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POSTCOLONIAL PALIMPSESTS: HISTORICIZING BIENNALES AND LARGE-SCALE EXHIBITIONS IN A GLOBAL AGE

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This dissertation *Postcolonial Palimpsests: Historicizing Biennales and Large-Scale Exhibitions in a Global Age* presents the history of the art world as one that is multi-layered, overlapped in order to contradict the grand narrative of Western modernity. It challenges the proposition of a singular notion of modernity contemplating Andreas Huyssen's words for an "expanded notion of the geographies of modernism" as a way to "understand [the process of] globalization [taking place] in our time."¹ The dissertation undertakes the same by examining how the non-Western "other" has come to be viewed through the examination to two significant exhibitions: *Magiciens de la Terre*, 1989, and *Documenta 11*, 2002 in Kassel Germany curated by Jean Martin, and Okwui Enwezor, respectively in order to examine the emergence of the postcolonial discourse in the context of contemporary art practices. *Magiciens*, as the first global exhibition that included the work of 100 artists from different parts of the world, which was critiqued for the totalizing worldview that lacked a critical distinction between the art/craft, primitive/modern and traditional/contemporary arts. On the other hand, *Documenta 11* emphasized the absence of the non-Western canon within the mainstream discourse of the arts through its unique curation of the "postcolonial

¹ Andreas Huyssen, "The Geographies of Modernity," New German Critique 2007 34(1 100): 189-207; DOI:10.1215/0094033X-2006-023.

constellation,” that comprised an exhibition and four education platforms.

This dissertation undertakes the 13 year journey using these two exhibitions as pivotal markers to also examine the biennales and large-scale exhibitions that have taken place during this period to understand the globalization of art that has taken place. In defining the *Postcolonial* as a *Palimpsest* this dissertation borrows curator Similly Shepard Steiner’s definition that views modernity as an “uneven palimpsests that textures the world full of very unequal modernities” that overlap or in their leaving gaps make visible the inequalities and silences by virtue of the hegemonic power of cultural dominants.² Therefore the world viewed as a palimpsest makes noticeable the several layers of complexities and the “multiple modernities” evident in postcolonial history.³ The focus of the dissertation is to present a proposition for a “new modernity,” one which extends outside the singular modern domain of the West, allowing for a new understanding to view the world and humanity through the realm of contemporary art.

² Similly Shepard Steiner, “Biennial Cultures/Perennial Worries,” *Art, City and Politics in an Expanding World: Writings from the 9th International Istanbul Biennial*, Deniz Unsal, Istanbul: Foundation for Culture and Arts, 2005, 152-168.

³ By cultural theorist Stuart suggestion, the notion of “multiple modernity” has always existed in the world. For him the artist no longer needs to view modernism as a secure possession of the West, but rather as an open language that can be transformed to write history as a series of “cultural translations” rather than a single “universal moment” in a given space and time. See Stuart Hall, Sarat Maharaj, Sarah Campbell, and Gilane Tawadros, *Modernity and Difference*, Annotations, Vol. 6. London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 2001, 18. For detailed discussion please view chapter 3 “Unsettling Constellations? Or the Biennialization of Contemporary Art.”

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Arshiya Lokhandwala is a Curator (M. A., Goldsmiths College, London) Gallerist, and owner of Lakeeren Art Gallery (1995-2003 and 2009-ongoing) in Mumbai, India, that has presented over 90 exhibitions of contemporary Indian art. She also curated *Rites/Rights/Rewrites: Women's Video Art* that traveled to Cornell, Duke and Rutgers's Universities from 2003-06. She was also an intern participant in the *Documenta 11* Education program in Kassel in 2002, under the artistic curator Okwui Enwezor and at the Tate Modern in 2000. Among her recent curatorial projects have been *Against All Odds: A Contemporary Response to the Historiography of Archiving, Collecting and Museums in India*, Lalit Kala Academy, Delhi January, and *Of Gods and Goddesses, Cinema, Cricket: The New Cultural Icons of India* at the Jehangir Art Gallery in 2011. Her upcoming exhibition *The Rising Phoenix: A Conversation between Modern and Contemporary Indian Art* will take place at the Queens Museum, New York, 2014 preceded by a symposium in NYC in 2012. She lives and works in Mumbai and her scholarly interests include biennales, large-scale exhibitions, globalization, feminism, performance and new media art.

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CHAPTER 1

FROM LES MAGICIENS DE LA TERRE TO DOCUMENTA 11

This dissertation *Postcolonial Palimpsests: Historicizing Biennales and Large-Scale Exhibitions in a Global Age*, examines the emergence of the postcolonial discourse in the context of contemporary art practices by examining two important exhibitions *Les Magiciens de la Terre* curated by Jean Martin in Paris, 1989, and *Documenta 11*, 2002 in Kassel Germany. Both exhibitions have achieved a significant place in history, but for opposing reasons. *Magiciens*, dubbed as the first global exhibition of contemporary art in the world, was critiqued for a totalizing worldview that lacked a critical distinction between the art/craft, primitive/modern and traditional/contemporary arts. *Magiciens* in its attempt to blur the distinctions between the West/non-Western worlds reinstated instead the Western perspective of the non-Western “other” as exotic and ended up reproducing an already existing hierarchy. On the other hand *Documenta 11*, one of the most important institutions of contemporary art, in 2002 presented the world’s first postcolonial exhibition that emphasized the absence of the non-Western canon within the mainstream discourse of the arts. In taking this stance *Documenta 11* served to critique the Western canon not only through a visual context of an exhibition, but by also engineering a theoretical space within the “postcolonial constellation” as a series of spheres and platforms. This view prompted theorist Johanne Lamoureux in her essay *From Form to Platform* to consider “*Documenta 11* as an antidote to *Magiciens de la Terre*.⁴ In considering this perspective the

⁴ Johanne Lamoureux, “From Form to Platform: The Politics of Representation and the Representation of Politics,” *Art Journal* 64, no. 1 (2005), 64(10). This essay was first presented in Norman Kleebatt’s 2004 College Art Association session “Identity Roller Coaster: From *Magiciens de la Terre* to *Documenta 11*.” This session was later published in Art Journal as a collection of several essays that addressed the issue of identity politics within large-scale exhibitions as a roller-coaster ride, with its ups and downs that were however important forums for social justice and radical reform.

dissertation, undertakes to study the 13-year period between *Magiciens* (1989) and *Documenta 11* (2002) by closely analyzing the two exhibitions as well as the biennales and other large- scale exhibitions that have influenced the emergence of the postcolonial discourse in the context of art.

The period before 1989 saw large survey exhibitions of Western art that took place in Europe and Northern America. These exhibitions and biennales were noted to exhibit very few non-Western artists emerging from the postcolonial world. Nor were they engaged with their discourses or politics thereby reflecting a disinterested attitude of the West towards the non-Western “other.”⁵

The process of de-colonization that commenced after World War II took nearly 40 years to gain acceptability in the Western art world. The dissertation analyses the reason for the delayed recognition and acknowledgement of the postcolonial canon by the Western art world. “Postcolonial” has been defined by theorist Bill Ashcroft as a discourse that “first, analyz[es] the many strategies by which colonized societies have engaged imperial discourse; and second a study in the way in which many of these strategies are shared with colonized societies, re-emerging in very different political

⁵ The “other” in the context of the postcolonial has a very specific reading. There are several postcolonial theorists including Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha who have written extensively on its meaning. However Bill Ashcroft in *Empire Strikes Back*, explains the “other” in terms of these theorists as a manner to: maintain authority over the other in a colonial situation, imperial discourse striver to delineate the “other” as radically different from the self, yet at the same time it must maintain sufficient identity within the “other” to valorize control over it. Hence for Ashcroft, “otherness” can thus be produced by a continual process of what Bhabha calls “repletion and displacement” that instigates an ambivalence of the very site of imperial authority and control on the postcolonial subject. In my usage of the “other” I allude to a subject of non-Western origin, arising either from the postcolonial / Third/Second World or has been marginalized, being of either gender. Bill Ashcroft, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, ed. Griffiths, Gareth, 1943- Tiffin, Helen. 2nd ed. ed. London; New York : Routledge, 2002., 103, Catalog Record - <https://catalog.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=4488544&DB=local>. Also see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London; New York: Routledge, 2004, 408; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* New York: Grove Press, 1967.

and cultural circumstances.”⁶ Since the 1980’s the postcolonial has emerged as an important socio-political discourse in the humanities. Hence the absence of non-Western artists belonging to the now postcolonial world is emblematic of larger issues tied to economic, political and social factors that have ethical and historical repercussions for the world.

Although many critics and scholars have credited *Documenta 11* in 2002 as being a pivotal moment in the history of exhibitions that institutionalized the postcolonial within the mainstream contemporary art world, it is necessary to understand the issues and conditions that led to the emergence and inclusion of postcolonial discourse in the contemporary art world. This dissertation, therefore, examines the 13 years period between the two exhibitions *Magiciens* and *Documenta 11* to analyze the emergence of the postcolonial discourse and what lead to its significance. The year 1989, undoubtedly could be earmarked as an inflection point in world political history, as the year that saw the collapse of the Second or communist world signified by the falling of the Berlin wall that divided East and West Germany. This reinforced capitalism and the might of the American empire as the new global order. It was the same year that marked a moment of celebration for South Africa with the end of apartheid, but a moment of grief for China with the Tiananmen Square massacre. The year 1989 also witnessed the dismantling of the former three -world structure of the First, Second and Third World. This opened a new space in the world context that allowed the neglected history of colonization and the postcolonial

⁶ As defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, the Third- World are “countries of the world, especially those of Africa and Asia, which are aligned with neither the Communist nor non- Communist bloc; hence, the underdeveloped or poorer countries of the world, usu. those of Africa, Asia and Latin America”. See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, (prepared by J.A Simpson et al), Vol. xvii, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1989, 957.

discourse to emerge as an important consideration in the global discourse on the arts.

In order to begin we must start by acknowledging the influence of the exhibition *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, 1984 at the Museum of Modern Art without which the exhibition *Magiciens* would not have taken place. *Primitivism* exhibited Modernist paintings alongside African, Native American, and other non-western artifacts and received critical attention for articulating a dialogue between Western and tribal art and the relationship between them. *Magiciens* in 1989 presented at the Centre Georges Pompidou Paris, initially designed for the Grande Halle of La Villette in Paris, an abandoned slaughterhouse attempted to further this discussion.⁷ The intended location, of *Magiciens*, however would have magnified the already problematic presentation of the exhibition by further highlighting the history of France as a colonizing nation, responsible for not only plundering its colonies but also for the loss of thousands of lives.

The exhibition nevertheless was conceived as a commemoration of the bi-centenary of France as a nation state, but could be additionally viewed to mark the 100-year anniversary of the world fair or the *Exposition Universelle* that took place in Paris. In 1883, *Exposition Universelle* had exhibited the non-Western “other” as exotic amidst the progress of the West highlighted by its industrial revolution. A century later the exhibition *Magiciens* further maintained this separation of the “other” by selecting non-Western tribal artists to exhibit their work with avant-garde contemporary Western artists. Clearly despite the 100 years the world had not changed very much and although it had attained freedom from the process of colonization, non-Western

⁷ For details see Lamoureux, “From Form to Platform: The Politics of Representation and the Representation of Politics,” *Art Journal* 64, no. 1 (2005): 64(10).

representation as a postcolonial entity was still considered the “other.”

Exposition Universelle had its advantage in that it prompted the commencement of the first Venice Biennale in 1895 as a new exhibition model. As a bi-annual exhibition the biennale offered a perspective of the world exposition outside that of the “exotic.” The biennale as a recurring bi-annual exhibition represents a unique geo-politics of location at a particular moment in history and is therefore different from a large-scale exhibition. While the museum is a permanent structure, the recurrence and flexibility of a biennale allows it to reinvent itself and re-negotiate its relationship between the local and global with greater immediacy than a museum. Of the various kinds of exhibitions including large-scale exhibitions, blockbusters, which are popular museum shows, the biennale has hence emerged as one of the most important exhibition model that represents the globalization of art.⁸ Biennales could be stated to present the politics of the world at a macro level, while large-scale exhibitions allow one to view specific discourses from a micro level, allowing for an in-depth analysis of the context.

Consequently the recurrence of the biennale provides historic continuity, which mega-exhibitions as singular events cannot offer. However, the history of the biennale over a 100 year period reveals the fact that relatively few non-Western artists were included up until the 1980s, a period when Third World biennales started emerging on the periphery from the postcolonial world namely Istanbul, Havana and Cairo. These biennales played a pivotal role in centering on their own issues and contexts as they

⁸ Rene Block, the curator of the Museum Fridericianum that host *Documenta* (An exhibition taking place in Kassel, Germany every 5 years), defines the biennale as a chronological event staged every two years. Block Rene, ed., *Song of the Earth*, Kassel, Germany: Museum Fridericianum, 2000, 4.

invited other Third World nations to participate. This further highlighted the absence of the postcolonial “other” within the mainstream Western art world.

Given this distinction between the biennale and large-scale exhibition *Documenta* on the other hand, could be termed a hybrid as it functions both as a large-scale exhibition that is recurring like the biennale, but in a 5 yearly cycle. The exhibition originated in Kassel as post world rebuilding of West Germany after the bombing of the town. Although it has been highly valued for its critical discourse and institutional critique, it has since its inception engaged mainly with Western avant-garde artists and their discourses. *Documenta 11* in 2002 curated by Okwui Enwezor and his team of 6 curators holds a significant place as it was the first to engage and highlight the politics of the postcolonial canon. Enwezor defined the “postcolonial constellation” as:

an understanding of a particular historical order that configures the relationship between political, social, and cultural realities, artistic spaces and epistemological histories not in contest but always in continuous redefinitions.⁹

Looking back at *Documenta 11* seven years later in 2009, the influence of the exhibition is amply evident with non-Western artists regularly exhibiting and selling at top prices, sometimes out pricing their Western counterparts in art centers of the world, like New York, London, Paris or Berlin. Traditional auction houses such as Sotheby’s have also changed their auctions presentation to have categories such as “contemporary auctions” that include artists from all over the world. But viewing the expansion of the postcolonial in the context of the museal culture this inclusion of the postcolonial “other” is an integral process that shifted the art world from the international (a relationship determined by nation states) to a global space in which the

⁹ See Okwui Enwezor, “The Black Box,” *Documenta 11, Platform 5: Exhibition*, Catalogue, English, ed. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002, 43.

boundaries are porous (no longer being defined by the nation state). This has as a result affected the relationship between the center (West) and the periphery (non-West), allowing for a new dialogue to begin between them. In the arts, the difference is perceptible with the inclusion of the postcolonial “other” in the Western biennales propelled by the Third-world biennales, which have given the postcolonial discourse additional agency, and impetus.¹⁰ This has enormous consequence, as the history of the postcolonial world in the process of decolonization has been a short one, comprising only 60 years.

The emergence of the postcolonial has benefited from the appearance of another factor, namely the preoccupation of the world with memory. This can be surmised from Andreas Huyssen in arguing that although globalization has emerged as a new force in which access, information and people are suddenly moving and traveling at rapid speeds the past seems to have gained more currency than the future.¹¹ According to him globalization has created a cycle of quick disappearance and commodification of objects, leaving people paranoid about remembering the past with an attempt to museumize it.¹² He advocates this paranoia of memorializing the past as premised on one’s irrational “fear of forgetting.”¹³ Hence for him this cultural obsession that we are currently witnessing, stems from one’s desire to hold on to the

¹⁰ The term “other” as defined by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, in general terms is attributed to anyone who is separated from one’s self. In this case, I allude to their definition of the colonial subject as “other” by which the authors, consider discourses such as “primitivism and cannibalism” as ways in which, “the binary separation” between the “colonizer and colonized” is retained. They further, state that it is through this assertion, that the “naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view” are preserved. See Bill Ashcroft, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, ed. Griffiths, Gareth, Tiffin, Helen, London: Routledge, 1998.

¹¹ Andreas Huyssen, “Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia,” *Public Culture* 12, no. 1 (2000), http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/public_culture/v012/12.1huyssen.html.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

past in order to memorialize it, and prevent it from disappearing from our memory. This results in the world becoming increasingly “musealized” in which “total recall” becomes our final aim.”¹⁴

When viewed in the current context of globalization of media, this according to Huyssen allows, “our past [to] invade our present,” in which history engages us with an ever more “voracious museal culture,”¹⁵ keeping the past alive in the present in a way that was not possible earlier. As a result, the shrinking temporal boundaries have weakened the experiential dimension of space, changing the way we conceptualize memory into a “mode of re-presentation of the past” in the present context through the “globalization of memory.”¹⁶ Here I extend Huyssen’s premise of the significance of the globalization of memory that has additionally facilitated and supported the appearance of the postcolonial discourse. I reevaluate the contribution of exhibitions such as *Documenta 11* to further endorse Huyssen’s globalization of [postcolonial] memory through its unique postcolonial constellation.

The dissertation thus, undertakes to examine and include postcolonial history that has until now been largely excluded by the West. In defining the *Postcolonial* as a *Palimpsest* this dissertation borrows Similly Shepard Steiner’s definition in her essay “Biennial Cultures/Perennial Worries” that views modernity as an “uneven palimpsests that textures the world full of very unequal modernities” that overlap or in their leaving gaps make visible the inequalities and silences by virtue of the

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid. Here I allude to Huyssen’s premise regarding the difference between postwar Germany and South Africa as political sites of memory that still function as national, rather than post-national or global spaces. The biennale similarly as a global entity draws on local context of memory as an enterprise.

hegemonic power of cultural dominants.¹⁷ The world viewed as a palimpsest makes visible the several layers of complexities and the “multiple modernities” evident in postcolonial history.¹⁸

This is a significant shift in the way the world was viewed. Modernity or “the modern” according to several theorists including Timothy Mitchell has always been a “synonym for the West.”¹⁹ He defines modernity as a process that began and finished in Europe, being “exported across ever-expanding regions of the non-West.”²⁰ Therefore he says it is wrong to assume: the existence of the West and its exterior, long before the world’s identities had been divided into this neat, European-centered dualism.²¹ This thought is confirmed by Perry Anderson who states, “that the idea of modernism was born ‘in a distant periphery rather than at the center of the cultural system of time.’”²²

Further, several theorists including Andreas Huyssen; assert “Modernity is never one.”²³ According to him different pasts have shaped how specific cultures have

¹⁷ Similly Shepard Steiner, “Biennial Cultures/Perennial Worries,” *Art, City and Politics in an Expanding World: Writings from the 9th International Istanbul Biennial*, Deniz Unsal, Istanbul: Foundation for Culture and Arts, 2005, 52-168.

¹⁸ By cultural theorist Stuart suggestion, the notion of “multiple modernity” has always existed in the world. For him the artist no longer needs to view modernism as a secure possession of the West, but rather as an open language that can be transformed to write history as a series of “cultural translations” rather than a single “universal moment” in a given space and time. See Stuart Hall, Sarat Maharaj, Sarah Campbell, and Gillian Tawadros, *Modernity and Difference*, Annotations, Vol. 6, London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 2001, 18. For detailed discussion please view chapter 3 “Unsettling Constellations? Or the Biennialization of Contemporary Art

¹⁹ Timothy Mitchell, “The Stage of Modernity,” *Questions of Modernity: Contradictions of Modernity*, v. 11 Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, 1.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid 3.

²² Ibid, 6.

²³ Andreas Huyssen, “The Geographies of Modernity,” *New German Critique* 2007 34(1 100): 189-207;

negotiated the impact of modernization since the nineteenth century.²⁴ He therefore calls for an “expanded notion of the geographies of modernism” as a way to “understand [the process of] globalization [taking place] in our time.”²⁵ Dipesh Chakravorty attempts to further Huyssen’s position of “geographies of modernism” by adding “the time of modernity is never uniform, [because] modernity appears in multiple histories.”²⁶ Chakravorty therefore contemplates the possibility of multiplicity of modernities, some of them non-Western in origin.²⁷

S. N Eisenstadt pronounces that the idea of multiple modernities is the “best way to understand the contemporary world” in which “the history of modernity” is continually constructed and reconstituted by the multiplicity of cultures.²⁸ Also he clarifies that modernity and Westernization are not the same. Therefore, he suggests Western patterns of modernity are not “authentic” modernity although they enjoy historical precedence and continue to act as a basic reference point for others.²⁹ For him, it is only in acknowledging a “multiplicity of continually evolving modernities” that one confronts the problem of just what constitutes the “core of modernity.”³⁰ This allows us to counter-act the totalizing view of Western hegemony that has dominated the worldview through the perspective of both “historicism” and modernity as a grand

DOI:10.1215/0094033X-2006-023.

²⁴ Ibid., 199.

²⁵ Ibid., 207

²⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Shemuel Noah Aizensh, Tadt. *Multiple Modernities*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2002, 2.

²⁹ Ibid., 3.

³⁰ Ibid.

narrative.³¹ The dissertation *Postcolonial Palimpsest* therefore undertakes to examine the artworld in the context of a “new modernity” constructed as “multiple modernities” that need to be viewed in their individual time frame and context.

The changes in the visibility of the postcolonial however, have been much aided by the biennales and large-scale exhibitions that have propagated and circulated the postcolonial discourse all over the world. Hence the changes that took place during the 13-year period (1989-2002) are of great significance within the discourse of the contemporary arts. How did *Magiciens* and *Documenta 11* effectively bring about this change? What has been the consequence result of inclusion of the postcolonial? To answer these questions it is important to understand the circumstances that allowed for these changes to take place. This leads us to begin by examining the relationship and intersections between globalization and postcolonial theory, as it is their interaction that has resulted in the emergence of the postcolonial discourse in the context of art.

GLOBALIZATION AND POSTCOLONIAL THEORY IN THE GLOBAL AGE

Examining the globalization of art that includes biennales and large-scale exhibitions, a strong nexus between globalization and postcolonial theory becomes evident.

Theorist Simon Gikandi in his essay “Globalization and the Claims of Postcolonial,” situates “globalization and postcoloniality” as two important terms in social and cultural theory today. He alleges that since the 1980s, both globalization and postcoloniality have functioned as dominant paradigms that support the large-scale transformations taking place within the political and economic relationships in our world. In thinking about the interaction between the two, Gikandi stresses postcolonial theory as a foundation for rethinking the global, leading him to enquire, “Is

³¹ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* [Illuminationen.], 1st ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968.

postcoloniality a consequence of the globalization of culture?"³² In either case, what it determines is there exists a strong inter-relationship between them. But in order to consider this we first need to understand what these terms mean. The current phase of globalization in the context of the postcolonial allows one to consider the continued existence of the past; for example, the history of colonialism that extends into the present, thereby the postcolonial is not only relegated to the past but also continually linked to the present. In understanding the influences of the globalization of art along with the process of "globalization of memory," as suggested by Huyssen, it is imperative to understand and define the process of globalization, the postcolonial, and the intersections that become visible in the context of circulation of art.

1- Theories of Globalization

Today we understand globalization as a complex phenomenon that is considered to be a universalizing, homogenizing entity that is plural, multiple and is located nowhere and everywhere simultaneously.³³ Defined by postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha, globalization enables the spaces within boundaries to become permeable, so that global economies and cultures come into intense and instant contact with each "other."³⁴ The process of globalization however is not new. Sociologists Ronald Robertson, and David Held date the process of globalization beginning as early as 1496 with the colonization project by Western European countries.³⁵ Other social

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Homi Bhabha, "Democracy Unrealized," *Documenta 11, Platform 1*, Okwui Enwezor, Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002, 351.

³⁵ For more information see David Held, *Globalization: The Reader*, edited by John Beynon and David Dunkerley. Routledge, 2000, 11-12. Held, D. and McGrew, A., Goldblatt, D. and Perraton, J. *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999, 429.

historians like Jan Nederveen Pieterse (“Oriental Globalization”), John Hobson, and Martin Bernal (*Black Athena*), date it even earlier, presenting evidence of globalization in the East as an expansive territory with the Afro-Asian age of discovery that preceded Columbus and Vasco Da Gama by about a millennium.³⁶ But according to many sources, globalization as a term has only come to exist since sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein’s *World Theory System*, in which he presented the world as one that comprised of centers, peripheries and semi-peripheries, which is often cited as the forerunner to globalization theory.³⁷

Today, globalization is nonetheless most often understood by the definition of geographer David Harvey as a “compression of space and time” to an extent that nothing can be considered local anymore.³⁸ The Canadian cultural critic Marshall McLuhan, fondly known as the “father of new media,” introduced the idea of a technologically based “global village” generated by social “acceleration at all levels of

³⁶ John Hobson, in his essay “East and West in Global History” presents a strong critique of global history as a discipline based on historical evidence. He suggests that global history is neither global nor historical, but is “Ahistorical Eurocentism” written backwards. For more details see Jan Nederveen Pieterse essay “Oriental Globalization, Problematizing Global Knowledge and the New Encyclopedia Project: An Introduction edited by Mike Featherstone and Couze Venn, *Theory, Culture & Society* 2006 23, 411.

³⁷ Wallerstein’s world system informs us that the world is divided into the center and periphery, rejecting the view that societies are relatively stable, holistic units, making it the role of conflict of history in social change to seek and map the dynamics of asymmetries in capitalist culture. Although challenged and reworked, Wallerstein’s theory still acts as an influence in the discourse of late capitalism. See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, New York: academic Press, 1974. David Washbrook, another economist further appropriates the world-system theory as Eurocentric, as it suggests the “West” as the center in world social relations. See David Washbrook, “South Asia, the World-System, and World Capitalism,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 49: 3 (August 1990): 479-508.

³⁸ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, D. Harvey, Cambridge: EUA Blackwell, 1990.
<<http://quipote.biblio.iteso.mx/dc/ver.aspx?ns=000160508>>.

human organization” of new media technologies in the 1960s.³⁹ Sociologist Robertson later articulated this conception as the “single world space.”⁴⁰ Yet, postmodernist theorist Fredric Jameson views the current state of globalization as one encompassing “new technologies” called “information”⁴¹ or “communicational nets” and sociologist Manuel Castell calls this phenomenon a “network society” or “space of flows” that replace the traditional “space of places.”⁴² In the realm of contemporary globalization, information technology (and especially the Internet) is not only pivotal in connecting the world today but also gives one several virtual worlds to inhabit through cyberspace.

In this however, globalization circulates within various microcosms and macrocosms of the local and global,⁴³ that theorist Robertson terms as “glocalization”

³⁹ See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1994.

⁴⁰ The *Oxford English Dictionary*, notes the earliest uses of the term global by Marshall McLuhan in Edmund Carpenter’s and McLuhan’s *Explorations In Communication* from 1960. In this text McLuhan coins a term “global village” where he anticipated the effects of the worldwide electronic media, especially television that would bring people and events of the world in instant contact with each other, just like in a small village. See The *Oxford English Dictionary*, (prepared by J.A Simpson et al), Vol. xvii, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1989, 522, and McLuhan, “Introduction,” McLuhan and Carpenter (eds) *Explorations In Communication: An Anthology*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1960.

⁴¹ Fredric Jameson “Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue,” *The Cultures of Globalization*, eds. Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998, 56.

⁴² Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. 1st MIT Press ed. ed. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994. Castel in this book makes an important differentiating between the terms “information society emphasizing the role of information in society. In contrast for him the “informational” society indicates a specific form of social organization in which information generating, processing and transmission become sources of productivity and power.

⁴³ In order to clarify the process of globalization it is important to also distinguish if globality and globalism similarly convey the same meaning. Sociologist Ulrich Beck informs us that “globality” refers to the “world society,” making the “notion of closed doors” an archaic one, suggesting that nothing can be local anymore. “Globalism” for Beck relates to the economic structures of the “world market” which has the necessary power to supersede (local and national) governments with the permission to take necessary political action if required, with globalization being a universal term to describe “the processes through which sovereign national states are criss-crossed and undermined by trans-national actors with varying prospectuses of power, orientations, identities and networks.” Cited in John Beynon and David Dunkerley, *Globalization: The Reader*, London: Routledge, 2000, 11-12.

or “glocal,” that reflects the interpenetration between local and global rather than a situation of local being overridden by the global.⁴⁴ This, according to him, gives both local and global the power to construct each other in which globalization transforms the local identities, customs, and values; and the inhabitants also transform the global into their local environments leading to the construction of new identities not necessarily belonging to either local or global.⁴⁵ For Bhabha, globalism opened a new dynamic shift in the global axis, which changed the dynamic that existed over centuries from the “north- south” to the “global and the local.”⁴⁶ Or as he would prefer to call it “local-global,” giving agency to the local.⁴⁷

Globalization has also been further presented as a disjunctive process by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai in his essay “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” presented as five fluid interjecting spaces called “ethnoscapes,” “mediascapes,” “technoscapes,” “finanscapes” and “ideoscapes.” A recent addition of the sixth scape in 2003 is called the “artscape,” of which each represent different zones or categories, but also overlap with each other.⁴⁸ Although some critics like Appadurai see globalization optimistically as a force that benefits the world, there

⁴⁴ Rolland Robertson, “Globalization Theory 2000+: Major Problematics,” *Handbook of Social Theory*, eds. George Ritzer and Barry Smart, London: Sage Press, 2001, 458-471.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 458-471.

⁴⁶ Homi Bhabha, “Democracy Unrealized,” *Documenta 11, Platform 1*, Okwui Enwezor, Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002, 351.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 351.

⁴⁸ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Vol. 1, Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, 35. For Appadurai scapes, such as the ethnoscapes (produced by the flows of people, tourists, immigrants, refugees and guest workers), mediascapes (the worldwide distribution of information and images by newspaper, magazine, television and film), technoscapes (the distribution of both mechanical and informational technologies), finacescapes (global capital flows) and ideoscapes (the distribution of ideas, terms and images and political values related freedom, democracy, welfare and rights).

exist several others who offer cautionary critiques. For example, Cuban curator and historian Gerardo Mosquera considers “globalization is to be feared” as it repackages development of the world “reorganized by colonialism.”⁴⁹ It continues to perpetuate and feign characteristics of the homogenized Mc-American culture at levels of both popular culture and high art. This for him simulates the same “hegemonic structures” of global capitalism “even when contesting them.”⁵⁰ And it leads him to also eye “the new [postmodern] appeal towards otherness” with suspicion, in which “art from the peripheries,” is labeled as “exotic,” (*Magicien de la Terre*, Paris 1989), “authentic” (as critiqued by *Authentic/Excentric*, Venice, 2001) or “indigenous,” thus affirming the victory of the “coloniality of global capitalism.”⁵¹

But one of the most powerful critiques of globalization has emerged from theorists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their book *Empire*. By playing on the term “empire” itself, the authors extend the terrain of the former colonized empire, the rule of a single entity of the colonizer to the contemporary context where globalization is “neo-imperialism” that incorporates the entire world.⁵² Their empire as the new global order determines the “global market and global circuits of production” so as to establish a “new logic of rule” that propagates its own sovereignty.⁵³ But the authors’ main emphasis in writing *Empire* is to critique empire by offering a means to resist it

⁴⁹ For more details see Gerardo Mosquera, “ Some Problems in Transcultural Curating,” edited by Jean Fisher, *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*, London: Kala Press, 1994, 133

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000, xi.

⁵³ Ibid., xvi. Negri and Hardt allude to the sovereignty of the nation-state being the cornerstone of the imperialisms that European powers were constructed throughout the modern era.

through a concept they call the “multitude.”⁵⁴ The “multitude,” for Negri and Hardt, presents a new possibility of liberation that resists empire by individually acting to oppose or act as a “counter-empire force.”⁵⁵ But, according to them, the multitude's ability to communicate and collaborate allows it to use the very capitalist networks that oppress it to produce a common body of knowledge and ideas that can serve as a platform for a democratic resistance to empire.⁵⁶ For the “multitude” to exist “the movements must be able, while maintaining their autonomy and singularity, to act in common and create a coherent and powerful political project.”⁵⁷

Negri and Hardt's empire as one of the hotly debated concepts has received much critical acclaim but has also been critiqued by many scholars. One of the most vehement criticisms is by Timothy Brennan amongst others that foregrounds empire's ahistoricized foundation.⁵⁸ According to him Hardt and Negri want to historicize empire at the same time they want to move outside it, since much of *Empire* is written in a historical mode, but without providing evidence. A related critique resonates in theorist Atilio Boron's book *Empire and Imperialism* in which he explains his problem with *Empire* in the way Negri and Hardt define imperialism. Here, he is largely dissatisfied by the scant attention that *Empire* pays to the literature about imperialism.⁵⁹ Borton sees this as a missed opportunity for Negri and Hardt to take

⁵⁴ Ibid., 394.

⁵⁵ Ibid., xv.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Timothy Brennan, “The Empire's New Clothes,” *Critical Inquiry* 29, no. 2, 2003.

⁵⁹ Boron's concerns is the lack of attention paid by the authors to acknowledge or review the large body of work that has been done by Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg in regards to imperialism. Atilio Borón, *Imperio & Imperialismo. English; Empire and Imperialism: A Critical Reading of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri*, London; New York: Zed Books; New York: Distributed in the USA exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 23.

advantage of the rich literature on imperialism coming from Latin America, India, and Africa. Therefore, he is quite accurate in suggesting that Negri and Hardt's vision is a view from the top.⁶⁰ In doing so, would they not be propagating the very notion that they intend to critique? Although this critique alludes to Negri and Hardt's book, there is no doubt that globalization as a field of study has been largely Western in its orientation and has received much criticism for not engaging sufficiently with non-Western histories. This makes the inclusion of postcolonial theory of great significance and one that should be studied and considered.

2- Emergence of the Postcolonial

But does globalization's current time-space compression consider the past? Does it continue to examine the relationship with history of colonization in the present? This makes it imperative to include the postcolonial that Bill Ashcroft so aptly has defined as a methodology in his book *Postcolonial Transformation*. According to him, the methodology explores the relationship between the colonized societies' engagement with the "imperial discourse."⁶¹ For Ashcroft, the postcolonial examines the ways in which "strategies shared by colonized societies, reemerge in different political and cultural circumstances."⁶² But in considering postcolonial and globalization's relationship with each other he notes two important distinctions-- first that globalization personifies a "space" which is "Western" in its orientation, but also that as a result of the colonial cartography, transforms itself into a "place" in the context of the postcolonial.⁶³ This location of spatiality is significant, says Ashcroft, as it places

⁶⁰ Ibid., 23.

⁶¹ Bill Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation*, London; New York: Routledge, 2001, 7.

⁶² Ibid., 7.

⁶³ Ibid.

the postcolonial as a form of “cultured correctness” in which the specific location becomes important. But in considering the aspect of location the term postcolonial has two variants, which change with the placement of a simple hyphen; the “post-colonial,” which puts an emphasis on the discursive and material effects of the historical “fact,” is distinguished from colonialism.

The term “postcolonialism,” however, is considered a blanket term for all kinds of indiscriminate “cultural difference” and marginalities not necessarily linked to a colonial experience.⁶⁴ This makes the term “post-colonial” with a hyphen more of an issue about particularity, the historically and culturally grounded nature of the experience it represents.⁶⁵ As a result, one must also reflect on the changing nature of the postcolonial which is no longer limited to colonized countries. The history of migration, colonization, and contemporary globalization has further circulated the postcolonial subjects to be located all over the world. Hence as Trinh T. Min-ha informs us, “the West is painfully made aware of the existence of a Third World in the first world, and visa versa.”⁶⁶ This makes us further consider the importance of exploring and including the postcolonial in our current globalized reality.

When did the era of the postcolonial exactly begin? According to Neil Lazarus, the discourse of the postcolonial today can no longer be simply understood as the process of decolonization since 1945.⁶⁷ During that period, it was conceived as a

⁶⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 10. In this dissertation, I am referring to the postcolonial, as a general state and not a specific one hence, I allude to the postcolonial without the hyphen, unless meant otherwise.

⁶⁶ Trinh T. Min-ha, “Woman, Native Other in Third Space,” *Journey to LA and Other Real Imagined Places*, ed. W. Edward Soja, London: Blackwell publishers, 1996.

⁶⁷ Neil Lazarus, “Introducing Postcolonial Studies,” *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. Neil Lazarus, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 2.

“discrete historical moment” to mark a period, rather than to determine the postcolonial as a field.⁶⁸ Lazarus notes that this continued process of antagonism between the two worlds distinguishes the postcolonial from being a historical category to a term of interpolation-- what he calls “a theoretical weapon” that “‘intervene[s]’ in existing debates and ‘resist[s]’ certain ‘political and philosophical constructions’”⁶⁹ He adds that until the late 1970s the area of academic specialization of postcolonial studies was non-existent in the way we understand today.⁷⁰ That does not mean the postcolonial discourse did not exist before the 1970s, but that the study of the postcolonial was more a methodology then than a discipline.⁷¹ In the late 1970s, as a result of a few intellectuals that came to the West (with Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said being some of the most prominent) postcolonial studies came to be constituted as a discipline. Postcolonial theory however, largely operates within the historical legacy of leftist Marxist critique, receiving much impetus from Said’s pioneering work *Orientalism* in 1978, Gayatri Spivak’s studies on the subaltern, and Bhabha’s important book *The Location of Culture* in 1994.⁷²

Said’s *Orientalism*, influenced heavily by French Poststructuralist theorist Michel Foucault, exemplifies the Orient as a European product of the Western imagination that helped define Europe (or the West) by providing a contrasting image, idea, personality, and experience of what it was to itself.⁷³ This made Orientalism a

⁶⁸ For more details see Ibid., 2.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁷¹ Ibid., 1.

⁷² Ibid., 1-7.

⁷³ Edward W Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1994, 1.

“style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction” that presented an unequal power dynamic between “the Orient” or the East, being weak and feminine and “the Occident” being the West, considered masculine and strong.⁷⁴ Although Said has several important texts and books to his credit, including *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) which present a strong critique of the West, his 1983 essay “The World, the Text and the Critic” is particularly relevant to the discussion of the biennales because it explored the idea/concept of a “traveling theory.”⁷⁵ “Traveling theories” for Said are theories that travel and as a result have become their own exemplary case of fast moving ideas.⁷⁶

Also important to the theorization of the postcolonial is the work of Gayatri Spivak who has played a significant role in shaping postcolonial theory and subaltern studies. Spivak is also known for translating Jacques Derrida’s seminal book *Of Grammatology* in 1976. She has since applied the deconstructive strategies to her various theoretical analyses of feminism and Marxism to literary criticism.⁷⁷ But one of her best-known essays “Can the Subaltern Speak?” reveals her support for the marginal voices, which remain oppressed, motivating her to write history “from below.”⁷⁸ The “subaltern,” defined by Ranajit Guha (from the subaltern group), is

⁷⁴ Ibid.,1.

⁷⁵ Edward Said, *The World, the Text, the Critic*, Cambridge: M.A Harvard UP, 1983.

⁷⁶ James Clifford, “Notes on Travel and Theory,” 1998,
http://humwww.ucsc.edu/CultStudies/PUBS/Inscriptions/vol_5/clifford.html

⁷⁷ See Lazarus, *Introducing Postcolonial Studies*.

⁷⁸ Spivak, Chakravorty Gayatri, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Williams, Patrick, 1951- Chrisman, Laura, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, 570.; Astrid Schmetterling, “Encounters at the Site of Trauma,” *Third Text* 20, no. 5 (09//, 2006), 561-570. The Subaltern group according to Spivak, “ the social groups and elements included in this category represent the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as “elite.” Spivak however critiques the term Subaltern as she feels that the entire notion is represented as a whole or as a heterogeneous category, which is problematic given to the uneven character of regional economic and social developments, differed from area to area. Also

inscribed within Antonio Gramsci's notion of the "economically dispossessed."⁷⁹ In this essay she attempts to reveal the case of a subaltern woman in India, an individual of a disfranchised disposition that in one sense is exiled from history completely due to her inability to speak for herself. Spivak's claim here is that she cannot speak due to her marginal position, which dis-empowers her.⁸⁰ Instead, both the former colonizer and patriarchy claim to represent her concerns and speak for her instead.

In the context of globalization however, Spivak's concept of worlding provides a new insight to view the world. *Worlding* is a concept originally derived from philosopher Martin Heidegger's canonical essay "The Origin of the Work of Art."⁸¹ Spivak reworks Heidegger's concept as the "worlding of the world on uninscribed earth" that is determined by the "inscribing" of the imperial discourse upon the

she believes that there are certain kind of Indian elite are at the "best native informants" for the first world intellectuals interested in the voice of the other. But one must nevertheless insist that the colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogeneous, making the same class or element which is dominant in one area (subaltern as native informant) dominating the other another (subaltern).

⁷⁹ Vinay Lal, "Subaltern Studies and its Critics: Debates Over Indian History," *History and Theory (Middletown)* 40, no. 1 (2001), 135 (14 pages). According to Vinay Lal Subaltern Studies is a school that originated in India in 1982 founded by Ranjit Guha, an Indian historian, currently living in Australia. As the founding members of the group, he challenged Indian Marxist historians and their claims to write the people's history. In doing this they responded to a genuine need for a new methodology, "epistemology and paradigm," a need felt not only in India but also worldwide. Borrowing from Gramsci the concept of "subaltern" and drawing on the prevailing Western ideas about the historiography of mass culture, Subaltern Studies tried to provide new interpretations and methodologies for writing Indian working-class history.

⁸⁰ Spivak, Chakravorty Gayatri, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 570.

