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Horizontal Art History and Beyond

Revising Peripheral Critical Practices

EDITED BY AGATA JAKUBOWSKA
AND MAGDALENA RADOMSKA

Horizontal Art History and Beyond

This book is devoted to the concept of horizontal art history—a proposal of a paradigm shift formulated by the Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski (1952–2015)—that aims at undermining the hegemony of the discourse of art history created in the Western world.

The concept of horizontal art history is one of many ideas on how to conduct nonhierarchical art historical analysis that have been developed in different geopolitical locations since at least the 1970s, parallel to the ongoing process of decolonization. This book is a critical examination of horizontal art history which provokes a discussion on the original concept of horizontal art history and possible methods to extend it. This is an edited volume written by international scholars who acknowledge the importance of the concept, share its basic assumptions and are aware both of its advantages and limitations.

The book will be of interest to scholars working in art history, art historiography and postcolonial studies.

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Introduction

Agata Jakubowska and Magdalena Radomska

This book is devoted to the concept of horizontal art history – a proposal of a paradigm shift formulated by the Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski (1952–2015) – that aims at undermining the hegemony of the discourse of art history created in the Western world. The existing discourse of art history was recognised and described by Piotrowski as "the hierarchical, vertical discourse ordering the artistic geography in terms of centres and peripheries".[1] Piotrowski challenged the centre–periphery paradigm, claiming that peripheries should not be understood as passive recipients of artistic trends but rather as consciously creating their cultures and as privileged in undermining universal narratives.

The concept of horizontal art history is one of many ideas on how to conduct nonhierarchical art historical analysis that have been developed in different geopolitical locations since at least the 1970s, parallel to the ongoing process of decolonisation. Some of these concepts managed to reach a wider audience and have also inspired scholars active beyond the regions where they originated. This is also the case with horizontal art history. It was created in the course of writing Eastern European postwar art history, yet it drew the attention of scholars dealing with art created in other peripheries and those from the centres who were dissatisfied with the results of revisions in art historical studies. It proved to be highly attractive for art historians who aim at challenging hegemonic art historical discourse that has retained its hold despite revisionist attempts undertaken both in the centres and peripheries. Piotrowski himself considered horizontal art history to be an open concept, conditioned by numerous factors, primarily by the changing global political situation, and as a concept that should be revised continuously. Alter-globalist art history – the subject of Piotrowski's last, unfinished book[2] – may be perceived as both an apt and a problematic extension of horizontal art history formulated as a response to global problems.

The horizontal history of art is a situated concept, born in the specific context of post-communist Poland, created by a particular person with a distinct history and personality.[3] The conceptual framework of it was conceived in the 1990s. The new (post-1989) geopolitical situation resulted in, among other things, an increased interest in Eastern Europe. In this period, Piotr Piotrowski critically observed initiatives that aimed at repositioning Eastern European art in the world, above all exhibitions that "provided for him the fertile ground to rethink the interpretive strategies in this newly emerging field of studies", as states Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius in an essay published in this volume. Analysing such exhibitions as *Europe, Europe: The Centennial of the Avant-Garde in Central and Eastern Europe* organised in Bonn in 1994 or *Beyond Belief: Contemporary Art from East Central Europe* in Chicago in 1995, he appreciated

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the extensive presentation of art from Eastern Europe but questioned the universal, "that is, of the common experience and repertoire of meanings",[4] perspective from which it was perceived.

Piotrowski was not a distant observer but an art historian who actively participated in creating the history of Eastern European art, be it as an organiser, curator and, above all, an art writer. In 1994, in Poznań, the international congress *Culture of the Time of Transformation* was organised, where Piotrowski was responsible for the part dedicated to the visual arts. He contributed texts to numerous catalogues of exhibitions presenting art from Eastern Europe, served as a consultant in such projects as *2000+ EastArt Collection* (Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana) and curated several exhibitions himself at the National Museum in Poznań, where he worked at that time. His exhibition projects, as well as his writings, dealt at that time with Polish post-war art mainly,[5] but in the course of working on them, he developed a reflection on how to write the history of the region in such a way that it would challenge the Western paradigm of art historical discourse. The first key text on the subject was published in 1998 under the title "Towards a New Geography of Art". It was published in Poland (both in Polish and English),[6] but shortened versions appeared also in the "Moscow Art Magazine" and in the Czech magazine "Umélec".[7] In this essay, Piotrowski underlined that

> The art of Czechoslovakia, Romania and Hungary was developing in different semiotic and ideological spaces than the art of France or Italy, while the universal perspective understood as a methodological instrument, prevents the discovery of the particular meanings of culture and disrupts all attempts at defining their regional, ethnic and local identities.[8]

He admitted that art historians working on Eastern Europe face the problem of "the absence of our cultural production within the canon of the artistic culture of the continent (with a few exceptions) and by its peripheral location" but claimed that the solution to this problem cannot be reached by reproducing "the imperial and hierarchical interpretative models, but to revise the paradigms, to change the analytical tools so that they would allow us to discover the meanings of cultures of 'other' geographical regions".[9]

It is from this perspective that Piotrowski, at the turn of the 2000s, wrote his history of avant-garde in Eastern Europe between 1945 and 1989 that appeared as *Awangarda w cieniu Jałty. Sztuka w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w latach 1945–1989* in 2005. Four years later, it was published in English by the Reaktion Books as *In the shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989.* Piotrowski wrote his texts in Polish and always published them in his native language. Most of his articles were translated by Marek Wilczyński, while his books (often consisting of revised texts published earlier) by Anna Brzyski, and they were then edited by various people. This resulted in differences between various versions of Piotrowski's texts that do not affect the understanding of the basic assumptions of his revisionist concepts.

The question of English translations of both books and essays written by Piotrowski on the art of the region reveals, however, an important problem related to the very act of its designation. As an academic teacher and a scholar writing in his native language, Piotrowski was radically attached to the notion of East-Central Europe (Polish: Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia), arguing the hyphen separating its components reflects

its innerly conflictual character. It appeared in the Polish edition of *In the Shadow of Yalta*, yet Piotrowski decided to use the notion of Eastern Europe in the English translation of the book, thereby asserting the apparently strong status of the notion of Western Europe, which remained untouched and, thus, seemingly more stable. This advance was an important step towards compromising his theoretical approach, thus, subjugated to the Western hegemony, dictated by customs of publishing houses. Piotrowski, however, justified this notional shift that his English-speaking reader was not aware of with the comment "I will follow that Western usage (of the notion of Eastern Europe), except where I need to be more narrowly precise".[10] In *Art and Democracy*, Piotrowski used the concept of post-communist Europe claiming that terms such as Eastern Europe, the former Eastern Europe, East-Central or simply Central Europe appear in the text as synonyms. In his recent book, *A Global Approach to the Art of Eastern Europe*, although he unprecedentedly uses the notion of Eastern Europe also in the original Polish title, in the actual text of the book, his initial attachment is strongly observable. Until *A Global Approach to the Art of Eastern Europe*, Piotrowski had been insisting on the adequacy of the notion of East-Central Europe, objecting to both the notion of East-Central Europe (Polish: Europa Środkowowschodnia) and Central Europe (which emphasised cultural independency and continuity of the region despite changing political circumstances). Whereas in all English translations of his books Piotrowski chose the notion of Eastern Europe over seemingly apolitical Central Europe, in Polish, the original version, he consistently avoided it.

Despite our opinion that the name of a research centre established in 2018 (Piotr Piotrowski Center for Research on East-Central European Art, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań), in order to maintain both material and immaterial heritage of Piotrowski, should reflect his original concept, we also chose not to intervene in different decisions of particular authors of that volume. This choice was due to the fact that horizontal art history may take a plural form also because of non-singularity of the notion of the region that had been an initial object of Piotrowski's interest over the years.

In *In the Shadow of Yalta*, Piotrowski identified particular artistic tendencies and forms relevant for the region but also strongly stressed the heterogeneity of it. At the same time, he emphasised the "otherness" of this part of Europe and objected to perceiving it as having a unified cultural identity. He claimed that "depending on the location and political context, the same type of art could have radically different meaning and significance in different countries of the region".[11]

As in all his art historical writings, also in this book, Piotrowski concentrated on the relationship between art and politics. While the majority of studies of art behind the Iron Curtain discuss official and unofficial art, he arranged his arguments around the distinction between autonomous and politically engaged artistic approaches. He coupled the avant-garde in Eastern Europe with anti-communist resistance. Piotrowski always put the issue of democracy at the core of his art historical writings and his activities as a critic, curator, museum director and citizen.[12]

When writing this study of the avant-garde *In the Shadow of Yalta*, Piotrowski developed his methodological ideas around the necessity of challenging the hierarchical paradigm of art history writing. The earlier arguments were repeated and enriched by several new aspects. One of them was his call to relativise and localise the Western narrative, instead of perceiving it as universal, by calling "this type of narrative by its proper name, precisely as a 'Western' narrative".[13] Western art history – he claimed –

can, thus, be "placed next to other art historical narratives – in accordance with the horizontal paradigm". Another new aspect was Piotrowski's perceptions of the peripheries as privileged to undermine universal narratives, which they owe to their higher sensitivity to situatedness (Piotrowski uses the term "localisation") of art historical narratives. He claimed that

> the historian of the centre, often quite unconsciously, tends to ignore the significance of place, thus becoming an instrument of colonisation, [as] in his or her opinion, if art is universal, the place from which it speaks does not matter.[14]

The quotation cited above comes from one of the texts in which the concept of horizontal art history was formulated. It was first presented in 2008, at the 32nd International Congress of the History of Art (CIHA) and at the inaugural congress of the European Network for Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies, and appeared in publications that resulted from both events.[15] At that time, it was also included in two art magazines: "Artium Quaestiones" published in Poland in his home Institute of Art History at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and in the Czech magazine "Umění". While the last three presentations of the text took place on the territory on which he had previously operated, that of revising a position of Eastern European art in relation to the West (mainly Western Europe and the United States), the first presentation – during the conference organised under the title *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence* – signalled an attempt to use the concept of horizontal art history in global art history. What is immediately visible is the difference between the titles – in the Melbourne version of the text there are no geographical references – is confirmed in the text. Piotrowski decided to present in this context solely a part of a longer essay, which offers a revision of global critique of what he called vertical art history.

Overall, this new global perspective was becoming more and more important to him. In the opening chapter of his second comprehensive book study on art in Eastern Europe, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, published in Polish in 2010, Piotrowski discusses intrinsic problems of the art of that region in the context of global attempts to challenge what he called vertical art history. Addressing the history of modern art in Asia and especially in Latin America, he claimed that

> World art history, were it to be written according to the expectations of geohistory, in other words, taking into consideration specific meanings of art produced in the marginal regions, must function as a critique of the hierarchical art historic narration produced within the context of vertical art history, and therefore must be written from a different paradigmatic perspective, one based on the horizontal model.[16]

While the very title of the original book, published in Polish as *Agoraphilia* with the subtitle *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe* was undoubtedly intended as a polemic towards the notion of "agoraphobia" elaborated in a historic essay by Rosalyn Deutsche,[17] it seems that the notion of horizontal art history similarly stems from Piotrowski's critical reading of Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann. It was his book *Toward a Geography of Art* that provoked Piotrowski to shift his focus from the notion of geography of art or – after Irit Rogoff – "relational geography" typical for the argument of *In the Shadow of Yalta*, towards the elaboration on the concept of horizontal art history.

It is the title alone of his text *Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde* published one year prior to the Polish edition of *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe* that points to a book by Kaufmann, published six years after Piotrowski's text – *Towards a New Geography of Art*. Despite its strong theoretical background, it seems that horizontal art history was primarily the result of Piotrowski's practical efforts to effectively use the art history narrative as a tool of analysis and description of art produced in Eastern Europe; until then, art history continued to manifest itself as a tool of suppression of Eastern European art.

Therefore, horizontal art history can be perceived as the aftermath of such a failed meeting – of art history and the art of the region – that led to a constitutive crash of art history against the map. It was its practical inability to be both the cause and the remedy of the apparent delay of the artistic production in the region, already diagnosed by Piotrowski in *In the Shadow of Yalta* as merely discursive. Although *Art and Democracy* was to be the very first large-scale employment of horizontal art history, it also revealed its limitations, which, as a result, led to its rechallenge in the last book by Piotrowski, which is soon to be published in English. In the very first chapter of *Art and Democracy*, focused on 1989, understood by Piotrowski as a "spatial turn", the author argued "there are several fundamental problems in adopting the postcolonial perspective to work on contemporary art of the (former) Eastern Europe".[18] Concluding – "Instead of the postcolonial framework, post-apartheid and post-authoritarian conditions in South Africa and South America could perhaps provide more promising prospects for post-communist studies".[19]

Thus, the caesura of 1989 presented a significant challenge for Piotrowski's concept of horizontal art history not only pointing to a "spatial turn", but also as he puts it – being "one of the factors that supported the development of the horizontal approach to art history"[20] and functioning as "a catalyst" for his project of construction of "a horizontal cultural plane that includes art history, understood as a discourse on past and contemporary art practice".[21] The year 1989 was later selected by Piotrowski in his last book *A Global Approach to the Art of Eastern Europe* as one of the "three horizontal cuts" constituting the comparative and constructive approach in global art history, named by Piotrowski as "alter-globalist art history".[22] The latter was defined by Piotrowski as art history willing to take on the mission of functioning as a "part of public political debate, or even a strategy of resistance against power and oppression on the side of emancipation and liberation"[23] on the global scale that "would require exposure of repressive practices against the margins and the peripheries understood in both geographic and topographic (with the context of particular localities) terms".[24]

The relationship between horizontal art history and the alter-globalist one was never clearly problematised by Piotrowski himself; nevertheless, it likely well reflects shortages of the former that Piotrowski was becoming aware of. Provided that horizontal art history was to challenge the hierarchical approach of a vertical narration by shifting the paradigm set up by the centre to the unparadigmatic coexistence of peripheries, it was tangled up in its attempt to reevaluate the binary structure of the Cold War diktat. The notion of *agoraphila* elaborated in *Art and Democracy* was also a telling example of this dependency. On one hand, agora served as an image of the horizontality in practice; on the other hand, however, it was also the figure of democracy much cherished by Piotrowski, questioned as a process binding neoliberalism by the alter-globalist movements. While *Art and Democracy* still negotiated almost silently between horizontality understood as democratic agora and as a tool of social

equality, the last book of Piotrowski, with its opening calling for "peripheries of the world to unite", brought those conflictual meanings of horizontality into focus in its endeavours to refer to Marxism and its attempt to establish post-communist studies as a global alternative for postcolonial ones.

Although challenged by Piotrowski himself, horizontal art history still remains a much discussed and much spoken narrative of global (and alter-globalist) art history. Not only does it correspond well with other critical narratives that are relevant in the humanities today, such as postcolonial studies, posthumanism, ecological perspectives and post-Marxism, but it also resonates with current global political issues. As it oscillates between the task of undermining power relations within the vertical narratives inherent in all those narratives and studies and the demand of the radical paradigm shift, it has ability to mediate different narratives intrinsic for numerous contemporary artworks that address the complexity of those issues (gender, but, at the same time, postcolonial identities intersecting with ecological and political struggles). Rooted, however, in critical reading of funding texts for postcolonial studies, posthumanism, feminist and gender studies, Marxism, etc., it both synthesises structures behind different struggles narrated by them and offers a device that can be used as their critical intersection. The aim of this book is to equip the reader with the aftermaths of these intersections that were both raised by the author of the concept of horizontal art history (as his comprehensive criticism of postcolonialism) and partially neglected by him (as his readings on Marxism, feminism, ecology or censorship and the question of freedom) but remain relevant for its reevaluation.

The book is a collection of essays written by international scholars who acknowledge the importance of the concept, share its basic assumptions and are aware of both its advantages and limitations. They either critically practise horizontal art history or propose theoretical revisions of the concept (Piotrowski himself was first and foremost a practitioner). These authors approach horizontal art history from various perspectives, which is also visible in what text presenting horizontal art history they refer to. Some of them are, like Piotrowski, scholars dealing with the art of Eastern Europe who attempt to find the best ways to narrate its history in a global context. They – we, the editors, belong to this group[25] – often knew Piotrowski's writings before he formulated the concept and they perceive it in the context of his earlier publications. Others met him or his writings while realising their projects in which they challenge hegemonic narration of Western art history from various geopolitical locations, be it Argentina, England, France, South Africa, Spain, Sweden or the United States. These scholars have all been struggling with similar problems that set limitations for revisionist projects, such as – to name just a few – the endurance of the conceptual art historical framework and its inherent verticality, the permanence of the concept of the canon and the persistence of universalist claims of the main players in the art world. Some of them entered into direct dialogue with Piotr Piotrowski and his concept of horizontal art history, which, sometimes, resulted from joint seminars and discussions. Others approached it from a more distant position, and in their texts included in this volume, they demonstrate how Piotrowski's horizontal art history resonates with their research practice.

The volume consists of four sections.

In the first part, titled *Practicing horizontal art history: democracy*, we included texts that highlight the important aspect of Piotrowski's challenge of hegemonic art

historical narration that is its embeddedness in his devotion to democracy and his interest in the political engagement of art, artists and art historians. This aspect of his writing and other academic activities is lesser known to the international audience, as significantly related to the changing political situation in Poland and activities prior to the entrance of Piotrowski into international circles of art history, yet crucial for understanding specificity of his revision of hegemonic discourses. The three texts that appear in this part address this issue from different perspectives. Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, who was Piotrowski's deputy at the National Museum in Warsaw, discusses the concept of the critical museum, which they aimed to practise in this institution and which she considers to be implementation of the horizontal art history. She presents origins of the critical museum in Piotrowski's curatorial practice and offers a reflection on continuing significance of the concept, both locally and globally, in light of the decolonisation movement in museology. She underlines that

> the critical museum project is not a transplantation of an academic theory onto museum practice, but it constitutes a tool and it provides a venue for the enacting of the horizontal art history in a continuous global struggle for democracy.

Dorota Jarecka traces back the notion of revolution in Piotrowski's writings, bringing readers to ideas also expressed in his books published only in Polish: *The Decade. On the Artistic Syndrome of the 1970s, the Artistic Culture, Art Criticism and Art, in a Biased and Personal Way* (1991) and *An Artist Between Revolution and Reaction. A Study on the Ethical Art History of the Russian Avant-garde* (1993). She argues that "the idea of revolution understood as rebellion that is doomed to fail haunted Piotrowski's writings from the very beginning and was never actually abandoned", contrary to other notions used by Piotrowski that have been subjected to a critical reevaluation. Jarecka analyses the tension between ethical categories, such as choices between fair and false, rebellious and conformist and democratic and totalitarian, that imply a vertical system of values, and his appeal for horizontality. Karen von Veh and Richard Gregor, in their essay, do not analyse the horizontal art history practised by Piotrowski but refer to how they practise it themselves. They perform it in their long, multi-staged and "inherently open ended" project that offers a dialogical analysis of art created in two different societies defined by totalitarian regimes: South Africa and Eastern Europe. Their joint research supports Piotrowski's idea that these are political histories that offer a basis for global comparative art historical analysis. According to them, it is "the theme of artists interacting with the resonances of place or land to explore the current sense of urgency in breaking free of an oppressive past" that links their "disparate geographies and informs our common attempts to overcome the stigma of peripheral existence in art historical discourse".

In the second part of the book, we concentrate on what Piotrowski himself recognised as the crucial aspect of the practice of horizontal art history that is localisation of revising practices. He underlined the importance of recognising that both art historians located in the centre and in the peripheries write from "a place with specific local legal, ethnic, and cultural parameters".[26] Authors of the chapters gathered in this part offer analysis that demonstrate various aspects of localisation of art historical narratives. Mathilde Arnoux undertakes a very important problem of the way "the West" is to be understood in projects, like Piotrowski's horizontal art history, that challenge Western hegemonic art discourse. She comes back to her cooperation

with Piotrowski in the project "OwnReality. To Each His Own Reality" (2011–17), devoted to the notion of reality in Cold War Europe (in France, Poland, East and West Germany) and describes how joint discussions helped understand the ways in which categories such as "the West" function. She claims that embracing diversity required emancipation from generalities and revealed the necessity to challenge a reduced negative rhetorical image of the West. The next text offers a similar reflection formulated by Paula Barreiro López in reference to postcolonial studies that

> tend to base their analyses on a criticism of Eurocentrism that understands the European space as 'a negative rhetorical figure', as hegemonic and homogeneous, when the realities of this space historically are more complicated and the relations of power deeply asymmetrical.

Her analysis is devoted to Spain during the Francoist dictatorship (1939–75) that she calls *peripheral* West and the Spanish diaspora. She presents the attractiveness of horizontal art history for analysis of artistic production from various places that – like Spain – are "an undeniable part of Europe, but functioning nevertheless as an *exotic* anomaly within the West" and have been ignored by the Western canonical narration. In her contribution, Natalia Smolianskaia focuses on how the notion of the "Russian Avant-Garde", which she considers to be a constructed concept, functions depending on where a subject of art historical narration is situated. She describes the way this notion operates in the Western canonical narration (in a geographically boundless, unmapped space of the 'Other') but also in art histories created in Russia and Ukraine, demonstrating how they are affected by the changes occurring in the post-Soviet area. Her analysis leads her to the conclusion that the notion "Russian Avant-Garde" cannot operate within horizontal art history as "It occupies the place of a normative narrative and implies the narrator's position not within but outside the story". The last two texts included in this section undertake a problem of failed attempts to horizontalise art history on a global scale. Anthony Gardner analyses international exhibitions from the point of view of their potential to challenge hierarchical narrations. He points to decontextualisation of artistic production as a problem that numerous shows attempting to deconstruct North Atlantic hegemony face and presents examples of events that successfully managed to solve it through modes of *adjacency*. In his opinion,

> Adjacency might also be a powerful method through which we might write and connect our art and exhibition histories as well: in ways that communicate and align the localisation of our histories (the stories we tell, the ways we narrate them) along the 'peripheries' of North Atlantic norms.

The issue of decontextualisation is also raised by Agata Jakubowska in her reflection on globalisation of feminist art history. She proposes following Piotrowski's concept of alter-globalist art history as a remedy to the problems that occurred in existing efforts to rewrite feminist art history globally, apart from the fact that his own texts are often unsatisfactory from a feminist point of view because of the way the art of women artists is presented in them. In her opinion, his call for "peripheries of the world" to unite offers inspiration for a more radical challenge to the feminist art history narrative undertaken by feminist art historians working both in centres and on the peripheries. It encourages the consideration of localised experiences (in Jakubowska's

case that of post-socialist Poland) as a starting point for calling into question basic elements of its conceptual framework.

Authors of texts gathered in the third section of the volume titled *Challenging horizontal art history and its internal contradictions* also consider horizontal art history to be of great significance for the development of nonhierarchical art historical discourse. Yet, in the essays included here, they do not only point to the merits of the concept but also signal inconsistencies of Piotrowski's thought and his omissions, fragility of the concept in the face of the current state of affairs of the (art) world and – above all – limitations of its revisionist attempts. They challenge horizontal art history not in order to reject it, but rather to offer necessary revisions. In the opening chapter, Maja and Reuben Fowkes take Piotrowski's art historical writing as a starting point – his pioneering comparative analysis of post-war art from Eastern Europe in *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe*. The authors of a monograph titled *Central and Eastern European Art Since 1950* (published in 2020) share their reflections on how to write a global history of the region highlighting the link between horizontalising and decolonising art history. In their project, it results in comparative accounts of the art of the region that foregrounde the many other social, technological, cultural and environmental factors that shaped artistic practices, and devote attention "to the voices of those who have been excluded from ethnocentric and monocultural art histories". The following chapters investigate internal contradictions or even paradoxes underlying the very concept of horizontal art history, evident only after the attempts of its adaptation in certain directions. The text by Edit András emphasises the fragility of the concept of horizontal art history in regard to the increasing role of nationalism – the process that became obvious only after the death of Piotrowski. Calling horizontal art history "the endangered species", András points to its founding paradox, neglected by the author himself, that lays "beneath all the excitement and confidence in joining the happy alliance of many parallel histories indicated in the hypothesis of horizontal art history", namely, the fact that the "national art history has been largely overlooked and unrecognised in his theory". András argues that horizontal art history lacks essential restrictions leading to possible – and fatal – misunderstanding and its rhetoric of "distinct features and particularities in regional art" can be mistaken for the rhetoric of the neo-nationalists. The following text by Jakub Dąbrowski stresses yet another internal contradiction of the concept by pointing out the fact that the tension between horizontal art history and Piotrowski's attachment to the idea of absolute freedom of artistic expression appears as the embodiment of the universal narrative that he declaratively rejected, therefore –

> horizontal art history, embedded in the traditional framework of human rights and democracy and linked to the Western understanding of freedom of expression and art, is globally losing its emancipatory edge, and can even be perceived - as human rights are often perceived - as part of the imperial agenda of the West.

Therefore, Dąbrowski ponders upon the possibility of establishing "cross-cultural dialogue approach" based on a "horizontalisation of the Western approach to freedom of expression (including freedom of art)" in order to "supplement Piotrowski's postulate of horizontal art research". The two subsequent chapters of this section focus on the possibility of using horizontal art history as a device of introducing and practicing equality in the art historical narrative. Jérôme Bazin emphasises the discrepancy

between the perspective of horizontal art history and economic history and proposes rethinking the former around three terms: concentration, poverty and desirability. Bazin reflects upon the potential of horizontal art history to tackle economic issues, by juxtaposing the notions of artistic and economic backwardness. His text "reveals a significant uncertainty in the practice of horizontal art history, a hesitation between two critical positions: to reveal spatial hierarchies or to contest them" calling for egalitarian art geography. In the closing chapter of the third section, Magdalena Radomska criticises horizontal art history for being not horizontal enough, arguing that it ignores both the class structure behind the superstructural construct of art historical narrative and the primacy of the base over superstructural analysis, thus leading to the supremacy of formal analysis over the material one. Accounting the concept of horizontal art history for its Marxist assumptions, Radomska argues for a necessity of taking the step backwards – towards the analysis of the Marxist base conditioning the art work – or application of non-alienational criteria of progress in order to maintain the horizontality of horizontal art history.

The fourth and closing section of the book *Alternatives to horizontal art history* place horizontal art history in the context of a variety of similar concepts offering, thus, modified, polemical or alternative approaches that share its ambitions to challenge the vertical art historical narrative. Terry Smith compares Piotrowski's art historical methodology to several other art historical approaches that, since the 1970s, have had similar aims, but also points out the particularity of the moment around 2000 when horizontal art history was formulated. Thus, the complex argument of the text negotiates between issues discussed already in the third section and those essential for the last section. Smith (similar to András) raises what he recognises as "the national question" and refers to leftist foundations underlying the concept of horizontal art history comprehended as a social and political practice (similar to Bazin and Radomska) by addressing the problem of equality and fairness. The chapter also lays a good foundation for the following chapters by Karlholm, Joyeux-Prunel and Giunta by advocating for the importance of lateral movements and the necessity to alter the concept proposed by Piotrowski. In the following chapter, Dan Karlholm indicates the limitations of horizontal art history, thus paving the way for his alternative concept of lateral art studies that seek to investigate how the material singularities of art, i.e., artworks, interconnect and relate to each other. He argues that "the horizontal model, despite its best intentions, and partly due to its imminent vanguardism, fails to depart from Western-generated hierarchical art history or its structures of domination between centers and margins", proving that "the modern alternative of lateral art studies deflects this course, in the name of flatness, materiality, and a neutrally distributed claim to artworks' equal aesthetic rights". In the next chapter of the final section, Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel criticises the stability of the art historical narrative in its dogmatic approach towards centre–periphery model intrinsic to the decolonial perspective that – as she proves – effectively "prevents the narrative of the canon from being called into question other than as a negative reference point". Therefore, accepting horizontal art history as a significant device to "break the deadlock" she proposes an alternative; a digital approach towards art history, by demonstrating how the gathering of sources on a global scale and their "distant reading" can contribute to disorganising one relationship to art history, preconceived ideas about the global geopolitics of the arts and, finally, traditional hierarchies of artists, styles and trends. In the closing chapter of the section, Andrea Giunta addresses horizontal art history from the perspective of her

research on Latin America and juxtaposes Piotrowski's concept with her original idea of "simultaneous avant-gardes". The text by Giunta wraps up the volume, as her approach is as similar as it is different from Piotrowski's, and therefore, it demonstrates well both the simultaneity of art historical revisions and how geopolitical conditions influence the forms of these revisions.

During the period, we were working on this volume, an English translation of the last, unfinished book by Piotr Piotrowski was prepared to be published by the Igor Zabel Association. Its original Polish version appeared in 2018, three years after his death, in a form edited by the family. Several of the texts included, in the book, were known to international audiences thanks to earlier publications of articles that were later to form its chapters, and others are being made available for the first time. Although Piotrowski's last book is being published now, he finished the project of revising horizontal art history in May 2015. It, thus, seemed the right moment to offer a critical look at the concept. Despite the fact that in Piotrowski's last book horizontal art history evolved into the concept of alter-globalist art history, we chose to organise the structure of the book around the former concept. This is not only due to the fact that it had already resonated widely, but also because we perceive alter-globalist art history as simply one of its possible practices.

This book is a critical examination of horizontal art history, taking into the account its fluctuating character. We believe that it will initiate a discussion both on the origins of the concept that significantly influenced its specificity, and the way it evolved, resonating both with the local situation of post-communist Europe and the global (art) world, provoking new practices of horizontal art histories.

Notes

1 Piotr Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde," in *Europa! Europa? The Avant-Garde, Modernism and the Fate of a Continent*, eds. Sascha Bru, Jan Baetens, Benedikt Hjartarson, Peter Nicholls, Tania Ørum, and Hubert van den Berg (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 51.

2 Piotr Piotrowski, *Globalne ujęcia sztuki Europy Wschodniej*, Poznań: Rebis 2018; Piotr Piotrowski, *A Global Approach to the Art of Eastern Europe*, trans. Anna Brzyski, Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory (Ljubljana: Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory, forthcoming).

3 See more in: *After Piotr Piotrowski. Art, Democracy, Friendship*, eds. Agata Jakubowska, Magdalena Radomska (Poznań: the Adam Mickiewicz University Press, 2019).

4 Piotr Piotrowski, "W stronę nowej geografii artystycznej"/"Towards a New Artistic Geography," *Magazyn Sztuki*, No. 19 (1998), http://web.archive.org/web/20170425140536/magazynsztuki.eu/old/archiwum/nr_19/archiwum_nr19_tekst_4.htm (Accessed November 12, 2021).

5 The most important publication from that period is a book *Znaczenia modernizmu: w stronę historii sztuki polskiej po 1945 roku* [*Meanings of Modernism: Towards a History of Polish Art after 1945*] (Poznań: Rebis, 1999).

6 Piotr Piotrowski, "W stronę nowej geografii artystycznej,"; Numerous observations were repeated in Piotr Piotrowski, "The Geography of Central/East European Art," in *Borders in Art – Revisiting Kunstgeographie*, ed. Katarzyna Murawska - Muthesius (Warsaw: Institute of Art, and Norwich: University of East Anglia, 2000), 43–50.

7 Piotr Piotrowski, "Рамирование» центральной европы"/"Framing Central Europe," *Moscow Art Magazine*, No. 22 (1998): 55–66 (Russian/English), and "'Rámování' střední Evropy," *Umělec*, No. 4 (1999): 34–5 (Czech). The bibliography of Piotr Piotrowski's texts, which he compiled himself, mentions some reprints in publications that appeared in

Eastern European countries. See: https://pressto.amu.edu.pl/index.php/aq/article/view/14572 (Accessed November 1, 2021).

8 Piotrowski, *The Geography of Central/East European Art*, 45.
9 Piotrowski, *The Geography of Central/East European Art*, 45.
10 Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, trans. Anna Brzyski (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), 7. First published in Polish as *Awangarda w cieniu Jałty. Awangarda w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w latach 1945–1989* (Poznań: REBIS, 2005).
11 Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 10.
12 More on this in *After Piotr Piotrowski. Art, Democracy, Friendship*.
13 Piotr Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde," 54.
14 Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde," 55–6.
15 Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde,"; Piotr Piotrowski, "Towards Horizontal Art History," in *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence, The Proceedings of the 32nd International Congress in the History of Art*, ed. Jaynie Anderson (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2009), 82–5.
16 Piotr Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, trans. Anna Brzyski (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 31. First published in Polish as: Piotrowski, *Agorafilia. Sztuka i demokracja w postkomunistycznej Europie* (Poznań: REBIS, 2010).
17 Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 7–14.
18 Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 49.
19 Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 49–50.
20 Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 40.
21 Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 40.
22 Piotr Piotrowski, "Od globalnej do alterglobalistycznej historii sztuki," *Teksty Drugie*, No. 1–2 (2013): 269–91. "From Global to Alter-Globalist Art History," trans. By Marta Skotnicka, *Teksty Drugie. Special Issue – English Edition*, No. 1 (2015): 112–34.
23 Piotr Piotrowski, *A Global Approach to the Art of Eastern Europe*, chapter 2, 13.
24 Piotrowski, *A Global Approach to the Art of Eastern Europe*, chapter 2, 13.
25 Piotr Piotrowski was our teacher and then colleague in the Institute of Art History at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań.
26 Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal Art History of European Avant-Garde," 56.

Part I

Practicing Horizontal Art History

Democracy

1 The Critical Museum Debate Continues

Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius

The concept of the critical museum, which had been launched by Piotr Piotrowski during his directorship of the National Museum in Warsaw between August 2009 and October 2010, proved not only the most daring of his projects but also his most far-sighted intervention into the contemporary cultural field.[1] What Piotrowski had proposed was an entirely new model of an art museum which, questioning its time-sanctioned celebratory formula, would use its collections, space and institutional authority to engage, consciously and unreservedly, in struggles for social justice and for a new art geography, marginalizing the established centres of art while empowering the peripheries.[2] The critical museum principles formed part and parcel of Piotrowski's campaign against the universalist discourses of mainstream art history, and it was devised specifically for, although not reducible to, art museums in post-communist East-Central Europe. In spite of an unprecedented international resonance of the project's flagship exhibition *Ars Homo Erotica*, the critical museum strategy was rejected by both the museum's curators and the Board of Trustees, to be hastily buried by a prominent section of the Polish art world as an academic reverie, motivated by ideology.[3] Almost exactly ten years later, however, the very notion of the museum as the agent of democracy has become the basis of a new definition of the generic museum institution which, proposed by the ICOM's steering committee, emphasized precisely inclusivity and a critical dialogue.[4] This chapter argues that the critical museum was the product of both Piotrowski's conceptualization of the critical art geography and his curatorial practice, but it also provides an extended reflection on its continuing significance after Piotr's untimely death in 2015, especially at the time of the decolonization movement. What follows is written from the position of the participant observer since my own biography is inextricably tied to the National Museum in Warsaw. I had grown up there as an art historian, and I returned there from my university post in London for the duration of the critical museum battle, invited by Piotr to act as his deputy. The tug of war between art history as a 'positive' and as a 'critical' discipline, as well as that between West and East, has been part of my professional makeup.[5]

From Museum Exhibitions to the Critical Art History of East-Central Europe

Deemed as utopian, as built on theory rather than practice, the critical museum project had been, in fact, grounded in Piotrowski's extensive curatorial experience, gained both in Poland and at diverse art institutions of the world. The museum was for him

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both the target of critique and a powerful medium of scholarly discourse, capable of disseminating the ideas worthy of public debate. Indeed, as Jan Białostocki, my former museum boss and teacher, Piotrowski belongs to the rank of the world-famous art historians in Poland, who merged their academic careers with museum practice. For both, museum experience served as an important tool of their art histories as well as a catalyst of their exceptionally prolific dialogue with the international community of scholars. And both of them repositioned the arts of East-Central Europe towards the western canon.[6] Certainly, there are significant differences regarding the political eras in which they operated, the periods they focused on, and the aims of their art histories.[7] Differences could be multiplied: Białostocki worked at the Department of European Art of The National Museum in Warsaw throughout his professional career, from 1945 until his sudden death in 1988 just before the end of Polish People's Republic. By contrast, Piotrowski kept the post at The National Museum in Poznań for five years, between 1992 and 1997, in the early days of so-called post-communist transformation, and was in charge of Polish post-WWII art. Białostocki was holding for decades a prominent position in the Warsaw museum but never aspired to manage the whole institution. Piotrowski, in turn, when invited to run it, not only took on the task of managing the whole of the establishment but went much further, embarking on the mission of changing it.

If Białostocki undertook all the areas of museum activities: overseeing and researching the collections as well as curating, what mattered for Piotrowski were, first and foremost, exhibitions. Quoting Jean-Marc Poinsot, Piotrowski conceded that 'staging an exhibition is essentially art history writing', adding however that one must be aware of the consequences.[8] And, indeed, the reflection on the exhibition as the strategic medium of art historical expression would accompany much of his writing, foregrounding its two fundamental concepts, the critical art geography and the horizontal art history. But it also gave rise to the project of the critical museum, which turned out as both the product and the platform for implementing the first two.

Contributor to numberless exhibitions all over the world, from Los Angeles to Ljubljana, Piotrowski was well aware of the advantages of museum display and the visibility it attracts. In contrast to an article in a scholarly journal, or a book read by a narrow constituency of fellow art historians, the same ideas staged as exhibitions, including their catalogues, are disseminated among much larger and wider audiences and stand a chance of contributing to social difference. As he stressed laconically, the first programmatic *Women Artists 1550–1950* exhibition in Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1976 had a much larger resonance than Linda Nochlin's famous article 'Why have there been no women artists' of 1971.[9] And accordingly, the exhibitions Piotrowski curated were always devised as arguments, constructed in relation to material evidence as well as theoretical concepts. Their aim was to realign the field, and never to celebrate genius, or a movement.

His first show at The National Museum in Poznań, *The Thaw*, in 1996, went against the grain of the triumphant narrative of Polish post-WWII modernism, arguing that the experience of socialist realism led ultimately to the petrification of the autonomy of art as a new dogma. It also claimed that the ensuing 'conservatism of Polish culture' was perceivable 'mainly in museums'.[10] While the traditionalism of the latter was a recurrent trope in Piotrowski's writing at that time, by contrast, the catalogue of his last exhibition in Poznań, *Zofia Kulik: From Siberia to Cyberia*, 1999, brought his first conceptualization of the museum as a critical institution, predicated on the belief in

the redemptive power of contemporary critical art. 'The critical art needs a museum', he wrote, and vice versa, the museum needs critical art, thus mutually saving themselves from the fallacy of the spectacle.[11]

Clearly, the environment which proved most stimulating for Piotrowski's were the large exhibitions of East-Central European art, staged after 1989 by various museums in the West. They provided for him the fertile ground to rethink the interpretive strategies in this newly emerging field of studies.[12] One of the strongest impulses came from the monumental *Europa, Europa* which, staged by Ryszard Stanisławski and Christoph Brockhaus in Bonn in 1994, strived to insert the art of East-Central Europe into standard art history books.[13] Piotrowski disagreed forcefully with the application of the 'universal', i.e., western aesthetic categories to the art produced in different political, social and cultural circumstances of the Other Europe. As he claimed, the exhibition 'did not modify the paradigm of the artistic geography', as the act of adding the names of missing European artists to the canon formulated by western art history would not challenge 'the hierarchical interpretive models of art history'. The point was 'to change the analytical tools so that they would allow us to discover the meanings of cultures of "other" geographical regions'.[14] This was just a prelude to his model of the critical art geography, formulated within the framework of 'the spatial turn' in critical studies, and to his most resonant idea of a 'horizontal art history', which would focus emphatically on exchange and circulation outside the centres, the key approach of the rising global history of art.[15]

When he joined the Advisory Board setting up the first Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw in 2005, Piotrowski turned his attention from exhibitions to the strategies of the museum institution per se. He proposed expanding the 'geographical interest of the museum … in terms of both the collection as well as the exhibition program' to include modern and contemporary art of the whole region of Central Europe. Instead of following the western model, the matrix of this museum would be provided by the complex history and politics of the region, not avoiding its communist heritage.[16] The idea of such an institution was directly related to his ground-breaking book on the avant-garde 'in the shadow of Yalta', which was about to appear in Britain.[17] It was also informed by his belief in political responsibilities of art, art history and its institutions. The idea was too compelling to be forgotten. Very soon, the invitation to take over the National Museum in Warsaw presented another opportunity. As Piotrowski admitted to the editors of the Polish radical journal *Krytyka Polityczna*, 'The concept of the critical museum stems directly from the work on the concept of the Museum of Modern Art'.[18]

The Art Historian between Museum and Academia

Piotrowski's appointment as Director of the National Museum in Warsaw resulted, typically, in a series of lectures and conference papers, digging up the new field and articulating new issues. So far, Piotrowski had been drawing his ideas, including the critical art geography and the horizontal art history, from the reflection on contemporary art worlds and their inherent critical relationship to the contemporary world.[19] Entering the largest art institution in Poland, of 150 years of history and the collection of over 800 000 objects in diverse media, from many regions of the world and periods, not to mention its 500-strong staff, Piotrowski was moving into a very different territory. He was fully aware that 'the injection of the criticality to a historical museum has no precedence' and requires nothing less than redefining the mission

of the generic museum altogether.[20] In the Polish context, it meant also re-opening to public scrutiny the conflict between the two models of art history. In his paper given at the Annual Conference of Polish Art Historians in the Autumn of 2009, barely a couple of months after his nomination, Piotrowski mapped this new territory, outlining the rise of museum critique, the rise of the New Art History, and the ensuing clash between the museum and the university.[21] The critical museum was an outcome of this disciplinary shift, with an added awareness of the pulling power of the issues related to East-Central Europe, which by that time had already led to the formulation of his concept of the horizontal art history.

Museum critique, as old as the institution of the museum itself, has been practised both on the left and on the right of the political spectrum, for over 200 years, from Quatremère de Quincy to Walter Benjamin and Pierre Bourdieu.[22] At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was taken over by artists. It featured prominently in manifestoes of the historical avant-garde and, in the post-WWII period, in diverse actions performed by the Institutional Critique conceptualists and feminist artists, now challenging museum's association with imperialism, colonialism, racism, patriarchalism and sexism.[23] In the 1980s, the criticism of museums migrated again, this time from the field of art practice to that of art history. Moreover, it metamorphosed into a new sub-discipline of the New Museology.[24] It has successfully entered the university curricula, acting now arm in arm with the New Art History. If the latter questioned the methods, scope and canons created by the old discipline, revealing its alliance with power-knowledge, the New Museology likewise, aimed to denaturalize the mechanisms of the museum-work, to investigate the practices of exclusion, implemented under an apparently apolitical surface of aesthetics. The museum, perceived by radicalized university departments as a besieged fortress of the old-fashioned art history, tended to assume, in turn, the role of the bastion of the civilized society, rebuking the New Art History for abandoning the aims of the discipline and accusing the New Museology as an onslaught of Marxism-fed 'museophobia'.[25] The conflict reverberated throughout the western world, but neither the New Art History nor the New Museology paid attention to the issues faced by art institutions in East-Central Europe.

In Poland, the conflict was ignited within the field of art history rather than museum studies. A series of methodological conferences organized by young scholars at the Department of Art History at Poznań between 1973 and 1981, who had invited the radical West German art historians Martin Warnke and Wolfgang Kemp, marked the formation of the revisionist and Marxist-inspired approach to studying art. As reported by Andrzej Turowski, this was seen at the time 'as an attack on the history of art'.[26] Piotrowski, then Turowski's student, was the participator of those conferences, and hence, the earliest intellectual stimuli leading to the critical museum idea reached back to the heydays of the 'Poznań school of art history'. It took over 30 years to re-ignite the battle in the Polish art world, centring it on the functions of art and its institutions in contemporary society. If the Poznań debates were confined to a narrow group of professionals, Piotrowski's model of the critical museum and its social functions were brought to the centre of public attention when he became Director of the National Museum in Warsaw.

Making the Museum Critical

As said above, critical museum studies, proposing the concept of a 'new museum', or 'post-museum',[27] aimed to empower the viewer and redress social and colonial

exclusions but have hardly paid any attention to the issues faced by post-communist countries. Piotrowski's critical museum not only integrated the academic critique into the realm of museum practice, but it also aimed to turn the art of the marginalized part of the European continent into a terrain for interventions in the public space as well as for an inquiry into the unresolved social, political and ethnic conflicts specific to the region, including the trauma of the Stalinist past.

From the onset, commitment to reflexivity was launched by the action called *Interventions*, which shifted some of the objects between permanent galleries of the Warsaw museum, encouraging the viewer to release their alternative meanings, different from those suggested by the guide. As noticed by Magdalena Radomska, while editing the current book, the very process of abandoning the disciplinary boundaries and hierarchies between the museum's spaces shared the principles of the emphatically non-hierarchical horizontal art history. Apart from questioning the linearity of the display, the challenge was to restage the galleries with no costs involved, avoiding the standard glamour of the polished museum interior. There were other significant changes, including the planning of a new Polish Contemporary Art Gallery, to be opened in the space taken by curators' offices, as well as, of course, many exhibition scenarios which included an inquiry into the meanings of democracy, into images of the museum's audience over the decades as well as a large show of the shifting cartographies of the region on the hundredth anniversary of its reappearance on the maps of Europe.[28]

But the major bone of contention turned out to be *Ars Homo Erotica*, the exhibition that argued for the fundamental significance of the queer aesthetics for the trajectories of art over the centuries.[29] Curated by the external curator Paweł Leszkowicz, the exhibition used both the works of contemporary artists from East-Central Europe and those from the museum's own collections, casting a queering gaze at the works housed in galleries and magazines of the National Museum in Warsaw, and uncovering a wide range of homoerotic themes, often overlooked but ever present in art over the ages, from the Antiquity to the present day. As argued by Leszkowicz, by visualizing the relevance and the continuity of homoerotic representation in the history of art, this international and transhistorical exhibition pointed the way to 'rethink the authoritarian and traditional conceptions of the National Museum and of the nation itself, in order to break the heteronormative and nationalistic filters imposed on major cultural institutions'.[30] It did involve the largest art institution in Poland in the public debate on gay and lesbian rights, thus accomplishing the task of writing a scenario of the transformation of the universal survey museum into the critical museum, ready to take an active part in public debates on fundamental issues of the society. The exhibition attracted enormous attention from the moment it was announced, receiving very diverse reactions from the public, as well as from the media of various political orientations, not just in Poland, and not just in professional journals.[31]

There were other exhibitions and exhibition projects raising the issues of immigration, democracy and the formation of East-Central Europe after the end of WWII, but also significant changes in galleries and in the inner structure of museum departments. As far as the process of the realigning of art history was concerned, Piotrowski's former idea of the Centre of East European Studies in Warsaw returned as an important point on the agenda, now incorporated into the project of the Centre of Museum Studies. Building on the already high academic profile of the National Museum in Warsaw, measured by the number of postgraduate degrees held

by the staff, the Centre was to expand research towards critical reflection on museums, thus introducing the principles of the horizontal art history while focusing on East-Central Europe.[32]

Importantly, for the whole duration of the critical museum project, the museum and its duties were discussed by the daily press, proving relevant not only for art historians and museum curators but also for visitors. The off-shot of this unprecedented media attention was that Piotrowski, so far perceived as a theory-driven scholar, was now cast by the right-wing Polish press as a Marxist theorist, hell-bent on destroying the National Museum in Warsaw, desecrating its space as the 'treasure of the national culture'.[33] And yet, the process of turning the Museum as Temple into Forum had been initiated through the very act of making the museum and its function the subject of public discussion. Although the pronounced resistance to the critical museum ended in resignations of both Piotrowski and myself as his deputy, this was not the end of the project.

The Critical Museum Debate Continues

Even if aborted in Warsaw, the critical museum debate has led to a shake-up in the corridors of museums in Poland and far beyond. To repeat the point already made: provocation, uproar, a whirlpool of arguments and counterarguments exchanged in the public sphere, all this formed a constitutive part of the project. Inseparable from the process of turning theory into practice, this guaranteed attention and engagement, also involving those who would fight for maintaining the status quo. As commented by the media, this was the first contribution of Warsaw museum's director to submit this institution's mission and function for public discussion, and the first programme of its reform, which was articulated publicly.[34] It helped disseminate the driving idea of the project, the realization that in a similar way in which the mission of art museums in the past was to disseminate the canon of beauty and contribute to the process of imaging the nation – their task today is to target chauvinism, patriarchalism, homophobia, persecution and contempt towards refugees and ethnic minorities.

The book *Muzeum Krytyczne* which was published by Piotrowski in just a few months after his resignation, slim and readable, and presenting in detail both the background and the practice of the critical museum, rekindled the discussions.[35] Its launch in Warsaw attracted a huge audience that filled the largest exhibition space at the Museum of Modern Art. The Serbian translation of the book proved that the Eastern European agenda of the critical museum is important for the whole of the region.[36] The majority of the reviews, written both by its opponents and by 'fellow travellers', were forced to take a stance towards the issue of the social function of art and the responsibilities of the museum. University courses in Warsaw and at the Humboldt University Berlin, followed by papers at international conferences in Brno, Prague, Moscow, Venice and New York, helped disseminate the concept on an international stage. A session at the Annual Conference of the British Association of Art Historians held at the Open University at Milton Keynes was devoted specifically to the critical museum, and the book, stemming from this event, included papers by major museum professionals and academics from the field of museum studies and beyond, from Britain, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and the United States, was published in 2015.[37] Its reviews, such as that by Samuel Rumschlag in *Museums & Social Issues*, confirmed

that the ideas of using the cultural authority of the museum to facilitate social discussion, 'if embraced, would shake the world of museum from its very foundations'. As he admits, the encouragement of controversy rather than appeasement in addressing the public might be 'shocking', but 'no honest museum professional can dispute the authors' main point: that any museum's aura of neutrality is at best a façade', concluding that the book 'deserves a place on the shelf of every museum professional'.[38] The impact of *Ars Homo Erotica* was reinforced when Maura Reilly listed it among the most significant shows on gender issues in her award-winning book *Curatorial Activism: Towards an Ethics of Curating*, in 2018.[39]

In Poland, a special issue of *Krytyka Polityczna*, entitled *The Critical Institution* included interviews with Piotrowski and the leading Polish museum directors and curators, focusing on the concept of criticality and its implementation. Borrowing from Piotrowski, the editors claimed that 'the idea of the critical museum is not completed; it is one of the manifestations of the generic critical institution: the critical school, critical kindergarten, critical corporation, critical political party'.[40] In spite of an obvious partisanship on the part of the journal, many of the contributors took a cautious position to the concept, denying their earlier support in some cases, or opting for the models of the Temple of Art. Piotrowski's interview, conducted in stages in 2013 and 2014, stressed that the principle of criticality applies not just to art museums, but to the whole culture as the 'way of life'. Significantly, it also included a chilling evaluation of the changes in Polish politics. In reference to the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising, 'the most significant success of the right-wing politics of history',[41] Piotrowski warned against 'neoliberalism and the conservative turn [which] does not encourage thinking about transforming museums, about making the historical museum critical'.[42] His diagnosis that 'history in Polish society plays a stronger role than art' and that 'there is an urgent need for the historical museums … to undertake critical reflection on history' are particularly urgent today, in light of the conservative turn after the parliamentary election in the autumn of 2015.[43] The former neoliberal government, which had not actually censored the *Ars Homo Erotica* exhibition (even if it had denied any funding for the project), was ousted by the populist one, formed by the socially conservative party Law and Justice. The new cabinet from the start put an enormous pressure on the Polish art world, proclaiming an outwardly nationalistic, patriarchal, xenophobic and celebratory attitude to history and society as the only correct approach for all sectors of culture, including museums.

Is the critical museum ethos still alive in Poland? To what extent does political oppression act as its catalyst? A large international conference *Museums and Their Public at Sites of Conflicted History*, organized by POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw in March 2017, argued for the urgency of museums taking on the role of 'agents of citizenship' at the time of radical political and social change when the imperative to expand democracy and human rights challenges the 'long-held national narratives enshrined … on the walls of major museums', which tend to 'silence conflicts and aestheticize diversity'.[44] But, soon, as if in repetition of the Warsaw critical museum story, the international impact of POLIN's exhibitions and activities as well as the unsolved problem of antisemitic excesses in Poland, the contract of the museum director Dariusz Stola was not renewed, which led eventually to his resignation in 2020.[45]

Significantly, critique keeps rising to the top of museum agendas worldwide. The recent decolonization movement took over both academia and museums, enforcing

the major overhaul of teaching curricula, and a painstaking revision of museums' repatriation policies vis-à-vis their objects from colonized countries. It generated a comprehensive rethinking of museums' mission, aims and duties to respond to the 'challenges and responsibilities in the 21st century'.[46] This led to a decision of revising the ICOM definition of the generic museum institution, and its proposal, prepared by the committee led by Jette Sandahl, has raised the issue of democracy, criticality and inclusivity, by declaring in its first sentence

> Museums are democratizing, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artifacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people.
>
> (Sandahl 2019)[47]

Affinities with the critical museum project do not end at the conceptual level. This timely new definition was roundly rejected by the national delegates at the ICOM Assembly in Kyoto in 2019, who requested the postponement of a vote until a new revised proposal is submitted.[48] Reportedly, the ICOM definition was protested because of its normative rhetoric and its incompatibility with the heterogeneity of museums. As it transpires from the texts written by the leading ICOM figures, however, the major issue, yet again, was the charge of ideology and, in particular, a widely shared view that the political, social and environmental responsibilities outlined in the new definition are not applicable to the majority of museums. The enraged tone of the discussions, and the outright dismissal of the social justice concerns as 'aspirational platitudes', 'Orwellian newspeak' or 'a statement of fashionable values, much too complicated and partly aberrant', echoed not only the combative rhetoric of the earlier 'museum vs academia' hostilities but also the crusade against the critical museum, and especially against the *Ars Homo Erotica* exhibition.[49] The decision to restage the ICOM consultations and postpone the voting until the general conference in Prague in 2022 led to a flurry of resignations from the international team which had been working on the definition.

The year 2020 challenged the museum world even further. The COVID-19 pandemic has overturned the established practices of museum institutions all over the world, now forced to arrive at entirely new ways of giving access to their collections, revising their priorities and values, and the ways of making themselves relevant to the public.[50] Moreover, the murder of George Floyd in Atlanta brought into the open even more strongly the frightful heritage of colonial and postcolonial violence, radicalizing yet again museums' decolonization movement. Significantly, museum activism expanded its limits, tools, meanings as well as geography, applying the call to decolonize museums also to the region of East-Central Europe, burdened with its own unresolved history of ethnic conflicts and hierarchies.[51]

Devised for museums of East-Central Europe, the critical museum project is not a transplantation of an academic theory onto museum practice, but it constitutes a tool and it provides a venue for the enacting of the horizontal art history in a continuous global struggle for democracy, in which critique liaises with the process of queering the established norms and boundaries as well as with the urgency of decolonization.

2017–2021.

Notes

1 I would like to thank Maria Żuk-Piotrowska and Grzegorz Piotrowski for their help in the preparation of this text. For the most comprehensive intellectual portrayal of Piotrowski, see *After Piotr Piotrowski: Art, Democracy and Friendship*, eds. Agata Jakubowska, Magdalena Radomska (Poznań: University of Adam Mickiewicz Press, 2019).

2 On the critical museum, see Magdalena Radomska, "Muzealny hacking, causa locuta," *Czas Kultury* 5 (2010): 100–7; Piotr Piotrowski, *Muzeum krytyczne* (Poznań: Rebis, 2011); its Serbian translation: Piotr Piotrowski, *Kriticki Muzej*, trans. Milica Marki (Belgrad: Evropa Nostra Srbija, 2013). See also Piotr Piotrowski, "Museum: From the Critique of Institution to a Critical Institution," in *(Re)Staging the Art Museum*, ed. T. Hansen (Oslo: Henie Onstad Art Centre/ Berlin: Revolver, 2013): 77–90; *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum*, eds. Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, Piotr Piotrowski (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), especially: "Introduction," 1–12 and Piotr Piotrowski, "Making the National Museum Critical," in Murawska-Muthesius and Piotrowski, *From Museum Critique*, 137–46.

3 Maura Reilly, *Curatorial Activism: Towards an Ethics of Curating* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2018): 196–201; Maria Poprzęcka, "Raport z przegranej sprawy," *Dwutygodnik.com* 59 (June 2011), http://www.dwutygodnik.com/artykul/2334-raport-z-przegranej-sprawy.html, accessed October 1, 2021.

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5 I borrow this distinction from Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989): 33–59, esp. 56–7.

6 Jan Białostocki, *The Art of the Renaissance in Eastern Europe: Hungary, Bohemia, Poland* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1976); Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, trans. Anna Brzyski (London: Reaktion, 2009).

7 Białostocki's use of the museum resources in his research and his facilitation of academic exchange between museums of art in the Communist Poland is one of the areas of his immensely rich intellectual biography which awaits scholarly attention.

8 Piotr Piotrowski, "O końcu Europy Środkowej i praktykach kuratorskich," in *Mowa i moc obrazów: Prace dedykowane Marii Poprzęckiej*, eds. Waldemar Baraniewski et al. (Warsaw: Neriton, 2005): 398–404, esp. 400.

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10 Piotr Piotrowski, "Odwilż/ The Thaw," in *Odwilż: Sztuka ok. 1956 r./ The Thaw: Art. c. 1956*, ed. Piotr Piotrowski (Poznań: National Museum, 1996): 9–35, esp. 32.

11 Piotr Piotrowski, "Między Syberią a Cyberią: O sztuce Zofi Kulik i muzeach," in *Zofia Kulik, Między Syberią a Cyberią/ Zofia Kulik*: *Between Syberia and Cyberia*, ed. Piotr Piotrowski, (Poznań: National Museum: 1999): 7–33, esp. 29–30.

12 He contributed to most of them: Piotr Piotrowski, "The Old Attitude and the New Faith," in *Beyond Belief: Contemporary Art from Eastern Europe*, ed. Laura Hoptman (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1995): 34–45; Piotr Piotrowski, "Die Kunst im Spiegel der Geschichte," in *Der Riss im Raum. Dokumentation* (Berlin: Guardini Stiftung, 1995): 25–37; Piotr Piotrowski, "The Grey Zone of Europe," in *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe*, eds. Bojana Pejić, David Elliott (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1999): 35–41.

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version: Piotr Piotrowski, "New Museums in East-Central Europe: Between Traumaphobia and Traumaphilia," in *1968/1989: Political Upheaval and Artistic Change/Momenty zwrotne w polityce i sztuce*, eds. Claire Bishop, Marta Dziewańska (Warsaw: Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej, 2009): 165.

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30 Leszkowicz, "Piotr Piotrowski," 153.

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33 I am paraphrasing Stephen Deuchar's description of the campaign against David Solkin's 'Marxist' exhibition of Richard Wilson in Tate in 1983, Stephen Deuchar, "Whose Art History? Curators, Academics and the Museum Visitors in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s," in Haxthausen, *The Two Art Histories*, 3–12, esp. 5; Piotrowski, *Muzeum krytyczne*, 85–7; For the media reaction to *Ars Homo-Erotica*, see among others, Jacek Dytkowski, "Skandal w Muzeum Narodowym," *Bibuła: pismo niezależne*, October 14, 2009, http://www.bibula.com/?p=14790; Marcin Austyn, "Homoseksualni obrzucają błotem posła," *Radio Maryja*, accessed January 16, 2010, http://www.radiomaryja.pl/bez-kategorii/homoseksualni-obrzucaja-blotem-posla/; "Homowystawa w Muzeum Narodowym," *Fronda*, accessed June 09, 2010; Jan Engelgard, "Czy to jeszcze Muzeum Narodowe?," *Bibuła: pismo niezależne*, accessed June 15, 2010, http://www.bibula.com/?p=22929;

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36 This book is available online http://europanostraserbia.org/kriticki-muzej/, accessed May 1, 2017. See also presentations by Ekaterina Degot and Charles Esche in the *Critical Museum* session at the conference *What Art History? In memoriam Piotr Piotrowski* at Modern Galerija, Ljubljana, 2016, https://video.arnes.si/portal/asset.zul?id=m4uHgWjl4kpNZZLPcybd8cIL, accessed April 16, 2017.

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43 Piotrowski, "Instytucja krytyczna," 156.

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2 Horizontal Art History and the Revolutionary Double Bind

Dorota Jarecka

The focus of this essay is Piotr Piotrowski's theory and writing in respect to an artist's political commitment, with the ethical dimension regarded as the crucial issue. The major question is how this aspect of his art historical practice relates to horizontal art history.

In 1993, Piotrowski published *An Artist Between Revolution and Reaction. A Study on the Ethical Art History of the Russian Avant-garde*.[1] It is a brilliantly written essay on positions and clashes within art circles during the October Revolution and the decade that followed. The binary categories of "revolution" and "reaction" were applied to decode the multitude of ideological conflicts of the 1920s. It was not only a historical analysis but also a contemporary intervention into debates on the legacy of socialism. The art scene of Revolutionary Russia served here as a mirror of contemporary events. The persistent tension observed by the author between left-wing and conservative, progressive and regressive forces, the search for new languages and incentives that kept minds and bodies in place, seemed astonishingly contemporary. A similar set of contradictory tensions formed the ideological landscape of the political transition of 1989. In 1993, Karol Modzelewski, one of the leaders of the left-wing opposition during socialism and a long-time political prisoner, published an important and regrettably forgotten book of essays (titled *Which Way out of Communism?*), in which he analysed the results of the sudden shift of parties generated out of the Solidarity movement towards the right.[2] A former member of the ruling party, Modzelewski, broke away from it in the 1960s after realizing its authoritarian course. The evolution of the Solidarity camp towards cultural conservatism and liberal economics after 1989 offered not just a historical paradox to him, but also a personal dilemma, since it signified the necessity to break with his former allies and friends.

A parallel observation – that the right wing was dislocating swiftly and appearing in the most unexpected places – was shared by Piotrowski. It was expressed in his 1993 text, *An Artist Between Revolution and Reaction*, and later reworked. A new formulation of the old paradigm was proposed in 2010 in the study on "postcommunist agoraphilia," which was soon to be published in English as *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*.[3] He translated the opposition of "revolution" and "reaction" into a new set of ideas: "agoraphobia" *versus* "agoraphilia," claiming it's possible to categorize artistic positions in the former Eastern Bloc in relation to these poles. Agoraphobia in this context would mean a fear of interaction with the outside world, a backward and conservative position, while agoraphilia signifies an ability to take the risk of intervention into the public sphere and confrontation with society. The polarity was differently articulated, yet the intention was similar: to define the contradictory

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tensions within each culture: the conflict of a revolutionary drive and the tendency to conform, of the power of revolt and the inclination to collaborate with the official line, the desire to break away from status quo and the pleasures of meeting the requirements of ideology.

Since the 1960s, two major models have been present in Soviet studies: one totalitarian and one revisionist. The first is inherent in approaches which favour power relations and are focused on the political class, the other leans towards social and cultural studies and the analysis of horizontal social tensions and structures.[4] There is no doubt that Piotrowski's early book on the Russian avant-garde is closer to the "totalitarian" paradigm. It is written from an anticommunist point of view, condemning artists participating in the communist project as allies not only of revolutionary violence but also of the totalitarian system. The term "ethical art history" is advanced in order to judge the moral dimension of the artists' commitment to the cause of the revolution. When Piotrowski published his book, anticommunist ideology was not yet institutionalized and the "anticommunist memory entrepreneurs" (to quote a brilliant term of Zoltán Dujisin) had not yet gained their power.[5] This rhetoric was soon abandoned in Piotrowski's writings and the notion of "ethical art history" disappeared.

By the end of the 1990s, the idea of horizontality started to emerge in his writings, and horizontal art history assuredly reinforces a revisionist perspective. One can note that Piotrowski's general claim for horizontality causes certain confusion. Ethical categories, such as choices between fair and false, rebellious and conformist and democratic and totalitarian, imply a vertical system of values, and they did not entirely disappear. On the contrary, they acquired unusual strength. Was this an inconsistency of his project? Or, rather did Piotrowski's horizontal approach retain some verticality in its core? The mysterious word "revolution" will play part in this discussion.

There are two historical points around which I will revolve. The first is the worldwide cultural breakthrough of 1968, which had a deep impact on economics, politics and culture and triggered a major paradigm shift in the field of art history with new readings of the avant-garde and Modernism. In Poland, the events of the year 1968, also involving massive students' strikes, were of a particular character since the protests demanding political freedoms were directed not against liberal democracies but against the authoritarian rules of the Polish United Workers Party. However, its impact can be compared to the processes that took place in the Western zone: dissolving the orthodox, searching for an alternative.[6] The new left-wing intellectual factions that formed in the aftermath of 1968 diverged from the old-fashioned Party Marxism as well as from the traditional culture based on conservative values that was also present during (and in spite of) the socialist era.

The second turning point is June 1989, i.e., the first free democratic elections in Poland. I have intentionally chosen this event as a mark of political turn, instead of the – more popular – fall of the Berlin Wall. Preceded by a series of meetings between the government and the opposition, the elections resulted in political groups which originated in the Solidarity movement taking over rule. The elections triggered a process of reforms that eventually led from state socialism to liberal democracy. Carefully observed in the Eastern Bloc, this had a direct impact on the political shift in the region, demonstrating a possible way out of the authoritarian system via non-violent mechanisms of democracy. For this reason, the symbol of the Berlin Wall falling, which draws on iconoclasm and revolution, has been replaced here by a less distinct and more dispersed idea of evolution. Slavoj Žižek has warned us about misinterpretation of the

"Fall" as one of the "veils of fantasy," collectively producing phantasmatic images responsible for the functioning of ideology. In his Lacanian reading, the image of the "Fall" masks another, traumatic or extremely painful experience. It is, therefore, of a paradoxical character: "Adam chose to fall in order to retain *jouissance*, what he loses is precisely *jouissance*" – Žižek says.[7] Certainly, the fall of the Wall and the fall of the first man have different meanings, but their function is not that different, the demolition of the Wall can also be seen as a kind of veil: the system was already dismantled when it happened. The image of the Fall still haunts contemporary imagery and allows for misunderstandings. Enzo Traverso in his recent book *Left Wing Melancholia* (a thrilling panorama of modern and contemporary left-wing culture) has argued that 1989 in Europe, including events such as the dissolution of the Soviet Union, should be seen as a "defeat suffered by the left."[8] Left-wing intellectuals, Traverso continues, have felt "spiritually roofless" since that time.[9] Moreover, he compares this event to the shock of the Hitler's rise to power in 1933.[10] This statement makes the Eastern European reader feel more Eastern European than ever, by which I mean – definitively excluded from the left-wing community. This all too universal claim seems to completely ignore the presence of left-wing intellectuals in the countries of the Eastern Bloc and their historical experience. The dissolution of the Soviet Union was not the reason for their despair, but rather the ideological crisis that followed and soon afterwards acquired unusual strength. The series of right-wing takeovers that followed much later (Hungary in 2010, Poland in 2015) is connected to occurrences in this earlier period. Already in 1989, in countries that would roughly be described today as "post-communist," clashes and conflicts focused on economics, religion, women's rights, national identities and the interpretation of history.[11]

Sketches for a Background

Piotrowski was born in 1952 in Poznań, a city that experienced the workers' strikes of 1956 that were violently suppressed by the government; however, these events later resulted in a political thaw which brought an end to the Stalinist era in Poland. In his youth, he was witness to the political turn of 1968. In contrast to the student movement in France or Germany (but similar to Mexico), the revolt was soon crushed by the ruling party, and a long period of political stagnation followed. The repressions included tightening of censorship and an ideological cleansing of the Party and among the ranks of university professors and lecturers which had a devastating effect on higher education. A long-lasting result of the events was a wave of forced emigration of Polish citizens who were officially and unofficially reminded of their "Jewish descent." All this left deep marks on the artistic and scientific life in Poland. The initial consequences were, however, ambiguous. On the one hand, international exchange was harmed, bringing many international and local initiatives to a halt. On the other hand, these changes paradoxically triggered a spirit of disobedience. At the end of the 1960s, official propaganda language verged on the absurd. In the Party doublespeak "Zionism" signified something other than a tendency of Israeli politics, namely, ideological enemies of the socialist state, and was a cover word for "Jews." "Fascism" served as political invective directed against the left-wing opposition and, together with "Zionism," formed part of a new hate speech clearly manifesting the backlash of antisemitism in Party policy. Returning to Enzo Traverso's controversial claim, the notion "left-wing melancholia" would be more appropriate in describing this particular moment when

the ultimate dismantling of the socialist illusion occurred, and the socialist state exposed itself as a police-state, using racist propaganda in order to retain power.

Piotrowski was too young to take part in the events of 1968. However, when he entered the University in Poznań in 1971, it was still in the moment of "aftershock." From the beginning of his activity as curator, art historian and lecturer at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Piotrowski allied himself with the groups and factions that had been formed after the political turn of March 1968 and under its impact.[12] The intellectual circles he adhered to are not easy to define in binary categories. Critical towards the socialist state, they did not declare complete mistrust towards the socialist utopia. In 1973, Piotrowski met Andrzej Turowski as his university professor, who was at that time instigating new art history methodologies inspired by post-structuralism and semiotics.[13] The artist Jarosław Kozłowski became his friend and close collaborator. By the end of 1960s, Kozłowski was assistant to Andrzej Matuszewski, who ran OdNOWA gallery in Poznań. In 1969, Matuszewski was dismissed, and the programme of the gallery was banned. As a result, Matuszewski turned to alternative artistic activities such as the organization of outdoor experimental events, and Kozłowski – together with Andrzej Kostołowski, another art historian from Poznań – started to develop an initiative called NET.[14] NET was founded by them in 1970 and was quickly transformed into a global network of artists and critics, who exchanged ideas through mail and other independent channels. The initiators of NET were distant from the official sphere, and they also had no interest in adhering to the political opposition; however, it was exactly the official policy that had pushed them underground. For example, in 1972, secret police invaded Kozłowski's apartment and seized an exhibition of mail art. Piotrowski was not involved in NET but was aware of its activities and collaborated with Kozłowski at the gallery Akumulatory in Poznań between 1972 and 1975.[15] Akumulatory was under the umbrella of the student movement and rather loosely controlled, enabling an independent and internationally outreaching programme. From the beginning of the 1970s, these semi-underground alternative artistic circles had a deep influence on Piotrowski's theory. In terms of horizontality, Piotrowski surely gained inspiration from the Akumulatory gallery programme, and his interest in the contemporary art of neighbouring countries, such as the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the GDR, was already sparked in the 1970s.[16] It is worth admitting that the notion of "ethics" also appeared in Akumulatory gallery circles. Between 1974 and 1977, Kostołowski advanced the concept of "ethical art," and in his "Notes on an Ethical Art Program" declared that aesthetics should be treated as a particular aspect of ethics and that conceptual art could serve as a tool of ethical revaluation of the art scene.[17] The "Ethical Art Program" was understood by the author as a network, and not as a normative structure, and, thus, could be seen as a follow up to the ideas of NET.

After 1980, as a lecturer at Adam Mickiewicz University, Piotrowski engaged in the Solidarity movement, and after 1981 (Marshal Law), he continued underground activities. In 1989, he was a witness to the dismantling of state socialism, and the transition toward democracy, a process full of contradictions. In 1989, the artistic elites credited the young democratic state with trust. Soon they were about to experience a major cut to state spending on the visual arts. The abolition of censorship in 1990 was greeted with relief; however, it did not immediately reinforce the field of art history studies, quite the opposite, since the change of the economic structure caused the temporary suspension of cultural production and harmed the dynamic of scientific life in the

country. Already in 1990, the dissolution of the Solidarity camp occurred and a cultural war between its factions followed. Piotrowski published his two ground-breaking books in this intellectual climate. The first, in 1991, *The Decade. On the Artistic Syndrome of the 1970s, the Artistic Culture, Art Criticism and Art, in a Biased and Personal Way*, was a political revision of the 1970s in the visual arts in Poland, and a first manifestation of his "ethical art history."[18] It was soon followed, in 1993, by *An Artist Between Revolution and Reaction. A Study on the Ethical Art History of the Russian Avant-garde*.

