinctions between Europe and other parts of the world (this is most fully developed in Martin Powers's scholarship), or the existence of multiple centers of innovation and belatedness (I will consider this later). A less straightforward approach is to reconsider the concept of belatedness itself. A number of scholars, including Partha Mitter, have contributed to redefinitions of belatedness and the avant-garde.[37] Such conceptual critiques have led to several

[37] Mitter's contribution is the concept of the "Picasso manqué syndrome," which he develops by comparison between Picasso's borrowing of African motifs and Gaganendranath Tagore's borrowing of cubist motifs. The former did not "compromise" Picasso's "integrity," but the latter was seen to result in the loss of Gaganendranath's "self as an Indian." (Mitter, "Decentering Modernism," 537.) Mitter does not elaborate a theoretical platform for avoiding the syndrome, but his statement of it is clear and helpful—although I would rather it had been called the "Gaganendranath-Picasso syndrome," to keep cultural parity. A useful source for the

proposals: to acknowledge the fact that belatedness and the avant-garde are different in different places;[38] to abandon *influence* in favor of concepts like *affinity* or *resonance*;[39] to see belatedness as a positive possibility on account of the way that newness is always partly disguised by displacement and repetition;[40] to "frankly" note the ideological interests that drive talk about

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reconsideration of the modernist avant-garde is Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, *Stammbäume der Kunst: Zur Genealogie der Avantgarde* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005).

[38] This is perhaps best argued in Clark, *Modern Asian Art,* 217–32. For a critique, see my "Writing About Modernist Painting Outside Western Europe and North America," cited in Section 3 of the Seminars.

[39] This is Mitter's proposal. For a critique of the proposal, see Dadi, review of Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism,* 654.

[40] This is an inadequate condensation of Chakrabarty's reading of Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* in the unpublished paper "Belatedness as Possibility." Chakrabarty takes *repetition* in the Deleuzian sense of behaving "in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular that has no equal or equivalent," so that newness is at first not experienced, because it "enters the world in disguise… in disguise and through displacement." Chakrabarty, "Belatedness," unpaginated, unpublished MS, section II. The first quotation is from Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* translated by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); 1, as cited by Chakrabarty. This approach, which is akin to questions that have long been debated in aesthetics about the nature of originality, could be useful in discussing modernist art; in my reading, it would refocus inquiries on the structure of repetition, disguise, and apparent newness. For some sources in aesthetics on the reciprocal relation of originality and repetition, see my "From Copy to Forgery and Back Again," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 33 no. 2

belatedness;[41] and to make belatedness into a virtue by stressing the self-reflexivity and sophistication of belatedness outside the West.[42] That is five possibilities in my count, and they are often mingled and combined with a sixth—simply ignoring the issue, writing around it or overwriting it with new material.

An example of the first possibility—stressing how belatedness, and the avant-garde, appear differently in different places—occurs in C. J. Wan-Ling Wee's Assessment. His crucial and final example is Ahmad Mashadi's contribution to the Singapore Biennale in 2006, which proposes that new Asian figuration and conceptual art should not be seen as belated because they arose for different reasons than they did in the West. "Thus," Wee concludes, "by implication, the region has no need to be 'in sync' with Western narratives of such art forms." This is the commonest form of the argument against belatedness, and it insists reasonably enough that forms and practices can be reinvented in new contexts. One could add that forms and practices are also interesting to the degree that they are visible as reinventions. But this does not resolve the initial problematic of belatedness. Contemporary figuration and conceptual art in Singapore can be described in such a way that they are of interest to people who follow conversations on non-Western forms of twentieth-century figuration or conceptual art, so that the practices in Singapore do not appear as *only* belated. Singaporean figuration and conceptual art can also be described so they are comprehensible to scholars who are concerned about Western precedents, so that the practices in Singapore appear in some way dependent on Western modernism and postmodernism, and not as putatively original creations. Contemporary Singaporean figuration

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(1993): 113–20, and *Ethics and the Arts: An Anthology,* edited by David Fenner (New York: Garland, 1995).

[41] "Frankness" is enjoined in Reiko Tomii's Assessment.

[42] This is the strategy deployed by Ajay Sinha's "Intervention" in the *Art Bulletin*. Sinha argues that Indian modernists felt an "historical 'blush'" at such moments, and he divides his theory into three examples, "virtualism, feminization, and mimesis." (Sinha, "Intervention," 567.) Sinha's position is promising, but it runs the risk of valuing complexity, self-reflexivity, and irony, qualities that were the possession of the European avant-garde.

could be framed as a development in the ongoing, worldwide explorations of the figure; or else it could be acknowledged, as an historian of an earlier generation would, that while contemporary Singaporean figuration has its own interest, it is *also* belated. Either one of these two can be accomplished by itself, but there is not yet a way of joining the two discourses to make a new, more complex whole. That further problem, the problem of synthesis or rapprochement, is only occluded by saying, as Wee and Mashadi do, that Singaporean figuration is something different, because that is true, differently, from both perspectives. Because there is truth in both ways of describing contemporary figuration in Singapore, it may seem that this is only a pseudo-problem, and a thoughtful text or exhibition might embrace both as a dialectic condition of current practices. But that would lead, I think, to a genuine dilemma, because the the two positions are not in a dialectic relation: there are political investments in both positions, and one perspective partly excludes the other. If I call a figurative painting done in Singapore in 2005 "belated," I foreclose some talk about how the work is part of a different socioeconomic and temporal condition. I am as helpless on this point as I think anyone is. Concepts like belatedness are not disarmed by the observation that they differ in various places, or that they are culturally produced, or that they depend on politics, imperialism, nationalism, or identity. That makes concepts like belatedness less magical, but it does not make contact with the force they have in their original contexts, both in North America and Western Europe *and also* in various centers, including Singapore, where artists work in ways they know are indebted to previous Western models.

