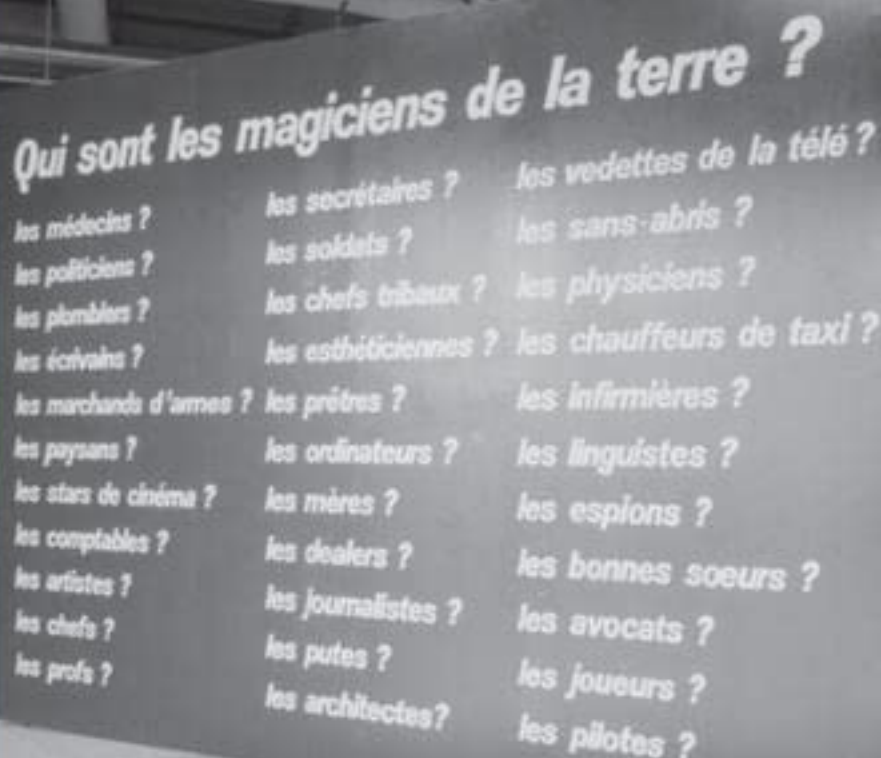


Making Art Global (Part 2)

Magiciens de la Terre 1989

Lucy Steeds and other authors



Qui sont les magiciens de la terre ?

<i>les médecins ?</i>	<i>les secrétaires ?</i>	<i>les vedettes de la télé ?</i>
<i>les politiciens ?</i>	<i>les soldats ?</i>	<i>les sans-abris ?</i>
<i>les plombiers ?</i>	<i>les chefs tribaux ?</i>	<i>les physiciens ?</i>
<i>les écrivains ?</i>	<i>les esthéticiennes ?</i>	<i>les chauffeurs de taxi ?</i>
<i>les marchands d'armes ?</i>	<i>les prêtres ?</i>	<i>les infirmières ?</i>
<i>les paysans ?</i>	<i>les ordinateurs ?</i>	<i>les linguistes ?</i>
<i>les stars de cinéma ?</i>	<i>les mères ?</i>	<i>les espions ?</i>
<i>les comptables ?</i>	<i>les dealers ?</i>	<i>les bonnes sœurs ?</i>
<i>les artistes ?</i>	<i>les journalistes ?</i>	<i>les avocats ?</i>
<i>les chefs ?</i>	<i>les putes ?</i>	<i>les joueurs ?</i>
<i>les profs ?</i>	<i>les architectes ?</i>	<i>les pilotes ?</i>

Exhibition Histories

Making Art Global (Part 2)
'Magiciens de la Terre' 1989

Lucy Steeds

With additional essays by Pablo Lafuente and Jean-Marc Poinso; texts by Rasheed Araeen, Jean Fisher, Thomas McEvilley, Jean-Hubert Martin and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak; interviews with Martin (conducted by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh) and Alfredo Jaar (conducted by Francisco Godoy Vega); and statements by Frédéric Bruly Bouabré and Barbara Kruger.

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Exhibition Histories

Afterall Books presents *Exhibition Histories*, a series dedicated to shows of contemporary art that have – since the first documenta in Kassel, Germany, in 1955 – shaped the way art is experienced, made and discussed. Each book in the series draws on archival material, bringing together numerous illustrations, texts from the time and newly commissioned essays to provide detailed exploration and analysis of selected exhibitions. The shows under consideration have all responded to and influenced artistic practice whilst provoking debates about the meaning and importance of art within culture and society more broadly.

The history of modern art has conventionally focused on artistic production, emphasising the individual artist in the studio and the influences on his or her practice. *Exhibition Histories* complicates this approach by arguing for an examination of art in the moment and context in which it is presented to a public. Exhibitions usually offer art its first contact with an audience, and in so doing they place art within explicit or implicit narratives and discursive frameworks. Every decision about the selection and installation of work, the choice and use of the venue, the marketing strategy and the accompanying printed matter informs our understanding of the art on display. The various agents and diverse factors that give form to an exhibition and determine its subsequent influence are addressed in these books from multiple standpoints: the voices of artists, curators and writers are all brought to bear. In some instances the shows selected for study already have established reputations and our work involves analysing why this is so and whether it is justified. In other cases the opportunity is taken to illuminate lesser-known exhibitions that have, nonetheless, suggested new paradigms and that can stake an equal claim to historical importance.

This series is the result of a research project developed by Afterall at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London, in collaboration with the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, and the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. The first publication was launched in 2010. In 2012, a new partnership was formed with the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College. Through archival study, interviews, symposia and seminars, we continue to amass the materials to allow us to select exhibitions for examination and to give shape to the resulting books. The findings, analyses and narratives we propose are by no means exhaustive; rather, we see these books as a spur to further research into the exhibition form, and ultimately as a contribution towards a better understanding of contemporary art and its histories.

Front cover image

Barbara Kruger, *Qui sont les magiciens de la terre?* (*Who Are the Magicians of the Earth?*), 1989; © the artist and Centre Pompidou/MNAM-CCI/Bibliothèque Kandinsky/B. Hatala

Back cover image

Richard Long, *Red Earth Circle*, 1989
and Yuendumu community, *Yam Dreaming*, 1989
© the artists; photography: Deidi von Schaewen

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Making Art Global (Part 2)
'Magiciens de la Terre' 1989

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**Introduction: From the Outside In – ‘Magiciens de la Terre’
and Two Histories of Exhibitions**
—Pablo Lafuente

Consider the following scene: several women and a man, wearing coats and hats, stand against a barrier, attentively looking down with amusement at two men sitting on the floor, which they are in the process of decorating with a concentric composition of clean, straight lines. The two seated men are wearing what looks like traditional (‘folkloric’, perhaps?) clothing (headbands, necklaces, belts, light-coloured trousers) that contrasts with the austere outfits of the onlookers (mostly of dark colours, the women with high necklines, long skirts and hats, the man in a suit, tie and handkerchief). We can’t see their faces, but we can assume from the clothes, and from the drawing on which they are working, that those being observed come from a different cultural context and tradition (and perhaps ethnicity) from those behind the barrier. They appear concentrated on making, while those behind the barrier seem focused on looking – curious, pensive. The floor composition, and the large painting that covers part of the wall to the right, are clearly new imports in the space, visibly different from the granite floor and the rounded metal barrier, which are more fitting to the clothes worn by the onlookers. What seems to be pictured is the performance of a cultural practice, one that implies a displacement, a relocation, and one in which the roles assigned (who observes and who makes) are fixed, without remission, by the barrier.

Now picture the following: a man (wearing grey trousers and vest over a white shirt) is slightly bent over a red pole at the centre of a depiction, on the floor, of stars, faces (or masks?) and other symbols and patterns, rendered in looser lines than the one in the previous scene. A spotlight illuminates the base of the pole, where a couple of bottles sit. The drawing, the pole and the man are upon a raised, white platform, and framed by a white wall to the right; to the left, a group of people stand, observing, talking to each other, taking pictures. While the onlookers in the previous scene are raised above the two men working on the drawing, those in this scene are at a lower level. The relation between the two positions is, however, the same: one of separation between making and looking. And this separation once more frames a relocation: the spectators’ clothes again contrast with those of the man on the stage, which are no longer obviously traditional but quietly eccentric. The man, the bottles and the floor drawing do not belong to the place in which they are located – an institutional setting again, but one of a different style, from a different time. The situation here too is the result of a dislocation – a dislocation framed by a looking based on a division of roles.

The similarities between these two scenes are perhaps surprising given that they were captured five decades apart. The first documents two Navajos composing a ceremonial sand drawing at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1941, as part of the exhibition ‘Indian Art of the United

States', organised by René d'Harnoncourt.¹ The second shows a moment during the opening events of 'Magiciens de la Terre', an exhibition curated by a team led by Jean-Hubert Martin that took place at the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Grande Halle de La Villette in Paris in 1989;² the Haitian Vodun priest Wesner Philidor performing a ceremony in front of members of the exhibition's curatorial team, French political and institutional figures and members of the press. These two photographs, in their chronological distance and structural proximity, frame a possible history of the way in which the contemporary art context (Western in its geography, bourgeois in its culture and capitalist in its economy) has dealt with cultural practice and associated objects that do not in principle belong within it – because of their geography, but more importantly, because these practices and objects occupy a different position and play a different role in the cultural and socio-economic contexts in which they originate.

fig.25

This history is in part one of representation – of what could be referred to, setting a dualistic opposition between self and otherness, as a history of the inclusion (integration, or incorporation, appropriation, even co-option?) of that which does not originate from within. As Benoît de L'Estroile has pointed out, the history of museography can be read as the history of two models of museum: the museum of the self, and the museum of the other.³ The former responds to the question 'Who are we?', by addressing both the community whom it represents (and which constitutes itself through this representation) and the visitor from its outside; the latter implies a removal of agency from those being represented, and therefore from the process of construction of their cultural and political identity. This framework, if applied to the history of contemporary exhibitions, would provide a historical narrative articulated in terms of struggle – not of class, but of national, continental, geographical and cultural identities, along more or less defined hierarchical axes: West and East (or West and the rest), North and (Global) South, contemporaneity and tradition, developed and un(der)developed...⁴

¹ 'Indian Art of the United States', Museum of Modern Art, New York, 22 January–27 April 1941.

² 'Magiciens de la Terre', Centre Georges Pompidou and the Grande Halle de La Villette, Paris, 18 May–14 August 1989. The curatorial team also included Mark Francis, Aline Luque and André Magnin.

³ See Benoît de L'Estroile, *Le Goût des Autres: De l'Exposition coloniale aux Art premiers*, Paris: Flammarion, 2007, pp.12–13.

⁴ These histories of geographic and cultural polarisation have been studied and complicated in recent times by large-scale research projects such as FORMER WEST (2008–14, see <http://www.formerwest.org>, last accessed on 18 December 2012) or Red Conceptualismos del Sur (<http://redconceptualismosdelsur.blogspot.it>, last accessed on 18 December 2012). It was also addressed in the conference 'Exhibitions and the World at Large', organised by Afterall and TrAIn at Tate Britain, London, 3 April 2009. The discussions from that occasion have led to two publications in the *Exhibition Histories* book series: the present one, and Rachel Weiss et al., *Making Art Global (Part 1): The Third Havana Biennial 1989*, London: Afterall Books, 2011.



Installation view, "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern', Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1984–85
 © the artists
 Photography: Katherine Keller
 © 2012. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence

The narrative could start in the sixteenth century with the 'human zoos' held in European courts of African, South American or Asian peoples, and could continue with the colonial presentations within the World Exhibitions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the creation of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris in 1937 and MoMA's 'ethnographic' projects throughout the first half of the twentieth century.⁵ But it was not until the mid-to-late 1980s that cultural practice that had not originated in the West was addressed directly and explicitly by several large-scale initiatives within the Western art system. The size and ambition of these projects, as well as their repercussions in terms of ideas, production and commerce, generated a series of polemics and dramatic shifts in artistic, curatorial and collecting practices that changed, for good, the context of contemporary art production.

Two of these initiatives stand out. The first was "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern', organised at MoMA in 1984–85,⁶ a show that reanimated the original perspective of the 'discovery' of non-Western cultural production by Western art (modern artists in Paris) from 1905 onwards, by displaying masks, totems and other cultural objects from Africa, South America or Polynesia in juxtaposition with works of modern and contemporary Western art. The exhibition, through the notion of 'affinity', identified form as a shared concern between 'primitive' and modern art, and from there proposed a universalist and humanist conception of artistic creation, written from a modern (Western) perspective. It gave occasion to a lively, sometimes heated discussion that mostly focused on issues of cultural representation, and a critique of the Eurocentric, colonial

⁵ Including 'Indian Art of the United States', 22 January–27 April 1941 and others such as 'Arts of the South Sea', 29 January–19 May 1946. The term 'ethnographic' is used loosely here.

⁶ 27 September 1984–15 January 1985.

attitude implied by the adoption of a modernist outlook to frame both modern art and non-Western objects. Shortly thereafter, a similar diatribe emerged as a response to 'Magiciens de la Terre', a show that, from an equivalent Western institutional framework (France's national museum of art, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris),⁷ attempted to present art from the West and the non-West on an alleged equal footing. The exhibition, which presented itself as the 'first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art', bought together more than one hundred artists, half from the West and half from the non-West, and juxtaposed their work in two exhibition venues in the city of Paris, the Centre Pompidou and the Grande Halle de La Villette.⁸ The artists were invited by the curatorial team to develop new work on site (in most cases), and were selected on the basis of a set of agreed criteria that included radicalism, a sense of adventure and excitement, their originality with respect to cultural tradition, or the relationship between the maker and his or her work. At the exhibition's base there was a humanist, universalist conception of the act of artistic creation – one that attempted to relativise the centrality of the Western perspective by defending the equality of the practice of those included – and, by extension, the equality of artistic practice globally. But, perhaps in reaction to the polemics surrounding "Primitivism" and in an attempt to address its hegemonic perspective, it abandoned from the start some key modernist tropes (for example, by substituting the term 'magicien' for the term 'artist') while embracing others (adopting a notion of the subject's creativity that translated in the exhibition to the presentation of artists as agents). This equality was denounced as fictitious, as oblivious to the socio-cultural and historical context in which the different selected practices emerged, and therefore as exoticising, and 'Magiciens de la Terre' became, especially in the Anglo-Saxon context, the embodiment of a neocolonialist attitude that allowed the contemporary art system to colonise, commercially and intellectually, new areas that were previously out of bounds.

Simultaneously to these two landmarks, not directly in response to them but as a result of a wider cultural, political and economic mood, divergent approaches emerged in both the West and the non-West contesting the Western history of art (and its modernist underpinnings) and, perhaps more importantly, the articulation of agency within the representation process. Looking at it from the self-other dichotomy, in these years, exhibitions of the self began to be organised not only by the West but by those outside of it, on a scale and with a reach beyond their 'home' territory that were unheard of in earlier decades. The Bienal de La Habana, with its original

⁷ The exhibition was not originally conceived for the Centre Pompidou, but by the time it opened it had become an initiative of the national museum, endorsed by the country's ministry of culture. See Lucy Steeds, "Magiciens de la Terre" and the Development of Transnational Project-Based Curating, in this volume, pp.24–92.

⁸ 'Première exposition mondiale d'art contemporain', press release, CGP archives, box 95026/168.

Latin American and later Third Worldist vocation,⁹ and 'The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain' in 1989, with its formulation of an unrecognised modernism produced by cultural and racial minorities in the UK,¹⁰ are representative of an impulse that was to be furthered throughout the 1990s and that by the 2000s had lost steam.

But this history of representation only tells a fraction of the story. Partly due to political urgencies in the motivation for (at least a large percentage of) these exhibitions, and also as an effect of the discourse of identity politics that was constructed around them (both by those organising the exhibitions and by their critics), what was often forgotten was a consideration of what arguably constitutes the essential aspect of the medium of exhibitions: display. By this I refer not to the exercise of selection, nor to the matter of who made the decisions about that selection and authored the conceptual framework, but the actual articulation of a specific set of relations between objects, people, ideas and structures within the exhibition form. Display, and the principles that rule its articulation, proposes a discourse that is sometimes at odds with the discourse that surrounds the exhibition. Only by addressing the two together does a comprehensive picture of the actual position of the exhibition in relation to this history of identity struggle emerge. And not just this. By considering display rather than identity and representation, and the way in which display enacts this movement of inclusion and exclusion, we can attempt to look at this 'partial' history of identity struggle as more than that: as a means to understand something about the nature and the mechanisms of 'art' and 'exhibition'. That is, if considered in this way, this particular history becomes a lens through which to access a more general understanding of the processes by which the contemporary exhibition form works, along division lines that are no longer geopolitical or civilisational, but rather refer, for example, to the nature of knowledge and the effects of its presence or absence, the differing agencies of both artist/maker and object, and the way aesthetics might relate to the political – not only in terms of political representation and knowledge production but also of its specific effectivity. The history of the inclusion in the (Western) contemporary art context of what comes from its outside (in the form of both cultural products and producers) offers a privileged window from which to understand, and therefore intervene in, the contemporary art system itself.

⁹ While the first two editions of the Biall mostly showcased art from Latin America, the third, in 1989, openly embraced a Third World agenda, proposing a view of the global from the south. See R. Weiss, 'A Certain Place and a Certain Time: The Third Biall de La Habana and the Origins of the Global Exhibition', in R. Weiss et al., *Making Art Global (Part 1)*, *op. cit.*, pp.14–69. The polemical reception to the exhibition is discussed by Jean-Marc Poinot, 'Review of the Paradigms and Interpretative Machine, or, The Critical Development of "Magiciens de la Terre"', in this volume, pp.94–108.

¹⁰ 'The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain', organised by Rasheed Araeen at the Hayward Gallery, London, from 29 November 1989 to 4 February 1990. See Jean Fisher, 'The Other Story and the Past Imperfect', paper given at 'Exhibitions at the World at Large' symposium, *op. cit.*

The similarities between the two opening scenes obscure an important development in the history of exhibitions as a story of cultural and geographical identity struggle: a historical shift towards the inclusion of the artist or cultural producer as an acting subject within the contemporary exhibition context, rather than his or her inclusion as a represented subject (the 'indigenous' or 'primitive' creator or maker), or the inclusion of the objects for which he or she is responsible. In 'Indian Art of the United States' the act of 'performing' a work in front of an audience highlighted the difference of the Navajo artists with respect to the modern artists whose work the museum would normally exhibit, turning their presence into an act of representation. In contrast, in 'Magiciens de la Terre' the artist was no longer just represented; rather, the figure of the artist was the structural unit that gave form to the exhibition.¹¹ (That is, the exhibition consisted of a number of artists invited on the strength of their individual practices, although the display might have subsequently modulated their individuality by creating relations that disturbed it). The fact that the inclusion of this or that artist was not an act of representation doesn't mean that there was no representation; representation took place, to a certain degree, as a result of the show's claim to be the 'first worldwide exhibition' and its insistence on an equality in numbers, an even split between the artists from the West and those from elsewhere.¹² But it remained a general, abstract representation, one that abandoned nations and regions, and with them actual political considerations. Instead, it assigned each artist a singular location in the world, a dot in a map pictured on each of the artists' sections in the catalogue, always at its centre, so that every one of them is presented as an inhabitant of a common space.¹³ In summary, the notion of exhibition adopted by 'Magiciens de la Terre' is the result of a coming together of (living) artists who, on equal terms, produce work (either together or in parallel) on the exhibition site.

This conception had already been put into practice in a contemporary art context in the late 1960s, when exhibitions such as 'When Attitudes Become Form', organised by Harald Szeemann in 1969 at Kunsthalle Bern, portrayed curatorial work as a two-stage process: a selection of artists in the first place, following curatorial research and international travel, and, secondly, an organic development of work by the selected artists in the exhibition space, perhaps in response to it.¹⁴ Whether this research method and organic

¹¹ Although they were not 'artists' but 'magiciens', as noted earlier.

¹² Neither the marketing material nor the catalogue classified the selected artists according to either of those categories, so this split is notional rather than actual. This might lead to an interesting guessing game in relation to some of the artists' status, but that would be a diversion, since the stress is on the equality of their positions, not in the definition of two fields or teams.

¹³ See Jean-Hubert Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre* (exh. cat.), Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1989. These maps are displayed on the top-right corner of each artist's entry. This reinforces the message of equality, and at the same time assigns difference to the individual rather than the group. In fact, it points to both a humanist equality and an equally humanist individualism.

¹⁴ The parallels are highlighted by the fact that this process of development of

installation process were actually the case or just a constructed narrative in Szeemann's exhibition does not matter as much as the fact that the model of exhibition-making that it claimed for itself went from being a new(ly marketed) idea in the late 1960s to becoming common and even dominant throughout the 1990s and 2000s.¹⁵ If in the late 1960s and 70s it was associated with a recognition of the artist's agency in the studio and outside of it, in combination and/or conflict with the gallerist, collector and exhibition organiser, in 'Magiciens de la Terre' the move can be seen as the effect of an egalitarian impulse in relation to the role of the artist (rather than a negotiation between different roles within the art system). The principle enacted is that those making work outside the West and its traditions are equal to those making work within it.

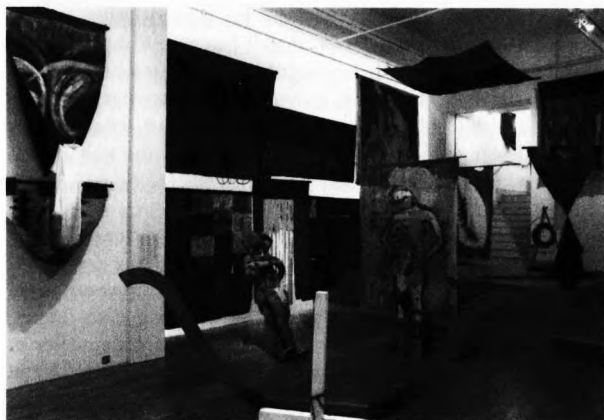
In order to claim such equality, the curatorial team of 'Magiciens de la Terre' chose to abandon modernist constraints by leaving behind some of its key terminology.¹⁶ Adopting the term 'magicien' instead of 'artist' proposed an alternative to controversial framings of practitioners from the outside. These had been, until then, either 'artists' working with an exported, colonial modern canon, or 'craftsmen' working outside of that canon, often subjects without a name or a face, dissolved into the collective expression of a tribe, a region, a country or a continent.¹⁷ Artists working within modern traditions that

work and installation was registered, at the initiative of the curatorial team, in two very similar recordings (for television, in the case of 'When Attitudes Become Form', and as a video release by the Centre Pompidou, in the case of 'Magiciens de la Terre'). The two documents show the artists at work, making or installing their contributions, as well as discussing them in front of the camera. (See Marlene Belillos and André Gazut, *Quand les attitudes deviennent formes*, Television Suisse Romande, broadcast on 6 April 1969, and Gianfranco Barberi and Marco di Castri (dir.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, VHS PAL, 52min, Turin: Cataloga, 1989.) It is also perhaps productive to compare the curatorial selection process carried out by Harald Szeemann for 'When Attitudes Become Form' and that of Jean-Hubert Martin as a process in which, to some extent, selection preceded the research trip, and the curator's encounter with the artist functioned as a verification or confirmation, rather than an act of discovery. For a discussion of the curatorial process of 'When Attitudes Become Form', see Christian Rattemeyer, "Op Losse Schroeven" and "When Attitudes Become Form" 1969", in C. Rattemeyer et al., *Exhibiting the New Art: 'Op Losse Schroeven' and 'When Attitudes Become Form' 1969*, London: Afterall Books, 2010, pp.12–26. For 'Magiciens de la Terre', see L. Steeds, "Magiciens de la Terre", *op. cit.*

¹⁵ The research model of international travel after identifying the artist or community of artists of interest has become the dominant practice within curatorial practice today. The organic development of works by artists brought together on the occasion of the exhibition has most often been the case with large-scale periodical exhibitions internationally.

¹⁶ A similar attempt to escape the traps of modernist terminology would be made by Catherine David two decades later, with her 'Contemporary Arab Representations' research, exhibition and publication project (2001–06).

¹⁷ For considerations of authorship in relation to primitive art, see Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, esp. 'Chapter 7: From Signature to Pedigree', pp.100–07.



Installation view, 'Seven Stories of Modern Art in Africa', Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1995
© the artists
Courtesy Whitechapel Art Gallery, London

they claimed as their own were the focus of exhibitions such as 'The Other Story', 'Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa' (1995)¹⁸ and 'The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945–1994' (2001–02).¹⁹ But the confrontation with the common enemy, a contemporary art, cultural and market sector wilfully ignorant of those artists and oblivious to their work, was often overshadowed by a confrontation between those speaking from the position of the diaspora and those who were working on the ground. Such confrontation might have been the result of a very specific history within the wider history of identity struggle: that of Africa and its artistic and cultural production. This history is complicated by the absence of strong local institutional structures, the relatively small number of initiatives of self-historisation and conceptualisation,²⁰ and consequently

¹⁸ 'Seven Stories of Modern Art in Africa', Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 27 September – 26 November 1995, curated by Clémentine Deliss and Catherine Lampert, who was director of the Whitechapel at the time. The exhibition travelled to Malmö Konsthall (27 January–17 March 1996), where it was curated by Sune Nordgren, with the involvement of only part of the original team. In the exhibition catalogue the Guggenheim Museum in New York's SoHo is listed as the third venue, but the exhibition never travelled there. 'Seven Stories of Modern Art in Africa' was part of *africa95*, a programme coordinated by Deliss that aimed to showcase contemporary culture in the continent. The programme originated partly in response to 'Africa: The Art of a Continent' (4 October 1995–21 January 1996), an exhibition curated by artist Tom Phillips for the Royal Academy of Arts in London, in the form of a traditional, but large-scale, exhibition of African art as mainly tribal and exotic.

¹⁹ The exhibition, curated by Okwui Enwezor, opened at Museum Villa Stuck, Munich (15 February–22 April 2001) and travelled to Haus der Kulturen der Welt at Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (18 May–22 July 2001); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (8 September–30 December 2001) and P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center and Museum of Modern Art, New York (10 February–5 May 2002).

²⁰ One of the few exceptions is Leopold Senghor's theorisation and promotion of the idea and practice of African art around the concept of 'négritude', especially

the importance of diasporic positions and the need for a negotiation (sometimes confrontation) between these and 'local' ones.²¹ But at the root of these disputes there seems to be a dynamic of antagonism, a constant mode of confrontation based on the fact that what is being negotiated is not how specific work is being dealt with in the exhibition context. Instead, what appears to be at stake is a redefinition of the field of agencies, and of the voices that are authorised to speak with and about those agencies.

Historically, this redefinition has been accompanied by a defence of the agency of the artist, in conflict with that of the curator and to the detriment of the work.²² In 'Magiciens de la Terre', such redefinition is accompanied by two additional twists, which makes it a specially revealing case. In the first place, the agency of the artist, in order to escape the problematics of modernism and its sociocultural determination, is reframed as the agency of the magician – an individual who has a privileged relationship to group and place and who, thanks to that privileged relationship, gains his or her individuality. (This individuation is, curiously, not far from the Western romantic notion of the artist.) The second inflection is that, again thanks to that privileged relationship, the magician is not only distinct from his or her cultural context (the work of the artists included is not the expression of a culture and a time), he or she is also to some extent freed from it. That is, the magician is the individual who wants to and is able to escape the determinations presented by his or her immediate context.²³ The relationships of opposition are then not binary, in the form of an acting subject

in Senegal. See for example Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *African Art as Philosophy: Senghor, Bergson and the Idea of Negritude* (2007, trans. Chike Jeffers), London, New York and Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2011; and Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960–1995*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

²¹ It is also possible to write a similar history of exhibitions of art from Latin America, as seen by the West. These would include 'Art in Latin America: The Modern Era, 1820–1980', Hayward Gallery, London, 18 May–6 August 1989 and touring; 'Art of the Fantastic: Latin America, 1920–1987', Indianapolis Museum of Art, 28 June–13 September 1987 and touring; or 'Artistas latinoamericanos del siglo XX', produced by MoMA but inaugurated at the Expo 92 in Seville, 20 April–12 October 1992, and touring. But this history would have to either contend with (or consciously ignore) a history articulated from the inside, through exhibitions and publications produced over the years mostly on a national scale that provide an elaboration of developments, ideas and figures that has arguably been absent in the case of Africa. See Francisco Godoy Vega, *Modelos, límites y desórdenes de los discursos post-coloniales sobre el arte latinoamericano. Textos y contextos de las exposiciones de arte latinoamericano en el Estado español (1989–2010)*, PhD Thesis, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2013.

²² In this discussion, the possibility that the work might have its own agency has not played a part.

²³ This suggests that the exhibition's lack of recognition of the context in which those included worked – a recurrent criticism received by the show – is not a shortcoming, but rather a programmatic choice.

versus a passive subject or an absent subject, present through his or her 'silent' work. 'Magiciens de la Terre' is also an exhibition of makers that sets itself against both an exhibition of cultures and an exhibition of silent objects. This set of oppositions, if developed into a system of relations with two variables, results in a diagram with four nodes: exhibitions of contextualised objects; exhibitions of contextualised subjects; exhibitions of decontextualised subjects; and exhibitions of decontextualised objects. Such a diagram might allow us to move from an understanding of the history of inclusion of non-Western art as a negotiation of voices and identities to a consideration of how this history, through a study of modes of display, might actually expose the workings of the system of art.

While 'Seven Stories', 'The Short Century' or 'The Other Story' showcased the work of artists embedded within a certain cultural and political history (that of modernism in some of its variations), 'Magiciens de la Terre' singled out artists and presented them exclusively in relation to other artists, without in principle any given connection. The variable between these two groups is context, and the constant among them the figure of the artist – and necessarily the fact that in none of the cases did the presence of the artist actually guarantee that his or her agency was decisive when confronted with the agency of the curator. The humanist, decontextualising exercise of 'Magiciens de la Terre' could be (and was) faulted for being a Western, colonial imposition:²⁴ the exercise of decontextualisation to which both Western and non-Western artists were exposed was something with which at least some of the Western artists were arguably more familiar, and more able strategically to address. There are, then, practical limits to the claims for decontextualisation to which the Western museum, the white cube and the black box are epistemologically and experientially bound – limits that allow for the development of strategies for interaction by those who have the necessary knowledge or cultural capital. However, there are also problematic implications for the opposed position: a contextual presentation designed by the exhibition's curator has the potential to conflict with the artists' perspective (again, a confrontation between the agency of the artist and that of the curator). But, more importantly, a narrative based on biographical, social, economic or historical determinations might curtail or even neutralise the artist's agency. In 'Magiciens de la Terre', the artists or magicians were all presented as equally capable of signifying independently from their context, even though at least some of the non-Western artists were less equal than the others because of their lack of familiarity with the new context that they had (suddenly) entered. In 'The Short Century', on the other hand, artists were treated equally, but only in the sense of being conditioned by their biography and context. The risk of this position is that an understanding

p.15

²⁴ See, for example, J. Fisher, 'Fictional Histories – The Invisible Labyrinth: "Magiciens de la Terre"', *Artforum*, vol.28, no.1, September 1989, pp.158–62; reprinted in *Vampire in the Text: Narratives of Contemporary Art*, London: Iniva, 2003, pp.200–13; and in this volume, pp.248–58.

of subjects' actions as the result of their context can, in its most extreme formulation, give the impression that the actions of those subjects are just the expression of their circumstances.²⁵ Contextual determination threatens to curtail, even do away with, artists' agency, betraying the emancipatory promise that art and the aesthetic experience might hold.

p.10

Between 'Magiciens de la Terre', an exhibition of artists removed from their socio-cultural context, and "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art', an exhibition of similarly displaced objects, the constant is the decontextualising move, and the variable is the element that is decontextualised (artists in the former and objects in the latter). Such a clean distinction is complicated by the fact that "Primitivism" was, more precisely, an exhibition in which non-Western art objects were extracted from their context in order to be recontextualised in relation to modern and contemporary Western artworks, following the history of the 'discovery' of 'primitive' art by the modern artists in Paris in the early years of the twentieth century.²⁶ The exhibition, presented as 'the first ever to juxtapose modern and tribal objects in the light of informed art criticism',²⁷ was denounced in a series of (once more) tense exchanges between Thomas McEvelley and its curators, William Rubin and Kirk Varnedoe, as an attempt to 'revalidate' modernist aesthetics by means of primitive art.²⁸ Furthermore, McEvelley criticised the curators' 'ego projections' on the 'primitive' works as inaccurately claiming an intentionality that was not the case.²⁹ The problem identified, then, was not the reconstruction of a modern 'primitivist' narrative, but the fact that the curators actually confused the modern artists' perspective with the perspective of those who made the objects. Besides the habitual suspicion of the curatorial role (a curator's will that is seen as tending to overrule the artist's will),³⁰ what emerges in this dispute between the intentions of the modern artists on the one side and the intentions of the objects' makers on the other is a discourse on how, or rather, whether, the objects speak independently

²⁵ I am translating here to an exhibition-making context the arguments raised by Jacques Rancière in his discussion of the work of Pierre Bourdieu. See Collective Révoltes Logiques, *L'Empire du sociologue*, Paris: La Découverte, 1984, or Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor* (1983, trans. John Drury, Corinne Oster and Andrew Parker), Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

²⁶ For a history of this discovery as told by its protagonists, see the first section of Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch (ed.), *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2003, pp.25–116.

²⁷ Press release no.17, "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern', Museum of Modern Art, New York, August 1984.

²⁸ See Thomas McEvelley, 'Doctor Lawyer Indian Chief: "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art the Museum of Modern Art', *Artforum*, vol.23, no.3, November 1984, pp.54–61; reprinted in Bill Beckley and David Shapiro (ed.), *Uncontrollable Beauty: Toward a New Aesthetics*, New York: Allworth Press, 1998, p.151.

²⁹ T. McEvelley, response to William Rubin, 'On "Doctor Lawyer Indian Chief"', *Artforum*, vol.23, no.5, February 1985, p.46–51; reprinted in B. Beckley and D. Shapiro (ed.), *Uncontrollable Beauty*, op. cit., p.191.

³⁰ See T. McEvelley, 'Doctor Lawyer Indian Chief', op. cit., p.150.

from the voices of the modern artists and the makers. Are the objects mute, and do they therefore need text (information, explanation) to speak for them, as McEvilley demands? Or can they instead talk through their form, independently from their function, as the curators maintain?³¹ But even those who claim that the objects can speak by themselves decide to speak for them, therefore deciding what they say: Rubin and Varnedoe want the primitive objects to talk about form and universality, and most importantly to talk as art objects;³² McEvilley wants them to talk as the expression of collective culture, and to do so about dread, communal identification and loss of self.³³

The struggle on this occasion is no longer a struggle among individuals, but among individuals and objects – objects that might be willing to act in certain ways, and that are made to act by the curators in a manner that might be contradictory with those ways. The ghost in this discussion, as it was with artists in the earlier opposition, is context; the question that hovers in the background is whether objects are able (or willing) to set themselves apart from their original context without being forced to. For McEvilley, the answer is no: by invoking Edmund Carpenter, he makes recourse to ethno-aesthetics and its privileging of context. Ethno-aesthetics, following the writings of Bronisław Malinowski and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, responded to the massive, uninformed incorporation of indigenous objects into Western commercial and exhibition contexts with the demand to understand art through its indigenous social system, conceived as holistic and balanced. But by the early 1970s, such faith in a signifying context had been abandoned in the search for a system that accounted for relations among local groups (the objects were not only made for internal use, and in any case they circulated between different groups, in different modes) and with a global scene (in interaction with international tourism and consumption).³⁴ On this occasion, as is often the case, art criticism was late.

Rubin and Varnedoe instead embraced the strategy of dislocation of the classic model of the Western art museum, in order 'to deal with the questions

³¹ Their search for a beauty in form follows modernist aesthetics in its negation of function. For an alternative, nuanced approach to the issue of beauty in 'primitive' art, in which beauty in form is understood in relation to function, see Franz Boas, *Primitive Art* (1927), New York: Dover Publications, 1955. According to Boas, 'the judgement of perfection of technical form is essentially an aesthetic judgement' (p.10).

³² William Rubin, 'On "Doctor Lawyer Indian Chief: "Primitivism in 20th Century Art at the Museum of Modern Art in 1984"', *Artforum*, vol.23, no.5, February 1985, pp.42–46; reprinted in B. Beckley and D. Shapiro (ed.), *Uncontrollable Beauty*, *op. cit.*, p.173.

³³ See T. McEvilley, 'Doctor Lawyer Indian Chief', *op. cit.*, pp.160–61. McEvilley is following Edmund Carpenter's *Oh, What a Blow That Phantom Gave Me!* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973, pp.53 and 56).

³⁴ For a more detailed elaboration of this shift, see Christopher B. Steiner, *African Art in Transit*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp.11–12.

raised by the form of the objects, rather than with the other kinds of questions that could only be answered by supporting texts about their origins or functions'.³⁵ This was seemingly done without any reservation about the bourgeois nature of that artistic and cultural sphere, and about its blindness towards both the mechanisms that enable certain objects to enter it and the effects of those mechanisms on the objects themselves and those who interact with them, proposing a bourgeois, humanist, consensual, unified vision of mankind that was consistent with its bourgeois conception of art. Perhaps the fundamental problem here is that the decontextualisation effected by the Western museum (and the white cube and black box) begins with an initial step of abstraction. This abstraction from the everyday conditions constitutes an essential moment in the (Western) definition of the aesthetic experience, as has been understood since the end of the eighteenth century.³⁶ But this moment of abstraction, which is also fundamental to the bourgeois model of democracy, implies that any consideration of context entails a retreat (of art or of politics), a limitation of possibilities, and is therefore a negative movement.³⁷ Oblivious to this, Rubin and Varnedoe follow André Malraux in his demand that, to avoid the separation between viewer and object, and to allow the object to become art, no information could be provided on the object's origin or possible function.³⁸

The process of progressive liberation from context undertaken by anthropology throughout the second half of the twentieth century draws an alternative trajectory, one that can modify or qualify the understanding of what the system of art can give occasion to. What is important for the understanding of 'Magiciens de la Terre' is that this trajectory doesn't fully accept the narrative of the aesthetic experience embraced by the Western tradition, and because of this it might lead to an awareness of the conditions of possibility of such experience. An anthropology that rethinks itself in order to question a privileged historical, geographically bound account,³⁹ might create the possibility for thinking of objects as having an agency of

³⁵ Kirk Varnedoe, 'On the Claims and Critics of the "Primitivism" Show', *Art in America*, vol.73, May 1985, pp.11–21; reprinted in B. Beckley and D. Shapiro (ed.), *Uncontrollable Beauty*, *op. cit.*, p.243.

³⁶ In the writings, for example, of Friedrich Schiller.

³⁷ In political theory, this need to escape contextual determinations recurs, in different manners, from Aristotle to Hannah Arendt to Jürgen Habermas or Jacques Rancière.

³⁸ 'The deepest metamorphosis begun when art no longer had any end other than itself'. André Malraux, *Les Voix du silence, Oeuvres Complètes, Vol. 4*, Paris: Gallimard, 2004, pp.204–05.

³⁹ I am thinking here of the work that several authors have published in the last decade, including Bruno Latour's discussion of the 'faitiche' in *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods* (1996, trans. Catherine Porter and Heather MacLean), Durham: Duke University Press, 2000; Philippe Descola's revision of the distinction between nature and culture in *Pardela Nature et culture*, Paris: Gallimard, 2005; and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's exploration of perspectivism in *Métaphysiques cannibales: Lignes d'anthropologie post-structurale* (trans. Oïara Bonilla), Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2009.

their own, on the same level as that of artists and curators, and might provide the thread for another category of exhibitions in which objects are neither context-bound nor decontextualised; in which objects can do and undo relations, including relations with the system that makes them possible; and in which objects can interact with artists and curators on a level playing field. This approach avoids a 'classical' discourse that, by establishing ontological differences between substances (man and thing, individual and collective, nature and society), is obliged to distinguish, without remission, between the processes and representations in which each of them engages. Instead, those elements are to be seen as 'multiple entities with an ontological status and a capacity for action that varies according to the positions they occupy in relation to each other'.⁴⁰

For the field of art exhibitions, following this path would offer an alternative to the conception of this history as one of identity struggle – of a dispute about inclusions and exclusions, about who is allowed to speak and who is not – which seems all but exhausted. Instead, it would open the door for considering artworks and artists as essentially able to enter into changing sets of relations, and would inscribe 'Magiciens de la Terre' into an alternative history of exhibitions. This would include shows such as 'Lotte or the Transformation of the Object', the 'Núcleo histórico' of the 24th Bienal de São Paulo; documenta 12 or 'The Potosí Principle',⁴¹ and could claim for itself a history of more 'ethnographic' predecessors, including Georges Henri Rivière's work as curator of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris and Lina Bo Bardi's displays at the Museu d'Arte Popular in Salvador de Bahia in the 1950s and 60s.

What all these exhibitions and practices share, despite their differences, is an incorporation of the object (the art object, the cultural object, or the 'primitive' object) that refuses to determine what this object is, or how it should be read. Whether it is north Brazilian craft production in the case of Bo Bardi; Polynesian, African or South American tribal works for Rivière; a 1940s German doll called Lotte, manufactured decades later in the West Coast of Africa and incorporated by the Yoruba people into their rituals; Francis Bacon paintings in São Paulo; rubands from Tajikistan and sculptures

⁴⁰ P. Descola, *L'Écologie des autres: L'anthropologie et la question de la nature*, Versailles: Quae, 2011, p.13. Translation the author's.

⁴¹ 'Lotte or the Transformation of the Object', Grazer Kunstverein, Graz, 14 October–18 November 1990 and the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, 4 December 1990–20 January 1991, curated by Clémentine Deliss; 24th Bienal de São Paulo, 3 October–13 December 1998, curated by Paulo Herkenhoff; documenta 12, Kassel, 16 April–23 September 2007, curated by Roger M. Buergel as Artistic Director and Ruth Noack as Curator; 'The Potosí Principle', Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 12 May–6 September 2010, and then touring to Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 7 October 2010–3 January 2011 and Museo Nacional de Arte and Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore, La Paz, 22 February–30 April 2011, curated by Alice Creischer, Max Jorge Hinderer and Andreas Siekmann.

by John McCracken in documenta 12; or colonial paintings of the Potosí mines from Bolivia, the issue at stake in these exhibitions was not what had been included and left out, or the level of engagement of those who made those objects. What all of them can be seen to be attempting, in different ways, is an exploration of the possibilities of display, the effects of the absence or presence of limited or copious information, the effect that both display and information have on viewers as collective or individual subjects and a reflection on (or prodding of) the limits of the art system's ability to deal with what is not conceived within or for it. This is not a history of 'better' exhibitions, but an alternative historical thread that might shed light on the possibilities of the system of art, no longer to secure visibilities and shape identities, but to develop ways to understand how cultural objects and cultural producers (from anywhere) might relate to each other. Here the notion of 'migration of form', proposed by Roger Buergel and Ruth Noack as the grammatical unit of documenta 12, is perhaps a useful tool.⁴² Like the 'affinities' that Rubin and Varnedoe defined as 'basic shared characteristics' or 'common denominators',⁴³ 'migration of form' is a strategic tool in exhibition-making rather than a hard concept; but unlike the 'affinities', and against its actual name, 'migration of form' is not about form, it is about a displacement that allows for new articulations of both form and content.

'Magiciens de la Terre' did not obviously set out to propose such articulations, but its insistence on form and its belief in the equal availability of artistic practice certainly brings it close. Its display disturbed the individuality of the artist's figure that its discourse proclaimed, and articulated visual relations that could be understood as 'migrations of forms', or 'contact zones' in which mixed and shifting agencies are possible.⁴⁴ 'Magiciens de la Terre' was perhaps the first exhibition of the self that refused to accept the existence of an other who could not have a place within it: no longer an exhibition of 'us', but an exhibition in which everything (or, rather, everyone) belonged. By working towards this goal, it suggested the possibility of another exhibition, the show in which nothing actually belongs. And this is perhaps what the exhibition form is: a place where nothing belongs, but where, because of this, objects and people (artists, curators and others) enter into relations, according to and against their will.

⁴² See Ruth Noack and Roger Buergel, 'Some Afterthoughts on the Migration of Form', *Afterall*, issue 18, Summer 2008, pp.5–15.

⁴³ See "'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity between the Tribal and the Modern", exhibition booklet, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1984, p.3.

⁴⁴ For the notion of the 'contact zone' in relation to 'Magiciens de la Terre', see J.-M. Poinso, 'Review of the Paradigms and Interpretative Machine', *op. cit.*

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**'Magiciens de la Terre' and the Development of Transnational
Project-Based Curating**
— Lucy Steeds

Reviewing the exhibition 'Magiciens de la Terre' in Paris in 1989, a young critic suggested that its curator had been 'so taken with the immensity of his task that he didn't know how to pose the real questions'.¹ The task that Jean-Hubert Martin had set himself was an exhibition of contemporary art with over a hundred participants,² only half of whom were Western.³ The immensity of this undertaking stemmed from the parochialism of the institution of art in Western Europe and North America at the time, and from a general lack of information about artistic practice beyond those geopolitical confines. 'Magiciens de la Terre' challenged this closed but relatively contented art 'world', with promotional material proclaiming it to be the first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art.⁴ It triggered a storm of questions – not only about whether the questions it posed were the right ones, but also asking if those begged by its premises had been adequately answered. Overridingly, people wanted to know how contemporary art was to be defined and judged in a global field, and what form of exhibition could do justice to such a field. The young critic Nicolas Bourriaud would attempt to address that second question curatorially thirty years later and, in the catalogue to his Tate Triennial show, hailed 'Magiciens' as an 'exhibition that, for all the controversy it provoked, marked the symbolic inauguration of planetary art'.⁵ If this symbolism is what customarily identifies 'Magiciens de la Terre' as a landmark exhibition, then the accompanying controversy marks the show as a moment of unsteady departure or a rupturing event. We need not be lulled into consensus by the sense of familiarity that gathers around the exhibition

¹ 'Magiciens de la Terre', Centre Georges Pompidou and Grande Halle de La Villette, Paris, 18 May to 14 August 1989, curated by Jean-Hubert Martin with the assistance of Mark Francis, Aline Luque and André Magnin. The quote is from Nicolas Bourriaud, 'Magiciens de la Terre' (trans. M.R. Rubinstein), *Flash Art*, no.148, October 1989, p.121. Over thirty years later, Bourriaud called into question his own understanding of the issues at the time; see 'Globalization: So What Is It?', *artpress*, no.379, June 2011, p.59.

² Of the '100' artists listed in the catalogue as participants, at least five were in fact groups: husband and wife team Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen constituted one count, for example, as did three members of the Pelgyeling monastery in Nepal, Lobsang Palden, Bhorda Sherpa and Lobsang Thinle. Two artists listed in the catalogue were not ultimately represented in the exhibition: Jivya Soma Mashe and Temba Rabden.

³ The term 'Western' (or 'occidentaux', in French) was not defined by the curators. It will be used here to indicate association with norms in Western Europe and the US.

⁴ A curatorial statement dated January 1989 and the *Petit journal* that accompanied the show both, for instance, included the statement 'Première exposition mondiale d'art contemporain', officially translated as 'The first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art'. See CGP archives, box 95026/168.

⁵ N. Bourriaud, 'Altermodern', in N. Bourriaud (ed.), *Altermodern: Tate Triennial 2009* (exh. cat.), London: Tate Publishing, 2009, p.20.

as landmark; instead we might feel encouraged to investigate the ruptures or discontinuities afresh.

Given the sheer volume of words published on 'Magiciens', both at the time and subsequently, there is a serious risk that the show itself becomes sidelined, if not forgotten. While the actuality of the exhibition is no longer accessible to us, following its closure and dispersal, the photographic, text, audio and video archive is rich, and the memories of the artists, curators and others involved are simultaneously crystal clear and intriguingly contradictory. This, and distinct historical and geopolitical perspectives, make new readings possible – even necessary.

The significance of 'Magiciens de la Terre' in terms of modernism or postmodernism and its postcolonial or neocolonial position continue to be debated. The nature of its globalism is the subject of ongoing analysis in these debates, and its ambition to present worldwide internationalism is generally acknowledged – if often with caveats – as radical for its place and time. However, it is arguably the show's *transnationalism* that is its dominant legacy. What became important in the ensuing era of art and exhibition making are the issues of locality and specificity in relation to the wider world. The nation state became increasingly irrelevant or at least its relevance was put into question in the context of the growth of global exhibitions from 1989 onwards. In particular, 'Magiciens de la Terre' may be seen to have developed a transnational and project-based approach that offered a useful model for the subsequent curation and production of large-scale exhibitions that would flourish in the emerging climate fostered by the neoliberal globalisation of capital. The curatorial team behind 'Magiciens de la Terre' could not have foreseen the consequences of their global ambitions. They put the exhibition together in the twilight years of the Cold War, when the globe was still largely divided into two camps, with the Third World marginalised between them and the quasi-universal reach of capital still a few steps away. Their mixed ambitions were a response to a transitional time, and in order to achieve some degree of understanding of their project it is necessary to go back to the genesis of the exhibition in the Paris of the mid-to-late 1980s.

1. *From Idea to Exhibition: Les étapes d'un projet*⁶

World music, or rather *sono mondiale*, was in full sway in Paris in the second half of the 1980s, and associated publications like the monthly magazine *Actuel* offered a broad cultural context that included, for instance, painting.⁷ However, the notion of 'world art' was alien to the establishment at the

⁶ 'The steps in a project', the title given to a section of the 1989 press pack. See CGP archives, box 95026/168.

⁷ Jean-François Bizot, the influential figure behind Radio Nova and *Actuel*, invited Chéri Samba from Kinshasa to Paris in 1982 and commissioned twenty paintings from him for reproduction in the magazine (no.33–34, 1982).



Installation view, *Poïpoïdrome* –
The Poïpoï Foundation presents:
*Hommage aux Dogons et aux
Rimbauds*, Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris, 1978
© Centre Pompidou/MNAM-CCI/
Bibliothèque Kandinsky/J. Faujour

time. Given the uncommon ambition of the 'Magiciens de la Terre' project, we might trace its formation back to the person responsible: its curator. Asked about his starting-points shortly after the exhibition had closed, Jean-Hubert Martin replied:

Well, to begin with, I grew up in Alsace, which is a place where everyone is bi- or trilingual and nationality or ethnicity is seen as something mutable or substitutable. Later I travelled quite a lot. In 1965 I went to India and Nepal by car from France, in a 2CV, and from that time on I always loved to travel. In the mid-1970s I went to Nigeria, and so on. I saw things that were absolutely intriguing and had nothing to do with what you'd see in anthropological museums. Already at that time I had the feeling that there was a level of creation in the Third World that was different from what was shown in the primitive art collections.⁸

The image of Martin, the young Alsatian, wowed by the wider world viewed through his Citroën window and wondering how this could be brought home might stay with us as we consider the standard account of the project's beginnings.

Writing his preface to the catalogue, Martin anchored his curatorial concern to produce a 'really international' show in the practices of two artists who emerged in the early 1960s, Joseph Beuys and Robert Filliou.⁹ While their Fluxus activity – with its ecumenical understanding of art and what might now be described as its transnational spirit – would appear to influence the selection of particular works for the exhibition, it was their specific commit-

⁸ J.-H. Martin in 'Overheard: Former Beaubourg Director Jean-Hubert Martin Talks with Thomas McEvelley', *Contemporanea*, no.23, December 1990, p.110.

⁹ J.-H. Martin, 'Preface', in J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre* (exh. cat.), Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1989, p.8. All translations from French the author's, unless otherwise noted.

ment to cross-cultural dialogue and to a universal notion of aesthetic creativity that Martin credited as inspiring the project overall.¹⁰ He was studying art history at the Sorbonne in Paris during the 1960s, whilst simultaneously drawn to the art of the time.¹¹ Having transferred to the prestigious École de Louvre, he then became a curator at the Musée national d'art moderne in Paris, working as part of the team that would reinvent this institution for its opening at the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1977. A year after the opening he worked with Filliou, together with architect Joachim Pfeufer, on a commission for the building as part of their *Poïpôidrome* series – named after a Dogon figure of speech and conceived as a forum for 'constant creation'.¹² While the installation was up, Filliou and Pfeufer used the commission funds to visit a Dogon community in Mali, where they presented material produced in the Centre Pompidou's *Poïpôidrome* and, on their return, they then added to the Parisian installation their documentation of this bid for cultural reciprocity.