⁸¹ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 15. In this essay Heidegger concerns himself with what distinguishes art from ordinary objects, as a way to problematize the viewing of the world today. In order to explain what for him characterizes an artwork, he resounds that it has a world and earth that reveal things that ordinary things do not. This concept is explained further by Ranjana Khanna in her book *Dark Continent* in which she suggests, for Heidegger worlding performs the "unconcealedness of being" which allows one, a new way of "being in the world" that at the same time reveals the "concealedness of the earth."⁸¹ Therefore for her, Heidegger's "unconcealedness in the world" and "closure into the earth" constitutes the process of worlding. See Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003, 5.

colonized space.⁸² From Spivak's perspective, the "notion of the worlding of the world," as presented in an interview with Elizabeth Gronz in 1984 is an imperialist project that through the process of colonization, territorialized the earth; according to her, the world was previously uninscribed.⁸³ This "epistemic violence of imperialism or worlding" in Spivak's terms articulates territory or spaces prior to colonization as *earth* and the ones through and after the process of colonization as *world*.⁸⁴ Spivak's transformation can be made visible in the land as earth, which, in the process of colonization, became a world or landscape, motivating her to theorize this process of cultural violence as one that emerged from the process of culture and imperialism.⁸⁵

Spivak's concept of worlding today could also emphasize the continued existence of epistemic violence that reveals it is also applicable to the new empire of globalization. Here one can further note a connection between worlding and the contemporary nature of globalization. In presenting Spivak's concept of worlding the continued existence of epistemic violence is now visible within the new empire of globalization as well. Taking theorists Hardt and Negri definition of empire as "global market and global circuits of production" that establish a "global order," as a "new logic of rule" I would like to highlight the similarities between the old and new

⁸² Spivak Gayatri Chakravorty, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," *Aesthetics, Politics, Academics*, Bruce Robbins, ed., University of Minnesota Press 1990, 153-154. For further reading on Spivak's concept of worlding refer to her early essay "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" in *Critical Inquiry* "12:1, Autumn 1985 235-61. Also for a detail notation on worlding see Deborah Cherry, "The Worlding of Algeria", essay in eds, *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography*, ed M. Roberts and J. Beaulieu, Duke University Press, Durham, 2002, 106. Please note Cherry's comment on worlding in the endnotes of the above chapter. She says: It must be emphasized that "worlding" was not presented by Spivak as a unified concept, although, she elaborated her ideas on it in several articles and interviews in the mid-1980s. Cherry, 126.

⁸³ Spivak Gayatri Chakravorty, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," 153.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 154.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 154.

empires, which although appear during different historical periods and different limits of scale and speed, seem to be essentially motivated by the same things for similar reasons.

For example, the colonial empire represented a limited territory under the rule of a single entity, while empire as explained by Negri and Hardt represents a borderless place that rules not just territories, markets, and populations, but more fundamentally every social level, with the power being de-centralized, and de-territorialized, where the controls are not visible, as in transnational corporations.⁸⁶ In looking at the world today, it is no secret that more than 70 percent of the transnational and multi-national companies are situated in the USA and Europe alone. This determines globalization as the “new global empire” with a limited de-centered power in which the power is still located in one central place, the West.

The second consideration for this is colonialism with regard to the colonizer has always been an imperial project motivated by the need for economic gain at any cost, by any means. Globalization according to Negri and Hardt is also tainted with what they term as “neo-imperialism,” which claims to be in the service of the good, but continues the process of exploitation in disguise. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana conceived of neo-imperialism “as the worst [project] of its kind.”⁸⁷ For those who practice it, he says, “it means power without responsibility, and for those who suffer it, it means exploitation without redress.”⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ibid, xiv. The author’s main intention in writing *Empire* is to offer a means to resist it, by presenting the concept of what they call the multitude. The multitude for Negri and Hardt offers a new possibility of liberation from the establishment that sustain empire, by individually acting to oppose or act as a force “counter- Empire” to empire. For more details see ibid, “The Multitude Against Empire,” 394.

⁸⁷ Nkrumah, Kwame, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, Thomas Nelson and Sons, London, 1965, 1.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Given the new empire of globalization what can be advocated as its relationship with culture? Postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha in his important book *Location of Culture* informs us that the location of culture has changed. In considering this he defines postcolonial as a “revis[al] [of] those nationalist or ‘nativist’ pedagogies that set up the Third World to the first world in a binary structure of opposition.”⁸⁹ By this Bhabha means the “postcolonial perspective” resists all attempts in presenting any “holistic forms of social explanation,” thereby “forcing a more complex recognition of cultural and political boundaries to exist between the two opposed political spheres of the First and Third World.”⁹⁰ Bhabha affirms that the postcolonial critique dismantles and displaces the true claims of Eurocentric discourses, or “interrupt[s] the Western discourse on modernity.”⁹¹

This takes us to Bhabha’s main theoretical premise of cultural hybridity that is empowered by his concept of ambivalence.⁹² For Bhabha cultural identity always materializes in this contradictory and ambivalent space. For him, the recognition of this ambivalent space of cultural identity assists one to overcome the “exoticism of cultural diversity” in favor of the recognition of an empowering identity that may operate within cultural difference.⁹³ According to him, a new cultural hybrid identity emerges from the continual interface and exchange of cultural performances between the colonizer and colonized, in which Bhabha contends that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space that he calls the “third space of enunciation.”⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London; New York: Routledge, 1994, 171, 173.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 171, 173.

⁹¹ Ibid., 241.

⁹² Ibid., 118.

⁹³ Ibid., 118.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 37.

Bhabha's hybridity then serves as a form of "in-between space," or a "third space," which could be said to constantly reinvent itself as it continually deflects the category of the original culture. Hence, he advocates the "importance of hybridity" from which a "third space" emerges.⁹⁵ This allows us to view the global space not as a homogenized space, but as a hybrid place.

This led postcolonial theorist Revathi Krishnaswamy to conjecture that the current globalization theory must be influenced by a postcolonial response to older Eurocentric forms of globalization?⁹⁶ In her essay "The Criticism of Culture and the Culture of Criticism" she proposes that all that is new about the present globalization theory is the addition of the postcolonial content that emphasizes cultural "deterritorialization" and "hybridity."⁹⁷ But, although she locates both globalization and the postcolonial as having distinct origins, she claims that there exist several overlaps in their objectives.⁹⁸

First, she states that they both lie at the juncture of "imperialism, capitalism, and modernity," and concern themselves with the effects of unequal power relations in different parts of the world.⁹⁹ The second overlap could be stated as their shared engagement with time. For Krishnaswamy, postcolonial theory operates primarily on a "(Eurocentric) colonial past" that examines the "subaltern practices and productions in

⁹⁵ Homi Bhabha, "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha," *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Rutherford. Jonathan, London: Lawrence Wishart, 211.

⁹⁶ Revathi Krishnaswamy, "The Criticism of Culture and the Culture of Criticism: At the intersection of Postcolonialism and Globalization theory," *Diacritics (Baltimore)* 32, no. 2 (2002), 106.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Krishnaswamy in her article alludes to globalization theory as an emergence from the social sciences, especially sociology. For her, postcolonial theory originated in the humanities, particularly in the context of literary criticism. For more details see Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

the non-Western peripheries in response to Western domination.”¹⁰⁰ Globalization theory on the other hand actively engages in a more “(Americocentric) post/neocolonial present” that observes how contemporary Western practices and productions affect the rest of the world.¹⁰¹ As a result, Krishnaswamy surmises, both disciplines dislocate Western modernity (from the theoretical center) by questioning its universality and dismantling those categories that are central to the narrative of Western modernity, such as “nation,” “nation-state,” “culture” and so on.¹⁰² This allows her to locate the cultural basis of postcolonial theory within a historical framework that could be perceived to be archival in nature, while relegating globalization theory to a cultural basis that is primarily economic.¹⁰³ This makes both postcolonial and globalization studies frequently focused on various forms of economic, political, social, and cultural flows that exceed the boundaries of the nation-state and operate in a de-territorialized or transnational fashion.

In considering both flows of globalization and the postcolonial it is evident that global flows attempt to homogenize and centralize while the postcolonial discourses attempt to resist any universalizing framework of fixity, resonating Homi Bhabha’s concept of “ambivalence,” or “in-betweenness.” Unlike globalization’s fast moving orbits of spatiality, Appadurai’s scapes and virtual neighborhoods or Negri and

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. For the definition of the subaltern please refer to the section on Gayatri Spivak.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ For social scientist Michael Mann, globalization offers pluralities of geographies, which he defines as local, national, inter-national, macro-regional, transnational and global. He suggests the first two of these as being independent of globalization, though they would not be if combined with any of the next three spatial networks: “inter-national (between national units), transnational (transcending the boundaries of the national and potentially global), or macro-regional (transnational but regionally bounded).” See Michael Mann *Globalizations: An introduction to the spatial and structural networks of globality*, <http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/CCT510/Sources/Mann-globalizations.html>.

Hardt's multitudes, need to come together to work. Postcolonial theories revoke a different spatiality as Spivak's concept of worlding in which there exists a transformation of the concept of space to place. For example through worlding, the "earth" becomes the world, and land as earth or "space" which, in the process of colonization and now globalization, becomes a world or landscape or "place." Said's traveling theory, Spivak's worlding or Bhabha's hybrid, constantly resist being located, thereby; revealing the ambivalent character of the postcolonial, but also emphasizing its significance.

Although postcolonial theory has found a critical place within the socio-cultural theoretical discourses, there exist several critiques of the same that will be taken up in the subsequent sections. Most of the criticisms have originated from the postcolonial theorist themselves, as Bhabha, who claims that postcolonial theory "privilege[s] the Western elite to produce a discourse of the other that reinforces its own power-knowledge equation."¹⁰⁴ But in this process there is a rupture, similar to Said's traveling theory, which in the way of traveling is unsettled and ambivalent, always engaged in Bhabha's "third place" of hybridity. Hence postcolonial theory gains its significance as an active concept that allows us to contextualize the past in terms of a continued present, which is always in flux. This makes the project of the postcolonial integral, as it embodies continual resistance to the current world, as we understand it today.

The above mentioned and briefly discussed concepts are central to this dissertation as I set out to explore the impact of the postcolonial discourse on contemporary art and its evolution between the inception of the exhibitions *Magiciens*

¹⁰⁴ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 21.

and *Documenta 11* in the context of globalization, empire and the multitude. Hence, these central concepts are further discussed and articulated within the following chapters for which I provide the summary/synopsis here forth.

The chapter to follow (Chapter 2), entitled “Revitalizing Signs: The Post (*Magiciens*) Condition,” examines the much critiqued global exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* of 1989 curated by Jean-Hubert Martin.¹⁰⁵ This exhibition comprised hundred artists—half of them Western in origin and the other half were the former non-Western world. The exhibition attempted to remove the divide between the “center” and “periphery,” attempting to construct a new relationship between the Western worlds “us,” and the non-Western “them.” Although the process of globalization has undoubtedly hastened the engagement of non-Western centers, *Magiciens* needs to be given credit for inciting the process of change that swept the art world since then. In this chapter I explore the concept of *Magiciens* by examination of “la terre” (the earth), by engaging postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak’s concept of worlding, originally derived from Martin Heidegger’s essay “The Origin of the Work of Art.”¹⁰⁶ Spivak defines “epistemic violence of imperialism or worlding” connoting territory or spaces prior to colonization as *earth* and the ones through and after the process of colonization as *world*.¹⁰⁷ In order to examine the above, I begin by first discussing *Primitivism in the 20th Century* exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art in 1984

¹⁰⁵ See Jean Hubert Martin, *Magiciens De La Terre*, Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1989, 10.

¹⁰⁶ See Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Poetry, Language, Thought*, ed. Martin Heidegger, 1st Harper Colophon ed., New York: Harper & Row, 1975, 1971, 15-88.

¹⁰⁷ Cited in Deborah Cherry, “The Worlding of Algeria,” *Orientalism’s Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography*, eds. Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts, Durham: Duke University Press, 2002, 106-7.

considered to be the predecessor to *Magiciens*,¹⁰⁸ as well as articulating *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain* curated by Rasheed Araeen in the same year as a response to *Magiciens*.¹⁰⁹ The chapter further attempts to narrate the post-*Magiciens* condition by presenting the outcome and effects of the exhibition since the 1990s. To do this, it examines: *Contemporary Art from Asia: Traditions/Tensions*, presented by Apinan Poshyananda, 1996,¹¹⁰ *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945-1994*, curated by Okwui Enwezor,¹¹¹ 1994; *Unpacking Europe*, curated by Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi, 2001;¹¹² *The American Effect* curated by Lawrence Rinder, 2003;¹¹³ and *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America*, presented by Mari Carmen Ramirez and Héctor Olea in 2004.¹¹⁴ This provides a trajectory of emergence of the postcolonial exhibition since *Magiciens* and its charted course for the future.

¹⁰⁸ *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, organized by William Rubin and Kirk Varnedoe, was on view at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, September 19, 1984-January 15, 1985.

¹⁰⁹ *The Other Story: Afro-Asian artists in Post-War Britain* was curated by artist and art critic Rasheed Araeen in London at the Hayward Gallery in 1989.

¹¹⁰ *Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions*, an exhibition organized by the Asia Society, New York City, and presented simultaneously at the Asia Society, Grey Art Gallery of New York University, and the Queens Museum of Art.

¹¹¹ *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945-1994* opened at the Museum Villa Stuck, Munich (February 15-April 22, 2001) and traveled to Martin Gropius-Bau, Berlin (May 18-July 29, 2001), Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (September 8- December 30, 2001), and P.S.I Contemporary Art Center and the Museum of Modern Art, New York (February 10-May 5, 2002). Mark Nash selected the films in the exhibition.

¹¹² Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen and others, *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading*, Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen : NAI Publishers, 2001.

¹¹³ *The American Effect: Global Perspectives on the United States 1990-2003*, was curated by Lawrence Rinder in Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City in 2003.

¹¹⁴ *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America*, was curated by Mari Carmen Ramirez and Héctor Olea in the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Texas in 2004.

The third Chapter “Unsettling Constellations? Or Articulating the Biennialization of Contemporary Art in a Global Age” examines the process of globalization of art by exploring biennales, large-scale recurring global exhibitions. Viewing the *Plateau of Humanity* from the perspective of the 2001 *Venice Biennale* curated by Harold Szeemann implores us to consider if the world had reached a place where all humanity could be presented and viewed from a common platform?¹¹⁵ In examining this reality philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their book *Thousand Plateaus* defined “plateaus” as “uncommitted points,” which “ahistorically,” could be a more appropriate assertion to how the world should be viewed.¹¹⁶ This consideration of the world comprising of “multiple modernities” was however expressed in the 52nd Venice Biennale *The Dictatorship of the Viewer* curated by Francesco Bonami articulating the biennale’s potential to realize this “new modernity.”¹¹⁷ Hence this “new modernity” as suggested by Bonami reflects a substantial shift in the way the world was viewed a millennium ago, making visible for the first time the existence of the postcolonial discourse, which had largely remained unacknowledged until the 1980s.

Since most biennales have originated in the West they have until recently exhibited only Western artists. It has only been since the 1980s that the biennales have come to include and consider the work of the postcolonial artists from the non-West. This chapter explores Bonami’s commitment to this “new modernity” by examining the biennale’s role in undertaking the same. Given this can we then estimate that we

¹¹⁵ Biennale di Venezia and Harald Szeemann, 49. *Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte : La Biennale Di Venezia : Platea Dell 'Umanita' = Plateau of Humankind = Plateau Der Menschheit = Plateau De l'Humanite*, Milano: Electa, 2001.

¹¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*; 1-25.

¹¹⁷ Bonami, Francesco, *Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer*: La Biennale di Venezia: 50th international art exhibition, Marsilio: La Biennale di Venezia, 2003.

reached a state of “new modernity” in which the postcolonial has finally arrived? Do we still need biennales from the Third World? Finally the chapter critiques Szeemann’s perspective of the “Plateau of Humankind” by articulating a “new modernity” constructed of “multiple modernities” that need to be examined in their individual space and context. By reviewing the history of the biennale, its current position and critique, this chapter explores the potential of the biennale in further defining this “new modernity” in our lives today.

The dissertation’s fourth chapter “For Example, *Documenta 11*, or how has the Postcolonial been produced in Art History?” alludes to Walter Grasskamp’s seminal essay “For example, Documenta, or how is Art History produced?” in which he presents the *Documenta*, in Kassel, Germany as the most distinguished exhibition in the world.¹¹⁸ By inserting the “postcolonial” in Grasskamp essay title, my attempt in this chapter is to highlight the absence of the postcolonial context within the canon of *Documentas* which have taken place in the last (since 1955) 50 years. I undertake this by discussing the first *Documenta* of the twenty first century; *Documenta 11* the first curated by an African curator that presented his exhibition as a “postcolonial constellation” that comprised five Platforms (four of which were intellectual Platforms, with only the final being realized as an exhibition), each of which took place in the world.¹¹⁹ But what was critical was the way “postcolonial constellation” was pivotal in circulating what Andrea Huyssen has termed the globalization of [postcolonial] memory.¹²⁰ This has allowed the unacknowledged past to be

¹¹⁸ Walter Grasskamp, “For Example, Documenta, Or how Art History been produced?,” *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds., Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne, 487th ed., London; New York: Routledge, 1996, 71.

¹¹⁹ See Okwui Enwezor, “The Black Box,” *Documenta 11, Platform 5 : Exhibition Catalogue*, English ed., Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002, 49.

¹²⁰ The only continent, which was not included in the platforms, was Latin America, but this was realized in the form of a Platform book.

retrospectively viewed in the present, through Homi Bhabha's concept of the "postcolonial time lag."¹²¹ This emphasized *Documenta 11* as a "retrospective," as it was concerned with representing the unacknowledged history of the twentieth century, especially reflecting the newly postcolonial societies and their current situation in the world.

As a result of this, many critics perceived *Documenta 11* as an antidote to the infamous *Magicians de la Terre* that took place nearly seventeen years before, as it seemed to counter-act some of the issues raised by *Magiciens*.¹²² This makes the endeavor of *Documenta 11* a historical one that needs to be analyzed and studied as an ambitious intervention of the postcolonial, with strong ethical implications that emerged at a critical moment in time and had never been undertaken in the history of art or global exhibitions. With this consideration *Documenta 11* has legitimized and framed the postcolonial discourse in the haloed hall of the *Documenta*'s but importantly in context of art history and the global art circuit as well.

Finally, Concluding Remarks: "An (other) Artworld on the Cusp? revisits the main issues that concerned the two exhibitions *Magiciens de la Terre*, 1989 and *Documenta 11*, 2002 in the dissertation *Postcolonial Palimpsests* in order to affirm the significance of the postcolonial discourse in the context of art. In that it attempts to articulate the possibility of presenting a new way to view the world outside "us" (West) and "them" (non-Western) by constructing the possibility of (another) artworld, one that is constructed of "multiple modernities," operating outside the linear narrative of "historicism." To undertake this, it employs several theoretical frameworks, including

¹²¹ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 21.

¹²² Please refer to Chapter 3 entitled "Revitalizing Signs: The Post (*Magiciens*) Condition" for details about the exhibition.

Gayatri Spivak's concept of worlding that allows a new spatiality between the "earth" and "world" be defined. In furthering Spivak's reading of worlding, I define the process of "de-worlding," by first rejecting its Western interpretation and imposition of the colonized world. The process of "re-worlding" then allows us the opportunity to regroup and consider the notions of worlding, which are productive for us.

Further, chapter 3 contends philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guttari "plateaus" that allows us to ahistorize the given platform of modernity, opening up a space for a "new modernity" to emerge, one that is multiple, non-linear and opposes the universalizing narrative of Western "historicism." Chapter four with its case study of *Documenta 11* with the "postcolonial constellation" allows us to view our past retrospectively within the context of the postcolonial time lag, allowing us to make amends with the process of colonization. The concluding chapter summarizes the possibilities that can be realized within the "new modernity" and what change that might mean for the world.

The dissertation *Postcolonial Palimpsests: Historicizing Biennales and Large-Scale Exhibitions in a Global Age*, presents the changing perspective of how the non-Western "other" has come to be viewed and as a result opened up the possibility of a new (art) world to exist, one that is encompassing and more inclusive through the examination to two significant exhibitions: *Magiciens de la Terre*, 1989 and *Documenta 11*, 2002. It further presented a brief history of large-scale exhibitions and the biennales along with surveying recent theories of globalization and postcolonial and the overlap between. The focus of the dissertation and this chapter is to present a proposition for a "new modernity," one which extends outside the singular modern domain of the West, allowing for a new understanding to view the world and humanity through the realm of contemporary art.

CHAPTER 2

REVITALIZING SIGNS: THE POST (MAGICIENS) CONDITION

In retrospect, *Magiciens de la Terre*, the exhibition that took place nearly twenty years ago in 1989, makes us wonder if the global exhibition as we know it could exist without it?¹²³ *Magiciens*, which has proven to be one of the most controversial curated exhibitions of our times, can also be considered as one of the most important for the same reason. Curated by Jean-Hubert Martin and his team of curators, the ambitious exhibition was the first to include hundred artists—half of them lived and worked in the West and the other half were from the non-Western world. This gave the exhibition the privilege of declaring itself the “first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art” or what we call today the first-ever “global” exhibition.

The year *Magiciens* debuted can be seen as a watershed moment for two reasons. First, as it was conceived to commemorate the bicentenary of the French revolution (1789-1989), the exhibition attempted to embody a spirit of freedom and the readiness of France to embrace and include the world in its discourse.¹²⁴ That year further presented an important change for the world. The crumbling of the Berlin Wall signified a collapse of the communist empire that had divided the Eastern and Western world for several decades. This further amplified the scope of *Magiciens*, allowing it to encompass the discourses of the world.

Here, *Magiciens* can be understood as a bold attempt to abandon the divide between the “center” and “periphery,” so as to establish a new relationship between

¹²³ The exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre*, organized by Jean-Hubert Martin, was on view at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, May 16-August 15, 1989.

¹²⁴ Johanne Lamoureux, “From Form to Platform: The Politics of Representation and the Representation of Politics,” *Art Journal* 64, no. 1 (2005), 64(10).

the Western world’s “us,” and the non-Western “them.” The exhibition, although much critiqued because of the way it was curated and presented, nevertheless raised questions that have been critical and instrumental to contemporary art discourse today. As a result of engaging with artisans and craftspeople (artists beyond the typical stereotypical Western artist), *Magiciens* led us to further elaborate on the distinctions between art/craft, art/artifact and similarly, between Western categories such as the primitive/modern and traditional/contemporary. This makes us aware that the world we inhabit is made up of “multiple modernities,” which makes it impossible to place ourselves within a single concept. In its examination, *Magiciens* did not question the issue of the First/Third World.¹²⁵ Instead it chose to homogenize the difference between them by focusing on magic as a common theme for worlds, making the interpretation and connection between them problematic for both. This curation by Martin’s was based merely on visual affinities and did not distinguish between contemporary and traditional art forms, both of which are tied to issues of modernity.

Although the process of globalization has undoubtedly hastened the engagement of non-Western centers, *Magiciens* needs to be given credit for inciting the process of change. It also highlighted the coming of age of the curator as the cultural mediator who negotiates and places the “other” within the context of art.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ As defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, the Third- World are “countries of the world, especially those of Africa and Asia, which are aligned with neither the Communist nor non- Communist bloc; hence, the underdeveloped or poorer countries of the world, those of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The First World See J. A. Simpson, E. S. C. Weiner and Oxford University Press., *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford; Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1989 , 957.

¹²⁶ The “other” in the context of the postcolonial has a very specific reading. There are several postcolonial theorists including Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha who have written extensively on its meaning. However Bill Ashcroft in *Empire Strikes Back*, explains the “other” in terms of these theorists as a manner to: maintain authority over the other in a colonial situation, imperial discourse striver to delineate the “other” as radically different from the self, yet at the same time it must maintain sufficient identity within the “other” to valorize control over it. Hence for him “otherness” can thus be produced by a continual process of what Bhabha calls “repletion and displacement” that instigates an ambivalence of the very site of imperial authority and control on the postcolonial subject. In my usage of the “other” I allude to a subject who is non-Western, either emerging from the

The exhibition forced the Western world to engage with the “other,” demanding to seek an equitable dialogue based on new grounds of understanding outside the Third World boundaries and colonial stereotyping. It also queried the late arrival of postcolonial art within the Western world that almost came to fruition only around the period of *Magiciens* in 1989.

In noting the overall criticism from the critics and historians in regard to *Magiciens*, it is my opinion that discussions have concentrated around the areas of primitivism and magic, in which the non-Western “other” was viewed through anthropological lens. My approach is to explore *Magiciens* through a closer examination of “la terre” (the earth), which forms part of the exhibition’s title, from the perspective of colonization and the postcolonial. This perspective seems to be neglected within the exhibition. Although not entirely surprising, it is interesting to note the curator’s choice in not elaborating on the aspect of colonization, given France’s own history as a colonizer built on the wealth of its empires. Given the magnitude of *Magiciens*, the absence of discussion on the postcolonial context is notable. Hence, this chapter re-contextualizes the use of “terre” or land by engaging postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak’s concept of worlding, which brings a new perspective to the exhibition.¹²⁷

postcolonial / Third/Second World or has been marginalized, and is either male or female. Bill Ashcroft, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, ed. Griffiths, Gareth, 1943- Tiffin, Helen., 2nd ed. ed., London; New York: Routledge, 2002, 103. Catalog Record - <https://catalog.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=4488544&DB=local>. Also see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London; New York: Routledge, 2004, 408.; Frantz Fanon , *Black Skin, White Masks* New York: Grove Press, 1967.

¹²⁷ Spivak Gayatri Chakravorty, “Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution.” *Aesthetics, Politics, Academics* Bruce Robbins, ed. (University of Minnesota Press 1990, pp. 153-154. Here alluding to Spivak’s worlding is also interesting to observe the difference between world and the global as suggested by Anthony King in Culture, Globalization and World-system. He suggests that etymologically the word global does not carry as much “cultural, religious, historical baggage” as the word “world” which has historically richer connotations of worldly/unworldly. Also he brings to our attention that linguistically the word “world” alludes to “whole of humankind, human society, the earth as a region, globe,” within which the “world” has limited connotations referring to specifically earth or

The concept of worlding as discussed in chapter 1, is originally a concept of Martin Heidegger from his essay “The Origin of the Work of Art.”¹²⁸ Gayatri Spivak reworks his concept of “worlding of the world on uninscribed earth,” to highlight the “epistemic violence” of territory or spaces considered prior to colonization as “earth,” and the ones through and after the process of colonization as “world.”¹²⁹ She theorized this process of cultural violence as one that emerged from the process of culture and imperialism in which land as earth became a world or landscape in the process of colonization.¹³⁰

Here Martin’s premise for the *Magiciens* becomes visible in the way he contextualizes the fifty non-western artists included in the exhibition. In his reluctance to articulate the history of colonization, he is unable to see the difference between the “earth” and the “world.” As a result, his exhibition engages superfluous differences constructed on the basis of magic and craft, which in a way are easier to deal with and interpret as compared to the significant changes that have taken place within the non-Western world since 1945. This calls attention the fact that the world has changed since then, and what we view as a tradition, including the practices of so-called “tribal” people, is never a constant. In considering this, it is important to view Martin’s

territorial globe. This is helpful while thinking about Spivaks’ worlding that arises from a sense of the world that is inclusive of its historic baggage specifically to the earth. Anthony D. King, ed., *Culture, Globalization, and World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, trans. 107- 28. Binghamton, New York, 1991.

¹²⁸ See Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” please refer to Chapter 1 for a detailed discussion on worlding *Poetry, Language, Thought*, ed. Martin Heidegger, 1st Harper Colophon ed. ed., New York: Harper & Row, 1975, 1971, 15-88, Catalog Record - <https://catalog.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=842184&DB=local>. In this essay Heidegger concerns himself with what distinguishes art from ordinary objects, as a way to problematize the viewing of the world today. In order to explain what for him characterizes an artwork, he resounds that it has a “world” and “earth” that reveal things that ordinary things do not.

¹²⁹ Spivak Gayatri Chakravorty, “Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution,” 153.

¹³⁰ Ibid.,154.

inability to view these postcolonial transformations within Spivak's suggestion of worlding, in what Martin sees as "earth" in the context of primitive magical notions have been transformed to "world" or been worlded. Hence, his perception of the show does not acknowledge the existence of the postcolonial, as well as the multiple modernities that exist in the world today.

In this regard Martin's modernist tendencies become immediately visible. Timothy Mitchell and other theorists however associate modernity as a certain place in the West, or as a synonym or Europe, where it is "staged as singular, original, present and authoritative" entity.¹³¹ Given modernity's strong Western articulation Mitchell thinks it essential to "revise the narrative of the West" by providing an alternative history of origins and influences.¹³² This however for him is not the same as "alternative modernities" which once again implies a (fundamentally singular) modernity that is modified by local circumstances into a variety of cultural forms. This would mean keeping the primarily hegemonic power structure of the West in place. Therefore Gisela Welz suggestion is imperative: to make "visible and critique the unequal power asymmetries, [...] otherwise modern or alternatively modern or is simply another way of saying 'backward' or replacing the older labels 'pre-modern'

¹³¹ Mitchell, Timothy, "The Stage of Modernity," *Questions of Modernity: Contradictions of Modernity*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), v. 11.

¹³² Ibid. Eisenstadt in speaking about modernity critiques the classical theories of modernization "(Marx, Durkheim, Weber)" as the core project of modernity, "which had its origins in Europe but was expected to become universal in time. Eisenstadt, S. N. "Multiple Modernities." *Daedalus* 129.1 (Winter 2000): 1-29. In the same vein Frederick Cooper, "why an alternative modernity should be called a modernity at all." In extending Cooper's point we should remind ourselves that "alternative means alternative to the West, and increasingly, to other alternatives, to modernity itself. Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question Theory, Knowledge, History*, Berkeley: University of California P, 2005, 114. In extending Cooper's point we should remind ourselves that "alternative means alternative to the West, and increasingly, to other alternatives, rather than alternative to modernity (although many advocate this option)."

or ‘traditional.’”¹³³ Therefore, multiple modernities can be best understood as suggested earlier by Eisenstadt as an unfolding story that is continuously constituted and reconstitution within a multiplicity of cultures.¹³⁴

In order to articulate the above, I begin a close examination of *Magiciens* by first discussing *Primitivism in the 20th Century* exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art in 1984, considered to be the predecessor to *Magiciens*.¹³⁵ By way of comparison I also discuss *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain* (a landmark postcolonial exhibition) curated by Rasheed Araeen in the same year as *Magiciens*.¹³⁶ The chapter further attempts to narrate the post-*Magiciens* condition by presenting the outcome and effects of the exhibition since the 1990s. To do this, we examine: *Contemporary Art from Asia: Traditions/Tensions*, presented by Apinan Poshyananda, 1996,¹³⁷ *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945-1994*, curated by Okwui Enwezor,¹³⁸ 1994; *Unpacking Europe*, curated by

¹³³ Grisela Welz, “Multiple Modernities: The Transnationalization of Culture,” Schulze-Engler, Frank, and Sissy Helfff. *Transcultural English Studies: Theories, Fictions, Realities*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009, 53.

¹³⁴ Eisenstadt, S. N. “Multiple Modernities,” *Daedalus* 129.1 (Winter 2000), 1-29.

¹³⁵ *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, organized by William Rubin and Kirk Varnedoe, was on view at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, September 19, 1984-January 15, 1985.

¹³⁶ *The Other Story: Afro-Asian artists in Post-War Britain* was curated by artist and art critic Rasheed Araeen in London at the Hayward Gallery in 1989.

¹³⁷ *Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions*, an exhibition organized by the Asia Society, New York City, and presented simultaneously at the Asia Society, the Grey Art Gallery of New York University, and the Queens Museum of Art.

¹³⁸ *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945-1994* opened at the Museum Villa Stuck, Munich (February 15-April 22, 2001) and traveled to Martin Gropius-Bau. Berlin (May 18-July 29, 2001), Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (September 8- December 30, 2001), and P.S.I Contemporary Art Center and the Museum of Modern Art. New York (February 10-May 5.2002). Mark Nash selected the films in the exhibition.

Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi, 2001;¹³⁹ *The American Effect* curated by Lawrence Rinder, 2003;¹⁴⁰ and *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Grade Art in Latin America*, presented by Mari Carmen Ramirez and Héctor Olea in 2004.¹⁴¹ This shows the trajectory of emergence of the postcolonial exhibition and its course for the future.

Looking Back is the Only Way Forward: Approaching the Primitive

Looking back before the emergence of *Magiciens* leads us to inquire and also appreciate how long it has taken us to reach this point in time and, finally, have the opportunity to engage in an equitable dialogue with the non-Western “other.” Colonization since 1496 provides a timeframe of nearly 600 years in which the West has encountered and interacted with the non-Western “other.” The interest in the “other,” which began with process of colonization and resulted in the collection of exotic, unusual objects, which filled the display cases of the Cabinet of Curiosity in the 17th-18th centuries, slowly also led to an interest in the “other” as exotic. This aspiration of the West to collect objects and display the “other” resulted in the origin of world expositions or world fairs in London, Paris and Chicago from the mid 19th to the early 20th century. We know that for these fairs, exotica from far and near, as well as several hundred natives from the non-Western world, were exported to the site of the exhibition and made to perform as the “other.”¹⁴² In witnessing this, one cannot but

¹³⁹ Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen and others, *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading*, Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen : NAI Publishers, 2001.

¹⁴⁰ Lawrence Rinder at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City curated *The American Effect: Global Perspectives on the United States 1990-2003*, in 2003.

¹⁴¹ *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America*, was curated by Mari Carmen Ramirez and Héctor Olea in the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Texas in 2004.

¹⁴² These world expositions often exported the natives from Africa and Asia to participate in the fairs as the exotic “other” forcibly making them perform and dress against their own will. Amongst one of the more humiliating incidents was the Philippine people made to eat dog meat a condition that was not only humbling but also carnivorous. Warren James Belasco, *Meals to Come: A History of the Future of Food.*, ed. University of California Press, Berkeley: , 2006, 159-160.

be aware that there is transference of fetishistic attribute from the object to the non-Western people making it problematic to include the so-called “other” within the critical discourse of art in a manner that was not humiliating. This is something that was not discussed nor brought up in the discourse of the exhibition frame until *Magiciens* and is a matter that needs further elaboration.

Rasheed Araeen, an artist and critic has questioned the absence of the “other” in his essay, “When the Naughty Children of Empire Come Home to Roost.” Here Araeen queried the delayed inclusion of postcolonial artists in the international art circuit gaining visibility only in the late 1980s despite the end of the colonial era in the 1940s.¹⁴³ Considering the emergence of the postcolonial exhibitions in the West, Araeen declared that there was a time in the history of postwar Britain during the 1950s in which the climate for art was momentarily different.¹⁴⁴ He asserts that in the aftermath of World War II, the British art scene in the early years suffered from a postwar economic hangover and only exhibited white British artists.¹⁴⁵ With the influx of artists from Britain’s ex-colonies, such as India, Ceylon and Pakistan in 1956, however, many met with success and British society came to be known as multiracial. But this success was short lived. The closing down art of galleries, such as the New Vision Center, found these artists suddenly abandoned and excluded from the history of which they had been a part and had contributed enormously.¹⁴⁶ Araeen, however, notes a renewed interest in the Afro-Asian artists in the late 1980s. He asserts that this

¹⁴³ Rasheed Araeen, “When the Naughty Children of Empire Come Home to Roost,” *Third Text: Third World Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture* 20, no. 2 (2006), 233-239. Araeen was born in Pakistan and moved to Britain later in his career.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. This led Araeen to curate the exhibition *The Other Story: Afro-Asian artists in Post-War Britain* in 1999, at the Hayward Gallery, London that is discussed later in the chapter.

interest should not be viewed as a genuine recognition of quality, but was more a reconciliatory gesture by the British of “exotica or mediocrity” based on earlier misgivings arising from a confused sense of “cultural diversity.”¹⁴⁷

In noting this movement from the 1980s, Araeen articulated two emerging trends: First, a debate that interrogated the “institutional policies and attitudes towards the artists who were not white.” As a response to this, he charged the system with “institutional racism.” The second trend critiqued the system of “multiculturalism” as a “debate, which was not about the equality of all cultures” but one that existed in the service of dominant culture to maintain the oppressed so as to preserve their power.¹⁴⁸ The main concern here, for Araeen, was not just the exclusion of non-Western artists from the art scene, but also their own lack of knowledge of their repressed history and their contribution to the art world. This concern at that time took on an international dimension with many Third World critics and art historians questioning the way history of modern art has been perceived and written, and why it has included only white artists from Europe and North America?¹⁴⁹

In placing this within the context of the history of colonization, it could be said that post-World War II led to the formation of different worlds; namely the first (colonizers) and third world (postcolonial) but another “other” of the second

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Homi Bhabha defines multiculturalism as a “a portmanteau term for anything from minority discourse to postcolonial critique, [...] has become the most charged sign for describing the scattered social contingencies that characterize contemporary Culture.” For Bhabha “the multicultural” has itself become a “floating signifier” [...] to mark social process where “differentiation and condensation seem to happen almost synchronically.” Homi Bhabha, ed., *Cultures in between* London; New York: Routledge, 1998, 32. Catalog Record - <https://catalog.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=3341321&DB=local>.

¹⁴⁹ See Rasheed Araeen, “A New Beginning: Beyond Postcolonial Cultural Theory and Identity Politics,” *Third Text: Third World Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture* 50, no. Spring (2000), <http://web.ebscohost.com> (accessed 9/5/2007).

(Communist) world. Elaborating on the history of exhibitions that had taken place since then, it could be said with certainty that European and North American artists dominated the international art scene.¹⁵⁰ It could also be said that, as early as 1969, there were exhibitions that did attempt to break the hierarchies within art (still within a Western frame of mind). Harold Szeemann, a world-renowned Swiss curator, presented one such notable point in *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*. This being the first major survey of conceptual art to take place in Europe, subtitled *Works, Concepts, Processes, Situations, Information*, marked an important departure from existing exhibition practice. In it, the artists were more or less free to contribute any work that they felt would be relevant. Szeemann was among the pioneers who identified the role of the curator as translator and cultural negotiator in the context of art.¹⁵¹

In the late 1970s there was a trend to compare the art between cities such as Paris/New York, 1977; Paris/Berlin, 1978; Paris/Moscow, 1979; Paris/Paris that took place in 1981 or as Westkunst, 1978, Berlin, a large exhibition that surveyed American and European art from 1939 till the 1970's.¹⁵² The 1980's seems interested in defining the spirit of the times, with *Zeitgeist: Spirit of Times*, Berlin 1982;¹⁵³ 60/80

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ See *Documenta Archive*, “D5 1972,” Documenta Archive, <http://www.documenta12.de/d5.html?&L=1> (accessed 08/08/2007, 2007).

¹⁵² Marcel Baumgartner and others, *Westkunst : Zeitgenössische Kunst Seit 1939*, Köln: DuMont, 1981. The exhibition Westkunst Zeitgenössische Kunst Seit 1939, ambitious survey of art of the Western world from 1939 to date which comprised over 800 works by more than 200 European and American artists. The exhibition attempted to conveys a vivid sense of the vitality and invention of the art in the present context after the great movements of Cubism and Surrealism. As reported by Baumgartner, Westkunst was conceived in 1978 to revive the spirit of the great art shows that took place in Cologne before World War I, such as the avant-garde Sonderbund exhibition of 1912, which included work by the young Picasso.

¹⁵³ For further details about all these exhibitions see Robert Hughes, “Paris 1937-1957: An Elegy,” *Time Magazine*, no. Oct 12, 1981, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,924928-3,00.html>.

Attitudes: Concepts and Images, that took place in Amsterdam,¹⁵⁴ 1982; *A New Spirit in Painting*, London, 1981;¹⁵⁵ and *Difference: On Representation and Sexuality* at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, 1984.¹⁵⁶ What happened to American art during the 1980's was discussed in *The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity* in the 1980's in a large exhibition six months into the 90's.¹⁵⁷ The 1980's also presented a show that further redefined the spirit of the times, arguing that the spirit is not only in the artwork but also in their context of history.¹⁵⁸

But the exhibition that perhaps inspired *Magiciens* was presented four years earlier. William Rubin and Kirk Varnedoe organized titled *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, at the MoMA in 1984. In this controversial exhibition, the curators juxtaposed a hundred and fifty historical works of European modernist artists, with two hundred African tribal artifacts on the basis of superficial similarities or affinities between them.¹⁵⁹ The curators presented an

¹⁵⁴ Ad Petersen and Amsterdam (Netherlands). Stedelijk Museum., 60[-]80 : *Attitudes/Concepts/Images : [Tentoonstelling] Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 9. IV - 11. VII. 1982.* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1982).

¹⁵⁵ Christos M. Joachimides and others, *A New Spirit in Painting*, London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1981.

¹⁵⁶ Kate Linker and others, *Difference: On Representation and Sexuality*, New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984. Saskia Bos and others, *Jetztzeit*, Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Cantz Verlag, 1994. Also the exhibition *Jetztzeit* developed out of an invitation by the Austrian Ministry of Culture to curate an exhibition on Austrian art for the Kunsthalle Wien. According to the curator Saskia Bos the exhibition focused to provide a fresh perspective on the national art scene through the eye of a foreigner. In her curatorial text, the title *Jetztzeit* was to reflect on the concept of contemporariness – “être de son temps” as noted by famous artist Gustave Courbet put it.

