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The Practice of Cartography: Imagining World Art Studies After Eurocentrism

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THE PRACTICE OF CARTOGRAPHY
Imagining World Art Studies After Eurocentrism

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THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

As the discipline of art history becomes increasingly global, the prevalence of European systems of thought and the supremacy of European systems of value in the way that we record, synthesize, teach, and preserve history have become increasingly apparent. This primacy of European systems of value, what we may call Eurocentrism, can be reduced to a problem of singularity: the belief in a single canon, a single timeline, or a single hegemonic center. Taking as subject; the theoretical infrastructure of the discipline itself, the Eurocentrism that has shaped it, and the past twenty years of postcolonial discourse, this paper seeks to perform a kind of exorcism: extracting the conceptual effects of the Geist from art history and reconstructing our approach to the discipline around an engagement of pluralities and a methodology we might call cartography.

If Edward Said’s Orientalism, published in 1978, may be identified as marking the beginning of postcolonialism as an academic discipline, it can no longer be said today that the discipline is new\(^1\). However, even the most cursory survey of the discipline as expressed through pedagogy reveals that post-colonial analysis and global content are still primarily treated as an additive; taking the form of elective, upper-level courses or hermetically separated chapters at the end of survey-style textbooks. This begs the question: why hasn’t the research been integrated? Why is the global perspective additive, rather than transformative? Following my research into the history of art-historic

\(^1\) This paper was finished in 2017, nearly forty years after the emergence of postcolonial analysis as a field of study.
methodologies, I propose that the reason art history has been so resistant to the incorporation of postcolonial analysis is that Eurocentrism remains a fundamental element of the discipline as we know it. The first part of this paper, entitled The Geist in the Woodwork: The Construction and Persistence of Eurocentric Methodologies, will look backward at some of the key figures in the development of art history, as identified by Vernon Hyde Minor and Laurie Schneider Adams in their texts: Art History’s History and The Methodologies of Art (respectively), and trace the ways in which these historians and philosophers established and/or enforced Eurocentric concepts or systems within the foundational architecture of art history.

In order to understand why the absence of integrated post-colonial discourse should pose a concern, it is important to illustrate the effects of this Eurocentric framework on contemporary texts, historians, artists, and students. In addition to unpacking the misinformation that develops from a research vacuum and the reliance on imaginary frameworks, the second section of this paper, entitled: Eurocentrism in Action: Cultural Loss at the Intersection of Domination and Ignorance, will address the inextricable connection between art history and colonial violence through its manifestations at the theoretical level: the problem of inter-cultural brokerage by a dominant academic system; the conflation of geography and time; and the tendency of art historians to avoid hybrid case studies or fail to recognize contemporary post-colonial and diasporic artists as authentic or innovative.

Ta-Nehisi Coates wrote of the black literary tradition, “I did not find a coherent tradition marching in lockstep [with the white literary canon] but instead factions, and
factions within factions.”² This sensation is true of the search for a coherent solution to the issue of Eurocentrism in the discipline of art history as well. Yet, as with the black literary tradition, this “brawl of ancestors”³ offers fertile ground from which to imagine a way forward. The third section of this paper, entitled: Factions within Factions: Mapping Contemporary Postcolonial Discourse and Strategies, enacts the practice of theoretical cartography by presenting a cursory review of postcolonial criticism in art history over the past twenty years as it coalesces around certain broad themes: the issue of European centrality embedded in the center/periphery model of these discussions; the question of language and the philosophical implications of such basic terms as “art,” “history,” and “conceptualism”; the benefits and dangers of using intersectional case studies as a new critical vehicle; the highly political concerns surrounding material history, preservation, and sovereignty between cultures; and the debate concerning how, or whether, the canon may be adapted to reflect these post-colonial values.

The concerns raised by this analysis and by the critical discourse of the past twenty years are, in many ways, troubling and dangerous. In addition to critical understanding, these demand active and tangible resolutions. The fourth and final section of this paper, Cartography as Pedagogy: Applying World Art Studies, therefore represents my attempt to shift theory into practice and to propose the means by which the methodological practice of Cartography might be applied within the context of curriculum and pedagogy. Here, I will advocate for a stronger emphasis on specialization; for a reconsideration of the role of the survey course in undergraduate

³ Ibid., p 48.
curriculum; and for a survey course model that might better serve the values and goals of a World Art Studies.⁴

THE GEIST IN THE WOODWORK:

The Construction and Persistence of Eurocentric Methodologies

The issue singularity—wherein the discipline of art history constructs itself around the presumption of singular or hierarchal frameworks: the single canon, the single timeline, or the placement of one perspective at the center of global discourse—may be understood as having originated from certain core art historical ideologies: the linear and hierarchal construction of history termed ‘historical determinism’, the vested interest in authenticity, and the notion of a single, universal canon of masterworks. These ideologies have operated though art historical frameworks with a kind of objective impunity, functioning as a solid, irrefutable base upon which to perch contemporary historical narratives. However, when traced back through the history of the discipline to their origination in the work of Johann J. Winckelmann and within Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s philosophy of the Geist, these seemingly rational, objective ideologies reveal themselves, instead, to be overtly mystical, rooted in bias, and subject to misinformation. The history of how these nearly imaginary philosophies survived the more sober and rational practices of later historians through the mediating effect of subsequent scholars such as Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin, James Ackerman, and even Alfred Barr is also the history of how the Eurocentric notion of singularity was constructed and persistently ingrained into the discipline.

When Johann J. Winckelmann wrote The History of Ancient Art in 1764, he established a marker in both time and place from whence the history of art could be
counted, and against which every subsequent artistic development could be measured. He established it in ancient Greece. To this day, texts that outline the history of the discipline start their first chapters with Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus. In his survey text of the discipline of art history, *Art History's History*, Minor claims that Johann J. Winckelmann has been credited as the creator of modern art history. Consequently, his contributions to art history may be considered the basis of the discipline as we know it, and we can look to the guiding principles of his research and writing for clues regarding how western scholars continue to understand art history today. For example: Winckelmann’s 1764 text, *The History of Ancient Art*, reflected the belief that the practice of making art is essentially mimetic, consisting of copying visual experience, and that artists should therefore be exposed to ancient masterworks in order produce masterful pieces themselves. *The History of Ancient Art* listed the masterworks Winckelmann believed artists of his day should emulate. This list would eventually form the basis of our contemporary western canon—or as Minor described it, “[that collection] of great works that (we are supposed to agree) express or somehow embody the highest values of our culture, are most worthy of emulation, and should be studied throughout history.”

It is important to note that the majority of the artwork in Winckelmann’s list belonged to the Greek classical age. In fact, it was Winckelmann who established the unifying aesthetic and philosophical principles that would define the classical age for

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6 According to Minor, Winckelmann may even have been the first scholar to combine the words “History” and “Art” in a published text. Ibid., p.85.
7 Ibid., p 86.
later historians. However, it should also be noted that Winckelmann never personally travelled to Greece. His theories were based on very limited collection of writings, engravings, and sculptures available in Europe at the time, as well as his own subjective interpretation. In the process of centralizing ancient Greece in the European lineage, Winckelmann created “Classical Greece.” The foundation of Art History, it could be argued, is imaginary.

However imaginary it may have been, however, Winckelmann’s treatment of art history was linear and structured: an appealing foundation for future scholars to build upon. One such scholar was Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, whose Philosophy of Fine Art, derived from lectures given between 1820 and 1830 at the University of Berlin, extended that linear view of art history into a philosophy centered on the concept of the Geist. Literally meaning “ghost,” the Geist was conceived of as the ethos—spirit, ghost, or collective consciousness—of a culture. According to Hegel, this abstractly sentient Geist matures and self-actualizes through the collective growth of human culture, and its evolution can be traced though the history of visual art. Derived from Winckelmann’s structure and driven by the concept of evolution, Hegel’s philosophy organized art history in a strictly linear and hierarchical fashion.

Hegel outlined the growth of the Geist though philosophical stages of artistic production, beginning at the symbolic stage (Egyptian artwork, with formulaic human figures and a lexicon of symbologies); through the Classical stage (the golden age of

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8 Europe in the mid-eighteenth century was heavily influenced by its history as a part of the Roman Empire, and in post-imperial fashion, looked to Rome as the origin of culture. In such a context, Winckelmann’s assertion that the ‘nascence’ of great art was not in Rome, but Greece, was a radical one. Ibid., p 87.
Greek art, which is more rational and rooted in the human body as metaphor for the spirit); and then finally into the inevitable stage of Romantic Art (which comprises of post-classical, Christian artwork and privileges painting as the quintessential expression of complex existential themes.)

While Hegel’s narrative was not culturally sealed—it acknowledged the presence of Egypt in its history—it did serve to enforce a singular cultural and artistic lineage, in which Egyptian artwork was pushed backwards in both time and philosophical maturity, and European culture was established as the pinnacle of collective human actualization.

Art historian Alois Riegl may not be as well known outside of German-speaking countries, but his contribution to the canonization of Hegel’s philosophies within art history is worth noting. As described by Hegel, the fantastical nature of the Geist—and by extension the fantastical nature of art history constructed around the concept of the Geist—was overt. However, when Riegl sought to examine and explain the progressive development of styles, visual logic, and aesthetic in the history of fine art, he relied on the linear premise of Hegel’s philosophy to make the argument without overtly presenting it as such. In Riegl’s writing, the concept of the Geist reappeared as the Kunstwollen, or “will.” His reinterpretation stripped the concept of its sentience, thereby stripping back its overt supernatural quality, but preserved the notion of an inevitable and collective thrust forward. Borrowing not just from Hegel, but empiricist Immanuel Kant, Riegl reframed the construction of history as linear and hierarchal in an

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12 Ibid., p 102.
empirical language, lending it an air of objectivity and self-evidence it didn’t have before.