Towards Verticality

The Decade, a violent polemic on the art scene in Poland of the 1970s, constituted a major blow to its former participants causing a stir among artistic circles. It condemned the majority of positions assumed by them as predominantly yielding to authority. In this short book, judging the artists' choices from the point of view of ethics, Piotrowski considered the majority of artists who were lured into public commissions and events organized under the patronage of the state, as conformist, compromising (deliberately or not) with official policy. In his view, they traded freedom of speech for economic and private comfort. Moreover, he posited that a special sort of conceptual art found understanding and support from the authorities that, in the 1970s, the cultural authorities created a system of encouragement to enhance formally progressive but, at the same time, politically harmless art, deprived of social or political message. Piotrowski used the example of works by such artists as Józef Robakowski, Natalia Lach-Lachowicz, KwieKulik and Zbigniew Warpechowski, to demonstrate the emptiness, and even "boredom" of their artistic production. After the troublesome decades of the 1950s and 1960s when art in Poland was strictly controlled, these artists were – he claimed – deceived by the promise of artistic autonomy. In their views, they were able to sport progressive and experimental art. In fact, they just responded to the new Party line, which was an amalgamate of panoptical control and a need for modernization. "Ethical art history" was formed at this moment, and its connection to the transformation of 1989 should not be overlooked. Piotrowski was judging socialist legacy. He wrote from a post-communist perspective, i.e., extremely critical towards the socialist state of Poland in the 1970s. This book was first of all a declaration from the young art historian and critic that he was rejecting the former language of adjustment to the status quo and offering a new liberating narration of distrust towards the accepted aesthetic conventions and social rules.

The very term "ethical art history" appeared in Piotrowski's writing in 1993 with the publication of *An Artist Between Revolution and Reaction*. In the study dedicated to artistic life in Russia between 1917 and 1928, Piotrowski discussed the political choices of artists from the point of view of their ethical responsibility. As he declares in the introduction, this was not based on archival research but on secondary literature, and its aim was purely theoretical: it was an attempt at the reconfiguration of a discourse, a change of historical narrative. Without questioning the values of the artworks, the author is asking, what was the ethical dimension of an avant-garde artists' decision to support a Leninist policy, and later that of Stalin. Out of three leading revolutionary figures, Lenin, Lunacharsky and Trotsky, Lenin was the most cautious and even hostile towards artistic modernity; however, Piotrowski does not spare the other two, observing that the conflict between two readings of the avant-garde,

political (the proletariat as the avant-garde of the revolution) and artistic (the avant-garde as a source of new artistic language), had already emerged at the beginning of Bolshevik rule. He traces the further development of such artists as Klutsis, Rodchenko, Tatlin and El Lissitzky, locating a culmination in the clashes of the "cultural revolution" of 1928 and the new policy of the Five-Year Plan, followed soon after by the era of Stalinist terror. He closes his narration with the infamous *Belamor Canal* album, comprising the texts by Gorki and photographs by Rodchenko, claiming the "defeat" of the avant-garde artist, who deliberately joined the propaganda line, and took part in the "big lie," as he calls this connection of Socialist Realism and terror.[19] Piotrowski is stressing a basic theoretical difference between revolt and revolution, and following Albert Camus' *The Rebel* concludes that being rebellious is a universal ethical challenge, whereas joining the ranks of revolution should be understood as subjugation and moral defeat. Therefore, he calls this particular moment in art history when artists mostly had to choose in favour of the revolution, a "historical tragedy" or "tragedy of the avant-garde."[20] For Piotrowski, this book was also aimed at a demystification of art history discourse since, as he claimed, it also participated in a "big lie," never fully admitting the real dimensions of this tragedy. It should, therefore, be understood as an ethical revision not only of the avant-garde itself but also of its historiography in the region. There is a hidden polemic with earlier approaches to the problem of the transformation of the Russian avant-garde, mainly by Turowski in his 1990 study on the *Great Utopia of the Avant-garde*.[21] Although Piotrowski agrees that the Soviet authority appropriated the constructivist utopia in order to form a new propaganda language, he shifts the focus towards the issue of personal involvement. In contrast to a linguistic approach, another – moral – structure of values emerges and breaks away from the neutrality of previous narrations. The avant-garde artist was neither misled nor manipulated but intentionally entered a dialogue with power, in spite of the crimes of the system, Piotrowski claims. Moreover, it was exactly the element of the utopian dream, the idealistic core of the avant-garde, that made artists smoothly adjust to the idea of progress at any cost, inherent to the Stalinist project. The idea of revolution was at stake, obfuscating the reality and justifying the deficiencies of the system. Returning to the metaphor of the "fall," the first and major dismantling of the utopia should, in fact, be located at this moment when revolt was betrayed in favour of revolution.

There are a number of texts, written mostly by scholars who experienced everyday life under state socialism, which represent a similar approach to the problem of Leninist and Stalinist power exerted on artists, created towards the end of the socialist era and triggered by its twilight.

In 1986, a Polish émigré publishing house in Paris launched a compact book by Wojciech Włodarczyk, *Socialist Realism. Art in Poland Between 1950–54*.[22] Two years later, *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin* by Boris Groys appeared causing a global response.[23] In 1990, a book by Igor Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and The People's Republic of China*, followed, soon republished in Russia.[24] In 1999, Vitalij S. Manin published *Art in the Reserve. The Artistic Life in Russia Between 1917–41* in Russian, rich in factual research, based on archival materials and other testimonies.[25] The above publications vary in their scope and objectives. Golomstock offers a comparative perspective on Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany, communist China and fascist Italy. Focusing on the affinities between the aesthetics of the USRR and Germany in the 1930s, he coined the term "totalitarian art" to describe

the particular entanglement of idealist aesthetics and political violence. Włodarczyk examines artistic life in Poland, and particularly art academies at the beginning of the 1950s. He observes connections between the avant-garde and Socialist Realism in relation to the idea of progress and the need for subordination to ideology. Claiming that Socialist Realism created a chance to fulfil the avant-garde dream of unity between artistic and political revolution, his book preceded the famous thesis by Groys that Stalin was a pure product of the avant-garde. Groys aimed at the demystification of the avant-garde as a progressive and revolutionary idea, and by that – at the demystification of art itself. He claimed that the avant-garde utopia was the source of the artist's hubris and as such paved the way to Stalinism. The final blow consisted in the conclusion that Stalin had actually carried out the agenda of the avant-garde in the most perfect form. Both positions, by Włodarczyk and Groys, bear features of historical dialectics: history has its logic and evolves inevitably towards accomplishment or fall. Manin's study is of a different character. It does not contain this kind of historicistic claim, it rather offers an insight into the ongoing battles on the role of the art in the process of revolution, and as in Piotrowski's book, the backward tendencies inside the communist camp are precisely outlined. Manin pays special attention to the various factions and groups (OST or AKHRR) which in the 1920s aimed at gaining domination in the field of artistic production. Socialist Realism is understood as ideological oppression as well as an economic system of art production. Understanding the dangers of the system and its threatening character, especially during the "great terror," Manin repudiates the moral attitudes of the art circles, considering some attitudes as nihilistic. I do not wish to oversimplify the message of these scholars; my aim is rather just to draw out one characteristic feature of them, more or less explicitly formulated, namely, ethical judgement.

By the end of the 1960s, the idea of historical revisionism in Soviet studies had been developed in the work of scholars who revised the previous (totalitarian) approach to Soviet history. This change was due to growing criticism of Western Democracies after 1968, escalating distrust towards Cold War policy and a questioning of the entirely totalitarian characterization of Russian and Soviet cultures. The revisionist perspective does not negate the oppressive character of the authoritarian state; however, it takes into account other factors such as social mobility, the life of unprivileged groups, class, gender, age-related and other determinants that previously tended to be overlooked. The "debate on revisionism" took place in 1986–87 when the controversies between the two paradigms accumulated.[26] Undoubtedly, the publication *An Artist Between Revolution and Reaction*, with its harsh criticism of deliberate artistic enslavement, contained elements of the totalitarian perspective. The ethical approach to the Russian avant-garde is not, of course, limited to a group of Soviet or Polish authors; it is a more widespread phenomenon, which by no means has a local character. In looking for a horizontal approach to art history, it is hard to miss T.J. Clark's *Farewell to an Idea*. His personal experience as a left-wing intellectual coping with the acceptance of positions assumed by the left-wing circa 1917 is visible too. Clark observes that Malevich or Tatlin, though their art was purely abstract, could also be read in parallel to war Communism, which made the artists into allies of revolutionary violence.[27] As in Piotrowski's book, the personal will of the artist is less important than the historical logic. The determinist elements to this narration are clearly visible too.

Horizontal Lines

"Double bind" is an idea developed by Gregory Bateson in the 1950s to describe a dilemma in communication in which an individual or a group receives two conflicting messages, one negating the other.[28] When each solution is perceived as wrong or misleading, freedom of choice is harmed, and thinking and emotions are disturbed. A particular difficulty of double bind is also connected to the fact that conflicting demands are not only imposed but also internalized, accompanied by feelings of guilt and self-accusation. The double-bind situation is recognized as a tool of manipulation within families or any other close relationship. However, it can also describe a general confusion of communication when we hear contradictory demands, both of them emotionally engaging. It is said that the double-bind situation is basically undone when a person gains awareness of it and when the very choice is rejected as a comprehended source of oppression.

In the Peoples' Republic of Poland, the left-wing intellectual was constantly forced to confront the double-bind embarrassment. In state propaganda, the revolutionary language seemed very vivid; the anniversary of the October Revolution and Lenin's birthday were officially celebrated. But what would the call to follow in the footsteps of Lenin have meant at the time? To put Lenin into practice would have meant to start a revolution, the alternative was to repeat the words of Lenin but try not to use them. By this means, the model of pathological communication was fulfilled. There is no irony in the fact that the word "revolution" was reserved for carefully selected contexts and strictly controlled. In 1967, the critic Janusz Bogucki, who ran Galeria Współczesna in Warsaw, opened an exhibition which was supposed to be called "Avant-garde and Revolution" and was about to feature works by Russian artists of the revolutionary period. It had a somewhat grassroots character; some of the objects came from private collections, among the contributors were Anatol Stern, a poet formerly connected to the futurist movement; Seweryn Pollak, a poet and translator of Russian literature; and art critic Szymon Bojko, who read excerpts from Alexander Rodchenko's diary, with a description of Malevich's funeral, aloud at the opening of the show. A reconstruction of a propaganda tram stood outside the gallery. The title of the show, however, was censored and had to be replaced by "New Art of the October Revolution."[29] Plainly the issue was not purely formal, all interpretations of revolutionary culture deviating from the official narration of historical triumph and glorious progress towards socialism were censored. When Turowski submitted his manuscript on the constructivist movement in Poland to a publisher at the end of the 1960s, the publication was put on hold, and his study could only be launched after the political thaw of 1980.[30] When this book was delayed, he was commissioned to write another study on a similar subject, which he originally titled "Constructivist Revolution." This title was questioned by the censors and the book eventually released as "In the Circle of Constructivism."[31]

The major political change of 1989 neutralized and suddenly abolished the double bind. However, the cautious approach towards the idea of revolution was preserved, and the term didn't fare well before or after '89. On the one hand, witnessing the outbreak of war in Yugoslavia and the Ceaușescu execution broadcast on Polish TV contributed to these feelings. On the other hand, there was the intergenerational memory of revolutionary defeat, connected not only to "Great October" but also to a series of disillusions and failures, of which 1968 in Poland was only one recent example. During the transformation of 1989, the term was cautiously used. The Czech term

Velvet Revolution is a great example of this approach, as is the brilliant formulation by Timothy Garton Ash, who observed that the changes in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia could be termed "Refolution" by which he meant "a mixture of revolution and reform."[32]

We can also perceive this cautious mood in the concept of horizontal art history. Horizontal art history and alter-globalist art history were elaborated during the last two decades of Piotrowski's writing and were heralded by the text *Towards a New Geography of Art* published in 1998.[33] The idea of "horizontality" was fully manifest in his 2008 essay *On the Spatial Turn, or a Horizontal Art History*.[34] It was included two years later in the Polish publication of his book *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*.[35] In 2013, it was adjoined to the concept of "alter-globality."[36] Piotrowski's two critical ideas were an attempt to abolish binary categories of description of twentieth-century art (such as centre/periphery, West/East, global/local and originality/imitation), and their advantage is in their ability to undermine the universal value system. One virtue – rebellion – was kept in place, as well as its mortal enemy – the backward and conservative forces that emerged (or rather re-emerged) after 1989, such as the rise of nationalism, authoritarian political tendencies and radical cultural conservatism. Rebellion and anarchy were now included in the semantic field of "Agoraphilia."[37] The idea of "revolution" was still to be found as their enemy, signifying a negation of rebellion: an anarchy tamed, turned into a servant of political rule.

Revolution, as Hannah Arendt writes, is a deeply ambivalent term, and it has acquired its contemporary meaning only after a long and surprising evolution. Originally, it was used as a concept describing the cosmic motion of planets, and – in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – as the redirection towards a natural path in political history. As Arendt observes, this astronomic metaphor was soon contradicted by a linear idea of history advanced by both Hegel and Marx, based on the model of the French Revolution. This determinist view deeply influenced not only the political theory of revolutionaries but also their praxis. The defeat of the revolution (according to Arendt) is, thus, inscribed in its fate.[38]

This idea of revolution, understood as rebellion that is doomed to fail, haunted Piotrowski's writings from the very beginning and was never actually abandoned. The image of the "fall of communism" bears strictly determinist features, and it was present in the vertical model of "ethical art history" as well as in its horizontal version, where the fantasy of the "fall" gives way to the inception of "global agoraphilia." In one of his last texts (unfinished), Piotrowski made a sketch of this new concept, which he described as a desired and possible to realize the form of global democracy propelled by *Agon*.[39] The circulation and hesitance between the image of a revolution (which is doomed to fail) and the image of a liberation breaking all bonds (doomed to win) can be seen as a new embodiment of the revolutionary double bind. To take part in the revolution is to take ethical responsibility for its crimes, however, to not take part in it is also morally repugnant. The Hegelian/Marxist determinism is in full swing here. The revolutionary utopia can be extremely dangerous and is embodied in the Saturnian image of the revolution devouring its own children. However, dropping all the hopes for change would be a manifestation of cynical conservative reason.

This series of dialectical images of motion towards the future and criticism of the past is inherent in the concept of horizontal art history. Its ambiguity consists of two understandings of history, which occur simultaneously and contradict each other. The first is coloured with the Benjaminian concept of history seen as a pile of rubble,

accompanied by a feeling of disenchantment and an awareness of past defeats. The other is based on the idea of progress; it holds the perspective of improving social conditions and great prospects for political change. In other words, ethical art history blocks horizontal art history here, interferes with its development, modifies its tissue and also prevents it from too utopian claims.

It makes us think that, however, harmful the double bind is in real life, it could be extremely productive at the core of intellectual life. This aporia, to make a final point, also bears horizontal features and might be perceived globally. Until, of course, it revolves.

Notes

1 Piotr Piotrowski, *Artysta między rewolucją a reakcją. Studium z zakresu etycznej historii sztuki awangardy rosyjskiej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza 1993).
2 Karol Modzelewski, *Dokąd od komunizmu?* (Warszawa: Polska Oficyna Wydawnicza BGW, 1993), 12.
3 Piotr Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-communist Europe*, trans. Anna Brzyski, (London: Reaktion Books, 2012). Originally: *Agorafilia. Sztuka i demokracja w postkomunistycznej Europie* (Poznań: Rebis, 2010).
4 Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Revisionism in Soviet History," *History and Theory* 46, no. 4 (2007): 77–91.
5 Zoltán Dujisin, "A History of Post-communist Remembrance: from Memory Politics to the Emergence of a Field of Anticommunism," *Theory and Society* 50 (2021): 65–91.
6 These processes were neither simple nor one-dimensional and can be found in the whole region, cf. Klara Kemp-Welch, *Networking the Bloc: Experimental Art in Eastern Europe, 1965–1981* (Cambridge, MA – London, England: The MIT Press, 2018).
7 Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London and New York: Verso, 1997), 19.
8 Enzo Traverso, *Left-wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 41.
9 Traverso, *Left-wing Melancholia*, 18.
10 Traverso, 297.
11 Cf. Małgorzata Fidelis, "The Long Shadow of 1989," *Aspen Review* 4 (2019), https://www.aspen.review/article/2019/long-shadow-1989/. Accessed on March 14, 2022.
12 Cf Piotr Piotrowski, "Globalny NETwork," in *Globalne ujęcie sztuki Europy Wschodniej* (Poznań: Rebis, 2016), 121–54.
13 Piotr Piotrowski, "'Francuskie teorie', amerykańska mediacja, polska redakcja. Pro domu sua i/lub humanistyka po dekonstrukcji," in *French Theory w Polsce*, eds. Ewa Domańska and Mirosław Loba (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2010), 105–7.
14 *SIEĆ - Sztuka dialogu / NET - Art of Dialogue*, ed. Bożena Czubak (Warszawa: Fundacja Profile, 2012).
15 Adam Mazur, "Kryterium Postawy. Rozmowa z Jarosławem Kozłowskim," *Magazyn Szum* (August 29, 2015) https://magazynszum.pl/kryterium-postawy-rozmowa-z-jaroslawem-kozlowskim/ accessed on July 1, 2021.
16 Bożena Czubak and Jarosław Kozłowski, *Beyond Corrupted Eye: Akumulatory Gallery 1972–1990* (Warszawa: Zachęta National Gallery of Art, 2012).
17 Andrzej Kostołowski, "Szkice do programu sztuki etycznej (fragmenty)," and "Szkice do programu sztuki etycznej," in Kostołowski, *Sztuka i jej meta-* (Kraków: Bunkier Sztuki, inter esse, Galeria Miejska Arsenał, 2005), 155–73.
18 Piotr Piotrowski, *Dekada. O syndromie lat siedemdziesiątych, kulturze artystycznej, krytyce, sztuce – wybiórczo i subiektywnie* (Poznań: Obserwator, 1991).
19 Piotrowski, *Artysta między rewolucją a reakcją*, 123.
20 Piotrowski, *Artysta między rewolucją a reakcją*, 7–10.
21 Andrzej Turowski, *Wielka utopia awangardy. Artystyczne i społeczne utopie w sztuce rosyjskiej 1910–1930* (Warszawa: PWN, 1990).
22 Wojciech Włodarczyk, *Socrealizm. Sztuka polska w latach 1950–1954* (Paris: Libella, 1986).

23 Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, trans. Charles Rougle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). Originally: *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin. Die gespaltene Kultur in der Sowjetunion* (Munich: Carl Hauser Verlag, 1988).
24 Igor Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and The Poeple's Republic of China* (New York: Icon Editions, 1990). Cf. Igor Golomshtock, *Totalitarnoje iskusstvo* (Moskva: Galart, 1994).
25 Vitalij S. Manin, *Iskusstvo v rezervacii. Khudozhestvennaia zhizn Rosii 1917–1941 gg.* (Moscow: Editorial URSS, 1999).
26 Martin Wagner, "Revisionismus. Element, Ursprunge und Wirkungen der Debatte um den Stalinismus 'von unten'," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 66 (2018): 631–81.
27 T.J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea. Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999).
28 Gregory Bateson, Don D. Jackson, Jay Haley, and John H. Weakland, "Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia," *Behavioral Science* 1 (1956): 251–64.
29 "Galeria Współczesna," Archives of the Institute of Art History of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw.
30 Turowski, *Konstruktywizm polski. Próba rekonstrukcji nurtu (1921–1934)* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Ossolińskich, 1981).
31 Turowski, *W kręgu konstruktywizmu* (Warszawa: WAIF, 1979). Cf. Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 90.
32 Timothy Garton Ash, "Conclusions," in *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and their Aftermath*, eds. Sorin Antohi and Vladimir Tismaneanu (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000), 395–402. https://books.openedition.org/ceup/1906.
33 Piotrowski, "W stronę nowej geografii artystycznej / Towards a New Geography of Art," *Magazyn Sztuki*, 19, no. 3 (1998): 76–99.
34 Piotrowski, "On the Spatial Turn, or a Horizontal Art History," *Umeni/Art*, 5 (2008): 378–83.
35 Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*.
36 Piotrowski, "Od globalnej do alterglobalistycznej historii sztuki," *Teksty Drugie*, no. 1–2 (2013): 269–91.
37 Piotrowski, "Anarchy, Critique, Utopia," in *Art and Democracy*, 125.
38 Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 41–58.
39 Piotrowski, "Globalna agorafilia," in *Globalne ujęcie sztuki Europy Wschodniej* (Poznań: Rebis, 2018), 173.

3 Horizontality without Limits

Postcolonial and Postsocialist[1] Experience as Frameworks for Studying Art and Art History in Peripheries

Karen von Veh and Richard Gregor

In his final years, among many of his other activities and interests, Piotr Piotrowski traversed the territorial limits of the art and art history of Central-Eastern Europe in an attempt to elaborate his conception of 'horizontal art history', mainly through comparative studies with other world peripheries. In all his scholarship on global art history, it was the regions of Central and Eastern Europe, with an emphasis on Polish art that remained the touchstone by which other peripheries were considered. His methodological approach was to employ the two supportive theoretical frameworks of political histories and art histories through which he could conduct his comparisons. He applied this system to examples in countries outside East-Central Europe, including consideration of examples in Asia, Argentina (and elsewhere in Latin America) and later on partially in South Africa. The choice of comparative locations arose from his international scholarships and lectures at the time, but no matter which geographic region he was studying the method was the same: political histories functioned as a code to discover what role modernism played worldwide, mainly between 1945 and the first decade of the twenty-first century, with 1989 identified as one of the crucial turning points. There are several published texts,[2] lectures or recordings[3] in which Piotrowski engages with this topic. One of the issues with which he grappled, which we consider key for our theme in this essay, arose from his participation in the debate on whether it is relevant to use postcolonial studies as an alternative methodology when attempting to define a common history of art in the Eastern Bloc, before and after the fall of the Iron Curtain. This search for a common theory/history is understandable, as the main disadvantage for this region is the absence of a coherent platform which might be termed 'postsocialist studies'. Until now, Central European art scholarship has resisted such ambitions due to its heterogeneity, and it is precisely this national and historic complexity which partially defines many parameters of what might be identified as the 'perfect other' in art historical terms.

The case study we are now developing to further this discourse is based on our joint research of the similarities and differences between artistic practices in South Africa and Eastern Europe. Piotrowski had indicated that he considered this a fruitful area for further study a few years before he died.[4] We started our project in 2014, and throughout the following years, our research has emerged as 'The Afterlife of Socialism and Apartheid in the Art and Art History of East-Central Europe and South Africa'.[5] We believe that despite the geographical distance between these two peripheries the post-totalitarian context might function as an indicator of certain common parameters: either through a comparison of these two completely different (ex-) totalitarian regimes in isolation or by allowing certain reciprocal themes to unfold in tandem.[6]

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Piotrowski's 2014 essay on the problematics of postcolonial theory as a methodology for approaching postsocialism responds to an epilogue written for *The Third Text Reader* by Rasheed Araeen (founding editor of Third Text).[7] The title of this essay is 'A New Beginning' and the content is a critical look at postcolonial theories and the limitations in their application for the study of art in postcolonial peripheries. Piotrowski takes this critique a step further by asking how useful such a methodology can be for other (non-colonial) peripheries such as the postsocialist art scene of Eastern and Central Europe. Despite Piotrowski's hesitancy, it is clear that although there are some problems with a blanket application of postcolonial theory in East-Central Europe, it is by no means entirely disposable either. In the next section, we look for the areas of overlap, firstly by addressing the implications of self-colonization as a manifestation of all peripheral experience (to varying degrees) and, therefore, a possible common denominator for our study. Secondly, we consider the diversity of peripheral identities, knowledge systems and art histories as, ironically, a unifying factor due to the way they are perceived (as 'other') and exploited by the 'center'.

Local Identities for Sale

There appears to be a divergence between the postsocialist 'wish to belong' in opposition to the postcolonial attempt to 'divorce' from the West. There is a corollary, however, to the apparent rejection of colonial/modernist influence in the postcolonies, an argument that was raised already in 1998 by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in an essay entitled '*Who claims Alterity?*'. Spivak discusses the difficulties of trying to present an alternative history (or history of art in our case) when the framework, the discourse used and the core of the argument, is presented in a manner that is informed by the academic structures of the 'centre' (specifically colonialist structures, as she is presenting her argument from an Indian point of view). She is talking here about 'internal colonization' (which could be seen to have some similarities with 'self-colonization') where the rejection of the dominant culture is offered from within the system or using the terms of that culture. To clarify, the postcolonial 'other' has been educated in a colonial institution (university perhaps) and learned to construct an argument or debate a point of view within certain time-honoured academic rules supported by the 'master narratives' of Western discourse. Now, in order to be heard by a broader audience, i.e., beyond their periphery, they must conform to this dominant mode in order to be heard. Spivak, thus, problematizes the work of the (art) historian attempting to present an 'alternative' view to the centre, specifically a view that is critical of the dominant ideology. She states that this might produce: 'the site of a chiasmus, the crossing of a double contradiction … the system of production of the national bourgeoisie at home, and abroad, the tendency to represent neocolonialism by the semiotic of "internal colonization"'.[8] Araeen raises this issue with relevance to postcolonial studies, which arose originally as a form of resistance but which now have been appropriated by the academy and have become part of the dominant narrative.[9]

In postsocialist countries, self-colonization functions slightly differently as explained by Alexander Kiossev in his essay analysing the Bulgarian experience, entitled '*Notes on self-colonising cultures*' (originally written in 1995).[10] Bulgaria provides an interesting parallel to Africa as Kiossev explains that in 1995 Western discourse identified Bulgaria in terms of its global absence, specifically found in their lack of

civilization, culture and economic or other forms of power. In a way, this equates with Western attitudes to colonized cultures which are also identified in terms of lack although in the colonies the identification is a construction created to legitimize imperialism. To give just one example, missionaries came to Africa to bring civilization, knowledge and salvation to the indigenous population who lacked these 'advantages'. In the process, it was hoped that the influence of Christianity would make them productive cogs in the colonial machinery, thereby enabling the colonizers to exploit the natural resources of the country as an added benefit. The point is that the arrival of colonial settlers is the event that definitively awakened an awareness of any lack in the native inhabitants – an awareness that initially made them feel inferior and, therefore, dependent on the colonizer, but which is now being fiercely fought in recent decolonial discourse.

Kiossev's Bulgarian example differs only in the close proximity to a European 'center' and the apparent attempts of Bulgarians to 'self-colonise' in order to overcome the differences noted between what the centre has (knowledge, education, enlightenment, resulting in wealth and opportunities) and what they are told, in no uncertain terms, that they do not. The irony that Kiossev points out is not that they are self-colonizing because they are inherently lacking, but that they are striving to attain what Western ideologies value because their lack of such advantages has been identified by the central 'other'.[11] The awareness of lack is, therefore, as in Africa or other colonized countries, an imposed status of devaluation, based on a hierarchical model of value systems where the Western centre is situated at the apex. As such it cannot rightly be identified as 'self-colonization' because the impetus comes from without.

It is clear that this so-called self-colonization appears to be a common problem in both postcolonial peripheries and postsocialist peripheries, both of whom find it necessary to work within structures present in the 'master narratives' of dominant discourses. There is a further level of complexity to consider in the European context, however, where the push and pull of dominance are far more fluid than in colonial countries. Piotrowski notes that, in certain instances, there are reciprocal forms of cultural exchange between Europe and its peripheries (or between peripheries themselves) making it less easy to identify who might be dominating whom.[12] Despite this, the fact remains that both postsocialist and postcolonial contexts are struggling with the ramifications of dominance from the Western centre and both are still attempting to identify strategies for self-affirmation. Such a struggle is often undermined ironically through an apparent acceptance by the 'center' as discussed below.

Despite ongoing occasional debates about self-colonization, at least since 1995, and despite contemporary fashion in mapping the art of various world peripheries by Western art museums, we still face a persistent domination of Western narratives. The widely welcomed recent recognition of neo-avant-garde and postsocialist art is not supported by a recognition of local (national) narratives, which without a doubt have played a significant role in the origins of art in each geography.[13] This situation can be seen as a way in which Western cultural frameworks (often represented by decision-making institutions such as art museums) create individual 'pars pro toto' representations from Central and Eastern European art and repackage them for Western consumption within familiar institutionally sanctioned frameworks.[14] One understands that such decisions are often dictated by expedience particularly as the Western institutional market is less ideological than it is economic. For example, exhibiting practically unknown artists from peripheries does not excuse the gallery from

the need to attract masses of paying visitors. The result is that individuals or teams of curators from major institutions often make decisions about which artists will be selected for their exhibitions, based on whether they fit within the framework of broader generally familiar topics. These selections and topics, as well as the written texts that accompany them, maintain the continuity of a Western narrative that might be – in the original context of the artist's home country – superficial or confusing.

In extreme cases, it could be said that a previously ideologically coherent Western narrative has now devolved into mass popularism which persists because the 'peripheral' artists are inserted into an ideological narrative without any cognisance of their idiosyncratic status – simply in order to attract the widest possible audience (not only a Western European audience). In such cases, the audience is given a supporting story to contextualize this inclusion resulting in an artist promoted by an internationally recognized museum who is presented as if he/she is a key figure in a particular local context. Their presence as apparent supporters of Western narratives perpetuates the creation of further artificial contexts within which Western institutions present peripheral art and art histories. Within this 'modus operandi', the narratives of particular Eastern and Central European national art histories are never taken in their entirety, nor are the selected aspects of each history presented within a local framework or social context (or only very briefly). In fact, we can also say that the power of the dominant centre is preserved in the European peripheries as much as it is in the colonial regions. There is no agency for the choices or decisions of the peripheral, so the result is merely a new eminence for a handful of selected artists who are identified as central figures of particular local art tendencies or movements.

South African art history is similarly complicated by the fact that so much of it has been overlooked, not because of different national divisions but because certain aspects have been under-researched or ignored in the past due to colonial preferences. This results in lacunae in indigenous art histories (in the process of being amended by current research). Due to decolonizing discourses, however, there is now an attempt to diminish the importance of any art history that is focused on art made during the colonial period that conforms to the Western canon. The current research in South African art history is, thus, complex and piecemeal. An attempt was made in 2011 to bring together all these strands in a four-volume publication called *Visual Century: South African Art in Context, 1907–2007* (2011, editor in chief Mario Pissarra). For various reasons, this publication appears uneven and has been criticized more for the exclusions than for what was included. Art and art history from South Africa is, however, most likely to be identified with the African continent which remains decidedly postcolonial and peripheral in terms of global discourse and which is inherently diverse in terms of content and approach.

East and Central Europe, like Africa, are also complicated by historical constraints where, in the socialist past, the artists of Central/Eastern Europe could only have an inner dialogue with those behind the Iron Curtain. It was not possible to communicate or share ideas or to participate equally in critical discussions with Western artists and art historians.[15] This has been ameliorated since 1989, but art historians today have still not developed their discussions with the aim of setting retroactive framings, an example being for the neo-avant-garde. Another reason for local art histories of Central and Eastern Europe still being excluded from the main narratives might be found in the diversity (in all possible senses) of this half of Europe, arising from the fragmentation of national identities.

Due to different political histories, relatively small regions might offer narratives which differ even within each particular national state or geography, thus limiting the possibilities for coherent developmental or inclusive studies. As history has shown us, certain multinational states have atomized into many others over the past few decades, and each of them is trying to promote their local treasures as individual stories. Simple statistics can clarify the complexity of this situation: for example, from the eight socialist states existent in January 1989, we have 20 states in January 2017 – all in the same zone in Central and Eastern Europe. Each of these has its own specifics and timelines, individual preferences in art styles and history of art, inclinations towards foreign artists and writers, relations based on historical coincidences, fashions and censorships, residuals, exclusions, overlooked parts,[16] mystical or demonized personalities, miracles or sins.

This is the reason that Piotrowski's major book on modernism behind the Iron Curtain, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, still remains the most complex achievement in presenting a coherent view of a peripheral art historical region.[17] On the other hand, texts like *The Green Block* by Maja Fowkes[18] or *Anti-politics in Central European Art* by Klara Kemp-Welch[19] are constructed using a common denominator of historical or political phenomena (ecology and political reticence in the first and second case, respectively) within a trans-national framework and, thus, have the opportunity to delve deeper into particular art tendencies and the works of particular artists. These books are so specific in their intent that it is clear there is much work still to be done to broaden the scope of postsocialist art history. Moreover, our discussion clearly shows how much is yet to be done to overcome what Piotrowski called 'local identities for sale'.[20] This problem is visible not only in the larger framework of East-Central European art history but also locally, within each national platform individually.

South Africa does not have a Piotrowski figure to try and consolidate the history of Southern African art although this lack was noted and the recent *Visual Century* volumes mentioned above were an attempt to ameliorate the situation. There have also been recent calls for the decolonizing of education which have begun to change syllabi in Universities and Colleges. Before such calls, the teaching of art history in South Africa usually began with old Western classics such as Gardner's *Art Through the Ages*. This Western focus would be followed by selected readings on specific local artists or themes (according to the preferences of the teachers or lecturers). Art historical publications in South Africa have largely been monographs on particular artists, or thematically based volumes concentrating on issues such as feminism and its impact in South Africa (such as Marion Arnold, *Women and Art in South Africa*,[21] or Marion Arnold and Brenda Schmahmann, *Between Union and Liberation: Women artists in South Africa 1910–94*)[22] or resistance art during the apartheid era (Sue Williamson, *Resistance Art in South Africa*)[23] or postcolonial and post-apartheid art (Annie Coombes, *History After Apartheid*[24] and John Peffer *Art and the end of Apartheid*)[25] among other themes. Obviously, in recent books, postcolonial issues have dominated and there has been more of an attempt to situate South Africa within the African continent rather than present it as a foil to Western art. While the art history of this region may not be fully comprehensive, it does have a strong and undeniable colonial/postcolonial bias that links recent art history thematically and raises many complex issues regarding race, identity and social politics.

The question for our study now is how can we compare the national heterogeneity and lack of common art historical sources on one side (East-Central Europe) with the

racial heterogeneity[26] in South Africa which is nevertheless equipped with a rich portfolio of postcolonial studies. Obviously, the differences listed like this are somewhat reductive and do not allow for the nuances arising from post-totalitarian trauma in both areas. We argue that it is within a framework of post-totalitarian reimagining that a common denominator arises in the art production of our two diverse peripheries, as discussed below.

The Afterlife of Socialism and Apartheid

In this section, we consider how our research project might function as an alternative to the Western/Central hegemony in art history. South Africa and Central and Eastern Europe are diverse regions but with a shared history of suppressive political regimes (socialism and apartheid) and eventual democratic 'freedom' (although this freedom is debatable in real terms). The fact that both areas have now had about 30 years of democratic rule means that the affected generations, both young and old, have reached a stage where there is enough distance to allow for reflection and consideration on how events of the past may have affected their present and their future. Each dispensation has negotiated some form of regime change, and now, they all exist within similar political conditions of democracy; but, now, these positive developments, in many cases, appear to sink in the mire of reintroduced restrictions, various forms of manipulation, radicalism and scepticism, political corruption and the perceived slow pace of positive social change leading to a general sense of disappointment.[27] We have identified a need for art historical discourse to grapple with the permeating thread of commonality that arises from the similarity of experience within such disparate contexts. Artists in both postsocialist and post-apartheid (postcolonial) milieux are negotiating the changes they have lived through, often by comparing past and present both critically and nostalgically. Their approaches include questions about how to select, what to remember, how to express those memories, how to deal with the ongoing effects of past (and present) injustices and how to grapple with the demise of expectations or the limitations of the current dispensation. Our project is, thus, based on a belief in the appropriate use of postcolonial discourse and/or in the viable comparison of both areas despite the differences we have discussed in the sections above.

We believe that there is a possibility of common ground between post-apartheid and postsocialist artists in terms of the tradition (and perhaps also the need) for ongoing subversion through artistic practice, as despite the liberation from totalitarian regimes we see our societies constantly embroiled in political and moral troubles. In both areas, there was a belief that after liberation each nation could build a democratic society that would benefit everyone (admittedly a rather utopian dream). In South Africa, the new democracy was heralded by the new constitution which has been hailed as one of the most progressive in the world. However, there is rampant corruption in the government that is decimating the growth of the country and leading to unemployment, mainly affecting young people. The resultant widespread poverty and ongoing inequality fuels this disconnect and exacerbates levels of violence, social unrest and xenophobia as local residents take out their frustrations on the many refugees and migrants flooding into the country. Young people feel as if they have no future and many older people feel let down by the promises made by the government as their lives have not changed in any meaningful way. A similar situation pertains in Eastern and Central Europe exacerbated by the uncertainties of developments in recent years

in both the East and the West.[28] Now, when democratic societies of the first world face radicalization and a concomitant rise of populism, a common platform of post-totalitarian identity is, at the very least, questionable. Once again, in an interesting revival, this situation has initiated essential questions about how we have dealt with our past (in the twentieth century), how much we examined it and understood it and what impact our knowledge of the past might have on our present and future. In both the post-apartheid milieu and in postsocialist countries, artists respond to these ongoing social issues by either making activist art with hard-hitting social commentary or tapping into a form of nostalgia for a lost hope and a lost future.

The recent events that have destabilized Europe and led to the revival of politically right-wing reactions have clearly resulted in a renewal of interest in the topic of nostalgia – but this topic occurs in terms that go beyond the specificity of its 'Ostalgia' meaning. We considered this aspect of overlap between diverse geographies so pertinent to our study that we presented a panel on this topic titled 'Divided Societies: Manifestations of Postsocialist and Post-apartheid "Nostalgia"' at the CAA[29] conference in February 2017, in New York.[30] Nostalgia can be many things in many different contexts, but the biggest development identified in both Eastern-Central European examples and South African examples appears to be a move beyond the narrowly defined retrospective interpretation of the nostalgic impulse. When we initiated the CAA conference panel, despite the different traditions and contexts of these papers (two from South Africa and two from Eastern Europe), each of them responded to the effects of collective nostalgia when contending with current responses by artists to past repressions. As Viktor Misiano explains with reference to post-Soviet nostalgia: 'any new definition of contemporaneity inevitably provokes a discussion of the past: any self-definition in the present takes the shape of historical reflection'.[31] It is important to point out, however, that the nostalgia discussed in the papers for our panel was not about an orthodox remembrance of this past nor, necessarily, about pitting the historic past against the present (which, in many cases, has not lived up to expectations) but includes what Svetlana Boym identifies as a nostalgia for the future. Boym, who wrote *The Future of Nostalgia*,[32] discusses how nostalgia might function with reference to socialism as both a reflective and restorative duality. Misiano calls this 'progressive nostalgia' which counteracts the passive sense of longing for a lost past with a more purposeful and energetic approach, where one not only considers the past that was, but the one that could have been – an idea which was critically considered in diverse ways by the participants in this panel.

In April 2021, Karen von Veh co-chaired a panel with a colleague, Landi Raubenheimer, at the Association of Art History conference in the United Kingdom. The panel was titled '*Challenging Legacies in Post-apartheid and Postsocialist Notions of Place*'. Papers dealt with a broad cross section of identities that had previously been colonized or, otherwise, politically suppressed (African, Native American, South American and several postsocialist European countries). They reflected research that specifically engages with place, landscape or site and that critically interrogates the visual legacies (monuments, buildings, artworks) inherited from oppressive regimes. Works discussed responded to the problematic residue of such cultural objects and/or the images and ideologies perpetuated or retained in a postcolonial/postsocialist milieu. There was great diversity in content and subject as well as in the geographies being addressed yet each of these papers were linked by the theme of artists interacting with the resonances of place or land to explore the current sense of urgency in

breaking free of an oppressive past. It is perhaps this sense of purpose that we could identify as the cohesion that links our disparate geographies and informs our common attempts to overcome the stigma of peripheral existence in art historical discourse.

Conclusion

With reference to Piotrowski's notes and writings, we might consider our research projects as case studies for his 'horizontal art history', in terms of our approach to contextualizing the art histories of two (distanced) peripheries. We are, of course, still working on documenting it with art historical examples, but in this endeavour, we can, perhaps, take inspiration from the brief suggestions Piotrowski himself considered in his writings on India and Argentina. The first impulse for a dialogue between the authors of our joint text happened back in 2014 and was based on comparisons of the different use and meaning of religious images which, in contemporary art, is often employed to comment on social and political issues.[33] The other frequent keyword within our 'Nostalgia' conference panel was the 'future' as an echo of various kinds of avant-garde and post-avant-garde utopias (and dystopias). These imaginings are typical in many transforming societies and particularly topical in postsocialist and post-apartheid milieux, where both an imagined utopia and reflections on a current dystopia may become the topic of contemporary artworks. The theme of the second conference was the engagement and reimagining of historic traces in land and material culture that resolve as a new imaginary in current and future identities.

Our project, at this point, is inherently open ended. This is not merely a melancholic metaphor for Piotrowski's unfinished work, but it refers to several other approaches that have raised important precedents for us throughout our research: Rasheed Araeen's question 'what should be done now?' at the end of his text;[34] Slavoj Žižek's and Srećko Horvat's book *What Does Europe Want?*[35] or James Elkins' open end in his 2020 book: *The End of Diversity in Art Historical Writing: North Atlantic Art History and its Alternatives*[36] – to mention just a few. In his attempt to identify the relationship between peripheries and 'important' Western narratives, Piotrowski has explored many angles and initiated debates from varying points of view. Similarly, in our text, we try not to be reductive, not to close the issues or tie up loose ends, rather we want to open the way for further discussion.

There remain many complex avenues for further debate – we must find a way to bridge the west-centric hierarchy, we need to address what Piotrowski identified as the East-Central European 'Messianic syndrome',[37] we also need to identify the differences and similarities between postcolonial and postsocialist experiences, among many other possible areas of discussion.

We suggest, however, that our open end must have a direction and that this might include aspects of postcolonialism due to the fact that (as we have pointed out) there is no coherent postsocialist discourse while there is a rich and well-documented postcolonial discourse. We further suggest that our comparison of two diverse peripheries may assist in enriching postsocialist studies and may chart a new approach to fill the gaps – and this is what we are hoping to attain in our project. In other words, we are open ended like Piotrowski, but looking for a discourse that can be applied to any 'post' scenario in most peripheries, including South Africa and East and Central Europe: 'Peripheries of the world unite!'.

Notes

1 Piotr Piotrowski referred to post-communism in his writings but we have chosen to use the term postsocialism in our topic heading as we feel it encompasses more countries and ideological options in terms of our research interests. It appears less specific than post-communism (where people tend to think of Russia as a default example).
2 An example of this would be the lecture at The BASEES 2014 Annual Conference, Cambridge in April 2014 entitled "East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-Colonial Theory", translated and published in Slovak magazine of art *Jazdec (Rider)*, vol. VI, no. 1 (2014): 8–12. There is also an essay published posthumously: Piotr Piotrowski, "Peripheries of the World, Unite!," in: *Extending the Dialogue. Essays by Igor Zabel Award Laureates, Grant Recipients, and Jury Members, 2008–2014*, eds. Urška Jurman, Christiane Erharter, and Rawley Grau (Ljubljana-Berlin-Vienna: Archive Books, 2016), 14–26.
3 Just one of the many examples is Piotrowski's keynote address during AICA International Congress in Košice, Slovakia 2013 entitled "Peripheries of the world unite!"
4 Richard Gregor discussed this particular theme with Piotr Piotrowski in Poznań in early December 2014. Piotrowski was very interested in the upcoming exhibition at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg (Between Democracies 1989/1994–2014. Memory and Commemoration, September 2015), and was planning to attend its opening. A catalogue of the exhibition is available online at: http://www.kunsthallebratislava.sk/khb/between-democracies-1989–2014-memory-and-commemoration.
5 Our project was originally part of a wider collaboration entitled "Between Democracies 1989/1994–2014. Memory and Commemoration" which was initiated by Judy Peter (ZA) and Cristian Nae (RO).
6 Other than the continual research by Piotr Piotrowski, it's important to note that our project was preceded by the long term research undertaken by Klara Kemp-Welch which is focused on mapping the relations between East-Central Europe and Latin America (MA History of Art special option "Countercultures: Alternative Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America 1959–1989" at the Courtauld Institute of Art.)
7 Rasheed Araeen, "A New Beginning: Beyond Postcolonial Cultural Theory and Identity Politics," in: eds. Rasheed Araeen, Sean Cubitt, and Ziauddin Sardar, *The Third text Reader on Art, Culture and Theory* (London: Continuum, 2002), 333–45. Third Text: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Culture is an academic journal that was founded by Karachi born artist and academic, Rasheed Araeen in 1987. The Journal aims to develop the discourse of 'peripheral' art histories, particularly those from Africa, Asia and the 'third world' as part of a broader consideration of global contemporary art. The Third Text website explains that: "It has brought with that analysis a particular focus on both the impact of globalisation on cultural practices and the lessons of postcolonial theory." (http://thirdtext.org/about-us).
8 Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak, "Who Claims Alterity?" in: eds. Barbara Kruger and Phil Mariani, *Remaking History (Discussions in Contemporary Culture # 4)* (New York: The New Press and Dia Art Foundation, 1998): 274, 275.
9 Araeen, "A New Beginning," 336.
10 The essay that is being referred to here is the one that was re-printed in eds. Bojana Pejić and David Elliott, *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-communist Europe* (Stockholm: Modern Museum, 1999), 114–7.
11 Kiossev, "Notes," 115.
12 For example Piotrowski cites the example of Czech Surrealism in his text: "On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History," *Umění* VI (2008): 378.
13 Geography of art refers to the importance of the place and time of origins (with reference to Piotrowski), "On the Spatial Turn," 378.
14 Examples of this occur, for instance, in a series of recent exhibitions on peripheral Pop Art that occurred in 2015, i.e.: "International POP" held at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis 2015; "The World Goes Pop" held at the Tate Modern, London 2015; and "Ludwig Goes Pop: The East Side Story" at the Ludwig Museum, Budapest 2015.
15 James Elkins, Richard Gregor, "The Homonymic Curtain," *Umění*, LXIII, no. 3 (2015): 150–5.

16 These lacunae were referred to in the main theme of the 2013 AICA Congress: "White Places and Black Holes."
17 Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta. Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe 1945–1989*, trans. Anna Brzyski (London: Reaktion Books, 2005).
18 Maja Fowkes, *The Green Bloc: Neo-avant-garde Art and Ecology under Socialism* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2015).
19 Klara Kemp-Welch, *Antipolitics in Central European Art. Reticence as Dissidence under Post-Totalitarian Rule 1956–1989* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).
20 Piotrowski, "On the Spatial Term," 381.
21 Marion Arnold, *Women and Art in South Africa* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip: 1996).
22 *Between Union and Liberation: Women Artists in South Africa 1910–1994*, eds. Marion Arnold and Brenda Schmahmann (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).
23 Sue Williamson, *Resistance Art in South Africa* (Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2004).
24 Annie E. Coombes, *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* (Johannesburg: WITS University Press: 2004).
25 John Peffer, *Art and the End of Apartheid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).
26 Racial heterogeneity is mostly understood as a simple binary of black and white in South Africa, however there are many people who were brought to South Africa under the colonial rule as slave labour or indentured labour. These include the Malay people who were brought as slaves to the Cape in the eighteenth century, Indian people who mostly came as indentured labour in the nineteenth century (many to work on the sugar farms in Natal), and Chinese who came firstly as debtors but most of whom were labourers imported to work on the mines in the early twentieth century. Each of these groups has grown their communities in South Africa, each has maintained to a large degree their historic cultures, languages and religions. The white settlers also came from several different European countries with different languages and cultures (mainly Dutch, French and English). In addition, there are many indigenous cultures that co-exist but maintain their own identities, including San-Bushmen, Zulu, Xhosa, Pedi, Tswana, etc. In the law drawn up under the new democratic South African constitution, in an attempt to assert the importance of maintaining these cultural identities, South Africa has 11 official languages.
27 For example, in South Africa there have been a spate of recent protests against the slow pace of decolonisation that have emerged predominantly in educational spheres. Examples include the 'Rhodes must fall' demonstrations in March 2015 which resulted in the removal of Marion Walgate's sculpture of Cecil John Rhodes from the University of Cape Town campus a month later, and the ongoing protests at all university campuses from 2015 to the present to provide free and equitable education and to 'decolonise' the curricula and teaching methods across the country and in all disciplines.
28 Developments such as the refugee crisis in Europe, for example, has led to right wing reactions in various populations (Brexit being a manifestation of this scenario) and is creating uncertainty about the future of the European Union. The US election that put Donald Trump in power is also a reflection of these tendencies arising elsewhere in the West.
29 The acronym CAA stands for College Art Association which is the biggest art historical association in the U.S.A.
30 The panel was chaired by Karen von Veh and Richard Gregor, presented on Thursday, 02/16/17: 10:30 am –12:00 pm at the CAA (College Art Association) Annual Conference in New York, 15–19 February 2017. Presenters in this panel included Christian Nae, Ksenia Nouril, Thabang Monoa, and Pfunzo Sidogi.
31 Viktor Misiano, "Nostalgia for the Future," in: *Progressive Nostalgia: Contemporary Art of the Former USSR* (WAM and New Museum Foundation, 2008), 13.
32 Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).
33 Karen von Veh has written many texts on the trangressive use of religious imagery for social and political critique including: "Contemporary Iconoclasm in SA: Transgressive Images of Madonna and Christ in Response to Social Politics," *IKON 9: Journal of Iconographic Studies*, vol. 9 (June 2016): 355–62; "Deconstructing Religion through Art: Wim Botha's Images of Christ," *IKON 8: Journal of Iconographic Studies*, vol. 8 (June 2015):

181–92; "Deconstructing Dogma: Transgressive Religious Iconography in South African Art," *De Arte*, vol. 89 (June 2014): 39–63; "White/ Black/ Grey Areas: Reflections on Transition in South African Art," *Artes Magazine*. 25 November 2013, http://www.artesmagazine.com/2013/12/whiteblack-grey-areas-reflections-on-transition-in-south-african-art/; "Post-apartheid masculinity reviewed through the lens of Christian iconography: The work of Conrad Botes and Lawrence Lemaoana," *Communication: South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*, vol. 39, no. 2 (2013): 271–91; "Diane Victor, Tracey Rose, and the Gender Politics of Christian Imagery," *African Arts*, vol. 45, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 22–33; "The Intersection of Christianity and Politics in South African Art: A Comparative Analysis of Selected Images Since 1960, with Emphasis on the Post-apartheid Era," *De Arte*, vol. 85 (2012): 5–25; "Faith or Expediency/Religion or Art? A Consideration of Contemporary Transgressive Religious Images," in: ed. Fiona Rankin-Smith, *Figuring Faith: Images of Faith in Africa* (Johannesburg: Fourthwall Books, 2011): 174–86; "Saints and Sinners: Re-Evaluating Gendered Power Bases Entrenched by Religious Imagery," in: ed. Amanda A. du Preez, *Taking a Hard Look: Gender and Visual Culture* (Newcastle on Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 47–70.

34 Araeen, "A New Beginning," 343.

35 Slavoj Žižek, Srećko Horvat, *What Does Europe Want?: The Union and Its Discontents* (Columbia University Press, 2014).

36 James Elkins, *The End of Diversity in Art Historical Writing: North Atlantic Art History and Its Alternatives* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020).

37 Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 29.

Part II

Practicing Horizontal Art History

Localizations

4 About the West

Mathilde Arnoux

What are "the West", "the Western art", "the Western usage" constantly mentioned by Piotr Piotrowski in his works? What realities cover these notions? These are questions that very early on marked the reflection of the research project "OwnReality. To Each His Own Reality" and the discussions with Piotr Piotrowski who had accepted to be associated with it as Senior Professor. The project, conducted from 2011 to 2017, gathered an international team of doctoral students in art history and post-doctoral students in philosophy in order to study together the notion of "reality" and "the real" in the art discourses and artistic practices of France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic and the Polish People's Republic between 1960 and 1989.[1]

Examining the artistic relations between Eastern and Western Europe during the Cold War was a challenge. Such a task might have seemed unrealistic given the imposed restrictions on movement and the permeation of competing ideologies into the sphere of art during this period. Yet, taking a closer look at these limits prompted us to question them. The study of artistic relations in Europe during this time calls for a reflection on the ways in which we identify these relations and what they entailed. Basing our work on research that highlights the importance of reality and the real in art discourse and artistic practices during this period, we studied the benefits of adopting a cross-perspective view in relation to a particular notion within a transnational research project.

Following the approach of *histoire croisée* and thanks to the points of view that a team of researchers from different horizons could offer, we made room for the distinct conceptions that the same notion could have and to put these variations at the heart of our analyses; it is from this angle that we had to consider the real and reality. It was never a question of pursuing a definition, but rather of considering the various conceptions according to space and time. These conceptions determined the points of view on artistic practices. Between them, relations were woven that did not replay the geopolitical division that generally organized the analysis of artistic relations in Europe during the Cold War. Depending on whether art works were conceived in a mimetic relation to reality or whether they questioned it, possible encounters beyond division were emerging.

In this framework, we paid attention to the marks left by the geopolitical division of Europe on the narratives of art history relating to this period. A critical examination of the political and historical underpinnings of our current categories required, however, cooperation between researchers from different academic horizons and an awareness of the singular trajectory from which each point of view has been formed. Only by sharing the various historiographical approaches can we apprehend the overlapping and divergent use of concepts, the ideological biases, the formation of institutions,

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the interpretation and presentation of art during the Cold War and after 1989. This ambition was also at the heart of the series of meetings entitled the "*Authorities of Art History*", which brought together researchers from different academic backgrounds around the same subject.[2]

In this context, Piotrowski' thought acted like a stimulus. As one of the first academic works to have proposed a synthesis of the debates around the artistic practices of Eastern Europe during the Cold War and a transversal point of view on the avant-garde that had emerged there, his contributions were fundamental to our research project. His writings, in particular *In the Shadow of Yalta*,[3] which at the beginning of the project in 2011 had just been published in English following its original publication in Polish in 2005, opened an essential line of research on account of not only the geographic space the book considers but also due to the rereading of other texts it prompted, in particular, because it reconsidered the underlying notions of the Cold War that are "East" and "West". Piotr Piotrowski's work was a starting point for analysing the realities that these notions covered and in particular the West in relation to whom Eastern Europe – the very subject of Piotr Piotrowski's research – was defined.

The West indicates a direction, but it also denotes belonging to a conception of thought and culture. It has also been used to qualify a geographical space bringing together countries categorized as belonging to this culture, located west of the Iron Curtain in the Cold War and capitalist.

In Piotr Piotrowski's texts, it seemed that the West was used to make differentiations, but without having a fixed use and referring to different realities depending on whether they referred to practices, discourses or culture. This plasticity characterized the paths taken by Piotr Piotrowski's reflection. Always subject to debate, it was transformed over time and research. In order to continue the discussion with Piot Piotrowski's thinking, I will share here my observations about the West and the diverse ways in which Piotr Piotrowski used this notion, which was extremely valuable for the "OwnReality" project team.

A General Definition of the West

In his book *In the Shadow of Yalta*, the introduction begins:

> This book is concerned with the art of 'East-Central' Europe, part of a larger geo-political formation, namely the 'Eastern Bloc' or 'Eastern Europe'. The art produced in this larger area is usually referred to as 'East European' in the English-speaking world. I will follow that Western usage, except where I need to be more narrowly precise. So where exactly is 'East-Central' Europe?[4]

The East and East-Central regions baptized by the West had to be situated and differentiated. This attempt to define what East and East-Central Europe represented was shared with Piotr Piotrowski by other specialists such as László Beke, Laura Hoptman, the IRWIN group, Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, Mária Orišková, Krisztina Passuth, Tomáš Pospiszyl, Andrzej Turowski and Igor Zabel, to whose works he made reference throughout his texts.

Piotr Piotrowski's writings, in particular, *Znaczenia modernizmu. W stronę historii sztuki polskiej po 1945 roku*[5] and then *In the Shadow of Yalta*,[6] discuss the artistic practices assimilated by the avant-gardes that had arisen during the Cold War in several

Eastern European countries, which had until then essentially been ignored by art history. To give them a place in the analyses made, Piotrowski not only took them for a subject, but he also raised fundamental issues of methodology. He questioned the reason for their long absence and took an interest in the manner in which they had till then been treated. Among the prerequisites for any research on this geographic space, he demanded that it should not be reduced to either a homogeneous East or Central Europe. This is why he insisted on the need to differentiate the individual contexts of each artistic scene that had come into being in the Eastern bloc, and he clearly stated, in a conversation, comparing art from Poland and from GDR in the 1960s, that simply because the Eastern European countries were socialist did not mean that their individual artistic practices were necessarily related. The fact that they were brought together in a bloc by the Cold War should not be misleading, no obvious relations between the artistic practices of the former socialist countries should be prejudged. Socialism had been implemented differently in different places; the artistic worlds and artistic practices that had taken shape there were also distinct from each other.

Piotr Piotrowski constantly discussed what constituted Eastern or Central Europe. He, thus, undermined any uniform representation of them, in particular, by questioning their constitution through discourses that he identified as those of the West. The need to take into account the diversity of artistic practices in the countries formerly located east of the Iron Curtain was, therefore, formed against the backdrop of the West that was considered uniform. And this is what first caught my attention.

Understanding this diversity and plurality demanded that all essentialist conceptions be set to one side. But how could this approach come about against the background of an undifferentiated West? What did this West correspond to in Piotr Piotrowski's writings? Was the West a part of the world in a geographic setting, a group of capitalist nations or an order of thought with imperious ambitions? By which countries and discourses was it typified?

In every case, the definition of the West remained very general and seemed to connote equally the United States and the various countries of Western Europe – something I found very striking. From my perspective as an art historian trained in Paris and Munich, the idea that the West to which France belonged in the contemporary age was a uniform space had never arisen. De Gaulle's choice to withdraw from NATO's military integrated command had, in this respect, left its mark on people's memories. It was not a question for the country of belonging to the West but of always standing out from the throng of rival dominant nations characterized by their desire to demonstrate their national identity in their specificity. When the West was considered as an entity, it was to define a geographic space or the power represented by NATO. It was also a term designating a dominant culture compared to those of the African or Asian continent. But, it was not used to point out a uniform understanding of art in the twentieth century. On the contrary, the different debates that had marked the era were constantly distinguished according to the horizons of each, too diverse to form a coherent whole.[7]

The West or Art History with Universal Aspirations and Vertical Orientation

In spite of the general usage of the word "West", it was possible to have an idea of what Piotr Piotrowski was getting at with this term in his writings. In *In the Shadow of Yalta*,

he pointed out the inappropriateness of the approaches to modern art history developed in the West as far as the study to be undertaken was concerned. The use of Western analytical perspectives to interpret the art of the countries in Eastern Europe would lead to errors. For example, Rosalind Krauss's analysis of the absence of originality in Neo-Constructivism[8] was reviewed and weakened by the interpretation made of it by Polish artists, namely, Władysław Strzemiński, Katarzyna Kobro, Henryk Stażewski, Kajetan Sosnowski and Zbigniew Gostomski, in whose works nothing evinces a systematic submission to the grid. In a similar exercise of revision, Piotr Piotrowski did not view the interest in figuration at the start of the 1960s, in particular, by the Wprost group in Kraków, as a return to order but as a reaction to the reappropriation of modernist practices by the political power in place. Thus, Piotr Piotrowski contradicted the conclusions reached by Benjamin Buchloh, who, in 1984, interpreted figuration as an indication of the growth of authoritarian tendencies in politics.[9] The specificity of the contexts, thus, came to invalidate certain conventional rationales of interpretation.

A year earlier, in his article *On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History*,[10] Piotr Piotrowski recognized the excellence of the university manual *Art Since 1900*, which he described as "a textbook focusing on Western art – the art produced in the cultural and political centres of the West: Paris, Berlin, Vienna, London, New York and others", one that did not challenge the foundations of modern art geography. Although the book had encouraged a reconsideration of the paradigms of art history through its employment of the social sciences, psychoanalysis, feminism and queer theory, the fact remains that "the accounts of art produced outside the centres in Western Europe and the United States have been written within the Western paradigm". The only exception of a non-Western art being judged on the basis of Western values was Russian avant-garde art:

> What is really significant is the presentation of the art of other regions as fragments of the global or universal art history established in the West. This reveals both the West-centric approach to art history and the premises of modernist art geography.[11]

To enhance our understanding of the Western discourse, we discussed this subject with Piotr Piotrowski during the Artl@s seminar organized by Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel on May 30, 2013, at which Piotr Piotrowski gave a lecture with the title "Globalizing Eastern Europe. The Global NETwork. An Introduction to Comparative Art History". Piotr Piotrowski identifies this discourse with, for example, the position developed in Werner Haftmann's *Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Prestel, 1954), to whose large number of new editions since its original publication (nine in 2000 alone) he made reference. On the subject of *In the Shadow of Yalta*, Luiza Nader rightly pointed out that Piotr Piotrowski was trying particularly to distance himself from the theories of the twentieth century published by critics in the American academic art journal *October*.[12] Furthermore, it was in relation to the manual *Art Since 1900*, which compiled the writings of these same art critics, that Piotr Piotrowski directed his own analysis rendered in the article "On the Spatial Turn".[13]

By matching accounts and analyses, it was possible to infer that in his discussion of the West, Piotr Piotrowski was referring to art history with universal aspirations centred on the artistic productions of the Western democracies, which were able to integrate the productions of other spaces, but by including them in their universal and

vertical system. This characterized the narratives of the art history of the second half of the twentieth century, which, in Piotr Piotrowski's opinion, had substituted national categories with universalist ambitions from a modernist standpoint, before these were replaced by "anti-modernist" universalist ambitions, followed by the "postmodernist" version. And he remarked that even when these modernist attitudes meant to be critical, they could not escape the centralized rationales.[14] Thus, in Piotr Piotrowski's writings, the terms West, Western and western designated not just a geographical zone but also an outlook on the twentieth-century art from which he wished to differentiate himself.

The Antagonism between Two Conceptions

Could it be that this viewpoint on the twentieth-century art that was essentially formed on the basis of Anglo-Saxon research on contemporary art represented the perspectives of the West? Was it clear that those perspectives had been taken into account by everyone and, as such, that they may have ended up representing the West in general? These alleged references and interpretations common to the West and to the different centres identified by Piotr Piotrowski don't, in fact, seem so very widely shared to me. For example, in France, Peter Bürger was not a primary reference to contemporary art history,[15] no more so than the manual *Art Since 1900* cited by Piotr Piotrowski.[16] The journal *October* was only considered seriously by a tight group of researchers revolving around EHESS and the journal *Macula*.[17] Modernism was not a concept debated in the same terms as it was in art history seen from the viewpoint of the English-speaking – or Anglo-Saxon – academic tradition.[18] The references and temporalities of the history of contemporary art in France, a country of the West, were not the same as those which according to Piotr Piotrowski represented the history of contemporary art in the West. In 1997, the book *Où va l'histoire de l'art contemporain?* brought together contemporary French, American and German authors and stimulated a debate between them, thus emphasizing the diversity of historiographical traditions according to academic horizons.[19] Although there had been widespread ignorance of the artistic practices to the east of the Iron Curtain among the countries to the West, it was impossible to conclude that there was a community of Western art history, as the paths proposed were so varied according to the way the discipline and its methods of analysis had been formed. Whereas, in Piotr Piotrowski's writings, all these different expressions pertained to the same system of thought based on modernity, after having revolved around a concept of the nation, these leanings could not be considered like the one pertaining to the West as modernity had also been a subject of major worry for the Eastern bloc, as demonstrated for example by David Crowley in *Cold War Modern*.[20] So, what does the West denote?

It seems that there was an incongruity between two conceptions in the usage that Piotr Piotrowski made of this term. The "West", sometimes, signified a geographic space in relation to the Iron Curtain and, thus, was clearly differentiated from the area to the east of it. However, the West also denoted to Western thought as it had taken shape over time since antiquity and had infused systems of knowledge. This made it much more difficult to demarcate the East as this area too had the same intellectual heritage. However, the wish to see Eastern artistic practices taken into account by the narratives of art history could be a starting point for questioning the knowledge systems of Western thought, following the example of certain post-colonial studies, in order to set down new scientific markers.[21] Thus, the West is understood in terms of culture that

is distinguished from cultures of indigenous, oriental, Pacific, African, etc., origin. The disparity between these two conceptions can be compared with the discrepancy that exists in certain languages, such as French, in which the term "Ouest" is used to denote the first understanding and the term "Occident" to denote the second.

The Cross-Perspective of Post-colonial Studies and Research into Artistic Practices in the Countries to the East of the Iron Curtain

The post-colonial studies encouraged Piotr Piotrowski not to bring together the artistic practices of the countries east of the Iron Curtain into an indistinct whole and not to assimilate them into existing narratives. The consideration of these practices invited the affirmation of the need for a fundamental renewal of the discourse on art. There was no question, however, of the paradigm of modernity being replaced by that of global perspectives.

It was for this reason that Piotr Piotrowski refused to take part in the symposium organized by Tate Modern to complement the exhibition "Global Pop".[22] He was unable to accept the use of the term "pop art" – with its Anglo-Saxon origin and usage in Western Europe – to designate artistic practices during the 1960s that came into being outside the West:

> We still are faced with a problem: American and Western European methodological imperialism frames global art via stylistic premises that originated in North Atlantic art history. […] Peripheral artworks are caught in a kind of trap between a general vocabulary of style, which originated elsewhere (in the case of pop art the origins are of course North America and Britain), and local specificity that is not readable from the outside.[23]

When placed under the heading "pop art", non-Western artistic practices initially appear to be influenced by the West, before being considered in the specific context in which they appeared. Moreover, adoption of this viewpoint encouraged recognition of pop practices where they were not, in fact, necessarily predominant or representative of the local currents.[24]

Piotr Piotrowski's writings described the cross-perspectival studies on the art history of communist Europe and research into art geography and post-colonial and global studies, as they had already appeared in many articles on the art history of the East published in the journal *Third Text* dedicated to the margins of the history of art.[25] Together, these approaches questioned the predominant narratives of the centres, inviting consideration of the peripheries and challenging the knowledge systems on which our understanding of the world depends.[26]

The Need to Maintain Distinctions

Although Piotr Piotrowski was able to associate the artistic practices of the Eastern Bloc with the peripheries of the post-colonial spaces in order to disconnect them from the dominant rationale, he did not blur their issues and endeavoured to pinpoint their differences. Consequently, in his article *East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-Colonial Theory*, Piotr Piotrowski stressed the contribution of post-colonial views to the study of artistic creation in the countries of Eastern Europe during the Cold War

while insisting on the particularity of the communist context and the risks incurred by the lack of differentiation between the analysis of peripheral Europe and that of former colonies.[27]

He argued in favour of a critical geography of art that does not simplify the problems through the transposition of the post-colonial interpretive matrix onto the analysis of the art of the countries in the Eastern Bloc. He shows how the concept of Eurocentrism – which is the major problem in post-colonial research, Europe being the rhetorical negative figure – is unsuitable for studying the art of Eastern Europe, which is defined by comparing itself to Europe rather than as an antagonist. He concludes:

> In one word: there was not one Europe: it was both the colonizer, and colonized, imperial and occupied, dominating and subordinated. For us, thus, studying European pluralism, a critique of the homogenizing vision of Europe such as the one produced by post-colonial studies seems to be crucial. Their concept of Eurocentrism turns out to be a little bit problematic – at the very least, not so useful for research into European peripheries.[28]

After having initially been linked with a general image of the West that seemed to encompass the United States and Western Europe indiscriminately, his research in parallel with post-colonial studies led Piotr Piotrowski to a different perspective on Europe and its component parts.

His critical views on Europe as a rhetorical negative figure in post-colonial studies reveal, as though retrospectively, his own development. The West appeared first as the rhetorical negative figure in relation to which he had initially identified the specific characteristics of the artistic practices east of the Iron Curtain: it was an undifferentiated West that did not take account of the variety of which it was composed during the Cold War, a West that had been predominantly assimilated into the Anglo-Saxon discourse. The questioning of the dominant narrative and import of the peripheries had then established a connection between it and post-colonial studies and art geography, while making it understand the need to shake off all unsatisfactory essentialist conceptions in order to embrace its plurality. Europe itself developed to imagine diversity based on its variety of experiences derived from colonialism and industrialization but also from its division into two during the Cold War.

This analysis intends to offer not a uniform but a multiple image of European culture,[29] a finding that linked Piotr Piotrowski with the approach of his friend, the art critic and theoretician Igor Zabel. In 2004, Zabel observed that the binary system representative of the Cold War was followed by the conception of the reunification of Europe founded on the ideas of Samuel P. Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations* (published in *Foreign Affairs*, summer 1993) and Francis Fukuyama in *The End of History* (published in *The National Interest*, 1989) as well as *The End of History* and *The Last Man* (1992). He described this conception of reunification as "a process of the total assimilation of Eastern Europe […] into the Western cultural block, and [whose] putative final social form of historical development [would be] a democratic and liberal capitalist society". Zabel went on to argue:

> What seems to me more productive (and perhaps not completely Utopian) is an attempt to reformulate European identity in a way that would connect elements of both social and cultural systems into a new unity. Unavoidably, such a new entity

> will be highly complex and heterogeneous, and not without contradictions […] understood as something variable and changeable, and without definite outer limits.[30]

Analysis of the practices of the East and the peripheries rendered the reduced negative rhetorical images of the West and Eurocentrism more fragile. Embracing plurality required emancipation from generalities. To establish points of reference and accept differences and points in common, it was necessary for individuals to take up a position so that the various intellectual landscapes might take form. Rather than start from the postulate that there was a pool of shared references, Piotr Piotrowski's horizontal art history proposed the various definitions that they might have and encouraged the acceptance of the notions of difference, irregularity and conflictual situations, rather than smothering them in favour of a uniform image of an East, a West, a Europe, a global world. Thus, this perspective stimulated our work of associating different narratives and establishing a common terrain, one still being debated, on which ideas could be ceaselessly developed.

Translated by Timothy Stroud

Notes

1 See the website of the project, https://dfk-paris.org/en/ownreality.
2 See the website of the seminar, https://dfk-paris.org/en/page/art-history-authorities-1457.html.
3 Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta. Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 139–41 (original Polish edition, 2005).
4 Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 7.
5 Piotr Piotrowski, *Znaczenia modernizmu. W stronę historii sztuki polskiej po 1945 roku* (Poznań: Rebis, 1999).
6 Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*.
7 Magdalena Radomska rightly suggested, while editing the current book, that this misunderstanding might be due to the influence of Serge Guilbaut's book (*How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art to Paris*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) that underlines that logics - France being the past of USA, but all together still being historical West, that is history - driven (i.e., western) logics with no regards to the map.
8 Ibid., 139–41.
9 Ibid., 172–3. Piotrowski refers to Benjamin Buchloh, "Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting," in *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation* (Brion: Wallis, 1984), 107–35.
10 Piotr Piotrowski, "On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History," *Umění. Časopis Ústavu dějin umění Akademie věd České republiky*, vol. 56, no. 5 (2008), 378–83. http://www.digitalniknihovna.cz/knav/uuid/uuid:88c6c2cc-9117-6813-7d83-ee4126e34535.
11 Ibid., 378.
12 Bożenna Stokłosa, Iza Kowalczyk, Luiza Nader et al., "'Jałta' i cień awangardy. Dyskusja redakcyjna wokół książki Piotra Piotrowskiego 'Awangarda w cieniu Jałty'," *Obieg*, no. 25 (August 2006), http://archiwum-obieg.u-jazdowski.pl/rozmowy/5705.
13 Piotrowski, "On the Spatial Turn," 378–83.
14 Piotr Piotrowski, "East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-Colonial Theory," *Nonsite*, no. 12 (August 2009), http://nonsite.org/article/east-european-art-peripheries-facing-post-colonial-theory.
15 The first French translation of *Theorie der Avantgarde* (1974) was made in 2013 by Jean-Pierre Cometti: Peter Bürger, *Théorie de l'avant-garde* (Paris: Questions théoriques, 2013).
16 On the slow acceptance of the theories of American art history in France, see Hélène Trespeuch, *La Crise de l'art abstrait? Récits et critiques en France et aux États-Unis dans les années 1980* (Rennes: PUR, 2013).