¹⁵⁷ *The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity* in the 1980s was co-organized by and co-presented by the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, the New Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Studio Museum in Harlem. Cited in “New Museum -History” New Museum, <http://www.newmuseum.org/about/history> (accessed 9/8/, 2008).

¹⁵⁸ Utilizing the concept of Gesmankunstwerk, (brought to a fore by Wagner as he did in music was to extend the boundaries of what art is?). For details see J. Debora Meijers, “The Museum and the Ahistorical Exhibition .” In *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne, 487th ed., London; New York: Routledge, 1996, 10.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 56.

anthropological perspective of examining, presenting and including the “other” from remote cultures of Africa and Australia. The crux of the exhibition could be encapsulated in an advertisement in the Sunday Times Magazine October 1984, which stated: “Which is Primitive? Which is Modern? And the question is of course how do they relate to each other and we to them?”¹⁶⁰ The advertisement continued that the exhibition presented a: new definitive view of similarities and differences, the influences and affinities, which have intrigued us for over a hundred years. A response was clearly provided by the exhibition, through the disempowered anonymous “other,” labeled as primitive and exotic.

This concept was severely criticized by several historians, such as Johanna Lamoureux in her essay “From Form to Platform.” Lamoureux was among one of the most forceful, as she questioned the term “affinities” as a way to connect the so-called primitive objects along with the generic usage of the term “tribal,” to represent people/artifacts from the non-Western world.¹⁶¹ The presentation of these objects for her also carried a misplaced sense of nostalgia for a “mythical past” which upheld them as lost objects in time.¹⁶² Hence, the exhibition neglected to locate the real influences on Western artists, such as the African artworks that influenced Picasso that were simply labeled primitive.¹⁶³ Further the African artworks were exhibited without dates or any mention of the maker of the object, nor were they accompanied by any discussion of their meaning or function within their original contexts.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Brian Sewell, “Pride Or Prejudice,” *The Sunday Times Magazine* (26 November, 1989), 339.

¹⁶¹ Lamoureux, *From Form to Platform: The Politics of Representation and the Representation of Politics*, 64(10).

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

Moreover, art historian Thomas McEvilley in “Exhibition Strategies in the Postcolonial Era,” contends that the non-modernist works were treated in a flippant manner that deprived them of their dignity and made them seem as if they did not really belong to any real culture and were instead “appendages to the West.”¹⁶⁵ These critiques of what was labeled “primitive” and “tribal” were of great significance and unfortunately were replayed in the exhibition *Magiciens* with a major difference. All artists in the exhibition were alive and their names, location, and details of work were clearly defined, but their parameters were similar to what was undertaken in Primitivism and were defined in the area of “magic.”

Conjuring up An (“other”) World: *Les Magiciens de la Terre*

Les Magiciens de la Terre that commemorated the bicentennial of the French Revolution marked a turning point in French art history. It served as a perfect moment for that nation to showcase its openness and tolerance of world cultures. Held at two venues, the Centre Georges Pompidou and Grande Halle of La Villette in Paris, *Magiciens* came to be known to achieve the opposite effect, one that showcased a disparate view of history.¹⁶⁶ It claimed the position of being the most critiqued and controversial exhibition in history for its uncritical view and stereotypical presentation of the non-West, thereby failing to uphold the proclamation that was undertaken by its country, France, two hundred years ago as pinnacle of the French Revolution.

¹⁶⁵ Thomas McEvilley, “Exhibition Strategies in the Postcolonial Era,” *Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions, Tensions; Traditions, Tensions*, ed. Apinan Poshyananda, New York: Asia Society Galleries: Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 1996, 54-69, Catalog Record - <https://catalog.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=3338712&DB=local>.

¹⁶⁶ Lamoureux, “From Form to Platform,” 64(11). Here Lamoureux is ironic about Martin’s curatorial attempt in conceiving *Magiciens*. She reports that although Martin attempted to do something contrary of the famous 1931 Paris Colonial Exhibition, which arose “from a perspective of economic and political colonialism,” the installation at La Villette, especially, made her think precisely of the 1931 show.

In a penchant to create a homogenous space to equally represent all artists, it inadvertently created another “other,” space, based on the forced theme of “magic.” This further created a separation in what could be termed the “center” and “periphery” or “us” and ‘them.’ *Magiciens*’ impact however could be noted differently from *Primitivism*, in the fact that it attempted to confront its predecessors’ anthropological aspect of viewing art that was object based. It only included living artists in the show to shift the focus from traditional “object” to a lived contemporary reality. But one can ask whether that would be enough? An appropriate response here would be to acknowledge the intent of the curators in their attempt to be inclusive of cultures from far and wide that had never been cited or viewed within the Western world. But they need to be critiqued for their framing and contextualizing their presentation of the non-Western “other” in their exhibitions. One of the big issues, which could be viewed in examining *Magiciens*, was that it retained an engagement with affinities (in a similar fashion to the exhibition *Primitivism*) in the way it viewed art. It also continued to use a primitivist attribute as its key curatorial premise based on “magic” and the “earth,” both once again strongly rooted in anthropology and animistic beliefs.

The exhibition however did not address the aspect of religion overtly, but instead express a propensity for the regressive and mystical to be visible.¹⁶⁷ In her essay, Lamoureux links the term *magician* to Sigmund Freud’s book *Totem and Taboo*. From a Freudian perspective, she asserts the failure of *Magiciens* resulted from an unrecognized relationship between the subject (the magician) and the object (the fetish).¹⁶⁸ She further emphasized this connection by comparing *Magiciens de la Terre* with *Les Damnés de la Terre (The Wretched of the Earth)* an important book by

¹⁶⁷ McEvilley in his essay associates *Magiciens* with the non- Western cultures with magic and or the non-rational. ¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon. Interestingly in this book, Fanon attempts to resolve the stereotypical binaries between black as bad and white as good.¹⁶⁹ Instead *Magiciens* chose to do the opposite, as the curators juxtaposed Western contemporary artists with native/tribal art from the non-West, cultures that resonated a strong bipolarism within the exhibition frame. For her however, one of the most important parts of *Magiciens* lies in the fact that it finally brought forth the politics of representation in art exhibitions. She suggests that although Primitivism had posited the “creativity of otherness as a phenomenon of the past, *Magiciens* situated it elsewhere.”¹⁷⁰ For her “the time of otherness” became the “space of otherness.”¹⁷¹ From a distance however, it seemed that these were the very boundaries that *Magiciens* pretended to shake.

McEvilley succinctly sums up *Magiciens*, saying that it highlighted the crux of the problem of viewing the non-West through a Western perspective.¹⁷² This was amply evident from the curator’s preference in substituting the word artist with *magiciens*, underscoring that their exhibition included representation of non-Western artists that were not artists in the traditional sense but more “object and image makers” invited to present their art.¹⁷³ Another critical folly made by the curator in order to preserve a non-existent “purity of tradition,” and maintain the distinction between the West and the non-West was his decision to not exhibit hybrid works of art.¹⁷⁴ Gavin Janties a curator/artist, confirmed this view by remarking that *Magiciens* laid open the

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Lamoureux, “From Form to Platform,” 64(11).

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² McEvilley, “Exhibition Strategies in the Postcolonial Era,” 54-69.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

“Western /Eurocentric consciousness like a surgeon dissecting his own body without an anesthetic.”¹⁷⁵ According to him, it revealed that the “Eurocentric gaze had distinct and overwhelming problems when fixed upon the “cultural other; its achievements and methodologies.”¹⁷⁶ He says that although the exhibition emphasized “equality in the cultural arena” amongst all artists, it can be stated as an imagined notion for the curator.¹⁷⁷

This becomes amply clear from Jean- Hubert Martin’s curatorial statement. According to him the idea behind the exhibition was “ to question the relationship of our culture to other cultures of the world,” thereby questioning the false distinction between Western cultures and other cultures.¹⁷⁸ But in understanding the difference between our culture and theirs, “us” and “ them,” in what manner can one establish a dialogue with the “other” which is culturally different? *Magiciens* chose to articulate affinities merely visually as stated by Martin:

The term quality has been eliminated from my vocabulary, since there is no convincing system to establish relative and binding criteria of quality ... I will... go by visual criteria alone, my vision and that of my colleagues.¹⁷⁹

Jean-Hubert Martin

¹⁷⁵ Cited in Bruce W. Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg and Sandy Nairne, “Mapping International Exhibitions,” *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe*, eds. Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic , Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005, 37.

¹⁷⁶ Cited in Ibid., 37.

¹⁷⁷ Cited in Ibid., 37.

¹⁷⁸ In affirming the visual semblances as curatorial criteria that marks Martin exhibition, his perception of how culture should be viewed is clarified in an interview with art critic Benjamin Buchlock. Martin states: “The basic idea of our exhibition is to question the relationship of our culture to other cultures of the world...the exhibition tends to create a dialogue. I oppose the idea that one can only look at another culture to exploit it. Our first concern is with exchange and dialogue with understanding others in order to understand ourselves.” Cited in B. H. D. Buchloh and Jean Hubert Martin, “Interview,” *Third Text: Third World Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture*, no. 6 (1989), 19-27.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. Also see for more details Jack Flam, “The Gallery: Global Art: Getting the Big Picture,” *Wall Street Journal* (Jul 25, 1989), 1.

I would consider this one of the biggest flaws of Martin's show: constructing an exhibition based on visual criteria as a critical benchmark given the diversity of the artists and their context. In resorting to this, Rasheed Araeen in his very important issue of *Third Text* dedicated to *Magiciens* writes: "Is the EYE enough to recognize what we appreciate to be art?"¹⁸⁰ His point is to ask if one can rely on a visual examination of art alone. If so, he asks what is the role of other discourses "(art history, theory and criticism, among others) in order to legitimize them as art?"¹⁸¹ This in my opinion forms an important question, as it clarifies that our understanding of art is no longer based on visual criteria alone, but that context and discourse form an equal part of it. Martin's attempt to use magic as a common denominator within a visual context to transcend the theoretical and historical framework of what art has come to mean to us is problematic. Therefore, the visual affinity of curating such an exhibition, according to Araeen, does an injustice to both Western and non-Western works, as it overly simplifies both practices by misinterpreting the non-Western artist's work, as well as issues at the core of Western art, by regressing further into a retinal mode of appreciation.¹⁸²

The question of affinities is amplified by conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner who queries: "what is art?"¹⁸³ This existential question, which is complex even in

¹⁸⁰ Rasheed Araeen, "Our Bauhaus, Others' Mudhouse." *Third Text: Third World Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture*, no. 6 (1989), 3-14.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid., 282-283. Araeen critiqued *Magiciens* as he felt it was a perfect example of one (West) culture curating another (non-Western). It resorted to a simplistic means of using magic and spirituality as a way to hide the uncomfortable questions of "cultural identity" and "differing critical systems," opting instead for a "classical modernist thematic." In his eyes it failed in "unpacking and recasting wider concepts of cultural and artistic conceptualizations" in context of the exhibition space. He felt the exhibition's success could be attributed as a result of its scale and the fact that it created the much-needed debate around issues of representation.

¹⁸³ Jean Hubert Martin, *Magiciens De La Terre*, Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1989, 10.

discussions of Western art, takes on another level of complexity in the undefined space of “othered” non-Western sphere. Here, besides examining art in the context of its materiality, content and symbolism, its role or function assumes criticality. In the case of several of the fifty non-Western *magiciens*, the separation between art and life does not exist. This can be viewed for instance when we look at the sacred mandala that has been so meticulously prepared by three monks, namely Lobsang Thinle, Lobsang Palden, and Bhorda Sherpa from Nepal, and subsequently destroyed. For these monks from the Gelugpa monastery, the making of the mandala is their religion and life, and also determines their purpose in life, which is religion. In reading their response to Weiner’s statement one understands that they do not have such a notion of art as separate from life. As evident in their work, their art (mandala) is a way of life.¹⁸⁴

A similar reflection is evident in the work of the Indian Warli painter Jiuya Soma Mashe, whose paintings are made on the outer walls of his house; commemorating events in his life. For example, the work in *Magiciens* reflects a marriage in the village. Hence art and life take on another relationship within the work of the non-Western *magiciens* who were selected for the show. To include the so-called “tribal” artists with other non-Western artists is very problematic. To ask what they call and term art is inappropriate. But through this it becomes clear what the curator view as art. It would be something, which retains a certain “primitive” quality that according to the curator would have a universal appeal that would transcend and relate to all cultures. My guess is that artist Lawrence Weiner’s question itself was a clever ploy to expose the problems in framing *Magiciens*: i.e. in conceptual terms the definition of art becomes extremely subjective. For the curator, hence along with the

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 241.

(intended) impossibility of determining what constitutes art in specific terms, the existence of multiple modernities to co-exist within the same modernity was also overlooked.

But as rightly suggested by Araeen in the case of *Magiciens*, the main argument is often displaced from the centre of struggle (modernism/modern art) to the “predicament” of other cultures. However, any challenge to modernism, as far as the Third World is concerned, must come from a premise in which modernism for the “other” remains a basic issue. Geeta Kapur, an Indian art historian, clarifies some of Araeen’s concerns by stressing the difference between the terms “tradition” and “contemporaneity.”¹⁸⁵ Her contention is that it is not as simple to view “contemporaneity” through an ideological lens of modernity, as the problem of modernity is posited within an indeterminate relationship with modernization and modernism.¹⁸⁶ Modernization for her is: “a social and economic process now applicable mostly to the underdeveloped/developing societies (of the Third World), while modernism is a cultural term situated in Western history from the nineteenth century.”¹⁸⁷

Her problem is:

In the process non-Western nations, though struggling with the processes of modernization, are excluded from modernism per se. Or they are seen to be incidental to it.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Geeta Kapur, *Contemporary Cultural Practice some Polemical Categories*, New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1989.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

Therefore according to her, “contemporaneity” seemed a safer term to use than modernity.¹⁸⁹ The history of modernism, of what it includes and excludes needs to be considered. What it excludes from its recognition is not only what Buchloh calls “the plurality of cultures,” or the continuation of past traditions, but also “the objects of high culture produced by the “other.”¹⁹⁰ The elitism of modern art is clear to all of us, and this is not the place to argue for radical alternatives. Araeen confirms Kapur’s statement as he opines that the continuing monopolization of modernism by Western culture (particularly in the visual arts) is to deny the global influences of modernism, and to mask its function as a dominant force of history to which people all over the world are increasingly subjected.¹⁹¹ The situation worsens when the attitude “anything goes” is legitimized by the benevolence of dominant culture, creating a space in which the “other” is accommodated in a spectacle that produces an illusion of equality.¹⁹²

This leads us to return to clarify an important question in the show, namely who are the *magiciens*? And what is their connection to the earth and with each other? This question forms part of the artwork of conceptual artist Barbara Kruger in the exhibition. The over sized catalogue constructed to resemble an atlas of the world includes the exact geographic location of the artist and contains a photo of the artist alongside the work. Given the fact that there were hundred *magiciens* or artists for each, a stamp size map located them in the center of the world comes. In alluding to the map, which relates to the earth and territory, one is reminded of philosopher Charles Baudrillard’s concept of the simulacra, in which he suggests that “it is the map

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Buchloh and Jean Hubert Martin, 19-27.

¹⁹¹ Araeen, “Our Bauhaus, Others’ Mudhouse.” 3-14.

¹⁹² Ibid.

that engenders the territory” re-affirming the map as a signifier that secures geography’s place in history.¹⁹³ This reveals something, which has been left undebated, that the map itself is a result of the ominous history of colonization. It is a mechanism via which colonizers controlled their vast empires by putting their name in print to usurp almost the entire world. Here it is necessary to recall the words of the late Edward Said, who said “the earth, will belong to whoever knows it best,” which largely has been the colonizers as they not only colonized the world but were also the ones who invented the map that allowed them to “name the territory.”¹⁹⁴

This leads us to consider the title of the show and the main premise of the exhibition “earth,” and question why colonial history, which was inextricably linked, to land was conveniently ignored. In engaging Spivak’s concept of worlding, the “earth” can be understood as the primal, regressive, untouched land in the world. It only becomes “worlded” if we consider the epistemic violence of the process of colonization, which transformed the landscape completely. In that sense, the exhibition’s engagement with the “earth” as the primal source of energy within Spivak’s concept of worlding would suggest that the “un-worlded” return to the pre-history of mankind with man as the primitive, unless Martin’s *Magiciens* attempted to represent a space as the emergence of human kind when there were no distinctions between people and hence no “otherness,” and the “earth” could thus be as a space that belonged to everyone.

This energy of returning to source was largely omitted in all works of the show, including German artist Anselm Kiefer’s large paintings and objects that exposed a

¹⁹³ Jean Baudrillard and Mark Poster, *Jean Baudrillard : Selected Writings* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 1988), 166.

¹⁹⁴ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

primitive roughness; Swiss artist Daniel Spoerri's work that responded to African masks and ritual objects; and the memorable work of British artist Richard Long's "Red Earth Circle," that was a circular finger painting done with reddish mud. Also what could be noted as interesting were some of the works of the fifty non-Western magiciens. For example, the work of the six members of the aboriginal Australian Yuendumu community that was juxtaposed alongside Long's work could be said to have less of a primitive or earthly quality than that of Long. However, what would have been more interesting is to problematize the relationship between the colonization of the aboriginal's land by the British (Long), and reflect upon the outcome of the people who originally lived there and are today removed from their original space and live a nomadic existence.

In deciding not to engage with the violent history of colonization, and the contemporaneity of the postcolonial artists today, *Magiciens* lacked any connection with the politics of space or place that would really engage in the "earth" as a land or home, embodied in the lives of people all over the world. Also, it did not responsibly acknowledge its own history of violence—that of France as a nation that had colonized a significant part of the world that had only as late as the 1960s was forced to free Algeria that they had colonized for over two hundred years. The *Magiciens* undoubtedly are the Western colonizers who, in spite of decolonization, continue to control and dominate the rest of the world as a result of their economic prowess. Besides their continued dominance, their magical qualities are visible, for example, in the way the British and the French made up the land of Israel, rendering Palestine as outlawed.

In examining *Magiciens*, one of the biggest issues could be noted in the lack of criticality of contextualizing the "world" as a space, and in not identifying its

relationship with the “earth.” In this regard, it further perpetuated the notion of center and periphery as one that could be considered even more regressive by affixing the discourse of primitive/modern to all the contemporary art discourse that had already taken place since then.¹⁹⁵ Criticisms such as these are well-founded since the ambition and the scale of the exhibition made it impossible to ignore the discrepancy within the curatorial agenda that comprised fifty works of Western contemporary artists juxtaposed with a similar number from the non-West, whose works could be considered exotic, working in traditional arts or self taught modernists artists. Furthermore no distinctions were maintained between the arts and crafts in the non-Western category, proving the lack of research by the curator and a half-hearted attempt to represent and include the so-called “other.”

As a result of relying on visual affinities, the curators were unable to go beyond the simplistic associations among the artists and create any new links due to the lack of accounting for multiple modernities. The penchant for anthropology was also evident, which perpetuated the hegemonic separation of power between the West “us” and the non-West “them.” It did not in anyway tell the “other” story of the non-West in adequate terms. But in the same year, another exhibition titled *The Other Story* curated by Rasheed Araeen undertook it as its mission. This allows us a comparative perspective of what *Magiciens* failed to consider.

¹⁹⁵ Bill Ashcroft in his book *Transformation* informs us that the perspective from which the globe was seen had an incalculable effect on how the world was to be known. With the colonized lands being literally re-inscribed, or written as maps, Ashcroft’s point is an important part of maintaining the European hegemony that was conferred by the “dynamic of naming,” which by its very act of inscription, became an extension of the dominance of imperial powers over the non-European world. Hence in his words, naming “appropriates, defines, captures a place in language” extending the European hegemony of “exploration” and ‘discovery’ by the dynamic of control, that is manifested on an atlas. See Bill Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation*, London; New York: Routledge, 2001, 129, 207.

An (other) Story

While examining *Magiciens*, it is critical to compare it to another important exhibition that took place the same year. *The Other Story*, curated by Araeen in the Hayward Museum, London, 1989 addressed what *Magiciens* had largely overlooked. Both exhibitions were geographically only a few miles apart, but presented two contradictory perspectives. *Magiciens* presented a reality that exoticized the “other” through difference. Araeen’s *The Other Story* exposed and problematized this very exoticization of otherness in the case of African and Asian art by representing the story from a position of difference. While *Magiciens* rendered the Third World “other” as primitive, *The Other Story* depicted the reality from the perspective of otherness. Both exhibitions presented two opposing paradigms of examining otherness, one from the perspective of a white, Western curator and the other from a non-Western artist based in the West. Araeen’s intent in his exhibition, as articulated earlier in the chapter, was to reclaim acknowledgment and dignity for the Asian and African artist.¹⁹⁶

But instead of welcoming this effort, the exhibition was largely dismissed by the British art media.¹⁹⁷ Araeen argues that the easy rejection of the exhibition was not due to rational reasons but was because it touched a sensitive nerve in making visible the racism that “lay hidden behind the liberal mask.”¹⁹⁸ He highlights one of the harsher accusations by critics such as Brian Sewell, who queries: “why have Afro-Asian artists failed to achieve a critical notice and establish a London market for their

¹⁹⁶ Araeen, “When the Naughty Children of Empire Come Home to Roost,” 233-239.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

work?”¹⁹⁹ Answering this question Sewell, adds: “they are not good enough. They borrow all and contribute nothing.”

He continues:

The dilemma for the Afro-Asian artist is whether to cling to a native tradition that is either imaginary, long moribund, or from which he is parted by generations and geography, or to throw in his lot with an ancient tradition of white Western art, from which he borrows but with which he has scant intellectual or emotional sympathy. Whichever he chooses, he must not require praise, nor demand a prime place in the history of art, simply because he is not white. For the moment, the work of Afro-Asian artists in the West is no more than a curiosity, not yet worth even a footnote in any history of 20th-century Western art.²⁰⁰

Similarly, *Magiciens* can be considered an exhibition that revealed the discordant tendencies and attitudes of the West towards the non-West during the late 1980s that perhaps still lurks somewhere today. The exhibition effortlessly juxtaposed the work of Western artists with traditionally non-Western art, almost as if to imply contemporary art as a Western phenomenon. It was much condemned by several critics such as Tim Griffin in *Artforum*, who viewed *Magiciens* with a “proleptic sense of what is to come (the global-themed show) as well as for its “neoprimitivist, regressive aspect--its Beuysian concept of the artist as shaman, of the work of art as auratic.”²⁰¹ *The Other Story*, on the other hand, brought into focus what Araeen suggests is not common knowledge—that perhaps the “other” has already entered the citadel of modernism and has challenged it on its own ground.²⁰² His concern was to prove that it is no longer enough to know who the “other” is, but how the “other” has

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Cited in Sewell, “Pride Or Prejudice.”

²⁰¹ Tim Griffin, “Global Tendencies: Globalism and the Large-Scale Exhibition,” *Artforum* 42, no. 3. (Nov, 2003), 152,
<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=489605851&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>.

²⁰² Araeen, “Our Bauhaus, Other’s Mudhouse.” 3-14.

subverted the very assumptions on which “otherness” is constructed by the dominant culture.

Determining the Post (*Magiciens*) Condition

In examining the emergence of the global exhibition, including the discourses on the postcolonial in looking at *Magiciens*, *Primitivism* and *The Other Story*, what can be said to be the repercussions of these exhibitions with regards the future of the large-scale global exhibition? In the 1990s the postcolonial emerged as a dynamic force that was pushed as a significant moment in history by art historians and curators related to the postcolonial field. These curators importantly problematized these dialogues not in isolation, but in relationship with the West, making them extremely important in shaping the articulation and reception of the postcolonial in the West. As a result a growing number of south-to-south (Gerardo Mosquera) exhibitions started to get established that allowed discussions to take place outside the West.

But in spite of these associations and developments, a significant number of large-scale postcolonial exhibitions have been realized only in the West. One reason could be due to sparse economic resources in the non-West. Since production costs are extremely high, some of the non-Western countries do not have adequate spaces, such as museums, to undertake these exhibitions. A second reason could be that the postcolonial discourse within the arts is still struggling to gain agency of its own. As a result, most of the well-known non-Western curators have had to be legitimized by the Western art world and now (mostly) live in the West.

I now undertake to examine the influences of *Magiciens* on the exhibitions that followed, specifically in the development of the postcolonial discourse. The exhibitions in consideration are: *Contemporary Art from Asia: Traditions/Tensions*,

1996; *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945-1994*; *Unpacking Europe*, 2001; and *The American Effect and Inverted Utopias: Avant-Grade Art in Latin America*, 2004.

Opposing Asian Traditions?

Contemporary Arts from Asia: Traditions /Tensions opened at the Asia Society in 1997 in New York City. This could be considered one of the foremost exhibitions of contemporary Asia to be exhibited in the West. It was also one of the first exhibitions to be presented by an Asian curator, Apinan Poshyananda, a Thai art historian and art critic who was equally conversant in both Asian and Western art discourses. Engulfed in globalization, Asia's shifting landscape left little doubt that this moment of transition was one filled with angst and apprehension. The exhibition attempted to de-exoticize the notion of Asia, presenting it as an entity, which reflected the chaos as much as its mythical heritage.²⁰³ Equally it quietly bared the package of Asian authenticity as a myth constructed by the West.²⁰⁴ The central concern of the exhibition, evident from the title itself, was to present contemporary Asian art outside the pureness of tradition in order to emphasize its hybrid nature. In a sense this could be attributed to *Magiciens*, which confirmed the concept of tradition as not being fixed nor engaged in a higher realm.²⁰⁵

In presenting several Asian artists in the United States for the first time, the exhibition challenged the Western viewer's familiarity with Asian history, politics,

²⁰³ Apinan Poshyananda, "Roaring Tigers, Desperate Dragons in Transition," *Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions, Tensions; Traditions, Tensions*, ed. Apinan Poshyananda, New York: Asia Society Galleries: Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 1996, 27, Catalog Record - <https://catalog.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=3338712&DB=local>.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 27.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 27.

and culture to require them to engage with contemporary art from Asia.²⁰⁶ In order to oppose the formerly overused, simplistic dichotomies of East versus West, Orient versus Occident, Asia versus America, us versus them, history versus modernity, and tradition versus contemporaneity,”²⁰⁷ it chose to explicitly deconstruct the various orientalizing characterizations of Asia by juxtaposing alternative dichotomies of:

tradition versus modernity; multiculturalism versus multimodernism; race/skin versus gender/class; religion/myth versus egotism/materialism; postmodernism versus postorientalism; globalism versus localism.²⁰⁸

Importantly, the exhibition sought to shift the gaze from the Occident or the West to a view from the Orient or Asia, thereby reflecting on how Asian identity was viewed within itself.²⁰⁹ With this approach, the exhibition contended that there was not one Asian identity but many Asias that were distinct and embodied several traditions, co-inhabiting various timeframes and, hence, containing multiple modernities. This made it impossible to construct one notion of Asia as is often understood by the West, thereby grounding the exhibition in a state of flux that reflected a larger connection with the world and the process of globalization that was taking place.

Traditions/ Tensions alerts us against the reifying tradition and warns us against its memorialization as a fixed entity, both in terms of identity and in the context of culture. It also affirmed that it is no longer a matter of non-Western people confronting Western models, but is now a situation in which the West has to adapt to the independent self-definition of other cultures in a way it has long resisted.²¹⁰ Now

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 27.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 15.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 26.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 28.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 28.

for the first time, according to McEvilley, the West has had to confront the notion that it does not control the non-West.²¹¹ As previously colonized societies have come to experience themselves as their own centers again, he adds that their art will serve the function of integrating them around expressions of their own selfhood and thereby inform a new attitude towards the West.

An African Century?

On a similar note, *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945-1994*, curated by Nigerian born Okwui Enwezor, embarked on a project to frame the discourse on Africa. In viewing the title of the exhibition, the curator references a moment in time in African history when postcolonial memory becomes evident. In his review of *The Short Century*, critic Glen Bush queried if the exhibition title intended to propose to the viewer that the 20th century was shorter for Africa than for the West and if so, why? Or he asks if Enwezor was proposing to examine the 20th century using a timeline from the African perspective? This is possibly true, as Enwezor borrows the title from Kwame Nkrumah's declaration in his 1958 opening session speech at the All-African People's Conference that stated "this mid-twentieth century is Africa's."²¹² In addition, the title could also be understood to imply the shortness of the decade in perceiving the shifts that have occurred in the ten years within the context of African art since the exhibition *Primitivism* in 1984 up until *The*

²¹¹ Ibid., Thomas McEvilley, in his article "Present Tense: On 'Traditions/Tensions: Contemporary Art from Asia,'" applauds Asia Society efforts as an institution, that up until now was pre-occupied "with the so-called traditional arts from Asian nations," to finally "turned its attention to the contemporary [art], prompting a major revision of our perception of Asia." In noting this as a "historic shift" McEvilley affirms the exhibition's crucial role in re-structuring the "social and geopolitical reorientation" of Asia since the postcolonial era. See Thomas McEvilley, "Present Tense: On 'Traditions/Tensions: Contemporary Art from Asia.'" (32): 38-41, 1997.

²¹² Cited in Okwui Enwezor and Chinua Achebe, Okwui Enwezor and Chinua Achebe, *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994*, Munich; New York: Prestel, 2001, 10.

Short Century in 1994 with regard to Africa's place in the world.²¹³

The Short Century was an ambitious exhibition that took on the mantle of presenting Africa in the light of de-colonization. It attempted to unravel what the decades since colonization have looked like, specifically the historical period from the mid-twentieth century onwards, when independence movements and wars of national liberation were taking place throughout the colonized continent of Africa. The exhibition placed emphasis on the center of Africa's successful struggle against direct colonial subjugation.²¹⁴ It also drew on recent initiatives in the fields of postcolonial studies by emphasizing the pivotal role of transnational movements, such as Pan-Africanism and Negritude, in overturning colonial cultural hegemony.²¹⁵ While noting the central role of Western-educated intellectuals in African independence movements, curator Enwezor consciously eschews the elitist trap inherent in much contemporary discourse theory by focusing on the popular struggle against Europe's economic and political domination of the continent.²¹⁶

The Short Century attempted to shift the gaze of the continent of Africa that had overcome its stereotype of coming to embody the primitive, which in some manner reflected an authenticity of sorts. Keeping this in mind, Enwezor clearly attempted to alter the image of Africa as a dark continent that was barbaric and

²¹³ In this decade since 1994 witnessed several important African shows, including the exhibition presented at the Whitechapel Gallery, London in 1995, *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa* that responded to *Magiciens* and explored Africa's relationship with Europe. For more details see *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa*, ed. Deliss, Clémentine. Lampert, Catherine,Whitechapel Art Gallery Malmo Konsthall Guggenheim Museum Soho, Paris; New York: Flammarion, 1995., 319, Catalog Record - <https://catalog.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=2760146&DB=local>.

²¹⁴ Ashley Dawson, "The Short Century: Postcolonial Africa and the Politics of Representation," *Radical History Review*, no. 87 (Fall, 2003), 226-236.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

backward. He wanted to bring to the fore what Africa meant today by familiarizing viewers with the history of the continent since decolonization, including the struggle for freedom and democracy. Much of the exhibition was centered on documenting the years since 1945 by means of a visual archive of books, showcasing the works of contemporary artists that engaged with its own history and art, historical movements in Africa, and important movements of art, such as the emergence of conceptualism in the African context. Enwezor wanted to present Africa in the sense of being “worlded,” as a political entity that was located in modernity.

To undertake this, Enwezor took on several tasks. The first issue was the question of how to present Africa. Second, what Africa meant to the world and how it was perceived from within. As is known, Africa is a continent of several countries with individual histories and only came to be known as Africa after European colonization. In her essay “Hit and Run,” the art historian and art critic Irit Rogoff sums up Enwezor’s contention succinctly. From her perspective, she views *The Short Century* through senses of “losses” experienced by the West from which it constituted a space called Africa.²¹⁷ She says that the exhibition undertook precisely to dismantle this European notion of Africa and to instead re-constitute the same within its own right, thus appropriating Africa in a new light of resistance to Western colonization.²¹⁸ Rogoff also adds that Enwezor undertook to reconnect the continent of Africa to itself by building on the wealth of “mutual histories and linked narratives,” in order to circulate a global network perpetuated both by the colonizer’s culture and the complex internal network of inter-African migrations, circulations, influences, and exchanges.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Irit Rogoff, “Hit and Run--Museums and Cultural Difference,” *Art Journal* 61, no. 3 (2002), 63(11).

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

The third important consideration for Enwezor was to present the exhibition as a living archive of African history, which until that moment had been absent. This was undertaken by employing a knowledgeable research team that assembled relevant documents, catalogues and books under one roof and produced an elaborate catalogue in which some of the most significant intellectuals presented their thoughts. In addition, Enwezor's exhibition strongly resonated the archival sentiment that embraced historicizing by the use of multiple media that included art, videos and documentaries.²²⁰ This included displaying some of the most poignant pieces by contemporary artists from the diaspora and Africa, including documentaries of revolutionary wars that were fought—from Franz Fanon and the FLN in Algeria to Patrice Lumumba in the Congo. *The Short Century* rewrote African history, moving away from a condition of loss to reclaiming a victory of lively resistance.²²¹ *The Short Century*, it could be said, celebrated Africa's successful struggle against colonial hegemony and memorialized the revolutions and the deaths that occurred in the process of highlighting the intellectual contribution of African scholars and intellectuals. The significance and influence of the exhibition can be noted by the numerous reviews and discussions, which emerged after the exhibition.²²² For Okwui Enwezor *The Short Century* was a pre-cursor to the curator ship of *Documenta 11*. Although the exhibition traveled through several venues within Germany and the USA, it was never exhibited in Africa, mostly for lack of funding.

²²⁰ Dawson, *The Short Century: Postcolonial Africa and the Politics of Representation*, and Chambers, Eddie, *Black Issues* Sep/Oct 2001, Vol. 3 Issue 5, 41.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

The “other” at Home

By contrast, in Rotterdam, Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi presented an exhibition and anthology titled *Unpacking Europe* at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, with the impetus to examine the influence of artists outside Europe and those living in the diaspora. They chose to answer the question “How European is Europe?” by saying that everyone is the “other,” and that there is no single pure sense of race that can be maintained in Europe nor the world any more.²²³ Hence the “other” has existed within their backyard all along. Moreover, the exhibition went on to comment that the “other” (Turkish, Moroccan, etc) had always existed in Europe’s history and is not so different from the “other” as described today.²²⁴ One no longer had to look outside at what that meant. Instead, they emphasize not viewing traditions, society and culture as a constant but as something, which is always changing, evolving and mutating. So attempting to find the authentic European individual is impossible as there is no such pureness of race left after the long history of migration, wars and European colonization.

The curators immediately delved into Europe’s history of colonizing so as to “deconstruct” the concept of Europe as a “pure construct.”²²⁵ By inviting contemporary artists from Africa, China, India, Europe and America to exhibit their work, *Unpacking Europe* attempted to reveal the historical baggage that had not been acknowledged, such as cultural inheritance and influence from the non-West on Europe. In one sense, the exhibition turned the whole notion of Europe (or the West)

²²³ Salah M. Hassan, Iftikhar Dadi, *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 2001. 12.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

defining the rest of the world on its head by inviting the rest of the world to define Europe for a change. The exhibition strongly critiqued “Eurocentrism,” “Orientalism” and the Western othering of non-Western cultures that in a way prevented the West from seeing itself as other.²²⁶ In affirming that “cultural identities are not given but produced,” it recognized Europe as always being culturally hybrid, in which new “hybrid identities and new ethnicities” were constantly being formed.²²⁷ Moreover, the exhibition drew attention to the European borders, that once porous were hardening as the issues of immigration and migration were coming to the fore.²²⁸ And still worse they were turning xenophobic; changing Europe into a heavily guarded fortress at the same moment that globalization was opening the boundaries and connecting the rest of the world. The exhibition, by *unpacking* the contents of Europe, revealed perilous elements lurking within, thereby serving as a wake up call for Europe to take stock of what is going on inside its borders. To this end, *Unpacking Europe* condemned Europe’s long history of colonization and plunder. Its second purpose was to acknowledge the postcolonial subject that has been historically “othered” and continues to be “othered” as a migrant or immigrant labor in Europe today. Finally, it wanted to ensure that this part of Europe’s past and present is included in the future writings of European history.

Reflections on the American Self

President George Bush’s assertion “either you are with us or you are with the terrorists” serves as a key to the politics of what America means in the world today.²²⁹

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid., 13.

²²⁸ Ibid. 12

²²⁹ Cited in *The American Effect: Global Perspectives on the United States, 1990-2003*, ed. Rinder, Lawrence, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York: Whitney Museum of American Art:

The fall of Communism in 1989 undoubtedly led to the emergence of the United States as a super power. *The American Effect: Global Perspectives on the United States, 1990–2003*, held at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York conceived prior to the events of 9/11, seemed a self-reflection on the power that the United States had amassed. The curator of the exhibition, Lawrence Rinder, invited a selection of artists from forty countries to reflect on the theme of America's role as a powerful figure in the imagination.²³⁰ In his catalogue essay, Rinder asserts that the exhibition chose to deal with America's real and imagined effects, intertwined to create a fertile source of themes and images for artists around the world.²³¹ The works in the exhibition explored the ways in which the idea of America has come to be seen increasingly as a mythic power.²³²

Art critic, Adrian Parr in her review of the exhibition, “Megamodernity: Towards the American Effect,” inquires into the effect of the fall of the Berlin Wall and considers whether the world is any freer than it was thirty years ago.²³³ Instead, she declares that although the nature of walls has changed, their content has remained the same. The walls no longer exist only between the East and West. Now the

Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 2003, 21, Catalog Record - <https://catalog.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=4823157&DB=local>.

²³⁰ According art historian Jane Desmond, *The American Effect* was the first time the Whitney Museum that primarily exhibited 20th and 21st-century American Art, featured works “done primarily outside of the United States by “non-Americans.” For her the framework for the show, designation of “American” and “not-American” was “overly simplistic and remain[ed] uninterrogated.” She asks why this categorization and “what particular knowledge [was] to be achieved in this gathering together of work by “outsiders”? For details see Jane C. Desmond, “As Others See Us? Fetishizing the Foreign at the Whitney,” *American Quarterly* 56.4 (2004) 1051-1066

²³¹ Ibid., 18.

²³² Ibid., 18.

²³³ Adrian Parr, “Megamodernity: Towards the American Effect,” *Third Text: Third World Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture* 19, no. 1 (01, 2005), 91-104.

marginalized East is Islam.²³⁴ She argues that in the context of the new world, America is viewed as the land of opportunity for some with a number of barriers declining. However, for most, especially to the illegal migrants from the poorer neighbors in the South, these frontiers can be seen as reinforced and becoming stronger. Parr maintains that the exhibition was well intended, was meant to provoke a sense of responsibility and place accountability on America.

Based on the statistics presented by Rinder, only 14% of Americans held passports. This led her to ask, “How effectively did the show raise American consciousness, or the consciousness of the American administration?”²³⁵ Parr on the other hand, interprets this as confirmation of Americans disinterest in world issues.²³⁶ Rinder suggests this could be as a result of America’s physical location that has separated it from the rest of the world and additionally endowed it with adequate natural resources to be self-sufficient, and blames America’s lack of contact with the world as the reason why it views “the other” as “foreign.”²³⁷ But is this enough reason for a nation to turn its “attention inward”?²³⁸ In short, *The American Effect* revealed that the United States as the super power has been so preoccupied with globalizing its own vision of the world that it has neglected to take into account the perspectives of the non-American “other.” This show therefore exposed the insulated way America looked at its own empire.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ *The American Effect: Global Perspectives on the United States, 1990-2003*, 215.

²³⁷ Ibid., 22.

²³⁸ Ibid., 22.

On Top of the World: Repositioning Latin American Art

In 2004, curators Mari Carmen Ramírez and Héctor Olea presented *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America at the Museum of Fine Arts*, Houston. This was one of the first large-scale exhibitions devoted to the emergence and development of avant-garde art in Latin America from 1920 to 1970. *Inverted Utopias* included artists from Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean to analyze the extensive dialogue that prevailed within Latin American artists and European and North American Modernists.²³⁹ The curators of *Inverted Utopias* focused on capturing two significant moments. They first focused on the period of the 1920s during which Latin America artists returned from Europe.²⁴⁰ The second focus was to determine the contribution of Latin artists from the post-World War II period till the 1970s. The exhibition's main attempt was to highlight the origins of movement and development of the Latin avant-garde as independent from Europe and the United States so as to validate the contribution of the Latin artists.²⁴¹

In examining some of the leitmotifs of the Latin American artists that resonated during that period, the curators found a strong interest in utopia. This led them to approach the concept of “inverted utopia” through a process of negation or a reversal. They adopted this concept from the 1936 manifesto by famed Uruguayan artist Joaquin Torres-Garcia in which he depicts an inverted map of South America.²⁴² The exhibition positioned the Southern Cross constellation, or the southernmost tip of the continent, as the top of the map and North America and Mexico, as well as the rest of

²³⁹ Edward Leffingwell, “Latin American Modern,” *Art in America* 92, no. 9 (2004), 76(7).