Also following in the empirical tradition of Immanuel Kant was art historian Heinrich Wölfflin. A Swiss scholar who fled to the United States after World War II, Wölfflin wrote lucid visual analyses based on direct observation in order to draw connections and identify artistic principles or laws. He established a methodology of “seeing” and a systemic language of categorization and description. The empirical clarity and apparent objectivity of his language appealed to American scholars, who viewed the fields of history and philosophy as categorically different from one other, and who generally resisted interdisciplinary approaches. As Minor wrote, “Because Wölfflin’s approach appears to be based upon empirical investigation, it has appealed to the nonphilosophical and nonsociological inclination of American academics.” It would be a mistake, however, to assume Wölfflin’s work was not predicated on the same magical philosophies put forth by Hegel and Riegl a century earlier. In fact, Wölfflin borrowed directly from Hegel’s Geist when he defined “the elusive spirit of an age” as the Zeitgeist in his best-known book, Principles of Art History, and argued, like Riegl, for the inevitable progression of style across art history; claiming that each artistic style or moment contains an “inner necessity” to evolve according to a linear logic of cause and effect. It is clear from Wölfflin’s focus on the monumental arts of Greece, Rome, and Western Europe that his lens was shaped by the same canon Winckelmann proposed

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13 Rafael Chacón, Interview with the author. University of Montana, November 12, 2015.
15 Ibid., p 122.
16 Ibid., p 123.
nearly two centuries earlier: in other words, his lens was decidedly Eurocentric in both content and construction.

In his struggle to negotiate the influence of European philosophies and practices within his own research, James Ackerman’s work illustrates the complex and sometimes conflicting process by which the European and American art historical processes were integrated. On one hand, Ackerman was suspicious of the vague, supernatural nature of the Zeitgeist. In his 1963 text with Rhys Carpenter, Art and Archeology, he wrote: “I have tried to define principles based as far as possible on the examination of the creative process, so that the individual work of art, and not the force of some vague destiny, might be seen as the prime mover of the historical process revealed by style.” 17 In many ways, Ackerman was among the strongest critics against what we may refer to as a Euro-mythic tradition. He intentionally wrote the last vestiges of mysticism out of art history by doubling down on the empirical tradition and advocating for the practice of reading artworks only against themselves. However, the appeal of a linear organization of art history, still rooted in Winckelmann’s canon of works, proved harder to reject—and Ackerman mapped his empirical, objective practice over the same imaginary skeleton proposed by Winckelmann and Hegel. This preserved the notion of history as a propulsion forward—or the belief in Historical Determinism—in our contemporary treatment of art history, and with it, the embedded presumptions of hierarchy that continue to privilege European sensibilities.

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This presence of historical determinism in American art history is possibly best reflected in the work of the modernist curator and critic Alfred Barr. As a curator of the Museum of Modern Art, he is best known for his 1939 exhibition, “Cubism and Abstract Art,” which presented the permanent collection of the museum in such a way that it drew a linear path from representational work into the increasingly ‘mature’ works of abstraction and high modernism. Barr defended this curatorial implication in the accompanying catalogue, describing each step towards pure abstraction as the result of increasing originality and daring. He completed the catalogue with a now infamous graphic chart, or ‘family tree,’ depicting the sequence of influences in a relatively clear, unambiguous fashion. On the official website for the Museum of Modern Art, the project is referred to as: “[the] genealogy of modern art from Cezanne and Gauguin,” (emphasis mine) and the language is important here. Although later curatorial projects and research would reveal to what extent Barr’s curation ignored any artworks within the established chronology that conflicted with the narrative he proposed, and sometimes went so far as to arrange objects out of chronology in order to support the point, the term genealogy on the museum website continues to reinforce the concept of direct and sequential lineages in the construction of art history.

This summary is far from a complete list of the art historians and critics that have shaped the history of the discipline as we know it, and several of the scholars omitted from this short summary have, in fact, recognized and sought to counter this tradition of

18 Alfred H Barr, Cubism and Abstract Art (New York: The museum of modern art. 1939).
linear history, mysticism, and myopic canons. Certainly, it could be argued that
presenting the genealogy of European influence in this way suffers from the same
linearity that it aims to critique.

However, the continued presence of these ideas in our current discipline is
inescapable. We still seem to visualize the discipline of art history along a singular
timeline, and Hegelian ideas of cultural essentialism and hierarchy continue to influence
the way the discipline navigates questions of artistic value and relevance. The fact that
such Eurocentric perspectives are not simply present in, but foundational to, the
discipline of art history explains why it has struggled to deconstruct itself—or reconstruct
itself—according to global realities. By acknowledging the extent to which this is true,
we may then be able to grasp the depth of critical analysis and deconstruction it will take
to exorcise the Geist.
EUROCENTRISM IN ACTION:

Culture Loss at the Intersection of Domination and Ignorance

In order to understand why the Eurocentric model of history fails us as scholars, it may be useful to ask why it is that we study art history to begin with. What is our objective? What do we hope to gain?

This is not a question we ask ourselves as often as we perhaps should, possibly because the answers lend themselves to broad and optimistic generalizations about human nature and collective human experience. At the risk of evoking such simplifications or sentimentality, I posit that we study the history of art for the same reasons as we study history: In order to more fully understand ourselves; what we are capable of, and what social and political patterns or events have created the context in which we must operate. Art objects and practices allow us to connect to a certain immediacy within these events and patterns, reflecting, as a series of case studies, what we (in the broadest sense) have valued or understood about ourselves and our circumstances across geography, time, and cultures. In his essay, “Prelude: Keeping the world together,” Ben-Ami Scharfstein refers to the human quality of empathy as both a reason to seek out art and the instrument that we may use to grasp it. He reminds us that human experience is contagious, and if we are not emotionally blinded by narrow-
mindedness or narcissism, we may access and exchange each other’s experiences through empathetic engagements with the things we create.21

If the goal of art history is, then, to expand the range of our empathy though exposure to one another’s art and to more fully understand ourselves in the process, then Eurocentrism fails us by limiting both our exposure and our capacity to understand. The concept of the Geist, though philosophically attractive, is also imaginary, and our reliance on this imaginary system interrupts our capacity to recognize more realistic frameworks. The canon, narrowed by bias and tradition, limits our exposure, and therefore invites us to drawn incomplete—if not altogether false—conclusions about who we are or who we have a capacity to be. In short, we are mislead. For these reason alone, we should be motivated to deconstruct Eurocentric systems in the discipline. However, the cost of Eurocentrism is not visited simply on the Euro-American scholar or student. The inextricable connection between Euro-American art history and colonialism means that the theoretical fallacies of Eurocentrism directly impact the majority of the world, and often in ways that benefit and perpetuate colonial and postcolonial violence.

Defined most simply, Eurocentrism is the privileging of European perspectives, historically or conceptually. Though this may seem self-evident, it merits expansion, particularly in regards to the embedded term: centrism.22 In assuming centrality—that is universality—Eurocentrism assumes that the European perspective is objectively true, or

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22 Not to be confused with the Canadian political party, or position of moderation within any two party political system; CENTRISM/CENTRALITY here refers to the positioning of one culture or perspective as the center, or pivot, of global culture; and the presumption that this singular culture can be an adequate reference for ‘universally true’ or applicable values, paradigms, concepts, aesthetics, or experiences. Centrism assumes that the culture at the center is the norm from which all others deviate.
universally applicable. When the Eurocentric perspective encounters a cultural other, it conceives of that other as a deviation—or derivation—from what is true or what is normal. Because of this, the Eurocentric imagination is incapable of conferring a parallel complexity onto the other; or of envisioning the other as capable of integrating foreign influences into its continued evolution the way it imagines Europe capable of consuming or folding the influence of foreign philosophies, aesthetics, materials, and cultures into itself without diluting its authentic European identity. To put it in terms of singularity, Eurocentrism assumes that there is a universal truth defined by its own worldview, which is articulated in the construction of a single canon, single timeline, and single philosophical center to any global scholarship.

Though critics of postcolonial discourse may argue that this is simply ethnocentrism, and far from a uniquely European quality, art critic Gerardo Mosquera cautions us not to confuse the two. He writes, “Eurocentrism is different [from] ethnocentrism…Eurocentrism is the only ethnocentrism universalized through actual world-wide domination by a metaculture, and based on a traumatic transformation of the world through [the] economic, social, and political processes centered in one small part.”23 Unlike ethnocentrism, which assumes its centrality through isolation or defense, Eurocentrism imposes the notion of a “global culture” actively, though practices of insertion, destruction, and absorption; and without awareness of its own subjective limitations. In short, Eurocentrism is fundamentally different from other forms of

ethnocentrism or xenophobia due to the depth and breadth of its influence across the globe. If ethnocentrism is narcissism, Eurocentrism is domination.

The effect of this colonial expansion upon art has been to establish the European methodologies of art history as the dominant agent of memory and artistic value, not simply in Europe, but across the globe. When Mosquera wrote: “One of the worst problems of the southern hemisphere is its lack of internal integration and horizontal communication, in contrast with its vertical—and subaltern—connection with the North,” he illuminated another effect of colonial legacy upon contemporary systems of cultural exchange, wherein the North, or the Euro-American center of power, remains the broker—and filter—of global cultures amongst each other. He termed this an apartheid, or enforced isolation, between south-south nations and cultures. Steven Nelson touched on this as well, and his text illuminates the way in which this “apartheid” is maintained through internalizations of the center/periphery model (or north-south model of brokerage,) by scholars, students, and curators across the world. On the difficulty of facilitating, or even finding, cross-cultural dialogues outside of Euro-American institutions, or ‘the hegemonic center’ of academic and curatorial influence, he writes: “It is shockingly easy to get international artists to talk to the hegemonic center: much harder to get them to talk to each other.” Sensitive to the power and resources Euro-American institutions have relative to other international institutions; it should not be surprising that international artists would, themselves, perpetuate the hierarchy of northern institutions. However, it should be concerning. Institutions and

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24 Ibid., p.222.
methodologies are, of course, closely linked, and when these artists are interpreted to each other through European institutions, they are interpreted through a set of methodologies that are ill equipped to understand or represent them. That these methodologies are Eurocentric matters for this reason: the failings and dangers of Eurocentric systems have an expansive and overwhelming influence in the real world.

In the essay, “In the Heart of darkness,” Nigerian artist and critic, Olu Oguibe pointed to one of the more insidious fallacies of post-Hegelian frameworks: the conflation of geography and time. The essay took its title from the 1899 novel by Polish-British novelist Joseph Conrad, The Heart of Darkness, which perfectly illustrated the phenomenon. In the novel, introspective British sailor Charlie Marlow travels up the Congo River by boat. Throughout the journey, he describes the sensation of traveling backwards to some primordial and savage moment in time: “Going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world.”26 This notion that Conrad’s characters could travel backwards into their own past by displacing themselves geographically and culturally illustrates the linear construction of history embedded in Hegel’s philosophy of the Geist; wherein Europe is the present, and the cultural other performs the role of Europe’s past. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault affirms this point; pointing to the fantasy of what he called “evolutive time” that appears in disciplinary methods aiming to chart the notion of progress, such as the discipline of art history when constructed along a Hegelian framework.27

According to Oguibe, the political control of ‘the present’ by the west is extended through the language of history itself: words like “prehistory,” “posthistory,” and even “modernism” serve to keep certain people from being able to exist in the contemporary world as an equal witness and critic. He writes, “Time is a colony.” If we confuse Hegel’s timeline for time itself, then temporal concepts such as “modernism”, “modernity”, “contemporaneity”, and even “development” become locked within the singular curated history that the Hegelian timeline incorporates, and any attempts to discuss modernity or innovation as it appears outside of a Euro-western context falters in a trap of misaligned sequence.