Belatedness, the avant-garde, influence, derivativeness, originality, and precedence are in turn enmeshed in problems of periods, styles, manners, practices, schools, and groups. These latter are the primary organizational tools employed by art history. A problem for work that wishes to be read as art history is the occurrence of periods and styles outside their normative origins. What is Paraguayan expressionism? Czech cubism? Peruvian surrealism? Even though such expressions are reductive, in some form they are unavoidable in art historical description. There is an awful formula, "The *Iliad* of X," which is used for innumerable national poems: the *Shanameh* is the *Iliad* of Persia; the *Manas* is the *Iliad* of Kyrgyzstan; the *Lusiad* is the *Iliad* of Portugal; the *Three Kingdoms* is the *Iliad* of China, and so on without end. These formulas are persistent because they capture the irreducibly comparative character of modernist historical understanding. Several people who wrote assessments for this book are concerned with ways to

avoid such comparisons; Carolyn Loeb, for example, suggests "transcultural" studies. The difficulty with all such projects, as important as they are, is that the structure of understanding on one side—the Euramerican side—depends on versions of such formulas. It is that structure itself that we need to study: the way the integrity and sense of European modernism relies on the development of comparisons at all levels of historical understanding.[43]

Several people who wrote Assessments are working on these problems, and avoiding words like influence in favor of concepts like affinity or resonance. (This is the second of the options I mentioned above.) Speaking of *Global Conceptualism,* the exhibition she helped curate, Reiko Tomii remarks that viewers found "resonances" between conceptual art in different regions of the world even though connections were not actively pursued in the exhibition. She defines *resonance* as "similarity with little or no evidence of actual connection, influence, or knowledge." There can be many kinds, resulting in layered "maps" of analogous phenomena, "extended chain[s] of similarities and dissimilarities," and "hidden degrees of similarity." I think that with work, the concept of *resonance* might gain in interpretive power, but I am already convinced by her stress on individual concepts, such as *shinkō geijutsu* ("new art"), and especially avant-garde (*zen'ei*), which in its original Anglicized French version "is effective only as a way of aligning Japanese practices to similar practices outside Japan." I prefer the analysis of terms to the construction of a theory of resonances, because concepts can be more exact. As Tomii says, partly following Terry Smith, "the perception of international contemporaneity at a given locale at a given time and the actual state of international contemporaneity are not always the same"—and the way to get at that, I think, is through individual concepts and not through fine-tuning of multiple "layers" of resonances, similarities and analogies. There may not be a clear alternate to the old-fashioned art historical reliance on cause and effect (that is, on influence).[44]

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[43] My own effort is the book-length study, *Chinese Landscape Painting as Western Art History* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, forthcoming).

[44] Reading this section, Zhivka Valiavicharska added a long marginal comment. In part she was urging that "The question is also that effects are not necessarily passive results of what is causing them, and the 'effect' itself can radically subvert or unpredictably alter the agency that produced

Yet *resonance* and *affinity* are not the only possibilities. Tomii also calls for a deconstruction of originality and derivativeness to find "differences within similarities." Ming Tiampo writes about concepts influence and originality, in an attempt to rethink them from the bottom up. Like Tomii, Tiampo, Dadi, and many others, I think fundamental conceptual analysis is indispensable, but I wonder if it will ever be enough. These concepts have deep roots, and the culture in which they grew has impacted around them like clay. We can work hard at understanding how the concepts have operated, and we can acknowledge their continuing grip,

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it, in our case the phenomena that have the power to influence… That way [the] 'derivative' can have a radically different social, political, or cultural function…." It is true, as Valiavicharska went on to point out, that accounts by Derrida, Judith Butler, and others, have problematized the sort of dead-end, one-way theory of influence that is ingrained in older art history. This entire subject needs to be explored in, and as, art history. In this context I will only add the observation that *logically* speaking, resonances, affinities, analogies, and other kinds of relations can function more to defer questions of causality as to offer alternate models. Causal models are hidden inside models of affinities like the load-bearing structures hidden inside architectural edifices. No matter how complex the model of causality becomes, it will have to come to terms with logical causation. An interesting text here is Karl Aschenbrenner's study of the concept of coherence, which is remarkably difficult to define because its operation as an aesthetic term depends on the occlusion of its relation to causality. Claiming a work of art is *coherent*, like claiming a cultural relation depends on *resonance,* is a way of conjuring but postponing inquiry into causal relations. Aschenbrenner, *The Concept of Coherence in Art* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: D. Reidel, 1985).

but it is as if they are fused to the soil.[45] If concepts like influence are radically reduced by critique I think we will be little left of what matters.

My best try so far is to redefine terms such as *figuration, conceptual art, cubism,* and so on, for each next new context—that is what I am experimenting with in a work in progress. In the same vein Iftihkar Dadi mentions the need to reconsider terms such as *Islamic art*. That way, at least, frail bridges remain in place linking concepts and practices in different places. *Cubism,* for example, does not sound the same in a text on France as it does in a text on Chile, Colombia, or China, and it can help to set out the different meanings, so that *cubism* appears as two different words, or three or four different words, in different contexts.[46] Singaporean figuration would be *belated* in one sense when it is introduced to an art history seminar on the histories of modernism, but it would be *belated* in another sense when the artists themselves talk about their relation to the art historical past. (Some artists treat words like *belated* or *original* the way people

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[45] Rebecca Brown puts this concisely in her *Art Bulletin* "Intervention," responding to Partha Mitter. "We require," she writes, "a major shift in our understanding of modernism and postmodernism." She feels Mitter "does not make this move," but he "tempts us to discard the modern altogether as an organizing principle." She doesn't advocate that, however, because it would go against the importance modernism had for the artists. I agree, but I also note Brown implies that it would be possible to shift or discard the concepts of modernism. Brown, *Art Bulletin* "Intervention," 556. The metaphor of the conceptually rooted discipline is also used by Saloni Mathur: "To tug at these deeply rooted ideas is to realize the extent to which they remain firmly attached to the epistemological bedrock of the discipline itself." Mathur, *Art Bulletin* "Intervention," 558.

[46] See the end of Section 3 of the Seminars. This method is pursued in the experimental article "Writing About Modernist Painting Outside Western Europe and North America," in *Compression vs. Expansion: Containing the World's Art,* edited by John Onians (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 188-214.

sometimes treat serious words like *cancer*: they are said as quickly as possible, as if in passing, or else insouciantly, as if they were simple and easy.) Instead of changing the subject and talking about socioeconomic contexts, it is possible to continue using even dangerous words like *belated,* provided it is understood that their meanings can vary so widely that they are effectively different concepts camouflaged as a single word. The same applies to period and style terms such a *cubism*. It seems to me a way forward here is to take the generative concepts, the building blocks of art historical writing on modernism, and reveal their multiple meanings.

The crucial point in regard to current revisions of art history is that the test of an adequate re-conceptualization of a term like *belatedness* will be whether it can sustain a conversation that combines the anxiety the word continues to provoke in some quarters with the many decathected versions in current scholarship. It is not enough to explore "differences within similarities," or to write about repetition and disguise, or affinities instead of influence. It is necessary to "move away from blunt instruments such as originality, influence and derivation that remain embroiled in discourses of domination," as Ming Tiampo writes, but it is also necessary to *include* them, to let them speak. There is an opportunity here, because despite suggestive work by Judith Butler and others, none of our current solutions are enough. Without a synthesis, an account calling itself art historical will only tell part of the story, and be compelled to omit the rest.

2. Stop asking about a work's value or its visual quality (the old questions of Euro-american modernist art history), and consider identity issues, subjectivities, social settings, market forces, economic frameworks, national and political constructions of meaning.