If specific contemporary European artists planted the idea for the exhibition, a constellation of earlier shows surely nurtured its conceptual development. One that had impressed Martin as a child was the internationally touring show of photography 'The Family of Man', the catalogue for which he had kept.¹³ This exhibition, curated by Edward Steichen and originating at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1955, united figurative scenes captured in 68 countries, representing cultural diversity but insisting on the universality of human experience. Roland Barthes, assessing the French version of the display in 1957, found that 'exoticism is insistently stressed ... the image of Babel is complacently projected over that of the world. Then, from this pluralism, a type of unity is magically produced: man is born, works, laughs and dies everywhere in the same way'.¹⁴ The downplaying of confrontational politics and economic inequities in 'The Family of Man' has interesting parallels with 'Magiciens'. The human universalism pursued in the 1989 show was not that of birth, emotion, death or work, but that offered by creativity. This was not illustrated photographically but made manifest physically, through artworks presented in three-dimensional space. Each exhibition ventured a bid to represent globally dispersed people even-handedly – bids in which control was firmly tethered to a major city for culture and historically invested in Western ideas. A formative principle for Martin's exhibition, clearly expressed in his catalogue essay, was that all the

¹⁰ Beuys had presented his artistic role as that of a European shaman since the 1960s. In 1982 he had a much publicised meeting with the fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet, who would go on to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

¹¹ J.-H. Martin in conversation with the author, 7 September 2011.

¹² The particular work was subtitled *Hommage aux Dogons et aux Rimbauds*. 'La création permanente' was a regular refrain and core concept for Filliou.

¹³ 'The Family of Man' was presented in 38 countries from 1955 to 1962 and seen by more than nine million people. Martin visited the show, retitled 'La Grande Famille des Hommes', at the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris. J.-H. Martin in conversation with Pablo Lafuente, 23 May 2008, notes in the Afterall Exhibition Histories archive.

¹⁴ Roland Barthes, 'The Great Family of Man', *Mythologies* (1957, trans. Annette Lavers), London: Paladin, 1972, p.100.

artists 'had to be treated on an absolutely equal footing'.¹⁵ However, the overtones of 'liberté, égalité, fraternité' here, given the bicentenary of the French Revolution of 1789, may remind us of national claims upon so-called universal values. And inevitably the relationships of the selected artists to the setting that united them differed widely, with some participants new to the continental, national, civic or institutional context, for example. Tellingly, 'The Family of Man' was underwritten by the US Information Agency, thereby constituting a nationalist move in international politics conducted in cultural terms. Promoting Western humanism as if it were universal, it implicitly staked a US claim to a global perspective, subtly wielding knowledge as power while appearing to share precisely this with the rest of the world. 'Magiciens de la Terre' may be seen as a European retort stemming from a similar underlying philosophy, although the agenda that might be read into it is undoubtedly distinct and specifically concerned with art and aesthetics rather than culture more broadly conceived. The Paris show of 1989 did not tour the world but invited the world to visit, perhaps seeking to establish the French capital as leading the way in global exhibition practice. Having been the capital of modern art only to lose out to New York over the course of the twentieth century, Paris could then be proclaimed in 1989 as a home for contemporary art – for global contemporary art, if this is not a tautology – and as a destination for major exhibitions of its exponents.

The cultural positioning of Paris relative to New York at this time has often been discussed in connection with 'Magiciens', particularly through comparison with "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art', an exhibition that took place five years earlier at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.¹⁶ Curated by William Rubin with Kirk Varnedoe, this show drew significant critical attention for the way in which it highlighted formal similarities between canonical Western art from the twentieth century and selected works of diverse periods from Africa, Oceania, Native and Pre-Columbian America. It presented ceremonial or functional objects from a plurality of cultural traditions alongside modern and contemporary art, in what many saw as an attempt to bolster the universalist claims to preeminence for European and North American work.¹⁷ As James Clifford remarked at the time, 'the

p.10

¹⁵ J.-H. Martin, 'Preface', *op. cit.*, p.10. A similar assertion appears in the first curatorial statement, which was initially issued in 1986 and later distributed in both French and English with the title 'La Mort de l'art, l'art en vit' / 'The Death of Art – Long Live Art' (with some amendments) as part of the press material that accompanied the show: the artists will be 'presented on equal terms' ('présenté sur un pied d'égalité'), p.6. See CGP archives, box 95026/168, and reprinted in this volume, pp.216–22. Gavin Jantjes was among those who challenged this curatorial ambition at the time. G. Jantjes, 'Red Rags to the Bull', in Rasheed Araeen (ed.), *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain* (exh. cat.), London: Hayward Gallery, 1989, p.127.

¹⁶ "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern', Museum of Modern Art, New York, 27 September 1984–15 January 1985.

¹⁷ For debate prompted by the exhibition see, for example, Thomas McEvilly, 'Doctor Lawyer Indian Chief: "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art' at the Museum



André Breton's studio,
42 rue Fontaine, Paris, 1955
Photography: Sabine Weiss

"tribalism" selected in the exhibition to resemble modernism is itself a construction designed to accomplish the task of resemblance.¹⁸

Martin visited the show and his particular concerns focused on its representation of contemporary art.¹⁹ While Beuys, Louise Bourgeois, Richard Long and several US Land artists were included, living artists from outside Europe or North America were not featured in the same manner and there were certainly no invitations to anyone beyond these regions to make work for the exhibition. The 'primitive' or 'tribal' work, including masks, dolls, charms and totems, were all described as such, rather than being presented as works of art, and they were undated and unattributed – specifically drawing contrast with the way in which the modern art was treated. As already noted, it would be a core intention of 'Magiciens de la Terre' to treat equally the various works it brought together, and certainly they were presented *more*

of Modern Art in 1984', *Artforum*, vol.23, no.3, November 1984, pp.54–60, and the ensuing to-and-fro with Rubin and Varnedoe in the letters section of subsequent issues, *Artforum*, vol.23, no.6, February 1985, pp.42–51 and *Artforum*, vol.23, no.9, May 1985, pp.63–71; see also Yves-Alain Bois, 'La Pensée Sauvage' and James Clifford, 'Histories of the Tribal and the Modern', *Art in America*, vol.73, no.4, April 1985, pp.178–89 and pp.164–215, with a response by Kirk Varnedoe in the following issue, 'On the Claims and Critics of the "Primitivism" Show', *Art in America*, vol.73, no.5, May 1985, pp.11–13. All these texts, bar those by Bois and Clifford, are reprinted in Bill Beckley and David Shapiro (ed.), *Uncontrollable Beauty: Toward a New Aesthetics*, New York: Allworth Press, 2001, pp.149–258.

¹⁸ J. Clifford, 'Histories of the Tribal and the Modern', *op. cit.*, p.166.

¹⁹ J.-H. Martin in conversation with P. Lafuente, 23 May 2008, *op. cit.*

fig.78–79 and 84
fig.51 and 57

equally than in “Primitivism”.²⁰ In fact, Martin’s exhibition over-extended the modernist trope of individual authorship, at points lapsing into assimilationism. This was not done programmatically: for instance, those constituting the Walpiri group that came from Yuendumu were collectively identified as ‘Yuendumu’;²¹ and the bark painting by a group from Papua New Guinea was attributed exclusively to their leader, Nera Jambruk.²² More productively, and acknowledging the creative reality of all the contributors to the show, Martin put considerable emphasis on curatorial meetings with artists, using this as a basis on which to decide whether or not to select their work for the exhibition.²³

p.29

In order to test his vision of what the show might look like, Martin visited André Breton’s Paris home and studio at 42 rue Fontaine. Here, the Surrealist had presented his personal collection, mixing together a painting by Joan Miró, a sculpture by Alberto Giacometti, an anthropomorphic cowbell from Mexico and a polychrome wooden shield from New Guinea, for example,²⁴ without differentiating between the cultural contexts of their production and apparently with an eye to the overall impression of the display rather than to individual pairings.²⁵ Martin took Breton’s ideas into the exhibition, deciding to unite his pick of contemporary art from around the world and display them all in the same manner to collective effect. In terms of public exhibition precursors, we might look to the first International Exhibition of Surrealism staged in London in 1936, which Breton had been partly involved in organising.²⁶

²⁰ See J.-H. Martin, ‘The Death of Art – Long Live Art’, *op. cit.*, p.4, and reprinted in this volume, p.219: ‘No work of art is anonymous. An artist (or artists) is always identifiable.’

²¹ Paddy Jupurrurla Nelson and Towser Jakamarra Walker are quoted in the catalogue (see J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, *op. cit.*, p.267). Niru Ratnam lists the artists responsible as ‘Paddy Jupurrurla Nelson, Paddy Japaltjarri Sims, Paddy Cookie Japaltjarri Stewart, Neville Japangardi Poulson, Francis Jupurrurla Kelly and Frank Bronson Jakamarra Nelson’. See N. Ratnam, ‘Exhibiting the “Other”: The Yuendumu Community’s *Yarla*’, in Jason Gaiger (ed.), *Frameworks for Modern Art*, New Haven, London and Milton Keynes: Yale University Press in association with The Open University, 2004, p.207.

²² Making this point in 1991, Cesare Poppi cites the anthropological work of Donald Tuzin and notes that Jambruk’s leading of the project reflected a political and social role, rather than individual creative activity. See C. Poppi, ‘From the Suburbs of the Global Village: Afterthoughts on *Magiciens de la Terre*’, *Third Text*, vol.5, no.14, Spring 1991, p.95.

²³ J.-H. Martin, ‘The Death of Art – Long Live Art’, *op. cit.*, p.6, and reprinted in this volume, p.222: ‘Each artist must be visited in his studio or environment.’

²⁴ See <http://andrebreton.fr/home/Mur.cfm> (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

²⁵ Martin knew this place, where Breton housed his collection from 1922, from visits on behalf of the Centre Pompidou. Following Breton’s death in 1966, the collection was kept in place until its sale in 2003, when the works from a wall were acquired – as hung there – by the Centre Pompidou.

²⁶ ‘The International Surrealist Exhibition’, New Burlington Galleries, London, 11 June–4 July 1936, organised by André Bréton, Diana Brinton Lee, Paul Éluard, David Gascoyne, George Hugnet, Humphrey Jennings, Rupert Lee, Paul Nash,



Installation view, 'International Surrealist Exhibition', New Burlington Galleries, London, 1936
 Photograph Album belonging to Roland Penrose, illustrating Surrealist exhibitions in Britain in the 1930s, Roland Penrose Archive, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh



Installation view, National Collection with works borrowed from Musée de l'Homme, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1977

© Centre Pompidou/MNAM-CCI

Martin had, in fact, already shown Cubist and Surrealist art at the Centre Pompidou alongside African and Oceanic works in 1977, under Pontus Hultén's directorship and for the opening hang of the national collection in the new building.²⁷ The comparative objects were borrowed from the Musée de l'Homme and disrupted the standard narrative of smooth linear progression in avant-garde art practice from Paris in the first half of the twentieth century to New York in the second. However, they were displayed

Man Ray, E.L.T. Mesens, Henry Moore, Roland Penrose, Herbert Read and Hugh Sykes Davies.

²⁷ See the exchange between Thomas McEvelley and William Rubin for more about these displays, as reprinted in B. Beckley and D. Shapiro (ed.), *Uncontrollable Beauty*, *op. cit.*, pp.170, 185–86, 209, 212 and 228–29.

in vitrines, rather than in free space like the adjacent modernist paintings and sculptures, and together with each other rather than interspersed amongst the modern artworks.

Hultén, the lauded exhibition curator and museum director, was responsible for a specific series of temporary shows at the Centre Pompidou that Martin has credited as influential in the development of his own ideas for 'Magiciens'.²⁸ This famous sequence examined the history of visual culture in the twentieth century through uniting practice in Paris with that of other artistic centres: 'Paris–New York', 1977, representing the period 1905–68; 'Paris–Berlin: 1900–1933', 1978; and 'Paris–Moscou: 1900–1930', 1979.²⁹ Martin worked under Hultén on the latter two shows in particular. An expanded definition of art, or what Martin describes as Hultén's 'openness in approach',³⁰ applied in all of them and extended to their installation techniques (involving major construction, indeed architectural reconstruction) and high production values. These aspects can all be found again in the installation of 'Magiciens de la Terre', which took place partly in the same building. However, the later show was avowedly committed to multiple locations for art production rather than single cities paired with Paris, and it explicitly focused on 'peripheries' as well as 'artistic centres'.³¹ It was also strictly contemporary rather than historical, giving Martin the opportunity to commission new contributions from artists. Indeed, his strong emphasis on showing the work of those living, on bringing artists together to make or install their work side by side, meant that he could not include the art of those who had inspired the project because both Beuys and Filliou died while the show was in preparation. The expanded aesthetic field as put on display by Hultén was also understood decidedly differently by Martin. For instance, the former had included a significant number of films and posters in the galleries, whereas the latter mostly kept films to a parallel programme and he excluded design, yet introduced into his exhibition works made with other functional intent, especially with religious or ritual purpose rather than being primarily artistic.

Such intent is signalled elliptically by the title 'Magiciens de la Terre', which is conspicuous for avoiding the word 'art' or 'artists',³² while playing on the French expression 'le magie de l'art'.³³ In fact, at the instigation of Lawrence Weiner, everyone contributing to the exhibition catalogue as an artist was

²⁸ J.-H. Martin in conversation with the author, 7 September 2011.

²⁹ The series concluded with 'Paris–Paris: Créations en France 1937–1957', opening in 1981, after Hultén had left the Centre Pompidou.

³⁰ J.-H. Martin in conversation with the author, 7 September 2011.

³¹ These expressions feature in J.-H. Martin, 'The Death of Art – Long Live Art', *op. cit.*, p.3. Reprinted in this volume, p.218.

³² This and other aspects of the title are discussed in Martin's catalogue essay, the 1989 press release and the *Petit journal* that accompanied the exhibition.

³³ The play on this French expression is noted on the website now dedicated to the exhibition, where the associated ambition is described as having been to 'charm' and 'seduce'. See <http://magiciensdelaterre.fr/contexte.php?id=6> (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

asked to state on their pages what they understood by the word 'art'.³⁴ Martin himself came close to an answer in the catalogue preface, where he emphasises a community of people, distributed across the world, all making imagery and objects with 'an aura', as 'the receptacles of metaphysical values'.³⁵ The notion of a global unification of individuals through aesthetic creativity, on the one hand, and through the human metaphysicality of *l'esprit* – spirit, spirituality and the mind³⁶ – on the other, arguably has certain hippie or New Age resonances that might correspond with Martin's days in his 2CV but were broadly out of step with the ideology of the late 1980s.³⁷ Martin equally intimates a crisis of confidence in the European Enlightenment and in a rationalist application of scientific and industrial solutions to social issues as associated with the notion of the West. Yet, the circumspection of the exhibition title notwithstanding, he remains fundamentally confident in his geocultural authority to judge aura and to determine what constitutes contemporary art, lamenting that the taste of his (European) team was not necessarily shared elsewhere, without reflecting on the fact that its validity might thereby be put into question.³⁸

The fourth Biennale of Sydney, directed by William Wright in 1982 with input from Martin, had crucially tested this aesthetic authority and encouraged his conceptualisation of 'Magiciens de la Terre'.³⁹ While the Australian exhibition included artists from Argentina, Bangladesh, Colombia, Poland and Yugoslavia, the majority of its more than two hundred participants were from countries routinely contributing artists to exhibitions in Europe and the US at the time.⁴⁰ What proved significant for Martin was the inclusion of one particular work – a ground painting by a Walpiri group based in Lajamanu – which was produced in the central void at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and the 'very good mood as the French artists and the Aboriginal artists prepared their work side by side'.⁴¹ Here, in the pairing of European and indigenous Australian art, Martin found a model for bringing together so-called Western and non-Western work. He has commented that it was 'very controversial among us, both curators and artists, whether

³⁴ See J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, *op. cit.*, p.71.

³⁵ J.-H. Martin, 'Preface', *op. cit.*, p.8.

³⁶ The 'spiritual' is repeatedly referenced in J.-H. Martin, 'The Death of Art – Long Live Art', *op. cit.*, pp.1, 3 and 6. Reprinted in this volume, pp.216–18, 220 and 222.

³⁷ Bourriaud suggested at the time that the idea of the show was potentially 'neo-hippie'; see N. Bourriaud, 'Magiciens de la Terre', *op. cit.*, p.120.

³⁸ See J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, *op. cit.*, p.8.

³⁹ 'The Fourth Biennale of Sydney: Vision in Disbelief', 7 April–23 May 1982. Martin specifically advised on and worked to support the participation of six artists from France. The overlap with 'Magiciens' included ten artists: Marina Abramović, John Baldessari, Francesco Clemente, Enzo Cucchi, Rebecca Horn, Per Kirkeby, Nam June Paik, Sarkis, Ken Unsworth and Krzysztof Wodiczko.

⁴⁰ Specifically in contrast to the Venice Biennale and Bienal de São Paulo, the Sydney Biennale did not involve national pavilions.

⁴¹ J.-H. Martin in 'Overheard', *op. cit.*, p.110.

it was right or not to include these people in an obviously Western or Westernised art exhibition'.⁴² Perhaps one of the things at issue here was the religious element within the Aboriginal work, evident in the process of its making if not necessarily in the finished piece.⁴³ For 'Magiciens', a floor-based earth work, *Yam Dreaming*,⁴⁴ was executed by a distinct Walpiri group, six men from Yuendumu, while Long was at work on *Red Earth Circle*, an adjacent wall-painting using River Avon mud. This pairing of contributions to the exhibition would provide a defining moment for many visitors.

Inspired by European artists who had interests in life and ideas beyond Europe, and shaped in response to particular exhibitions in the preceding three decades, 'Magiciens de la Terre' was not intellectually or politically driven. It was primarily a pragmatic response to the expanded horizons produced by satellite television, affordable long-distance travel and the new fax technology that made written arrangements between geographically remote partners instantaneous. Is it possible that the show's title only inadvertently echoed Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961),⁴⁵ and the first line of 'The Internationale' (1871), which Fanon's book references? Martin has remarked that 'it was important to me, in a very French, very intellectual world, to borrow some Anglo-Saxon pragmatism. The project was not theoretical but physical and relational; it was to see people, meet people, take decisions and bring things together.'⁴⁶ Nonetheless, postcolonial theory, against which the show would be measured, was well established by the 1980s. In *Éloge de la créolité*, published in the year during which the exhibition was on view, Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant celebrated a key notion introduced by Édouard Glissant, Fanon's peer, which undercut some of the rationale for the show, asserting that: 'Creoleness is an annihilation of false universality, of monolingualism and of purity.'⁴⁷ Meanwhile, postcolonial theory written in English had long been anchored in Edward Saïd's *Orientalism* (1978, first translated into French in 1980). Here a clear warning was to be read in Saïd's description of 'the high-handed executive attitude of nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century European colonialism',⁴⁸ an enterprise and discourse that threatened perpetuation through curatorial high-handedness from Paris in the late twentieth century. The inclusion of an essay by Homi Bhabha in the 'Magiciens' catalogue and

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Martin has more recently remarked: 'we couldn't look very much because it was a religious ritual and the doors were closed from time to time'. See 'Art without Borders: Jean-Hubert Martin in Conversation with Michael Fitzgerald', *Art & Australia*, vol.48, no.2, Summer 2010, p.236.

⁴⁴ The work is also referred to as *Yarla*, which uses the local term for the bush potato that gives the ground painting its central design or story. See, for instance, Howard Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, London: Phaidon, 1998, p.375.

⁴⁵ As suggested by Martin in conversation with the author and Thomas Boutoux, 23 July 2009.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, *Éloge de la créolité* (*In Praise of Creoleness*), Paris: Gallimard, 1989, p.28.

⁴⁸ Edward Saïd, *Orientalism*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, p.2.

the commissioning of papers by Gayatri Spivak and Bhabha for the colloquium that accompanied the show clearly indicate the significance of these issues for the exhibition, but they might seem more like ballast added late in the project than fuel for its formation, given the accounts of the curatorial process.

In fact, theory consonant with the exhibition may be found in a surprising place: French managerial literature of the ensuing decade. Here the emphasis, in concert with contemporary publications in the United States, lies on project-focused activity. The industrial model of business practice involving enduring structures, foreclosed procedures, strict measures and increasing size and specialisation is abandoned in favour of investment in projects that rely on a compelling specific vision of a transient form and on flexible, networked activity. 'Magiciens de la Terre' may be considered in this way as an early move within the value sphere that Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello identify as the 'project-based polis' ('la cité par projets') that will define the 1990s.⁴⁹ In their book published a decade on from the exhibition, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Boltanski and Chiapello draw on an extensive analysis of business literature produced in France in the intervening years to propose the existence of a moral regime centred on project management. Here lies the seed of an argument that 'Magiciens' is best viewed neither as a modernist or postmodern exhibition, nor as a post- or neocolonial venture, but rather as a characteristic project for the neoliberal world to come. As the vision-led product of global artistic labour gathered together over a limited period on the basis of networking, and as a bid to boost the cultural kudos of the host city, 'Magiciens' may be interestingly understood as an inadvertent precursor of the project-based polis that Boltanski and Chiapello map in their book.

The standard narrative of the curatorial process for 'Magiciens de la Terre' gives 1984 as the date when its preparation began.⁵⁰ This was the point at which Martin began to convene meetings with 'three colleagues and friends, Jan Debbaud, Mark Francis and Jean-Louis Maubant, in order to discuss the project and its feasibility', to establish 'the criteria and methods' and to start approaching artists.⁵¹ Martin was the director of the Kunsthalle Bern at the time, and he surrounded himself with men in comparable positions: Debbaud at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, Francis at The Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh and Maubant at the Nouveau Musée in Villeurbanne. Crucially, their meetings were supported by project funding from the French Ministry of Culture, then in the hands of Jack Lang, and specifically from Claude

⁴⁹ It has been translated into English as 'the projective city'; see Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (1999, trans. Gregory Elliott), London and New York: Verso, 2005.

⁵⁰ See the 1989 press release, CGP archives, box 95026/168; and J.-H. Martin, 'Preface', *op. cit.*, p.8.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* An undated document titled 'Allocation of Artists to Meet', divides thirty Westerners between the four curators, with three of the thirty additionally assigned to the writer Bernard Marcadé, who would play a key role in helping to conceptualise the catalogue and then in contributing to it; see CGP archives, box 95026/167.

Mollard, head of the Visual Arts department. Previously Secretary General of the Centre Pompidou, Mollard had been appointed to found the Visual Arts department following the elections of 1981 that brought the Socialist Party and François Mitterrand to power. In 1982 Lang had announced a doubling of the culture ministry's budget, but it was not only this that must have encouraged Martin to approach the new French government for funds. Lang would later be identified as 'in the first instance, the minister for artists',⁵² and Mollard had announced this same priority himself, asserting that: 'The artist comes first, and institutions, since they exist, must serve them.'⁵³ This approach must have chimed well with Martin's as-yet homeless project, which emphasised the figure of the artist as creative agent. Moreover, addressing a United Nations conference in Mexico City in July 1982, Lang had raised the issue of 'globalist discourse' and what it might mean, commanding: 'Let us be proud of our identities and our particularities, and look with admiration on the spectacle of our differences.'⁵⁴ In the same speech he challenged any resting on the fixity of cultural heritage, emphasising instead creativity in the present, whilst proving wary of the cultural imperialism that he implicitly accused the US of perpetuating. Martin's project was able to benefit from the new policy on the basis of its convening contemporary artists from around the world who might be said, after Lang, to represent the 'spectacle' of cultural difference. At the same time, Martin sidestepped the battles for cultural dominance between nation states by stressing that it was an artist's individuality – and his or her village, city or region, rather than nationality – that was critical.

Although 'Magiciens de la Terre' was originally envisaged for Paris and ultimately took place there, Martin proposed the project for Kassel when involved in a meeting to shape the curatorial direction of documenta 8 (1987).⁵⁵ The idea was rejected and Manfred Schneckenburger, who had been Artistic Director of documenta 6 in 1977, was given the directorial role again for the 1987 edition.⁵⁶ The provincial German town of Kassel would have provided

⁵² Bernard Latarjet, *L'Aménagement culturel du territoire*, Paris: La Documentation française, 1992, p.83. Emphasis the author's.

⁵³ Claude Mollard, *Le Mythe de Babel: L'Artiste et le système*, Paris: Grasset, 1984, p.56.

⁵⁴ Jack Lang, Mexico City, 27 July 1982, quoted in Philippe Urfalino, 'De l'Anti-impérialisme américain à la dissolution de la politique culturelle', *Revue française de science politique*, vol.43, no.5, 1993, p.835. And online at http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/rfsp_0035-2950_1993_num_43_5_394783# (last accessed on 1 November 2012). Lang arguably uses the word 'globaliste' in this context in response to the US use of the term 'global', whilst simultaneously making use of the French word's emphasis on totalism (which does not necessarily make any geographic reference to the world). Malraux, speaking in 1960, uses the expression 'planétaire'. The literature in connection with 'Magiciens de la Terre' would use the term 'mondiale' ('worldwide').

⁵⁵ J.-H. Martin in conversation with P. Lafuente, 23 May 2008, *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ The curator was Michael Erlhoff. Edy de Wilde and Harald Szeemann were also in the running. See Walter Grasskamp, 'To Be Continued: Periodic Exhibitions (documenta, For Example)', *Tate Papers*, no.12, 1 October 2009. See <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/be-continued-periodic-exhibitions->

such a different context for 'Magiciens', relative to the capital of a former colonial empire, that it is intriguing to imagine how the exhibition would have been received there. In fact, documenta would only much later – well behind other recurrent exhibitions and most conspicuously the Bienal de La Habana – take up a position on the global production of art.⁵⁷ While 'Magiciens' and its accompanying rhetoric would emphasise a diversity of locations for art production worldwide, Paris was audaciously claimed to be the first global centre for art display.⁵⁸

Martin's project eventually began to home in on the French capital when Mollard asked him to place it under the auspices of the fourteenth Biennale de Paris, due to take place as documenta 8 closed, in the autumn of 1987. Martin left Bern in 1985 to assume this new curatorial directorship, and then began visiting artists prospectively for inclusion in the show. The Biennale de Paris had been inaugurated in 1959, following the initiative of André Malraux, then French Minister of Cultural Affairs.⁵⁹ Speaking in Tokyo in 1960, Malraux made an assertion that would be quoted by Mollard almost a quarter of a century later: 'Our era is making an immense discovery, the discovery for the first time of the plurality of civilisations ... At the same moment, we discover, with this plurality, the birth of the first planetary civilisation.'⁶⁰ Mollard hailed Malraux as 'a giant', going on to admit proudly that 'we remain suffused by his ideas'.⁶¹ Martin would share their humanist and universalist perspectives, conveying these through 'Magiciens' without significantly altering them.⁶² However, the thirteenth Biennale de Paris ran into deficit and the ensuing edition was cancelled, leaving the project again without an institutional frame.

The doomed Biennale would, however, bequeath Martin one of the two venues for 'Magiciens', the Grande Halle in the Parc de La Villette.⁶³ This nineteenth-century cattle market, a vast steel and glass construction designed by Victor Baltard, was situated in the park recently established on the site of the Napoleonic abattoirs of Paris, part of an urban redevelopment project that Mitterrand inherited but would make his own. François Barré, the

documenta-example (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

⁵⁷ See Charles Esche, 'A Good Place or a No Place?', in Rachel Weiss et al., *Making Art Global (Part 1): The Third Havana Biennial 1989*, London: Afterall Books, 2011, pp.9–10.

⁵⁸ As will become clear, this is a claim that may readily be challenged.

⁵⁹ Raymond Cogniat curated the inaugural 'Manifestation Biennale et Internationale des Jeunes Artistes' at the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris.

⁶⁰ C. Mollard, *Le Mythe de Babel*, op. cit., pp.47–48.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp.45 and 55.

⁶² Jean-Michel Bouhours and Gisèle Breteau would include the documentary *Journal de voyage avec André Malraux à la recherche des arts du monde entier* (1979) in the film programme at the Centre Pompidou in conjunction with 'Magiciens de la Terre'.

⁶³ Several of the artists included in Georges Boudaille's 1985 Biennale de Paris at the Grande Halle de La Villette would, in fact, show there again in 1989 for 'Magiciens': Jean-Michel Alberola, Christian Boltanski, Per Kirkeby, Mario Merz, Ken Unsworth and Lawrence Weiner.

president of the newly renovated Grande Halle de La Villette, was impressed by Martin's exhibition proposal, and they agreed that this would continue to be developed for the space. Use of this venue would be crucial to the legacy of the exhibition, at least partly on the basis of the building's credentials as a 'project space', as defined in the 1980s. Such a definition draws on the history of alternative spaces for art in the 1970s – an alternative that was constituted as a ghetto within the museum (for example, through the adoption of the 'Projects' label by MoMA in 1971), or away from and in rejection of established institutions (for instance, New York's P.S.1 or Project Space 1, founded in 1976).⁶⁴ Taking their lead from the art of the time – from its process-based nature and its responsiveness to site or situation – these arenas were looking for an art that prioritised what might be referred to as 'projecthood', in order to distinguish it from the 'objecthood' or 'presentness' that Michael Fried had recently identified in Minimalist and modernist art respectively.⁶⁵ The political and critical agendas associated with dedicating space to such art dissipated in the 1980s, to the point where, to use Nancy Adajania's later description of the uptake of project-based practice in post-Fordism, 'what started as mutiny was optimised, even capitalised'.⁶⁶ Interestingly, the radicality that she evokes here originated in the military industrial complex: famously in the department of Lockheed Martin called Advanced Development Projects, where employees – given a high degree of autonomy in order to work on innovative and often secret contracts – were responsible for aircraft designs of major significance to the CIA's Cold War effort. Rather than reflecting the institutional critique developed by the alternative art scene in the US and Europe of the 1970s, the Grande Halle de La Villette represents a space emblematic of the 'project-based polis', the embodiment of the new spirit of capitalism.

In 1986 Martin found himself with this venue for his exhibition, but with no finances. That same year he produced an extended curatorial statement setting out his core ideas, the selection criteria and methods, and the installation

⁶⁴ Project Space 1 played on the given name for the building of Public School 1. See Martin Beck, 'Alternative: Space', in Julie Ault (ed.), *Alternative Art New York, 1965–1985*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, pp.257–59. For discussion of the situation in Europe at the time, see Marente Bloemheuvell, 'Exhibiting in Motion', in Paul Andriessse (ed.), *Innodigend voor mooie tentoonstellingen + Trio eenzaamheid*, Amsterdam: Galerie Paul Andriessse, 1989, pp.49–52, reprinted, with further relevant essays, in Paul Andriessse and Mariska van den Berg (ed.), *Art Gallery Exhibiting: The Gallery as a Vehicle for Art*, Amsterdam: Galerie Paul Andriessse and Uitgeverij De Balie, 1996.

⁶⁵ Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', originally published in *Artforum*, vol.5, no.10, Summer 1967, pp.12–23 and republished on several occasions since. Also note the 1970s use of the term 'project' in the titles of works by artists including Asco (*Project Pie in DelFace*, 1972) and Hans Haacke (as discussed below).

⁶⁶ Nancy Adajania, 'An (Un)timely Meditation: Pointing to a Future Ecumene of Art', keynote paper for the 3rd FORMER WEST Research Congress, Vienna, 19 April 2012, available at <http://www.formerwest.org/ResearchCongresses/3RD FORMERWESTResearchCongressPartOne/NancyAdajaniaAnUntimelyMeditationPointingtoaFutureEcumeneofArt> (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

principles.⁶⁷ Akin to a mission statement, this document names his project and announces that his abiding vision and key strategy is to 'bring together artists from all over the world'.⁶⁸ In the next sentence he goes on to highlight the fact that the exhibiting artists will be relieved of representing 'their particular government or country',⁶⁹ later stressing his transnational approach with the following assertion: 'This project can only be realised wholly independently of all political machinery, national or international.'⁷⁰

Martin does not justify his chosen title in this context, but the immediate association of 'terre', given the elaboration of the project presented, is planet earth, the world.⁷¹ As already described, the word 'Magiciens' was intended to unite practitioners who did not primarily identify themselves as artists with those who did. What was supposed to equalise those contributing works to the exhibition, however, was sometimes read as marginalising and/or fetishising the newcomers. Gayatri Spivak, for instance, memorably noted at the time that when agents of the Third World were finally admitted into the First World's frame of reference, it was not as worldly subjects, as global artists, but as mediums tied to the ground, magicians of the earth.⁷² While it may be argued that, to the extent that 'Magiciens' invokes tricksters or shamen, claims to the irrational and transcendental aspects of aesthetic practice are made, interestingly the website Martin much later dedicated to the exhibition notes that 'It was never intended that recourse to occult and supernatural practices would be the common denominator for the exhibiting artists.'⁷³ Inevitably, perhaps, the title acted as a lightning rod for responses to the show. Indeed, it could almost be read as foretelling the 'magical' solutions that would be promised by economic neoliberalism operating through globalised markets. In this way, it inadvertently becomes an example of the sort of exploitation that would be involved in the neoliberal reach across the globe, with the notion of 'magicianship' and its specific social

⁶⁷ For the untitled English version, opening 'The very idea of a "work of art" ...', see CGP archives, box 95026/168. The later English version, titled 'The Death of Art – Long Live Art' and distributed as part of the press material that accompanied the show, is reprinted in this volume, pp.216–22.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.216. The French version distributed in the press pack accompanying the show promises 'une confrontation entre des artistes venant du monde entier', p.1. See CGP archives, box 95026/168.

⁶⁹ In this volume, p.216. The French version distributed in the press pack accompanying the show specifies 'd'un état et d'une nation' ('state and nation'), p.1. See CGP archives, box 95026/168.

⁷⁰ In this volume, p.221. Note that in the following sentence he returns to referencing internationalism rather than transnationalism, falling back on terminology that implicates rather than questions or transcends the nation state.

⁷¹ Specifically relevant to some artists but not all, 'terre' also references earth in the sense of physical matter or raw material, and/or land, locality and place.

⁷² Gayatri Spivak to Nikos Papastergiadis, reported by the latter in email correspondence with the author, 14 June 2011; confirmed by Spivak in email correspondence with the author, 19 September 2012.

⁷³ See the web page <http://magiciensdelaterre.fr/contexte.php?id=6> (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

role in regions outside the modern Western world being casually taken up, or bought cheaply, and then loosely applied as if universally applicable, indeed sold back to the non-West as the means of entry into global art discourse.

The artists involved in the exhibition had diverse, sometimes strong and sometimes interesting opinions on the title that brought them together.⁷⁴ Long and Marina Abramović both embraced it as poetic,⁷⁵ while Chéri Samba adopted 'Magiciens de la Terre' as his artistic or professional strapline, painting this on a banner that he posted across the façade of his studio before leaving Kinshasa for Paris, as well as having it printed on his letterhead.⁷⁶ Daniel Buren asked a number of his fellow participants to state on camera what they thought of the title and whether they considered themselves to be a magician, using the interviews in one of the four films he contributed to the exhibition, *Les Magiciens de la terre vus par eux-mêmes. Questions (The magicians of the earth as seen by themselves. Questions)*, 1989, another of which, *Les Magiciens de la terre vus par Daniel Buren (The magicians of the earth as seen by Daniel Buren)*, 1989, included broadcast footage of a man doing conjuring tricks. The implication of a sleight of hand was just one of the reasons why Hans Haacke was critical of the title, while Huang Yong Ping found the playful invocation of circus activity to be a positive aspect.⁷⁷ Barbara Kruger, like Buren, targeted the exhibition title in her contribution to the show, posing the question 'Qui sont les magiciens de la terre?' ('Who Are the Magicians of the Earth?') on a billboard and replying with questioning suggestions such as 'les plombiers?', 'les écrivains?', 'les marchands d'armes?', 'les chefs tribaux?' ('Plumbers?', 'Writers?', 'Weapon Merchants?', 'Tribal Chieftains?'). She has since remarked: 'The exhibition was prescient in terms of the inclusion of different threads of visual practice, but to choose to title it in that way was certainly not a paradigm shift, it was as old as the hills.'⁷⁸ That such criticisms were recognised by the organisers at the time is clear from the inclusion of Rasheed Araeen's critique of the title in his contribution to the exhibition catalogue.⁷⁹

With the title established, Martin used his 1986 curatorial statement to announce five selection criteria, which – with 'radicalism' mentioned in the

fig.41

fig.4–5 and 7,
p.287

⁷⁴ For responses to the exhibition title in 1989 by Huang Yong Ping, Cildo Meireles, Maestre Didi and Boujemaa Lakhdar, see, for instance, 'Cinq questions à des artistes non-occidentaux ('Five Questions for Non-Western Artists')', *artpress*, no.136, May 1989 (with dossier on 'Magiciens de la Terre'), pp.48–49.

⁷⁵ Richard Long in conversation with the author, 21 March 2008; Marina Abramović in email correspondence with the author, 15 April 2008.

⁷⁶ Chéri Samba in response to questions from the author, 18 December 2008.

⁷⁷ Hans Haacke in email correspondence with the author, 15 August 2008; Huang Yong Ping in response to questions from the author (trans. James Kao), 18 April 2008.

⁷⁸ Barbara Kruger in conversation with the author, 2 April 2008. An abbreviated version of this conversation is published in this volume, pp.286–87.

⁷⁹ In response to the question posed by Weiner to all the participating artists – 'What is art?' – Araeen stated: 'Art is not magic. Magic is not art. Really, if they meet, they destroy each other.' J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre, op. cit.*, p.85.

first instance and 'opposition and resistance on the part of cultural dissidents to the surrounding establishment' in the last – could be read as ways of understanding the modernist principle of avant-garde practice without actually using the words themselves.⁸⁰ The unified approach to works considered for inclusion that is implied by the criteria has to be set against earlier parts of the same document, which detail different approaches to be taken in different parts of the world. In this and elsewhere in the document, Martin broaches major areas of debate with the confusion of someone at the beginning of a vast undertaking. It is interesting to compare the original statement with the slightly revised version distributed as part of the press pack issued at the opening of the show in 1989. Small shifts in language between the two drafts highlight the fraught terrain of terminology, with artists from 'the Third World and Socialist countries' later designated as belonging 'to the "peripheries"' and – with a harsh, if surely inadvertent, denial of rights – a concurrent announcement that they 'do not belong' to the artistic centres.⁸¹ The first document makes a point of distinguishing those described in both documents as coming 'from developed, capitalist countries', or as 'our own Western artists', not only from 'artists from the Third World and Socialist countries', but also from a middle category, labelled 'artists with links to non-Western cultures'.⁸² Remarkably, artists living outside of the West and making work in relation to Western practice are not given comparable attention.⁸³ At the same time, it is significant that nowhere in the exhibition or in the accompanying published material was it specified how those artists selected to participate had been classified – whether between two, three or however many categories.

With his first curatorial statement ready for circulation and a compelling title for the project, Martin began to gather financial support. Crucial funding came in 1986 from Sylvie Boissonnas – who had previously been supportive of other curators, including Hultén – through the Fondation Scaler.⁸⁴ On the basis of this, Martin could appoint two curatorial assistants to work with him from an office at La Villette: first Aline Luque and shortly afterwards André Magnin. Luque had been working for Boissonnas – on documenting

⁸⁰ J.-H. Martin, 'The very idea of a "work of art"...', *op. cit.*, p.12 and as distributed as part of the press material that accompanied the show, J.-H. Martin, 'The Death of Art – Long Live Art', p.6, and reprinted in this volume, p.222.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.6 (1986) and p.3 (1989), and reprinted in this volume, p.218.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp.1, 3, 6 and 5, respectively (1986); and pp.1 and 2, respectively (1989), and reprinted in this volume, pp.216, 217 and 218, respectively.

⁸³ Within the category Scaler associated with the peripheries, 'works of artists who have been trained in Western or Westernised art-schools' are described as being of interest, although only when their 'authenticity' can be determined. *Ibid.*, p.6 (1986) and p.3 (1989), and reprinted in this volume, p.219.

⁸⁴ The Fondation Scaler – for Science, Culture, Art, Literature, Education and Religion – was founded after World War II by Sylvie and Éric Boissonnas. A budget attached to an agreement between the Centre Pompidou and La Villette, dated 28 April 1989, suggests that 600,000 francs were donated; see CGP archives, box 95026/169.

traditional Alpine culture, for instance – and Magnin, who had provided curatorial assistance on the 1985 Biennale de Paris, simply dazzled Martin with his enthusiasm when interviewed.⁸⁵

In 1987 a major commercial backer was found in the form of the broadcasting company Canal+, which came on board as the leading sponsor.⁸⁶ Perhaps going a step further than the gloss on most exhibition-sponsorship deals, and specifically highlighting the project-based nature of the show, the Canal+ announcement of its support expresses delight in the exhibition's 'crazy gamble'.⁸⁷ André Rousselet, company President, to whom Martin had pitched the idea in a matter of minutes,⁸⁸ opens his accompanying statement by saying he was 'seduced from the start by the project'.⁸⁹ While not easy to trace in archival documents, it has been suggested that this sponsorship was the result of individuals at the highest level looking out for their mutual interests, specifically that Rousselet, who had been Mitterrand's chief of staff, was encouraged to support the project by the President, whose wife, Danielle Mitterrand, had been impressed by the 1986 curatorial statement regarding 'Magiciens de la Terre' and its resonance with her own concerns as crystallised in the Fondation France Libertés that she established that year.⁹⁰

Meanwhile, in October of 1987, Martin was appointed Director of the Musée national d'art moderne at the Centre Pompidou. This brought him numerous other professional duties that delayed progress on 'Magiciens';⁹¹ however, it offered a whole new platform for the show. The project now not only had additional funding but also a second venue: the most prestigious museum for modern and contemporary art in the country in a flagship building in the heart of the city. Mark Francis, one of the three original advisors, moved to Paris to join the curatorial team in December 1987, and the following summer he was made the Commissaire Délégué. With two buildings, which united Bernard Tschumi's design for the park at La Villette with the comparably postmodern architecture of the Centre Pompidou completed a decade earlier, 'Magiciens' had the contemporary contexts it needed to become a major international statement. The addition of the

⁸⁵ J.-H. Martin in conversation with the author, 7 September 2011.

⁸⁶ Unattributed and untitled document announcing the sponsorship in the press pack (three untitled pages opening 'Les créateurs plastiques...', 'CANAL+ et ses dirigeants...' and 'Par ses liens uniques...'); see CGP archives, box 95026/168. Here a figure of 6,000,000 francs is given, although this contrasts with a budget attached to the agreement between the Centre Pompidou and La Villette dated 28 April 1989, *op. cit.*, which suggests 2,000,000 francs.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ J.-H. Martin in conversation with P. Lafuente on 23 May 2008, *op. cit.*

⁸⁹ A. Rousselet, 'CANAL+ et ses dirigeants...', *op. cit.*

⁹⁰ Jean-Marc Patras in conversation with the author, 10 October 2012. Patras worked with and for the founder of *Actuel*, Jean-François Bizot, who was responsible for bringing Samba to Paris in 1982 and gave Martin's curatorial statement to Raphaël Doueb, Secrétaire Général of the Fondation France Libertés.

⁹¹ The opening date was pushed on five months, from December 1988 to May 1989.

Centre Pompidou also strengthened the civic claims to centrality within the global field of contemporary art and focused them on the national museum, upping the ante in the retort to "Primitivism" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. At the same time, the exhibition was nationalised through the Centre Pompidou's French, as well as specifically Parisian, concerns.

A national and international agenda was likewise imposed, complicating the earlier civic and transnational vision for the show, when further substantial financial backing was secured in connection with celebrations of the 200-year anniversary of the storming of the Bastille in 1789, symbolically the start of the French Revolution.⁹² Now the exhibition would be perceived 'as a moment of celebration for the ideology of a country presenting itself as the inventor of the universal rights of man'.⁹³ These rights offer a potentially interesting lens through which to view the show. Bestowing the right to 'liberty' may be read into Martin's freeing of artists from national representation and – through his allocating money from the project's budget to cover all travel and other expenses – from other obligations associated with the potential support of the various national governments. Crucially bound up in this bestowal, of course, is the assimilation or submission – attendant upon access – to a Parisian, French and 'Western' viewing context. The emphasis on 'equality' between the works brought together in the show, and, further, between those making them, has already been noted, and here the modernism inaugurated by the French Revolution gains a postmodern inflection. The principle of 'fraternity' is addressed in the new curatorial statement written by Martin in January 1989, where he qualifies and adds to his earlier text, revising some of his assertions from three years before, but essentially consolidating his approach. Here he emphasises 'the idea of an exchange and dialogue between individuals coming from all over the world',⁹⁴ having previously only announced that 'many works will be executed and installed by artists on the spot', without highlighting the community or family of artists thereby convened.⁹⁵ The receipt of financial support in connection with celebrations of the French Revolution may also prompt comparisons between 'Magiciens' and the Exposition Universelle of 1889, mounted to

⁹² The budget attached to the agreement between the Centre Pompidou and La Villette dated 28 April 1989, *op. cit.*, suggests just over 10 per cent (800,000 francs) of the funding secured from the government (7,200,000 francs) was given in connection with the bicentenary.

⁹³ Yacouba Konaté, "Magiciens de la Terre": The Strange African Destiny of a Global Exhibition', in Bernadette Dufrene (ed.), *Centre Pompidou: Trente Ans d'histoire*, Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2007, p.561. Commissioned by the Centre Pompidou to reflect on the exhibition over a decade later, Konaté points out the 'shortcut' involved in this perception, given that the show was not conceived with this frame in mind but acquired it latterly.

⁹⁴ J.-H. Martin, curatorial statement dated January 1989 and titled 'The first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art', distributed as part of the exhibition press pack, p.1 (p.2 in French version). See CGP archives, box 95026/168.

⁹⁵ J.-H. Martin, 'The very idea of a "work of art" ...', *op. cit.*, p.10; J.-H. Martin, 'The Death of Art – Long Live Art', *op. cit.*, p.5 (and reprinted in this volume, p.221).

mark the centenary of the same historic event.⁹⁶ Mitterrand had actually planned to stage an Exposition Universelle in 1989, but this was cancelled, leading to extra money for Martin's project.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, funding from a corporate source – the Canal+ sponsorship – secured the ambition to work transnationally, regardless of national priorities and international relations.

Martin's new curatorial statement at the start of 1989 would make the claim, much quoted since, that 'Magiciens de la Terre' was 'The first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art'.⁹⁸ Almost inevitably there are other exhibitions that could equally have been described thus at the time. Indeed, Lucy Lippard noted in 1990 that the second Bienal de La Habana in 1986, in particular, was 'a preceding global exhibition'.⁹⁹ Martin knew about this event too late to visit but he was familiar with the catalogue, which lists 57 countries as participating, whereas 45 were encompassed by 'Magiciens'.¹⁰⁰ His own project, like the Havana – and indeed the Paris – biennials before it, rejected the display principles of the Venice and São Paulo biennials, freeing the exhibited works from being grouped according to the nationality of the artists who contributed to them. And in the associated catalogue the significance of nation states was down-played further still.¹⁰¹ 'Magiciens' might reasonably be claimed as the first worldwide exhibition *within the West*, yet as important, in retrospect, is its city-based and transnational approach to curating, and its being project-based as well as museum-based: these characteristics would prove typical of the numerous biennials that were launched around the world from the 1990s onwards.

⁹⁶ For press coverage of 'Magiciens' that references this precursor see, for example, Philippe Dagen, 'L'Exposition universelle', *Le Monde*, 19 May 1989, p.28.

⁹⁷ For more on Mitterrand's project plans, see *Projets pour l'exposition universelle de 1989 à Paris: Livre blanc*, Paris: Flammarion, 1985.

⁹⁸ This is the title given to Martin's curatorial statement dated January 1989 and distributed as part of the exhibition press pack, *op. cit.*, p.1.

⁹⁹ Lucy R. Lippard, *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1990, p.28.

¹⁰⁰ J.-H. Martin in correspondence with the author, 1 March 2011. The explicit focus for the second Bienal was African, Asian, Caribbean and Latin American artists, ethnically or by birth, and on artists from elsewhere based in these regions; a significant number of contributors identified as African, Asian, Caribbean and Latin American came to Havana from Europe or North America, where they were based at the time. Gerardo Mosquera, who was core to the curatorial team for the first three editions of the Bienal, is credited at the Centro Wifredo Lam in the acknowledgements published in the Parisian catalogue. See J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, *op. cit.*, p.6.

¹⁰¹ In the catalogue for the second Bienal de La Habana, nationality is the first basis on which the information given on artists and their works is organised. The catalogue for the third edition, which opened shortly after 'Magiciens' closed, presents the equivalent information without national groupings being primary. The third Bienal de La Habana abandoned the competition and prize-giving of earlier editions, while introducing an overall theme and associated discursive activities and events. See, R. Weiss, 'A Certain Place and a Certain Time: The Third Bienal de La Habana and the Origins of the Global Exhibition', in R. Weiss et al., *Making Art Global (Part 1)*, *op. cit.*, pp.14–69.

2. Curatorial Selection: *La recherche dans le monde*¹⁰²

With the curatorial intention declared in the mission statement of 1986, and with a curatorial team in place, dedicated research into artists and artworks began in earnest. We might compare the parallel trajectory developed for the third edition of the Bienal de La Habana, as another globally orientated exhibition of the time. The Cuban team had a Research Department that was – like those based in France with ‘Magiciens’ in mind – working from first principles: studying whatever relevant printed literature could be gathered together, consulting those felt to be expert and undertaking investigative travel.¹⁰³ However, Martin and his colleagues had more of a sense of what they were looking to include from places previously unknown to them, as the statement from 1986 makes clear and, partly as a consequence of their foreknowledge, they chose distinct individuals to make their introductions. As already noted, the team also expressly sought artists who could be commissioned and might come to Paris to make their work in situ. Nonetheless, as with the Havana exhibition, the whole preparatory process took three years rather than the two anticipated in 1986.

Martin’s taking on a role that in some ways amounts to patronage – through not only importing commissioned goods but also artistic labour, or indeed the artistic labour to produce goods in situ – contrasts with that of the organisers of the Bienal de La Habana.¹⁰⁴ The European history of commissioning works from multiple artists for production in a single exhibition may be traced to developments in museums, Kunsthallen and recurrent-exhibition platforms at the turn into the 1970s, for instance to Wim Beeren’s ‘Op Losse Schreeven’ (1969) for the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and Harald Szeemann’s ‘When Attitudes Become Form’ (1969) for the Kunsthalle Bern, or the latter’s documenta 5 (1972) in Kassel. With ‘Magiciens’, this process remains anchored in Europe but opens up to artists and artistic labour from further afield. The Centre Pompidou archives testify to the magnitude of this undertaking: through urgent, sometimes confused, sometimes desparate, sometimes joyous messages by letter, fax and telex, both directly addressed to artists and indirectly via intermediaries. There are also, however, significant gaps in the records of negotiations – or, as likely, much was left to be resolved when everyone finally came together during the exhibition installation.

It is not only a worldwide purview that distinguishes the project-based nature of Martin’s show from that of Beeren’s and Szeemann’s exhibitions; it is also the level at which this project-based nature was appreciated. In his 1986 text on major or large-scale exhibitions for a special issue of *Les Cahiers du Musée national d’art moderne* titled ‘L’Oeuvre et son accrochage’ (‘The

¹⁰² ‘Research in the world’, taken from the *Petit journal*, *op. cit.*, p.1.

¹⁰³ See R. Weiss, ‘A Certain Place and a Certain Time’, *op. cit.*, pp.23 and 27–30.

¹⁰⁴ Gerardo Mosquera describes many artists coming, mostly from within Latin America, to Havana for the first three editions of the Bienal. However, the priority was to involve them in social and discursive events, rather than on producing work in situ. Mosquera in email correspondence with the author, 19 December 2012.

Work of Art and Its Display'), Jean-Marc Poinot paves the way for this distinction. Having flagged the increase in the commissioning of work, he then suggests that: 'In fact, it is at once the museum and the curator, the exhibition and its organiser, city councillors, the minister, the president, his state and, by delegation, every visitor who effect the commission.'¹⁰⁵ What is significant here is the emphasis on more than just the *curatorial* identification with the commission, as closely associated, in particular, with Szeemann; rather, it is the noting of specifically *civic* claims. With the biennial boom of the 1990s, the idea would spread that a transnational exhibition on the scale of 'Magiciens' could be hailed by the host city as a significant occasion for development and marketing, acting as a focus for cultural tourism.