Gerardo Mosquera’s essay “The Marco Polo Syndrome: Some Problems around Art and Eurocentrism,” outlines the embedded connection between conflation of geography and time and the constructions of authenticity and value around the fantasy of a “pure other.” He speaks of a ‘splitting’ wherein the existing culture of a nation seems to be arrested at the precise moment of its colonization and a second culture begins to evolve in hybridization with the colonizer’s traditions, values, aesthetic, etc. in its place. Colliding with the Hegelian characterization of cultures as possessing some inherent or essential quality, a Geist, that unifies its authentic character—and therefore the belief that there is such a thing as an authentic culture—we are left with the belief that the colonized nation ceased to be authentic at the precise moment of its arrest. The result of this phenomenon is that the contemporary art and culture of once-colonized nations are dismissed by the west as derivative or inauthentic. Artists from colonized

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nations are therefore pressured to replicate antiquated traditions at the expense of their contemporary lived experiences, or be ignored.\textsuperscript{30}

Oguibe wrote in his essay, \textit{In the ‘Heart of Darkness’}: “The assimilation of outsider culture into European art is considered the most significant revolution of its time while the same is bemoaned in Africa as a sign of the disintegration and corrosion of the native by civilization.”\textsuperscript{31} What this reflects, once again, is the severe imbalance with which the West conceives of itself in relation to the cultural other. The notion that some essential ‘African-ness’ would be rendered inauthentic by contact with Europe—as though it had not already formed its pre-colonial identity through contact and exchange with other nations and tribes long before recorded contact with Europe, points back, once again, to the failure of the Eurocentric imagination to perceive any nonwestern culture as more than a chapter in its own, singular, past.

Even then, the contributions made by indigenous nations to the dominant Hegelian timeline are rarely acknowledged as such. In his book, \textit{Art of Colonial Latin America}, Gauvin Bailey states that the comparative silence surrounding indigenous contributions to colonial societies results, in part, from the tendency of art historians and anthropologists to favor “pure” cultures, or “civilizations supposedly untouched by the complex changes wrought by contact with others.” \textsuperscript{32} In other words: researchers are drawn to cultures that have not been complicated nor distorted by hybridization, and as a result, systemically ignore examples of intercultural complexity. While there is an argument to be made that such ‘pure’ cultures may present a neater subject, it would be

\textsuperscript{30} Mosquera, “The Marco Polo Syndrome.” p. 218-225.
\textsuperscript{31} Oguibe, “In the ‘Heart of Darkness.’” p. 231.
a mistake to assume that the comparative silence around hybridization is a result of laziness or cowardice across an entire field of study. Rather, this trend reveals the underlying certainty among researchers that cultures can, in fact, be whole within themselves. To accept that cultures develop over gradual and frequently complex systems of appropriation, translation, interruption, and exchange with their predecessors and contemporaries conflicts with this Hegelian philosophy. Culturally hybrid objects are therefore more likely to be ignored in part because there seems to be no place in a linear history in which to fit such examples, and in part because these examples threaten the linear structure of history on which the discipline, as we know it, depends.

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33 When Stuart Hall said in an interview: “Except in myth, there is no moment when cultures and identities emerge from nowhere, whole within themselves,” the statement was used as a rhetorical foothold, not a radical assertion. Naturally, we know this. That cultures develop over gradual and frequently complex systems of appropriation, translation, interruption, and exchange with their predecessors and contemporaries seems evident. However, against the canon of art historical and anthropological research, Hall’s statement suddenly seems less benign. Stuart Hall and Sarat Maharaj, “Modernity and Difference,” in Changing States: Contemporary Art and Ideas in an Era of Globalization, ed. Gilane Tawadros, (London: inIVA, 2004), p 190 -195.
FACTIONS WITHIN FACTIONS:

Mapping Contemporary Postcolonial Discourses and Strategies

When Ta-Nehisi Coates described the canon as comprised of “factions within factions,” he could just as easily have been describing the diverse range of writings and discussions by postcolonial critics, historians, and scholars addressing the discipline of art history over the past twenty years. The problem of how best to deconstruct the effects of Eurocentric limitations and create proactive solutions is a complex one, and it has spawned an equally complex discourse rife with competing ideas and incomplete answers. In the tradition of poststructuralist and feminist scholarship, many scholars have turned their analysis towards the articulation of fundamental Eurocentrism through seemingly benign characteristics of the field and towards the ways in which Eurocentric presumptions may articulate themselves in the very nature of our approaches and strategies. Daunting as the discourse may be, however, it is its scale and complexity that make it invaluable, as both content and practice, to reorienting our construction of the discipline around plurality.

If the problem of Eurocentrism may be restated as a problem of singularity, it follows that the solution to this problem might lie in the restructuring of our approaches around the concept of plurality. Hence, the practice of engaging the plurality of voices and perspectives across contemporary postcolonial discourse may be taken as a metaphor for the practice of integrating a plurality of works and epistemologies into a
new configuration of the discipline, which John Onians proposed we term *World Art Studies*.

The following chapter represents a review of the discourse as it has coalesced around certain broad themes: the issue of European centrality manifested in the center/periphery model of the subject itself and the false framework of duality that emerges when we attempt to replace, rather than displace, the center; the political and philosophical implications of our essential terminology, including the words “art,” “history,” and “conceptualism;” the benefits and dangers of using intersectional case studies as a new critical vehicle; the highly political concerns surrounding material history, preservation, and sovereignty between cultures; and the question of how, or whether, the canon may be adapted to reflect these postcolonial values. In addition to serving the presentation and comparison of the chapter’s content, the organization of this chapter into thematic sections and within which a plurality of perspectives are presented as lateral, rather than hierarchal may be taken as an example of the methodological practice of *cartography*, or “mapping.”

**Dismantling the Center/Periphery Model**

The feminist poet and critic Audre Lorde famously wrote, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” This paradox is especially true of postcolonial criticism that remains focused on the issue of Eurocentrism, as mine has throughout this

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34 Onians, *Art and Nature*.
35 The proposal to consider “cartography” as a methodological practice is covered in greater length in the fourth and final chapter of this paper, “Cartography as Pedagogy.”
paper. Ironically, the attempt to create distance from the hegemonic center continues to be measured against that center and therefore compulsively refers back to it. Critiques of European centrality nevertheless position Europe as the protagonist of their discourse. As Oguibe reminds us: “To counter perpetually a center is to recognize it.”

The result of this involuntary complicity with Eurocentrism is an implicit belief that there is such a thing as a center that must be occupied—if not by Euro-American theoretical frameworks, then by some comparable alternative. A kind of metaphoric battle offers itself to the imagination: the titan of European Perspective is confronted by its equally titanic adversary, ‘Global Perspective,’ which, true to the rules of duality, would be a singular, coherent force and Europe’s ‘pure’ opposite.

Of course, the image is false. To perceive Europe as one half of a dichotomy between itself and the entire rest of the world is a little like believing that the earth is one full half of the universe: it presents a stunning misunderstanding of scale. Stepping outside the framework of European centrality would not reveal one opposing perspective, but rather a constellation of them, each as independently complex as Europe’s and none more ‘central’ than another.

Ironically, a framework of duality does exist in some form today. However, this is not a duality between a European titan and global one, but between the Euro-American west and its sibling, the Euro-Soviet east. The Eurocentric framework we are familiar with in the United States is just one of two branches split from a common colonial history by the US/USSR cultural and political separatism of the Cold War. Considering the massive

(imperialist) expansion of cultural influence by both the United States and the USSR across separate areas of the globe since the Cold War, we might identify two hegemonic centers of theory, as enforced by colonial/imperial force: the Euro-American centricity and the Euro-Soviet centricity.

Writing about the challenge of inviting global scholars and artists to discuss the problems of Eurocentrism in his essay, “Conversation without Borders,” Steven Nelson pointed out that many of these scholars did not, in fact, refer to the dominating influence of Europe. “Moreover,” he writes, “when asked what art-historical hegemonic centers exists, instead of naming the west, participants, more often than not, identified the Soviet Union or other places closer to their homes.”

Parallel to our model of Euro-American centricity, Euro-Soviet centricity has many of the same problems we may find familiar. As Korean-American art historian Young Ji Lee noted in her paper, “Pivoting to the Foreign Homeland: Returnees from Japan and Postcolonial anxiety in North Korea:” To read the realist paintings of North Korean returnees from Japan after WWII through the lens of Soviet influence or theory fails to adequately address the more complex colony/post-colony relationship between Korea and Japan. The Korean fascination with seemingly European realism and style, according to Lee, is better understood as ‘recovery’ from Japanese colonialism of Korea than as the imposition of Soviet values over Korean art.

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Though it may seem strange that the framework of the discipline as we know it in the west fails to account for this fork in postcolonial European history or for the nearly equivalent philosophical, political, and aesthetic influence Soviet Europe has exerted over the parts of the world behind its side of the proverbial iron curtain, it should not actually be that surprising. The post-Hegelian model of singular centricity and linearity cannot conceptually accommodate this kind of fracture, and so it has ignored it.

Forgoing, then, the fantasy of a single adversary to a single European center, we are still left with a kind of purity paradox, wherein scholars attempting to mitigate the influence of (this) Eurocentrism search for discussants distant enough from any European influence as to provide a kind of authentic diversity of thought. The fallacy of this longing became clear to James Elkins in the editing of his book, *Is Art History Global?*, which aimed to feature as diverse a collection of art historians among its contributors as possible.\(^40\) Elkins solicited respondent essays to the book’s main text from scholars out of thirty-four different countries, including: Macau, South Africa, Benin, Paraguay, Venezuela, Georgia, and Uzbekistan.\(^41\) There was a kind of fantasy-fulfillment here: by inviting contributors who had neither previously participated in Western European or North American conferences nor published work in western languages, Elkins’ project promised to expand fully outside of the sphere of European influence and incorporate a ‘pure’ alternative to western modes of thinking.