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

the world, are not represented at all.²⁴³ This inversion of the world acted as an appropriate metaphor for Latin America to reclaim the power subsumed by the West. Through this powerful inversion of the world image from a Latin perspective, the curators intended to proclaim the development of Latin American art to rival European avant-garde, and in the process embrace the “art of the indigenous people and unite South America in the development of an integral and native culture.”²⁴⁴ Hence, *Inverted Utopia* effectively memorialized and articulated the unacknowledged contribution of Latin America in the development of the conceptual art movement.²⁴⁵

Finally, almost as an antithesis to *Magiciens*, given the criticism and discussion that had taken place, curator Martin fourteen years later continued to pursue his argument that *Magiciens* was correctly curated. In 2002 he curated *Partage d'Exostismes* at the 6th Lyon Biennale of Contemporary Art. Martin's Lyon biennale,

²⁴³ *Inverted Utopia* went on to constitute its anti-hegemonic stance by constituting itself more as a dialogue of ideas than a historical survey of Latin America. It was presented as a set of six constellations, each of which highlighted the polarities such as “Play and Grief,” or “Universal and Vernacular,” thereby contesting the contested the hegemonic stance of the grand narrative (that emanated from the West). Also Ramirez's focused her exhibition as a “constellation,” which alluded to specific concepts or historic tendencies, as “luminous points,” than perusing a survey approach that narrated a linear history. This allowed the contribution of Latin American art in the 20th century to be acknowledged, not only as an important constituent of art history but mapped in the context of Latin America, but the world as well. See Mari Carmen Ramirez, “Beyond the Fantastic:” Framing Identity in U. S. Exhibitions of Latin American Art,” *Art Journal* 51, no. 4, Latin American Art (Winter, 1992), 60-68 , <http://links.jstor.org/sici?&sici=0004-3249%28199224%2951%3A4%3C60%3AB%22FFII%3E2.0.CO%3B2-D>.

²⁴⁴ Leffingwell, “Latin American Modern,” 76(7).

²⁴⁵ See the review of *Inverted Utopia* by Holland Cotter, “Ready to Rumba!” August 27, 2004 <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/27/arts/art-review-ready-to-rumba.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> (Sourced October 2011). In this review, Cotter a critic based in New York, highlights the significance of the show, but laments that the show never traveled to another location, specifically to NYC where works had not been seen. He also applauds the exhibition’s expansive notion on the term “political art” and the “sheer breadth of formal and intellectual territory covered by traditional modes ” that it included. Also see Jacqueline Barnitz, “Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America,” *ArtNews* 103, no. 9 (2004): 191(1). Regine Basha, “Inverted Utopias: Avant Garde Art in Latin America,” *Modern Painters* 17, no. 3 (2004): 130(2) and Guy Brett, “Inverted Utopias,” *Artforum International* 43, no. 3 (2004): 217(1).

although it embraced a similar format as *Magiciens*, embraced a more “hybrid structure” than its earlier exhibition that searched for “purity” and “spirituality.”²⁴⁶ Art critic Andrew Budge in his review “Do Magicien’s Grow Wise or Just Old,”²⁴⁷ examined *Partage* and states that as had been the case with *Magiciens*, *Partage* represented forms that reminded one of the works from the former exhibition, such as the Tibetan and Mandala, now replaced by a ground painting with a similar motif done by an Indian collective.²⁴⁸ Although Martin in addition did include the diaspora and hybrid works, for Budge, *Partage* if anything, acted as a “veneer of its former magiciens” that included the 1990s “postcolonial respectability.”²⁴⁹

In its hurry to correctly appropriate the “plural exoticisms,” *Partage* failed to remind itself that the exotic, as a seventeenth century Western construct similar to Orientalism, was created precisely to maintain a clear distinction between the civilizations of Western Europe and the “other world.”²⁴⁹ As Said informs us in *Orientalism*, the Orient and the Occident have unequal power dynamics, in which the Orient was feminized and “othered,” to separate it from nineteenth century Europe.²⁵⁰ These to Said differentiated the European ideas from that of the Orient, with the latter considered as being regressive and unimaginative and the former as superior and

²⁴⁶ Andrew Budge and Wendy Shaw, “Reviews,” *Third Text: Third World Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture* 16, no. 1 (2002), 87(16). The exhibition received much criticism see Kim Levin “The Lyon Biennale.” Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art. 13-14, 2011. According to Levin the exhibition evoked “the old exoticizing infatuations (Orientalism! Primitivism! Primal energies!)” that evoked a “false display of mutual otherness.” Although the curatorial vision clearly stated “the victory of anthropology over traditional aesthetics,” for Levin it seemed like “anthropophagi” was the call of the day, as for him the biennale seemed nothing more than a “feeding frenzy of global exoticisms.”

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 5.

²⁵⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, 5.

admirable.²⁵¹

The issues of “us and them” however, appeared differently in *Partage*.

Contrary to what was found in *Magiciens*, Budge seems to think that *Partage* suffered from an over patronizing sense of otherness. This can best be understood by examining Araeen’s comments on postcolonial theory. Araeen maintains that the postcolonial discourse has been re-appropriated by art institutions, which as a result has “diluted its effect to extricate the West[ern] domination.”²⁵² The quick absorption of the postcolonial into the mainstream, as in the case of *Partage*, can be viewed as patronizing and what Araeen would deem offensive.²⁵³ He opines that instead of defining arts geographically, it would be more worthwhile to examine the networks of contemporary art that bring the “South and North together in the same modernity.”²⁵⁴

But this is not all. He notes, as sometimes the exotizations are propagated by the postcolonial “other” themselves, in which artists in exile serve as excellent examples of how art institutions are still “bastions of white intellectual superiority” which use “multicultural and postcolonial theory to legitimize (their) neo-liberal agendas and blunt or even mute the subversive potential use of art.”²⁵⁵ This trend is further affirmed by Spivak who adds that the role of the postcolonial is neither to recover “signs of self-representation,” of the “disenfranchised speaking for themselves” nor is to address “victim hood by the assertion of identity.”²⁵⁶ This rightly

²⁵¹ Ibid., 7.

²⁵² Araeen, “Our Bauhaus, Others’ Mudhouse.” 3-14.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Sarah Harasym, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, New York: Routledge, 1990, 56.

leads Araeen to call for a more complex definition of the postcolonial, one, which perhaps would explore the issues of identity and representation without playing the victim.²⁵⁷

Conclusion:

In examining the emergence of the postcolonial exhibitions, which began in the late 1980s to date, there have undoubtedly been many noteworthy changes in the history of these exhibitions. One of the important shifts could be considered by looking at *Primitivism* and *Magiciens* that have moved from a binary approach of “us”(West) and “them” (non-West), to a more hybrid structure in the 1990s. This could be examined particularly in *Tradition/Tensions* and *Unpacking Europe*, where there is a stronger tendency to evoke a dialectical relationship with the West, instead of examining the postcolonial within rigid binaries. Also, non-Western curators who started curating their own cultures also increasingly intervened and accomplished what could be labeled as postcolonial exhibitions in the 1990s. This gave more agency and credibility to their exhibitions. They also utilized methodologies laid out by postcolonial theorists, such as Spivak’s concept of worlding, that could be viewed as a strategy to dismantle Western monopoly on the world and extend it as an analytical tool to related concepts to provide a means of interrogating the processes of worlding by what I term “de-worlding.” The re-inscription of new meanings into the spaces that have been “de-worlded,”(or removed from their earlier position) may be termed “re-worlding” (the concepts could be reinstated if found useful, but with a shift of context and agency).

The processes of “de-worlding” and “re-worlding” that I propose could be perceived as anti-cartographical concepts, as they resist being mapped or firmly placed

²⁵⁷ Araeen, *A New Beginning: Beyond Postcolonial Cultural Theory and Identity Politics*, 3-20.

with the binaries of East/West, North/South, Orient/Occidental or any other binary dichotomy, but look instead to create their own worlds outside of any imperialism. This allows “de-worlding” and “re-worlding” to be both viewed as concepts of resistance against all forms of epistemic violence, either through colonialist strategies of imperialism or globalization disguised within neo –imperialist practices. In a similar way, a “re-worlded” colonial subject is doubly exposed, by negotiating his colonized past but also by being actively aware of globalization as a process, which is imperialist and exploitative. By this extension, “re-worlded” art or its concept re-opens a sense of the world which in the very process of its making brings about its unmaking. It thereby seeks to resist its core or the essence of the process of its origin that has lead to its creation.

Alluding to Spivak’s concept of worlding, the exhibitions *Tradition /Tensions*, *The Short Century*, *Inverted Utopia* and *Unpacking Europe* have worked to “de-world” themselves from Western framing. They have through their exhibitions attempted to reject the Western notion of Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe. Also importantly, they have attempted to “re-world” themselves by independently asserting themselves with agency and by unpacking and re-thinking some of the received Western concepts. For example, Poshyananda, presentation of Asia not only removed the Western stereotypical representation of Asia as exotic or oriental, but also actively dismantled the category of Asia itself as a Western construct. Instead, he attempts to present Asia as it is today within the context of “re-worlding,” in which tradition and tension exist side by side, but are also conflicting positions that are constantly negotiating with each other.

Similarly, Enwezor’s *Short Century* sought to dismantle the foundation of Africa itself, also a notion designated by the West, and dislodged the falsehoods of

such terms as “barbaric” and “authentic,” revealing them as bogus. In Enwezor’s “re-worlding” of Africa, he envisaged it as a free continent with a rich diversity of culture and varied history that was independent and striving to gain its agency. Also Ramirez’s in *Inverted Utopia* “de-worlded” the Western notion of Latin America as subservient to the West and instead “re-worlded” itself by inverting the relationship dynamic between the West and Latin America. Curators, Hassan and Dadi similarly “de-worlded” or unpacked the concept of Europe the way it was understood by itself by “re-worlding” Europe to include not only the immigrants and migrants, but also forcing it to acknowledge its own historical realities and basis of colonization and migration. On the other hand, *The American Effect* could be said to “de-world” its own concept of how it perceives itself by instead “re-worlding” itself to be inclusive to the discourse for the rest of the world.

There is undoubtedly much work to be done in this regard, refining and redefining the place of the postcolonial in the age of globalization. Especially considering that *Magiciens* and *Partage* that followed fourteen years later, some curators and art historians continued to adopt a patronizing approach towards the postcolonial “other,” which makes it evident that we still have a long way to go. This makes it important for us to seriously heed Araeen’s call to work towards a more complex definition of the postcolonial and to take this opportunity to push the discourse forward rather than to fall into the same trap as the West of exoticizing ourselves.

CHAPTER 3

UNSETTLING CONSTELLATIONS? OR THE BIENNIALIZATION OF CONTEMPORARY ART

In viewing *Plateau of Humanity* the 2001 Venice biennale that marked the *fin de siècle* curated by Harold Szeemann, would lead us to believe that we as a society have finally evolved to a place where all humanity could be placed on an equitable platform. But, on closer examination of the key work in his exhibition “The Platform of Thought,” that comprised several sculptures from artists from Nigeria, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Kenya, Cuba, Germany, Switzerland and France, also included antiquities such as a centuries-old Buddha statue and a mask from Bali, which makes one wonder if the world has changed enough in the last century to provide an equal place for the non-Western “other.”²⁵⁸ The boundaries between “us” and “them” as well as the “exotic,” and “primitive” were more pronounced than ever. Since all the figures were to respond to Rodin’s “The Thinker,” it reaffirmed the Eurocentric hegemony of privileging Western history over that of the rest of the world.²⁵⁹

Hence it was no surprise that Szeemann’s “The Platform of Thought” reminded one of *Magiciens de la Terre* which almost a decade earlier (1989) was much critiqued for the uncritical manner in which it articulated the difference between Western and Non-Western artists. In a sense Szeemann’s exhibition *Plateau of Humanity* could be considered as problematic as *Magiciens* in its representation of the “other” as it assumed all of humanity to be on the same level.²⁶⁰ Here it is of interest to note

²⁵⁸ Biennale di Venezia and Harald Szeemann, 49, *Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte : La Biennale Di Venezia : Platea Dell 'Umanita' = Plateau of Humankind = Plateau Der Menschheit = Plateau De l'Humanite*, Milano: Electa, 2001.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ In revisiting Szeemann’s oeuvre as a curator with exhibitions such as *Ahistorical Sounds, documenta*

Szeemann's choice in not alluding to the term "plateaus" as defined by the famous philosophers Giles Deleuze and Felix Guttari in their book *Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze and Guttari define "plateaus" as a set of "uncommitted points," that can be linked "ahistorically," thereby making them anti-chronological and opposed to a linearity of time.²⁶¹ This then, would have set the right tone to Szeemann's exhibition and his work "The Platform of Thought" to not only establish connections that represent different time periods of the works he had chosen, but importantly make a realistic representation of humankind, one that represents multiple modernities that co-exist and cannot be classified as a homogenized entity.

This potential of multiple modernities was however expressed in the subsequent 52nd Venice Biennale *The Dictatorship of the Viewer* curated by Francesco Bonami who invited nine curators to present different modernities that existed in the world. He claimed:

The Grand Show of the 21st century must allow multiplicity, diversity and contradiction to exist inside the structure of an exhibition ... a world where the conflicts of globalization are met by the romantic dreams of a new modernity.²⁶²

5 one notes his tendency to break the hierarchies between medium and different objects in order to create a new space. In his 2001 *Venice Biennale* Szeemann exhibited a significant number of new media and video installation, attempting to present technology as the new zeitgeist to further affirm his concept of *Platform of Humanity*. This however could be noted as an unsuccessful endeavor, considering the fact that technology at that moment in time and even until today is not accessible to the entire world especially a significant part of the Third world. Hence *Platform of Humanity* as a theme could be viewed to largely allude to the West as it was framed to accommodate a Western narrative and embody a perspective of how the West viewed the rest of the world.

²⁶¹ The authors define "plateau" as: any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as it forms or extends a rhizome." A rhizome for them connects "any point to any other point" being also "anti-genealogy" or "antimemory." They also conceive the rhizome as it "ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggle." Importantly for them the plateaux is constructed of rhizomes. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "Introduction," *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [Mille plateaux], Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, 1-25.

²⁶² Bonami, Francesco, *Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer*: La Biennale di Venezia: 50th International art exhibition, Marsilio: La Biennale di Venezia, 2003.

Discussing Venice, the oldest and most prestigious of all biennales founded over 100 years ago, Bonami's statement here establishes the contemporariness of the biennale to evoke a "new modernity" a millennium later. Perhaps the "newness" arises as a result of the globalization that transformed modernity from a purely European construct to what cultural theorist Stuart Hall considered, to include the "multiple modernities" that have always existed in the world.²⁶³ By Hall's suggestion, the artist no longer needs to view modernism as a secure possession of the West, but rather as an open language that can be transformed to write history as a series of "cultural translations" rather than a single "universal moment" in a given space and time.²⁶⁴ Hence this "new modernity" as suggested by Bonami resonates a substantial shift in the way the world was viewed a millennium ago, making visible for the first time the existence of the postcolonial discourse, which had largely remained unacknowledged until the 1980s.

In considering the question of modernity and the ability of the biennale to suitably respond to it, Similly Shepard Steiner in her essay "Biennial cultures/Perennial Worries" for the 9th *Istanbul Biennale* affirms the biennales' role to respond to:

modernity at large, but now changeable and distinct from moment to moment and place to place; most importantly, no longer one but many grand narratives since each particular micro-narrative has its own purchase and relationship to the whole.²⁶⁵

She views modernity is an "uneven palimpsest that textures the world full of very unequal modernities" that are overlapping or leaving gaps, but

²⁶³ See Stuart Hall, Sarat Maharaj, Sarah Campbell, and Gilanse Tawadros, *Modernity and Difference*, Annotations. Vol. 6. London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 2001, 18.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Similly Shepard Steiner, "Biennial Cultures/ Perennial Worries," 15-165.

always making visible the inequalities and silences by virtue of the hegemonic power of the cultural dominants.²⁶⁶ Hence for her, “there is no better argument for the biennale than one that acknowledges precisely this gathering up of unequal modernities and places them beside each other.”²⁶⁷

It is a fact that biennales (as a recurring global exhibition, where each gains its identity from the location from which it takes place) have originated in the West and exhibited only Western artists for a long time.²⁶⁸ It is only since the 1980s that the biennales have come to include and consider the works of the postcolonial artists that have emerged from the non-West, where the “new modernity” has been inclusive and opened up to include “the other.” The central question for this chapter is: Have we then reached a state of “new modernity” in which we could situate that the postcolonial has arrived? In that case, what would be the role of the Third World biennales, would they still need to exist? Consequently, this chapter explores Bonami’s promise of the “new modernity” by examining the biennale’s role in this process. Finally the chapter dismantles Szeemann’s perspective of a “Plateau of Humankind” by articulating a “new modernity” constructed of “multiple modernities” that need to be viewed in their own individual time frame and context.

Is the Biennale a formation of the “New Modernity”?

In examining Bonami’s statement that presents the 52nd Venice biennale as a signifier for a “new modernity,” it is interesting to note that the biennale has existed as an institution of art for over hundred years, commencing with the Venice biennale of

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ However few minor exceptions have to be noted for example the existence of the Egyptian Pavilion and some Latin Americans ones in Venice Biennale prior to the 1980s.

1893. The biennale nevertheless has its roots over a century and half ago in the “Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations” held at the Crystal Palace in London in 1851.²⁶⁹ This spectacular exhibition, say authors Ferguson, Greenberg and Nairne in *Mapping the Exhibition* captured the “spirit of a new age in an old capital” of Europe. But even as early as the 19th century, participating in a world exposition offered the city economic and financial benefits along with a place on the world map. Presented within a universalist paradigm of the world fair, these exhibitions evoked a sense of national rivalry due to their format of international pavilions.²⁷⁰

The competition could be said to also take place within the different cities. Paris for example, boasted three such expositions in a short period between 1867 and 1889, the time during which the Eiffel tower was erected.²⁷¹ Therefore, it was not surprising that the United States followed Europe as early as 1893 with the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. This exposition exemplified the vision of the “imperial white dream city,” being both utopic on one hand and carnal on the other. The whiteness of Chicago was reflected in the exposition that had a separate section where the “ethnic” or colored people were placed next to the fun fair and were displayed anthropologically.²⁷² American racism was evident as the forbidden desires of the white people were projected onto the “dark –skinned peoples,” who were humiliated as the “other” in order for the West to retain and preserve the “white purity.”²⁷³

²⁶⁹ Ferguson, Greenberg and Nairne, *Mapping International Exhibitions*, 50.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 50.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 50.

²⁷² Ibid., 50.

²⁷³ According to the authors, the debased versions of these exhibitions today are visible in Disneyland and Euro Disney, where each nationality or ethnicity is reduced to its almost “passé cultural form of superfluous consumptions.” Ibid., 50.

Today, some form of the world exposition or the “Great Exhibition” is reminiscent in the art centers that have become important financial centers such as New York City, Frankfurt, and Paris. What has then changed in the artworld in the last 150 years? The art biennale since the late 1980s, after almost a hundred years (*Venice Biennale*, 1893), has extended outwards from the West to emerge all over the world. The *Venice Biennale*, founded in 1893, continue to perpetuate an “inconspicuous form of internationalism” with their national pavilions in the Giardini or garden.²⁷⁴ A similar structure constructed on the “rivalry of nations and hierarchies of race” remains in place behind the *Carnegie International* founded in Pittsburgh in 1886 and the Corcoran biennale founded in Washington in 1907 (which has since been discontinued).²⁷⁵

This influence of *Venice Biennale* is also visible in the *Sao Paulo Biennial*, which has emerged as the second largest biennale in the world since 1951, with a mandate to have a strong globalizing agenda, namely delivering European art to Latin America. Subsequently, *Documenta* (1955), an exhibition from Kassel, Germany, was conceived with the intent to use contemporary art as a means to regain Germany’s reputation destroyed by the Nazi’s in the Second World War.²⁷⁶ It began with a resolve to re-globalize Germany through the art world, as a means to gain legitimate re-entry into the powerful circuits of the West. Being held at five yearly intervals, it

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 51.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 51.

²⁷⁶ The exhibition *Documenta* takes place every five years in the German town of Kassel. The exhibition was first launched in the mid-1950s –partly as a regeneration initiative for a small town that had suffered extensive damage during World War II and partly as an attempt to counter the attack on modern art by the Nazis. Angela Dimitrakaki, “Art and Politics Continued: Avant-garde, Resistance and the Multitude in Documenta 11,” *Historical Materialism* 11, no. 3 (2003), <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/> (accessed 3/20/2005).

has come to be recognized as the most significant political art exhibition in the world. Modeled on *Venice* and *Sao Paulo*, the *Paris Biennale* (1959-1985), Documenta was distinct in its emphasis on younger artists. In spite of the numerous biennales that are taking place all over the world, the *Documenta*, and the *Venice Biennale* command the highest prestige within the centers of art pilgrimage, setting trend. Biennales have emerged at different moments in history and the reason for their emergence falls under three classifications.

The first could be as a result of private patronage, as in the cases of the *Venice Biennale*, *Carnegie International*, and *Sao Paulo*. The second emerges from political conditions forming a strong nexus between art and politics, as in the case of *Africus* in 1995 that was inaugurated to commemorate the end of apartheid in South Africa. The *Kwanju Biennale* from South Korea founded in 1995, similarly memorialized the 1976 killings of over 200 students, *Manifesta*, a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union and Communist bloc in 1989, was instated in 1994, while *Documenta in Kassel*, Germany was founded in the aftermath of World War II. Aside from Venice 1895, the oldest triennales/biennales has been the Indian Triennale, 1968 and the Biennale of Sydney 1973, founded as international events but from their inception sought to highlight art from the Asian continent and Asia-Pacific region. Biennials in Havana, Cairo, Istanbul, and Dakar that emerged from the Third Worlds expanded the geographic focus and drew attention to them.

The third motivation for the biennales has been a result of burgeoning economies such as the *Shanghai Biennale* introduced in 2000, *Yokohama Triennale* in Japan in 2001, *Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art*, 2005, *Singapore Biennale*, 2006, and Sharjah (United Arab Emirates) in 1993, in which art and economy were merged to support each other. Biennials and Triennials now exist in Berlin, Buenos

Aires, Istanbul, Guangzhou, Liverpool, Lyon, Pusan, Taipei, Tirana, Valencia and Vilnius.

The Phenomenon of the *Biennialization* of Art

At the venissage of the 45th *Venice Biennale* held in 1993, Wu Hung a Chinese art historian declared that contemporary Chinese art was launched to the world. *The Venice Biennale*, the world's most important biennale, provided Chinese contemporary art a perfect gateway to the artworld.²⁷⁷ This goes on to affirm the importance of the biennale or the “biennialization” a term coined by art critic Gerhard Haupt. In his website *Universe –in- Universe*, Haupt focuses entirely on the biennales, finally counting down to suggest there exist over 60 biennales and triennales in the world today, with nearly two new biennales being added every year.²⁷⁸

The year 2005 peaked with twenty seven art biennales taking place in a single year, the highest number to date. Today the biennale is an integral part of the art-viewing matrix akin to museums, galleries and artfairs.²⁷⁹ The globalization of art has

²⁷⁷ Wu Hung, “History, Memory and, the Book: Exploring a Diachronic Dimension in Contemporary Chinese Art.” <http://www.scribemedia.org/2007/01/05/books-in-chinese-art/>. 2007 (accessed 03/08, 2007).

²⁷⁸ Gerhard Haupt is co-editor of “Universes in Universe-Worlds of Art,” which has been on the net since 1997 as a non- commercial Information site on the visual arts of Africa, Latin America, and Asia especially focusing on biennales. This website was setup to document the boom in biennales which began in the early 1990s. Since then it has becoming an important space for the art world, as it keeps one posted on important biennales enabling viewers to see them without visiting them. Gerhard Haupt, <http://www.universes-in-universe.de/english.htm> (accessed 6/5, 2007).

²⁷⁹ To parody the proliferation of biennales, the artists Gruppo from Italy developed *The Mobile Biennale building 3000 (MBB 3000tm)* that allows one to launch an international biennale in the country of their choosing. In an attempt to critique the site- specific part of the exhibition, Gruppo provide adaptable *Moving Modules* (IMM 2000tm), which permits one to mount a diffused biennale, or even better, their *Mimetic Supraskin*, adapts the biennale to its surrounding context, to portray that it always site specific thereby utilizes defunct factories, churches and warehouses. Gruppo also provide a *Mobile Biennale Building* service by which they undertake organizing the entire biennale for the client by providing an array of options so as their vision of the “perfect biennale” is realizable. Ferguson, Greenberg and Nairne, *Mapping International Exhibitions*, 58/59.

also recently extended itself into an international network of museums that art critic and curator Hou Hanru has termed the “Guggenheim Effect,” that allows museums such as the Guggenheim to have franchises in several megalopolises such as New York City, Berlin, Bilboa, Las Vegas, Venice and soon Abu Dhabi.²⁸⁰ A similar trend is reflected within art galleries like the Gagosian that is not only located in multiple cities such as London, New York City, Los Angeles and Berlin, but has several galleries in each city as well.²⁸¹

These trends are confirmed by art historian Rosalind Krauss in her essay “The cultural logic of the late museum,” citing the article “Selling the Collection,” that describes the huge shift in attitude in which the objects of the museum are now referred to as “assets” of the museum.²⁸² This marks a change from the “cultural patrimony” of estimating art collections as “stocks or assets whose value is one of pure exchange” and net worth.²⁸³ As a result there is a shift from the “museum of public patrimony”(belonging to the people) to the “museum as a corporate entity with a highly marketable inventory and desire from growth.”²⁸⁴ These shifts in attitude found support in Tom Krens, *The New York Times* magazine writer and recent director of the Guggenheim Museum, who referred to it as the “museum industry.”²⁸⁵ Krens

²⁸⁰ Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic, “Introduction,” *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe* [337], eds. Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005, 13-17.

²⁸¹ In considering the globalization of art, there has been some discussion between museums such as the Pompidou in Paris, MoMA in New York City and Tate Modern in London, to create a consortium where they all buy selective works of art (especially those which are very expensive and rare) collectively. The artwork is then to be exhibited and circulated amongst the different museums.

²⁸² Cited in Rosalind Krauss, “The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum,” *October* Vol. 54, no. Autumn (1990), 3-17, “Selling the collection” in the July 1990 *Art In America*.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ In parallel to Kren’s “museum industry” it is important to also consider Theodore Adorno and Max

stressed that art today had become an industry with similar needs as “mergers and acquisitions,” and “asset management,” in which museum exhibitions and catalogues are but a “product.”²⁸⁶

The biennalization of art can also be understood in the context of what Arjun Appadurai, has termed as “global cultural flows.”²⁸⁷ Appadurai proposes these global flows create what he calls “neighborhoods,” that resist the main premise of the imaginary nation-state. In a similar way, the biennale is no longer bound by physical territory, which makes them part of the “transnational intelligentsia” that could be either spatially located in a physical geography, or exist in the virtual realm as art networks.²⁸⁸ Although some intellectuals like Appadurai see globalization optimistically as a force that benefits the world, there exist several critics who feel otherwise. For example, Cuban curator and historian Gerardo Mosquera proposes, “globalization is to be feared” as it repackages development of the world “reorganized by colonialism.” It continues to perpetuate and feign characteristics of the homogenized Mc-American culture at levels of both popular culture and high art. This for him simulates the same “hegemonic structures” of global capitalism “even when

Horkheimer notation on “The Culture Industry.” For them exhibitions are “intrinsic and vital parts of the ‘cultural industries’ associated with : entertainment, mass culture forming part of the “consciousness industry” in which curators and artists participate as “cultural agents” in this industry. “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass deception” in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London: Verso, 1997, 120-167.

²⁸⁶ Ibid. Krauss affirms that there exist two kinds of museums spaces, the encyclopedic museum that is intent on telling a story and presents before the viewers a specific version of the history of art. The second is the synchronic museum that “compensates history for an intensity of experience,” playing on aesthetic value rather than the history. Given both kinds of museums, the biennale could be noted to replicate both conditions being encyclopedic and synchronic, as it uses a historical perspective emanating from a location, but presents it with a dynamic experience of the moment.

²⁸⁷ Arjun Appadurai, “The Production of Locality,” *Counterworks. Managing the Diversity of Knowledge*, ed. Richard Fardon (London: Routledge, 1995), 204-223.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 204-223.

contesting them.”²⁸⁹

Postcolonial critics such as Edward Said have suggested that globalization can also be viewed from a position of resistance. Said’s “Traveling Theories,” informs us that as theories travel from one space to the other they contain their own exemplary case of fast moving ideas.²⁹⁰ Anthropologist James Clifford further questions Said’s theory in the context of appropriation, resistance, and locatedness as well as displacements of the theory, querying, “how do theories travel among the unequal spaces of postcolonial confusion and contestation?”²⁹¹ Using Clifford’s suggestion, could the biennalization of art that utilizes a postcolonial position also be attributed to a “privileged place” increasingly challenged, intersected by other “locations, claims, trajectories of knowledge articulating racial, gender, and cultural differences?”²⁹² Radhakrishna, also a Postcolonial theorist confirms that as the origins of theory are “de-sacrilized” or “relativised” in the direction of its movement, a theory that could have transpired in the West could become an instrument of resistance in the non-West.²⁹³

Given this, it might be interesting to juxtapose Said’s traveling theory with Stuart Hall’s contemplation that “the most exciting artists are those who live in the

²⁸⁹ For more details see Gerardo Mosquera, “Some Problems in Transcultural Curating,” edited by Jean Fisher, *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*, London: Kala Press, 1994, 133.

²⁹⁰ James Clifford, “Notes on Travel and Theory,” (1998) See: http://humwww.ucsc.edu/CultStudies/PUBS/Inscriptions/vol_5/clifford.html

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ R. Radhakrishnan, “Globalization, Desire, and the Politics of Representation,” *Comparative Literature* 53, no. 4 (2001), 315(18).

center and at the periphery.”²⁹⁴ By this he means, that such an artist is able to inhabit the best of both worlds, “modern and vernacular” allowing him/ her the benefits and “goodies it entails” of being attached to both spaces.²⁹⁵ This allows us to realize Radhakrishna’s proposition in relation to the postcolonial artist, in which a theory transpired in the West can become an instrument of resistance in the non-West.

Here I would like to consider one such Western theory that has recently provided one of the most powerful critiques of globalization by theorists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their book *Empire*.²⁹⁶ As discussed in chapter one, the authors by playing on the term “empire” extend the terrain of the former colonized empire to include the contemporary context of globalization as a new “neo-imperialism” of empire. Their reason in writing *Empire* is precisely to critique empire, by offering a means to resist it, through a concept they call the “multitude.”²⁹⁷ The book *Empire* has been much influenced by the thoughts of Deleuze and Guattari, and definitely follows an ahistorical approach in which the authors adopt a perspective that is non-linear.²⁹⁸ They do not want to present history as one grand narrative but allude to the existence of “multiple modernities” or “plateaus” as their attempt is to deconstruct the power within empire itself. Therefore in that sense, the multitude could be said to take on a postcolonial position of resistance. Given the biennialization of art, it is evident that global flows attempt to homogenize and centralize while the

²⁹⁴ Stuart Hall, “Museums of Modern Art and the End of History,” Annotations 6: 22.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000, xi.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 394.

²⁹⁸ The non-linearity is understood as the rhizome that connects points and nodules in a non-linear manner. For a detailed discussion about the rhizome please refer to page 2 of this chapter. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “Introduction,” *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [Mille plateaux.] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 1-25.

postcolonial discourses attempt to resist a universalizing framework of fixity.

Determining the Terrain

In their essay “Mapping the Exhibition” Bruce Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg and Sandy Nairne affirm locality as the key factor that determines the politics of the exhibition. In the case of the biennale, the location takes on an even greater significance, as the geography of place most often gives the biennale its name, determines its time frame (winter/summer), as well as the curator and artists invited to participate.²⁹⁹ Hence the geo-politics of the exhibition are determined by the “glocal,” interjecting between the local and global, within the unique parameter of space (location) at a given moment in time in history, ensuring the biennales a very specific and distinct place in the art world. In the case of the biennales, the use of locality is determined within the specific-time frame in order to accentuate the significance of these recurring exhibitions, making them important conduits that not only circulate art globally, but also frame the curatorial context within a specific political structure from that moment in history.

This also constitutes one of major distinctions between a museum space and biennales, in that although biennales occupy museum spaces, it is the location/locality that determines its content. Museums on the other hand, although required to draw local audiences to their shows, are not obliged to present exhibitions that reflect the local politics. Furthermore, as they travel their exhibitions between various museum venues, the art is not necessarily tied to a particular time period (except in certain spaces) and tends to be less site-specific as compared to biennales. Given both forms of exhibition practices, museums as institutions have been slow to react to the issues

²⁹⁹ Ferguson, Greenberg and Nairne, “Mapping International Exhibitions,” 47.

of the day, as they are programmed several years in advance, whereas the biennale can usually respond more quickly to contemporary issues making them more spontaneous in responding to the *zeitgeist* of the time. Besides, the rules are normally more flexible for the biennales as they belong to less bureaucratic institutions. This allows them to take more risks and exhibit younger artists with a stronger probability to commissioning new works. The biennale does have its specific advantages over museums in these considerations, especially with no permanent institutionalized models to follow, giving the curators the independence (in most cases) to expand, frame and present the exhibition in a manner of their choosing.

According to Philippe Vergne, biennales also provide an alternative system to museums, and bring new and broader audiences to the museum for the first time.³⁰⁰ Biennales according to him are always developing new approaches to market and educate audiences in order to develop an innovative education program to serve a broad range of audiences.³⁰¹ Another important shift Vergne noted is that the artist no longer is the creator of objects. Instead his/her role is now to transform both the white cube of the gallery and the audience into an active protagonist.³⁰² This de-materialization of the art object is making way for time-based media works, which are noticeably forming a larger component within these exhibitions, in which documentaries, video, net/internet art, and gaming are increasingly gaining

³⁰⁰ Philippe Vergne, “Globalization from the Rear,” *How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age*, 1st ed., Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2003, 352. Here it is interesting to note artist Jens Hoffmann’s book project *The Next Documenta Should be curated by an Artist* as a critique to the emerging power and role of the curator. In this project, Hoffmann intending to pass artist the critical role and curatorial voice and to include them in a discussion that was artist led. Jens Hoffmann. *The Next Documenta Should Be Curated by an Artist*. Frankfurt [am Main: Revolver], Archiv fur aktuelle Kunst, 2004.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

prominence.³⁰³

Biennales are also different from blockbuster exhibitions, which are exhibitions marketed to the masses that carry a popular appeal. As defined by Emma Barker, a blockbuster is a “large-scale loan exhibition that people who normally don’t go to museums will stand in line for hours to see.”³⁰⁴ This makes blockbusters art spectacles, drawing large audiences for a short period of time by adopting a novel approach.³⁰⁵ The biennale, although capable of becoming a spectacle, is not a blockbuster. Instead it can be perceived as an active constituent of the global art circuit within which art is circulated, exhibited and consumed through traditional centers located in London, New York and Köln. The 1990s and the first decade of 2000s, have seen an expansion in the art circuit which now includes new centers such as Singapore, Shanghai, Mexico City, Dubai and Mumbai, which embraces artists, curators, museums and critics in addition to the commercial facets that include art fairs, auction houses, collectors and art galleries. These changes in the art world have also affected the pool of Western collectors who now are turning their eyes eastwards to acquire works from Asia, Africa, The Middle East, and Latin America.

As a result, Western museums have become self-conscious about their lack of knowledge and the scant attention paid to non-Western art. They are not only sending their curators all over the world to inquire and familiarize themselves with these

³⁰³ An example of this is *Documenta 11*, 2002, that had been nicknamed *Documentary Documenta* as it entailed 600 hours of viewing, an impossible task even if one stayed the entire course of the exhibition of 100 days. See Stewart Martin, “A New World Art? Documenting Documenta 11,” *Radical Philosophy*, no. 122 (Nov/Dec, 2003), 7-19.

³⁰⁴ Emma Barker, “Exhibiting the Canon: The Blockbuster show,” *Contemporary Cultures of Display* (1999), 127-145.

³⁰⁵ Ibid. According to Barker the blockbuster: “aims for maximum coverage and maximum publicity to attract maximum attendance.”

discourses, but several such as the Guggenheim have also decided to take the brave step of building a collection of non-Western art. The museums are also feeling immense pressure to present non-Western art, especially art that is socially relevant and which reflects the critical concerns of the day. This reflection is evident in the presentation of *Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking*, 2006 at the MoMA, New York City that was quickly accommodated in the museum's busy schedule in a matter of months, so as to appropriately respond to the representation of the Muslim world in the aftermath of 9/11. This exhibition was the first of its kind in such a significant museum to include Western and non-Western artists of both Islamic and non-Islamic origins. Although well intended, the exhibition lacked adequate research and a nuanced understanding of Islam, and therefore missed an opportunity to really engage with the issues at hand.³⁰⁶ Other recent examples of the inclusion of non-Western artists within the mainstream have included the presentation of Amrita Sher-Gill, the first Modernist artist from India, and Doris Salcedo, a Latin American artist, who are among the first non-Western artists to have solo shows at Haus der Kunst and the Tate Modern respectively in 2007.

The biennale ambiguous position of not conforming to either stance allows it to construct its own structure, which can be considered as anti-hegemonic. This makes biennales a unique entity that constantly remaps and morphs the cartography of the art world. In this process it facilitates the production of “new knowledge” that seeks opportunity to reveal narratives from specific vantage points. In reflecting this, one biennale that stands out among others for the push towards a local agenda is the *Liverpool Biennale* that originated in 1997. Liverpool, one of England’s port cities,

³⁰⁶ For further details about the exhibition read the review in Tyler Green, “MoMA Keeps the Walls Clean: Islamic show Sans Politics,” 2006, no. 4/2/2006 (2007), <http://www.observer.com/node/38636>.

famous for trade during the industrial age, preceded by heavy involvement in the Transatlantic slavery, has since World War II fallen into neglect and as a result suffers from a post-industrial hangover. In its 2006 edition, the curators Manray Hsu and Gerardo Mosquera focused their idea of using “local knowledge” in the city to revive its local health.³⁰⁷ This concept was considered driven by a contrast of diverse landscapes of the city of Liverpool, with its imposing imperial colonial buildings reflecting the city’s former wealth and glory, juxtaposed with empty, barren spaces and buildings of the empire lost.

Its “ignored, forgotten” past is embodied in the spirit of Liverpool, that curator Hsu interpreted as resulting in blockages in the lives of people and traffic, where the energy (in Chinese terminology chi) of the city is clogged or interrupted.³⁰⁸ Hsu proposed to help release and circulate the city’s energy by using the ancient Chinese cure of *Acupuncture* to restore the energy flows as done on a human body.³⁰⁹ So Hsu in his biennale re-appropriated this concept of acupuncture as “archipuncture,” in an attempt to metaphorically aid the urban regeneration of the city of Liverpool.³¹⁰ The city was then mapped as one would do with a human body, by inviting artists to intervene site- specifically to release the negativity in order to improve the public health of the city, and increase its well being.³¹¹ Similarly in 1999, the 6th *Istanbul Biennial* curated by Paolo Colombo, was interpreted as *The Passion and The Wave*, to respond suitably to the strong earthquake that shook Turkey in August 1999. The

³⁰⁷ Manray Hsu and Gerardo Mosquera, eds. *Liverpool Biennale 2006*, Liverpool, UK: Liverpool Biennale, 2006, 11.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 11.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 11.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 13.

³¹¹ Ibid., 13.

curator hoped that the biennale would assist in the “healing and in the reconstruction processes” of the country.³¹²

In the case of the non-Western biennales, their location can become a powerful impetus to articulate their histories that have not been adequately explored. For example the 24th São Paulo Biennale *Roteiros*, curated by Paulo Herkenhoff, engaged the concept of *Antropofagia*, which emphasizes the cultural tradition of cannibalism as a symbolic devourment of the “Western unconscious” as its focus.³¹³ Based on the 1928 manifesto *Antropófago*, or cannibal manifesto that resounded Oswald de Andrade’s cry for independence, the biennale served as a leitmotif for Brazil to assert itself against European post-colonial cultural domination.³¹⁴ This biennale successfully explored the condition of the changing world in the context of globalization as a consuming entity, by examining Brazil’s own history of colonization and its influence on its newly found post-colonial identity.

The globalization of art and specifically the emergence of the biennale have pushed the agenda of curating as a discipline. Now a field of its own, curating is offered as a course of study in several universities. The term curator is etymologically derived from the “keeper” as in the case of zoos or museums, or a term used by colonizing nations as a way to absorb and “classify” the foreign, as a passive noun emphasizing the process of collecting, rather than exhibiting or interpreting.³¹⁵ In the

³¹² “Istanbul Biennial,” Universes-in-Universe, <http://universes-in-universe.de/car/istanbul/e-hist.htm> (accessed 4/9, 2007).

³¹³ Fundação Bienal de São Paulo., *Bienal De São Paulo (1998)*; *Bienal De São Paulo*. São Paulo : Fundação Bienal de São Paulo., 1998-, 11.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 10.