A third distinction between 'Magiciens de la Terre' and the model project-based exhibitions of 1969 and 1972 involves an eye on the possibility of acquiring works for a collection through the organisation of these temporary shows. The question of whether the Musée national d'art moderne might expand its collection's geographical reach does not appear to have been a consideration during the preparations for the exhibition, and this is only in part because the Centre Pompidou was secured late as a venue. However, Canal+ was committed to purchasing for display, first in this temporary context and then as part of the company's collection, and its Director, Rousselet – while reliant on the selection of Martin and his team for the pool of potential works for corporate acquisition – was involved in the acquisition choices.¹⁰⁶

André Magnin has repeatedly described the way in which the curatorial team for 'Magiciens' filled a wall of their tiny windowless office with a map of the world and then picked areas of the globe in which each would specialise.¹⁰⁷ Very broadly speaking, while Martin initially concentrated on Asia, Magnin selected Africa and Luque Latin America. And when Francis fully joined the team he worked in the Pacific. Following the principle established at the outset, ensuing research trips prioritised meeting artists in their working environments, rather than just selecting work.¹⁰⁸ Some of the trips to establish contact with artists were undertaken by a significant number of others: these

¹⁰⁵ Jean-Marc Poinot, 'Les Grandes Expositions: Esquisse d'une typologie', *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, no.17–18, 1986, p.139 and (trans. Robert McGee) in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (ed.), *Thinking about Exhibitions*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996, pp.62–63.

¹⁰⁶ 'Par ses liens uniques...', *op. cit.* J.-H. Martin confirms the personal involvement of Rousselet, email correspondence with the author, 9 September 2011.

¹⁰⁷ André Magnin in conversation with the author, 9 September 2011; in conversation with Sophie Barnett, 30 April 2008 (text shared with the author by Magnin); in 'A Prospecting Life', *Arts of Africa: The Contemporary Collection of Jean Pigozzi* (exh. cat.), Milan and Monaco: Skira Édition and Grimaldi Forum, 2005, p.24, and http://www.caacart.com/about_am_en.php (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

¹⁰⁸ To the extent that, for instance, when Luque found masks in Alaska that she was keen to include but whose makers she could not arrange meetings with, the work could not be considered by the curatorial team (conversation with the author, 6 September 2011).

chargés de mission were mostly French, with the exceptions being Italian anthropologist Carlo Severi, who was trained and based in France, and Swiss artist and curator Bernhard Lüthi.¹⁰⁹ The curatorial committee convened by Martin to develop his initial idea, including Debbaut and Maubant, continued to meet, now reviewing the information gathered and moving to select artists and often specific artworks. Those researching 'made use of many local informants, critics and museum directors, etc.',¹¹⁰ yet the advice of Europeans was apparently paid most heed, with Martin particularly regretting that his team did not know 'experts in the Third World who shared [their] knowledge and tastes in contemporary Western art' and thereby prioritising his own cultural perspective.¹¹¹ The project funds from the Ministry of Culture gave a freedom to choose artists not sanctioned by national governments, on which the organisers might otherwise have had to rely for support. More controversial were the consultations with anthropologists, which indicate an interest in bypassing modernist art practices developed outside of a Western context.

A list of artists for potential inclusion in 'Magiciens de la Terre', written a year before the show, indicates that specific forms of practice had been decided upon, where no names could yet be provided – 'tantric painting', 'Aboriginal sand painting' and a 'sand mandala' were all explicitly envisaged, alongside named artists from Abramović to Zush.¹¹² Here, projecting an eclectic vision of global art production, traditions established outside the West were earmarked for presentation, especially those of a ritual or spiritual character, with individual avant-garde practice – that modernist principle – to be sought within these, or developing from them.¹¹³ In the colloquium

¹⁰⁹ They are listed in the catalogue as Franck André Jamme, Corneille Jest, François Lupu, Bernhard Lüthi, Bernard Marcadé, Jean-Louis Maubant, Carlo Severi, Jacques Soullillou and Yves Véquaud. The catalogue further credits over thirty 'Correspondents', including Fei Da Wei, Jyotindra Jain, John Mundine, Fumio Nanjo, J. Swaminathan and contributing artist Patrick Vilaire.

¹¹⁰ J.-H. Martin, 'The first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art', *op. cit.*, p.2 (p.3 in French version). There is something of a shift here from the curatorial statement distributed at the same time but dated 1986, where 'contacts in Europe and library research' are highlighted instead. See J.-H. Martin, 'The Death of Art – Long Live Art', *op. cit.*, p.3, and reprinted in this volume, p.219.

¹¹¹ J.-H. Martin, 'Preface', *op. cit.*, p.8.

¹¹² The document is dated 20 June 1988. See CGP archives, box 95026/167. This list is divided into two, with 'Occidental Selected Artists' given first, alphabetically, and then 'Artistes non-occidentaux sélectionnés' ('Non-Western Artists Selected') following, listed geographically.

¹¹³ For a celebratory discussion of such postmodern potential in exhibition-making, see Thomas McEvilley, 'Ouverture du piège: L'Exposition postmoderne et "Magiciens de la Terre"', in J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, *op. cit.*, pp.20–23. For more critical analyses see, for instance, C. Poppi, 'From the Suburbs of the Global Village', *op. cit.*; Okwui Enwezor and Olu Oguibe, 'Introduction', in O. Oguibe and O. Enwezor (ed.), *Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to the Marketplace*, London: Iniva, 1999, pp.8–14; and Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2012, pp.57–58.

that took place at the Centre Pompidou in conjunction with the exhibition, Rasheed Araeen, delivering a paper as one of the participating artists, would flag how this strategy engendered disparity in the curatorial approach to production in Western and non-Western regions, to the extent that 'folk art' was thereby prioritised for selection from the latter and yet ignored in the former.¹¹⁴ The curators were not unaware of the dangers of what might be called a 'neoprimitivising' approach to their selection process, with Martin keen to claim in interview that he was excluding certain 'artisanal objects' and Luque expressly rejecting specific works on the basis that 'naïve art does not fall within the axis of the exhibition'.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, a tendency to overlook modernism as a strong, diversely and significantly inflected tradition outside Western regions or amongst artists with indigenous heritage in areas Westernised through colonisation would subsequently become a key criticism of the show.

While it was presumably a point of principle not to identify 'Western' and 'non-Western' artists publicly, the labelling of participants in the exhibition archives is interesting and often surprising. One list, for example, has Soviet, Czechoslovakian and Israeli artists all bracketed within the West, where Alfredo Jaar and Krzysztof Wodiczko are also located, but not Joe Ben Junior, Cildo Meireles or any artists from West Africa; the non-Western category includes all the Australians, indigenous or otherwise.¹¹⁶ This confusing allocation shows the impossibility of satisfactorily applying these labels, both because the West is not a fixed category and because of migrancy.

While Filliou and Beuys could not be included in the exhibition given their recent deaths, their community and legacy were present. For instance, Fluxus activity haunted the selection of Stanley Brouwn, Per Kirkeby, Nam June Paik and Daniel Spoerri,¹¹⁷ and Anselm Kiefer and Sigmar Polke channelled the work of their ertswile teacher, Beuys.¹¹⁸ Spoerri's 'ethnosyncretisms'

p.126; fig.51
fig.27-28; 94;
38 and 3

¹¹⁴ In response to Araeen's comments, Martin defended the absence of Western folk art in the exhibition on the grounds that this was not as creative in the West, prompting Gayatri Spivak, also a participant in the colloquium, to raise the issue of New York graffiti and its erasure by civic officials. Audio recording in bibliothèque Kandinsky, CGP: cassette BS 424 [2], side A.

¹¹⁵ 'The Whole Earth Show: An Interview with Jean-Hubert Martin by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh', *Art in America*, vol.77, no.5, May 1989, p.153, and in an alternative version published in *Third Text*, no.6, Spring 1989, p.20, reprinted in this volume, p.226. Aline Luque in a letter to David Boxer at the National Gallery of Jamaica dated 25 January 1988; see CGP archives, box 95026/158.

¹¹⁶ Lists as prepared for a meeting 20 June 1988; *op. cit.* Ben Junior is described in the catalogue as Native American and living in Paradise Valley, Arizona; Jaar as Chilean and living in New York; Meireles as Brazilian and living in New York.

¹¹⁷ Indicating that it was felt to be significant, Brouwn's 'origins', presumably his birth in Surinam, are noted together with those of other Western artists by Martin in his catalogue essay: J.-H. Martin, 'Preface', *op. cit.*, p.9.

¹¹⁸ Lothar Baumgarten, another student of Beuys, entered into long discussions with the curators and submitted two proposals but ultimately withdrew. See CGP archives, boxes 95026/170-72.

must have had an appeal in their own right,¹¹⁹ and the artistic engagement in cross-cultural spirituality by Abramović, who had known Martin since the early 1970s, was presumably likewise a draw. Alighiero Boetti's global and aesthetic interests explain the inclusion of his work, in particular, amongst those associated with the Arte Povera movement. Giovanni Anselmo and Mario Merz, together with their contemporary Long, were all making work at the time that rather loosely involved the elemental and suggested the universal. Martin was expecting an 'igloo' from Merz,¹²⁰ but he turned up with a wicker cone instead – less obviously displaying the sort of cross-cultural interests that had originally inspired the curator. Long's contribution of a 'River Avon mud painting', by contrast, would take place very much as planned.¹²¹

fig.89
fig.24 and 27

fig.44
fig.97–98; 101

Neo-Expressionist painters of the 1980s chosen to exhibit in 'Magiciens' included Enzo Cucchi and Francesco Clemente, in addition to Kiefer, as well as Julio Galán and Moshe Gershuni from outside Europe. European sculpture was less readily generalised during this period; the work of Tony Cragg and Juan Muñoz was included, and a kinetic sculpture or sculptural installation was commissioned from Rebecca Horn. The Catalan artists (Antonio) Miralda and Zush (or Albert Porta), who like Clemente and Galán were partly living in New York at the time, were each commissioned to contribute an installation. Only rather weak lines of argument would seem to connect most of these artists to the expressed concerns of the exhibition.

fig.13; 20 and 38
fig.12 and 15; 95

fig.63 and 73
fig.14
fig.80; 59–60

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, given the national nature of the bicentennial celebrations, a conspicuous number of French artists were included in the exhibition, with Christian Boltanski and Daniel Buren notable amongst them as well as Louise Bourgeois – long a US citizen by then.¹²² More reflective of changes in European society at large, those from Britain were not exclusively caucasian, with Araeen, who had recently founded *Third Text* in order to offer 'Third World perspectives on contemporary art and culture',¹²³ and Shirazeh Houshiary both included.¹²⁴ Araeen has recalled having misgivings about the exhibition but simultaneously feeling unable to turn down 'the first international exhibition opportunity in my life'.¹²⁵ By comparison, both Sarkis and Braco Dimitrijević, born in Istanbul and Sarajevo respectively and each with homes in Paris, described themselves in the catalogue for

fig.105 and 41
fig.76

fig.50 and 112

fig.32; 2 and 47

¹¹⁹ 'Assemblages in which Daniel Spoerri uses ethnological objects (e.g. African masks).' See http://www.danielspoerri.org/web_daniel/englisch_ds/werk_einzel/28_ethno.htm (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

¹²⁰ The dome-shaped structures had been a feature of Merz's practice since his work *Igloo di Giap* (*Giap's Igloo*) of 1968.

¹²¹ See correspondence between Long and Mark Francis in the summer of 1988, CGP archives, boxes 95026/170–72.

¹²² The other artists with French nationality were Jean-Michel Alberola, Jean-Pierre Bertrand and Marc Couturier.

¹²³ The journal was launched, with this strap line, in 1987.

¹²⁴ Possibly in search of artists with cross-cultural backgrounds, Sokari Douglas Camp and Dhruva Mistry were both listed for potential inclusion; see, for instance, 'Répartition d'artistes à rencontrer', CGP archives, box 95026/167.

¹²⁵ R. Araeen in conversation with the author and P. Lafuente, 16 June 2008.

'Magiciens' as already working 'everywhere'.¹²⁶ Martin was in discussion with these artists from early on.¹²⁷

fig.2 and 47;
89; 3 and 83

From Central and Eastern Europe, beyond émigrés to the West (namely Dimitrijević, Abramović and Wodiczko) only Karel Malich, whom Francis met on a research trip to Prague, was invited, with his meditative abstract paintings. There is no indication in 'Magiciens de la Terre' of the cultural ferment in Communist Europe at the time, and instead the barrier represented by the Berlin Wall, which would fall later that year, still looms large.

fig.36 and 114

The contrast with the USSR is marked. Martin had repeatedly visited the Soviet capital since the late 1970s when, in the midst of historical research for 'Paris–Moscow' and at the height of Moscow Conceptualism, he first became aware of the work of Ilya Kabakov and Erik Bulatov, two artists who were not officially sanctioned and whom he would include in 'Magiciens' a decade later. Martin describes being struck by how well informed local artists were about Western art practice and how his realisation of this – in light of the Western ignorance of their work – was a formative moment in the conceptualisation of the show.¹²⁸

fig.95

fig.92

To come to Paris from south of Moscow were the paintings by Gershuni already mentioned and the calligraphic renderings of parts of the Koran by Yousuf Thannoon. Maubaunt went to Israel, met and selected Gershuni, while Luque visited Iraq and invited Thannoon. Jointly, the choice to include only these two artists suggests a cursory engagement with practice in the area known by Westerners as the Middle East. Those who have subsequently highlighted the neglect of Arab and Muslim culture in 'Magiciens' include Catherine David,¹²⁹ who was a curator at the Centre Pompidou at the time of the show and would develop her particular engagement with cultural practice from the region only later.¹³⁰

Curatorial research in India was more extensive, but the resulting selection of artists has been similarly and widely criticised, specifically because none

¹²⁶ J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, *op. cit.*, p.225 and p.123 respectively.

¹²⁷ Sarkis was involved in the 1982 Sydney Biennial and was there with Martin, who began conversations in this context that would lead to 'Magiciens'. Dimitrijević has described discussing the project with Martin five years before the show opened – in conversation with Teresa Gleadowe, 18 August 2008, notes in the Afterall Exhibition Histories archive.

¹²⁸ J.-H. Martin in conversation with the author, 7 September 2011.

¹²⁹ See, for instance, Catherine David, 'di/visions (from here and from elsewhere)', in *Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art 1: Heterotopias* (exh. cat.), Thessaloniki: State Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007, p.35.

¹³⁰ David's 'Contemporary Arab Representations' began with a seminar on Beirut and the Lebanon at the Universidad Internacional de Andalucía (UNIA), Seville in October 2001. A series of exhibitions, publications and seminars were developed under the same general title until 2006. See Pablo Lafuente, 'Art and the Foreigner's Gaze: A Report on Contemporary Arab Representations', *Afterall*, issue 15, Spring/Summer 2007, pp.15–23.

of the four painters contributing work to the exhibition took up the challenges of modernism, and the postcolonial cultural practice of the country was neglected.¹³¹ Martin visited Delhi and Bhopal in 1987, and Francis followed up a year later. The selection of Bowa Devi and of Jangarh Singh Shyam was guided by a French specialist in the paintings by women of the Mithila region, Yves Véquaud, and by the Indian directors of two museums characterised, at least in part, by their work with folk art, Jyotinda Jain of the National Crafts Museum in New Delhi and Jagdish Swaminathan of Roopankar in Bhopal.¹³² Frank André Jamme, another French specialist, was contracted to undertake 'the research and choice of tantric artists in India'.¹³³ Works by Raja Babu Sharma and Acharya Vyakul, whom he selected, and also Shyam, were all purchased for inclusion, apparently for roughly 10,000 francs per artist.¹³⁴ Bowa Devi, her husband and an assistant were each offered 7,750 francs for living expenses during the month they were in Paris to complete her wall painting.¹³⁵ The absence of any Indian artists who engaged with modernist debates was raised as an issue in the colloquium and in reviews,¹³⁶ and has been conceded as a regret by the curators, at least to the extent that Martin highlights his frustrated endeavours to include painting by Jogen Chowdhury, whom he had met and whose work he found impressive.¹³⁷

fig.22-23
fig.11, 55-56
fig.65-66

The curatorial selections from Nepal and Tibet were made early on and, informed by ethnographer Corneille Jest, focused explicitly on archaic practices, excluding a role for modern, contemporary or any other adaptation.¹³⁸ This

¹³¹ This was noted by critics at the time; e.g. N. Bourriaud, 'Magiciens de la Terre', *op. cit.*, p.120.

¹³² Jiva Soma Mashe was also selected, having been mentioned in the first curatorial statement of 1986 (reprinted in this volume, p.220), and he is represented in the catalogue. However, he did not ultimately claim his flight to Paris and, since he was going to bring his work with him, it was not then included in the exhibition.

¹³³ Agreement dated 1 September 1988. This and subsequent documents confirm a fee of 10,000 francs for this work. Bernard Marcadé was also funded to visit India. See CGP archives, box 95026/158.

¹³⁴ An undated document titled 'Prix unitaire des oeuvres achetées' indicates 25 paintings for inclusion by Sharma at 367.20 francs each and fifteen paintings for inclusion by Vyakul at 747.30 francs each; see CGP archives, box 95026/167. This suggests only three paintings to be purchased by Shyam, but the artist showed many more; another document lists 25 works insured for a total of 86,000 rupees; see CGP archives, box 95026/158.

¹³⁵ See CGP archives, box 95026/158.

¹³⁶ See for example, N. Bourriaud, 'Magiciens de la Terre', *op. cit.*, p.120, as pointed out earlier. In the colloquium held in conjunction with the exhibition, Homi Bhabha specifically lamented, for instance, that Nalini Malani had not been included (audio recording in bibliothèque Kandinsky, CGP: cassette BS 424 [5], side A).

¹³⁷ The loan of a work by the Delhi artist was turned down by the museum approached, on account of the painting's fragility. Martin volunteered an account of this event in the colloquium, in response to Araeen's paper; audio recording in bibliothèque Kandinsky, CGP: cassette BS 424 [2], side A.

¹³⁸ The artists selected were Nuche Kaji Bajracharya, Lobsang Thinle/Lobsang Palden/Bhorda Sherpa and Temba Rabden, although the latter was not able to

fig.67; 48
and 49, 26

fig.5 and 6

fig.27-28

contrasts with those artists included from China, on the basis of introductions provided by Fei Dawei, a Beijing-educated art critic, in November 1987: Gu Dexin, Huang Yong Ping and Yang Jiechang, none of whom was older than 35 when the exhibition opened,¹³⁹ were all actively part of the Chinese contemporary art scene, demonstrably well-informed of Western art history and philosophy and equally influenced by Chinese traditions. While Martin led the research in these Asian countries, Francis led in Japan, clearly not a Western nation geographically, albeit part of the G7 and, in several senses, at least as culturally 'advanced' as anywhere in the West at the time. The work of Hiroshi Teshigahara illuminates something of the paradox: primarily known in Europe and North America as a film-maker, his work was understood in Western art-house terms, yet he had a parallel practice as the master of a school dedicated to the Japanese art of ikebana.¹⁴⁰ For whatever reasons, there were no visits to Korea, Thailand or Indonesia and no artists – bar Paik, as an emigré to Europe and then the US – selected from these or other countries in the region.

When Martin went to Papua New Guinea in 1988, artist Lawrence Weiner accompanied him and they spent two weeks together to the north of the Sepik River. The idea was that a collaborative work with local artists might result, but in the event this project did not happen, apparently because Weiner was too conscious of the power differentials.¹⁴¹ Rather than buying

take part at short notice and his work was not therefore included. In the video-catalogue, Palden, Sherpa and Thinle discuss their work, describing it as 'precisely fixed by tradition, leaving no place for improvisation'. Gianfranco Barberi and Marco di Castri (dir.), Mario Miyakawa and William Chamay (prod.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, Turin: Cataloga, 1989, video, VHS PAL, 52min.

¹³⁹ There were more young non-Western artists than young Western in general, with a ratio of at least twelve to one, perhaps to two (clearly the categories are not hard and fast), under the age of 35 when the exhibition opened.

¹⁴⁰ The other artists included from Japan were Tatsuo Kawaguchi and Tatsuo Miyajima. On Kawa's nationality is conspicuously absent from his page in the exhibition catalogue, although he is described by Martin in the latter's catalogue text as being one of the contributing Western artists born into another culture. J.-H. Martin, 'Préface', *Magiciens de la Terre op. cit.*, p.9.

¹⁴¹ Weiner stated at the time: 'Instead of participating in Jean-Hubert's project of collaborating with a local New Guinea artist, I decided to talk to the artists I met there about contemporary art ... I went there to collaborate with another artist, but it became impossible because I would then in fact become a teacher, and I was not interested in imposing my standards on anyone else'. See Weiner in interview with Elizabeth C. Baker in 'The Peripatetic Artist: 14 Statements', *Art in America*, vol.77, no.7, July 1989 ('The Global Issue'), p.134. Reprinted in Gerti Fietzek and Gregor Stemmrich (ed.), *Having Been Said: Writings and Interviews of Lawrence Weiner, 1968-2003*, Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2004, pp.199-200. Martin's 1989 curatorial statement tells the same story with variations: 'Unfortunately, the travelling necessary to meet artists in different villages did not leave him the time for in-depth exchanges. He was not able to carry out his original plan for a dialogue between his work and theirs or for an eventual collaboration.' See J.-H. Martin, 'The first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art', *op. cit.*, p.2.

an existing work from Papua New Guinean artists, as made for German and Australian dealers, for instance, Martin commissioned a replica bark painting to match that adorning a building in the village of Apangai. Magnin would subsequently return to follow up on progress and to select additional work, purchasing bark paintings by Cleitus Dambi, Nick Dumbrang and Ruedi Wem for 2,745 francs.¹⁴²

fig.12

Lüthi seems to have been largely responsible for the selection of indigenous artists from Australia,¹⁴³ with input from Djon Mundine and Janet Parfenovics, based in the country.¹⁴⁴ Curator-in-the-field at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Mundine is cited by this institution as the first Aboriginal person to hold a curatorial post in the Aboriginal art department of a public gallery.¹⁴⁵ Artists John Mawurndjul, Jimmy Wululu and Jack Wunuwun – like fellow Australian Ken Unsworth – would contribute work to ‘Magiciens’ without going to Paris to install it. By contrast, Paddy Jupurrurla Nelson, Paddy Japaltjarri Sims, Paddy Cookie Japaltjarri Stewart, Neville Japangardi Poulson, Francis Jupurrurla Kelly and Frank Bronson Jakamarra Nelson from Yuendumu would all be invited to produce their work collectively in situ.¹⁴⁶ Twelve men from Lajamanu had travelled to Paris at the end of 1983 to make a ground painting as part of an exhibition for the Musée d’art moderne de la Ville de Paris; however, in this earlier context the work was segregated from European practice, displayed instead as part of an Australian showcase.¹⁴⁷ The Yuendumu artists in Paris for ‘Magiciens’ already knew something of the work by Long that would be shown adjacent to theirs: Philip Haas, who was making a film about their practice on the eve of the installation period for the exhibition, showed them his previous work *Stones and Flies: Richard Long in the Sahara* (1988).¹⁴⁸ Long reports knowing something of Australian ground painting before coming to produce his own work in situ in Paris, although not specifically the practice of those beside whom he would be working.¹⁴⁹ Neil Dawson, from New Zealand,

fig.104 and 46–47
fig.8–10 and 64

fig.78–79 and 84

fig.1

¹⁴² The bark painting commissioned from Jambruk and co-workers cost 8,320 francs. ‘Prix unitaire des oeuvres achetées’, *op.cit.*

¹⁴³ A. Luque, A. Magnin and J.-H. Martin in conversation with the author, 6–9 September 2011.

¹⁴⁴ In the catalogue, Lüthi is credited as a *chargé de mission* within the team responsible for the ‘organisation of the exhibition’ and Mundine and Parfenovics are thanked as *correspondents* in the acknowledgements; see J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, *op. cit.*, pp.2 and 3 respectively.

¹⁴⁵ See <http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/about-us/history/history-of-the-collection/> (last accessed on 3 October 2012).

¹⁴⁶ These names were not made public in connection with the exhibition. They are quoted from N. Ratnam, ‘Exhibiting the “Other”’, *op. cit.*, p.207.

¹⁴⁷ ‘D’un autre continent: l’Australie, le rêve et le réel’, 4 October–4 December 1983, curated by Suzanne Pagé.

¹⁴⁸ R. Long in conversation with the author, 21 March 2008. A fax from Philip Haas dated 1 May 1989 indicates that the film-maker had just been working with ‘Paddy Sims, Paddy Nelson, Cookie Stewart, Bronson Nelson, Francis Kelly and Neville Poulson’. See CGP archives, box 95026/173.

¹⁴⁹ R. Long in conversation with the author, 21 March 2008.

was also commissioned – like Long and those from Yuendumu – to work on a project for the exhibition.

fig.42; 58 and 31

fig.4, 5 and 7,
p.287

fig.30

fig.96–98

fig.99–100

fig.27 and 29

There were more contributing artists from the United States than any other country, even counting each of the co-workers from Yuendumu as an individual rather than jointly as one of the 100 participants. While national representation was expressly rejected by the curators, the long line-up of artists from the US – even excluding those based there but without citizenship – surely indicates the geopolitical and economic balance of forces at the time. The selection of well-established New York Conceptual artists Hans Haacke and Weiner, plus their West Coast peer John Baldessari, was presumably justified on the basis that each was commissioned to take up or respond to the curatorial concept of reflecting on a worldwide situation. This commissioning brief was further extended to other US or US-based artists whose practice was less narrowly conceptual or less well-known at the time, such as Barbara Kruger or James Lee Byars, and it was rarely if ever offered to artists based outside the West.¹⁵⁰ Commissions seem to have been budgeted at 10,000 francs each.¹⁵¹ The pre-existing work selected from On Kawara was his seminal *One Million Years (Past)* (1969), which manages to imply globalism through invoking a vast period of time and being dedicated to 'All those who have lived and died'. *Leetsoii* (1987), a floor-based work by John Knight that was chosen for 'Magiciens' because it referenced Navajo culture and territory, risked becoming meaningless after being relocated from its original context of display in New Mexico. Crucial to its inclusion, therefore, was the simultaneous installation of a floor-based work by a Navajo artist and, of those sought out by Mark Francis, Joe Ben Junior, who had shown in Indian Art Festivals in New Mexico since 1974, was selected.¹⁵² Arguably questioning the power of the nation state to define certain individuals, the catalogue that accompanied 'Magiciens de la Terre' describes Ben Junior as 'Native American',¹⁵³ similarly noting Paulosee Kuniliusee as 'Canadian, Inuit' and Norval Morrisseau as 'Ojibwe Indian'. Maubant, charged early on with meeting up with Vancouver artist Jeff Wall to discuss the show, had undertaken to look for work produced in Inuit

¹⁵⁰ Walter De Maria and Bruce Nauman turned down invitations to participate in the exhibition: the former described how he had 'decided to bypass all large group exhibitions for the next year and possibly beyond'; the latter's assistant explained that it was 'due to his exhibition and studio schedule'. Conversations with Bill Viola stalled when the desired work could not be completed in time. See CGP archives, boxes 95026/170–72.

¹⁵¹ Document titled 'Magiciens de la Terre/Artistes sélectionnés' and naming only the artists that were considered as Western, listed alphabetically. See CGP archives, box 95026/167.

¹⁵² See Mark Francis, 'True Stories', in J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, pp.13–14.

¹⁵³ This attribution actively works against Ben Junior's self-description as simply 'American' and his explaining this affiliation in terms of the continent rather than the USA. See *ibid.*, p.14. The other artists in the exhibition who are US citizens are described in the catalogue as 'American'.

and Native American circles while visiting Canada, but it was Magnin who carried out the follow-up research travel that led to the inclusion of Kuniliusee and Morrisseau.¹⁵⁴

fig.17 and 75

The decision not to include the work of any indigenous US artists operating within the contemporary art world was noted at the time and seen as a depoliticising move. Speaking in the colloquium in conjunction with the exhibition, Guy Brett specifically lamented the absence of Jimmie Durham,¹⁵⁵ who was one of several who had sent information to Francis after the curator had consulted Jean Fisher for recommendations.¹⁵⁶ The lack of African-American artists – and here David Hammons perhaps now seems the most conspicuous omission, although it was neglect of Betye Saar, Native American and Irish American as well as African American, that was questioned in *The New York Times*¹⁵⁷ – might be assessed likewise.

In Mexico, Francis sought out *alebrijes*, or papier-mâché figures, by the Linares family – partly because those of Pedro Linares had been collected by André Breton, a historical influence on ‘Magiciens’ – and the curator then came across Galán and his paintings. Inclusion of the *alebrijes* would be singled out for criticism, on the basis that they represented an artisanal practice marketed to tourists, in a review of the show by Alvaro Medina, who found a general ‘confounding of magic and craft in the choice of Latin Americans’.¹⁵⁸

fig.40

fig.12 and 15

Luque carried out curatorial trips to Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, Panama and, in South America, to Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay.¹⁵⁹ Her research focus seems to have been very much on religious practice; José Bedia, who would travel to Paris from Havana in order to install his project commissioned for ‘Magiciens’, was apparently ‘asked to show his private altar to “prove” that he was a true Santería believer’.¹⁶⁰ In a letter sent ahead of her arrival in Haiti, Luque expressed a wish ‘to meet Georges Liataud and other artists making Vodun sculptures’, also ‘artists of the Vodun cult’ who might come ‘to Paris to make a *vévé* [a Haitian Vodun symbol] on the ground for the

p.102 and fig.110

¹⁵⁴ A. Magnin in conversation with the author, 9 September 2009.

¹⁵⁵ Audio recording in bibliothèque Kandinsky, CGP: cassette BS 424 [1], side A.

¹⁵⁶ Jean Fisher in email correspondence with the author, 21 April 2008: ‘When I saw the show I understood that the artists that I had “recommended” were in fact too “political” (read, contaminated).’

¹⁵⁷ Michael Brenson, ‘Juxtaposing the New From All Over’, *The New York Times*, 20 May 1989.

¹⁵⁸ Alvaro Medina, ‘L’Art latino-américain dans quatre expositions internationales’, *Vie des Arts*, vol.36, no.143, 1991, p.44.

¹⁵⁹ A. Luque in email correspondence with the author, 2 September 2011. No artists from Jamaica, Argentina or Uruguay were included in the exhibition.

¹⁶⁰ Coco Fusco, ‘The Other History of Intercultural Performance’, *TDR*, vol.38, no.1, Spring 1994, pp.151–52. This story is expanded in Judith Bettleheim and Janet Catherine Berlo, *Transcultural Pilgrim: Three Decades of Work by José Bedia*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011, p.197.

fig.19; 87

fig.24–25
and 37

fig.102

exhibition', for example.¹⁶¹ Not only Liautaud but also Gabriel Bien Aimé, Wesner Philidor and Patrick Vilaire would contribute to the exhibition, with the latter two coming to install their work – Philidor provided *vévés* traced in flour on the floor of the Centre Pompidou. In Panama, Luque met Enrique Gómez, brought to the curatorial team's attention by Severi, who had first met Gómez on an anthropological field trip in 1979 and who lent the work displayed. Severi described its genre as 'a sort of geographical map, or logbook, of the spiritual voyage of a shaman'.¹⁶²

fig.107–08

fig.18 and 85

fig.36

fig.115, p.280

Only three South American artists still based in the region were included in the exhibition. All came from Brazil, and all contributed work with religious significance: Cildo Meireles showed his installation *Missão/missões: como construir catedrais* (*Mission/Missions: How to Build Cathedrals*, 1987), Maestre Didi showed Candomblé-related work and Ronaldo Pereira Rego showed Umbanda-related work. The Meireles installation involved socio-historical commentary with political bite: *Missão/missões* was originally produced for a show addressing the seven mission settlements founded by the Jesuits (1610–1767) to convert the indigenous peoples in Argentina, Paraguay and Southern Brazil and it gives dazzling visual form – even a dim lingering smell – to the bloody impact of evangelism and its underpinning by colonial wealth. This pre-existing installation, like the work that Martin had selected for 'Magiciens' from Kabakov, would have to be reconstructed in Paris. Meireles had shown in New York and Paris in the 1970s as an international contemporary artist, and in the following decade in both cities again, this time in historical surveys of Brazilian and Latin American art. His outnumbering in the 1989 Paris show by fellow Brazilians and Latin Americans making work less consciously engaged with global art and political history is remarkable, given the strong tradition of avant-gardism in this geographical region and its particular critical ferment in the 1960s and 70s. Alfredo Jaar, the first Latin American artist invited to both the Aperto section of the Venice Biennale (in 1986) and to documenta (the following year), was based in New York when approached by the curatorial team, although Luque caught up with him when back in Chile for Christmas. Jaar was commissioned to undertake a new project for 'Magiciens', which he has described as being fuelled by how 'incredibly provincial' he found his adopted hometown and for which, funded by the exhibition budget, he made a research trip to Nigeria.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ A. Luque, letter to Gérard Alexis at the Musée du Panthéon National Haïtien, Port au Prince, 4 September 1987. In a letter to Charles Carnegie at the African Caribbean Institute in Kingston on 22 January 1988, ahead of a trip to Jamaica, she likewise writes seeking 'artists both modern and traditional. I am particularly interested in meeting a priestess of an African Cult, who would be willing to come to Paris to realise a ground painting for our exhibition.' See CGP archives, box 95026/158.

¹⁶² Carlo Severi, 'Le Chemin des metamorphoses', *Res*, no.3, Spring 1982, p.33, online at http://carloseveri.net/pdf/02.-RES-1982_Chemin-des-metamorphoses.pdf (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

¹⁶³ Alfredo Jaar in conversation with the author, 12 March 2008.

Martin and Magnin both undertook curatorial research in Africa. In the summer of 1987, Martin spent two weeks in Benin, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo, hosted and advised by Jacques Soulillou, director of the Centre culturel français in Lagos.¹⁶⁴ He later visited Morocco. Starting in November 1986, Magnin went to Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo) and Zimbabwe, making repeat visits in several cases during the years of preparation, additionally travelling to countries visited by Martin and to places where no artists were selected, including Cameroon, Kenya and Mozambique. The assistant curator sought out Efiambelo and his painted funerary carvings or *aloalos* on a tip from Nicole Boulfroy at the Musée de l'Homme; John Fundi and his blackwood Makonde figures, or *shetani*, on the basis of Japanese and German publications; and Bodys Isek Kingelez and his coloured card maquettes on the recommendation of Soulillou and his architect friend Christian Girard. Beyond following leads from prior research, Magnin describes arriving in places then spending time looking and asking around for interesting artists.¹⁶⁵

fig.103

fig.53

fig.52

The approach to curatorial research in Africa has been the focus of particularly forceful criticism, with angry reactions to the exhibition's failure to represent those artists who were the subject of 'a patronage, an evaluation and a criticism ... that is not predetermined by an expatriate presence',¹⁶⁶ or those favoured by 'African artistic and cultural elites'.¹⁶⁷ This was not necessarily a matter of lack of contacts: for instance, in his African travel diary, as published in accompaniment to the exhibition, Martin describes disconcerting Aghama Omoruyi, Director of the National Museum in Benin City, with his insistence on seeing statues made by those without an education, which the latter – trained in art in Nigeria and France – deemed 'without artistic value'.¹⁶⁸ The lack of academic African art in 'Magiciens' has been criticised alongside the preference for work variously described as anthropological, applied, tourist or neo-primitive.¹⁶⁹ Here a spotlight is directed

¹⁶⁴ Archive documents indicate that Soulillou made follow-up visits with selected artists and identified Nigerian mask-makers for inclusion. See CGP archives, box 95026/159.

¹⁶⁵ A. Magnin in conversation with the author, 9 September 2011.

¹⁶⁶ John Picton, 'In Vogue, or The Flavour of the Month: The New Way to Wear Black', *Third Text*, vol.7, no.23, Summer 1993 ('Special Issue: Africa'), pp.94–95. Reprinted in O. Oguibe and O. Enwezor (ed.), *Reading the Contemporary*, op. cit., p.120.

¹⁶⁷ Y. Konaté, '“Magiciens de la Terre”: The Strange African Destiny of a Global Exhibition', op. cit., p.559.

¹⁶⁸ J.-H. Martin, 'Extraits de notes de voyage de Jean-Hubert Martin au Nigeria', *Magiciens de la Terre* (booklet accompanying the video-catalogue), Nice and Paris: Z'éditions and Centre Georges Pompidou, 1989, p.41.

¹⁶⁹ For a collection of essays on this and related topics, see O. Oguibe and O. Enwezor (ed.), *Reading the Contemporary*, op. cit.; and for a later summary of the situation see O. Enwezor in 'Curating Beyond the Canon: Okwui Enwezor Interviewed by Paul O'Neill', in P. O'Neill (ed.), *Curating Subjects*, London: Open Editions, 2007, pp.112–13.

on the coffins by Kane Kwei, the masks of Mark Unya/Nathan Emedem and, perhaps most often labelled as neo-primitive, the murals by Cyprien Tokoudagba.¹⁷⁰ The popular painted canvases of Chéri Samba and panels of Twins Seven Seven, examples of which were shown in the exhibition, pose different yet related issues, with Samba sometimes described contemptuously as a sign-writer, more positively as a satirical chronicler, and Twins Seven Seven either disdained for making upmarket tourist-art or, like Samba, celebrated for producing an urban vernacular art form.¹⁷¹ The word academic is not typically extended to the Oshogbo School of Art in Nigeria, which Twins Seven Seven attended, nor to the Tengenenge Sculpture Community in Zimbabwe, where Henry Munyaradzi trained. Martin commissioned six large paintings from Twins Seven Seven 'matching the quality of those in the National Gallery in Lagos',¹⁷² on the understanding that he would choose four for 'Magiciens', and a purchasing price of \$4,000 each was then negotiated.¹⁷³ Magnin chose ten canvases in Samba's studio, some of which needed to be finished for the exhibition,¹⁷⁴ with a sum of 6,000 francs apparently agreed for each.¹⁷⁵ Samba was so taken by 'the effervescence' of Magnin and his 'crisscrossing of Africa' on the hunt for art that the assistant curator became the subject of a further work, not exhibited in Paris, titled *La Chasse au bons* (*Looking for the Good Ones*, 1988).¹⁷⁶ Both Martin and Magnin recall considering art and artists in Africa who were more academic, but the former was apparently concerned that this work would be seen as derivative in Paris, where he suggests it was not unknown yet widely viewed with condescension, while the latter has described the work he came across through academic contacts as only of interest to diplomats and hoteliers.¹⁷⁷ The ease with which the

¹⁷⁰ This term was used, for instance, by Yacouba Konaté, in a paper for 'Curating the Other: Curator as Tourist', seminar at Dartington College of the Arts, Dartington 21 April 2007; online at [http://www2.curatorial.net/go/data/en/files/YacoubaKonaté\(Dak_art\).pdf](http://www2.curatorial.net/go/data/en/files/YacoubaKonaté(Dak_art).pdf) (last accessed on 6 October 2012). Salah Hassan, expanding and rewriting an essay from 1995 ('The Modernist Experience in African Art: Visual Expressions of the Self and Cross-Cultural Aesthetics', *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, no.2, Spring–Summer 1995, pp.30–33 and 72) for an anthology published five years later (O. Oguibe and O. Enwezor (ed.), *Reading the Contemporary*, *op. cit.*, pp.215–35) singled out Tokoudagba's work as exemplifying the Western interest in 'new primitives' (p.218), while for the same new forum Olu Oguibe also revised his essay 'Art, Identity, Boundaries' (*Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, no.3, Fall–Winter 1995, pp.26–33) in order to assess this artist's work as 'childlike', indeed as scarcely 'qualify[ing] as art beyond the sixth grade' (pp.24–25). Writing in 1995, Oguibe had specifically implied these criticisms might be levelled at Bouabré, although his language was less savage.

¹⁷¹ The term 'urban vernacular' is specifically used for Twins Seven Seven and Samba by Peter Wollen in the process of elaborating his concept of 'para-tourist art', in *Raiding the Ice-box: Reflections on Twentieth-Century Culture*, London and New York: Verso, 1993, pp.203–04.

¹⁷² J.-H. Martin, 'Extraits de notes de voyage', *op. cit.*, pp.37–38.

¹⁷³ 'Prix unitaire des oeuvres achetées', *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁴ A. Magnin in email correspondence with the author, 8 October 2012.

¹⁷⁵ 'Prix unitaire des oeuvres achetées', *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁶ C. Samba in response to questions posed by the author, 18 December 2008.

views of African experts in academic African art were set aside or dismissed is striking. Magnin is particularly passionate about art produced without a formal art education and about apprenticeship as an alternative form of schooling, identifying Bodys Isek Kingelez as the only African artist in 'Magiciens' plausibly described as an autodidact.¹⁷⁸ On the basis of his lack of art-school experience, Boltanski might be described likewise. However, it is to Kingelez that the term sticks forcefully in the press reception of the show.

fig.52

The global ambition of 'Magiciens de la Terre' put considerable demands on the curatorial team in terms of researching and clinching the selection of artists and art, and commissioning works. The neglect of certain artists, even of particular regions of the world, might be understood given the conceptual and logistical novelty of the undertaking. We may choose to interpret the notable interest in African, South Asian, Latin American and indigenous North American artists who do not reference modern or international (or indeed transnational) practice in their work as a depoliticising act; however, the political work by Jaar and Meireles that was included, for instance, would argue against this being a silencing move that was deliberate or concerted. Jaar is also significant for using photography in his contribution, since work involving lens-based media was generally absent from the show; further used only by Araeen, Buren and Wall. The small number of female artists seems similarly casual, although this has political consequences that – like the neglect of, or partial selections from, certain geographical regions – resonated in critical responses to the show at the time.¹⁷⁹

fig.115, p.280;
fig.107–08

The registrar work for the exhibition was arguably as challenging as the curatorial work, not least given the refusal of the usual art transporters to take on the project on the basis of what they perceived to be its unfeasibility. Élisabeth Galloy, head of the dozen registrars at the Centre Pompidou, has suggested that success was achieved through fax and fluke; she was quoted in *Libération* at the time of the show listing a string of unexpected problems, including closed borders in Nepal, a flood in Australia and restrictions on the international passage of works classifiable as animal matter.¹⁸⁰ While

¹⁷⁷ J.-H. Martin in conversation with the author, 7 September 2011; A. Magnin in conversation with the author, 9 September 2011.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Both Bhabha and Spivak used the colloquium to question the exhibition's under-representation of women artists, with the former specifically lamenting the absence of Sonya Boyce and Nalini Malani. Lucy Lippard challenged the neglect of female artists in a book that came out a year after the show and in fact her count of ten women (Abramović, Bourgeois, Bowa Devi, van Bruggen, Camara, Horn, Houshiary, Kruger, Mahlangu and Spero) among the '100' is generous, since van Bruggen (as paired with Oldenburg) is in fact half a count, and several more men are involved through partnerships implicated in other single counts. See L. Lippard, *Mixed Blessings*, *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁰ Recounted by Daniel Soutif in 'Les Aléas du transport de l'art', *Libération*,

natural disasters might flippantly be described as transnational, visas and the policing of boundaries between countries made the administrative work of the project resolutely national and international.

Tracing shifts of emphasis in the documents drafted in the process of curatorial selection, we may plot a development of thought towards projecthood in what was to be shown and transnationalism in the approach to the artists involved. It would seem that in the initial stages, and with Western artists first in mind, a process of commissioning works was prioritised: an early document titled 'Commandes d'oeuvres – artistes occidentaux' ('Work commissioned – Western artists') lists fifteen names, from Jean-Michel Alberola to Lawrence Weiner.¹⁸¹ At a later stage, a year before the show opened, the description of what is commissioned from these individuals shifts to 'project' rather than 'work'.¹⁸² Concurrently another list relating to 'non-Western artists', is added, with commissioned works or projects assigned.¹⁸³ In comparing these two documents prepared for the same curatorial meeting it is apparent that only those described as non-Western are labelled with a country and only this list is organised by nationality. Presumably this was a matter of what was common knowledge to those at the curatorial meeting – with Baldessari, for instance, so obviously associated with the US by the European team that, unlike Bajracharya from Nepal, for example, this did not need noting. However, it is still conspicuous that independence from nationhood, which we may describe as a transnational vision, was only extended to half the artists in the show. At a later stage a further list was produced, which finally united all artists, grouping them in the first instance by continent rather than nationality – Africa, America, Asia, Europe, Oceania – and with 'purchase' or 'commission' alongside several names, but with 'project Paris' against the majority. We may now ask whether and how transnationalism and project-hood were evident in the work in the exhibition once installed, and in the installation overall.

3. Installation: *Une exposition, deux lieux*¹⁸⁴

The curators of 'Magiciens de la Terre' decided to show a significant body of work, or a major installation, by all the artists selected, and often to give

—
27–28 May 1989, p.34.

¹⁸¹ This document is undated, but the inclusion of several artists not ultimately included (Lothar Baumgarten, Jenny Holzer and Jean Tinguely) and the absence of several named in other documents suggests that it was drafted early in the curatorial process. See CGP archives, box 95026/167.

¹⁸² 'Occidental Selected Artists', *op. cit.*, dated 20 June 1988, has 'P' for 'new project' against all the names in the earlier list plus thirteen others.

¹⁸³ 'Artistes non-Occidentaux sélectionnés' dated 20 June 1989, has 'P' for 'projet' (project) or 'C' for 'commande' (commission) against the majority of artists listed. In a few instances, the letters 'E' and 'A' appear, presumably indicating 'emprunt' (loan) or 'achat' (purchase), although these are not specified as such.

¹⁸⁴ 'One exhibition, two venues' was a slogan used extensively in connection with the project, for example on the 1989 press release, in the *Petit journal* (*op. cit.*, p.1) and on the exhibition tickets.

each his or her own space. Moreover, they committed to bringing the majority of the artists to Paris to install their works.¹⁸⁵ Those new to the context and producing work in situ, often with accompanying assistance, were generally given a month, provided with accommodation and paid per diems; those more familiar with the context were invited for ten days.¹⁸⁶ If one impetus was to allow those unaccustomed to the exhibition situation a chance to respond to it,¹⁸⁷ another motivation seems to have been to convene a global workshop or temporary working community of artists. As asserted by Martin in his 1989 curatorial statement: 'the idea of an exchange and dialogue between these individuals com[ing] from all over the world is rich in possibilities'.¹⁸⁸ This was not simply or fully achieved, given individual work imperatives and social and cultural barriers;¹⁸⁹ however, the Nepalese monks provided Ben Junior with minerals for use in his work,¹⁹⁰ and contacts were established that outlived the exhibition, for instance between Braco Dimitrijević and Ben Junior, and between Bedia and Esther Mahlangu.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ As far as she can recall, Aline Luque, in conversation with the author on 6 September 2011, confirmed the following came to install: Marina Abramović, Dennis Adams, Sunday Jack Akpan, Jean-Michel Alberola, Giovanni Anselmo, Rasheed Araeen, Nuche Kaji Bajracharya, John Baldessari, José Bedia, Joe Ben Junior, Jean-Pierre Bertrand, Alighiero Boetti, Christian Boltanski, Erik Bulatov, Frédéric Bruly Bouabré, Bowa Devi, Daniel Buren, James Lee Byars, Mike Chukwukelu, Marc Couturier, Tony Cragg, Neil Dawson, Gu Dexin, Maestre Didi, Braco Dimitrijević, John Fundi, Moshe Gershuni, Hans Haacke, Rebecca Horn, Shirazeh Houshiary, Alfredo Jaar, Ilya Kabakov, Tatsuo Kawaguchi, Anselm Kiefer, Bodys Isek Kingelez, Per Kirkeby, John Knight, Barbara Kruger, Felipe Linares, Richard Long, Esther Mahlangu, Cildo Meireles, Mario Merz, Miralda, Tatsuo Miyajima, Norval Morrisseau, Juan Muñoz, Claes Oldenburg/Coosje van Bruggen, Nam June Paik, Wesner Philidor, Sigmar Polke, Ronaldo Pereira Rego, Chéri Samba, Sarkis, Jangarh Singh Shyam, Daniel Spoerri, Lobsang Thinle/Lobsang Palden/Bhorda Sherpa, Cyprien Tokoudagba, Patrick Vilaire, Lawrence Weiner, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Yang Jiechang, Huang Yong Ping, six from Yuendumu – Paddy Jupurrula Nelson, Paddy Japaltjarri Sims, Paddy Cookie Japaltjarri Stewart, Neville Japangardi Poulson, Francis Jupurrula Kelly, Frank Bronson Jakamarra Nelson – and Zush.

¹⁸⁶ See, in the CGP archives, the letters agreeing arrangements with individual participants – for example the three Nepalese monks (box 95026/161) and the painter Bowa Devi (box 95026/158) – additionally a document headed 'Exposition: "Magiciens de la Terre" voyages et séjour des artistes occidentaux' (box 95026/168).

¹⁸⁷ J.-H. Martin, 'The Death of Art – Long Live Art', *op. cit.*, p.5: 'A bonus here is their possibility of reacting to the new cultural context offered by the Parisian environment, adapting their work according to new stimuli.' See CGP archives, box 95026/168, reprinted in this volume, p.221.

¹⁸⁸ J.-H. Martin, 'The first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art', *op. cit.*, p.1.

¹⁸⁹ For instance, Araeen describes no opportunity to socialise, Jaar only a little, Kingelez identifies more opportunities and Bedia and Long suggest that there were plenty (responding between 12 March 2008 and 16 November 2010 to questions posed by the author).

¹⁹⁰ A. Luque in conversation with the author, 6 September 2011.

¹⁹¹ B. Dimitrijević in conversation with T. Gleadowe, 18 August 2008, *op. cit.*; José Bedia in conversation with the author, 16 November 2010.

Having artists from around the world making or installing their work in Paris also proved a good marketing opportunity, although there were attendant risks of exoticisation. Buren recalls Mahlangu's stay and her painting of the replica of her Ndebele house, which was built by gallery technicians, as a neocolonial revitalisation of the 'human zoo', an example of which had featured in the Exposition Universelle a century earlier.¹⁹² Of course, the installation process was not open to the public, but the video-catalogue produced to accompany the show, as well as the press reportage, brought this preparatory period and several of its protagonists into the public eye. Reviewing this material, there is the whiff of fetishisation: rather much is made of Mahlangu's traditional Ndebele attire, for example.

Artists arrived in Paris with space for their work assigned or already agreed and relatively few changes were made.¹⁹³ According to intentions announced in the 1986 curatorial statement, such as it was distributed in 1989, the visitor route or *parcours* was 'established on the basis of meaning and not according to formal or geographic relationships'.¹⁹⁴ Like the main exhibition in editions of the Bienal de La Habana since 1986, 'Magiciens' was not installed following national or territorial principles, nor were works gathered according to medium. In Paris there was less photography on display than in Havana in the same year.¹⁹⁵ While painting and sculpture were prevalent, indicating a basic modernist frame of reference, these were also to be understood as mere techniques combined in the creation of works with alternative formal conventions, such as the *djalumbu* – hollowed and painted logs – contributed by Wululu, for example. Moreover, beyond canvas and paper, there were wall paintings and ground paintings, and beyond sculpture, there were installations. Indeed, the show's manifestation at La Villette in particular made something of a case for each of these three – wall painting, ground painting and installation – as global modes of practice.¹⁹⁶

The routes through each venue were conceptualised jointly by the curatorial team. As somewhat cryptically alluded to in Luque's contribution to the catalogue, which accompanied plans of the exhibition spaces, a basic narrative was loosely implied, albeit in the absence of developed thematic categories or curatorial chapters. The *parcours* was envisaged to open with 'orientation', further implying birth and origin, apparently, and then to move through

fig. 46–47

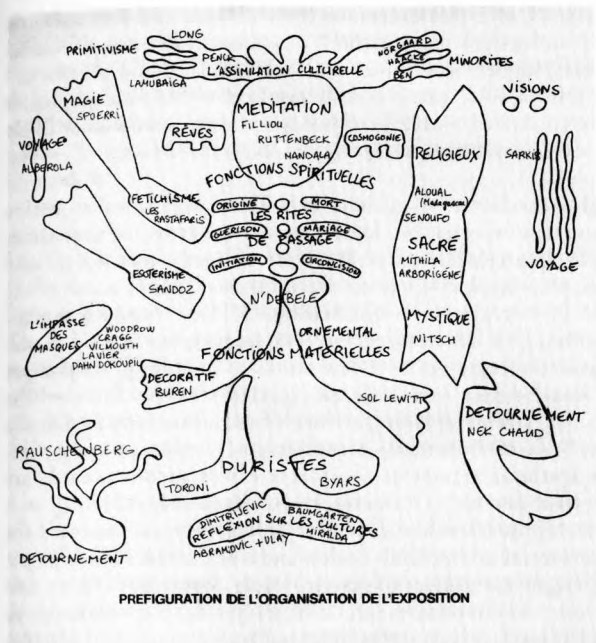
¹⁹² Daniel Buren in conversation with the author, 21 November 2011.