17 On the milieus open to the theories propounded in *October*, see Katia Schneller, "Sur les traces de Rosalind Krauss," *Études photographiques*, no. 21 (December 2007), http://etudes-photographiques.revues.org/2483. For a perspective on art history in France during the 1960s and '70s, see the views of Hubert Damisch in his interview with Giovanni Careri and Bernard Vouilloux, "Hors cadre: entretien avec Hubert Damisch," *Perspective*, no. 2 (2013), http://perspective.revues.org/1670. For an outlook on the new approaches taken by art history in France during the 1970s, see the views of Ségolène Le Men in the interview "Le XIX^{e}siècle au prisme des visual studies. Entretien de Quentin Deluermoz, Emmanuel Fureix avec Emmanuel Charpy, Christian Joschke, Ségolène Le Men, Neil Mc William, Vanessa Schwartz," *Revue d'histoire du XIX^{e}siècle*, no. 49 (February 2014), 139–75, http://www.cairn.info/revue-d-histoire-du-dix-neuvieme-siecle-2014-2-page-139.htm.

18 See *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, no. 19–20 (June 1987), on the subject of "Moderne, modernité, modernisme".

19 Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, Laurent Gervereau, and Serge Guilbaut, eds., *Où va l'histoire de l'art contemporain?* (Paris: l'image/École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 1997).

20 David Crowley, ed., *Cold War Modern*, exh. cat., London, Victoria and Albert Museum. (London: V&A, 2008).

21 For example, Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories – Global Designs. Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

22 See the website of the symposium, http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/conference/global-pop-symposium.

23 Piotr Piotrowski, "Why Were There No Great Pop-Art Curatorial Projects in Eastern Europe in the 1960s?," *Baltic Worlds*, no. 3–4 (2015): 10, http://balticworlds.com/why-were-there-no-great-pop-art-curatorial-projects-in-eastern-europe-in-the-1960s/.

24 *Ibid.*

25 Worthy of mention here is the important advances in research on artistic practices in Eastern Europe during the Cold War in an attempt to create new narratives than those of the past and which, for that reason, do not place emphasis on the centres, nor on the conventional currents, but explore networks and peripheral circuits, for example, the book by Jérôme Bazin, Pascal Dubourg-Glatigny and Piotr Piotrowski, eds., *Art Beyond Borders in Communist Europe (1945–1989)* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016), which considers the relations in art in communist Europe and, on the basis of this viewpoint, crossed the physical barrier represented by the Iron Curtain. Within this ideological context, it concentrates on the relations between the artistic practices in the Eastern bloc as well as in Greece, Belgium, France, Italy and China. This focus on the socialist context also underlay the studies of the *SocialEast Forum* initiated by Reuben and Maja Fowkes at Manchester Metropolitan University in 2006, but also research projects like "Networking the Bloc" by Klara Kemp-Welch, see her book *Antipolitics in Central European Art. Reticence as Dissidence under Post-Totalitarian Rule 1956–1989* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014). Note should also be made of the conference "La place du grand frère. Les échanges culturels entre l'Union Soviétique et les démocraties populaires à l'époque communiste" held by CEREFREA at the Villa Noël in Bucharest on September 16, 2016, and the series of symposia organised by Marina Dmitrieva (GWZO), Beata Hock (GWZO) and Antje Kempe (HU Berlin) at the Arts Academy in Tallin, Estonia, in 2016, titled "Art History and Socialism(s) after World War II. The 1940s until the 1960s", then at the Leipzig Leibniz-Institut für Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Europa (GWZO) in November 2017, titled "Socialist Internationalism and the Global Contemporary – Transnational Art Historiographies from Eastern and East-Central Europe". Their purpose was to explore selected theoretical underpinnings, methodologies, and legacies of art history writing during the socialist period for a possible alternative beginning to the methodology that set a worldwide focus in the study of art: the kind of "universal art history" or *Weltkunstgeschichte* as an approach to art history that was introduced in the countries of the Socialist bloc under the aegis of a socialist internationalism. Also note the symposium "The Other Transatlantic. Theorizing Kinetic & Op Art in Central & Eastern Europe and Latin America", held on October 21–22, 2016, at the Modern Art Museum of Warsaw (http://artmuseum.pl/en/wydarzenia/inny-transatlantyk-sztuka-kinetyczna-i-op-art-w-europie/2).

26 These cross-perspectival studies on Eastern Europe during the Cold War and post-colonial studies resulted in many articles on the art history of the East in the journal *Third Text*. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe were also included alongside those of Latin America and South-East Asia in the MoMA's C-MAP programme (https://www.moma.org/research-and-learning/international-program/global-research), which, through studies on under-represented regions in the museum's collections, aimed to shake up presuppositions based on the rooting of modernist art in the Western historiography of the early 20th-century avant-gardes.
27 Piotrowski, "East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-Colonial Theory".
28 Ibid., 4–5.
29 Ibid., 25: "The dynamic geography of European culture, constructed in this way, will reveal not one Europe but many. Without a doubt it will pose a challenge; one, however, that is worth taking up, since it may allow us to develop a better understanding of the place(s) in which we live."
30 Igor Zabel, "Haven't We Had Enough?," in *Personal Cuts. Art à Zagreb de 1950 à nos jours*, ed. B. Stipancic (Nîmes: Carré d'art, musée d'art contemporain, 2014), 57–67.

5 Close Other(s) in the West

Spain and Its Horizontal Histories during the Cold War

Paula Barreiro López

When in 2008 Piotr Piotrowski presented his ideas for horizontal art history, the book *Art since 1900* was for him a revealing example of critical and well-done analysis, that, despite its sophistication, failed to address the complexities of the global art world and reinforced hierarchical relations between centres and peripheries. For a Polish art historian like him, the deconstruction of the modern and postmodern artistic world proposed by the *October* journal editorial team in 2005 was way too short, leaving the former east and the South out of the picture and, thus, reinforcing traditional and hegemonic models of discrimination and colonization. With his article "On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History", he called for a horizontal art history as a counter-model. With this term, and in a manifesto tone, he proposed a framework of analysis from which to decentre and deconstruct art history at large. Implying a transnational study of artistic practices, it aimed to show the pluralism of transregional histories.[1] Since then, his analytical frame has been extremely useful not just for considering the strength of what had been considered traditionally peripheral spaces and their specificities (such as Central and Eastern Europe from which Piotrowski initially spoke) but also for addressing the production of other places absent from the *Art since 1900* project, including the case of Spain and its artistic production during the period of the Cold War.[2]

This paper seeks to address Piotrowski's proposal for a horizontal art history, from the perspective of the Spanish case during the Francoist dictatorship (1939–75). Going beyond the actual Spanish territory, it will also include the Spanish diaspora and its intermediate places of exile, like France and Latin America, in order to address their role in the process-building of modern art. Based on (the return to) archival sources, which horizontal art history should also entail, the aim will be to point out the complex histories that fostered the comprehension and circulation of modern art, with their inevitable negotiations between local, regional, national and international contexts.

A Peripheral West

Piotrowski's analyses grasp well the limits of Euro-American narratives for multiple places of Europe, pointing to the situation of what can be called a *peripheral* West, where practices and discourses—as is the case of Spain in Franco's time—do not find a place and have been until recently largely ignored. Postcolonial studies and the global approach have helped further to vindicate other temporalities as well as

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understandings of modernity, pointing out and demonstrating, among other things, the limits of formalist modernist narrative.

Since the 1980s, authors like Kobena Mercer, Néstor García Canclini or David Craven have questioned the hegemonic modern canon, pointing out how modernism and avant-garde(s) appear at the same time in different countries (especially in postcolonial countries of the South). Analysing the exchanges between the centres and the margins, they have argued that avant-garde innovators were frequently imported from the periphery (a phenomenon that can be well perceived in the Spanish context, with the cases of Pablo Picasso and Joan Miró going from Barcelona to Paris and becoming important catalysers of avant-garde movements like Cubism and Surrealism) or showing how modernism could be understood in "underdeveloped" processes of modernization, as García Canclini demonstrates in the case of Mexico.[3] Those perspectives initiated a process of opening up towards multicultural and focal analyses where "the Other"—the East, Africa, Japan, Latin America—gains a voice, introducing other readings and aiming to enter, with Mercer's words, "into a proactive relationship with a range of artistic traditions and lineages that are worthy of study in their own right".[4] But even if it is undeniable that these authors have provided with their work an opening through which to read other cultures and *discrepant* modernities, they tend to base their analyses on a criticism of Eurocentrism that understands the European space as "a negative rhetorical figure", as hegemonic and homogeneous, when the realities of this space historically are more complicated and the relations of power deeply asymmetrical.[5] Piotr Piotrowski made this point clear when questioned the concept of Eurocentrism. In doing so, he was criticizing the implicit uniformization of Europe in this conceptual construct, and he rightfully took into account the strength of peripheral spaces and their specificities (such as Eastern Europe – but one could also mention Spain in the second half of the twentieth century).[6] Considering that Eurocentrism and Westernization are terms that reflect conceptions of a "West" that is limited to a few hegemonic centres, he brings a useful approach for scholars like me working on Spanish art and critical practices; a country whose artistic practices had been largely ignored within international art history.

For a long time, Spanish artistic production rarely featured in traditional Eurocentrist accounts, and modern Spanish art history is largely neglected – except for certain cases of internationally renowned, individual artists, like Picasso, Miró, Dalí or Tàpies, and until very recently, it was normal to study the country's artistic production as an exclusive case. All through the twentieth century, it has been argued that Spanish modernity and modernism was different compared to the rest of the Western world and that it, therefore, has to be examined separately. At the end of the millennium, Anthony Geist and José B. Montléon pointed out this problem referring to a kind of modernism that was understood as deeply subjugated to the solutions of the "advanced" powers, often supporting "a theory in which modernism appears as a showcase of some ideal centre whose centrifugal forces may illuminate – or contaminate – diverse geographical and historical peripheries".[7]

These assumptions, imposed from outside, have also been accepted – if not supported – by Spanish historiography for a long time, which has analysed the country's art, history and culture in large parts individually, as a periphery and in consequence as "an independent chapter" of European history, as Francisco Calvo Serraller pointed out correctly already in the late 1980s.[8] The same conclusions were drawn by Julián Díaz Sánchez 20 years later when he analysed the triumph of abstraction

(informalismo) from the 1950s onwards.[9] One can see in the phenomenon that both point out, on the one hand, a clear chauvinist approach that wants to distinguish the Spanish artistic production from the rest; on the other hand, also reflects the acceptance of traditional foreign commonplaces about the difference and backwardness of Spain (even the whole Iberian Peninsula) in comparison with Europe and, thus, seems like a perpetuation of that famous and often repeated nineteenth-century paraphrase, "Europe ends at the Pyrenees".

Of course, this exceptionality certainly also owed to Spain's ambiguous position during General Francisco Franco's rule, established after three years of fratricidal war that followed the coup d'état of the army on 17–18 July 1936 against the legitimate government of the II Republic. His regime developed a stringent politics of revenge against its opponents and promoted a return to the traditional Spanish values of National-Catholicism, conservatism, radical anti-avant-gardism, social elitism, martial rule and – largely driven by the outcome of the Second World War – autarkic politics. It was a country that had, by the 1940s, lost almost all authority over its former colonies but retained the remains and traces of a long-time colonial power (at that time still with a visible presence in its colonial holdings of New Guinea and the Spanish Sahara), and yet despite this vestige of former importance in Europe – if not the world – that lingered during the Franco dictatorship, Spain was marginal to Europe. The country had obvious difficulties in meeting the standards of the Western democracies as the photo-essay "Spanish Village" by Eugene Smith for *Life Magazine* or Ivan Massar and Leonard Schugar's "Franco's Spain: Poorhouse of the West" for *Look*, both published in 1951, show in a quite tendentious way that put the accent on misery, superstition and backwardness.[10] When, just two years later, with the bilateral agreement signed with the United States in 1953, the country was accepted in the Western ranks of Cold War politics (opening eventually the artistic scene and internationalizing some of its artists) its position as peripheral West did not substantially change and just individual artists working or having worked in the hegemonic centres (like the above-mentioned Picasso, Miró, Dalí or Tàpies and Saura) entered the canon of modern art.

During the last decade and, thus, quite late, new accounts, largely based on Piotrowski's ideas and a global approach, have reintroduced the Spanish case within an international frame of analysis. If Jordana Meldensson's study of the 1930s defended in 2012, the importance to show a plural and "connected" vision favouring the integration of the Spanish artistic production and the determining role that had in the Civil War (1936–39) for weaving networks and creating exchanges during that decade, four years later, the research platform Decentralized Modernities/MoDe(s), active since 2015, started to build a new history of global contemporary art in which Spain, its artistic practices and aesthetical narratives form an integrative part.[11] Furthermore, Spanish art has been an integrative part within transeuropean analysis of art collectives by Jacopo Galimberti and the global art history undertaken by Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel.[12]

However, and despite this very recent (and necessary) integration of the history of Spain within a plural and polycentric globalized world, back on the time, for the Spanish artists and art critics that lived and worked during the dictatorship, being at the peripheral West was felt in a clear way. They looked instead towards Paris, Rome, Venice, Berlin, New York, as places in which to negotiate their relationship with modern art, establishing a network of relations that demands a transnational analysis of their practices. In 1967, for example, the painter Antonio Saura (already

well established in Paris, but building new relations with other places, like Havana, New York and Rome) addressed this question directly in the first issue of the French journal *Opus International*:

> For a European (I believe that soon the Spaniards will be able to consider themselves Europeans), Paris continues to be the cultural capital of Europe. It is obvious that in New York the exhibitions are more interesting, the galleries and museums more active, and the collectors buy the paintings. But in Madrid, as in all of Spain, the cultural climate is grim, so the artist must emigrate in order to realize his potential. Paris is close, French is easy, women are beautiful, there are good movies, acceptable theatre and good exhibitions. For an underdeveloped painter, Paris continues to be a very important centre.[13]

The Spanish painter's viewpoint, nevertheless, contrasted with the rather negative views of Paris and its artistic scene held by French artists in the same article that opened the first issue of the journal. But, Saura was not alone in finding Paris a centre of creativity; his view was shared by other international artists circulating across Europe and the Atlantic during the 1960s.[14]

However, and despite the interest that Paris still held for the Spaniards, by then, the centres of modern art were way more than the French capital or even New York City. They were multiple, following different temporalities in Europe (with places like San Marino, Venice, Kassel, Barcelona, Pamplona or Turin bringing together artists from around the world) as well as in the Americas (with Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Coltejer or Havana doing the same thing). The configuration of a polycentric West (and a polycentric South), that Piotrowski helped underline with his writings, challenges the idea of the displacement from Paris to New York after WWII and helps decentralize for a long-time dominant north-Atlantic axis in art historic narratives.

Spain as a (Profiting) "Close-Other"?

The asymmetrical relations between centre–periphery that Saura's words reveal need to be approached from a situated perspective. Although Spain was for this painter clearly a periphery (almost to be considered part of Europe), the country still acted as a centre or destination point for multiple artists from the South, especially Latin American. Centres and peripheries were negotiated in real time.

Cities like Barcelona and Madrid had a long tradition as a starting point for a *grand tour* through Europe, including artists like Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros who lived in Madrid or Barcelona (and launched from there different artistic movements).[15] Actually, mobility and circulation of Latin Americans through Spain continued to be important throughout Francoism and created new synergies. For example, the Argentinian Alberto Greco, fleeing from Italy, came to Madrid and eventually settled in the little town of Piedralaves from where he started his Arte-Dito-Vivo projects and developed a fruitful collaboration with Spanish informalist artists like Manolo Millares, Antonio Saura and Eduardo Arroyo.[16] The Brazilian Regina Silveira, as part of the Hispano-American bilateral programmes of cultural (and political) exchange, received in 1967 one of the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica grants that allowed Latin American students to study in Spain. She, thus, spent several months in Madrid for artistic training and developed a close collaboration with the Spanish artists Julio

Plaza, with whom she would work (and live) from 1969 on in Mayagüez (Puerto Rico) and in 1973 eventually move to Sao Paulo.[17] These are just a few examples of a rich artistic exchange based on Latin American's circulation that proves until which point Spain was an important contact zone for these artists and, at the same time, a door to Europe that we are starting to understand just now.[18]

However, these circulations and exchanges have been for a long time underrepresented in the Spanish historiography due to the exceptionalism and marginal position that this country had in the historiography of modern art and to large parts following a nationalist strategy that dates from Francoist years and continues in art history literature until recently. In that sense, the position of Spanish art – being an undeniable part of Europe, but functioning nevertheless as an *exotic* anomaly within the West – enters in resonance with Piotrowski's concept of the "close Other".[19] In contraposition as the Other (defined by the logics of colonization), he brings this concept (defined by the logics of marginalization) that implies a "non-quite-Other or close Other", that "is on the periphery of European culture, outside the centre but still within the same cultural frame of reference".[20] "Close-other" is a dialogical and dialectical construct that allows us to understand places like Eastern, Central but also Southern Europe. In the case of Spain, its position as a "close-other" is greatly responsible for the invisibility of its artistic production in the international historiography, but this condition has not just been imposed over this territory and practices (as Piotrowski rightly analyses in the case of Central Europe) but also used in a proactive way. This is noticeable in the way Spanish art and Spanish artists (even though those well represented by international galleries like Pierre Matisse, Maeght or Malborough) were mostly presented to the international scene since the 1950s, reinforcing the exoticization of the marginal status Spain had at that time in the West;[21] a position of alterity that was consciously crafted with a variety of interest – by different artists and institutional agents as well as by the Francoist regime itself.

The (early) status of Spain as an uncomfortable fascist country in the middle of the new-brand antifascist democracies in post-war Europe reinforced its distance from Europe and redirected Franco's interest during the 1940s and 1950s to Spain's old colonies in Latin America. "The Spaniard feels closer to the American peoples of his own lineage than to that unhappy Europe that could never understand our fatherland", said Franco on a propaganda pamphlet from 1948, stressing this idea.[22] Three years later, such sentiments materialized in the inaugural ceremony of a new cultural and political platform of Atlantic reach: the *Primera Bienal Hispanoamericana* (First Hispano-American Biennial). As an international exhibition, this event wanted to emulate the model (and benefits) of the Venice or Sao Paulo's Biennial (and transforming Madrid into "an artistic meridian"),[23] the regime aimed for a platform of cultural (and political) promotion and exchange between Latin America and Spain on a regular basis.[24]

Within this cultural strategy, some high officials within the regime's structures (like some figures in the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica) started to reintroduce (not without polemic and resistance of the apparatus) modern artists after years of demonization (for their liberal and leftist past).[25] This was a process that accompanied the progressive incorporation of Spain into the Western ranks of the Cold War and the redirection of its interests from Latin America to the United States and Europe. In fact, if at the 1951 Biennial, the modern artists were marginal to the selection, the III Biennial of 1955 (two years after the bilateral agreement with the United States had been signed)

consolidated the number of abstract artists and, following the opening of relations between Spain and the United States, presented the whole lot of celebrated American abstract expressionists (Pollock, Rothko, Motherwell et al.). But, in order to maintain control over the interpretation of the new-brand abstraction proliferating as well in Spain (and baptised "informalismo"), the official narrative used cunningly the alterity that Spain represented to the first world since the XIX century, to defend a national art of long Hispanic history, an old and deep-rooted artistic sentiment that could cope with modern times.

In fact, *informalismo* fulfilled the ambitions of modernity and international acceptance that the regime craved for but rooted in a recognizable tradition that fuelled the regime desires for a national style – autonomous and formalist – that avoided any reference to the connections between the realm of art and the realm of politics. The link to Spanish baroque tradition was quickly identified as a useful tool to orchestrate such programme and despite the direct connection to the international movement of informel (that the Spanish artists like Antoni Tàpies, Antonio Saura contributed to build), *informalismo* was strongly interpreted as a nationalist product that reconnected to the same roots in which the regime's discourse wanted to legitimize its coup d'état since the Civil War: the Spanish Habsburg empire of the Golden Age as the historic core of the real Spain.[26]

The *informalismo* was presented as a modern art movement that stood in the lineage of the Golden Age, Habsburgian pictorial tradition and recuperated its heirs (Velázquez, Zurbarán, Murillo and even Goya) as well as multiple values that were understood as representative for the country's ethos: a vast collection of nationalist clichés and "constants" about the nature of the Spanish soul and its character that included spiritualism, solemnity, realism and expressionism. Similar arguments were used by the artists themselves.[27]

This perspective was strongly endorsed and disseminated by official Francoist accounts and specifically conceived for international distribution, circulating with great success internationally.[28] Presented in different exhibitions and sponsored by Franco's government at prestigious institutions abroad (such as the MoMA, the Musée des Arts Décoratives at Paris or the Tate Gallery), this interpretation was validated by the international art critics. In France, Françoise Choay, Jacquest Guerin and Pierre Restany underlined the "ancestral dramatic essence" of a phantomic and exotic Spain linked to a "transcendental baroque order".[29] In the United States, interpretations endorsed the same nostalgic past that the regime intended to stress.[30]

Only a few, such as the Spanish, at that time Paris-based art critic Julián Gállego, openly pointed out the inconsistencies of this self-proclaimed narrative that played consciously on the otherness of the Spanish art (and its supposed direct connection to the Spanish mysticism and character) and highlighted instead its shared condition with the international avant-garde.[31] Despite Gállego's observation at such an early date, the Golden Age formula continued to be invoked, even after the crisis of *informalismo* in 1962, as an interpretative tool of Spanish modern and contemporary art by different (not just official) sectors of the Spanish culture industry, as Jorge Luis Marzo has shown.[32]

Otherness and difference would be used consciously throughout the dictatorship to promote and sell Spain's particularities in multiple fields, not only in the cultural one. For example, the same principle underpins the propaganda campaign "Spain is different" that the minister of Tourism and Information, Manuel Fraga Iribarne, initiated

in 1962 to promote foreign investments and tourism. This specific catchphrase became the official label for a campaign that aimed to bring millions of foreigners to the coasts of "sunny Spain" by evoking distinctiveness and exoticism and soon familiar to anyone from abroad travelling to Spain during the 1960s.[33]

Transregional Histories: Polycentric Spain?

It is evident today that despite the difficulties and the sclerosis of the artistic scene under the conditions of the dictatorship, Spain was far from being a closed space and an exceptional case. Its configuration as part of the (Western) European camp and in terms of economic, social and political developments, especially from the 1950s on, has been well established by the work of Nigel Townson, using a comparative approach that breaks with the angle of distinctiveness when reading Spanish history.[34] Within the field of art, the lens of transnational and transregional art history defended by Piotrowski, as well as of a connected history, helps to show the configuration of a polymorphic network that in different scales and proportions was synchronizing with other parts of the world.

On the one hand, with the ending of autarky (from the 1950s on), exchange and collaboration with foreign colleagues in professional networks became more common. From 1955 onwards, Spanish artists and art critics benefited from a greater permissiveness in issuing passports and from more permeable frontiers. Motivated by cultural interests, ideological ambitions and a desire to connect with the international avant-garde, they would start to travel, establishing fertile exchanges with foreign colleagues and, thus, becoming part of an international community, in which professional associations like the AICA, the Rimini Congresses and the San Marino and Venice Biennials as well as journals had a very relevant role.[35] The configuration of dematerialized and experimental networks via the international Concrete Poetry movement and the Mail Art from the late 1960s introduced Spanish artists and practices to protoglobal structures.[36]

This interconnectivity happened hand to hand with the activation of the artistic scene in multiple places at the same time in Spain (like Cordoba, Valencia, Madrid and Barcelona) and the configuration of transregional artistic structures and axes of relation that established links to international partners in Paris, San Marino or Rome. This is especially visible within the process of cultural modernization, defined, in the words of art critic Vicente Aguilera Cerni, by "a necessary phenomenon of coming together",[37] which favoured the creation of art collectives from 1957 onwards. The case of Equipo 57 (a concrete art team) formed in Paris with five members working together at several points of its history (1957–62) between Madrid, Cordoba, Paris and Sion (Switzerland) is a great example of the entanglements in between places, ideas and projects, which were developed at the same pace for Paris as for the small town of Cordoba.[38] The cooperative of Estampa Popular (Popular Printmaker Cooperative), founded in Madrid in 1959, steadily spread throughout the country over the next decade, with groups of artists (men and women) establishing successively in the Basque Country and Andalusia, and later in Valencia, Barcelona and Galicia, in a network of collective collaboration that shows the activation of an artistic and political scene around the country.[39]

Those multi-dynamic relations and transfers between places and voices are deeply implicated in the configuration of modern art in Spain but also in the rising of a

political consciousness. The living conditions under the dictatorship determined a great deal of the negotiation(s) with modern art that artists and art critics undertook. It filtered their debates, modelling their perceptions and expectations in a way that challenges the canonical history of modern art during the Cold War years.

And even if parallels with Clement Greenberg's canonical approach have been found in the ideas of Spanish intellectuals of the immediate post-war years, like, for example, José Ortega y Gasset – a key thinker for the conceptualization of the formalist, autonomous and apolitical conception of the avant-garde established from the late 1940s on – the prior's work was absolutely unknown in Spain.[40] Actually, autonomy, formalism and self-consciousness, basic traits of modern painting, according to Greenberg, were strongly contested by militant critics and avant-garde artists, already during the Civil War but above all from the late 1950s. In fact, while in 1960 Greenberg gave his speech on "Modernist painting" via the USA propaganda organ and the radio station Voice of America, in Spain militant art critics were defending the reintegration of the avant-garde in social praxis![41]

The processes of "demarxization" that Serge Guilbaut analyses in the case of the United States took the opposite turn in Spain as well as in multiple places of Latin America. There, on the contrary, the "marxization" of the intelligentsia was by 1960 a current gaining increasing force.[42] The opposition in character between the two models is already evident in their choice of terminology. In Spain (as well as in Latin America – e.g. Argentina) by the 1960s, artists, art critics and art historians had replaced the term "modern art" – which had often been used in the preceding two decades within intellectual circles and by official agents responsible for the reconciliation between modern art and Franco dictatorship – with "avant-garde" or, to use art critic José María Moreno Galvan's conceptualization as Second Avant-garde.[43] This term had clear socio-political implication as it connected with the heritage historical avant-garde and its socio-political programmes, of great interest to the art critics and artists.

The Marxist *aggionamento* (updating) that took place in the Spanish cultural scene from the mid-1950s was highly responsible for this conceptual transformation that implied a reconfiguration of the avant-garde's nature and mission as an active part of the cultural forces against the regime. For this process Latin American thinkers, publishers and Spanish exiles played a significant role in supplying the necessary reading-material and ideas to the clandestine Spanish book market. Some of these committed intellectuals in exile such as Wenceslao Roces (who worked as translator), enhanced their doctrinal agenda, which aimed to spread the Marxist ideology and thoughts of those who had lost the Spanish Civil War.[44] Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, an exiled philosopher based in Mexico and member of the Mexican Communist Paper, was fundamental, for Spanish intellectuals, but also for socialist states like Cuba, to theorize a non-Stalinist understanding of Marxism that aimed to defend a place for the avant-garde within a Marxist conceptual framework.[45] Based on the ideas of Western Marxism – and especially the theories of this philosopher – Spanish art critics and artists tried to overcome the limits of the concept of the autonomous avant-garde in the West (based on the assimilation of liberal democracy) and state control in the East (reflected within the rhetoric of socialist realism) that underpinned and confronted the two ideological, political, cultural and aesthetic models during the Cold War.[46]

As a Conclusion: Building Pluralist Histories

Understanding the Spanish case as a part of a pluricultural and polycentric West, defined by the encounters and exchanges of multiple cultures (following Piotrowski's thought), is a first step to question centre–periphery dichotomies and to bring to light the transcultural and multivalent processes that the development of modernity and postmodernity entailed in this country.

Digging into the sources allows us to see the way in which the margins modify the perception of the centre, and how centres and peripheries were constantly negotiated, helping us to uncover a decentralized reformulation of the Euro-American sphere during the Cold War. The case of the *Art Review Journal* (1967–71), for a long time forgotten, is a clear example of an inter-Atlantic platform that does not respond to the imperatives of the North without negating them. Conceptualized in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, by the Spanish poet and art critic Ángel Crespo and the art critic Pilar Gómez Bedate (exiled in Puerto Rico from 1967 onwards) and lay out and print done in Madrid (by the artist José María Iglesias), this journal showed a new chart of relations that put both, Puerto Rico and Spain, at the epicentre of an inter-relational matrix, which gave voice to decentralized transnational modernism, in which rationalist and geometrical abstraction was favoured, with multiple voices coming amongst others from Spain, Italy (Germano Celant, Umbro Apollonio), France (Yvan Avena), Denmark (Karen Zahle), Puerto Rico (Struart J. Ramos Biaggi, José E. Arraras), Brazil (Rafael Ferrer), but also the United States (Barbara Rose).

A return to archival material is indispensable, in order to show a pluralist artistic historical narrative that better responds to the continuous negotiation processes that have taken place. Along with it, the opening up to artistic productions, narratives, critical corpuses and subjectivities during the Franco Regime that have been from long silenced (as feminist and LGTB practices and identities for example) is needed too.[47] This is why a productive dialogue between art history, feminist, postcolonial and decolonial approaches needs to be activated to undercover the pluralism of transregional histories that horizontal art history entails.

Notes

1 Piotr Piotrowski, "On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History", *Umení*, LVI (2008), 378–83.

2 Harold Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yves Alain Bois and Benjamin Buchloch, *Art since 1900. Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (Thames & Hudson, 2005).

3 García Canclini, "¿Modernismo sin modernización?", in *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, 51.3 (1989), 163–89; David Craven, "The Latin American Origins of Alternative Modernism", in Rasheed Araeen, Sean Cubitt and Ziauddin Sardar (eds.), *The Third Text Reader: On Art, Culture and Theory* (London, New York: Continuum, 2002), 24–34.

4 Kobena Mercer, "Introduction", in Mercer (ed.), *Cosmopolitan Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 13.

5 "For post-colonial scholars" – wrote Piotrowski – Europe is the negative rhetorical figure. Post-colonial scholars used to homogenize culture of the old continent. Frankly speaking they can perform such a simplification, since for their purposes detailed differentiation of inner-European issues, including inner-colonization, does not have much sense.
(Piotrowski, "East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-Colonial Theory", NonSite.org, issue 2, 2014 (available https://nonsite.org/east-european-art-peripheries-facing-post-colonial-theory/. Accessed 9 September).

6 Piotrowski, "On the Spatial Turn", 378–83.
7 Anthony L. Geist and José B. Montléon, *Modernism and Its Margins: Reinscribing Cultural Modernity from Spain and Latin America* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), xix.
8 Francisco Calvo Serraller, *Del futuro al pasado: vanguardia y tradición en el arte español contemporáneo* (Madrid: Alianza Forma, 1988), 17–39.
9 Julián Díaz Sánchez, *El triunfo del informalismo* (Madrid: Universidad Autónoma, 2000), 119–84.
10 See Javier Ortiz Echagüe, "*Mundo Hispánico* versus *Life*: 'Spanish Village' by Eugene Smith and the Debate over Spain in Illustrated Magazines (1949–1952)", *Communication & Society / Comunicación y Sociedad*, 27.1 (2014), 23–5 (available online; https://dadun.unav.edu/bitstream/10171/36260/1/20140114125330.pdf accessed 20/07/2021).
11 Jordana Mendelsson, *Ecounters with the '30s* (Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid: La Fábrica, 2013). Some of the publications issued of the collective work of the platform MoDe(s) (https://modernidadesdescentralizadas.com) are Paula Barreiro López and Fabiola Martínez (eds.), *Modernidad y vanguardia: rutas de intercambio entre España y Latinoamérica (1920–1970)*, (Madrid: Museo Reina Sofía, 2015); Paula Barreiro López and Juliane Debeusscher (eds.), "Cold War Networks and Circulations: Cross-cultural Dialogues and Practices throughout the Global South (1957–1991)", *REGAC (Revista de Estudios Globales y Arte Contemporáneo)*, 5.1 (2017–2018); Paula Barreiro López, *Atlántico frío. Historias transnacionales del arte y la política en los tiempos del telón de acero* (Madrid: Brumaria, 2019); Juan Albarrán, *Arte contemporáneo y performance. Discursos y problemas* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2019) and Olga Fernández, *Exposiciones y comisariado. Relatos cruzados* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2020), Pablo Santa Olalla, «Conceptualismos en el espacio sud-atlántico: Redes de relaciones entre España y Latinoamérica, *1972–1989*», (PhD diss. Universitat de Barcelona, 2021).
12 See Jacopo Galimberti, *Individuals against Individualism. Art collectifs in Western Europe* (Liverpool University Press, 2017); Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, *Les avant-gardes artistiques. Une histoire transnationale. 1848–1918* and second volume *1918–1945*, both Gallimard, 2016 and 2017 and idem, *Naissance de l'art contemporain 1945–1970. Une histoire mondiale* (Paris, CNRS Editions, 2021).
13 Antonio Saura, in Denise Miège, «Le siège Paris II. Enquête auprès des artistes et des critiques», *Opus international*, 1 (April 1967), 19.
14 For the Latin American case see Isabel Plante, *Argentinos de París. Arte y viajes culturales durante los años sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2013).
15 Craven, "The alternative origins".
16 Marcelo E. Pacheco, María Amalia García (comp.), *Alberto Greco ¡Qué grande sos!* (Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, 2021).
17 Santa Olalla, «Conceptualismos en el espacio sud-atlántico»; idem, «(Inter)crossed trajectories of Regina Silveira and Julio Plaza», *Decentralized Modernities*, 2018 (https://modernidadesdescentralizadas.com/gis/intercrossed-trajectories-of-regina-silveira-and-julio-plaza-pablo-santa-olalla/).
18 Part of the new findings had been taking place within the frame of the collective work done by MoDe(s) where we aim to reconsider and problematize the duality between the two blocs during the Cold War that, focusing on the different configurations of artistic modernisms in the transatlantic axis and studying the artistic and political practices from the viewpoint of local contexts that emphasize cultural transfers across national, cultural and ideological boundaries (for a bibliography see note 10).
19 Piotrowski used this term after Bojana Pejić, see Piotrowski, "On the Spatial Turn," 383 (endnote 16). It appeared in her essay "The Dialectics of Normality", in Bojana Pejić and David Eliott (eds.), *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe* (Stockholm, 1999), 120.
20 Piotrowski, "On the Spatial Turn", 380.
21 This is well visible in the case of the international projection of Antoni Tapies, Manolo Millares and in general of the Spanish *informalistas* (Claudia Grego March, "Les difficultés et ambiguïtés politiques d'Antoni Tàpies pendant le Franquisme" (Master diss. Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2017), Robert S. Lubar, "Millares y la pintura vanguardista española en América", *La Balsa de la Medusa*, 22 (1992), 49–72 and Julián Díaz

Sánchez, "1960: Arte español en Nueva York. Un modelo de promoción institucional de la vanguardia", *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*, XII (2000).

22 Francisco Franco, *Frase quincenal* (Departamento de Propaganda, 1948), reproduced in Alexandre Cirici, *La estética del franquismo* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1977), 29.

23 Pamphlet of the Biennial (1951) quoted in: Miguel Cabañas Bravo, *La política artística del franquismo. El hito de la Bienal Hispanoamericana de Arte* (Madrid: CSIC, 1996), 263.

24 Besides the first exhibition in Madrid in 1951, two others were celebrated, in Havana in 1954 and in Barcelona in 1955 (see idem, *El ocaso de la política americanista del franquismo* (Mexico: Instituto Mexiquense de Cultura, 1995).

25 Paula Barreiro López, *Avant-garde Art and Criticism in Francoist Spain* (Liverpool University Press, 2017), 59–65.

26 Paula Barreiro López, "Reinterpreting the Past – The Baroque Phantom during the Franco Regime", in *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* (Numéro spécial: "The Baroque in the Construction of a National Culture in Francoist Spain" (Paula Barreiro López, Carey Kasten and Tobias Locker (dir. avec une introduction), 5 (2014), 715–34.

27 If, for example, in the manifesto (1959) the group *El Paso* advocated a 'social art', the baroque tone prevailed; El Paso, "Manifesto", *Papeles de Son Armadans*, 37 (1959), 30.

28 Like the trilingual book *La pintura informalista a través de los críticos* in 1961 published by the Dirección General de Relaciones Culturales part of the Ministry of Foreing Affairs. Bringing together essays of well-established Spanish critics, it gave the key terms to guide the apprehension of the avant-garde in Spain. The book stressed the link with the baroque past, the actualization of its values (spirituality, *tenebrismo*, chiaroscuro, austerity and mysticism) within modern aesthetics; it emphasized the absolute individual, autonomous and tragic character and, above all, the Spanish specificity of this avant-garde.

29 Pierre Restany, *Feito* (Paris: Galerie Arnaud, 1960), 22. See as well Françoise Choay, "L'école Espagnole", *L'Œil*, 51 (1959), 13; Jacques Guerin, *13 peintres espagnols actuels* (Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 1959).

30 Frank O'Hara, *New Spanish Painting* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1960).

31 Julián Gállego, "Crónica de París", *Goya*, 32 (1959), 111.

32 The same legacy of the Golden Age had been used as a legitimizing tool by the opposition to the regime (see the articles of the special issue "The Baroque in the Construction"). It was also invoked by avant-garde artists, for example those working with geometrical abstraction who saw their work as heir to Velázquez (see Paula Barreiro López, *La abstracción geométrica en España 1957–1969* (Madrid: CSIC, 2009), 109, 163). This tradition, one of the most vindicated during Francoist times, lies underneath even today's interpretation of Spanish contemporary culture, see Jorge Luis Marzo, *La memoria administrada. El barroco y lo hispano* (Argentina: Katz Editores, 2011).

33 Dorothy Kelly, "Selling Spanish 'Otherness' since the 1960s", in Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas (eds.), *Contemporary Spanish Cultural Studies* (New York: Arnold, 2000), 30.

34 Nigel Townson, *Is Spain Different? A Comparative Look at the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Sussex Academic Press, 2015).

35 France and Italy and above all the cities Rome, Venice and Paris were the Spaniards' first choices for travel due to their proximity, the lesser language barrier and the contacts with an important community of exiled writers and artists. Other places (such as Germany, the UK and the US) were less usual destinations of art critics and artists, although they were sometimes chosen, as it was the case of Antonio Giménez Pericás and Simón Marchán Fiz. In the late 1960s Catalan intellectuals travelled more often to the UK. The Americas were also an attractive destination for intellectuals and artists: for example, the United States for the Catalan philosopher Xavier Rubert de Ventos, Costa Rica for the art critic Ángel Crespo and Brazil for the artist Julio Plaza. Barreiro López, *Avant-garde Art*, 121–36.

36 About the concret movement see Paula Barreiro López, "Tránsitos concretos: de la pintura a la poesía en la España franquista los años sesenta", *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 95.9 (2018), 977–98. DOI: 10.3828/bhs.2018.57 and for a geoanalysis of Spain in the mail art network see Juliane Debeusser and Pablo Santa Olalla, "Mail Art exhibitions in Spain,

1973–1981", *Decentralized Modernities* (2018) (https://modernidadesdescentralizadas.com/gis/mail-art-exhibitions-in-spain-1973–1981/).

37 'Un necesario fenómeno de agrupación'; Vicente Aguilera Cerni, "El año 1957 fue una de las fechas clave…" reprinted in Pablo Ramírez, *El grupo Parpalló: La construcción de una vanguardia* (Valencia: Institució Alfons El Magnánim, 2000), 172.

38 For further information see Llorente Hernández, Ángel, *Equipo 57* (Córdoba: Diputación de Córdoba, 2003).

39 For further information about those groups see Noemí de Haro García, *Grabadores contra el franquismo* (Madrid: CSIC, 2010).

40 For an interesting comparative analysis of both see Robert S. Lubar, "Ortega y Greenberg frente al arte moderno y la cultura de masas", in *Revista de Occidente* (Madrid), 168 (May 1995), 23–41.

41 Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting", in Francis Frascina and Jonathan Harris, *Art in Modern Culture* (London: Phaidon, 1992), 308–14. For an analysis of these processes in the Spanish critical discourse see Barreiro López, *Avant-garde Art*.

42 Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art. Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985). Paula Barreiro López, "Hacia la izquierda: el acomodo de una vanguardia sans rivages en el discurso estético marxista de los años sesenta", in Barreiro López and Martínez Rodríguez, *Modernidad y vanguardia,* 297–307.

43 José María Moreno Galván, *La última vanguardia de la pintura española* (Madrid: Magius, 1969).

44 Elena Hernández Sandoica et al., *Estudiantes contra Franco (1939–1975). Oposición política y movilización juvenil* (Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2007), 14.

45 For more information about Sánchez Vázquez's work see: Jaime Vindel, "México-La Habana-Madrid: Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez en el eje transatlántico de la guerra fría", *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, 112 (2018), 33–66.

46 Barreiro López, *Avant-garde Art*, 164–93 and 221–93.

47 I cannot enter in detail in this question but I can point out to relevant and recent authors that are working on this direction: see for example Juan Vicente Aliaga and Patricia Mayayo, *Genealogías feministas en el arte español 1960–2010* (Junta de Castilla y León, 2013); Mayte Garbayo, *Cuerpos que aparecen. Performance y feminismos en el tardofranquismo*, Madrid, Consonni, 2016; María Rosón Villena, *Género, memoria y cultura visual en el primer franquismo (materiales cotidianos, más allá del arte)*, Madrid, Cátedra, 2016. A queer analysis on Spanish art pratices is still to develop further but see Raquel (Lucas) Platero, "Apoyá en el Quicio de la Mancebía. Homosexuality and prostitution in Franco's Regime", in Noemí de Haro and Maria-Anna Tseliou, *Gender and Love*, (Inter-disciplinary Press, 2013), 115–24; Berzosa, Alberto, Lucas Platero, Juan Antonio Suárez y Gracia Trujillo (eds.), *Reimaginar la disidencia sexual en la España de los 70: redes, vidas, archivos* (Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2019).

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6 Russian Avant-Garde in the Optics of the Horizontal History of Art

Natalia Smolianskaia

The notion of the "Russian Avant-Garde", which became part of the cultural vocabulary in the twentieth century, has altered the art historical narratives. Like other established terms of this kind, it requires continuous revision and clarification. One wonders, in particular, what role the "Russian Avant-Garde" plays today in constructing the history of modern art in Russia. And to what extent it is possible to ignore the changes occurring in the post-Soviet space. To answer that question, it seems worthwhile to turn to critical geography, particularly to Piotr Piotrowski's concept of the "horizontal history" of art and his works on art and democracy in post-communist Europe.

The Concept of the Avant-Garde

In discussing the avant-garde in art, it now seems inadequate to merely enumerate the art movements that arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One has to be aware of why a certain art movement may or may not be considered avant-garde. In 2014, Peter Bürger, the founder of one of the first theories of avant-garde,[1] proposed a division between the conceptual notion of the "avant-garde" and the numerous interpretations seeking to accommodate a variety of modern tendencies—the "avant-gardes".[2]

The way each art movement positions itself with respect to the institution "art" determines whether it qualifies as avant-garde. An integral part of the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory, the notion of the institution "art", does not directly match that of the museum institution or artistic association. At its heart is the comprehensive concept of the social emancipation of art and "artistic autonomy", informed by the means of art production and dissemination.

Art history is, therefore, not merely a narrative but a construction. The role of the avant-garde in creating art history and the history of the institution "art" is understood in terms of a dialectic resolution of the contradictions between the content of art (its autonomy) and the relation of art to social institutions. In other words, there is tension between the inherent content of art (its aesthetic objectives) and the strategies for its production and consumption. Avant-garde comes to the forefront when this dialectic resolution of tension has to happen.

As a result, the conceptual, critical substance of the avant-garde becomes integral to its definition. For this reason, in his "Theory of the Avant-Garde", Bürger develops the concept of the avant-garde "in the singular". He sees the plurality of avant-gardes as eroding the historical significance of the phenomenon. The fact is, history is built on

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critical breaks, and it is these breaks rather than continuity that create the historical discourse. The avant-garde emerges as a theory that enables a look back at the past to see its connections to the present. It is, in this way, that the construction of art history happens—by glancing back from the present at the cultural breaks—and the avant-garde is there to introduce the aesthetic categories of shock and discontinuity into the institution "art".[3]

Modern art history is, therefore, a construction, and one that reacts to cultural breaks in history, too.

The Centre and Periphery: Vertical Historical Narrative and Normative Discourse

Modern art history as a construction responds to cultural breaks in different ways, depending on where the narrator is situated and to what extent their position in the cultural space is determined relative to the place they are speaking from. In his article "*Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde*", Piotrowski raises this issue of where art history comes from and what the position of the narrator is.[4] In this regard, the matter of art geography determines the political dimension of the historical narrative. It is possible to identify foci of power, or else "centres", geographically speaking: the centres of historical narratives.

In discussing the geographic context, Piotrowski proceeds from an art history deemed "universalistic", which he singles out as narrated from an assumed "centre".[5] While off-centre locations may supplement that history, the main narrative has an essentially top-down quality to it, unravelling from one point to another in the historical coordinates. Hence, Piotrowski's terms "universalism" and "universalistic". This history does not account for the distance between the centre and the periphery; it is not aware of any alternatives. In other words, certain centres—Berlin, Paris, Vienna, London—become the sites where art models emerge that become prototypes for the art of the periphery. This has the consequence that any recognition enjoyed by the peripheral artists depends on the centre.

The historical coordinates of East European art are not seen since the vertical universalistic history favours reference points away from Warsaw or Bucharest, Poznan or Kyiv. The principal narrative is constituted by the normative discourse, as pointed out by Piotrowski in his paper on framing.[6]

One way to conceptualize the centre–periphery division is in terms of creating hierarchies, distinguishing between the "principal" and the "secondary" artists. In this context, the main tendencies in art—such as cubism or conceptualism—take shape in Paris or New York, with their "peripheral incarnations" doomed to be regarded through the lens of the dominant authors. The history's normative quality evolves in the optics adopted for creating the narrative. That is, even the perspective on local art of the periphery itself is still informed by the normative discourse. The "secondary" peripheral artists remain obscure even to close neighbours. This scheme operates in Russian art with the notable exception of the "Russian Avant-Garde".[7]

In "Art Since 1900", Russian art is represented specifically by the "Russian Avant-Garde", which sets it distinctly apart from the art of many other East European nation.[8] One might say that, sanctioned by the universalistic history narration source, the "Russian Avant-Garde" became part of the vertical narrative. This suggests yet another centre–periphery dynamic: between the Avant-Garde of Russia and that of,

say, Ukraine. This dynamic did not manifest itself for a fairly long time until the inherently complex interrelations underlying the notion of the "Russian Avant-Garde" became exacerbated following the geopolitical shift of 2013–14 when public protest in Ukraine led to a transition from a pro-Russian government to one favouring integration with Europe, leading to a break and geopolitical strife with Russia.

The Russian Avant-Garde as an Artefact in Modern Art History Narratives

Despite its familiar ring, the concept of the "Russian Avant-Garde" only dates back to the 1960s and 1970s. As observed in 1994 by art critic Andrei Kovalev, Western researchers had originally applied the term "avant-garde" to Soviet art in conjunction with a growing demand for it both artistically and socioculturally.[9] (Kovalev claims that the term was used in articles by Western scholars as early as the 1950s and 1960s, but this could hardly have been the case, as the collocation "Russian Avant-Garde" only entered widespread use in the cultural discourse after the rise of the term "Avant-Garde" in 1968.) The Soviet cultural heritage of the prerevolutionary, revolutionary and early postrevolutionary period remained virtually invisible in the USSR until the 1980s but was featured at exhibitions in the United States and Western Europe. One might hypothesize that those years and the sites of active exposition of the avant-garde art—Soviet art included—turned out to be generative for the modern art history narratives presented by the authors published in *October*.

That journal emerged in 1976, following the transition of the primary centre of interest from Paris to New York. Its appearance nearly coincides with the time when the term "Russian Avant-Garde" was coined. Notably, that very notion could not exist without the conceptual foundations of the avant-garde discourse. For example, Robert Adlington demonstrates in the introduction to his book on the avant-garde music of the 1960s that the discussion of avant-garde gained relevance at the time when retrospective reflection on the role of historical avant-garde movements of the first third of the twentieth century got reinforced by the advent of neo-avant-garde artists identifying themselves with the avant-garde.[10] By that time, there was sustained interest toward Russian modernist art. Among the first exhibitions with a title directly referencing the phenomenon was "Russian Avant-Garde. 1908–1922" held in New York's Leonard Hutton Galleries in 1971.[11] Other exhibitions held at that time at MoMA still shunned that bright label, indicating it had not yet become a mark of quality. Thus, the February 1971 exhibition of Alexander Rodchenko at MoMA does not reference "avant-garde". That said, the 60th anniversary of the Russian Revolution saw a MoMA exhibition (1978–79) titled "Revolution: Russian Avant-Garde. 1912–1930", which reflected the connection between the social and the artistic experience in the Soviet Union.[12] It is then that the firm association between avant-garde and revolution was established.[13] Bolstered by a renewed interest in left-wing political theories, important for the authors of the journal and prominent in the 1960s–70s Europe, the "Russian Avant-Garde" came across as an experience aligned with the leftist discourse.

The appeal of art originating in Russia had to do with its characteristic experience of the revolution. The 1936 exhibition "Cubism and Abstract Art" at MoMA and shows at Peggy Guggenheim's The Art of This Century featured Russian abstract art. Nevertheless, Russian art was not discovered until Camilla Gray visited Russia and published "The Great Experiment: Russian Art 1863–1922".[14] It is noteworthy that this

book, which had a major impact in promoting the interest in Russian art, emphasizes its experimental nature. Camilla Gray's dating of the phenomenon does not coincide with the revolution. Her book begins the era of "Russian Avant-Garde" discovery by Western researchers. To put it in perspective, it was not until 1978 that Larisa Zhadova's well-known book on Russian and Soviet Art from 1910 to 1930 came out.[15] It is evident that despite the shift in temporal focus, the title is a reference to Gray's book, published 16 years earlier but ultimately never translated in the Soviet Union.

In a way, the "Russian Avant-Garde" can be construed as a periphery of sorts in relation to the universalistic history. Hence, its inevitable ethnic or ethnographic label—unlike with Dadaism or Surrealism—is in the universalist perception. Then again, by virtue of its relation to the universalistic art history canon, the entire construction of the "Russian Avant-Garde" may be seen as central: models developed by it can be transmitted from the "centre".

The title of Gray's book in its first edition left room for mapping the "great experiment" she referred to, but the subsequent 1971 and 1986 editions articulated it as "The Russian Experiment".[16] These changes predate the discovery of the avant-garde; besides, the mid-twentieth century saw the emergence of the conceptual geopolitical pair of "East" and "West" in the wake of the collapse of the great colonial powers, working through their heritage, and the formation of the so-called Eastern Bloc in Europe.

East and West

The "Russian Avant-Garde" is a discovery of Western art studies. From a selection of experimental movements originating in the former Soviet Union, and later in Russia, the notion of an "East" could be construed, showcasing, as it were, a unique cultural experience associated with the country of an "experiment"—above all, socially and politically speaking.

Piotrowski points to the "East" existing in opposition to universalistic art. An example is Stephen Foster's book on Dada, which relegates all groups and tendencies representing the assumed "East" to a separate fourth volume: "The title of this volume is quite telling: *The Eastern Dada Orbit*.[17] In this volume one finds the accounts of the Dada movement in Eastern and Central Europe, as well as in Japan".[18] Like the rest of the local Dada movements presented in the fourth volume, the "Russian Avant-Garde" is a combination of various tendencies. This assumed "East" depends on a narrator's non-manifest geoposition. Should the narrator find themselves in the "East", they would find it impossible to construct that peculiar yet supposedly congruent entity spanning Central Europe, Japan, etc. It is the same with the "Russian Avant-Garde".

The universalism versus "East" opposition, therefore, allows the narrator's localization to not be perceived. The "Russian Avant-Garde" encompasses both the assumed "East" and the revolutionary cultural experiment, which is conceptually at home in the space of utopia. That space manifests itself even more clearly later on when the Eastern bloc falls apart; but the idea of utopia as a localized history of the "Other" fits in well with the universalistic history as it facilitates the creation of an ideal utopic structure within this very history. Art concerned with the creation of ideal constructions is a category in itself, regardless of its stylistic features. In that sense, the East–West opposition, with the West playing the part of the universalistic history narrator, gets reflected in the "Russian Avant-Garde" construction.

While we could conceive of a variety of histories within Western art history, there is just one that is narrated by the normative frame (the assumed "West"). And that narrative has the "Russian Avant-Garde" inscribed into it, as Piotrowski points out in his analysis of "Art Since 1900" presented in "Toward a Horizontal Art History": "The main exception is the case of Russia (…) whose role has been distinctly highlighted in the book".[19]

While enabling the necessary East–West differentiation, the "Russian Avant-Garde" does not transcend the story presented by the narrator who never specifies their geoposition, for this history is based on ignoring the narrator's position. The narrative is mirrored by the concept of an exhibition space freed from contextual details. That said, this clean space might accommodate a very special narrative serving as a counterpoint to the universalistic art history.

Russian Avant-Garde as the Great Utopia

Creating the "Other" in the context of a unified vertical structure introduces a necessary counterpoint and separates the normative from the non-normative, even if positive, history. In this situation, the principle from postcolonial discourse is operational: the "Other", in this case the "Russian Avant-Garde", embodies the artistic realization of the sociopolitical structures that would be entirely impossible within the Western canon. This makes the alternative exotic and appealing as representing the kind of avant-garde genetically tied to the line of the European avant-garde of the normative discourse. Like the experience of revolution, avant-garde makes it possible to reactivate an ideal structure in a test tube, as it were. In a local context, ideal structures are not as ideal and intersect with other tendencies and neighbouring art movements. For example, Strzemiński's Unism was close to, yet distinct from Malevich's Suprematism. Despite that, a unified monolithic "Russian Avant-Garde" is constructed and credited with a set of assumed characteristics, which prevents internal differentiability and the identification of non-normative structures.

The "Russian Avant-Garde" operates in a geographically boundless, unmapped space of the "Other". This fosters an "orientalization" of the entire complex of tendencies, from the Suprematism of Malevich to "The Pomegranate Chaikhana" by Volkov, from the Constructivism of Tatlin to Dziga Vertov's newsreels. All the phenomena are inducted into the vertical narrative under the label of an unusual, amazing, exotic event, setting them apart from the normative discourse, which actually generates the narrative.

The case of avant-garde as a utopia is special for the "Russian Avant-Garde". The utopic connotation became particularly prominent against the backdrop of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The wall symbolized the divide between the two confronting blocs in the Cold War, and the utopic image, as seen from the Soviet Union, came to stand for a broken dream. Interestingly, the late 1980s and early 1990s saw a previously unprecedented and still unmatched number of utopia-themed publications and exhibitions of "Russian Avant-Garde" art.

In 1992–93, the epoch-making exhibition "The Great Utopia. Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde of 1915–1932" took place, attracting large audiences from Frankfurt to Amsterdam, New York, Moscow and St. Petersburg.[20] In his opening speech, Guggenheim Museum Director Thomas Krens remarked: "Given the course history has taken in Russia in the twentieth century, 'utopia' also has connotations of impracticality;

idealism is good in theory, but not in practice".[21] Thus, the "Russian Avant-Garde" was framed in terms of a mismatch between reality and idealism.

The association between the "Russian Avant-Garde" and utopia suggests that we draw a dividing line between the normative narrative and those evolving in the Soviet Union and Russia. In 1992, that distinction was particularly evident. In the Soviet Union, the word "avant-garde" connoted the normative discourse of the authorities. The artists who are today referred to as "unofficial" did not fit in with the accepted standards of self-expression and showcased their most interesting works outside the orbit of the artists union. The first public display of their art was the 1962 exhibition in the Moscow Manege. Emboldened by the Khrushchev Thaw, the artists were hoping to secure their right to being visible on the cultural landscape, but what happened instead was the infamous scandal.[22] For those artists, "avant-garde" had a ring of Lenin's rhetoric, with proletariat seen as the vanguard of the working class—it was the language of the authorities.[23] The word "avant-garde" had no association with the kind of art that was of interest to them—not until the visit of Western slavists (Jean-Claude Marcadé, Gérard Conio, Charlotte Douglas, Georg Witte, etc.) to the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Russian Avant-Garde as an Opposition to the Normative Discourse of the Authorities and as Normative Discourse: Local Histories

The artists who seek new forms of art in the "bounceback" of the "Russian Avant-Garde", in fact, remain in continuity with the normative discourse, albeit imbued with their own content. In this context, the utopia they picture tends to assume quasi-religious forms. Among those endowing their work with a religious dimension, Eduard Steinberg stands out. He cherished the existential ideas of Dostoyevsky and especially Camus, perceived in the light of Steinberg's discovery of the Russian Pochvennichestvo ideology[24] and Dostoyevsky's religious commitment. His drawings with the bird and cross, with seashells and stones, were quite different from the formal search for constructivity in Malevich. Interpreting his texts in an idiosyncratic way, the artist decided to establish a dialogue with Malevich. Soon the shells and stones were soaring in space as abstract shapes and it would appear, the dialogue had taken place.[25] Yet, this interpretation of Malevich seems to have been rather a way to escape the normative vertical discourse of the Soviet art system, as opposed to a wish to fit in with the "Russian Avant-Garde" narrative.

Two distinct attitudes towards the "Russian Avant-Garde" were evident in the art of the nonconformists. The first line continued what was understood as the "Russian Avant-Garde" tradition. It combined the quest for images and the making of forms, an understanding of "spirituality" in the context of the attitude to religion and the back-to-the-native-soil sentiment, to a certain extent. The alternative line involved a rejection of the Avant-Garde apology as alien and imposed by the normative discourse. This attitude was especially prominent in the 1980s and characterized conceptualist artists, deemed—with reservations—part of the Moscow Romantic Conceptualism. For Kabakov, Makarevich and Yelagina, the "Russian Avant-Garde" was a construction amalgamating the normative Communist discourse and an obsolete formal basis. For younger artists in the same orbit, the "Russian Avant-Garde" seemed to be a detournement, too, for it built on top of the imposed normative discourse of the authorities while, at the same time, being an expression of another normative discourse, not associated with the "West" back then but perceived as phony and cliché.

Another trajectory of "Russian Avant-Garde" deconstruction is associated with the so-called Soviet Pop Art exemplified by Kosolapov, Komar and Melamid and Sokov. Here, the name of Malevich, as a stand-in for the cigarette brand Marlboro on the label,[26] serves as a reference to the assumed "West" cliché. The opposed notion of the "East" also fulfils that function. In other words, the "Russian Avant-Garde", personified by Malevich as its most well-known representative in the West, is reduced to a popular brand name. Notably, it is in the "Western", or universalistic, context that this brand functions. In the "horizontal history" framework, it is significant where a statement is uttered. In this case, the statement of the "Russian Avant-Garde" has been expelled from its native context into a space without definite geographical and cultural coordinates.

Once Gorbachev's perestroika begins, the barriers are removed and artists go abroad. The West shows great interest, backed by the art market, both in the "Russian Avant-Garde" and in the modern Soviet artists who come to be associated with it—the "unofficial" ones who emerged in the 1960s and continued working into the 1970s and 1980s. Perestroika saw many modern artists adopt an abstract approach and engage in a dialogue with the "Russian Avant-Garde", seeking to establish continuity with it for the sake of the Western observer. When the interest in art from the former Soviet Union diminishes several years later, this tendency also fades.

This is a case of a mirror reflection of sorts. As Piotrowski notes, exhibitions of the "East" curiously accept the narrative imposed on them, without attempting to present a different art history or histories, for those displays target the Western audience: "The vector of East European culture is still directed westward, toward the centre, and still has a rather one-dimensional character".[27]

Alter-Globalist Art Histories

From the start, the "Russian Avant-Garde" construction relied on an opposition to local features, with the narrator positioned in the "West". So, it might come as no surprise that research supported by Western grants perpetuates that construction. A reaction on the part of the construction was to be expected, too, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Certain events of the recent years point to the structure's fragility and inadequacy to the present moment.

Following the decisive break between Russia and Ukraine, the existing geopolitical tendencies have to be accounted for. The first time Ukrainian artists were singled out internationally was when Andrei Nakov referred to a "Ukrainian Avant-Garde" in 1973.[28] That is when the first exhibitions of artists such as Oleg Bogomazov and Vasily Ermilov took place in the West. Already in the 1990s, in the wake of perestroika, several publications on the Ukrainian Avant-Garde came out, chiefly outside Russia, with the most representative exhibition held in 1990 in Zagreb.[29] The issue of "Russian Avant-Garde" representatives potentially belonging to Ukrainian culture exposes the problem with the universalistic canon. As it stands, the "Russian Avant-Garde" for Ukraine points both to the break with Russia and to the symbolic capital remaining in Russia.

With its notion of the "Russian Avant-Garde", the universalistic discourse absorbs the history of the Ukrainian Avant-Garde. A recognition of that history as distinct from the universalistic one would necessitate the creation of a new narrative that would clearly identify where it is coming from and would be aware of the "legitimate" models it relies on in the familiar canon. In that respect, the "Russian Avant-Garde" can

serve as a model for fashioning new narratives. This possibility has been realized in the works by Ukrainian artist Nikita Kadan, who examined art history and the history of sociopolitical change through a series of "reconstructions". Among the latest such reconstructions is his *The Red Mountains* (2019) at the Mumok museum in Vienna, showcasing an installation of three sculptures—three pedestals alluding to the monuments to commissars by the Ukrainian sculptor Ivan Kawaleridze.[30] The latter's monumental sculptures, dating back to 1926–27, rest on weighty constructive pedestals. One of them portrays Taras Shevchenko and the other two Comrade Artyom (Fyodor Sergeyev). Shevchenko is a crucial figure for Ukrainian culture, and so is Artyom, who founded and headed the Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic and so was a proponent of the region's independence. By leaving the bare pedestals to stand in for the sculptures, Kadan divests them of symbolic meaning. And the allusion to the formal avant-garde quest is self-evident. The pedestal functions as an index sign, as understood by Peirce, indicating the connections one might imagine between what remained there to see and what vanished—the figure of the hero and the topic of Ukrainian independence.[31]

In another project, Kadan reconstructed Vasily Ermilov's monument to the three Russian revolutions: 1825, 1905 and 1917. Only a sketch of the unrealized monument exists. Ermilov is a symbolic figure in a discussion on the "Russian Avant-Garde". His work is close both to the minimalist constructivism of Lissitzky and to the architektons of Malevich.[32] The monument is an abstract composition, with Kadan driving formal expression toward maximum detachment from any specific situation, rendering the entire sculpture in white. Kadan fitted the lower base of the monument with melted cups found in the ruins of a house ravaged by war in Lysychansk, Donbas, where instability persists to this day. By creating a monumental installation based on Ermilov's sketches, the artist effectively deconstructs modernist discourse, at the same time, stating his attitude to it as a monument of avant-garde.

Finally, Kadan recapitulated his own reexamination of avant-garde heritage in the local and international context by mounting "Postponed Futures", a 2017 London exhibition where he served as both an artist and a curator, putting together an exposition of both historical avant-garde exhibits and those by three contemporary artists. The exhibition raised the issue of self-identification in the local context, focusing on a dialogue between the Ukrainian Avant-Garde and present-day artists. Remarkably, the notion of Ukrainian Avant-Garde is still at times dismissed with that phenomenon relegated to being a part of its Russian counterpart. That is, a view from the outside invariably evokes the "Russian Avant-Garde" because that concept is backed by the normative discourse.[33]

It seems reasonable to develop Piotrowski's idea concerning globalism and the heritage of the bipolar break of the Cold War. According to him, the "Russian Modernism" in the Cold War era grew to be a part of the universalistic discourse, which has no place for distinctions based on local art history features: "The universal perspective, understood as a methodological tool, prevents one from reaching particular meanings of culture and from describing its regional, national and local identities".[34]

As a result of the world's polarization after the 1945 Yalta Conference, two major opposing powers emerged. According to Piotrowski, they came to be the protagonists of globalism:

> Obviously, the cold war was global and its key protagonists, the USSR and the West (the US in fact), went into competition in terms of their cultural strategies

> on the territories of the Third World countries as they were called back then. In the artistic sense, it was the competition between two myths of universalism, or at least two stylistics with universal ambitions: modernism and socialist realism.[35]

Admittedly, it is difficult to see socialist realism competing with modernism. The former would be doomed, for it lacked clearly expressed features characterizing modernity and the capacity to be applied on a vast cultural scale. Besides, on the Soviet Union's territory, it had a fairly sketchy expression. Modernism, however, became a political tool, which is recognized by Piotrowski when he refers to the two opposing systems. Each side of the conflict proposes a way of expression for the entire world. The problem is that the context gets eroded, and there is no alternative to the universalistic art history narrative. The "Russian Avant-Garde" is an appropriated discourse of the opposing pair. The reason it is "Russian" is precisely because Soviet socialist realism (according to Piotrowski) functions as the principal opponent of modernism.[36] Yet modernism (avant-garde in the context of modernism) sprouting up on "enemy territory" is both an achievement of one of the sides in the Cold War and a symbol of universalism. It implies that history is characterized by one integrated vertical, with the world centres of art producing models. Should one of such models belong to the opposing party, it is in a way perceived as an extension of one's own territory.

The main problem with globalism in culture is that adopting a single normative art history leads to all other versions disappearing as superfluous "provincial" alternatives.

The development of alternative art history narratives requires highlighting the critical breaks and, thus, making diverse versions visible. For an alter-globalist art history to emerge, both the narrators residing in the assumed centres and those from the assumed periphery have to be capable of departing from the canonical version. Beyond the mere existence of normative discourse with its narrative frame, the problem also has to do with the need for alternative art histories to transcend the canonical discourse frame, for a narrator aware of their own space to be open to other alternative histories.

In 2014, the Moscow Manege hosted "The Golden Age of Russian Avant-Garde", a multimedia installation created by Peter Greenaway and Saskia Boddeke.[37] Over 1,000 artworks were shown on 18 huge two-sided screens. Spectators found themselves inside the exposition, or inside a film, which was the intention of the creators. Apart from the artworks, the exhibition showed the artists themselves—portrayed by foreign actors—narrating stories based on surviving texts.

The installation met with a very harsh response from "Russian Avant-Garde" experts based in Russia. What caused their indignation was the discrepancy between the figures as shown and as represented in the canon. The critics mostly voiced their disapproval on the sidelines of the exhibition, but some publications followed, including one where the well-known art critic Valentin Dyakonov noted: "For anyone who knows more than the universally accepted minimum about the Russian Avant-Garde, the exhibition in Manege is off limits".[38] He was particularly provoked by the mismatch between the figures created by the cinema artists and their "real" prototypes: "How come Malevich is portrayed by a respectable middle-aged gentleman and Tatlin by a young man who appears 20 years old, with the actual age difference amounting to no

more than six years?" This bears a conflict that implies a knowledge of a "genuine" avant-garde, as opposed to one "imported" from abroad. The presumption is, there exists a "true Russian Avant-Garde" and a "false" one. In this clash between the supposedly true and false history, a local narrator assumes an outside position, not telling the story from their own location but relaying an image assumed universally right.

Russian Avant-Garde as Cultural Identity

The "Russian Avant-Garde" is a vehicle of normative discourse not just for the vertical narrative of the universalistic art history. It is also emerging as a normative discourse of the authorities in the new post-Soviet space. In an interview to *The Art Newspaper Russia*, Tretyakov Gallery Director Zelfira Tregulova said:

> I consider the Russian Avant-Garde a part of the Russian identity. The avant-garde is formulated in terms of a feast of the paradoxical idea, an aspiration to the absolute, prophetic statements. And a Russian has always aspired to the absolute form and the absolute as such.[39]

The very combination of "the absolute", "absolute form" and "the Russian Avant-Garde" in this unusual mixture results in a sole perspective, supreme form and self-identification converging at one point. Despite the director's experience as a research fellow, or perhaps by virtue of it, she is all but reproducing the normative discourse of the authorities. This perspective frames the "Russian Avant-Garde" as an innate expression form, not a construction. No wonder it is compared to the absolute. In this way, the "Russian Avant-Garde" undergoes sacralization and merges with the Russian identity, apparently associated with the state, because "Russian" assumes a general meaning here. This is a case of modernist discourse appropriation, only in reverse. It suggests that the dispute over the identification of the Russian or Ukrainian Avant-Garde and over the cultural affiliation of Malevich is also a product of the globalist discourse.

Talking about the "Russian Avant-Garde", one cannot overlook the construction "Malevich", in his context. This sacralized figure supports the normative discourse, so almost any association with the "Russian Avant-Garde" carries the seal of Malevich. From it stems the desire to deconstruct the "Russian Avant-Garde" by "severing" Malevich from that construction. It, therefore, stands to reason that disputes over the relevance of the notion of the "Russian Avant-Garde" in the context of alter-globalist art history creation begin with the question of whom Malevich belongs to.[40]

With parents of Polish descent and having spent his childhood and youth in Ukraine, Malevich spoke three languages: Polish, Russian and Ukrainian.[41] There is a Polish award named in honour of Malevich and conferred on Ukrainian artists along with an artist residency. Also, a discussion took place as to whether the Boryspil Airport in Kyiv should bear his name. This topic received much exposure in both the Ukrainian and the Polish media. While the proposal did not pass the public vote, it is telling that these issues are gaining importance.

The need for alternative art histories today is unmistakable. The "Malevich" and "Russian Avant-Garde" constructions are frozen and unlocalizable. This is what makes them so well suited to the universalistic art history canon. Attempts to deconstruct the "Russian Avant-Garde" within the framework of the artistic project itself have been undertaken by the so-called nonconformist artists, among them Soviet Pop

Art exponents Kosolapov, Sokov, Komar and Melamid, and young artists such as the Gnezdo group or Pavel Pepperstein.

The "Russian Avant-Garde" cannot operate within horizontal history. Alternative art histories call for criticism of the normative discourse—and, therefore, of the notion of the "Russian Avant-Garde" itself. We have shown this phenomenon to be a form of globalist discourse in the realm of art. It is used by the authorities to assert the status of power in the form of a "Russian identity", and it is used for commercial purposes as a label for art brand advertising. If Bürger saw the avant-garde as a critical discourse of the institute "art", then a "Russian Avant-Garde" is a self-contradiction in the context of the theory of avant-garde because it occupies the place of a normative narrative and implies the narrator's position not within but outside the story. In other words, Bürger makes a distinction between "the avant-garde" in the singular, as a concept for art based on a critical comprehension of the very foundations of art, and the numerous "avant-gardes" that refer to their respective historical narratives without necessarily incorporating this critical component, which is essential to comprehending art and its role in society after 1968. Accordingly, Bürger does not consider every art movement usually understood as part of the "historical avant-garde" to fit the criteria from the present-day perspective. Like the conceptual framework of Bürger with its associated terminology, the very notion of the "Russian Avant-Garde" is a later construct referring back to an earlier historical, rather than critical, narrative. Entering the cultural vocabulary in the Soviet era, this term was often used to frame contemporary unofficial art into the "normative discourse" and was, thus, imbued with a view "from outside", putting the "avant-garde" part of that label at odds with both the historical local art features and the underlying general notion discussed above.

In the wake of the changes associated with the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and following the 2014 confrontations, subsequent phases of self-identification are unavoidable, and they necessarily include a reorientation disfavouring the West as an authoritative reference. Such reorientation is only possible by constructing an alternative history, which features principal heroes of its own, whose "liberation"—even if symbolic—would also symbolize leaving the periphery.

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Translated by Nikolay Posunko

Notes

1 Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
2 Peter Bürger, Introduction to *Nach der Avantgarde* [After the Avant-garde] (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2014), 7–15.
3 Bürger, introduction, 7–15.
4 Piotr Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde," in *Europa! Europa?: The Avant-Garde, Modernism and the Fate of a Continent*, ed. Sascha Bru et al. (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2009).
5 Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta. Art and the Avant-garde in the Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, trans. Anna Brzyski (London: Reaction Books, 2009), 13.
6 Piotr Piotrowski, "'Ramirovanie' tsentralnoi evropy" [Framing of the Central Europe], *Moscow Art Magazine*, no. 22 (1998), http://moscowartmagazine.com/issue/43/article/842.
7 We put the term "Russian Avant-Garde" in quotation marks to indicate it stands for a construction that mythologizes Soviet and Russian art history, while simultaneously operating in the context of the universalistic art canon.
8 Hal Foster et al., *Art Since 1900. Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004).