³¹⁵ Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne, *Thinking about Exhibitions*, London: Routledge, 1996), 189.

context of contemporary art today, curating as a verb can be viewed to actively relay the above shift to the process of exhibiting and interpreting.³¹⁶ All kudos for the emergence of the role of the curator goes to Harold Szeemann, a Swiss curator who preferred to be addressed by the humble title of an “*Ausstellungsmacher* or exhibition maker.”³¹⁷ Beginning his career at the age of twenty-eight, Szeemann received his lucky break with his 1969 exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form*, after which he decided to resign and work independently, thereby officially appointing himself as the world’s first independent curator.³¹⁸ By choosing not to direct an institution, Szeemann liberated himself from the traditional museum responsibility of collecting and restoring art, turning instead to a more intellectual task of conceiving a theme or concept to frame to underpin an exhibition.³¹⁹

Since then the role of the curator has expanded, suggests curator Mari Carmen Ramirez in her essay “Brokering Identities: Art Curators and the Politics of Cultural Representation.”³²⁰ Analyzing the history of Latin American and its exhibitions in the United States, she viewed the “transformation of the curator of contemporary art from behind-the-scenes aesthetic arbiter, to central player in the broader stage of global cultural politics.”³²¹ Noting the spate of trans-cultural exhibitions taking place, she argues that the role of the curator as “arbiter of taste and quality” has expanded to

³¹⁶ Ibid., 189.

³¹⁷ Daniel Birnbaum, “When Attitude Becomes Form,” *Artforum International* 43, no. 10 (2005), <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=856743401&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientId=8424&RQT=309&VName=PQD>.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Carmen Ramirez Mari, “Brokering Identities: Art Curators and the Politics of Cultural Representation.” In *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne, ed., London; New York: Routledge, 1996, 23.

³²¹ Ibid., 23.

being a “cultural broker,” especially in the context of non-Western art, with the responsibility of negotiating between cultures.³²² But this is not without its problems, she purports, as although the curatorial function seems to have opened up new venues for the “distribution, acceptance and appreciation of previously marginalized art “it is still problematic.”³²³

As a cultural broker, she says there is recognition for breaking down the geographic barriers, to democratize and open up a space for cultural action, but on the other hand given the market forces “identity is still being packaged and sold as a reductive construct.”³²⁴ For Ramirez “identity [is] not an essence” but a negotiated construct that associates its multiple positions arising from “subject vis-a-vis the social, cultural and political condition it contains.” She clarifies that the “dynamics of identity politics” of the South are not independent, but are influential at both the “transnational (global) and local (multicultural) levels.”³²⁵

This makes the biennale an integral part of the art world specifically as it is connected with the globalization of art, and is involved with the production of global culture. But what is global culture? Does it really exist? There are several perspectives on this. Sociologist N. Perry opines that although global culture draws on folk and national cultures, it is not (yet) based on shared global stories and memories.³²⁶ In that

³²² Ibid., 23.

³²³ Ibid., 23.

³²⁴ Ibid., 23.

³²⁵ Ibid., 22. But given the global cultural industry a new kind of curator has emerged identified by Ralph Rugoff as the “jet-set Flaneur” who has no geographical boundaries, and for whom global – internationalism is the central issue.” R. Rugoff, “Rules of the Game,” *Freize* Issue 44, January–February 1999.

³²⁶ In the similar vein questions raised by the terms “international” and “global” are also brought under consideration of “world history” versus “global history.” Here I would like to address the argument of historian Bruce Mazlik about global history and the writing of world history as a continued effort to

sense, he implies that it is “memory-less” and syncretic.”³²⁷ Mike Featherstone, also a sociologist, asserts that whereas local culture is closely tied to place and time, global culture is free of these constraints. It is “disconnected,” and “de-territorialized,” thus existing outside the usual reference to geographical territory.³²⁸ But Bill Ashcroft identifies the concept of global culture as a bogus construct. For him global culture needs to originate from the postcolonial experience that resists the global not through its dismissal, isolation and rejection, but more through engagement and transformation.³²⁹ He inquires, “how can a culture be global” or can one “speak of a global society” when society and culture are still dominated by the “nation-state”? ³³⁰

These thoughts also resonate with Andreas Huyssen who emphasizes the emergence of the concept of “global memory” as the various parts of the world draw closer. For him global memory will always be “prismatic and heterogeneous” instead

transcend eurocentrism. According to him this has been a ploy to promote multiculturalism and even greater inclusion of non-European voices from the past.

He finds this task valuable but limited from his perspective as a global historian, as in its finality he questions if world history can be documented from the human perspective at all. With a view to modifying the world history project, historian Raymond Grew writes: “the challenge of global history is to construct global narratives.” He contrasts this with what world historians call a “celestial perspective,” modeled on the secularized theological view of Western Europe, and characteristic of nineteenth –century development in European historiography. According to them world historians attempt to create a single thread in Western human history.

Global history on the other hand suggests that there exist multiple worlds and geographies, and suggests an approach that moves away from fixed civilization or regionalism of the world. Cited the essay by Roxann Pazniak “Is World History Possible? An Inquiry,” *History After the three Worlds: Post – Eurocentric Historiographies* edited by Arif Dirlik, Vinay Lal, Lanham, Md : Rowman & Littlefiel, 2000, 277.

³²⁷ N. Perry, *Hyper-Reality and Global Culture*, London: Routledge, 1998.

³²⁸ Mike Featherstone, *Global Culture Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, London: Sage, 1990.

³²⁹ Bill Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation*, London: Routledge, 2001, 214.

³³⁰ Ibid, 214. Ashcroft further inquires if it is possible to “develop a global political theory when we have no concept of world society, and when all classical political theory has dealt with the society-state framework?”

of “holistic or universal” similar to what Ashcroft has determined.³³¹ Ashcroft, in addition, contends that global culture makes itself “at home” in “motion rather than in place,” viewing it as much more a tactical appropriation of the postcolonial within which local identities are strengthened.³³²

9/11 and Thereafter

One of the important events that changed the dynamic in viewing the postcolonial “other,” in the twenty first century has been the catastrophe that took place on September 11, 2001. The twin towers attacked by Islamic fundamentalists reflected the unease with the American empire.³³³ Arundhati Roy, the Indian political activist and acclaimed author, condemns the American empire’s powerful ghetto of global capitalism that she considers is getting stronger by the day.³³⁴ She historicizes September 11th as a date not only connected with the falling towers but as a date that represents the history of imperialism and colonialism for the entire world. Her first notation of the date leads her to look back almost eighty years ago to the Middle East on September 11, 1922, a date on which the British Imperial government proclaimed a mandate in Palestine, a follow up to the 1917 Balfour Declaration promising the European Zionists “a national home for Jewish people.”³³⁵ Despite the Arab rage that remained largely ignored, the British army was there in large numbers to witness the

³³¹ Huyssen, “Present Pasts,” *Public Culture* 12, no. 1.

³³² Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation*, 207.

³³³ Roy in her book clarifies her usage of the term empire to include: the “US government (and its European satellites), The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade organization (WTO), and multinational organizations (that includes America, plus a long list of other Western nations). Arundhati Roy, *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*, Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2004, 78.

³³⁴ Ibid., 78.

³³⁵ Ibid.

completion of their end of the bargain that lead to the creation of the modern State of Israel founded in 1948.³³⁶

Roy narrates another incident twenty-nine years ago, in Chile, Latin America, once again on September 11 but in 1973. It was on this day that General Pinochet overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in a CIA-backed coup. Roy quotes the insensitive words of Henry Kissinger, then President Nixon's National Security Adviser, who during the incident said: "I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people."³³⁷ By virtue of this discussion it can be stated that the occurrence of 9/11 is immersed in a long history, perhaps not necessarily American alone. Roy's intention could be perceived to de-emphasize the importance of the date by shifting the attention to other equally murderous historical acts of US imperialism (which happened to have taken place same day in the past) and in the process foregrounding the events of September 11th as a reaction to the US role and history of intervention in the world.

Therefore it was not unusual for the aftermath of 9/11 to be mirrored in biennales that came after, reflecting themes of war, justice and religion, such as *Poetic Justice, Istanbul Biennale, 2004; Unhomely Phantom, Seville Biennale, 2006*; and the new *Singapore Biennale Belief* (examining the role of religion) in 2006. But there was no direct reference to the incident in the first biennale held after 9/11, the *Whitney Biennale*, held at the Whitney museum in New York City in 2004. According to critic Eleanor Heartney, in her article "Well-tempered Biennale" for the most part, the biennale "scrupulously sidestepped direct social or political commentary for a focus on fantasy, nostalgia and escape."³³⁸ The biennale curated by Chrissie Iles, Shamim

³³⁶ Ibid., 25.

³³⁷ Ibid., 27.

³³⁸ Eleanor Heartney, "The Well-Tempered Biennial," *Art in America* 92, no. 6 (Jun/Jul, 2004), 70.

Momin and Debra Singer, could be best articulated through what Momin called a “post-everything.”³³⁹ Set in a retro mode with a special nostalgic appeal of the 1960s and 1970s revolutions of Algeria and Vietnam, the biennale sought to metabolize an “introspective and individualized” approach so as to bring about a “change in the mental rather than the political landscape” of art.³⁴⁰ But was this subverted form of allusion to 9/11 effective?

Heartney notes that surprisingly, the 2004 *Whitney Biennale* received an affirmative response. Although she expected the biennale to be an “exhibition that critics love to hate,” she cites critic Michael Kimmelman from the *New York Times* who called it “easily the best in some time,” while the New Yorker’s Peter Schjeldahl deemed it “startlingly good” and “better . . . than anyone . . . could have expected.”³⁴¹ One may conjecture whether in its aftermath, 9/11 too painful a memory to evoke. Or was it easier to ignore or forget what happened? Or did the curators, by circumventing the direct trauma of 9/11, allow the artworks to provide a space for people to enter and mourn quietly by themselves in their own way?³⁴²

The subsequent *Whitney Biennale* of 2006, however, did address some of the lack of politics experienced in its predecessor in 2004. Being the first *Whitney Biennale* to be titled *Day for Night*, after François Truffaut’s classic 1973 film, the biennale referred to the film’s original French title, *La Nuit Américain*, in which the curators alluded to the cinematic technique by which nighttime is shot artificially during the day by using special filters. Curated by Chrissie Iles and Philippe Vergne,

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

both non-Americans, enabled the 2006th Whitney biennale to resonate the pessimistic world opinion of the United States by personifying a strong undertone of “phantasmagoria and (the) melancholic” in order to reveal the real perception of the world in the displayed works.³⁴³ The title metaphorically switched the *Day* (positive) *for Night* (darkness), which could be viewed as a film negative that looks at the world from a reverse perspective. This could be witnessed in the curators exaggerated and even heightened reference to the current politics, which revealed the complexity of American culture by engaging with what they called the “premodern,” or “pre-enlightenment,” period of man, that sociologist of science Bruno Latour argues is a state in which “we have yet to become modern.”³⁴⁴

The biennale did include artists of color and referred to the politics of race and identity but laterally, with a strong appeal of the dark side. The curator’s quest was searching for “post-America,” in which America had become more of an “ideal than a nation.” He contends through subtle allusions to 9/11 and the politics that came after, that the definition of what constitutes being “American” was in flux. This allowed the portrayal of the biennale to reflect the rhetoric between the binaries of “good and evil” which infused American politics, and also allowed artists to comment obliquely about the world situation.³⁴⁵

So *Day for Night* for the curators not only reflected the “current cultural moment in America but also America’s international relevance as part of a larger cultural moment.”³⁴⁶ The *Whitney Biennale* that truly made its mark was the infamous

³⁴³ Chrissie Iles and Philippe Vergne, “Whitney Biennial 2006: Day for Night: Curator’s Preface,” <http://www.whitney.org/www/2006biennial/overview.php> (accessed 2/25, 2007).

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Heartney, “The Well-Tempered Biennial,” 70.

³⁴⁶ Iles and Vergne, “Day for Night: Curator’s Preface,” “Whitney Biennial 2006.

1993 biennial that was a precursor to a significant change in the politics of art practice in the United States. Up until the 1993 *Whitney Biennale*, the curatorial approach could be stated as conservative politics that upheld the so-called “American ideal.” The 1993 biennale curated by Elisabeth Sussman, Thelma Golden, John Hanhardt and Lisa Phillips, was the first to explore the issues of identity, racism and sexism, by exploring the history of slavery in the United States, not only referring to it as a specter of the past, but to its continued existence till today. Hence, the display of controversial work of artists of color and women such as Sue Williams, Fred Wilson and Daniel Martinez, as well as the video of Rodney King beatings, leaves no doubt as to why this biennale remains the most memorable in the Whitney’s recent exhibition history.³⁴⁷ What has been the result of these biennales with regards the postcolonial “other”? Let us examine this through looking at the Third World biennales.

Close Encounters of the Third Kind

Thomas McEvilley an art critic who in his 1993 article “Arrivederci Venice: The Third World Biennials,” commented that in 1968, the *Indian Triennale* was already much ahead of its time, as it invited international participation from the rest of the world, with the intent of putting “contemporary India on the map.”³⁴⁸ Although the concept of biennale originated in the West, the first international exhibition that took place in the non-West was *The Indian Triennale* in New Delhi, in 1968. Retrospectively analyzing this statement today, nothing could be further from reality. The Indian artist was not on the international (Western) circuit until the late 1990s. What can then be said about the results of 1968 Indian Triennale? Did it really manage to include the Third World discourse, or make any difference within the large

³⁴⁷ Heartney, “The Well-Tempered Biennial,” 70.

³⁴⁸ Thomas McEvilley, “Arrivederci Venice,” *Artforum* 32, no. 3 (Nov, 1993), 114.

discourse of art?

To respond to this query it is important to locate the history of the Third World biennale. The emergence of the Third World biennale was followed closely by the *Biennale of Sydney* (since 1973) that, although inspired by the Western exhibitions since its inception, sought to focus on non-Western art stemming from the Asian region. As already known, the Western biennales only began including non-Western art in their exhibitions after the late 1980s. This to McEvilley highlights the discomfort experienced by the Western art world towards art from the non-West.³⁴⁹ He also distinguishes between Third World biennales themselves, especially within their structural format. For example the *New Delhi Triennials* and *Cairo Biennials* that allude to the modernist Western traditions, differ from other biennales such as the *Sydney Biennale*, which can be termed non-Western in a geographical sense but closely follows the Western art movement due to its First World status.³⁵⁰ Hence it is not surprising that the *Sydney Biennale* emulates the survey shows of Europe and the U.S., which, while exhibiting Australian artists (including aboriginal artists), is still primarily euro-centric in nature.³⁵¹ Similar observations are made by McEvilley in examining Latin America, particularly the *Sao Paulo Biennial* that expresses the Western “cutting edge” affinities while shifting the emphasis somewhat towards Latin America. For him these shows resonate a strong “post-modernism tendency” resulting from the curators’ “residual sense of center that emanates a continuing modernist aura, which is located in the West.”³⁵²

³⁴⁹ Reflecting on this, McEvilley opines that it is not that the European influence on non-Western traditions was ever a one-way transaction, but was always based on reciprocity of exchanges.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

But the most prominent of all Third World biennales, The *Havana Biennale*, founded in 1984 in Cuba does serve a specific purpose, being the first biennale in the world to emerge in a socialist country. Its significance emerges from its stance to stand tall against the imperialist mission of capitalism in regard to cultural legitimacy. The biennale started as a platform to exhibit art from Latin America, extending itself slowly to include the works of other peripheral nations outside Latin America. In 1991, the biennale also began inviting artists from minority populations in the US and Western Europe. Following Havana closely was the *Istanbul Biennale*, which emerged in Turkey in 1987. Located on the cusp of Europe and Asia, Istanbul shares a unique relationship with both continents. Turkey, although once a colonizer of a significant part of Europe and Asia, have since the collapse of the Ottoman empire been relegated to a marginalized position by the West, which today views Turkey through a lens of the Orient and the periphery. In order to reassert itself and its position in history as a nation, the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts created the first official Istanbul biennial in 1987.

Is The Third World Biennale today an (Un) Necessary Event?

Many theorists and curators including Hans Ulrich Obrist, a co-curator of the 2003 *Venice Biennale*, have advocated the importance of the Third World biennale as playing a critical role in making the lesser-known locations of the world better known.³⁵³ According to him it is the Third World biennales that need to be credited for exhibiting some of the first generation artists from these unfamiliar cultural backgrounds, thereby making them internationally visible.³⁵⁴ Also he advocates that the Third World biennales constitute a platform for several Western curators to test

³⁵³ Griffin, "Global Tendencies: Globalism and the Large-Scale Exhibition," 152.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

their ideas and begin their engagement with non-Western art. He credits these curators for the inclusion of once isolated art practices of several Third World countries into the larger art scene.³⁵⁵ He considers the success of the biennales in some countries as a trigger to building more permanent exhibition structures and sustained exhibition activity.

Interestingly, Obrist states that the most influential exhibitions of the 1990s were from the non-West, namely Vasif Kortun's project, the Istanbul Museum of Contemporary Art, Enwezor's 1997's *Johannesburg Biennale*, and Paulo Herkenhoff's 1998's *Bienal de Sao Paulo*, that have shaped and influenced the emerging discourse in art of the 21st century.³⁵⁶ In short, the spurt of biennales such as *Havana* and *Cairo* in 1984 and *Istanbul* in 1987 that arose from the Third World in the 1980s stalwartly advocated the Third World contexts, tropes and issues in a manner that could be termed as an *introspective* stage or an inward-looking moment. On the other hand, the biennales such as *Fukuoka Triennale*, *Manifesta*, and the *Gwangju Biennale* that originated in the 1990s reflected the influence of global capitalism, mirroring their buoyant economies and representing their expansion and growth, which could be termed as an *extrospective* stage or outward looking phase. Their relationships and imperatives were grounded in mutual exchange, networks and interconnections rooted in globalization.

However, for me, the significance of the Third World Biennales is as a result of the new cultural hybrid identity that it enables, in which all-cultural statements and

³⁵⁵ Ibid. Hans-Ulrich Obrist, in this discussion adds any analysis of the globalization of contemporary art needs to begin by examining the dynamic of the center and periphery. He thinks the rise of biennials in Cairo, Dakar, Havana, and Sydney, the Fukuoka and Asia Pacific triennials, and even *Manifesta* occurred at a moment when there was a series of large consolidations in the marketing of global culture. Tim Griffin, "Global Tendencies: Globalism and Large-Scale Exhibition," *Artforum*, Nov, 2003.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

systems are constructed in a space that Bhabha calls the “third space of enunciation.”³⁵⁷ This space according to him navigates between the first World and Third World in the form of “in-between space,” or a “third space,” so as to constantly reinvent itself by continually deflecting the category of the original culture, creating a space and renewed understanding for the postcolonial to emerge.³⁵⁸

In contemplating Bhabha’s premise of the Third World biennale as a “third space” two studies are of significance - the first by Charlotte Bydler in her study of biennales *The Global Artworld Inc.*, 2003 that examined “globalization of contemporary art and the emergence of the art world,” and “Cultural Globalization between Myth and Reality,” which drew similar conclusions to those I have stated earlier.³⁵⁹ Bydler’s aim was to examine if the emergence of non-Western biennales did indeed challenge the hegemony of the USA and Western contemporary arts? In her analysis of the biennales of *Havana*, *Istanbul*, *Kwanju* and *Manifesta*, she concludes that the “globalization of the *avant-garde* world has not radically democratized” or become more “geographically inclusive” for biennales in the margins. She felt that even with the opening of the new biennales at the end of the century in “Cuba, Korea or Turkey, local centers have not replaced the major art world centers such as New York.”³⁶⁰

Larissa Buchholz and Ulf Wuggenig confirmed similar reports that: “the worldwide dissemination of art biennales and art institutions,” does “not necessarily

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 37.

³⁵⁸ Homi Bhabha, “The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha,” *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Rutherford. Jonathan, London: Lawrence Wishart, 211.

³⁵⁹ Charlotte Bydler, *The Global Art World Inc.: On the Globalization of Contemporary Art*, Vol. nova ser. 32, Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University, 2004.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

mark a sign of globalization to be celebrated.”³⁶¹ They remarked that economic status is a strong determinant in evaluating the process of cultural exchange. Their findings opposed the existing theories of cultural globalization, affirming that “symmetrical interactions within cultural flows” or networks make visible the unequally distributed economic development that exists.³⁶² In short they confirm globalization as a myth, clarifying that international success in the field of art had not shifted, but still retained its territorial, social and (macro) cultural characteristics, which determined the success of the artists.³⁶³

In addition, “the north Western part of the world,” a new terminology that Buchholz and Wuggenig coined, which included the USA and Western Europe, for them clearly dominated the centre of the art field. Yet their research showed the obvious: that the majority of “non-north Western” artists with high visibility lived and worked in north Western art metropolises like New York, and were part of the global circuit. This was further confirmed by their acknowledging both Raymond Moulin, and Saskia Sassen’s comments, that the high territorial concentration of art centers in the West lies in the close interdependence of the art market and the financial markets which leads to territorial concentration. This gives evidence that “the art market displays the two characteristics of being both internationalized and simultaneously centralized in a few world metropolises, similar to the financial market network, as both universes are interdependent.”³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ Larissa Buchholz and Ulf Wuggenig, “Cultural Globalization between Myth and Reality: The Case of the Contemporary Visual Arts,” *Artefact: Strategies of Resistance*, no. Glocalogue, 04 (2004), http://artefact.mi2.hr/_a04/lang_en/theory_buchholz_text2.html (accessed 3/3/2007).

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

Therefore, although the international mobility of artists and curators has increased, the centers of art located within the north-West have not moved. Consequently it could be stated that the proliferation of art biennales and art institutions outside countries of the north-West has not altered the traditional cartography of the center and peripheries in the art field. Biennales within the Western sphere could then be stated to have not shifted their core interest of exhibiting art from the non-West. These other spaces could be viewed as optimistic voices in the art world at best, according to Bydler's conclusion with regards to the non-Western biennales. Buchholz and Wuggenig draw similar conclusions confirming that the "globalization theories, such as de-territorialization, the acceleration of worldwide interdependencies" only manage to camouflage the reality of "persisting asymmetries and power structures."³⁶⁵ From their perspective, what is seen as the emergence of a global art field can be estimated as "the business of dyadic regionalization," which is represented by the worldwide establishment of some "institutional satellites" with restricted slots for artists from the non-West.³⁶⁶ The prognosis is clear, that not much has changed within the fate of the biennale, and that Western biennales have not significantly engaged with the elements of the postcolonial, and continue to persist in their traditional interests.

This would then make a good case for the continuation of the Third World biennale, since the centers of art remain located in the West. However, globalization nevertheless brings about certain shifts and changes within the center/peripheries and also between the peripheries themselves. Given the recent burgeoning economies as well as the art markets of Asia including China, India, Indonesia, and Singapore, with

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

their respective biennales in Shanghai, Beijing, New Delhi (upcoming) and Singapore, the dynamic is changing. These shifts interestingly are being reflected within the mainstream art practices in the West as well, which are altering the relationship between the West and non-West considerably. Also, the recent astronomical value of art from China and India, both being new art markets that came to fruition in the 1990s is altering the practices and reception of Western art as well. Art from the non-West is slowly coming to be located within the mainstream. Recent auctions indicate contemporary Indian and Chinese art reaching a comparative level to Western auctions.

How does this affect the status of non-Western artists? These concerns are voiced by Olu Oguibe's in his book *The Culture Games*, in which he asserts that "playing the other" is not easy, as it implies a secondary status for the artist, one based on "mythic identities" and "realities" located solely on a fetishized difference.³⁶⁷ In short, Oguibe perceives the context of contemporary art as a "global culture game," in which the winner is predetermined to fill the token rationed slots for non-Western artists."³⁶⁸ This "culture game" for him is doubly rigged, first as with any game you have to know the rules in order to play it and these rules have been written by the West, and second unlike any other game, the winner has already been pre-determined, so another has no chance of winning.³⁶⁹ This leaves the non-Western artist checkmated by institutional patterns and policies, having no recourse but to revert to "otherness" as the preferred mode in the game play of global culture. The West is less interested in individual non-Western artists, but more concerned with filling the

³⁶⁷ Olu Oguibe, *The Culture Game*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004, 204.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., XII.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 33.

slots.³⁷⁰

Hence as Oguibe says, if the non-Western artist wants to participate in the culture game, he has no choice but to play the “other.”³⁷¹ But what will it take to change the rules or disable them, given the “pre-determined obscurity and failure to which such artists are otherwise condemned?” Can this price of ticket for their entry be changed?³⁷² What are the choices available for the artist? As suggested by Ulf Hannerz in “Scenarios for Peripheral Cultures,” the only way these artists can succeed in the centre is through specialists that command a strong presence in the global West, who present their work and “disseminate [its] meanings” in the context of the West.”³⁷³ This reinforces Marie Ramirez’s comment that when art originates in the “periphery the rewards can be greater,” with curators being credited with breaking new ground and pushing the boundaries into uncharted territories on behalf of previously marginalized groups.³⁷⁴ This nevertheless concerns her, as she asks, “how then, can exhibitions or collections attempt to represent the social, ethic, or political complexities of groups without reducing their subjects to essentialist stereotypes?”³⁷⁵ This question still needs to be answered, although several of the biennales have demonstrated otherwise, we still have a long way to go in order to resolve or further

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 21.

³⁷² Ibid., 34.

³⁷³ Anthony D. King, ed., *Culture, Globalization, and World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, trans. , Binghamton, New York, 1991, 107- 28. See Ulf Hannerz, “Scenarios for Peripheral Cultures,” *Culture, Globalization, and World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King, Current Debates in Art History, Binghamton, New York, Department of Art and Art History, State University of New York, 1991, 107-28.

³⁷⁴ Ramirez, “Brokering Identities: Art Curators and the Politics of Cultural Representation.” 22.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 23.

this concern.

Are Biennales the Zeitgeist of our times?

Although the numbers of biennales are far from declining, there have recently been several critiques of the biennale that have been taken up by artists and curators alike or movements that are anti-biennales as with the 2006 Berlin biennale.³⁷⁶ In this biennale *Of Men and Mice* curated by a trio from the Wrong Gallery, Maurizio Cattelan, Ali Subotnick, and Massimiliano Gioni, there was no shortage of detractors who thought the exhibition would fall victim to Cattelan's penchant for practical jokes, considering he had staged a quasi-fake biennale, inviting a number of artists to go on vacation with him. The *Berlin Biennale* in a similar sarcastic tone expressed the curator's exhaustion of existing curatorial models, and instead undertook to create an intimate experiential setting of the "theater of the absurd." Although the biennale mockingly used alternative venues such as apartments, a cemetery, a former school, disused stables, and the street, the curators made a serious comment through the bleak landscape to critically reflect Europe's current state of mind.

Noticeably the tendency to critique biennales is much more prevalent in the West than the rest of the world. For the Third World countries that lack infrastructure for the arts, the biennale is a welcome sight, whereas in the Western world, the addition of another biennale brings on a sense of weary *deja-vu*. One such affirmation with regard to the instatement of the recent 2005 Moscow Biennale, is as follows:

³⁷⁶ One such example is the recent conference *Elective Affinities, Constitutive Differences: Contemporary art in Asia*, organized by Geeta Kapur presented by The School of Arts and Aesthetics of Jawaharlal Nehru University on March 9-11 2007, New Delhi. The conference was held to discuss the proposed Delhi Biennale in 2008, presented several critiques and moments, what Kapur calls biennale bashing.

The Biennale of Contemporary Art is not such a bad idea because it introduces certain standards, expands horizons, and helps create a more favorable environment for experimental art. Besides, exhibiting home-grown artists on a par with their foreign colleagues helps to form some sort of respectable identity needed in order to elevate the status of new art in Russia and to boost its sales (or subsidies, both private and institutional) at home and abroad.³⁷⁷

Another affirmation of the biennale in the non-West can be evidenced through critic Evelyne Jouanno in the *Emergency Biennale* curated for Chechnya in 2005. In her biennale, Jouanno utilized a subversive approach to reflect on Chechnya's national condition by taking her biennale all over the world,³⁷⁸ with the final destination being Groznyy, Chechnya.³⁷⁹ In this exhibition, she adopted the Duchampian alter-ego approach of Rose-Selvy by asking artists to make duplicate valises or suitcases as Duchamp undertook in his *Porte de Valises*. In 2005, the biennial's first incarnation, the work of more than sixty artists was displayed at Paris's Palais du Tokyo. Thus began a long journey of endless travel that did bring awareness and reflection on the current politics of Chechnya today.³⁸⁰

Further commendations for the biennale are given by the high powered curators

³⁷⁷ Cited in Victor Tupitsyn, "Throwing Rosemary's Baby Out with the Bath Water," *Third Text* 19, no. 6 (2005), <http://www.ebscohost.web>. The first *Moscow Biennale* was organized in 2005 by a team of curators at the former Lenin Museum (branch of the State Historical Museum), The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, The State Tretyakov Gallery, The Schusev State Museum of Architecture, and The Moscow Museum of Contemporary Art respectively.

³⁷⁸ Evelyne Jouanno, "Emergency Biennale in Chechnya," <http://www.emergency-biennale.org> (accessed 6/5, 2007).

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ According to Paley's report, the conflict in Chechens has been much overlooked for more visible conflicts of the Middle East, although the wars for independence, has intensified since 1994. The region is home to 1.4 million people, the majority of whom are ethnic Chechens, their territory covering a strategic part of oil and gas reserves exploited by Russia. Since 1994, it is estimated that intense fighting between Russian troops and Chechen fighters has resulted upwards of 150,000 civilian casualties. The conflict is ongoing, and while the Chechen government has declared independence, Chechnya is not yet recognized as independent by any other state. Dawn Paley, "Engage Yourself: The 'Emergency Biennale in Chechnya,'" *Seven Oaks: Journal of Politics, Culture and Resistance* 8/8/2006 (2007). <http://www.sevenoaksmag.com/features/chechnya.html>

of *Documenta X*, French born Catherine David, and its subsequent 11th edition, curated by Nigerian born American curator Okwui Enwezor. Enwezor affirms that large-scale thematic exhibitions and biennales play a critical role in the realm of global culture.³⁸¹ He optimistically believes that these global exhibitions not only contribute to expanding the base of contemporary knowledge, but also lead to the “sustained appraisal” of art and its production with the possibility of measuring and evaluating its content within the category of culture itself.³⁸² In this realization, Enwezor states that the biennale movement has sped up the tempo of the art world by increasing the dynamic of its “aesthetic renovation” as a continuous process within the arts.³⁸³ Catherine David on the other hand, while conceding that large-scale exhibitions offer visibility to artists so as to fundamentally alter the conditions of artistic discourse, believes that “no show could, or should, presume an all-encompassing thesis,” at least not in conventional terms, which she deems is problematic.³⁸⁴

Francisco Bonami, curator of the 2003 *Venice Biennale* asserts that as a result of globalization, the exhibitions no longer just exhibit art. They now extend their territory to accommodate panels, lectures, publications, performances, and public works that fall beyond the parameters of the traditional show, sometimes being so overwhelmingly large that they are well beyond the grasp of any single viewer.³⁸⁵ The

³⁸¹ Okwui Enwezor, “The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition,” *Fault Lines: Contemporary African Art and Shifting Landscapes*, eds. Gilane Tawadros and Sarah Campbell, London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 2003, 74.

³⁸² Ibid., 74.

³⁸³ Ibid., 74.

³⁸⁴ Catherine David when questioned about inclusion and selection of the artist in her *Documenta X* responded: “The question for me is not about ... who the artist is but about how to produce, discuss, debate, and circulate to various audiences a certain number of ideas and formal articulations proposed by author(s). For further details see Griffin, *Global Tendencies: Globalism and the Large-Scale Exhibition*, 152.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.,

shift in the relationship between art museums and biennale movements is also viewed by Carlos Basualdo (one of the six co-curators of *Documenta 11*) as a “new geography of culture” that presents a shift in the institutional structure and promises something new and different emanating from this association.³⁸⁶ Basalt imagines the scope of biennales to extend the social research of the art museum and to involve new publics, making art and its education accessible.³⁸⁷ According to Enwezor, the collaboration of biennales and art museums as institutions leads to a new form of “cosmopolitanism,” that fronts a new multi-level network of exchange that encompasses significations, translations, and transcriptions, pertaining to the movement of ideas that challenge the prevalent hegemonic and political methodology.³⁸⁸

Enwezor nonetheless is aware of the strengths and opportunities that exhibitions and biennales provide in the expansion of new knowledge through the dialectic of curating and contemporary art practice. He is equally confident that these exhibition sites would use the power and authority vested in these institutions in a critical manner.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁶ Basualdo, Carlos. Cited Okwui Enwezor, “The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition,” *Research in African Literatures* 34, no. 4 (2003), 57(26).

³⁸⁷ Carlos Basualdo, *Ibid.*,

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*,

³⁸⁹ In considering the scale of the biennale, Okwui Enwezor raises an important point in regards to architect Rem Koolhaas’s theory of bigness, as pointed by curator Francesco Bonami. Enwezor is less concerned about inability of large-scale exhibitions to harbor a level of intimacy among artworks, artists, forms, or discourses, but more concerned about the “danger of totalization” inherent in the attempt to address disparate practices, unless one sharpens the differences between them. He considers “bigness” to be great for Koolhaas’s architecture, but he does not see how it can function in an exhibition without destroying the systems of differentiation of each artistic practice.

In the context of the large exhibition, he insists on the responsibility of the curator to make “legible statements” by means of the exhibition, without abdicating this responsibility. If the exhibition gets “too big,” Enwezor gives less weight to the “plurality of visions,” that the exhibition might undertake, but instead considers it more important to fulfill the critical responsibility owed to the artist and audience.

On the other hand, several curators also critique the institution of the biennale. Amongst them are Charles Esche and Vasif Kortun, the curators of the 9th *Istanbul biennale* in 2006, who caution us of the homogenizing effect of the biennale in the long term while recognizing biennales as a channel through which the artwork gets validated in the art circuit.³⁹⁰ By this suggestion, they aspire to conceive a biennale that does not subscribe to “total consumption of art by the free market,” but retains a critical edge of difference.³⁹¹ Wu Hung, in his talk “De-Flattening Contemporary Global Art,” echoes a similar thought.³⁹² Hung is concerned about the “flattening of art,” especially in the context of non-Western art practices emerging in biennales which he calls multicultural exhibitions. Being attentive to the fact that the understanding of art is different among various cultures, he queries what happens to this difference in the context of globalization? Although one is aware that there exist many modernities that follow their own time lines, his concern is what happens when work from different contexts and modernities are placed next to each other, as in the case of biennales?³⁹³

For Hung, “flattening,” is a “simultaneous conflation and growth: events and representations are reconfigured into lateral networks and horizontal relationships.” This would also include the flattening of the historical dimensions of regional contemporary art (that belongs to a particular part of the world, like China) that,

³⁹⁰ İstanbul Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı, 9. Uluslararası İstanbul Bienali, 16 Eylül-30 Ekim 2005 = 9th International Istanbul Biennial : September 16-October 30, 2005, İstanbul: İstanbul Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı, 2005, 23.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 27.

³⁹² Wu Hung, “History, Memory and, the Book: Exploring a Diachronic Dimension in Contemporary Chinese Art,” <http://www.scribemedia.org/2007/01/05/books-in-chinese-art/> 2007 (accessed 03/08, 2007).

³⁹³ Ibid.

through a simultaneous process of “decontextualization and recontextualization, loses its meaning.”³⁹⁴ In thinking about this condition, he playfully substitutes the word “multi-national” in place of biennale to illuminate this problem.³⁹⁵ He says in such a situation the biennale could then turn very easily into a supermarket in which the artists are the different brands, wearing their identity inscribed in the logo-type of their country.

Hung’s endeavor in the process of curating (for example contemporary Chinese art) is to “retain the authenticity of this art, instead of “flattening” it “to suit a preexisting art historical narrative and exhibition mode.” He adds that the “the contemporaneity of regional art is redefined as a suspended moment outside any historical narrative.”³⁹⁶ So what happens in the global context of art? Hung is critical of the “insertion” of art in such unnatural settings of modern and contemporary art because of its specific timing, inspirations, criteria, and context.³⁹⁷

I however contest several of Hung’s claims. First, I think that when he speaks about the “flattening of art” he speaks from a position unique to China, which emerged from the 1966 Cultural Revolution with the history of its nation erased. Hence the process of “flattening” used by Hung cannot be compared with the homogenizing tendencies of globalization, as for him flattening means erasing or wiping out (as in the case of China), while homogenizing would mean a leveling of sorts that would normally resonate a tendency of the West. Besides the Chinese example, there is no evidence of any other cultural tradition that has attempted to be erased by a

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

government in power. For Hung to generalize this as one of the outcomes of the biennale for the rest of the world is misplaced. His definition of “flattening of art” seems to come close to what Szeemann’s biennale the “Plateau of Humankind” has been known to resonate, a leveling of art and humanity. I also disagree with his response that culture needs to “retain the authenticity,” as this tendency has led to the homogenizing of individual artists: because most non-Western artists are automatically associated with their countries or regions.³⁹⁸ As discussed in the last chapter, concepts such as authenticity, and tradition are not fixed concepts, and both raise the question what is the tendency that is being retained?

Hung rightly concludes however, that these questions cannot be answered by turning the clock back to old regional traditions, as like time, the interaction of contemporary art in a global space is irreversible.³⁹⁹ At this juncture, it is important to understand the context, content and characteristics of specific art practices, but it is just as important to understand the processes that comprise globalization and the interaction between local and global as much as it is to review the people that make these exhibitions happen.⁴⁰⁰ Also in associating Hung’s “flattening of art” with Said’s “traveling theory” which is one of not being constant but rather mutating or changing, the biennalization of art could take a position of resistance.

³⁹⁸ Ibid. To illustrate an example of the above, Wu Hung refers to the contemporary art scene in China during the 90s, within which one saw the emergence of new art forms such as installation, performance, and site-specific projects conveyed a strong social message to subvert established norms. For him this significance disappears when experimental Chinese works are displayed in international exhibitions that feature endless installations and multi-media works. The new exhibition venues thus he adds, should be thought of as a means of translation – something that reconstructs old definitions and regenerates new meanings and should also be identified as new sites of art production and circulation alone.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

The chapter explored the biennale as a “Plateau of Humankind,” not as a “plateau” that homogenizes or incorporates Hung’s “flattening of art,” but rather, explores it in terms of a “new modernity” as suggested by Bonami, which allows us a new, inclusive perspective to the world. In examining the Western and Third World biennales we have not yet reached a “new modernity” that allows for “multiple modernities” to be articulated in a world that is inclusive of the “other.” This is further confirmed by critic Paul O’ Neil who states that despite all the “curatorial self reflectivity present in recent large scale exhibitions that exemplify the global effects of biennalization, the periphery still has to follow the course of the center.”⁴⁰¹ Therefore the role of the Third World Biennale is now as relevant as ever, but with a difference. The importance and impact of third-world biennales such as Cuba and Istanbul have been tremendous. But this could be seen as the first phase of the Third World biennales that had to establish their presence as independent entities in relation to the West. The Third World biennales no longer need to advocate their presence or create awareness for themselves as before, but are required to be more introspective. Globalization and other political considerations of the last two decades have demanded a change in their approach and a review of their position. Here they need to be more inclusive of other “modernities,” including the West. Hence, criticism of the Third World’s *Havana Biennale* for having included First World artists is unfounded.

The *Havana Biennale* has correctly discerned the current political situation within the current milieu of globalization to expand its discourse, instead of ghettoizing the Third World, which was necessary during its early period. The second phase for the Third World biennale in my opinion, would require continued viewing of

⁴⁰¹ Paul O’Neil, “The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse,” J. Rugg and M. Sedgwick, *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, (Intellect Books), Bristol, 2007, 25.

itself in an introspective mode, further discerning the postcolonial subtext. For example the recent 9th *Istanbul Biennale* titled *Istanbul* attempted to examine itself given the global changes in the world. In thinking about itself in the contemporary context it needed to first “de-world” from the Western concept of the exotic orient by not exhibiting in spaces that were tied to those histories such as the Hagia Sofia or the Blue mosque. Instead it “re-worlded” itself by actively engaging in the local spaces that represented the Istanbul of today as a tobacco factory, an apartment building, and custom store house, which were more grounded in the people’s reality and lives. Most importantly in this phase, the Third World biennale should try to seek its own identity outside the West.

Another shift is the presence of the postcolonial in the context of the Western biennales. A perfect example that demonstrates this is the *Venice Biennale*, which retains its position as one of the most prestigious biennales in the world and continues its century long tradition of hosting the national pavilions in its Giardini, most of which belong to the Western nations, with few non-Western exceptions. Since the last decade however, the independent representation of the nations not represented in the Giardini has grown. In the 2003 *Venice Biennale*, there were over 50 participants outside the main biennale in the Giardini that were non-Western counties. These were not invited national pavilions but countries that participated autonomously on their own imperative. The main biennale can no longer intervene in their participation, as they are independently funded and lie outside the jurisdiction of the biennale. Over the last several years, these pavilions of mostly non-Western origin, which I term the pavilions on the periphery, are increasingly becoming an important part of the biennale, and in some cases showcasing work which is perhaps more interesting and challenging than the national pavilions in the Giardini. This implies that the *Venice*

Biennale has no recourse but to address and respond to the influx of excluded discourse of the non-West, which emanates from the position of the postcolonial.

The *Venice Biennale* however presents an anomaly as the city sustains itself mainly on tourism. In order to ensure a year round traffic of visitors it has repositioned itself as a cultural center of all art forms including dance, film, and architecture, that each have their own biennale every two years. This makes the *Venice Biennale* clearly not meant to respond to the locals, but rather to cater to the needs of traveling global audiences. The citizens of Venice besides reaping the economic benefits have no engagement with the biennale. Instead herds of curators, artists, and collectors flock bi-annually to visit the famous archipelago to view art in the beautiful Giardini and other sites within the different part of the city of Venice. Considering this, we can ask what is the role of local audiences. Is the *Venice Biennale* then to consider its unique island position only to provide a space for the “global circuit (comprising a limited set of curators, artists, collectors) relating to “other” modernities”? This would then lead us to consider that biennalization today is in danger of what Wu Hung warned us about, of the homogenization or the multi-nationalization of the biennale, with Venice and perhaps the remaining biennales simulating, exhibiting and circulating art with no real relevance to the location or the local.