¹⁹³ At La Villette, the works of Kossi, Muñoz and Gershuni were moved a significant distance from where they were originally intended to be sited, leaving more space for Meireles, Spero and Spoerri. At the Centre Pompidou, the work of Singh Shyam was added to fill the space left when that of Jivya Soma Mashe could not ultimately be included.

¹⁹⁴ J.-H. Martin, 'La Mort de l'art, l'art en vit', *op. cit.*, p. 6. This sentence is missing from the English version, which is reprinted in this volume.

¹⁹⁵ Wall was most obviously a photographer, although photography was also central to the work of Araeen and Jarr on display.

¹⁹⁶ A similar case for masks was not ventured, with only works from Nigeria and Benin included in the exhibition (and shown at the Centre Pompidou).



Early visualisation of the 'Magiciens de la Terre' exhibition layout by the architect in charge of scenography at the Grande Halle de La Villette, Jacques Lichnerowicz, under instruction from the curators. The drawing is inspired by a painting by José Benítez Sánchez, *El desmembramiento de Tacutsi Nakawé* (The Dismembering of Tacutsi Nakawé, 1973) Courtesy Aline Luque

various life phases or issues, before concluding with reference to 'death'.¹⁹⁷ This is most readily identifiable at La Villette, although the thread unwinds in the middle. So, for instance, the compass buried in the top of one of Anselmo's angled granite slabs, just inside the entrance to the space, pointed visitors north, while Huang's papier mâché turtle-tombs, close by, were orientated by the artist in the same direction. Elsewhere, in a pairing centred on striving for health, the drawings by Gómez referencing shamanic practices addressing mental illness could be found adjacent to the sand painting by Ben Junior that was derived from healing rituals. Finally, walking through the centre of the space towards the exit, a sequence of works – by Efiambelo, Boltanski and Wululu, following on from those of Sunday Jack Akpan and Kane Kwei – highlighted human mortality, or afterlife.

fig.44
fig.48 and 49
fig.102
fig.99-100
fig.103, 105;
46-47; 90-91
fig.101

Remarkably, an early bid to lay out the exhibition, or at least to cluster works conceptually in the process of their selection, survives to tell an alternative story. Via a mapping onto the anatomical parts of a dismembered figure represented in a Huichol painting, rather a different exhibition unfolds. In a tidy architectural diagram drafted for the curators, the word 'meditation'

p.63

¹⁹⁷ A. Luque, 'IL – visiteur qui cherche le sens? – joue à revenir sur ses pas', in J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, op. cit., p.12. Additional comments provided by J.-H. Martin in conversation with the author, 7 September 2011.

labels the figure's head, and this unites the artist Filliou and mandala art, for instance, while the legs below are marked 'ornamental/decorative material functions' and here Ndebele art, Buren and Sol LeWitt come together.¹⁹⁸ Though the final show would appear as fully resolved as this archival plan, it also seems to have contained a jumble of juxtapositions, which most likely contributed to isolated moments becoming the focus for debate.

fig.70-71

The works brought together in 'Magiciens de la Terre' were installed with a minimum of contextual information. Labels named the artist (or sometimes artists) responsible, giving their place and year of birth, nationality and place of residence; they further titled the work on display and occasionally provided snippets of interpretative information.¹⁹⁹ There were no explanatory wall-texts, although a free booklet, the *Petit journal*, reproduced quotes from the catalogue, photographs of a few works – including Mahlangu's painted home in South Africa – and offered a guided tour that followed the *parcours* while putting a few words to the work of each artist. *Art in America* worried that the 'lack of information encourages viewers to apply pre-existing Western aesthetic standards to objects where such standards are irrelevant',²⁰⁰ yet *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, reflecting on a generalised Western approach to the display of art by Africans, lamented the failure to address, extend and rethink such standards. In the latter's pages, Olu Oguibe challenged the neglect of certain works' 'contributions to, and discursive place in, contemporary [art]', highlighting the tendency to emphasise instead the tribal identity or spiritual background of the artists – that is, to exoticise, rather than to relate them to the contemporary moment and their peers elsewhere.²⁰¹

Two fifths of the artists exhibiting in 'Magiciens' were at the Centre Pompidou and three fifths at the Grande Halle de La Villette. The show's installation was lavish, costing over seven million francs, and it was especially demanding at La Villette, a space not designed for exhibitions nor routinely used for them.²⁰² A strapline printed on the tickets and other marketing material read 'one exhibition, two venues', yet barely half the audience would make it to the less central venue, La Villette. Martin has suggested that most locals in fact skipped this site, leaving it to visitors from further

¹⁹⁸ Drawing shared with the author by A. Luque. Sol LeWitt would not ultimately be included in the show. See p.63.

¹⁹⁹ The artists from Yuendumu were collectively dubbed with this place's name. To give some indication of the interpretative information provided, the label for Haacke's work attributed his chosen colours to those of the ANC and South African flags, and explained who Dulcie September – as referenced in the work's title – had been. See below, p.67.

²⁰⁰ Eleanor Heartney, 'The Whole Earth Show, Part II', *Art in America*, vol.77, no.7, July 1989 ('The Global Issue'), p.92.

²⁰¹ O. Oguibe, 'Art, Identity, Boundaries', *op. cit.*, p.28 (and pp.21–23 in reprint).

²⁰² The budget attached to the agreement between the Centre Georges Pompidou and La Villette dated 28 April 1989, *op. cit.*, suggests 1,950,000 francs would be spent at the former and 5,365,000 would be spent on the latter.

afield, who had come expressly for the exhibition, to experience the show fully.²⁰³ It presumably seemed more prestigious at the time for an artist to show at the Centre Pompidou but it would be the installation of 'Magiciens de la Terre' at La Villette that proved more memorable – more photographed, more discussed. While at the time visitors may have overlooked the larger, less well-established venue, it later put the more formal museum space in its shadow.

Martin's 1986 curatorial statement had noted the potential of the Grande Halle de La Villette as an exhibition venue, promising to use 'all its vast light and space while constructing intimate and closed areas within it'.²⁰⁴ The building's dramatic scale, its openness and the position of its windows would prompt Fisher's memorable description: 'an industrial Notre-Dame',²⁰⁵ while simultaneously recalling the spaces lavishly constructed for historical World Fairs, especially the Palais des Machines for the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris or the Crystal Palace of London's Great Exhibition in 1851.

The 'intimate and closed spaces' designed for the Grande Halle were mostly a collection of ceilingless 'white cubes', following the abiding modernist model for the display of art. Brian O'Doherty, in his canonical discussion of this exhibition format, also identified what he would refer to as 'projects' – 'short-term art made for specific sites and occasions' – tracing their emergence to Marcel Duchamp's contribution to the 'Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme' in Paris in 1938.²⁰⁶ Project spaces for art, as developed in the 1970s, offered an alternative to the white cube established by modernist museums, before museums also later adopted this form of display. Raw spaces and buildings designed for industrial activity were first turned into alternative venues for art as a challenge to the pristine galleries that were purpose-built for museums, with physical distinction announcing ideological difference, but these venues increasingly incorporated crucial aspects of the institutions they had initially put into question – and, on a physical level, often introduced white-painted plaster-board walls.

As a converted cattle market, the Grande Halle offered the opportunity for association with project spaces and here a move was made against the more conservative position taken by, for instance, Rudi Fuchs for documenta 7 in 1982 or by Georges Boudaille for his Biennale de Paris in 1985. Fuchs had announced at a press conference for his exhibition: 'I feel that the time one can show contemporary art in makeshift spaces, converted factories and so

²⁰³ J.-H. Martin in conversation with P. Lafuente, 23 May 2008, *op. cit.*

²⁰⁴ J.-H. Martin, 'The very idea of a "work of art"...', *op. cit.*, p.12. This was cut from the version distributed in 1989.

²⁰⁵ J. Fisher, 'Fictional Histories – The Invisible Labyrinth: "Magiciens de la Terre"', *Artforum*, vol.28, no.1, September 1989, p.158; reprinted in this volume p.248.

²⁰⁶ Brian O'Doherty, 'Context as Content' (1976), as reproduced in B. O'Doherty *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986, p.70.



Installation view, Biennale de Paris, Grande Halle de La Villette, Paris, 1985
Still from the film *Biennale van Parijs 1985 (Paris Biennale)*, 1985 by Jef Cornelis. Digital Betacam, colour, 67min 40sec
Courtesy the artist and Argos, Brussels

on, is over.²⁰⁷ And Boudaille, while using the post-industrial space of the Grande Halle, as Martin would, had effectively converted it into an institutional space.²⁰⁸ It is not incidental that Martin's promise, made a year after the 1985 Biennale de Paris, to create 'spaces of all kinds' at La Villette and simultaneously to respond to the spectacular particularity of the building – was prefaced with the words 'at last'.²⁰⁹

Martin's installation at La Villette drew not only on museological display strategies for art but also on those used in ethnographic museums. He had specific architectural structures constructed by the installation team, mimicking those found around the world: not only a mock Ndebele house for Mahlangu to adorn but also a pseudo Tohossou temple for Tokoudagba to decorate and a towering demi-cone in corrugated galvanised iron to support the bark painting by Jambruk and co-workers. Seen in combination, painting the far wall black for Long's *Red Earth Circle* suddenly seems to suggest a night-time diorama. Lobsang Palden, Bhorda Sherpa and Lobsang Thinle, invited to contribute a mandala, requested that a small house should be built to bear a wooden canopy that they would bring with them, and it was suggested to Weiner that a metal sheet might be set on end to carry his text and diagram work.²¹⁰ All these contributions to the show were gathered in the

fig.70–71

fig.81–82

fig.51 and 57

fig.77

fig.61–62

fig.58

²⁰⁷ Quoted in Coosje van Bruggen, 'In the Mist Things Appear Larger', in *documenta 7* (exh. cat.), Kassel: D + V Paul Dierichs, 1982, vol.2, p.ix.

²⁰⁸ The internal architecture built by Boudaille's team was grandly minimal and symmetrical, with two long stretches of continuous, high and thick walls extending from the front to the back of the space. Between these was a series of perpendicular walls, blocking the vista through the venue.

²⁰⁹ J.-H. Martin, 'The very idea of a "work of art" ...', *op. cit.*, p.12.

²¹⁰ Letter from Mark Francis to Loksang Shrestha, assistant-interpreter-courier, 12 December 1988; see CGP archives, box 95026/161. Lawrence Weiner in email

middle and back-half of the main area of the Grande Halle, where the initial flow of the exhibition, which was regulated by white walls, gave onto an open space that was significant in maximising interrelations between multiple works, in a way that was missing at the Centre Pompidou. Moreover, the split-levels and raised walkways that were an architectural given in the Grande Halle invited an explorative and reflective engagement with the space, and indeed the show, which contrasted with the linear and level path on offer at the museum.²¹¹ This form of engagement suggests a way to approach 'Magiciens' now, while analysis of the installation itself allows investigation of the transnational and project-based work that seems to be at the heart of the exhibition's innovations and a major reason it remains worth revisiting more than twenty years after it closed to the public.²¹²

The first work encountered at La Villette, even if not immediately recognisable as art by those waiting to enter the Grande Halle, was Haacke's *One Day, The Lions of Dulcie September Will Spout Water in Jubilation* (1989), a site-specific intervention that modified an existing but defunct fountain in front of the building. Haacke turned the structure, which had originally been made to commemorate Napoleon's Egyptian campaign of 1798, into a monument celebrating the life and work of the French representative of the African National Congress, a South African anti-apartheid activist who had been murdered in Paris the year before. The four, sculpted and 'dry-mouthed lions' that the artist had found on a preliminary site-visit were painted ANC gold,²¹³ the shaft between them that was patterned with palm-leaves became ANC green, and the basin below was filled with water dyed black – the third colour of the ANC flag, as raised on a pole at the centre, with the South African flag of the time knotted beneath it.²¹⁴ Haacke had long been associated with project-based art by this stage in his career,²¹⁵ and his work would be documented and discussed as part of the ongoing exhibition and working group 'Services: Conditions and Relations of Project Oriented Artistic Practice', later organised by Helmut Draxler and Andrea Fraser.²¹⁶

fig.42

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correspondence with the author, 19 November 2012.

²¹¹ Two upstairs spaces on the right-hand side of the building were inaccessible, having been used as studios or workshop space during the installation period – by Dimitrijević and Huang, for instance.

²¹² Only a highly selective tour of the exhibition will be offered here, given the more extensive walkthrough offered in this volume, pp.111–215.

²¹³ H. Haacke in email correspondence with the author, 15 August 2008.

²¹⁴ Haacke's work subverted the connection between modern sculpture of nineteenth-century Europe on the one hand, and Western colonialism, on the other. It resonated with the non-Western subversion of the category of sculpture, albeit in the absence of a clear-cut political agenda, in some of the work displayed inside the Grande Halle, for instance by Huang and Kingelez.

²¹⁵ Haacke had included the very term 'project' in titling his work in the mid-1970s, perhaps most famously in his *Manet-PROJEKT 74* of 1974.

²¹⁶ Draxler and Fraser's work, itself a project, started at the Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg at the invitation of Beatrice von Bismarck, Diethelm Stoller and Ulf Wuggenig. See Andrea Fraser, 'How to Provide an Artistic Service: An Introduction', presented at The Depot, Vienna, October 1994, with transcript

His contribution to 'Magiciens' is notable for its Western critique of national, international and transnational relations. He has described this work as targeting 'the collaboration of European and US corporations and their governments with the South African apartheid regime'.²¹⁷

fig.52

Inside the Grande Halle, the architectural maquettes of Kingelez responded to global politics in a distinctly different way, overtly envisaging future constructions and only tacitly implicating historical or contemporary situations. His coloured card-based constructions, all but one made in situ,²¹⁸ conjured elements of fantastical metropolises, with works such as *Paris nouvel* (New Paris, 1989) and *L'Allemagne en l'an 2000* (Germany in the Year 2000, 1989) projecting an African vision of urbanism for Europe: a transformative mirror image of past impositions of failed European visions on Africa. While four of the works each had their own plinth – as modernist sculpture might in order to emphasise its autonomy – the other three were grouped together on what approximated a table and hinted at extraordinary town planning or a fabulous building project. Here they picked up a notion of projecthood that may be explored in particular works, and in juxtapositions, further still into the exhibition.²¹⁹

fig.53 and 55

In a rare moment of continental grouping in the show, the work of Kingelez appeared alongside that of Fundi and Munyaradzi.²²⁰ While Munyaradzi's figurative stone sculptures were commissioned for 'Magiciens' and could be considered international in their Zimbabwean response to the European modernism fostered through British colonial rule, they did not address the transnationalism or globalism of the then current situation. They are indicative of a number of works within the exhibition that respect classical modernist principles, rather than suggesting transnational projecthood. Fundi's carved blackwood figures, positioned in between those of Kingelez and Munyaradzi, take on a correspondingly in-between status as regards this descriptive label, with a claim to transnational projecthood just about plausible on the basis of their being jointly installed on a shelf: here, with the shelf alluding to shop-based or domestic display, we may see a pointed or ironic reference to the widespread dismissal of Makonde sculpture amongst traditional specialists at the time, on the basis that it was airport art or art for tourists.²²¹ The uniting in this way of works originally conceived separately

fig.53

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online at <http://adaweb.walkerart.org/dn/a/enfra/fraser1.html> (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

²¹⁷ H. Haacke in email correspondence with the author, 15 August 2008.

²¹⁸ Bodys Isek Kingelez in response to questions posed by the author, 23 June 2008.

²¹⁹ In letters written to the curatorial team on 6 October 1987 and 18 April 1988, Kingelez refers to each work as a project. See CGP archives, box 95026/164.

²²⁰ As indicated by the plans of La Villette published in the exhibition catalogue and *Petit journal*, the sequence of work in this side space was originally planned to run Fundi then Munyaradzi then Kingelez (if walking away from the entrance of the building), rather than Kingelez then Fundi then Munyaradzi.

²²¹ In his travel diary, as published to accompany the exhibition, Magnin distances Fundi's work from 'airport art'. See A. Magnin, 'Extraits de notes de

by Fundi turns them into a project specifically conceived for and in Paris. More conventionally, perhaps, the inclusion of his figures in the exhibition might be read as a gesture of curatorial postmodernism: specifically as a bid to set modernist formalism in the context of 'other' symbolic practices.

Like Haacke and Kinglez, Huang – whose work would have been seen on moving between the work of these other artists, while not visible from either – contributed a project developed specifically for the show, which proved attentive to the local, national and transnational situation. For *Reptiles* (1989) the artist put French and Chinese communist newspapers through two minutes of a washing-machine cycle and used the resulting papier mâché to clad a pair of abstracted turtle forms, shaped from chicken wire, while also using the pulp to produce three mounds on the ground and to partially cover one of the two walls that provided a backdrop for the work.²²² A note on the sketch produced by the artist when in correspondence with the curators about his project states: 'The notion of "culture" should be to constantly be washing and drying.'²²³ A performance producing – and an installation presenting – the transmogrified matter of the international communist movement, which simultaneously exposed the machinery of production through putting the washing machines on display, the work was informed by traditional Chinese tomb architecture, Dada performance and Duchamp's readymades, as well as by ancient Taoist philosophy (for example of Laozi and Zhuangzi), Chan Buddhist teaching (for instance of Masters Dongshan and Yunmen) and twentieth-century European philosophy (such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, whose work was translated into Chinese in the 1980s). These influences suggest a transnationalism that is not corporate but intellectual, resulting from the global flow of ideas rather than goods and services, regardless of the national and international interests at stake.

Visible from Huang's installation and confronting visitors passing through a doorway between the work by Fundi and Munyaradzi was the 10-metre-high

fig.48 and 49

voyage de André Magnin en Tanzanie et Madagascar', *Magiciens de la Terre* (booklet accompanying the video-catalogue), *op. cit.*, p.60. Not long after the show, Fundi's work would be defended as 'para-tourist art' (see P. Wollen, *Raiding the Icebox*, *op. cit.*, p.198) and 'postcolonial expressionism' (see Sidney Kasfir, 'African Art and Authenticity: A Text with a Shadow', *African Arts*, vol.25, no.2, April 1992, p.49; reprinted in O. Oguibe and O. Enwezor (ed.), *Reading the Contemporary*, *op. cit.*, p.104).

²²² The 'Magiciens de la Terre' website describes the pulp as generated from Chinese newspapers (<http://magiciensdelaterre.fr/artistes?id=10#>, last accessed on 1 November 2012) but alternative sources – e.g. Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *A World History of Art*, seventh edition, London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd., 2005, p.893 – give the account reproduced here.

²²³ 'La conception de "culture" doit être toujours relaver et ressécher.' This sketch is reproduced on Huang's pages in the catalogue, J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, *op. cit.*, pp.152–53. The note references not only *Reptiles* but an earlier work titled 'L'histoire de l'art chinois' et 'L'histoire de l'art moderne occidental' sont mis dans la machine à laver pendant deux minutes ('The History of Chinese Art' and 'A Concise History of Modern Art' After Two Minutes in the Washing Machine, 1987).

fig.51 and 57

fig.58

bark-painting made by the group centred on Jambruk and commissioned to replicate one made for a building in Apangai, a village in Papua New Guinea. None of those responsible for this work came to install it, unlike Weiner, who, after meeting them with Martin on the research trip a year previously, travelled to Paris for the installation of his work alongside theirs. Weiner's contribution to the exhibition most prominently included a text that – responding to the given context, and specifically filtered through his experience in Papua New Guinea – addressed the redistribution of naturally occurring and manufactured materials around the world.²²⁴ Some additional text, not quite in keeping with his usual practice, given the font, layout and lack of an English-language version, conveys in South Pacific pidgin what the artist has translated as 'The art of today belongs to us'.²²⁵ While the work of Weiner and that attributed to Jambruk were made separately for the exhibition, they each rely on the other's presence to address transnationalism. Weiner's text about the global circulation of iron may be written on corrugated galvanised iron, but the global circulation of that material is only expressed through the architectural structure alongside it, which supported the bark painting and reproduced a building some nine thousand miles away.²²⁶ Concomitantly, in order to function critically as contemporary art, the bark painting needs the slogan set out on the work alongside it: 'The art of today belongs to us'. For Weiner, this slogan, which he coined with and for those he met in Papua New Guinea, emphasised an alternative to art made for an Australian dealer, or indeed for a French curator – suggesting that art primarily or ultimately belongs, or should belong, to those who make it.²²⁷ Weiner's words point viewers in the direction of those nine thousand miles to the paired bark painting produced for Apangai rather than Paris audiences. At the same time, we may expand the meaning of the statement, taking from it that 'contemporary art belongs to everyone'. The Utopian message here is that, whether or not 'Magiciens de la Terre' and its curators, visitors or critics recognised it at the time, from 1989 this 'everyone' meant a global public – indeed, transnational publics.

We may be reminded here of Jean-Marc Poinso's contemporaneous statement regarding art specifically conceived and made for major exhibitions:

²²⁴ As such, it bears comparison with the work that he had installed on the floor of the Grande Halle for the Biennale de Paris four years earlier, which repeated the words of its title, *The sands of here poured upon the sands of there* (1985).

²²⁵ L. Weiner in interview with E.C. Baker in 'The Peripatetic Artist: 14 Statements', *op. cit.*, p.134; reprinted in G. Fietzek and G. Stemmerich (ed.), *Having Been Said*, *op. cit.*, p.200.

²²⁶ As already flagged, this choice of material was accepted rather than proposed by Weiner. In email correspondence with the author on 19 November, the artist reflected: 'I thought it was odd but in fact why not. There is no difference between corrugated metal and sheet rock as a means to present a work. Having worked quite a bit in the Pacific, corrugated metal is just corrugated metal. No metaphor. But remember that sheet rock cannot exist for very long in tropical climates.'

²²⁷ L. Weiner in interview with E.C. Baker in 'The Peripatetic Artist: 14 Statements', *op. cit.*, p.134; reprinted in G. Fietzek and G. Stemmerich (ed.), *Having Been Said*, *op. cit.*, pp.199–201.

'every visitor ... effects the commission'.²²⁸ Weiner actually attempted to reach beyond European or North American gallery-goers by distributing a medal or coin stamped with his slogan in the local region within the South Pacific that had inspired it. The project-based nature of his work returns us to early understandings of what 'project-based' might mean, for instance to O'Doherty's 1976 assertion that art projects 'have a somewhat vernacular existence in the world'.²²⁹ At the same time, Weiner updates this understanding, enabled by the travel funds provided by 'Magiciens', to expand the geopolitical territory implied by the word 'world'.

The contribution made by Jambruk and co-workers more generally operates as a hinge between sculpture and wall painting in the show. While three-dimensional work – that which might be called sculpture or sculpturally-anchored installation – dominates the opening sequence of 'Magiciens' at La Villette,²³⁰ the mounted bark painting enacts a transition into wall-based work. This is immediately picked up by Weiner beyond it and then developed through contributions by further artists along the ensuing anti-clockwise path envisaged by the curators.²³¹ Two of the works by Alberola fall in this middle and rear area of the main space, while all four rely on the backdrop of a dedicated wall, painted a distinct colour. The only works to be distributed throughout the exhibition in either venue, Alberola's offerings punctuated or paced one's journey around the ground-floor installation in the Grande Halle de La Villette.

fig.51 and 57

fig.45, 63,
71 and 106

At the back of the space, yet visible from many points, was a pairing that was forcefully criticised at the time: the floor-based *Yam Dreaming* by the collective of artists associated with Yuendumu lay in front of Long's wall-based *Red Earth Circle*, and this juxtaposition was seen to suggest a hierarchical, indeed neocolonial, relationship – one that allowed the British work to preside over the Aboriginal Australian.²³² This impression is emphasised in

fig.77–79 and 84

²²⁸ J.-M. Poinso, 'Les Grandes Expositions: Esquisse d'une typologie', *op. cit.*, p.139; and (trans. Robert McGee) in R. Greenberg, B.W. Ferguson and S. Nairne (ed.), *Thinking about Exhibitions*, *op. cit.*, p.63.

²²⁹ B. O'Doherty, 'Context as Content', *Inside the White Cube*, *op. cit.*, p.70.

²³⁰ From Haacke to Adams; Anselmo; Alberola and Wululu; Dimitrijević, Huang and Houshiary; Kirkeby; and – with a possible sidestep via Kingeze, Fundi and Munyaradzi – Jambruk and co-workers.

²³¹ In the anticipated order in which they would be encountered: Unsworth, Bowa Devi, Mahlangu, Long and Tokoudagba.

²³² See J. Fisher, 'Fictional Histories: "Magiciens de la Terre"', *op. cit.*, p.161, and reprinted in this volume, p.255. See also Thomas McEvelley, 'Marginalia: Thomas McEvelley on The Global Issue', *Artforum*, vol.28, no.7, March 1990, p.19, and in this volume, p.269. Fisher convincingly saw in *Red Earth Circle* both 'the rose window of Notre Dame' and, referencing Georges Bataille, a 'solar anus'. As already noted, the black background further prompts a vision in this work of the moon. With further ambiguity between positive and negative associations, while more attentive to the work's precise form, Huang has described the impression of a wreath – Huang Y.P. in response to questions posed by the author, 18 April 2008, trans. James Kao.

certain photographs of this section of the exhibition that have been widely reproduced. However, other viewpoints giving more attention to the floor than the wall – simply by changing angle or lens, or by assuming an elevated and sidelong position by taking the stairs to left or right, for example – have a different effect,²³³ raising questions about how we judge exhibitions once they have closed to the public. Long has described ongoing conversations with Paddy Jupurrurla Nelson and his co-workers during the installation period in Paris, emphasising a mutual interest and immediate rapport.²³⁴ While each resulting work was made with the other in mind, and conscious of global cultural production generally, neither addresses the latter explicitly and, more specifically, neither demonstrates transnational awareness, in the absence of the other: it is only through their particular material relationship, involving pigmented earth from disparate points on the globe, and through their physical co-emergence in the process of their installation side-by-side, that they demonstrate transnational projecthood.

This pairing of works at the far end of the Grande Halle allows us to consider another shift of medium, loosely understood, within the exhibition. Contemplating the return through the central space towards the exit, a path opens up taking us past the ground-based works not only of Jupurrurla Nelson and associates but, further, the Tibetan mandala, Knight's carpet and Ben Junior's sand painting. All these contributions to the show – excepting Knight's – had semi-ceremonial value and, in the absence of claims to commercial permanence, would be destroyed after the close of the exhibition. Given questions over what should be done with the sand used in his work once 'Magiciens' was over, Ben Junior asked for it to be sent back to him for return to the desert, while the Nepalese monks requested that theirs be deposited in a non-fixed location, and it was therefore thrown into the Canal Saint-Martin. The ceremonial activation of Tokoudagba's contribution to the exhibition drew a considerable amount of comment at the beginning of the show's run because not only did it involve the ritual sacrifice of a chicken, but it did so to camera.²³⁵ Bedia has described how he and other artists assisted each other in their rituals, further involving interested support-staff working in the space.²³⁶ As a viewer rather than participant, Abramović has also recalled

p.102 and fig.110

²³³ If the wall painting had such a scale and prominence that, when viewed frontally, it tended to dominate, then it arguably did so over everything in the exhibition. This was not unanticipated: in correspondence regarding the commission, Long pointed out, with a French pun and/or some reservations about pretension, that 'the bigger the wall, the "grander" the work', with Francis replying with a description of the end wall on offer at La Villette as 'enormous ... spectacular' (CGP archives, box 95026/170–172). Having installed his work, Long left instructions that it was to be lit using half blue-filters and at 60 per cent, not '100 per cent megablast' (CGP archives, box 95026/173).

²³⁴ R. Long in conversation with the author, 21 March 2008.

²³⁵ This footage is included in the video-catalogue produced to accompany the exhibition. G. Barberi and M. di Castri (dir.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, op. cit.

²³⁶ J. Bedia in conversation with the author, 16 November 2010. See also J. Bettelheim and J.C. Berlo, *Transcultural Pilgrim*, op. cit., p.177.

the religious or spiritual inauguration of works in the show. Her account suggests that this happened in the course of a night vigil in the exhibition space, prior to the official preview the following day.²³⁷ From the informal photographic record, this opening event for 'Magiciens', itself something of a ceremonial occasion,²³⁸ seems to have involved the staging of at least one activation ritual at the Centre Pompidou.²³⁹ Back at La Villette, Abramović recollects Tokoudagba's reply on being asked by a member of the press what he thought of the work by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen adjacent to his own: 'No sacrifice, no good.'²⁴⁰

Knight's carpet might be assessed in conjunction with Ben Junior's adjacent sand painting as an infra-national variation on transnational projecthood, given the former's reference to Navajo rugs and to (radioactive) uranium mined by US companies in Navajo territory, together with the latter's more elliptical invocation of Navajo means for healing. A less witting relationship between adjacent works might be perceived in a raised side-space within the venue, where the bulging and sprouting figures commissioned from Seni Awa Camara were encountered on the approach to *Articulated Lair* (1986) by Louise Bourgeois, in which bulbous forms lured visitors into an abstracted domestic setting. Like Knight, Bourgeois was represented by an existing work, but she did not go to Paris to be involved in its installation. Nor did Camara, and the visions of gender, sex and the family scenario that are presented by these two artists remain culturally disconnected. More convincing claims for transnational projecthood might be made by the installations in the mirroring spaces upstairs on the other side of the Grande Halle – specifically, and separately, those by Jaar and Meireles. Jaar's work, at the back of the building, resulted from his investigations into Western corporations dumping toxic waste in Nigeria,²⁴¹ while that by Meireles, at the front of the building, addressed the matter of colonisation in the name of faith rather than nationhood.²⁴² Meireles rebuilt his macabre and glittering cathedral interior with 600,000 coins, 2,000 bones and 800 communion hosts sourced locally after having toured the original work in Brazil.

fig.96–98
and 99–100

fig.74
fig.76

fig.115, p.280
and fig.107–08

²³⁷ M. Abramović in email correspondence with the author, 15 April 2008.

²³⁸ As officially captured on camera it involved Jack Lang and Danielle Mitterrand, amongst other invited dignitaries, shaking hands with artists introduced by Martin, the latter representing not only his exhibition but the Musée national as its Director.

²³⁹ Deidi von Schaewen – who was asked by Martin if she would like to take photographs of the exhibition, but not formally commissioned – and Francis capture Philidor consecrating his contribution to the show titled *Espace de danse d'un temple vodou*, 1989 (*Dance Space in a Vodun Temple*, 1989). A snap by Francis shows an audience including Lang, Martin and Mitterrand.

²⁴⁰ M. Abramović in email correspondence with the author, 15 April 2008. Uncorroborated by Tokoudagba.

²⁴¹ A. Jaar, *La Géographie, ça sert, d'abord, à faire la guerre* (*Geography Serves, in the First Place, to Make War*, 1989).

²⁴² C. Meireles, *Missão/missões: como construir catedrais* (*Mission/ Missions: How to Build Cathedrals*, 1987).

Daniel Soutif, in his review for *Libération*, writes that 'Magiciens de la Terre' involved 'not only the great umbrella of La Villette but also the miraculous picture rails of one of the very spaces where our art is constituted as such'.²⁴³ Concurrent at the Centre Pompidou were solo exhibitions for Haacke and Richard Artschwager, a show of drawings by Henri Matisse and – indicative of the centre's broader cultural remit – 'Yves Saint Laurent: Photographies de mode', showcasing fashion photography. Immediately preceding the occupation of the *grande galerie* on the fifth floor of the building was an exhibition of work by Jean Tinguely and, immediately following, there were paintings by Bram van Velde.²⁴⁴ The novelty of the geographical reach of 'Magiciens' is brought home by the European (often Paris-based) or North American (and New York-based) individuals represented in all these surrounding shows. While Martin's curatorial statement from 1986, made when La Villette alone was envisaged as the venue for the exhibition, was tweaked for its re-release in 1989 to suggest that the Centre Pompidou would offer just as distinctive an installation, the reality would fall short owing to its purpose-built and museologically conventional galleries. There was an attempt, however, to match the ambition of the installation at the Grande Halle, with large-scale works on the façade and in the forecourt of the Beaubourg building, for example, by Dimitrijević and Dawson respectively. These must have commanded public attention from the square and marked the unusualness of 'Magiciens' for the passing visitor.²⁴⁵

fig.2; fig.1

fig.5 and 6

Hiroshi Teshigahara's project for the open-air gallery on the fifth floor, *Bamboo Corridor* (1989), was harder to spot from ground level yet resonated with particular freshness against the postmodern architecture of the building. This immersive environmental work drew on the artist's ikebana practice, whilst rethinking it through Land art of the 1970s and installation art in its various guises in the 1970s and 80s. Applying the thinking of Rosalind Krauss a decade prior to the exhibition, we might describe the work as a 'site-construction', defined – in contrast to sculpture and as part of an expanded field that she characterises as postmodern – in terms of its being both architecture and landscape.²⁴⁶ A decade following the exhibition and Krauss would come back to this subject forcefully, apparently feeling threatened by a 'post-medium condition' that disregarded her understanding of postmodern sculpture and the associated constellation of categories, not least on the basis that they were yoked to a modernism that, coming from the First World, is not necessarily relevant in the Second or Third Worlds, or rather to the world at large.²⁴⁷ She would rail convincingly against art

²⁴³ D. Soutif, 'La Prevue par le musée', *Libération*, 28 May 1989, p.33.

²⁴⁴ What was known at the time as the fifth floor has been referred to as the sixth since building renovations in 2000.

²⁴⁵ Contrast Buren's installation of flags on Parisian rooftops to be viewed from the Centre Pompidou, as commissioned by Martin for the opening of the building in 1977.

²⁴⁶ See Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', *October*, vol.8, Spring 1979, p.37.

²⁴⁷ See R. Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium*

'complicit with a globalisation of the image in the service of capital', which is ruled by the 'homogenising principle of commodification' and by 'the equivalency principle that levels objects to the measure of their exchange value'; yet she seemed unconcerned that, through globally applying the 'regime of postmodern sensation' that she read in Fredric Jameson, she extends a US vision in an imperialist manner that fails to perceive different interests active in the world surveyed.²⁴⁸ Peter Wollen, also writing in the 1990s, would contrastingly describe the 'discourse of postmodernism, even more than that of modernism' as 'stifflingly Euro-centric' and 'provincial'.²⁴⁹ Teshigahara's work quietly recognises this possibility, provincialising a postmodern icon by making the Centre Pompidou look somehow Euro-homespun, and pointing to the limited reach of the transnationalism claimed for the movement.

This potential was not necessarily perceived in the work at the time. Fumio Nanjo, speaking as a critic and curator during the colloquium staged in conjunction with 'Magiciens', expressed some concern that *Bamboo Corridor* would suffer from looking too traditionally Japanese, yet he saw its location outside the gallery as a redeeming aspect that, through allowing it to relate to the postmodernism of the building's architecture, freed it from too close a proximity to the 'tribal works' inside.²⁵⁰ This comment is interesting in its suggestion of concern that Japan might not have been effective in associating with Western regions since 1945 – through alignment initiatives such as the Group of Six or G7, for example – or that it might be relegated in Western eyes to a developing country again, and aligned with what is today referred to as the Global South.

Positioned opposite the entrance to *Bamboo Corridor*, inside the galleries, was a mask over 3 metres in height by Mike Chukwukelu, titled simply *Ijele* (1989) for the purposes of exhibition. As perhaps registered by Nanjo, African masks were notably present in this venue, while absent from La Villette.²⁵¹ Works by the most celebrated Western painters – Clemente, Cucchi, Kiefer and Polke – were also to be found in the Centre Pompidou galleries. In the white-cube space immediately preceding that given over to Polke,²⁵² hundreds of drawings by Frédéric Bruly Bouabré were shown. Carefully installed on

fig.7-9

fig.20; 13 and 38
fig.35

fig.33 and 34

— *Condition*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1999. Her given example of 'both landscape and architecture' is, in fact, Japanese gardens, however these are permitted into her thinking only as an ahistorical cultural phenomenon that clarifies her historical argument about modern and postmodern art in the West.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.56, 15, 41 and 56 respectively.

²⁴⁹ P. Wollen, *Raiding the Icebox*, *op. cit.*, p.205.

²⁵⁰ Audio recording in bibliothèque Kandinsky, CGP: cassette BS 424 [8], side A.

²⁵¹ In addition to Chukwukelu's Igbo *Ijele* mask there were a dozen Ekpeye masks by Unya/Emeden and ten Yoruban *gelede* masks by Dossou Amidou.

²⁵² While Martin had hoped that Polke might contribute paintings reflecting on his travels through South East Asia and Papua New Guinea earlier in the decade (J.-H. Martin in conversation with the author, 7 September 2011), ultimately included were existing works, most notably his canvas *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* (1988), relevant to the celebrations of the French Revolution latterly associated with 'Magiciens'.

wall panels and in tilted, free-standing display cases, Bouabré's work offered a visual encyclopaedia rooted in the oral tradition of the Bété people, inflected with the Romantic poetry of Victor Hugo and the modernist art of Picasso. The work was part of his abiding *Connaissance du monde* (or *World Knowledge*) project, whilst being consciously partial and anchored in his 'corner of Abidjan'.²⁵³ The installation in Paris was subtly transnational in the way it drew contrast with the French Enlightenment's commitment to a written *Encyclopédie*, playing with its rational or systematic (*raisonné*) character.²⁵⁴

fig.36

On the other side of Polke's room, Kabakov's installation *The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment* (1985–88) could be found. Immersing visitors in the narrative of an escape scenario, this work turned a tale of cosmic flight into a *mise-en-scène*: a bedroom wallpapered with Soviet posters has a ceiling with a hole blasted into it; the catapult contraption apparently responsible is left dangling below. The installation had been shown in a commercial gallery in New York the year before and in this earlier context there were national and international resonances given the US-USSR relations and Mikhail Gorbachev's recent announcement of glasnost.²⁵⁵ Seen in Paris in 'Magiciens de la Terre', the vision of a 'magical' departure from 'the Earth' is prioritised instead, with an emphasis on the staging of a supra-global project under Soviet conditions.²⁵⁶

fig.3

Somewhat similarly, Wodiczko's *Homeless Vehicle* (1988–89), a prototype unit for nomadic living, gained its own transnational edge through its relocation from New York to the Centre Pompidou, where it occupied the liminal zone of the entrance hall on the ground floor. In its transatlantic move between cities, the work developed its commentary on welfare issues by itself demonstrating the common condition of global migrancy and the concomitant risk of marginalisation.

In her ongoing work on the post-medium condition, Krauss attacks what she refers to as 'installation art', having previously bracketed this together with the 'mixed-media installation' and 'intermedia work'.²⁵⁷ With this term she has sought to label a weak or impoverished Esperanto-like art developed

²⁵³ Frédéric Bruly Bouabré in response to questions posed by the author, 26 April 2008, and reprinted in this volume, p.274.

²⁵⁴ Bouabré's work could be compared with the extended sequence of drawings by Gómez at La Villette, which did not develop a local position in relation to a global context.

²⁵⁵ The work was shown in the exhibition 'Ilya Kabakov: Ten Characters' at Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York, 30 April–4 June 1988.

²⁵⁶ For more on this work, see Boris Groys, *Ilya Kabakov: The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment*, London: Afterall Books, 2006.

²⁵⁷ See R. Krauss, *Under Blue Cup*, Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2011. The expressions 'mixed-media installation' and 'intermedia work' feature in R. Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, *op. cit.*, p.20 and p.56.

to satisfy the global and unregulated market that was just beginning to emerge in 1989. While a reasonable critique within the terms of progressive Western thought before 1989, Krauss's argument lacks the capacity to adapt to a context in which others can not only speak back to, but may also ignore, modernist artistic movements, while still justifiably demanding a place within the discourse and institutional display of contemporary culture. Art characterised by transnational projecthood, such as emerges in 'Magiciens', is certainly open as regards medium; indeed it might use or develop any – or several – visual languages or idioms. However, it demands a complex audience response, one that is sensitive to a plurality of production and reception conditions, rather than one looking for examples that address certain Western criteria, or one seeking to establish new and diluted criteria (the weak common denominators condemned by Krauss). Under the terms of transnational projecthood, the viewing context provided by the exhibition becomes crucial. The moment and setting in which such art finds its public produce the specific and active forum for its critical assessment, and enable a test of its potential to resist impoverishment through homogenisation.

Interviewed for *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* in 1986, before he became Director of the Centre Pompidou, Martin was asked about how the display (*l'accrochage*) of a work of art contributes to our understanding of it. He responded: 'according to the relations that it establishes with the other surrounding works!'²⁵⁸ In all its apparent simplicity, this may prompt a reflection that seems to elude Krauss and specifically, although not phrased in her terms, a consideration of the relationship between the transnational projecthood of art on the one hand, and transnational project-based exhibitions on the other. The latter have to be understood as more than just shows bringing together work that demonstrates the former. As such, transnational project-based exhibitions assert the general need to look very closely at the moment of an artwork's display and, rather than prioritising its point of origin remote from the exhibition context (a point classically located in the studio), they highlight this moment of finding a public as a defining one for the production of meaning, knowledge and criticality. Particularly, given the instance under discussion, the relationship between artwork and show becomes one of mirroring and amplification, of fractalisation, perhaps. To achieve this, the artwork and the exhibition at issue must be both conscious of their potential global status and aware of the significance of their locality. A show needs to address worldwide rather than national representation in its selection of artists, and be responsive to its historical and socio-geographical situation. Whether 'Magiciens' consistently fulfilled this demanding set of criteria is open to doubt, but together with the Bial de La Habana of the same year it marked a point after which large-scale exhibitions could only ignore these issues wilfully and out of contempt for large parts of the world.

²⁵⁸ J.-H. Martin, quoted in Fabrice Hergott, 'Réponses au questionnaire: "Accrocher une oeuvre d'art"', *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, no.17–18, 1986 ('L'Oeuvre et son accrochage'), p.207.

Contributing an essay to the same issue of the *Cahiers*, Catherine David suggested that 'The terminology of the 1970s (installation, environment, in situ) does not truly do justice to the pertinence, originality and diversity of contemporary works [a decade later] that proceed, rather, by what one might call the "invention" of place.'²⁵⁹ Shifting the focus of this comment from art of the 1980s to exhibitions following 'Magiciens de la Terre', we might see the invention or reinvention of the city as a task that would be made the responsibility of the transnational project-based show. Since 1989, it is often on this basis that such shows have secured funding, which in some ways validates Krauss's critique that the development and spread of biennials affirms the globalisation of art in the service of capital. However, there was and is no going back to forms of Western liberalism that pre-date this moment, and Catherine David might be said to make this argument in her 1997 documenta X – an argument paradoxically strengthened by the vehemence with which Krauss has targeted this exhibition.²⁶⁰

Exhibitions following the model of 'Magiciens' are also projects in their core reliance on the convening of collective artistic labour to deliver the final results. While the commissioning or installing of much of the art that we may describe as having transnational projecthood might make this seem inevitable, Martin's statement that the relations established between works in an installation define our understanding of them pushes this further, arguing that an exhibition is more than the sum of its individual artworks. However partial the success of 'Magiciens' was in these terms, the bringing together of so many geopolitically diverse artists for the installation period remains highly significant. As Richard Long – an artist involved in 'Op Losse Schroeven', 'When Attitudes Become Form' and documenta 5, so a contributor to project-based exhibitions from early on – has put it:

*I had a strange experience. Completely by chance, a month later, I had to come back through Paris and I went back to see the show. Without the artists it seemed rather sad and empty, even though the work was still interesting. The best time of it was being there when the show was being made.*²⁶¹

4. Framing the Exhibition: Autour de l'exposition²⁶²

From its launch in 1977, the Centre Pompidou prided itself on the effective communication of its endeavours to both specialist and non-specialist audiences. 'Magiciens de la Terre' not only had its two compelling straplines – 'the first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art' and 'one exhibition, two

²⁵⁹ C. David, 'L'Invention du lieu', *ibid.*, p.118.

²⁶⁰ documenta X, Kassel, 21 June–28 September 1997. Krauss takes this exhibition as a focus for criticism in *Under Blue Cup*, *op. cit.*, further describing David as 'the antagonist to this book's crusade' (p.84).

²⁶¹ R. Long in conversation with the author, 21 March 2008.

²⁶² 'Around the exhibition' is the title that was given to the final page of the *Petit journal* where further contextual material and events programmed in connection with the exhibition were listed, *op. cit.*, p.13.

venues' – but it was also given distinctive visual branding by designer Peter Saville. Celebrated for his work for Factory Records amongst others, Saville gave the show a strong logo that would feature on all the material produced to accompany the exhibition – from the catalogue to entry tickets, headed stationery and banners adorning the façades of both venues. In its fullest form, the logo involves a wandering yellow line that turns into a spiral – derived from a drawing by Laumu Baiga, an Indian artist not ultimately included in the exhibition²⁶³ – and this hovers above a purple mountain range, created by tinting the photograph of a geography model snapped from above. The accompanying exhibition title takes a serif font, in lower case, with the 'casual classicism ... on-trend for 1980s postmodernism'.²⁶⁴

p.215

Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne dedicated an issue to the exhibition ahead of its opening, edited by Yves Michaud independently of the Centre Pompidou's curatorial team, although several of the contributing authors seem likely to have been proposed by Martin or Francis and the publication was advertised in literature accompanying the show.²⁶⁵ Following a testing interview of Martin by Benjamin Buchloh,²⁶⁶ there were three essays on art in specific regions distant from France by individuals from these regions (Mundine on indigenous art in Australia, Nanjo on Japan, Jain on Madhubani painting), three Western writers on contemporary art who had some specialism in work being made outside of or marginalised within these regions (Brett, Fisher and Lippard), three essays by European and North American anthropologists (Louis Perrois, Sally Price and Severi) and a further two essays, one by the editor and one by Clifford, whose influential book on twentieth-century ethnography and art, *The Predicament of Culture*, had appeared the year before. Almost the whole issue would be released near simultaneously in English by *Third Text*, with an additional introductory essay by Araeen – a move that was significant for the reception of the exhibition across the Channel and the Atlantic.²⁶⁷

The catalogue produced to accompany the show contained commissioned essays as well as texts by Martin, his deputy and two assistant curators.²⁶⁸ Pierre Gaudibert was invited to write out of deference to his earlier and

²⁶³ The artist is credited in the exhibition catalogue, J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, op. cit., p.2.

²⁶⁴ Peter Saville in conversation with the author, 1 July 2009. The designer described the purple as a response to Yves Klein's blue and, by extension, as intended to reference the artist's interest in the elemental and the void, which seemed to offer 'a way out of postmodern hybridisation and ornamentalism'.

²⁶⁵ See *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, no.28, Spring 1989 ('Magiciens de la Terre').

²⁶⁶ See this volume, pp.224–37. Martin gave numerous interviews ahead of the exhibition, speaking not only to Buchloh but also, for example, to Jérôme Sans (*Flash Art*) and, with Francis, to Marianne Brouwer and Paul Groot (*Museumjournaal*).

²⁶⁷ See *Third Text*, vol.3, no.6, Spring 1989 ('Special Issue: Magiciens de la Terre').

²⁶⁸ Installation plans, not quite reflecting the final exhibition layout, are reproduced in the catalogue and Luque's text there works in conjunction with these. Pages from the travel diaries of Martin and Magnin are reproduced in the booklet

related curatorial interests;²⁶⁹ Soulillou contributed on the basis of his connection to certain African artists in the exhibition;²⁷⁰ Bhabha expanded an existing essay under the new title of 'Hybridity, Heterogeneity and Contemporary Culture'; and Thomas McEvilley developed his previous critique of MoMA's "Primitivism" exhibition by adding reasons to hope that 'Magiciens' might represent a postmodern retort to the earlier show's modernism. A brief extract from McEvilley's essay and from Martin's interview in the *Cahiers* were also reproduced in the *Petit journal*.

Arguably the major effort and gamble of the catalogue is the collage of existing images and texts contributed by Bernard Marcadé, as the result of extensive discussions with Martin. The section was conceived in eighteen chapters, each given a double-page spread and dedicated to different themes that 'seemed important for putting the exhibition into (historical and critical) perspective', from 'primitivism' and 'exoticism' to 'issues of the object in the era of globalisation' via 'colonialism' and 'wars of liberation'.²⁷¹ The material, culled from the fields of anthropology, philosophy, literature, art, cinema and the press, was then assembled in conjunction with designer Ruedi Baur into 'a constellation of texts and images so as to form conversations between them'.²⁷² If this work has been largely ignored, it is perhaps because it defies conventional discursive form, but equally perhaps also because its attempt to map Western views of non-Western cultures both visually and in text could be seen to reiterate – without questioning – those very views.²⁷³

The rest and indeed the majority of the catalogue is made up of artists' pages, with each spread typically displaying an image together with a panel of information.²⁷⁴ Almost all artists have a small map of the world on their pages, with a large dot indicating their place of residence and, importantly, with the version of the map shifting so that every dot appears near the centre.²⁷⁵ Several artists living or working in Europe or the US resisted giving their place of birth, nationality and place of residence, and often

that accompanied the video-catalogue, and interviews with selected artists feature here too.

²⁶⁹ J.-H. Martin, in conversation with the author, 7 September 2011, referred to the commission as 'something of a homage'.

²⁷⁰ He also writes on several of the African artists in the exhibition – Chukwukelu, Tokoudagba, Twins Seven Seven and Unya – on their catalogue pages.

²⁷¹ Bernard Marcadé, in email exchange with the author, 16 and 18 February 2009.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ In a footnote Terry Smith notably describes it as 'an extraordinary "museum without walls" album of colonialist imagery'. See T. Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*, New York: Independent Curators International, 2012, p.118.

²⁷⁴ James Lee Byars avoids such representation and contributes only the letters 'JHMBPF0MDFF' at the opening of the catalogue in a font so small that it is barely legible. This replicates the text engraved at the centre of the golden expanse of his work at the Centre Pompidou, suggesting that 'Jean-Hubert Martin bought perfection for 0 million dollars for France'.

²⁷⁵ Byars, Brouwn, Kiefer and Long are the exceptions.

responded playfully (for example, Ulay states 'the world is my country', while his dot is firmly placed over North West Europe). Most of the artists have a short text about their work, written by different named individuals, and each artist typically contributes a definition of art, as requested by Weiner. Described in the exhibition literature as 'An Atlas: The Catalogue of Works and Artists', the publication was a large and lavish object.

Cheaper to purchase and more novel in form was the video-catalogue.²⁷⁶ Almost an hour long and as lavishly produced as the book catalogue, it features almost a fifth of the artists, typically filmed producing or installing their work. Some answer questions and a few – notably the most distinctively dressed – are shown out and about in Paris more broadly. There is a suspicious emphasis on artists new to or defining themselves in distinction to the West, but Abramović, Boltanski, Long and Paik also feature. Taking the curatorial emphasis on individual artistic practice to a frustrating extreme, the video makes no particular attempt to portray the overall installation or relate the works to each other. Nonetheless, there are exceptional moments in which artists come together. The only actual conversation is between Mahlanghu and the wife of Ben Junior, who have an exchange about clothes and, in doing so, trip over their cultural differences. More evocative of the curatorial intent behind the exhibition is an extended moment in which one of the Nepalese monks hovers silently alongside the Australian artists working on their ground painting – he studies their materials, not so different from his own.