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14 Camilla Gray, *The Great Experiment: Russian Art 1863–1932* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1962).
15 Larissa Shadova, *Suche und Experiment. Aus der Geschichte der russischen und sowjetischen Kunst zwischen 1910–1930* [Search and Experiment: Russian and Soviet Art from 1910–1930] (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1978).
16 Camilla Gray, *The Russian Experiment in Art 1863–1922* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1971); Camilla Gray, *The Russian Experiment in Art 1863–1922*, rev. ed., ed. Marian Burleigh-Motley (London: Thames & Hudson, 1986).
17 Stephen C. Foster, *The Eastern Dada Orbit: Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Central Europe, and Japan*, ed. Gerald Janecek and Toshiharu Omuka (New York: G.K. Hall; London: Prentice Hall International, 1998).
18 Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal History," 51.
19 Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal History," 50.
20 Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (March–May 1992), Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (June–August 1992), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York (September 1992 – January 1993), State Tretyakov Gallery (March–May 1993), State Russian Museum (July–August 1993).
21 Anthony Calnek, ed., *The Great Utopia: Russian and Soviet avant-garde 1915–1932* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1992), x.
22 Susan Emily Reid, "In the Name of the People: The Manege Affair Revisited," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 6, no. 4 (2005), http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/kri.2005.0058.
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29 Marijan Susovski, Tihomir Milovac and Branka Stipančić, *Ukrajinska avangarda in Zagreb 1910–1930* [The Ukrainian Avant-Garde in Zagreb 1910–1930] (Zagreb: Galerije grada Zagreba, 1990).
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31 Charles S. Peirce, *Philosophical writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover Publications, 2011), 109.
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34 Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 24.
35 Piotr Piotrowski, "From Global to Alter-Globalist Art History," *Teksty Drugie*, no. 1 (2015): 122, http://doi.org/10.18318/td.2015.en.1.8.
36 Piotrowski, "From Global," 125.
37 "Peter Greenaway and Saskia Boddeke. The Golden Age of the Russian Avant-Garde," Digicult, accessed June 28, 2021, http://digicult.it/news/peter-greenaway-saskia-boddeke-golden-age-russian-avant-garde/.
38 "Kukla Lilya, kukla Kazimir" [Lilya Puppet, Kazimir Puppet], *Kommersant*, accessed April 25, 2014, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2459493.
39 Anastasiya Petrakova, "Zelfira Tregulova: My stoim na poroge gumanitarnoi katastrofy" [Zelfira Tregulova: We Are on the Verge of a Humanitarian Catastrophe], *The Art Newspaper Russia*, accessed May 25, 2016, http://www.theartnewspaper.ru/posts/3075.
40 For example, "To Whom Does the Avant-Garde Belong? Malevich Project" is an art research project devoted to revising the notion of the "Russian Avant-Garde" and, in particular, raising the issue of the cultural affiliation of Malevich in the new geopolitical situation. Co-operative for Creative Research "Krasnaya Shpana", ed., *To Whom Does the Avant-Garde Belong? Malevich Project* (Kyiv, 2019). In his book, Andrzej Turowski also raises the issue of which culture Malevich belongs to. Andrzej Turowski, *Malewicz w Warszawie. Rekonstrukcje i symulacje* [Malevich in Warsaw. Reconstructions and Simulations] (Cracow: Universitas, 2002).
41 It is no coincidence that one of the leading experts on Malevich, A. S. Shatskikh speaks these three languages.

7 Exhibition-Making as Horizontal Art History?

Anthony Gardner

Do exhibitions offer instances of "horizontal art history"? Although descriptions of important exhibitions pepper Piotr Piotrowski's histories of art from the communist and postcommunist periods, they remain curiously limited in his explicit theorisations of horizontal and world art histories.[1] I say "curiously" because exhibitions were clearly pivotal to Piotrowski's career in general, as an artist, a curator and especially as an advocate of the "critical museum".[2] Moreover, they seem an ideal medium for some of the core components that, according to Piotrowski, can help us reimagine art's histories away from the North Atlantic focus of centre/periphery models and towards a more geographically expansive and equitable artistic dialogue between contexts around the world, through which we can complicate or even shatter the top-down verticality of those North Atlantic narratives. After all, exhibitions (generally) bring a range of different works, often if not always by different artists, together in one space, allowing us to move and scan left and right, back and forth – literally on a horizontal plane from the gallery floor – in order to compare, contrast and explore the relationships, the influences and the resistance between one work and another. They can allow previously marginalised material – such as drawings in the career of a painter, or work by once-overlooked artists in the context of a broader survey – to find new audiences once (back) on show. And as (again, generally) a medium of display, of revealing and exposure, exhibitions can serve as mediators between contexts of production – the material conditions of the site and time of production, including the challenges and politics and possibilities fundamental to those contexts of production – and those sometimes very different, sometimes strangely similar contexts of reception.[3] Exhibitions, in other words, can make works from distinct histories and places become contemporaneous or synchronous in one space and time: the space and time of reception and display, or what we might want to call, following the important writings of Mikhail Bakhtin and Huey Copeland and Krista Thompson, the exhibition as a chronotope of address.[4]

Indeed, as a medium long ignored by North Atlantic art histories, exhibitions might offer a dual sense of the margins-at-work. They are a marginalised medium within canonical art histories that, out of storage or general neglect or across time zones (both historical and geographical), can bring marginalised artists, works and production-sites into dialogue and tension, both with us and with each other, within material space. At their most intriguing, then, exhibitions might offer that which, in a forerunner to Piotrowski's notion of "horizontal art histories", Australian art historian Charles Green calls "peripheral visions" of the entangled histories of art, with works always seeking our attention and wanting to address us from the edges of

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our perception and the limits of our knowledge.[5] Such visions might be relevant to all kinds of exhibitions, given how we view and move through an exhibition – the virtual and physical movements inherent to proprioception – and the possibilities of engaging with works not previously known to us or developing new insights through the questions and suggestions presented curatorially (what I consider the modus operandi of *exhibitions-as-propositions*). But they are particularly compelling, I wish to argue in the following pages, in international group exhibitions, including but not limited to the perennial exhibitions that have transformed the rhythm and structure of artistic display in recent decades, such as biennials, triennials and the leviathan quinquennial exhibition, documenta.[6]

By virtue of their internationalism – primarily of the artists exhibited but also potentially given the range of funding bodies involved, global publicity circuits and prospective audience outreach – such exhibitions are inherently intercultural in ways that other exhibition types are not. Monographic shows may emphasise artistic agency within a given time and place, and national shows may attend to what Piotrowski called the "key problem of horizontal art history, which is the problem of localization",[7] but both tend to eschew international and intercultural comparisons to spotlight an artist's singular output or aesthetic developments bounded by national borders. International group shows, by contrast, offer opportunities not only to expand the "artistic geography" of work beyond the place or country in which the exhibition takes place but also for critical dialogue and comparison to be drawn first hand between works from those diverse geographies. It is these materials, first-hand comparisons between works from different "localizations" worldwide, conducted *in situ* in the gallery space, that are otherwise missing from monographic, national and other exhibition types. Or at least such is the rhetoric of many large-scale international group exhibitions and their claims to being "global art shows". But that rhetoric subsequently poses important questions for us to address. How do these dialogues function in practice rather than just rhetorically? What pitfalls emerge from such a study, and perhaps from "horizontal art history" itself? And how have exhibitions responded to those pitfalls in order for us to re-evaluate the dialogues tendered by curatorial work?

International Exhibitions and Horizontal Art Histories: Passages and Pitfalls

Let's consider these questions through something still far too rarely enacted in scholarship on the histories of curating and exhibitions. Many commentators make broad brushstroke evaluations of exhibitions based on their thematic claims or catalogue texts, championing or castigating exhibitions (or curating, or curators) according to textual residues that, at best, treat exhibitions as contentless abstractions that do what the catalogue texts (or reviews, or advertising bumf) say they do or, at worst, allow preconceptions and prejudices to dictate how an exhibition should be (mis)understood long after it has come down.[8] Missing from such commentaries are the material conditions, appearances and experiences (whether actual or imagined) of the exhibition itself, rather than the textual residues that are only ever inadequate approximations for what an exhibition tries to do. So, let's explore specific episodes and passages in exhibitions to try to work out what it is that the curatorial *work* of an exhibition *does*.

And what better place to start than arguably the most important exhibition in the history of art's attempts to dehegemonise North Atlantic canonicity: the exhibition

professed (albeit erroneously) to be "the first truly international exhibition of worldwide contemporary art", and an exhibition that (however, anachronistically) could be thought to make "horizontality" an innovative feature in exhibition-making and, thus, vital to reconsider in an anthology such as this. That exhibition is *Magiciens de la terre*, staged in 1989 across two venues in Paris as part of France's bicentenary celebrations for the French Revolution and organised by a team of curators and associates led by Jean-Hubert Martin.[9] Can the frames offered by Piotrowski's innovative thinking allow us to re-evaluate the histories, but also pivotal instances, of exhibitions and their means of "making art global", as the editors of the Afterall book series described *Magiciens* in their eponymous volume? And what new insights might emerge about this now-infamous exhibition, and its challenging legacies, when viewed through a Piotrowskian lens? These questions are especially important given the exhibition's range of curatorial gestures that seem to point directly to a desire to challenge universalised North Atlantic narratives of art and offer comparative studies of works made in differing if parallel contexts worldwide. I'm thinking here of a number of important concerns: its 50/50 split of work by "Western" and "Non-Western" artists and their intermingling across the exhibition spaces in the Centre Pompidou and La Villette in northeast Paris; its reliance on years-long curatorial research to complicate art-historical presumptions about art practices worldwide, with Martin and colleagues (spearheaded by Aline Luque, André Magnin and Mark Francis) turning to professional and personal contacts in places with which they were unfamiliar, relying on those informants' knowledge of local practices for possible inclusion according to the curators' loosely outlined interests and selection criteria for the show;[10] its rejection of exhibition models that present work in national pavilions that reiterate a reductive "national aesthetic" and "national ambassador" model of art practice; and, connected to this rejection, its insistence on seeing artists as individual practitioners whose seemingly ineffable capacities to make work across cultural difference – or, perhaps more accurately, to be "legible" to a Parisian audience revelling in its bicentenary – underpinned the curators' mythologisation of art work as a form of "magic" wherever it is made.

For Martin, *Magiciens* was primarily "intend[ed] to initiate dialogues". "I oppose the idea that one can only look at another culture in order to exploit it", he argued at the time. "Our first concern is with exchange and dialogue, with understanding others in order to understand what we do ourselves".[11] Indeed, whilst notions of intercultural dialogue (and associated claims to international "cooperation", "friendship" and so on) had coursed through curatorial statements long before 1989, it would become the dominant trope of self-consciously "global exhibitions" in the decades following and this was due in no small part to *Magiciens*.[12] That dialogue had at least three manifestations. One was formal, anchored in the quantitative details of the 50/50 split of artists and driven not by the oft-derided (if rarely evidenced) homogenisation of contemporary art courtesy of globalisation but by the heterogeneity of practitioners and materials involved. Diversity stood here for dialogue: works spanned painting, performance, ceremony, photography, installation, sculpture, text and video, with artists identified only by name on the gallery walls and, in the hefty folio-sized catalogue, by their town of birth, nationality and the place where they work, alongside a small terrestrial map that changed appearance from page to page because it always positioned the artist's birthplace at the centre of the world.

A second manifestation was curatorial, sparked by the exhibition design and the contiguity of works by artists from different contexts, the one following on from the

other in curatorial enfilade. At the entrance to the 5th-floor wing of the Centre Pompidou allocated to *Magiciens*, for instance, visitors met with Barbara Kruger's eponymous billboard asking "Qui sont les magiciens de la terre?" followed by a list of 33 professions, from doctors to artists to nuns to pilots, that could address the question; on the billboard's verso, another Kruger billboard stating, in a weak gesture of institutional critique, "on n'a plus besoin d'héros", which faced Awkuzu-based Mike Chukwukele's enormous *Ijele* mask made with materials found in Paris and that, with help from his colleagues, he had set atop a foot-tall dais. Behind it, through the turnstiles, the sightline extended to Djinang elder Jack Wunuwun's series of 30 bark paintings, aligned in a neat row across the white cube space, and one acrylic and ochre painting on canvas, all titled *Barnumbirr Manikay* (translated in the catalogue as *Songs of the Morning Star Cycle*). Through the contiguity of works, their positions facing each other or sightlines between foreground and background planes, audiences could seek points of correlation and difference, or imagine relationships despite seemingly incommensurate styles, between the works displayed. Through curatorial dialogue, then, Kruger's assertion that "we no longer need heroes" could find accord, resistance or indifference from Chukwukele's mask, its relationship to ceremony potentially conversant with the starkly different ceremonial contexts from which *Barnumbirr Manikay* was born.

Even more explicit in this regard was *Magiciens*' most celebrated pairing: between Richard Long's *Red Earth Circle*, made of clay scavenged from the River Avon in England and smacked across a wall at the rear of the space in La Villette, and *Yarla* (also known as *Yam Dreaming*), the ground painting made of clay, ochre and other materials from Australia's central desert by seven Warlpiri men living in the remote community of Yuendumu. The pairing's elegant, photogenic simplicity has made it iconic in contemporary exhibition-making. The clever use of spotlights draws out the match of ochre colours and natural textures between the works, giving the impression not only of curatorial resonance but of a solar eclipse and its reflection on the ground, as though the works and their makers were in natural unison. These formal and material affinities could then potentially spark (at least a desire for) conceptual affinities, too:[13] What relationships to land might the Warlpiri and English men share? Could both modes of artmaking be understood as acts of ceremony and not just creative labour? And could a recategorising of both practices emerge through the two-way curatorial dialogue between them? It was not difference – let alone recognition of centuries of dispossession, genocide and cultural destruction – that was of concern to Martin and his colleagues here. Instead, the pairing's carefully spotlit allure, its position at one end of La Villette's Grande Halle to culminate the visitors' exhibition trajectory, its remembrance through its photogenic capture, its formal and material resonances – all served to naturalise a liberal fantasy of harmony and commonality as the apex of *Magiciens*' curatorial dialogue.

The third form of dialogue was literal. By inviting artists to complete their work *in situ*, the curators increased the likelihood of their meeting and observing each other in the days before the exhibition opened – and in La Villette in particular, which housed most of *Magiciens*' installation and ceremony-derived work, this is exactly what happened. As highlighted in the video-catalogue accompanying the exhibition and documenting the installation process – a remarkable and rarely analysed document that, sadly, is now difficult to find – the artists would pause to watch each other, occasionally conversing or making comment despite language difference (as with Cildo Meireles'

bemused look when Esther Mahlangu laughs as she leaves his space whilst he scatters thousands of coins across the gallery floor).[14] Sometimes, artists would share materials or feel them in their hand to gauge their texture and consistency (not least the small bag of stones borrowed from Navajo artist Joe Ben Junior by one of the Tibetan lamas working on the *Mandala of the Wrathful Divinity Bhairav and Twelve Gods of His Entourage*, or the ochre-treated grasses from Warlpiri country rubbed by another lama between his hands as he observes the production of *Yarla*). *Magiciens* was certainly not the first international group exhibition to offer participants the chance to meet and engage with each other despite coming from very different places and backgrounds; this had been pivotal to many such exhibitions after 1945, whether to resist Cold War antagonisms (as with the artists and curators from "East" and "West" meeting in exhibitions in communist Europe, such as Ljubljana's Graphics Biennial, or *Construction in Process* in Łódź just before Poland declared martial law in late 1981) or to celebrate solidarities across or between cultural and geographical regions (such as the pan-Africanism championed at *FESTAC* in Dakar in 1966 or the pan-Arabism of the Arab Art Biennials in the 1970s). But as the video-catalogue deliberately highlights, these literal encounters were central to Martin's ambitions for the show, actualising (and thereby further naturalising) the virtual dialogues afforded by Martin's curatorial designs.

At the core of each mode of dialogue was a sense of equalisation between artists from around the world, rather than the centre/periphery hierarchies that subtended (and largely still subtend) North Atlantic art histories. The 50/50 artist split (presented in the show and the video-catalogue alike), the two-way curatorial exchanges and virtual dialogues proposed between works, even the allocation of similar dimensions and types of space to each artist – white cubes, limited biographical detail on the walls or beyond the catalogue, square outlines of about 5x10m footprints in La Villette which artists then filled with installations and designs – all were intended to equalise if not homogenise the range of practices and limit distraction from the artworks themselves. But as Martin no doubt understood, this raised a particular problem common to all international group exhibitions, perhaps exhibitions in general, given their tendency to display the relics rather than the process or places of facture. That problem is *the contextualisation of production*. How can exhibitions give a sense of the conditions that surround and seep into a work's generation and an artist's practice, all the significance and the challenges that can come with working in the "peripheries" and especially for those who have fought against colonial oppressions and their neocolonial legacies? How not to reiterate tropes of exhibition-making and art histories alike that, in Piotrowski's words, "ignore … the significance of place, thus turning into an instrument of colonisation"?[15] And how to do so without resorting to stereotypes or orientalist myths familiar to (Parisian) audiences, whilst encouraging us (to cite Piotrowski again) "to deconstruct the relations between the center and the margins in the world history of modern art"?[16]

It's in light of these questions that two particular features stand out as central to *Magiciens*: the video-catalogue and the artists' invitations to produce their work on-site in Paris. Both sought – even more than the bulky coffee-table catalogue, so unwieldy to carry through the galleries – to amplify the works' contextualisation for uninformed audiences, but in easily digestible ways. The hinge was the artists' presence as metonym for context, whether by performing (or seeming to perform) ceremony for the camera or explaining a work's details through interpreters, or (most notably with Esther Mahlangu's *House* made to approximate Ndebele design, as well as the temple-like

structure encasing the *Mandala*) creating a simulacrum of "home" whilst garbed in traditional dress. If translating something from the "ineffably individual" into the material public realm underpinned the curators' notion of artists as magicians, then the curators had their own, equivalent "magic art" as well: one in which the seemingly ineffable sense of localisation and context, of how a work is made and given meaning "at home" and under what conditions, was given concrete presence to the exhibition's audiences. That mode of contextualisation was all the more crucial given Martin's desire for formal equality between the artists – dictated by his reliance on an art-fair aesthetic familiar from Cologne or Basel or Paris's Grand Palais, of separate white-walled booths for each artist and no textual details beyond the artists' names on those walls – had in effect stripped the works of all meta-information for the sake of an equalisation dependent on aesthetic appreciation. In this sense, the curators' attempts at contextualisation and localisation, at least for *Magiciens*' "non-Western" practitioners, were clearly compensatory for the violence enacted in the interests of "equalisation".

And as commentators widely note, there was also more than a hint of old-school, and by 1989 thoroughly debunked, ethnography at play here. The video-catalogue lingers extensively and uncomfortably on those artists (but especially Mahlangu) wearing traditional dress, capturing the "magic" of making like a pre-Rouchian reverie. Moreover, the production and inhabitation of simulacra of distant "homes" was an almost-exact replica of how "non-Western" life was staged in the Expositions Universelles and Coloniales in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Paris, where participants of colour performed or were made to perform in simulacral displays for the audiences' voyeuristic fantasies of what they imagined "non-Western" life was like (artist Daniel Buren for one perceived the experience as more akin to a zoo).[17] It's hard not to agree with critic Benjamin Buchloh – not someone to whom we might ordinarily turn for a critique of North Atlantic paradigms – when he decried Martin's desire to include material from beyond the North Atlantic for the primarily narcissistic purposes of self-affirmation, whether for "our inspection and *our consumption*" (Buchloh) or the desire for "understanding others in order to understand what we do ourselves" (as Martin himself freely admitted at the time).[18] Again, Richard Long's work was emblematic in this regard: positioned at the far end of La Villette's Grande Halle, its muddy glow radiated not just like a celestial entity but like an altarpiece or stained-glass rosette, visible from almost the entire expanse of the Halle's central nave and dominating the works and sightlines throughout its length. Indeed, Long's was one of the last works to be completed, and his use of a heavy forklift and sloppy clay necessitated covering the (by-now well-finished) *Yarla* with opaque plastic sheeting, such that any dialogue, whether actual or implicit, with the Warlpiri men or their work was deliberately stifled. If contextualisation sought to compensate for the effects of equalisation, then hierarchies continued to trump context (at least in La Villette), whilst motifs familiar to the localisation of Paris – from past exhibitions, religious worship and architectural heritage alike – were the filter through which to read the hierarchies at play.

The perils of decontextualisation have certainly not been limited to *Magiciens*. Even as sensitive a curator as the late Okwui Enwezor sometimes struggled with the intersectionality of deconstruction (of North Atlantic diktats and centre–periphery relations) and contextualisation (of conditions of production and provenance). Witness, for example, two curatorial passages from his 2015 Venice Biennale exhibition, *All the World's Futures*, involving Indigenous artists from Australia. In one room, a tall

black-and-white acrylic painting, its diagrammatic schema and the words "Marshall Islands Chart" difficult to discern behind a veil of dots, stands over a dead tree lying on the floor with its roots exposed and on an adjacent wall a suite of blue abstractions made by exposing light-sensitive paper to the sun. In another room, a group of figures in blackened wood (collectively titled *Against What? Against Whom?*) stands before a vast abstract painting called *Earth's Creation* and a series of sea-blue works on canvas, abstract but with some discernible forms (reeds? rocks? a face?), drawn from a tale involving a Dr Bluefins. With minimal contextualising information provided in the room's wall panels beyond the basic metadata of artists' names, works' titles, dates of production and gallery acknowledgements, both rooms seem to embrace confusion about which work is which and who made what, whether that be Daniel Boyd or Robert Smithson or Rugo Lagomarsino in the first room, or Huma Bhabha or Emily Kame Kngwarreye or Ellen Gallagher in the second. This method has an important point to make: that one cannot distinguish "quality", perhaps not even content, based upon geocultural biases about where works were produced, in what style or by whom. (Even the fact that the second room, in a remarkably rare moment for international exhibitions, spotlights work only by women of colour, from different generations as well as places, goes unnoticed except to viewers tutored in contemporary artists' biographies.)

Yet, that interchangeability also presents its own challenges. It divorces works and artists alike from a sense of place, from their situation in the world, beyond the impression that each artist shares the relative comforts afforded by gallery representation in one or more cities across the globe, as though the artists are as mobile as the works themselves. But that is certainly not the case. The legacies of colonial destructions of Indigenous land and life, and the feat of painting despite these near-impossible conditions (of forced exile, squalor and dispossession), are incomparably different from the possibility of living in or around New York, whether by birth (Smithson) or elective migration (Bhabha, Gallagher), and the opportunities it offers. Indeed, the vast dissimilarities in the conditions of production risk becoming flattened, or as abstracted and aestheticised as the themes invoked in each curatorial episode (of displacement in one case, of creation despite and after catastrophe in the other – themes perhaps discernible less clearly from the works themselves than from reading the catalogue, itself an unwieldy 4-inch-wide, two-volume tome, or the more portable "short guide" that offers nominal information about the works displayed).

Does this mean that international group exhibitions are doomed, by virtue of their largely synchronic embrace of all art now, to share the parochial visions of *Magiciens de la terre*? Or might they still be able to combat modes of dehistoricisation, decontextualisation and deracination, whilst still deconstructing North Atlantic paradigms? Although this intersectionality may seem like a near-impossible demand of any cultural work today, I want to touch on two more exhibitions, one in Gwangju, the other in Sydney, that have sought to take on that challenge directly through their unusual curatorial strategies.

The Possibilities of Adjacency

The first curatorial episode comes from *P_A_U_S_E*, Part 1 of the 4th Gwangju Biennale held in 2002 and curated by Hou Hanru, Charles Esche and Wan Kyung Sung. Strikingly for an international group exhibition, the curators did not invite specific artists to present individual works, but rather twenty-three predominantly

artist-run and independent spaces from across Asia (including Videotage, Parasite and Cattle Depot Art Village from Hong Kong, ruangrupa from Jakarta and Whashang Art District and ITPark from Taipei) and a handful from elsewhere in the world (such as Kurimanzotto from Mexico City and the Foksal Gallery Foundation from Warsaw) to present themselves, their activities and the kind of work they support in their home cities. Perhaps not dissimilar to *Magiciens*' parcelling of space, each ensemble received an allocated footprint in Gwangju's cavernous Biennale Hall. Unlike *Magiciens*, however, the contributors could use the space and present their work however they wished, with many electing to replicate in miniature the layout of their original spaces such that these quasi-pavilions dotted the Biennale Hall as, in Hou's words, an "Event City".[19] The description was apt, for the allotments became meeting-grounds for each institution to present public programmes of talks or screenings as they usually would and showcase their signature practices – whether conceptual or video work, or feasts of discussion and food – in concentrated, intimate proximity to the other spaces.

What often emerged through the Biennale's run was an interweaving of spaces and programmes, with people joining from the other ensembles such that divisions between *proximity to* each other and *participation with* each other quickly dissolved. Dinners cooked by hosts from one ensemble became shared experiences for all; formal discussions about art and cultural histories in Yogyakarta or Beijing or Singapore segued to informal dialogues over hot-pots and the start of new collaborations between these small-scale organisations, smuggled under the auspices of the sprawling Biennale. The exhibition became less a series of artworks, as is familiar from other international group shows, than a network of platforms that looked out to and worked with each other – sometimes literally so, with balconies stretching out towards nearby pavilions and floorplans starting to overlap as activities between the organisations increased. And through this network, the ensembles were able to share their philosophies and praxes, learning about (and, indeed, working together to practise) each other's conditions and methods of cultural production through their array of auto-curated discussions, exhibitions and programmes.

This delegated or auto-curation is crucial here because it did two key things. Firstly, it provided a sense of localisation that was both formal (replicating the form and layout of the home space, running the kinds of programmes and exhibitions that would inhabit that space) and substantive (using those programmes to analyse and present how work is made and shown in those home conditions, as testimony to the challenges and outlooks offered by those conditions). And secondly, it emphasised each organisation's autonomy and agency to develop and constantly redevelop their communications with each other throughout the biennial's duration, regardless (and often in ignorance) of the *P_A_U_S_E* curators' original plans. It's this uncontrolled, ever-changing programme – uncontrolled, that is, by top-down curatorial authority – which, together with the substantive exposition of the forces shaping locality, arguably distinguishes *P_A_U_S_E* from the reductive simulacra of faraway locations and appearance or performance of "tradition" in *Magiciens*. But in so doing, it also pushed *P_A_U_S_E* away from the usual format of biennials worldwide, with their anchoring in the Expositions Universelles of Paris or the national pavilions of the Venice Biennale. This revised structure was more akin to the conglomeration of artist-run and grassroots initiatives that have been the backbone of contemporary art's histories in East and Southeast Asia: the independent and quasi-independent artists' villages such as Whashang in Taipei and Cattle Depot in Hong Kong but also The Artists Village

in Singapore or Beijing East Village from the 1980s into the 1990s, each of which has offered space relatively free (however briefly or precariously) from state control in which the regions' artists could make, show and sell their experimental work. The model of artists' villages could, in other words, provide a very different format for a biennial from the norms that have spread centrifugally from the North Atlantic since the nineteenth century, an alternative reference point derived specifically from East Asian cultural histories and shared with participants and visitors regardless of their own place of origin.[20]

For Piotrowski, the activities in *P_A_U_S_E* might well have epitomised his belief that horizontal art histories offer an "analysis [that] should reveal the speaking subject: the one who speaks, on whose behalf, and for whom".[21] But I think a more fitting description belongs to the Taiwanese cultural scholar Chen Kuan-Hsing, for whom the kinds of exchanges evident in Gwangju are not just about speaking – words easily made, words easily forgotten – but about sharing the actual, material conditions under which subjecthood emerges. For Chen, this material exchange is the foundation for what he calls "internationalist localism", for looking out from one's own localism to that of others, such that "new political possibilities emerg[e] out of the practices and experiences accumulated during encounters" between local and international specificities and histories.[22] Despite this subtle yet material distinction in their thinking, both Chen and Piotrowski would, nonetheless, agree that what's at stake is an intersectional understanding of history: one that can deconstruct North Atlantic norms (including those offered by biennials), whilst generating other knowledge grounded in and drawn from specific local contexts. A translocal approach to history and culture, if you will, that is both internationalist and localised at once.

These attributes equally inform the second curatorial episode I want to consider, which comes from *NIRIN*, the 2020 Biennale of Sydney curated by Brook Andrew, a Wiradjuri-Celtic man and the first Indigenous artist to organise the Sydney Biennale in its nearly 50-year existence. Staged primarily in eight venues across Sydney (with satellite venues online and in other cities due to the Covid-19 pandemic), *NIRIN* was designed as an artist-led and First Nations-led exhibition, with many of its 98 artists and art-groups coming together from beyond the North Atlantic for their first experiences in a biennial.[23] But it's a specific episode in the Art Gallery of New South Wales (or AGNSW) that I want to focus on as emblematic of Andrew's curatorial methods. The AGNSW's ground floor is normally home to nineteenth-century paintings by Australia's white colonial settlers, some of the country's foremost works of the period: paintings of demure domestic scenes, Judaeo-Christian mythological allegories or sublime, depopulated outback landscapes. Such is the stuff that the new settler nation's dreams were made on. But now, beloved paintings have been moved into storage and replaced with bright acrylic depictions not of European or Australian fabulations but of Māori lands and *whakapapa* in Aotearoa by Emily Karaka. Other treasures remain but are veiled behind black textiles, some lace-like and translucent, others opaque and leathery, by Joël Andrianomearisoa from Antananarivo. In the centre of the gallery, bisecting the hall and dominating the sightlines from adjoining wings, stands a tall scaffold bearing 22 pelts (perhaps costumes, perhaps flayed skin), the *Altarpiece of the Hanged People* (1972–76) by the late Catalan artist, Josep Grau-Garriga. And from the Schaeffer Galleries one room over, dominating the AGNSW's soundscape as both lure and repellent, can be heard a tirade of racist epithets and anti-black violence mixed with the strains of Iggy Pop and stadium rock: Arthur Jafa's 29-minute audiovisual exploration of

whiteness – its racialised privilege and deep affectivities, attractions and aggressions and pushes and pulls – called *The White Album* (2018–19).

For Jafa, according to the extensive wall label beside his work,

> *The White Album* is a bit difficult to put into words…. For me, it is about the tension (or gap) between, on the one hand, what Cornel West has termed 'what one cannot not know as a black person in America (which basically could be named 'whiteness') and on the other hand, my deep affection, adoration and love for people in my life who would be termed white. How can you reconcile these two facts?

But words are arguably unnecessary in this instance – unlike the minimalist approaches taken by Martin or Enwezor, and despite the detailed information and production details that *NIRIN*'s wall texts offer given the relatively "unknown" status of these artists to Sydney audiences – because it's the curatorial work that makes context palpable here. Or, rather, the contiguity of contextualisations, their meeting along the edges of knowledge systems and experiences (*NIRIN* translates from Wiradjuri as "edge"), born of the fact that this curatorial passage is set not in the tabula rasa of a white cube, as with *Magiciens* or *All the World's Futures*, but in galleries that showcase Australian attempts to stamp new nationhood with aesthetic form since the 1800s. And if that aesthetic had been driven by fear of disaggregating from Western Europe's art histories, of the colonies losing touch with "home" even as they sought a kind of benign independence, then Andrew's curatorial work makes resistance to those histories and their persistence today *matter*.

How does that happen? First, through resistance to the AGNSW's national(ist) narratives of "Australia", infiltrating them with works from other contexts of anti-colonial struggle (Aotearoa, Madagascar, Catalunya, the United States) that have been excluded from the Gallery's parochial bounds of nation. Second, through resistance to what is obfuscated by, and yet utterly underpins, those narratives and myths of colonial modernism: that is, the genocide and "hanged people" of the colonised; the denial of *whakapapa* and other Indigenous cosmologies; the racism and abuse that provides the soundtrack not only to Jafa's video but also to visitors' perception of the colonial works around it, such that the soundbleed of taunts and chorus of n-words become inseparable from the whiteness propagandised by settler art histories. And through these curatorial methods emerges a third mode of resistance: resistance to the globalist ambitions of biennials like Sydney's, to their tendencies to decontextualise artistic production and make all parts of the world seem contemporary with each other despite the exploitations and neocolonialisms that make contemporary globalisation inherently inequitable. Indeed, by weaving the biennial through the nineteenth-century holdings, Andrew suggests that these global ambitions find their greatest affinities, even their very roots, in the kinds of settler colonialism aestheticised in the AGNSW's ground-floor galleries. The violence and resistance that resonate through the galleries, then, are a clear refusal of the imperatives of a white settler canon of art and visual culture – of what is denied and displaced to keep that canon powerful. But they are equally a rebuke to the canon-making capacities of biennials today and the legacies they have inherited from settler colonialism, both in Australia and worldwide. They are rebukes made not through written text, subordinating the experience of art to reading about it on the catalogue page or the didactic panel, but through a curatorial practice that foregrounds visceral, first-hand responses to colour, violence

and soundbleed as important modes by which Black and First Nations artists practise resistance and persistence – resistance to the colonial legacies under which contemporary art is made and presented, and persistence in the face of them.

Proximity, exchange, resistance, refusal. These are *NIRIN*'s methods for a generative, First Nations-led curatorial practice today, one that implicates art's histories within narratives of violence undertaken in the name of modernism and nation, but which also asserts that there are means to manifest histories *otherwise* – histories that are visceral and demanding, and globally connected in their anti-colonial intent. For Piotrowski, this sensitivity to "histories otherwise", and to the potential connections between them, was a powerful force in contemporary art, even a mode of "alter-globalist art history" emerging out of horizontal art histories, of potential connections between other histories (and othered histories) that could thereby offer a very different globality to the discipline.[24] But I am reminded equally here of the powerful writing of historian Tina Campt when she advocates for "the reparative work of transforming proximity into accountability, the labor of positioning oneself in relation to another in ways that revalue and redress complex histories of dispossession".[25] For Campt, this reparative work is made possible through modes of *adjacency*, rather than identity or proximity or juxtaposition, because it is adjacency that can assert a relationality of being connected with whilst being different from something or someone else's histories, and especially histories of exclusion, trauma, marginalisation and pain. That can assert a political relationality of solidarity without homogenising experiences of oppression. That can connect but still allow space for the distinct voices of Black, Māori, Wiradjuri or Asian contributors to histories and history-making.

In Campt's work, adjacency has become a core tenet of how Black artists practise refusal, both formally (such as Arthur Jafa's montage of appropriated videos to interrogate whiteness) and ethically in struggles for visuality, visibility and accountability. I think *NIRIN*, and perhaps *P_A_U_S_E* before it, would add that adjacency can be a cornerstone of similar practices *curatorially*, as ways we can also practise exhibition-making otherwise, whether as First Nations-led or from contexts specific to the histories of artist-run initiatives in East Asia (and it is telling that Jafa's *White Album* should be foundational for Andrew's curating as his career has been for Campt's historiography). I hope it's not too great a stretch to suggest that adjacency might also be a powerful method through which we might write and connect our art and exhibition histories as well: in ways that communicate and align the localisation of our histories (the stories we tell, the ways we narrate them) along the "peripheries" of North Atlantic norms. If Piotrowski's theories of "horizontal art histories", drawn from the communist and postcommunist contexts with which he was most familiar, offer one such method, then it is shared by other important theorists and practitioners worldwide – whether that be Tina Campt or Chen Kuan-Hsing, or those in *NIRIN* or *P_A_U_S_E*. Together, they offer a crucial realignment in thinking about our pasts and our practices to come, of thinking how to do that *through* exhibitions as well as historical narratives, drawn from a powerful sense of adjacency that builds upon, but now extends beyond, the potential of horizontality.

Notes

1 Piotr Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde," in *Europa! Europa? The Avant-Garde, Modernism and the Fate of a Continent*, eds Sascha Bru et al.

(Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH., 2009): 49–58. See also Piotr Piotrowski, "Towards Horizontal Art History," in *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence: The Proceedings of the 32nd International Congress in the History of Art*, ed. Jaynie Anderson (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2009): 82–5.

2 See Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius's contribution elsewhere in this anthology for a "behind-the-scenes" exploration of Piotrowski's curatorial work and how it informed his theorisation of the "critical museum".

3 I use the word "generally" here because not all exhibitions require public exposure or display to exist: we can think of the various "closed exhibitions" dotted through recent art histories – Yves Klein's *Le vide* at Galerie Iris Clert in 1958, Maria Eichhorn's *5 Weeks, 25 Days, 175 Hours* that closed London's Chisenhale Gallery in 2016 – or, since 2015, the presentation of work away from public view because located in the radioactive Fukushima Exclusion Zone in Japan by the curatorial collective Don't Follow the Wind: see *Don't Follow the Wind*, eds Nikolaus Hirsch, Jason Waite (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2021).

4 For Bakhtin, the literal time-space of the chronotope "provides the ground for the showing-forth, the representability of events": see Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981): 250. Bakhtin's influence runs through Copeland and Thompson's trailblazing shift from chronotopes to Afrotropes, including in Huey Copeland, Krista Thompson, "Afrotropes: A User's Guide," *Art Journal* 76, no. 3–4 (Fall–Winter 2017): 7–9. On exhibitions as modes of exposure, following the writings of Walter Benjamin, see Lucy Steeds, "Exposability: On the Taking-Place in Future of Art," in *Theater, Garden, Bestiary: A Materialist History of Exhibitions*, eds Tristan Garcia, Vincent Normand (Lausanne: ÉCAL and Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019): 75–84.

5 Charles Green, *Peripheral Vision: Contemporary Australian Art, 1970–1994* (Sydney: Craftsman House, 1995).

6 See Anthony Gardner, Charles Green, *Biennials, Triennials, and Documenta: The Exhibitions that Created Contemporary Art* (Boston: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016).

7 Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal," 56.

8 This is often the case with large-scale international exhibitions, such as biennials, which are often so vast that they resist the very attempts to reduce them to digestible soundbites by commentators. For a recent example, one that relies entirely and disappointingly on secondary literature rather than primary documentation or first-hand evaluation, see David Joselit, *Heritage and Debt: Art in Globalization* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2020).

9 The claim that *Magiciens* was "the first truly international exhibition of worldwide contemporary art" is Jean-Hubert Martin's, made in his now-notorious interview with Benjamin Buchloh: Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Jean-Hubert Martin, "The Whole Earth Show: An Interview with Jean-Hubert Martin," *Art in America* 77, no. 5 (May 1989): 211. In a 1986 curatorial statement, Martin also declared it would be "the first properly international exhibition by one organiser": Jean-Hubert Martin, "The Death of Art – Long Live Art," in Lucy Steeds et al., *Making Art Global (Part 2): 'Magiciens de la Terre' 1989* (London: Afterall Books and Koenig Books 2013): 216–23 at 221. For analysis of the extensive postwar histories of international exhibitions organised by individual curators and curatorial teams, long before 1989, see Gardner and Green, *Biennials*, especially 19–108 on "The Second Wave" of biennials after 1955. Piotrowski has engaged with *Magiciens de la terre*, through the lens of global and "alter-global" art histories: see Piotr Piotrowski, "From Global to Alter-Global Art History," trans. Marta Skotnicka, *Teksty Drugie* 1 (2015): 112–34 at 116.

10 Among those loose and mutable criteria, as outlined in the 1986 curatorial statement, were works "committed to the avant-garde", "Works of an archaic nature", "Traditional works showing an assimilation of external influences" and works by artists with connections between "Western" and "Non-Western" cultures. For artists from all contexts, however, Martin's core trope was that "{t]he authenticity of each [artist] will need to be distinguished": Martin, "The Death of Art," 218–19. I will return to this trope presently.

11 Buchloh and Martin, "The Whole Earth Show," 155.

12 For analysis of such claims made in international group shows in Alexandria and Ljubljana in 1955, in Saigon in 1962, in New Delhi in 1968 or in the 1979 Sydney Biennale, called *European Dialogue*, see Gardner and Green, *Biennials*, 81–93 on the "biennials of the south".

13 As is well-known, the trope of "affinity" was a deliberate curatorial strategy at *Magiciens*. It responded to the earlier and controversial assertion of "affinities" between European avant-garde artists and the various African, South American and South Pacific practices they appropriated (or, more accurately, stole from), as presented in the exhibition *Primitivism in 20th Century Art*, subtitled *Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1984.
14 These and other details are taken from the hour-long videocatalogue by directors Gianfranco Barberi and Marco di Castri, *Magiciens de la terre: Vidéocatalogue* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou and Turin: Cataloga, 1989).
15 Piotrowski, "Towards Horizontal," 84.
16 Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal," 50.
17 As cited in Lucy Steeds' superb analysis of *Magiciens*, "'Magiciens de la Terre' and the Development of Transnational Project-Based Curating," in Steeds et al., *Making Art Global (Part 2)*, 24–92 at 62.
18 Buchloh and Martin, "The Whole Earth Show," 211 and 155, respectively.
19 Hanru Hou, "Event City, Pandora's Box," in Wan Kyung Sung et al., *Project 1 – P_A_U_S_E – Realization – Gwangju Biennale 2002*, Exh. cat. (Gwangju: Gwangju Biennale Foundation, 2002): 29–32.
20 Writer Andrew Lam touches on this history of artists' villages in the *P_A_U_S_E* catalogue, but only in passing: Lam in Wan et al., *Project 1*, 55, 57. We should note that this remodelling of the Gwangju Biennale was not without its own reductiveness: it did not acknowledge, for instance, the important distinctions between government-facilitated villages, such as Taipei Art Village, and grassroots initiatives such as Singapore's Artists Village, which faced significant incursions from (and even prosecution by) the Singaporean authorities throughout the 1990s. For a superb overview of these histories, see *Histories, Practices, Interventions: A Reader in Singapore Contemporary Art*, eds Jeffrey Say, Seng Yu Jin (Singapore: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2016), and the work of T. K. Sabapathy as Singapore's unrivalled chronicler since the 1970s (especially T. K. Sabapathy, *Writing the Modern: Selected Texts on Art and Art History in Singapore, Malaysia and Southeast Asia, 1973–2015* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2018).
21 Piotrowski, "Towards Horizontal," 83.
22 Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010): 223; see also Kuan-Hsing Chen, "Positioning *Positions*: A New Internationalist Localism," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 2, no. 3 (1994): 680–710.
23 See Brook Andrew, *NIRIN: 22nd Biennale of Sydney*. exh. cat. (Sydney: Biennale of Sydney, 2020).
24 Piotrowski, "From Global."
25 Tina Campt, "Adjacency," Paper presented at the conference "Political Concepts Initiative: Retouch". Brown University. 6.12.2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3uFtRdVsEJI&t=39s; see also Tina Campt, "Black Visuality and the Practice of Refusal," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 29, no. 1 (2019): 79–87.

8 Toward Alter-Globalist History of Feminist Art

Agata Jakubowska

In this chapter, I propose a look at Piotr Piotrowski's horizontal art history from a perspective of a feminist art historian working on women artists active on the peripheries. Any feminist art historian reading Piotrowski's texts may be disappointed as he did not pay much attention to women artists and his narratives about art created on the peripheries are not gender balanced. This disappointment was straightforwardly formulated by Susanne Altmann in her essay published in the catalogue of the exhibition she curated in 2018 called *The Medea Insurrection. Radical Women Artists behind the Iron Curtain*. Acknowledging the significance of Piotrowski's writings in revising the history of Eastern European art, particularly of *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*,[1] she criticised the way he wrote on women artists in this particular book. The majority of them were subsumed in one last chapter titled *Politics of Identity. Male and Female Body Art*. Different artists "find themselves in a strange, forced community, thus suggesting that women artists in their presence essentially engaged with the body".[2] In other chapters, continues Altmann, where various post-war art tendencies are analysed, hardly any women artists can be found, which, according to her, illustrates a systemic blind spot.[3] Yet, Piotrowski cannot be criticised for ignoring feminist art history, to which he made numerous references. What is more, the development of his horizontal art history remains in an awkward relationship with feminism. He considered that art history should be "an element of the strategy of resistance to the authorities and oppression, at the same time being on the side of emancipation and liberation",[4] thus becoming a natural bedfellow to feminism. I demonstrate how in many of Piotrowski's texts this alliance appears in the form of a similarity between the position and identity of women (artists) and Eastern Europe (Eastern European countries). I analyse this relationship in the first half of this chapter, in which I go beyond this one text of Piotrowski recalled by Altmann – *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, although I admit that it is the crucial manifestation of horizontal art history – and consider his writings from a period during which this idea started to sprout up until his last project. This is to show that both horizontal art history and its relationship to feminism were dynamic.

In the second part of the chapter, I change perspective and instead of analysing Piotrowski's horizontal art history of Eastern Europe from a feminist point of view, I demonstrate how this revisionist mode of writing art historical narratives can be inspirational for rewriting a history of feminist art from Eastern Europe from a global perspective, apart from the fact that its realisation in Piotrowski's own texts is often unsatisfactory from a feminist point of view, as indicated by Altmann's remarks. My starting

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point here are Piotrowski's last texts, especially a revised concept of horizontal art history termed by him alter-globalist. I consider the extension of the geographical scope of his writings, from Poland through Eastern Europe to the global scale, not just as some kind of logical development of his research by enlargement of its area but rather as a response to the requirements of the fluctuating global art world (including art history). Alter-globalist art history can be seen as a response to the failed attempt to rewrite art history globally, which is observed also in the field of the history of feminist art.

Gendered History of Piotrowski's Horizontal Art History of Eastern European Art[5]

It is necessary to remember that Piotrowski's concept of horizontal art history was formulated during the process of writing about the history of post-war and post-communist art created in East-Central Europe. It was, in a way, tested in writings about particular artists from that region, one of whom was Zofia Kulik. Her art was crucial for forming an alliance between horizontal and feminist history of Eastern European art.

At the turn of the 1990s, Zofia Kulik began developing her solo career (before she worked in a duo, KwieKulik, with her partner Przemysław Kwiek). She started creating photomontages, in which the common element was a naked human figure inserted into patterned structures, treated as an ornament and juxtaposed with details referring to the communist and other totalitarian systems. Kulik's individual practice quickly attracted the attention of both critics and curators. From 1989 onwards, her works have been exhibited at numerous solo and group shows, both in Poland and abroad.

Piotrowski's first interpretation of Kulik's works came in a text called *The Old Attitude and the New Faith*, published in 1995 in a catalogue of the *Beyond Belief: Contemporary Art from East Central Europe* exhibition organised at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago.[6] The curator selected the works that she perceived as not "something completely alien to our [Westerners – AJ] experience but rather something that is very much related to it".[7] For example, the Polish woman artist Zuzanna Janin was chosen and compared to Rachel Whiteread. Piotrowski was critical of this show exactly because this attitude focused on similarities. His text concentrated instead on artistic practice that was particularly heavily immersed in the political situation of Poland. Zofia Kulik was not invited to take part in this show, but Piotrowski decided to include her in his essay.[8] Kulik interested him, as her "art combines political criticism with a feminist perspective. This combination seems very significant from the standpoint of the broader problem of the position of women in Polish society".[9] He explained in his text that this position had always been bad, mainly because of the strength of the Catholic church, and it even worsened during the period of the transformation, an example of which was the introduction of a severe anti-abortion law in 1993.[10] "We could say" Piotrowski wrote, "that Zofia Kulik's works constitute her reply to years and years of this kind of 'hammering' and 'subordination' to the men who hold power (including communists, but not exclusively)".[11]

The mid-1990s, when Piotrowski's text was written, was a period during which the foundations of horizontal art history were established. Its creation was initiated

mainly as a critical commentary on the art exhibitions of Central and Eastern Europe organised by the (former) West after 1989 (for example, the above-mentioned exhibition).[12] Their analysis led Piotrowski to the conviction that it was necessary to rethink how to write the history of the region. In the first key text on the subject that was published in 1998 under the title *Towards a New Geography of Art*[13] Piotrowski wrote, "Not so much perceiving similarities as differences may overturn the hierarchical view of geography. […] We describe the history of local art here on the 'periphery' in a different way than in the 'centre'".[14]

It seems that in this period, Piotrowski perceived a similarity in the situation of women and the peripheries. He did not state it outright, but it is clear in his writing that he advocated on behalf of both of them, women and peripheries, for the right to self-representation and self-narration based on their experience.

In 2009, Piotrowski published a text titled *Gender after the Wall*. It was included in a catalogue of the *Gender Check. Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe* exhibition[15] and reprinted in his book *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe* a year later.[16] In this text, Kulik was not even mentioned, which could be explained simply by the fact that he wanted to write about other women artists as well, but the reason for his temporal lack of interest in Kulik goes deeper. In *Gender after the Wall*, Piotrowski gave examples of women artists who had created feminist works exploring femininity, but he drew particular attention to Katarzyna Kozyra and her work titled *In Art Dreams Come True*. In this multi-elements project, Kozyra presented gender identity as performative. This work is, according to Piotrowski, instructive in going beyond binary opposition, both in the realm of gender and that of the post-communist world. If in the age of communism the world was based on a binary order, he claimed, since 1989 "this order has apparently become totally useless as a descriptive instrument".[17] He made references to Judith Butler and Rosi Braidotti, underlining that their books "that radically disrupted stable human identity were published in the 1990s," and he continued by saying that

> the deconstruction of gender in the last two decades of the twentieth century overlapped with the fall of communism and its consequences, […]. I do not mean that one factor determines the other, […] I just believe that the two processes shed light on each other.[18]

Piotrowski remained interested in Eastern Europe but concentrated more on a fluid identity of the region. Also, in relation to gendered emancipatory narrations, he gave priority to non-binary and unstable subjects. This attitude is visible in the exhibition *Ars Homo Erotica*, organised at the same time (in 2009) at the National Museum in Warsaw when Piotrowski was the director of the institution. It was his idea to organise this show, and he invited his former student Paweł Leszkowicz to curate it. The exhibition, which showed artworks not only from the collection but also by contemporary Eastern European artists, advocated for the diversity of identities and sexualities and spoke against heteronormativity. The curator observed that

> [Piotrowski] clearly sees the act of dissolving all differences, an act of queering par excellence, as the emergence of new European reality. For him the queer show at the National Museum in Warsaw signified the arrival of this new global, transnational, fluid and European reality in Poland.[19]

As soon became clear, such a reality, open to heterogeneity of identities, did not come. On the contrary, not only Poland but also other Eastern European countries saw political and social changes, including increasing support for conservative values, which also led to an increase in discrimination against women. It is in this context that I perceive Piotrowski's article *Gender Unbalanced: KwieKulik and Others*. In this text, he came back to gender relations, considering them again in binary and hierarchical terms and asking how these unbalanced relations were or were not undermined in different heterosexual duos working in Eastern Europe. Zofia Kulik reappeared in his writing, but he concentrated on the period when she worked with Przemysław Kwiek as KwieKulik. In his opinion, working in this duo had been problematic for Kulik, as she was dominated by her partner. Piotrowski again, as in the 1990s, proposed seeing her later art as a kind of feminist revenge for having spent so many years being suppressed by the man.[20] Kulik disagrees with this interpretation, saying that they were equal in art,[21] but it is not my aim to resolve this dispute. I am more interested in the fact that Piotrowski came back to Kulik and his vision of her as a strong woman artist capable of taking things in hand and changing her situation. He did this at the same time as he formulated the slogan "peripheries of the world, unite!"

This slogan appeared in an introduction to the new project on which he had been working in his last years, namely, *A Global Approach to the Art of Eastern Europe*.[22] In this work, instead of developing the idea of dissolving the identity of the region, he concentrated again on its agency. This time, yet, the agency was perceived as crucial for realisation of global ambitions. What was at stake was not revising a narration of the art of the region, but of global art history. In texts that were written as parts of the above-mentioned project, Piotrowski rarely used the term "horizontal art history", instead preferring "alter-globalist art history". It was a shift that signified, at the same time, a geographical extension of his research and a clear political stance. Global resistance to hegemonic practices, based on solidarity, is proclaimed in the book: "[Alter-globalist art history's] key feature should be criticism and resistance to centralistic and exclusive art historical activities and the ability to reveal mechanisms of building hierarchy and hegemony as well as repression and denial in the global scale".[23]

In the second part of the text, I will go in this direction developing Piotrowski's idea in the field of history of feminist art.

Globalising Eastern European Feminist Art

The history of feminist art is being globalised. In recent years, efforts have been made to expand the narrative of feminist art to include phenomena that originated outside the United States, which is still considered its centre. Certainly, the most ambitious projects of this kind were two monumental exhibitions which opened in 2007: *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles) and *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art* (The Brooklyn Museum, New York). The first one offered a historical overview of feminist art created between 1965 and 1980, whereas the second offered an overview of contemporary feminist art created by young to mid-career women artists after 1990. Both aimed to shatter the canon of feminist art by including women active in various places across the globe.

Despite their importance in the process of creating an image of inter-/transnational feminisms, these exhibitions met with some disappointment on the part of art historians active outside centres, e.g. Eastern Europe. One of them, Bojana Pejić, even

talked about anger when she explained that it led her to organise the exhibition *Gender Check. Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe* in 2009 (Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna).[24] One of the elements of Pejić's critique was the accusation of a lack of understanding of the local context. She was irritated by a text included in the *Global Feminisms* catalogue devoted to Eastern European art in the post-communist period, more specifically by the "romantic view of democracy" and "critique of the socialist period" that its author presented.[25] The valorisation of the communist and post-communist periods, also in relation to women, remains a subject of intense debate, but what is crucial is that Pejić's conviction that the Eastern European reality is being misunderstood by a researcher from outside led her to the conclusion that "if we don't start to deal ourselves with our art history, nobody will do it".[26]

Pejić worked on the *Gender Check* project in collaboration with a big group of researchers from the region. Such a solution helped avoid the simplifications mentioned by Pejić and offered a deeper understanding of the contexts in which artworks were created. Yet, as much as this show offered a comprehensive overview of women's art and a representation of gendered subjects in the region, it did not challenge the global narration of feminist art. "Telling our own story ourselves" is not enough if the latter is to be rewritten. Piotrowski, who based his revised project of horizontal art history on the alter-globalist movement, reminded his readers that "anti-globalist activists soon realised, however, that should the critique and resistance to globalisation be effective, the opposition movement must have a global character as well. Otherwise, it will be easily pacified".[27] The same is needed for an alter-globalist history of feminist art.

Not only the dominant art historical discourse, which opens itself to the peripheries to incorporate new artists into its canon, but also regional narrations have not been able to reformulate a conceptual frame for the history of feminist art. The failure of the latter is – at least in Eastern Europe – partially due to the fact that feminists from that region distanced themselves from local traditions of emancipation because of their relation to (post-)totalitarian communist regimes and oriented themselves towards Western concepts. Describing this process in Poland, Magdalena Grabowska demonstrated how it led to rooting "the Polish women's movement in the Western feminist movement".[28] A similar phenomenon can be perceived in art history in texts dealing with women's art, in which, paraphrasing Grabowska's words, the issue of emancipation exists only by reference to the Western women's movement and Western gender theories. One of the main recurring themes in the texts produced from this perspective is whether or not the artists active during the communist period were feminists, taking feminism is understood as ideas created during the Western second wave. As the majority of them expressed hostile or distrustful attitudes towards such feminism, art historians have remained confused when faced with "women artists working behind the Iron Curtain whose work was strikingly similar to women's and feminist art existing in the West".[29] Such confusion does not lead to asking a question about what the sources of such an art were but rather to observations as the one formulated by Altmann in her curatorial text for the exhibition mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: "Inspired not so much by the feminist theory that was being developed in the West as by instinctive self-empowerment within the prevailing authoritative and patriarchal system".[30] As Beáta Hock observed when commenting on texts published in the catalogue to the *Gender Check* exhibition and in a reader that accompanied it, "even accounts that acknowledge the relevance of reconsidering the

recent art history of the region from a feminist perspective usually only go as far as shedding light on artistic output that they label 'pro-', 'proto-' or 'latent feminism'". What they propose is "a normative comparison with a model development of feminist (art) history".[31]

I should myself be an object of such criticism. I studied art history from 1990 until 2000 (first obtaining a master's and then a doctoral degree) at the Institute of Art History at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, where the ethos of the democratic, anti-communist opposition was very strong at that time. It manifests itself, for example, in Piotrowski's *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*. As Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius accurately observed, "it is the anti-Communist resistance which defines the avant-garde in the shadow of Yalta".[32] This ethos has significantly shaped my perspective due to which, for many years, it was not possible for me to positively assess any policy aspects of the authorities of socialist Poland and the institutions largely dependent on them. Like many other feminist art historians of my generation, for a long time, I remained blind to emancipatory discourses that were present in socialist Poland, and I made reference only to Western feminist traditions. A change in my attitude occurred thanks to scholars working in the field of history, anthropology and sociology who advocated for a revisionist model of women's emancipation in Eastern Europe.[33]

Today, I understand that if an alter-globalist history of feminist art from Eastern Europe is to be written, a more radical challenge to the feminist art history narrative is necessary, one undertaken by feminist art historians working both in centres and on peripheries. We need to call into question basic elements of its conceptual framework, such as chronology and feminist concerns. The development of the second women's movement in the West should not be automatically considered a temporal frame for considerations of art and feminism. Also, the issues that concerned most feminists in the West should not organise the global narration on art and feminism.

One of the possible ways to start thinking about feminism, and also about feminist art, globally in a different (alter-globalist) way would be to come back to 1975. Here, I follow a suggestion of Piotrowski, which he included in his last project, to concentrate on moments that were crucial for global history.[34] In the case of women's emancipation, one such moment was the United Nations International Women's Year. The events that took place during 1975 demonstrated that numerous concepts regarding the emancipation of women did not appear together with the second wave of feminism but developed in different parts of the world earlier, each of them in the specific local context and also in relation to global politics. They additionally indicated that a much stronger diversity of ideas regarding women's struggle for equality existed than the dominant Western history suggests. As Jocelyn Olcott claimed in her book titled *International Women's Year: The Greatest Consciousness-Raising Event in History*, the huge international congress held in Mexico City "that might have been a parade of bureaucrats, talking heads, and garden parties instead became the launch pad for an array of global feminisms".[35]

If we were to come back to these debates and organise our narration on art and feminism according to what was crucial then for the emancipation of women in various sociopolitical contexts, the main themes would look different. For scholars like myself analysing post-war women's art from Eastern Europe, if we manage to free ourselves from Western categories, it becomes clear that some themes are missing, or at least underestimated, in global narration on art and feminism, such as labour and resistance.

In socialist Eastern Europe, women's emancipation was perceived as crucial for the new social order. As in other socialist countries around the world, with which art from Eastern Europe could be compared, this was realised (with more or less success) through labour. This aspect of women's lives in socialist European states found its rich manifestation in visual arts, also created by women. The common perception of this artistic production as Soviet propaganda has already been challenged. One could give as an example the research by the Estonian art historians Eha Komissarov and Katrin Kivimaa. They claimed that "socialist realist imagery of women, however prescribed, created an opportunity to represent totally new roles of women and to celebrate women's participation in the public sphere and labour".[36] The project of the emancipation of women through labour was not fully successful for several reasons,[37] which had been discussed already at that time in popular or scholarly texts and also in art. As a study of the GDR painting conducted by April Eisman demonstrates, artworks by women artists did not only offer a celebration of the new position of women but also offered "a socialist-feminist critique of the lingering patriarchal bias of East German society".[38]

The inclusion of women artists who were acclaimed by the ruling parties into the history of feminist art demands a significant revision of thinking about art and feminism. When dominated by a Western narration, it identifies feminist activities with grassroots movements. This also happens if it is dominated by an anti-communist perspective. For many Western and also Eastern feminists, it has been hard to acknowledge that socialist female activists did not just passively reflect the politics of the ruling parties but could be considered advocates of women's emancipatory politics and critics of the way the politics were implemented by socialist governments. Many women (also women artists) participated actively in this socialist project of women's emancipation. They observed and commented the way in which it was realised, as much as it was possible in countries where a public sphere did not exist but censorship offices did.

The mention of censorship brings us to the second category indicated before – resistance. Two self-portraits of women artists could be informative here: Geta Brătescu's *Censored Self-Portrait* (1978) and Letícia Parente *Preparation I* (1975). *Censored Self-Portrait* is a collage in which the artist covered her eyes and mouth with pieces of paper on which a representation of her eyes and mouths appeared. *Preparation I* is a video in which the artist sticks tape on her mouth and eyes and then draws lips and eyelashes on the tape. While the title of the first work clearly draws attention to the issue of censorship and the scene depicted in the second concentrates on make-up, both works can be perceived as referring equally to totalitarian repression and the beauty industry.[39] These artists, living and working in totalitarian regimes, respectively in Communist Romania and a military dictatorship in Brazil, made reference to the reality of living in such an environment. Yet, they did not remain indifferent to the development of consumer culture and the expectations it formulated concerning women. The ambiguity of their works – their oscillation between critique of patriarchal society and totalitarianism – is one of the aspects of the art of women artists that escapes the attention of those who recount narrations of art and feminism in countries where feminists function(ed) in democratic systems.

One often hears that in societies that suffered from authoritarian regimes or stayed in a state of independence or war, feminist art did not develop, as there were more important issues to fight for other than women's rights. In this way, Claudia

Calirman explained why in Brazil women's art was not rooted in feminist discourse during the dictatorship.[40] This is also what Tal Dekel said about feminist art in Israel in her lecture *Common Differences – Contemporary Feminist Art in Israel, an Intersectional Analysis*.[41] I also claimed that in Poland the introduction of martial law in December 1981 stopped feminist art activities that had just started to develop more intensely.[42] Yet, these were activities that complied with the Western notion of feminism that became known in Poland in the second half of the 1970s. They disappeared as they were inadequate for the very harsh political situation. In all of these cases, we could look again at art created by women and examine whether, indeed, the problematics of gender equality were absent from the art or it rather manifested itself in relation to other issues that were of crucial importance in these particular local contexts.

The two sample categories of labour and resistance could organise a narration of art and feminism differently. They are both deriven from research on Eastern European women artists. There is no reason not to start an alter-global history of feminist art from Eastern Europe. Writing this history from the perspective of Warsaw is as good as writing it from the perspective of Los Angeles or New York if we all agree that our versions are fragmentary and situated. These two categories are global, but not universal, in the sense that they concern many women in various parts of the world but never all of them and, above all, not in the same way.

The title of this text is a paraphrase of the title of Piotrowski's essay *Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-garde*, yet I used a term from his later text, "alter-globalist". By doing this, I wanted to point to two different texts that I find crucial for his revisionist project and also to underline the state of constantly reworking it. This is to stress that we are also always moving "toward" a better understanding and narrating of art and feminism from a global perspective.

Notes

1 Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, trans. Anna Brzyski (London: Reaktion Books, 2009).
2 Susanne Altmann, "Why the Insurrection, Medea?," in *The Medea Insurrection. Radical Women Artists Behind the Iron Curtain*, eds. Susanne Altmann, Katarina Lozo, and Hilke Wagner (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2019), 28–9.
3 Altmann, "Why the Insurrection," 29.
4 Piotr Piotrowski, "From Global to Alter-Globalist Art History," *Teksty Drugie* 1 (Special Issue – English Edition, 2015), 129.
5 The first version of this fragment was presented during the conference "Art in the Periphery", 14–16 March 2019, NOVA FCSH, Lisbon.
6 Piotr Piotrowski, "The Old Attitude and the New Faith," in *Beyond Belief: Contemporary Art from East Central Europe*, ed. Laura J. Hoptman (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1995), 34–45.
7 Laura J. Hoptman, "Introduction," in *Beyond Belief: Contemporary Art from East Central Europe*, ed. Laura J. Hoptman (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1995), 10.
8 One of her works – *The Guardians of the Spire* –was reproduced in the catalogue as an image opening his essay.
9 Piotrowski, "*The Old Attitude*," 41.
10 Law of 7 January 1993 on Family Planning, Human Embryo Protection and Conditions of Permissibility of Abortion made the latter more stringent by permitting abortion only in three cases: a threat to the life or health of the pregnant woman, a severe and irreversible fetal defect, or the pregnancy is a result of an unlawful act.

11 Piotrowski, "*The Old Attitude*," 42.
12 Another was *Europa, Europa: Das Jahrhundert der Avantgarde in Mittel- und Osteuropa* organised in Bonn in 1994. See Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius' text in this volume.
13 Piotr Piotrowski, "W stronę nowej geografii artystycznej/Towards a New Geography of Art," *Magazyn Sztuki* 19 (1998), 76–99. I'm quoting here a different version of this text: Piotr Piotrowski, "The Geography of Central/East European Art," in *Borders in Art – Revisiting* Kunstgeographie, ed. Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius (Warsaw: Institute of Art and Norwich: University of East Anglia, 1998), 43–50.
14 Piotrowski, "*Towards a New Geography*," 45.
15 Piotr Piotrowski, "Gender after the Wall," in *Gender Check – Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe*, eds. Bojana Pejić at al. (Vienna: Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig (MUMOK) and Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2009), 236–40.
16 Piotr Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, trans. Anna Brzyski (London: Reaktion Books, 2012).
17 Piotrowski, "*Gender after the Wall*," 240. To a great extent, it was related, according to Piotrowski, to the fact that a number of countries from the former Eastern bloc entered the European Union in 2004.
18 Ibid.
19 Paweł Leszkowicz, "Piotr Piotrowski and the Queer Revision of East-Central European Art and Museology," in *After Piotr Piotrowski. Art, Democracy and Friendship*, eds. Agata Jakubowska and Magdalena Radomska (Poznań: Adam Mickiewicz University Press, 2019), 168.
20 Piotr Piotrowski, *Gender Unbalanced: KwieKulik and Others* (unpublished manuscript provided to me by Zofia Kulik).
21 Correspondence with the author.
22 This unfinished project was published first in Polish, then in English: Piotr Piotrowski, *A Global Approach to the Art of Eastern Europe*, trans. Anna Brzyski (Ljubljana: Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory, forthcoming).
23 Piotrowski, "*From Global*," 129.
24 Izabela Kowalczyk, Dorota Łagodzka, and Edyta Zierkiewicz, "Anger of Bojana Pejić: An Interview on the Occasion of the Gender Check Exhibition at the Warsaw's Zacheta Gallery," *Artmix* 24 (August 2010), accessed October 1, 2021. https://archiwum-obieg.ujazdowski.pl/artmix/18402. See also Katrin Kivimaa, "Gender Check, Feminism and Curating in Eastern Europe: An Interview with Bojana Pejić," in *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions*, eds. Andrea Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 173–83.
25 Charlotta Kotik, "Post-Totalitarian Art: Eastern and Central Europe," in *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art*, eds. Maura Reilly and Linda Nichlin (New York: Merrell, Brooklyn Museum, 2007), 213–19.

> She wrote that the decision of many women of the post-socialist period to stay at home (and therefore take care of the family) is a political decision since in the communist age they have been forced to be employed! I simply hate such simplifications, particularly if we know that in the period of 'transition' it was primarily women who lost their jobs and remained unemployed.
>
> (Pejić in Kowalczyk, Łagodzka, Zierkiewicz, "Anger of Bojana Pejić")

26 Kowalczyk, Łagodzka, Zierkiewicz, "Anger of Bojana Pejić." The theme of women's emancipation was not given a separate exhibition space at *Gender Check* but rather was present in all parts of the exhibition (*Socialist Iconosphere, Negotiating Private Spaces, Post-Communist Genderscapes*).
27 Piotrowski, "From Global," 128.
28 Magdalena Grabowska, *Zerwana genealogia. Działalność społeczna i polityczna kobiet po 1945 roku a współczesny ruch kobiecy* (Warszawa: SCHOLAR, 2018), 19. See also 36.
29 Martina Pachmanová, "In? Out? In Between? Some Notes on the Invisibility of a Nascent Eastern European Feminist and Gender Discourse in Contemporary Art Theory," in *Gender Check*, eds. Bojana Pejić, et al., 242. Pachmanová belongs to that generation whose

feminist stance was formed in the 1990s, and she is (or at least was a dozen years ago) immersed in the dominant beliefs of the time, which are well illustrated by this passage:

> Since there was an absence of discussion and analysis of gender relations in most Eastern European countries, as the philosophical and theoretical language of the Western gender debate was only slowly discovered and there was only vaporous knowledge about the history of women's emancipation in Eastern European countries, critical gender debate had no substantial foundation on which to develop.
>
> (Pachmanová, "In? Out? In Between?," 243)

30 Altmann, "Why the Insurrection," 26.
31 Beáta Hock, *Gendered Artistic Positions and Social Voices: Politics, Cinema, and Visual Arts in State-Socialist and Post-Socialist Hungary* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013), 33.
32 Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, review of *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, (review no. 824), accessed October 1, 2021. https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/824.
33 As far as scholars writing on socialist Poland are concerned, these are, for example, Małgorzata Fidelis, Magdalena Grabowska, Natalia Jarska, and Agnieszka Kościańska.
34 Piotrowski, "*From Global*," 125–7.
35 Jocelyn Olcott, *International Women's Year: The Greatest Consciousness-Raising Event in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 5.
36 Katrin Kivimaa, "Workers, Collective Farmers and Women in National Costumes: Representing Soviet Femininity in Estonian Art from the 1940s and 1950s," *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis* 58 (2010), 58, Kivimaa made reference to Eha Komissarov's work on Aino Bach.
37 The reasons include traditional values that persisted in society (housework belonged to women, double burden), insufficient number of institutions meant to take over most of the "women's work", shortages in the economy (such as food shortages encountered by the majority of citizens living in the Bloc).
38 April A. Eisman, "From Economic Equality to 'Mommy Politics': Women Artists and the Challenges of Gender in East German Painting," *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity* 2, 2 (2014), 177.
39 In the case of Brătescu's work, it is more visible when the work is seen in relation to other pieces that she created at that time, for example, *Smile* that clearly makes reference to behaviour that is expected from women and also citizens of the communist regimes.
40 Claudia Calirman and Agata Jakubowska, "Convergences/Divergences. Natalia LL's 'Consumer Art' and Lygia Pape's 'Eat Me'," in *Natalia LL. "Consumer Art" and Beyond*, ed. Agata Jakubowska (Warsaw: Ujazdowski Castle Center for Contemporary Art, 2017), 171–3.
41 Tal Deker, *Common Differences – Contemporary Feminist Art in Israel, an Intersectional Analysis*, Webinar # 3 TEAM AWARE, accessed October 1, 2021. https://awarewomenartists.com/en/nos_evenements/webinars-team/.
42 Agata Jakubowska, "Circulation of Feminist Ideas in Communist Poland," in *Globalizing East European Art Histories: Past and Present*, eds. Beáta Hock and Anu Allas (London: Routledge, 2018), 144.

Part III

Challenging Horizontal Art History and Its Internal Contradictions

9 How to Write a Global History of Central and Eastern European Art

Maja and Reuben Fowkes

The title of this contribution refers to two interventions by Piotr Piotrowski into East European art history. The first being the inaugural lecture he gave to the SocialEast Forum held at Manchester Art Gallery in 2006 on 'How to Write a History of East Central European Art,' subsequently published in *Third Text* in a special issue on 'Socialist Eastern Europe.'[1] The second is the conference Piotrowski organised at Galeria Labirynt in Lublin in October 2014 on 'East European Art seen from Global Perspectives: Past and Present,' the proceedings of which he was working on in the months before his untimely passing.[2] These two moments also mark our first and last personal encounters with the founder of the field of post-war comparative Central and Eastern European art history and theorist of horizontal art history, the insubordinate principles of which we set out to put into practice in the account we went on to write.[3] Due to the velocity of concurrent geopolitical, planetary, technological and disciplinary transformations, such systematising undertakings are instantaneously historicised, and therefore to re-pose Piotrowski's question today entails contextualising his approach in relation to the precise moment in the accelerating trajectory of global political and artistic history in which it was conceived. Bringing his art historiographical insights into new constellations with the most pressing current theoretical and planetary concerns, this chapter poses a readjusted set of questions to test the axioms of the art history of the region. At this moment in time, is it still possible or desirable to write a comparative history of Central and Eastern European art? What is the role of Eastern Europe in the construction of an inter-regional, decentred and decolonial global art history? How does the shift from the art historical paradigm of Cold War polarities to a pluralised, multifocal and polyvalent approach reconfigure the concerns of East European art history? The postulates of the art history of the region are treated here as problems or propositions for disputation that are discussed under the headings of horizontality, chronopolitics, decoloniality, the principles of regionalism, the primacy of the political, the globalism of art styles, the plurality of art under socialism and the alterity of global socialisms.