\(^40\) Third in a series entitled, The Art Seminar, the book focused on the transcript of a roundtable seminar from a 2005 conference in Ireland and included essays from each member of the round table, as well as a series of responses by international art historians from across the world. Of the sixty scholars invited to write assessments and reviews of the Ireland seminar, forty were published. Elkins, James. “Can We Invent a World Art Studies” in *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and approaches*, ed. Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried. (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008) pp. 110.

\(^41\) Ibid., p. 108.
Without naming the scholars whose responses he had deemed unsuccessful or inappropriate to the project or even their countries, Elkins wrote: “some people who identify themselves as art historians are so far outside of American and European protocols of scholarship that they cannot yet engage the discussion we had set up.” He warned critics like himself to be weary of the assumption that every person who is interested in art and its history is capable of engaging in the kinds of discussion that interest the western art historian or the postcolonial critic of West art history.42

This is perhaps the greatest irony of the “pure adversary” fantasy: the truly other figure, suitably untouched by European theoretical influence, is not interested in Europe—or the European anxiety about its own centrality—as a subject. If countering a center is analogous to recognizing it, as Oguibe suggested43, then it follows that the scholar who does not recognize Eurocentrism is neither equipped to counter it nor particular interested in doing so. While it would, of course, be possible to interest such a scholar in becoming an adversary of Eurocentrism, this would require exposing them to Eurocentrism and thereby stripping them of that fantastical distance.

To return to Audre Lorde’s metaphor, it seems that any tools brought to the master’s house become the master’s tools. How, then, to dismantle it? Judith Butler’s essay, “gender is burning” may provide a useful counter-point to Lorde. In it, she writes about the possibility of subversion in a closed space, describing the way “disloyal repetitions” of hegemonic forms of power may destabilize and ultimately change the

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42 Ibid., p. 110.
43 Oguibe, p. 227.
structure of that power. Rather than depend on the possibility of an absolute external framework, we must accept that the effort of globalizing art history cannot rely on ‘purity’ or function in extremes. Participants in the effort will inevitably be implicated in the ideologies or power structures of the discussion. We may, and perhaps must, work within variations of the vocabularies and frameworks of the Eurocentric discipline as a starting point, or foothold, from which to expand. Approaching the deconstruction and reconstruction of the discipline through a practice of additive thinking and relentless incrementalism where various contrasting perspectives are considered in their complexity and plurality will not only displace Europe from the center, but ultimately displace the concept a center from our theoretical frameworks.

Problematizing the Essential Terminology: Art, History, and Conceptualism

In approaching the question of essential terminology, it may be worthwhile to remember the strong connection between postcolonial criticism and the tradition of poststructuralist or feminist scholarship. These systems of analysis interrogate complex social systems though their expression across seemingly benign details of society, such


46 Consider the influence of philosophers like Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Joanna Frueh, and Audre Lorde.
the use of specific terminologies. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that postcolonial
discourse regarding the issue of Eurocentrism would invite lengthy debate about the
specific language in use within the discipline and the philosophical implication of
essential terms such as “art,” “history,” and “conceptualism.”

The most contested term across the discourse is also the most obvious: “art.”

Common usage of the term generally relies on the assumption that the audience is able
to intuitively recognize what is, or isn’t, art. However, when we attempt to consolidate
that intuitive awareness into a single definition, as Ellen Dissanayake did over the course
of a chapter in her book, *What is Art For?*, the process reveals what seems to be an
endless loop of paradoxes. Every possible definition is easily followed by an exception47.

Even before taking into consideration the fact that ‘art’ is a culturally specific term
frequently mistranslated outside of European contexts, any attempt to define the term
suffers the tendency of the field to persistently resist and expand its own boundaries.

How, then, to define the term in such a way as to account for all these
exceptions, variations, and contradictions without ultimately arriving at a definition so
broad and vague that it becomes meaningless altogether? Perhaps more to the point: is
it worthwhile to continue searching for a definition—or defense—of the term?

In her essay, “The Trouble with (the Term) Art” Carolyn Dean referred to the
ambiguity and inconsistency of ‘art,’ calling it an “ambiguous term with multifarious and

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47 Can art be defined as necessarily aesthetically pleasing? Not if one considers the history of the
grotesque, the abject, or the “post art” aesthetic. Unique? Mechanically produced or digitally distributed
multiples, prints, and casts. Handmade? The readymade. Possessing or conveying some greater meaning?
Modernism and the AbEx movement. Made with the intention of being presented as art? Stolen or re-
contextualized artifacts. Essentially human? Monkeys, elephants, and software have produced imagery
indistinguishable from those of a person’s. The call and response of refuted definitions goes on.
inconsistent meanings” and points out that although we all seem to know and accept that this is true, the idea that art exists as a “universal that can and perhaps should be found in every society in every historical period pervades the discipline.” 48 Dean also reminds us that this presumption is rooted in the Eurocentric fantasy of the ‘Universal’ and that the conceptual separation of ‘art’ objects from other aspects of material or ritual culture, even in the ambiguous way we have defined it, does not exist worldwide.

Although Dissanayake reminded us that “not having a word for something doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist,” 49 Dean insists that the absence of a discrete category that translates to ‘art’ as we seem to mean it in English is relevant. She also warns us of the dangers of imposing our term, ‘art’ to those objects or within those cultural contexts that do not have it themselves. She writes:

In locating art where it was not found prior to our naming it, we risk re-creating societies in the image of the modern west [and] suggesting that cultures that did not possess the concept of art outright ought to have and that they would somehow benefit in having the concept introduced to (and for) them. 50

Ultimately, Dean recommends that the solution to the issue of translating the word, “art” is not, in fact, to translate it. Instead, she suggests that scholarship adopt indigenous terms, categories, and epistemologies alongside their objects and practices (where they can be recovered). This is not to say that Dean advocates appropriation. Rather, she suggests an integrated approach; situating objects within the beliefs that

49 Dissanayake, What is Art For? p. 36.
shaped them and thereby expanding our capacity to understand what the object we’ve recognized as art it may mean in context and how it may function within its own epistemological framework.

She brings up two examples of terms that could be considered in contemporary scholarship: the Nahua term, *toltecatl*, which can be loosely translated as ‘artist’, but literally means “the person who has a dialogue between head and heart,” and the Quechua word, *quillca*, which means “marking a surface,” and can refer to painting, drawing, engraving, tainting, or writing. In both of these examples, to translate these terms simply to “artist” or “art” would represent a loss—either of a complex idea about the nature of “art” as we see it or of the humbling notion that the decoration of a surface has not always been as singularly important as it has been in the west.

In a panel modeled out of Carolyn Dean’s essay entitled “Global Conversations,” several historians and critics expanded on this question of the term “art” and its’ limitations or borders. Ceren Ozipinar focused on the subject of Turkish miniatures painted during the Ottoman Empire’s occupation of Turkey, and how the cultural shift from Islam to a secular state has resulted in the erasure of the miniatures from published history and lectures, or from the categorization of “art,” despite their fundamental connection to contemporary Turkish visual culture. Sarena Abdullah spoke of the wealth of artistic practice in Malaysia, and how it has been marginalized by western historiography and criticism, in part because of its relation to Islamic, but not European,

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51 *Quillca* was originally interpreted as a loose translation for ‘painting, drawing, or engraving.’ The broader definition was later uncovered through closer analysis of Jesuit missionary texts. Dean, *The Trouble with (the Term) Art*, p. 28.

systems of value.\textsuperscript{53} One of the panelists, Davor Džalto, wanted to do away with the term ‘art’ altogether, claiming that the word itself is, as wrote Carolyn Dean, “Intellectually counter-productive” and so corrupted by economic systems as to become morally and intellectually compromised.\textsuperscript{54}

Although the work of Dissanayake, Dean, Ozpinar, and Abdullah all address the ways in which the term, ‘art’ may be insufficient, problematic, and dangerous, Džalto’s suggestion elicited an outcry from the panelists, and the audience, in defense of the term. Messy and incomplete as the word “art” may be, it seemed that no one in the room felt that it should be killed, as Džalto suggested. What emerged from the discussion was the certainty that imperfect and complicit as ‘art’ may be, its ambition to describe some common space of human creation, expression, and exchange remains worthwhile. There is a troubled boundary between ‘universality’ and empathy, and our defense of ‘art’ toes the line. However, without subscribing to the fantasy of a universally applicable concept of art, we might still be able to address the ways in which art functions as a tool for expanding our empathy and our dignity. Because we seem to believe that art represents an externalization of our humanity, recognizing the art of others is a means of recognizing their humanity and the ways it may be specific and complex. To be recognized as capable of making and connecting to art is tied to dignity. It was for this reason that Ozpinar, Abdullah, and the fourth panelist, Ana Mannarino fought to expand the term “art” to their cultures and practices. We, as a


room, were not ready to abandon the effort, or willing to see burn that which we had been fighting so hard to access.

The solution, then, is not to erase the term ‘art’ from our language, but to acknowledge its source, its limitations, and its borders. It is useful, as Dean suggested, to borrow indigenous names and ideas for the descriptions of what we, as western-formed scholars may first have identified as ‘art,’ or to follow those terms to the re-discovery of objects we may not have recognized as such, but may come to understand. As scholars, we are capable of accepting and utilizing subjective language and recognizing it as such. Therefore, we are capable of both discussing art and actively decentralizing the term ‘art’ from a place of privilege or a position of power. If we approach our scholarship, admitting: ‘this meets my informed definition of art, as a critic or historian, and so I choose to discuss it alongside other objects or situations that I also recognize as ‘art’; accepting that it may exist in other ways within its own context, and that these ways merit consideration’ we might loosen the hold of loaded terminologies over our intentions and practice.

In her book, Dissanayake ultimately deconstructed the term ‘art’ into a list of overlapping definitions, suggesting that the solution to the paradox of definition might be resolved by forgoing the single definition in lieu of a composite, or plural approach.55

In accepting that ‘art’ has not one false or impossibly broad definition, but several definitions that operate together, we may admit to the complexity of the term—

55 Unsatisfied with her list, I created my own. I offer that the word “art” as we apply it now slides between several meanings, and those of objects or situations which we may recognize or define as art most often meet one or more—though rarely all—of these criteria. As I define it, “art” is an umbrella category for an object or situation that demonstrates skill, or serves as a metaphor, or serves as an externalization, or serves as adornment.
and by extension, the field of study in which we’ve found ourselves. If we can train ourselves and our students to recognize which of these criteria we are applying to a particular object or practice under consideration, we may develop a more specific and sophisticated understanding of how we recognize, categorize, and compare artwork. We may also develop a stronger sense of the potential scale of the fully realized discipline.