Footage of participating artists working in other environments was included in the accompanying film programme put together for the Centre Pompidou by Jean-Michel Bouhours and Gisèle Breteau.²⁷⁷ This included monographic documentaries about the work of Kane Kwei, Long, Merz and Vilaine, as well as documentaries on painting in what was then Zaire, or on Navajo sand painting, indigenous Australian culture, African masks, and Vodun or Tibetan rituals. These ethnographic works were complicated by footage by Maya Deren and the films of Jean Rouch. Scarcely any films presented the cultures of the film-makers themselves, specifically only David Byrne's *True Stories* (1987, a loose response to tabloid tales set in a fictional US town) and Dziga Vertov's *Sestaja čast' mira* (*A Sixth Part of the World*, 1926, a travelogue bringing together footage shot across the USSR). Notable as bids to open up normative Western culture were Len Lye's *Tusalava* (1929), abstract filmmaking under the influence of Australian Aboriginal art, and Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Medea* (1969), a rethinking of European culture through an African imaginary. In addition, the programme gave the public the opportunity to see filmwork by artists exhibiting in the galleries,²⁷⁸ and, in the

²⁷⁶ Martin has uploaded several clips of the footage to YouTube. Some of the same footage, together with additional material, plus a soundtrack and an introduction by Martin, features in an Italian film. An excerpt can be watched online at <http://vimeo.com/14421900> (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

²⁷⁷ Afternoon screenings took place in the Centre Pompidou's Cinéma du musée during the first two months of the exhibition.

case of Marc Allégret and André Gide's *Voyage au Congo* (1928), to see the film referenced in the 'special project' commissioned for the galleries from Baldessari.²⁷⁹ Yet, while the programme includes some fascinating material and is historically wide-ranging, it is remarkable that so little diasporic or indigenous post-colonial film found its way into the Centre Pompidou. It seems that while the exhibition sought a genuine balance between Western and non-Western production in terms of art, cinema was presented more narrowly, privileging Western (especially European) depictions of non-Western cultural forms. By ignoring important examples of non-Western filmmaking, the critique of the exhibition as naively searching for an authentic, 'unmodernised' voice outside Europe and North America is reinforced.

Finally, a round-table discussion was staged three weeks into the exhibition's run.²⁸⁰ On the panel, moderated by Daniel Soutif, the core curatorial team was joined by five other participants, including advisor Fei and, less intrinsic to the project, the art theorist Thierry de Duve, for example.²⁸¹ The list of themes to be approached included: 'the notion of authenticity; the displacement of artists outside of their geographical and cultural context; tradition and the avant-garde; the split between urban and rural art; purity of art and the market for art'. The event presumably also picked up on issues raised in the colloquium held a week before, in which a dozen 30-minute papers were given by exhibiting artists, contributors to the *Cahiers* and catalogue as well as additional art critics, ethnographers and theorists.²⁸² The first day's discussion was billed as 'Artists in Societies: The Diversity of Aesthetic Criteria'; the second as 'Alterity, Identity and Cross-fertilisation'. Araeen's blasting contribution in the first session of the first day would echo throughout proceedings, with Bhabha, Nanjo and Spivak all referring back to it in their own

²⁷⁸ Films by Abramović/Ulay, Boltanski, Horn, Kirkeby, Oldenburg, Spoerri, Teshigahara and Wodiczko were included.

²⁷⁹ On his website, Baldessari describes his contribution to the exhibition, *Two Stories (Yellow and Blue) and Commentary (With Giraffe)* (1989), as both an installation and a special project. See http://www.baldessari.org/special_proj.htm (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

²⁸⁰ Programmed for 3–6 pm on 10 June 1989 in the larger basement room of the Centre Pompidou.

²⁸¹ Also Chérif Khaznadar, theatre director and founder of the Maison des Cultures du Monde, Gaudibert and Michaud, all billed with their nationality (French), like the other contributors (Chinese, Belgian and English). Members of the press, without these or their associated publications being named, are also noted as participants.

²⁸² Programmed for 3 and 4 June 1989 in the smaller basement room of the Centre Pompidou. Speaking on the first day were Brett, Adriana Valdés, Araeen (referred to as coming from Paskistan, although the catalogue gives his nationality as Pakistani/British, describing him as born in Karachi and living in London), Maestre Didi, Lucien Stephan, Jain and Francesco Pellizzi, with Martin providing opening words and with discussion chaired by Severi. Speaking on the second day were Robert Farris Thompson, Remo Guidieri, Bhabha, Spivak, Soullillou and Nanjo, with discussion chaired by Khaznadar who, along with Martin and Severi, provided a conclusion.

contributions.²⁸³ Setting the tenor for the discussions, when Martin introduced Araeen, he described the artist's work as combining European and traditional codes, suggesting that Europe connoted the avant-garde and that tradition was associated with elsewhere.²⁸⁴ In response to the challenging assertions made in Araeen's paper, Martin moved to cite modernism as the Western tradition, while ignoring the impact and reuse of modernism beyond Western confines.²⁸⁵ Here, the political dimension to what 'Magiciens de la Terre' had undertaken as if it were non-political comes to the fore. The idea that certain modernist principles, such as the neutrality of the gallery space – and that underlying modern assumptions about what constitutes freedom, equality or social progress – indicate universal values, is exposed, through Araeen's criticism, as untenable.

5. *Project Legacy: Is There Life after Death?*²⁸⁶

'Magiciens de la Terre' was well attended but not exceptionally so.²⁸⁷ Yet the press response was copious and widespread, with over 120 articles in France and nearly 150 internationally, plus additional television coverage in France, Belgium, England, Japan and Mexico.²⁸⁸ The subject of the show filled five pages in *Libération* shortly after opening, with editorial comment, reviews, interviews and features.²⁸⁹ Most articles published in areas of the world less commonly contributing artists to such a forum welcomed the occasion. Even the Cuban *Juventud Rebelde*, founded by Fidel Castro, included a celebratory text, together with photographs by their reporter.²⁹⁰ Of course praise was sometimes qualified. K.K. Man Jusu, writing an opinion piece in the state-run daily of Côte d'Ivoire, *Fraternité Matin*, welcomed the 'oppor-

²⁸³ For Gayatri Spivak's contribution to this colloquium, 'Looking at Others', see this volume, pp.260–66.

²⁸⁴ Audio recording in bibliothèque Kandinsky, CGP: cassette BS 424 [1], side A.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, cassette BS 424 [2], side A.

²⁸⁶ The cover of *Artscribe International*, no.77, September–October 1989, carried the words 'Baudrillard: Is There Life after Death?' underneath a line flagging a review of the exhibition, specifically 'Magicians in Paris'. The author of the review published inside, Clémentine Deliss, condemns the show, concluding that Buren's critical catalogue contribution and his quizzical work for the Centre Pompidou, installed in the final space in the galleries, offered the last word on the show ('Conjuring Tricks: "Magiciens de la Terre"', p.53).

²⁸⁷ In a letter to Munyaradzi a few days after 'Magiciens' closed, Magnin writes that 'almost a hundred thousand visitors attended the exhibition', presumably giving figures for La Villette alone (CGP archives, box 95026/164). More than double this number (205,206) visited the exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, according to its activity reports for the year; however, more attended the preceding Tinguely exhibition (231,716), which was open for a similar period.

²⁸⁸ There are three hard-bound books compiling copies of the press coverage. See bibliothèque Kandinsky, CGP: IN-4 6007, IN-4 6008, IN-4 6009. For an assessment of the reception, see Jean-Marc Poinso's contribution to this volume, 'Review of the Paradigms and Interpretative Machine, or, The Critical Development of "Magiciens de la Terre"', pp.94–108.

²⁸⁹ *Libération*, no.2493, 28 May 1989, pp.32–36.

²⁹⁰ Alejandro G. Alonso, 'Magiciens de la Terre', *Juventud Rebelde*, 2 July 1989.

tunity for cultural dialogue ... even if we regret that the organisers insist a bit too much on the opposition of Western culture and cultural "others".²⁹¹ Sandra Lancman, a Brazilian artist and art historian based in Paris, wrote two articles for *Infos Brésil*, a French periodical, and was generally positive, although she found 'real dialogue between all these juxtaposed universes' to be lacking, being troubled specifically by the staging of religiously ritualistic practice within the given 'mise-en-scène'.²⁹² Such criticisms notwithstanding, the global ambition of the exhibition was well-received around the world and often presented as a news item as well as featuring in cultural reviews. The specialist art press gave considerable space to the exhibition, with whole issues of respected titles dedicated to it and surrounding concerns.²⁹³ Previews were extended and developed through reviews and then retrospective reflections on the show, with these discussions becoming an essential part of the exhibition's legacy.

While 'Magiciens de la Terre' may not have been built on clear theoretical foundations, theory was clearly put to good use in response.²⁹⁴ In a catalogue for another exhibition that opened later that year, Gavin Jantjes wrote that 'Magiciens' 'laid open the Western/Eurocentric consciousness like a surgeon dissecting his own body without an anaesthetic',²⁹⁵ and many would subsequently step in to ease the patient's pain or intensify the operation. Cesare Poppi offered critical 'afterthoughts' on the exhibition in 1991, for instance, setting it up as 'a paradigm of postmodernist trends in the visual arts' in order to highlight its aporias as regards global history and power differentials.²⁹⁶ His essay appeared in *Third Text*, the journal that focused a whole issue preemptively on the show in 1989, and indeed debate of the exhibition continued in this forum for a number of years.²⁹⁷ In the final chapter of Peter Wollen's book *Raiding the Icebox: Reflections on Twentieth Century Culture*, published two years after Poppi's article, 'Magiciens' would be presented as a showcase for 'what we might call the global development of "para-tourist" art, alongside and as an alternative to the postmodernism of the core', of 'the old colonial empires'.²⁹⁸ A decade on from the show and Okwui Enwezor and Olu Oguibe would open the introduction to their anthology *Reading*

²⁹¹ K.K. Man Jusu, 'Félix [sic.] Bruly Bouabré: "Magicien de la Terre"', *Fraternité Matin*, 5 June 1989.

²⁹² Sandra Lancman, 'Magiciens de la Terre, côté jardin...', *Infos Brésil*, July–August 1989.

²⁹³ May's *artpress*, carried a dossier on 'Magiciens de la Terre' and July's *Art in America* – packaged as 'The Global Issue' – provided extensive coverage of the show.

²⁹⁴ In interview a year after the exhibition, Martin suggested that 'the show was deliberately intended to set off a debate – that was the idea'. J.-H. Martin in 'Overheard', *op. cit.*, p.111.

²⁹⁵ G. Jantjes, 'Red Rags to the Bull', *op. cit.*, p.127.

²⁹⁶ C. Poppi, 'From the Suburbs of the Global Village', *op. cit.*, p.87.

²⁹⁷ See, for instance, texts in *Third Text* by Gerardo Mosquera (vol.6, no.21, Winter 1992–93), John Picton (vol.7, no.23, Summer 1993), Stuart Hall (vol.13, no.49, Winter 1999–2000), R. Araeen (vol.14, no.50, Spring 2000) and Andrew Budge (vol.16, no.58, March 2002).

²⁹⁸ P. Wollen, *Raiding the Icebox*, *op. cit.*, p.191.

the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to the Marketplace by citing the exhibition, summarily assessing it as an attempt to be postmodern that neglected to be postcolonial, before going on to note that 'Many of the texts contained in the present volume were written in the days following "Magiciens de la Terre" and have created a textual network through which Martin's articulation can be better understood', if not always appreciated.²⁹⁹

Consistently overlooked is the fact that the Western world spent the following decade continuing to produce showcase exhibitions for the art of marginalised nations or continents, before catching up in the new millennium with ideas of the transnationally global. The facilitating drive that boldly brought together so many artists from so many places and enabled them to present major work is also all too often neglected. Moreover, the physical and discursive afterlife of the art given public exposure in 'Magiciens de la Terre' proves worthy of further study, while the legacy overall is due for reconsideration.

While certain artists' projects resulted in temporary installations that were painted over or disposed of after the show's end – including those by Long, Huang, Mahlangu and Weiner, for example – a significant number of works became available for acquisition. Some that had been purchased for the purposes of display with the exhibition's funds, without being accessioned in the process, actively needed homes, as did those by artists who didn't intend to keep them afterwards, and for which return costs had not been budgeted. The Centre Pompidou's Musée national d'art moderne, together with the show's major sponsor, Canal+, had their pick. Founding a start-up collection for Canal+, the company's president André Rousselet selected a significant number of works, including all those identified as 'tantric paintings' (25 by Sharma and nine by Vyakul), further paintings by Samba and Yang, painted wooden sculpture by Efiambelo and Agbagli Kossi, so-called ethno-syncretic work by Spoerri, which incorporated African and Australasian masks, and a photo-based triptych by Araeen.³⁰⁰

fig.22; 113 and 26
fig.103, 86
fig.94
fig.112

Acquisition for the French national collection was more complicated because a purchasing committee had to be persuaded, against a historical background of nearly exclusive Western interests. Martin chaired the committee but

²⁹⁹ O. Enwezor and O. Oguibe, 'Introduction' to Oguibe and Enwezor (ed.), *Reading the Contemporary*, *op. cit.*, p.9. Online at http://www.iniva.org/publications_prints/voices_on_art_amp_culture/reading_the_contemporary/introduction_reading_the_contemporary (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

³⁰⁰ The sales list for works displayed by Jean-Marc Patras in Paris in 2002 additionally details work by Bowa Devi, Cleitus Dambi/Nick Dumbrang/Ruedi Wem, the Linares family, Sharma and Twins Seven Seven. Archival research at the Centre Pompidou by Benjamin Barbier (Labex Arts H2H) further indicates that work by Kuniulusee, for instance, was purchased by Canal+ from the show. Information distributed in conjunction with 'Magiciens de la Terre' announced that half of the sum donated by the company would go towards the purchase of works, but it is not made clear whether this was for display in the exhibition or for starting up the Canal+ collection; see 'Par ses liens uniques...', *op. cit.*

fig.35

fig.87

fig.33–34; 18

fig.53; 51 and 57

fig.36 and 17

fig.101 and 83

fig.85; 113 and 37;
59–60

fig.33 and 34; 36

found most of his institution's curators against him.³⁰¹ A painting by Polke had been reserved for the collection prior to the exhibition, but there was a moment in the meeting when it looked as if no other works would be acquired.³⁰² Nonetheless, the following were ultimately agreed upon in addition to the Polke: a wall-mounted iron relief by Bien Aimé, drawings by Bouabré, a sculpture/sceptre by Maestre Didi, two blackwood figures by Fundi, the bark painting by Jambruk and his co-workers, the installation by Kabakov, a whalebone sculpted by Kuniliusee, the onion-shaped coffin by Kane Kwei, three pastel drawings by Malich, a freestanding iron relief by Pereira Rego, a canvas by Samba, a throne by Vilaire and a work on paper by Zush.³⁰³ Some of these have not been exhibited since, and the vast bark painting shown at La Villette, for instance, has never been on display at the Centre Pompidou. By contrast, the works by Bouabré and Kabakov, artists unknown in Paris at the time, have been much seen and widely celebrated and discussed.

fig.90–91

fig.67

fig.52

The implications of 'Magiciens' for the collecting policies of Western museums of modern art inspired cautious marvelling at the time – a sentiment underlying a UK review of the show by a curator at London's Tate Gallery, perhaps.³⁰⁴ A few institutions in regional cities responded to the opportunity, with the Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon gaining two large-scale donations (the twelve painted cement figures by Akpan and the installation of recycled plastic by Gu), for instance, while Frans Haks, the founding director of the Groninger Museum, purchased works by at least five non-Western contributors to the exhibition for this new collection.³⁰⁵ A Kingelez maquette was bought for 10,000 francs by Haks, after the artist's works had been valued at 2,000 francs by the curators a year before the show opened.³⁰⁶ However, profits like this, indeed sales of works at all, proved the exception rather than the rule at the time of the exhibition.³⁰⁷

Martin drew on contributions to 'Magiciens' that were still unclaimed in the early 1990s when working as the artistic director for the Château d'Oiron in

³⁰¹ J.-H. Martin in 'Overheard', *op. cit.*, p.110.

³⁰² J.-H. Martin in conversation with the author, 7 September 2011.

³⁰³ Document titled 'Oeuvres de l'exposition "Magiciens de la terre" présentées par Jean-Hubert Martin à la commission d'acquisition du MNAM Centre Pompidou le 5 septembre 1989', provided by Martin. Martin's document additionally indicates that works by Lakhdar, Felipe Linares and Munyaradzi were considered for the collection but rejected, as were further works by Bien Aimé and Kane Kwei.

³⁰⁴ Jeremy Lewison, 'Paris and Cologne: "Bildertreit" and "Magiciens de la Terre"', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol.31, no.1037, August 1989, pp.585–87.

³⁰⁵ Document titled 'Oeuvres de l'exposition...' provided by Martin. According to this, the Groninger Museum acquired work by Maestre Didi, Kingelez, the Linares family, Unya/Emeden and perhaps also Shyam.

³⁰⁶ Sales document and a handwritten sheet titled 'Bodys Kingelez' (*sic.*), CGP archives, box 95026/164.

³⁰⁷ In a similarly striking way, although presenting an opposing scenario, Araeen, in conversation with the author and P. Lafuente, 16 June 2008, angrily recalled the destruction of several of his works after the exhibition's close.

western France. There he exhibited work by Bouabré, Kingelez, Kane Kwei and Linares in the display that inaugurated the building in 1993, 'Curios & Mirabilia'. Five years later these were added to the Fonds national d'art contemporain, the French collection of contemporary art for loan.

Before leaving the Centre Pompidou and the Musée national d'art moderne,³⁰⁸ Martin had donated works including Tokoudagba's painted cement figures to the Musée national des arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie. When he became the director of this institution in 1994, his successors at the Centre Pompidou proved keen to pass on further works on permanent loan.³⁰⁹ In this way, work celebrated for its status as global contemporary art by the curators of 'Magiciens' in 1989 was set back within a timeless and geographically marginalised frame, with the lead curator temporarily accompanying them as ambassador. The MNAAO collections merged with those from the ethnographic department of the Musée de l'Homme and were moved to the Musée du quai Branly in 2003, where they were gathered under the rubric of 'the arts and civilisations of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas'.³¹⁰ The website for this institution now lists over a hundred drawings by Bouabré, donated by the Management Association of the Grande Halle de La Villette and previously in the collection of the MNAAO,³¹¹ presumably those not purchased by the Centre Pompidou, whose website lists thirteen.³¹²

fig.81-82

fig.33 and 34

If 'Magiciens' is to be seen as a project in a new mode that would take hold in the ensuing era of global aesthetic capital, then we might note how limited the returns have been for the Centre Pompidou, Paris and France. Given that the exhibition was announced as heralding a planetary scope that we might recognise in today's art world, 'Magiciens' is conspicuous for not leading to many of the benefits that might have been anticipated at the time of its shifting to coincide with the bicentennial of the French Revolution. After 1989, Paris did not become the new centre of European creative industries, nor did it manage to renew its former status as the most significant art-world hub. The failure to accrue artistic capital on the back of the show is perhaps most clearly highlighted by certain belated purchases made for Musée national d'art moderne. For instance, in 2006 the museum acquired *Takis (C.G. Pompidou)* (1982) by Samba, which questions both European progress and African invention while referencing an exhibition that the artist saw at the Centre in 1982. This painting, bought for approx-

fig.113

³⁰⁸ When Martin's contract came up for review the year after 'Magiciens', it was not renewed. For a discussion of this see J.-H. Martin in 'Overheard', *op. cit.*, p.110.

³⁰⁹ J.-H. Martin in conversation with the author, 7 September 2011.

³¹⁰ http://www.quaibranly.fr/uploads/tx.../BROCHURE-STIT_GB_WEB.pdf (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

³¹¹ <http://www.quaibranly.fr/cc/pod/recherche.aspx?b=1&t=1> (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

³¹² http://www.centrepompidou.fr/cpv/ressource.action?sessionId=6BBC974D20883A5916E14001F0EF5EB1?param.id=FR_R-8b6e5125b6ca9b3e51ede423d126b7e¶m.idSource=FR_P-8b6e5125b6ca9b3e51ede423d126b7e (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

imately 20,000 euros,³¹³ complements the one acquired for the collection from the ten gathered for 'Magiciens' and costing significantly less at this time: 6,000 francs.³¹⁴

fig.113

fig.26

Similar works were acquired at the same price in 1989 by Canal+ and then sold on, together with others from the show, a little over a decade later, for considerable profit.³¹⁵ Initially Rousselet had collected works from 'Magiciens' with the intention of displaying them and they were duly installed in the Canal+ headquarters, a flagship building designed by Richard Meier and constructed 1984–92. However, the architect apparently complained and, highlighting the relevant clause in his contract, exercised the right to veto the art hung in the space. The paintings by Samba and other works from 'Magiciens' were then kept in storage until Rousselet left the company, when they were sold off. The four works by Yang, for instance, raised some 100,000 euros, the three by Samba a little more.³¹⁶

In terms of the individual trajectories of the artists and curators following the exhibition, it is abundantly clear that 'Magiciens de la Terre' had a major effect on many of those involved. While Samba knew commercial success prior to the show, he has described being 'propelled into the international art world' by it.³¹⁷ Playing a crucial role in this and in the newfound success of Bouabré, Kingelez and other artists from Africa in particular was Magnin, who has moved into managing the sales and circulation of their works – at first crucially supported by, or working for collector Jean Pigozzi. According to a story that is often told, the businessman came to see the show on its final day and, apparently stunned by the African art on display, practically employed Magnin on the spot to start a collection for him.³¹⁸ Archival documents tell their own version of this story, although without mentioning the funder's name: four days after the exhibition had closed, the assistant curator wrote to Munyaradzi to commission more sculptures like those displayed in 'Magiciens', typing on paper bearing the show's branding but adding by hand at the bottom his home address and a request for reply.³¹⁹ In Magnin's own

³¹³ J.-M. Patras in conversation with the author, 10 October 2012. Patras sold the work on behalf of Jean-François Bizot, who – having invited the artist to Paris – commissioned twenty paintings from him for reproduction in *Actuel* (no.33–34, 1982).

³¹⁴ 'Prix unitaire des oeuvres achetées', *op. cit.*

³¹⁵ J.-M. Patras, in email correspondence with the author, 28 October 2012, reports them selling for 34–40,000 euros each in the period 2000–03.

³¹⁶ Approximate figures mentioned by Patras, who narrated this account of what happened to the Canal+ collection in conversation with the author, 10 October 2012.

³¹⁷ C. Samba in response to questions posed by the author, 18 December 2008.

³¹⁸ All the members of the curatorial team have a version of this story and it is also published, for instance, in J. Picton, 'In Vogue, or the Flavour of the Month', *op. cit.*, p.94 (and p.120 in reprint). For Magnin's own version see 'A Prospecting Life', *op. cit.*, pp.26–27, and online.

³¹⁹ A. Magnin in letter to Henry Munyaradzi, 18 August 1989; see CGP archives, box 95026/164.

words, he took on 'the prospecting life' by working in Africa for the new collector,³²⁰ who would later adopt the role of patron, while Magnin himself effectively developed into a dealer in African art with a stable of successful artists. He visited Efiambelo annually for the fifteen years between 'Magiciens' and the artist's death, leaving each time with several new works.³²¹ Pigozzi's collection rapidly became the major source for African art shown in contemporary art circles in Europe and North America, with Magnin not only doing all the liaising with the artists represented, but also curating several exhibitions from amongst the works included.³²² Now known as the Contemporary African Art Collection, it has remained almost definitive for certain artists and perhaps a certain era, with Enwezor, for example, borrowing two 'cities' of maquettes by Kingezele and approximately 1,500 drawings by Bouabré for Documenta 11 in 2002.³²³

Contrary to Araeen's predictions in the exhibition colloquium, 'Magiciens de la Terre' gave a significant number of artists lasting access to the Western scene for contemporary art.³²⁴ For example, Huang has said: 'This exhibition was a turning point in my art career ... It informed the way I worked in the 1990s, as I travelled round the world and participated in various shows. It also taught me how to be accepted in the international art world as well as to resist it, to keep myself myself but at the same time to overcome myself.'³²⁵ Huang would represent France at the Venice Biennale in 1999. Of the three Chinese artists included in the exhibition, only Gu returned to his country as planned: the others stayed on in France as political exiles following the Tiananmen Square massacre, which took place during the opening weeks of the show. Other artists in the exhibition who returned home after its opening would also be given opportunities in Europe, North America and increasingly worldwide as a result of their work's exposure in Paris.³²⁶ Bouabré has described the show as making him something of a

³²⁰ A. Magnin, 'A Prospecting Life', *op. cit.*, p.22 and online.

³²¹ A. Magnin in conversation with Sophie Barnett, 30 April 2008; text shared with the author by Magnin.

³²² See, for instance 'Out of Africa: The Jean Pigozzi Contemporary African Art Collection' at the Saatchi Collection, London in 1992 (with five of the eleven artists having shown in 'Magiciens') and 'Worlds Envisioned', co-curated by Magnin and Lynne Cooke for Dia Center for the Arts, New York in 1995 (pairing Bouabré and Boetti).

³²³ A. Magnin, email correspondence with the author, 12 October 2012. Magnin ceased to be the curator of the CAAC in 2008, working since as an independent dealer and curator. A gateway to the artists he represents, Magnin acted as a go-between for some of the research on the African participation undertaken for this publication.

³²⁴ Audio recording in bibliothèque Kandinsky, CGP: cassette BS 424 [1], side B.

³²⁵ Huang Y.P. in response to questions posed by the author, 18 April 2008, trans. James Kao.

³²⁶ Bedia, Bouabré, Huang, Kabakov, Kingezele, Mahlangu and Samba all described it as a transformative event for their careers (responding between 14 April 2008 and 16 November 2010 to questions posed by the author). Meireles, who had been exhibiting internationally since the 1970s, noted the importance of the

celebrity,³²⁷ indicating the potential for transnational fame as a contemporary artist. Clearly, outside a neoliberal mindset, financial gains and opportunities for further income are not the only measure of success. After working with Martin several times following their 1989 experience, Ben Junior apparently told the curator that he had decided not to continue exhibiting his work publicly because he felt he was being turned into a circus act.³²⁸

A large number of Martin's curatorial endeavours following 'Magiciens de la Terre' echo the rhythm of the show. In a period of overlap between 'Curios & Mirabilia' at the Château d'Oiron and his new directorship at the Musée national des arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, he curated two exhibitions each of which he describes as responding to a different specific criticism levelled at his major project of 1989. The first addressed his denying non-Westerners a curatorial role and it included Bouabré and Tokoudagba, amongst several other artists; the second revised his earlier decontextualisation of the artists represented and Ben Junior, Bouabré and Huang were three of the five who participated.³²⁹ He then left the museum to curate the Lyon Biennial of 2000, which was in many senses a reassertion of the principles of 'Magiciens'.³³⁰ In his subsequent role leading the Museum Kunst Palast in Düsseldorf until 2006, his programme included an exhibition resulting from a collaboration between Long and Jivya Soma Mashe, the former staying with the latter in India at Martin's instigation, and also a show called 'Altäre: Kunst zum Niederknien' ('Altars: The Art of Kneeling', 2000), which Luque worked with him to produce.³³¹ Since then, major projects have included the Third Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, for which he curated an exhibition called 'Against Exclusion' – again seen as a rerun of 'Magiciens' and drawing similar responses.³³²

In 1991 Francis moved from Paris to Pittsburgh to co-curate the 51st edition of the Carnegie International with Lynne Cooke. His appointment can be seen as evidence of a desire to make 'International' mean worldwide rather than merely transatlantic,³³³ and demonstrates a determination to take up

exhibition to him on the basis of the 'huge and unexpected visibility' it gave his work (in response to questions posed by the author, 19 June 2008).

³²⁷ F.B. Bouabré in response to questions posed by the author, 26 April 2008. See p.275.

³²⁸ J.-H. Martin in conversation with P. Lafuente, 23 May 2008, *op. cit.*

³²⁹ 'Rencontres Africaines' at l'Institut du Monde Arabe in 1994 and 'la Galerie des Cinq Continents' at the Musée national des arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie in 1995.

³³⁰ 'Partage d'exotismes', Biennale d'art contemporain de Lyon, 27 June–24 September 2000. See <http://art2000.labiennaledelyon.com> (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

³³¹ 'Altäre: Kunst zum Niederknien', Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, 2 September 2001–6 January 2002.

³³² 'Against Exclusion: Third Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art', 25 September–25 October 2009, <http://3rd.moscowbiennale.ru/en> (last accessed on 18 December 2012). For critical responses, see, for instance, Christy Lange, '3rd Moscow Biennale', *frieze*, no.128, January–February 2010, pp.112–13, available at http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/3rd_moscow_biennale (last accessed on 1 November 2012).

the challenge of 'Magiciens' to produce a global show of contemporary art. In addition, like the Bienal de La Habana, the context was that of a recurrent exhibition, or renewable exhibition project. Vasif Kortun has described the Paris show as formative for his edition of the Istanbul Biennial in 1992: "'Magiciens' was decisive – the first major postcolonialist exhibition I knew at the time', and instructive because 'It had a lot of flaws.'"³³⁴ A considerable number of biennials would be established in the 1990s, from Johannesburg to Gwangju to Santa Fe, similarly taking their lead from 'Magiciens', or from the third Bienal de La Habana of the same year, or indeed from Kortun's own Istanbul Biennial. These events were all curated, transnational forums for recent art, representing a rejection or modification of the national-pavilion system established by the Venice Biennale, and increasingly they gave prominence to the role of a curator or curatorial group. Following 'Magiciens', these ambitious exhibitions showed a marked tendency to commission projects from artists that would dispel any focus on national particularities by addressing both the specificity of the display context and transnational issues and audiences. Unlike 'Magiciens', however, these shows characteristically took place in cities outside the major metropolitan centres of the West and focused more overtly on the economic and urban-development advantages that their locations derived from the events. By the start of the new millennium, the worldwide biennial boom was well established, provoking apparently endless debates about the nature and sustainability of global art practice, with 'Magiciens de la Terre' proving a constant, if constantly controversial, reference point.³³⁵

In the 1980s Paris had reason to work on its reputation for visual arts; New York dominated both the art market and English-language art discourse, and the 1989 exhibition seems to have been project-funded at least partly with an eye on North America. But the Anglo-American critique of 'Magiciens' was often censorious and Martin remarked a year on that 'Many in Paris rejected the show on the grounds of good taste'.³³⁶ Nonetheless, the polarising debate generated in response to the exhibition remains hugely significant and the show's legacy in exhibition practice is undeniable. Moreover, the trans-

³³³ Clearly the title of the US exhibition project maintains an emphasis on relationships between nations in a worldwide context, rather than attempting to relegate the nation-state as an entity through transnationalism.

³³⁴ Quoted in Carolee Thea (ed.), *Foci: Interviews with Ten International Curators*, New York: ApexArt Curatorial Program, 2001, p.59.

³³⁵ See, for instance, James Meyer et al., 'Global Tendencies; Globalism and the Large Scale Exhibition', *Artforum*, vol.42, no.3, November 2003, pp.152–63, 206 and 212; Elena Filipovic, 'The Global White Cube', in Barbara Vanderlinden and E. Filipovic (ed.), *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe*, Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2005, pp.63–84; and 'Biennialogy', in E. Filipovic, Marieke van Hal and Solveig Øvstebø (ed.), *The Biennial Reader: An Anthology on Large-Scale Perennial Exhibitions of Contemporary Art*, Bergen and Ostfildern-Ruit: Bergen Kunsthall and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010, pp.12–27.

³³⁶ J.-H. Martin in 'Overheard', *op. cit.*, p.110.

nationalism and projecthood that are identifiable retrospectively in the work of Beuys and Filliou, which inspired Martin's exhibition, can be seen as definitive for art celebrated globally in the ensuing era.

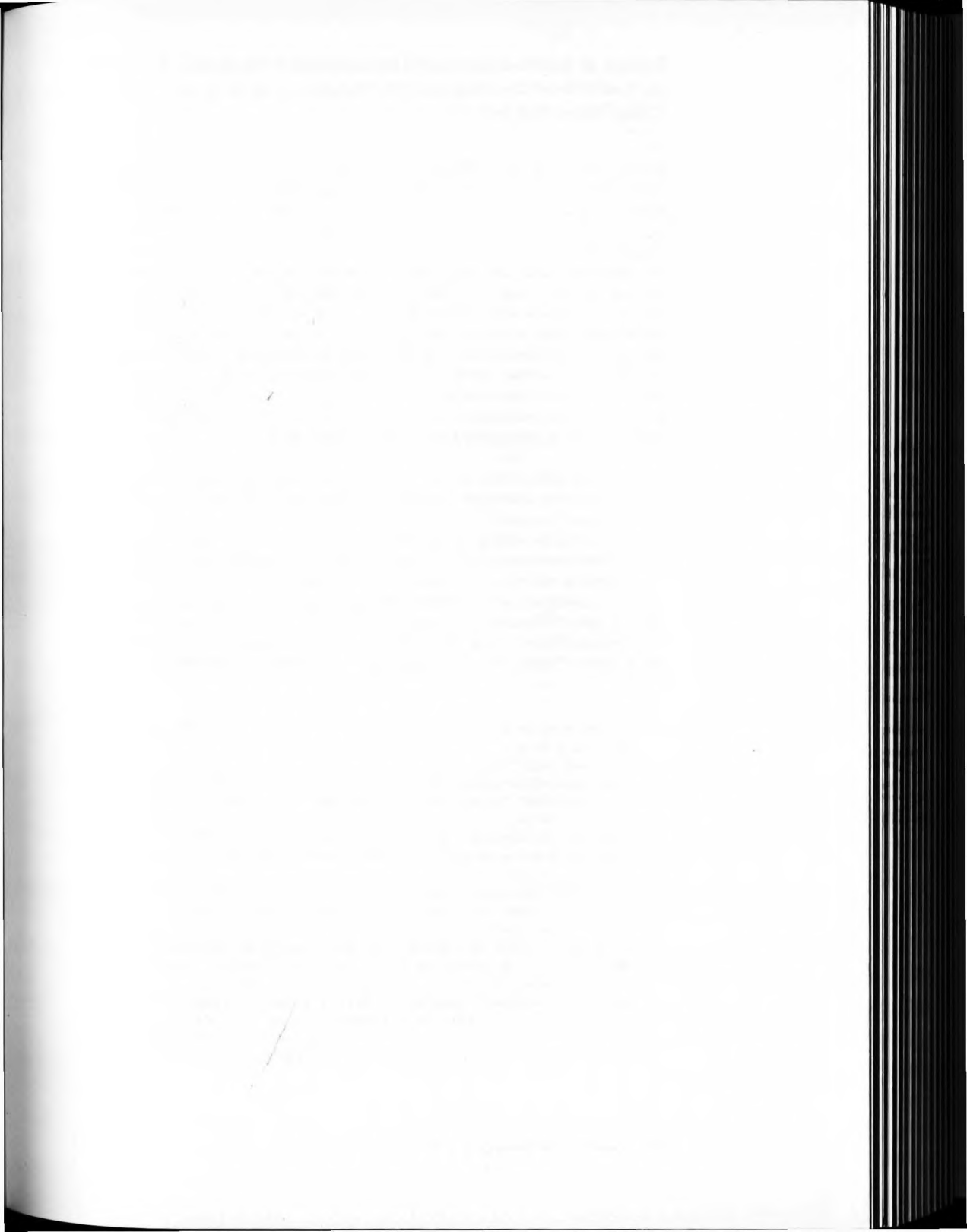
Transnational and project-based working might also be described, more broadly, as characterising the ideal for a world where the neoliberal globalisation of capital operates in tandem with the downsized yet still powerful nation state. Within contemporary art practice, the cultural tensions between transnationalism and a perceived need to update national identity were played out in the years after 1989. Recurrent exhibitions of British and American art were invented or expanded, often pushed in transnational directions by their curators. Something of this may also be seen in the latest and most obvious successor to 'Magiciens', the Triennial of contemporary art, Paris. When this exhibition project was launched in 2006, it was called 'La Force de l'art' and restricted exclusively to French artists. By its third edition, curated by Okwui Enwezor and inaugurated under the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy, it had become La Triennale.³³⁷ Its catalogue made overt reference to 'Magiciens de la Terre' as a historical precursor,³³⁸ while the foreword, written by Frédéric Mitterand – Sarkozy's Minister of Culture and Communication and François Mitterand's nephew – articulated the project's civic, global and yet resolutely national ambitions. Given increasing competition felt by Paris since 1989, the minister's opening sentence included a bid to bolster the city's cultural capital, hailing the Triennale as 'actively contributing to reinforce Paris's position on the international art stage'.³³⁹ The image of Sarkozy himself touring the exhibition ahead of its opening to the public may now be set alongside that of Martin getting the first glimmerings of his own curatorial project when touring the world almost half a century earlier. Sarkozy apparently praised 'the magic' surrounding him,³⁴⁰ describing what the dozen Project Partners – whose logos pepper the Triennale catalogue – had bought into: an idea of global creativity echoing that announced by 'Magiciens de la Terre' in 1989.

³³⁷ The exhibition, titled 'Intense Proximity' by Artistic Director Okwui Enwezor, was open from 20 April to 26 August 2012.

³³⁸ Part five is titled 'Curatorial License and Ethnographic Form: Exchanges on "Primitivism" and "Magiciens de la Terre"' and it anthologises a number of texts in connection with these two exhibitions. See O. Enwezor with Mélanie Bouteloup, Abdellah Karrou, Émilie Renard and Claire Staebler (ed.), *Intense Proximity* (exh. cat.) (English edition), Paris: Centre national des arts plastiques – Artlys, 2012, pp.295–355.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.9.

³⁴⁰ Reported by *The New York Times* in their column 'The Culture at Large': Elaine Sciolino, 'Sarkozy Praises "Magic" of the New Palais de Tokyo, Opening Thursday', 11 April 2012, available at <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/11sarkozy-praises-magic-of-the-new-palais-de-tokyo-opening-thursday/> (last accessed on 1 November 2012).



**Review of the Paradigms and Interpretative Machine,
or, The Critical Development of 'Magiciens de la Terre'**
—Jean-Marc Poinot

It is not by chance that 'Magiciens de la Terre' (1989) features among the emblematic exhibitions of the late twentieth century.¹ On the one hand, it made its appearance at a moment when modernist stances had been made extreme by being reduced to a restricted historical and geographical conception of Western space, and by a dogmatic recuperation of the so-called 'primitive' arts according to a single, simplistic reading.² On the other hand, in its discursive output, including the catalogue, and special issues of the journals *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* and *Third Text*, the exhibition called upon authors highly representative of antagonistic positions (critics, art historians, ethnologists and theoreticians) in order to discuss the globalisation of art.³ These authors, and many more who responded to the exhibition at the time and wrote about it subsequently, developed through their writings what 'Magiciens de la Terre' has become in the history of these past 25 years: a springboard and a forum for debate.

Its enduring influence is well illustrated, for example, by the 2012 edition of the Triennale that took place at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris under the title 'Intense Proximité: Une anthologie du proche et du lointain' ('Intense Proximity: An Anthology of the Near and the Faraway').⁴ The voluminous publication accompanying the show puts forward a set of issues and proposes a compilation of texts that return, under the unexplained section title of 'La Licence curatoriale et la pensée ethnographique' ('Curatorial Licence and Ethnographic Thought'), to discussions that emerged in relation to the exhibitions "'Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern' (1984–85) and 'Magiciens de la Terre'.⁵ The exhibition's long-

p.10

¹ I am thinking here of exhibitions such as 'When Attitudes Become Form', Kunsthalle Bern, 1969; 'Information', Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1970 and documenta 5, Kassel, 1972.

² We might thus contrast at one end of the spectrum 'Westkunst: Zeitgenössische Kunst seit 1939' ('Western Art: Contemporary Art since 1939'), held in Cologne in 1981, and on the other "'Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern', Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1984–85.

³ See *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, no.28, Spring 1989; *Third Text*, no.6, Spring 1989, p.7.

⁴ The exhibition was on view at the Palais de Tokyo and several other venues in Paris from 20 April to 26 August 2012; it was organised by Okwui Enwezor. It is worth noting in passing that the title of this event includes no indexing of place, in the same way that the name of the Musée du quai Branly, the museum in Paris devoted to the indigenous cultures of the world, refers solely to its location.

⁵ "'Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern' took place at the Museum of Modern Art, New York from 27 September 1984 to 15 January 1985. The section in the Triennial catalogue included a series of letters between William Rubin and Kirk Varnedoe, the curators of "'Primitivism'", and critic Thomas McEvilley in the pages of *Artforum*; an interview between Jean-

lasting influence is also illustrated by the subsequent revisiting on the part of its curator, Jean-Hubert Martin, of simulacra proposals in writings, interviews, exhibitions and, indirectly, in the comprehensive website about the show that he helped launch in 2011.⁶ But its ability to endure in the collective memory tends to obscure the manner in which this interpretative machine was set in motion, and also the different phases of its development and the diversity of the challenges to which it attests.

I

*It was a century ago, at the 1889 World's Fair [Exposition universelle]. Visitors proceeded with great delight from the Japanese pavilion to the Kanak village, from the Tuareg encampment to the African hut. Casts from Borobudur, Papuan and Guinean fetishes, peoples from 'our colonies': everywhere, oddities and novelties, reconstructions and simulacra arrayed in such a way as to make a pleasant stroll for the promenading flâneur. Geography, ethnography and the history of religions and the arts were, it is true, somewhat poorly treated. No one tried to understand objects and costumes, but the picturesque, for its part, enjoyed its apotheosis. Huge success, hordes of visitors. A beautiful exhibition, truly ... Is it possible to visit 'Magiciens de la Terre' without thinking that today's exhibition is reproducing more or less the system of a century ago?*⁷

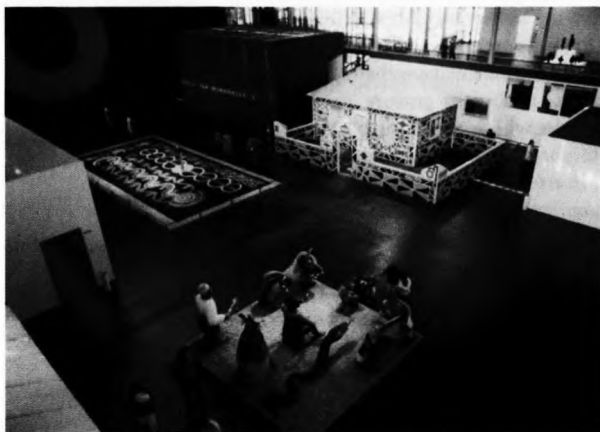
That is how Phillipe Dagen started his review in *Le Monde*, indicating his reservations in the name of an absent scientific perspective – one that, if present, would have contributed to a more respectful attitude towards those cultures portrayed than that actually employed by the museographic display, which he considered too directly tailored to the general public. According to Dagen, the incorporation of contemporary art within a museum display 'kills non-Western works while claiming to glorify them'.⁸ His words exemplify a fairly common reaction at that particular time – namely, that it is

Hubert Martin and Benjamin Buchloh published in the special issue of *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, no.28, Spring 1989, pp.5–43 (with English versions published in *Third Text*, vol.3, no.6, Spring 1989, pp.19–27 and *Art in America*, vol.77, no.5, May 1989, pp.150–59 and 213; and reprinted in this volume, pp.224–37); and the seemingly unconnected essay by Hal Foster 'The Artist as Ethnographer', originally published in George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers, (ed.), *The Traffic in Culture*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, pp.302–09 (see also *The Return of the Real*, Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1996, pp.171–203). See Okwui Enwezor with Mélanie Bouteloup, Abdellah Karrou, Émilie Renard and Claire Staebler (ed.), *Intense Proximité* (exh. cat.), Paris: Centre national des arts plastiques – Artlys, 2012, pp.284–360.

⁶ See <http://www.magiciensdelaterre.fr> (last accessed on 18 December 2012). For a discussion of some of Martin's curatorial projects after 'Magiciens de la Terre', see Lucy Steeds, "Magiciens de la Terre" and the Development of Transnational Project-Based Curating, in this volume, esp. pp.90–93.

⁷ Philippe Dagen, 'L'Exposition universelle', *Le Monde*, 19 May 1989, p.28.

⁸ *Ibid.*



Installation view, 'Magiciens de la Terre', Grande Halle de La Villette, Paris, 1989
© the artists
Photography: Jean Fisher

possible to engage with works from those cultures, but only by isolating them, by not putting them on a level with Western works. Such compartmentalisation separated two worlds regarded as incomparable, and this is precisely the approach that Martin and his team wished to avoid in their curatorial approach.

The actual meaning of such a curatorial exercise was, however, an object of dispute, and resulted in opposed readings. And so Deke Dusinberre wrote in *Art Monthly*:

fig.70-71
fig.77-79 and 84

fig.68-69

The second quality which emerged was that of the power of transformation: artwork as an intervention which changes the environment (or our perception and understanding of it). This certainly comes closer to the curators' ambitions, approaching perhaps the authentically 'magic' aspect of art. One end of the hall at La Villette, for instance, was occupied by Esther Mahlangu's geometrically decorated house and biomorphic earth painting done by the Yuendumu community, against the backdrop of Richard Long's 30-foot high Red Earth Circle (painted in earth taken from Long's home town). Facing these was an apparently unrelated work by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, From the Entropic Library [1989], an oversized shelf of moth-eaten, dog-eared notebooks and papers. The combination was particularly effective, not only because of harmonious colours, of forms which hold their own against their counterparts, of similar scale ... but also because of the way they reflect one another. The house is not only a 'machine for living', it becomes a 'dynamic machine to look at'; the earth circle is sun to the house, moon to the ground, bull's eye to the notebooks; the Yuendumu transformation of the ground from profane to sacred is emblematic of all other works and the irony of the Oldenburg/van Bruggen sculpture suddenly lies in the enormity of its triviality (the 'futility' of entropic transformation experienced here as comic, not as tragic).⁹

Contradictory readings from different authors became contradictory feelings within one and the same text, and several of the reviewers expressed both disappointment and delight in response to the show, as in Rasheed Araeen's preface for the special issue of *Third Text*:

My disappointment with the exhibition is not due to the quality of the work, or the display. In fact the exhibition looks very attractive; almost all the works are given equal space and are arranged in such a way that in some cases it is difficult to distinguish visually between the 'modern' and the 'traditional' ... I must also express my appreciation of some very beautiful works, particularly those of the Chinese, Chilean and Brazilian artists.¹⁰

Araeen, Nicolas Bourriaud, Thomas McEvelley and Jean Fisher, among many others, wrote about the seduction exercised by the exhibition over them, without letting this sway them from their criticism.

In the face of this diversity of positions and approaches, and in order to put things straight a year after the exhibition, McEvelley tried in part to arrange all these critiques in Kantian and Hegelian families, right and left, but in conclusion, and despite such classification, what remains is the contradictions that characterise all the critiques – contradictions as powerful as those affecting the show itself.¹¹

There were unconditional supporters of 'Magiciens de la Terre', like Michel Nuridsany of *Le Figaro*, who, in a chauvinistic mood, was delighted that France had rediscovered its ability to produce an event 'in the grand universalist tradition of yore';¹² and the out-and-out imperialists who, like Jack Flam, in the *Wall Street Journal*, declared:

Economic and technological inequalities are to some degree still translated into cultural inequalities. This is specially apparent in the non-Western works that attempt to adapt themselves to the Western art scene, most of which look provincial or outdated.¹³

Over and above slogans packed with popular misconceptions, preconceived ideas and prejudices, what seems striking on reading the abundant press coverage on the exhibition is the number and diversity of artists referred to by the critics, with an emphasis on those who were hitherto nameless or

⁹ Deke Dusinberre, 'Conjurations: "Magiciens de la Terre"', *Art Monthly*, no.129, September 1989, p.7.

¹⁰ Rasheed Araeen, 'Our Bauhaus Others' Mudhouse', *Third Text*, no.6, Spring 1989, p.7; reprinted in this volume, p.241.

¹¹ See Thomas McEvelley, 'Marginalia: Thomas McEvelley on The Global Issue', *Artforum*, vol.28, no.7, March 1990, p.19–21. Reprinted in this volume, pp.268–72.

¹² See Michel Nuridsany, 'Du Monde entier au coeur au monde', *Le Figaro*, 24 May 1989.

¹³ Jack Flam, 'Global Art: Getting the Big Picture', *Wall Street Journal*, 25 July 1989.

unknown. This is an interesting point, especially if we consider how the exhibition had unsettled the critics, as Bourriaud reflected in his second and somewhat favourable article on the show: 'In any case it is impossible to subject this "first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art" to the categories of traditional criticism.'¹⁴

He thus shared his doubts with Clémentine Deliss, author of a long and well-reasoned article in *Artscribe International*, who asked:

*how can we relate artists' work to present artistic, cultural and political manifestations within their own countries, and further, how does it coincide with variations in the market for non-Western arts?*¹⁵

Where, how and with what tools was the diversity of works on view to be examined? That question applied not just to the unknown Third World artists, but also to the fifty Westerners whose inclusion and relevance in that context commentators queried. All the artists were actually treated equally in the display, in absence of any geographical, formal or other kind of order, with work from the First, Second and Third Worlds in juxtapositions that were often condemned as meaningless (the words 'bazaar', 'dime store', 'bric-à-brac' and 'fair', all commercial metaphors, were used). Based on the ideological inclinations of those writing, these comparisons would either contribute to sidelining the Third World artists, or, on the contrary, would reveal the weakness of the Western works.¹⁶ Rare were those critics who found any interest in the not explicitly comparative likenesses that the exhibition established between works, but all those writing benefited in one way or another from being forced into an exercise that involved a more attentive eye than encouraged by other contemporaneous exhibitions.

A brief run-through of the press coverage published at the time of the show quite clearly reveals that for a large number of people it was difficult to assimilate the exhibition's fundamental proposition: to place all the works on the same level. Simultaneously, the response makes apparent the effectiveness of an arrangement that obliged everyone visiting, including professionals, to look closely at what was being presented to them.

II

*The essential social function of art is to define the collective ego – and redefine it based on the way the group develops.*¹⁷

¹⁴ Nicolas Bourriaud, 'Magiciens de la Terre' (trans. M.R. Rubenstein), *Flash Art*, no.148, October 1989, p.119.

¹⁵ Clémentine Deliss, 'Conjuring Tricks: "Magiciens de la Terre"', *Artscribe International*, September–October 1989, no.77, p.52.

¹⁶ For an example of the former, see J. Flam, 'Global Art', *op. cit.*; and P. Dagen, 'L'Exposition universelle', *op. cit.* For the latter, see C. Deliss, 'Conjuring Tricks', *op. cit.*; N. Bourriaud, 'Magiciens de la Terre', *op. cit.*, or Daniel Soutif, 'La Preuve par le muse', *Libération*, 27–28 May 1989, pp.33–34.

Thomas McEvelley, in his contribution to the *Magiciens de la Terre* catalogue, embarked on the telling of the history of the postmodern exhibition – a history that was being announced by a series of redefinitions not only of art, but also of the exhibition in general, its viewers, its venues and, last of all, modernism. The essay, titled ‘Ouverture du piège: L’Exposition postmoderne et “Magiciens de la Terre”’ (‘Opening of the Trap: The Postmodern Exhibition and “Magiciens de la Terre”’), listed the stages of modernism before defining the goals of the postmodern exhibition: breaking with the universal canons of a history dominated by progress and the transcendence of pure form. The exhibition “Primitivism” in 20th Century Art’ at the Museum of Modern Art in New York had revealed for McEvelley the doctrinaire modernism of its curators, William Rubin and Kirk Varnedoe, and of the institution itself. That exhibition and its organisers imposed a simplistic reading, hallmark of the dominant, imperialist conception of art:

p.10

*The fact that the primitive ‘looks like’ the modern is interpreted as validating the modern by showing that its values are universal, while at the same time projecting it – and with it MoMA – into the future as a permanent canon.*¹⁸

Parallel commentaries on the New York show had been made by sharp-minded anthropologists. The first of them, James Clifford, offered an analysis of the ‘symptoms of a pervasive postcolonial crisis of ethnographic authority’.¹⁹ He located the exhibition within a narrative that had to do with contacts, with the collection of objects,²⁰ with the experience of historical impurities, and with the vision that the peoples concerned had of the presentation of their own works. It is undeniable that some of Clifford’s ideas were present in the mind of Martin, who, for example, saw in the borrowing of certain emblems of modernity by the non-Western artists not the sign of a loss of identity, but proof of the vitality of contemporary traditional cultures. Clifford’s ideas would be developed in depth in the survey conducted by Sally Price among collectors of primitive art, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (1989).²¹ While Clifford opened up a general line of

¹⁷ T. McEvelley, ‘Ouverture du piège: L’Exposition postmoderne et “Magiciens de la Terre”’, in Jean-Hubert Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre* (exh. cat.), Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1989, p.20.

¹⁸ T. McEvelley, ‘Doctor Lawyer Indian Chief: “Primitivism” in 20th Century Art’ at the Museum of Modern Art in 1984’, *Artforum*, vol.23, no.3, November 1984, p.56.

¹⁹ James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988, p.8.