This change of focus creates an interpretive dilemma, which Charles Green expresses most eloquently. "If art history's terms of value and the reasons for valuing painting have been formulated across the North Atlantic," he writes, "then attempts to think of other centers as equal—as Asianist John Clark does, for example—might seem to risk cutting off the reasons for valuing painting as painting. Do such attempts risk tending to change the conversation from the value and quality of the painting to the socio-economic contexts that make different art unique in different places?" As Green notes, the interest in *not* framing modernist art in terms of its value or quality springs from the awareness of the historical and political conditions under which the art was given attributes such as value and quality. This is an interesting opening for new scholarship, but also a problem, because the two approaches are not understood as compatible,

and only one—the new one—includes an account that explains the other. (This is not to say that the two approaches should be reconciled, or their deep disagreements resolved: but the unequal interpretive power of the two makes it especially challenging to see how they might coexist in a single text.) This issue is also succinctly put in Ming Tiampo's Assessment. She notes the assumption "that modernism was a closed system, located in the West and relentlessly disseminated to its territories with no reciprocal exchange; and that once 'transplanted,' modernism was replicated around the world, resulting in no contributions that were necessary to modernism." Her suggestion is to shift the question into politics: "As Edward Said suggested in *Culture and Imperialism*, modernism needs to be re-evaluated as a transnational movement that is inextricably linked to its history of colonialism, imperialism, war and the outcomes of travel, commerce, media, immigration and imagination." In this way the new interests are presented as ways to understand the old interests: the two perspectives are unequal in their interpretive power.

The shift from esthetic interests, such as value and quality, to socioeconomic ones is the sea change in art historical scholarship in the last thirty years, and it is still far from being resolved. In this book as in many others, the change plays out as a divergence of opinion between those for whom judgments of aesthetic quality are primary, and those who want to understand art as a social and economic phenomenon. Broadly speaking, the interest in quality, visual and formal properties, aesthetic content, value, and judgment is pursued within art history; and the interest in politics, nationality, and economic context is identified—again speaking broadly and informally—with postcolonial theory and cultural studies. The common rhetorical form this difference takes is that scholars who speak from outside art history are outspoken and those who write as art historians are circumspect, and I think the reason is partly the perceived unequal explanatory power of the two positions.

This, at least, is how I would put the situation as a heuristic formula. There are a thousand shades of gray and a million compromises. Thus T. J. Demos, for example, takes Susan Buck-Morss to task for a "totalizing tendency" that "reduces all culture to economic reason," even though Demos's interest is not aesthetics but the complexity of the market and the concept of the imagination.[47] But in the gray of ordinary compromise it is possible to discern the blurred

[47] In the *Art Bulletin* "Intervention," Saloni Mathur says that what made Gaganendranath Tagore's modernism distinctly "Indian" was "the revolutionary currents of Indian nationalism,

outlines of a deep and fundamental disagreement about the nature of art. In this book the greater interpretive power of socioeconomic analysis is not questioned, but its relation to aesthetic understanding is unresolved. Three questions in particular stand out. I arrange them in order of the strength of the claims that are made on behalf of political interpretations.

A. *Make use of social and cultural contexts to problematize the simple identification of the visual qualities of unfamiliar art*. Iftikhar Dadi cites the enormous compendium *Modernism*, edited by Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska, and especially an essay by Andreas Huyssen called "Modernism at Large." The argument, as Dadi presents it, is that modernism needs to be understood by "careful and patient work, including an awareness of social and political history, languages and literatures, and other cultural conceptions."[48] As Dadi notes, much of that work has been done in the pages of *Third Text*. Before *Third Text,* it had seemed possible to quickly assess whether a particular Kazakh, Indian, or Japanese painter was worthy of consideration in the context of canonical modernism, or whether the work lacked value or quality. Without extensive research into the particular conditions of each place, Dadi points out, writing about South Asian modernists will just be a new form of trophy-hunting, with the Eurocentric historian bringing back astonishing and exotic new examples of avant-garde art.

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the radical forms of cultural resistance operating in Bengal in the 1920s" and other factors, all of them political and social rather than aesthetic. (Mathur, *Art Bulletin* "Intervention," 559.) Although none of the respondents to Mitter's "Intervention" quite say it, Mitter's position is taken to be more traditional, formal, and perhaps even aesthetic. See for example Iftikhar Dadi's review of Mitter's *Triumph of Modernism;* and among the "Interventions," especially Wright, p. 554.

[48] Dadi's position is interesting and complex, and he also advocates "careful studies of the intellectual and aesthetic concerns of modernist and globalist artists at large." For the purposes of this summary, I am concentrating on what I see as his principal interest, which is not aesthetic but social.

I agree with these reservations. When I travel, I do not hope to augment the modernist canon, and in fact I systematically avoid "discovering" "new" artists.[49] I say this because I have been misidentified as a covert agent for the moribund traditions of Western art history.[50] And yet it is a common temptation for scholars to "discover" "new" artists, and describe them using terms familiar from North Atlantic modernism. [51] This is explicit in Steven Mansbach's book

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[49] See *Stories of Art* (New York: Routledge, 2002); "Is There a Canon in Art History?" in *Partisan Canons*, edited by Anna Brzyski (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2007); and "Writing About Modernist Painting Outside Western Europe and North America," in *Compression vs. Expansion: Containing the World's Art,* edited by John Onians (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 188-214.

[50] Most recently, Parul Mukherji has argued this in a reaction to a reading of an Indian text. Her essay will appear as part of a volume edited by Thomas DaCosta Kaufman; the paper was originally given at the 2008 CIHA conference in Melbourne. Mukherji refers in her paper to an abbreviated version of an account of the *Visṇudharmottara Purāṇa* in my *Stories of Art*. My interest in the original analysis of that text, in *On Pictures and the Words that Fail Them* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), as I hope is clear, is not to shore up a Western understanding of art history: it is rather to help erode that sense. Ironically—unfortunately—Mukherji and I have compatible aims, even though her essay doesn't make it sound that way. See her *The Citrasūtra of Visṇudharmottara Purāṇa,* edited and translated by Parul Dave Mukherji, Kalāmūlaśāstra Series (K.M.S.) vol. 32 (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi Centre for the Arts, 2001), and the review by Doris Meth Srinivasan, "The *Citrasūtra* of the *Visṇudharmottara Purāṇa*," *The Journal of the American Oriental Society* (July 1, 2004), accessed online August 2008.