The Problem of Horizontality

Curiously, the origins of the notion of problem understood in scientific terms as an 'inquiry which starting from some given conditions investigates some fact, result, or law,' can be traced to Euclid's *Elements*, the founding treatise of geometry.[4] Piotrowski's proposition of 'horizontal art history' could also be problematised in terms of geometry, by examining the implications of constructing art narratives in accordance with

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the principles of horizontality. The horizontal relates to proximity to the horizon, the etymology of which derives from the Greek ὁρίζων κύκλος (horizōn kyklos) for 'separating circle,' with the root verb ὁρίζω (horizō) meaning to mark or bound the limits. Paradoxically, the notion of horizontality contains within itself the act of constituting a boundary line, which complicates its cultural associations with flatness, evenness and levelness, and the related notions of inclusivity and openness. Furthermore, if one were to speculate about the possibility of observing the horizon of Eastern Europe stretching from Estonia to Albania, the question arises as to the viewer's angle of vision, how far to the east or west one would have to stand, and just as significantly, to what height it would be necessary to ascend in order to capture it. The horizontal is, therefore, inseparable from the position from which it is observed, as well as from the opposing notion of the vertical, which derives from the more prosaic Latin *vertex*, meaning directly overhead. In that sense, verticality, and the hierarchical criteria with which it is associated, is unavoidable even within the comparative approach of horizontal art history.

The inseparability of the horizontal and the vertical, and the inherent problems around linear and abstract thinking, can also be deduced from the fact that they are both measured from the same point in the Cartesian coordinate system of x and y axes. Reportedly, this was a consequential outcome of Enlightenment philosopher and inventor of analytical geometry René Descartes's apocryphal attempt to locate a fly on the ceiling above his bed.[5] However, due to the curvature, rotation and variable gravity of the Earth, all vertical lines eventually intersect, and so do horizontals; in other words, there is no pure and perfect linearity. Challenging the tendency to separate the elements and impose geometric forms onto natural entities, which they trace back to Plato, artists and scholars Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman point in their work *4 Waters: Deep Implicancy* (2018) to the epistemic violence of Western knowledge that 'reduces the basis of existing and knowing to lethal abstraction,' while concealing histories of slavery, racism and colonialism.[6] In that sense, the underlying eurocentrism of geometrical metaphors, also reverberating in the call to horizontalise art history, is at odds with the writing of a global history of Central and Eastern European art, which presupposes a reorientation towards non-Western, decolonial and decentred positions. In other words, moving away from the abstract linearity of Cartesian logic entails thinking not in terms of vertical or horizontal relations, but rather about meandering, winding, twisted, curved, interrupted, loose, unfixed, embedded and multi-directional connections, collisions and entanglements.

The Problem of Chronopolitics

Western modernity's 'colonization of time,' as decolonial theorist Walter Mignolo asserted, placed 'value on time, progress, and development,' while ordering the non-Western world to fall in line behind.[7] Extending this logic to the art field, Mignolo posited the working of the linear time of colonial modernity as an 'important component in manufacturing narratives of authors, works and schools,' by arranging them in chronological order in 'museums of art history.'[8] The colonialist distortion of artistic temporalities could also be uncovered in the notion of 'belatedness,' another chronopolitical tool imposed by Western epistemology onto various world art histories, customarily also including Central and Eastern Europe, by which globally practiced styles and movements are assumed to lag behind developments in Western

artistic centres.[9] The introduction of the concept of belatedness went hand in hand with the supposed rise of United States supremacy in contemporary art, epitomised by the Earthworks of the late 1960s, seen as the first authentic American art movement,[10] which tellingly implied a corresponding mastery over nature. Although East European art could frictionlessly fit into established chronologies that, for example, date the emergence of Land Art to 1969,[11] de facto disputing the logic of belatedness, the underlying chronopolitical issue of the manipulation of chronology to the disadvantage of non-Western artists remains. To decolonise chronopolitics entails dismantling the project of mastery, not only by revealing the supposed time lag as yet another artificial and imposed construct but also by contesting the exclusionary ethos and progress-oriented competitiveness embedded in the modernist narrative of the succession of art movements.

The chronopolitics of art historical accounts also derives from their conjuncture with specific socio-political developments, as can be detected in relation to Piotrowski's concept of horizontal art history, which could be historicised in terms of the particular historical moment in which it emerged. His theory was formulated as a critical response to the 2004 Thames & Hudson publication *Art Since 1900*, written by doyens of the art journal *October*, who despite their progressive credentials in the field of feminist and socially engaged critical art history, still spoke from a Western position.[12] This signified for Piotrowski a vertical attitude, since although the book ostensibly expanded geographical coverage, art produced in non-Western localities was still described within the 'Western paradigm,' reflecting the authors' steadfast refusal to 'deconstruct the relations between the centre and the margins in the world history of modern art.'[13] Nevertheless, for Piotrowski, the solidity of the Western model as a system of values and its institutional infrastructure was not in doubt, since 'art historical consecration,' of art produced elsewhere still 'depends on the centre: on exhibitions organised in the West and books published in Western countries.'[14] Such stability of certain epistemological fixtures anchors his theory of horizontal art history in the post-1989 zeitgeist, encapsulated by the deterministic notion of the 'end of history,' which posited the victory of the capitalist side of modernity.[15] His theoretical approach also corresponded to a praxis of writing comparative Central and Eastern European art history at the height of the globalising era of the 2000s when the integration of many countries of the region into the European Union signalled the imminent completion of the mission of post-socialist transition.

This historicisation opens up critical perspectives on the current historical moment; when globalisation has stalled, Western dominance has been systematically challenged by the emergence of empowering movements for racial, social and environmental justice, while the interests behind publishing and curating no longer follow geographical lines. Today, the imperative to decolonise art history by programmatically provincialising Western art and stripping it of its universalising pretensions can be seen in the reframing of canonical surveys, such as through the retitling of the anthology *Art in Theory* in its 2021 edition as *Western Art in Theory*.[16] At the same time, attempts to think about Central and Eastern European art in an international and comparative framework have been undermined by the rise of right-wing populism across the region. At an infrastructural level, this has included concrete acts of interference in the working of arts institutions and universities to promote nation-centric art historical accounts or reconstitute the idea of Central Europeanness around religious and ethnic identities as shared normative cultural values.[17]

The Problem of Decolonising Art History

'To decolonize art history now is to cite, expose, and critically respond to the structures and residues of the colonial project as they have shaped the discipline and its institutionalization,' is how art historian of Southeast Asia Pamela N. Corey responded to a questionnaire on the topic initiated by the UK journal *Art History* in 2020.[18] She went on to clarify that 'decolonial art-historical work' entails challenging in parallel 'the canons and timelines' of a West-centric discipline and the 'production of exclusionary nationalist narratives of art history and their representative institutions.'[19] Both these aspects have particular relevance in the context of Eastern Europe, on the one hand, by raising questions of how the region's art is framed by Western institutional and epistemological structures, while, on the other hand, pointing to mechanisms of exclusion at work within nation-centric narratives.

In his work, Piotrowski dealt with aspects of post-colonial theory, drawing attention to the peripheral position of Central and Eastern Europe within its core critique of eurocentrism, insisting that 'there was not one Europe: it was both the colonizer, and colonized, imperial and occupied, dominating and subordinated.'[20] For Piotrowski, the limitations of post-colonial theory as a basis for writing global art history lay in its unwillingness to abandon its own 'privileged position' and 'supposedly universal methodological master key' in order to devise an approach that is relevant to other world regions, including Eastern Europe.[21] This tension with post-colonial discourse articulated by Piotrowski has dissipated more recently with the prominence of decolonial thought, which is directed at the unmasking of globally experienced exploitative relations. Nevertheless, the methodology of horizontal art history has itself been recognised as contributing to the pluralising of the accounts of artistic modernity in the post-war period, by expanding their geographical scope and 'debunking Western assumptions concerning the former Eastern Bloc,'[22] laying the groundwork for a decolonial challenge to the dominance of Western epistemologies and structures in art history. Piotrowski identified the colonial operations of Western domination as a stark process by which the 'art of the centre determines a specific paradigm, while the art of the periphery is supposed to adopt the models,' and implement the 'canons, hierarchy of values and stylistic norms,' established in Western centres.[23] The discrepancy between the Western paradigm and actual developments in art is suggested by his further observation that the 'international avant-garde did not view the art scene from a vertical perspective,'[24] with this unidirectional model exposed as a construction of Cold War art history. At the same time, it could be pointed out that although horizontal art history is aligned with the wider decolonial endeavours that contest established hierarchies, its deconstruction of Western verticality does not go so far as to challenge the ascendency of modernism and as result hides from view the multitude of other social, racial and cultural exclusions at work in colonial modernity. Today, to write a decolonial history of Central and Eastern European art entails engaging with the complexity of the task of unravelling the entwined histories and structures of the 'colonial matrix of power.'[25]

The multiple challenges of attempts to decolonise art history in specific regions can also be seen through the prism of Latin American art. Compelled, on the one hand, to confront the direct links between the discipline of art history and European colonialisation of the continent, such an undertaking, as emphasised in particular relation to Brazil, also has to address the 'peculiarities of its acculturation and transculturation

in a formerly colonised country with a vast repertoire of Amerindian and Afro-descendant art.'[26] This insight into the need for a multifocal approach to decolonisation is equally relevant for Central and Eastern European art, where attention to the impact of Western dominance has to be combined with analysis of the particularities of socialist modernity and its complex relationship to colonialism. Drawing attention to the 'darker side of Russian/Soviet coloniality/modernity', post-Soviet decolonial theorist Madina Tlostanova has emphasised that despite its decolonial rhetoric, socialist modernity was in practice 'marked by Orientalism, racism, othering, and forced assimilation.'[27] Furthermore, while refashioning the 'rhetoric of modernity in the language of socialism versus capitalism,' in her view it still 'reproduced the logic of coloniality in the control and management of its colonies, particularly the non-European, non-Christian, racialised colonies—in the Caucasus and Central Asia.'[28] In Central and Eastern European art history, contesting such colonial exclusions comes to the fore in recovering the art histories of Roma and other ethnic minorities as well as in drawing attention to the work of non-native artists in the region.[29] Bringing together the decolonial contestation of both West-centric and nation-centric art narratives guards against the tendency for decolonial critique to be appropriated by right-wing populism and maintains the potential to write comparative Central East European art history on Piotrowski's terms.

The Problem of Regional Art Histories

With Central and Eastern Europe in turbulent political disarray in the wake of the escalating neo-nationalist populism that has swept the region over the last decade, the grounds for considering its comparative art history from a non-instrumentalising perspective are shifting. These complex intra-regional relations are also played out in trans-regional settings when considering the position of the art territories of Eastern Europe in relation to other world regions. For Piotrowski, writing just over a decade ago in the introduction to his *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, the 'key to any horizontal approach' lay in seeing 'Western culture not in terms of its hegemony, but its geographical specificity: as a culture of one of the regions of the world.'[30] Today, a vision of a global art history made up of parallel and intersecting accounts of the art of distinct geographical regions not only disrupts the centralising and verticalising tendencies of art history written from the perspective of Western art centres but also acts as a counterpoint to the outlook of nation-centric accounts, which themselves have the ambition to form populist regional platforms. Piotrowski's rallying call in the title of the first chapter of his book on alter-global art history, 'peripheries of the world unite!', was made before the era of the global neo-conservative culture wars that heralded the prospect of populists of the world uniting to greater political effect.[31]

Accounts of the art history of global regions have multiplied in the era of globalisation and open up points of comparison with attempts to write a global art history of Eastern Europe. For instance, especially when discussing contemporary art, such surveys indicate the extent to which artistic practice across global art regions has been transformed by transnational flows of globalisation and is entwined with decolonial processes. For example, a publication dealing with *Oceanic Art* drew attention to the integration of Pacific artists into global art circuits and their responses to colonial histories and imaginaries, concluding that 'Oceanic art is at once now international and distinctly local.'[32] Another impact on regional art histories of transnational migration

is discussed in an account of *Contemporary African Art*, through the observation that in recent decades 'there has been a gradual breakdown in the classificatory boundaries of who "counts" as an African artist,' with the emergence as a result of economic globalisation of new diasporic communities in which artists 'increasingly live in Berlin *and* Nairobi, or Amsterdam *and* Cape Town, or Brussels *and* Lubumbashi.'[33] Similar processes of deterritorialisation have complicated the understanding of who counts as an Eastern European artist, or for that matter art historian, as the circulations of transnational communities of artists, curators and academics contradicts ethnic or geographical definitions of East Europeanness.[34] Such accounts point to the possibility of belonging to multiple geographies and the proliferation of situated art practices that operate both on an international and at a local level, which rings as true for Eastern Europe as it does for other global regions. While discussed here in relation to the effects of post-1989 globalisation on regional art scenes, in terms of transnational identities under socialism, the question can be posed as the extent to which the Iron Curtain and the conditions of exile played a decisive role in determining what kinds of artistic transnationalism were possible.

The establishment of a basis for inter-regional comparison for earlier periods of art history brings a particular set of challenges. For Piotrowski, the protocol for undertaking 'non-hierarchical art-historical analysis on a global scale' entailed the selection of several key dates and the examination of 'artworks created during those times in different parts of the world.'[35] As a template for just such a series of 'horizontal slices through world history,' Piotrowski selected the period 1947–48, the year 1968 and as a final point of historical comparison, 1989.[36] The potential for inter-regional comparisons lies, therefore, in horizontalising chronopolitics through a date-based approach, in order to revise and decolonise West-centric accounts. This methodology was also made visible in the exhibition 'Postwar: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic 1945–1965,' curated by Okwui Enwezor at the Munich Haus der Kunst in 2017,[37] which by looking across the globe at particular dates gave equal weight to artistic developments in non-Western countries. As a result of the curatorial emphasis on the decolonising nations of the African continent, rather than delivering a West-centric story of post-war reconstruction and the establishment of a universal human rights, the exhibition articulated the aftermath of centuries of colonial exploitation and the racial exclusions within post-war globalism. In his catalogue text, Enwezor also signalled the need for a nuanced and non-reductive approach to the politics of colonialism, by drawing attention to the prevalence in art circles of 'the idea of cultural sovereignty and of the uniqueness of post-colonial African modernity.'[38] While the particular set of geopolitical considerations suggested by the curatorial subtitle 'between the Atlantic and the Pacific' left little room in practice to articulate the specificities of the artistic production of the post-war period in the socialist bloc, the exhibition demonstrated the potential of comparing artistic events in particular world regions across historical turning points to decentre and shakeup dominant accounts.

The Problem of the Primacy of the Political

Indicative of the praxis of subordinating art historical developments to political turning points is Piotrowski's repeated call to organise comparative accounts of first East European and then global art history according to significant dates of 1948, 1968 and 1989. By fixing art narratives with reference to these geopolitical watersheds,

Piotrowski set out to show how 'politics produced different contexts for local/national cultural productions in those countries, and as a consequence different meanings of art in particular places.'[39] The problem arises from the fact that such an approach tends to essentialise regional art histories as reactive to political events, rather than unfolding in relation to entwined and multiple factors such as technological, cultural or theoretical influences, or by engaging with aesthetic, stylistic or disciplinary concerns and subjective individual intentions in art making. In that sense, the horizontal art history of Eastern Europe might equally well investigate 1957 as the emergence of Art Informel in Poland, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, or 1964 as marking the ascendence of pop art in the region, artistic developments for which politics was only one of the contributing factors.

The tendency to emphasise the political determinants strongly marks the art history of regions which have traditionally been relegated to the category of the 'peripheral.' Writing about *Conceptualism in Latin American Art*, artist and academic Luis Camnitzer distinguished between the apolitical disciplinary focus in 'cultural centres like New York' on the 'dematerialization of art' and the emphasis in 'the periphery, Latin America included,' on the communication of political ideas in the context of 'turmoil, economic exploitation and cold war.'[40] There have also been attempts to compare and contrast the decisive influence of politics on the development of modernism in these global regions.[41] Furthermore, in what could be seen as a gesture towards 'provincializing the West,' there have been revisions of art history that attempted to show that Western art practice was just as susceptible to political instrumentalisation. As John J. Curley argued in *Global Art and the Cold War*, both American abstract expressionism and Soviet socialist realism of the early 1950s relied 'on the utopian notions of their respective political systems: American individuality in the case of Pollock's painting, or the greater communal good achieved through overcoming individual desires in the Soviet work.'[42] However, rather than 'horizontalizing' the political in this way, by positing the equivalence between the ideological character of art in East and West, the key to writing a global art history of Central and Eastern Europe lies in focusing instead on its own disciplinary developments. Rather than circularly reinstating the West as a primary reference point for comparison, decolonising regional art history entails challenging the hierarchical primacy of political interpretative tools.

The Problem of Global Art Styles

The narrative of the unfolding of experimental art practices in Eastern Europe during the socialist period has frequently been attributed to instances of individual travel across the Iron Curtain, such as Piotrowski's statement in his *The Shadow of Yalta* that 'one could say that [Tadeusz] Kantor brought Art Informel [from Paris] to Poland in his suitcase.'[43] The 'suitcase model' could be taken as a metaphor for the simplistic account of the transfer of art movements from Western centres to the rest of the world, based on a unidirectional flow of cross-border artistic transfer which implicitly reinforces the aesthetic hierarchies of the Western paradigm.[44] Pop art, which around 1964 appeared in several East European art scenes, including Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia, as well as in other parts of the non-Western world, could be taken as a case in point. The emergence of pop art in Slovakia has regularly been attributed to exposure to international influences, with art historians debating the precise source and itinerary of such external impulses,[45] while Hungarian art history has weighed up

the significance of exposure to American pop art at the Venice Biennial of 1964, in a dispute over whether the course of local artistic developments can be reduced to the 'issuing of passports.'[46] In the Yugoslav context, the self-proclaimed inauguration of pop art also took place in 1964 at the solo exhibition of Olja Ivanjicki in Belgrade.[47]

Rejecting the primacy of the American model, the catalogue text of an exhibition of Anglo-American pop art at Zagreb's Gallery of Contemporary Art in 1966 described the trajectory of the movement as 'appearing in England and the USA after Informel as a closed subgenre of those endeavours known throughout the world as 'new realism,' 'new figuration,' 'neo-Dada,' 'new vulgarists,' 'common object painters' and 'new narrativity.'[48] Going beyond the suitcase model, the particular traits of American pop art were located within a wider set of global practices, and rather than bestowing upon it a paradigmatic status, referred to American pop as one of a plethora of equivalent regional variations on a common trend. In other words, already in the 1960s, East European art critics had regionalised or provincialised pop art. Global art museums are only now catching up with the horizontal insights of the time, with Tate Modern's 'The World Goes Pop' excluding all the well-known Western pop artists, emphasising instead the simultaneous emergence of 'many pops,' which were often 'imbued with an ambivalence, if not outright hostility, to the notion of American economic (and implicitly artistic) dominance.'[49] That there is still much work to be done in reassessing East European pop art from a global perspective is suggested by the fact that although the Tate exhibition included a number of artists from Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Slovakia and Poland, there were none from Hungary or Estonia, two countries singled out by Piotrowski as exceptions to the general lack of interest in North American pop art in the region.[50]

While paradigmatic, the case of pop art is not exceptional, since other globally appearing post-war art movements, from Informel to conceptual art, give rise to similar questions and contestations in relation to subsequent West-centric historicisations and purifications of art movements. Extending ecological thinking to art history, the modernist art historical drive to pick out all the weeds from the hybrid fields of international movements could be seen as an attempt to turn the global terrains of artistic plurality into monocultures of unified styles. Through decolonial, environmental and socio-critical reassessments of ruderal and entangled histories which were disregarded or dismissed by colonial modernity, the monolith of Cold War art history is now cracking open to allow intersecting and cross-pollinating heterogenous global art narratives to emerge.

The Problem of Pluralising Art under Socialism

The issue of pluralising accounts of international art movements also extends to art practiced under socialism, to reveal its historical specificities in all their multiple manifestations and overlaps, rather than, as was the tendency of Cold War art history, to reduce heterogenous positions to binary oppositions between official and unofficial art.[51] Sharp distinctions between these two categories dissolve as soon as one considers, for instance, the intersections between the neo-avant-garde and moderate modernism, cases of coalescence between official ideology and radical artistic propositions, or the nuances around art produced for state commissions. Comparative analysis of art under socialism shows how various states developed their own apparatuses to manage the artworld, leaving space through inefficiencies, loopholes or intentional design for

less closely supervised artistic expression. In that way, artists were inventive in developing strategies to productively negotiate the contradictions and potentialities of the 'actually existing artworlds' of socialism.[52]

In terms of socialist realism, the genre most closely associated with the socialist bloc, it is now apparent that, in Cold War art history, the style was denigrated as propaganda and systematically excluded from the rest of artistic production and master narratives. One could also recognise the modernist mindset at work in seeking to purify the style, reflected in the focus on the years around 1950, when the attempt to create art systems in Eastern Europe on the model of the Soviet Union was at its most determined and cohesive. Piotrowski, whose distain for the movement saw him skip the whole socialist realist episode in *In the Shadow of Yalta*, later went on to dispute the 'stylistic blurring of the concept of "socialist realism"' to encompass 'any form of engaged realism' that had a 'socialist character.'[53] However, it is precisely in making visible its porousness towards politically engaged expanded realisms of the immediate post-war period or its connections to the radical modernisms of the interwar era, that more nuanced interpretations are emerging, which provide points of reference for understanding it as a global art movement.[54]

Problem of Global Socialisms

Notably, it was only with the ending of the Cold War that a regional approach to global art history could emerge, superseding the tripartite division between the 'first,' 'second' and 'third' worlds and responding to the consolidation of a multi-polar world order. Since the East-West cultural divide bestowed a privileged position on East European art as the ideological opposite to the Western mainstream, the shift towards a global art history of coeval regions has also necessitated a renegotiation of status for the former East as well as the former West.[55] What is more, although 'actually existing socialism' eventually failed and the collapse of the socialist system appeared predestined in histories written from the perspective of the Western victors, it should be remembered that during the whole post-war era there were two competing world systems, and it was far from a foregone conclusion which side would ultimately win out in the fields of social and technological development. Although the 'Cold War can be described as the opposition between two universalities,'[56] as it is put in the introduction to *Beyond Borders*, a volume coedited by Piotrowski, the situation was, in fact, more complex. During the height of its activities in the 1960s, the Non-Aligned Movement renounced the ideological polarisation of the Cold War, rejected the domination of a single power or economic system and set out to build a third-way model of alternative mondialisation.[57] The hybrid production of the art of socialist internationalism reflected the existence of a variety of anti-capitalist and decolonial options, giving rise to a multiplicity of forms of solidarity with Third World struggles. The interweaving of the disparate paths of socialist and decolonial liberation struggles was manifest in the diversity of global art practices that defied the purifying logic of Western modernity.

This chapter laid out concerns about how to write a global art history of Central and Eastern Europe, arranged around problems or distinct areas of inquiry that have proved to be closely entwinned, spilling over the categories in which they are delineated, and also inseparable from the fast moving social and political crises of the present day. The dissolution of the binary framework established during the Cold War and lingering on into the post-socialist era has allowed a multitude of alternative lines of

connection to surface in accounts that situate the art of the region within the expansive contours of global socialisms and reinstate their alignment and dialogue with the parallel histories of decolonial movements in the global South. In the wake of the retreat of Western primacy, the process of peeling back the layers of West-centric historicisation, purification and appropriation of international art movements is accelerating, with the policing of styles by gatekeepers giving way to more pluralistic and nuanced accounts that allow the historical specificities and heterogenous positions of Central and East European art history to be articulated. In place of the tired geopolitical turning points that long structured art historical narratives, comparative accounts of the art of the region now foreground the many other social, technological, cultural and environmental factors that shaped artistic practices, while attention is devoted to the voices of those who have been excluded from ethnocentric and monocultural art histories. The toolbox of Piotrowski's horizontal art history has been expanded and refined, with the putting into practice of a variety of methodologies to disrupt chronopolitical domination and by making explicit the link between horizontalising and decolonising the discipline. At the same time, the geometrical distinctions made by Piotrowski between vertical and horizontal perspectives are unsettled by planetary approaches that capture the entangled and winding course of Central and Eastern European art history.

Notes

1 Piotr Piotrowski, "How to Write a History of Central-East European Art?," *Third Text*, vol. 23 no. 1 (2009), 5–14.
2 The title of his last book, published posthumously in Polish, was 'A Global View of the Art of Eastern Europe.' See Piotr Piotrowski, *Globalne ujęcie sztuki Europy Wschodniej* (Poznań: Rebis, 2018). English translation forthcoming.
3 Maja and Reuben Fowkes, *Central and Eastern European Art since 1950* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2020).
4 Definition of 'problem' in the *Oxford English Dictionary* online edition, page modified March 2021, consulted at: https://www.oed.com/.
5 See for example the entry on 'Descartes and his Coordinate System,' on encyclopaedia.com, accessed at: https://www.encyclopedia.com/education/news-wires-white-papers-and-books/descartes-and-his-coordinate-system.
6 A line from the film *4 Waters: Deep Implicancy* (2018) by Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman. See also, Denise Ferreira da Silva, '1 (life) ÷ 0 (blackness) = ∞ − ∞ or ∞/∞: On Matter Beyond the Equation of Value,' *E-Flux Journal* #79 (February 2017), accessed at: https://www.e-flux.com/journal/79/94686/1-life-0-blackness-or-on-matter-beyond-the-equation-of-value/.
7 Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 177.
8 Ibid., 169.
9 For a recent attempt to critically reassess belatedness in American art history, see the Terra Foundation for American Art online Study Day at the Department of History of Art, University of Oxford, 28 June 2021, accessed at: https://www.hoa.ox.ac.uk/event/terra-foundation-american-art-study-day.
10 See for example, Suzaan Boettger, *Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2004) or John Beardsley, *Earthworks and Beyond: Contemporary Art in the Landscape* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2006).
11 See discussion of Land Art in Maja Fowkes, *The Green Bloc: Neo-Avant-Garde Art and Ecology under Socialism* (Budapest: Central European Press, 2015), 41.
12 Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004).

13 Piotr Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde," in Sascha Bru and Peter Nicholls, eds, *European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 50.
14 Ibid., 51.
15 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).
16 See Paul Wood, Leon Wainwright and Charles Harrison, eds, *Art in Theory: The West in the World - An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2021).
17 See, Maja and Reuben Fowkes, "The Art Critic under Populism: Confronting the Post-Democratic Turn in Central Europe," *Paletten* (December 2019).
18 'Decolonising Art History,' a questionnaire co-ordinated by Dorothy Price and Catherine Grant, *Art History* (February 2020), accessed at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1467–8365.12490.
19 Ibid.
20 Piotr Piotrowski, "East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-Colonial Theory," *Nonsite.org* (12 August 2014), accessed at: http://nonsite.org/article/east-european-art-peripheries-facing-post-colonial-theory.
21 Piotrowski, *Globalne ujecie*, 2018.
22 See for example, Flavia Frigeri and Kristian Handberg, "Introduction: Toward a New Understanding of Globalism in Postwar Art," in Flavia Frigeri and Kristian Handberg, eds, *New Histories of Art in the Global Postwar Era: Multiple Modernisms* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 5.
23 Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde," 51.
24 Ibid.
25 See, for example, Anibal Quijano and Michael Ennis, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South*, vol. 1, no. 3 (2000), 533–80.
26 Carolin Overhoff Ferreira, *Decolonial Introduction to the Theory, History and Criticism of the Arts* (Morrisville, South Carolina: lulu.com, 2019), 19.
27 Madina Tlostanova, *What Does It Mean to Be Post-Soviet? Decolonial Art from the Ruins of the Soviet Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 10.
28 Ibid., 137.
29 See for instance, Maja and Reuben Fowkes, 'Sidelined, Under-represented and Snubbed: The New Unofficial in East European Art,' paper given at the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) congress 'White Places – Black Holes, Reflection of the Future,' Bratislava, September 2013.
30 Piotr Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 52.
31 See for example, Larne Gogarty Abse, "The Art Right," *Art Monthly* no. 405 (April 2017), 6–10.
32 Nicholas Thomas, *Oceanic Art*, second edition, first published in 1995 (London: Thames & Hudson, 2018), 206.
33 Sidney Littlefield Kasir, *Contemporary African Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2020), 8.
34 For the perspective of international artists who settled in Hungary after 1989, see, Maja and Reuben Fowkes, *Revolutionary Decadence: Foreign Artists in Budapest since 1989* (Budapest: Kiscelli Museum, 2009).
35 Piotrowski, *Globalne ujecie*, 2018.
36 Ibid.
37 See Okwui Enwezor, Katy Siegel and Ulrich Wilmes, eds, *Postwar: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic 1945–1965* (Munich: Haus der Kunst, 2017).
38 Okwui Enwezor, "The Judgement of Art: Postwar and Artistic Worldliness," in Okwui Enwezor, Katy Siegel and Ulrich Wilmes, eds, *Postwar: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic 1945–1965* (Munich: Haus der Kunst, 2017), 32–3.
39 Piotr Piotrowski, "How to Write a History of Central-East European Art?" *Third Text*, vol. 23, no. 1 (January 2009), 5–14: 8.
40 Luis Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 1.
41 See for example, Katarzyna Cytlak, "Multiple Resistances to the Concept of Modernism: The Emergence of Artistic-Poetic Networks between Eastern Europe and Latin America

in the late 1960s and 1970s," in Flavia Frigeri and Kristian Handberg, eds, *New Histories of Art in the Global Postwar Era: Multiple Modernisms* (London: Routledge, 2021), 57–68.

42 John J. Curley, *Global Art and the Cold War* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2018), 22.

43 Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, translated by Anna Brzyski (London: Reaktion books, 2009), 72.

44 See, Maja and Reuben Fowkes, "Art History in a Suitcase: The Itinerary of Art Trends in Socialist Art Criticism," in Beáta Hock et al., eds, *Universal – International - Global*, a special issue of *Das östliche Europa. Kunst und Kulturgeschichte* vol. 10 (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2022 – forthcoming).

45 Compare for example, Richard Gregor, *Haberernová's Eye: Post-Informal Figuration in Slovak Visual Arts of the 1960s*, translated John Minahane (Bratislava: Galéria Cypriána Majerníka, 2013) and Zora Rusinová et al., *Šesťdesiate roky v slovenskom výtvarnom umení* [The sixties in Slovak fine arts] exhibition catalogue (Bratislava: Slovak National Gallery, 1996).

46 Katalin Keserü, KESERÜ, *Variations on Pop Art. Chapters in the History of Hungarian Art Between 1950 and 1990*, exhibition catalogue (Budapest: Ernst Museum, 1993), 12.

47 Lina Džuverović, "Pop Art Tendencies in Self-Managed Socialism: Pop Reactions and Countercultural Pop in Yugoslavia in 1960s and 1970," PhD thesis, Royal College of Art, submitted April 2017, p. 151.

48 Boris Kelemen, *Pop Art*, exhibition catalogue (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1966), n.p., translation Maja and Reuben Fowkes.

49 Jessica Morgan, "Political Pop: An Introduction," in Jessica Morgan and Flavia Frigeri, eds, *The World Goes Pop*, exhibition catalogue (London: Tate Modern, 2016), 15.

50 Piotr Piotrowski, "Why There Were No Great Pop Art Curatorial Projects in Eastern Europe in the 1960s?" in Annika Öhrner ed., *Art in Transfer in the Era of Pop* (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 2017), 24.

51 See for example, Edit Sasvári, Sándor Hornyik and Hedvig Turai, eds, *Art in Hungary, 1956–1980: Doublespeak and Beyond* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2018).

52 See also, 'Actually Existing Artworlds of Socialism', guest editor Reuben Fowkes, *Third Text* no. 153 (July 2018).

53 Piotrowski, *Globalne ujecie*, 2018.

54 See for example, Jérôme Bazin and Joanna Kordjak, eds, *Cold Revolution. Central and Eastern European Societies in Times of Socialist Realism, 1948–1959* (Warsaw: Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, 2020).

55 Fowkes, *Central and Eastern European Art since 1950*, 13.

56 Jérôme Bazin, Pascal Dubourg Glatigny and Piotr Piotrowski, eds, *Art Beyond Borders: Artistic Exchange in Communist Europe (1945–1989)* (Budapest: Central European Press, 2016), 21–2.

57 Bojana Piškur et al., *Southern Constellations: The Poetics of the Non-Aligned* (Ljubljana: Moderna Galerija, 2019).

10 Not Horizontal Enough

Horizontal Art History with Marxist Restrictions

Magdalena Radomska

My text analyses the assumptions of Piotr Piotrowski's horizontal art history from the perspective of Marxist philosophy. This approach was prompted by my conversations with Piotrowski concerning the constraints I deemed necessary as a result of the clash between my own research perspective, influenced by Marxism and post-Marxism, and the tools offered in Piotrowski's texts, lectures and seminars when I was his undergraduate, graduate and PhD student and, later, when I worked with him for a few years at the Adam Mickiewicz University Art History Institute. The horizontal art history, which in Piotrowski's texts is prescriptive and constitutes the horizon of his considerations, is for me primarily a working tool whose usefulness lies not only in its agenda and prescriptions but above all in its critical application. I treat it, therefore, not primarily as theory, but as practice, and this text is the result of many academic debates that are nothing more than practical exercises in its application. Marxism was the primary backdrop to Piotrowski's texts and his horizontal art history developed in fundamental tension with Marxism. Not only is it present, albeit not always explicitly, in Piotrowski's texts but is also acknowledged in his last book, where he explicitly if inconsistently anchored the practice of horizontal art history in the form of alterglobalist art history within a Marxist perspective. I have dealt with this issue in the afterword to the English translation of Piotrowski's last book, and in a text which is a response to Matthew Rampley's polemic against Piotrowski's text on the horizontal art history originally published in *Umění*, to which one of the last issues of the magazine has been devoted. Horizontal art history practiced as a tool reveals a number of inconsistencies in its treatment as a methodology. As I have pointed out in both texts, many of the problems that Piotrowski poses and which make his argument more coherent can be found in the texts of Marxist scholars, an example of which is the criticism of postcolonialism formulated from this perspective. As I have indicated in the afterword to Piotrowski's last book, if he had taken it into account, this would have answered many of the problems he poses.[1] It is not my intention, however, to point out the shortcomings of the horizontal art history, but rather to demonstrate its strength. Indeed, Piotrowski was not a theoretician interested in creating a method, but a practitioner. Thus, if I call horizontal art history a tool rather than a method, I am, in fact, saying that its disciplinary imperfection points precisely to its affinity with Marxism, provoking readers to use it as a tool for changing what Piotrowski calls vertical art history, rather than getting involved in theoretical considerations detached from practice. In this text, I will focus on an aspect which I could only hint at as a problem in the afterword to Piotrowski's last book and in the text to *Umění* because of their different functions. Analysing from a Marxist perspective the criteria and categories of

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the shift posed by Piotrowski from vertical art history towards horizontal art history, I will consider first how class analysis serves as a horizon of horizontal art history and whether it conditions its existence. In a word, I examine whether horizontal art history is horizontal enough where it ignores class analysis.

Verticality as a Negative Reference Point

Piotrowski's turn from the *status quo* diagnosed as vertical towards what he called a horizontal art history involves a certain paradox. The starting point for Piotrowski's considerations is an implicit criticism of the very notion of art history, a move away from it towards thinking connected with geography and maps. Before the concept of horizontal art history came into being, he had used such notions as art geography or artistic geographies,[2] not so much to invalidate the historical aspect of the discipline but to shift its gravity from well-established and narrativised consequences of historical thinking towards geographical relations that evade the linear paradigm of history. These geographical relations reveal the power relations based on a clear hierarchy of, usually incompatible, historical narratives. In academic discussions, Piotrowski often advocated a similar system of education at the Poznań Art History Institute, one which would not be based on a chronological narrative of art history, but one that would enhance specialisation in a given issue or time period and which would include other disciplines, history, philosophy, political science, etc., as key elements. It would seem that Piotrowski's research could only be crowned not so much by further incarnations of a horizontal or alter-globalist art history but by a critique of the discipline. It was also indicated by his criticism of the notion of derivativeness that implied criticism of the categories of backwardness and progress present in *Avantgarde in The Shadow of Yalta*.[3] Piotrowski saw these two terms as oppressive functions of a hegemonic vertical narrative, one that was purely historical, which I see as an absolutisation of linear history so that it could be based on universalisation of West-European paradigms of the destination and progress criteria. However, since Piotrowski did not reject the category of art history, we should focus on the part of horizontal art history which is usually dismissed in texts devoted to this problem as transparent or unimportant, a kind of remnant of verticality inscribed in the discipline, which Piotrowski's concept basically criticises. I wish to demonstrate that an analysis of the ways in which the concept of art history is applied in Piotrowski's texts from a Marxist position helps situate the concept of horizontal art history vis-à-vis class problems and, thus, those that I consider decisive for stripping horizontal art history of its own horizontality. I would like to reach this historical examination by means of a Marxist analysis of the concept of time, which I understand as a factor ascribed to verticality rather than horizontality, but which is also inscribed in the concept of horizontal art history in a way that could seem opaque. I intend to demonstrate that it is the essential coupling of the notions of time and social class that is crucial for the understanding and critique of the concept of horizontal art history.

This problem is comprehensively addressed in *Marks. Praca i czas* (Marx: Labour and Time) by Marek Łagosz. Referring to Marx's texts, the author proves that the German philosopher developed an ethic of time related to work,[4] i.e. an "ethic whose axiology is based on the extra-moral value of time and its fundamental norm demands respect for the time of another human being".[5] This, of course, involves the link between the so-called labour theory of value, according to which an object/commodity

has the value of the labour required to make it, which Marx measured by "socially necessary labour time",[6] demanding the abolition of class division, and, therefore, the division of labour.[7]

If we assume after Łagosz that Marxist ethics is contingent on the linking of time and freedom, since for Marx

> the kingdom of freedom begins in fact only when labour, determined by poverty and external necessity, ends (…) [i -M.R.], this begins the development of human powers as an end in itself (…). Shortening the labour day is the fundamental premise.[8]

Then, we may admit that freedom is a function of equality. As Łagosz demonstrates further,

> From this perspective, the history of societies, and in particular that aspect of it which Marx defined as the 'class struggle', can be presented as a struggle for time, and all the forms of humans dominating other humans which have occurred in history can be seen as appropriation of others' time, albeit in different forms and to different degrees.[9]

As he concludes, "That is why class struggle may be seen as struggle for a 'just' distribution of free time".[10] Łagosz's reflections become a most useful tool to probe into the inconsistencies of Piotrowski's concept of horizontal art history, not only into the persistence of seemingly vertical history but also into the concept of freedom rather than equality linked to democracy, which Piotrowski stressed. I will deal first with the former questions, pointing to the ramifications of Łagosz's (and Marx's) thinking for a critique of the discipline and the inconsistencies of horizontal art history.

Since, for Marx, history is basically one of class struggle, a critical history of art based on the assumptions of Marxism would accordingly constitute a narrative telling the story of hegemony in Gramsci's sense.[11] The consequence of approaching the notion of class via the Marxist angle on the question of time and, thus, of presenting class struggle as a struggle for a just division of time may be in the history of art both the analysis of paradoxical conflicts resulting from the fact that the working time of artists is accumulated in the form of free time, which deprives them not only of the right to free time, but also to work, contributing to the alienation of labour discussed by Marx, but also to another kind of alienation, defined by Giorgio Agemben as being cutting off from one's own impotentiality.[12] Another consequence is the question whether within what Piotrowski calls vertical art history there is a just division of time, and whether horizontal art history is a potential tool for making this division visible or rectifying it. In other words, the question of what a horizontal art history is good for (and whether horizontality does not necessarily entail its critique).

As early as 1999, Piotrowski not so much criticises the discipline itself as he distinguishes between what he calls "Western art history" and art history of East-Central Europe. Thus, the goal of the researcher is to "deconstruct the universalism of the only art history".[13] Piotrowski questions the universalism of art history and of the art canon, exposing them as Western constructs.

However, replacing the term history of art with geography of art does not seem to be sufficient for Piotrowski. He mentions geography of art as something which, being

involved in a similarly universalistic perspective as history of art, also requires revision and establishing new paradigms.[14] Such a revision does not so much involve a need to undermine the role of borders as it requires the designation of previously invisible points on the map (appreciation of the periphery) and the elimination of the monopoly of places previously deemed as pivotal points of reference (centres) for other places, both those visible on the map and those invisible on it. As I have already argued in the afterword to the English edition of Piotrowski's last book, there is a significant rupture in Piotrowski's approach to the centre and the periphery. It becomes evident when the horizontal art history transforms into an alter-globalist one, and Piotrowski takes a step towards Marxism, using in an unprecedented way the notion of the periphery with the notion of the proletariat.[15] This reveals the weakness of Piotrowski's revision of artistic geography. Importantly, he misses the other, potential pole of such an equation, namely, the possibility of describing centres as capitalists, although, in fact, the accumulation of symbolic capital in Western art history is the butt of his criticism in his texts. Such a step would lead to an inconsistency which Piotrowski manages to avoid on many occasions, namely, the identification of the economic supremacy of the so-called West and perceiving it as the centres of actual capital accumulation with the centres where the symbolic capital of art and art history accumulates. Piotrowski points to the marginalisation of, e.g., Scandinavian art.[16] As he is aware that the centres of accumulation of economic capital are not the same as the centres of accumulation of symbolic capital, indicating that treating centres are capitalists as opposed to "proletarian" peripheries is not justified. On the other hand, in an article published in Polish in *Artium Quaestiones* "O horyzontalnej historii sztuki" [On the horizontal art history], summarising the main tenets of his concept, Piotrowski unquestioningly claims, referring to the issues addressed by Suzana Milevska, that world art history cannot operate beyond the geographic dichotomies of East–West and peripheries–centre.[17] This statement explains the validity of the researcher's use of the notion of proletariat. As I argued when I started a discussion in *Umění* with a text by Matthew Rampley, polemical towards Piotrowski's text on the concept of horizontal art history, once published in that journal and accusing Piotrowski, not without reason, that his concept of the privileged critical status of the periphery is based on simplifications, as they tend to be blind to the fractures of the centre, Piotrowski's assumption is anchored in the Marxist definition of the proletariat.[18] Rampley's remarks actually reiterate the reservations levelled by Walter Benjamin towards György Lukács's interpretation of Marxists consciousness of the proletariat as self-consciousness or self-knowledge.[19] Let us, therefore, take a further look from this perspective at the construction of what is the object of Piotrowski's critique and what he calls "vertical art history". While the researcher does not choose to consistently uphold the capitalist–proletariat dichotomy in his reflection on the relationship between centre and periphery, the way he characterises the universalising "vertical" art history enters into dialogue with the Marxist conception of ideology. The naturalisation or neutralisation of the narrative and canon of vertical art history would correspond to the concept of false consciousness, i.e. ideology in the form of "the production of ideas, concepts and consciousness" so that

> the ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relations (…) grasped as ideas; hence of the relations which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.[20]

This is the perspective to apply to understand Piotrowski when he says that "the subject in the centre forgets that he is in the centre, in a place rather precisely defined on the world's map".[21] Understood in this way, the vertical history of art would, thus, be based on a false consciousness whose function could be either the mechanism of self-colonisation described by Kiossev and repeatedly referred to by Piotrowski,[22] or else a unique and critical status of the peripheries. The latter would correspond to what Marx defines as a revolutionary potential of the proletariat, its predestination to counter oppression with self-consciousness. According to the authors of *The German Ideology*, the road beyond mystification of ideology involves references to the material living conditions, to which ideology is the superstructure.[23] If, however, the "privileged status" of peripheries was to move beyond the very fact of being marginalised and be the source of this unique critical condition, this condition would, in line with Marxism, need to refer to production relations the Marxist way. The very fact that Piotrowski uses the term "privilege" where he means exclusion and marginalisation is very much telling. Such a construction, paradoxical at first sight, brings to mind the reflections of the Hungarian Marxist György Lukács on the revolutionary potential of the proletariat, according to which it is the only class capable of opposing the reification affecting all its members in capitalist society.[24] This occurs only when the consciousness of the proletariat awakens to a consciousness of the process and only then will the proletariat become the identical subject–object of history whose praxis will change reality.[25] According to Lukács, the proletariat is only capable of being both the object and the subject of history if it focuses on practice.[26] As he demonstrates, there can be no single act that will eliminate reification in all its forms at one blow; it means that there will be a whole host of objects that at least in appearance remain more or less unaffected by the process.[27] Thus, it is clear that the very fact of objectification/reification of the potential excluded subjects of art-historical narrative, in fact, from both Piotrowski's and Marxist philosophy's perspectives, becomes the cornerstone of their critical position. For Piotrowski, however, this would take the form of a "critical analysis (…) [which-M.R.] should reveal the speaking subject, that is, who is speaking, on whose behalf and for whom".[28] The aim, then, is to make the Western narrative relative and "to place it side by side with other art history narratives".[29] Unlike Lukács, Piotrowski is not interested in dialectics. For Piotrowski, relativisation does not mean that the concepts he employs, i.e. West and East, centre and periphery, have become dialectical. He upholds the dichotomy of the former conceptual pair because one of the aims of horizontal art history he acknowledges is precisely "naming" what seems a universal art and art history, i.e. "as Western".[30] While it is easy to imagine a dialectical account of the geographical directions defined by these terms, Piotrowski sees them rather as narratives, the former being hegemonic, and which are unlikely to be susceptible to the process of dialecticisation. Piotrowski is also uninterested in the essential fact for Marxism,[31] namely, that horizontal art history might be a project of liberating not only marginalised narratives but also those attributed to the centre. According to Lukács and more broadly according to Marxism, what Piotrowski terms a universal art history would seem inner antagonisms, which are seen as primary and within which others, like gender, ethnic, religious and class divisions function as secondary, i.e. those which "can only become visible if mediated by the former and can only become dialectical when they do".[32] An art historian deals somewhat differently with the notions of the centre and the periphery, setting in motion, if not directly, their dialectical relation when he diagnoses also marginalised narratives as reiterating the

dichotomy also within the inner structure when he mentions the history of the Polish "thaw" period as written from the perspective of the centre, i.e. the nation's capital. Thus, he recognises that the peripheral location of, e.g., Warsaw is relative, but he fails to see that within the centres, especially within them, there are also peripheries, i.e. art works and narratives about them that are absent from the dominant narratives, those whose negligible market value results in their absence and invisibility.[33] The categories of West and East, centre and periphery, chosen by Piotrowski as the primary ones, enable the solidarity of "merger", the cooperation of non-Western peripheries, but they do not take care of the Western peripheries. Only if we keep the analysis on the class level, which I will prove in the second part of the text, would it be possible to see these "peripheries of the centres" in the form of art created within the framework of and in relation to centres such as New York, Paris or London, but which is doomed to non-existence due to its insignificant market value.

It is possible to imagine that the consequence of the dichotomy adopted by Piotrowski would be a horizontal art history, or, as Piotrowski calls it, horizontal art histories, which would account for the clash between the centres and the peripheries, within which the East–West relation would be only one of many possible ones. It would thus be a complex and multi-level narrative combining elements of art history and history of discipline, i.e. the way it formulated the above definitions. We deal here, of course, with a nuanced and, thus, incoherent picture. As Piotrowski claims, "there is no single history of the art of the margins; there are as many of them as there are margins, yet they may be negotiated, above all in a critical perspective towards the centre".[34] However, when we consider the preservation of the notion of history in what Piotrowski proposes as a horizontal art history, which I see here as the effect of many years of reflection on the incompleteness of the vertical historical perspective and the necessity of supplementing it with a horizontal one, it becomes evident that its temporal aspect actually serves to disguise a certain inconsistency of the researcher's argument. I refer not only to the very concept of horizontal art history but also to the reflection on which it is based, one concerning the relation between art and the discourse of art history. In the seminal text of the horizontal art history, this inconsistency is to be found in the excerpts devoted to modernism,[35] which Piotrowski refers to using this word, on the one hand, in a paradigmatic manner and, on the other hand, as a definition of the question addressed also by the theory of Latin American art, as purloined *episteme*.[36] Piotrowski writes about Eastern European and non-Western modernists as those who, by their contemporaries (Western and otherwise), were "recognised as equal partners", and it was only "art history that established a hierarchic discourse, a 'vertical' one, that set artistic geography in centre-periphery terms".[37] This clearly critical perspective on art history entails certain evident simplifications concerning the very condition of artists and, by implication, their art works. In Piotrowski's texts, they are in a condition which is, at the same time, critical and innocent, attributed (if we maintain the vertical historical narrative) to a paradoxical point in time, both before and in relation to the oppressive historical narrative. Of course, it can be argued that we are talking about a certain critical condition, a potential visible precisely in the horizontal narrative of art history. However, one cannot but observe, which I did when writing my book devoted to the critical analysis of art and art history of Hungarian avant-garde,[38] that such a vision is only apparently idealistic towards artists and their oeuvre. In fact, it strips works of art of the material context of their creation for the sake of potentially safeguarding them against being appropriated by

the vertical art history discourse. Geographical distance, when we consider material conditions, is not identical from the centre to the periphery and from the periphery to the centre. Therefore, it is not only the question of the white dots on the map, which Piotrowski considers to be the responsibility of the history of modernist art, but also the question of whether, given the economic conditions, Jindřich Štyrský was as far from Paris as Breton was from Prague or, to take a slightly different example than that of the economically well-developed Czechia, whether the distance from Poznań to Berlin in the 1920s was equal to that from Berlin to Poznań, but also what access to the means of production the artists working in all these centres had. The argument of Piotrowski's texts, however, focuses on the circulation of contacts, formal means and information, rather than on their actual price. Progress, paradigmatic for modernism, is, moreover, a problematic category from the point of view of Marxist philosophy because its criteria, as Łagosz argues, contribute to the alienation of labour.[39] Furthermore, Łagosz proves that

> for ontology of a social being in terms of historiosophy, the question of the arrow of time is usually linked to the category of progress.[40] He reflects on the need to develop non-alienative criteria of progress and calls for adding to 'criteria such as growing economic complexity of social labour organisation' and 'level of development of forces of production', which he sees as purely technical.[41]

such criteria as "the level of social (…) emanation of direct producers or the degree of intensification of class struggle".[42] He sums up his observations by saying that

> it is vital to focus on the social and ethical aspect of the evolution of social being and to ask questions about progressiveness precisely in this context (…) Progress as a category that determines the direction of the arrow of time in history may, in the context of Marxist thought, be interpreted as a move towards eliminating alienation.[43]

It is only this perspective that overcomes the inconsistencies arising from the fact that, within what Piotrowski calls a vertical history of art, art is accorded a problematic position in time.

A Constitutive Step Backwards—from Superstructure Analysis to Base Analysis. Formal Analysis versus Alienation of Means of Production

If art becomes objectified in the discourse of art history, then it is subject to alienation of work, which would also be proved by the fact that the relations of artistic production are also subject to alienation when artists compete rather than cooperate. If we were to agree with Łagosz's interpretation that "alienation (…) is the subordination of human time to alien factors", then the tension between vertical art history and horizontal art histories outlined by Piotrowski reflects well the pattern of appropriating not only of time but also history and art history understood as ways of narrativising it. However, I want to ask slightly different questions than Piotrowski did and recognise as primary different conceptual categories. As I have argued in the afterword to Piotrowski's last book, both the project of a horizontal art history and its extension in the project of an alter-globalist history of art get entangled in many paradigmatic

assumptions for a vertical history of art. It is precisely where Piotrowski tries to, as he calls it, "deconstruct" the foundations of vertical art history, its analytical categories, modes of narration and English language, and where he polemicises with the stylistic "backwardness" of Central and Eastern Europe, that he actually becomes entangled, as I prove[44] in various aspects of superstructure, succumbing to the constraints of formal analysis. Naturally, this is not without valid reason: the primacy of the English language (or more broadly Western languages) in the discipline is a factor operating by means of analytical categories, oppressive for the art of the world's marginalised regions, upholding the hierarchy rooted in "backwardness" and "secondary nature" of the art of the peripheries and the "genuineness" and "primary nature" of Western art, which should be critiqued yet which can be completely rejected only when we reject the arrow of time seen as a vector of alienative categories of progress and then either as a radical polemic with the notion of history (including art history) as of necessity inherent or far more radical attempts to break free from formal analysis intertwined with vertical art history. In a word, this is a turn from superstructure analysis towards base analysis. This turn must seem a step backward towards such underappreciated and trivialised factors as analysis of material (social, class and economic) conditions of the work of an artist and an art historian. Only this perspective, showing art and art history as an effect of work, and, thus, of production and ownership relations, enables the disentanglement of the inconsistencies and simplifications inherent in horizontal art history and arising from the implicit hierarchy it employs: simultaneously critical and innocent "horizontal" art and the vertical narratives oppressive towards it. It is only the common definitional separation of art and art history as work that enables this ordering step backwards, towards the base and relations of production. Analysis of both Piotrowski's texts which are the source of his concept of the horizontal art history as well as its evolution into alter-globalist history of art shows to me that such a turn does not contradict the assumptions of the horizontal art history and that it, moreover, constitutes its practical horizon. Theoretical shortcomings or internal contradictions of the concept of horizontal art history must of necessity be verified when the horizontal art history becomes a set of practices, which, in fact, was the objective of Piotrowski, interested in practice rather than theory.

Due to the limited length of the text, I will refer only to a single example of such a step backwards towards the base, which, by the way, according to the non-alienative criteria of progress, is a step forward. The rationale for the English-language character of twentieth-century art history is aptly described in Serge Guilbaut's book, which Piotrowski eagerly read.[45] English seen as the language of capitalism and global markets and other Western languages mediated the work of modernists (even if we accept Piotrowski's idealistic vision) already at the stage of information flow and contacts of what Piotrowski claims to be an international milieu. These took place in Western languages, which constituted the means of production of both art and, secondarily, art history. The monopolisation of these means of production becomes visible only in the case of the analysis of the costs of this communication, which Piotrowski perceives as horizontal. Because it was the access to the means of production that determined the distribution of capital, including symbolic capital. In a word, for a French, German or English-speaking artist, the costs of this "horizontal" communication were significantly lower than for artists from the so-called periphery, which obviously questions their horizontality understood as an equality criterion. Moreover, access to them was class-related. Herein lies an important difference between Western artists who,

although they also had different and limited access to other means of production, had at their disposal, to an extent unlimited by class stratification, their own Western languages, which gave them an a priori privileged position in access to the means of production. This fact partially obscures the exclusions arising within the centres of vertical art history and, thus, seemingly reduces the usefulness of horizontal art history for Western art history. I insist, however, that the proper horizon of the horizontal art history in Piotrowski's approach is class analysis and, as postulated by the researcher in his last book, a move away from formal analysis towards material analysis, which, I believe, must address the base.[46] The categories of West and East as well as centre and periphery, thus, appear to be only as a derivative of the map of capital concentration. It indicates the areas of capital accumulation located partly along, but partly across these divisions. Marina Gržinić aptly addresses this problem, pointing precisely to the essential manner of the critique of capitalism.[47] It also helps explore Piotrowski's fundamental problem of the role of essentialist conceptual categories, such as nation, in artistic and historical narratives created on the periphery, and their relation to the horizontal histories of art he postulates. Considering this issue, Piotrowski asks a question, embedded in Marxism, about the material premises behind national constructions of modern art history, and thus, he clearly abandons the construct of the nation located in the domain of the superstructure, in the direction of its material conditions—i.e. those which remain on the side of the base. The recognition of selected Western languages as means of production, the possession of which conditions the accumulation of symbolic capital, also explains the marginalisation of certain Western countries, for example, the area of Scandinavian art and its absence from the canon. The class perspective and class geography clearly prevent the abrogation of the categories of West and East discussed within art theory,[48] not as inherent categories of the superstructure but as those defining the primary structure of distributing capital and means of production and, thus, the right to time, and ultimately of history or art history. Only the detachment of the centre–periphery categories from the superstructure makes them operational.

Writing art history in terms of the struggle for the right to a time free from capitalist appropriation also enables a critical analysis of Piotrowski's appreciation of the categories of freedom and democracy at the expense of depreciating the category of equality. Adopting a Marxist perspective clearly indicates how freedom exists as a function of equality and is secondary to it. I am referring here to the excerpt from Marx's considerations cited by Łagosz, in which he states that "the conditions of alienation violate the principle of freedom (as self-determination)".[49] Only such a non-alienative definition of freedom allows the disruption of what Boris Buden terms an equation of democracy and capitalism, and which Piotrowski often gets entangled in his books.[50] The class-based analysis of art works and art discourse and the definition of both in terms of labour help, moreover, to analyse the phenomenon addressed by Hans Abbing and Julia Bryan-Wilson of a lack of recognition of art work as labour. From the perspective adopted by Marx/Łagosz, it seems as accumulated as (others') free time, to which labourers of art are not eligible, however. It is necessary, at this point, to turn to the forms of alienation of the labour of art historians. It can be inferred, although Piotrowski does not devote any attention to it, that in the vertical model labour alienation concerns academics who do not possess the means of production. I disagree with Antonio Negri, who qualifies intellectual labour as not subject to alienation, arguing that intellectuals are in possession of the means of production in

the form of their own intellectual capacities.[51] After all, we are all dependent on the means of production at the disposal of publishing corporations and on grants and forced to calculate where it is more profitable to publish because of the scoring classification. Researchers located on the periphery also have, many times, lower salaries than those working in the centres, inferior access to the means of production in the form of books and articles and funding systems, and they have no natural command of conference languages; hence, they are not infrequently forced to invest in their own work (buying books, shipping, translations) funds disproportionately high to the remuneration they receive. Their work is, therefore, alienating and often boils down to work in local languages, which they can simply afford. The alienating criteria of progress prevailing in science contribute to the alienation of the production relations of the scientific community. Vertical art history is further problematised by the division of labour inherent in it, whereby the efforts of female and male academics from marginalised regions with scarce linguistic competence are often treated as a source to be drawn upon in accumulating symbolic capital in the form of comparative analysis. Horizontal art histories understood as a certain horizon would not only have to take into account non-alienative criteria of progress but would also need to confront the problem of alienation of labour as they are not methods, but a tool in the hands of concrete, politically, but also class-situated subjects. Taken as a tool, horizontal art history not only potentially opens itself up to class analysis, but also seems, unlike the various methodologies of art history, to enable a crucial shift from the superstructure towards the base, within which only horizontality is actually possible.

What matters, then, is a step backwards (in terms of alienative criteria of progress) not only towards depreciated and marginalised narratives or areas but also towards all that art history treated as subservient and secondary, namely, class relations and conflicts. This is, therefore, a move, as Piotrowski claims in his last book, towards material analysis, critical towards formal analysis.[52] The former, referring to the base rather than the superstructure, appears an indispensable element of horizontal art history.

Notes

1 Magdalena Radomska, "Marxist Endnotes to Alterglobalist Art History," trans. Marcin Turski, in Piotr Piotrowski, *A Global Approach to the Art of Eastern Europe,* trans. Anna Brzyski, Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory (Ljubljana: Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory, 2022); Magdalena Radomska, "What Isn't Orthodox Horizontal Art History," *Umění*, no. 2 (December 2021): 183–5.
2 Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, trans. Anna Brzyski, (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), 11–29.
3 Ibid., 272.
4 Marek Łagosz, *Marks. Praca i czas* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2012), 333–42.
5 Ibid., 340.
6 Karl Marx, *Capital:Volume One* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2011), 46.
7 Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), 115–34.
8 Karol Marx, *Kapitał. Krytyka ekonomii politycznej, t3, cz.*2, trans. Edward Lipiński, Julian Maliniak, (Warszawa:Książka i Wiedza, 1959), 400–1, after Łagosz, *Marks*, 367.
9 Łagosz, *Marks*, 367.
10 Ibid, 368.
11 Antonio. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks. Volume 1* ed. Quintin Hoare, Geoffrey Nowell, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

12 Giorgio Agamben, *Nudities*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 43–5.
13 Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 19.
14 Ibidem., 13–14.
15 Piotrowski, *A Global Approach*.
16 Ibid.
17 Piotr Piotrowski, "O horyzontalnej historii sztuki", *Artium Questiones XX* (2009), 62.
18 Radomska, "What Isn't Orthodox Horizontal Art History", 184.
19 Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1994), 112–5. See also: Matthew Rampley, "Networks, Horizons, Centres and Hierarchies: On the Challenges of Writing on Modernism in Central Europe", Umění, no. 2 (December 2021), 145–163.
20 Karol Marx, *German Ideology*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), 67.
21 Piotrowski, *O horyzontalnej*, 68.
22 Alexander Kiossev, "Otherness, Again: Notes on Self-Colonising Cultures", in *After the Wall*, ed. Bojana Pejić, David Elliott (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1999), 114–7, after Piotr Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, trans. Anna Brzyski, (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 47.
23 Marx, *German Ideology*, 394.
24 Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1972), 198–9.
25 Ibid., 197.
26 Ibid., 198–9.
27 Ibid., 206.
28 Piotrowski, *O horyzontalnej*, 67.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 66–7.
31 That perceives capitalism as oppressive both for proletariat, but also - for capitalists, see Marx, *Capital*.
32 Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 206.
33 Piotr Piotrowski, *Znaczenia modernizmu: w stronę historii sztuki polskiej po 1945 roku* [*Meanings of Modernism: Towards a History of Polish Art after 1945*] (Poznań: Rebis, 1999), 40–7.
34 Piotrowski, *O horyzontalnej*, 67.
35 Ibid., 61.
36 see Walter Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto", *Transmodernity* (Fall 2011).
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38 Magdalena Radomska, *Polityka kierunków neoawangardy węgierskiej 1966–80* (Kraków: Universitas, 2013).
39 Łagosz, *Marks*, 410–4.
40 Ibid., 411.
41 Ibid., 412.
42 Ibid., 413.
43 Ibid.
44 Radomska, "Marxist Endnotes to Alterglobalist Art History". tbd.
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46 Piotr Piotrowski, *Globalne ujęcie sztuki Europy Wschodniej*, (Poznań: Rebis, 2016), 23.
47 Marina Gržinić, Šefik Tatlić, *Necropolitics, Racialization, and Global Capitalism: Historicization of Biopolitics and Forensics of Politics, Art, and Life*, (Lanham: Lexington Press, 2004).
48 See Maria. Hlavajova, *Former West: Art and the Contemporary after 1989* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2017).
49 Łagosz, *Marks*, 415.
50 B. Buden, *Transition to Nowhere Art in History after 1989* (Berlin: Archive Books, 2020).
51 Antonio Negri, *Goobye Mr Socialism* (Warszawa: Egzegeza, 2006), 51.
52 See more Radomska, "Marxist Endnotes to Alterglobalist Art History", Radomska, "What Isn't Orthodox Horizontal Art History".

11 Cultural Backwardness and Economic Backwardness

How Can Horizontal Art History Tackle Socioeconomic Issues?

Jérôme Bazin

Iván Berend, an influential historian of the economy who has dedicated his academic life, from the 1970s until today, to analysing poor regions, claims: "backwardness is a harsh reality and it is not the construct of bias or cultural prejudice".[1] With this sentence, written in his 2012 book about the European economy in the nineteenth century, and repeated in 2020 in his *Economic History of a Divided Europe*, Berend explicitly opposes research by those like Maria Todorova and Larry Wolff, who see in the observation of backwardness a projection by foreign observers who misunderstand what they observe. With his sentence, Berend grants reality and objectiveness to this designation.

The sentence is disconcerting and disturbing because the idea of backwardness seems outdated in many other parts of the academic world, for instance, those interested in horizontal art history. By reintroducing a "harsh reality" of backwardness, it pushes horizontal art history into a corner and by doing so makes visible frontiers between different realms of knowledge. The study of economy, society, culture, art, etc., produces different narratives which seem incompatible, proceeding to a collusion between different ways of writing history.

The following chapter is an attempt to clarify this antagonism and propose possible connections. It is based on observations made during research on visual arts and architecture in different contexts of socialist Europe after the Second World War, especially on some documents from the 1970s tackling the issue of economic/cultural backwardness. The geographical field of study is similar to that of Iván Berend and Piotr Piotrowski: Eastern and Central Europe, a region that is interesting for such discussions for many reasons. Firstly, as is often noted, it is a region different from Western Europe, but close to it – hence the use of terms like semi-periphery or close otherness to characterise it. Another reason (less often discussed) is the role of Russia and the Soviet Union in the region. The Russian area to the east of Eastern and Central Europe has had an ambivalent role: it can embody backwardness par excellence (associated with barbarian, non-European characteristics and nourishing a hostility born in traumatic experiences of war and occupation), but it can also represent another centre, different from the Western centres: for instance, in the artistic field, the attraction of the Russian/Soviet avant-gardes, and later, in the economic field, the interest in rapid Stalinist industrialisation. Adapting the expression "poor power" from historian Georges Sokoloff,[2] we could speak of a peripheral centre to characterise the effect of the Russian centre on Eastern and Central Europe.

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Backwardness: A Disused Concept for (Horizontal) Art History

Before becoming neglected at the end of the twentieth century, discourse on artistic backwardness was common. It corresponded to a vision of the evolution of the arts: a succession of advances, from rudimentary arts to elaborate ones, a series of passages from the simplistic and rough to the complex. It is not difficult to find examples of such discourses; they belonged to the vocabulary of the art critic and of a spontaneous perception of the arts. In Eastern and Central Europe, it is not unusual to find an inhabitant from one place speaking about the artistic backwardness of another place in the region: when an inhabitant of a city looks at art from the countryside, from a capital to a smaller city or from one country to another. In his book about Albania in the 1950s, Elidor Mëhilli quotes documents where Polish and Bulgarian delegates speak of the backwardness of Albania – for instance, the Albanian Ministry of the Interior complaining about Poles taking photographs of "beggars, badly dressed peasants along with their animals, old dirt roads, ruined houses", to the detriment of the new infrastructure that the ministry would prefer to see photographed.[3] As mentioned in the introduction, the Soviet Union frequently appears as a backward countermodel. In her book about the exchanges between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, Rachel Applebaum quotes an article on the exhibition of Soviet socialist realism in 1947 at the Mánes Gallery in Prague – the author of the article (a surrealist and not communist artist, who is still allowed to publish at this time in the 1940s) writes that the exhibition "belongs on the periphery of artistic creation" and relates it to the alleged Byzantine legacy and feudal heritage which would still be visible in the Soviet Union.[4] Similarly, regarding the "progressive" architecture elaborated by Czechoslovak planners in the late 1940s, Kimberly Zarecor asserts that "this progressive character was put in opposition to the fascism of the German and Hungarian peoples and the perceived backwardness of the Soviets".[5]

This way of presenting arts and culture is nowadays rare. The academic and museal interest for art from different parts of the world has finally relativised the idea of a succession of styles and progress of the arts. Regarding the twentieth-century art, it is now common to speak of multiple or plural modernities.[6] Thinking of the arts in terms of being backward/forward is today infrequent. The expression "horizontal art history", formulated by Piotr Piotrowski in the 2000s, encapsulates this shift. Targeting the Western-oriented organisation of art history, the intellectual operation of horizontal art history concerns space and geography, and not principally time.

Backwardness: An Obvious Fact for Economic History

In contrast, in the field of economics, discourse on backwardness is still very much present. In the well-known volume edited by Daniel Chirot in 1991, Robert Brenner wrote that "the problem of backwardness in Eastern Europe is a question badly posed", and yet this way of understanding economic evolution is still present.[7]

Historians have discussed, and still do, the chronology and the causes of this backwardness; in a critical way (inherited from Rosa Luxemburg's work on Polish industrial development), or in a less critical manner.[8] From one research project to the next, the question is not "are the countries backward?", but "when and how did they become backward?" At what point did the socioeconomic situation in Eastern and Central Europe become different from that in Western Europe? The early modern

period is scrutinised as the period of divergence. Was it linked to Western European colonial expansion from the sixteenth century, or with the industrial explosion of the eighteenth century? How to appreciate the demographic and economic crisis of the seventeenth century? The economic effects of the second serfdom in Northern Eastern Europe and the inscription of Southern Eastern Europe in the Ottoman economy are still vividly debated.[9] Discussions about Eastern Europe can, thus, be embedded in a global reflection on the great divergence and the question of why Western Europe grew rich.[10]

Other historical studies show that backwardness was a concern for politicians and intellectuals from different periods. When Yanni Kotsonis analyses the economic politics of the Russian Empire from the abolition of serfdom until the First World War,[11] he shows that the denominations of backward (отсталый) and undeveloped (неразвитой) were used by Russian politicians when they failed to transform the peasantry as they wanted. The growing debt, the economic failure of cooperatives, the impossibility to transform the Russian peasantry into a group of small independent landowners (a model that was supposed to explain the success of British agriculture), all contributed to defining the peasants as unable to change, unenlightened and obscure (темный). Disappointments about economic results produced stereotypes that made the failure explainable and ineluctable. Peasants were doomed to be passive, without the spirit of entrepreneurship, whereas Yanni Kotsonis has found evidence of their (often unsuccessful) attempts to adapt to the changing situations. Backwardness discourse is not solely the creation of Western European observers or posterior apprehension by historians; it was the creation of unsuccessful reformists and is a part of that history.

We hear the same preoccupations about backwardness all throughout the twentieth century. After the First World War, the aspiration for development coexisted with the temptation to withdraw from international competition and mutual comparison, according to the ideas defended by the Romanian economist and politician Mihail Manoilescu – the ineluctably backward countries had nothing to gain from international exchange.

After the Second World War, the installation of socialist states brought a new perspective. Socialism promised to break the economic dependency towards Western Europe, develop a new prosperous system and establish another international sphere. The Soviet motto "catch up and overtake" (догнать и перегнать), translated into different Eastern European languages, promised to find a way of doing things as well as the West, even better, while affirming differences. The period of the 1960s–70s is certainly original in this history: the general elevation of the living standard for large parts of the population led to the elaboration of the "theory of convergence" in international organisations and it highlighted the similarities between Western and Eastern Europe. The example of the village of Tázlár in Hungary is well known, firstly through the inquiries of sociologist Ferenc Erdei, and then (from 1976 on) by American anthropologist Chris Hann.[12] The two of them observed changes in agricultural production, the introduction of mechanisation, the migration of peasants, the changes in material life in relation to time, even in the definition of poverty (before collectivisation "working for others" was a mark of poverty, whereas afterwards, it became irrelevant). They formulated the thesis of the embourgeoisement of the peasants (in the sense of both getting closer to Western bourgeois behaviour and developing civic interest).

Throughout the whole bloc, the crisis of the 1980s put an end to both the reality and illusion of convergence. The deterioration of the economic situation was a firm reminder of the dysfunctionality of the planned economy, and the debt of socialist countries revealed their dependence on Western banks, underlining their lack of economic sovereignty.

The post-communist situation after 1989 can be appreciated in different ways: either as a period when that region of Europe finally caught up with Western parts (through inscription into the European market and the capitalist economy). Or, as a new chapter in the history of marginalisation, Eastern Europe remaining in a secondary position, without commanding functions, without high-value production and without a sector of "research and development".[13]

To conclude this quick overview of this economic history, the past and current situation in Eastern and Central Europe can be read in two contradictory ways: as a history of postponed economic development due to lost opportunities (imperial blockages, interwar isolationism, socialism) or as a history of constant marginalisation with no actual possibility of integrating into the Western bloc. The Swiss historian of the economy, Gilbert Rist, considers that the discourse on development is based on unfounded hopes, empty promises to catch up to a Western level.[14]

But the most important point for our discussion is that a backward characteristic seems undeniable, no matter how it is approached and explained. It seems to be objective because it refers to a series of indicators. In the field of work: indicators about weak production, low productivity, an absence of "surplus", use of outdated machines, a lack of material. In the domestic field: indicators about housing, equipment, water supply. In the field of "human development", as it's called in international organisations from the 1970s: indicators about access to education, literacy, health, free time. Recurrent waves of emigration from Eastern to Western Europe can also be interpreted as evidence of the division between periphery and core. Let's read again the full citation by Iván Berend:

> Backwardness is a harsh reality, and it is not the construct of bias or cultural prejudice. It not only indicates different consumption patterns, but also expresses radically different patterns of the quality and standard of living. Backwardness means having less food to eat and less clothing to wear, living in inferior or substandard housing, receiving less or lower-quality healthcare and education, and enjoying less entertainment and culture. 'Perceptions' alone cannot explain away the fact that advanced countries and regions had two or three times more goods and services available for their population than did backward ones. 'Different cultures' cannot justify the fact that in 19th century Europe people in advanced regions had a life expectancy of fifty-five years, while those in backward regions had that of only thirty-five years.[15]

In the rest of the chapter, we would like to see what an art historian can do to confront this gap between two ways of writing history, two intellectual scaffoldings that are far from each other. Despite their distance, it seems possible to draw some ropes between them and go from one to the other like a tightrope walker. This approach is not guided by irenic and conciliatory motivations – after all, it is conceivable that discourses are incompatible and antagonist. It rather comes from the observation that horizontal art

history can, sometimes, be equipped to tackle some issues. We see two ropes: a dyad of concentration/dispersion and a dyad of richness/poverty.