²⁰ Over and above direct reports like that elaborated by Michel Leiris, what Clifford’s questions result in is the writing of the history of ethnographical collections. As examples of this type of writing, see Benoît de l’Estoire, *Le Goût des autres: De l’Exposition coloniale aux arts Premiers*, Paris: Flammarion, 2007, and Maureen Murphy, *De l’Imaginaire au musée: Les Arts d’Afrique à Paris et à New York (1931–2006)*, Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2009.

²¹ See Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

enquiry about the history of the eye cast by Westerners on the culture of production of tribal peoples – an enquiry that was close to cultural studies and to the deconstruction of Orientalism embarked upon by Edward Saïd – Price put more concrete questions to the organisers of 'Magiciens de la Terre'. These had to do with criteria for appreciation, in particular with the notion of quality – a notion that Martin rejected in a conversation with Benjamin Buchloh that took place in advance of the exhibition.²² With this dismissal, Martin rejected the one-way universality of the moderns, and instead embraced reciprocity by inviting all the artists to meet one another on the actual turf of the exhibition and 'dialogue'. By doing this, at least the anonymity and absence of temporality typical of the modern perspective were abolished at La Villette and at Beaubourg, as they were in the catalogue.

The lesson that Martin drew from "Primitivism" and the debates that ensued was ambiguous. If he left behind the handicaps that were normally associated with the traditional arts, he nevertheless favoured artists who had been identified to him by ethnographers on the basis of information that was already fifteen or twenty years old. He was rebuked for those choices, which included producers of masks, painters of mandalas and makers of earth drawings. He was also criticised for his liking of exoticism, his old-fashioned colonialism, his inability to understand the real 'authenticity' of what he was exhibiting, and, further, his refusal to take into consideration the 'moderns' and the 'professional artists' who were contemporary with and fellow countrymen of the traditional 'creative' artists.

Lovers of primitive art, for whom, to borrow Sally Price's words, 'a work originating outside of the Great Traditions must have been produced by an unnamed figure who represents his community and whose craftsmanship respects the dictates of its age-old traditions',²³ joined forces with the critics. The journalist Olivier Cena, writing for the television magazine *Telerama*, cried 'hoax' and 'treason'.²⁴ He gave voice to a man dedicated to locating and sourcing important works of 'primitive' art for the Western market, who stated that the objects he normally purveyed to Western dealers had been forgotten by the populations within which they were made, unconcerned by remembering or conserving the beauty that they had produced. He considered that the works on view in 'Magiciens de la Terre' were, in contrast, 'works in an age-old spirit made by uprooted people whose imagination derives from a culture which they are no longer part of'.²⁵

²² 'The term "quality" has been eliminated from my vocabulary, since there is simply no convincing system to establish relative and binding criteria of quality for such a project.' Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'The Whole Earth Show: An Interview with Jean-Hubert Martin', *Third Text*, no.6, Spring 1989, p.24. Reprinted in this volume, p.232.

²³ S. Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, op. cit., p.56.

²⁴ See Olivier Cena, 'L'Aventure de l'art perdu', *Telerama*, no.2055, 31 May 1989, pp.6-9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.8.

Certain aesthetic features common to objects coming to Europe as a result of colonial plunder undeniably found a lasting place in the Western imaginary. If commercial interest in the art market (mainly in Paris and New York) and political interest (like that prevailing over the creation of the Musée du quai Branly)²⁶ seem to endure, this has to do with the persistence of a twofold logic that McEvelley points at with regard to "Primitivism":

In its process of defining the viewer, the object exhibited puts forward certain assertions about the groups the viewer belongs to. The hegemony of a community of taste always acts to the advantage of some – notably those who control its criteria – and to the disadvantage of others – those who see things differently.²⁷

According to his analysis, the object's presentation was decided by the exhibition's organiser, and the object had no capacity to act on its own. In this way, McEvelley denounced a reversal of the postmodern spirit, picturing a situation in which there were masters of the game alongside players subjected to their rules. In agreement with this, several commentators on 'Magiciens de la Terre', including Pierre Courcelles, reproached Martin for wanting to introduce a new primitivism from a curatorial position and without taking into account artists' perspectives:

The 'Magiciens de la Terre' operation won't have any follow-up as such ... quite simply because the overlapping of cultures and artistic hybridisation cannot be decreed. It is artists, creative people, who do this at their own pace.²⁸

We can see here how certain lines of argument converge around the figure of a hegemonic subject who is also an onlooker: the Western curator, as well as art audiences in colonising nations, while at the same time the producing subjects were denied the ability to lay claim to the agency of their work and their thought. What 'Magiciens de la Terre' did, in its determination to restore an identity (a name) to the authors and a (contemporary) temporality to the moment of their action, was to restore to their objects a power of action. What remained undecided was the roles of both those who produced the objects and those who looked at them.

²⁶ See Pierre Courcelles, 'Magiciens de la Terre', *Révolution*, no.484, 9 June 1989, p.49. In this communist journal, Courcelles raised the point that the collector Jacques Kerchache's first request to open the Louvre to the art of 'primitive' artists was issued prior to 'Magiciens de la Terre'. During the second half of the 1990s Kerchache would be responsible for persuading the then French President Jacques Chirac to build the Musée du quai Branly. Earlier, a manifesto, titled 'Pour que les Chefs-d'Oeuvre du monde entier naissent Libres et Égaux', with the adhesion of curators like Martin, artists including Daniel Spoerri and poets and politicians such as Léopold Sédar Senghor, was published in 1990: <http://modules.quaibranly.fr/kerchache/11.swf> (last accessed on 18 December 2012).

²⁷ T. McEvelley, 'Ouverture du piège', *op. cit.*, p.20.

²⁸ P. Courcelles, 'Magiciens de la Terre', *op. cit.*, p.49.



José Bedia, *Vive en la línea*
(*He Lives on the Railroad Tracks*),
1989, in 'Magiciens de la Terre',
Grande Halle de La Villette,
Paris, 1989
© the artist
Photography: Mark Francis

In 1991, Cesare Poppi returned to 'Magiciens de la Terre' and the expectations it raised by reconsidering primitivism as a historical fact: 'Thus a movement such as "Primitivism" is not yet given its historical due in terms of the impact it had within its own context at the time it rocked the European cultural scene.'²⁹ Associated with the term 'primitivism' are questions about the legitimacy of aesthetic, ideological and scholarly constructs related to the representation of the other and his or her cultural productions. These questions were being addressed at the time of 'Magiciens de la Terre' by anthropologists, who were revisiting the problems entertained by their predecessors. During those years, a large-scale theoretical and historical task was being faced – a task that consisted in re-treading a path that no longer made it possible to talk about a plurality of others, but instead to allow those others to say something about their confrontation with the colonial powers. So, for example, in 1997, in an issue devoted to postcolonialism, the magazine *Dédale* republished an essay written by Michel Leiris in 1948 titled 'Message de l'Afrique', expressing both his fascination with and his fears about contemporary society but speaking on behalf of Africans, alongside another essay by Clifford about museums as 'contact zones'.³⁰ In this essay, Clifford recounted several experiences in which the Tlingit people, from the Pacific Northwest Coast of America, were urged to talk about objects acquired over a long period of time for a private collection, and began to combine the rediscovery of the objects with a reengagement in more recent challenges such as the politics of the Forest Administration. This was an opportunity for him to return to the notion of 'contact zone' as defined in 1992 by Mary Louise Pratt, when she wrote:

²⁹ Cesare Poppi, 'From the Suburbs of the Global Village: Afterthoughts on "Magiciens de la Terre"', *Third Text*, no.14, Spring 1991, p.87.

³⁰ This issue also included an essay by J.-H. Martin, 'Qui a peur des peaux rouges, du péril jaune et de la négritude?'. See *Dédale*, no.5–6, Spring 1997, p.225. Clifford's essay was titled 'Les Musées comme zones de contact' (p.251).

By using the word 'contact', I want to favour the interactivity and the improvisation which run through certain colonial encounters and which have been so easily ignored, not to say denied, by those propagating a line of thinking about domination and conquest. A so-called 'contact' approach favours the way in which subjects construct their identity through their relationship with themselves and others. Joint presence and interaction matched with understanding and overlapping uses are often situated inside radically asymmetrical relations of power.³¹

This detour, or return, is the one that Okwui Enwezor made in his show and publication for the Triennale and was suggested in its title, 'Intense Proximité', where he reverted to the contact zone as both subject and question. Enwezor's project is interesting for us in its reconsideration of the space and time disjunctions around three major themes: the poetics of ethnography, where Leiris plays a central part, the exhibitions "Primitivism" and 'Magiciens de la Terre' and the issue of contact zones in our contemporary societies. It suggests that 'Magiciens de la Terre' might well have been a particularly interesting contact zone. In fact, the assertion that distances are done away with, the understanding of curatorial activity as including an exploratory exercise and the return to traditional art forms are very closely linked to contemporary Western art at the moment. The words of the Cuban artist José Bedia, who participated in 'Magiciens de la Terre', in a recent conversation with Lucy Steeds show that the dialogue invoked by Martin and so frequently decried as an illusion by the critics could actually have been productive:

Meeting artists from around the world was one of the great things about that show. I would take a break from installing and talk to people. I established friendships with Joe Ben Junior, the Australian Aborigines, Richard Long, Cyprien Tokoudagba from Benin, Esther Mahlangu from South Africa.³²

So we can see the idea of postmodernism and its recognition of identities being slowly replaced by a return to the history of contact zones: 'Magiciens de la Terre', with its choice of two equal camps (one largely made up of works based on tradition), could set the grounds for a joint presence and an interaction that had been interrupted by the fossilisation of art through the notion of 'primitivism' in the hands of specialists and dealers. The recurrent criticism of the exhibition's backward-looking choices, objectively incompatible with the contemporaneity described by Poppi, seems due for reconsideration. In 1991, he wrote that 'such a projected image of a reconciled world

³¹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London: Routledge, 1992, quoted by J. Clifford in 'Les Musées comme zones de contact', *op. cit.*, p.251. Clifford's essay is based on *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997.

³² 'José Bedia in conversation with Lucy Steeds, 15 November 2010', in Rachel Weiss et al., *Making Art Global (Part 1): The Third Havana Biennial 1989*, London: Afterall Books, 2011, p.217.

is ideological, and therefore it is false'.³³ But this mistaken image would extricate the polemics of primitivism from the context of a domestic tiff within the Western world, and create room for the new words of those who were previously absent, or stashed away in a postmodern otherness.

III

Rasheed Araeen did not understand why 'Magiciens de la Terre' felt the need to raise the issue of primitive societies, as it did with its inclusion of traditional art forms. Writing in *Third Text*, he asked: 'Why is there such an obsession with so-called primitive societies? Where are these societies? Are not most Third World societies today part of a global system, with a common mode of production and similarly developing social structures?'³⁴ He battled, in the pages of *Third Text* but also in exhibitions such as 'The Other Story',³⁵ for recognition of the input of Third World artists (those living in their countries as well as those in Western countries) to the history of modernity – a position that has been adopted by many involved in articulating plural modernities, unaffected by the advent of postmodernism. One of these, Geeta Kapur, defended in 1989 traditional Indian culture's role in the struggle for liberation from the British colonial yoke.³⁶ In contrast, according to Araeen, the priority lay in the 'present-day struggles and their challenge to the hegemony of Western culture'.³⁷

The difference between these positions has to do with the terrain from which each of them speaks. Araeen's world and challenges stem from the diaspora, as a result of which culture and its capacity to be heard depend on very different struggles from those experienced by other societies.

Writing in 1990, McEvilley was still persuaded that 'Magiciens de la Terre' had fulfilled the hope he had invested in it: 'The hope it embodied was to find a postcolonialist way to exhibit the work of First and Third World artists together, a way that would involve no projections about hierarchy, or about mainstream and periphery, or about history having a goal.'³⁸

³³ C. Poppi, 'From the Suburbs of the Global Village', *op. cit.*, p.87. Poppi's criticism was not valid for so-called primitive works, but more relevant to examples like the one he chose (the juxtaposition of the Nepalese mandala with Marina Abramovic's piece), because it could be assimilated to a written culture rather than an oral tradition.

³⁴ R. Araeen, 'Our Bauhaus Others' Mudhouse', *op. cit.*, p.4. Reprinted in this volume, p.270.

³⁵ 'The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain', Hayward Gallery, London, 29 November 1989–4 February 1990.

³⁶ Geeta Kapur, 'Contemporary Cultural Practice: Some Polemical Categories', paper given at the conference organised for the Third Bienal de La Habana, reprinted in R. Araeen, Sean Cubitt and Ziauddin Sardar (ed.), *The 'Third Text' Reader on Art, Culture and Theory*, London and New York: Continuum, 2002, pp.15–24 and R. Weiss et al., *Making Art Global (Part 1)*, *op. cit.*, pp.194–203.

³⁷ R. Araeen, 'Our Bauhaus Others' Mudhouse', *op. cit.*, p.4. Reprinted in this volume, p.270.

This assessment was not shared by other exhibition curators, historians and theoreticians, for whom, as Sidney Kasfir wrote, 'Magiciens de la Terre' was 'a flawed attempt at paradigm-breaking'.³⁹ This statement, which could be read as a direct answer to McEvilley, demands commentary. In effect, as the author of a history of African art, Kasfir judges 'Magiciens de la Terre' by the yardstick of such art, whose significant presence in the Paris show he roundly admits; but, as Yacouba Konaté writes, 'Magiciens' did not have a special focus on African art, and cannot therefore be judged just in terms of its approach to and effects for art from that continent: 'Whereas the exhibition was intended as a plea for the equality of the world's cultures, Africa's artistic and cultural élites took it as the paradigm of the neo-primitivist event authorising a definitive distrust of so-called "African" exhibitions. And yet it wasn't an African exhibition.'⁴⁰

Konaté's retrospective assessment, written almost two decades after the exhibition, is not a celebratory account. He had considerable reservations about the choice to select 'self-taught' artists, which he saw as mirroring colonial operations. He also spoke out against the disproportionate power of the curators, who could put Christian Boltanski and Frédéric Bruly Bouabré on a par, from one day to the next, without further consideration: 'He [the curator] plunges into the Africa of mysteries and ambiguities to discover creatures which nobody had sought. Then, taking them by the hand, he reveals them to their contemporaneity. The whole strategy of the big difference lies in this two-fold operation: going back into the pre-modern to display the contemporary.'⁴¹

This diagnosis seems to hit the target in the case of Africa, since it reflects the compromised choices, and since selecting 'creators' rather than 'modern artists' generated, among other things, large geographical blind spots: for example, no artists from the Maghreb were included because their work seemed to be for the curators much too close to European aesthetic norms.⁴² But this criticism about the African choices is difficult to apply in any systematic way to work from other continents. For example, artists from South America included Bedia, Julio Galán, Alfredo Jaar and Cildo Meireles, artists whose work was at the time included in international exhibitions and discussed in the pages of art magazines, among them *Third Text*.⁴³ Other

p.102 and fig.110;
12, 15; 115
and 107-08

³⁸ T. McEvilley, 'Marginalia: Thomas McEvilley on The Global Issue', *op. cit.*, p.20.

³⁹ Sidney Kasfir, 'African Art and Authenticity: A Text with a Shadow', in Olu Oguibe and O. Enwezor (ed.), *Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to the Marketplace*, London: Iniva, 1999, p.88.

⁴⁰ Yacouba Konaté, "Magiciens de la Terre": L'étrange destin africain d'une exposition mondiale', in Bernadette Dufrene (ed.) *Centre Pompidou: Trente ans d'histoire*, Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2007, p.559. As Konaté points out, the exhibition included among its over 100 participants sixteen artists from sub-Saharan Africa (p.561).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.562

⁴² This was pointed out by both Pierre Gaudibert and Geneviève Breerette in 'La Planète toute entière', in J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, *op. cit.*, pp.15-19.

⁴³ See Gerardo Mosquera, 'The Marco Polo Syndrome', *Third Text*, no.21, Winter

fig.99-100
fig.17-19

artists invited from the Americas made more narrative work, and reflected disciplines as diverse as Navajo sand painting (Joe Ben Junior), Inuit art (Paulosee Kuniliusee) and Haitian recycled sculpture (Georges Liautaud).

fig.27-28
fig.30, 48 and 49

Asia's representation was no less diverse: it ranged from Nam June Paik and On Kawara (both totally integrated into the Western art scene), Huang Yong Ping and Tatsuo Miyajima (two relative newcomers who would become regular participants in the French and wider Western exhibition context), Bowa Devi and Lobsang Thinle, Lobsang Palden and Bhorda Sherpa (respectively a Mithila woman and Nepalese mandala painters).

fig.65-66
and 61-62

Martin defended the choices of the team in the interview conducted by Benjamin Buchloh. The members of the team were not made publicly responsible for specific choices, but, for example, we know that for the African selection most of the work was conducted by André Magnin, who went on to work on the development and international promotion of Jean Pigozzi's Contemporary African Art Collection (CAAC), and that Mark Francis was in charge of the selection of the Navajo artist Ben Junior. Criticism about the latter focused not on Ben Junior's work, but on its lack of contextualisation in the struggle for land restitution in the US, raised by Fisher in *Artforum*.⁴⁴ A similar criticism emerged in relation to the presence of artists from Yuendumu, praised by Terry Smith, in whose text the exhibition was literally reduced to their presence, and Fisher, who rallied against the mode of their inclusion – namely, the placement of their work in an overwhelming juxtaposition with Richard Long's 'solar anus'.⁴⁵

fig.99-100

fig.77-79 and 84

The amount and complexity of the issues raised by this self-proclaimed 'first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art'⁴⁶ had to do with the fact that, as I have tried to show by pointing at the limits of McEvilley's argument, there could be no single answer, or one political or theoretical insight capable of offering a solution to the problem of a global art exhibition that was both satisfactory and comprehensive. In 1989, even if the postcolonial struggles had been going on for several decades, the effect of these struggles on the writing of world history was still deficient, and the work being done internationally had not resulted in a historical awareness among the French. Besides Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire, who still had a rather limited presence in public debates and had little echo until very recently,⁴⁷ many years would pass before the official reviewing of the past in terms of colonial struggle began.

1992-93, pp.35-41.

⁴⁴ See J. Fisher, 'Fictional Histories – The Invisible Labyrinth: "Magiciens de la Terre"', *Artforum*, vol.28, no.1, September 1989, p.160. Reprinted in this volume, pp.248-58.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Terry Smith, 'Black Art, Its Genius Explained', *The Independent Monthly*, September 1989, and J. Fisher, 'Fictional Histories', *op. cit.*, p.161.

⁴⁶ J.-H. Martin, 'The first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art', distributed as part of the exhibition press pack, p.1 (p.2 in French version). See CGP archives, box 95026/168.

⁴⁷ Though somehow familiar in Paris at the time, Édouard Glissant was much

Martin stood his ground, but it is evident from his writings and interviews from the time that he had not conceived the exhibition as a postcolonial endeavour. He had engaged artists like Barbara Kruger, Daniel Buren, Alfredo Jaar and Hans Haacke (who, by the way, were oddly overlooked in the critical commentaries), but if their contributions to the show made it possible to avoid a somewhat naïve consensus, they did not seem to be included as part of a general programme or a theoretical approach. In 1989, as mentioned above, France was still applying a very selective forgetfulness about its past; it would still be necessary to wait for a few years until the first serious studies on slavery appeared, or others on the country's colonial period, postcolonial issues or the links between the development of ethnographic collections and colonisation at large.⁴⁸ France had no room in its scientific, cultural and artistic contexts for recent immigrants from the old colonies; its universities did not recruit the African intellectuals whom they trained, and even throughout the 2000s the government gave limited support to projects such as Françoise Vergès's Comité pour la mémoire et l'histoire de l'esclavage (Committee for the Memory and History of Slavery),⁴⁹ just as it did not help Édouard Glissant accomplish, in his lifetime, his project for a Musée Martiniquais des Arts des Amériques (Martinican Museum of the Arts of the Americas).⁵⁰

Martin was impervious to any approach that did not stem from exclusively artistic or aesthetic registers, returning in the ensuing years to those same issues to rail against the conservatism of his museum colleagues, who seemed incapable of incorporating objects that did not fit within established categories and therefore eluded their understanding.⁵¹ He continued to address questions that seem trivial nowadays, such as critical exoticism,⁵² devoting his attention to introducing within an art context works of a religious nature without making them undergo the typical desacralisation treatment enacted by modern museums,⁵³ and continuing to champion artists as individuals, whatever their origin.

In the face of this, Fisher probably provided one of the most accurate criticisms of the exhibition, by linking the process of de-industrialisation in

better known in the United States, where he taught until his death in 2011.

⁴⁸ The rewriting of general, economic, cultural and art histories undertaken over the past three decades is testimony to the recent work against such amnesia. See for example Jack Goody, *Le Vol de l'histoire: Comment l'Europe a imposé le récit de son passé au reste du monde*, Paris: Gallimard, 2010; or, in a different register, Philippe Descola, *Par-delà Nature et culture*, Paris: Gallimard, 2005.

⁴⁹ See <http://www.cpmhe.fr> (last accessed on 18 December 2012).

⁵⁰ See <http://tout-monde.com/M2A2#> (last accessed on 18 December 2012).

⁵¹ See J.-H. Martin, 'Qui a peur des peaux rouges, du péril jaune et de la négritude?', *Dédale*, no. 5–6, Spring 1997, pp. 225–30.

⁵² See J.-H. Martin, Thierry Prat and Thierry Raspail (ed.), *Partage d'exotismes: 5th Biennale d'art contemporain de Lyon* (exh. cat.), Paris: Réunion des Musées nationaux, 2000.

⁵³ See J.-H. Martin (ed.) *Altäre: Kunst zum Niedererkennen* (exh. cat.), Düsseldorf: Museum Kunst Palast, 2000.

the West to a loss of content, which, in return, gave a transcendental significance to non-Western art: 'Perhaps this is why the exhibition tended to privilege traditional material processes; the fetishising of these processes as they are practised in Western culture and elsewhere reflects the yearning for some pre-industrial integrity that permeated "Magiciens".'⁵⁴

In a way, this was a return of what had earlier been repressed, to the production of objects over the dematerialisation of Conceptual art, at a time when contemporary art was seeing a return to painting.⁵⁵ Today, other criticisms of global society would find a foothold in this fetishisation of art and it would probably be impossible to imagine remaking an exhibition like 'Magiciens de la Terre'.

It is not impossible that what commentators regarded as a failed attempt to break down established paradigms would have been impossible to realise on that scale and at that precise moment if the exhibition had not been characterised by such an aesthetic approach. What it proposed was a departure inasmuch as it successfully managed to introduce new artists and works within a normally unreceptive context, but also because it did not exclude voices that would question it. In fact, some of the questions, like those raised by Homi Bhabha and Pierre Gaudibert in their contributions to the catalogue, were not addressed or pursued by the commentators.⁵⁶ Despite such loose threads, 'Magiciens de la Terre' remains an outstanding exhibition, if only for having engaged, directly or indirectly, so many positions in issues that have still not been resolved, and might well never be.

Translated from French by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods.

⁵⁴ J. Fisher, 'Fictional Histories', *op. cit.*, p.159. Reprinted in this volume, p.252.

⁵⁵ During that same summer the exhibition 'Bilderstreit: Widerspruch, Einheit und Fragment in der Kunst seit 1960' was on view at the Rheinhallen der Kölner Messe, Cologne.

⁵⁶ See Homi Bhabha, 'Hybridité, identité et culture contemporaine', and Pierre Gaudibert, 'La Planète tout entière, enfin...', in J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre*, *op. cit.*, pp.24–27 and 18–19 respectively.

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Centre Georges Pompidou and the Grande Halle
de la Villette, Paris 1st May - 14 August 1985

'Magiciens de la Terre'

Marina Abramović (LV)

Dennis Adams (LV)

Sungun Jack Akpan (LV)

Jean-Michel Alberola (LV)

Dossou Amidou (CGP)

Giovanni Anselmo (LV)

Rasheed Araeen (LV)

Nuche Kaji Bajracharya (CGP)

John Baldessari (CGP)

José Bedia (LV)

Joe Ben Junior (LV)

Jean-Pierre Bertrand (LV)

Gabriel Bien Aimé (LV)

Alighiero Boetti (CGP)

Christian Boltanski (LV)

Louise Bourgeois (LV)

Bowa Devi (LV)

Stanley Brouwn (CGP)

Frédéric Bruly Bouabré (CGP)

Erik Bulatov (LV)

Daniel Buren (CGP)

James Lee Byars (CGP)

Seni Awa Camara (LV)

Mike Chukwukelu (CGP)

Francesco Clemente (CGP)

Marc Couturier (LV)

Tony Cragg (LV)

Enzo Cucchi (CGP)

Cleitus Dambi, Nick Dumbrang,

Ruedi Wem (CGP)

Neil Dawson (CGP)

Maestre Didi (CGP)

Braco Dimitrijević (CGP, LV)

Efiaimbelo (LV)

John Fundi (LV)

Julio Galán (CGP)

Moshe Gershuni (LV)

Enrique Gómez (LV)

Gu Dexin (LV)

Hans Haacke (LV)
Rebecca Horn (CGP)
Shirazeh Houshiary (LV)
Huang Yong Ping (LV)
Alfredo Jaar (LV)
Nera Jambruk (LV)
Ilya Kabakov (CGP)
Kane Kwei (LV)
Tatsuo Kawaguchi (LV)
On Kawara (CGP)
Anselm Kiefer (CGP)
Bodys Isek Kingelez (LV)
Per Kirkeby (LV)
John Knight (LV)
Agbagli Kossi (LV)
Barbara Kruger (CGP)
Pauloossee Kuniliusee (CGP)
Boujemâa Lakhdar (LV)
Georges Liautaud (CGP)
Felipe Linares (CGP)
Richard Long (LV)
Esther Mahlangu (LV)
Karel Malich (LV)
Jivya Soma Mashe (CGP)*
John Mawurndjul (LV)
Cildo Meireles (LV)
Mario Merz (LV)
Miralda (LV)
Tatsuo Miyajima (CGP)
Norval Morriseau (LV)
Henry Munyaradzi (LV)
Juan Muñoz (LV)
Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen (LV)
Nam June Paik (CGP)
Ronaldo Pereira Rego (LV)
Wesner Philidor (CGP)
Sigmar Polke (CGP)
Temba Rabden (LV)*
Chéri Samba (LV)

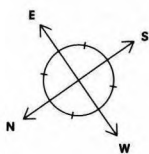
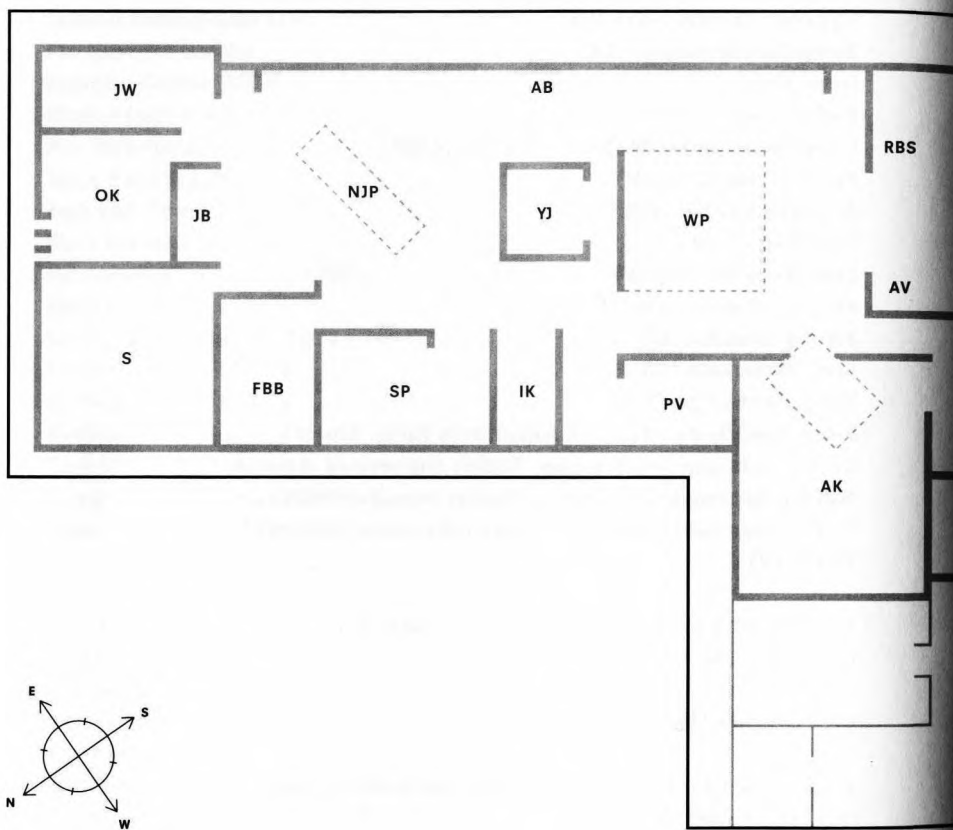
Sarkis (CGP)
Raja Babu Sharma (CGP)
Jangarh Singh Shyam (CGP, LV)
Nancy Spero (LV)
Daniel Spoerri (LV)
Hiroshi Teshigahara (CGP)
Yousuf Thannoon (LV)
Lobsang Thinle, Lobsang Palden, Bhorda Sherpa (LV)
Cyprien Tokoudagba (LV)
Twins Seven Seven (LV)
Ulay (LV)
Ken Unsworth (LV)
Chief Mark Unya, Nathan Emeden (CGP)
Patrick Vilaire (CGP)
Acharya Vyakul (CGP)
Jeff Wall (CGP)
Lawrence Weiner (LV)
Krzysztof Wodiczko (CGP)
Jimmy Wululu (LV)
Jack Wunuwun (CGP)
Yang Jiechang (CGP)
From Yuendumu: Francis Jupurrurla Kelly, Frank
Bronson Jakamarra Nelson, Paddy Jupurrurla Nelson,
Neville Japangardi Poulson, Paddy Japaljarri Sims,
Paddy Japaljarri Stewart, Towser Jakamarra Walker (LV)
Zush (LV)

*artists included in the exhibition catalogue
but not in the final exhibition
CGP = Centre Georges Pompidou
LV = Grande Halle de La Villette

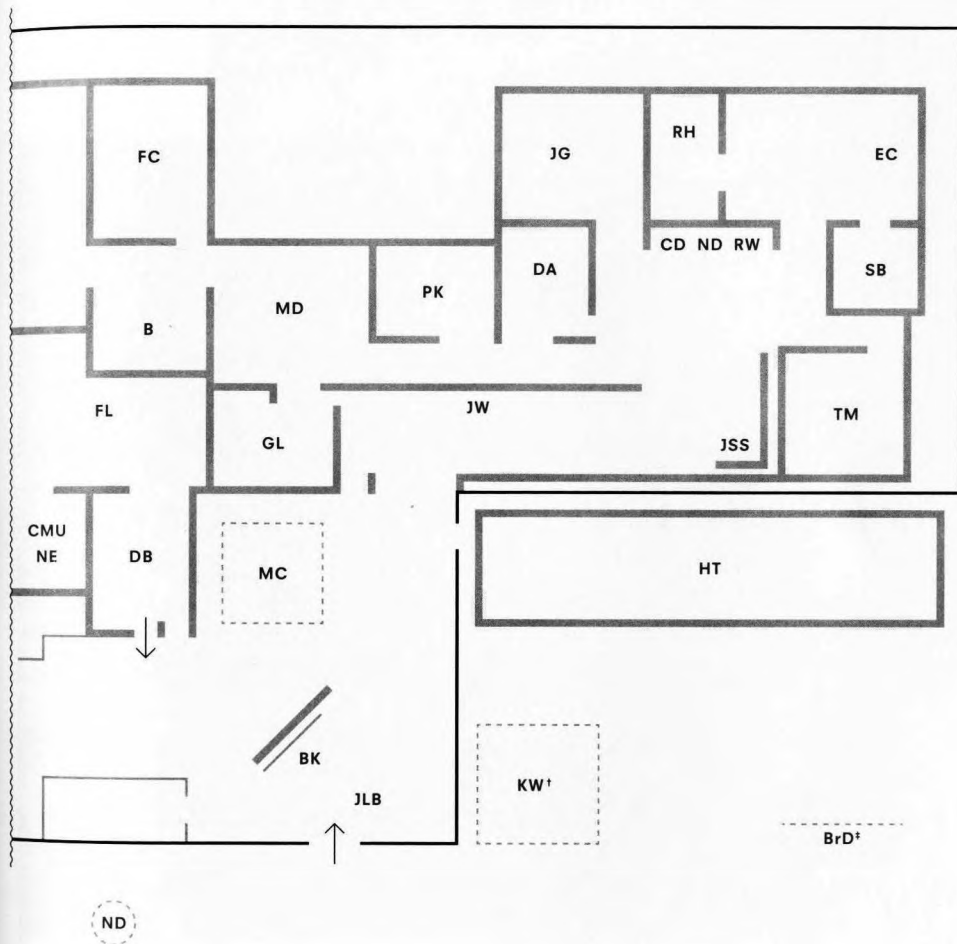
Artists are identified on the plans by their initials
(pp.114-15 and pp.150-51)

The plans and captions for the installation views
(pp.114-212) are based on information provided
by Aline Luque and further research carried out
by the Afterall editorial team

Centre Georges Pompidou: Fifth Floor*



- * After building renovations in 2000, the fifth floor was renamed the sixth floor
- † Work located on the ground floor
- ‡ Work located on the façade



At the Centre Pompidou, two works were shown outside the building. There was a further work in the entrance hall, Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Vehicle* (1988-89, fig.3) and the exhibition otherwise occupied the entire fifth floor, known as the Grande Galerie.



fig.1

In the forecourt of the Centre Georges Pompidou, hovering above the heads of passers-by, Neil Dawson positioned the work *Globe* (1989) so that his country, New Zealand, faced downwards.



fig.2

Braco Dimitrijević's work *The Casual Passer-By I Met at 3.59 p.m., Paris, 1989* (1989) is seen on the façade of the building. Another work by Dimitrijević, *Status Post Historicus, About Two Artists* (1969–89) was shown at the Grande Halle de La Villette (see fig.47).

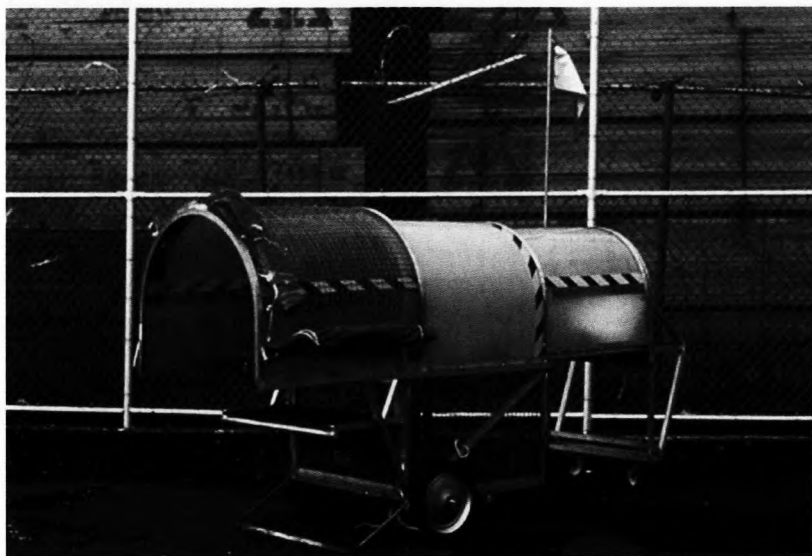


fig.3

On the ground floor of the Centre Pompidou, in the entrance hall of the building, Krzysztof Wodiczko presented *Homeless Vehicle* (1988–89). In the 1980s Wodiczko made several vehicles that offered mobile solutions for sleeping, storing possessions and washing outdoors, designed in collaboration with street dwellers from New York and San Diego. This image shows *Homeless Vehicle (Variant 3)* (1988) pictured on the streets of New York.



fig.4

At the main entrance of the exhibition on the fifth floor, visitors stepped in across James Lee Byars's floor piece *JHMBPF0MDFF* (1989), consisting of 49 tiles made of gold leaf with the work's title engraved at its centre. (This inscription is in fact shorthand for the sentence: 'Jean-Hubert Martin Bought Perfection For 0 Million Dollars For France'.) This is a photograph of Byars performing at the opening – standing on his own work – in front of Barbara Kruger's installation, the double-sided billboard *Qui sont les magiciens de la terre?* (*Who Are the Magicians of the Earth?*, 1989).

James Lee Byars performing at the opening.
Kruger's *Qui sont les magiciens de la terre?*
(*Who Are the Magicians of the Earth?*, 1989)
is to the left, and in the background Hiroshi
Teshigahara's bamboo corridor can be seen
on the outdoor terrace (see also fig.6).



fig.5



fig.6

Teshigahara's *Bamboo Corridor* (1989) was out on the terrace, nestled against the glass-tube escalators of the Pompidou's façade. The work was accompanied by a *shodo*, a calligraphy scroll containing Hagiwara Sakutarō's poem 'Bamboo', from his anthology *Howling at the Moon* (1917).

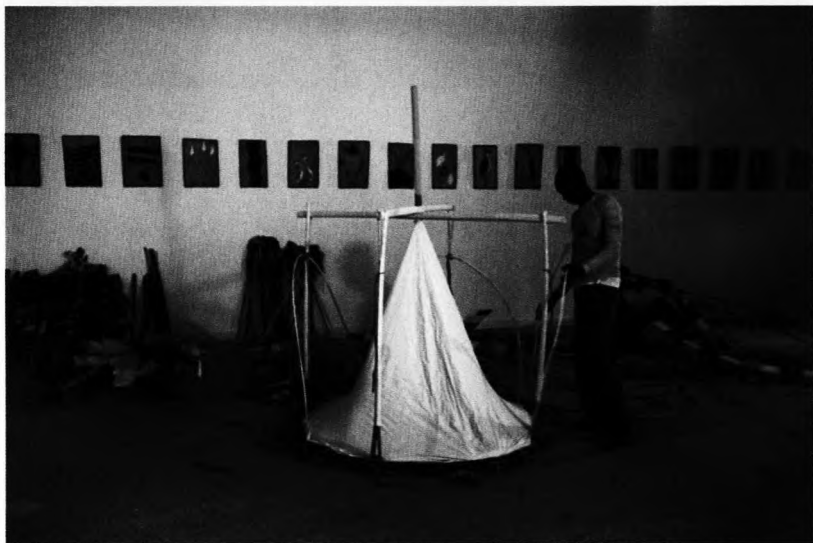


fig.7 and 8

Re-entering the Grande Galerie, the other side of Kruger's billboard, seen on the left, states: *On n'a plus besoin de héros* (*We No Longer Need Heroes*). Mike Chukwukelu's *Ijele* mask (1989), compiled from over 500 elements made from materials that the artist found in Paris, is in the foreground (fig.7). Chukwukelu constructing the *Ijele* mask prior to the opening (fig.8); in the background, some of Jack Wunuwun's paintings from the *Barnumbirr Manikay* (*Songs of the Morning Star Cycle*, 1988) are visible (see also fig.9 and 10).



fig.9

Wunuwun's *Barnumbirr Manikay* (*Songs of the Morning Star Cycle*, 1988), were installed beyond the turnstiles to the right (with Chukwukelu's *Ijele* mask to the left). They included a series of thirty paintings on barnumbirr bark representing individual songs in the cycle. In the centre, on the back wall, a larger painting on canvas combined all the elements from the series.



fig.10 and 11

Wunuwun's series of paintings, *Barnumbirr Manikay* (*Songs of the Morning Star Cycle*, 1988) (fig.10). At the opposite end of the gallery, Jangarh Singh Shyam's untitled wall painting stretched across two adjacent walls coated with earth (fig.11). The artist also presented paintings and drawings on paper at La Villette (see fig.65 and 66).



fig.12

To the left of Sing Shyam's work were three bark paintings by Cleitus Dambi, Nick Dumbrang and Ruedi Wem (all 1988). In Govenmas, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea, the villages are organised around a 'House of Men' (an exclusively male social space) containing painted panels by different artists depicting the story of the founding of the clan. On the left, Julio Galán's painting *Tehuana* (1987) can be seen (see also fig.15). To the right, Japanese artist Tatsuo Miyajima's LED work *Counter Room* (1989) was installed in a dedicated room.



fig.13

On entering the far right-hand gallery, Enzo Cucchi's large wall-based works were installed: *Untitled* (1989) to the left and, to the right, *Untitled* (1989), made with metal and rubber elements (fig.13). To the right side of Cucchi's work, a room was constructed for Stanley Brouwn's contribution. For several months, before and after the show, Brouwn walked in as many European cities as possible, counting his steps and recording what the camera saw in front of him as he walked. Each video take was 100 paces long. At the Pompidou, the space constructed was measured by Brouwn's step and the videos were shown on a monitor on a plinth. Each video was titled according to the name of the city, the street, the date, the time, which 100-pace interval is seen, and the total amount of steps taken on that day.



fig.14

To the left of Cucchi's works in a separate alcove was Rebecca Horn's *Kuss des Rhinozeros* (*Kiss of the Rhinoceros*, 1989), fabricated from steel, aluminium and motorised elements. At certain intervals the two metal arcs rose to meet each other and electric sparks were generated.

In the far left-hand gallery, to the left of Dambi, Dumbrang and Wem's work, were oil paintings by Julio Galán (see also fig.12). From left to right: *Niña triste porque no se quiere ir de México* (Sad Girl Because She Doesn't Want to Leave Mexico, 1988), *Caballo Ballo* (1987) and *Tehuana* (1987).



fig.15

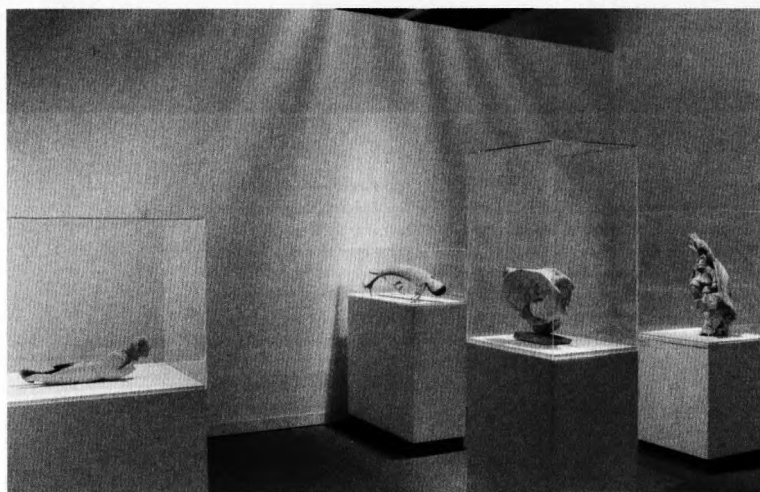


fig.16 and 17

On entering the right-hand gallery along the corridor, ten painted wooden masks by Dossou Amidou (made in 1988) were displayed on shelves (fig.16). The masks are made for the *gelede* festivities and rituals practised by the Yoruba of Nigeria and the Nago of Benin. In the adjacent gallery, seven whalebone sculptures made between 1981–88 by Paulosee Kuniliusee, an Inuit sculptor, were presented on pedestals (fig.17).



fig.18

Maestre Didi, artist and priest of the Candomblé religion, presented sculptures inspired by the emblems of the Orishá (the intermediary between God and man) made from sacred materials, such as the veins of palm leaves, leather, raffia, shells and beads. This photograph shows only a partial view of the room: from left to right, *Opà Èyè* (*Sceptre of the Ancestral Mother*), *Omó Ósanyin* (*Worship the Lord of the Vegetation*), *Óbá Dena* (*Sentry of the King of the Earth*), *Iwin - Igui* (*Spirit of a Tree*), all dates unknown. In the background, part of Francesco Clemente's work *Indigo Room* (1983-84) can be seen on the right, and to the left are two paintings by Nuche Kaji Bajracharya.

Next to Maestre Didi's space, on the left, cut-out iron sculptures by Georges Liautaud were displayed on shelves and on the floor. *Diable* (Devil, n.d.) is in the foreground, and in the background are seven smaller sculptures. In the early 1950s, Liautaud, a blacksmith from Croix-des-Bouquets, Haiti, began producing purely non-utilitarian sculptures from *dwoum*, empty gasoline drums or tin sheets. His work greatly influenced other Haitian cut-out metal artists, such as Gabriel Bien Aimé (exhibited at La Villette, fig.87).



fig.19



fig.20

Francesco Clemente's installation *Indigo Room* (1983-84), charcoal, indigo dye and silver on 123 sheets of handmade Pondicherry paper, consisted of four parts. Here, the first part is seen next to the entrance to Maestre Didi's space, with Liautaud's sculptures just visible in the distance. Small rectangles of paper are joined together with hand-woven cotton strips, and Kamasutra-like figures faintly marked in charcoal can be seen.



fig.21

This space is dedicated to paintings in gouache, collectively titled *Paubha* (n.d.), intended for temples and believers. They were executed by Nuche Kaji Bajracharya, a Newar of Kathmandu. Once each painting is finished, a priest carries out a ritual that gives life to the deity depicted. From left to right: *Le Bouddha suprême Vajrasattva et la déesse Svābhaprajñā* (n.d.), *Le Bouddha du Sud Ratnasambhava*, *l'un des cinq Tathāgatas* (n.d.), two unidentified works and far right, *Mahākāla, l'un des huit gardiens de la religion, sous son aspect Caturbhūja* (n.d.).

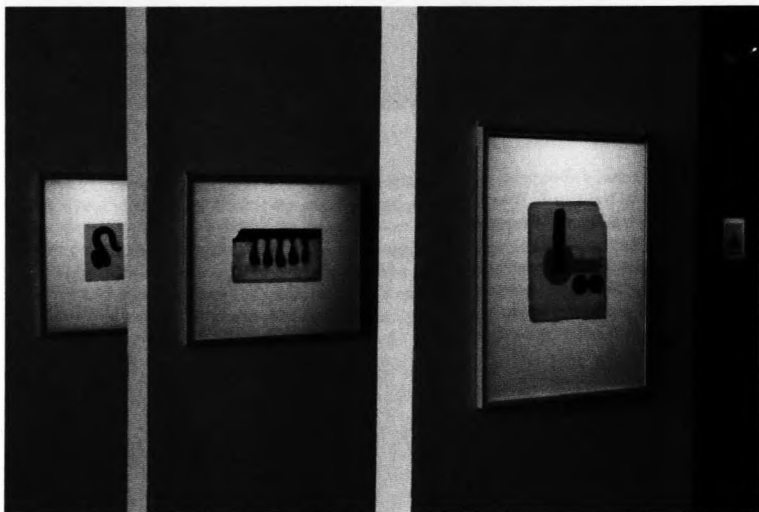


fig.22 and 23

The paintings of Raja Babu Sharma and Acharya Vyakul were displayed on walls and freestanding partitions (fig.22 and 23). Sharma's 25 compact and meticulously executed paintings serve as meditation cards and carry symbolic images such as *lingams* and *yonis* (abstract male and female forms). Vyakul renders these and other symbols in a looser hand, so that Sanskrit characters and cellular shapes appear to drift off the page. Three paintings by Vyakul are in the foreground; Sharma's paintings are in the background.



fig.24

On entering the next gallery – a larger and more open space – Wesner Philidor, *hougan* (priest) of Port au Prince, built an 8 by 8 metre space for dance identical to those found in Vodun temples, *Espace de danse d'un temple vodou*, (*Dance Space in a Vodun Temple*, 1989). On the ground, covered with earth, he drew *vévés* (religious symbols commonly used in Vodun) with cornflour. Part of Alighiero Boetti's *Poesie con il Sufi Berang* (*Poetry with the Sufi Berang*, 1988–89) is visible in the background. This work, consisting of 51 square panels embroidered by refugee Afghan women in Peshawar (Pakistan), contained 25 lines of 25 letters, in 100 colours. Each line alternated an Italian text on the theme of time by Boetti with a Farsi text titled *Naghma ye Bismil* (*Wounded Song*) by Sufi Berang, given to Boetti so that, according to Berang, he could use it 'in his effort to spread the culture of the heroic nation of Afghanistan, especially now during this period in its history filled with the blood and tears of resistance and jihad'.



fig.25

During the opening, Wesner Philidor performed the rite of consecration.

Behind Philidor's space, in a small gallery at the centre of the larger space, Yang Jiechang stands beside one of his paintings. Inspired by Chinese pharmacopoeia and titled *Hundred Layers of Ink* (1989), they were produced by the artist in a large workshop at La Villette and were painted with Chinese ink layered in part with rice paper. In the background part of Boetti's work can be seen.

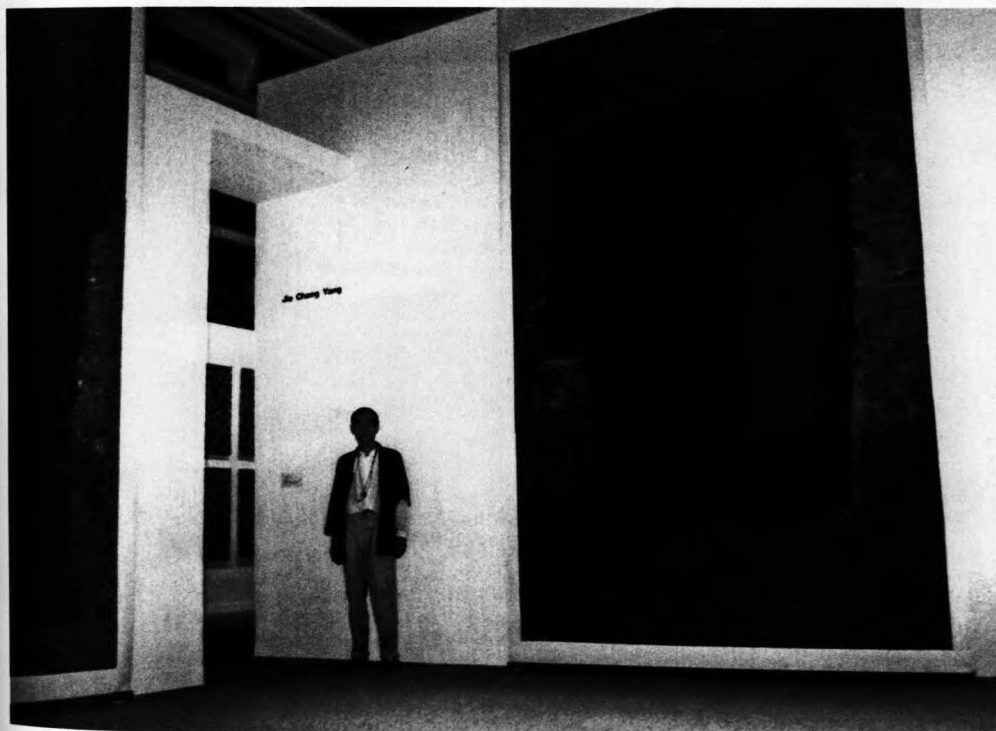


fig.26



fig.27

On re-entering the large open space, with Boetti's work to the right, the visitor encountered Nam June Paik's *Good Morning Mr. Orwell* (1984), installed in the centre. The video screened on the monitors was an edited version of Paik's first satellite 'installation', a television programme which was aired across the US and also broadcast in South Korea and parts of Europe on New Year's Day in 1984. Paik coordinated various live and pre-recorded segments for television – a collage of art and pop culture, featuring performances by Laurie Anderson, Merce Cunningham and Peter Gabriel among many others. On the left, in a separate room, is *The Storyteller* (1986), one of two large photographic works by Jeff Wall (see also fig.29), and to the right is a partial view of Boetti's embroidered work *Poesie con il Sufi Berang* (*Poetry with the Sufi Berang*, 1988–89).



fig.28 and 29

Another view of the gallery (fig.28) showing Boetti's work on the left-hand wall, with part of Paik's installation *Good Morning Mr. Orwell* (1984), a Korean sedan chair, perched on the central wall, with the other larger component of Paik's work in the foreground. In the right-hand corner, the edge of one of Sigmar Polke's paintings can be glimpsed (see also fig.35). In a gallery at the rear to the right (fig.29) were two large light boxes by Jeff Wall. To the left *Tran Duc Van* (1988) and to the right *The Storyteller* (1986).

The ten-volume work by On Kawara *One Million Years (Past)* (1969) with the dedication 'For all those who have lived and died' was exhibited in a room of its own sited near Wall's work. The work begins with the year 998031 BC and ends with 1969 AD. Each hardbound book is made up of 200 type-written pages and each page lists 500 years. The dates are typed in Arabic numerals.