Dealing with essential terminology such as ‘art’ as a composite of plural definitions also makes it easier to incorporate precise ‘borrowed’ indigenous terms become and to regard them as means of better understanding the existing parameters or limitations of the field and how it may continue to grow.

In a final argument for the continued use of the term, “art,” we might look at an example of what can happen when an attempt to replace terminologies without interrogating them reveals new biases and problematic frameworks. Both Pablo Lafuente and Thomas McEvilley wrote about an ambitious 1989 curatorial project in Paris, titled “Magiciens de la Terre.” They paid particular attention to the term “magiciens” in their criticism, a word choice both critics acknowledged was in deference to the ongoing anthropological debate about the definition and nature of the word “art” or “artist,” and dodged the hierarchy of “artist” vs. “craftsman;” both of whom were present in the show. The choice to refer to their contributors as “Magiciens,” or “magicians” in English, aimed for some new categorization; more to do with wonder than hierarchy. Because of their thematic aims of presenting a globally diverse show, however, the term “magiciens” unwittingly leaned heavily into the stereotype of the
“noble” or “magical” savage.\textsuperscript{56} Beyond the implications of the terminology, McEvilley mentioned that the approach to the cultural other through the stereotype of the noble savage was also present throughout the exhibit’s dominant aesthetic.\textsuperscript{57} According to Jean Fischer’s critical essay on the exhibit, this came though across the language and approached of the curatorial team’s solicitations and decisions as well.\textsuperscript{58} What the example of \textit{Magiciens de la Terre} ultimately tells us is that re-address without structural and philosophical adjustments or an attempt to avoid controversy through a simple shift of terms is not enough.

In the introductory essay to the book, \textit{World Art Studies: Exploring concepts and approaches}, Wilfried Van Damme touched on discussions had at the Clark Conference and Norwich Summer Institute regarding the title of the discipline they hoped to amend. In these discussions, the singular term, “history” took on a critical significance. Van Damme writes that singular uses of the word ‘history,’ ” might unwittingly suggest the idea that historical developments in the world’s various art traditions ultimately present one homogenous study that might lead to the portrayal of these various traditions on an evolutionary ‘ladder’ and instill a hierarchy of maturity and power.”\textsuperscript{57} Essentially, he suggests that the singular use of the word ‘history’ lends itself to the domination of the


discipline by Hegel’s timeline—or, should Hegel’s contribution somehow be displaced, that it be replaced only by another singular and hierarchal construction of history.

David summers wrote in his book, Real Spaces, “World Art History…is not a global history (which I think is both undesirable and impossible) but the discipline of art history itself, now faced with the task of providing the means to address as many histories as possible nearly enough in their own terms to permit new intellectual discussion.”

The suggestion that the discipline could become a means, or frame, in which ‘as many histories as possible’ would have the space to be explored in depth, and through the methodologies and terminologies best suited for their content and contexts opened the way for a new ambitious consideration of the discipline and to the term, “World Art Studies.” Additionally, loosening the distinctions between art history and art criticism within the larger frame of “art studies” allows for an integration history and criticism necessitating the study of art objects alongside the study of how we have come to think about, value, and question those objects and how those positions have changed with context and time. The practice makes the historian visible, along with their political and social context, and this visibility makes it easier for students to critically engage both the content and framework of their education. It also allows for new, experimental forms or cross-disciplinary research.

Electing for “studies” in place of “histories” also resolves one of the issues brought up by John Onians in his review of the global contributors who submitted incompatible papers to his book, Is Art History Global?: namely, that a number of these

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contributors did not see a meaningful difference between art history and art criticism. Onians offers that this was in part because these scholars had not been shaped by the methodological traditions that gave form to what we in the west recognize as art history. Under the title “World Art Studies,” such distinctions become less disruptive, and there is space in the discipline to consider these voices in balance with those of Winckelmann, Clive Bell, or Alfred Barr.

Though less broad-reaching than the debates over ‘art’ and ‘history,’ the analysis of the philosophical limitations of the word ‘conceptualism’ may provide a model for the continued discourse around other terms essential to our current artistic discourse. In their series of essays for the catalogue of a 2001 exhibition of African conceptual art entitled Authentic Ex-centric, Olu Oguibe, Salah Hassan, and Okwui Enwezor addressed the presumptions embedded within the term “conceptual art” in contemporary critical frameworks. Oguibe and Hassan identified the common characteristics of conceptual art: self-reflexivity, dematerialization, context-as-content, and certain trends towards the incorporation of language and text, performance, and relational situations. They made the case that these characteristics were also common to classical forms of African art, as well as Oceanic, Asian, and Indigenous art. 61

The essays sought to ask the question “Is there an African conceptual practice?” and in so doing, posed larger questions about the west’s ability to name as “new movements” the reemergence of traditional non-western practices within a Euro-American context (or within the possession of European and American artists and

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institutions). Oguibe, Enwezor, and Hassan pointed to the irony of western critics and curators who look back to the very cultures who inspired or originated this ‘movement,’ and ask whether they have arrived there yet.

Although Enwezor acknowledged that the use of these historically non-western practices to deconstruct and critique the hegemonic presence of modernism in particular can be considered an integral element to what we call conceptualism, Oguibe and Hassan remind us that the domination of African institutions by European systems of artistic theory and values have marginalized these classic characteristics from African academic or modern work as well, meaning that the (re)turn to traits of African Classicism in Africa since the 1970s meets this final requirement: carving out a radical, if not unsteady “conceptualism” in the contemporary moment.

Regardless, the questions these essays raise are worth consideration: is “conceptualism” so tethered to its relation to modernism and American frameworks as to necessitate that a nation must be within American hegemony or subjugated by it in order to create ‘conceptual work’? Is the discourse surrounding ‘conceptualism’ capable of addressing the difference between a turn to, a return to, or a continuation of practices conceived of as new or innovative only in the specific confines of Euro-American lineage? How does terminology like “conceptualism” travel between international and multinational artists and institutions? One might hope that approaching these terms

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63 Hassan and Oguibe, p. 10-12.
form a philosophy of plurality would bring such questions—and their solutions—to the forefront.

Using Intersectional Case Studies as a Critical Vehicle

The absence of hybrid examples in the canon of our Eurocentric art history, as observed by Gauvin Bailey⁶⁴, has been a recurring concern in the debates regarding the creation of a new World Art Studies. Recognizing that the exclusion of hybrid content is a feature of Hegelian frameworks, scholars invested in the ‘exorcism’ of the Geist, myself included, have worked to bring such hybrid examples back into the foreground of art studies. Others, such as Ben-Ami Scharfstein, remind us that hybridity already exists in examples that we may have been trained to ignore, such as the work of Hokusai and Degas.

Ben-Ami Scharfstein established hybridity and cross-cultural influence as a sort of inevitable reality, invisible to us only through our own veils and refusals through a number of what he calls, “subtractive fantasies” in his prelude to the book World Art Studies. By imagining the absence of one culture from the larger map of art history and following the hypothetical effects of its absence, Scharfstein reveals how indebted much of what we think of as Western art is to those influences we so often hold out of sight, or history.

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⁶⁴ You may recall from Chapter two that Gauvin Bailey, in the book Art of Colonial Latin America, stated that the comparative silence surrounding indigenous contributions to colonial societies results, in part, from the tendency of art historians and anthropologists to favor “pure” cultures, or “civilizations supposedly untouched by the complex changes wrought by contact with others.” Meaning that researchers are drawn to the idea of cultures that have not been complicated nor distorted by hybridization, and as a result, systematically ignore examples of intercultural complexity. Bailey, Art of Colonial Latin America. (London: Phaidon Press, 2005), p. 72.
The first of these subtractive fantasies Scharfstein proposed was the absence of Japanese artists from the history of art. Without Japanese artist Kionaga’s diptych of women bathing, which hung in Degas’ bedroom, and the influence of Hokusai and Utamaro, Sharfstein suggested that we would not likely have many of Degas’ “bathers” paintings, or even his tendency to work in a series. Gauguin is said to have directly borrowed Hokusai and Kuniyoshi’s figures and compositions in a number of his paintings, which would disappear with them. Van Gogh, it seems, idealized the dreamy quality of Japanese rural and landscape imagery and this inspired his move to the south of France in search of similar examples of rural life. Without the influence of Japan’s aesthetic, we lose all of Van Gogh’s Arles paintings as well. Another subtractive fantasy, the subtraction of Africa, naturally erases Picasso and Matisse from the map, and with them, cubism. Modernism, which grows out of cubism, falters from the gap and may not recover.

Of course, the fantasy also works in reverse: without the presence of European prints and Jesuit artists in China and Japan, Hokusai’s particular style—which emulated European styles of shading and perspective—disappears as well. The Chinese artist Tseng Ching, known as an extraordinarily realistic portraitist by Chinese standards, was certainly moved by European insistence on naturalism and emotion, as well as a certain vividness or opacity of color, which Tseng Ching represented through washes.\(^{65}\) The exercise could continue infinitely, with the same result: ‘pull this thread,’ and immediately whole swaths of history fall away.

Simple as it is, the exercise of subtractive fantasies illustrates the plural nature of art and cultural history. If so much of what we take for original culture is rooted in these interconnected and inter-reliant histories, then history cannot be visualized as a line. Instead, one might picture constellations or perhaps neural maps, with certain objects—such as Picasso’s Demoiselles D’Avignon (plate 1)—forming the juncture between several traditions and exchanges.

If art may be seen as a kind of case study in the larger project of recording and understanding history, then these particular hybrid objects, which we might call intersectional case studies, may be unfolded, so to speak, into a critical vehicle for studying art, history, and culture. It was with this ambition that I delved into the study of certain intersectional objects within my own research:

*The Miraculous Mass of St. Gregory* (plate 2), was a Nahua, or Aztec, feather-painting produced by Amantecas, or a collective of feather-painting artisans from present-day Mexico, in 1539. The piece replicated the content and composition of a fifteenth century German engraving by Flemish artist Israhel van Meckenem and connects traditional Nahua practice and Dutch catholic imagery, reflecting the appropriation of indigenous art forms by Jesuit missions during colonial expansion.66

The Liberal Arts and Four Elements (plate 3) was a circa 1670 ‘biombo,’ or Japanese-style standing-screen painting in multiple panels, created by mestizo (Moorish-Spanish and African) Mexican artist Juan Correa using the Baroque style.