Another such example could be the second Johannesburg biennale *Trade Routes: History and Geography*, which was realized in Johannesburg and Cape Town in 1997. The local authorities in the culture sector discontinued this biennale as they felt the exhibition did not respond to the legacy of Apartheid and the needs of the local disadvantaged art community, nor was it intelligible to the population at large. Curated by Okwui Enwezor as the chief curator, this biennale attempted to question the “entire notion of history” through an exploration of the process of globalization and the

“economic structures of the last 500 years.”⁴⁰² As evident from the title itself, Enwezor sought to contextualize two very significant aspects of globalization, which from his perspective had not been addressed. The first being historical, attempted to excavate the deep seated impact of colonization by addressing newly decolonized nations like South Africa, that endeavored to create a historical reconnection with the rest of the African continent after apartheid, and reemerge as a nation within the rest of the world.⁴⁰³ The second was to emphasize the importance of geography and location within the context of the global.

Although the exhibition succeeded at several levels, especially in highlighting South Africa on the map, it did have its shortcomings and was suspended earlier than its closing date.⁴⁰⁴ One of the first problems was a poor image portrayed by the media that conveyed confusion in the exhibition. The biennale’s biggest failure, stated by many critics was that in addressing the global; it failed to consider the significance of the local.⁴⁰⁵ The problem was the division within the art community along black and white axis, the competition between exiles and insiles as they called them with the ANC cultural leadership in control of the art sector, plus other issues existed as part of

⁴⁰² Okwui Enwezor, “Travel Notes: Living, Working and Traveling in a Restless World,” *Trade Routes: History and Geography, Second* (South Africa: Africus Institute for Contemporary Art, 1997), 12.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁰⁴ The *Johannesburg Biennale* according to Clive Keller perpetuated a vibrant cultural exchange in Africa, incorporated “African intellectual knowledge,” dispensed information and provided global exposure to African artists and intellectuals alike. The exhibition according to him presented South Africa at the cusp of a critical moment in history : “the establishment of black majority rules” confirming Enwezor’s objective that the biennale should succeed in placing South Africa on the global art circuit, producing knowledge and discourse.

He however adds that the exhibition also suffered due to a lack of experience, knowledge and skills to cope with the global changes on the part of both the curators and the city itself, which did not take into account the long isolation and separation that South Africa had endured. Keller, Clive. “The Johannesburg Biennial. *Song of the Earth* (Kassel: Documenta and Museum Fridericianum, 2000), 24.

the apartheid legacy. The misconception is to think the biennale as something meant to address all the disadvantages of apartheid regime. That is not the role of the biennale. It actually trained a lot of local (black artists) and curators, in addition to bringing an opportunity for them to interact with the international scene.

This makes one mindful of the consequence of the biennale to globalize “localized memory” which in the case of South Africa did manage to circulate to the rest of the world. But what it failed in undertaking to do was to first localize the memory with the local inhabitants prior to its globalization. In that sense it “othered” its own modernity, while giving the “other” a place of its own. This made South African art visible in the world before it gained recognition or acknowledgement within the nation itself.

Two decades of the presence of the postcolonial discourse have demonstrated a gradual change in the rules of art. The rules written by the West are slowly being re-written by the new generation of postcolonial biennales such as the *Moscow Biennale* in 2005 and the *Singapore Biennale* in 2006, which deal with global issues such as hope and religion, and seek to confront the global politics from the local/global dynamic rather than from a third/second world position. While on the one hand postcolonial discourse is gaining significant momentum, on the other we have the example of the *Venice Biennale* which has turned into a spectacle where the location or “place” can be “displaced” to mean “anywhere” in the world. In such a case the project of the biennale itself is meaningless and needs to be reconsidered.

The biennale must first address and engage the local and then allude to the global. Otherwise it exists, but as an empty signifier, having consumed itself in the onslaught of globalization, being nothing more than a futile and wasteful spectacle of

art. We still need to aspire to move towards the *Plateau of Humankind* but one as defined by Deleuze and Guttari that is ahistorically outside the linear perspective of any specific history, especially the West. It would allow “multiple modernities” to co-exist amicably allowing them to be self –defining and governed by their own time frames, perhaps allowing for the creation of the “multitude” of Negri and Hardt, in which collective forces come together to present not another grand narrative, but instead allow spaces for individual stories to unfold next to each other. In this way, we no longer view each other as the “other” but rather more inclusively a part of a “new modernity,” one that embraces “multiple worlds and geographies,” moving away from any denomination of a “fixed civilization or regionalism of the world.”⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁶ See essay by Roxann Pazniak “Is World History Possible? An Inquiry” History After the three Worlds: Post –Eurocentric Historiographies” edited by Arif Dirlik, Vinay Lal, Lanham, Md : Rowman & Littlefield, 2000, 277.

Chapter 4

FOR EXAMPLE, DOCUMENTA 11, OR HOW HAS THE POSTCOLONIAL BEEN PRODUCED IN ART HISTORY?

In his essay “For example, *Documenta*, or how is art history produced?” Walter Grasskamp presents *Documenta*, the most distinguished exhibitions in Kassel, Germany, as being an “exemplar for the production of art history [rical canon].”⁴⁰⁷ Derived from the normative plural of the medieval Latin term documentum that means a lesson or warning, *Documenta* as an institution identifies its intentions: to document history through the intellectual faculties of the mind.⁴⁰⁸ The engagement with history has a special meaning for *Documenta* as an institution, as it was set up as a post-World War II initiative to rebuild the destroyed town of Kassel, Germany. This need to continue to rebuild oneself anew through an examination of the past has served *Documenta* to reflect on its inherent philosophy i.e.: to use each of its exhibitions as a mirror which, while examining the history of the world, also forces it to reflect upon itself.

To undertake this, each *Documenta* adopted different moments in history, along with embodying a unique identity and approach within its exhibition. *Documenta 11*, the first *Documenta* of the 21st century was unique within the history

⁴⁰⁷ Walter Grasskamp, “For Example, Documenta, or how Art History been produced?” In *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds., Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne, ed., London; New York: Routledge, 1996, 71.

⁴⁰⁸ Christoph Lange, “The Spirit of Documenta: Anti-Philosophical Reflections” In *50 Jahre Documenta, 1955-2005 = 50 Years Documenta,; 50 Years Documenta 1955-2005*, ed. Glasmeier, Michael, 1951- Stengel,KarinKunsthalle Fridericianum., trans. 415, 1. Aufl. ed. (Gottingen: Steidl, 2005., 2005), 14, Catalog Record - <https://catalog.library.cornell.edu.proxy.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=5735511&DB=local>. According to Lange, the title Documenta in Medieval Latin meant instruction, hence he acknowledge the term documentum to emerge from “1) Lat. Docere: to teach, instruct, inform, also to show and tell; 2) lat. Mens: the intellectual faculties” of the mind.

of the exhibition itself, as it chose to examine the 20th century not from a Eurocentric perspective as those before, but rather by determining what it had failed to consider: namely the postcolonial discourse which geographically accounted for over 80% of the world.⁴⁰⁹ This examination of the postcolonial had merited very little consideration within the prior *Documentas*, and (as discussed in the earlier chapters was more debated within the academics circles) had not been adequately realized or discussed within the global circuit of art. Therefore *Documenta 11* as Sylvester Ogbemie suggests has been pivotal in investigating and promoting the possibilities of avant-garde art for political action in the era after the “end of art.”⁴¹⁰

The need for *Documenta 11* to historicize the absence of the postcolonial discourse could also be understood through its lack of logo in the exhibition. The concept of “no-logo,” developed by one of the exhibition artists Eche Bonk for the

⁴⁰⁹ *Documenta 11* was organized by Okwui Enwezor, Carlos Basualdo, Ute Meta Bauer, Susanne Ghez, Sarat Maharaj, Mark Nash, and Octavio Zaya, and was on view at the Fridericianum and other venues in Kassel, Germany, June 8-September 15, 2002.

⁴¹⁰ Sylvester Okwunodo Ogbemie, “Ordering the Universe: Documenta II and the Apotheosis of the Occidental Gaze,” *Art Journal* 64, no. 1 (2005), 80(10). By this Ogbemie reference “the end of art” he alludes to two very significant essays were introduced during the 1980s, “The End of History,” by Francis Fukuyama and “The Death of Art” by A. Danto. Both essays were situated in the late 1980s; a decade that marked important shifts in the course of history of the world. Francis Fukuyama in his controversial essay, “The End of History?” 1989 argued that the end of the Cold War signals the end of the progression of human history: “What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.” Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, London; New York: Penguin, 1992, xii.

Similarly, Arthur Danto proclaimed in “The Death of Art,” 1984 was meant to be “counter ideological,” in that it “imagined” the end of all ideologies, but was not meant to be understood or simply declare the end of art, but to the end of a certain narrative of art. The suggestive “death” implied by Danto was further re-addressed in his subsequent book “After the End of Art,” 1997 that a certain story was over, and it was now an appropriate time to begin a new chapter of history, as he has already informed us that “Life really begins when the story comes to an end.” Perhaps, in considering Danto’s perspective, one can note a certain end of art, possibly the end of western hegemony in the art. As since the early 1990s art from the non-western postcolonial world has become visible and began claiming a space within the contemporary art discourse. Arthur C. Danto, “Art After the End of Art - The Irrelevance of Ideology in Future Art,” *ArtForum*, 1993.

curator Okwui Enwezor, (the first non –European curator and also the first African curator to be invited to curate the *Documenta*,) could be seen to indicate the absence of the postcolonial canon, and also perceived as a gesture of resistance against the institution of *Documenta* itself.⁴¹¹ The “no-logo” also serves to indicate the second underpinning of *Documenta 11*, as a critical response to globalization, a relationship it shared with the postcolonial.⁴¹² Here the concept of the “no-logo” could be interpreted to examine the exploitation served by globalization, (by critiquing the concept of sweatshops and being anti-brand) experienced by the postcolonial. By way of reference, the concept of “no-logo” of *Documenta 11* also can be viewed along with the strong anti-global stance taken by Naomi Klein in her book *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*.⁴¹³

The concept of the “no-logo” of *Documenta 11* could be understood under the umbrella of the “postcolonial constellation” orchestrated by Enwezor and his team of curators, as not just an exhibition but as a “discursive domain” of “circuits of artistic and knowledge production and research modules” that not only evaluates art but

⁴¹¹ Stefaine Herbst, “Meaning Communicated: Documenta Design between Conventions and Transmissions of Value” In *50 Jahre Documenta, 1955-2005 = 50 Years Documenta; 50 Years Documenta 1955-2005*, eds. Michael Glasmeier and Karin Stengel, trans. 415, 1. Aufl. ed., Göttingen: Steidl, 2005., 2005, 5, Catalog Record - <https://catalog.library.cornell.edu.proxy.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=5735511&DB=local>.

⁴¹² As *Documenta* as an institution does not historically title the exhibitions, the logo plays a critical role in defining the context of each *Documenta*. This gives each *Documenta* a distinct identity as it comes to be known through its edition numbers.

⁴¹³ Naomi Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, 1st ed., Toronto: A.A. Knopf Canada, 2000, 490. Klein in her famous book focuses on the relationship between branding and globalization. She specifically deals with the case of sweatshops in Latin America and Asia, reporting the alleged misdeeds of Nike, The Gap, McDonalds, and other brands that exploit the poorer nations of the world. In using this reference my attempt is to acknowledge *Documenta 11*’s refusal of using a logo (similar to Klein) to uphold a position of resistance against what some brands have come to represent.

produces knowledge as well.⁴¹⁴ The “postcolonial constellation” drew on several influences of different concepts and ideologies to expose contradictions within the system of art by re-emphasizing and evaluating the cultural and historical paradigms within the process of the creative. It formed the core of *Documenta 11* comprising 5 Platforms (4 of which were intellectual Platforms, with only the final being realized as an exhibition), each of which took place in different parts of the world.⁴¹⁵ In considering this, it not only examined the globalization of art taking place in the world but also realized Andreas Huyssen’s concept of the “globalization of memory.”⁴¹⁶ This concept articulated in his essay “Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia” questions the sudden spate of museum building all over the world, as a condition attributed not to globalization alone, but the paranoia of memorializing the past, premised on one’s irrational “fear of forgetting.”⁴¹⁷ For him, this cultural obsession based on the “fear of forgetting” prompts one to hold on to the past in order to memorialize it, and thereby prevent it from disappearing from our memory. In considering this, the chapter argues

⁴¹⁴ Carmen Ramirez and Mari, “Constellations: Toward a Radical Questioning of Dominant Curatorial Models,” *Art Journal*, no. Spring (2000), <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0425/is_1_59/ai_63295353>

In her article published as early as 2000, Ramirez outlined the constellation as a curatorial model that: “condenses, rather than illustrates, specific themes or historic sensibilities by means of “luminous points”—that is, key developments or singular visions that expose the relationships between the artists, their works, and the specific context in which they were produced.” Her approach was to allow for a flexible model that produces, including “simultaneous readings of the selected works from comparative or contrasting perspectives capable of grasping, in one single glance, historical, cultural, and/or formal traits.”

While examining Enwezor’s approach to the “postcolonial constellation” it becomes evident that he has been able to realize some of Ramirez’s ideas of the constellation, especially the idea of the luminous points that form the 5 Platforms of the “postcolonial constellation.”

⁴¹⁵ Enwezor in his catalogue text for *Documenta 11*, defines the Platforms as: “an open encyclopedia for the analysis of late modernity; a network of relationships; an open form for organizing knowledge, a non-hierarchical model of representation; a compendium of voices, cultural, artistic, and knowledge circuits. See Okwui Enwezor, “The Black Box,” 49.

⁴¹⁶ Andreas Huyssen, “Present Pasts” *Public Culture* 12, no. 1.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

that the uniqueness of *Documenta 11*'s "postcolonial constellation" lies in the ways the Platforms, which were based in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Caribbean, metaphorically alluded to a global exchange of knowledge from every part of the world, and were involved with pivotal in circulating what Huyssen has termed the globalization of [postcolonial] memory.⁴¹⁸ Hence *Documenta 11*'s project through the "postcolonial constellation" could be stated: to document the history of the postcolonial world that had been excluded or absent from the history of both the exhibition *Documenta* and the art world. This leads us to query whether something unacknowledged in the past can be viewed retrospectively and amended in the present? What are the ethical underpinnings in undertaking this and to what end?

In order to examine *Documenta 11*'s contribution to the articulation of postcolonial histories, I briefly discuss the history of *Documenta* as an institution, as well as closely examine the last *Documenta* of the millennium curated by Catherine David, *Documenta X*. *Documenta X* which had a pronounced X in lower case as its logo marked in red with a black background, made one speculate whether the 10th *Documenta* (1997) intended to allegorically suggest an erasure of the *Documentas'* past? The "X" in *Documenta X* needs careful consideration, as within its core it expressed its sentiments as the last *Documenta* of the 20th century, one which David referred to in an understated and self-reflective tone merely as a "retrospective." In this case, David's "retrospective" of *Documenta X* could be said to examine the *fin de siècle* under the auspices of "de-Europeanization" of the world, which was strongly critiqued for presenting post-war globalism as if Europe was never "de-

⁴¹⁸ The only continent, which was not included in the platforms, was Latin America, but this was realized in the form of a Platform book.

Europeanized.”⁴¹⁹ Although this *Documenta* did retrospect the history of the world, it choose to examine the 1960s and 70s, a period that was presented in the important *Documenta 5* curated by Harold Szeemann in 1972. In exploring why *Documenta X* chose to retrospect on this period, what stands out is that neither of these moments had any inflections of the postcolonial within them, but were preoccupied with examining the standard Euro-American art.

Returning once again to *Documenta 11*’s “postcolonial constellation” and viewing it in a comparative frame to *Documenta X*’s “retrospective,” perhaps both exhibitions could be said to examine the history of the 20th century. In that sense they both could be viewed as retrospectives, *Documenta X*, which addressed a Eurocentric history of the 1960s-70s, and *Documenta 11*, the history of decolonization post 1945. Hence, *Documenta 11* did make the twenty-first century feel like the twentieth, as the project of the postcolonial dealt with the 20th century and unfinished histories tied to colonization.⁴²⁰ This could also be analyzed in terms of what historian Huyssen called the “globalization of localized [postcolonial]⁴²¹ memory,” which not only created awareness of the local postcolonial context through the Platforms, but also through the final 5th Platform was able to circulate it all over the world.⁴²² This localized [postcolonial] memory that has now been globalized has been integral, since

⁴¹⁹ Catherine David, “*Documenta X*: Short Guide,” 1997, 9.

⁴²⁰ This is concurrent with the view of Thomas McEvilley, who noted that many of the issues that *Documenta 11* explored had a sense of having already been rehearsed (for better or worse) elsewhere, and for anyone with an interest in the politics of representation in a global, postcolonial context there would have been few surprises in the rhetoric of otherness, difference, globalization and hybridity employed in *Documenta*. McEvilley wrote: “In a sense the agenda proclaimed by these curators gave one a sense of *deja vu*; or rather, it seemed not exactly to usher in a new era but to set a seal on an era first announced long ago.” “An Interview with Marcel Broodthaers” *Trepid Fall*, no. October 42, (1987), 36-38.

⁴²¹ The term postcolonial here is my inclusion and emphasis.

⁴²² Andreas Huyssen, “Present Pasts,” *Public Culture* 12, no. 1.

Documenta 11's postcolonial constellation has impacted not only how the West views the non-West, but also how the non-West views itself through the postcolonial lens. This engagement with the local histories and localized knowledge in the case of the postcolonial importantly provided an ethical and intellectual reflection on the global scale of contemporary cultural transformation.

In retrospectively viewing *Documenta 11*'s contribution, in 2007 five years after the exhibition, it has undoubtedly been viewed as one of the most significant and influential exhibitions in the global art circuit. It has been instrumental in pioneering a new space for the inclusion of the postcolonial discourse and the dissemination of its knowledge. As a result, many critics perceive *Documenta 11* as an antidote to the infamous *Magicians de la Terre* that took place nearly seventeen years before.⁴²³ This makes the endeavor of *Documenta 11* a historical one that needs to be analyzed and studied as an ambitious intervention of the postcolonial, one that took place at a critical moment in time and one that had never been undertaken in the history of art or global exhibitions. With this consideration this chapter examines the pivotal role of *Documenta 11* in legitimizing and framing the postcolonial discourse all over the world and importantly the well-deserved place it earned in the production of the postcolonial in art history.

Documenting History

Walter Grasskamp has remarked that the myth of the Documenta is “palpable” as the selected artists get included into the “pantheon” or what can be called a Mecca for artists.⁴²⁴ *Documenta* is truly the Olympiad of both large-scale exhibitions and

⁴²³ Please refer to Chapter 3 titled *Revitalizing Signs: The Post (Magiciens) Condition* for details about the exhibition.

⁴²⁴ Grasskamp, “For Example, Documenta 11, Or how Art History been Produced?,” 67-78.

biennales, a hybrid of a recurring large-scale exhibition that takes place every five years in Kassel.⁴²⁵ Its own history of the holocaust and particularly of Kassel, Germany, which was bombed in World War II, perhaps gives it the impetus to make history anew with each edition of its exhibition.⁴²⁶ This makes the *Documenta* the only recurring exhibition within which every edition is encouraged to conceive a new format under a new curatorial initiative. By allowing curators to challenge themselves and showcase some of the most avant-garde artists of the time, the 50-year-old *Documenta* has been able to maintain its critical edge and youthful spirit. But, in keeping with the new, the *Documenta* has always been self-conscious of its past with a strong need to historicizes its own history as well as that of the world.

The history of *Documenta* engaged with documenting history began with the first exhibition founded by Arnold Bode (and art historian Werner Haftmann) as a retrospective of classical Modernism in 1955 of defamed artists that the Nazis had termed as “degenerated” art that included the works of younger artists as well.⁴²⁷ The

⁴²⁵ George Baker and Christian Philipp Müller, “A Balancing Act,” *October* 82 (Autumn, 1997), 2, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/779002>. According to the authors, the history of *Documenta* and the Fridericianum is linked to war in more ways than one. From the 1930s, Kassel served as one of Hitler's key ammunition depots, a function that eventually led to the city's almost total destruction by the Allies in the final phase of World War II. Kassel is, at the same time, the home of the Museum Fridericianum, built between 1769 and 1779 as the first museum in all of Europe, giving it a unique position to view history.

⁴²⁶ *Documenta* is an exhibition that takes place every five years in the German town of Kassel. The exhibition was launched in the mid-1950s –partly as a regeneration initiative for a small town that had suffered extensive damage during World War II, and partly as an attempt to counter the attack on modern art. According to art historian Andrea Dimitrakaki, *Documenta* has come to be today the most important international art event, with an agenda aided by, but also contesting, the increasingly global frameworks defining the production and reception of art.

She also suggests that the significance of *Documenta* has less to do with its rare but periodic occurrence and more with the fact that the curatorial teams involved in the show's production appear to be relatively uninhibited about working with the organizing principle of “politics,” against the dominant trends in the art world and the world at large. Angela Dimitrakaki, “Art and Politics Continued: Avant-garde, Resistance and the Multitude in Documenta 11,” *Historical Materialism* 11, no. 3 (2003), <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/> (accessed 3/20/2005).

⁴²⁷ *Documenta* Archive, “D1 1955,” *Documenta* Archive, <http://www.documenta12.de/d1.html?&L=1>

curators presented the second edition of *Documenta* 2 in 1959, which focused on the period post-World War II, and subtitled the exhibition “Art after 1945.”⁴²⁸ This exhibition was planned as an even more extensive exhibition than the former, for which the Museum Fridericianum was not sufficient and included for the first time, the Orangerie in the garden.⁴²⁹ But the final edition under the direction of Arnold Bode and Werner Haftmann was *Documenta* 3 that took place in 1964 with the underlined theme “*Art is what major artists make.*”⁴³⁰ It was in this edition that Bode assigned the term *Documenta* as a “museum of 100 Days.”⁴³¹ In this exhibition like the first, Haftmann once again focused his criteria to draw on pre-war modernism that centered his exhibition as a retrospective to the earlier artists, but focused on individual tendencies of artists, rather than group dynamics.⁴³²

After the retrospective approach of the earlier three editions, the turning point of the *Documenta* came with the controversial *Documenta* 4 of 1968, which began with Werner Haftmann’s resignation that led to the formation of a committee of 23 members to select the artists.⁴³³ This *Documenta* however was dominated by the influence of American art, as one witnessed a large number of abstract and color field

(accessed 08/08/2007, 2007).

⁴²⁸ Documenta Archive, “D2 1959,” <http://www.documenta12.de/d2.html?&L=1> (accessed 08/08/2007, 2007).

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Documenta Archive, “D3 1964,” Documenta Archive, <http://www.documenta12.de/d3.html?&L=1> (accessed 08/08/2007, 2007).

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Documenta Archive, “D4 1968,” Documenta Archive, <http://www.documenta12.de/d4.html?&L=1> (accessed 08/08/2007, 2007).

paintings, as well as minimal art and pop art.⁴³⁴ But *Documenta 5*, of 1972, curated by Harald Szeemann was to be one of the most influential and memorable. Szeemann, who at that time headed the Kunsthalle Berne and is credited with coining the term “freelance curator,” was appointed the sole responsibility of curating the *Documenta* for the first time.⁴³⁵ His exhibition, which revolved around the concept of “Individual Mythologies” explored individual artistic practices under the premise *Questions of Reality: The Image-World Today*.⁴³⁶

Here Szeemann opened up a new space to explore the production and reproduction of the image in media, by incorporating popular culture such as kitsch and advertising as acceptable forms of contemporary art.⁴³⁷ His concept extended to include a wide spectrum of interests like political, religious, and science fiction, by turning *Documenta* into an event-oriented space of interaction, which also questioned every day reality.⁴³⁸ The fluxist energy of *Documenta 5* was immediately visible in its poster and catalogue cover designed by artist Ed Rushcha, with embodied ants

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Documenta Archive, “D5 1972,” Documenta Archive, <http://www.documenta12.de/d5.html?&L=1> (accessed 08/08/2007, 2007).

⁴³⁶ Ibid. In examining Szeemann’s approach in *Documenta 5* it would be interesting to note his overlap with his earlier exhibition *Ahistorical Sounds*, in Szeemann displays diverse objects such as a chair, and artifacts from different periods juxtaposed with contemporary artworks. His interest here was to facilitate an interaction with certain moments of art history, so as to contemplate if art and history resound together. According to art historian Debora Meijers, in “The Museum and the Ahistorical Exhibition,” Szeemann’s *Ahistorical Sounds*, served to break the “traditional chronological arrangement, which reveal correspondence between works.” For her these “affinities cut across chronological boundaries” of different styles in history.

She states that by abandoning the classical classifications in terms of material it was finally “Einfühlung” or (empathy) that makes it possible for Szeemann to connect a 15-century chair with a female portrait of Picasso, and thus break the linearity of history in relation to its materiality. J. Debora Meijers, “The Museum and the Ahistorical Exhibition,” *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne, ed., London; New York: Routledge, 1996, 8.

⁴³⁷ Documenta Archive, *D5 1972*, 1.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

crawling to form the number “5.”⁴³⁹ The open-endedness of the exhibition could also be translated into examining the catalogue that comprised a ring binder in which additional pages and notes could be added.

Szeemann also further attempted to break down the distinction between art and mediated art forms by using performance art. He undertook this by re-invoking the museum for 100 days from *Documenta 3*, inviting Joseph Beuys’ to perform “Organization for direct democracy through plebiscite,” a Platform through which the artist debated with the audience for 100 days.⁴⁴⁰ In short, Szeemann’s significant curatorial intervention could be stated as creating fictitious myths, as in the case of *Individual Mythologies* with absurd resonances as a way to expose the truth.

In reviewing his oeuvre, a constant pattern which could be noted as the contemplation of history as one big myth.⁴⁴¹ This unique ahistorical methodology of examining works by focusing attention on individual concerns arising from the artworks themselves to construct a new history, can be also be seen in Szeemann’s subsequent exhibitions *Der Hang Zum Gesamtkunstwerk*. (The Quest for the Total Artwork of art), Zurich 1983 and *Ahistorical Sounds (A-Historische Klanken)*, Rotterdam, 1988 in which he aimed to reveal correspondences from different periods,

⁴³⁹ Lutz Jahre, “Curators and Catalogues: In the Documenta Reading Room,” *50 Jahre Documenta, 1955-2005 = 50 Years Documenta,; 50 Years Documenta 1955-2005*, ed. Glasmeier, Michael, 1951-Stengel,KarinKunsthalle Fridericianum., trans. 415, 1. Aufl. ed., Gottingen: Steidl, 2005., 2005, 53, Catalog Record - <https://catalog.library.cornell.edu.proxy.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=5735511&DB=local>.

This was visible in the *documenta 5* catalogue that was published in ring binder as a collection of loose pages that provided an addition space for the “after” sections for visitors to include texts, images, press collected by them. They also originally planned to offer a series of loose-leaf installations that would continue after the exhibition for the subscribers.

⁴⁴⁰ Documenta Archive, *D5 1972*, 1.

⁴⁴¹ Harold Szeemann, “III. *Documenta 5*,” *Écrire Les Expositions* Brussels, no. La Lettre Volée (1996), 24-33. The title, *Individual Mythologies* was to be originally called Shamanism and Mysticism, in homage to the artist Joseph Beuys. Szeemann instead sensibly changed this to reflect the work of little-known French artist Etienne Martin, who described his own sculptures as “personal mythologies.”

objects and cultures.⁴⁴² These affinities cut across chronological boundaries as well as conventional stylistic techniques implemented in art history.⁴⁴³ Thereby in examining *Documenta 5*, its contribution could be assessed as one that interrupted the historical traditions and conventional modes of viewing history and art. *Documenta 5*'s significant contribution was to question the linearity of history (as with the other *Documenta*'s) and bring something new into existence. But what was seen as most memorable to this exhibition was Szeemann's attempt to construct individual metaphors to create a new art historical paradigm without historical concepts.

Manfred Schneckenburger led the subsequent Documenta 6 in 1977 where the artistic director focused on film, photography and video.⁴⁴⁴ Schneckenburger's concerns could be encapsulated to resonate in his question: "What is the state and location of art in a media society?"⁴⁴⁵ His desire was to explore the problematic relationship between art and social reality, therefore his edition presented several earth works such as Richard Serra's *Terminal* (1977), a huge structure of iron slabs, and Walter de Maria's *Vertical Earth Kilometer* (1977), a bronze pole weighing 12-tons, which transformed the Friedrichsplatz into a building site with much controversy.⁴⁴⁶ Also memorable was his curatorial intent to include official Socialist Realist art from East Germany that faced intense protests and included the withdrawal of the contributions of important artists such as Georg Baselitz and Gerhard Richter.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴² Meijers, *The Museum and the Ahistorical Exhibition*, 8.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁴⁴ Gerhard Haupt, "An Interview with Alfons Hug," Universe in Universe, http://www.universes-in-universe.de/doc/opinion/e_hug.htm (accessed 07/08/, 2007).

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

On the other hand, Rudi Fuchs, the artistic director of *Documenta* 7 in 1982, wanted to free art of the “various constraints and social parodies it is caught up in.”⁴⁴⁸ He left his *Documenta* untitled, as he did not believe in restricting his exhibition to a particular theme, as he was of the opinion that works of art should be able to “show themselves unrestrainedly.”⁴⁴⁹ Although Fuchs recognized the work of individual artists, he nevertheless refused to acknowledge a connection between the artists themselves and their place in the cultural tradition of history. This led to a powerful critiques of the exhibition by Lawrence Weiner, one of the artists in the show, to place on the outer façade of Museum Fridericianum a concept that reflected the curatorial view: “Many Colored Objects Placed Side by Side To Form A Row of Many Colored Objects.”⁴⁵⁰

Although the classical genres of painting and sculpture featured strongly in the exhibition, one of the most memorable was “7000 Oak Trees” by Joseph Beuys. In this work Beuys deposited 7,000 basalt steles on the main square of the museum Friedrichsplatz in Kassel.⁴⁵¹ In the subsequent 5 years, 6,999 trees were planted all over Kassel with a basalt stele placed alongside, the last of which was placed on the opening day of Documenta 8 in June 1987 by Eva Wurmbacher-Beuys, the artist's

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid. For many critics this was the critical response to Fuchs's *Documenta*. However, an interesting anecdote from Curator Rudi Fuchs of *Documenta* 7, perhaps would give a clearer idea of his curatorial intent: We have of course considered giving the exhibition a title...But we did not find one...The problem of the title must be the problem of the exhibition or the period in which the exhibition takes place. Also see “An Interview with Marcel Broodthaers,” 36-38.

⁴⁴⁹ Gerhard Haupt, “An Interview with Alfons Hug.”

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid. Beuys' trees project was a site-specific and made for the town of Kassel. The rootedness of the tree to the earth made the project nontransferable, thereby the work took on an eternal quality. Beuys conceived his project in the context of what he called “super time,” as a temporal trajectory measured in terms of the life span of an oak tree, which he estimated as 800 years. Given this lapse, his basalt stones would still stand the test of time beside the decaying trunks.

widow, to commemorate Joseph Beuys death in 1986.⁴⁵²

Manfred Schneckenburger, the curator of *Documenta 6* could be said to be the only curator to be invited to present the *Documenta* twice. He curated *Documenta 8* in 1987, continuing his eye on technology, but further suggesting a “historical and the social” slant.⁴⁵³ He was also interested in exploring the intersections between “design, art and architecture,” which included examining “art's potential to achieve change in the areas of applied arts and in the field of social utopias” that was essential to the contemporary state of crisis in the world.⁴⁵⁴

Considerably different from its predecessor, *Documenta 9* in 1992 was curated by Jan Hoet, a Belgian director who envisioned his exhibition as “a *Documenta* of locations” based “solely on the artist and his work”⁴⁵⁵ In refusing to consider a theoretical concept with *Documenta 9*, Hoet shattered the *Documenta* principle that had resolutely shaped the exhibition's character since at the fifth edition.⁴⁵⁶ Instead, Hoet perceived the fundamental objective of contemporary art was to provide “subjective experiences” which would oppose a reality; one that he felt was increasingly slipping towards a virtual realm.⁴⁵⁷ With these motivations in mind, it was not surprising to find *Documenta 9* as being more experience-led, one in which he did not choose to impose any systematic structure to review or evaluate the art within

⁴⁵² Please refer to Debora J. Meijers detailed account of Rudi Fuchs *Documenta 7* Meijers, “The Museum and the Ahistorical Exhibition,” 7-20.

⁴⁵³ Gerhard Haupt, “An Interview with Alfons Hug.”

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

the current norm of art.⁴⁵⁸

Introspecting Documenta X

Catherine David, curator of *Documenta X*, previously the curator of contemporary art at the Pompidou Centre, had the privilege of being the first female curator in the history of *Documenta*. But if the organizers invited a woman hoping to resonate strong feminist overtones in the exhibition, they had chosen the wrong candidate. David's *Documenta* stood as an "anti-spectacle," one that was a highly political and theoretical enterprise that made a strong case against existing capitalist practices of the world.⁴⁵⁹ In examining *Documenta X*, the motif of the large "X" presented by David set the theme for her exhibition as a "retrospective."⁴⁶⁰ This notion of the "retrospective" effectively embodied her concept of "looking back into the future" as her main curatorial endeavor, suggested within the text of the exhibition guide as:

...the last Documenta of this century can hardly evade the task of elaborating a historical and critical gaze on its own history, on the recent past of the post-war period, and on everything from this now-vanished age that remains in ferment within contemporary art and culture: memory, historical reflection, decolonization and what Wolfgang Lepenies calls the "de-Europeanization" of the world, but also the complex processes of postarchaic, post-traditional, postnational identification at work in the "fractal societies" (Serge Gruzinski) born from the collapse of communism and the brutal imposition of the laws of the market.⁴⁶¹

Furthermore *Documenta X* curated by David, although conceived as a "retrospective" did not contemplate the last moments of the *fin de siecle* of the 20th

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ See David, *Documenta X: Short Guide*. *Documenta X* was also critiqued due to its lack of sensational or aesthetic appeal in terms of the art, and also considered by several critics as dull and boring.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

century. In terms of historical lineage of the *Documenta*, *Documenta X* closely resonated Arnold Bode's original concept of the "retrospective," since the period it chose to examine was during the 1960s and 70s with a specific interest in Western history of Europe and United States, similar to what Bode undertook.⁴⁶² According to Bettina Steinbrugge in her evaluation of the exhibition, David's intent could be interpreted to include the use of historical models and materials to gain insight into the present as a way to discuss the outcome of what is to come.⁴⁶³ Perhaps with this objective, it could be stated that *Documenta X*, instead of addressing the period of the 90s or fin de siecle as one would have expected, chose to retrospect *Documenta 5* curated by Szeemann. The immediate question that comes to mind is - why did David specifically look back at the period of *Documenta 5*, which reflected the late 1960s and 70s?

In reviewing the exhibition and text of *Documenta X*, David's intent could be to critically reflect on the past fifty years, by examining not only *Documenta*'s own history, but also by reviewing the significant events that shaped the world during that period. For David certain timeframes assumed greater importance, such as the period around 1945, 1968 or 1976/77, for their wide-reaching social and cultural significance.⁴⁶⁴ She suggests that these moments are those within which "art's political, social, cultural and aesthetic exploratory functions" could be traced.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶² Roger M. Bruegel the curator of *Documenta 12* of 2007, in comparing *Documenta 1* with *Documenta X* re-emphasizes Arnold Bodes, the founder of *Documenta*'s central question of "where does art stand today, where do we stand today? Hence for him, the exhibition should not engage with a direct answer, but an indirect tone that should be communicated via the medium of the exhibition. M. Roger Buerger, "The Origins" In *50 Jahre Documenta, 1955-2005 = 50 Years Documenta; 50 Years Documenta 1955-2005*, ed. Glasmeier, Michael, 1951- Stengel, KarinKunsthalle Fridericianum., trans. 415, 1. Aufl. ed., Gottingen: Steidl, 2005., 2005, 175.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., Bettina Steinbrugge, "Documenta X: An Ontology of the Present," 353.

⁴⁶⁴ Gerhard Haupt, "An Interview with Alfons Hug."

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

Therefore the theoretical concept underlying *Documenta X* was that aesthetic production should also incorporate the political environment in the broadest sense of the word. David wanted to enable people to “recognize the state of the world” in varying ways, a desire that prompted her to devote considerable attention to those critical artistic positions that evolved at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s.⁴⁶⁶ Hence, David's intention of placing her exhibition in relation to its predecessors could be stated to uphold the “tradition of innovation,” one that embodied the starting point of every *Documenta*, in which David's return to the concept of the retrospective itself could be viewed as unique.⁴⁶⁷

But could this have been the only impetus for David to locate her exhibition within the 1960s/70s time period? In their article “Mapping International Exhibitions” art historians Reese Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne view David's exhibition as one reflecting “social fragmentation and contemporary social crisis” with a view to achieving “social reconstruction” of society.⁴⁶⁸ This suggests that David alluded to deconstructing the “modernist belief” in which art attempted to unify a philosophical motif. This would be similar to Szeemann's *Documenta 5* that clearly located itself in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when artists themselves sought to resist the formality of the museum and dealers and instead resorted to creating site-specific works. Here both Szeemann's site-specific installation and David's exhibition share a similar concern, to confront the co-modification of art and its practices today, a

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ David, *Documenta X: Short Guide*.

⁴⁶⁸ Bruce W. Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg and Sandy Nairne, “Mapping International Exhibitions,” *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe*, eds. Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005, 337.

critical position that evolved at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s.⁴⁶⁹

This connection is further illustrated by David's reinstating of Marcel Broodthaers's *Musee d'Art Moderne, Departement des Aigles, Section Publicite* which was shown earlier in *Documenta 5* in 1972.⁴⁷⁰ Constructed on the premise of the archive *Musee d'Art Moderne*, otherwise known as the *Eagle Museum*, combines two very important leitmotifs. The first is the "analysis of media" as a "concrete investigation of culture as a construct of modernity."⁴⁷¹ The second is that Broodthaers's work notably examines the power of art to interrogate various knowledge systems, redefining values and establishing accepted versions of art history such as the archive, the library, the museum, and the art market.⁴⁷² In extending this consideration, Broodthaers's archival investigations of both *Documenta 5* and *X* are curated around the theoretical position of the archive and its relationship with history.⁴⁷³

⁴⁶⁹ References of *Documenta 5* curated by Harold Szeemann could be seen by David's inclusion of an explicit reference to *Documenta 5*, Marcel Broodthaers "Section Publicite, Musee d'Art Moderne, Department des Aigles" which had already been displayed in Kassel in 1972 was included in her exhibition. Additional large-scale work by Michelangelo Pistoletto, Brazilian artists Helio Oiticica and Lygia Clark, Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck or the *Atlas* by Gerhard Richter were produced around 1970s or were begun during that period, also formed part of David's exhibition. Gerhard Haupt, "An Interview with Alfons Hug."

⁴⁷⁰ Marcel Broodthaers in his important work *Musee d'Art Moderne* (1968–1972) focuses on highlighting a complex interplay of power and responsibility. His fictional museum installation needs to be examined in a larger context of the battle for "autonomy" and "self-determination" pivoted around the protests of 1968, confirming: "it shared a character connected to the events of 1968, that is, to a type of political event experienced by every country."¹⁴ Although having many versions, the final version of *Musee d'Art Moderne* was exhibited in *Documenta 5* in 1972 and included the *Section Publicite* – the use of the eagle in advertising, shown alongside the Museum's own archive, functioning as publicity for each other.

⁴⁷¹ Steinbrugge, *Documenta X: Ontology of the Present*, 354.

⁴⁷² Ibid., 354. Broodthaers in an interview in 1968 is cited having said, "I don't believe in the unique artist or unique work of art. I believe in phenomena and people who put these ideas together." "An Interview with Marcel Broodthaers," 36-38.

⁴⁷³ For an extensive discussion of the *Musee d'Art Moderne*, see Marcel Broodthaers, B. H. D. Buchloh and Rainer Borgemeister, "Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs." Cambridge, Mass.: MIT

The motif of the archive from *Musee d'Art Moderne* was further continued by David by her inclusion of historical works by Gordon Matta-Clark,⁴⁷⁴ Gerhard Richter's mammoth *Atlas* project, (which comprised over 3,700 photographic images), one of Hans Haacke's 1971 real estate pieces (a controversial piece that included 142 photographs, data sheets and six charts detailing the holdings of a particular New York real-estate empire in the hands of a few dealers.⁴⁷⁵ Due to the sensitive nature of this piece, the controversy resulted in the cancellation of the artist's solo exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum, NYC.⁴⁷⁶ This raises the question, of why *Documenta X* did not represent the current contemporary artists, but was involved in a certain project of "re-presentation, of a very specific and selective recent past?" Several of the artists exhibited by David allude to the artists from *Documenta 5*, and could be seen as contemporaries which emerged from their tradition, the viewers who critiqued David for not having adequately represented her time frame did not easily understand this connection.