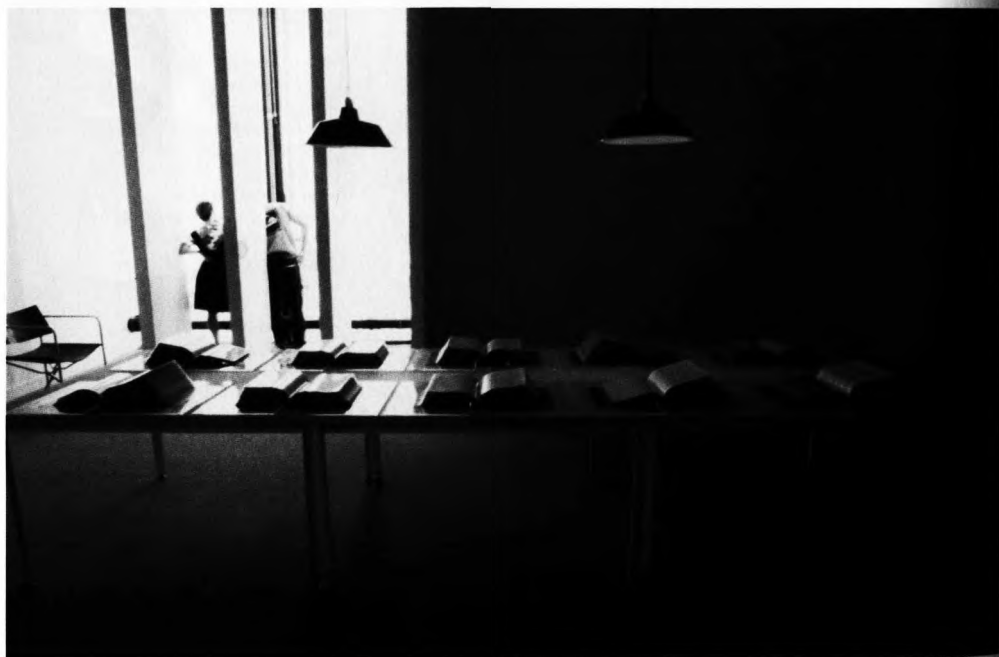


fig.30



fig.31

John Baldessari's work *Two Stories (Yellow and Blue) and Commentary (with Giraffe)* (1989), consisting of a group of framed and unframed black-and-white and colour photographs and cut-outs painted with oil and vinyl, was dispersed over a partition wall. Cinematographic references were placed side by side with other images including film-maker Marc Allégret's well-known photograph *The 'Push-Ball' game of the Sara women*, reproduced in his film with André Gide's *Voyage au Congo (Travels in the Congo)* of 1928, seen here on the top right- and bottom left-hand walls.

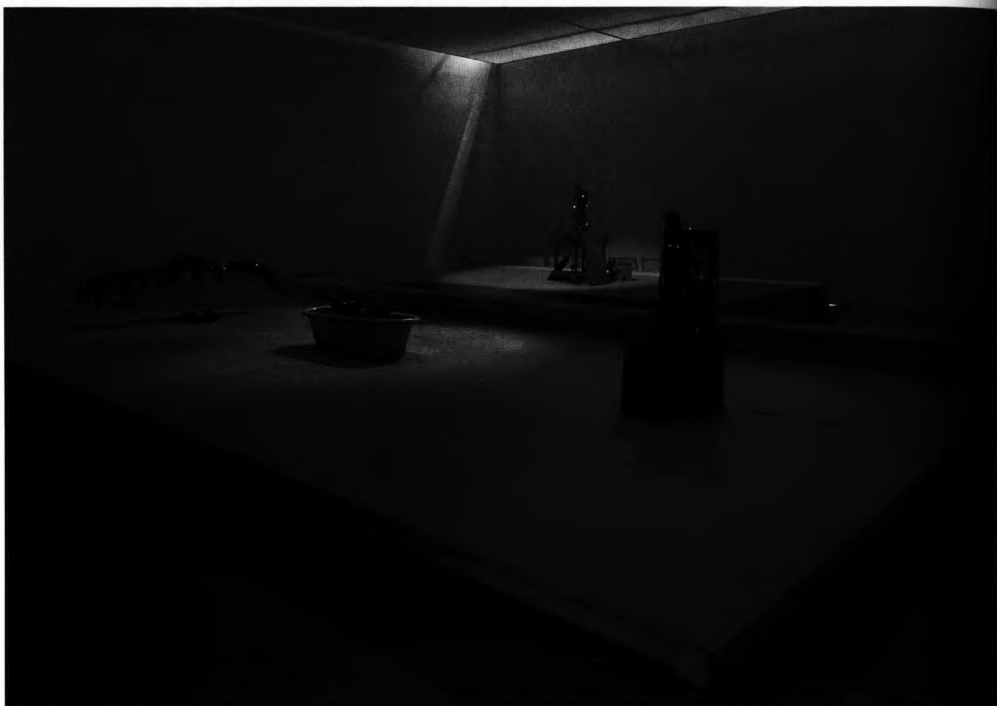


fig.32

In the adjacent space, on a platform with wheels, Sarkis re-interpreted his solo exhibition or installation *Çaylak Sokak*, which originally took place in February 1986 at the Maçka Sanat Galerisi in Istanbul. *Çaylak Sokak* is the name of the street where the house in which the artist was born is located. The artworks and workbench of his uncle, a shoemaker, whom Sarkis assisted as a child, are covered with the ribbon taken from audiotapes of the film *Nostalghia* (1983) by Andrei Tarkovsky, and are illuminated by theatre projectors emitting red, blue, green and yellow light.

In an adjoining room were drawings by Frédéric Bruly Bouabré, including work from the series *Les Grandes Figures* (Great Individuals, 1987–88), *Musée du Visage Africain* and *Mythologie et Civilisation Bété* (The Bété Mythology and Civilisation), all dated between 1978 and 1988. The drawings on cardboard packaging, made with coloured pencil and pen, are part of Bouabré's larger ongoing series of pictograms, *Connaissance du monde* (World Knowledge), conveying the traditions and knowledge of his native people, the Bété of Côte d'Ivoire (fig.34). To the right: Bouabré selecting drawings to exhibit (fig.33).



fig.33

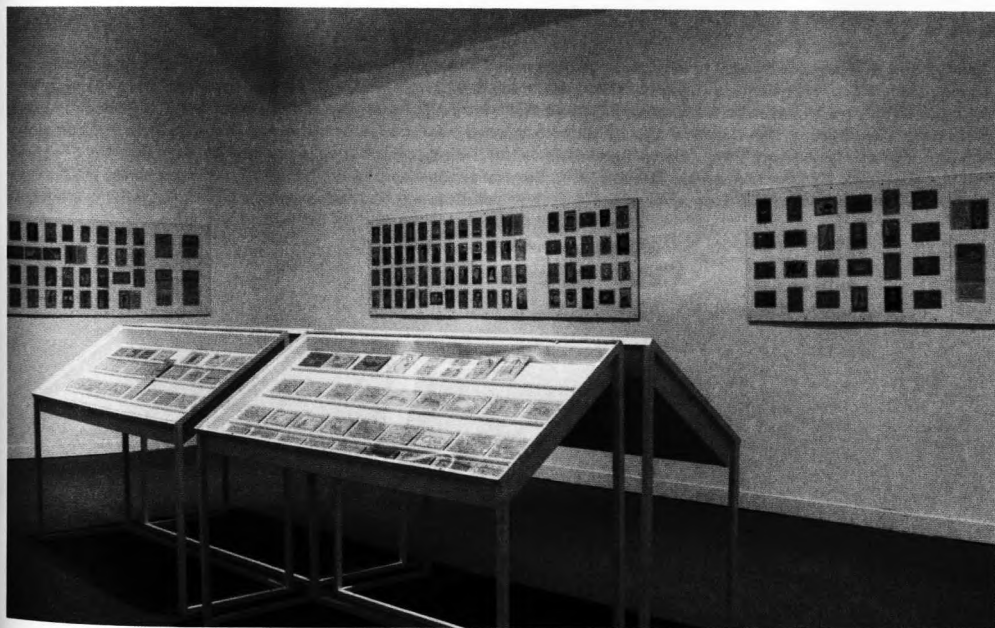


fig.34



fig.35

A partial view of a room dedicated to the paintings of Sigmar Polke, showing from left to right *Untitled (Triptych)* (1989), *Untitled* (1987), *Gold Leaf* (1989) and *Jeux d'enfants (Children's Games)* (1988). Further works were also shown in this room: *Le Jour de Gloire est arrivé (The Day of Glory Has Arrived)* (1989), *Liberté, égalité, fraternité (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity)* (1988) and *Médaille (Medal)* (1988). Several of the exhibited works adopted the iconography of the French Revolution.



fig.36

A view of the interior of Ilya Kabakov's installation shown at the end of a long, narrow enclosed space, *The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment* (1985–88). The room, visible only through an opening in the wall, contained a human catapult, as well as scientific drawings and diagrams pinned to the wall over old Soviet propaganda posters. A model of a town showed the man's expected projectile path to outer space. A text by three residents of the apartment building described the story that shortly after the man went into orbit the authorities arrived and boarded up the room.



fig.37

Six chairs by Patrick Vilaire welded from steel sheet employing symbols taken from Haitian Vodun were installed in a small room next to Kabakov's work. Three are pictured here, from left to right: *Fauteuil Trappe* (*Trapping Armchair*, n.d.), *Homme Fauteuil* (*Armchair Man*, n.d.) and *Fauteuil Président* (*President Armchair*, 1986).



fig.38

Partial view of the large room containing works by Anselm Kiefer made partly in opposition to the practice of organising census. From left to right, *Volkszählung, Leviathan (Behemoth) (Census, Leviathan (Behemoth), 1989)*, made from acrylic, emulsion, lacquer, ashes and photographic fragments on canvas; *Untitled (1980-86)*, a work in three panels, made of oil, acrylic, emulsion, lacquer, lead, coal, steel cable and straw on photograph mounted on canvas; and *Volkszählung, Leviathan (Census, Leviathan, 1987)*, container, lead and steel.

In a room off to the right there were headdresses from the Ekpeye culture of the Niger Delta made by Chief Mark Unya and Nathan Emeden: *Otobo* (*Amphibian Fish*, 1989), *Ayezhim* (*Whale-shark*, 1989) and *Oiseau* (*Bird*, 1989).



fig.39 and 40

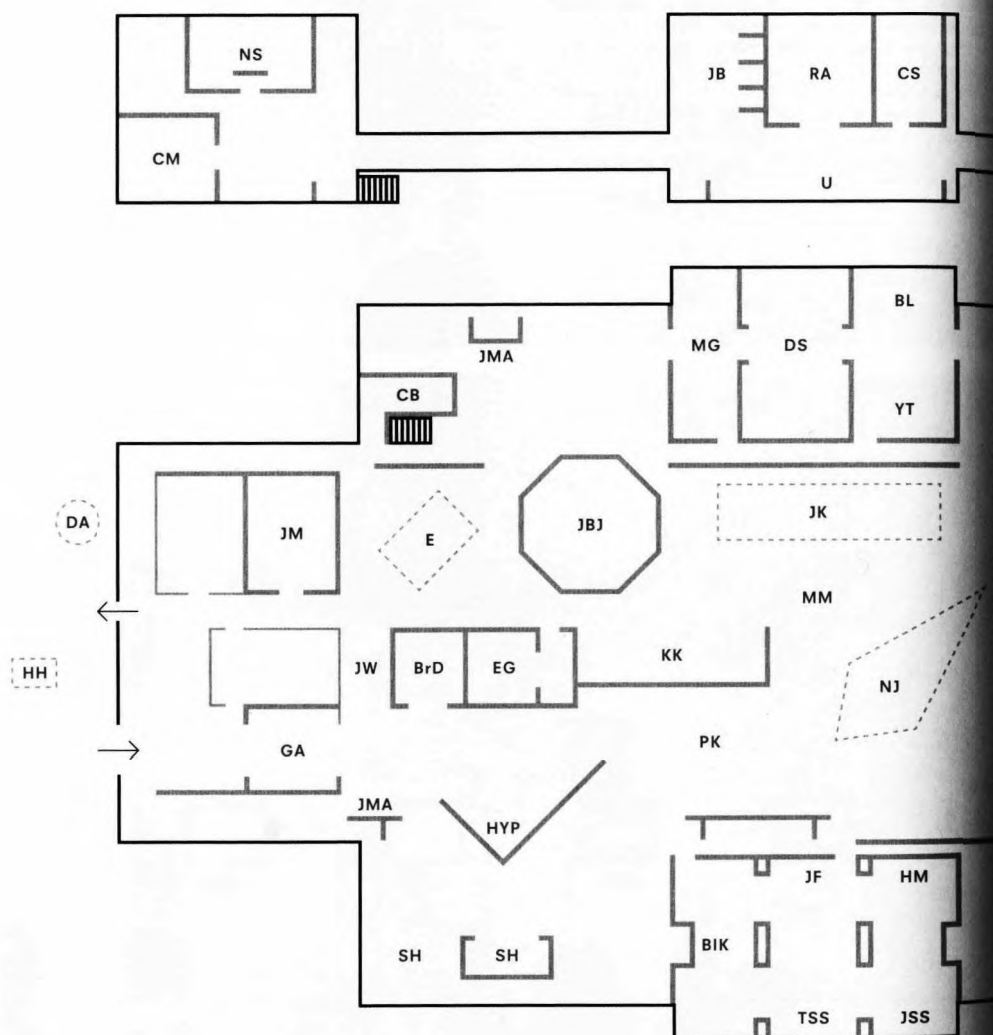
Exiting the room of Kiefer's work, in an open space, were 35 *alebrijes* made by Felipe Linares and his two sons. Renewing the Mexican tradition of *cartoneros* (artists working with papier mâché), the sculptures are the creation of Don Pedro Linares, Felipe's father, who invented the term that names them in 1936, it is said, after a vision in a fever-induced nightmare. Linares's workshop is located behind the Sonora market in Mexico City – an area known for the making of paper sculptures.

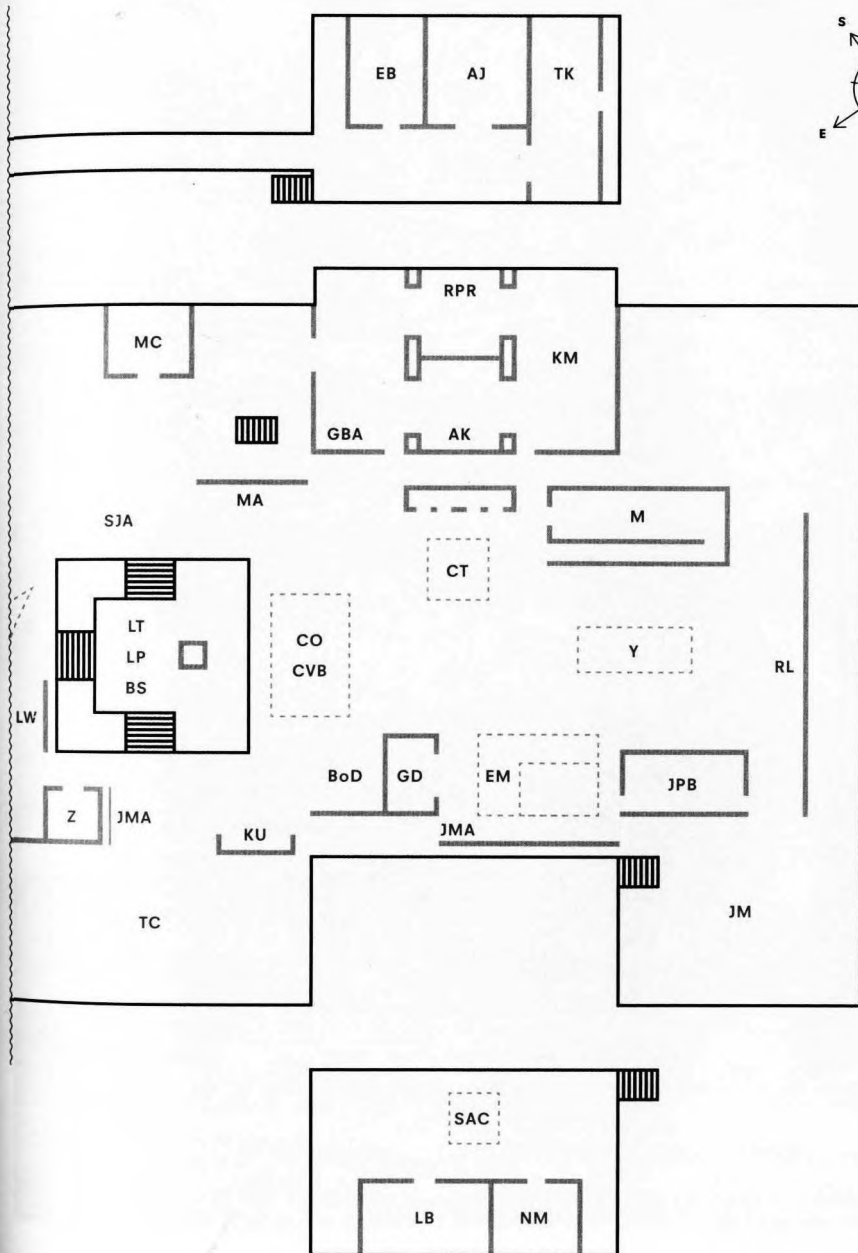
Daniel Buren's four video monitors were placed at the exit of the final room in the Centre Pompidou, showing, from left to right, the following four films made for the exhibition: *29 bandes de 8,7 cm chacune vues à la télévision* (29 stripes of 8.7cm each, viewed on television, 1989), a film shot in real time of a work by Buren in the Pompidou collection display one floor below; *Les Magiciens de la terre vus par eux-mêmes. Questions* (The Magicians of the earth as seen by themselves. Questions, 1989), a series of interviews made by Buren to artists included in the exhibition; *Les Magiciens de la terre vus à la télévision* (The Magicians of the earth as seen on TV, 1989), excerpts from films of the making and opening of 'Magiciens de la Terre' shot for television; and *Les Magiciens de la terre vus par Daniel Buren* (The Magicians of the earth as seen by Daniel Buren, 1989), showing footage of a music-hall magician performing.



fig.41

Grande Halle de La Villette





At the Grande Halle de La Villette, besides the two works presented outside, the exhibition unfolded under the hall's great central aisle and adjacent rooms, as well as the mezzanine level on both sides of the building.

In front of the Grande Halle, Hans Haacke made an intervention on La Villette's fountain, and gave it the title *One Day, the Lions of Dulcie September Will Spout Water in Jubilation* (1989). The work references Dulcie September, the Africa National Congress representative in France, who was murdered in Paris on 29 March 1988. The ANC flag flies above the then national flag of South Africa. The three colours of the former are replicated on the fountain, including the black-tinted water and the gold-painted lions.



fig.42



fig.43

Sited to the left of the entrance of the Grande Halle de La Villette, Dennis Adams's *The Algerian Folie* (1989) consisted of two light boxes attached to the platform of a semi-trailer, showing the busts of French generals removed after Algeria's independence.



fig.44

On entering the Grande Halle, the first work encountered was Giovanni Anselmo's *Verso Nord e Attraverso* (*Towards North and Through*, 1989), a piece of granite cut in two with six iron steps set into it. On climbing up viewers found a compass that revealed the orientation of the sculpture as pointing north. Just visible in the background are works by Per Kirkeby and Nera Jamburk (fig.51 and 57).

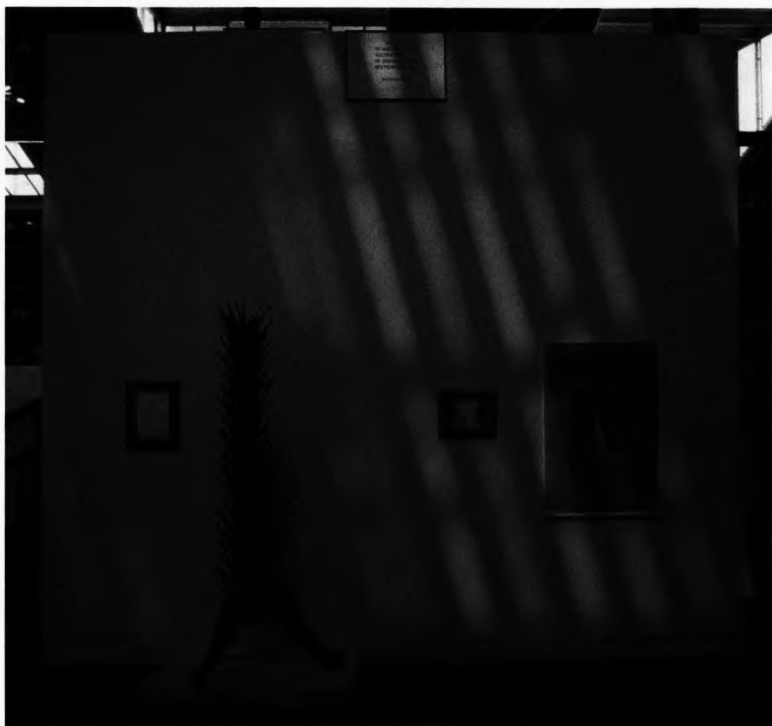


fig.45

To the right, sited close to Anselmo's work, was the first of Jean-Michel Alberola's four wall works (all 1989); each wall was painted in a different colour, and they were located at the four corners of the Grande Halle. They were titled *1 ère cimaise, jaune* (Panel no.1, yellow, see fig.45), *2 ème cimaise, rouge* (Panel no. 2, red, see fig.63), *3 ème cimaise, blanche* (Panel no. 3, white, see fig.71), *4 ème cimaise, orange* (Panel no. 4, orange, see fig.106). At the top on this first wall work is *Ici et là-bas de quelque chose qui disparaît, de quelque chose qui n'existe plus. A. Dixit. (Here and There from Something that Disappears, from Something that No Longer Exists. A. Dixit.)*. On the pedestal is *Presque aussi facile que de pisser avec des gants de boxe (Almost as Easy as Pissing with Boxing Gloves, 1989)*, an eighteenth-century bottle rack from Burgundy and its purchase invoice. To the right, centre is the found photograph *Salutations distinguées (Best Regards, 1989)*, while at the far right is *Commerce (Trade, 1985)*.



fig.46

To the left of Anselmo's work and alongside Dimitrijević's space stood *Djalumbu (Hollow Logs, 1988)* by Jimmy Wululu, twelve mortuary poles like the ones used in Arnhem Land, Northern Australia, to contain human bones.

Wululu's work was next to Braco Dimitrijević's room *Status Post Historicus, About Two Artists* (1969–89) – four bronze busts on green marble pedestals of Leonardo da Vinci, Peter Someren, Albrecht Dürer and Babe Enawad. The anecdote on the wall stated, in English: 'Once upon a time, far from cities and towns, there lived two painters. One day the king, hunting nearby, lost his dog. He found him in the garden of one of the two painters. He saw the works of that painter and took him to the castle. The name of that painter was Leonardo da Vinci. The name of the other disappeared forever from human memory.' The series was initiated in 1971 and since then the busts have multiplied and form a tribute to those whose name history does not retain. Dimitrijević's *The Casual Passer-By I Met at 3.59 p.m., Paris, 1989* (1989) was exhibited on the façade of the Centre Pompidou (see fig.2).



fig.47

View looking back towards the entrance of the exhibition. Prominent in the foreground is Huang Yong Ping's work *Reptiles* (1989), which the artist constructed out of Chinese and French communist newspapers pulped by passing them through washing-machine cycles. Oriented north, the two larger paper-coated forms are based on tombs in the shape of a tortoise – an animal that symbolises longevity in Chinese culture. They were accompanied by three washing machines and three smaller mounds of paper pulp, which also covered part of a wall. Alberola's work can be seen in the background.



fig.48



fig.49

Huang installing *Reptiles* (1989).



fig.50

In a space behind Huang's installation were two works by Shirazeh Houshiary, *The Pole of the Sphere* (1989), fabricated from lodestone and copper, with a flame emerging from a metal cavity; and *The Geometry of Water* (1989), a circular steel basin filled with water with concentric waves on the surface.



fig.51

Six bronze sculptures by Per Kirkeby were sited along the central corridor of the Grande Halle:
Tor I (Gate I, 1987), *Tor II (Gate II, 1987)*, *Torso I (1983)*, *Torso II (1983)*, *Untitled (1989)* and *Untitled (1989)*.
 In the background, from left to right, are works by Nera Jambruk, Bowa Devi and Richard Long.

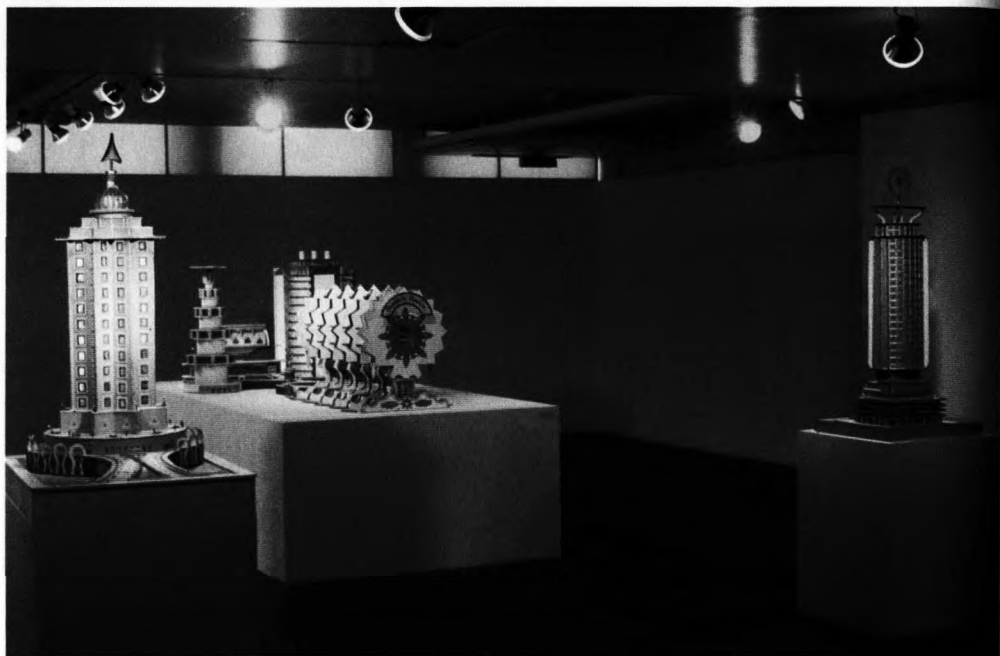


fig.52

A partial view of the first room to the right under the mezzanine, containing a group of seven sculptures by Bodys Isek Kingelez, constructed from recycled paper, cardboard and plastic. The three works visible in the foreground, from left to right, are *Croix du ciel* (*Cross of the Sky*, 1989), a model for a mausoleum – *Mausolée Kingelez* (*Détente chino japonaise, rue des artistes*) (n.d.) – and *La Méditerranéenne française* (*The French Mediterranean*, 1989).

To the left, on entering the next larger space, were four wood carvings made from blackwood by the Makondé sculptor John Fundi. The exhibited sculptures, from left to right, were *Untitled* (n.d.), *Litendamwene* (1988), *Untitled* (1987) and *Eve* (1987). The six stone carvings by Henry Munyaradzi, a Zimbabwean Shona, were lined up on plinths to the right in the adjacent alcove. Seen here are *Family Under the Palm Tree*, *Wise Man*, *Rich Man*, *New Moon*, *Butterfly* and *Master Man* (all dating from 1988 and made of serpentine). Also sharing this space were paintings by Twins Seven Seven and Jangarh Singh Shyam (see fig.54–56).



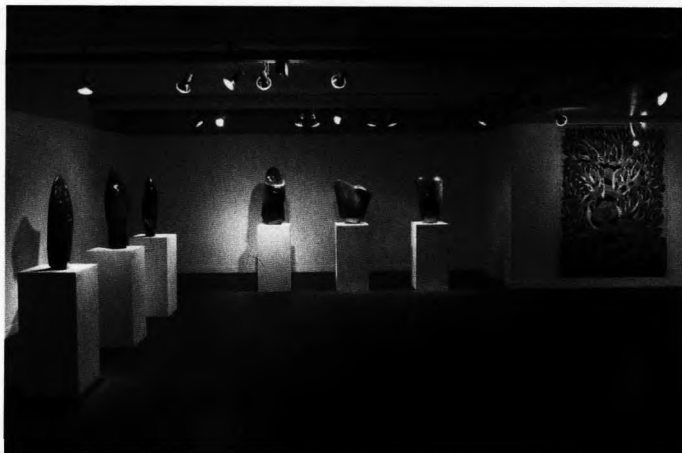
fig.53

Four paintings by Twins Seven Seven hung to the far right of the space shared with Fundi, Munyaradzi and Singh Shyam. Twins Seven Seven's paintings, made from overlaid perforated sheets of plywood, take as their subject the Yoruba mythology. Three of the four paintings can be seen here, left to right: *Fish Birds and Totems* (1989), *The Mother of the World Reptile* (1988) and *Creative Spiritual Shapes in the Souls of Animals* (1988).



fig.54

To the left are Munyaradzi's stone carvings, and to the right a work by Singh Shyam titled *Passage avec araignée* (*Passage with Spider*, 1988).



Nine additional framed paintings and works on paper by Shyam: *Bird*, *Stag*, *Stag*, *Untitled*, *Peacock*, *Crab*, *Peacock*, *Stag* and *Crane* (dates c.1988-89). Shyam also made a wall painting at the Centre Pompidou (see fig.11).



fig.55 and 56



fig.57

Opposite

On re-entering the Grande Halle, the visitor encountered Nera Jambruk's work *Fronton de maison des hommes* (*Pediment of the House of Men*, 1988) rising up into the roof. This piece was commissioned by Jean-Hubert Martin while he and Lawrence Weiner were visiting Papua New Guinea. Fabricated from pieces of bark and a reconstructed corrugated iron roof, the painting in natural and synthetic pigments represents the myth of the origin of Jambruk's clan.

Below

Lawrence Weiner's corrugated iron panel *NAU EM I ART BILONG YUMI* (*Now Art Belongs to You and Me*, 1988–89) was positioned directly behind Jambruk's work. The painted slogans on the right side of the panel are copies of some of the villagers' tattoos and some of Weiner's own tattoos. On the left the text reads 'Iron steel & glass / Strewn underfoot / Upon a path from place to place / Bamboo vines & shells / Strewn underfoot / Upon a street from place to place'. Also just visible in the background, from left to right, are works by Sunday Jack Akpan (see fig.90–91), Marina Abramović (see fig.89 and Bowa Devi (see fig.65–66).



fig.58



fig.59

Exhibition view looking right, with the edge of Weiner's work in the foreground and sculptures by Tony Cragg on the floor to the far left. Zush's room (fig.60) is straight ahead, with its flag and curtained door visible and five paintings from his series *Girls and Men in My Life* (1987-88) on the long partition wall to the right.



fig.60

Zush recreated his own workshop with *Evrugo Mental State* (1968-89). This room, which could be entered through a curtained door, brought together objects, drawings and documents relating to Evrugo, an imaginary autonomous and utopian state that Zush had created.



fig.61 and 62

The Mandala of the Wrathful Divinity Bhairav and Twelve Gods of His Entourage (1989) by Lobsang Thinle, Lobsang Palden and Bhorda Sherpa, was housed in a temple within a recessed space at the centre of the Grande Halle (fig.61). In the picture below the artists can be seen working on the mandala during the installation period (fig.62). The diagram was made with powdered minerals. In accordance with the ephemeral nature of the rite and at the request of the priests, the powder was dispersed in the waters of the Canal Saint-Martin in Paris at the end of the exhibition.



fig.63

Tony Cragg's sculpture *Fruit of Whose Labour* (1989) was shown on the floor in an open space to the right in the Grande Halle. Alberola's second wall panel, *2^{ème} cimaise, rouge* (Panel no. 2, red, 1989) was placed behind Cragg's assemblage, with ten steel sculptures and the print *Geography* (1985) hanging on the wall, and one further steel element placed on a pedestal in front of it.



fig.64

Ken Unsworth's work *Langsam (Slowly)*, 1988) was framed by a freestanding partition wall located to the right of Cragg's sculptures.

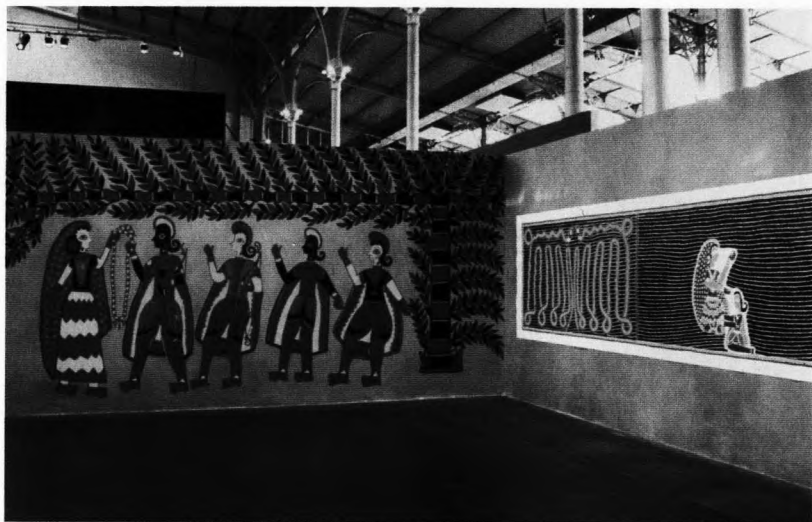


fig.65 and 66

Adjacent to Unsworth's sculpture, in a separate alcove, were works by Bowa Devi made with acrylic and fluorescent paint. The fresco *King and Queen Story and River Inside* (1989) is on the earth-coated wall to the left, and to the right are two works on paper, *Snake* (1989) and *Ramastory* (1984). Below, Bowa Devi and an assistant preparing the work on paper (fig.66).

In a small enclosed space behind Bowa Devi's work, Gu Dexin lined the walls with pieces of burnt plastic and made a collection of sculptures from recycled plastics and general waste.



fig.67



fig.68 and 69

Claes Oldenburg installing the sculpture *From the Entropic Library* (1989), made from cloth, wood, aluminum and expanded polystyrene, coated with resin and painted with latex. Centrally installed – behind (and above) the *Mandala of the Wrathful Divinity Bhairav and Twelve Gods of His Entourage* (1989) by Palden, Sherpa and Thinle – Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen's sculpture depicted a row of monumental, decaying books and two bookends with the shape of an elephant combined with an outboard motor.

Esther Mahlangu working on *House* (1989) during the installation period (fig.70). Towards the far end of the Grande Halle, to the right of Gu's room, Mahlangu's *House* was installed (fig.71). The house was decorated by Mahlangu in the tradition of the Ndebele people of South Africa. Behind the house on the left is the black box containing the work of Jean-Pierre Bertrand, and on the right Alberola's third wall panel, *3 ème cimaise, blanche* (Panel no.3, white, 1989), which featured five works, of which two can be seen: *Dimanche matin de bonne heure* (*Café de la Gare*) (Early Sunday Morning (*Café de la Gare*), 1989) and *Suzanne et les vieillards: L'image retrouvée* (*à Joseph Beuys*) (*Suzanne and the Old Men: The Image Regained* (for Joseph Beuys), 1985–86).



fig.70



fig.71



fig.72

In the black boxed-off space at the far corner of the Grande Halle, behind *Mahlangu's House* (1989) was Jean-Pierre Bertrand's installation *Volume de perception au seuil de l'imaginaire* (*Volume of Perception on the Threshold of the Imaginary*, 1989), 48 pencil drawings with traces of honey, lemon, strawberry and salt, displayed behind a metal grid.



fig.73

Juan Muñoz's ceramic sculpture *Tres columnas y un enano* (*Three Columns and a Dwarf*, 1988) was positioned to the right of Bertrand's space, close to the back wall of the Grande Halle by the stairs to the upper mezzanine.



fig.74

Up on the landing of the mezzanine, twelve terracotta figurines by Seni Awa Camara were displayed on a plinth. Camara's sculptures draw from the traditional Senegalese arts of her Ouolof heritage. Part of *Red Earth Circle* (1989) by Richard Long can be seen in the background.



fig.75

In one of two rooms on the right-hand mezzanine, oil paintings on canvas by Norval Morrisseau, a Native American *ojibway* (painter and shaman), were installed. From left to right: *Migration (The Great Flood)* (1975) and *Artist with Thunderbird Vision - The Visionary* (1977). Camara's work can be seen through the door on the right.



fig.76

Louise Bourgeois's modular installation *Articulated Lair* (1986), made from painted steel, rubber and metal, was installed in the space adjacent to Morrisseau's works, the last of the three spaces on the right-hand mezzanine.

Richard Long working on *Red Earth Circle* (1989) (fig.77). Members of the Yuendumu community at work on their painting with Cyprien Tokoudagba's work in progress is just visible to the left (fig.78).



fig.77

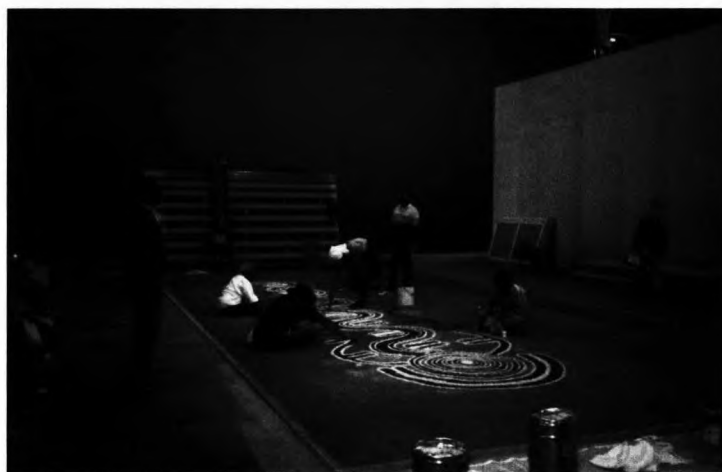


fig.78



fig.79

Returning from the mezzanine back to the ground level, visitors encountered the large ground painting *Yam Dreaming* (1989), made on clay by seven members from the Yuendumu community in Australia: Francis Jupurrurla Kelly, Frank Bronson Jakamarra Nelson, Paddy Jupurrurla Nelson, Neville Japangardi Poulson, Paddy Japaljarri Sims, Paddy Japaljarri Stewart and Towser Jakamarra Walker. The painting consisted of three separate motifs: a Warna-Jardiwarnpa (snake), Ngapa (water) and a Yarla (bush potato), and had a freestanding yam placed on a decorated pole near its centre. Richard Long's wall painting *Red Earth Circle* (1989), made with clay from the River Avon, took up the central back wall of the Grande Halle.

To enter Miralda's installation *Santa Comida* (*Holy Meal*, 1984-89), placed in the white boxed-off space to the left of the Yuendumu community's work, visitors walked through a narrow 12-metre-long corridor containing seven altars dedicated to the Orisha and lined with display cases containing products found in a Botánica – an Afro-Caribbean Santería store. The installation referred to the Yoruba, Christian and Vodun origins of African-American culture. At the end of the corridor, in a wider space, a film of the meal offered to the gods was projected.



fig.80



fig.81

In the foreground is a series of seven of Cyprien Tokoudagba's sculptures of the Vodun gods, *Vaudou Zangbeto Legba* (1989), made of painted, reinforced concrete. His paintings and sculptures were usually made for Vodun temples in Abomey, Benin. From left to right *Les 2 Lions* (*The 2 Lions*), *Dan: Le serpent arc-en-ciel* (*Dan: The Rainbow Serpent*), *Zanganauadi: Chef des vaudou Zangbeto* (*Zanganauadi: Zangbeto Vodun Chief*), *Legba: Messenger et protecteur* (*Legba: Messenger and Protector*), *Le Avadtigan: Le bourreau* (*Avadtigan: The Executioner*) and *Le Supplicié* (*The Tortured*) (all 1989). Tokoudagba made the entire work on site in Paris, including a Toxossou temple, decorated with murals of attributes of the deities, visible in the background. Right: Tokoudagba and an assistant at work during the installation period.



fig.82



fig.83

Behind Tokoudagba's Toxossou temple, in the first of four rooms under the left-hand mezzanine, eighteen pastel drawings by Karel Malich were displayed, from the series *Svetlo* (*Light*, 1986–89).



fig.84

Bird's eye view of the far end of the exhibition from the gangway located directly above the work of Oldenburg and van Bruggen. From left to right can be seen works by Tokoudagba (fig.81-82), Long (fig.77 and 79), the Yuendumu community (fig.78-79) and Mahlangu (fig.70-71). The large space containing Miralda's work is visible to the left, and in the background to the right, behind Bertrand's black room, is Muñoz's work.



fig.85 and 86

In the adjoining space, 23 sculptures collectively titled *Imagination of the Umbanda* (1985-88) by Ronaldo Pereira Rego were presented along a partition wall on a long shelf. Pereira Rego's wrought-iron sculptures translate the symbolic shapes of the deities of the Pantheon of the Brazilian Umbanda religion (fig.85). In the opposite space nine sculptures (all 1987-88) by Agbagli Kossi, an artist and Vodun priest from Togo, were displayed on a plinth. From top to bottom, left to right, *Dabe*, *Fiovi*, *Asafo*, *Ayo*, *Densu*, *Kundo*, *Yasu*, *Detugbi* and *Atupani* (fig.86).



fig.87

In the last space under the mezzanine, thirteen sculptures by Gabriel Bien Aimé, cut from metal oil drums, were displayed on the wall. Bien Aimé continues in the tradition of Georges Liautaud (see fig.19). From left to right, *Marasa Dyab* (1985), *Femme au Chapeau* (Woman with a Hat, 1985), *Vévé du Tambourinier* (Tambourine Player's Vévé, 1985), *Maître Grand Bois* (Master of the Great Forest, 1989), *Maître de la Terre* (Master of the Earth, 1989) and *Le Taureau sacrifié* (The Sacrificed Bull, 1985).

In a smaller isolated room behind the staircase, set apart from the previous four adjoining spaces under the mezzanine, two sculptures by Marc Couturier were presented. *Lin, verre, or (Linen, Glass, Gold, 1988)* can be seen on the left, and installed to the right was the work *Hostia (Communion, 1988)*.



fig.88

Marina Abramović, during the installation period, standing by her work *Boat Emptying, Stream Entering* (1989) – a freestanding partition wall located in front of Couturier's room and the staircase – with twelve quartz blocks positioned at the level of her head, heart and groin. The visitor could choose a combination of blocks and press his or her body against them in order to receive energy.



fig.89



fig.90 and 91

Located close to Abramović's work were twelve life-size effigies by Sunday Jack Akpan, made from reinforced concrete painted with acrylic (all 1989, titles unknown) (fig.90). Akpan made all the works on site in Paris in the months preceding the exhibition. The more expansive installation view (fig.91) shows Akpan's work in the foreground alongside the recessed space containing the *Mandala of the Wrathful Divinity Bhairav and Twelve Gods of His Entourage* (1989) by Thinle, Palden and Sherpa. The works of Tokoudagba, Long, Oldenburg and van Bruggen, Bowa Devi and Unsworth are in the background, from left to right.

In the first of another series of three rooms under the mezzanine was a calligraphic work (ink, watercolour and gold-leaf) on paper by Yousuf Thannoon, *The Apartments (Surah 49, Verse 13 of the Quran)* (1989). The Arabic text can be translated as: 'In the name of God, the Clement and Merciful. "O Men, we have begotten a man and a woman, we have divided into families and tribes. The more worthy before God is the one among you who fears Him the most. But God is wise and informed of everything".'



fig.92



fig.93

At the opposite end of the space, seven furniture-objects by Boujemaâ Lakhdar were exhibited, four of which are visible here. Using local craft techniques from Essaouira, Morocco, the objects are composed of marquetry, hammered copper and various other elements including leather, bone and wood. From left to right, *Le Totem de la pensée* (*The Totem of Thinking*, n.d.), *Astrolabe musical* (*Musical Astrolabe*, 1985), *Tableau aigle* (*Eagle-Tableau*, 1983) and *Bateau-phallus* (*Phallus-Boat*, 1986).

Opposite, top

The next gallery housed a collection of ten works by Daniel Spoerri – a mixture of wall-based pieces and freestanding sculptures on plinths. From left to right: *L'imbécile aveugle* (*The Blind Fool*, 1989), *Dogon* (1986), *Bite en tête* (*Prick on Head*, n.d.), *Le Chat mor(t)du* (*The Bitten/Dead Cat*, 1986), *L'Évêque Zitlala* (*The Bishop Zitlala*, 1989), *Le Dieu caché* (*Tableau-piège*), *hommage à Lucien Goldmann* (*The Hidden God (Picture-Trap)*), *Homage to Lucien Goldmann*, 1987) and *L'Ogre* (*The Ogre*, 1986).

Opposite, bottom

Moshe Gershuni's untitled series of paintings (gloss, oil and spray paint on paper), made in 1989, were exhibited in the final gallery under the mezzanine.



fig.94 and 95



fig.96 and 97

Re-entering the Grande Halle, the visitor encountered John Knight's carpet *Leetsoii* (*Uranium*, 1987) laid out on the floor. The piece was first shown in a gallery in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1988. The patterns on the work represented the primary geometric forms of minerals (uranium and tin) as codified by the US Geological Survey and also referred to Navajo sand painting. To the left, Mario Merz installed an *Untitled* sculpture from 1989 made of rattan and bamboo. Behind it, to the right, Joe Ben Junior's *Sand Painting* (1989) was housed in an octagonal room (see fig.99), and to the left coffins made by Kane Kwei are visible (see also fig.101).

Exhibition view looking back towards Long's wall painting, with Knight's work in the foreground and Merz's *Untitled* sculpture (1989) to the right, next to Jambruck's *Fronton de maison des hommes* (*Pediment of the House of Men*, 1988). Installations by Akpan, Tokoudagba, Oldenburg and van Bruggen, Thinle, Palden and Sherpa, Bowa Devi, Weiner and Zush are visible behind, from left to right.



fig.98



fig.99 and 100

View of Joe Ben Junior's *Sand Painting* (1989). For the exhibition the artist invented his own images while preserving the formal aspects of the Navajo style. The work depicts the history of harvest, and how the gods transmitted knowledge for growing crops. Below, Ben Junior at work on *Sand Painting* during the installation period (fig.100), when mineral pigments were poured onto sand. At the end of the exhibition the pigments were brought back to the Navajo desert and dispersed.

On exiting the octagonal room containing Ben Junior's work, visitors could see Kane Kwei's seven painted wooden caskets, visible here in the foreground to the right. *Mercedes, Onion, House, Lobster, Fish, Elephant and Eagle* (all 1988) were exhibited, from left to right, in an open space on low trestle tables in the central part of the Grande Halle. The caskets are made in workshops in Teshie, a suburb of Accra in South Eastern Ghana, where wealthy families bury their dead in coffins designed in a form that represents the life of the deceased. Works by Merz, Jambruck, Long and Oldenburg and van Bruggen can be seen in the background.



fig.101



fig.102

In an enclosed space next to Kane Kwei's work, hung on the wall to the left, was the text of the *nia-ikala*, a chant used by shamans in Panama and Colombia as a treatment for mental illness. The text is about 1,000 verses long; it was converted into pictograms in coloured crayon by the Cuna shaman Enrique Gómez and gathered in its present form by the anthropologist Carlo Severi in 1983. Gómez's pictograms were exhibited to the right of the partition wall.

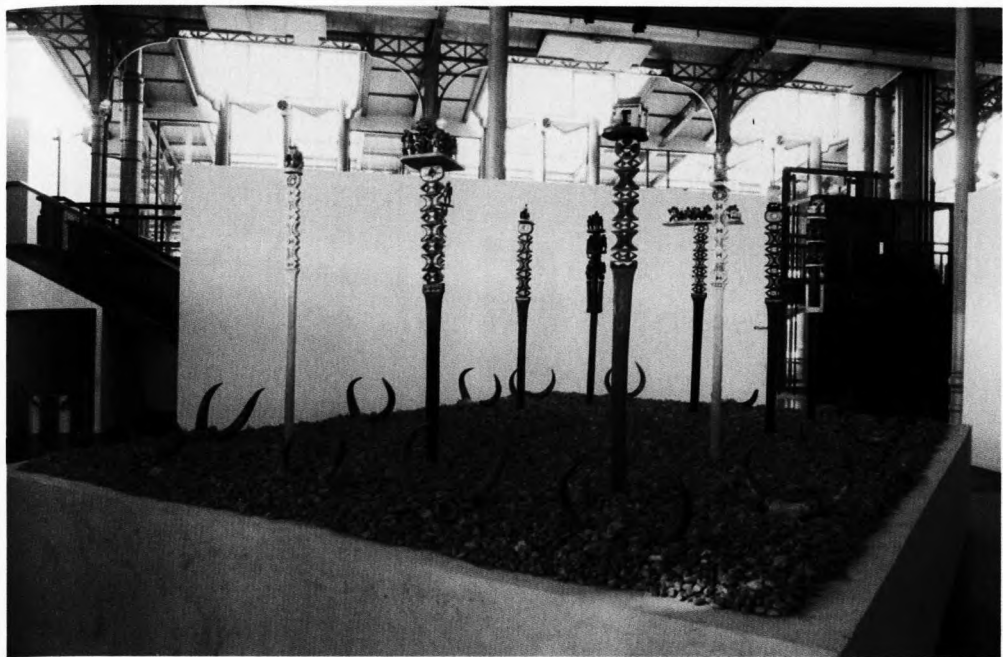


fig.103

Returning towards the entrance of the exhibition, and adjacent to *Djalumbu* (*Hollow Logs*, 1988) by Wululu (see fig.46), Efiambelo's reconstitution of a tomb from Southwest Madagascar was installed, oriented towards the east. It contains *aloalos* – carved wooden painted funerary posts relating to the life of the deceased, along with the horns of *zebu*, a type of cattle and a symbol of wealth.



fig.104

Also close to the entrance/exit, near Anselmo's sculpture *Verso Nord e Attraverso* (*Towards the North and Across*, 1989, see fig.44), was a room containing six paintings by John Mawurndjul, in ochre and synthetic polymer on bark, using the crossed line technique *yarrk*. Visible in this partial view of the room, from left to right, are *Kumurken* (*Fresh Water Crocodile at Kabarabadi*, 1988), *Njalyod* (*Female Rainbow Serpent*, 1988) and *Nawarramulmul* (*Shooting Star Spirit*, 1988).



fig.105

Behind Efiambelo and Mawurndjul's works, in a small space under a staircase, Christian Boltanski installed *Les Bougies* (*The Candles*, 1987), 33 copper figurines placed on tin shelves and lit with candles.

Behind the staircase was Alberola's fourth wall panel, *4^{ème} cimaise*, orange (*Panel no. 4, orange*, 1989), including, from left to right, *La Frontière* (*The Frontier*), *Ex-voto: La Frontière* (*Ex-voto: The Frontier*) (diptych, 1986), *Câble Transatlantique de Toulon à Saint-Louis (Sénégal)* (*Transatlantic Cable from Toulon to Saint-Louis (Senegal)*, n.d.) and *Acteon Fecit* (1986).