(Plate 1)
PABLO PICASSO
Demoiselles D’Avignon. 1907
Oil on canvas
Museum of Modern Art, NYC
(plate 2)
Unnamed AMANTECA
The Miraculous Mass of St. Gregory, 1539.
Feather on Wood; 26” x 22”. Musée des Jacobins, Ausch.
(plate 3)
JUAN CORREA
The Liberal Arts and Four Elements, c.1670.
Oil on Canvas; 95” x 127” Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City
(plate 4)
LUIS NIÑO-Potosí Painter
Our Lady of the Victory of Malaga, 1735
Oil on canvas. 59”x 43”.
Denver Art Museum (original: Bolivia)
YINKA SHONIBARE
How to Blow Up Two Heads At Once (Ladies) 2006
Multimedia: mannequins, guns, Vlisco wax printed cloth.
Collection of Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA
Connecting Japanese, Baroque, and Mexican sensibilities with multiracial Afro-Latino subjectivities, the piece nearly bridges the world.\textsuperscript{67}

\textit{Our Lady of the Victory of Malaga} (plate 4) is an example of many similar paintings by indigenous and mestizo paintings from colonial Peru, where the Andean deity of Pachamama is thinly veiled as the image of Mary. The form of the dress and triangle crown relate back to Pachamama mountain iconography, and in this example by Luis Niño, the symbol of the crescent moon and two vertical lines form the image of an Inka ceremonial knife, or \textit{Tumi}, and allude to pre-Hispanic royalty and power. The blossoms at her feet, too, reference Andean ritual.\textsuperscript{68}

\textit{Vlisco}\textsuperscript{69} wax cloths, as quoted by contemporary Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare in \textit{How to Blow Up Two Heads At Once (Ladies)} (plate 5) and the rest of his mannequin series, are a portrait of global cultural exchange. These represent Dutch interpretations of Indonesian design overtaking Islamic and then Portuguese trade between West Africa and south Asia in order to saturate the western and central African market to such an extent that they would be identified as authentically “African.”\textsuperscript{70}

In their essay, “Interculturalization in Art: Conceptualizing Processes and Products,” Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried Van Damme addressed the frameworks by which this kind of hybridity might be discussed by offering a new comparative vocabulary of exchanges. These terms sought to reflect the histories of trade routes, religious

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\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., p. 46.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., pp. 94-97.
\textsuperscript{69} “Vlisco” is short for the company name: Van Vlissingen & Co.
\textsuperscript{70} Amanda Elizabeth Hicks, \textit{Tailoring Patterns of Perception: Dutch Wax Textiles, Yinka Shonibare and Cultural Brokerage in the Postcolonial Age}. Thesis presented to the Department of Art History and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon. (Eugene: University of Oregon, 2006) p. 3.
conversions, military or political conquests, hybrid innovations of diasporic communities, international markets and tourism, and the mimetic nature of artistic curiosity and adoption. They introduced the term, “Acculturation,” referring to the notion of one-way cultural exchange through domination or assimilation, and compared it to terms such as “Interculturalization” or “Transculturation,” referring to a mutual or reflexive change wherein or each party contributes to or is being changed by the encounter. The purpose of this new terminology is to strip from our historical frameworks the presumption that Europe may absorb cultural influence without alienation from its identity or agency while non-European cultures are rendered inauthentic by any sign of European influence. Instead, “Interculturalization” insists that each participant may be active in the process of transforming their culture in response to contact with new influences.

In our enthusiasm for these case studies and the complex history of intercultural exchanges they signify, however, we may rush to emphasize connections and cross-histories at the expense of more diligent research. In his introduction to the panel,

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73 This is not to suggest that hybridity is not complicated by violence, theft, murder, and genocide; that it is consensual, or that it is equal. As Sarat Maharaj reminded us in his interview with Stuart Hall, there is an inevitable loss in each act of translation: the ‘penumbra’ of meaning that forms in the epistemological context of a form or phrase is inevitably misappropriated, if present at all; and every translation is not, in fact, an transferal, but a recreation in a new context. Sarat Maharaj and Stuart Hall “Modernity and Difference” p 192.
“Connected Art Histories: A Global Flow of Images,” Historian Yukio Lippet advised us to use caution. He addressed a recent rush towards what he called, “flamboyant hybrids,” or “flamboyant examples of cultural circulation.” These ‘perfect’ junctures of expansive histories create their own seductions; encouraging the scholar to stretch the likeliness of connections where these may in fact be tenuous at best, or to miss more subtle points of exchange happening within cultural interiors in favor of the more ‘flamboyant’ cases. Consider Young Ji Lee’s research into the relationship between Japanese and Korean aesthetics, for example; or the influence of textiles from Paracas in the southern coast of Peru on Inka textiles nearly two thousand years later; or the relationship between the angular sculpture of Teotihuacan and the colossal Telemones found in the Toltec city of Tula, which the Toltec would have seen in their migration south. These examples of intra-regional complexity should not be sidelined in favor of those hybrid histories in which the west remains a protagonist, or where the breadth of influences at play satisfies some touristic impulse.

In essence, what is true of the grand or flamboyant hybrid is true of the regional or specific example also. In their inherent, inextricable hybridity, each of these objects forms an argument for this case: that history is plural, and that case is constructed through are interwoven, simultaneous, and often multi-leveled influences.

75 As described by Young Ji Lee, in her paper: “Pivoting to the Foreign Homeland: Returnees from Japan and Postcolonial anxiety in North Korea.”
Material Preservation and Cultural Sovereignty

Another important concern has emerged on the landscape of current art historical practice and politics: this is the confluence of history and preservation applied at the global scale. Specifically, conflicts have emerged in response to the Euro-western belief in preservation as informed by an ideology wherein cultural memory—and therefore art—is centered on the physical object in its singular occurrence, and that, in a linear history, specific moments frozen in time may be more socially relevant (or authentic) than their continued transformation across time, generations, practice, and adaption.

As Ana Mannarino reminded us in her paper “Art History and Cultural Hegemony in Brazil:” “Art is not a universal concept…and the indigenous idea of art is not characterized by constant supersession, but rather by continuity.”78 For indigenous cultures in Brazil as for many indigenous cultures throughout the world, Mannarino tells us, the knowledge of how a thing is done often supersedes the products of that knowledge, specifically when it comes to artistic practices. The integration of organic, temporary, or decomposing materials (plants, soluble pigment, etc.) in artwork from indigenous peoples in Africa, Brazil, and elsewhere reflects the fact that the preservation of an object through time was not necessarily important to its cultural value or purpose, and in some cases, would actually run counter to it.79

Consider, for example, Enwezor’s essay on African conceptualism, where he states that “African Objects were never ends in themselves,” meaning not that the

79 Ibid.
physical objects did not matter, but that they mattered in their ability to be “activated” by context. He referenced an Igbo concept, which he paraphrased as: “where there is something standing which can be seen, there is something standing next to it which cannot be seen, but which accompanies the object.” The collection of African Masks and artworks by European archeologists displayed in museums in the western framework of ‘art’ certainly represented theft, but it also represented a kind of ‘death’ for the object though the stripping bare of those elements of performance and context—that penumbra—that gave it social significance for its makers and intended audience.

Ikem Stanley Okoye and Rosa De Jorio both presented papers to a panel entitled, “Islam and Contested Cultural Heritage in Africa” in which they each presented case studies where the untranslatability of materially-based value of preservation intersected with local values in problematic ways. Both, perhaps unsurprisingly, referred to UNESCO’s presence in the Islamic African world.

Okoye presented the paper, “Preservation, Priorities, and the Histories: Private vs. Public in Agadez” on the subject of UNESCO’s attempts to preserve the city of Agadez in Niger as a world heritage site and the messy ways they went about it, failing to take local resistance and controversy into account or ascertaining the expected permissions from local government before instilling a controversial system of regulations and enforcement. As residents of a preserved site, the inhabitants of Agadez are prevented from building on, adapting, or even repairing their homes outside of designated restrictions in order to preserve the superficial appearance of the particular

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moment in history when the city was deemed ‘authentic.’ The irony, here, is that one of
the most highly regarded historical buildings in Agadez: the “Maison de Sidi Kã” or the
“Maison du Boulanger,” is itself the result of alterations and multicultural ornamentation
by an immigrant to the city around the time when the city was ‘frozen,’ and the lauded
house, with all the qualities UNESCO historians have heralded, would be illegal to build
according to current restrictions.81

In a more extreme example of this friction around preservation, Rosa De Jorio’s
paper, “Contested sites of remembrance: Islamic heritage in Timbuktu” profiled the
philosophical and political standoff between UNESCO, which is attempting to preserve
historic mausoleums in Timbuktu in Mali, and or Abu Tourab (full name: Ahmad Al
Mahdi Al Faqi,) who has lead a radical Islamic group in the destruction of those same
mausoleums. These modest constructions over the graves of important Islamic saints
and scholars reflect Mali’s history at the center of the Islamic world in the 13th Century.
However, in response to UNESCO’s commitment to preserving these structures, Abu
Tourab and his group had been systemically leveling them, leading UNECO to rebuild
them once again. In a bizarre standoff, a cycle of deconstructions and reconstructions
culminated in armed guards posted around the rebuilt mausoleums and Abu Tourab’s
arrest. In a statement regarding the situation, UNESCO’s director referred to the
destruction of the Mausoleums as “barbaric.” Her choice of words reflected the chasm
that had developed between the two parties and the breakdown of understanding or
empathy between them.