Concentration/Dispersion

The diversified research referring to the geography of art intensively discusses the existence of artistic centres: Florence during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; Rome during the seventeenth century; Paris, London, Berlin, New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles throughout the twentieth century; etc. There are different sorts of critiques against centres. We will mention only three main sorts.

The first one criticises the privileges associated with the status of the centre. The centres have different privileges: to make visible (the recognition of an artist from a periphery depends on the centre), ignore and neglect (thanks to a sanctioned ignorance), produce generalisations (objects from the centre are supposed to be relevant in different contexts, whereas objects from a periphery are specific and restricted to one context).

The second sort of critique insists on the fact that a centre is actually composed of different spaces. The history of Paris as an artistic centre concerned different parts of the city: the districts of Montmartre, Saint Germain des Prés, Montparnasse, Quartier Latin.[16] The same can be said about New York with Greenwich Village, Soho, the Bronx, Brooklyn.[17] Such a fragmented approach insists on the differences between the parts. Where is actually the centre? Is a central city a sum of internal margins? It is a relevant critique but also a mild one – the distance between Manhattan and the Bronx is still smaller than the one between Manhattan and a remote place in Southern America.

The third critique is probably the most radical because it attacks what appears as the most tangible element that defines a centre: its density, its concentration. A centre is a centre because it concentrates a high number of artists, ateliers, commissioners, buyers, galleries, museums, places of formation, audiences. In their ground-breaking article from 1979, Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg define the centre precisely by concentration.[18] They explain the expected consequences of density: the multiplication of professional opportunities and increased artistic innovation and creativity. It is this chain of association (concentration/opportunity/creativity) that justifies the existence of a centre and that is interesting to critically question. In the rest of their article, Castelnuovo and Ginzburg present examples where this chain is jeopardised: Avignon in the geography of the Trecento, Umbria in the geography of the Renaissance, Milan at the time of European avant-gardes. They show that the peripheral situation stimulates artistic divergences and deviations and, hence, what we can call creativity. A position "further back" actually stimulated creation – on the other hand, we might associate concentration and a dense network of opportunities with conformism.

In the archives of artists, it is not rare to find similar considerations about the perception of centre. When we read a 1972 letter by Alex Mlynárčik deploring "the aesthetic of the petit and grand bourgeois presented in Venice, the morbidity in Kassel or the exhibition of Pompidou with its pompesité",[19] we find confirmation that for an artist like Mlynárčik, centres and their density are more repulsive than appealing. Mlynárčik, an artist based in Bratislava and doing performances, travelled to different places in Europe, before and after the Prague Spring, despite the difficulties imposed by the Czechoslovak dictatorship. In this letter, he speaks about his travel in 1972 to Venice, Napoli, Paris and Kassel – written in French it is addressed to Raoul-Jean Moulin, a French communist art critic (who is in Paris, but at the margins of French

political and artistic life). In this quote, he minimises the creative potential of three artistic centres of the 1970s (Venice, Kassel and Paris). The word "morbidity" used to describe documenta 5 in Kassel represents a lack of creativity – according to him, art does not live there. Regarding the exhibition at the Grand Palais in Paris, the made-up word pompesité (a pun associating the name Pompidou, French president from 1969 to 74, involved in the promotion of contemporary art, and the adjective pompeux, pompous, pedantic – a word with the same stem exists in Eastern European languages) underlines a feature of the centre: the false impression of grandeur.

The rest of the letter proves that Mlynárčik is concerned with localisation and the relationship to space.

> You have to find a place in life and become a worker on this place – like a stone carver. To work. To reconnect to life, to touch life; it is not a new idea – finally it has created art history, it is not so long that we have lost the red line. Remember Mayakovsky and the Soviet avant-garde.

It is no surprise to hear someone working on performances and happenings to insist on the importance of being embedded in a context and work in the here and now. But it is interesting to see that the place the artist is supposed to work with is not defined – it can be anywhere, in a centre or in a periphery. Actually, it does not need to be defined because the artistic "work" precisely redefines the place, gives importance to it and makes the hierarchisation of spaces irrelevant.

We might also note that the reference which comes to his mind is the Soviet avant-garde of the 1920s, proving that, despite the tense relationship between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, some parts of Soviet art still constituted a horizon for him and shaped a geography of art oriented to the Soviet Union or at least where the Soviet Union played a role.

Mlynárčik's letter also questions the meaning of artistic travel. He went to the different central places, was curious to see and was not ignorant (his position was, of course, different from that of a party ideologue who would reject any forms of experiment in art). But the centres had no effect on him. In a way, centres attract but are not necessarily desirable. The geographical libido (the desire to be in one place, to work in one place) is aroused by other considerations than the fact of belonging to a centre.

How far can we go with the simple letter of an artist? Here, we bump into a methodological issue. For many economic models, the chain concentration/opportunities/creativity is obvious. Can we oppose this letter to the wide range of indicators elaborated by economic history? A specific discourse such as Mlynárčik wrote in 1972 opens up a discussion on concentration and creativity.

Another random archival document confirms that such critics can be found in fields other than the artistic. Coming from the archives of the trade union of rural workers in Italy, the document is the transcribed discourse an Italian trade unionist made in Sofia in 1971 when he was invited by the equivalent Bulgarian trade union.[20] In the frame of collaboration between Bulgarian and Italian organisations, the Italian speaker praises the situation in the Bulgarian countryside: the success of collectivisation, the abolition of the land price and the access to healthcare and social services in the rural context. He then speaks about the struggles of Italian rural workers to get a decent house, environmental degradation due to the new models of production and the depopulation of the countryside in different parts of Europe – what he calls *l'esodo tumultuoso*. He

evokes the slums (*tuguri*) in Italian cities, the expectations of the peasants who go there and are disillusioned.

> We speak too often of the city, we are probably fascinated by its lights, like a model of *civiltà* that different parts of the countryside should achieve. It is maybe possible that the city is a point of reference for the socialist countries, but for Italy the city, in particular the big city, cannot be considered as a model.[21]

The urban/rural division plays the role here of synecdoche to centre/periphery; the speech can be read as an analysis of the lack of expected opportunities in cities within the capitalist frame – contrary to what, he claims, might be said about cities within the socialist frame. Certainly, we could oppose this statement with many more testimonies of people who migrated to cities and benefited from opportunities, but such a document weakens the association between concentration and opportunities.

Such considerations can resonate with elements of the history of architecture and urbanism during the twentieth century: the efforts to avoid the density and to create new forms of cities and countryside which go beyond oppositions between concentration and dispersion.[22] The reflection on urbanism has been, to a great extent, a reflexion on concentration. This topic seems also to be a relevant field of reflection for horizontal art history and a possible way of connecting it with economic considerations.

Richness/Poverty

One possible way of defining horizontal art history is to see it as an enterprise to equally consider works of art coming from different places and give value to objects that are neglected, ignored, unseen, considered only as epigones and pale imitations of other artistic productions from the centres. By describing and inscribing them in their own complexity, they are given a visibility and consistency. This definition and the following consequences do not correspond to the perspective by Piotr Piotrowski, who did not express the issues in these terms; we propose a possible extension of the definition of horizontal art history that seems to us consistent with its general idea.

In this perspective, horizontal art history shows how *rich* an object is. When we say that an object is rich or poor, we do not refer principally to the cost of its realisation nor to its price (the price that a commissioner or the buyer paid for it). It refers to the ability of the objects to appeal, catch the spectator's eye and, potentially, provoke discourses and discussions. Someone interested in horizontal art history tries to arouse this interest for negligible art. Horizontal art history *gives credit*. It considers objects even if they don't have a price on the art market, or a very low price.

The practice of horizontal art history (again, as we understand it here) is different from a sociology of artistic valorisation, i.e. studies that reconstitute what has been valorised and how it has been valorised – in the sociological movement, it is the responsibility of historical actors to give value and the researcher is supposed to be an external observer of this process of valorisation. On the contrary, such horizontal art history aims to produce a valorisation – an egalitarian valorisation.

The practice of giving value to un-valorised parts of art history can be approached through past initiatives. Even if the writings of Piotrowski are mainly focused on avant-gardes and neo avant-gardes, the practice of this horizontal art history can approach enterprises on other objects: the long tradition of folklore, anonymous

handcrafts, vernacular construction in the field of architecture, domestic and amateur photography and movies. Creations that seem at the first glance repetitive, dull, or with poor material, appear differently in the light of such discourse.

In the long history of organising such minor arts, it is interesting to hear discussions at different periods that are not so different from the academic ones around horizontal art history. For instance, when we look into the archives of the Soviet Union about amateur art,[23] we find meeting protocols where artists and art supervisors discuss how to consider these objects. The context of such a session in the Soviet Union of the 1970s is different from current academic circles, but the problems resonate. Should the objects have a price and, if so, what price? Should they be purchased by museums? Should they be shown in specific exhibitions or integrated in "general" exhibitions? Should they be presented as epigone of professional art? Should a catalogue be made with reproductions? What kind of reproductions? Which texts for the catalogue? Many discussions revolved around the geographical origin of the objects and the commission hesitated between two ways of presenting this origin: either as coming from "the countryside" (even though many amateurs lived in cities) or coming from peripheries of the Soviet Union (that is the Siberian region and the Soviet Republics of Central Asia and Caucasus). Finally, even in a context where these arts were supposed to be officially supported, the question "is this really art?" came up regularly.

Amateur art then was clearly instrumentalised in a socialist and patriot way by Soviet authorities and we can read this as an effort from Moscow to create and impose an identity and tradition to peripheries. But we can simultaneously read it as an attempt to give value to what was perceived as having little or no value. What seems poor is actually rich.

In Italy, the interest in vernacular architecture led to the expression of "pride in modesty" (*orgoglio deglia modesta*), which provides an opportune formulation for various initiatives and one possible ambition of horizontal art history.[24]

When Iván Berend speaks of the "harsh reality" of backwardness, he reveals a vision of a singular reality of poverty and homogenises different conditions. This unifying vision comes from some spectacular images of poverty: people living in shanties and slums, clothed in rags or idle unemployed people loitering on streets. Poverty becomes an absolute that affects every sphere of existence. It becomes an overwhelming condition, condemning each individual to be miserable. Such an expression as "pride in modesty" shows that there were other ways of approaching poverty and richness. What is at stake is the frontier between poverty and modesty, the difference between being poor and being modest.

We can juxtapose another voice to the earlier quote by Iván Berend, verses written by Stefan Stambolov in 1875:

> Не щеме ний богаство,
> Не щеме ний пари,
> А искаме свобода,
> Човешки правдини!
>
> We don't want richness,
> We don't want money,
> But we want freedom,
> Human rights!

Stefan Stambolov is more known for his action as a Bulgarian political leader in the 1880s and 1890s than for this poem. He wrote the verses when he was young (he was born in 1854) in the specific context of the mobilisation before the Russian–Turkish war of 1877–78 that led to national independence. Belonging then to the left wing of the national movement, he wrote this "marching song" to accompany the so-called revival. When Bulgaria became independent, he was one of the main political leaders, all at once liberal, dictatorial and a moderniser. He is a complex figure, with many faces, of which these verses show only one. Since his assassination in 1895, the interpretation of his activities has been controversial. The quote was reproduced by the communist authorities in 1976 on a plaque for the commemoration of the uprisings – among a series of quotes from revolutionaries, this plaque is in the forest of Oborishte, a remote village between Sofia and Plovdiv, birthplace of the mobilisation.

The lines, with their boastful and blustering tone, are not easy to understand – whose money don't we want? The opposition between money and freedom seems particularly juvenile and naïve. But such poetical affirmation also questions the definition of poverty and richness and what the notion meant for his contemporaries.

Conclusion

The different archives from the 1970s quoted here (the letter of Czechoslovak artist Mlynárčik, the speech of the Italian trade unionist in Sofia, the discussions in the commission about amateur art in the Soviet Union, the plaque in Oborishte with Stambolov's verses) are isolated voices that do not offer a theoretical frame. They certainly constitute a motley and random group of sources; they are different kinds of discourses (a private letter, a speech, a report, a public writing). But what they have in common is rekindling interrogations about horizontal art history when a researcher finds them today by chance. They show how academic theoretical questions were embedded in various social experiences. And they all suggest that both conceptual pairs (density/dispersion and richness/poverty) can be productive fields of research for horizontal art history, in addition to the usual pair centre/periphery.

Other notions would certainly be worth considering, such as sophistication/unsophistication, for instance, which we find in the recent book *Precolonial African Material Culture* by Vincent Tarikhu Farrar about sub-Saharan Africa.[25] The book begins with a contrast that is similar to our starting point. Vincent Tarikhu Farrar reminds us of the worldwide interest in sub-Saharan art; even if actual knowledge about the objects is still narrow, they are respected as works of art – they are objects in collections, it is common knowledge that they inspired Western avant-gardes during the twentieth century, and there are currently feuds over who owns them and who has the right to present them. Nevertheless, in the field of economy, Vincent Tarikhu Farrar notes the general depreciation of sub-Saharan economic systems before colonisation, which he presents as an alleged "paucity of economic, technological, and more broadly, social dynamism".[26] To thwart this second idea, he offers a synthesis of (mainly archaeological) research, about the techniques of terracing, the invention of agricultural tools (that make an observation about the absence of the plow irrelevant) and the techniques of metallurgy and construction. To valorise these techniques, he recurrently calls them "sophisticated", which, sometimes, seems to mean "adapted to the environment", but, sometimes, to have a larger meaning that stays undefined and which is certainly deserving of further discussion.

Let's Return a Last Time to Iván Berend's Quote for Two Conclusions

His books, in which we find the quote, offer spatial categorisations and maps. In the book about nineteenth-century economy, a map on page 9 divides Eastern and Central Europe into two ensembles. One gathers regions "semi-successfully modernized (agricultural–industrial)": the Baltic provinces, Russian-partitioned Poland, the Eastern part of the German Empire, the main parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The other concerns Galicia, the kingdom of Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and European Turkey and is categorised through a "failure of modernisation". In the book *Economic History of a Divided Europe*, a similar map is also found in the introduction, on page 13, within the current borders of Europe. The first group (which now includes Czech Republic and Slovakia) appears under the question: "Central Europe and the Baltics: trapped in middle-income periphery?". The second group is now called "the Russia-Turkey-Balkans low-income region". Here is not the place to launch a discussion about Eastern and Central Europe; it is, however, interesting to see how consideration of peripheral areas always creates subdivisions. As soon as we say "to be at the forefront / to be backward", we create an opposition not only between centre and periphery but also (and maybe most of all) subdivisions among centres and subdivisions among peripheries, and we create an endless dynamic of promotion and marginalisation.

Secondly, our discussion reveals a very significant uncertainty in the practice of horizontal art history, a hesitation between two critical positions: to reveal spatial hierarchies or contest them. In the first direction, the existence of centre and peripheries is denounced; in the second, it is doubted. The second position is more demanding and challenging, even more so if we include the economy. The issue would then be: should we stop considering Western Europe as a centre and as rich? The historian Adam Tooze writes in his study of the Nazi economy:

> as in many semi-peripheral economies today, the German population in the 1930s was already thoroughly immersed in the commodity world of Hollywood, but at the same time many millions of people lived three of four to a room, without indoor bathrooms or access to electricity. Motor vehicles, radios and other accoutrements of modern living such as electrical household appliances were the aspiration of the social elite.[27]

We can add that during the hard times of the 1930s, many Americans also did not experience "the commodity world of Hollywood". There is something refreshing in presenting Germany or the United States as *not so rich* countries. Impoverishing the Western part of the world (a perspective squarely opposed to Berend's point of view) is a provocative and somehow inconsistent enterprise. But it is maybe a necessary intellectual operation to conceive the egalitarian geography proposed by horizontal art history.

Notes

1 Iván Berend, *Economic History of Nineteenth Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 11, Iván Berend, *Economic History of a Divided Europe: Four Diverse Regions in an Integrating Continent* (Abington: Routledge, 2020), 13.

2 Georges Sokoloff, *La Puissance pauvre: Une histoire de la Russie de 1815 à nos jours* (Paris: Fayard, 1993).

3 Elidor Mëhilli, *From Stalin to Mao: Albania and the Socialist World* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2017), 153.
4 Rachel Applebaum, *Empire of Friends: Soviet Power and Socialist Internationalism in Cold War Czechoslovakia* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2019), 43.
5 Kimberly Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945–1960* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 9.
6 Catherine Grenier, ed. *Modernités plurielles* (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2013).
7 *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe: Economics and Politics from the Middle Ages until the Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Daniel Chirot (Oakland: University of California Press, 1991), 15.
8 Jacek Kochanowicz, *Backwardness and Modernization: Poland and Eastern Europe in the 16th-20th Centuries* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).
9 Markus Cerman, *Villagers and Lords in Eastern Europe, 1300–1800* (London: Red Globe Press, 2012).
10 Prasannan Parthasarathi, *Why Europe Grew Rich and Asia Did Not: Global Economic Divergence 1600–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
11 Yanni Kotsonis, *Making Peasants Backward. Agricultural Cooperatives and the Agrarian Question in Russia, 1861–1914* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999).
12 Chris Hann, "Backwardness Revisited: Time, Space and Civilization in Rural Eastern Europe," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 57 (4) (2015): 881–911.
13 Румен Аврамов, *Стопанският XX век на България* (Sofia: Център за либерални стратеги, 2001).
14 Gilbert Rist, *Le Développement: Histoire d'une croyance occidentale* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2013).
15 Berend, *Economic History of Nineteenth Century Europe*, 11.
16 Julie Verlaine, "Rive droite, rive gauche. Centres et périphéries artistiques à Paris 1945–1975" in *Grenzen der Zentralität*, ed. Myriam Geiser, Dominique Rademacher, and Lucie Taieb (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2011), 179–200.
17 Lauren Rosati, *Alternative Histories: New York Art Spaces, 1960–2010* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012).
18 Enrico Castelnuovo, Carlo Guinzburg, *Centro e periferia nella storia dell'arte italiana* (Rome: Officina Libraria, 2019).
19 Musée d'Art contemporain du Val-de-Marne (MAC VAL), Centre de documentation, Archives Raoul-Jean Moulin, Moul.EE/004.
20 Archivio storico Donatella Turtura, fondo Federbraccianti, busta n°629, "intervento da M. a Sofia, sett. 1971".
21 Ibid.
22 Nikolai Roskamm, *Dichte: eine transdisziplinäre Dekonstruktion* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011), Wolfgang Sonne, *Urbanity and Density in 20th Century Urban Design* (Berlin: DOM Publishers, 2017).
23 Российский государственный архив литературы и искусства (Ргали), collection n°2082, inventory n°6, archive n°2533: "Протокол совещания комиссии по самостоятельному изобразительному творчеству (20.01.1971)".
24 Michelangelo Sabatino, *Orgoglio della modestia: Architettura moderna italiana e tradizione vernacolare* (Milan: Francoangeli, 2011).
25 Vincent Tarikhu Farrar, *Precolonial African Material Culture: Combatting Stereotypes of Technological Backwardness* (Washington: Lexington Books, 2020).
26 Ibid.
27 Adam Tooze, *The Wage of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 24.

12 Horizontal Art History
Endangered Species

Edit András

One of the latest outcomes of the East-Central European region's constant discursive urge to redefine its position in art history is the concept of horizontal art history,[1] coined by the late Piotr Piotrowski. The notion is as intriguing as it is fragile. This text focuses on the potential benefits and also attempts to uncover the neglected side of the theory.[2] But most importantly, it aims to shed light on its current insecure, endangered position.

Back in the 1990s, confrontation with post-Cold War conditions, and their rearranged but still unequal power relations, generated diverse feelings among scholars in the post-Socialist countries. These included not only disappointment, anger and criticism over unequal treatment but also the fear of losing the attention associated with the privileged position of the 'Cold War Other'.[3] It was not enough anymore to be located behind the Iron Curtain and to speak from an oppositional position. The direction of motion between the two parts of Europe also changed; it was no longer Western intellectuals travelling to the 'grey zone' of Europe to discover the voice of the oppressed, but instead, those in the margins of the new Europe were expected to take their fate into their own hands and articulate their own voices in a common language, in the new lingua franca, English.[4] Thus, East-Central European actors of the art scene were faced with two choices: staying hopelessly trapped in the past and in a parochial world of national art history, or entering the tough competition in the wider global arena. Piotr Piotrowski chose the second option. Tracing the genealogy of his account, in 1998, he criticized the mythology of universalism which classified art production into a vertical and hierarchical order based on their geographical location, regarding the West as etalon.[5] In 2004, he did not lament the loss of the integrated but submissive position anymore and argued for regionalization.[6] In 2006, he was speaking about the 'two voices of art history', borrowing the notion from Hans Belting[7] – whose account had a strong influence on him –, which anticipated his own theory, named horizontal art history, and launched in 2008.

In the extended world, new competitors outside of the dominating Cold War binary also demanded recognition; the ex-Third World, the recent Global South, that is, the 'post-colonial Others'. Actually, these fellow travellers vehemently and efficiently criticized the hegemonic and normative art historical narrative and advocated entitlement beyond the scope of the limited and narrow path of Western art history. It took time for those included in Western art history – albeit with a secondary status – to realize, acknowledge and accept that the ex-Socialist bloc, the Other within Europe, is just one of the many margins. Piotrowski was well aware of the heavy-weight competitors coming from the ex-Western colonies in the Middle East or East Asia with the

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agenda of Postcolonialism. He referred to Edward Said's famous notion of the 'Other' modifying it to 'not-quite-Other' or a 'close Other'[8] with regard to the East-Central European region and also adapted the idea of 'provincializing Europe',[9] transforming it into the phrase 'provincializing the West'.[10] However, he did not refer to the radical theory of decolonization originating from South America and the Caribbean.[11] He did not argue for radical distancing from the Western canon or for tabula rasa. Rather, he aimed to secure place, visibility and presence on an equal footing for East-Central Europe, while 'reversing and overturning the dominant art-historical narrative'.[12] He eliminated the hierarchy of the positioning built into the 'universal art history' by shifting the alliances and challenging the central position of the Western canon by both exposing and overcoming the limitations of the binary opposition. The method he offered was levelling and comparison: firstly, to put on the same level, side by side, the various art histories of the multiple centres and margins by removing any hierarchical or subordinate relations between them, and second, to compare them without prioritizing values. According to this theory, the necessary act of equalizing should be twofold.[13] On the one hand, it presupposes the manoeuver of 'localizing' and 'provincializing' the centre. On the other hand, it assumes an analogue process on the other side, meaning that 'The Other must also take a fresh look at itself, define its position and the place from which it speaks'.[14] This meant self-awareness and valuation of the position the region had, instead of feeling constant shame due to the secondary position and thus a constant need to 'catch up'. This view was motivated by his strong belief that 'one can see much more from the margins' than from the centre.[15] At the same time, instead of sticking to the secondary position within the prioritized first world position, this perspective offered alliance with the post-colonial world. This was a new, updated approach to secure access to the global discourse on equal rights by carving out a space for the region in the alliance of parallel histories. The question is, with what to contribute to this alliance? What could be considered are its heavily loaded, turbulent historical experiences with ruptures; huge critical potential, richness in visions and utopias and constant alertness against authoritarianism having experienced them in all formations, colours and even combinations.

The position on the margins was admired so much by Piotrowski,[16] that it was even offered to the centres, since it 'quite often unconsciously, due to the ideology of [the] universalization of modern art, ignores the significance of place … If art is universal, the place from which it speaks does not matter'.[17] In the theory of horizontal art history, space does matter and the lack of it in the universal history of art was seen as a handicap. Piotrowski attributed privileged position to the margins from which he assumed a better sight in every direction than in the self-absorbed centre. He envisioned a momentum for the centre 'to catch up', having a unique chance 'to revise its self-perception in light of the studies focused on the periphery, horizontal art history or art histories'.[18]

After the initial burst of enthusiasm in the early years of the post-Cold War era, it gradually became painfully evident that new Europe was not placed on an equal footing with the 'old' one; neither in the political, economic nor cultural sense. While shaping his theory almost 20 years after the collapse of the Socialist system, Piotrowski had to take into account as well as that it takes two to make a bargain. Namely, that his proposal required considerable intellectual and psychological efforts from both sides. Nevertheless, the question still plagues many of us as to whether the one in a dominant power and control position would come around at all and voluntarily give up its

position of privilege, the inherent inequality for claims of reciprocity and supposed benefits; benefits attributed to the marginal position by the advanced native theorists of the peripheries but which were doubted even by many actors of the local art scenes. In reality, the latter still relentlessly yearns after the recognition of the powerful and aspires to admission to the exclusive club of the dominant art historical narrative. Precisely because of this persistent ignorance or scepticism on both sides towards the values intrinsic to the marginal position, Piotrowski relentlessly opposed the locally beloved rhetoric of 'integration' into the (Western) canon that became so popular in the post-Socialist era that its realization seemed within reach. He warned explicitly that 'integration' comes, at the price of re-identification with the subordinate, secondary position.

In reflecting on the extension of the EU and on the 'global turn' in the humanities, he shared the optimism of his contemporaries in anticipating that the system of nation states, alongside nationalism, is crumbling and might even be swept away by the process of globalization. Yet, from the post-Socialist perspective, he was hesitant to accept that a particular set of experiences with its locality had disappeared altogether as an identity marker, given that any kind of universal/global project is inherently non-spatial.[19] Thus, localization has become a key point of his horizontal art history: 'We have the "history of modern art" with no local specification, while on the other hand [outside the center] we have all kinds [of] adjectives specifying the regional'.[20]

From a Caribbean post-colonial perspective with a Haitian background, Trouillot had similar arguments in the beginning of the 2000s. His suggestion was a radical, explicit attack on the 'slot' itself, which was constructed for the 'savage' to fit into the academic disciplines. Trouillot outlined a critique of the very foundation of the West's geography of imagination, as he named it, and proposed a solution to the dilemma of the Other. His target was the 'savage slot' reserved for othering in academic discourse. His aim was to destabilize and eventually completely destroy it. Still, he believed that a transitional phase precedes the terminal phase wherein the specificities of otherness are defined. As he put it, 'to claim the specificity of otherness is to suggest a residual of historical experience that always escapes universalism exactly because history itself always involves irreducible objects'. Thus, this 'residue', the historical experience, which is always specific and localized, is the other key tenet of his theory as the 'space of the historical subject is out of reach of all metanarratives'.[21]

In this way, he opens up the possibility for an alliance into which 'the multitudes of Others, who are all Others for different reasons', can enter. Such an alliance goes against any totalizing narratives, which mute and marginalize localities and historical specificities. To translate his account into art historical narratives: it presupposes in the short term, the layering and nuancing of specificities, the addition of context and texture as an antidote to generalization and homogenization. In illuminating the pitfalls of universalism, he also gives substance to what is merely the slot of absence and negation in that narrative: the place of the Other.

To interpret Piotr Piotrowski's optimistic view from the vantage point offered by Trouillot's radical approach, it may be argued that only in the long run, after the destruction of the slot constituted for the non-universalized Others, could we reach the concept of horizontal art history?

Beneath all the excitement and confidence in joining the happy alliance of many parallel histories indicated in the hypothesis of horizontal art history, lies a paradox, or rather a deep-seated fear; that equality on the surface might result in fading

local–regional or national–specificities, peculiarities. In a harsh competition for attention and in a desperate effort to carve out space for global margins in an extended arena, those subtle distinctions that could disassociate the post-Socialist Europe within the European discourse, seemed relatively minor in comparison to the (post) colonial condition. This is a fear that seems to be justified by ignorance on both sides of the potential partnership, to be formed between the ex-second and ex-third world. It is demonstrated clearly, on the one hand, by the neglect to take into account East-Central Europe when defining the notion of 'subaltern knowledge' and 'border thinking'[22] initiated by the radical critique of Euro-centrism, and, on the other hand, by disregarding the 'decolonial option'[23] in post-Socialist theorization. In its assault on Europe-centrism, the postcolonial and even decolonial critique homogenized Europe and oversaw the 'minor difference' attributed to its eastern part,[24] while East-Central European art history has frequently forgotten to be involved in various projects of global art histories as something belonging to the deconstructed grand narrative. In other cases, the term 'postsocialism' is used to refer to 'Non-European Soviet ex-colonies'.[25]

Both spectrums, regional and national alike, were involved in Piotrowski's account despite the fact that the dilemma with regard to national art history has been largely overlooked and unrecognized in his theory. It wasn't his aim to abolish national art history at all. Quite the opposite, as it very much concerned him.[26] Trouillot struggled with a similar predicament and as a solution located the two diverse concepts ('the residue' of history, that is, otherness and break with the 'savage slot') in a timeline as consecutive stages of the same process. To solve the plaguing dilemma about the place of national history within the new theoretical concept, Piotrowski simply cut through the Gordian knot and applied diverse, even oppositional discourses on different aspects of national art histories according to their purposes and target audiences. In other words, he demonstrated a kind of flexibility of methods and approaches instead of insisting on a pure and consistent one. This translates into the parallel use of micro and macro perspectives adjusted to the constantly changing viewpoints since the concept was not seen as static and fixed but rather as a flexible one under construction. The argument goes that 'the "nation" seen from a postmodern perspective is deprived of its essential features. Post-colonial scholarly practice, however, relies on the essence of the nation to define its critical strategy and resistance to the center … in international horizontal art history, operating with the "notion" of the "nation", there must be a defense [of] the (national) subject. It is thus closer to the post-colonial interpretation than to the postmodern'.[27]

All in all, the account tried to reconcile two conflicting streams, stating that 'horizontal art history written from a micro perspective … has to make a critique of the essence of the national subject, has to deconstruct it, in order to defend the culture of the "Other" against the national mainstream'.[28] The solution was an inclusive, transnational, regional art historical narrative, firstly, combining both the macro and micro perspectives; secondly, shifting the perspective if needed, in order to negotiate values and concepts along lines other than opposition between national and international and thirdly, all of this should be done with a critical thrust and an alertness that are historically characteristic of the region's approach to historiography.

Adding the notion of time to place might provide us with a better understanding of inherent flaws and disparities within universal(izing) or global(izing) art history, both of which tend to conflate differences within various narratives. Despite the promise of

multiple and non-hierarchical temporalities advocated by contemporary critical theories, opposite approaches are far from absent since the hierarchical arrangement of places goes hand in hand with an imposed time-measuring system. We might admit that the centre–periphery dichotomy in contemporary art has been abolished, thanks to its globalized curatorial network and institutions, such as biennials all around the globe. In the eyes of the advocates of 'contemporaneity', a phenomenon regarded as substantially different from both modernity and postmodernity, 'the power to force everyone forward in broadly the same direction has been lost … multiple temporalities are the rule of these days'.[29] Thus, as opposed to modernity, which divided the world into modern beings living in the present and 'non-contemporaneous beings' living in the past, contemporaneity is understood as the synonym of 'current plurality', all belonging to the same historical time.[30] As for the locality, a kind of intellectual optimism is echoed in the account that 'particular … is now general and, perhaps forever shall be'.[31]

However, this optimism attributed to 'contemporaneity' is difficult to share while the leftovers of the concept of the universal flow of time are still with us or returned after a period of dormancy. Okwui Enwezor notes that, despite globalism's effect of abolishing temporal and spatial distances, 'there is no vantage point to observe any particular culture',[32] due to standardization and homogenization which is a concomitant outcome of globalization. His compatriot, Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie, an art historian of Nigerian origin focusing on African modernism, has a similar but much more radical and critical position. Instead of the rosy picture of 'contemporaneity' with synchronous time-settings, he rather detects a backlash, or rather a U-turn: 'the contemporary era after postmodernism has returned to modernist commitments and strategies with a vengeance, a process hereby identified as neomodernism'.[33] He calls our attention to the still existing power imbalance and the quest of the powerful for domination and supremacy. The idea of international equality is not to be taken seriously, he warns, as it proved to be nothing else than lip service; the global illusion has rapidly dispersed. He argues that due to the discursive violence and technologies of active control on the discourse, the voice and aspirations of the 'savage' Other have been carefully 'edited out of art history' and thus, modernity's chronotrope equates African art with Europe's past. Numerous scholarly accounts compare this position to that of the ex-Socialist bloc's, condemning the Western discourse for its 'stubborn incuriosity' and 'general blindness to the second world', and detecting the 'scholarly amnesia and silence'[34] surrounding the Soviet satellite countries. However, the examples of the expert on the field of Slavic studies are confined to the Soviet Union and its successor states as if the Soviet and East-Central European experience would be identical. Boris Groys, a leading scholar theorizing post-Socialist condition, raises the visibility of the 'post-communist Other' and provides insightful framework for its interpretation; however, his main focus is also on the Soviet Union and Russia,[35] leaving the other successor states of the Soviet empire and especially the satellite countries behind in terms of theory. It might be timely to provincialize the Soviet and Russian experience within the ex-East bloc discourse instead of totalizing and generalizing it, as par excellence Eastern European experience. Although it was not a declared task on Piotrowski's agenda, he always distinguished between the Soviet/Russian and East-Central European (art)history and experiments. The project and seminar series he initiated at Clark Research Institute focused explicitly on East-Central European art history writing within the ex-East bloc.[36]

In the paradigm of modernism, the time of the 'East European Other' was also considered the past; the near-past, the prehistory and memory of the 'relevant present', associated with the Western world and the centres. In this regard, the eastern part of Europe had a shared position with the non-Western world, which in the discourse was characterized by a temporal lag, as living in another time, always far behind the Western world.[37] Maria Todorova asserts an overall consensus in the discourse of history that Eastern Europe has been lagging – economically, at least – since the sixteenth and seventeenth century.[38] The temporal lag in the progress of society and economy then easily translates into backwardness regarding culture in the modernist discourse.

As of today's advanced discourse, substantial discrepancies may be detected between the conceptions of synchronicity of the present time in the theory of contemporaneity[39] and between the hidden implications of hierarchies, with regard to the different pasts.[40] In other words, while we gladly acknowledge that the dominance of the privileged present of the centres has evaporated, when it comes to dealing with the past, the discourse falls short, and the past needs to be adjusted by the 'old-time Others'. When, how and what is remembered still needs to be synchronized to the disguised yet powerful 'prime timers'. The remembrance of socialism, for instance, was seamlessly channelled into a Western construction of Cold War legacies and was praised accordingly.[41] However, the unresolved and disturbing legacies of nation building in the eastern part of Europe, with imagined or real wounds and unfulfilled aspirations, became dismissed as anachronistic by the trendsetting Western discourse since its own nation-building projects have already faded into history. Analysing the discourse of backwardness applied to Eastern Europe, Todorova pinpoints the difference between the Western and 'indigenous' scholars' accounts of nation building. According to her, the national movement is understood by Western scholars as an 'organic' Western phenomenon that has been exported, transplanted and modified in an 'alien' soil. 'The study of east European nationalism is subjected to the same evolutionary paradigm as industrialization, modernization … the latecomers are laggards resorting to mimicry without "organic" roots'.[42] She sketches the discursive process through which the 'neat mechanical bifurcation' of Europe has been constructed, asserting that Western European nationalism was based on reality producing modern principles, while the Eastern European version was obsessed with producing historical myths, a dichotomy that has been endlessly repeated ever since, lately described as the different trajectories of the 'civic' and 'ethnic nationalism'.[43] As she points out, this reductionist dichotomy 'fails to account for the incredible West European investment in and production of foundation myths … it also forgets that the impulse attempts at historical legitimation by the new Eastern European states were a response precisely to Western European obsession with rights (or lack thereof) "historic" and "non-historic" people'.[44]

In the post-Cold War euphoria, the post-Socialist countries were accused once again, in their drive to re-nationalize their coercively internationalized communities, of a 'sentimental regard for the past',[45] this time named as 'cliophilia',[46] echoing the deep-seated desire of Western academia to describe its eastern counterpart as being absorbed in its own past and history, unable to listen to the call of the time. Piotrowski was well aware of the dangers of nationalism, into which the region could easily lapse, as well as of the vulnerability of the region to accusations of reawakened national sentiments if such political instruments were needed to maintain the dominance of the Western narrative. He addressed the issue of post-Socialist nationalism from the mid-1990s until the latest years of his professional career.[47]

The climate of re-awakening nationalisms all over the world in the millennia reveals a further twist. With regard to the genealogy of nation states in the very place of the Soviet satellite countries, we find differences within Eastern Europe as well: the re-nationalization project proceeded differently in each country; they followed diverse trajectories, in the very same way as the 'arrival of nationalism' emerged in many variations in that part of Europe.[48] Such differences in re-nationalization include conflicting construction of history and historical time, diverging even between neighbouring states with regard to which national past they 'returned' to after the 'internationalist' Socialist era, and which national past they idealized or demonized or totally neglected in their rewritten historical narrative. Finally, how all this matched with the neighbour's position.

Returning to the post-Socialist discourse of art history and its local receptions, and applying a psychological metaphor, we can say that the repressed unconscious of art history, namely, reinvigorated national art histories, interfered with the concept of horizontal art history that prioritized a regional perspective and comparative method, contrary to the self-isolated national narratives. The newly rewritten and mostly strongly opposing narratives of local national art histories seemed difficult to reconcile.[49] Re-identification with the idea of universalism was, thus, seen as a well-trodden escape route to get away from any (seemingly) threatening, hostile, parochial and closed discourse, be it regional, national or fundamental. At the same time, this solution acted as a convenient way to disregard the concept of (regional) horizontal art history.

In the nineties and the first decade of the 2000s, the issue of nation building and nationalism seemed so distant and obsolete for the established democracies, that the related calamities were relegated, without a second thought, to the ex-margins, and were seen as evidencing a pre-modern or tribal past. By the second decade of the 2000s, the situation changed dramatically and fundamentally. The methods of governance in which nationalism is closely entwined with populism and authoritarianism can no longer be consigned to the multiple margins even if they provide much matured or less camouflaged examples. The peaceful, happy union within the globalized world and the European Union, if it ever existed, seemed to be in ruins in 2017 in the midst of migration, in the shadow of Brexit (which came into effect on 31 January 2020), and after the Turkish coup and subsequent retaliation. All this was crowned by the Trump administration of the United States, declaring 'America First' isolationist and populist politics, which lead to the storming of the White house in Washington, D.C., by pro-Trump rioters. On the top of that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic breaking out in 2020, the world has come to learn about the new phenomenon of 'vaccine-nationalism' that bulletproofed the construction of nation states and rendered the world into a hierarchical order once again, accompanied by unconcealed necropolitics.

The changes in the political climate of Europe, with which the United States has rapidly fallen in line, has altered the rhetoric, the urgencies, the alliances and the agencies as well. Academic discourse is not exempt from these processes. The recent shift in arguments that favours recycled universalism – whether it's called cosmopolitanism, globalism, neo-modernism, etc. – could be seen as a direct counter-effect to populist neo-nationalisms. To stand for the relevance of a regional perspective at a time of pervasive nationalisms relying on essentialized uniqueness, maintaining Piotrowski's project of undermining and subverting the dominant and vertical narrative of universal art history by promoting an alternative model of parallel art histories seems to

be blown away, and the supposed alliance is out of the question. Even the meticulous methodology of horizontal art history, with its double-edged sword, was incapable of saving national art history from essentialization, nor could it hijack mainstream public discourse and prevent its drive for dominance and its homogenizing effects, not even in exchange for empowerment and entitlement of diversity and spatial and timely specificities.

Due to the political climate change, the rhetoric of distinct features and particularities in regional art has also taken on new connotations for the wider community. One could no longer argue for the specificities of art and culture of the East-Central European region as deriving from locality and different trajectories of its history and time-setting since this argument, though only on the surface, is all too easily mistaken for the rhetoric of the neo-nationalists. Due to the growing fear and loathing of ghettoization and sliding back again to the 'savage slot', the momentum for making a case for regionalism is simply gone.[50] At the time when basic human values, even lives are at stake and need to be defended, regional advocacy seems either derogatory or parochial if not an entirely hostile enterprise. The ideal resolved set of propositions, called horizontal art history, in which East-Central European art would have its own distinct space, seems to descend into wishful thinking, betrayed as it was by the rise of new sociopolitical realities. Although a global or world art history might shelter and embrace all the 'refugees' from the margins, at least in principle, it could hardly address myriads of specificities and an overload of historical baggage. In times of emergency such baggage is best left behind. As Ogbechie puts it, 'assumption of universality supports the hegemonic interpretation of global culture'.[51]

In the onset of these developments described above, in 2012 Piotr Piotrowski, having a sensitive compass for changes in the discourse, revised and modified his theory under the name 'alter-global' or 'alter-globalist' art history, which he saw at the time as a successful critique of globalizing Western art history.[52] However, he immediately added that this alternative perspective must be global in its character, which actually has not been specified, but could be understood as offering local answers to global questions. Furthermore, he emphasized that it must be a comparative history writing, in which local particularities are to be neither ignored nor generalized but compared by way of their nuanced analysis.

To sum up my observation, due to the political climate change, the powerful vision, the empowering utopistic account of horizontal art history, has been squeezed in between two fringes: that of the politically instrumentalized and essentialized national discourse on the one hand, and the reinvigorated universal art history, under the name 'world art histories' or 'global art history', on the other hand. Under the recent political climate, any utopistic theory became extremely fragile and threatened, among them horizontal art history. They are qualified for the registers of endangered species of knowledge, though their protection is not granted.

Piotrowski closed his lecture on alter-Globalist art history delivered in Budapest with Zygmunt Bauman's famous words, 'thinking needs time'.[53] The art history writing of East-Central Europe apparently hasn't had enough time. Neither has it been offered the possibility of living up to the momentum of the concept on a global scale and, thus, joining the cacophony of horizontal art histories premised on equality of status. Piotrowski's vision of a potent and elaborate narrative of East-Central European art history within horizontal art histories is yet to materialize. He acknowledges that there are different Other positions: 'the place of the "real Other" … is determined

not by the strategy of marginalization, but of colonization'.[54] Yearning for explanation for the inability of the post-Socialist region to standing up for itself, it might also be the case that, from the point of view of the 'close Other',[55] it is much more difficult to take such a radical position as is offered from the perspective of the 'real Other'. This discourse presupposes that 'the epistemological structure of art history excludes the possibility of the practice of the Other' and, for this reason, argues for an art history 'that is constituted by a radically different alignment'.[56] Finally, one cannot help but wonder how Piotr Piotrowski would have re-worked his theory of horizontal art history, and subsequently of alter-globalist art history, in the radically new-old era of universal nationalisms. We can only guess how his method could have been put in practice based on the translation of the introduction[57] to his last book:[58] 'In order to engage in a non-hierarchical art historical analysis on a global scale … one has to select several key dates and examine artworks that were created during those times in different parts of the world. In particular, one must focus on artworks that were created in the context of important events or even helped bring them about'.[59] It tells the recipe of how to apply his account to the actual practice of art history writings. This method resonates strongly with Okwui Envezor's curatorial practice realized at the exhibition *Postwar: Art between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945–1965*.[60] As for the track Piotrowski might have taken, the title of the text provides some insight: 'Peripheries of the World, Unite'! We could paraphrase Bauman, that 'radicalization needs time'. It is a major loss for East-Central European art history that Piotr Piotrowski did not have the time that was needed to further elaborate on his concept and to put it in operation on a global scale.

Notes

1 Piotr Piotrowski, "On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History", *Umění / Art*, no. 5 (2008): 378–83.
2 This essay is an elaborated version of the paper delivered at the international conference "What Art History? In memoriam Piotr Piotrowski" (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija / Museum of Modern Art, December 8–9, 2016), organized by Igor Zabel Association, Ljubljana and ERSTE Foundation, Vienna.
3 The same applied to the artists. See: Edit András, "The Painful Farewell to Modernism. Difficulties in the Period of Transition." In *After the Wall. Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe*, eds. David Elliot, Bojana Pejić (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1999), 125–30.
4 Edit András, "Provincializing the West: Interview with Piotr Piotrowski", *Artmargins online*, (October 2012) https://artmargins.com/provincializing-the-west/ (Visited: July 13th, 2021); Croatian artist Mladen Stilinovic's banner, An Artist Who Cannot Speak English Is No Artist? reflects on the same phenomenon from the artist's point of view.
5 Piotr Piotrowski, "The Mythology of Universalism", 1998.
6 Lecture at AICA World Congress (Taiwan: 2004), Section 1. The establishment of Regional Dialogs among Art Critics.
7 Hans Belting, *Art History after Modernism* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2003), 57–61.
8 Piotrowski, "On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History", 379.
9 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe, Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: University Press, 2009).
10 András, "Provincializing the West".
11 When Piotrowski initiated the program "Unfolding narratives: Art histories in East-Central Europe after 1989" (2009–11) at the kickoff meeting in Clark Research Institute, he suggested comparative studies to be conducted on East-Central European and Latin American art histories. (About the project see: http://www.clarkart.edu/rap/events) This was also the time, when *ARTMargins online magazine*, having had a 'non-exclusive focus on

the region formerly known as Eastern Europe' changed its focus and expanded its scope to the 'thickened global margin'. The printed version, *Artmargins journal* (MIT) was already launched with this expanded agenda in 2012.

12 Piotr Piotrowski, "Peripheries of the World, Unite!" in *Extending the Dialogues: Essays by Igor Zabel Award Laureates, Grant Recipients, and Jury Members, 2008–2014*, eds. Christiane Erharter, Rawley Grau, Urška Jurman (Berlin: Archive Books; Ljubljana: Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory; Vienna: ERSTE Foundation, 2016), 15.
13 Piotrowski, "On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History".
14 Ibid., 381.
15 Ibid., 380.
16 Piotr Piotrowski used both terms, the margins, mostly used by his teacher Andrzej Turowski, and periphery. Thanks to Magdalena Radomska for this distinction.
17 Piotrowski, "On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History", 381.
18 Ibid.
19 Piotr Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe* (London: Reaktion books, 2012), 15–52.
20 Ibid.
21 Michel-Ralp Trouillot, *Global Transformatios: Anthropology and the Modern World* (London: Palgrave, 2003), 27.
22 Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledge, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).
23 Walter D. Mignolo, Arturo Escobar eds., *Globalization and the Decolonial Option* (New York: Routledge, 2010).
24 Madina V. Tlostanova, Walter D. Mignolo, *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2012).
25 Madina V. Tlostanova, *Postcolonialism and Postsocialism in Fiction and Art. Resistance and Re-existence* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 93–128; 157–91.
26 I do not take the task of elaborating on the genealogy of (Polish) national art history in the agenda of Piotrowski's thinking through his professional career which I leave to the Polish speaking art historian community. I rather zoom in the period he entered the international arena and elaborated his account on the region's art history and the task and place of national art history writing within.
27 Piotrowski, "On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History", 382.
28 Ibid.
29 Terry Smith, "Introduction: The Contemporaneity Question", in *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*, eds. Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor, Nancy Condee (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 5.
30 Ibid., 8.
31 Ibid., 9.
32 Okwui Enwezor, "The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition", in *Antinomies of Art and Culture*, ed. Smith, Enwezor, Condee, 207.
33 Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie, "The Perils of Unilateral Power: Neomodernist Metaphors and the New Global Order", in *Antinomies of Art and Culture*, ed. Smith, Enwezor, Condee, 165.
34 Nancy Condee, "From Emigration to E-migration: Contemporaneity and the Former Second World", in *Antinomies of Art and Culture*, ed. Smith, Enwezor, Condee, 235.
35 Boris Groys, *Art Power* (Boston: MIT Press, 2008), 149–64.
36 See note 11.
37 Maria Todorova, "The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism", *Slavic Review*, 64, no. 1 (Spring 2005), 144.
38 Ibid., 146.
39 Smith, Enwezor, Condee, *Antinomies of Art and Culture*.
40 Edit András, "What Does East-Central European Art History Want? Reflections on the Art History Discourse in the Region since 1989", in *Extending Dialogue*, eds. Christiane Erharter, Rawley Grau, Urška Jurman, 52–77.
41 Edit András, "An Agent still at Work: The Trauma of Collective Memory of the Socialist Past", *Springerin*, no. 3 (2008), http://springerin.at/dyn/heft.php?id=56&pos=1&textid=2103&lang=en (Visited 2021, July 13th)

42 Todorova, "The Trap of Backwardness", 147.
43 Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993), 3–16; Charles King, *Extreme Politics: Nationalism, Violence, and the End of Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
44 Todorova, "The Trap of Backwardness", 153.
45 Todorova originated the 'mental map' from Hans Kohn, Ibid. 152.
46 King, *Extreme Politics*, 180–1.
47 Piotr Piotrowski, "The Old Attitude and the New Faith", in *Beyond Belief: Contemporary Art from East Central Europe* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1995), 34–45; Piotr Piotrowski, "Between Real Socialism and Nationalism", in Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-communist Europe*, 155–201.
48 Todorova, "The Trap of Backwardness", 150.
49 András, "What Does East-Central European Art History Want?" 52–77.
50 Edit András, "The Obscure Object of Desire: Is there any Place for Eastern Europe on the Map of World Art or Global Art (History)?" *Mezosfera.org* (Augustus 2020) http://mezosfera.org/the-obscure-object-of-desire/ (visited: July 13th 2021).
51 Ogbechie, "The Perils of Unilateral Power", 166.
52 Piotr Piotrowski, "Alter-Globalist Art History Seen from East-European Perspective" lecture (Budapest: Contemporary Art Museum, Ludwig Museum, April 4, 2012) (manuscript).
53 Ibid.
54 Piotrowski, "On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History", 380.
55 Bojana Pejić, "Dialectics of Normality", in *After the Wall*, ed. Elliott, Pejic, 380; Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*.
56 Ogbechie, "The Perils of Unilateral Power", 183.
57 Piotrowski, Peripheries of the World, Unite! 15–26.
58 Piotr Piotrowski, *Globalne ujęcie sztuki Europy Wschodniej* (Poznań: Rebis, 2018).
59 Piotrowski, "Peripheries of the World, Unite!" 17.
60 Okwui Enwezor, Katy Siegel, Ulrich Wilmes eds., *Postwar: Art between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945–1965* (Munich: Prestel, 2017).

13 Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Art in the Perspective of Horizontal Art History

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The programme of horizontal art history formulated by Piotr Piotrowski was directed against the imperial and hierarchical narrative of Western art history.[1] It pushes non-Western subjects to nothing but dead ends: if they reject the patterns imposed by the Centre, they are "exoticised" as the Other, while following them makes them mere copycats or inept imitators. To break this impasse, Piotrowski questioned the research paradigm built around the Western Centre and proposed a spatial turn in art history aiming to analyse the specificity of the speaking subject (otherness) and their position (locality) in a horizontal, polyphonic, multidimensional, global and comparative perspective. Such an approach can reveal the distinctiveness of the art of a given micro-region hidden under a seemingly universal form and highlight its particular meanings and multi-threaded connections that run not only one way from the Centre to the periphery but have the nature of a complex network of mutual impacts. Importantly, the Centre itself, viewed from the periphery, reveals its cracks and heterogeneity. In other words, it is a place like any other, and it has certain historical and discursive parameters, and as such, it should be knocked off its pedestal and included in the art history freed from geographical hierarchy.[2]

Piotrowski perceived such a horizontal art historical analysis, which could concern both the past and the present, as a political activity. He understood the work of a scholar as part of a public debate, a specific strategy of resistance to power and oppression and an attempt to reveal the centralist mechanisms of building hegemony, hierarchy, domination and displacement. The aim was to free oneself from these repressive practices and take the side of emancipation.[3] The idea of agonistic democracy provided a broader political framework for his concept. Piotrowski agreed with Chantal Mouffe and other theorists of agonistic democracy that the consensus characteristic of liberal democracies must be replaced by a permanent dispute, which should become the irreducible basis of political order, while the participants of the dispute cannot strive for mutual destruction but only compete with each other (conversion of antagonism into agonism). At the same time, he emphasised that "such a model must be founded on the respect for freedom and the right of everyone to the freedom of expression, however not in the name [...] of an allegedly common good, but the expression of own convictions, despite the fact – or maybe because of the fact – that they are in contradiction to the general opinion". Actually, no matter what type of democracy we support, its basis for the Polish art historian must be respected for human rights and freedom.[4] In Piotrowski's approach, art remained a separate sphere based on autonomous principles, but within its autonomy, it gained specific tasks – it was to remain an agent facilitating emancipation and democratisation processes.[5] These are

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significant tasks, yet Piotrowski did not privilege artistic expression and denied the immunity of art, pointing to the need to protect the freedom of expression as such: "Freedom as a human right is indivisible: it is either there, or it is not. If it is there, then it is a right to be enjoyed by everybody, not just by artists but also those whose expressions would be difficult to classify as cultural. Freedom of expression cannot be of an aesthetic nature".[6] It can be said that in this approach, the general freedom of expression enjoying special protection so to speak consumed the freedom of art.

In view of the above, I would venture formulating the thesis that there was a crack at the meeting point of Piotrowski's research approach and the ideological and political postulates that accompanied it. Democracy, especially agonistic democracy, the liberal concept of an individual and freedom, as well as human rights, especially freedom of expression, have become for the Polish art historian a universal political matrix for the functioning of humanities, art and society in general; at the same time, within this matrix, art, in a manner characteristic of the European avant-garde of the twentieth century, maintained its special position due to the tasks with which it was burdened. Undoubtedly, it is difficult to reconcile these Western *par excellence* assumptions with the postulate of resistance against the domination and hegemony of the Centre. Therefore, from the perspective of a researcher dealing with freedom of expression and freedom of art, Piotrowski's project provokes a critical reflection. Such a revision would require supplementing the proposals for horizontal research on art with the horizontalisation of the aforementioned political matrix. Therefore, I will indicate the possibilities of reformulating the universal approach to human rights in reference to the idea of cross-cultural dialogue and diatopical hermeneutics of Raimon Panikkar, developed by Boaventura De Sousa Santos. Their suggestions will be used for a cross-cultural analysis of the Western concept of freedom of expression, which – as I mentioned – consumed the freedom of artistic expression in Piotrowski's approach. I will begin this analysis with immanent critique, i.e. from liberal positions, which, on the one hand, will enable undermining the universalist claims of the Western approach to the freedom of expression and, on the other hand, will expose its insurmountable limitations. Then, I will juxtapose the Western approach to the freedom of expression with that derived from Islam, which will indicate the possibility of modification and horizontal calibration of both concepts.[7] Finally, I will look closely at the very concept of artistic freedom, as it invariably remains a strong topos of Western culture. To this end, I will refer to the findings of Jessica Winegar, who, starting from the periphery (art of the Middle East) towards the Centre (US cultural policy), showed how the connection of art with the ideas of humanity and freedom and the slogan of building intercultural understanding allows the United States to shape cultural exchange and artistic canon with the Middle East in line with imperial political agenda. It will be, thus, a form of horizontal critique. The problems of universalisation of the democratic system and the nature of democracy will only be signalled by me as they are beyond my competence.

Human Rights between Universalism and Relativism

The international human rights system derives from the Euro-American Enlightenment, but it was formalised by the United Nations General Assembly only after the tragic events of WW2.[8] This system refers to the universal human nature that can be grasped by reason treated as the universal, autonomous and, at the same time, the

highest form of reality. Its second conceptual pillar is an individual with absolute and irreducible dignity, requiring protection from the state, society and other forms of domination, and the third one is the democratic social order. The latter assumes that society is the sum of equal individuals and that their will is sovereign and ultimate. The rights and freedoms of individuals may be limited by the rights and freedoms of other individuals or the state, but only because the state embodies the will and interests of the majority.[9] Due to the Western provenance of these assumptions, attempts to spread human rights after WW2 are perceived, especially by postcolonial states, as manifestations of cultural imperialism of the West. There is also resistance to the fact that hegemonic capitalist states use human rights as a cover to strengthen economic, military and geopolitical power and do not hesitate to infringe them in the name of their particular interests. It should come as no surprise then that the idea of universal human rights is treated with distrust by peripheral states and perceived not as a source of emancipation, but as a specific form of continuation of colonialisation processes. Therefore, the concept of relativity of human rights has gained importance, according to which they should be shaped each time in accordance with the culture and tradition of a given country or region. However, relativism leads to the erosion of the entire system and is often used by authorities to justify even drastic violations of human dignity. It can be said that cultural alienation of the concept of human rights in peripheral states and the lack of local legitimisation of the standards set by these rights prevent their effective, universal implementation, and the dichotomy between universalism and relativism hinders breaking this impasse.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos connects the attempts made so far to popularise the Western notion of human rights with the concept of *globalised localism* (globalisation from above).[10] This concept is based on the fact that some local – in this and, in most cases, Euro-American – phenomenon is effectively globalised. Meanwhile, in the world today, apart from the Western human rights system, at least three other alternative ones can be identified: the Inter-American, the African and the Asian. Only in relation to the Western system are claims for universality made, which *de facto* means granting the attribute of universality to the Western culture. As an alternative to globalised localism, Santos indicates *insurgent cosmopolitanism* (globalisation from below), that is the transnational resistance directed against the hegemonic globalisation by the oppressed or excluded states, regions, classes, social groups and their allies. However, this does not imply a general theory of social emancipation and the annulment of differences within its framework. Insurgent cosmopolitanism is nothing more than a global manifestation of a fusion of local progressive struggles aiming to maximise one's own emancipatory potential *in loco* through trans-local collaboration. Different cosmopolitan communities from different parts of the world have different concepts of emancipatory resistance, which may be associated with the pursuit of conflicting interests. As Santos points out, human rights should become part of the agenda of such grassroots insurgent cosmopolitanism. To make this possible, claims to their universality must be abandoned in favour of a multicultural concept; otherwise, human rights will not gain local legitimacy and will always be perceived as part of Huntington's "clash of civilizations".

According to Santos, the transition from the conceptualisation of human rights within globalised locality to their conceptualisation within insurgent cosmopolitanism requires taking several premises into account.[11] First of all, it is necessary to overcome the intrinsically false debate on the relativism or universalism of human

rights – this dichotomy in itself has a Western provenance and blocks emancipatory approach to human rights. Cross-cultural equal dialogue must be established against universalism. Moreover, to prevent relativisation of rights, it would be necessary to establish cross-cultural procedural criteria that would help distinguish progressive politics from regressive, empowerment from disempowerment, emancipation from regulation (we are talking about cross-culturalism, not trans-culturalism, because values always have meaning within the culture they are part of). Secondly, each culture has its own vision of human dignity, which does not always become the equivalent of human rights. Therefore, it is important to look for isomorphic problems (or, as Panikkar writes, homeomorphic equivalents)[12] in various cultures. Different ideas, concepts and worldviews may concern similar or translatable problems or aspirations. Thirdly, all cultures are incomplete and problematic in their approaches to human dignity. The more we horizontalise our research perspective, the more we expose such cracks, inconsistencies and discontinuities. Fourthly, none of the major cultures is monolithic – within each of them there are different versions of human dignity. Fifthly, all cultures tend to stratify people based on two principles of hierarchical belonging: unequal exchange between equals or unequal recognition of difference. As de Sousa Santos emphasises, taking into account these five factors, especially the awareness of the incompleteness of individual cultural approaches to human dignity, would enable the establishment of cross-cultural dialogue on human dignity, which would lead to a cross-cultural approach to human rights. Instead of presupposing universalism, it would be based on a constellation of local and mutually recognisable meanings and a network of reinforcing normative references.

A form of cross-cultural dialogue is the *diatopical hermeneutics* developed in the 1970s by Raimon Panikkar.[13] Morphological hermeneutics deciphers the forms and values of a specific culture (single tradition), while diachronic hermeneutics mediates between temporally distant areas in the cultural history of mankind, but still in relation to a single culture. On the other hand, diatopical hermeneutics transcends the hermeneutic circle resulting from the limitations of these two paradigms and tries to bring radically different horizons into contact in order to provoke *dialogical dialogue* taking into account cultural differences. Its starting point is the assumption that *topoi* – culturally unrelated places – cannot be comprehended with tools derived from only one specific culture or tradition. So, it is the art of reaching understanding by going through these places (*dia-topos*).[14] Santos notes that cultures are universes of meanings made up of *topoi* constellations.[15] The latter are the overriding, undisputed obviousness of a given culture and function as premises for argumentation enabling the production and exchange of arguments. Strong *topoi* are usually untranslatable and, therefore, difficult to accept in different cultures, so they should be moved from the position of a premise to the position of an argument. In this way, as a result of dialogical processing, their incompleteness would be maximally exposed (*topoi* are incomplete like the cultures they are part of).

Then, similarities – homeomorphic equivalents (isomorphic problems) – should be identified within the *topoi* in order to make translation and understanding possible. Thus, diatopical hermeneutics is not aimed at closing cultures, but at maximum exposure of their mutual incompleteness through engagement in dialogue. In this dialogue, the parties try to understand and critique a specific problem with tools derived from other interested cultures, bearing in mind that the awareness itself and even the formulation of the problem are culturally conditioned. This requires a different type of

knowledge: collective, participatory, intersubjective, networked, based on equal cognitive and emotional exchange.[16]

Referring to such a cross-cultural dialogue enables horizontalisation of the political matrix of Piotrowski's deliberations, supplementing it with horizontal components affecting the shape and role of human rights, including freedom of expression and art. It also prompts a revision of the importance of democracy in a globalised world; however, – as I mentioned – we will not deal with this problem although it is worth noting that such a revision would be consistent with the views of Mouffe herself.[17] Let us now consider how horizontalisation of the Western approach to freedom of expression (including freedom of art) would look like in the cross-cultural dialogue approach, which could supplement Piotrowski's postulate of horizontal art research.

Towards a Cross-Cultural Approach to Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression is mentioned in all the most important acts of the global human rights system; it is also common in constitutional acts of Western countries. Let us treat freedom of expression as a *topos* of Western culture and, shifting this idea from the position of a premise of argumentation to the position of argument, let us subject it to critique from a liberal perspective in order to reveal its discontinuity and incompleteness.

In line with liberal revisions, freedom of expression can be justified neither by its special status nor by its distinctiveness. None of the justifications for freedom of expression are specific to it and can be used to rationalise other types of freedom, such as freedom of religion or assembly.[18] Moreover, almost every enacted law affects communication, if not its content, then its course, even if this law seems to us very far from the issue of freedom of expression (e.g. ownership rights and the criminalisation of theft prevent unauthorised use of someone else's means to transfer information, taxes – reducing our budget – hinder acquiring these means legally, the offence of littering public places will prevent scattering leaflets, etc.). In other words, even if a given regulation does not directly refer to the content of the act of communication, it affects the distribution of resources, and this, in turn, influences what is being said, by whom, to whom and with what effect. Unbiased assessment is also a problem. If someone claims that a law violates freedom of expression and has a negative effect on their situation, it does not mean that it is having such an impact on everyone. The legislator and then the courts must decide which interest is more important. It is difficult because all concepts of freedom of expression should assume their lack of bias in assessing the content of communication. However, it is not possible for governments or courts to balance competing interests in accordance with the principle of neutrality for a very simple but fundamental reason – no political morality can take a positive view of actions that violate it. Hence, the paradox of liberalism which requires unbiased assessment but does not ensure it itself. Therefore, even in the liberal approach (which Piotrowski seemed to adhere to), it is impossible to uphold the assumption that freedom of expression is universal, neither within state legislative systems nor even less within the human rights system, because its scope will always be ideologically modelled as a function of time, place, economy, culture and politics.[19] As Stanley Fish observed: "[…] abstract concepts like free speech do not have any 'natural' content but are filled with whatever content and direction one can manage to put in to them. 'Free speech' is just the name we give to verbal behaviour that serves the substantive agenda we wish to advance […]".[20] Fish also argues that the condition for freedom is

the existence of some primary exclusion that gives it meaning and sense. Without restriction, without a built-in sense of what is unmeaningful or unsayable, there cannot be a statement or reason to express it. A statement is never a value in itself but is always produced within some assumptions about the good to which it will have to be related when conflict arises. Sooner or later, the state is faced with such a conflict, and it responds to behaviour that undermines its (the state's) rationalisations by prohibiting it. It does so not because suddenly an exception to the general freedom of expression is made but because freedom has never been general and its understanding has always been contingent on some primal exclusions that give it meaning. Courts, therefore, never protect expression itself (pure speech) but rather classify utterances in reference to values that are true, even if repressed, objects of protection. These values are, of course, established by privileged classes and groups – so it is pure politics.[21]

It follows that even in the Western liberal Centre, freedom of expression is neither an absolute nor an autotelic value. Moreover, its understanding is not uniform and differs in individual countries, and may even show differentiation within them, which is confirmed by the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights. The Court emphasises that the protection of expression under Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms has a wide scope and also applies to artistic expression. However, this freedom is limited by Article 17 of the Convention and, above all, the limitation clause in Article 10(2) of the Convention, on the basis of which the Court examines whether the national authorities, by interfering with the freedom of expression, acted in the right manner, that is: first of all, whether a given restriction was prescribed by law; secondly, whether the interference served a legitimate aim (state security, territorial integrity or public security, preventing disorder or crime, protecting health and morality, the reputation and rights of others, and preventing the disclosure of confidential information or guaranteeing the dignity and impartiality of the judiciary); thirdly, whether the restriction was necessary in a democratic society. Thus, the limitation clause determines the interests and circumstances in the name of which the freedom of expression may be restricted. At the same time, the Court allows some of these interests to be weighed differently in different countries. In several rulings on controversial works of art, the Court emphasised that, nowadays in Europe, it is not possible to find a uniform concept of morals or observe a unified view of the importance of religion. Therefore, to protect religious feelings or morals, national authorities, due to their better understanding of local contexts, have a certain margin of appreciation in assessing the necessity and degree of interference with freedom of expression.[22] However, this margin is much narrower when the prohibitions relate to political debates or public matters of general interest – these are specially protected spheres to which the Court applies uniform, strict standards for assessing restrictions.[23]

The inability to maintain unbiased, coherent doctrine of freedom of expression within the Centre itself demands a critical examination of attempts to force it in non-Western cultures, with different visions of the individual, society, freedom, dignity, law, the role of religion, etc. We are not dealing here with an attempt to instil the idea of pure freedom (it simply does not exist), but a political project which, under the guise of universality, tends to hide its ideological base. In addition, it should be stressed that the Western liberal concept of freedom of expression is not a rule, but an exception, and it cannot be imposed on others without building a sense of violation of local identity and culture. Hence, the need to search for horizontal principles for the functioning of the idea of freedom of expression and human rights, in general.

Within diatopical hermeneutics, the liberal concept of freedom of expression, including artistic expression, may be a *topos* that corresponds to the *topos* of freedom of expression, for example, in the culture of Islam (in fact, such a dialogue would have to be multilateral). The starting point for the meeting should be the recognition of the incompleteness and weakness of one's own culture in the dialogue. As mentioned above, the West has at least partially developed such awareness. It is equally important to develop trans-local acceptance of the assumptions of diatopical hermeneutics. Social support for its principles and emancipatory claims will not be possible when they are imposed from above but when they become part of the local context. Therefore, we need internal dialogue within cultures or countries not only over given *topoi* but also over the procedure of diatopical hermeneutics, which must be based on enlightened openness to otherness and difference and local readiness to change. In other words, for the evolution of the approach to human rights to be internalised, it is first necessary to make diatopical hermeneutics itself a culturally accepted mechanism.[24]

Ali Muhammad Bhat points out that blasphemy (*sabba*, *shatama*) is defined today as: "disgraceful hostile approach against either the fundamentals of Islam, Allah, the personality of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), or any other Prophet. Such statements are being made with the intention to insult the sensibilities of Muslims" is the main crime that justifies restrictions on freedom of expression in Islam.[25] In the Qur'an, blasphemy includes denial of the truth, introducing falsehoods and offending divine authority, but Muhammad recommended tolerating insults, and the punishment for such actions was to be in God's hands. Thus, it is not a crime penalised by Qur'anic criminal law (*Hadd*), but only by Sharia (the Islamic legal system created from the eight century on the basis of the Qur'an and Sunnah). Bhat notes that it was only in the third Islamic century that the jurists establishing the Sharia found statements directed against the Prophet more unacceptable than those directed against God, and in the fourth Islamic century, they decided that whoever offends Muhammad must be punished by death. It seems, therefore, that the cross-cultural approach of the Islamic lawyer Ahmed An-na'im could apply to the issue of freedom of expression. He emphasises that every meaning of a text is a product of human understanding in a specific historical context, and therefore, he suggests taking an evolutionary approach to Islamic sources. It would consist in examining the specificity of Sharia creation by jurists and using earlier Qur'anic traditions, taking into account the contemporary context. The point is to reconcile Islamic legal sources with the human rights system as much as possible and, at the same time, highlight the Islamic origin of at least some freedoms, and even their religious rationalisation.[26] Various intercultural isomorphisms, such as the assumption about the pursuit of truth, the tradition of tolerance or the penalisation of acts against religion, could be helpful for a cross-cultural dialogue on the *topoi* of freedom of speech.

Undoubtedly, cross-cultural dialogue would also shape the idea of human rights within Western culture, for example, by forcing a perspective wider than that individual-focused: in non-Western countries, including Islamic ones, the key rationalisation of limiting rights and freedoms is maintaining harmony and social order, i.e. collective interest. The incompleteness of the Western approach to human rights manifests itself mainly in its inability to accept the collective rights of various social groups – human rights in themselves do not strengthen communal relationships that unite communities, they do not support the solidarity that is so important for non-Western cultures.[27]

This is clearly visible in the extremely liberal American First Amendment doctrine. Its supporters assume that allowing, for example, the mockery of religion does not create acceptance for hate speech but shifts the responsibility of acceptance or rejection to free individuals. This implies – as Fish notes – that the deliberation of individuals is to be purely formal, devoid of the cultural context. However, the context is crucial for the reception of not only individual but also collective feelings of wrong, injustice, humiliation, betrayal, etc. Therefore, the making and application of the law must be approached casuistically, considering the advantages and disadvantages of the solutions under consideration in a broad perspective, and not relying solely on concepts and rules that are either empty or implicitly shaped by specific interests.[28] As it seems, in the framework of the postulated cross-cultural dialogue, greater losses for the idea of freedom of expression and human rights are caused by violating by speech (regardless of its form) the socio-religious *status quo* prevailing in postcolonial countries than by refraining from transgressive statements, affirming values important from the perspective of the West. This is evidenced by the dispute over the caricatures of Muhammad published in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands Posten* in 2005. Western culture has specific obligations, a requirement for a particular sensitivity due to its past and present position, which, in many fields, remains dominant within, as James Tully writes, "informal and interactive" imperialism.[29] Hierarchy is permissible in cultures, but it cannot be the starting point in a cross-cultural dialogue nor can either party arbitrarily set its criteria.

In the present conditions, cross-cultural dialogue on human rights in the form of diatopical hermeneutics is a utopian proposition, but this concept introduces a conceivable horizontal alternative to the seemingly insurmountable universalism vs. relativism dispute. In a way, it synthesises both options, and it can be said that it is a model of universalising rights through their particularisation. It also opens up the possibility of reshaping the hierarchy and power relations with which the concept of human rights is entwined.