Destinations as Journeys

David in placing her *Documenta* within a retro-mode had a very distinct *Parcour* or journey in mind. *Parcours* translated in English as *routes*, seemed a popular concept in 1997, as it resonated within several exhibitions such as Okwui Enwezor *Trade Routes*:

Press, 1987.

⁴⁷⁴ Baker and Müller, *A Balancing Act*, 95-118.

⁴⁷⁵ For a detailed account see the essay by Lynne Cook. Gerhard Haupt, "An Interview with Alfons Hug." According to Cooke, *Atlas* is an ongoing work of Richter from 1962 in which he brought together photographs "that had been or could become pictorial sources for his paintings" that engaged him. *Atlas* is a large body of over 3,700-3,800 images: reproductions, documentary photographs and elements of photojournalism, photographed by the artist. These images are then grouped together in over 600 separate panels installed in rigorous formations for the exhibition.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid. To reiterate this point further, the museum director Thomas Messer of the Guggenheim had written that museum policies "exclude active engagement towards social and political ends."

History and Geography, the 2nd Johannesburg biennale,⁴⁷⁷ and the 1998 Sao Paulo biennale of Paulo Herkenhoff's *Routes/Routes/Routes*.⁴⁷⁸ Although Enwezor's biennale charted the course of globalization by reconnecting South Africa with the rest of the world and *Routes/Routes/Routes* addressed the history of colonization in Brazil and the rest of the world, David's project had a different focus. Her project connected the period of the 1960s /70s with the present moment of the *fin de siecle*, which was largely concerned by connectivity and the process of globalization. Hence it is not surprising that David began her section *Parcours* as charting her journey at the station or the Kulturbanhaf. What was interesting was that David not only ascertained connections within journeys past but also linked them to the new condition of globality.

These relationships however were not necessarily visible ones, as in the case of the work of Viennese artist Lois Weinberger. Globalization theorist Masao Miyoshi (also one of the 100 day guests of David's museum of a 100 days, and a writer in the Documenta book, *Poetic/Politics*) informs us of David's ingenious employment of the unused track at the station, a site of the work by Lois Weinberger.⁴⁷⁹ Weinberger's ironic work according to Miyoshi was camouflaged amidst the dense weeds in the railway lines by weeds that already existed there.⁴⁸⁰ There was however one difference, the weeds planted by the artist were the fast growing mutant variety,

⁴⁷⁷ See Johannesburg Biennale, Okwui Enwezor and Colin Richards, *Trade Routes: History and Geography: 2nd Johannesburg Biennale 1997*, [Johannesburg], South Africa; Den Haag, Netherlands; Johannesburg: Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council; Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, 1997.

⁴⁷⁸ Bienal Internacional de Sao Paulo and others, *XXIV Bienal De Sao Paulo: Nucleo Historico : Antropofagia e Historias De Canibalismos*, v. 1, Sao Paulo, Brazil: Fundacao Bienal de Sao Paulo, 1998.

⁴⁷⁹ Miyoshi M, "Radical Art at Documenta X," *New Left Review*, no. 228 (1998), 151-160.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

resistant to herbicides and capable of endangering the original species.⁴⁸¹ For the viewer these weeds had a menacing attractiveness, which although harmless in appearance, had spread rapidly all over the station.⁴⁸² Weinberger's work in David's exhibition undoubtedly alluded to a critique of globalization, in that globalization similar to the weed looks deceptively harmless, but at the same time presents potential dangers for humankind.

In journeying through David's exhibition the viewer is lead to Kassel's post-war *Treppenstrasse* (terraced street), which according to Miyoshi retains a Nazi character in the urban market-space turned contemporary mall.⁴⁸³ Hence it was not surprising to find within the underground space Jeff Wall's photograph *Milk* (splash of milk), 1984 and Christine Hill's *Volksboutique*, 1997, which imitated a second-hand clothes shop from Berlin.⁴⁸⁴ This journey then continued to the Museum Fridericianum and Orangerie, which contained the experimental hybrid workspace. This passage finally ended with artist Martin Kippenberger's sculpture *Transportable Subway Entrance*, which included a painting of the locked up subway station, his last before his early death that year. In considering this, David's retrospective journey which began with the train station and ended with the suspended train station of Kippenberger similar to Weinberger's weeds, commented on the dire consequences created by globalization which include the perils of immigrant and illegal labor tied to the mass movements and migration of people.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

An Euro–centric bias?

In examining *Documenta X* it is amply evident that the single most important concern for David was to establish a strong correlation between politics and cultural practices in society. Although reflective in her exhibition, the relationship is affirmed in her publication for the exhibition titled *Poetics/Politics* inspired by the seminal book *Thousand Plateaus*, by philosopher Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. This can be seen at several levels, such as the placing of several unconnected texts within a rhizomatic frame without any chronological order in *Poetics/Politics* similar to *Thousand Plateaus*.⁴⁸⁵ This format incorporated David's expanding discourse of art, by including texts on philosophy, history, cinema and poetry. Hence, the intent of *Politics/ Poetics* was not to reveal the contents of the show, but instead to provide a conceptual framework for the exhibition, challenging viewers to establish their own links and perspectives on the exhibition. This however, left many viewers frustrated and confused as to the context of the show, one of the primary reasons the exhibition was critiqued.

One of the major criticisms of David's exhibition was that although her retrospective was very specific, she did not contextualize the reason for excluding artists from the rest of the world. Miyoshi notes this as one of the main criticisms coming from the left (some of whom could be considered her contemporaries) stating her “Western bias” and insufficient representation of the Third World.⁴⁸⁶ The critics found the suggestive inclusion of the “other” as tokenism since even though a “fifth of the 100 guests came from ‘non-Western’ countries,” more than half of them resided

⁴⁸⁵ Jahre, “Curators and Catalogues: In the Documenta Reading Room,” 59.

⁴⁸⁶ Miyoshi, “Radical Art at Documenta X,” 151-160.

in the Western metropolis.⁴⁸⁷ David responds by saying, “I’m not interested in culture shopping” or “I’m not going to have an ethnic feast” since she believes “other cultures appear in Europe as exotic.”⁴⁸⁸ This is further noted by Geeta Kapur, an art critic from India, also a speaker at the 100 days events, that David at all cost wanted to avoid showing “mediocre” art by “Western standards” just to fulfill a quota or satisfy a wish for folklore.⁴⁸⁹ David’s argument could be ascertained as not to include artists from the periphery simply because they were from the periphery, but that they need to work within the larger framework of art. This served as her main reason to include very few artists from the non-West in her exhibition.

In noting David’s comments and exhibition, Kapur challenges David’s inclusion of the non-West only in other forms of expression such as cinema, theater, literature, music, and oral traditions.⁴⁹⁰ She exposes David’s bias as typical of a Western curator’s perceptions of contemporary art in non-Western cultures, as merely a “side-effect” of the truly relevant cultural expressions found in music, oral and written language (literature, theatre), and cinema.⁴⁹¹ For instance, David claims that in Iran, cinema is the most advanced art form. But Kapur maintains that cannot be universalized to be true of India, Indonesia, Korea, nor the Philippines, as in those regions the development of the avant-garde is sophisticated and fairly complex.⁴⁹² Kapur further argues that she is less interested in David’s final inclusion of the artists

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ Gerhard Haupt, “An Interview with Alfons Hug.”

⁴⁸⁹ *Kunstforum*, June - August, 1997, 435 (accessed 6/7/08).

⁴⁹⁰ Gerhard Haupt, “An Interview with Alfons Hug.”

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

from the South, but is more interested in her consideration of contemporary art only within the framework of the historical avant-garde. She questions David as to why she has not applied the same standards for what might be considered avant-garde equally to all parts of the world.⁴⁹³

According to Kapur, David's intention in presenting only Euro-American art as avant-garde was too limited in scope. In order to find out what else is truly going on in the world of avant-garde, the viewer would have to go "elsewhere."⁴⁹⁴ She demands recognition of contemporary art from the non-West, noting that "in the art of many non-Western cultures there are local modernities but (even though) not what one might call advanced or avant-garde works."⁴⁹⁵ Kapur suggests this is true not just for Asia, but also cites Cuba as an example of one of the most advanced in South America, not only in terms of the production of art, but as a point of convergence for Latin American avant-garde art.⁴⁹⁶ Overall, as Kapur herself pointed out, the fact that *Documenta X* seriously engaged in an argument of the avant-garde and inclusion of the West and rest, was itself a considerable achievement.⁴⁹⁷

In speaking about South America, David's *Documenta X* disappointed several historians as she was known to be familiar with the region, and hence more representation was anticipated.⁴⁹⁸ For example, South American curator, Alfonso

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Miyoshi M, "Radical Art at Documenta X," *New Left Review*, no. 228 (1998), 151-160.

⁴⁹⁸ See Gerhard Haupt, "An Interview with Alfons Hug." In Hugs words these expectations were not met. In fact, he emphasizes that *Documenta X* fell far behind Jan Hoet's *Documenta 8*. He notes Jan Hoet as the first *Documenta* in which the curator invited twelve artists from the so-called Third World. Although this was a small number that did not represent the world at large, it was noted as a significant

Hugs did not concur with David's position that in the majority of the countries in these regions such as Africa, Asia and Latin America, visual arts are not the most important form of expression, and therefore focused upon films and other media.⁴⁹⁹ He argues that since films themselves are based upon a "culture of images," they do form part of the visual arts, and counters her argument that visual arts are not important.⁵⁰⁰ In further pointing to David's compartmentalizing of art forms i.e.: music, arts, film in the non-West, he asks why the same curatorial logic would not apply for Europe as well?⁵⁰¹

To illustrate this, he takes the example of France, David's home country, in which music, film etc are more highly developed than the "visual arts."⁵⁰² His question here is why then did David include French contemporary artists rather than only engaging with the French philosophical traditions or films, which are predominant there?⁵⁰³ This convinced him that David is using different criteria for Europe and for the non-West, especially given the flourishing contemporary art scene of Latin America that includes Mexico, Brazil and Cuba. He asks why this discrepancy for the non-West and demands to know what permits the inclusion of "Italian or Belgian art"

moment in art history, specifically as two African sculptors, previously ignored were included in his Hoet's *Documenta*.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid. David's *Documenta X* received criticism from critics for its lack of engagement with world art outside the West. Curator Alfons Hugs picks on some of David claims about film, music, and literature, which have been key in freedom movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America compared to the visual arts. He feels this is a sweeping generalization as this has not been the case for some countries in those continents such as China, Brazil or Cuba. He emphasizes that in these countries visual arts are at the forefront, something that is not true, by the way, for all of Europe. For him all the artists who appeared in *Documenta X* belong to an art context emerging from a Western perspective. As a result, those who didn't fit a specific discourse were not invited.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

while excluding the others?⁵⁰⁴

This concern is further reiterated by Kapur's observation, which suggests that although David's intention was to open up a critical discourse of art, she is still protecting the nature of the art object as a product developed in the West, one emerging from the Western avant-garde tradition.⁵⁰⁵ Also she does not seem to recognize other objects, or when she does recognize them, she fears that they are "exotic."⁵⁰⁶ Her message through her exhibition is clear, that the fine arts in Africa and Asia do not necessarily play the most interesting role. Hence according to Kapur, David makes a very exclusive choice in the matter as a European curator, in which her criteria come out of Western modernism.⁵⁰⁷ Hence no matter how radically she frames her exhibition there is no moving away from her curatorial premise resonating an exclusionary mode of the "rest," rather than an inclusive one.⁵⁰⁸ That is for the most part "just simply colonialism" or what Miyoshi has termed "token multiculturalism," that acts as an "alibi for Eurocentrism."⁵⁰⁹

Here one cannot help but look back and review whether David in her exclusion of contemporary art from the non-West in favor of film, music etc, resonated a tendency similar to the much critiqued *Magiciens de la Terre*, curated by Jean-Hubert Martin. In my analyses, the problem in *Magiciens* could be seen as different, as *Magiciens* did include non-Western practitioner's of art, even if they were not

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ Miyoshi, *Radical Art at Documenta X*, 151-160.

contemporary artists. *Documenta X* on the other hand invited very few artists from the non-West, almost to a point to exclusion and non-representation. However, it could be said that both *Magiciens* and *Documenta X*, which followed eight years later, did share a bias that contemporary art does not exist in the non-West. This was further evident in examining David's large 684 pages *Documenta* book, which while purporting to be a retrospective, did not contain, or even mention the existence of non-Western or postcolonial histories.

The *Parcours* or journeys taken in the exhibition and the book were clearly Western, ones rooted in Western avant-gardes, and specifically relating to a nostalgic past of the late 1960s and early 70s from *Documenta 5*. While *Magiciens* juxtaposed the work of Western contemporary artists with non-Western craft people, *Documenta X* juxtaposed the work of artists from the late 1960s with younger contemporary artists, both from the West. Hence David's retrospective only chose to highlight specific Western histories, and clearly set the stage for what the next *Documenta 11* by Enwezor should possibly consider and undertake.

Documenta 11: Historicizing the Postcolonial Constellation

If the work of Marcel Broodthaers's *Musee d'Art Moderne, Departement des Aigles, Section Publicite* of 1972, was the leitmotif of *Documenta X* which was conceived as a historical archive in the form of a retrospective, then the work *Lament of the Images* by Chilean Alfredo Jaar could be seen to best embody Enwezor's "postcolonial constellation" in *Documenta 11*. In his installation, *Lament of the Images*, Jaar cautioned us about the outcome and effects associated with Huyssen's concept of globalization of [postcolonial] memory that is taking place in the world today. In his work Jaar raised critical questions with regard to image and memory, and what

happens when images are erased from history, especially postcolonial images, which have never been seen or documented in the first place?⁵¹⁰ How will they be remembered if they have ceased to exist within the framework of history? Can we reconcile with the prospect of global amnesia in which parts of history would be lost forever?

Jaar's installation, which comprised a dark passageway with three illuminated texts sans image, finally led into a large vacant room, which exploded, with white light emanating from the wall. What is of significance here is the artist's choice in deliberating on three critical moments in history, all of which belonged to the non-Western postcolonial world. The first text alluded to the lack of image to capture Nelson Mandela's historic release from his prison in Robben Island in 1990, and his inability to cry due to eye damage from his exposure to harsh sunlight while laboring in limestone quarries during his 28-year imprisonment.⁵¹¹ This blindness could be allegorically read as his erasure of South Africa's harrowing apartheid past.⁵¹²

The second text panel referred to the creation of Bill Gates' company Corbis, which announced in 2001, that seventeen million images of all kinds that have founded our notion of history had been purchased by Gates, was being digitized and buried in an underground archive.⁵¹³ In considering the question of history a universal construct which belongs to humankind, now being owned by one individual, the

⁵¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of the Jaar's work, refer to Peter J. Schneemann, "Critical Constellations: When Art Questions the Image," *Led on Line* Numero 5/2005-2006 (2007), <http://www.ledonline.it/leitmotiv/>

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² In thinking about Jaar's work one needs to reflect on the "globalization of memory," as defined by Huyssen and its repercussions on the world if the past was erased. Here I link Mandela's blindness as symptomatic to the erasure of memory that to endure the pain turns a blind eye.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

thought of our historical images being locked up for eternity in an archive and unavailable to us anymore, is disturbing. Given that only two percent of these images have been digitized, the chance to access them is no longer guaranteed. These images then, would only be available to us as an image through our memory. What happens then to subsequent generations? Is it possible to have a society that can function on memory without an image? Jaar's third text in his work, referred to the purchase by the U.S. Defense Department of all available air views of satellite images of the bombing of Afghanistan in 2001 under Operation "Whiteout."⁵¹⁴ The US government, with the clear intention to control all images, purchased them from a private company that maintains the satellite called *Ikonos*. This resulted in the loss of information on what exactly occurred during the bombings in Afghanistan.

Jaar's work is a critical reflection on the status of images in our society. On the one hand, it alludes to the inevitable blind spots (and hence limitations) of all photographic documents, on the other hand the empty screen serves as a visual allegory of the fate implied in Jaar's texts: a future in which the capacity to bear witness to one's reality in the form of an image – and, by extension, to imagine a possible alternative to that reality – will have been permanently withdrawn. His work suggested that he viewed memory as a historical archive, one that was particularly concerned about the postcolonial memory-image, which was in danger of being erased and lost forever under the hegemony of globalized powers.⁵¹⁵ This however is an ethical loss as the record of the event or the occurrence that has taken place is lost forever.

Okwui Enwezor as the chief curator of *Documenta 11* considered these

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

thoughts and more in his aptly titled essay the “The Black Box,” and defined the “postcolonial constellation” as: the understanding of a particular historical order that configures the relationship between political, social, and cultural realities, artistic spaces and epistemological histories not in contest but always in continuous redefinitions.”⁵¹⁶ In which these domains stand historically to guard the “hegemonic imperatives of imperial discourse” currently in power.⁵¹⁷

In confirming the significance of postcolonial history and theory in the understanding of the social and cultural temporality of late modernity, Enwezor conceived postcolonial as a prism to “illuminate our reading of the fraught historical context from which the discourses of modernism and contemporary art emerged.”⁵¹⁸ *Documenta 11* posed a key question in contemporary art discourse: why even fifty years after the process of decolonization, was the postcolonial context being excluded in the history of world exhibitions? Why had the institution of *Documenta*, a carefully, planned, budgeted and historic exhibition only accounted for Eurocentric history? Hence, one of the larger questions undertaken with the “postcolonial constellation” was to challenge the greatest epistemological critiques of the “West’s greatest myth-history.”⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁶ Here I connect Enwezor’s usage of the term “Black Box” is his essay, with the black box in a plane that records recoverable data in the event of a crash. In this case I allude to Enwezor’s attempt to recover some part of (postcolonial) history.

⁵¹⁷ Enwezor, “The Black Box,” 55.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

⁵¹⁹ Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, 2nd ed., London; New York: Routledge, 2004, 19, 2, 33. In his book *White Mythologies*, Young opposes philosopher Hegel’s account of non-European societies as one “without a history.” In order to undertake this, he develops an epistemological critique at the most fundamental level of the connection between the development of historicism [...] and critiques of imperialism on the one hand, and on the other, the actual practice of imperialism by which the accumulation of territories and population, the control of economies, and the incorporation and homogenization of histories are maintained.”

History has always been seen as a Western construct, with very little acknowledgement of the non-Western world till the 1980s. The West has always written non-West history from their perspective, much as a rules of colonial interaction. The voice of the postcolonial non-Western “other” had been suppressed for centuries and never been heard. This lack of visibility of the postcolonial discourse is especially significant when the outcomes of memory, history and ethics get intrinsically linked. Hence, Enwezor’s single- minded objective in *Documenta 11* was to make the historical voice of the postcolonial heard in the larger global context of art. Also, being from Nigeria, a former colony of Britain, he was able to present an insider’s perspective of the postcolonial.

The criticality of the project of the postcolonial is evident in that if these histories are not documented, how will they be remembered or known to have occurred? Here philosopher Paul Ricoeur in “Memory and Forgetting” speaks of memory as a form of remembering. He establishes memory as having two kinds of relationships to the past: the first through knowledge, the second in relation to action.⁵²⁰ Thus he views memory as an exercise in which we can talk of the “use [fullness] of memory,” as well the possible “abuses of memory” that would take place if misappropriated or deleted.⁵²¹ For example, Jaar’s work in regards to the erasure of postcolonial memory could be viewed as such. In considering his installation, the erasure of memory could be termed as a violation of the “ethics of memory” which signifies the “knowledge, perception, imagination or understanding” in which

⁵²⁰ Paul Ricœur, “Memory and Forgetting,” Kearney, Richard, and Mark Dooley, *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Continental Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 1998, 5.
For a detailed account on memory see Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* [Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli.], ed. translated by Blamey, Kathleen and Pellauer, David, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

memories constitute “knowledge of past events” with regard to the postcolonial.⁵²² Hence it is only through approaching memory “as a kind of action” that we can broach the “problems of ethics of memory.”⁵²³ In considering this, it could be said that Enwezor’s “postcolonial constellation” was an active ethical imperative in which he attempted to revive and globalize [postcolonial] memory, as an attempt to prevent both the memory and the image of the postcolonial from erasure.

This lament of the postcolonial images as suggested by Jaar can be further understood in the work of Edward Said, who informed us that the framing of history has always been “Eurocentric” and “problematic to historicist forms of knowledge” which were linked to the question of European imperialism. Said further elaborates this in his critique of historicism stating:

So far as Orientalism in particular and European knowledge of other societies in general has been concerned, historicism meant that one human history uniting humanity either culminated in or was observed from the vantage point of Europe, or the West...⁵²⁴

This identifies history and historicism as both Eurocentric constructs. The point here is to de-mystify history, that Gayatri Spivak has also affirmed as an “epistemic violence.” She does this by relating historicism with Orientalism, as constructed “with no existence or reality outside its representation.”⁵²⁵ This leads us to consider Walter Benjamin’s history of philosophy, in which he discusses history in the context of the Angel Novus, an angel who in looking at the past and ushers in the future. Benjamin

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, also see Edward W Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 154, Catalog Record - <https://catalog.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=5913310&DB=local>.

⁵²⁵ Cited in Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, 130.

reminds us that the past only exists as an image in our memory.⁵²⁶

This allows Benjamin to further distinguish history from historicism. For him, while history is remembered as discrete images of events past, historicism presents an eternal image of history. What is important here is his rejection of historicism on grounds of its ethical and political ramifications, by advocating, “the only continuity to be found in history is that of oppression.”⁵²⁷ Benjamin’s perspective on history as oppressive is further reflected in his statement: “there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.” Here he considers the entire process of civilization itself as violent. In view of this continued violence of history and society, he further affirms that: “The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the ‘state of emergency’ in which we live is not the exception but the rule.”⁵²⁸ This is reflective of the current state of the world, which is in constant crisis given the numerous wars, natural disasters, and terrorist attacks that we are constantly experiencing. Thus, Benjamin’s intention could be stated as proactive, as he viewed not just the past “in all its moments,” but also focused on the effects of historical disturbances in the present. He decided not to focus on the victors but rather on the oppressed. Enwezor’s project of the “postcolonial constellation” reflected this very perspective of Benjamin, to reveal the historical oppression of non-Western people

⁵²⁶ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* [Illuminationen.], 1st ed., New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968, 257. In his history of philosophy, Benjamin speaks about history and historicism metaphorically. He speaks about a: “A Klee painting named ‘Angelus Novus’ that is an angel looking as though[...] he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. [...]The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.”

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 257.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., 257.

who live in a constant state of emergency.

Similarly Dipesh Chakrabarty in his book *Provincializing Europe* continues Benjamin's critique of historicism by including a non-Western perspective in it. He views historicism as "what made modernity or capitalism look not simply global but rather as something that became global over time, by originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it."⁵²⁹ His definition of "historicism" is as a "posited historical time" determined by "cultural distance" that exists between the West that is located "first in Europe" and non-West, which supposedly lies "elsewhere" in the structure of time.⁵³⁰ For him the concept of historicism itself or the "modern European idea of history" occurred as somebody's way of saying "not yet," telling the "colonized to wait" their turn in history.⁵³¹ He adds regretfully, that despite the anti-colonial movements and decolonization, historicism has not disappeared from the world, and its "not yet" continues to exist in tension with the global insistence on the "now" that marks all popular movements towards democracy.⁵³²

Chakrabarty extends Benjamin's account of historicism by including within the "not yet" the "universal logic of capital," referring to what Karl Marx, labels History 1 and History 2.⁵³³ For him History 1 represents historical events that actually produced the logic of capital. But History 2 does not necessarily contribute to the reproduction of the logic of capital.⁵³⁴ In viewing general (or European) art history; it becomes

⁵²⁹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, 8.

⁵³⁰ Ibid., 7.

⁵³¹ Ibid., 8.

⁵³² Ibid., 8.

⁵³³ Ibid., 17.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 17.

evident that postcolonial history is written about as the latecomer, which has “not yet” taken to all the aesthetic practices of globalized art.⁵³⁵ In taking Chakrabarty’s point the postcolonial can be viewed as the “not yet” of History 2.⁵³⁶ Similarly as a result of Enwezor’s “postcolonial constellation” the “not yet,” of History 2 would have found a way to arrive and be included in what the West considers history.⁵³⁷

Robert C. Young in his book *White Mythologies*, concurs with Chakrabarty about this development by recent non-European theorists who re-theorize history as multiple accounts (similarly to “multiple modernities”). In considering this, he confirms non-European accounts of “history” as no longer a “single overarching narrative,” but instead act as “networks of discrete, multitudinous histories that are uncontainable within any single Western schema.”⁵³⁸

Chakrabarty’s History 1 and History 2 could also be interpreted in terms of what Homi Bhabha has defined as the postcolonial “time lag.”⁵³⁹ Based on the concept of *Nachträglichkeit* by Sigmund Freud, time lag is located on a concept of an activity of the past in the present, or can be stated as a dramatic instance of a present that exists as having been. *Nachträglichkeit* could be viewed as not memory but as a conscious retrieval of the past as forgotten possibility, but rather memory as turbulent eruption of emotion-laden content from the past as repressed unconscious.

According to Bhabha, it is the function of the lag to slow down the linear,

⁵³⁵ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Universalism and Belonging in the Logic of Capital” *Public Culture*, vol. 12 no. 3, 2000, 653-78.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Ibid

⁵³⁸ Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, 3.

⁵³⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London; New York: Routledge, 2004, 314.

progressive time of modernity to reveal what he calls “its tempi” or “relax action.”⁵⁴⁰ For him “time lag keeps alive the making of the past.” This implies that slowing down or lagging presents an opportunity for the “past” to catch up with the present. Hence Bhabha’s “time lag of postcolonial modernity” could perhaps be a way for us to revisit past events such as the postcolonial experience, that would allow us to actively bring it into the present and make it part of our lives.⁵⁴¹

Therefore, Enwezor’s “postcolonial constellation” could be said to have identified this “elsewhere” and the “not yet” defined by Chakrabarty (Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Latin America) of History 2 and placed them within the same circuit of the West, History 1. In order to challenge the “not yet” Enwezor located his constellation within a space he called “experimental cultures” which functioned as an “accumulation of passages, a collection of moments, and temporal lapses,” rather than one unified world- view that summed up historical perspectives.⁵⁴² This was done in two ways, the first being through the “spatial and temporal,” i.e.: moving outside Kassel as a location through the Platforms.⁵⁴³ The second was through recognition of “the historical and cultural.”⁵⁴⁴ However, he is cognizant of the danger of the postcolonial once again being subsumed within the global system through the existing “epistemological structures” from a constrained Western perspective.⁵⁴⁵

This allowed him to examine the postcolonial through a wider realm of the new

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 364.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 364.

⁵⁴² Enwezor, “The Black Box,” 45.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., 42.

political, social, and cultural relations that emerged after World War II, by investigating postcoloniality as a double move: the first move stemming from the process of decolonization, which he terms as liberation from within.⁵⁴⁶ In this case, he views the postcolonial not only as a “counter hegemonic or counter –normative” but also as the ultimate indicator of “imperial governance” or colonial rule.⁵⁴⁷ The second move, he believes, exceeds the borders of the former colonized world to lay claim to the modernized, metropolitan world of empire by making empire’s former “other” visible and present at all times. This occurs either through the media or through mediatory, spectatorial, and carnivalesque relations of language, communication, images, contact, and resistance within the everyday.⁵⁴⁸

This addressing of counter-hegemonic voices is evident in what constitutes the avant-garde today. To understand this Enwezor, has suggested that we look beyond the field of contemporary art into the expanded field of culture and politics, in the realm of the economic that finally controls all relations under the powerful hegemony of capital.⁵⁴⁹ He believes that this formation of the avant-garde lies within the conflict between traditional artistic philosophy and aesthetic discourse with contemporary art reflecting geopolitical concerns, for example between the so-called local/ global, center/margin, nation state vs. the individual, trans-national and diasporic communities, audiences and institutions.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 44.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 45.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 43.

⁵⁵⁰ In responding to the spate of large scale exhibitions Yinka Shonibare, a non- Western artist and participant in several of these exhibitions applauds the recent attempts to challenge a very tired, Eurocentric view of art, citing exhibitions like *Magiciens de la Terre*, *Documenta X*, and *Documenta 11* that have created a necessary Platform of visibility to the non-Western artist. The representation of non-Western art, which began, as a radical political shift now seems to have acquired a “global curatorial

Stewart Martin, in an article entitled “A New World Art?” also comments on the historical transformation in the political context of the traditional sites of avant-garde art, namely the move from European colonialism to a period of decolonization and postcolonialism, as well as the emergence of novel forms of global imperialism.⁵⁵¹ Reflecting on Enwezor’s contention above, Martin states that, despite “the anomalies and exceptions, contemporary postcolonialism is a political form that fundamentally postdates the historical avant-gardes.”⁵⁵² Therefore one could place Enwezor’s project of the “postcolonial” next to Philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s concept of “aterritoriality” that resonates the “impermanence” and uncertainties that according to Enwezor are part of the avant-garde strategies today.⁵⁵³

Martin nevertheless suggests, for Enwezor as for many others, that postcolonialism is not exhausted by the recovery of national or individual sovereignty, but rather it introduces a new form of relations of difference.⁵⁵⁴ From his perspective, this is the global form that Enwezor emphatically ascribes to postcoloniality.⁵⁵⁵ Placing this in a larger context, *Documenta 11*’s rhetoric of postcoloniality and

tendency.” As an artist of non-Western origin, he feels strongly that the time has come to resist the temptation of defining artists by the “narrow confines of nationality.”

Although he is aware that globalization and its political significance perpetuate an economically divided world, he also sees the fantastic opportunity and visibility it has provided to the non-Western artists. See Tim Griffin, “Global Tendencies: Globalism and the Large-Scale Exhibition,” *Artforum* 42, no. 3 (Nov, 2003), 152,
<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=489605851&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>.

⁵⁵¹ Stewart Martin, “A New World Art? Documenting Documenta 11,” *Radical Philosophy*, no. 122 (Nov/Dec, 2003), 7-19.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Enwezor, “The Black Box,” 45.

⁵⁵⁴ Martin, “A New World Art? Documenting Documenta 11,” 7-19.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

globalization is not just investigative, but also contains ethical injunctions that emphasize the representations of social and political injustice and in doing so, opens up a space for the articulation of counter-hegemonic voices.⁵⁵⁶ One needs to further explore these strategies by examining and discussing the *Documenta X* exhibitions and the Platforms.

II-The Platforms

The *Documenta 11* Platforms were unique in the fact that they displaced the historical context in Kassel by orchestrating “Platforms” within a five-point star constellation which shifted the discourse to four continents or regions: Asia, Africa, Europe and the Caribbean, each touching the other at an intellectual level.⁵⁵⁷ Through them Enwezor was motivated to create a major shift within the current conditions of cultural production, dissemination and reception of contemporary art at large, originating not just from the specific site of culture, but more from a critical standpoint of the complex geopolitical powers that define the systems of production by engaging transnational audiences within traditional circuits of institutionalized production and reception.⁵⁵⁸ As an alternative to such practices, Enwezor and his team sought to

⁵⁵⁶ Enwezor, “The Black Box,” 45.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 42. Martin in addition to his article provides details of the *Documenta 11* exhibition which are as follows: Taking place over eighteen months, between March 2001 and September 2002, and organized through the framework of five separate Platforms located across four continents, it was obvious that *Documenta 11* was not going to follow the format of preceding projects. Conceived as an opportunity to provide both a public and private intercession into the topics of art, history, politics and economics, the first Platform, “Democracy Unrealized,” took place in Vienna as early as March 2001 and continued in Berlin. Platform 2, “Experiments with Truth: Transitional Justice and the Processes of Truth and Reconciliation,” took place in New Delhi and consisted of five days of public panel discussions, lectures and debates. The third Platform, “Creolite and Creolization,” was held on the West Indian island of St Lucia in the Caribbean,” whilst Platform 4 took place in Lagos and examined the current state of affairs of African urban centers. Martin, *A New World Art? Documenting Documenta 11*, 7-19.

⁵⁵⁸ Enwezor, “The Black Box,” 54.

position contemporary art practice in terms of its ability to produce knowledge systems beyond already existing structures stating:

Documenta 11's paradigm is shaped by forces that seek to enact the multidisciplinary direction through which artistic practices and processes come most alive, in those circuits of knowledge produced outside the predetermined institutional domain of Westernism, or those situated solely in the sphere of artistic canons.⁵⁵⁹

With the fifth Platform, known as the exhibition, being the last and only Platform that was held in Kassel, Michael Gibbs, in his review for *Documenta 11* in *Art Monthly*, argues that the exhibition's most significant achievement was its ability to extend itself to produce artistic practices and circuits of knowledge outside the predetermined institutional domain of Westernism.⁵⁶⁰ By this he meant that *Documenta 11* constituted and constructed knowledge outside the Western framework, locating itself within the realm of the artistic canons.⁵⁶¹

Second, the exhibition moved outside the domain of the gallery space to that of the discursive, where the *Documenta 11* "postcolonial constellation" could be perceived as a constellation of public spheres motivated more by the rhizomatic process of expanding the historical discourse. The exhibition seemed to manifest itself in the form of a rhizome,⁵⁶² (a system of connections) which permitted links and

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Michael Gibbs, "Documenta 11/1," *Art Monthly*, no. 258 (2002).

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

⁵⁶² Analyzing this further from the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari, these rhizomatic links between the different Platforms "heighten[ed]" "energies," between the Documenta spaces and created new juxtapositions that enabled "intensive states between which any number of connected routes could exist." Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [Mille plateaux], Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.,

interaction between seemingly disjointed parts. This established *Documenta 11* as a non-centered, non-hierarchical approach, thereby locating itself outside the paradigm of the museum, to include unfamiliar histories as well as a way to define geography.⁵⁶³

In addition, due to the multiple Platforms, a significantly larger audience was able to participate, resulting in an unexpected and rewarding critical engagement. By merit of the same, *Documenta 11* Platforms could serve as free-floating thinking pads that addressed various critical issues independent of each other by tapping into unexplored territories that enabled new linkages to resonate within the fifth Platform, i.e., the exhibition space.⁵⁶⁴ This resulted in the Platforms successfully incorporating specific geo-political agendas and issues that addressed concerns within the boundaries of their homelands, achieving the task of drawing worldwide attention to problems arising out of globalization that had never been contextualized within a critical art space. Most importantly for Enwezor, the Platforms offered the opportunity to confront the limits of any exhibition model that tried to simply appropriate the term “globalization,” without a rigorous review of what “global” actually was in relation to different spaces of production.

It was for this reason that Enwezor located some of the Platforms in countries like India and Nigeria, where the experience of postcolonial diaspora had not been significantly discussed in the context of the global. In her essay “Art and Politics Continued” Angela Dimitrakaki reviewed the exhibition suggesting that the Platforms defined themselves between the center, where Germany and Austria represented “the West,” and the periphery or “the rest,” represented by the West Indies, India and

⁵⁶³ Enwezor, “The Black Box,” 55.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

Nigeria.⁵⁶⁵ Therefore *Documenta 11*, along with its Platforms and exhibitions, provided an opportunity for “the rest” to examine opposition from “the West” on what the real nature of the dialectic between “the West” and “the rest” has been.⁵⁶⁶ This re-established geography as the key factor in global exploitation and offered a new perspective of the world by “default:” one that has been consistently proposed over the years by artists and intellectuals alike who have been preoccupied with processes of decolonization during the same time.⁵⁶⁷ Enwezor’s suggestion that the *Documenta 11* exhibitions and its Platforms were conceived relatively independently of each other allowed for a “re-territorialization of an art institution,” that according to these transformed dynamics was not available to the critique of inside and outside, and center and margin that characterizes the imperial metropolitan context of the historical avant-gardes.⁵⁶⁸

One of the most important things that the Platforms undertook was to expose the strong relationship that exists between history and knowledge production. In considering this role of “contemporary knowledge circuits,” the objective was to document and emphasize the creation of systematic knowledge production collected from the Platforms. Focusing their concerns on the global, the multi-cultural and the postcolonial, the Platforms functioned between different disciplines and mediums to comprehend the relationships between them and also amass a wealth of cross-cultural knowledge about the different problems and perceptions in the world. But the full significance of the contemporary knowledge circuits of *Documenta 11* can be

⁵⁶⁵ Dimitrakaki, “Art and Politics Continued: Avant-garde, Resistance and the Multitude in Documenta 11,” 3/20/2005-176.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Enwezor, “The Black Box,” 55.

understood by examining its contribution in the context of global knowledge. Mike Featherstone and Couze Venn further reflect on the role of globalization, which has created a place for “different accounts of global history” and various “alternative modernities.”⁵⁶⁹ They emphasize globalization’s role in recasting the imperialism of Western classification of knowledge in all streams, which are being challenged by the production of “counter-knowledge,” along with a reevaluation of the “linearity” of progress.⁵⁷⁰

Hence, their endeavor is not to replicate the silencing of non-Western knowledge that is marked with certain “universalizing Occidentalism.”⁵⁷¹ These circuits further kept in mind Chakraborty’s comments in *Provincializing Europe* that the “problematizing of knowledge” should not “repeat the denigration or silencing of non-Western knowledge.”⁵⁷²

Similar thoughts resonate in philosopher Naoki Sakai’s essay “Dislocation of the West and the Status of the Humanities” in which he critiqued the Occidentalism of knowledge by examining “the classification of knowledge or information flows in relation to the West.”⁵⁷³ Sakai by further extending Dipesh Chakraborty and Osamu Nishitani’s models of knowledge production in the humanities, proposed two classical

⁵⁶⁹ Eugene Thacker, “ Problematizing Global Knowledge,” The Theory, Culture & Society Encyclopedia Project Edited by Mike Featherstone Et Al. Theory, Culture, & Society Issue 23.2-3 (2006). Sage Publications, London. 616 Pp., Paper. ISSN: 0263-2764," *Leonardo* 41, no. 2 (2008), 191-192.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 2 .

⁵⁷³ Naoki Sakai, “Dislocation of the West and the Status of the Humanities,” *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading*, eds. Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi, Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen: NAI Publishers, 2001.

prototypes in *humanitas*, that have come to convey Western or European humanity, which distinguishes the individual from what cultural theorist Stuart Hall has termed the “the rest” of humanity.⁵⁷⁴ This is opposed to *anthropos* that determines an ethnic definition in classifying individuals located in the non-West or the peripheries, wherein their understanding is interpreted within the context of translation within the Western language or humanities.

Putting this into perspective, the *Documenta 11* Platforms begin by bringing the local contexts of the regions into sharp focus, and then extending them into the larger universe of the world. For example the first Platform in Vienna, *Democracy Unrealized*, questioned the theories and institutional policies that defined democracy in the new world order of globalization. By inversion of the title “unrealized,” Enwezor questioned the paradigm of democracy as a way to interpret the varied modifications that the ethics of democracy and its institutional forms have undergone.⁵⁷⁵

The second Platform *Experiments with Truth: Transitional Justice and the Processes of Truth and Reconciliation*, which took place in Delhi, India (titled after *Experiments with Truth*, an autobiography of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in 1920s), dealt with questions of ethical slant and judicial justice for conflicts against genocide and human rights violations through “truth commissions.”⁵⁷⁶ For example, it engaged with “how are human rights fashioned in the wake of unaccountable power,” and thereby concerned itself with “interpreting justice and historical work that

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ See Enwezor, “The Black Box,” 50.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., 50.

emerged from those commissions.”⁵⁷⁷ In doing so, it also investigated the concept of “universal jurisdiction” and the memorialization of these traumas within museums and memorials alike.

The fourth Platform, *Creolite and Creolization*, which took place on the island of St. Lucia, expanded the discourse from the Caribbean to the world, so as to restore the historical links with the other continents of Africa, Europe and America.⁵⁷⁸ In the founding text of the critical theory published in 1989 by three Martinian intellectuals, Jean Bernabe, Patrick Camoieseau, and Raphael Confiant, they viewed polycentrism of the Caribbean or “Creoleness [as] the interaction or the transactional aggregate of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same solid by the yoke of history.”⁵⁷⁹ This Platform served an important role to reconstitute the task played by Creolite, which had been until recently much ignored within the context of world cultures, and defined it as an important area, which needed to be addressed. The final Platform, *Under Siege*: Freetown, Johannesburg, Kinshasa and Laos examined four cities in Africa, specifically focusing on the process of urbanization in relation to globalization’s effects within Third World cities. By undertaking this study of the “urban system,” and accounting for “ecologies of sustainability,” the Platform investigated various effects, which were derived by the imperatives of modernization and development.⁵⁸⁰

Although these Platforms were not directly reflected in the exhibition, they had achieved their purpose, which was to include the long neglected postcolonial discourse

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., 50.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., 51.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., 51.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 52.

within an exhibition frame. This opened up the works to allow not a direct intervention, but rather situating it within a larger body of knowledge. The Platforms discussed both current events and historical issues (not in relation to the exhibition). The localization of knowledge raised through the Platforms was vital for the project, as it generated a sense of recognition for places far away such as India, which had never been included or considered important enough to be included in the larger contemporary discourse of knowledge production. The Platforms made it amply clear that concerns stemming from the local were not only theirs to deal with alone, but formed a large ethical responsibility of the world at large. This localization prompted local participants to be circulated in a larger global setting, in the contexts of democracy, justice and reconciliation, Creolite, and urbanization. It could be noted that the Platforms realized what Huyssen suggested about the “globalization of localized [postcolonial] memory,” as the proceedings of the Platforms were then published and made available as a web cast that resonated local issues strongly and as suggested by Huyssen, were indispensable to the process of globalizing the localized memory.