81 Ikem Stanley Okoye, “Preservation, Priorities, and the Histories: Private vs. Public in Agadez” (paper
presented for the panel: “Islam and Contested cultural Heritage in Africa” at CAA, New York, NY, February
It may be interesting to note, however, that the “barbaric” destructions were, in fact, handled carefully: Abu Tourab and his team used hand-held tools so as to localize the destruction to the structure alone, leaving the tomb undisturbed. It is also true that since Abu Tourab’s arrest, he has published an apology and financially contributed to reconstruction efforts. However much one may disagree with his actions or values, to treat these actions a barbaric and without logic is to miss the point. The actions were intentional and measured against a clear set of values, which dictated that the structures should not exist, because the ‘worship’ of these structures by the west and could be considered blasphemous to the philosophy of their creation.\footnote{Rosa De Jorio, “Contested Sites of Remembrance: Islamic Heritage in Timbuktu” (paper presented for the panel: “Islam and Contested cultural Heritage in Africa” at CAA, New York, NY, February 15-18, 2017).}

These case studies not only beg questions regarding when we have a right to remember and be remembered, but also when we might observe a right to forget. More to the point: who owns history? To insist on the preservation of objects within a culture that philosophically believes that preservation\footnote{And here, we find ourselves navigating a kind of slippage between preservation and worship or fetishization.} is a blasphemy or violation may place the practice art preservation in the role of cultural (memory) theft.

Though I am deeply interested in the question, I am without answers. Do we defend the right to remember as argument for collective human culture? Do we acknowledge the agency of a culture to forget its history and destroy its past? What if this means risking—once again—a discipline ignorant of the significant history of Islamic art through its absence from the material canon, and by extension a limitation of the empathy that some awareness of each other’s art may facilitate? Could some non-
transgressive compromise, such as Chad Elias’s suggestion that 3D mapping and printing may allow for preservation without removal, displacement, or armed guards in the private backyards of people in Timbuktu,\textsuperscript{84} offer a morally satisfying answer to either party?

In the immediate sense, the methodological model of cartography seems to offer little recourse to the immediate tangibility of these problems. However, at the risk of sounding overly optimistic, I believe that an art historical discipline based around plurality and in which the acknowledgement of subjectivities is philosophically embedded could prepare future scholars for these conflicts of values, so that moral chasms such as the one between UNESCO and Abu Tourab’s group might not yawn so wide in the future.

\textbf{Can there be a Canon in World Art Studies?}

The question of how, or whether, to adapt the canon into the foundation of a World Art Studies is an exceedingly practical one, though no less philosophically complicated. As postcolonial critics, we understand that the canon embedded in contemporary western art history is still deeply reliant on Winckelmann’s original proposition, and that one of the ways Eurocentrism has managed to dominate the discipline of art history is through the continued use of this canon and its biases. From this perspective, the notion that the canon should be reconsidered seems obvious.

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However, to what degree? Is it possible to edit or amend the canon? Or must it be abandoned altogether?

Since Winckelmann’s original text, the duration of art history has comprised of amending the canon he originally proposed, with the majority of these amendments comprising of the addition of artworks, ideas, and terms. Yet, the conceptual ethos and European bias of the original canon have remained intact. If we understand that Europe is not equal in scale to the rest of the world, we must also understand that, to truly create a summary list that represented each culture as fully as it represents Europe would be to increase it exponentially. Do we have the capacity to navigate such a drastic shift in scale? Would anything short of this massive expansion represent a betrayal of the intent: reducing the diversity of content to a role of adornment and perpetuate the ‘supplementary’ attitude with which global artworks are currently handled?

Julian Bell’s textbook, *Mirror of the World*, represents a noble effort towards building an integrated global canon. The structure of the textbook is chronological and categorical but jumps geographically and culturally in each section, exposing his readers to diverse responses to similar thematic interests at similar moments in time. By presenting disparate artworks in each slice of time, Bell invites his readers to build connections and trace relationships outside of a single imposed narrative.

However, the success of Bell’s text had its limitations, which he addressed in the book’s preface. The primary issue was that of scale, which he linked to a feature of the discipline itself. He wrote, “A work of Art seeks to hold your attention and keep it fixed: a history of Art urges it onwards, bulldozing a highway through the house of the
imagination.”⁸⁵ At a global scale, the pace of the historian is exacerbated and the focus of breadth over depth invites shallow understandings—if not outright misunderstandings—of some artworks that may already be outside students’ frame of reference. If the goal of art history textbooks and courses is to facilitate relationships between students and artworks, this issue of breadth over depth creates a significant loss. How might the student build a relationship to an artwork if they are forced, by the scale of the task, to brush past it?

Bell’s solution to this issue of scale was to set limitations regarding what he would cover and how he would cover it. For one, he chose only to feature artwork that was visual and object-based. This choice, of course, takes a stand regarding what might be considered art that leans in western favor and necessarily leaves out the indigenous sensibilities of action or performance, addressed by Enwezor and Mannarino. Secondly, Bell narrowed the questions he asked of each piece; focusing on material and process as opposed to the social context and consequence of each piece. Because so much of the cultural knowledge we may hope to gain through studying art happens across this second set of questions, Bell’s final product more closely resembled the actions of a colonial museum collecting objects into its infrastructure than any meaningful inclusion of autonomous and self-possessed artistic practices.

If Bell’s serious attempt to create a successful canon for World Art Studies still managed to fail in these small but significant ways, it may be difficult to visualize what a

successfully amended canon could look like. We may even find ourselves asking whether the solution might not be to do away with the notion of a canon altogether.

This, however, brings us back to the vocal outcry given at the suggestion that we might abandon the word ‘art’. As the panelists and audience of “Global Conversations III” asserted; to do away with categories at the precise moment when they begin to allow for global access represents a kind of cruelty, and to treat the category as ‘done’ or without further value is to communicate a kind of privilege.\(^8^6\)

Kitty Zijlmans explained it well in her essay, ‘The Discourse on Contemporary Art and the Globalization of the Art System’, in which she referenced the 2004 Edinburgh workshop, “Art History in National Context: Structures and Institutions of Scholarship.” Here, scholars from Slovenia, Estonia, and Latvia discussed the challenges of constructing or re-constructing a post-soviet national identity. Analyzing the conversation, Zijlmans wrote:

> It is an example of the dissimultaneity of evolving art systems that these countries are struggling to forge national cultural identities and subsequently a national history and canon of art [while] the concept of canons of art are heavily contested by the discourses of the dominant Euro-American system and are thrown overboard.\(^8^7\)

What is true of Slovenia, Estonia, and Latvia in this case is certainly true of Africa, South and Central America, Asia, and Indigenous nations as well. The right to create a canon is of crucial importance to national identity-formation and sovereignty. For contemporary

\(^8^6\) Global Conversations III” at CAA, New York, NY, February 15-18, 2017.

scholars in the US and Europe, then, to insist that the notion of a canon is no longer viable in the field of art history reveals a level of over-confidence in the privilege of operating as agents of a dominant/colonial power, free of the need to ‘reorder’ itself or resist the anxiety of erasure, more suspect than the notion of the canon might be.

The solution, then, is not to get rid of the concept of “a canon” so much as the notion of “the canon.” In the same way contemporary discourse favors “Histories” over “History”, it may be useful to deal with canons as multiples. The canons, here, would be overlapping, autonomous collections framed within epistemologies and languages best suited to term, and flexible by nature; expanding and contradicting in response to the work of critics and historians within their fields.

Parul Dave-Mukherji offers useful closing thoughts on the subject of the canon. As he wrote in his essay, “Art History and its Discontents”, his aim is not to “celebrate the denser peopling of the art map…. but to register the postcolonial redistribution of the sensible, and to grasp the ‘double movement’ of the world shrinking into a planet and the simultaneous expansion of the constituencies of artists and viewing public.”

In essence, through a multiplicity of canons, the map of the discipline does, in fact, become denser and far more balanced. In addition to his, however, by not trying to force this new breadth into a singular lineage or collection, the complexities of context, language, philosophy, epistemology, and the critical importance of sovereignty are not compressed out of recognition nor reinvented in the service of a singular conception of

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art. Once again, it is through plurality that the full scope of World Art Studies might exist in the discipline with room to invite discourse, empathy, and passion.
CARTOGRAPHY as PEDAGOGY:

Applying World Art Studies

This paper is clearly centered on issues within the discipline of art history at the theoretical level. Throughout my research, I have been primarily concerned with analyzing the systems of thought and overarching concepts that, in turn, shape our direct approaches. I believe that it is at this theoretical level that long-enduring paradigms and dominant frameworks can be deconstructed, understood, and redirected. Ultimately, these adjustments at the theoretical level could have concrete effects not only the ideas and politics of artists, students, and scholars; but on their tangible lives as well, for it is worth remembering each of these theories correspond to and often stem from actual lived effects and experiences.\(^9\) However, if we might take the cacophony of contemporary postcolonial discourse presently juxtaposed against a slowly changing pedagogy as an example; it is altogether too possible for conversations had purely at the theoretical level to be lost in the proverbial fray.

\(^9\) Take, for example: the way that the conflation of geography and time has impeded rational political responses to natural and political catastrophes in the non-western countries in part because these countries seem to exist in a ‘past’ and do not seem as though their effects will be felt in the western ‘present;’ the way the fixation with the notion of the authentic has excluded many contemporary non-western artists from institutional representation and pushed others to hyper-perform their ‘authentic character’ to the point of altering the way art is made by certain communities; the way the inability to recognize cultural differences in terms of what ‘art’ may mean or what art may be ‘for’ manifests in the theft and misrepresentation of culturally significant objects from indigenous peoples all over the world, creating political standoffs around repatriation, destruction, and military-enforced attempts at preservation; or the suggestion that by abstractly personifying culture into a Geist through the lens and language of his own German context, Hegel armed other thinkers to perceive Germany as some essential whole and that these ideas were a contributing factor in the extremes of Germanic ‘cultural purity’ embedded in the rise of the Nazi party and the catastrophic events of World War II. (Rafael Chacón. Interview by Aja Sherrard. Discussion Session within Methodologies Course. University of Montana, November 12, 2015.)
Because I began this project out of my own concerns regarding diversity in the context of pedagogy, it is through the process of imagining pedagogical applications of this research that I will bring my efforts ‘home,’ so to speak, and illustrate what the exorcism of Eurocentric frameworks, the privileging of pluralities, and the methodological practice of cartography may look like on the ground.\(^\text{90}\)

The problem of Eurocentrism in the discipline of art history is complex and multifaceted. However, much of its effects can be understood as a problem of singularity: the belief in a single timeline, a single hegemonic center; a single universal definition of the word ‘art’, or a single canon of important works. As evident across the expansive discourse cited throughout this paper: singularity, especially at the scale at which contemporary art history hopes to extend itself, is a falsehood, and a dangerous one.

By relinquishing our impulse to believe in the singular, or to compress the breadth of content, concept, and philosophy of world art into a single canon or category, we allow ourselves to view the discipline of art studies through the paradigm of pluralities, or as countless and lateral points of information.