Freedom of Art – Horizontal Analysis

Freedom of art in the acts of the international human rights system is either mentioned explicitly or treated as part of the general freedom of expression. The latter type of regulation would be closer to Piotrowski's approach, for, as I wrote, he rejected the immunity of art.[30] However, in the Western tradition, the *topos* of art as a separate sphere that deserves special treatment is strongly rooted. Numerous rationalisations have been developed to justify this view. They take the form of defensive tactics aiming to justify potential artistic transgressions and provide art with a kind of aesthetic alibi – social and legal immunity.[31] In other words, in the West, it is assumed that art should enjoy special privileges and be absolutely free. Therefore, I would like to take a closer look at this issue: can art actually be free? What can such a *dictum* entail, especially in the context of multicultural exchange? For this purpose, we refer to the horizontal research perspective suggested by Piotrowski, i.e. the artistic practices of the Centre will be shown from a peripheral position, taking into account the local point of view. This will reveal the mechanisms of building and imposing a canon on the margins, which, next to the concept of style, is a key category that enables the West to homogenise art history.[32] However, I will start with the problem of cracks and discontinuities in the freedom of art within the Centre itself.

Fish leaves us disillusioned, and he stresses that all forms of expression, including those of artistic nature, are not pure and always belong to some community context shaped by interests (i.e. goals), without which they would be neither imaginable nor understandable. Thus, a work of art as an expression is a product of limitations – pre-existing pre-assumptions that give it a specific meaning. The fact of conceiving a specific work of art is in itself impure (and as impure, it is also communicable) because of the context in which the thought takes its shape. This context as a whole cannot become the subject of critical, self-conscious reflection, but rather it is a space from which consciousness emerges, and thus also a work of art; therefore, it will always (just like any other statement) be political in a way not fully cognisable to the speaker.[33] Moreover, the very abstract art construct used by Piotrowski is unusual in the sense that it is a specific product of the context of Western culture.[34] It is based on autonomous principles formed within the art world, which are distinguished by a high degree of arbitrariness and uncertainty; there are also certain specific expectations and ethical assumptions associated with art. At the same time, the art world operates within – as Pierre Bourdieu (1996) would say – a field which, like any other field, is shaped by a system of objective relationships of a game nature for different stakes (economic, cultural, social) between various socially defined positions. Moreover, the autonomy of art is subject to heteronomies of other fields, especially political and economic ones. Thus, not only a work but also the process of conferring art status upon it, the category itself and methods of presentation, interpretation and evaluation are not phenomena subject to universal aesthetic principles but remain – like the idea of freedom of art or expression – politically entangled.

Jessica Winegar has analysed the connections of American politics after 9/11 with the methods of presenting art from the Middle East.[35] The author – an expert on the culture of the region – notices that such events organised after the attacks on the World Trade Centre gained a specific character in the United States. The tastes of sponsors and organisers (local or national art institutions, universities, corporate foundations or NGOs), the tastes of the audience, the specific connection between art, humanity and religion, the evaluation framework and institutional requirements were combined with the slogan of building "bridges of understanding" between cultures. In fact, however, the US cultural agenda reproduced the conditions of a political conflict. Political interests were naturalised on the aesthetic level and determined the classification not only of "good art" but "art" in general. Therefore, the selection of art from the Middle East presented by American institutions differed significantly from what was simultaneously presented in the exhibition institutions of the region. The niche, poorly developed field of Middle Eastern art, was unable to break through with its own offer. With such an evident asymmetry of power, the American patronage and market ruthlessly decided what, how and when were presented in the United States and, indirectly, what could gain global recognition. In other words, it not only hegemonically shaped the canon but also the entire interpretive framework for the art of the periphery. This led to the flattening of diverse cultural production and, at the same time, its close connection with Islam, which, thus, became the only valid interpretive reference, as if the Middle East was exclusively Islamic and Islam was limited only to this region. At the same time, the American export offer was constructed in such a way as to convince that the United States, despite the wars fought, Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib prisons, remain the bastion of freedom and democracy.

Winegar notes that the idea of art as the universal and highest expression of human development has its roots in Kant's philosophy and was established by anthropological

theories in the twentieth century. Therefore, in American cultural policy, art was easily combined with such concepts as *bridge of understanding, exchange, evidence of advancement and humanity*. In this approach, only civilised people are able to create and appreciate art, but terrorists and extremists cannot; therefore, art can become a platform for intercultural understanding. According to Winegar, within the art/humanity framework, three types of Middle Eastern artistic production have been recognised as "good art" and have gained particular popularity among American institutions and patrons as well as audience acceptance. First of all, exhibitions of historical Islamic art and the ancient states of the Middle East, which focused on the once intense cultural exchange between East and West. These presentations referred to the idea of utopian intercultural understanding through the contemplation of art. The historical context was cleared of conflicts. At the same time, specific framing and lack of contemporary components suggested – as in the classic primitivist paradigm – that in this region outstanding art was created only in the pre-colonial period. Thus, the contemporary "fall" of Middle Eastern/Islamic culture has been portrayed through its relationship to art. Secondly, music concerts, especially Sufi music. It was treated as a product of a peaceful, "good" branch of Islam; its humanistic aspects were emphasised, which was aimed at depoliticising the context of presentation. Thirdly, in contemporary visual arts, the works of women that are critical of Islam have gained particular popularity, which, in this approach, has become the only source of gender inequalities. Most of these artists came from the Middle East, but lived in the West, which has always added value to their work. Winegar notes that this obsession with female artists criticising Islam gave the impression of subconscious rationalisation of US military aggression. On the other hand, specific discrimination against male artists from the Middle East may have resulted from the fact that "bad" Islam is commonly associated with male gender.

Winegar stressed the power relations present in such discursive categories as: art, freedom, humanity, understanding. Art is to be the highest expression of human creativity, it is free and as such, it is to build bridges of understanding – it follows that if Muslims are art producers, they are also human, and their culture is not based solely on religious fundamentalism and terrorism. Art is treated here as a fully secular tool that should be used to emancipate from Islamic oppression (but not, for example, from military occupation or neo-colonial domination). Thus, the vast majority of contemporary local cultural production remained outside the category of art. This framing based on binary oppositions not only leads, as Winegar notes, to informal dispersed censorship of Middle Eastern art but also – often against the intentions of the organisers of cultural events – perpetuates the impression of a "clash of civilisations". The nature of art promoted by the Americans did not erase stereotypes about Islam and the Middle East, but it depended on these stereotypes and perpetuated them. Attempting to build an alternative to this Orientalised discourse (as defined by Edward Said) is extremely difficult as it remains deeply rooted in the Western culture, science and history; it comes as no surprise then that it attracts the interest of institutions and the public, and last but not least state and private patronage.

Winegar's analysis also proves that the type of cultural exchange preferred by the United States, aimed at erecting bridges of understanding, is diametrically different from that suggested by cross-cultural dialogue, which, after all, was designed to build such bridges. The seemingly universal discursive frame (humanism, art, freedom) conceals ethnocentrism, hierarchies and exclusions, suppresses self-critical reflection and

perpetuates stereotypes. The exchange is only ostensible, local *topoi* are completely ignored, the weaker party to the interaction is unable to shape its own position. It becomes merely a function of the hegemon's expectations, who – of course – sets the emancipatory agenda for the subordinates. The relations are clearly oppressive although they function under the banner of support for freedom in the Middle East. When pointing to the advantages of cross-cultural dialogue against this background, however, we must remember that even within it, art will not achieve absolute freedom. Nevertheless, participants of the dialogue, at least to a certain extent, are involved in selection and framing, which influence the shape of the cultural offer and methods of interpretation – it can be said, perversely, that they first and foremost decide autonomously how free art is not. In this respect, cross-cultural dialogue offers a chance for a real exchange and building real bridges of understanding.

Piotr Piotrowski's horizontal research approach is a tool that fosters demystification of art history of both the Centre and the periphery. It enables building (locally and globally) new historical and artistic narratives, revealing distortions and simplifications, reconfiguring canons, meanings and hierarchical relationships. In this sense, it also has a significant political dimension. However, horizontal art history, embedded in the traditional framework of human rights and democracy and linked to the Western understanding of freedom of expression and art, is globally losing its emancipatory edge and can even be perceived – as human rights are often perceived – as part of the imperial agenda of the West. Therefore, in my opinion, in order to consistently maintain the emancipatory potential of this research approach, one should either leave this political matrix unspecified or transform it in such a way that it also benefits from the horizontal approach. It seems that cross-cultural dialogue in the form of diatopical hermeneutic may provide a solution to the latter option. Moreover, Piotrowski's concept is close to what I would call "synchronous hermeneutics", i.e. mediating in a given period between geographically different areas in the global world, while remaining faithful to the horizon of Western art history with its terminological and methodological background and a specific approach to the object of study. Perhaps, it would be worth considering to what extent at least some of the assumptions of diatopical hermeneutics could be woven into global art history research in order to open the discipline to completely new areas of cognition and knowledge. It would undoubtedly mark the end of the history of art as we know it,[36] but isn't the game worth the candle?

Notes

1 Piotr Piotrowski, "O horyzontalnej historii sztuki," *Artium Quaestiones* vol. XX (2009), 59–73. Piotr Piotrowski, *Agorafilia. Sztuka i demokracja w poskomunistycznej Europie* (Poznań: Rebis, 2010).
2 Piotrowski, *Agorafilia*.
3 Piotr Piotrowski, *Globalne ujęcie sztuki Europy Wschodniej* (Poznań: Rebis, 2018), 37.
4 Piotr Piotrowski, *Sztuka według polityki. Od Melancholii do Pasji* (Cracow: Universitas, 2007), 229. Piotrowski, *Agorafilia*.
5 Piotrowski, *Sztuka według polityki*, Piotrowski, *Agorafilia*, Piotrowski, *Globalne ujęcie*.
6 Piotrowski, *Agorafilia*, 266.
7 In his horizontal research, Piotrowski focused primarily on the interrelations between Central and Eastern Europe and the cultural centres of the Western world. Nonetheless, it would be difficult to apply an analogous periphery-centre scheme in relation to contemporary Europe in the field of human rights, including freedom of expression, for minimum three reasons.

Firstly, these issues are strongly unified due to the system of international law, mainly the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Union understood as a community of certain values expressed in harmonised legal orders. Therefore, in the legal field, the concept of Central and Eastern Europe has lost its meaning, e.g. the differences between Slovenia and Russia, Poland and Belarus or the Czech Republic and Ukraine are much greater than those between Slovenia and France, Poland and Italy or the Czech Republic and Germany.

Secondly, historically, human and civil rights have been a common part of the civilisation of that part of the world, for instance in many Central and Eastern European countries women gained full voting rights sooner than in Western countries.

Thirdly, identities and differences in Europe sometimes run across the traditional East-West divide. They may be cultural and permanent (e.g. the inhabitants of Tyrol in Austria, Bavaria in Germany, Campania in Italy, Greece or Poland may have similar attitudes to restrictions on freedom of speech for religious reasons), as well as political and transitory (e.g. attitudes to the rights of migrants may change within a given country depending on the political party being in power at a given moment).

In this context, the juxtaposition of the European, or rather Euro-American (i.e. Western) concept of human rights with ideas derived from the Islamic culture seemed to me natural and – what is crucial – instructive, as it allowed for the full use of instruments applied in horizontal analysis.

8 The fundamental act of international human rights, i.e. the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was adopted in 1948, and successive ones, i.e. the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, were adopted in 1966.

9 Raimon Panikkar, "Is the Notion of Human Rights a Western Concept?" *Diogenes*, vol. 30, no. 120 (1982), 75–102.

10 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "Towards a Multicultural Concept of Human Rights," in *Moral Imperialism. A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Berta Hernádez-Truyol (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 39–60, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "Human Rights as an Emancipatory Script? Cultural and Political Conditions," in *Another Knowledge Is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*, ed. by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (London - New York: Verso, 2007), 3–40.

11 Santos, "Human Rights."

12 Pannikar, "Is the Notion of Human Rights,"

13 Ibid.

14 Raimon Panikkar, *Diatopical Hermeneutics*, https://www.raimon-panikkar.org/english/gloss-diatopic.html. Accessed 15 June 2021.

15 Santos, "Human Rights."

16 Santos, "Towards a Multicultural Concept," Santos, "Human Rights."

17 Mouffe rejects the hegemony of Western modernity (Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics. Thinking the World Politically*, London - New York: Verso, 2013). She sees the world not as a *universum* but as a *pluriversum*, which means a multipolar order built around various economic models and political systems. She argues that it is impossible to transfer an agonistic democracy model from a national to international level, as there is no political community in this dimension. In both cases, however, it is important to recognize the importance of the political meaning and conflicts that pluralism brings and the transformation of antagonisms into agonisms. While liberal democracy will never become a universal, global political system, the idea of human rights should continue to play an important role, provided it is reformulated in a way that would enable their pluralist interpretation. The philosopher also follows Panikkar's reasoning here. As she emphasises, the multiplicity of concepts of human dignity, but also differences in the understanding of such concepts as: person, self, autonomy, community, religion, will obviously translate into a specific image of the nature of democracy and democratic institutions. Thus, Mouffe criticises the universalist claims of the Western concept of democracy, understood as a multi-party system based on elections, secularised and related to an individualistic approach to human rights and a free market. At the same time, she proposes shaping relations between states and cultures based on an

agonistic encounter of a variety of poles - such confrontations would not be aimed at annihilation, assimilation or establishment of domination, but contribute to the strengthening of pluralism in a multipolar world.

18 Frederic Schower, "Must Speech Be Special?" *Northwestern University Law Review*, vol. 78 (1983), 1288–306, Larry Alexander, "Is Freedom of Expression a Universal Right." *San Diego Law Review*, vol. 50 (2013), 707–20.

19 Alexander, "Is Freedom."

20 Stanley Fish, *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech and It's a Good Thing* (Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1994), 102.

21 Fish, *There's No Such Thing.*

22 Otto-Preminger-Institut v. Austria (Judgement of 20 September 1994, Application no. 13470/87); Müller and others v. Switzerland (Judgement of 24 May 1988, Application no. 10737/84); Wingrove v. United Kingdom (Judgement of 25 November 1996, Application no. 17419/90).

23 See e.g. Karataş v. Turkey (Judgement of 8 July 1999, Application no. 42571/98). It should be noted that the Court does not grant any special immunity to art. The possible higher level of protection of the freedom of artistic expression is primarily the function of assigning a given statement to one of the specially protected spheres.

24 More on problems with cross-cultural dialogue see: Santos, "Human Rights," Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, "Toward a Cross-Cultural Approach to Defining International Standards of Human Rights: The Meaning of Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment," in *Human Rights in Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. by Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 19–43.

25 Ali Muhammad Bhat, "Freedom of Expression from Islamic Perspective," *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, vol. 6 (May 2014), 69–77.

26 An-Na'im, "Toward a Cross-Cultural Approach".

27 Panikkar, "In the Notion of Human Rights," Scott L. GoodRoad, "The Challenge of Free Speech: Asian Values v. Unfettered Free Speech, an Analysis of Singapore and Malaysia in the New Global Order," *Indiana International and Comparative Law Review*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1998), 259–318, Santos, "Towards a Multicultural Concept," Santos, "Human Rights."

28 Fish, *There's Is No Such Thing.*

29 James Tully, "Modern Constitutional Democracy and Imperialism." *Osgoode Hall Law Journal*, vol. 46, no. 3 (Fall 2008), 461–93.

30 Piotrowski, *Sztuka według polityki*, Piotrowski, *Agorafilia.*

31 Anthony Julius, *Transgressions. The Offences of Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), Jakub Dąbrowski, Anna Demenko, *Censorship in Polish Art after 1989. Art, Law, Politics* (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 2019).

32 Piotrowski, *Agorafilia.*

33 Fish, *There's No Such Thing.*

34 On Islamic concept of art see e.g. Muhammad Al-Ghazali, "Reflections on Islamic View of Art and Literature." *Islamic Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4 (Winter 1996), 425–34.

35 Jessica Winegar, "The humanity Game: Art, Islam, and the War on Terror." *Social Thought & Commentary*, vol. 81, no. 3 (2008), 651–81.

36 James Elkins, *Is Art History Global* (New York, London: Routledge, 2007).

Part IV

Alternatives to Horizontal Art History

14 Allegories of Orientation

Terry Smith

Vertical: hierarchical, Western, power flows mostly top down, narrowly then outwards to the Rest where its potency grows, weakening everything it encompasses. Inside the Western centres, art mostly serves, sometimes evades and rarely opposes the colonizing, imperialist power that is the basis of the world's modernity. Elsewhere, art is always already Othered. As are the historians of art at the margins. Horizontal: when the vertical is comprehensively rejected, every place becomes a centre that is also decentred, power is shared widely, equitably, and agency is available to all. Difference is respected; there are no Others. Transnationality, transregionality and cosmopolitanism rule. Art flourishes. Art history also.

A simple distinction, with many resonances. A desire with a long history. I am interested in why it appeared in the years around 2000, as a proposition for the kind of art historical inquiry called for by the times, promulgated by Piotr Piotrowski. I am also interested in comparing Piotrowski's art historical methodology to several other art historical approaches that, since the 1970s, have had similar aims. These include centre–periphery or metropole–province theory, art geography, comparative regionality, world art, global art and theories of contemporaneity and planetarity.

Locations: Orientations to them, between them, around them, beyond them. Allegories of art historical orientation. These are the issues raised by Piotrowski's proposal.

Appeal to Fairness

Piotr Piotrowski's proposal for a 'horizontal art history', it seems to me, was fundamentally an appeal to fairness, a plea to be able to make art and pursue art historical research according to the democratic principle of equality, even according to a kind of basic egalitarianism. Perhaps he was asking us to reimagine art historical studies as based on the premise that all works of art were (or should have been, or should be) created equally, that each, in its origination, is as worthy of attention as any other – at least in the first place, for a time, as a presumption, before we bring into focus relevant historical, contextual information and before we make critical judgements. Which we must, of course, do. Yet, before that process is launched, a kind of primal innocence seems possible. He bravely heralds it as a value at a time when every opposite quality seemed to be triumphing in public life.

It is no coincidence that he developed his idea (although not yet the phrase) during the 1990s, as the USSR imploded, during the subsequent spread of US-led economic and political globalization, and the contested but steady forging of a European Union. For a moment, the possibility of a 'clean slate' arose for Central and Eastern Europe,

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and for Poland in particular. In the moment before the worst elements of Western neoliberalism and local ethnic nationalism rushed in to fill the 'post-socialist' void, pushing aside (for a time) dreams for a genuine communism, while leaving alive some slender hopes for viable social democracy.

Although Piotrowski's main research focus was postwar art in Eastern Europe, his rethinking occurred when contemporary art was burgeoning worldwide, and several cheap and easy versions of postmodernism were abroad attempting to theorize the discursive moment. 'Horizontal art history', however, wants something more straightforward as its core value: that every work of art be equally present to every other, at the same time, in a kind of suspended contemporaneity of equal opportunity.

Piotrowski knew, of course, that this was a fantasy. That it did not describe actual situations in which art is made – now, then, ever. But he wanted us, as historians approaching our material initially from some pure place outside of history's actualities, to proceed as if we could come to our object of inquiry as if it were newly born, as if we might hold off our contamination of it for as long as possible. At least for long enough for the work to start to speak in its own voice, one that might push back against the 'vertical art history' (hierarchical, Westernist, EuroAmerican, North Atlantic) we had been trained to bring to it. Until we could learn to see art differently – perhaps, *mirabile dictu*, as itself. That is, free.

Lateral Inclination

As we strive to map the historical unfolding of artmaking in particular places, in regions, or more widely, Piotrowski's proscriptions imagine our gaze as having certain orientations, most already conditioned, institutionalized and conventional yet not entirely closed to change and reenergization. The two obvious ones are top down and bottom up (how much did Piotrowski pay attention to the latter?). By definition, both stay within the hierarchy, struggling for supremacy or, at least, advantage. Horizontal movement, however, is imagined as laid across this verticality (perhaps making it into a cross, across which the object of our gaze – art – is spread, as if it were our arms, wide open, inviting compassion).

Broadly speaking, it is the case that Europeans have tended to picture top-down and bottom-up movement, mostly, in two-dimensional terms. The Great Chain of Being; the Estates General; the four worlds during the Cold War; the top 20 best-selling artists, *Artreview*'s 'Power 100'. Horizons, in contrast, may be indicated on a two-dimensional surface as a line drawn across its expanse, but this does not exhaust the conception or the image of the concept. The very existence of a horizon establishes a field between us and it. It opens the possibility of traversing the three dimensions between us and it. Dan Karlholm misses this point in his suggestion that Piotrowski's proposal for a horizontal approach in art history makes the simple category mistake of matching a concept about scales of value with one about 'geographic extension in the real world' as if one could replace the other.[1] In the real world, horizontal thinking is not simply a matter of laying out a map as if it were a carpet on which anyone can walk. From a political perspective, horizontality is what happens after the citadels have surrendered (or been turned into museums). The people come to command the entire field between here and the horizon. The horizon may, of course, be the limit of their reach, but their reach may, equally, extend beyond it. We need to go there and see. And we can, because once the victory is won, we are free to do so. In this conception, the horizontal field is, precisely, a plane

of freedom. Similarly, hierarchy may be pictured in two dimensions, but 'in the real world', it operates in three, four, indeed, in most imaginable dimensions (choose your own parable by Franz Kafka as an illustration, or simply look around you).

Towards a Horizontal Art History

Piotrowski offers a comprehensive statement of his idea in a paper, 'Towards a Horizontal Art History', which he presented at the 32nd International Congress in the History of Art, held in Melbourne in January 2008.[2] I will examine this paper in some detail in what follows. It is assumed that he is discussing methods of writing histories of *modern* art. No earlier art is mentioned, nor is there a suggestion that 'horizontal' approaches might be usefully back projected in ways appropriate to the study of the art of the past. Although the paper was part of a session, chaired by Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Peter Schneemann, devoted to 'The Idea of World Art History', Piotrowski makes only token references to such a concept.[3]

He opens by setting up an opposition between vertical and horizontal perspectives. The remainder of his presentation systematically collects under the latter label all, or most, of the then prevalent critical perspectives towards modern and contemporary art. He does not introduce a different or distinctive approach of his own that parallels or displaces those he discusses. His basic method is one of synthesis, of clustering this range of critical approaches into a set by showing that they share a certain spirit – that is, horizontality, forged in contrast to verticality. Those already committed to one of these approaches might feel that such a clustering would weaken its critical acuity. By definition, synthesizing has the effect of generalizing its components, which usually reduces criticality, so this concern may, indeed, be a valid one. As we shall see, he ends his paper with an appeal to plurality, which is itself a generalization (of particulars).

Centres and Peripheries, Metropoles and Provinces

Piotrowski begins with a summary of how centres and peripheries interacted during modern times:

> The heart of modern art is the centre - a Western city or cities - where paradigms of the main artistic trends came into being: Berlin, Paris, New York. From the centre, particular models come to the periphery, and from there spread all over the world … The centre provides the hierarchy of values, and the role of the periphery is to adopt this hierarchy in the process of reception. It may happen, of course, that the periphery has its own outstanding artists, but their recognition depends on the centre: on the exhibitions organized in the West and the books published in Western countries.[4]

Centre–periphery theory was influentially advanced during the 1970s within the framework of Marxist world systems theory, by scholars such as Immanuel Wallerstein (based in Montreal and then Binghampton, NY), within which the critique of Eurocentrism was developed by economist Samir Amin (based in Dakar). Tracing the patterns of artistic influence resonates throughout the history of art historical writing, from Vasari through Winckelmann to the German founders of modern art history. These efforts took on a critical cast among Marxist art historians during the 1930s, becoming radical

in a variety of ways during the 1960s. The power of art made in metropolitan centres to determine the agendas of art made in provinces, and the need for such artists to develop at least some kinds of independence at angles to these agendas, was the subject of a 1962 lecture by Kenneth Clark; inspired some authors of histories of art in the settler colonies, notably Bernard Smith in Australia and Barry Lord in Canada; interested many artists, not least members of the Art & Language group such as Ian Burn; was the subject of my 1974 *Artforum* article 'The Provincialism Problem' and Nicos Hadjinicolaou's 1982 lecture 'Art Centres and Peripheral Art' among other interventions; and has returned in recent years as an urgent topic in the inquiries of a younger generation of scholars, as is evident in the work of journals such as *ARTMargins* and *Artl@s*.[5]

The implication in Piotrowski's opening statement – that this centre–periphery exchange was highly problematic, indeed, intolerable because it was a closed system – was made explicit in my 1974 *Artforum* article.[6] Whereas my predecessors had argued that artists in the centres operated in relative freedom in contrast to the dependency trap imposed on artists in the peripheries, I pointed out that 'provincialism pervades New York, precisely in that the overwhelming majority of artists here exist in a satellite relationship to a few artists, galleries, critics, collectors, museums, and magazines like this one'.[7] I argued that, in the current situation throughout the world, the 'provincialist bind' could not be broken: '*As the situation stands, the provincial artist cannot choose not to be provincial*'.[8] This rule, I insisted, applied to artists in New York as much as it did to those working elsewhere. A hierarchy, indeed, with everyone locked in their place within the pyramid, even as they toiled to build it. A few artists, every few years, were permitted to ascend as a few fell from 'star' status, thus energizing the aspirations of all. In those days, the main currency was reputation among one's fellow artists and critics, more so than the latest sale price. Avant-garde values being still prevalent, reputation turned on the nature and impact of one's innovations. In these circumstances, there was but one answer to the provincialism problematic: the bind itself had to be destroyed, systemically, on a worldwide basis. I went on to suggest several ways in which that might be done. They have been playing out ever since.

Non-Western Modernities

Taking the centre–peripheral hierarchy as the fundamental structure within which modern art was produced, in his Melbourne paper, Piotrowski then launches his critique of 'vertical art history' by facing this problem: 'The question that is raised in this context and that must be answered is whether there is a non-Western modern art, and, if so, what are the modes of its existence'?[9] After all, 'Modernism, as well as its mutations - anti-modernism and post-modernism – were defined by the West, which means that they carried so-called universal meanings'.[10] This sentence is somewhat less considered than most of Piotrowski's writings, as, even in the West – indeed, especially in Western centres such as New York – modernism was defined (most influentially by Clement Greenberg during the 1960s) as a specific, highly reflexive tendency within modern art more broadly conceived. It did not claim universality in the usual senses, but it did claim (or, better, certain critics claimed for it) a singular capacity to pursue the inner development of art as such. In this sense, the claim goes, the work of these few artists got closest to what the modern world was really demanding of its art. Most artists, including most other artists working in evidently modern manners in the centres, did not do so and, thus, were not properly understood as *modernists*.

Piotrowski does not take up this distinction between Modern Art and modernism, nor should it concern us, as it is, now, a historical *cul-de-sac*. He returns to the issue of 'non-Western modern art'.

> It is obvious that in colonized regions art developed primarily by drawing on models developed within the metropolis. But to experts working on such areas, it is also obvious that the significance of non-metropolitan art reaches beyond adoption and imitation, as well as beyond simple 'completion' of the art defined by the centres of modernism.[11]

He goes on to cite John Clark's pioneering studies of art in Asian countries during the past two centuries, highlighting Clark's demonstration that local responses to what he names 'Euramerican' influences are just one of several concurrent strands that shape art production in the region. Other equally important – indeed, often more prominent – strands include the inner dynamics of local cultures, themselves often quite diverse, the continuing strength of long-standing traditions which undergo constant internal renovation while absorbing external stimuli (thus generating 'neo-traditionalisms'), and the 'transfer' of artistic ideas and practices within the region in forms indifferent to Western models.[12] If Asia was the 'real Other' to Western modernism during this period, then 'eastern central Europe' was, Piotrowski claims, evoking Bojana Pejić, its 'close Other'. (Needless to say, this is itself a Eurocentric distinction.) Dominated by the Soviet Union after 1945, cut off from the rest of the continent by the Iron Curtain, artists of the region nonetheless absorbed Western models but did so through a political framing that Piotrowski explores in his detailed studies.[13] In contrast, artists based in South America (he draws on Dawn Adès to suggest) shared a continent-wide heritage of struggles for independence from European colonization and the subsequent experience of nation-building. These comparisons point towards a world art history based on comparing regions with each other, including Europe as one region among several others.

Provincializing the Centres

To see the New York artworld as a provincial locality rather than a metropolitan centre was, of course, the pivotal point of my argument in 1974. In fact, at that time, this artworld was living on a reputation earned in the postwar decades. The closed system I described was, in fact, a house of cards. The city was nothing like the financial centre it had been, coming close to bankruptcy in 1975. The gallery scene was led by established venues; auction houses had little relevance, being mostly confined to the secondary market; museums, including MOMA, featured a historicized version of modernism in their collection hangs and showed current art, when they did, as potentially modernist. Artists responded by picketing the museums to show current work, not least by women and people of colour and by creating alternative networks to support each other and display their work. A similar dynamic could be observed in previously dominant art centres throughout the world. Meanwhile, smaller cities, and regional centres in Europe (led by Germany), as well as cities in previously marginalized cultural colonies (especially in South America and soon, Asia) had begun to emerge as creative concentrations. Artists, critics and curators travelled more frequently between them, noticing similarities and differences, gradually registering the coming into being of an international artworld, one that was primarily shaped by activity in the Western

centres but which was, nonetheless, undergoing an iconogeographic turning of world historical dimensions that continues to unfold today.

For Piotrowski – as, of course, for Dipesh Chakrabarty, the main theorist of how to provincialize Europe – the first step towards a horizontal art history is to recognize that Western art history is just and only Western, to decouple it from its presumption of constituting 'universal art history'.[14] The second step is to see the centre from a marginal position, which naturally affords a wider view:

> Generally speaking, the marginal observer sees that the centre is heterogenous. While the centre perceives itself as homogenous, the margins, in the process of reception and transformation for their own use, can see inner tensions that belong, as it were, to its essence.[15]

In his *Modernism's History*, Bernard Smith fully acknowledged that it was at the centres that the 'grounding concepts of cultural imperialism were given their theoretical weight, power and respectability':

> It is here that the aesthetic universalisms were moulded into powerful instruments that could be applied to the very notion of art in any part of the globe, irrespective of cultural difference, in order to separate art from craft, classical man from primitive man, fine art from kitsch, and here where artefacts from any part of the world could, at the behest of European desire, be fetishistically transformed into fine art, for the markets and museums of Europe and its colonies.[16]

These processes of universalization and absorption were, he argued, two sides of the same dynamic. The Enlightenment rediscovery of Greek antiquity was at once an act of idealization, but it was also, given that Greece was, in the eighteenth century, folded within the Ottoman Empire, an Orientalist appropriation, in fact, 'the first modern primitivism'.[17] Orientalisms and primitivisms of several kinds impacted art, taste and belief in European countries throughout the nineteenth century, triggering most of the stylistic changes that are presented in standard histories of modern art as if they were spontaneously self-invented by artists at the centres. These interests in the exotic were reinforced by artists from the cultural colonies who migrated to the centres, such as Camille Pissarro and Pablo Picasso, and by artists – Paul Gauguin and Henri Matisse, for example – who travelled to the colonies for long or shorter periods. Smith traces the impacts of the margins on artists at the centres as being fundamental to their capacity to innovate, to modernism as an artistic enterprise.[18]

The reverse is also true. As Piotrowski states: 'The Other must also take a fresh look at itself and define its position and the place from which it speaks'.[19] This raises the issue of nationality.

The National Question

Piotrowski is acute in noting that surveys of modern art published in the Western centres see modernism as engaged in a universal pursuit, the making and dissemination of Art as such, whereas the margins are assigned the lesser tasks of striving to define regional, ethnic and national identities. Another legacy of imperialism. He identifies one of the factors that brought about this state of affairs during the modern period:

I think that what mattered most was the lack of direct communication among [marginal] cultures. If they communicated at all it was via the centre … If there is any transfer of values, experience or knowledge, it goes on only through the Master, that is the West, which in this way legitimizes a specific Other in the eyes of 'An-Other'.[20]

He suggests that this was true for artists working within entire regions, such as Eastern Europe, individual nations throughout the world and their cities.

This bleak retreat to his opening dichotomy between the vertical and the horizontal requires some comment. Attention to heterogeneity within the art of the centres will quickly reveal countless artists committed to figuring the centre's own evolving official national narrative from a variety of positions ranging from celebration to critique: for France, compare Delacroix's mural commissions to Fougeron's postwar panoramas; In Germany, von Menzel's industrial scenes, Friedrich's landscapes and Dix's war paintings; in Spain, from Picasso's *Guernica* to Equipo Cronica; in England, Wyndam Lewis and Stanley Spencer during the World Wars; the United States, the Farm Security Administration photography project during the Depression to Johns' *Flag* paintings, Warhol's 'Death in America' series and Rosenquist's *F-111*. Further, while a lack of direct, lateral communication between marginalized cultures may have been the case in eastern Europe, this was less true in South America where a revolutionary nation-building project such as Mexican muralism was widely influential as a model during the early and mid-twentieth century, followed by a Cuban pop revolutionary aesthetic, and then politically engaged forms of conceptualism and performance as well as exhibition-making, notably since the 1980s by the collectives who curate La Bienal de la Habana. In Asia, the constant renovation of traditional arts and crafts, and the adoption and adaptation of Western academic and avant-garde modes, was accompanied by – and, John Clark has recently argued, absorbed into – a complex but distinctive 'Asian modern' (an aesthetic modernity, not a modernism) that was grounded in regular communication between artists and writers in the region.[21] The connections become increasingly lateral.

Transnational, Transregional, Contemporary

The concluding passages of Piotrowski's 2008 lecture acknowledge that the situation was changing as he spoke. Modern 'international' perspectives were being displaced by contemporary 'transnational' ones. 'The idea of transnationality ought to be used to develop a horizontal art history that is polyphonic, multi-dimensional and free of geographical hierarchies'. Always the synthesizer, he quickly adds in all of the elements of 'new art history', those forwarding the interests of 'specific genders, ethnic groups, subcultures and so on', while noting, correctly, that not all of these – feminist art history, for example – systematically 'violate the geographic-hierarchical paradigm' of modern Western art historical writing. Comprehensively adopting the strategy of a horizontal art history, he concludes, 'should result in a plurality of transregional narratives - an obvious critique of West-centred art historical narrative'.[22]

He does not take up the question of how his horizontal strategy might be appropriate to the interpretation of contemporary art, perhaps seeing the latter as simply the most recent phase of modern art and, therefore, equally in need of horizontal perspectives, perhaps a plurality of transregional ones. This debate has, however, moved on considerably since the early 2000s, with contemporary perspectives prominent, albeit highly contested. Regarding transnationality, I have, since 2000, consistently argued

that, while the becoming contemporary of art in the Western centres and their cultural colonies was and continues to be a major stream within contemporary art, the most transformatory current in recent decades has been and continues to be what I call 'transnational transitionality', that is, the constant cultural reimagining of self and community through world picturing, placemaking and connecting.[23] If, during the modern period, artists frequently produced national allegories, in contemporary conditions, allegories evoking their transnational, transitional condition have come to the fore in the most ambitious art (in the video installations of Isaac Julian and John Akomfrah, for example).[24]

Contemporary perspectives have also had an impact on art historical reconsiderations of modern art, in general, and modernist art, in particular. Piotrowski's proposal is a contribution to a discipline-wide project devoted to identifying the multiple artistic modernities generated throughout the world in recent centuries. This project has made massive strides since the early 2000s. Highlights include Kobena Mercer's series 'Annotating Art's Histories: Cross-Cultural Perspectives in the Visual Arts' (2005–08); Elizabeth Harney and Ruth B. Phillips's Multiple Modernisms: Transcultural Exchanges in Twentieth Century Art project (2011–18), particularly its focus on Indigenous modernisms.[25] Some important anthologies have collected the research in progress of the multiple modernities project. They include Elaine O'Brien et al. eds., *Modern Art in Asia, Africa, and Latin America: An Introduction to Global Modernisms* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); Martha Langford ed., *Narratives Unfolding: National Art Histories in an Unfinished World* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill University Press, 2017) and Flavia Frigeri and Kristian Handberg eds., *New Histories of Art in the Global Postwar Era: Multiple Modernisms* (London: Routledge, 2021).

Outstanding regional and national studies include those of John Clark already mentioned, as well as Iftikhar Dadi, *Modernism and the Art of Muslim South East Asia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), Ming Tiampo, *Gutai: Decentering Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), Chika Akeke-Ogulu, *Postcolonial Modernism: Art and Decolonization in Twentieth Century Nigeria* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014) and Reiko Tomii, *Radicalism in the Wilderness: International Contemporaneity and 1960s Art in Japan* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016). Several survey exhibitions have been crucial to this project of reimagining artistic modernities: beginning, inside the hegemon, with the Centre Pompidou series curated by Pontus Hulten and others in the late 1970s which linked art in Paris to that of other European cities and, of course, New York; looking from the centre out to the Rest in Jean-Hubert Martin's *Magiciens de la Terre* (1979); until the Rest arrives to deprovincialize the centre in Okwui Enwezor's *documenta 11* (2002) and his *Postwar: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic 1945–1965* (2016–17).

The trajectory through these research projects, publications and exhibitions has been clear: inside out, then outside in, precipitating lateral connections across expanding planes of possibility for the world's art.

Alter-Globalist Horizontality

Horizontal art history makes an appearance in one of Piotrowski's last essays, 'From Global to Alter-Globalist Art History', published in 2015, in which he proposes that it might serve as a necessary 'filter' for 'critical European studies' to learn the lessons being offered by the post-colonial critiques of Eurocentrism, by their provincialization

of Europe.[26] More concretely, it might connect studies of art in Eastern Europe to the contemporary efforts to develop a critique of globalization, including its creation of a globalizing art culture. In this essay, he compares developments in art in Europe and specifically Eastern and Central Europe with developments, at the same time, elsewhere in the world by making three temporal 'cuts'. The first is the intensification of the Cold War at the end of the 1940s when Socialist Realism becomes one of the two 'myths of the universal culture'; the other being liberal modernism, both of which are then projected, by the USSR and the United States, respectively, into the Third World, where they meet both acceptance and resistance in variable measures.[27] The second cut occurs in the years around 1968, during which neo-avantgarde artists in Argentina underwent political radicalization, whereas in Poland, this approach enabled artists to escape politics. The third is 1989, when epoch-making geopolitical changes meant that 'everywhere in the world, including Eastern Europe, artists became interested in global issues'.[28]

These cuts are, he suggests, markers of the movement towards a world situation in which neoliberal globalization has become dominant, an Empire, as Hardt and Negri describe it.[29] This empire has, however, provoked the resistance of the Multitudes, from anti-globalization activists to artist/activists such as Artur Żmijewski, who promote an attitude of 'global agoraphilia'.[30] He points out, correctly, that curators more than art historians been the more effective companions of these struggles. His key example is the exhibition *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s–1980s*, curated by Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver and Rachel Weiss at the Queens Museum, New York, in 1999.

An art history of, by and for these anti-globalizing others is needed. His name for it: 'Alter-globalist art history', that is, horizontal, comparative art history on a (anti) global scale.[31] We might hear here an echo of curator Nicolas Bourriaud's 'altermodernism', his effort to show that othering of all kinds was fundamentally altering modernist art practice.[32]

Thinking Laterally

If we are looking for one term to define the most productive orientation for writing histories of modern and contemporary art, the real limit to Piotrowski's suggestion about horizontality is its generality. But this, of course, would be true of any single term. In calling for horizontality he was not, as we have seen, proposing a single pathway. Rather, he was rhetorically proclaiming an allegorical figure for the kind of orientation that historians of modern art should adopt. We have also seen that Piotrowski's analysis becomes sharper when the orientations are allegorized less as top-down, bottom-up or simply horizontal in a general sense, more when imagined as moving from the margins inwards towards the colonial, imperial metropoles, as provincializing the supposed centrality and universality of the North Atlantic fictions that used to prevail in mainstream art historical thinking.[33] But we must not stop there; the next, decisive steps unfold as follows: demonstrate the value of artwork made at the margins and artwork made in the dynamic interactions between the centres as they provincialize and the margins as they become independent. Articulate the value of the artwork that points us through the current transition away from the previous regimes toward our contemporaneity, which is a plane of possibility with horizons that prefigure our planetarity.

Today, moving, insistently, outside in and then expanding towards and beyond horizons are not so much horizontal movements as *lateral* ones. Despite all the obvious obstacles implanted by planet-destroying economic globalization, and by fearful, reactionary resurgence in the politics of many places, the resistance of us others is orienting the world towards laterality, and doing so with an upward and outward inclination.

Notes

1 Dan Karlholm, 'Postcritical or Acritical? Twelve Steps for Art History Writing in the Anthropocene', *Konsttidskrift/Journal of Art History*, 88, no. 2 (2020): 150–64. At https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00233609.2019.1704863.
2 Jaynie Anderson ed., *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence, The Proceedings of the 32nd International Congress in the History of Art* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2009), 82–5. It is developed from his first statement 'On the Spatial Turn, Or Horizontal Art History', *Umeni/Art* (2008): 378–83. He uses the same framework, and much of the same text, in his essay 'Towards a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde', in *Europa! Europa?* ed. Sacha Bru et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 49–58. This version begins with a rather generous summary of the first edition of *Art since 1900* (2004), although of course faulting it for bringing all of the art it discusses within the purview of 'the West'.
3 For a historical review of ideas of world art and an advocacy for a 'worldly' approach to doing art history, see my entry 'World Art', in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 2nd edition), vol. 6, 313–7.
4 Piotrowski, 'Towards a Horizontal Art History', 82.
5 See Kenneth Clark, *Provincialism* (London: The English Association, 1962); Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting 1788–1960* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1962); Barry Lord, *A History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People's Art* (Toronto: NC Press, 1974); Ian Burn, 'Provincialism', *Art Dialogue*, 1 (October 1973) and in Ian Burn, *Dialogue: Australian Essays on Art History*, ed. Geoffrey Batchen (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), 131–9; Terry Smith, 'The Provincialism Problem', *Artforum* 12, no. 1 (September 1974): 54–9; Nicos Hadjinicolaou, 'Kunstzentren und periphere Kunst', *Kritische Berichte*, 11, no. 4 (1983): 36–56. I had this last essay translated into English and introduced its publication in *ARTMargins*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2020); 112–8, 119–41. I trace these debates as they unfolded from the 1960s to the present in some detail in 'The Provincialism Problem: Then and Now', *ARTMargins*, 6, no. 1 (2017): 6–32.
6 He and I discussed the article, which he told me he knew well, during his visit to Melbourne for the CIHA conference.
7 Smith, 'The Provincialism Problem', 54.
8 Smith, 'The Provincialism Problem', 57, my italics.
9 Piotrowski, 'Towards a Horizontal Art History', 82.
10 Piotrowski, 'Towards a Horizontal Art History', 82.
11 Piotrowski, 'Towards a Horizontal Art History', 82.
12 See John Clark, *Modern Asian Art* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998).
13 Notably *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009) and *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe (London: Reaktion Books, 2012)*.
14 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
15 Piotrowski, 'Towards a Horizontal Art History', 83.
16 Bernard Smith, *Modernism's History: A Study in Twentieth Century Art and Ideas* (Sydney: UNSW Press and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 51.
17 Smith, *Modernism's History*, 53.
18 While I fully support this trajectory within the book, I believe that Smith occludes it by his insistence on renaming modernism as 'the Formalesque'. See my 'Bernard Smith: The Art Historian as Hero', in *The Legacies of Bernard Smith: Essays on Australian Art, History and Cultural Politics* eds. Jaynie Anderson, Christopher Marshall and Andrew Yip (Sydney: Power Institute, University of Sydney, and Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2016), 109–28.

19 Piotrowski, 'Towards a Horizontal Art History', 83.
20 Piotrowski, 'Towards a Horizontal Art History', 84.
21 See John Clark, *The Asian Modern* (Singapore: The National Gallery of Singapore, 2021).
22 Piotrowski, 'Towards a Horizontal Art History', 84.
23 See, for example, Terry Smith, *What is Contemporary Art?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), Terry Smith, *Contemporary Art: World Currents* (London: Laurence King, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2011), and Terry Smith, *Art to Come: Histories of Contemporary Art* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019). For related perspectives, see Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not At All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London: Verso, 2013), and David Joselit, *Heritage and Debt: Art in Globalization* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020).
24 I am alluding to the debate stirred by Fredric Jameson's suggestion that 'national allegory' was the central and distinctive feature of 'the cognitive aesthetics of third-world literature'. See his 'Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text*, no. 15 (Autumn, 1986): 65–88. Critiqued by several postcolonial scholars, including Ajaz Amad, 'Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the "National Allegory"', *Social Text*, no. 17 (Autumn, 1987): 3–25. Revisited by Imre Szeman, 'Who's Afraid of National Allegory? Jameson, Literary Criticism, and Globalization', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 100, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 803–27. Jameson himself offers a commentary on the debate in his book, *Allegory and Ideology* (London: Verso, 2019).
25 Kobena Mercer ed., *Cosmopolitan Modernisms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), *Discrepant Abstraction* (Cambridge, MA; MIT Press, 2006), *Pop Art and Vernacular Cultures* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), and *Exiles, Diasporas, and Strangers* (Cambridge, MA; MIT Press, 2008); Elizabeth Harney and Ruth B. Phillip ed., *Mapping Modernisms: Art, Indigeneity, Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).
26 Piotr Piotrowski, 'From Global to Alter-Globalist Art History', *Teksty Drugie*, no. 1 (2015), special issue on *The Humanities and Posthumanism*, 125, at http://rcin.org.pl/Content/59977/WA248_79759_P-I-2524_piotrow-from_o.pdf.
27 Piotrowski, 'From Global to Alter-Globalist Art History', 126.
28 Piotrowski, 'From Global to Alter-Globalist Art History', 127.
29 He cites their influential book, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).
30 Piotrowski, 'From Global to Alter-Globalist Art History', 133.
31 Piotrowski, 'From Global to Alter-Globalist Art History', 129.
32 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Altermodern: Tate Triennial* (London: Tate Publishing, 2009).
33 On North Atlantic fictions, see Michel-Rolfe Trouillot, 'North Atlantic Fictions: Global Transformations, 1492–1954', Chapter 2 of his *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). James Elkins has adopted this name in his latest survey of issues in global art history, *The End of Diversity in Art Historical Writing: North Atlantic Art History and its Alternatives* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 29–46.

15 From Horizontal Art History to Lateral Art Studies

Dan Karlholm

Piotr Piotrowski's most widely known and influential contribution to critical historiography is his proposal of a paradigm shift towards what he terms 'horizontal' art history in contradistinction to the prevailing Western model, which he argues is 'vertical', i.e. hierarchical.[1] His ambition was to depart from Western art histories (West European and American), which privilege the West and a Western concept of art, thus leaving Central and Eastern Europe and large parts of the world outside the scope of scholarly attention. It is easy to sympathize with these ideas as a means of dealing with colonial structures and politically generated boundaries pretending to be natural or universal, in general, and the situation in the post-communist art world in Central and Eastern Europe, in particular. To dismantle the Western bias of this account, or of the presumptions behind a prefix-less concept of art, in favour of a more nuanced and diverse model is no less than necessary from the viewpoint of current scholarly standards. The question is how to do so, without reproducing key elements of Western-generated art history. The merit of horizontal art history is chiefly diagnostic, as it critically identifies a real problem: art history's historical legacy of West-centred bias—dealing de facto mostly with art in the West and using a West-derived concept of art that presumes to be universal or applicable anywhere. As a 'model' or 'paradigm' for future use, however, something more constructive than horizontalizing this art history is needed.

In the following, I will outline what I perceive as merits and problems of horizontal art history (Part I), to pave the way for my lateral art studies alternative (Part II). I will argue that the horizontal model, despite its best intentions, and partly due to its immanent avant-gardism, fails to depart from Western-generated hierarchical art history or its structures of domination between centres and margins. Two images are inserted into the text, to provide perspectives on the issues discussed, which ultimately relate to our newest geological epoch, the Anthropocene, to which all our historical efforts must correspond, regardless of whether we insist on conducting anthropocentric art history or challenge such hierarchical constructs in view of flatter, more neutral and ecologically resilient alternatives for art.

Image 1: H. Berghaus, Map of the world in star projection (1880)
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hermann_Berghaus.JPG

If we could dismantle the slightly tilted globe on our table, peel it like a fruit in one piece and spread it out horizontally on a piece of paper, a beautiful star-shaped form unfolds. Planet earth among the stars harbours a star of its own, flat as a mat but, as Bruno Latour reminds us, the Copernican revolution did nothing to alter our phenomenological relation to the world. We still experience it as flat and still, incapable as we are of perceiving its

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spherical shape and perpetual motion.[2] *This is a disorienting image, fruitfully upsetting our conventional sense of place. We quickly identify the large regions of the world but may have some initial difficulties to mark out all the human social boundaries we have erected and which we live by, such as the nations we have so recently named, the colonies and post-colonies attached to them and the division of the world in East and West, of the London meridian, that is. The very division of the world in two hemispheres is a Western one (where Europe belongs to the Eastern hemisphere). This bipartition is now literally globalized, even though the world, as Ai Weiwei has pointed out, 'is a sphere, there is no East or West'*[3] *i.e. the world is one, not two.*

I

Piotrowski's analytical altitude is an elevated one—first overlooking the geographical situation in Europe, then extending it to the West (adding the United States) and finally encompassing countries in a globally enlarged or 'alter-global' perspective.[4] From the post-communist situation in Central and Eastern Europe, he zooms out to cover the entire field of interest of modern and 'global' contemporary art. It is from the point of view of space and geography that his claims behind horizontal art history are presented. As a pedagogical prelude to his argument, he picks the 2004 volume *Art since 1900* by a group of American art historians connected to the journal *October*, to praise its critical merits before pointing out its chief omissions.[5]

> The problem is that the text does nothing to revise the unspoken assumptions of modernist artistic geography, nor does it make any effort to reach for what Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann has referred to as "geohistory." In other words, it does not reveal the historic significance of spaces and locations within which given art was created, nor does it deconstruct the relationship between the centre and the margins of the global history of modern art.[6]

This critique could be directed at any modern art history that privileges art from the Western world. Should art history pay more attention to geography and the 'historic significance of spaces and locations', Piotrowski must assume, this would lead to an eye-opening realization that there are other spaces and places of historical significance for the development of modern art. Such a wide-angle perspective seems prohibited, however, by the 'vertical' point of departure of the West-derived hegemonic account. The book *Art since 1900* exemplifies one such 'vertical art historic narration. This type of art history is primarily characterized by a hierarchical approach'.

I fail to see how this practice would differ from non-Western art histories, in general. What vertical/hierarchical art histories imply, for Piotrowski, does not immediately concern valuation but dissemination. They allegedly assume that

> art of the centre sets up the paradigm; art of the peripheries adopts models developed in the artistic metropolitan centres. The art canons, hierarchies of value and stylistic norms are all created in the centre; on the peripheries those canons, norms and values are at best received and assimilated.[7]

The very relationship between a 'center' and a 'periphery' is, thus, hierarchical, but the centre itself is hierarchical too, as the creative locus of 'hierarchies of value'. The only

place without a hierarchy appears to be the margin or periphery, but Piotrowski knows that this is not really the case. After having received and transformed the Western canon, the peripheries or margins 'because of local mechanisms, create their own hierarchies and relations––in other words, their own canons'.[8] The vertical/hierarchical dimension of art history is, thus, not, in fact, reserved for the Western narrative on the West-centred artworld, but is re-created in the Eastern or non-Western localities as well. This means that the problem of verticality/hierarchies mars the Western centre as well as the Eastern or any other so-called periphery or margin. The horizontal alternative cannot be counterposed with verticality, which, and I would strongly agree, is a trait of art history wherever it appears. Rhetorically, the pair vertical-versus-horizontal connotes two opposing dimensions of the same analytic system, interlinked like longitudes to latitudes, while, in fact, the one is based on a scale of value and the other on geographic or spatial comparison.

It is customary to counterpose the parameter of space to the parameter of time, but the latter––also the chief parameter of history––is curiously absent from Piotrowski's model. The verbal phrasing of the Western type of art-historical narration called vertical is also odd, if you think of this as history, that is. From centres such as Paris 'particular models come to the periphery', Piotrowski writes. Why not 'came'? Furthermore: 'the art of the centre determines a specific paradigm, while the art of the periphery is supposed to adopt the models established in the centre'. Why not 'determined'? Why 'is supposed to', as if this was not a history at all but a program? 'The center provides canons, hierarchy of values, and stylistic norms––it is the role of the periphery to adopt them'.[9] This is clearly not a schematic recap of history writing, but an ascription of predetermined tasks for historical agents like cities or regions. As Piotrowski also notes, at times in the past a 'periphery' picked up models from a 'centre', and so what? Such a sentence summarily describes a past happening, while the above phrases turn all such descriptions into prescriptions.

In a famous early attempt by Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg to apply the model of centre-versus-periphery to art history, the case was Italy in medieval times, where many centres corresponded to a plethora of national peripheries.[10] This model, however, crudely implying that central innovation is followed by peripheral delay, has a clear use-value, even when, or especially when, this direction is falsified by the historical evidence.[11] The hierarchical model of centre-versus-periphery may be of Western origin but to identify centres with the West and peripheries with the East or non-West is to distort the model as well as the historical evidence. Centres and peripheries, if we accept this vocabulary, appear in any country or larger region of the world where art is produced on a certain scale. Centres and peripheries are both 'vertical' in the sense of hierarchical by establishing differentiations between good, better and best; masters and pupils; leaders and followers; first- and second-rate art; outstanding and mediocre production; etc.

To typify the modern Western art-historical narrative by referring to its model of centre-versus-periphery is, furthermore, to give too much credit to this narrative. As if those who employed it were even conscious of what was systematically left behind or ignored and had seriously reflected upon how Western centres related not only to their own peripheries, but to non-Western 'peripheries' as well, when the case is that these writers typically proceed as if the only modern art of interest, with a few exceptions, is from or at least in Western Europe and the United States. The problem of Western art historiography, calling for something like a horizontal paradigm, is surely not that

modern hegemonic art history of the Western kind has misrepresented or not fully acknowledged non-Western peripheries, but that it has by and large ignored them.

Why this ignorance, and what could be done about it? Well, the presentation of the horizontal alternative proposes space, geography and 'the problem of location' to be instrumental here, again analytically broken down to the relationship between centres and peripheries or 'margins'. But since this analytical model can be utilized anywhere, it is surprising to find location and not politics to be 'the key problem.'[12] After 1945, it was easy enough for Western art history to simply follow the postwar bipartition of the world (large parts of it) into East and West, State Socialism and Social/Liberal Democracy, Communism and Capitalism and turn its back on the former to provincially concentrate on the latter. The problem was not that the West had a biased and unspoken 'modernist art geography' but that its art politics were biased and unspoken. So unspoken and unmarked, in effect, that it turned into a blank, a non-problem, akin to the skin colour white, which was not even regarded as a colour or its people as coloured. Is not the 'problem of location' actually that the West has had no sense of direction whatsoever, no sense of even having a 'modernist art geography'? Is not the problem to be located in the politically supported ignorance of the West of its Eastern half? The horizontal solution is hardly that we need only to look at other geographic locations than the 'central' ones, but how such other locations of art making are acknowledged, understood and valued in comparison. It is not, I will suggest, 'the relationship between the centre and the margins' that needs to be deconstructed, as it can at times be revealing of what happened, but the very over-determined terminology itself and its hackneyed application. However, understandable it is to claim the stakes of margins in view of their relatively inferior position or neglected status vis-à-vis the Western centres, the very terminology threatens to preserve the hierarchy and prolong the conflict.

What Piotrowski, furthermore, refers to as a margin is, logically speaking, and in my analysis, the outer part of the very same space or playing field of which the centre marks the middle (in terms of space) or is central (in terms of value).[13] The margin literally encircles the centre as its *outer* (literally outmost) part, whereas the periphery, in this usage of the term, lies *outside* this space altogether. Besides connoting negativity and lack, both terms are also negatively constituted from the notion of the centre, but whereas the first belong to the same region or category (but is valued differently), the latter does not.

At first, Piotrowski oscillated between peripheries and margins but came to favour the latter.[14] Given the problematic within Europe as a whole, this is not surprising since a margin, as I argued, is of the same territory as the centre but deferred or pushed away from it. What does this margin 'want'?[15] If it does not seek independence, artistic autonomy or the identity of another centre, it might seek recognition from the centre: to be acknowledged, first, and to be counted, second, as an equal of sorts, endowed with the same 'aesthetic rights'.[16] I do not think this reflects Piotrowski's view, but how could a state of equal rights be achieved if one position persists in referring to itself as a margin? To continue to speak of margins and marginal art seems to confirm the hierarchy between a centre of innovation and a location of belated reception and adaptation, which means that this is not simply a spatial issue but a temporal one. And while such a margin does not preclude resistance, agency, originality and innovation, it is, arguably, doomed to be related negatively versus the distant as well as previously established centre.

A periphery residing somewhere beyond the margins is, thus, peripheral to the margin as well as to the centre. It is situated outside the pale of the margins-encircled centre, outside of its view and its interests. The periphery has fuzzy borders fading from view. It is not a place so much as an extending continuous no-place, a perpetual yonder. Such peripheries can only be glimpsed or imagined from afar, since if you approach it, presuming that you could, it disappears like a mirage in the desert. You cannot occupy a periphery like this as you can a centre, it can only be occupied as a (different) centre. You must also remember that a centre may appear essential, as a kind of atom, nucleus or 'core',[17] whereas, in fact, it should be understood as assembled, centralized. But who or what, to paraphrase Pierre Bourdieu, created the centres?[18] Why, of course, the peripheries, i.e., smaller, insignificant locations, the agents and activities of which were partly and eventually centralized, i.e., de-peripheralized. Thus, the locations that the term peripheries refer to predate so-called centres.

That Piotrowski on occasion tended to prefer the notion of margins to that of peripheries is understandable given the internal division of Europe that was his starting point. But to think of yourself as margin-based or as marginal appears to be a conceptual cul-de-sac. You can bemoan your marginality, critique it or brag about it as an underdog, but as long as this game is played, domination will prevail. Piotrowski's ambition, however, was precisely to 'level' the field and reach a form of art history 'deprived of any domination',[19] which is exactly my ambition too.

II

I understand there to be two important claims behind Piotrowski's alternative to vertical (Western) art history, dubbed horizontal art history: (i) Western art history is not Western, it is universal; (ii) universal art history is not universal, it is Western. Followed by two goals: (a) to make Western art history Western (as Eastern art history is Eastern); (b) to make universal art history universal (including Western and Eastern art history). Universality as such is not the problem, nor is equal rights for all; the problem is that universality is unevenly distributed since the West has pretended to be universal and have a privileged entry into this idealist space. Piotrowski is clearly justified in insisting on calling things by their right name, and to aim at 'provincializing the West', to paraphrase Dipesh Chakrabarty.[20] Today, however, we might have to provincialize the world. As Chakrabarty was among the first to argue, world history needs to be connected to the time scales of geology—in a different and deeper sense of geo-history than the one used by Piotrowski (and DaCosta Kaufmann).[21]

Image 2: The earth seen from Apollo 17 ('The Blue marble') (1972). Photo: Harrison Schmitt

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Earth_seen_from_Apollo_17_(AS17-148-22727).jpg

Behold this planet and tell me East from West! There are no 'marginal regions of the world', unless we choose to call them such.[22] *There is North and South, South and North, around which axis the slightly compressed sphere swirls, but no East or West. Nor are there any 'centers' to be seen from the window of the space shuttle that gave us this most precious 'matter of concern', accredited with starting off the environmental movement.*[23] *(The beauty of the view almost makes us forget that it is literally American—a souvenir from the freezingly cold space war with the Soviet Union.) We have to try to look at the world, our common terrestrial resting place, with new eyes,* i.e.*, with the eyes of a child,*

mad person, visionary or artist. Why? Because our inherited existential co-ordinates have turned defunct. The partly cloud-covered shimmering surface is the thin film on which humankind's entire existence was always and is still played out. In contemporary Earth System Science and Gaia theory, it is referred to as 'the critical zone'.[24] *Critical—not as in critical theory, but as in urgent, not as in aggressive cutting edge but as in a dangerous and frightening situation that needs to be attended to immediately, critical as in crisis. 'I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to react as if our house is on fire. Because it is'.*[25] *So, this is where we are now, aided by an exterior gaze onto our earthly predicament. Who or what got us into the Anthropocene?*[26] *Not the human being (Anthropos) as a species, for sure, but some two centuries plus of ruthless capitalist exploitation of the earth and its finite resources—human and nonhuman.*[27] *Modern art was the art of this modernity, this fossil-fuelled enterprise that gave us, some of us, so much comfort and security, but that is now threatening to devastate living conditions on Earth for all, i.e., universally, as the anthropocentric saying goes—disregarding that our planet is but a tiny dot in the Universe.*

Words, terms and concepts determine what we can see and what we cannot. Local and global are descriptive terms, even if they are, sometimes, linked to values, whereas globalization is vehemently normative and ideological, as the colonizing voice of Capital in the twenty-first century.[28] Universal, which was descriptive in medieval times and became normative during the Enlightenment, deserves to be cleansed from its partial and repressive connotations and picked up in a neutralized sense. All artworks are global in the sense of being *of the globe,* and universal in the sense of being *of the universe*. The same could be said about the planetary, but all of these terms hide and defy more tangible problems.[29] Back to ground control.

Here on Earth, we are still stuck with labels like *global art* and *world art*, which are abstract meta-concepts that fail to connect with the material tissue of art, as in works of art. To focus on particulars and avoid universals as much as possible, I am tempted to paraphrase Ernst Gombrich's opening of *The Story of Art* and say: there is no such thing as art, there are only artworks.[30] And although art, artists and artworks are all interdependent, how are the latter connected to history—the subject of our Hegelian 'stories'?[31] While we art historians are interested in tracking and understanding changes through time, conventionally associated with the keyword 'history', we have arrived at a situation where this concept seems overburdened with connotations of a final record, a canon or monument, as in phrases such as 'make history', 'go down in history' or 'become historical', which sound as if someone was winning a contest and the price was eternal embalmment. As history was academically introduced in early nineteenth-century Germany, its subject was, unless otherwise noted, the nation (and its people).[32] This structure was challenged many times over but most conspicuously, perhaps, in the wake of the dethroned Berlin Wall, when history was, albeit prematurely, pronounced 'over' and a turn to memory came in its stead. While Pierre Nora's now famous concept *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) has been connected to the paradigm of trauma and memory studies, a vogue for nostalgia as well as a 'material turn', it could assist in pointing out the drawbacks of history and the benefits of starting over on a lower level of investigation.[33] If artworks since Hegel have been understood as inevitably historical, but declared 'post-historical' since around 1989, they are surely also material 'sites' as well (though not only or necessarily 'of memory').[34] Another angle in the 'post-historical' years was Jacques Derrida's re-reading of Marx in 1993, whereby he coined the concept *hauntology* to capture the haunting presence

of the past in the present.[35] While memory is, sometimes, identified with an emphasis on affect, the benefit for lateral art studies is that it is grounded in contemporaneity, in the present (i.e., shifting) past, whereas history is still associated with the distant and bygone (i.e., finalized) past.

'The dominant time conception has changed from a linear, irreversible and progressivist time conception to a non-linear, reversible and non-progressivist one', according to historian Chris Lorenz.[36] The first is recognized as 'history', but what to call the other conception? What we need, arguably, is some other concept than history—connoting a record of the past—or memory—connoting a recollection of the past. A concept agile enough to calibrate artworks as themselves temporal beings and trace them in time (and space), assuming that they either move or are moved, thus requiring efforts to understand these changes and the new environments and situations in which they find themselves, or that they remain in the same place, in which case they are nevertheless affected by the passing of time and the fact that the world around them changes. The coinage *art studies* is a little dull but suffers from none of the drawbacks of being associated with history, memory or, for that matter, science (as in *Kunstwissenschaft*), while obviously continuing to be a part of the humanities, thus a field of knowledge (Foucault).

No art, as in artworks, could reasonably be prefixed 'world' or 'global'.[37] To call them 'local' may be theoretically correct if also a senseless truism and no way to approach a work of art (unless you want to insult or diminish it). On the level of work, *global* or *world* evaporates, except in the Heideggerian sense that each work opens up a world.[38] Lateral art studies is a conceptual competitor to an art history stuck in totalizing conceptions, essentialism and hierarchical thinking. The openness—not to say meaninglessness—of studies is well suited to such a vision. Is this art studies approach affiliated with 'World art studies' (coined by John Onians in 1992)? In so far as the latter takes itself to be understood as worldwide art studies, rather than the study of 'world art' (often, in practice, synonymous with non-Western art traditions), there is a match. Regarding its 'three basic themes of investigation', however, differences prevail.[39] I propose that we snatch *art studies* from *world art studies* but put *world* under erasure, as Derrida (and Heidegger) would have said—that we, in other words, remember the world verbally erased.[40] The worldwide dimension must be taken for granted, given that no borders, essences or national identities are permitted within the extended take on horizontality termed lateral art studies. On closer inspection, is not horizontal art history more of a *studies* approach than a *history* proper?[41] Piotrowski's late 'alter-global' project about the comparison of vastly different art environments seems to suggest this too.

What if centres were described as art sources, artistic hotspots or, more poetically, as wells of creation? None of these are binary terms, which means that they are not immanently hierarchical and that they are found in 'centers' as well as 'margins'. The only difference is one of size or scale (not translatable to quality or importance). We could also use big and small, if we must quantify these art sources, without thereby immediately valuing or qualifying them. Such qualification and evaluation tend to seep in eventually but are better strategically postponed. If judgements are made, they ought not to precede the investigation (other than in the sense that it seems interesting or worthwhile to conduct it) but conclude it.[42]

Lateral art studies have two main methodological components, the one responding to the 'art' in art history and the other to the 'history'. The first methodological

approach concerns the material base of the artwork itself. This, of course, presupposes a distinction between mere material things as distinct from artworks, where a work—a worked entity—of some kind is connected with a concept of art of some kind.[43] After sorting out such philosophical problems regarding the ontology of the artwork, at least provisionally, the work as we find it (be it in a gallery, museum, storeroom, private or public space) is up for close inspection. The first thing to check—while strategically ignoring prefabricated labels, stories, genres, categorizations, critical opinions, etc.—is the condition and physical standing of the work. All the work's material components should be registered as equally important, at least provisionally. Among the components, including its slow deterioration, age marks or experience of restoration, are also *parerga* like passe-partouts, frames or plinths, which can be seen as necessary supplements.[44] The work's material and technical examination approximates a conservationist's mode of operation.[45] From this angle, temporalities appear and diverge, for example, that the canvas is older than the painted picture on it, or that some pigments have aged more speedily than others, cracking up the surface, thus altering the work itself in comparison to its first or pristine state. Such temporalities exemplify another kind of earthly or geo-historical attachments than DaCosta Kaufmann, Piotrowski and also Chakrabarty talk about.[46] Artworks, on this stage, are seen more as specimens of nature or chemistry than products of culture, even if this is not a sustainable distinction; rather, the works are individualized 'natureculture' composites or compositions.[47] However particular and singular, each artwork must be seen as assembled and composed,[48] which also testifies to their deep internal temporality, in turn, evoking what Alois Riegl famously referred to as 'age value', in contradistinction to 'historical value', regarding monuments. Some of these were saved and protected because of their mere age—long—and others for their historical (or aesthetic) significance—high.[49] We habitually consider temporal dimensions of art historiography as having to do with the movement *between* actors of different kinds, or between whole periods and ages, whereas the above dimension concerns the typically ultra-slow movement *within* the work as an actor or actor–network.[50] A metaphor for the first level of investigation of artworks is the geological excavation. Like for a geologist or archaeologist, it is a matter of disclosing strata, planes or lines, in the recycled terminology of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,[51] or 'time layers', in Reinhart Koselleck's term,[52] to read the accumulating age rings of the artefact. It is about looking into examples (artworks) as material and sensational intensities around which events—slow or fast, gradual or abrupt—have occurred and left their marks. Issues of quality, however, other than the material quality or texture of the work, would be irrelevant to the investigation so far. The guiding questions on the first stage would rather be: What is this and what has happened to it? What is it made of? How has it changed?

The next few questions point ahead to the subsequent second stage. How did it get here? What routes and connections made this possible? How to describe the work's shifting accumulation of meaning vis-à-vis its shifting environments? These may, at least initially, resemble the open and disinterested questions that anthropologists and historians of pre- or deep history would pose to a find, instead of the biased searches for who did the most radical thing first characteristic of modern art historians (Western and Non-Western). The investigation on this stage concerns the artwork as it is physically moved or moving in time and space, with one proviso. The most typical case is the one in which artworks travel, move and change places during their 'lifespan', whether by, e.g., being bought and sold, collected, exhibited, borrowed, stolen,

repatriated or moved to a new location or symbolic representation in historiography and museography. The proviso concerns the case when the work remains in situ—like most architecture or site-specific works—but is, nevertheless, affected (moved) or effected by its changing ambiance. The work remains but the world around it changes, whereby the work does not remain the same.

Once upon a time, the work was attuned to its world, time, environment, but as these conditions change, the work ages and may appear obsolete, strange or incomprehensible. The art historian's standard response to this is to try to reconstruct the lost world of the artwork to understand it on its own terms (connected to its origin, cause or birth) and disregard later addenda, circumstances, effects and experiences, so to speak. The lateral alternative pays attention, instead, to the life (from its beginning or infancy onwards) or afterlife of the work itself, i.e., how it survives 'itself' as it was once constituted and presented to the world––thus extending the gap between the work (as conceptualized or programmed) and its differentiating self. This means that there is no lost temporal identity to resurrect, no origin or point in the past to which the work must comply; rather the work is seen as a transforming, de- and re-territorializing actor in time and space, which carries its past along, right up to the point where we encounter it in its *anachronic* constitution. The work can be seen as an undeterminable, ever-changing event centre. A lateral approach could, of course, be applied to any work in any place anywhere. The last sentence proudly avoids the totalizing terms world, global or universal. *Any* and *one* is also preferable to *every* and *all*, by its opening appeal rather than closing gesture.

Evoking anachrony (not anachronism, which is still associated with a historical mistake) is to challenge historical narratives that follow a singular, uni-directional chronology, along which artworks are locked into their unique time-place of creation, their meaning linked to their origin, which also implies that their subsequent spatiotemporal journey is of no significance to their art-historical determination.[53] The latter is based on the nineteenth-century model of historicism, which is perpetuated in the figure of the avant-garde as its most radicalized form. The avant-garde produces temporal distance, where the past is actively and irreversibly outdistanced by the progressing present. From this phenomenon, I have picked the term *avant-gardism* to signify all art history devoted to keeping track of the canonical tip, the cutting edge, the steadily advancing departments of art, in tune, supposedly, with the rapidly changing times. It is hard to think of a more hierarchical mode of historizing art. If artworks are rather seen and embraced as anachronic, this means that their temporality is in flux, folded, contradictory or double, for example, indicating, in turn, that the singular timeline of crystallized forms is no longer tenable. Artworks may be early and late, ahead of or behind what appears to be their contemporaneity. This would require a more programmatically neutral model of doing (art) history (or art studies), which I have sketched elsewhere.[54] A neutral model sounds clearly naïve and largely impossible to achieve, not least given the investments of a cultural institution such as the pseudo-militant avant-garde.[55] However, the value of horizontality, it could be argued (if this term is to be maintained at all), lies precisely in its structural flatness or neutrality, understood as a strategy capable of breaking with a vertical/hierarchical account, and not just accomplishing anti-verticality or a counter-vertical narrative with other heroes and alternative top events.