[51] "North Atlantic" is also a term used by Charles Green; I like it because it acknowledges that the principal centers of *scholarship* on modernism and postmodernism are still centered on

Modern Art In Eastern Europe, which describes many Eastern European artists in terms of their similarities to Western European artists.[52] Yet it is nearly impossible *not* to do so, and the reason is not simply that it is natural to understand new things in terms of familiar things: it is because the logic of modernism requires incessant aesthetic judgment, and we—all of us—are not yet free of modernism. Even scholars trained in postcolonial studies can find themselves "discovering" "new" artists. In this book, several Assessments propose political and economic analyses of artists, including criticism of previous work that had made simple identifications of the art and aesthetic values, but without saying why those artists are worth considering *aside from* their political and socioeconomic contexts. The absence of that justification is a sign that aesthetic and socioeconomic understandings are immiscible: within a politically-oriented critique, an artist can still be understood as having intrinsic value, but that value is presupposed and not directly addressed. The unarticulated assumption that an artwork has intrinsic value, and it is therefore worth writing about, is a limit to the postcolonial-studies project of problematizing the modernist scholars' identification of visual qualities, because the initial choice of the artwork is beyond the text's horizon of conceptualization. A corollary is that the project of problematizing the identification of aesthetic qualities in art appears *as a project* because modernist logic remains so pervasive. In this case it is the internal conceptual structure of modernism that leads scholars to see their task as the dismantling of modernist concepts. This is

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western Europe and the Eastern seaboard of North America. when it comes to *art practices, markets,* and *institutions,* other terms are also useful, such as "Euro-american" or "Euramerican" (preferred by John Clark), or "Eurocentric" and "Anglocentric."When it comes to art practices, as distinct from the centers of theorization and scholarship, a diverse vocabulary of "centers" is helpful. Each "provincializes" differently.

[52] Review of Steven Mansbach, *Modern Art in Eastern Europe,* in *Art Bulletin* 82 no. 4 (2000): 781–85; and "Response [to Anthony Alofsin's letter regarding the review of Mansbach's Modern Art in Eastern Europe]," *Art Bulletin* 84 (2002): 539; and a reprise in "Writing About Modernist Painting Outside Western Europe and North America."

a complex argument, but it is a complex problem: postcolonial theory and visual and cultural studies that interpret art as a socioeconomic and political phenomenon conceive themselves as engaged in a critique of judgments of value and quality that emanate from particular cultural institutions in Europe and North America, and that critique takes the form of the assertion of the conceptual dependence of valuation on politics, rather than an examination of the possibility and history of valuation, and that is because valuation is involved in the initial location of objects of study, outside the text: and that, in turn, is a result of the ongoing dependence of writing about modern art on the conceptual machinery of high modernism, no matter how distant that machinery may appear to be.

B. *Replace older assertions of value and aesthetics with the critical tools of postcolonial studies, cultural studies, and critical theory*. It is one thing to employ socioeconomic and political tools to *problematize* previous assertions about the visual qualities of art, but it is another to assume that such tools will *remove* or *vitiate* older assertions. Some contributors to this book imply that work on political histories will come to replace the older, art historical concerns that I am identifying with aesthetics. It seems reasonable that as the new scholarship grows, the old art historical valuations will fade away along with the institutions and ideologies that supported them. For several respondents, the best way forward is to just change the subject from aesthetics to politics. The argument is not explicit in this book, but it is implied whenever a writer remains silent about value, quality, and other aesthetic judgments.

I am not convinced: I think that modernist investment in judgment, together with the art historical and critical narratives that gives it voice, is tougher than postcolonial theory.[53] I do not think that even the massive accumulation of scholarship on art outside of North Altantic modernism has had an effect on either the global value of North Atlantic modernism or the ongoing power of its master tropes. Despite Rasheed Araeen's very serious criticism, I do not

[53] *Master Narratives and Their Discontents*, with an introduction by Anna Arnar, in the series *Theories of Modernism and Postmodernism in the Visual Arts,* vol. 1 (Cork, Ireland: University College Cork Press; New York: Routledge, 2005), is an attempt to see how the existing narratives are structured, so that new accounts can get a grip on them, and build an effective critique.

think that *Third Text* has come to terms with the power of the aesthetically-driven narratives of modernism in the way that is necessary if they are to be fundamentally changed and not just rewritten as episodes in the history of nationalism, or slowly forgotten as fading remnants of European hegemony. The new subjects (economics, politics, postcolonial histories, languages and social contexts, material culture, identity construction) will not remove the old subjects (including not just value, quality, and other aesthetic judgments, but also "master narratives," concepts of the avant-garde, originality, immediacy, formalist criticism, notions of the significance of cubism or surrealism—the entire narrative and scholarly tradition of Western modernist and postmodernist art history).[54]

[54] Tani Barlow criticizes *Third Text,* and mentions *Positions, Traces,* and *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* as promising venues for Asian studies. It may be that in a decade *Third Text* or journals such as the ones Barlow prefers to it will be the principal texts in seminars on art history and criticism. But if that is so, it will be partly because people prefer writing that appears independent of older discourses. That is a working premise in journals such as *Third Text* that set out fresh problems and unfamiliar contexts rather than revisiting older ones. On the one hand, it is vital that projects like *Third Text* continue to bring new material into writing on art. But on the other, it is often easier to work with new ideas than it is to continue engaging the same stubborn bankrupt ideas of older art history. This is my principal complaint about visual studies: it is too easy, because there is often too little sense that the past of disciplines bears down on the present. This is developed in *Visual Studies: A Skeptical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 63–124. In relation to this book, see also Kasfir Sidnay, "Thinking About Artworlds in a Global Flow: Some Major Disparities in Dealing with Visual Culture," *International Journal of Anthropology* 18 no. 4 (2003): 211–18. I thank Joaquín Barriendos for drawing this to my attention.

The reason is an old chestnut: value matters in modernism, and judgment of quality is not separable from modernist self-descriptions. Postcolonial theory, area studies, and critical theory have rewritten judgments of quality and originality as ideologically and historically specific notions, whose persuasive force depends on specific political and institutional interests: but aesthetic quality cannot be made into a socioeconomically determined property of modern art without loss of a historical grip on the self-understanding of the modernist artists.[55]

Dadi writes that "in the absence of powerful but outdated institutional and academic codes to rebel against, the avant-garde simply cannot exist." This is a good observation, but it may miss something that can be crucial to the ways artists outside Europe understood what they were doing: the fact that in the absence of the institutions that propelled European modernism, it was and still is possible to *desire to have an avant-garde*. You can still mimic what you take to be avant-garde styles and ideas, and you can still measure the quality of your art against them. In my experience, most modernist painters working today do not measure their work directly against North Atlantic models, but that is not because they are convinced that their socioeconomic condition makes them different in kind, it is because a direct comparison is debilitating. Modernist artists in places like Chile, Paraguay, and Argentina—or Cambodia,

[55] Reading this passage, Zhivka Valiavicharska suggested I could add that "these concepts were the epistemological foundations of this kind of knowledge and they produced a modernist subjectivity (what you call self-understanding); an epistemological analysis of modernism and this modernist subjectivity is yet to happen. We need to write genealogies of when, how, and by what necessity notions of 'originality,' 'immediacy,' 'value' appeared,… and how artists become agents of this knowledge." I agree, but I also would add that such genealogies would not necessarily improve our sense of the artists' self-understanding, both because that self-understanding was not always, or often, self-critical, sufficiently articulate or capacious enough to accommodate narratives about its deployment of concepts such as 'agency' or 'originality'; and because aesthetic judgments are experienced as immediate and outside concepts. This is an obdurate problem because of the opacity of judgment, not just because of the lack of analysis.