III-Platform 5: Documenta Spaces

The *Documenta 11* exhibition was presented as a microcosm that visually reflected the postcolonial. In the fifth Platform, known as “the exhibition,” the works of 116 artists were thematically located in four different centers in Kassel, namely: The Museum Fridericianum, the Documenta-Halle, the Kulturbahnhof, and the Binding Brewery, that could be either visited by foot, by car or by riding one of the 100 gold bicycles of the artist Meschaq Gaba.⁵⁸¹ Given Enwezor’s vision of the show, there was no doubt

⁵⁸¹ Meschaq Gaba, one of the participating artists in the exhibition for his work the Museum of African Art, Humanist Space, provided 100 gold colored bicycles that could be rented by the participants to enjoy Kassel and visit the venues of the *Documenta 11*.

that unlike any other Documenta before, *Documenta 11* had the largest number of participating countries, especially from the continents of Africa and Asia. Hence the exhibition displayed an experimental openness, being particularly receptive to previously excluded work developing outside the leading art centers that had formerly been accorded a “purely ethnographic status.”⁵⁸²

As expressed in Enwezor’s essay, the exhibition was conceived as a kind of “meta-language of mediation” that was “self- reflexive,” where in a sense each of the artworks forged a conceptual, formal and analytical link of their own to the ideology of the exhibition.⁵⁸³ The exhibition was also inclusive of different kinds of artistic practice, as made evident by the juxtaposition of high- and low-tech practices, such as in the display of Feng Mengbo’s videogame alongside the simple arrangement of books, images and artifacts in a room by Georges Adeagbo.⁵⁸⁴ *Documenta 11*, along with several large-scale and site-specific installations, leaned towards photography and video projections that directly or indirectly evoked the news media, thus earning the exhibition the nickname of “the Documentary *Documenta*” or CNN Documenta.⁵⁸⁵

In considering the context of the documentaries it should be noted that as much as it presents a perspective or opinion, the documentaries do not necessarily represent the truth or document the real. This point is well illuminated by Vietnamese filmmaker and writer Trinh T. Minh Ha who pointed out in her key text, “ Documentary Is/Not a

⁵⁸² Martin, “A New World Art? Documenting Documenta 11,” 17.

⁵⁸³ Enwezor, “The Black Box,” 47.

⁵⁸⁴ Martin, “A New World Art? Documenting Documenta 11,” 19.

⁵⁸⁵ Kim Levin, “The CNN Documenta: Art in an International State of Emergency,” *The Village Voice* 47, no. July 3-9 (2002), <http://www.villagevoice.com/2002-07-02/art/the-cnn-documenta/>.

Name: Documentary” has its raison d’etre in a strategic distinction.⁵⁸⁶ According to her documentaries: “puts the social function of film on the market” as it utilizes the lives of “real people” and their world and deals with them.⁵⁸⁷

These points were further noted by Enwezor himself in an unpublished lecture, which aligned the documentary with the burden of truth that bears witness to aspects of our contemporary reality and specifically to issues of ethics and biopolitics, which Enwezor considers the key political impetus in contemporary art.⁵⁸⁸ According to Enwezor, the witness has to constantly toe the line between the universal and particular, categories that frame our understanding of human rights. While authenticity and objectivity persist as a horizon of expectation for documentary practice, the greatest myth, of course, is that documentaries tell the “truth.”⁵⁸⁹

In extending the issue of truth, the main clue in approaching *Documenta 11* was through the catalogue, which opened its pages with a series of news images from a number of familiar, dramatic recent events: bombings in Palestine and Israel, Ground Zero, anti-globalization demonstrations, etc.⁵⁹⁰ The artwork, like the images in the catalogue, seemed to strongly reflect the condensation of space and time that Enwezor attributes to everyday life in the age of globalization. In considering this,

⁵⁸⁶ Trinh T. Minh-Ha, “Documentary Is/Not a Name,” *October* 52 (Spring, 1990), 77-98, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/778886>.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Vivian Rehberg, “The Documentary Impulse,” *Jong Holland* 21, no. 4 (2005).

⁵⁸⁹ Here James Meyer in his essay “Tunnel Visions” sums up *Documenta 11* are important James Meyer, “Tunnel Visions,” *Artforum*, no. September (2008), <http://www.proquest.com.proxy.library.cornell.edu>. Meyer critiques that *Documenta 11* concept of political art, as according to him Documentary does not embody a reflexive approach to the exhibition itself. With the overkill on video and Documentary style photography he opines that *Documenta 11* presented itself as if the social injustices of our time can only be accessed through the projected image.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

according to Angela Dimitrakaki the catalogue then becomes a perfect ideological document for the “order of appearance” in which the catalogue “reverses the *real* order of things.”⁵⁹¹ By this suggestion, she purports that just as one encounters disturbing images everyday that ground us in our daily reality the *Documenta 11*-exhibition space does present a similar unease and tension as we encounter a compression of time and space enveloping us.⁵⁹²

This disturbing nature of the works in the exhibition however, led Dimitrakaki to further raise an important question: if the objective of *Documenta 11* was to “highlight injustice, oppression, historical, representational elision and tyranny,” then in what way was the “the need to probe” any different from the way the media examined these very issues?⁵⁹³ Moreover, if the work in the exhibition focused on the “wider political, cultural and discursive realm,” she wonders how art functions in “relation to the very struggles and inequities that it registers”?⁵⁹⁴ She states that if one decides to accommodate a politicized art form that is to be more fully accomplished, then is there also a demand to articulate the level at which art is different from politics or other forms of Documentary?⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹¹ Dimitrakaki, “Art and Politics Continued: Avant-garde, Resistance and the Multitude in Documenta 11,” 3/20/2005-176.

⁵⁹² See Martin, “A New World Art? Documenting Documenta 11,” 17. Martin in his article argues that the *Documenta 11*, of Platform 5 the exhibition that has traditionally been the only site of *Documenta* – should not be understood as the result or destination of the other Platforms. The exhibition he says, was far too complex for this, as were the foregoing Platforms. In addition he states that many of the artists provide theoretical contextualization of their own work that resist such a connection. But the Platforms from his perspective, do generate a set of debates in relation to which one’s experience of the exhibition may be inflected and enriched in important respects.

⁵⁹³ Dimitrakaki, “Art and Politics Continued,” 176.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

Before answering her questions, I would like to introduce the artwork in the exhibition. In examining the artworks in the exhibition, most of them had a strong connection to global movements in connection with the postcolonial. This is evident in the works of Pavel Braila's *Shoes for Europe (Mongolia)* Chantal Ackerman's *D'est*,⁵⁹⁶ Fareed Armaly's *From/To 2002, (US/ Mexico)*⁵⁹⁷ Dominique Gonzalez Forester's, *Park- A Plan for Escape*, (each object of the park was from a different part of the world, such as the rose bush from India, the sand from Brazil)⁵⁹⁸ Tsunamii.net, *alpha 3.3.2001* (limits of technology, internet)⁵⁹⁹ and *A Journey through a Solid Sea*, 2002, the work of Multiplicity, an Italian collective, that provided a harrowing examination of the sinking of a fishing boat in the Mediterranean in 1996 that resulted in the death of several hundred clandestine refugees.⁶⁰⁰

Allan Sekula's photographic series *Fish Story* served as a fervent critique of globalization. Sekula's *Fish Story* according to postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha, places the world in a "doubly horzoned world picture" that establishes the sea as an "in-between" space of capitalism, which analogizes the maritime world through late modernity or postmodernism.⁶⁰¹ Here Bhabha weaves the concept of hybridity or "third space" with Sekula's frame of the "double horizon."⁶⁰² For him the "in-between

⁵⁹⁶ "Artist Writings: Project Proposals for Documenta 11," Enwezor, Okwui. *Documenta 11, Platform 5: Exhibition, Catalogue*, Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002, 547.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., 549.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., 562.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., 589.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 577.

⁶⁰¹ Homi K. Bhabha, "Democracy De-Realized," 357. Also see the project proposal of Allan Sekula in "Artist Writings: Project Proposals for Documenta 11," 582.

⁶⁰² Bhabha., 357.

space” is the juncture where the “inter” or the “cutting edge of translation and negotiation” takes place.”⁶⁰³ Interpreting Sekula’s photography of the partial prow of the container vessel cutting obliquely to leave traces of the ubiquitous presence of globalization.⁶⁰⁴

In revisiting Dimitrakaki’s contention with *Documenta 11*, is such a distinct practice as “art,” if not independent from politics, then at least an alternative to it,⁶⁰⁵ sets off another question. Is it adequate or critically effective to present an overview of contemporary art practices in terms of the extent to which they reflect issues readily accessible in the media and newspaper images that we are confronted with every day?⁶⁰⁶ She states that perhaps it sometimes takes a “conservative” position to attain a more radical approach. In my examination of *Documenta 11* exhibition, Enwezor did consider this strongly, as he placed the “postcolonial” directly as a confrontational strategy in order to take on the issues head-on.

In order to respond to Dimitrakaki’s concerns stated above, I reflect on some of my own observations on the *Documenta 11* exhibition. Firstly, I would like to address Dimitrakaki’s concern with regard to the difference between art and images from the media.⁶⁰⁷ In viewing *Documenta 11* it is very clear that Enwezor was not concerned about the choice of medium of the art or artist. In my opinion, Enwezor envisioned the exhibition to show the critical orientation of engaging all forms of visual production (images, objects, architecture, non-images etc). Unlike the earlier *Documentas* that

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., 358.

⁶⁰⁵ Dimitrakaki, “Art and Politics Continued,” 176.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.

attempted to institute a “narrative” or “posit a unified vision of art” or to “draw conclusions about the formal distinctiveness,” *Documenta 11* was clearly different. Enwezor’s exhibition was not motivated to reach any “grand conclusions” or attain any “forms of closure.”

Similar thoughts echoed in the mind of art critic Massimiliano Gioni, who critiques *Documenta 11* for taking on a “literalist approach and taxonomic impulse.”⁶⁰⁸ His concern is whether being “literal” might become a “new dogma,” one as oppressive as “abstract or modern art was in the formalist aesthetics of high modernism in the previous century.”⁶⁰⁹ His concern is whether the influence of “literalism” is enough to elevate any document to the status of art.⁶¹⁰ In my opinion, it would seem that in some moments it becomes necessary to represent “literary” directly, rather than to let these issues get erased or go underground. In responding to Gioni’s concern here, a question immediately comes to my mind: why is it no one charged the earlier documentas of being exclusionary and white centric?⁶¹¹ It is telling that earlier *Documenta* exhibitions were not read as celebrations of white identity despite their near exclusion of African, Asian, and other non-Western artists.

I would like to respond to Gioni and some of Dimitrakaki’s literalist critiques of media images by highlighting what Enwezor’s co- curator of *Documenta 11*, Sarat Maharaj suggested as the shifting role from the “artist” to “anti-artist” to the “anartist,” to an “indeterminate practioner.”⁶¹² In the context of *Documenta 11*, the

⁶⁰⁸ Featherstone, Mike and Venn, Couze, “Problematizing Global Knowledge and the New Encyclopaedia Project: An Introduction,” *Theory Culture Society* 23, no. 1 (2006).

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

⁶¹² Ibid.

indeterminate practitioner could be any of the architects, activists, or artists that were invited to participate. I view this position as one that reaffirms postcolonial resistance, where hierarchies between individuals and mediums are insignificant. Similarly the boundaries between a particular visual language for art and document are bogus. It is my belief that the context of the work needs to be viewed carefully. Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie in his essay “*Documenta 11* and the Apotheosis of the Occidental gaze” further supports my thoughts.⁶¹³ Ogbechie argues that although *Documenta 11* used documentary style images, these images could be seen to theorize, “disorder as the new norm of contemporary existence.”⁶¹⁴ It was for this reason that he emphasizes Enwezor’s presentation of “literal Documentation of all facets of human experience” to comment on the “accumulated detritus of urban culture.”⁶¹⁵ From Ogbechie’s perspective, this “literalist” response instead “reiterated the artist’s commitment to a “social vision” located in “justice and ethics,” one which according to him recorded “degradation and conflict” as a “radical act” in an “unjust age.”⁶¹⁶

Given the dissolving boundaries, I view the overt sensitivity to *Documenta 11* focusing on documentaries and “literal” approach as being unfounded, as Enwezor as a curator is right in showing work in the exhibition that best conveyed his concerns. In addition for me, this “literalist” style of documentary images of the postcolonial is immersed within a strong ethical imperative, one that presents the inclusion of violence emanating from wars, violence, and human rights. In relating the postcolonial

⁶¹³ Ogbechie, “Ordering the Universe: Documenta II and the Apotheosis of the Occidental Gaze,” 80(10).

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

to the context provided by Ricoeur, it could be stated as one in which the traumatic character of past humiliations brings us back permanently towards the past, but the same events directed towards the future can allude to justice.⁶¹⁷ He suggests that it is only through this strong interrelationship between the past and the future that one can apply the “power of justice” “against victims” so that “we may prevent the same events from recurring in the future.”⁶¹⁸ But examining the past requires us to work from memory (in this case postcolonial memory) in which the past influences future events. This according to Ricoeur, necessitates individuals with a “duty to remember” which does not only have a deep concern for the past, but importantly gives a strong impetus to transmitting the meaning of past events to the next generation to render justice.⁶¹⁹

Ricoeur defines duty as something, which concerns the future even as it involves the past. With this imperative directed towards the future, he says it is not enough to remember but it is our duty to tell.⁶²⁰ This makes it necessary that we retain the traces of events and reconcile with the past in order to continue actions into the future, emphasizing that at this point in history, we must work towards evolving a culture of “just memory.”⁶²¹ This aspect of “duty to remember,” so as to construct a “just memory” is visible in the case of *Documenta 11*’s “postcolonial constellation.” As Enwezor visibly questioned and critiqued the existing contemporary discourse in art, he brought to attention the history of colonization and its lack of presentation of

⁶¹⁷ Ricoeur, “Memory and Forgetting,” 11.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Ibid., 10.

⁶²¹ Ibid., 12.

the other. This could be seen as Enwezor's way of returning his debt to society and doing his duty, through the *Documenta 11* that evoked (postcolonial) memory and served as a constant reminder to us to look ethically.

But included within the issues of ethics in relation to the postcolonial are also the concerns of identity politics and race. This was also one of the main areas of criticism for *Documenta 11*. Ogbechie also locates several critiques of Enwezor's exhibition as "pandering to an ethos of identity politics and multiculturalism by its overwhelming focus on non-Western spaces."⁶²² First, he sees this resulting from the larger number of African, Asian, and other artists of non-European descent in the exhibition. Viewed against the backdrop of the previous *Documenta* exhibitions with their limited inclusion of these "non-Western" artists, *Documenta 11* undoubtedly facilitated their visibility. This leads Ogbechie to consider whether representing 45 countries in *Documenta 11*, unlike 24 in *Documenta X* made all the difference, even though the non-Western artists represented only about 20 percent of the total number of participants in the exhibition.⁶²³ I disagree with Ogbechie contention that the number of non-Western artists did make a difference in the exhibition, as they were able to bring very different issues that emerged from their personal context. This allowed *Documenta 11* to include an expanded view of the postcolonial not based on a single kind of postcolonial identity, but one that emerged from a position of "multiple modernities."

Second, Ogbechie's argued that several of the artworks in *Documenta 11* were didactic and controversial. He felt that Enwezor relied overtly on "cultures and

⁶²² Ogbechie, "Ordering the Universe," 80(10).

⁶²³ Ibid.

conflicts” drawn on the imagery of trauma from non-Western societies, which further exoticized these works.⁶²⁴ He queried Enwezor’s portrayal of a bleak picture of the postcolonial through several films and video projections that depicted desolate landscapes, rotting walls and urban warfare.⁶²⁵ In continuation with this thought, he also opined that the projected images in *Documenta 11* such as films, video, and digital installations, all questioned the nature of contemporary reality and the place of marginalized (mostly non-Western) constituencies within the new world order, one marked by post-cold war American hegemony.⁶²⁶ These concerns were further amplified by the clinical visual display of the exhibition itself that heightened the contrast between the works and their exoticisms.⁶²⁷ Gioni, similar to Ogbechie also critiqued *Documenta 11* for its clinical and overly aesthetic representation of conflict, and furthermore felt that the exhibition turned the spectator into a voyeur rather than providing a blueprint for political action.⁶²⁸

At this point I would like to respond to the issues presented by Ogbechie and Gioni with regards to the clinical layout of the exhibition, as well as the expectation from *Documenta* as a further blue print for political action and exoticization of non-Western works. My question is: If one needs to draw attention to an important issue which had not been addressed (in this case the postcolonial) with the dignity it deserves, and in a way to highlight its concerns, what would they suggest as the best way to undertake this in a museum space? Having witnessed the exhibition myself, I

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

⁶²⁸ Cited in Ibid. Featherstone, Mike and Venn, Couze, “Problematizing Global Knowledge and the New Encyclopaedia Project: An Introduction.”

felt that the works were placed no differently than other museum curated spaces (either in the West or non-West), therefore the criticism for the clinical representation of the work seems unjustified. Also Enwezor dispersed the images of these so called disturbing postcolonial images throughout the exhibition, hence his attempt can be seen as not to isolate these images but present them as a part of the contemporary representation of the world today. And yes, if the viewer saw a difference in the content, imagery and starkness, it presented a reality of disparity, which did exist between the worlds and which until *Documenta 11* was never exhibited in any exhibition of the West with such rigor. This was *Documenta 11*'s way of evoking Ricoeur's "just memory" and reinforcing a demand of ethical practice.

In considering Gioni's point about a blueprint for political action, I consider his demand to be unreasonable. Would he have had the same expectation from Western exhibitions? If not, why demand political action from the first postcolonial exhibition that declares itself as such? In spite of Gioni's inappropriate demand for political action, I would like to firmly assert that Enwezor's *Documenta 11* through the "postcolonial constellation" did in fact present a blueprint for political action. This imprint, which contained a strong emphasis on the postcolonial, has managed to change the nature of exhibitions and their politics in the world (particularly in the West), and the political climate and receptivity to art in the non-West. In fact viewing this shift in attitude and the changes that *Documenta 11* has brought especially in the inclusion of the "other" one could deem the postcolonial constellation as a blueprint for action (in the era after the end of art).

With these considerations in mind however, Ogbechie is uncertain about Enwezor's motivations in his exhibition, and if his engagement with non-Western art

merely answers to “global capitalism's persistent need for new commodities?”⁶²⁹ Here he wonders if Enwezor's role in bringing these “artists and marginal centers of art to the purview of the West, makes them simply available for consumption”?⁶³⁰ He fears that instead of reflecting an identity politics that empowers marginalized societies and structures their demand for recognition, the exhibition may be constructing conditions for a new appropriation of the “other” by the West, in a manner similar to modernism's appropriation of African and other “non-Western” arts at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁶³¹ These thoughts have also echoed through the minds of several historians including Elizabeth Harney who maintains “the international art market's recent intense interest in contemporary African art eerily mirrors the fascination of the art world a century ago when art Negre was in vogue.”⁶³²

In her opinion, the contemporary context replaces the world fairs of the Victorian era with today's international biennials, in which *Documenta 11* is the ultimate incarnation.⁶³³ In this she opines differently from Ogbechie in which she views Enwezor's exhibition as one that through its representation of the non-Western populations challenges the “West's unbridled consumption of the ‘other,’ by opposing its omnivorous appetite for global dominance.”⁶³⁴ She therefore commends Enwezor's pioneering effort for focusing on this struggle and for using *Documenta 11* to shoulder the excessive expectations of both the mainstream art world and its marginalized

⁶²⁹ Ogbechie, “Ordering the Universe,” 80(10).

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

⁶³¹ Ibid.

⁶³² Cited in Ibid. Elizabeth Harney, “Contemporary African Art and the Marketplace: Situating the Works of Georges Adeagbo,” in Georges Adeagbo: Archeology of Motivations; Rewriting History, ed. Silvia Eiblmayr , Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2001, 19-35.

⁶³³ Ibid.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

communities.

I would like to further engage the issue of the marginalized communities discussing the work of artist Jeff Wall in *Documenta 11* through the photographic work *Invisible Man*, based upon Ralph Ellison's novel of the same title. In this photograph Wall represents the visual of Ellison's black protagonist, sitting in a basement surrounded by 1,369 light bulbs.⁶³⁵ The electricity that illuminates these bulbs is embezzled from the state utility company, which leads the viewer to interrogate what the life of a black person underground would be like. In this autobiographical work represented by Wall on Ellison's own life and experiences of living in Harlem, NYC, he uses his theft of power from a white-controlled company, and new rent-free residence under a white-only building, as symbols of his invisible rebellion against white society. Hence it is from this underground abode and state of invisibility that the protagonist experiences and positions American society in which light represents an intellectual necessity of truth and knowledge, while the dark underground forces represent the repressive racist powers of the West.

There is apprehension of what would happen if the electric companies were to discover his theft and turn out his lights. Would the existence of the protagonist be obliterated forever?⁶³⁶ Although the light represents the protagonist trying to affirm his existence against the pressures of the West, or what Ogbechie says "limits the life of the people of color, thereby preventing them from being heard or attaining viable political, economic, or cultural power."

⁶³⁵ Cited in Ogbechie. *Invisible Man* is narrated in the first person by the protagonist, an unnamed African American man who considers himself socially invisible. His character may have been inspired by Ellison's own life.

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

This work similar to Jaar's *Lament of the Images* also makes a connection about the invisibility of the postcolonial through a metaphor of light. Like others, this work stands against the expanding influence of the "Western ethnocentric approach," which continues to propagate a global system that has far-reaching effects at the local level in the non-West. Hence alluding to both Walls *Illumination* and Jaar's *Lament of the Images*, both represent the significance of bringing to full illumination the absence or danger of erasure of the postcolonial, thereby reiterating the significance of fifth Platform of the exhibition space in the realization Enwezor's "postcolonial constellation." Hence the exhibition Platform both reveals the fragility and criticality of illumination of the postcolonial thereby highlighting its significance.

Conclusion

The title of this chapter is an ironic play on a well known essay by Walter Grasskamp on Document and the production of art history entitled "For example, *Documenta*, or how has art history been produced? " By deliberately adding the word "postcolonial" to the title of the essay, the significance of *Documenta 11* was highlighted in two ways. First, it reinforced the absence of the postcolonial discourse within the context of contemporary art. Second, *Documenta 11*, engineered around Enwezor's "postcolonial constellation," went beyond examining the postcolonial discourse in the various continents of Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe through the four Platforms, but also went on to explore them in the context of "alternative modernities," so as to account for "different accounts of global history" suggested by Mike Featherstone and Couze Venn. This is the reason why several critics perceived *Documenta 11* as an antidote to the infamous *Magiciens de la Terre* that took place thirteen years ago.

During the space of thirteen years between *Magiciens* (1989) and *Documenta 11* (2002) while there have been several important exhibitions that have furthered the representation of the postcolonial and non-Western artists, none can replace or even come close to the single-minded objective of Enwezor's *Documenta 11* to insert the postcolonial as a necessary vocabulary in the context of contemporary art. *Magiciens*, as noted in chapter 3 has been acknowledged as one of the first exhibitions to draw attention to the representation of the "other," by including non-Western art practitioners. But the choice of these artists /practitioners clearly revealed an inequitable relationship, resulting in the displaying of primitive art practices (amongst the non-Western cultures) vs. Western contemporary art.

Documenta 11's uniqueness as explored in this chapter could be stated to insert the postcolonial artist's political discourse in an exhibition and theoretical framework, pointing to the existence of an avant-garde in the context of contemporary non-Western art practices, or what Gioni has stated as a blue print for political action, one that legitimized the non-Western artists on equal terms within contemporary discourse.

Enwezor viewed the world as web of rhizomatic connections in which history, politics and socio-economics of the world were interconnected and hence could no longer be viewed from the perspective of historicism of the West. Although aware of globalization's exploratory effects especially amongst the poorer nations, through *Documenta 11* Enwezor undertook to reveal that a new world order had been established under the onslaught of globalization that no longer permitted the binaries of center/periphery, Oriental/Occidental, Western/non-Western, First World/ Third World to exist as they had before. Although aware of the parity between the history of globalization and colonization, Enwezor showed his optimism about the access that globalization provides within nations, especially those within the new global South

that would normally be connected via the West.

This new world order immersed within the “postcolonial constellation” articulated the complexity, mutual connectivity by making the local and global, and West and non-West share close proximity with each other, thus propelling the constellation to grow into a larger project of global interactivity. Hence it confronted the fact that today it was impossible to avoid the “other” as the boundaries had collapsed given the migration and immigration that has occurred over the last several decades. This fluidity no longer permits the separation between one and the other, and hence one needs to account for war, colonization, and genocides in a larger world space, in which the results of actions have repercussions for everyone.

Although *Documenta 11* did highlight the significance of the postcolonial, it did not only serve to represent non-Western cultures and their histories, but also the relationship of memory, history and ethics, all of which are intrinsically linked for society as a whole. It meant to state that this loss or lack of representation would be a loss for mankind by citing the danger of its exclusion. For example Jaar’s work in *Lament of the Images*, and Wall’s *Invisible Man* cautioned us that a possible outcome if the postcolonial and the “other” were left unrepresented would be the erasure of postcolonial memory. *Documenta* shared an equal concern for the project of global memory, as in case of *Corbis*, the photo archive company referenced in *Lament of the Images*, as being one organization that controlled all the vital visual images of human history. What would occur if Corbis chose to modify our memory, by adding to or deleting our future?

Documenta 11 provoked us to think of what happens to the world if the history of what has been undertaken were erased forever? Would memory and the

remembering of world history exist without an image? ⁶³⁷ This highlighted the significance of the words of Huyssen, who cautioned us that the “globalization of [postcolonial] memory” (by extension, I would append the term ‘postcolonial’) would result in an amnesic condition of the world. This stresses the importance of the preservation of memory. *Documenta 11* not only created awareness of the postcolonial, but also managed to circulate it all over the world through its four Platforms and publications.

Enwezor’s “postcolonial constellation” articulated this through several levels. Firstly, at a formal level, the organization of the project across four continents and five separate Platforms and the subsequent relativization of the exhibition were radical. Second, adopting a discursive methodology of presenting the Platforms at sites of rupture, as in Asia, Europe, Africa and the Caribbean, allowed the discourse of *Documenta 11* to create a new pool of encyclopedic knowledge through “contemporary knowledge circuits,” based on localized interventions and debates that were held outside the Western framework of knowledge production. They attempted to shift Edward Said’s assertion of history as always being “Eurocentric” by adopting Mike Featherstone and Venn Couze’s position, which challenged the imperialism of Western classification of knowledge and its “linearity” of progress by producing a body of “counter-knowledge” of postcolonial and non-Western origin.

The Platforms also performed the task of propelling the discourse of localized knowledge within the regions they took place. For example in the context of Europe it raised the question of what democracy meant in relation to the large immigrant population that it did not consider its own. In the Indian context, the Platform “Experiments with Truth” returned to a critical point in Indian history, its

⁶³⁷ Schneemann, “Critical Constellations: When Art Questions the Image,” 9/2/2007.

independence from the British in 1947, by viewing it in terms of Mahatma Gandhi's text on truth, ethics and transitional justice. Here, discussed for the first time, his project of independence meant addressing the partition between India and Pakistan, as well as connecting its severed ties with the lost diaspora that lived in the continent of Africa. The Platform "Creole and Creolization" similarly questioned the parameter of its own identity within the Caribbean in St. Lucia. Here the global cultural homogenization and mis-generation within the cultural context was explored. In Africa the Platform "Under Siege" explored the tale of four African cities in the process of de-colonization, affected by the trope of globalization and all its discontents, especially the effects of urbanization in a third world economy. Hence *Documenta's 11* Platform's could be stated as being imperative in circulating what Huyssen has termed "localized memory" and I have additionally contributed the "postcolonial" aspect of the same constituting it as localized [postcolonial] memory. This could be stated as such, as the localizations of (memory), knowledge which took place in these Platforms did manage to circulate locally especially in the case of Africa and the Caribbean.

This difference in approaching history could be examined in a way in which *Documenta X* and *Documenta 11* have a connection; namely the imperative to view history in the context of retrospectives, albeit what this entailed for them individually was different. *Documenta 11* made the twenty-first century feel like the twentieth, as the project of the postcolonial was one that dealt with unfinished histories tied to colonization from the last century. However, both exhibitions adopted a self-reflective and understated tone in the presentation of work, a stand that critics have termed as "literalist and conservative." *Documenta X* could be guilty of what Said had warned, that the framing of history has always been "Eurocentric." Enwezor's attempt was to

break the tradition of historicism that viewed history as Eurocentric by employing Chakraborty's "not yet" so as to lessen the postcolonial time-lag or *Nachträglichkeit* that Bhabha had suggested exists.⁶³⁸ Thus Chakraborty's "not yet"⁶³⁹ of the non-West was subsumed in Enwezor's text to be the "nearness not elsewhere" in which the "postcolonial" is a "world of proximities."⁶⁴⁰ By this stance, the postcolonial time lag could be stated within *Documenta 11* to have finally caught up with the present moment in history and found a new place of its own. This realizes Robert Young's concept that non-European accounts of "history" no longer constitute a "single overarching narrative" but instead work as "networks of discrete, multitudinous histories that can not be contained within any single Western schema," and thus have started to find their own direction.⁶⁴¹

This finally leads us to examine the question of ethics that emerged in *Documenta 11*. Returning to Walter Benjamin's premise of historicism as a violent process, Enwezor's approach of the postcolonial could be viewed as a "state of emergency." Following through on Benjamin, Enwezor focused not on the past "in all its moments," but rather in the disturbances of the continuous history and chose to not focus on the victors but the oppressed.⁶⁴² This is what Ricoeur has meant by the duty to tell the truth, in this case from the perspective of the oppressed. By being one of the first to address several of the issues such as genocide, war and violence that occurred in the process of colonization and the continued effects on the de-colonized countries,

⁶³⁸ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 341.

⁶³⁹ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 7.

⁶⁴⁰ Enwezor, "The Black Box," 44.

⁶⁴¹ Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, 3.

⁶⁴² Benjamin, *Illuminations* [Illuminationen.], 257.

Documenta 11 made a strong case for representing the misgivings of the 20th century with regards to the postcolonial. Through its “postcolonial constellation” it reinforced both calls of Ricoeur, of the “duty to remember” the past as a means of constructing the future with our “duty to tell.”⁶⁴³ *Documenta 11* through the “postcolonial constellation” critically engaged in the process of looking and questioning history and thereby began the process of returning our debt to society as a way of doing our duty as conscious citizens of the world. It also makes us conscious of our own duty as viewers to look ethically and be aware about recognizing whether the voice of the repressed in any context, not necessarily in a postcolonial frame, is being articulated.

⁶⁴³ Ricoeur, “Memory and Forgetting,” 10.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: ANOTHER ART (WORLD) ON THE CUSP?

The dissertation *Postcolonial Palimpsest* examined the emergence of the postcolonial discourse in the context of contemporary art by analyzing two exhibitions *Magiciens de la Terre*, 1989 and *Documenta 11*, 2002. By exploring the time frame 1989 to 2002 of thirteen years, the dissertation aimed to highlight the significance of the postcolonial in the art context and to reveal the escalation in its visibility over this period. *Documenta 11* can be considered more than just an antidote to *Magiciens* as it did much more than merely highlight the absence of the non-Western “other.” *Magiciens* did not consider the non-West as having a contemporary discourse within the art context. It assumed the non-West as the “other” that could not engage in a similar manner with a contemporary Western discourse and so created a binary by relegating the non-West to the realm of traditional artisan works and discounting its contemporary context. Its preference for the self taught artists and its avoidance of major non-Western modernists, some of them live or alive in the heart of the Western metropole re-affirms such “otherization.” Furthermore, its style of display of relegated the works by non-western art works to an appendix and a footnote of Western modern/contemporary art history, the same way MoMA’s *Primitivism* did to the so-called tribal art of the non-West in relation to Western modernist and avant garde aesthetics at the turn of the twentieth century, despite the façade of egalitarianist pronouncements of its curators/organizers.

Documenta 11 on the other hand went much further than simply including contemporary artists from the non-West. Instead of conceding to the uncritical worldview propagated by *Magiciens*, in which differences were blurred by superficial similarities to present a totalizing picture of the world, *Documenta 11* through the “postcolonial constellation” made evident the differences between the “them” and the

“other.” The exhibition propagated that the world needs to be understood in the context of “multiple modernities,” in which the relationship between the West and the non-West needs to be viewed in its own timeline and modernities.

This aspect was further elaborated in my chapter two entitled “Revitalizing Signs: The Post (*Magiciens*) Condition,” as the criticism that emerged after *Magiciens* positively impacted the visibility of the non-West artists within the context of Western exhibitions.⁶⁴⁴ The exhibitions, which came thereafter have engaged a more complex approach to “us”(West) and “them” (non-West) as evident in *Contemporary Art from Asia: Traditions/Tensions*, 1996, *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945-1994*, 1994; *Unpacking Europe*, curated by Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi, 2001; *The American Effect* and *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Grade Art in Latin America*. The important change reflected (post) *Magiciens* was that non-Western curators got the opportunity to curate their own cultures through presenting large-scale exhibitions and biennales that challenged and dismantled the way the West had viewed the world and presented it. The chapter utilized Spivak’s postcolonial concept of worlding, which according to her separated the world within the binaries of the “world” and the “earth” to distinguish the “colonizer” from the “colonized” that even today exists as “us” and “them.” My concept of “de-worlding” rejected the binaries of East/West, North/South, Orient/Occidental to propose a new cartographical analysis of the world, outside the Western framework through a process I define as “re-worlding,” after Spivak, to create worlds outside of the process of imperialism.

⁶⁴⁴ *Magicians* as discussed in Chapter 2 received much criticism that provoking a strong response in the way the large- scale exhibitions were being curated and presented. The magnitude and influence of this exhibition is further evident in the fact that Third Text, edited by Rasheed Araeen dedicated an entire issue in 1989 to speak about these issues. Post *Magiciens* a critical shift in thinking and curating these large-scale exhibitions is visible. See Third Text. 3(6):3-14.
<<http://www.informaworld.com/10.1080/09528828908576208>>. (accessed 22 October 2010).

Chapter three, “Unsettling Constellations or Articulating the Biennialization of Contemporary Art” further engaged the concept of “re-worlding” by examining the scope of biennales in configuring the relationship between the “us” and the “other.” First, I critiqued the concept of “Plateau of Humanity” proposed by Szeemann’s 2001 *Venice Biennale* presented at the beginning of the 21st century. His vision of presenting all “Humanity” as a “Plateau,” could be stated as flawed due to the impossibility of viewing all humankind as one. The world as we understand it is not a single place, and the difference between people and civilizations is real.

Presenting or even desiring to place the world within a linear grand narrative is emblematic of affirming Western domination. Szeemann’s presentation of ancient statues juxtaposed with contemporary artifacts instead magnified the time gap between the objects of art and the disparity in work. Szeemann’s concept of “Plateau of Humankind” needs to be in my words “de-worlded” or dumped in order to be “re-worlded” to adopt Francesco Bonami’s concept of “multiple modernities” as the “new modernity.” Given the presentation of the “new modernity” what then is the role of the Third World Biennale? Should it exist and if so should it represent an all-encompassing discourse of the world? My recommendation here would be that the biennale focus much more on its own modernity in order to establish deeper links with its own culture and people and also give the same opportunity to the invited artists and curators in the form of art residencies, work shops and the other platforms for exchange. This would allow a richer dialogue to emerge, as it would be a single modernity responding to “multiple modernities,” allowing an in-depth cultural analysis to take place.

Chapter five “For Example, Documenta 11, or how has the Postcolonial been produced in Art History” could then be viewed to specifically address a certain kind

of modernity that shares a history of being colonized. *Documenta 11* choose to highlight the aftermath of colonized societies by bringing into focus the postcolonial, which had been largely ignored by the Western canon, through Enwezor's "postcolonial constellation." The Platforms that posed as "contemporary knowledge circuits" for Asia, Africa, Europe, St. Lucia and metaphorically Latin America, affirmed the existence of "multiple modernities" through a reading of "alternative knowledge" outside the Western reading of history in a manner and scale that had not been realized before. Although the Platforms individually embraced issues of democracy, ethics, justice, creolization, hybridity and urbanization, from specific geopolitical locations, they finally converged in a way that made it impossible to view them in isolation.

This leads us to consider history from the perspective of ethical and political ramifications, outside the existing "eternal image of history" as a "posited historical time" of the West. It further endorses Benjamin's critique of historicism, in which *Documenta 11* highlighted the postcolonial. The exhibition also shifted the power dynamic suggested by Dipesh Chakraborty's "History 1" as the general (or European) art history and "History 2" as the latecomer, of the "not yet." This was undertaken by adopting Bhabha's presentation of the postcolonial time lag that allowed us to retrospectively revisit and amend the past or in this case History 2 as the postcolonial through the process of memory. The lags managed to slow down the "linear progressive time of modernity" and present an opportunity for the "past" to catch up with the present, in which the issues of colonialism and postcolonialism were addressed in the present context of the world. This changed the perception of how the non-West had been viewed in the world as not something of the past but as a continued present.

In order to surpass this time lag the process of postcolonial memory is critical. Benjamin's angel of history reminds us that the past only exists as an image in our memory, making our notion of history null and void without an image. This also relates to Paul Ricoeur's discussion on memory that informs us as having two kinds of relationships with the past: the first through knowledge, the second in relation to action. It is only by broaching memory "as a kind of action" can we speak about the "ethics of memory" which can be aided by globalization, particularly the postcolonial aspect. In considering the question of ethics historian Jerome Binde says "an ethics of the future is not an ethics in the future."⁶⁴⁵ He adds if tomorrow is always too late, then today is often already very late. He further affirms, that "an ethics of the future, if it remains an ethics in the future, is an injustice committed against all generations, present and future" in which future delayed is future denied.⁶⁴⁶

Hence Enwezor's postcolonial constellation could be viewed as one such active ethical imperative. It attempts to revive the "globalization of [postcolonial] memory" in which the image of the memory is replayed through the exhibition and is also documented via the platforms. The circulation of postcolonial memory prevents the *Lament of the (postcolonial) Images* as suggested by Alfredo Jaar. This prompts us to take steps to preserve images of world history that act as our visual memory. On the other hand, the lack of the postcolonial context would be tragic, as it would result in a skewed perspective of the world.

Enwezor's *Documenta 11* stands the ground for being one of the few historical exhibitions (aside from *The Other Story*) addressing the postcolonial on such a large

⁶⁴⁵ Jerome Binde, "Toward an Ethics of the Future," *Public Culture*, Volume 12, Number 1, Winter 2000, 51-72.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid.

scale, a discourse that had not been highlighted and could be on the verge of being consumed by globalization and thereby considered as less important. It presented a reading of history as “a new modernity” with no grand narratives but by creating space for the “other” to included in the larger discourse of the arts.

It also affirmed Benjamin’s thesis to reveal the history of the world as a palimpsest of discrete images of past events that can be viewed as “multiple modernities” that might independently exist but overlap, thereby rejecting the historical grand narrative. Thus postcolonial theories such as worlding, “de-worlding” and “re-worlding,” as elaborated on and articulated in this dissertation, allow a new spatiality to emerge within the global space. It allows us to not only make amends with the past, but also open up a space for the postcolonial to emerge as an empowered entity. Critic Ryan O’Neil further highlights the significance of acknowledging these absences. He says:

“what is omitted from the past reveals much about the culture as what is recorded in history and circulates as collective memory. Therefore our relationship to this past is not a question of what art is now seen to have been part of history but also what kind of documentation and evidence of its display has survived.⁶⁴⁷”

From my perspective, there is need for a more archival and scholarly work on non-western modernists figures, retrospective shows of their works, catalogue raisonnee, to provide the raw material for art historical canonization and to write the very serious art history of the postcolonial “other” we are lacking. Although, the

⁶⁴⁷ Paul O’Neil, “The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse,” J. Rugg and M. Sedgwick, *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, (Intellect Books), Bristol, 2007, 25.

Western centers have not entirely shifted to the non-West, the influence of two decades of euro-centric critiques of exhibitions like *Magiciens* and the affects of *Documenta 11* along with the effort of artists, curators and theorists are visible. Within the Latin America, Africa and Asia there is a burgeoning art scene that is working independently outside the Western framework. Several alternative movements, such as non-profit spaces, artist studios, residencies and symposiums are being orchestrated within the non-Western spaces with greater awareness and focus on local events and issues. This is strengthening South-to South links between the nations, with the nature of art and exhibition practices becoming more inclusive and collaborative.

On the Western front, the mayhem in the European and US financial markets are increasing the currency of emerging economies like India, China and Brazil making them centers of their own. Another significant factor of change has been the collapse of the dictatorial regimes in the middle-East that have taken place in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya in 2011 that have empowered people to advocate for an independent nation run by democracy. Here, visibly Negri and Hardt's "multitude's" unite and came together for a common cause for freedom, being able to overthrow established dictatorships that had ruling their nations for decades. There is still much to be achieved, and a long way to go, but the pivotal role played by exhibitions like *Magiciens*, and *Documenta 11* in shaping the world today through the debate they have generated, and the impact of their discourse in the field of art, culture and politics needs to be acknowledged. As a result there seems to be a distinct possibility with the horizon slowly coming into view of a new art world emerging on the cusp.

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