Modern art, and the avant-garde especially, has wittingly and unwittingly glorified the lifestyle and habitus of (Western-based) modernity—its progressive demands,

relentless growth and innovation along a single timeline—which is now threatening the world of culture and civilization tout court. Modern art history reflects this glorification, and while horizontal art history meritoriously challenges Western privileges, it retains its modern impetus, goals and directionality. The non-modern alternative of lateral art studies deflects this course, in the name of flatness, materiality and a neutrally distributed claim to artworks' equal aesthetic rights. But if we regard all artworks to have the same aesthetic rights, it becomes less meaningful to compare them; the task is to connect them and by, thus, tracing real connections, offer an alternative to historicist hierarchies, to investigate, instead, how the material singularities of art, i.e., artworks, interconnect and relate to each other, including what distant relatives they connect with, what extended families they create, what shifting spaces they inhabit, what time layers they may reveal and how such studies could hopefully overcome the compulsion among us art historians to decide what is in and out, major or minor, avant-garde or rear-garde, central or marginal. It is—dimensionally speaking—a sideways operation, always from the entry point of one specific artwork. Some similar phrases occur once in the above-mentioned Castelnuovo and Ginzburg essay, where the authors talk about a 'sidestep' as 'a sudden lateral displacement in relation to a given trajectory', exemplified by 'some particular movements that horses make'.[56] For lateral art studies, however, side-stepping *is* the given—crab-like rather than horse-like—trajectory.[57]

Notes

1 Many thanks to Jeff Kinkle for his proof reading and language check of this text.

Piotr Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal Art History of the European Avant-Garde," trans. Marek Wilczynski, in *Europe! Europe? The Avant-Garde, Modernism and the Fate of a Continent*, eds. Sasha Bru and Peter Nicolls (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 49–58. A version was also included in *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration, and Convergence*, ed. Jaynie Anderson (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2009), 82–5. The first and shorter version of this text (not acknowledged in the above text) was published in a Czech art journal under the title "On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History," *Umeni/Art*, Vol. 56, No. 5 (2008), 378–83, (only in 2009 published in Polish). Parts of these articles were also included, and revised, in "1989: The Spatial Turn," Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, trans. Anna Brzyski (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 15–52, and parts also included as "Writing on Art after 1989" in Hans Belting et al., eds., *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds* (ZKM, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013).

2 Bruno Latour, "Moving Earths – Lecture Performance," Hans Rausing Lecture, Uppsala University, Sweden, 2019-10-14.

3 Ai Weiwei, *Weiwei-isms*, ed. Larry Warsh (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 2013), 81.

4 Piotrowski, "From Global to Alter-Globalist Art History," 2015, available at http://rcin.org.pl (2020–03–12).

5 Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004).

6 Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal Art History of the European Avant-Garde," 50. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward A Geography of Art* (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004); DaCosta Kaufmann and Elizabeth Pilliod, eds. *Time and Place: The Geohistory of Art* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

7 Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 26.

8 Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 32.

9 Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal Art History," 51.

10 Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg, "Symbolic Domination and Artistic Geography in Italian Art History" (1981), *Art in Translation*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (2009), 5–48.

11 Cf. Foteini Vlachou, "Why Spatial? Time and the Periphery," *Visual Resources*, Vol. 32, No. 1–2, 9–24.

12 Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 36.
13 "[N]o examples of art created outside *the West or on its margins* are mentioned." Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal Art History," 49 (emphasis added).
14 "[T]he notion of the periphery does not work properly, it does not show the real problem right now. This is why I prefer the notion of margins, instead of peripheries, which is not the same. However, I would argue that the dichotomy of the center and the margins is not very effective at the moment. 'Provincializing centers' is what I prefer doing. Everything is a periphery, everything is rooted in a particular context." Piotrowski, *Art Margins* interview, published January 29, 2015, available at https://artmargins.com/a-way-to-follow-interview-with-piotr-piotrowski/ (2020–03–13).
15 Cf. W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).
16 Boris Groys, "The Logic of Equal Aesthetic Rights," *Art Power* (Cambridge, MA & London: MIT Press, 2008), 13–22.
17 Cf. Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
18 Pierre Bourdieu, "But who Created the 'Creators'?," *Sociology in Question* (London: Sage, 1993), 139–48.
19 Piotrowski, "East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-Colonial Theory," *nonsite.org*, issue #12, 2013/2014, last page. Perhaps "devoid" would be a better translation here.
20 Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 52. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 2000).
21 Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 35 (Winter 2009), 197–222.
22 Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 28.
23 Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2005), 87–120; Paul Warde, Libby Robin and Sverker Sörlin, *The Environment: A History of the Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 2018).
24 James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford: Oxford UP., 2016 [1979]). Latour, "Some advantages of the notion of 'Critical Zone' for Geopolitics", available at http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/P-169-GAILLARDET-pdf.pdf. (accessed 2020–03–13). Cf. also V.I. Osipov, *Biosphere and Environmental Safety* (Cham: Springer, 2019).
25 Speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos 2019-01-25, Greta Thunberg, *No One is Too Small to Make a Difference* (UK: Penguin, 2019), 18.
26 Jan Zalasiewicz et al., eds., *The Anthropocene As a Geological Time Unit: A Guide to the Scientific Evidence and Current Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2019).
27 Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg, "A Geology of Mankind? A Critique of the Anthropocene Narrative," *The Anthropocene Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (2014), 62–9; Jason W. Moore, ed., *Anthropocene or Capitalocene: Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016).
28 "Globalization is the direct consequence of the expansion of European culture across the planet via settlement, colonialization and cultural mimesis. It is also bound up intrinsically with the pattern of capitalist development as it has ramified through political and cultural arenas." Matthew Waters, *Globalization* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), 3.
29 Cf. Chakrabarty, "The Planet: An Emergent Humanist Category," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 46 (Autumn 2019), 1–31.
30 E.H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon, 1979), 4.
31 They are Hegelian in their unspoken assumption that the unfolding of art *is* the unfolding of history/nations/peoples. Cf. also Keith Moxey, "Art History's Hegelian Unconscious: Naturalism as Nationalism in the Study of Early Netherlandish Painting," *The Practice of Persuasion: Paradox and Power in Art History* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 2000), 8–41.
32 See, e.g., Chris Lorenz, "Unstuck in Time. Or: The Sudden Presence of the Past," *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, eds. Karin Tilmans et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam U.P., 2010), 67–102.
33 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Representations*, Vol. 26 (Spring 1989), 7–24; Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books,

2001); *Material Powers: Cultural studies, History and the Material Turn*, eds. Tony Bennett and Patrick Joyce (London: Routledge, 2010).

34 Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?," *The National Interest*, Vol. 16 (Summer 1989), 3–18.

35 Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International* (New York & London: Routledge, 1994 [1993]); Ethan Kleinberg, *Haunting History: For a Deconstructive Approach to the Past* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 2017).

36 Lorenz, "Blurred Lines: History, Memory, and the Experience of Time," *International Journal for History, Culture and Memory*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (2014), 46.

37 I thus disagree with the practice used in Piotrowski, "From Global to Alter-Globalist Art History," 113. Cf. Karlholm, "'Does It Work?': A Note on Pragmatic Parts and Global Wholes," James Elkins, ed., *Is Art History Global?* The Art Seminar, vol. 3 (Routledge & Cork U.P., 2006), 227–32. On the emergence of these terms in art history, cf. Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, "Art History and the Global: Deconstructing the Latest Canonical Narrative", *Journal of Global History*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (2019), 413–35.

38 Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper, 2001), 17–86.

39 The three investigations, apart from Onians' research on neuroscience and art, are studies on the earliest artistic behavior of humankind, intercultural art comparison and interculturalization of the arts regarding "artistic influences". Wilfried van Damme and Kitty Ziljmans, "Art History in a Global Frame: World Art Studies", *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks*, eds. Matthew Rampley et al., (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2012), 217–29, esp. 220–4. Cf. also Ziljmans and Van Damme, *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008).

40 Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1976 [1967]).

41 An evident history is Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), but "horizontal art history" is not history, it is a "program," "model" or "paradigm" (to use the author's own terminology) to a certain kind of contemporary and future study. The distinction between "global art *history*" and "postcolonial *studies*" (italics added) is adopted by him, but without discussing the difference in kind. Piotrowski, "From Global to Alter-Globalist Art History," 115ff.

42 "It is not a matter of doing without judgement, but of deferring it until later." Edward De Bono, *Lateral Thinking* (London: Penguin, 1990 [1970]), 95.

43 Danto's distinction between artworks and "mere real things" is one version of this discussion. Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard U.P., 1981), 1–32. Another one is Heidegger's treatise on the origin of the artwork, where things, equipment and works are distinguished. (note 38 above). Cf. also Bill Brown "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Autumn 2001), 1–22.

44 Derrida, *The Truth in Painting* (Chicago & London: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987), 37–82.

45 One useful reference is Emma Hermens and Tina Fiske, eds., *Art, Conservation and Authenticities: Material, Concept, Context* (London: Archetype, 2009).

46 Instead of treating "geohistory" as a way to track trade ways among human agents across the "horizontal" surface of the globe—artists, dealers, patrons, collectors, curators, gallerists, critics, museum executives, etcetera—it could mean, investigating "vertically" the "geo"/earth, *i.e.* the elements or sedimented *material/natural* constituents of artworks.

47 On "naturecultures," cf. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991) trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P. 1993); Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003).

48 Cf. Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh U.P., 2016); Karlholm, "Reassembling the Artwork: The Relevance of Assemblage Theory for Art Studies", *Tahiti*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (2021).

49 Alois Riegl, "On the Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin" (1903), *Oppositions*, Vol. 25, (1982), 21–51.

50 Latour, 2005; John Law and John Hassard, eds., *Actor-Network Theory and After* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

51 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London & New York: Continuum, 2004). Cf also Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (London & New York: Routledge, 2016).
52 Reinhart Koselleck, *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003).
53 For a good overview, *see* Eva Kernbauer, "Anachronic Concepts, Art Historical Containers, and Historiographical Practices in Contemporary Art," *Journal of Art Historiography*, Vol. 16, (June 2017), 1–17.
54 Karlholm, "Is History to Be Closed, Saved, or Restarted? Considering Efficient Art History," *Time in the History of Art: Chronology, Temporality, Anachrony*, eds. Dan Karlholm and Keith Moxey (London & New York: Routledge, 2018), 13–25.
55 A source of inspiration here is Roland Barthes, *The Neutral* (New York: Columbia U.P. 2005).
56 Castelnuovo and Ginzburg, "Symbolic Domination," 19.
57 Taking this as given, too, means, finally, that "lateral" could well be put under erasure akin to "world," since art studies must be seen as both lateral and world-extensive.

16 Why Horizontal Art History Cannot Escape Computation

Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel

One of the major problems of art history has been its relationship to the "peripheries", and the need to reconsider its infamously Western-centric canon. The canon is usually placed in opposition to postcolonial or decolonial approaches, but it is unclear as to whether these approaches have changed the state of play: neither the canonical approach nor decoloniality (both of which postulate a relationship between "centre and periphery") can adopt the agnostic approach proposed by Piotr Piotrowski, "horizontalizing". Horizontalization does not postulate in advance the domination of one camp over the other, indeed, as Piotrowski put it so well. It is instead concerned with contexts, with the difference between local, national, and transnational situations. It is preoccupied first and foremost with studying actors, works, and sources, all of which are placed on the same level, before moving on to any hierarchical interpretations. However, this perspective risks relegating the horizontal history of art to monographs or regional case studies, and an approach based on individual case studies will never be able to replace the great canonical narrative. Continuing a discussion begun with Piotrowski when I invited him to spend a month at the École normale supérieure in Paris in 2013, I contend here that a global, computational, and comparative approach completes the agnosticism of horizontal art history coined by Piotrowski and that it helps to build the basis for new art-historical narratives.

On the Pitfalls of Postcolonial and Deconstructive Approaches

The so-called (and very recent) postcolonial turn in art history has not allowed art history to break with the usual hierarchies.[1] I would like to suggest three reasons for this statement.

First, while the historiographical balance sheet may appear positive today for the artistic productions of African Latin American countries, China, or Japan, it has further peripherized certain regions of the world – Eastern, Southern, and Northern Europe in particular. Those responsible for the theoretical output of these regions feel obliged to resort to postcolonial stances to claim a place on the world stage, sometimes to the point of justifying national (or even nationalistic) agendas using the postcolonial paradigm.[2] The postcolonial point of view has become something of a Procrustean bed into which the productions of the post-socialist world will always struggle to fit. Similarly, the postcolonial prism is often ill-equipped for addressing the twentieth- and twenty-first-century Latin American art: there, decolonization predates that of Africa and South-East Asia by 150 years or so; the postcolonial paradigm does not really help

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us to better understand the history of nonconformist artists in Brazil or Argentina such as Hélio Oiticica and Artur Barrio; often the recourse to decolonial theory does not add anything more than would a simple political and social contextualization.[3] A postcolonial discourse has been broadly used for contemporary diasporic African artists, for whom the paradigm represents a genuine dilemma.[4] As it has come to constitute a new canon of its own, the postcolonial approach has led to over-interpretations that do not necessarily help understand history.

Secondly, many of the "peripheral" movements that have enjoyed the greatest success in recent years thanks to postcolonial endorsements have, in fact, been those that the modernist narrative could most easily incorporate. For example, Tarsila do Amaral, Joaquín Torres-García, and Jesús-Rafael Soto have entered the canon without challenging its model.[5] But peripheral artists whose work does not meet modernist criteria of anticipation, originality, innovation, rupture, subversion, or resistance are left scattered across a broad and discontinuous field of differentiated stories.

Lastly, the canon has not yet been displaced by another narrative. The supposed existence of "counter-canons" or "pluriversal canons"[6] does not allow for unified discursive constructions. While people crave stories, and grand ones at that, it is regrettable that the usual history of modern art and modernism today represents art history's only clear narrative. It is a drastically simple and highly convincing one: a timeline of successive innovations that break time and again with a constantly outmoded past; a heroic drive for an ever-greater autonomy and independence, a history of subversion and resistance to material, religious, political, economic, and social logics – and of resistance to "the centre" and "the canon".[7] The weakness or absence of alternative narratives allows the canon's power and its geopolitical background to go largely unchecked and non-revised, despite, or thanks to, the efforts of its critics. As Gregor Langfeld puts it, "The dismissive attitude many art historians express today regarding the canon and its conceptual basis should not obscure the fact that hierarchies in the field of art continue to be relatively clearly established".[8]

Why do we lack alternative stories? Postcolonial approaches are often deconstructive: they reject dramas and climaxes, despise the mythology of the subject, they question normative ideas of time and space. In short, they reject what is at the heart of strong narratives and memorable stories: subject, action, time, place … The influence of Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, etc., and their commentators have imposed a principle of analysis that substitutes fiction for fact.[9] Meaning is now what we art historians are supposed to be interested in, much more than dates, places, names, social positions, true or false declarations, and so on. The theories of Edward Said, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Aníbal Quijano, and Boaventura De Sousa Santos and influential critics and curators, such as Okwui Enwezor, Olu Oguibe, or Salah Hassan, have incited scholars to systematically look for (and find) in works of art stances against logics of domination, without concretely verifying whether or not there actually was a logic of domination at work in the first place.

A widespread and watered-down postcolonial approach to art history makes it possible to see remnants of coloniality anywhere, with little serious historical work. All of us could quote articles, master's thesis and PhDs that fall into the trap of levelling accusations without verification and explanation; that do not contextualize their sources; that focus exclusively on images and their theoretical interpretation; that rely on a preconceived idea of the global geopolitics of culture and of a monolithic "Western art system". Tellingly, no serious historians have participated in the group

"Modernidad/colonialidad" which is considered today as the most prominent representative of the postcolonial heritage. This is a pity, but it is also something to consider.[10]

Postcolonial theories have ended up positing an essentialized "centre" that is invoked to illustrate resistance against it. The "centre-periphery structure" on which the canon relied has been taken for granted. For instance, art historians are by and large still persuaded that Paris and New York have been the world centres of modernism before and since 1945.[11] The most entrenched hierarchy of all, the hierarchy which remains intact within even the least formalistic, least patriarchal, and least ethnocentric approaches in art history, is still the "centre-periphery" hierarchy.

Horizontalizization: A Question of Relativization

Hence, the importance of Piotrowski's call to horizontalize art history – to move away from a "hierarchical, vertical discourse ordering the artistic geography in terms of centres and peripheries".[12] This is a call to avoid defining in advance the "centre", whether positively as a reference or negatively as something to be challenged. It is a call to contextualize our objects of study.[13]

The redefinition and the contextualization of terms were for Piotrowski two inseparable processes. Hence, his most interesting form of historical relativism, that consisted in observing that artists' references changed from one country to another. For example, Polish artists still considered Surrealism as a reference in the 1960s, but with their experience of the cultural implications of communism, they could not understand the Surrealists' fascination with it.[14] Here, there was not a centre (Paris and Surrealism) and a periphery (the Polish modernists), but instead very different ideas of what art could be and where the centre of reference could be, and a series of productive misunderstandings that meant that a relationship was still possible between these differing positions.

As a global and social history of the canon itself demonstrates, such productive misunderstandings play a central role in the artists' construction of their own legitimacy.[15] Alongside historical relativism, a little comparative anthropology or sociology of action encourages us to treat references to a putative centre not as evidence of authentic allegiance but as a strategic discourse. When artists refer to a centre, it is not necessarily because they are dominated by this centre. This reference can be a means of playing on the inferiority complexes of their local audience. Artists have always needed to refer to an "elsewhere" to affirm their legitimacy. This is the logic of the aphorism "no one is a prophet in their own land". For example, during what was supposedly the golden age of so-called Parisian art in the first half of the 1910s, Parisian Cubist artists capitalized upon Germany's perceived cultural superiority by exhibiting and finding collectors on the other side of the Rhine. This sparked the jealousy of Parisian cultural milieus that felt obliged to catch up.[16] Similarly, it is not by chance that conceptual artists who came from the New York art system claimed to be rootless and at odds with New York in the 1970s.[17] Throughout the twentieth century, it has been more rewarding for artists to boast about exhibitions abroad than it has been to exhibit in local museums (at times neglecting to mention that foreign exhibitions took place in obscure rooms rented for the occasion). In summary, processes of legitimation are even more effective when they invoke external references. As such, the centre is always elsewhere, but an elsewhere to which artists need to show that they are connected. "Centres and peripheries" have always been negotiated and defined according to the interests of the actors involved.

The Case Study Is Not Enough

One of the difficulties of the horizontal approach, however, is its generalizability. For example, showing that the Poles were in dialogue with (rather than in submission to) Parisian Surrealism does not alone help us contest the myth of New York's global centrality after 1945. To do so, we would need to demonstrate that Poland was not an exception that this example can be generalized. Such a demonstration could be based on a global, comparative, collective, pragmatic point of view, far beyond the individual case study.

If we return to the example of the ostensible dominance of New York in the global field of art since 1945, we see that deconstruction was of little help. Most studies have taken the discourse of New York's world centrality as given despite their intention to explain that U.S. artistic domination was not the result of U.S. art essential superiority. They have been written around New York-based sources and have never verified the *global* reception of the United States so-called artistic propaganda.[18] How many art historians have taken the trouble to check whether or not Clement Greenberg and his comrades were the only ones to believe in the idea of New York's post-1945 global centrality? Apart from Catherine Dossin's seminal book on the subject, how many have checked if non-U.S. artists knew about Abstract Expressionism in the 1950s and the 1960s?[19] The tinted prism of the "global centrality of New York after 1945" must be abandoned because it does not stand the test of a simple comparative study conducted on a global scale.[20]

However, we face another problem: the horizontal approach is not yet well enough established to allow for the emergence of a new narrative in art history.

For lesser-known periods, particularly post-1970, which have received widespread scholarly attention only in the past dozen years, the horizontal approach has brought convincing results and has become relatively dominant in this restricted field. Art since 1970 is well suited to this decentralized approach: the artistic circles of the post-1968 period were themselves questioning the quality of North America's artistic production, most often for political and commercial reasons. The post-socialist or postcolonial wave of the 1990s in contemporary art accentuated the relativization of the centre–periphery model by its historians. Thus, a relatively plural and de-hierarchical narrative of the art of the last 30 years has emerged.

By contrast, for the period prior to the 1970s, the horizontal approach has not fared well. Here, the canon is backed up by museum collections which can seemingly only be modified at the margins. Presentations and introductory texts to exhibitions about "Art since 1945" usually begin with some version of "the shift of avant-garde development from Europe to America" (according to a description on the Guggenheim website of a 2020 exhibition on the period supposedly dedicated to "Developments, Diversity, and Dialogue").[21] This is to say nothing of a terribly imposing collective *musée imaginaire*, in which the canon retains all its force and which is supported by films, fiction, textbooks, and university courses.[22]

This canon is based on what are ultimately problematic methodologies that have never undergone the test of generalizability. The monograph often produces hagiography. It is equally biased when it focuses on particular forms, reaffirming the formalistic evolutionism that the canon feeds on.[23] The monograph also incites to limit one's investigation to a single place – or even a single country – in what can only be called methodological nationalism. Finally, it is unsatisfactory from a heuristic point of view: it does not allow any passage to generality since the conclusions it draws can

only relate to the case at hand. The case study is worthwhile only when it has been *preceded* by a general approach that allows for a better understanding of its degree of exception or representativeness.

Global, As Worldwide, and Total

The requirements of comprehensiveness and generalizability mean that a horizontal approach should be global in many senses of the word: general, interdisciplinary, and conducted at a worldwide scale. And, this holds true not just for our objects of research but for art-historical journals.

To make space for all places of artistic production and treat them at the same level, the work of researchers specializing in the so-called peripheries must be circulated as widely as possible, hence the importance of translation work and Open Access journals. This is why *Artl@s Bulletin* (https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/) is in Open Access, whereas many peripheral-oriented journals such as *Art Margins* offer only paid-for access.[24] A voluntarist policy of theoretical openness is also urgent among journal editing boards. Peer reviewers should be encouraged not to favour articles that systematically respond to the Anglo-Saxon rhetorical model which I would readily caricature as follows: a case study opens the article, inviting us to study how such and such an artist, obviously marginal, deconstructs through his (less often her) work the scopic or political conditions of their era and questions (obviously) the canon, unknowingly applying Deleuze, Derrida or Agamben in the process. A horizontal history of art must break the historiographical glass ceiling that pushes researchers published in imposing English-speaking journals to adopt the rhetorical tics necessary for making their work known in international academic circles.

A horizontal art history might even dare to publish, read, and even appreciate bad English. Why should art historians spend time perfecting their English rather than developing their understanding of non-dominant languages and cultures? Why be afraid to undertake and circulate English translations of our papers without linguistic proofreading? Surely, our research budgets ought to be spent on more important issues. Here, I acknowledge and thank native English-speaking colleagues who volunteer their time to edit the "badly written" work of foreign colleagues who do not have the budget to pay for proofreaders.

Further upstream, a horizontal history of art should encourage the digital publication of sources from the peripheries. The historiographical power of the canon stems in no small part from the fact that its centres have long dominated when it comes to the preservation of archives, works, and printed sources. All of us prefer to work on objects for which archival sources are readily available, at the risk of excluding those for which they are not.

Today, the war for sources is digital. Not only do we have to expand the digitally available sources, we also need to connect them with the sources with which art historians most often work. It is with this goal in mind that the Artl@s project (https://artlas.huma-num.fr/en/) has developed since 2009. Its global database of exhibition catalogues, BasArt,[25] makes available online data from thousands of exhibition catalogues from all over the world since the nineteenth century, with a cartographic and statistical visualization interface alongside the usually advanced search functionalities. Published as open data, it expands regularly as researchers continue to add their own data. It currently features exhibition catalogues from the Middle East, Africa,

Europe, and the Americas, with new contributors currently adding data for Asia. This digital database encourages users to recognize that a topic is never strictly local or national: browsing exhibition catalogues, navigating their visualization on a timeline, on a map or a graph, one can realize that an artist exhibited alongside Moroccan artists, painted a landscape in Chile, shared the same address as a Korean artist, or borrowed a title from a South American artwork. The digital tool also makes it possible to measure the internationality of a given exhibition, to trace the circulation of works and artists – in short, to globalize art-historical research.

Computing to Dehierarchize and Generalize

Digital tools, when applied to globalized sources, can produce promising results in terms of the generalizability that we need. When applied to coherent, worldwide, comparable corpuses, quantitative methods can make a powerful contribution to a horizontal history of art:

1 They disorganize our knowledge. In a map, a chart or a diagram, our preconceived ideas about the global geopolitics of the arts, our traditional hierarchies between artists, styles, and trends have less place. The digital approach de-hierarchizes data, levels out information, and eschews a discourse on value. It loses the individual in the group and no longer forces us to work constantly on exceptions. Cartographies make it possible to visualize the activity of the peripheries and show the polycentrism of art history.
2 Diachronic visualizations shake our idea of the art geopolitics as they show that cultural equilibriums are fragile. They lead to thinking about traffic issues – their factors, mediators, channels, obstacles –, and about their importance in the negotiated construction of a global geopolitics of art.
3 Distant computation enjoins us to start by questioning the "how much", the "where" and the "when" of any object of study. Gaps, absences, and holes are even more heuristically productive than clusters and statistical peaks. Despite its virtual outlook, computation, thus, contributes to the factual, material turn so necessary in art history: an artefact is an object and, as such, it is subject to the categories of number, space (in which it circulated) and time. What's more, quantity, place, and time are the most useful categories for writing a story.
4 Having learned the lesson of deconstruction, we will always benefit from varying points of view. With digital visualization, we can vary scales of analysis and methods: long/short term, cohorts/case studies, prosopography (collective biography)/biographies, remote/close mapping, sociology/visual study, etc. It encourages dialogue between sources and methods: archives, images, works of art and their materiality, quantitative data, biographies, etc.
5 Statistics make it possible to speak the language of one's time, rather than complain that the present time only believes in what is calculated. Today, we are brought prizes, scores, and rankings. Let's respond with charts that show that one could have said the opposite, before moving on to case studies. Quantitative visualization carries a symbolic violence that can be used against another symbolic violence, that of the canon. Computation, particularly in light of its controversial status in art history, does its best to explain its hypotheses, consolidate its corpuses, and explain its methods. Art history needs such attitudes.

6 Finally, the digital approach is a collective way of working. It requires a generous attitude and a practice of sharing. It is also a place for friendships, both interdisciplinary and intercultural. As Piotrowski himself underlined so often, horizontal art history will be written by friends.

Varying Scales. A Proposition among Others

How, then, after making our way through large series, numbers, graphs and maps, and back to historical documents and artefacts, can we return with a story? It is a daunting task: how can we produce narratives that are not only sufficiently comprehensive and general but which also offer stories that are coherent and engaging enough to displace the modernist canon. For my part, I have tried to propose a transnational history of the avant-gardes where the avant-gardes are defined by *their own* claims to novelty and innovation: a new, decentred version of what has been perhaps the most solid base of the centre–periphery model inherent to the canon.

This proposition is a limited one with a limited timescale (1848–1970), and in the space of a few paragraphs, I can only summarize it briefly. I worked on a social field which globalized gradually from the late 1880s onwards and which became really global after the First World War.[26] Two first volumes published in paperback editions, for the periods 1848–1918 and 1918–45, are contributing, at least for the French-speaking field, to relativizing the alleged centrality of Paris and increasing awareness of the importance of the so-called peripheries in the transnational construction of artistic modernity. A third and final volume concerns the period 1945–70. This volume has occupied me for no less than 15 years: distant study is impossible without an extended exchange and interaction with the publications of others and with contemporary sources of the time.

The aim of this third volume is to question the notion of New York's centrality for the period after 1945, while reconstituting the rise of the global contemporary art system. My thesis is, firstly, that this story is one of social, economic, and political artistic peripherizations whose effects are still felt today; secondly, that this peripherization was not a geopolitical one (the peripherization wherein one nation (the United States) triumphed over all others), but that it became geopolitical afterwards.

I used sources and methodologies on three complementary scales of analysis.

- From a distant scale, using exhibition catalogues and art journals to build statistical series, and looking at the so-called peripheries before turning to the putative centre, but also comparing countries and their artistic lives, we can provincialize New York: from the 1940s onwards, the artistic and critical elite in the United States closed itself off from foreign artistic life,[27] lost in a nationalistic navel-gazing that was barely shaken by the resumption of transnational exchanges and the dynamism of the international scene in the 1950s. In the meantime, prior to the 1960s, all was still to play for on the global cultural stage. There was undeniably a challenge to the artistic reach of Europe (and France). But the pretenders with high cultural hopes were many, creating museums (or museum departments) of modern art, Biennials,[28] academic exchange programmes, building libraries. Travelling exhibitions received state subsidies, not only in France and Mexico but also in Franco's Spain.[29] The United States would jump on the bandwagon only somewhat later, with the creation in 1953 of the United States Information

Agency. Their artistic propaganda efforts abroad seem modest when compared with the machinery deployed by France and Mexico. In the struggle for cultural centrality, certain metropolitan elites actively sought out avant-gardes: this was the case in Argentina after the fall of the Perón régime,[30] and in Brazil, where neo-concrete art received enthusiastic support.[31] It is in these terms that the promotion of Abstract Expressionism by New York's liberal circles to the "national" U.S. art form – even as it differed little from international lyrical abstraction[32] – must be understood.

- At an intermediate, sociological scale, biographies help to look at the social trajectory of artistic cohorts. The intermediate scale is also that of reception studies, cultural transfers, and transnational or translocal approaches: the meaning of an artwork in circulation varies across different sites of reception. Some sources, such as press cuttings, or personal archival material, are useful to track such phenomena. As such, the international reception of U.S. art in Europe (where it was most widely dispatched) was, in fact, quite minimal compared to the reception of art from other countries. The number of visitors to the "American" art exhibitions in Western Europe in the early 1950s, when known, does not exceed 20,000, which is very little compared to the more than 100,000 visitors who flocked each time to the 1952–53 Mexican art exhibition as it travelled between Paris, London, and Stockholm.[33] Documenta 1955 received 130,000 visitors and did not exhibit one single "American" artist. One "American" exhibition at the Orangerie in Paris that same year did attract more than 100,000 visitors (188,000): it was dedicated to French art in U.S. collections.[34] Catherine Dossin, who compared exhibition receptions, confirms the low interest in U.S. modern art at the time.[35] U.S. art's international breakthrough occurred only in the 1960s, and in the context of a "global" circulation that was in reality anything but being limited almost exclusively to Europe and the United States[36] Reciprocally, the breakthrough of the U.S. avant-garde on the international art market started only in 1963 with the European exportation of pop art. Pop art's domestic recognition in the United States came *after* it had found favour among European audiences.[37]
- Finally, the analysis of artists' trajectories and artworks through specific case studies helped me to refine the results of the distant and intermediate steps. The micro-historical history of individuals is a history of circulations, adaptations, collaborations, and rivalries, of permanent negotiations between the most welcoming and the most promising networks: works of art are part of this negotiation. Likewise, the symbolic domination of the United States was built on a series of reinterpretations that have been forgotten. Robert Rauschenberg's 1964 Grand Prix at the Venice Biennial is the centrepiece of the narrative of the United States post-war centrality. Yet in selecting Rauschenberg, the Venice juries were merely honouring the sole representative at the Biennale of a broader international trend that had emerged in Europe in the 1950s: whether as a new realism or a postdadaism, or assemblage art, this current was pursued by avant-gardes in Rome and Milan (Burri, Fontana, Manzoni, and Castellani), Paris (notably the Nouveau Réalisme), Antwerp (the Nul group), and West Germany (ZERO, SPUR) as well as in Argentina. Rauschenberg had exhibited alongside this tendency and collaborated with several of them.[38] All reacted against the same tendency, lyrical abstraction (Abstract Expressionism, for the United States), and with similar visual and plastic vocabularies. Rauschenberg had been a frequent

traveller in Europe since the early 1950s in defiance of the patriotic isolation of the New York milieu. His work – along with that of Johns, Twombly and Oldenburg – stood in defiance of a heroic, nationalistic, and homophobic lyrical abstraction.[39] In 1964, the organizers of the U.S. Pavilion in Venice and the North American press dutifully represented Rauschenberg's reputation and oeuvre as "Made in the U.S.A." when in reality it had been constructed *against* the ethnocentric, isolated, and inward-looking narrative of "globally dominant American" art, *with* the European avant-gardes, and in a polycentric, transnational avant-gardist utopia.

Conclusions

The lack of generalizability is the weakest point of the canon. It must not be the Achilles' heel of the horizontal approach. If the horizontal approach is limited to studying contexts, it risks being limited to a list of case studies that will always be difficult to put on the same level. It is not enough to postulate equality for all to demonstrate it. My point of view is that the method needs to be enriched, demonstrate horizontality by deconstructing the hierarchies of the art history canon, and precede monographic approaches by global and quantitative studies, where cold and distant statistical comparison will allow a first de-hierarchization that postcolonial and decolonial narratives exhaust themselves in proposing. Without idealising it, a pluriscalar methodology is likely to help us get out of one of the most important aporias of decolonial thinking. Decolonial thinkers have stressed that colonial structures persist in our ways of thinking, breathing, loving:[40] there is little hope in such a position. Before decolonizing our thinking and our soul, we do have a possibility to change and enlarge our way of selecting our sources, of defining our terms, of choosing our methodologies. We can proceed with a global big corpora and produce comparisons that previous narratives do not help to interpret. We can vary and multiply our scales of analysis, to ensure that the hypotheses born from one scale are confirmed by other scales of study. Then we will be able to start narrating the peripheries with stories that will be less dislocated and more connected, more horizontal – more collegial and more story-like.

Geneva,
April 2022.

Notes

1 On this "postcolonial turn", see Joyeux-Prunel, Béatrice, "Art History and the Global: Deconstructing the Latest Canonical Narrative", *Journal of Global History* 14, no. 3 (2019), 413–35. doi:10.1017/s1740022819000196. Cambridge University Press online.

2 See for instance the introduction to the Exhibition *Lost in the Archive* (Riga: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2016), introduction - https://lcca.lv/en/exhibitions/exhibition--lost-in-the-archive-/, consulted 4 October 2021. On the generalization of identity as a label for distinction, see Belting Hans et al. (ed.), *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2013), 29.

3 An example: Lucero María Helena, "Decoloniality in Latin American Art", *Southern Perspectives* (a paper delivered at the Southern Perspectives series at the Institute of Postcolonial Studies on August 11 2011): https://southernperspectives.net/region/latin-america/decoloniality-in-latin-american-art (consulted 29 July 2020).

4 Moura Sabrina, "The Dilemmas of African Diaspora in the Global Art Discourse", *Artl@s Bulletin* 8, no. 2 (2019), Article 4. https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol8/iss2/4/.

5 Langfeld Gregor, "The Canon in Art History: Concepts and Approaches", *Journal of Art Historiography* 12 (2018), 10–13 https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2018/11/langfeld.pdf (consulted 29 July 2020): "Feminist art history has hardly changed the highly selective system that has led to the canonisation of specific artists; it has instead confirmed it despite the modification of the canon" (p. 13).
6 Iskin Ruth E., "Introduction: Re-envisioning the Canon: Are Pluriversal Canons Possible?" In Iskin Ruth E. (ed.), *Re-envisioning the Contemporary Art Canon: Perspectives in a Global World* (London: Routledge, 2017), 1–41.
7 Most representative: Foster Hal, Krauss Rosalind, Bois Yves-Alain, and Buchloh Benjamin H. D., *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005).
8 Langfeld Gregor, "The Canon in Art History: Concepts and Approaches", *The Journal of Art Historiography* 19 (2018), 1–2.
9 See the assessment of Edwards Carole, "Réalité ou fiction? L'Histoire à l'épreuve du postmodernisme", *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 18, no. 4 (2011), 487–98.
10 The group's main actors are the anthropologists Arturo Escobar and Fernando Coronil, the literary critic Javier Sanjinés, the pedagogue Catherine Walsh, the philosophers Enrique Dussel, Santiago Castro-Gómez, María Lugones and Nelson Maldonado-Torres, the sociologists Aníbal Quijano, Edgardo Lander, Ramón Grosfoguel and Agustín Lao-Montes, and the semiologists Walter Mignolo and Zulma Palermo. Similarly, the group http://reseaudecolonial.org features no historians. Website consulted July 2020. In April 10, 2022, the website has been closed. A Wikipedia page gives a list of the Réseau's members : https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Groupe_modernit%C3%A9/colonialit%C3%A9.
11 On the permanence of this idea, particularly in the Art History courses offered by U.S. universities, see Joyeux-Prunel Béatrice, "Provincializing New York: In and Out of the Geopolitics of Art After 1945", *Artl@s Bulletin* 10, no. 1 (2021), Article 12. https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol10/iss1/12/.
12 Piotrowski Piotr, "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde". In Sasha Bru et al. (eds.), *Europa! Europa! The Avant-Garde, Modernism, and the Fate of a Continent,* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 49–58.
13 Jakubowska Agata, Radomska Magdalena (ed.), *After Piotr Piotrowski: Art, Democracy and Friendship* (Poznań: Adam Mickiewicz University Press, 2019), 8–17.
14 Piotrowski Piotr, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989* (London: Reaktion, 2009), 47–55.
15 Joyeux-Prunel Béatrice, *Les Avant-Gardes Artistiques 1848–1918: Une Histoire Transnationale* (Paris: Gallimard, 2015); Joyeux-Prunel Béatrice, *Les Avant-Gardes Artistiques 1918–1945: Une Histoire Transnationale* (Paris: Gallimard, 2017), 263.
16 Joyeux-Prunel Béatrice, *Nul n'est prophète en son pays ? L'internationalisation de la peinture des avant-gardes parisiennes, 1855–1914* (Paris: Musée d'Orsay / Nicolas Chaudun, 2009).
17 Cras Sophie, "Global Conceptualism? Cartographies of Conceptual Art in Pursuit of Decentring". In DaCosta Kaufmann Thomas, Dossin Catherine, and Joyeux-Prunel Béatrice (eds.), *Circulations in the Global History of Art* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 167–82.
18 For instance, Guilbaut Serge, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art. Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985).
19 Dossin Catherine, *The Rise and Fall of American Art, 1940s–1980s: A Geopolitics of Western Art Worlds* (New York: Routledge, 2017).
20 Joyeux-Prunel Béatrice, *Naissance de l'art contemporain 1945–1970. Une histoire mondiale* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2021).
21 *Art since 1945: Developments, Diversity, and Dialogue*, exhibition, Guggenheim Bilbao, November 16, 2004-January 30, 2005. Still online on July 29, 2020 https://www.guggenheim.org/exhibition/art-since-1945-developments-diversity-and-dialogue.
22 Further details in Joyeux-Prunel Béatrice, "Provincializing New York: In and Out of the Geopolitics of Art After 1945", *Artl@s Bulletin* 10, no. 1 (2021), Article 12.
23 For instance by Bois Yves-Alain, Krauss Rosalind, 'Vive Le Formalisme!', *Art Press* 149 (1990), 47–51.
24 Out of 162 Art History academic journals listed by Beate Fricke and indicated on her twitter account on 3 July, only 37 were in Open Access, i.e. less than 23%. See https://twitter.com/perillus1/status/1272145786646790150?s=20, consulted July 3, 2020.

25 https://artlas.huma-num.fr/map/#/. The Artl@s Project, ed. Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, in collaboration with Catherine Dossin and Léa Saint-Raymond. ENS/PSL Research University, Paris, France, and the university of Geneva, Switzerland.
26 Joyeux-Prunel, *Les Avant-Gardes Artistiques 1848–1918*; Joyeux-Prunel, *Les Avant-Gardes Artistiques 1918–1945*.
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17 Simultaneous Avant-Gardes and Horizontal Art Histories

Avant-Gardes Outside of the Canonic Narrations

Andrea Giunta

> The cultural history of the Third World will no longer be a miniature repetition of the recent history of the United States, West Germany, France, etc. It must expel from its bosom the mentality on which the colonialist spirit rests.
>
> Mário Pedrosa[1]

> Subverting the dichotomy of power requires producing local theory, situated knowledge, discourse and situational awareness, which generate an imbalance of functions within the distribution hitherto divided between the Latin American proliferation of differences (as a surplus of irrationality) and the function of those who oversee producing "the narrative of restitution of order" that the Latin American will use to give each difference a classifiable and interpretable place.
>
> Nelly Richard[2]

In 2009, when Piotr Piotrowski wrote an essay proposing a horizontal history of art,[3] several art historians and cultural critics were intensely arguing with the canonical narration of modern art. Its evolutionary, reductive and hierarchical map had been established in the exhibition *Cubism and abstract art* curated in MoMA by Alfred Barr in 1936. Based on a selection of dates, movements and a geography that differentiated the formation of the idea of abstract art in Europe of what had happened in other parts of the world (in his words, "Japanese Prints", "Near-Eastern Art", "Negro Sculpture"), his diagram ordered the fundamental milestones that consolidated the canon of modern art. The graceful curves and arrows of the Barr diagram made up a story that had already been written in Europe although it was more complicated there. In Europe had more names and a wider geography, but it lacked the clarity and effectiveness that the director of MoMA gave it. Barr's correspondence reveals the precision with which he chose the works for the collection to have the pieces he considered the best.[4] The catalogs, the reproductions, the postcards, managed to distribute the certainty that the museum has the best and most complete version of modern art. It has been written that the center of modern art passed to New York, a process that began when the Germans invaded Paris.[5] This is the story of the centers that repeat the books on modern art. Then became History, with capital letters. Outside of that geography, art histories are considered peripheral (a denomination the center uses to name what is outside of themselves), associated with the ideas of secondary, derivative, lacking in originality and quality. They are little and marginal local stories. Knowledge, theory, interpretations, acknowledgments and legitimations occur in a few northern countries.

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From Latin America, we observe the structures of knowledge production of the centers. If France and Germany produce theory, philosophy, political and aesthetic thought, it is in the American academy where the concepts and their various fields of application are ordered, explained and made useful. Books published in English are later translated and published in Spain, which has displaced translation centers in Buenos Aires and Mexico during the Franco regime. We have read several Spanish versions of books by October group, by authors based in the IVY League universities, all on the East Coast of the United States. They produce theoretical and interpretive books and articles that provided excellent reading models focused on the art of the centers.

Meanwhile, the rest of the world, of course, produces art, culture, concepts but lacks the power and legitimacy networks to distribute, universalize and manage them to put the hegemonic reductive narrative into crisis. Our dilemma has been, do we want to integrate ourselves into that canonical History or do we prefer to put it in crisis? Are we looking to add chapters to modern art books or do we want to shift their hierarchical structure to focus on simultaneities, parallelisms and exchanges?

In this chapter, I would like to address three aspects. In the first place, consider the critical response on the idea of periphery and marginality from Latin American art critique. Second, to propose the notion of simultaneous avant-gardes to analyze the process of Latin American art during the second half of the twentieth century. Finally, leave open the dialogue with counter-hegemonic proposals launched by other art histories. In this case, the positions posed by the Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski.

How They See Us, How We See Ourselves

If we visit a museum in Latin American countries with a European or a North American colleague trained in the story of modern art, we will hear similar comments. Instead of wondering with curiosity on the characteristics of the works, the artists, the movements or the contexts in which they arose, their observations remind us a class of attributions. Before each work and each artist whose name they hear for the first time, they mention some famous European or North American avant-garde artist. The repertoire is classic and recurring: Piet Mondrian, Max Ernst, Joan Miró, Theo van Doesburg, Georges Vantongerloo, Paul Klee. And, of course, Pablo Picasso and Marcel Duchamp. Where we see Alfredo Hlito, they see Vantongerloo; where we see Joaquín Torres-García, they see Mondrian; where we see Tarsila do Amaral, they see Fernand Léger.[6] Of course, the problem of influences is not exclusive to what the centers call peripheries. If we think of the New York school, it is legitimate to find Picasso or Miró in Arshile Gorky's work and in the cubist works of Picasso and Braque, African masks and sculpture. So, it is not that the relationship between the forms does not exist. But we know that this is just a piece of information for understanding the intervention of images in the dynamics of culture. If incorporating influences is typical of peripheral and subaltern art, we could argue that European cubism (the heart of modern art for Barr) is peripheral with respect to African sculpture. The exhibition *Picasso Primitif* in Paris, Quai Branly Museum (2017), clearly exposed the peripheral condition of Picasso in relation to the sculpture of Africa, Oceania, Asia and America. The exhibition could have been called *Picasso Peripheric*.

But the problem of hierarchies does not lie only in the centers. The peripheries are marginalized when they assume the stories of the center as normative and reproduce

their vocabularies to refer to local art as versions of central art. Thus, it is common to find in Latin America art history books chapters that refer to impressionism, futurism, cubism, surrealism, pop or conceptualism in their national versions. Especially in relation to Latin American conceptualism, a great effort has been made to distinguish it by calling it political or decentered. The problem is that artists did not always call themselves conceptualists or surrealists or cubists, there were other names, groups, texts, actions, exhibitions or publications that remain as curiosities under the great legitimizing umbrella of the modern and postwar periods of art.

The vertical and hierarchical history of art, as Piotr Piotrowski called it, repeats itself in many local stories that are emptied of their contexts and the singular words that the artists themselves chose to name what they did.[7] They wrote inaugural texts and did avant-garde works and radical gestures. For example, the one that Joaquín Torres-García made in 1934, when he returned to Montevideo, his hometown, the capital city of Uruguay, and presented an inaugural conference in which he turned up the map of South America and declared: "Our North is the South". He proposed to create a new art school of art, which he articulated until his death in 1949, and which his disciples continued. The force of Constructive Universalism was as powerful as that of Mexican Muralism.

Peripheric Modernities?

A critical movement that proposed to reverse the existing models of analysis in the cultural and literary studies of Latin American culture took place in the eighties. Several Latin American cultural critics inverted the subalternizing aspects of the periphery concept to consider its positive and creative aspects. The movement took place in the context of the irruption of the debate on postmodernity. It was even a way of maintaining that what was now glimpsed in the centers (the end of history, the idea of the future, progress, purity that consolidated the canon of modernity) had been anticipated by the peripheries. In Latin America, modernity had never been a pristine process of ideas intertwined in the pursuit of self-improvement that the history of art narrated—eugenic matrices are not external to the model of modern art. Here, modernity had always been mixed. And for Latin American theorists, this trait was positive. It undoubtedly allowed the weight of the cultural inferiority complex to be removed. Although there are many Latin American cultural theorists that I could review to understand such a process of ideas, I will focus on three whose books were extraordinarily influential.[8]

In 1986, the French-Chilean cultural critic Nelly Richard published in a special issue of the Australian magazine *Art and Text*, in English and Spanish, the book *Margins and Institutions. Art in Chile since 1973*. "Margin" was the productive term from which Richard analyzed a group of artists antagonistic to the authoritarian model of the Pinochet dictatorship. At the same time, because of their marginal positions, these works were resistant to the censorship of the repressive system. Marginal meant rupture, friction and alternative. She was referring to the marginal, unofficial culture, whose displaced signs altered the relations between the erudite and the popular, and which from a decentralized position eroded the monolithic signs of the patriarchal authoritarian state. Instead of the one-way, evolutionary discourse, linked to the discourses of progress, Richard considered the margins, the folds and the fragments.

Two years later, the Argentine literary critic Beatriz Sarlo publishes *Una modernidad periférica: Buenos Aires 1920 y 1930* (A Peripheral Modernity: Buenos Aires 1920 and

1930). She proposed to understand Buenos Aires's modern culture as a "complex mixture". Other books had allowed her to think this condition as productive and positive. She herself connected her book and those of Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-De-Siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (1979)[9] and that of Marshall Berman, *All that is solid melts into air* (1982).[10] These authors had contributed to a non-monolithic vision of European modernity. Both analyze the urban laboratory of large metropolises in their modernization processes. Berman observed the productive tension between the impulse toward the new, the future and the remains of other times—in a reactive sense—, that refer to different pasts. While Paris and New York would respond to a developmental modernization, Saint Petersburg—Berman maintains—would be the opposite: a modernism of underdevelopment and illusion, far from the parameters of a development expanded in all spheres. Such analyzes allowed a link with Latin American modernity. Sarlo studied how in the 1920s and 1930s Argentine intellectuals experienced the processes of urban transformation in Buenos Aires through contradictory feelings, ideas and hopes.[11]

Perhaps because her book begins with a luminous description of a group of paintings by the Argentine artist Xul Solar, the concept that appears in the title of the book (peripheral modernity) impacted on the studies of art history that were developed in Latin America between the 1980s and 1990s.[12] In the art field, in which the ideas of novelty and innovation regulate museographies, the art market, institutional and private collecting, the notion of periphery is opposed to that of innovation. Peripheral is the term that generally centers use to disqualify what they do not do.

In 1989, Néstor García Canclini published *Culturas híbridas. Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad* (Hybrid Cultures. Strategies for entering and leaving modernity).[13] The term "hybrids" refers to contemporary cultural mixtures. His analysis is focused in the cultural processes of the 1980s—not the 1920s and 1930s like Sarlo. From a transdisciplinary perspective that involves art history, literature, anthropology, communication, among other social sciences, he observes the intersections between the traditional and the modern, between high illustrated culture and the popular and massive. This perspective also allowed him to analyze what has been generally interpreted as the contradictions and failures of Latin American modernity.

The reviewed analysis provided a critical perspective towards visions that considers Latin American culture as mimetic and derivative. At the same time, their considered that through selection and discard, Latin American culture assumed an active position, a strategic operation which indicated its originality and innovation.

In 2006, Nelly Richard recovered a Homi Bhabha concept of hybridity, even of "wild hybridity",[14] to characterize a system that does not reconcile but rather breaks and blocks the certainty of the centers.[15] Richard identifies the rebellious potentiality that intercepts the idea of translating universal codes (the idea of modern art) into local contexts (the local versions of the canon) as a productive notion. It was also Nelly Richard who argued that when art institutions in the centers exhibit Latin American art, they flatten such insubordination to suit the works on their reading standards. In the keynote she gave at the Museo Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in 2017, Richard questioned how the museum was exhibiting Carlos Leppe's work, *El perchero* (*The Hanger*, 1975).[16] In this work, the artist presented a photographic record of the performance in which he travestied his body. Many aspects in his performance referred to a broken body, a broken identity. To highlight this, he presented the life-size photographs folded on a hanger. The idea of the marginal body was reinforced by the dictatorial

context. The Reina Sofía Museum exhibited the photos in full and expanded copies. What was a folded and broken body, became the glorious and spectacularized display of a transvestite body.[17]

Plural Modernities and Political Interceptions

The decolonial perspectives have prompted efforts to review the disqualifying hierarchical structure that dominates in the centers. In this sense, the exhibition *Modernités plurielles. 1905–70* curated by Catherine Grenier at the George Pompidou Center in 2013 is a good example. The exhibition was based on the museum's collection that was presented as a critical reading of the twentieth-century art history. It was even proposed as a "manifesto exhibition", as one of the first proposals to renew the discourse of modern art understood as a unified, linear and progressive story adopted with slight national variations by Western museums (the centers cannot resign to present what they do as inaugural). The exhibition was based on two related aspects: the critical reading of Western modernity and the context of globalization. The general strategy proposed by the exhibition was interesting: instead of adapting the works to the stories, it proposed starting with the works themselves. Cultural studies and visual studies were the perspectives from which she set out to erode the reductive histories of modern art. Since the 1980s, as we have seen, Latin American criticism was dedicated to this task.

However, in these cultural analyzes, something is lost concerning the way in which the art works intervened in the art scenarios. Deregulating the normative power of the center through adjectives (peripheric, hybrid, decentered culture) is undoubtedly productive for thinking about contradictions—if we observe culture from the canonic perspective. But, at the same time, it blurs the specific, particularly the value of the terms that the artists themselves proposed to name their poetics and the innovations that they proposed in their works, in their texts. Artists conceive their works as innovations, not as peripheral expression. Returning to Torres-García, if we analyze his work according to its deviations with respect to Mondrian's constructive proposal, the specificity that he himself named when he referred to his aesthetic program as "Constructive Universalism" is invisible. His aesthetic program proposed specific concepts of object, tone, measure, references to intertwined, coexisting human, affective, mental, vegetal, animal or mineral universes. The notion of simultaneity makes it possible to highlight another historical articulation that, as we will see, does not ignore the cultural relations with the Euro-North American centers but, at the same time, highlights the specific, innovative and situated.

Despite the efforts of global exhibitions that, in recent years, have had an inclusive approach, contemporary art continues to be divided into the art of the centers (the same names, coming from the Euro-North American axis) and that of the peripheries, Latin American, African, Asian or East Europe artists who enter according to the requirements of representation of the global order of art, to international events and to the market although their presence and prices are never equivalent to those of the art of the centers. The peripheries are, generally, represented in group exhibitions—art from Latin America, Asia or Africa—exceptionally individual ones, or in biennials in proportions that depend on the responsibility of their curators. The fresh air of novelty is celebrated by the press, but entry into the world of international art (collections, market, museums, solo exhibitions) occurs in very few cases. Integration is almost never final. The works are immersed in the singular and exotic place of the periphery,

where they will remain after their strange irruption on the great art scenarios. Some central museums acquire Latin American works for their collections, but generally they remain in their reserves. The main circuits of art are interested in the anecdote, the comment, which confirm their certainties without questioning the assumptions from which their exclusive narrative, the canon, has been configured.

Let us analyze what happened in February 2017 with the installation of MoMA's permanent collection. Those, who are habitues of the museum, are pleased to see what is generally in its exhibition spaces: the traditional History (or story) of modern art organized from a repertoire of landmark works in the constitution of the evolutionary argument of the language of modernity. The public visits it to see the works of Monet, van Gogh, Cézanne, Picasso, Matisse, Mondrian, Boccioni, Miró, Pollock, Gorky, among other artists from Europe and the United States, central in the story of artistic modernity, and infinitely reproduced in catalogs, posters and postcards. MoMA is, in many ways, the History of Modern Art displayed on the walls of the museum. For this reason, it was surprising and pleasant to find in February 2017 unexpected interruptions in its narrative, incrustations that led the public to approach strange works, introduced among other well-known ones. MoMA responded to and challenged Donald Trump's proposed migratory veto to prevent the entry of citizens of Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Iran to the United States. Thus, in Picasso's gallery, *The mosque* by the Sudanese artist Ibrahim El-Salahi (1964) was introduced; on the site of Matisse's works (*The Piano Lesson and The Dance*), that of the Iranian artist Charles Hossein Zenderoudi *Mon père et moi* (1962). Marcos Grigorian and Shirana Shahbazi represented Iran. On the fifth floor, there was a sculpture by the Iranian Parviz Tanavoli. Completing the breakthrough, *The Peak of Hong Kong* by Zaha Hadid and the video *Chit Chat* by Tala Madani, both originally from Iran. Along with each work a text explained:

> This work is by an artist from a nation whose citizens are being denied entry into the United States, according to a presidential executive order issued on Jan. 27, 2017. This is one of several such artworks from the Museum's collection installed throughout the fifth-floor galleries to affirm the ideals of welcome and freedom as vital to this Museum as they are to the United States.[18]

Intercepting the traditional narration of the collection, the museum articulated a protest: it gave place in its story of twentieth-century art to a set of works that it owns but remains in its reserves. The works were not exhibited as configurators of the story of the artistic modernity that the institution proposes about. This disruptive insert, which acted as a manifesto against xenophobia fed from Washington, allowed us to see these works, probably for the first time. In the compact and naturalized relationship from which MoMA teaches that modern art comes from Europe and continues in the United States these images established an unexpected gap that, at the same time, demonstrated the restrictive order of the established story.

Against a Vertical History, Horizontal History and Simultaneous Vanguards

Piotr Piotrowski proposed to de-hierarchize the history of Western art and erase the differentiation between centers and peripheries. He invited to understand the history of European art as a story, not as History. His perspective was in close dialog with

decolonial perspectives that intercept the cultural representations of the countries colonized by the West. Even when the situation in Poland is different from that which characterizes Latin America, Africa or Asia, which are also specific and differentiated cases, the argument has powerful points of contact. Piotrowski's perspective shares the matrix that relativizes the universal model of the idea of modern art. Rejecting its normative centrality is also proposed in Dipesh Chakrabarty's book *Provincializing Europe* (2000).[19] Chatakrabarty rejects military and ideological domination that serve as the foundation for universalizing colonial culture as legitimate and valuable. However, he doesn't sustain a cultural relativism or an essentialist position based on traditions. What he proposes is precisely to de-essentialize the reductive vision of European modernity to "liberate" the elements that can enrich pluralism and emancipation projects.

In order to consider the productivity of what remained in the secondary place of the periphery, Piotrowski's perspective proposes the de-hierarchization of the reductive history of European art. In his concept of horizontality, two aspects reverberate. The first is that the hierarchical perspective makes invisible zones of contact, simultaneities and coincidences. The second is that a horizontal perspective provides a knowledge that affects both, centers and peripheries.

Other stories are necessary. Other forms of understanding cultural interaction that instead of seeking the same to demobilize the different, aspire to a plural perspective founded on horizontal exchanges of knowledge.

In order to suspend the idea of exceptionality of the hegemonic center's productions, it is also necessary to highlight the simultaneities between different artistic spaces. In the Latin American case—and I perceive that in other cultural spaces as well—it is remarkable the simultaneity with which transformations in the artistic language took place since the postwar period and, particularly, since the 1960s. Let's take an example from the Argentine art scene.

In 1964, the artist León Ferrari made *Cuadro escrito* (Written Painting), a work in which he did not paint, did not sculpt, but wrote by hand a text in which he described the work he would do if he knew how to paint, if God had given him the gift to do it. The substitution of a painting by a descriptive text is comparable to the procedure followed by Joseph Kosuth when, in 1965, he presented a chair, its photograph and its definition in the dictionary (*One and Three Chairs*, 1965). The methodologies are equivalent even if the results are different, and it is also different the context from where they are departing: Kosuth working from semiology or tautology; Ferrari from literature and from theological criticism. Ferrari has been linked to proto-conceptualism or political conceptualism. I propose to put aside this adjectival as well as others that have been applied to Latin American conceptualism (political conceptualism, decentered conceptualism) since it constitutes a procedure that departs from normative universals to give legibility and legitimacy to works that were not informed by what was done in art centers. Undoubtedly Kosuth did not know the work that Ferrari made a year earlier. Ferrari didn't know Kosuth's either. Ferrari's work was linked to Julio Cortázar, fantastic literature and the Rabelesian spirit that dominated all his work. For more than 50 years, the artist made a sustained criticism of Christianity, the relationship between catholic religion and Argentine state and its intrinsic relationship with Western violence.

Do we have to conceptualize the history of Latin American art as consequences of the history of the centers? Piotr Piotrowski's historiography approach has many points

of contact with the concept of simultaneous avant-gardes that I proposed in the book *Contra el canon. Arte contemporáneo en un mundo sin centro* (Against the Canon. Contemporary Art in a World Without a Center, 2020).[20] The edition includes a paper that I presented in 2012 at the Reina Sofía National Art Center, entitled "Farewell to Periphery" where is analyze the process of postwar neo-avant-gardes in Latin American art as a process of productive repetition that also happens, simultaneously, in different parts of the world.[21]

Two notions are relevant for thinking about avant-garde art in Latin America from an alternative perspective to the unified and evolutionary canon of modern art. On the one hand, the concept of *shared cultural horizons* that involved Latin America, Europe and other parts of the world. Not only that of modernity, inherent to the growth and expansion of cities and metropolitan culture, but others, such as those marked by the postwar period or feminism, processed in simultaneous and different ways in various international artistic formations. On the other hand, in the sixties, the *productive relationship between avant-garde and neo-avant-gardes*: just as in Europe and the United States,[22] the avant-garde strategies were revised, they were also retaken in Latin America. And it was not Dadá or the historical avant-gardes what art of the 1960s and 1980s necessarily reviewed. They also returned to the conceptual and formal matrices of Torres-García's *Constructive Universalism* or the concrete avant-garde of Buenos Aires (*Madí*, *Perceptism*, *Concrete Art Invention* movements) or the *Anthropophagia* movement proposed by Tarsila do Amaral and Oswald de Andrade in Brazil in 1928, revised by the works of Helio Oiticica or Lygia Clark, among many other artists after the 1960s. A process of simultaneization of neo-avant-gardes took place after WWII. Comparable strategies were used in different cities at the same time. I am thinking, for example, of the simultaneity between the *Destructive Art* exhibition, held in Buenos Aires in 1961 and *The Art of Assemblage* exhibition, presented the same year at MoMA. *Destructive Art* preceded the *Destruction in Ar*t symposium held in London in 1966. But Gustav Metzer had already written his manifest text *Auto-Destructive Art* in 1959. At the same time, these moments took up some of the strategies of montage already raised by Dadaism and Surrealism. But they were all different. The productive repetition of the neo-avant-gardes was manifested in different metropolises of the world, including the European ones. If repetition was defining the peripheral condition from which it would be possible to postulate the lack of originality, after the war, we could even think of the artistic centers as a periphery of themselves. In their cities, proposals from the historical avant-gardes were retaken. The return to the expressive capital of the avant-garde took place in New York, Tokyo, Amsterdam, Brussels, Copenhagen, Buenos Aires, Caracas, Santiago de Chile, Paris and Milan.

The third aspect to consider, along with the observation of shared cultural horizons and the processes of simulteanization of the avant-garde, consists of giving priority to the words that the artists or critics from Latin America used to name the art they made. Such redirection of the gaze starts from a different place than the one that articulates history as a dispersion or anticipation of the styles of the centers. This was the perspective from which together with Agustín Pérez Rubio we co-curated the exhibition *Verboamérica* for the Museum of Latin American Art of Buenos Aires (MALBA) (2016–18). In the catalog, we incorporated a glossary that included terms such as *Martin Fierro*, *Muralism* or Indigenism, which were much more significant for artistic practices in Latin America than those of Euro-North American styles.[23]

The exhibition and its catalog were interventions that contradicted the traditional views of Latin American art.[24] Focused on works, they proposed iconographic nuclei that subverted the order of chronology and styles to introduce aesthetic and intellectual experiences about how Latin America had been experienced and to what extent art had been part of that intellectual, aesthetic and affective life. The terms included in the glossary, selected from Latin American culture (including political culture), made visible the ideas that organized the aesthetic thought of the region.

The inversion of the angle that is expressed in the reviewed essays and curatorial proposals allowed the emergence of new knowledge. Made it also possible to eliminate isolation, misunderstanding or disinterest complexes, that central museographies and the international market generate in Latin American art.

Verboamérica proposed to return to the works themselves, their languages and their cultural and poetic articulations to produce a different approach. A comparative perspective that jumped from the stylistic affiliation to that of the stories that the images organize from the visual languages. The exhibition offered a reflection on the power of images beyond the power of genealogies, chronologies, styles that order a teleological history, the story about the evolution of forms. It was proposed to link temporalities and produced an encounter around nuclei of meaning (urban experience, colonial maps, blackness, indigenism, feminisms, gender perspectives, the experience of the avant-garde as an inaugural strategy, among others). What else is art but an emotional and intellectual experience that brings us closer to other dimensions of history and time, an invitation to learn to see life (ours, that of others) in its details? Multiple stories live and inhabit in the works. Its forms are chrysalis and faceted crystals at the same time. Holding them from the order of styles implies impoverishing their multiple interpretative consequences. At the same time, it is necessary to consider the regional and international links also present in the works. In this sense, I propose also to consider the notion of *contact zones* enunciated by Mary Louise Pratt in 1992.[25] She refers to the material relations, of co-presence, between colonizers and colonized, of travelers and visitors, which were found in asymmetric power relations. The colonization process brought the previously separated inhabitants of America and Europe into relationship. In modern times, traveling linked Latin American artists with each other and with Europeans.

Between them, there were transatlantic and transnational horizontal relations in which the scheme of nations was broken to draw different regions whose maps were modified over time. Siqueiros' travels through Latin America in the 1930s define one map, the publication of the *Arturo* magazine in 1944 defines another, the publication of Torres-García's *Constructive Universalism* in Argentina, also in 1944,[26] allows us to observe another. And I could continue connecting Latin American cities in which artists were forging relationships through travel, magazines and exhibitions.

Returning to words and returning to works instead of classifying them from the movements of canonical modernity allows us to approach a constellar scenario in which influences, contacts and simultaneities are more evident and more productive than the repetition of the formula that legitimizes a central model dispersed in the peripheries. It is interesting, at this point, to reintroduce the thought of Nelly Richard when she analyzes the place of the metropolitan academy (she refers to the North American academy but could well be thought of the academy of a part of Europe as well) in relation to the culture of the peripheries.[27] She critically analyzes a relationship in which works (literary, visual, philosophical) become sources and raw material

interpreted from the centers and inscribed in concepts and theories that feed the academic machine based on prestige and high salaries that no academic reaches from Latin American universities. Allow me, in an extreme extrapolation, to think of such a relationship in a structure equivalent to the one that characterizes the behavior of extractivist capital that seeks raw material in Latin America to keep consumption, markets and its economic power structures active.

Without being able to go deeper here, I would also like to point out that the history of art in Africa also criticizes the concept of the periphery. Chika Okeke points out that the center–periphery structure disqualifies modern art by African artists. This perspective denies its possibility of assembling expressive techniques or media that have been associated with European art (although, as we noted, many of these expressive media were borrowed from Africa). It denies that they were able to create anything different or original. It even denies that African artists may have been involved in the aesthetic debates of the centers, in addition to those that took place in different cultural geographies that hierarchical history does not allow to consider.[28]

Piotr Piotrwski's proposal for a horizontal art history maintains a close dialogue with the critical itineraries that shake the hierarchical structure of the art history proposed, at different times, from Latin America or from Africa. They are simultaneous and decolonial perspectives that observe the mechanisms that, even in the present, refer to the art of a century without considering a critique of the restrictive geography that this story narrates. Piotr Piotrowski refers to the book edited by the October group, *Art Since 1900* (2004).[29] Although the book considers cases from Brazil, Mexico, Japan, Russia, Central, Southern and Northern Europe, it does not deconstruct the relationship between centers and margins and describes the art of these regions within the paradigm of the West. Canon, hierarchies and stylistic norms radiate from the centers that also have the attribute of recognizing the peripheries. The problem that the author analyzes has elements different from those that characterize the Latin American case. Particularly because Eastern Europe is also Europe. However, it does not integrate the stories of modern art. In this way, it accounts for a subalternization that occurs in the same region.

What we can conclude is that critical writings from different parts of the world realize that in their dispersion the notions of canon and style exploded. The relativization of the canon of Western art not only allows us to visualize processes of negotiation, localization and subversion of what is called "the canon".[30] It also allows us to observe innovation. The Latin American avant-gardes and neo-avant-gardes inaugurated languages, concepts and ways of understanding the relationship between art, its institutions and its audiences. The universal dilutes the singular (it even dilutes the historical singular in the same centers). Critical perspectives on art history that propose to displace universalist and decontextualizing models of analysis open up the possibility of capturing specific fabrics of history. As specific as those that articulated the art history of a part of Europe and the United States. Finally, the History of Modern Art is not more than a provincial history invested with the power to embody History.

Notes

1 Mario Pedrosa, "Discurso a los tipinaquis o nambás" (Speech to the tipinaquis or nambás), written by Mário Pedrosa in Paris, in 1975, and published in *Revista Versus* no. 4 (1976). See Mario Pedrosa, *De la naturaleza afectiva de la forma*, (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2017), 263–8: 265. Translated by the author.

2 Nelly Richard, "Intersectando Latinoamérica con el latinoamericanismo: discurso académico y crítica cultural" (Intersecting Latin America with Latin Americanism: academic discourse and cultural criticism), in S. Castro-Gómez y E. Mendieta (coords.), *Teorías sin disciplina. Latinoamericanismo, poscolonialidad y globalización en debate* [Teories without discipline. Americanism, postcolonialism and globalization debate], (Ciudad de México: University of San Francisco, 1998), 255. Richard quotes the article by Francine Masiello, "Tráfico de identidades. Mujeres, cultura y política de representación en la era neoliberal", *Revista Iberoamericana*, 62, no. 176–7 (1996), 745–66: 751. https://doi.org/10.5195/reviberoamer.1996.6257 (consulted: 05–08–2021) Translated by the author.
3 Piotr Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde," in *Europa! Europa? The Avant-Gard, Modernism and the Fate of a Continent*, eds. Sascha Bru et al. (Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 49–57.
4 For example, the painting of Pablo Picasso, *The Girl with a Mandolin*, 1910. For several years Barr was behind of this painting. He tried to buy it to Roland Penrose, who acquired it in 1937. But he didn't want to sell it. Barr let know Rockefeller about the divorce of Penrose and Lee Miller, thinking that it was a good opportunity to acquire it. Rockefeller's close relationship with MoMA ensured that the work would enter the collection. So it was. In 1979, when Rockefeller died, it went to MoMA as part of his legacy.
5 Harold Rosenberg leaves open the question about where the torch of culture will continue to be lit in his article "On the fall of Paris", published by the *Partisan Review* magazine in 1940. On the critical, ideological and political process of such transfer of power, see Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art. Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, (Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1984).
6 What I tell is based on concrete experiences, touring the collections of the National Museum of Fine Arts in Argentina, and the Museum of Latin American Art in Buenos Aires with European colleagues.
7 In this sense, in the catalog of the exhibition *Verboamérica*, which we co-curated with Agustín Pérez Rubio at the Museum of Latin American Art of Buenos Aires (MALBA), we organize a glossary of key terms of Latin American art in which we intentionally avoid the vocabulary of Euro North American art. The glossary was written by Pablo Fasce and its content selected and edited by the curators. See Andrea Giunta and Agustín Pérez Rubio, *Verboamérica*, (Buenos Aires: MALBA, 2016).
8 From the Brazilian theorist Mario Pedrosa, who used the term postmodern as early as 1977, to Nelly Richard in Chile, Ticio Escobar in Paraguay, Gabriel Peluffo Linari, in Uruguay, Gustavo Buntinx in Peru, Gerardo Mosquera in Cuba, and myself in Argentina, among many others.
9 Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1979).
10 Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air. The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).
11 Beatriz Sarlo, *Una modernidad periférica: Buenos Aires 1920 y 1930* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1988), 9.
12 I used it myself to title a work about an artist from the city of Rosario, in Argentina. Andrea Giunta, "Gambartes y una modernidad (doblemente) periférica," (Gambartes and a (doubly) peripheral modernity), CAIA (org.), *Las artes en el debate del Quinto Centenario* (The arts in the Fifth Centennial debate), (Buenos Aires: CAIA – FFyL – UBA, 1992), 105–10.
13 Néstor García Canclini, *Culturas híbridas. Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad*, (México: Grijalbo, 1989). Translated as *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, (Minnesota: The University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
14 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994).
15 Nelly Richard, "Los pliegues de lo local en el mapa de lo global: reticencia y resistencia," (The folds of the local on the map of the global: reluctance and resistance), in *Signo y Pensamiento* xxv, no. 49 (July–December 2006), 46–57.
16 Nelly Richard, "Los desafíos de la circulación internacional de la memoria de resistencia crítica de los archivos del arte chileno," (The challenges of the international circulation of the memory of critical resistance of the archives of Chilean art), Keynote Conference, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, August 17, 2017, available in www.museoreinasofia.es/multimedia/nelly-richard- conferencia-magistral (consulted: 23/7/2021).

17 See www.museoreinasofia.es/coleccion/obra/perchero (consulted: 09-09-2021) and https://artishockrevista.com/2016/07/26/cuerpo-deen-obra-reconstituyendo-leppe/ (consulted: 09-09-2021).
18 Jason Farago, "MoMA Protests Trump Entry Ban by Rehanging Work by Artists from Muslim Nations", *The New York Times* (February 2017).
19 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton Universtity Press, 2000).
20 Andrea Giunta, *Contra el canon. El arte contemporáneo en un mundo sin centro* (Against the canon. Contemporary art in a world without a center), (Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 2020). (This book has not been translated into English).
21 Andrea Giunta, "Farewell to the Periphery. Avant-Gardes and Neo-Avant-Gardes in the Art of Latin America," in *Concrete Invention. Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros. Reflections on Geometric Abstraction from Latin America and Its Legacy* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2013), 104–17.
22 Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).
23 See note 7.
24 Nicole Martínez, "A Buenos Aires Museum Creates a New Lexicon for Latin American Art," *Hyperallergic*, (April 2017).
25 Mary Luise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, New York: Routledge, 1992).
26 Joaquín Torres-García, *Universalismo Constructivo* (Buenos Aires: Poseidón, 1944).
27 Richard, "Intersectando Latinoamérica".
28 Chika Okeke, "Modern African Art", in Okwin Enwezor (Ed.), *The Short Century. Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945–1994* (Muchich-London-New York: Prestel, 2001), 29–36.
29 Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois and Benjamin H. F. Buchloh, *Art since 1900. Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004).
30 In this sense, I would like to submit to criticism an essay that I published in 1992, translated into English in 1995 as "Strategies of Modernity in Latin America", in Gerardo Mosquera (Comp.), *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America* (London, Institute of International Visual Arts, 1995), 53–67.

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