Thailand, and the Philippines—have long understood their projects as emulations of European modernism, and that makes it not only permissible but necessary to think of aesthetic questions including quality and value. Dadi is sensitive to this, and he writes that it is important to engage in "a writing of artistic practice that respects the formalist properties of the art." But how, I wonder, can formalist properties be represented in a discourse that sees formalism and its attendant aesthetic properties as products of specifically European and North American practices?

There is an enormous, largely submerged problem here. Reconfiguring concepts such as value or the avant-garde as particular effects of specific Euramerican socioeconomic configurations only delays and deflects the possibility of better understanding their effect on our own choices and interests—on the reasons why we choose to write about certain art practices. As Ian Hacking has argued, naming something as a social construction is not the same as critiquing that thing.[56] I agree wholeheartedly with Partha Mitter that despite the new scholarship in postcolonial and area studies "the problem remains," because of the "sedimentation that has accumulated over the centuries with regard to what art is and must be." The privilege of the center will continue, he says, unless there is "some drastic re-thinking of the underlying assumptions of art history."

C. *Use socioeconomic analysis to describe any art*. An inbuilt assumption of postcolonial studies and other recent work is that a sensitivity to economic and political contexts is apposite to any art practice. Because all art is politically implicated, a political act, scholarship that attends to socioeconomic conditions will in theory be able to describe any unfamiliar art practice. I wonder about this assumption, not because some practices may cease to appear as interesting art, but because socioeconomic interest can be high where the art practices appear to be uninteresting, and vice versa. This is clearest to me in John Clark's work on the Tokyo Academy of Art at the beginning of the twentieth century, which which I mentioned in the Seminars.[57] I

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[56] Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[57] See Section 5 of the Seminars. Clark, *Modern Asian Art* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), especially 217–25.

was arguing that Clark avoids the derivative nature of the paintings in order to write about the socioeconomic conditions in the Tokyo Academy at the time. But it is not clear how the politics or economics of the Tokyo Academy bear on the qualities of the artwork: indeed, it is meant *not* to be clear because Clark intends to change the subject, to avoid the unfruitful and restricted discourses of belatedness and quality. Yet the reason why that disconnection is itself unproblematic is not addressed within the text.

3. Avoid global themes or concentrate on particular contexts and localities, treating artworks and their makers and publics as individual instances; acknowledge and develop multiple histories of modernism.

The emphasis on the particular, the unique, and the unreproducible is an exemplary purpose of historical writing, and it would be hard to maintain that compelling historical accounts could be written without such an emphasis. I list this option separately because it has become a trope in the historiography of art history and postcolonial studies, and also because it has been put in such a way that it bypasses specifically disciplinary concerns. At its core, it revives an old historiographic debate about the importance of individual events and objects as opposed to universal ones.[58] In that debate, the question is whether scholarship that attends only to particular people and objects can be historical writing, and conversely what happens when scholarship becomes so interested in large-scale ideas that it ceases to see structure in history. In this book there are several calls for a return to specificity. Speaking of the Seminars, Hyungmin Pai asks: "Is this a search for a global theory in a globalized world? One must emphasize that there are centers and peripheries; divergent communities defined through language, ideology, nationhood, financial interests, wealth, and connectedness to a global world… The point is how writing changes when one is immanent to the concepts that one uses." Other Assessments exemplify Pai's point. Caroline Jones gives a persuasive account of Hélio Oiticica's sense of the local and global; Suman Gupta offers a glimpse of his work on Zlatyu Boyadzhiev; Esther

[58] A useful comparison is Erwin Panofsky's debate with the anthropologist Franz Boas. See Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (New York: Icon, 1972); "atomism," the logical extreme of a focus on the local and particular, is discussed in my *Stories of Art,* chapter 1.

Gabara reads all the Seminars through the example of Cildo Meireles; Rasheed Araeen mentions *Third Text* work on non-White artists in postwar England and the US; and Iftikhar Dadi reports that he is working on a book on Pakistani artists.

I think it is helpful to distinguish a pragmatic and a critical form of the valorization of the local and particular. As a pragmatic approach, it is a way of suspending conversation about large issues such as influence or experiences of the avant-garde. It is a tonic to the repressive effect of those concepts, and also a tacit response to what is understood as their lack of consequences for day-to-day writing. As a critical strategy, looking at local contexts is a way of revealing the fundamental *disunity* of the European center. Alistair Wright, for example, suggests that thinking about Rabindranath Tagore can also reveal the "hybrid and contingent nature of Picasso's own work."[59] Both the pragmatic and the critical purpose raise several issues.

A. *The question of how to best understand what is meant by the "local."* I mentioned that Seminar 1, led by Fredric Jameson, attracted most attention not for its theorization of the global or the national but for those concepts' putative opposites. Saskia Sassen's Assessment is exemplary in this regard. Among the terms that are used to name what the global or the national occlude, the *local* is a common choice. Hyungmin Pai writes about Jameson's seminar that "It is mostly disappointing when brilliant writers who deal with the global never assume themselves to be local." For Pai, the local is a practice, not a conceptualization. It is therefore not available to universalizing theories. He makes an analogous point about the affiliated concept of the *everyday* when he asks: "isn't the everyday, even in its varied uses, defined as something that is practiced rather than thought?" For Pai, the everyday and the local are immersive: they may own us rather than the other way around. "The everyday impinges on the concept," he writes. These two kinds of experience, the local and the everyday, appear in a number of Assessments. They are understood in various ways, but their uses share a stress on nonconceptual, phenomenological, lived experience, and in that respect the conversations in this book echo conversations elsewhere

[59] Wright, *Art Bulletin* "Intervention," 554. This is another instance of the work that the *hybrid* does in current scholarship: here it signifies a foundational dissimilarity to self that is taken as a critique of the self-image of Western modernism.

in art theory[60] and contemporary art criticism.[61] A common thread in these otherwise divergent usages is an interest in inhabiting a represented experience that is phenomenological rather than conceptual.

