

GEOGRAPHIES OF
COLLABORATION II

Universal Horizons and
Categories of Art

Saturday, Nov 23, 2013

Film Screening 3-4.45 pm, Theater hall

PAYS BARBARE

Yervant Gianikian & Angela Ricci Lucchi, F 2013, 65min, original with English subtitles, followed by a talk with the filmmakers

Conference 5-9 pm, Exhibition hall

5-5.45 pm

KADER ATTIA

THE END OF BELIEFS: RATIONAL WITHIN THE MAGICAL

“It has been many years now that I have been observing and thinking extra-Occidental cultures and their artistic production under the shadow of two monotheist giants: Christianity and Islam (in which I grew up). In both cases, contacts have been prolific around the issue of Art. Absorptions can be found in many examples on both sides. But one thing comes out of these reflections: the issue of Magic. Islam as well as Christianity dogmatizes the issue of Good and Evil, through an unbalanced fight between God and the Devil. Art in these two monotheisms has also always been the occasion to support each religion’s cause (mainly iconographic on the one hand, and iconoclast on the other). On the contrary, in polytheist cultures, nothing is balanced: there is no order. Art is a stage on which everything can be plaid, danced, seen and everything moves during the ritual. This absence of rational order is in fact a window toward another order, the one of magical worlds, where the most unexpected things are logical.”

5.45-7 pm

NTONE EDJABE

NOTES ON THE DIALECTICS OF A BLACK CULTURE IMAGE PRODUCTION

FESTAC 77, the Nigerian answer to Leopold Senghors "Festival des Arts Nègres" in Dakar 1966, has been foremost a potent demonstration of superlatives, an excessive celebration of a fictive pre-colonial African culture, and arguably the largest performance of diaspora-informed "Black Power" in its nostalgic, idealist strand the world has ever seen. FESTAC 77 has also been an effort to create a claim toward Europe to recognize Africa as being part of modernity and demand its entry into history with all its explicit Africanity. It didn't work, the hangover has been lasting, the expected impact didn't surface and FESTAC 77 has soon been forgotten. More than 30 years later this cultural event, with all its ambiguity and failure, could serve exemplary to explore the dialectics of inclusion and exclusion in a cultural and capital Modernity.

7.30–8.15 pm

LUCY STEEDS

BEYOND "MAGICIENS DE LA TERRE":
FROM "EXPOSITIONS UNIVERSELLES"
TO GLOBAL SHOWS OF CONTEMPORARY
ART

"Magiciens de la Terre," in Paris in 1989, was promoted as the first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art. While the bold "first" of this claim needs to be contextualized and unsettled, the show did represent a radical departure for exhibitions in Europe and North America. The project, which became linked to celebrations of the bicentenary of the 1789 revolution, can be seen as a fulcrum between the "expositions universelles" at the height of European colonialism on one side and, on the other, transnational biennials and triennials around the world in the neoliberal era of global capitalism. The precise legacy of the show will be reexamined for the possibilities and warnings it offers for thinking exhibition-making in relation to globalized art production now.

8.15–9 pm

ANSELM FRANKE

"AFTER YEAR ZERO": FRAMES AND
NO FRAMES

This presentation will engage with "negative universalism" from a curatorial point of view, a concept originally proposed by Theodor Adorno, and recently re-activated by Dipesh Chakrabarty. Negative universalism, according to Chakrabarty, "derives from a shared sense of catastrophe." What does negative universalism imply for the historical and political imageries of modernity and its historiography? And against the backdrop of the political fates of negativity in late modernity, does such negative determination ever open towards affirmation? The focus will be on the implicit border-regimes of modernity, and how they can be made explicit within the medium of exhibitions, through narrative framing and "constellation critique." This discussion will unfold taking as an example a single painting found in the collection of the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam.

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Sunday, Nov 24, 2013

Conference 5–8.30 pm, Exhibition hall

5–5.45 pm

KOYO KOUOH

HEARD OF, SEEN, OUTSHONE AND REAPPROPRIATED: THE LIMITS OF GEOGRAPHIES

This presentation is about the place of Africa in international contemporary art and intellectual collaborations, about the seen and the unseen. It focuses on the international situationist and the work of Issa Samb aka Joe Ouakam. In 1974 Samb founded, together with a group of artists, writers, filmmakers, performance artists, and musicians, the Dakar-based Laboratoire Agit'Art. The aim of the group was to transform the nature of artistic practice from a formalist, object-bound way of working to practices that were based on experimentation and agitation, on process rather than product, ephemerality rather than permanence, and political and social ideas over aesthetic ones. Focusing on communication between the artist and audience over physical objects, the actions of Laboratoire Agit'Art engaged with the immediate sociopolitical situation. His work, although nontraditional and unconventional, combines African artistic traditions – where importance is placed on the spoken word and performative actions – with direct political action.

5.45–6.30 pm

BASSAM EL BARONI

A BRIEF ENCOUNTER WITH FINE ART, UNIVERSALITY, AND OTHER WEATHERED NOTIONS

The vast majority of art produced in various contexts throughout the world never makes it into the international circuit of biennials and discursive art projects. And perhaps there is a scarcity of serious theoretical attempts at finding out why. Beyond the usual arguments of inclusion and exclusion, many theorists, critics, curators and artists are familiar with, most peoples' notions of what art is can be tagged under the term “fine art,” art characterized by the academic application or manipulation of canonical art histories. Current biennials and similar event structures favor “contemporary art” over “fine art”; the reasons given are unconvincing for most people. What is really behind this phenomenon? The talk attempts to uncover some of the sophisticated root causes behind why some art practices are accepted into the realm of the international while others remain incompatible to it or outside of it.

7-7.45 pm

SUSANNE LEEB

GLOBAL ART AND ITS INSTITUTIONAL LIMITS

If we take the notion of Global Art seriously we would be confronted with numerous objects which specific aesthetics would not "fit" into our still modern notion of art. This concerns especially the big modern division in Ethnology and Art. In the talk I try to discuss to what extent institutional limits and museal categorizations – which artworks are a reflection of – are to be modified. Besides I will highlight some contradictions of a universal notion of art.

7.45-8.30 pm

DAVID BARTON

UNIVERSAL BIENNIAL: TAIWANESE CAMOUFLAGE AND SECOND CONSCIOUSNESS

There are three responses to the 2013 Taipei Biennial: Twirling (into autism), Camouflage (Hide yourself), Recruitment (make art public, like suicide bombers). In a Biennial devoted to the "Monster of History" who is cheering for the monster, who is cheering against and who just wants to read the monster as another natural disaster. The spectator of the Taipei Biennial becomes the potential recruit, examined, networked, advertised. For what job, here in Asia? The job of realization, the job of altering Marx's Asian mode of production, which has already been literally altered, but has it mentally been altered? Do the Taiwanese recognize themselves as historical artifacts of the Cold War, or as marginalized victims, a refugee of historical processes that first gave them to the Japanese, then to the Americans and now, lingering on the horizon, to China. How does the icon of the Biennial play out?