\(^{90}\) Though these cannot be the focus of this section, it is worth mentioning that there are active steps we can take in terms of research and Institutional reform as well. At the research level, we should strive to invite more voices into the field and expand the range of who is listening to them speak by publishing work by a wide range of researchers and artists and translating historical texts and criticism, not only into English from other languages, but from English to every language possible, and most importantly, between various subaltern languages without the brokerage of Euro-American interpreters. Institutionally, we must critique the role of curator-as critic. This is not to say, “don’t curate,” but to advocate that we curate with a self-awareness of the ways in which curation dictates knowledge and access. We should experiment with curation formats that integrate the communities and the epistemologies of the works being curated. We should commit to navigating the issues of sovereignty and ownership carefully, and we should accept certain losses. Finally, we should continue fund global scholars, support local institutions, and aim to practice transparency where economics, politics, and Institutional values collide.
In shifting its language from the singular ‘history’ to the inclusive and plural term, ‘studies,’ the configuration of the discipline under the name *World Art Studies* is fundamentally rooted in this visualization of the discipline not a *timeline* but as a *living constellation*.

One might liken the breadth and motion of world art across time to the metaphor of the internet: both contain vast amounts of compelling information within which each case study (page) can unfold (hyperlink) into related content, influences, connections, and comparisons. As in the Internet, each path of inquiry forgoes another path that might have been taken at that same juncture and the process of research is littered with these uninvestigated connections. Finally, as for the Internet, it is not possible to methodically or chronologically “read” the field in its entirety.

If we take the model of the Internet as a metaphor for the field of *World Art Studies*, then we accept that the methodology of study with which we approach it cannot be designed to *list* the content of the discipline, as historical determinism hoped, but to *navigate* it.

It is here that the phrase *cartography* enters.91

The intent of using ‘cartography’ as a verb to describe a methodology is to evoke the image of a map as the root of the practice. Consider, for a moment, the way information is presented on a map: set at a distance, the map offers all information as

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91 While I am not aware of cartography used as a verb any place outside of this text, I will be the first to admit that approaching fields of study from the metaphor of landscape or mapping is hardly a new one, as evidenced by the fact that I just used the term ‘field’ in reference to an area of study—and then proceeded to use the term ‘area’ to avoid repeating the word, ‘field.’
simultaneous and non-hierarchal. The map also offers the means to forge a path, or line, across its content without dictating which path that might be or implying that it is the only path in existence. By presenting information laterally and facilitating the audience’s active role in charting or investigating the map’s contents, the map presents such investigations or explorations as self-evidently subjective and therefore more likely to be accountable.

In order to propose a restructuring of pedagogical models, it may be useful, once again, to ask what we hope pedagogy to achieve. In addition to the goals of studying art—to extend the reach of our empathy and more fully understand ourselves; what we are capable of, what we do and have valued, what we do and have understood, and what social and political patterns or events have created the context in which we must operate through the immediacy of art’s many case studies—I believe we teach art in the hopes of facilitating students’ relationships to individual artworks across geography and time and evoking in them a desire to learn more and in greater depth.

I believe our ambition as professors and creators of pedagogy, then, is to evoke a kind of attachment and curiosity from students; so that over the course of their education, they might develop a private canon of favorite works which they understand in depth and around which they may form ideas about society and themselves. Alongside accountability, subjectivity, interactivity, open-endedness, and non-hierarchal simultaneity drawn from the notion of the ‘map,’ the practice of cartography addresses these pedagogical goals through a conscious navigation of scale.

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92 Political distortions notwithstanding.
Returning to the metaphor of the Internet for a moment, it seems that the best way to navigate a limitless depth of information with enough specificity to evoke interest in individual artworks is to ‘zoom in.’ Unlike the practice of summary by way of single canon, the practice of ‘zooming in’ operates from the constant awareness of the full constellation of information available and a subjective choice to focus on a given case study, theme, or region in time for the duration of the lecture, course, or text. Within the close focus, objects and theories may be observed and discussed in depth, allowing students to connect to—and invest in—the content. Only then does the curriculum zoom out once again, giving the students’ ‘investment’ context in the wider patterns of tradition, geography, and history.³

Applied pedagogically, the practice of cartography can be illustrated through these three recommendations: emphasize specialization over the course of the curriculum; reconsider the need for foundations and the role of the survey course; and imagine the model of a collaborative survey course in the round.

First, we must accept that ‘foundations’ is a myth. The notion that one could feature the scope of “World Art History” (let alone World Art Studies) in the span of one course with either meaningful depth or breadth borders on the absurd, and the conviction that such a thing could be possible is what has lead to the hypocrisies of

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³ If this seems like a disorienting approach to learning or you fear for your students’ capacity to deal with this, have a little faith: Contemporary students are children of the internet, meaning that they are perpetually dealing with the prospect of infinite information and the practice of “zooming in” and “zooming out” rather than working through the totality of the information in a deliberate or linear methodical way. Cartographical navigation is actually more in line with their critical instincts now than the Hegelian timeline may be.
foundations art courses today, which, despite being described as courses in “world art”, largely continue to rely on a narrow timeline and a single, Winckelmann-driven canon.

Rather than rely on overburdened foundations courses, World Art Studies programs should center their curriculum on specialization throughout. In this model, the majority of courses would be structured around a narrow focus and treated in depth. These courses might center on just a few case studies, unfolded into a network of influential events, migrations, and exposures; on a particular theme or analytical lens, such as feminism or queer theory; or simply on particular region in time, such as colonial South America, or apartheid South Africa. This would allow students to spend enough time with the course material to connect to it personally and to experience first-hand what in depth research and comparative criticism might look like. A course with a narrow focus might be able to afford more room for student research and collaboration, which, in addition to developing student skill, serves to force open the presumed boundaries of the syllabus and encourage students to discover new content and connections on their own.94

While the bulk of the student’s arts education should happen within these specialized courses, some overview course might still be necessary to orient this in-depth research within a larger comparative view. However, this survey course does not need to preempt specialized, in depth courses. Considering that swollen, rushed survey lectures struggle to bring student contributions—and therefore, student investment in

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94 In my experience, college students are capable of independent critical thought in response to their own research from first year, or at least, they are capable of making the serious attempts that launch their critical thought and independent research down the line. In other words, I feel it is never too early to engage students in comparative, critical thinking or to push them to develop extracurricular problem solving.
the material—to the forefront, it would likely benefit students to enter the discipline through the more intensive and personal scale of a specialized course. Rather than treat the survey course as entry-level requirement, we might reverse the traditional sequence of the curriculum: that students would take the ‘overview’ course as a final. Rather than be treated as a lukewarm course for the uncommitted, the survey course would be attended by students who each, by this point in their education, have some specialized knowledge and interests in the discipline. As ‘resident experts’ in their academic background, these students would be able to approach the course in more of a round-table manner, relying on and integrating each other’s knowledge as they expand their view of the field. Through this kind of mismatching of expertise, with a focus on drawing connections, a late survey could help students navigate the field of World Art Studies with critical self-awareness and – ideally – an interest in investigating the underdeveloped areas of study within the discipline and fill in the gaps for future generation.

Imagine standing at the center of the globe as it spins through human history, with innovations happening simultaneously and in every direction. Cultures touch and change one another work as time progresses, and ideas flash across the map then linger and mature. You watch art come into being, from the earliest recorded hand axes and cave paintings in Indonesia and France all the way though the global art project pioneered by JR manifesting giant black and white portraits wheat-pasted on monuments and city walls all across the world and the recent Venice Biennale. A sort of

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95 This idea was first proposed to me by ethnologist/anthropologist G.G. Weix, in a discussion about curriculum. G.G. Weix. Interview by the author. University of Montana, March 30, 2017
collective story might form over the tangible example of art; not in a linear way, but in a
cyclical one, with patterns and rhythms. It’s almost dizzying, so every century or so, you
hit pause. You freeze the frame, and take inventory; dropping pins on those moments
with a story to tell96. With each pause, you take inventory, and this series of inventories
becomes the framework of your global memory.

This daydream, imagined by artist MaryAnn Bonjorni over the course of a shared
afternoon97, is a thrilling way to imagine the integrated, wide view of World Art Studies.
Perhaps someday (in a University with the funding and technology available for it) this
“round” classroom will truly exist. In the meantime, though, the notion of the circular or
cartographical classroom can be a useful way to imagine the framework of a survey class
with the same aim.

Built to follow, or function in tandem with, more specialized courses; the World
Art Studies survey designed through a methodology of cartography might be
structurally similar to Julian Bell’s Mirror to the World, It would pause according to
chronological benchmarks and, at each pause, investigating the artworks produced by
several different countries and cultures within the given time frame. Analyzed
comparatively, these varied case studies would emphasize the diversity of the field and
break down the conflation of geography and time. By selecting hybrid objects such as
those featured in the third chapter of this text among those case studies, the structure of
the class would necessarily represent the interconnected nature of World Art Studies.

96 Giant Olmec heads made only 500 years after the completion of the Stonehenge monument, for
example. Another Pause; the Venus de Samothrace, made within 50 years of the completion of the Terra
Cotta Warriors. Another; the Venus of Urbino by Titan is painted a year before The Miraculous Mass of St.
Gregory.
Detailed treatment of these individual case studies would expand student ideas about art within their cultural moments, and supplementary readings would focus on deepening the scope of this cartographic practice. The call-and-response model of the course, in which the class breaks into in depth discussion at regular intervals, would invites students to research artworks or relationships that the survey didn’t cover, so that their relationship to World Art Studies would be to perceive the discipline as a collaborative project with limitless room for growth.

Ultimately, pedagogy is a battle for the imagination. We are shockingly capable of doing something once we have imagined it. Therefore, I believe that if we make this shift from a foundations-based system to one based in a plurality of specializations and reconstruct the survey course into a kind of conference of emerging scholars that builds out their sense of context and connections around the artworks—or cases—in which they are already invested, then I truly believe that in once generation, the Geist of Singularity will have loosened its hold. Within two or three generations, I believe that the practice of charting critical courses though a limitless plurality of information according to the model of cartography could become second nature. Following these changes, the costs and dangers of ‘singular’ ideology felt across global arts institutions, practices, and theories may loosen as well. I believe that some lessons take generations to learn, but if we can apply the ideas and concerns uncovered by contemporary criticism to contemporary pedagogy and shift the way young scholars are introduced to the discipline of World Art Studies, then I am optimistic.
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