Yet it could be said that Arjun Appadurai, one of the authors of the currently circulating idea of the local, warned against the identification of the local with "phenomenological"

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[60] Pai's intervention, for example, resembles the nonconceptual, phenomenological account of *land* and *landscape* that is developed by the geographer Denis Cosgrove as an example of what Marxist other ideological analyses of landscape omit. See *Landscape Theory,* co-edited with Rachael DeLue, vol. 6 of *The Art Seminar* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 93. This theme is developed in my "Über das Buch Landscape Theory," in *Points of View: Landschaft verstehen: Geographie und Ästhetik, Energie und Technik,* edited by Richard Schindler (Freiburg i. Br., Modo Verlag Freiburg, 2008), 45–54.

[61] The everyday is a common concept in contemporary art criticism, although it is not often articulated beyond Michel de Certeau's formulation. The canonical source is de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* translated by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). For uses of the everyday in current art criticism—sources that could be used to do more work on temporality—see Anna Dezeuze, "Assemblage, Bricolage, And the Practice of Everyday Life," *Art Journal* 67 no. 1 (2008): 31-37; Dezeuze, "Everyday Life, 'Relational Aesthetics,' and the 'Transformation of the Commonplace,'" *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 5 no. 3 (2006): 143; and Meir Wigoder, "Some Thoughts About Street Photography and the Everyday," *History of Photography* 25 no. 4 (2001): 368–78. See also Sarat Maharaj on "everyday space," in his "Counter Creed: Quizzing the Guangzhou Triennial 2008 According to James Joyce's 'Catechetical Interrogation,'" in *"Farewell to Post-colonialism,"* 5–11, especially p. 7.

experience.[62] In this book, the local moves between a phenomenological experience that can only be conjured or excerpted and never assimilated, and a compressed microcosm of the global, which remakes global conditions while participating in their conceptualization.[63] As Pai says, paraphrasing Mark Wigley, the local "is a form of knowledge" that reconciles "knowledge" with "place-bound conditions." A truly phenomenological sense of the local, however, could only be hinted at through "thick description," and not analyzed using the tools developed in this book.[64] A purely phenomenological local would be inimical to accounts of historical structure, but the evocation of an unthought, practiced and lived experience is an integral part of the presentation of the local in this book. This opens a question for future writing: what threads lead from the practiced, unthought, experienced, unconceptualized sense of the local—which I think is primarily a phenomenological conceptualization—to the wider concerns of scholarship, up to and including the global? Or to put it more formally: how can phenomenological experience be represented in accounts that are engaged with concepts that devolve from the universal?

B. *How does modernism-at-large serve as a counterbalance to the local or individual?* When some version of the local, particular, or individual is valorized, and the global is suspended or rejected, it becomes necessary to develop an alternate term that can function to counterbalance the global. One of the candidates here is modernism-at-large. Tani Barlow makes an especially strong stand in favor of the individual, distinguishing it from "modernism-at-

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[62] Appadurai, "The Production of Locality," in his *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 1996), 178–200, especially 182.

[63] For another critique of the use of *local,* see Lee Weng Choy, "Just What is it That Makes the Term "Global-Local" So Widely Cited, Yet so Annoying?" in *Over Here: International Perspectives on Art and Culture*, edited by Gerardo Mosquera and Jean Fisher (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2004). I thank Nora Taylor for drawing this to my attention.

[64] Pai's invocation of the local has resonance with Partha Mitter's evocation of Clifford Geertz's "thick description" in "Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery," *Art Bulletin* 90 no. 4 (December 2008): 568–74, especially 569.

large": "So let me make my first point as unmistakable and clear as possible," she writes, "Tanizaki, Oiticia, Doxiados, Lu Xun, Na Haesuk, and so on are not integers on a larger platform or project about globalism or global art. They are critical and inventive actors in the historical events of modernism-at-large." Here "modernism-at-large" is the critical counterbalance to the individual, but it could be argued that "modernism-at-large" is not as clearly disjunct from either larger platforms or individual "actors" as it would need to be to serve the distinction Barlow makes. Andreas Huyssen, who coined the expression, defines "modernism at large" as "the hybrid cultural forms that emerge from the negotiation of the modern with the indigenous"; for him the expression is more about mediation than difference.[65] Arjun Appadurai's concept of "modernity at large" is similar, although does oppose itself more distinctly to modernity's "universalism."[66] "Modernism at large" and "modernity at large," along with other concepts that point to modernism's entanglement in nationalism, global media, capital, migration, and colonial experience (to paraphrase a list of Dilip Gaonkar's), are parts of a general conversation on the impure, hybrid, self-dissimilar, and continuously political sense of modernism.[67]

The issue raised by Barlow's Assessment is different: it is to do with what concepts might be evoked by scholars who wish to distinguish their interests from any that have a potentially global reach. One reason the debates in this book have so much energy is because of the unremitting difficulty of replacing a discourse relating a universalizing modernism or postmodernism with the individual or local, with a discourse relating the individual or local to something else. Holding too tightly to the particularity of local contexts or individual artists and

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[65] It is also another concept that depends on an agreed-upon sense of hybridity. Huyssen, "Modernism at Large," in *Modernism,* edited by Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2007), 53–66.

[66] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 1996). Huyssen acknowledges Appadurai's concept only in passing: "Modernism at Large," 57.

[67] Gaonkar, "On Alternative Modernities," *Public Culture* 11 no 1 (1999): 1–18; Gaonkar's formulation is also quoted in Huyssen, "Modernism at Large," 57.

artworks can mean releasing the companion term of the dialectic into an open-ended or ill-defined conceptual field. In Barlow's Assessment, that problem is avoided by adducing "modernism-at-large," which she also links to Dadi's use of the expression, to neoliberalism, and to the collapse of the central position of the US in the world economy. There are many possibilities for this kind of move, and they can be developed by exploring exactly what roles are played by the three groups of concepts: the large terms that are suspended (in Barlow's text, "globalism or global art"), the small-scale terms that are valorized (the "actor," the "integer"), and the new alternates to the large-scale terms ("modernism-at-large").

C. *How do multiple modernisms serve as counterbalances to the local or individual?* One possible outcome of attending to many local contexts is the sense that modernism was a multiple endeavor, and that the European version need not be privileged over the others. Charles Green's brilliant Assessment takes stock of mutual influences, resonances, and other kinds of connections, and opts for a model that accommodates many modernisms. "Imagine," he writes, "that many places have seen analogous modernities, and many of the artists are of equivalent value. The canon depends on where you live, and depends on the ability to imagine that you are not at the center of the world and that there are many potential places of greatness." If painting is the art we're interested in, Green says, then Paris will indeed have to be the center, but there are other centers for other media. That is one way to conceive multiple modernities or modernisms. Another is to notice the presence of non-Europeans in European contexts, and to see how "Europe" itself was always divided. Like others in this book, I am exploring whatever possibilities present themselves. but I am not certain that histories of the multiple centers of modernism can ever, in the end, be more than adjustments and correctives to the self-described unity, universality, and independence of North Atlantic modernism. The problem here is strictly symmetric to problem of replacing older assertions of value with the critical tools of postcolonial studies: in replacing older ideas, we risk losing a sense of the way the modernist artists understood themselves. In the case of value, there is the fact that modernists in many countries aspired to the avant-garde, to value and quality and originality. In the case of multiple modernisms there's the fact that modernists in many countries sought to emulate European or North American modernism. Those desires can be dissected and their ideology can be revealed, but then they disappear *as desires,* and something of the sense of the particular historical

situation gets lost.[68] On the other hand, modernisms *were* multiple in many ways, and Green is absolutely right to keep reminding us of the fact. Even if no one at present is trying to write an answer to *Art Since 1900,* and even if "new" centers of modernism and modernist artists are likely to be swallowed into the slightly bulging canon of modernism that is still growing in North Atlantic scholarship, there are few things as sensible as continuing to point out what has been overlooked, and why.

D. *And finally, how do we recognize the local?* So far I have just been arguing that as we explore ideas of the local, individual, or particular, that we keep a watch on the ecology of terms in which they thrive. It is also possible to ask how we come to recognize what counts as interesting local or particular practices to begin with. I wonder if what counts as persuasive immanence to local practices isn't limited to work that makes contact with "our" interest in global capital and the possibility of resistance, as Caroline Jones puts it. Critical or resistant practices are the main examples of the local throughout this book. What about the very modest, direct, and crystal-clear Assessment by Karl Eric Leitzel, Director of Landscape Artists International? He also has things to say about his practice, but they scarcely touch on anything we discuss in this book. He only mentions the local and the global, the intuitive and the theoretical, because he was generously trying to reply to my request. There may be more to this than our concern with critical art: it may also be that our interest in critical art is shaped and even limited by our sense of persuasive immanence or local practice—or, more troubling, that that our sense of local practice is limited by our sense of critical art. What about artists who speak like Leitzel? Perhaps they reveal another limit to "our" apparently capacious interests in current writing on art.

4. Create a compelling narrative that might be detached from existing academic concerns.

So far I have outlined two dialectics: one that binds and differentiates art history and postcolonial studies; and one that binds and also distinguishes global concerns and local ones.

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[68] Again this is a question of modernism, Dadi's "first phase." It's true that "the problem melts away," as Green says, when it comes to more recent art. "John Cage," he says, "is as good a cosmopolitan example as [Colin] McCahon or Xu Bing."

This fourth and last strategy I want to introduce re-imagines both of those dialectics by focusing on writing, trying to find a working method that can be independent of some customs of academic writing. The Seminars and Assessments suggest several possibilities. In this case, they are all hypothetical.

A. *Use interpretive methods other than Western ones, such as concepts and theories outside semiotics, deconstruction, structuralism, or psychoanalysis*. Many contributors are also invested in the kinds of writing that scholars produce when they present the new art, and the ongoing dependence of that writing on models developed in North America and Western Europe. What is new in such writing is the art, the artists, and their cultural contexts. The writing can also appear new because it is so full of unfamiliar points of reference—"new" geographies, languages, politics, and temporalities. As a thought experiment, let me propose a more radical possibility, one that is consistent with these interests: deploy *interpretive methods* that are not used in North America or Western Europe—methods that are more temporally or culturally consonant with the work that is being studied.

Again it is Tani Barlow who puts the argument most strongly. She quotes my idea that a young scholar who tries to explain Renaissance altarpieces in terms of Peruvian *huacas* might not get a job at a major university. I should have said "in an art history department, as a specialist in the Italian Renaissance."[69] It is definitely the case that such a person could get a job in a major university, and that writing that deploys unexpected interpretations is often privileged in the humanities. Visual studies, anthropology, and philosophy are filled with such experiments, and they can be compelling. At the same time, academia continues to impose limits on such experimentation. Elsewhere I have noted that Gayatri Spivak reads Derrida for the interpretive methods she deploys, and not, for example, Bengali texts. (She reads and works with Bengali texts for many other purposes, but she takes deconstruction as her interpretive tool.) Vinay Lal and others have proposed a radical rejection of Western interpretive sources and concepts in

[69] So I agree that there is "precious little danger to even the most rarified aspirants to even the best universities, if they write across disciplines." But my point wasn't about writing across disciplines, which is widely encouraged: it was about using interpretive methods taken from disparate cultures.

favor of Indian sources, but that suggestion has not been taken up by any scholars I know.[70] It remains the case that a text on a Renaissance altarpiece, elucidated by reference to Peruvian concepts, would not be acceptable in specialist journals or conferences. There is a great deal more that can be done along these lines.

B. *Write a text that risks, or invites, being read as "poetry" rather than as expository prose*. The word "poetry" came up several times in the Seminars, as a name for any sort of writing that would not be immediately recognizable as a contribution to an existing body of disciplinary knowledge. A "poetic" text on an Indonesian modernist, for example, might not appear as art history or postcolonial studies, even though it might still appear as a text of interest *for* art history or postcolonial studies. "Why demonize poetry?" Barlow asks. "For me the poem is a precisely a problem in universality." Poetry, she notes, asks about the "universal in the appreciation of this thing called art." So why be skeptical of "poetry"? Why can't it be a solution to the problems raised in the Seminars? It can, and perhaps it will. Yet very few people write outside academic conventions in this sense. There is actual poetry on visual art, by John Ashbery's for example; and there is creative writing on visual art, such as John Berger's or Thomas Bernhard's. But the list of people who write genuinely unclassifiable prose on visual art is very small: for me, it includes Joanna Frueh and the inimitable Jean-Louis Schefer. Real

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[70] For Lal and Spivak, see my *Visual Studies*, 115–16. The closest is perhaps Parul Mukherji's analysis of the *Citrasūtra of Visṇudharmottara Purāṇa,* cited above, but her essay in the ambitious anthology *Towards a New Art History* cites Norman Bryson and Griselda Pollock, and the introductory essay "Towards a New Art History," co-written with Deeptha Achar and Shivaji Panikkar ends with a "select bibliography" of exclusively European and North American scholars—no Indian sources are considered as interpretive models. The anthology is an excellent conceptualization in many ways, and I mean only to point to the existence of an even more radical possibility. *Towards a New Art History: Studies in Indian Art,* edited by Deeptha Achar, Parul Dave Mukherji, and Shivaji Panikkar (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2003), especially pp. 47–68 and 122–30.

"poetry"—meaning non-academic writing, unclassifiable as expository or fiction—is exceptionally rare. The vast majority of us, including the most disaffected among the contributors to this book, write normative expository narratives with footnotes, captions, section headings, and bibliographies. Sometimes we also write the non-academic "poetry" that is conventional in commercial gallery publications, but for the contributors to this book, that is an unusual sidelight on our principal work.[71] If we want to hold up an ideal of inventive writing such as Carl Einstein, Walter Benjamin, or Aby Warburg, we need also to acknowledge that we ourselves are not following in those footsteps. This is, I think, another opportunity for radical experimentation. Both this and the idea of using non-Western interpretive methods would acknowledge the implication we all have in our writing: as long as scholars in art history, critical theory, and postcolonial studies continue to write normative academic papers, with abstracts, introductions, and carefully signposted arguments, supported by archival research, trailed by footnotes, presented at conferences, revised for edited volumes, and published by university presses, we will confine the "newness" of our scholarly practice art to the art we describe. A more radical engagement with the "new" can involve, and risk, more than just the pouring of new art into vessels that are now not only quite old but deeply stained by the very Euramerican interests that we often wish to question.[72]

C. *What does it mean to be outside Western academic writing, but still inside academic writing?* This last question concerns what happens when an author wants to be distinct from a

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[71] This is discussed in *The State of Art Criticism*, co-edited with Michael Newman, vol. 4 of *The Art Seminar* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[72] As I see it, this position is commensurate with calls for a radical and transformative encounter between critics and artists, which can be found for example in Irit Rogoff's work. In other words, it already happens in some art criticism; the scholarly disciplines represented in this book lag behind. A good comparative source here is *After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance,* edited by Gavin Butt (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), discussed for example in *The State of Art Criticism*.

specifically Euramerican context, but still participate in an international—globalized—academic discourse: in other words, when a scholar does now want to be seen to be writing "poetry."

John Clark's despondent Assessment concludes with this line: "In short this was another case of discussion in Euramerica which will end up being for Euramerica, and its very inconclusiveness points to an aporia which will become more apparent with time." It is true that the only non-Euramericans "admitted" to the book (as editor, I have to say that many more were invited) are from Japan, China, India, and Singapore, places where scholars "know how to discuss in these modes" and can read English (the transcript was not offered in translation, but Assessments could be in any language). But is Clark as "distant," as far outside this immense self-lubricating mechanism of Euramerican art scholarship as he proposes? For some, his work would be even further "inside" than most, because his writing can be exceptionally difficult to read: it depends on extensive knowledge of political, poststructural, and postcolonial theory, all of which have been elaborated in Euramerican academia.[73] One of the principal unresolved issues in the book *Is Art History Global?* was the question of the existence of non Euramerican (or, as I would rather say, North Atlantic) practices of art history. It is a sensitive question, because it leads not only toward the limits of our awareness of our implication in academia, but also toward the limits of our acceptance of whatever might count as different, as "poetry." In the next few decades, as questions about world art history and world critical studies become increasingly common and central, it will be necessary to develop good accounts of what, exactly, will count as being outside Euramerican scholarship *other than* writing about non-Western

[73] David Carrier's recent book on world art history can be used to raise the same question. Carrier ends the book with three fictional examples of art historians who work in Beijing, Mumbai, and Baghdad and write about Western modernism and postmodernism. The fiction is meant to sketch a condition of the near future, in which art history is written everywhere, about everyone. However it also posits a future in which a particular kind of Western academic writing has won the day. (One of Carrier's fictional authors has supposedly published in *The Burlington Magazine*.) Carrier, *A World Art History,* 147–52.

subjects.[74] "Poetry," I think, is as good a cipher as any for that supposed "outside," but the structure of the "inside" is still very much in question.

Conclusion

My purpose in setting out these four options is not to produce a taxonomy, but just to temporarily tease apart practices that are actually mixed. The options blend, diverge, and converge continuously, in all the writers represented in this book. Although Suman Gupta's Assessment is mainly about the inefficacy of our abstract arguments, his current project on Boyadzhiev is a mixture of close readings (they are, broadly speaking, art historical), meditations on the economic and political histories that have kept Boyadzhiev out of the mainstream (those passages are consonant with postcolonial studies and related initiatives), and enthusiastic appreciations of the work (which can be read as criticism or even "poetry"). Gupta mixes modes as practical matter; in theological terms, his project is kathenotheistic, because it turns to whatever will help throw light on the mysterious object of his attention. Most scholars have mixed practices. (A few don't: Benjamin Buchloh's political readings, for example, are relentlessly consistent.) The reason I treated these four options as if they exist separately in the literature is that sometimes it is helpful to look at just one strand or another in a practice that is, like all real-world practices, entangled. My concern is that when an interpretive strategy harbors an endemic problem that is pertinent to the artwork and to the projected audience for the text, then mixing that strategy with others may hide the problem rather than healing it. But that observation does not imply that purer practices are more effective. In practice, writing is mixed, and it thrives on that mixture. None of the purer themes I have considered would be as nourishing.

My own interest in this book has been to make it a little more difficult to add to the current glut of writing on contemporary international art. In the art world, you can say almost

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[74] I thank Whitney Davis for sharing a chapter of his work in progress on global art history, which is partly an "ethnography" of the different initiatives. Many are mentioned in *Is Art History Global?* and in *World Art Studies*, edited by Wilfried van Damme and Kitty Zijlmans (Leiden: Valiz, 2008).

anything you like about expression, meaning, ethnicity, nationality, nationalism, translation, hybridity, universality, postcolonialism, locality, place, everyday experience, temporality, identity, or neoliberalism, provided it is sufficiently multivalent, ambiguous, ambivalent, open-ended, allusive, impressionistic, coy, or otherwise free from critical accountability. As C. J. Wan-Ling Wee so nicely puts it, art world writing has "a vocabulary that indicates 'critique'" but "a tone that suggests 'celebration.'" I hope this book demonstrates that there are rigorous discourses available to help make sense of what is happening in contemporary art production. At the same time I have no illusions that this book will make a difference—I can't imagine many exhibition catalogues, brochures, reviews, or monographs taking these arguments on board. There is tremendous euphoria in the market, and despite little dips and crises it is doing just fine without serious discussion of meaning. As long as artworks are used as signs of prestige, culture, mobility, and patriotism, then art writing can remain vague, polyphonic, evocatively allusive, provocatively opaque, teasingly meaningful, and intellectually evasive.

Happily there is great pleasure in the hard work of rethinking contemporary art. It is often said that the complexity of art theory is artificial, and that it damages our love of art. I think more often, the opposite is true: after a while, the unfocused joys of unanalyzed art can get a little old. The thorny, contentious, and often brilliant critiques in this book are not aimed at art but at the ways it is understood, and they have the effect of making the art even more rewarding. I learned a tremendous amount from the contributors of this book, and now I think we are only at the beginning of a truly reflective and ambitious account of art and globalization.