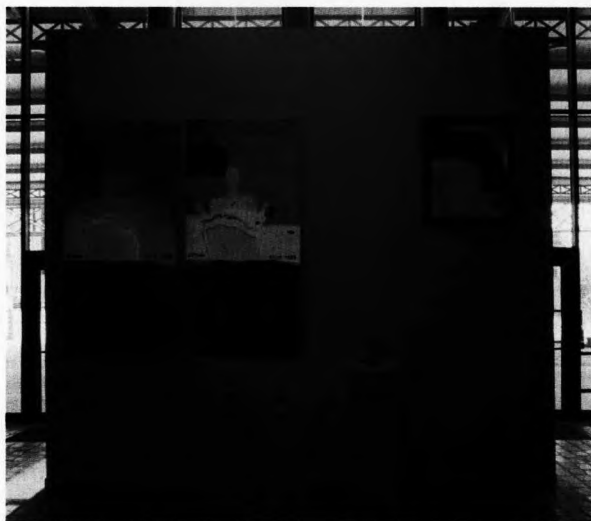


fig.106

Up the right-hand staircase to another mezzanine level were eight rooms. The first contained an installation by Cildo Meireles, *Missão/missões: como construir catedrais* (Mission/Missions: How to Build Cathedrals, 1987) (fig.108), which was made to commemorate the mission settlements founded by the Jesuits in Paraguay, Argentina and the south of Brazil between 1610 and 1767. The floor comprised 600,000 coins, the ceiling was composed of 2,500 bones (the tibiae of cattle), and joining these two elements was a column of 700 communion wafers. Right: Meireles installing the work.



fig.107



fig.108



fig.109

To the right, in the second space on the mezzanine, were Nancy Spero's series of framed works on paper including painting, collage and text, and titled *Codex Artaud* (1971-72).



fig.110

Along the walkway, on the external wall of a space containing works by Rasheed Araeen and Chéri Samba, the visitor encountered José Bedia's installation *Vive en la línea* (*He Lives on the Railroad Tracks*, 1989) (see also p.102).



fig.111

Along a partition wall opening onto the Grande Halle, to the right of Bedia's installation, was *Orchestra of Women* (1989) by Ulay. The work consisted of twelve naturally-dyed straw mats, woven in Morocco, depicting container typologies: jars, urns, jugs and vessels.



fig.112 and 113

Entering a room to the left of Ulay's mats was a group of works in various media by Rasheed Araeen (fig.112). Visible in this partial view of the room, from left to right are *Look Mama... Macho!* (1983-86), *Sonay Ke Chirya* (*Golden Bird*) (1986) and *Black Painting* (1987), and, occupying the centre of the room, *Sheesmahal* (1988-89). Chéri Samba's six acrylic paintings on canvas were in the room adjacent to Araeen (fig.113). From left to right are *Mobali ya monyato ou la bataille dans un foyer* (*Mobali ya monyato or the Battle at Home*, 1989), *Le Doigt magique* (*The Magic Finger*, 1989), *Le Lavement* (*The Enema*, 1989), *Traitement apollo* (*Apollo Treatment*, 1989), *Autoportrait* (*Self-Portrait*, 1989) and *Marche de soutien à la campagne sur le S.I.D.A.* (*Demonstration to Support the Campaign Against AIDS*, 1988).

Further along the mezzanine, down another walkway, were three more spaces. The first contained Erik Bulatov's oil paintings on canvas subverting official Soviet propaganda imagery. From left to right *Printemps dans une maison de repos des travailleurs* (*Spring in a Resthouse for Workers*, 1988) and *Perestroika* (1989).



fig.114

In the adjoining darkened space, Alfredo Jaar's installation *La Géographie, ça sert, d'abord, à faire la guerre* (*Geography Serves, in the First Place, to Make War*, 1989) contained five light boxes installed along a series of internal corridors. Pictured here is a light box showing children playing in a landfill site in Nigeria, littered with toxic waste originating from Italy (see also p.280).



fig.115



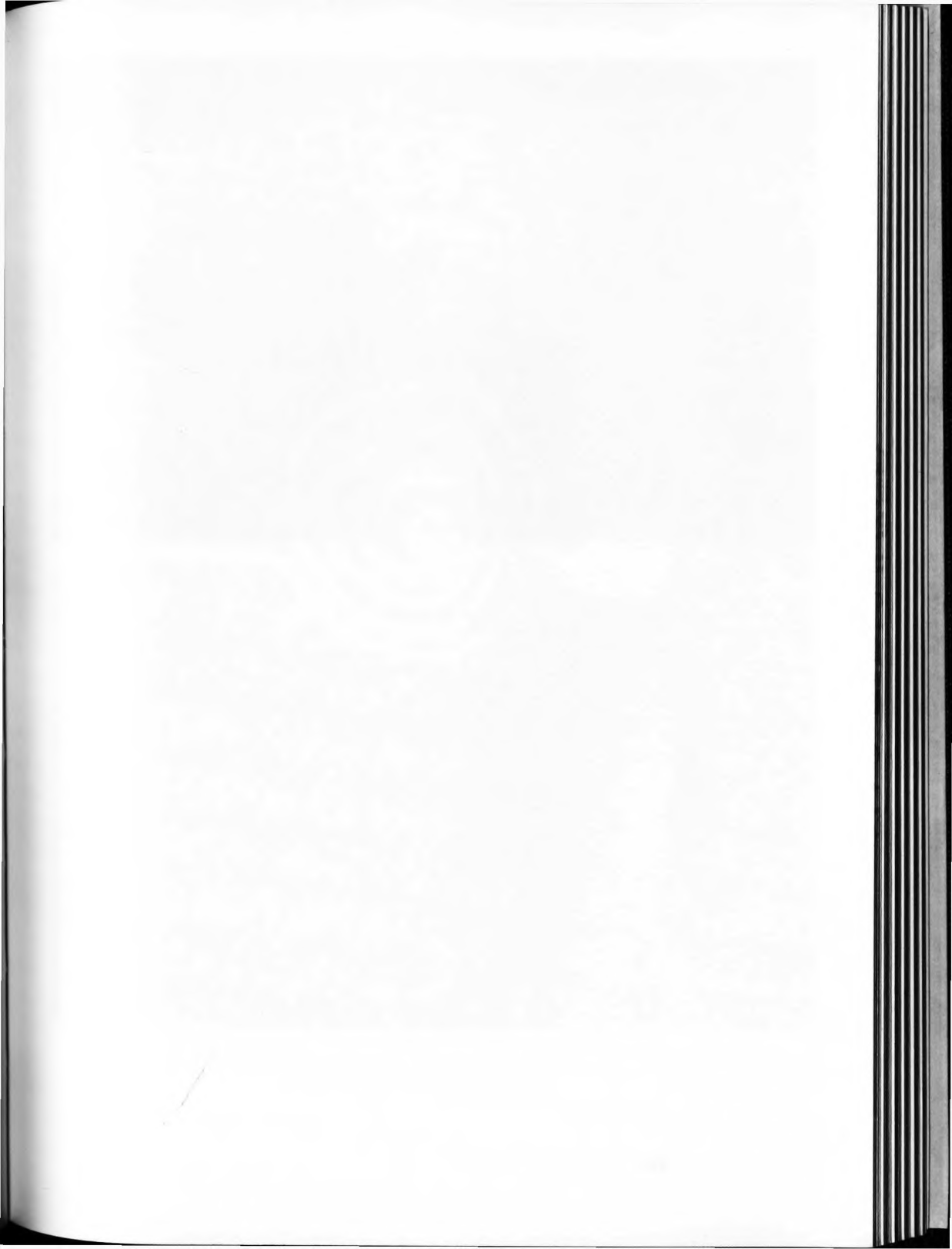
fig.116

The installation *Relation - Seed, Soil, Water, Air* (1986-89) by Tatsuo Kawaguchi was housed in the final room on the mezzanine level. Seeds were sealed in lead plates on the walls, and water, air and soil were locked inside bars of copper, aluminium and brass consecutively, and were placed on the ground. The metal containers ensured the preservation of the seeds, water, air and soil after a nuclear disaster.



fig. 117


A bird's-eye view of the Grande Halle looking back towards the entrance/exit of the exhibition, showing the mezzanine level to the right and some of the many partitioned spaces constructed for the exhibition. The photograph is taken from a gangway directly above the work *From the Entropic Library* (1989) by Oldenburg and van Bruggen, with the top of the work *Mandala of the Wrathful Divinity Bhairav and Twelve Gods of His Entourage* (1989) by Thinle, Palden and Sherpa just visible in the foreground. From left to right, works by Alberola, Zush, Kirkeby, Weiner, Jambruck, Kane Kwei, Merz, Knight and Akpan can also be seen.



Cover of the *Magiciens
de la Terre* catalogue
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Photography: Trevor Key
Courtesy Jean-Hubert Martin



magiciens de la terre

 Centre Georges Pompidou

The Death of Art – Long Live Art, 1986¹

— Jean-Hubert Martin

The very idea of a 'work of art' is a particular invention of our culture. Many other societies have no such concept. Other cultures create visual, static images whose function is to contain a living soul.

It is this spiritual characteristic of the magic and holy objects that together with works of art will be explored by 'Magiciens de la Terre'. Too much art today is given over to intensive production that obscures any spiritual value. This exhibition will bring together artists from all over the world, not just from developed, capitalist countries. The artists will be presented as individuals in their own right, representing their own cultures rather than their particular government or country.

The Present State of Western Art

Hegelian philosophy postulated the death of art as a result of the weakening of religious belief. Yet the output of works of art has in no way diminished. Leaving aside any discussion of art as a religion in itself, all this continued activity has taken the place once occupied by the spiritual and the metaphysical – that which transcends the material and the explicable.

It is no small paradox now to see artists create 'open' works (to use Umberto Eco's expression)² leaving the audience to invest them with a meaning, and even to create works that are deliberately meaningless. Some works revert to ancient archetypes in imitation of so-called 'primitive' art, appearing to try and discover a lost meaning. With works which are deliberately meaningless, in defiance of language as it were, it is to transcend the simplistic game of explanation and achieve an absolute of form and colour.

This is the artist defying interpretation in a world where his output can acquire a significant financial value. If this were not the case for those who deal with such things, if there were not some magic behind such practical matters, how could such price explosions and sales be explained?

Since the beginning of the century, generation after generation has sought to re-create the ultimate work, the final picture – works whose formal characteristics have been distilled down to the minimum in attempts to arrive at

¹ Editors' Note: This curatorial statement for 'Magiciens de la Terre' was produced in 1986, the year that Jean-Hubert Martin secured the first of the two venues for the exhibition, the Grande Halle de La Villette. A revised version of this statement was issued in 1989 as part of the press material for the exhibition. This previously unpublished text is a translation from French (translator unknown, document available in CGP archives, box 95026/168). Published by kind permission of the author.

² EN: See Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (1962, trans. Anna Cancogni), Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1989.

the bare essentials. The Conceptual art of the late 1960s and early 70s marked a decisive stage in this reaching for the absolute; the artistic thought implicitly behind all this confined the movement in splendid isolation. By its own definition it successfully excluded itself from any parallel or comparison with other artistic movements.

Paradoxically its very awareness of its own existence, though prompted by humility, prevented such art from any intercourse with artistic activities of other societies than our own on equal terms; links with other cultures seemed impossible. An understanding of the circumstances surrounding its creation prevented any comparison with other environments.

But at the same time other artistic currents were undermining the long-held dominance of this state of affairs in the art world. Their resurgence (rather than any spontaneous appearance) proved the pendulum-like movement of artistic fashion.

Regressive – or at least traditional – works (seen in terms of the history of art) sprouted like mushrooms. This is not to say that Expressionist painting was dead during the 1960s and 70s: it was simply outside the circles where values are established by those within.

The history of art – seen as an intellectual method which seeks to understand the creative impulse – likes to progress in chapters, oblivious to currents of thought that move parallel within it.

The artistic landscape now before us is no longer that of avant-garde pursuing the ultimate work that will contain all within an absolute distillation. Quite the opposite: young artists are moving in an astonishing number of directions – Neo-Expressionism, Neo-Figurative art, post-Minimalism, assemblage, furniture design and decoration, photography, critical and introspective asceticism, political statement, abstract painting. The adherents of 'saying the most with the least' have not lost their ability to surprise us. They have given this century its most original image. They have given an expression and a freedom which has been to us an intellectual and aesthetic inspiration.

Yet artists will continue to create in the absence of any prevailing spiritual movement. Painting may lose its privileged position to some extent, but it is not dying – it can be seen flourishing alongside a whole multitude of movements and media.

The State of Art Outside the Western World

The concept of relativity, ever-present in twentieth-century thought, has as yet no role in the field of the visual arts. The answer to this is well-known, that our own Western artists have remained so aware of the possibilities offered by so-called 'primitive' art, that its qualities and potential offered sufficient scope to artists working in the first half of the present century. Since then the imposition of Western codes of behaviour upon the Third World has

destroyed or at least contaminated everything; and in our eagerness to chastise ourselves we failed to go and see what was really happening.

We have hastily grafted the Hegelian notions of the disappearance of traditional religion and consequent death of art on to non-Western cultures. Yet our evolutionary conception of art seems at odds with artistic concepts based upon the traditional representation of familiar images. This statement needs qualifying: besides the fact that invention and the pursuit of originality is part of our heritage, it is essential to move away from a view of the history of art as a series of breakthroughs. In the well-known case of Cézanne, for example, was his breakthrough really as important as it is made out to be? It is equally valid to see art history in terms of its permanence – not as a continued linear development but a revival of lost traditions, of signs and symbols belonging to the history of humanity and not necessarily to the history of art.

Theories and their contexts differ enormously but, setting aside discussion of cultures, if one examines the working of the creative impulse, then perhaps cultural gaps seem less wide. It may be possible to find common denominators: the motivation that drives an individual to create, and the series of formal decisions by which he frees himself. When the artist gives form to his idea, the sharp differences between the respect for tradition and the urge to innovate become blurred. A Nepalese or Tibetan painter of Tonkas puts his entire faith into his work. He may make some modification to traditional models according to his own religious beliefs or interpretation of the articles of faith; so a form of evolution is possible, though very slow.

On the other hand, when a Western artist goes on painting the same forms for twenty years, he is simply reproducing a model of his own devising.

With all this in mind, the exhibition falls into two sections:

I. Artists from the artistic centres

'The Death of Art – Long Live Art'

A representative selection of art today, showing the mature artists of the last twenty years most committed to the avant-garde. Here there is a reduction of content, but the works seem at the same time charged with present spiritual values.

Artists with links to non-Western Cultures

- African and Asian artists living in the West whose work reveals elements of their cultural roots.
- Western artists whose work shows a concern for cultures other than their own.

These two groups throw interesting light on the subject under discussion, and help direct the course of exploration.

II. Artists who do not belong to these centres but to the 'peripheries'

Research into this group should be as broad and far-reaching as possible, undertaken with the most careful investigation and open-mindedness.

Contacts in Europe and library research have already identified a great many artists. The authenticity of each will need to be distinguished:

- Works of an archaic nature intended for ceremonies and rituals, linked to transcendental religious experience or magic (e.g. the Warlpiri aborigines, who created a sand picture for ARC, at the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1983).
- Traditional works showing an assimilation of external influences (e.g. aeroplanes or motorbikes found on Nigerian *gelede* masks).
- Works from the artists' imagination, sometimes marginal, reinventing or rediscovering a cosmogony or interpretation of the world. Such works can reveal all kinds of cultural crossovers.
- Works of artists who have been trained in Western or Westernised art schools.

It is clear that this has nothing to do with a search for some original purity or cultural identity that might have been preserved despite Western contamination: apart from rare exceptions this is no longer to be found. My own interest in Papuans and Aborigines has nothing to do with the often-repeated notion of rediscovering humanity at some earlier stage of evolution. It is rather an interest in meeting men and women who live in the present but with a totally different history from our own, and who have qualities that we lack. Artists are well aware of this: those in the early twentieth century were not simply concerned with the formal characteristics of African sculpture.

The myth of the noble savage is still going strong. We still maintain that any contact between Western and primitive societies must be to the latter's detriment, and that any attempt to spread a knowledge of non-Western cultures springs from neocolonialist thinking.

Idealistic attitudes to non-Western art prevail. It is often held that the manufacture of sacred or magic objects (commonly called art) is the result of some spontaneous mass expression, whereas in fact such an object is always made by one person or a small group who take responsibility for it, having mastered the necessary techniques. No work of art is anonymous: an artist (or artists) is always identifiable. If African sculptures are anonymous, this is the result of white collectors having taken no interest at all in the artist's identity. Recent research – into *gelede* masks in particular – has shown that individual sculptors and even dynasties of sculptors spanning several generations can be identified.

Evolution

It is often asserted that there are other societies which are static compared with the Western view of history and evolution, that there is no notion of

history in a chronological sense and thus no concept of evolution. But there is no such thing as a totally static community. Man's relationship with his environment, known as culture, alters through contact with other communities or through individual impulses from within. The speeds and rhythms of these changes vary enormously, and are not analogous.

Every object known implies a contact at some time with the Westernised world. There exists no creation in a pure state. The contact implies that people have reacted to such encounters. Two examples can be given:

- The sculptors of *gelede* masks in Nigeria incorporated in their works all kinds of objects from modern Western civilisation: bicycles, cars, aeroplanes, etc. ... There are ethnologists who see this as a sign of decadence caused by the overwhelming influence of the West. It is rather proof of a culture's ability to assimilate new aspects of the world around it instead of becoming fossilized into an outdated archetype.
- The Warlpiri, an Australian aboriginal tribe, are quite willing to create and show their sand paintings, though these were once exclusively restricted to those concerned in the ritual of circumcision. They do this in the belief that this is the best way to make their culture understood. They take great pride in their work and know how important its survival is. They hope by encouraging outside recognition to protect themselves against invasion and destruction from Western influences.

Myths and Legends reworked by an Artist

Traditional myth and legend can serve as a basis for artists who interpret them using traditional techniques but using their own formal invention as well. There are artists among the Warli tribe of Maharashtra, India, for instance. They are deeply involved with the life of the community, and share in its spiritual life. The artist Jivya Soma Mashe is more inventive and creates new ways of recounting the ancient legends. He would be invited to participate in the exhibition.

The Problem of the Visual Arts Compared with Other Media and the Problem of Context

It is odd that our knowledge of world literature should far exceed that of the visual arts, as it is well known that such a thing as really accurate translation is impossible. Yet in the visual arts, even though the received image may vary according to the viewer's culture, the work itself remains unchanged.

Nowadays it is commonplace for a troupe of actors or musicians to appear in the West. But in the visual arts some lengthy explanation is generally felt necessary, while other art forms are rarely felt to need this. Non-Western art seems branded with a taboo that demands it cannot be shown without explaining its context. People should bear in mind that visual objects are capable of conveying signs and meanings through the imagination and the emotions.

The average museum visitor has a better idea of what is currently happening in the Third World, thanks to the various news media, than he has of the creative environment of the Middle Ages. The problem is more one of a cultural approach than of knowledge.

Ephemeral Works and Installations

Many works will be executed and installed by artists on the spot. A bonus here is their possibility of reacting to the new cultural context offered by the Parisian environment, adapting their work according to the new stimuli.

Ephemeral works (Aboriginal and Navajo sand paintings, Vodun *vévés*) can be executed with a sense of authenticity: such works escape the machinations of the art market. Ceremonial sand paintings completed on the ground by shamans have to be obliterated after a certain time. Navajo Indians do sand paintings on panels for the tourist market. To avoid breaking tribal law they are careful never to feature sacred motifs in these pieces, and take pains to alter them.

Methods and Criteria

This project can only be realised wholly independently of all political machinery, national or international.

It will be the first properly international exhibition by one organiser who can guarantee the intellectual unity of his selection. A team of three helped in conceiving and developing the project:

- Jan Debbaud, Director of the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven.
- Mark Francis, previously Director of The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, Delegated Commissioner.
- Jean-Louis Maubant, Director of the Nouveau Musée de Lyon-Villeurbanne.

They form part of a new generation of exhibition organisers, and with their distinctive styles are sure each to play an important part in the contemporary art scene in the forthcoming years.

The exhibition will be open and receptive towards other civilisations, but the selection will be made from a Western standpoint. Rather than trying to deny this, it is better to make use of the artistic experience gained in this century, where so many possibilities have been explored. The exhibition is not simply a world art catalogue; it is an exchange between different creative approaches. It cannot claim to be exhaustive. Just as in our own society current prevailing tastes can blind us to the appreciation of certain works, it is impossible to deny the project's inherent risks. It does not aim to be timeless and definitive – quite the reverse: it is wholly a reflection and a product of its time.

The artists in the exhibition will not be picked and shown as ambassadors of their countries there to demonstrate their nation's cultural, economic and

political skills, but as individuals from all the world, each striving towards spiritual fulfilment.

They will be presented on equal terms. To avoid petty nationalistic comparisons that journalists like so much, there will be three basic pieces of information about each artist: country of origin, country of residence and nationality (passport). I should not be surprised to see many participants whose three 'entries' were quite different.

The criteria of selection will be those current in contemporary art, applied in varying degrees according to each case. In different contexts, some of these would be inadequate or irrelevant. They should be listed:

- Radicalism: Ideas must be carried to their extreme limits.
- The sense of adventure and excitement takes precedence over aesthetics and form.
- Originality in relation to cultural traditions.
- The relation between the man and his work. This is why each artist must be visited in his studio or environment.
- The scale of opposition and resistance on the part of cultural dissidents to the surrounding establishment.

Architecture

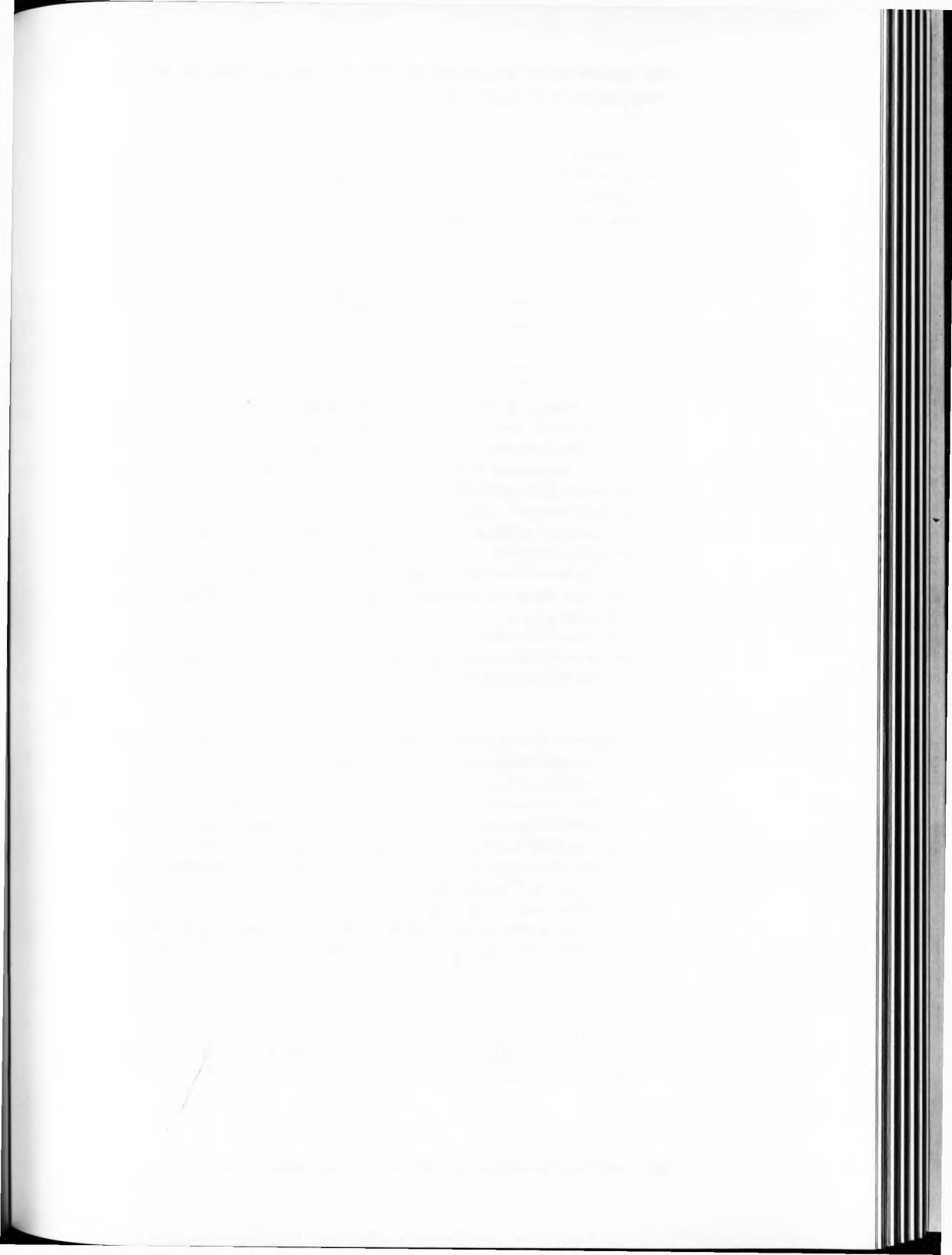
Particular care must be taken over the deployment of space and its suitability for the works on show. Too little attention has been paid to this point in many contemporary art exhibitions in France.

In the Grande Halle de La Villette and the Centre Georges Pompidou, spaces of all kinds can be created. They should have a definite effect on the visitor, sometimes going so far as to impose physical constraints to underline the context of a particular environment. A particular route could lead the visitor in a calm fashion to view works that require silence and contemplation.

Conclusion

This is an exhibition that will generate enormous debate, pose a great many questions that till now could only be theoretically discussed. It may resolve and put into perspective a multitude of preconceived ideas and set theories.

It is an event to help break through the closed circle of contemporary art, whose protagonists have all the answers to all questions, and to open a door to the unexplored. It is a step into the unknown, with things never before seen by experts or laymen. Not surprisingly, this is what everyone wants from art.



The Whole Earth Show: An Interview with Jean-Hubert Martin
— Benjamin H.D. Buchloh¹

The forthcoming exhibition 'Magiciens de la Terre' was conceived in 1985 by Jean-Hubert Martin, then newly appointed director of the Paris Biennale. Originally intended as a replacement of the Biennale's traditional format (in which contributions were selected by cultural representatives and committees from each participating country), this show has now grown into a major exhibition of international contemporary art. Its organisers intend to explore the practices of artists in Asian, African and Latin American countries, juxtaposing a selection of work from those cultural contexts with contemporary works from the United States and Western Europe.

[...]

What follows is my translation of excerpts from two rather lengthy conversations between myself and Martin, the first on 14 July 1986, and the second two years later in October of 1988. Both took place in Paris and were conducted in French. While these conversations originated in the interest I share with Martin in what seems to be a long-overdue and courageous attempt to depart from the hegemonic and monocentric cultural perspectives of Western European and American institutions and their exhibition projects, it was also inevitable that I would want to challenge some of the underlying assumptions of this exhibition. In particular, I raise questions about the exhibition's approach to the issue of cultural authenticity, about its treatment of the relationship between 'centre' and 'margin', and about the possible fallacies of focusing exclusively on the 'cultural' object — in short, about the exhibition's potential neocolonialist subtext.

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh: In discussions of the last few years, the question of cultural decentralisation has emerged as increasingly important. It encompasses efforts to decentre traditional conceptions of the author/subject construction, as well as challenges to the centrality of the oeuvre and to the concept of the work of art as a unified substantial object. But there are broader ramifications: the issue of decentralisation is also related to an ongoing critique of the hegemony of the class culture of bourgeois modernism and to analysis of the dominance of the Western capitalist world's cultural production and its markets over cultural practices in the social and geo-political 'margins'. Cultural decentralisation aims at a gradual recognition of the cultures of different

¹ Editors' Note: This interview was commissioned and published by *Art in America*, vol.77, no.5, May 1989, pp.150–59 and 213. Reprinted courtesy BMP Media Holdings, LLC. Another version of this interview was published in *Third Text*, vol.3, no.6, Spring 1989, pp.19–27; and in French translation in *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, no.28, Spring 1989, pp.5–43.

social and ethnic groups within the societies of the so-called First World, as much as at recognition of the specificity of cultural practices outside – that is, in the countries of the so-called Second World and Third World.

Does the project 'Magiciens de la Terre' originate in these critical discussions or is it just another exercise in stimulating an exhausted art world by exhibiting the same contemporary products in a different topical exhibition framework?

Jean-Hubert Martin: Obviously the problem of centre and periphery has been much discussed in European-American avant-garde culture in recent years, and our exhibition, 'Magiciens de la Terre', takes off from those discussions. First of all, from a geographical point of view, we want to treat contemporary art production on a global, worldwide scale. But the questions of centre and periphery are also related to issues of authorship and oeuvre that concern us, especially since the artist's role and the object's functions are defined in an entirely different manner from our European way of thinking in a number of the contexts with which we will be dealing. As for the problem of marginality, it is difficult and delicate to include artists from different geo-political contexts in an exhibition of Western (Euro-American) contemporary art, the dominant art of the 'centres'. But we have come to recognise that in order to have a centre you need margins, and the inverse is true as well. Therefore, 'Magiciens de la Terre' will invite half of its approximately 100 artists from marginal contexts, and will include artists who are practically unknown in the contemporary art world.

BB: How will you go about this project without falling into the seemingly inevitable and worst of all traps – that is, without once again deploying ethnocentric and hegemonic criteria in the selection of participants and their works for the exhibition?

J-HM: I agree that this is the first trap one thinks of. But I would argue that it is actually an inevitable trap. It would be worse to pretend that one could organise such an exhibition from an 'objective, unacculturated' perspective, from a 'decentred' point of view. How could one find a 'correct' perspective? By including artists on a proportional scale? Or by having the selections made by cultural functionaries in each country, functionaries whose principles are infinitely less elaborate than ours? Or by political commissaries from UNESCO, and according to the size of the population of each country? I do not believe that any of these approaches is possible. They would throw us back to the worst mistakes we made when the Paris Biennale first began – when artists were selected by national commissaries who chose only those artists who, in their opinion, deserved the official stamp of cultural and political authority. The result was a disaster of officious and official culture.

I have therefore argued for the exact opposite: since we are dealing with objects of visual and sensual experience, let's really look at them from the perspective of our own culture. I want to play the role of someone who uses

artistic intuition alone to select these objects which come from totally different cultures. Thus my approach will also be the opposite of what you might have suggested: I intend to select these objects from various cultures according to my own history and my own sensibility. But obviously I also want to incorporate into that process the critical thinking which contemporary anthropology provides on the problem of ethnocentrism, the relativity of culture, and intercultural relations.

BB: What are the self-critical and corrective elements in your method and procedure? Are you actually working with anthropologists and ethnographers on this project? Are you working with specialists from within the cultures that you approach from the outside?

J-HM: Yes, I have collaborated with numerous anthropologists and ethnographers in the preparation of this exhibition. This collaboration has proven to be very fertile since it has helped us to assess the role of the individual artist in various societies, as well as to understand the specialised activities of those artists and the functions of their formal and visual languages. By the way, our exhibition occurs at a moment when many anthropologists have started to ask themselves why they have traditionally privileged myth and language over visual objects. The corrective critical ideas that I am primarily thinking of are the ethnographic theories of ethnocentrism that have been developed over the last twenty or more years. I have also benefited from the advice of ethnographers and specialists in local and regional cultures, and have obtained precise information from them in order to prepare for research and travel. In some cases we have actually conducted our exploratory travel in the company of ethnographers. For example, we went to Papua New Guinea in the company of François Lupu.

But let's not forget that, after all, I must think of this project as an *exhibition*. If, for example, an ethnographer suggests to us a particular example of a cult in a society in the Pacific, but it turns out that the objects of this culture do not communicate sufficiently well in a visual-sensuous manner to a Western spectator, then I would refrain from exhibiting them. Certain cult objects may have an enormous spiritual power, but when transplanted from their context into an art exhibition they lose their qualities and at best generate misunderstandings – even when one attaches long, didactic explanatory labels to them. Similarly, I have had to exclude a number of artisanal objects, since many of the societies we have looked at actually do not differentiate between artist and artisan.

BB: Another crucial problem of your project as I see it is that, on the one hand, you do not want to construct a colonialist exhibition like 'L'Exposition coloniale internationale' in Paris in 1931, in which objects of religious and magical practices were extracted from their functions and contexts. These objects were displayed for the hegemonic eye of control, for Imperialist domination and exploitation. But neither do you want to simply aestheticise these heteronomic cultural objects once again by subjecting them to the Western modernist concept of 'primitivism'.

J-HM: Our exhibition has nothing to do with the one in 1931, which clearly originated from the perspective of economic and political colonialism. Inevitably, however, that 1931 exhibition has served as a negative reference point for the authors of the catalogue and will be critically discussed.

Concerning the problem of the cultural object and its context, I would like to offer two arguments. First of all, when it comes to foreign literature, music and theatre, nobody ever asks this type of question, and we accept translation – though we know it is most often a falsification – as a necessary form of mediation. Now, you might argue that these are temporal and aural forms of artistic experience, which are different from the spatial and visual objects that we deal with, and that different modes of reception clearly apply. A Western viewer sees in a manner altogether different from an Asian viewer, even though the moment of retinal experience is actually identical. But, nevertheless, to argue that it is therefore impossible to present visual/spatial objects outside of their cultural context seems absolutely horrible to me – especially since this type of communication has in fact occurred for centuries in, for example, the field of literature. That is my first argument...

BB: If I may interrupt here, it seems evident that your problem is characteristic of all modernist art history, which has traditionally contemplated only objects of high culture, even though modernist avant-garde art was in fact constituted in dialectic relationship with mass culture from its very beginnings. The objects and users of mass culture – if considered at all – were at best compartmentalised into a different discipline (sociology), or more recently into the area of mass cultural studies. In the same manner that traditional art history has always excluded the plurality of cultures within 'bourgeois' culture, your attempt to select only the 'highest artistic quality' from the cultural practices of 'The Others' runs the risk of subjecting them to a similar process of selection and hierarchisation.

J-HM: This is another point, and I will return to it. But let me first make my second argument. A criticism that was immediately expressed about this exhibition project concerns the supposed problem of decontextualisation and the betrayal of other cultures. Yes, the objects in our exhibition will be displaced from their functional context, and they will be shown in a museum and another exhibition space in Paris. But we will display them in a manner that has never been used for objects from the Third World. That is, for the most part, the makers of these objects will be present, and I will avoid showing finished, movable objects as much as possible. I will favour 'installations' (as we say in our jargon) made by the artists specifically for this particular occasion – for example, a Tibetan mandala, an *ijele* 'mask' from Nigeria or a Navajo sand painting.

Works of art are always the result of a ritual or a ceremony, and that is just as true for a famous painting of the nineteenth century, where – in a manner of speaking – we are also looking at a 'mere residue'. One always speaks of the problem of 'context' when it comes to other cultures – as though the

problem did not exist for us in our confrontations with a medieval miniature, or even with a Rembrandt painting, when we visit the museum. Only a few specialists really know anything at all about the contexts of these objects, even though we would claim that, after all, they are part of our own cultural tradition. I know that it is dangerous to extricate cultural objects from other civilisations. But we can also learn from these civilisations, which – just like ours – are engaged in a search for spirituality.

p.70

BB: This concept of an abstract transhistorical experience of 'spirituality' seems to be at the core of your project. In that respect, it reminds me of the "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art' exhibition, which took place at the Museum of Modern Art in 1984–85. There a presumed spirituality was also placed at the centre of the exhibition, and considered to be operating regardless of social and political context, and regardless of the technological development of particular social formations. Don't you think that the search for the (re-)discovery of spirituality originates in a disavowal of the politics of everyday life?

J-HM: Not at all. As you will recall, the main criticism levelled at the "Primitivism" exhibition at the time was that it was a formalist project. To me, it seems important to emphasise the functional rather than the formal aspects of that spirituality – after all, magic practices are functional practices. Those objects which have a spiritual function for the human mentality, objects which exist in all societies, are the ones of interest for our exhibition. After all, the work of art cannot simply be reduced to a retinal experience. It possesses an aura which initiates these mental experiences. I would go even further and argue that it is precisely those artistic objects which were created twenty years ago by artists with the explicit desire to reduce the auratic nature of the work of art by emphasising its material objectness that now appear as the most spiritual ones. In fact, if you talk to the artists of that generation, you will often hear about their own involvement with the concept of the 'magic' of the work of art. We have to admit that there is a sphere of social experience which has taken over the space of religion, and while it does not fulfil religion's communal functions, it does involve large segments of our society.

BB: It sounds as though you were arguing that the failure of the artistic practices of the 1960s to emancipate art from ritual (what Walter Benjamin called art's parasitical dependence) could now be compensated for best by ritualising these practices themselves. To mention an example: when Lothar Baumgarten set out in the late 1970s to visit the tribal societies of the Amazonas that are now threatened with destruction, he operated in the manner of an amateur ethnographer. But he also operated from within a modernist artistic tradition – that is, he searched for and discovered the values of exotic cultures in order to reconstitute the cult value of the work of art, its share in the ritualistic experience. Paradoxically, in doing so, artists of that tradition in modernism have contributed to the development of a highly problematic vision of the 'other', conceived of in terms of 'primitivism'. I wonder

whether your exhibition is not also based upon this same model. Is that why you sent Lawrence Weiner to Papua New Guinea during the preparation of his contribution to your exhibition?

J-HM: There are enormous prejudices in what you just said concerning our project. A basic idea of our exhibition is to question the relationship of our culture to other cultures of the world ('culture' here is not an abstract generality – it describes a set of relations that individuals have with each other and with which we interact). I wondered whether it would be possible to accelerate these relationships and the dialogue ensuing from them. That's why I suggested that Lawrence Weiner should go to Papua New Guinea. Let me emphasise that first of all this exhibition intends to initiate dialogues. I oppose the idea that one can only look at another culture in order to exploit it. Our first concern is with exchange and dialogue, with understanding others in order to understand what we do ourselves.

BB: Inevitably your project operates like an archaeology of the 'other' and its authenticity: you are engaged in a quest for original cultural practices (magic and the ritual), when in fact what you will most often find, I presume, are extremely hybridised cultural practices in their various stages of gradual or rapid disintegration and extinction – a condition that results from their confrontation with Western industrial media and consumer culture. Are you going to 'distil' the original objects for the sake of an artificial purity, or are you going to exhibit the actual degree of contamination and decay within which these forms of cultural production actually exist?

J-HM: I think that is a real misunderstanding of my way of looking at these phenomena. I am in fact very interested in archaic practices (I would like to avoid the problematic term 'primitive'). I am really against the assumption – it was also, in a way, an underlying assumption of William Rubin's exhibition "Primitivism" – that we have in fact destroyed all other cultures with Western technology. A text written by the aboriginal artists of Australia who are participating in this exhibition has clarified this issue for me. They state the problem of decontextualisation perfectly well. But they go on to argue that they commit their 'treason' for a particular purpose: to prove to the white world that their society is still alive and functioning. Exhibiting their cultural practices to the West is what they believe to be the best way to protect their traditions and their culture at this point in time.

BB: It sounds as though you are engaged in some kind of a reformist project – that you are searching for residual magic cultures in societies alien to ours and that you are in pursuit of revitalising the magic potential of our own.

J-HM: Obviously we live in a society in which we always speak from our own position about others, and we judge their position from ours. It is 'we' who think of 'them' as still involved in magic. That is an *a priori* upon which we naïvely rely, though the situation is actually infinitely more

complicated, and we have no idea of how it really functions. In the same manner, we do not know how magic thought functions in our own society, and obviously there is a lot of it.

BB: Is your exhibition going to address the magic rituals of our society as well? You seem to be looking for an irrational power that drives artistic production in tribal societies, and you seem to argue that there is a need for our society to rediscover this power. By contrast, the actual mechanisms in which magic rituals are practiced in our society – in the fetishisation of the sign, in spectacle culture and in commodity fetishism – these mechanisms do not seem to be of interest to you?

J-HM: But I am also not in search of an original purity, even though there are cultures which still have had very little exposure to Western civilisation and whose modes of thinking are utterly different from ours. It astonishes me more and more the longer I work on this project that, even in serious studies, the ideal of an archaic and authentic production is upheld, possibly even that of a collective production, when in fact the number of objects which would truly qualify for this category is rather small. We know that, for the most part, these practices have been compromised or destroyed altogether... But in the large cities of Asia and Africa, where shocks resulting from the encounter between local cultures and Western industrial cultures still reverberate, one finds numerous manifestations that we would have to identify as contemporary works of art – for example, those connected with the emergence of an 'avant-garde' in China, or those of Chéri Samba in Zaire.² And one finds examples from both spheres – that is, the objects of a traditional local high culture as much as objects of popular culture.

BB: Don't you think you have to differentiate between the residual forms of high culture and local popular culture, on the one hand, and the emerging forms of mass cultural consumption, on the other?

J-HM: No, I do not exclude the objects of mass culture, but I am interested in finding the individual artist or artists that one can really name and situate, and that have actually produced objects. I refuse to show objects which claim to be the anonymous result of a cultural community – to me, that seems to be a typically perverted Western European idea that I want to avoid at all costs. If fifty craftspeople produce more or less the same type of cult object, that does not interest me. I am looking for the one that is more original than the rest – as Esther Mahlangu is in Ndebele culture in South Africa.

BB: You don't seem to mind that this approach reintroduces the most traditional conception of the privileged subject and the original object into a cultural context that might not even know these Western concepts, and that it excludes from the beginning such notions as anonymous production and collective creation?

² EN: Now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

J-HM: But I will not exclude objects of collective production. In fact, there are quite a few already in the projected exhibition. But I do like the joke which argues that the only reason we imagine Black African masks to be anonymous is that when they were first found in the various tribal communities, the people who took them or collected them did not care to record the names of their authors. It is a typical Western projection to fantasise that these communities live in a state of original collective bliss, and therefore one does not want to credit them with having original authors. Let me give you an example – the type of mask which is identified as *gelede*. Two ethnographers from California have studied these objects which are only worn once a year for a particular festival. They have found that the makers of these masks are specialists who make them for the various villages and communities which use them.³ Not only are there specialists in this type of mask, who identify their works with their signatures on the inside, but these specialists come from dynasties of mask-makers, and often their masks can be traced through two or more generations. Furthermore, what is peculiar about these *gelede* masks is that they actually change over time – as opposed to our Western concept of a fixed and stable type – and over the last few decades they have incorporated more and more elements from industrial culture. To me, this change proves the vivacity of that culture and its flexibility in responding to contact with Western civilisation. Certain ethnographers were distressed by the changes because they perceived these tribal communities as having lost their original purity. But I don't think that any society ever had this purity. They are all in constant flux and exchange with other societies, and admittedly the Western world is, of course, a particularly powerful influence in these contacts.

BB: Let's use a hypothetical example to discuss your method. How would you approach a country which was once a European colony, let's say that it is now a Socialist state, which might still have rather active Beaux-Arts schools in its cities, but if you travelled through its remote villages, you would probably find residual forms of artisanal popular culture and possibly even religious practices. At the same time, I would imagine that there might be emerging forms of a new Socialist culture. Which of these three domains is of primary interest to your project?

J-HM: Before I answer, I would like to address the method of our work. The particular needs of this project require that a constant exchange take place between theory and practice, and that both constantly correct each other in the course of the preparation of this exhibition. It is not that discourse on intercultural relationships has been absent from French thought – what is missing are the pragmatic forms of putting this discourse into practice. That is what I am trying to develop. Now, to answer your question. Which of the three formations are of interest to us? Well, I want to show as much as possible, as many divergent phenomena as possible, even if that might make the exhibition heterogeneous at times.

³ See Henry John Drewal and Margaret Thompson Drewal, *Gelede: Art and Female Power Among the Yoruba*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983.

BB: To invert my question: will your exhibition also present information on so-called minority cultures living inside the hegemonic Western societies? Will you, for example, show the particular forms of Black modernism that have emerged in the United States since the turn of the century, or the cultural practices of African and Arabic minorities living in France at this point?

J-HM: Obviously I have thought about it, and often one is obliged to start from that point. I have, for instance, encountered a painter from the People's Republic of China who came to France about four years ago and who now lives in Paris. He is part of a Chinese artistic community in France, and he has given me a number of leads, both in approaching the phenomenon of Chinese emigrant artists and for the art of his own country as well. To return to your question about former European colonies, I will approach them in a pragmatic manner, and not a theoretical one. In these countries you find a widespread tendency to harmonise traditional calligraphy with École de Paris painting, and the work is technically often quite remarkable. I have to admit, however, that this type of work does not particularly interest me. It is too fabricated, and one knows all too well how it came about.

My method will be, first of all, to proceed by visual criteria alone – my own vision and that of the colleagues with whom I am preparing and discussing this project. If we encounter visually astonishing material, we will go further and visit the artists to find out more about the history and the context of the work. I want to show *individual artists*, not movements or schools. In that sense, I am trying to do exactly the opposite of what the Biennale de Paris has traditionally done when it has relied for its exhibition selections on the information provided by the cultural functionaries of individual countries, and has presented artists who were more or less imitating the mainstream culture of the Western world – whether it was the École de Paris or New York School painting.

BB: The central tool which bourgeois hegemonic culture (that is, white, male, Western culture) has traditionally used to exclude or marginalise all other cultural practices is the abstract concept of 'quality'. How will you avoid this most intricate of all problems in your selection criteria if you operate by 'visual' terms alone?

J-HM: The term 'quality' has been eliminated from my vocabulary, since there is simply no convincing system to establish relative and binding criteria of quality for such a project. We know very well that even the directors of the great Western museums do not have any reliable criteria to establish a consensus on this issue. But of course one has to develop criteria, and some are more tangible and rigorous than others. There are criteria to be derived from the physicality of the work, from the relationship between the maker of the object and the community which relates to that object, from the socio-political and cultural context of that object.

BB: When exhibitions are organised in the United States from a critical perspective that challenges mainstream hegemonic culture the standard prejudicial response one always hears is: That's interesting work indeed, but it lacks 'quality'.

J-HM: That's what happens when one groups artists together by country or geo-political context. But that is not my approach. We are selecting individual *artists* from a wide variety of contexts, and it is the individuality of these artists which guarantees the level of our exhibition. That brings us back to the criterion of 'quality'...

BB: But certain works (for example, by feminist artists) distinguish themselves precisely by challenging and criticising that very notion of abstract quality, because the term itself is, of course, already invested with interest, privilege, control and exclusion.

J-HM: Certainly. We are going through a phase in which all these concepts are being transformed and re-evaluated, and we are gradually moving on to different concepts. This change is happening first of all on the level of theory, and meanwhile we do not yet have any reliable means or any solid bases to articulate these changes in actual exhibition practice. But that should not deter us from trying to develop them.

BB: In the course of the last ten years or so, Western modernism as a hegemonic culture has been criticised from the perspectives of other cultural practices as much as from the inside. For some time, it has no longer seemed acceptable to treat modernism as a universal international language and style, governing all countries of the advanced industrial culture as well as the countries of the so-called Second and Third Worlds. This change in attitude became particularly obvious in the increasing attacks on the International Style in architecture and in our recognition that it was necessary to take national and regional specificities and traditions much more into consideration than hegemonic modernism had allowed for. Does your exhibition project take its point of departure from similar critical perspectives?

J-HM: Absolutely. That is precisely the reason we want to build a truly international exhibition that transcends the traditional framework of Euro-American contemporary culture. Rather than showing that abstraction is a universal language, or that the return to figuration is now happening everywhere in the world, I want to show the *real differences* and the specificity of different cultures.

BB: But what are the 'real differences' between the different cultures at this point? Western hegemonic centres use Third World countries as providers of cheap labour (the hidden proletariat of the so-called post-industrialist societies). They devastate their ecological resources and infrastructure, and use them as dumping grounds for their industrial waste. Don't you think that by excluding these political and economic

aspects, and by focusing exclusively on the cultural relationships between the Western centres and developing nations, you will inevitably generate a neocolonialist reading?

fig.115, p.280;
fig.43

J-HM: Alfredo Jaar's and Dennis Adams's projects for the exhibition are in fact concerned precisely with these global problems. Your argument seems rather weak. It implies that visitors to the exhibition would be unable to recognise the relationships between Western centres and the Third World. Our generation – and we were not the first – has denounced these phenomena you refer to, and things have after all developed a little bit. One cannot say that we still live in a neocolonialist period. Obviously, the Western world maintains dominant relationships with respect to the Third World, but that should not prohibit us from communicating with the people of these nations, nor from looking at their cultural practices.

BB: Let me ask you a more specific question. Concerning a possible contribution from New Zealand, for example, would you choose an artist who works with video and who produces studies that document the activities of the Maori work force in the sheep-shearing industry, the slaughterhouses and the meat-packing factories? Or would you try to find a Maori sculptor who produces traditional artisanal forms of sculptural objects that do not deal with such everyday working conditions?

J-HM: It could be both. It would obviously be very interesting to show both individuals, as long as both of them produced work that was sufficiently strong...

BB: But what are your criteria for the 'strength' of a work?

J-HM: The intensity of communication of meaning...

BB: Meaning for *us*, or meaning for *them*?

J-HM: For *us*, obviously. That is important because whatever meaning a practice has for its practitioners is not relevant to *us* if it cannot be communicated to *us*.

BB: But isn't this approach, once again, precisely the worst ethnocentric fallacy? A particular practice communicates to *us*, therefore it is relevant for the exhibition. Worse yet, this approach smacks, once again, of cultural (and political) imperialism. We request that these cultures deliver their cultural products for inspection and *our consumption*, instead of making an attempt to dismantle the false centrality of our own approach and attempting to develop criteria from within the needs and conventions of these cultures.

J-HM: I understand very well what you are trying to say, but how would you actually go about developing these immanent criteria? I have determined a number of them and applied them for definition of the participants of the

exhibition, but inevitably these criteria are different from case to case, and eventually they generate a considerable number of contradictions. I do not really see how I can altogether avoid an ethnocentric vision. I have to accept it to some extent – in spite of all the self-reflective corrections that we tried to incorporate into our method.

On the other hand, I am particularly interested in the difference between the meaning of the object in its original context and that which it has in ours. Isn't this exhibition a real opportunity to question ourselves about this vital problem? What is especially important to recognise is that this will be the first truly international exhibition of worldwide contemporary art. But I don't pretend in any way that it will be a complete survey of the planet. Rather, it is a sampling that I have chosen according to more or less accurate, yet somewhat random criteria. I cannot select objects in the manner of ethnographers, who choose them according to their importance and function inside a culture, even though such objects may 'mean' or 'communicate' very little – or nothing at all – to us. Inevitably there is an aesthetic judgement at work in the selections for my exhibition and that includes all the inevitable arbitrariness that aesthetic selection entails.

BB: The other side of the ethnocentric fallacy is the cult of presumed authenticity, whereby we try to force other cultural practices to remain within the domain of what we consider the 'primitive', the original 'other'. In fact, artists in these cultures often claim – and rightfully so – to have developed their own forms of high culture, which correspond to that of the Western world and its institutional values and linguistic conventions. They therefore insist on being looked at in terms of their own high cultural achievements, and not in terms of our projection of authentic otherness.

J-HM: That is why we have conceived of the exhibition as a situation in which dialogic relationships occur between the artists from the Western centres and those from the so-called geo-political margins. But this exhibition will also establish other types of cross-cultural relationships: for example, between the manner in which the repetition of identical models functions in Tibetan Tanka painting and in the work of a contemporary painter such as Daniel Buren, who has consistently repeated the model which he established for himself in the late 1960s. After all, Tanka painting is still a living artistic practice, even though we only know it from ethnographic museums.

Let us not forget that many of the societies that we are looking at do not know or agree with Western divisions of culture into 'high' and 'low', or ancient and recent. Australian aboriginal culture, for example, does not separate high culture from popular culture at all. There is simply *one* traditional culture which they now deploy to defend their identity against the increasing onslaught of Western industrial culture. Even if they are called 'Bushmen', they obviously drive cars and have guns. Nevertheless, they teach their children how to use the bow and arrow and how to pursue

their cultural traditions as a form of resistance against violation by Western industrial culture. That is also the reason they were eager to accept my invitation to show their work in a museum in Paris – outside its original functional context, so to speak, but yet within its function of defending their aboriginal identity.

BB: That raises another problem. How will you avoid the total aestheticisation of their work and of all other exhibited forms of cultural manifestations from non-Western contexts once they enter your museum/exhibition? How can you supply your visitors with sufficient visual and textual information and yet avoid burying the actual experience of these objects in didactic apparatus?

J-HM: Obviously, I do not want to construct a didactic exhibition with an overwhelming number of text panels. It is self-evident that all the artists will receive the same treatment in both the exhibition and the catalogue (and the catalogue will of course provide the crucial information and the didactic assistance needed for such an exhibition).

BB: Your decision to emphasise 'aesthetic' criteria is therefore a pragmatic one – a means of enabling you to construct an exhibition from this heterogeneous mass of objects?

J-HM: Obviously, I will work with the architects (Jacques Lichnerowicz and Xavier Rémond), and we already have numerous ideas about various forms of installation that will convey to the viewers the complexity of the situation – that will indicate to them that they are in fact not looking at traditional museum objects, but rather that they are confronted with objects from totally different contexts. We have to keep in mind, however, that this is an exhibition, not a discourse. Yet I know that exhibitions cannot claim innocence, and our project will be critical and visual at the same time. What interests me in particular are the visual shocks that such an exhibition can possibly produce and the thinking that it might provoke. But most of all, I would like to see it operate as a catalyst for future projects and investigations.

BB: I imagine that your project could provoke a lot of scepticism, if not anger, among those authorities in the art world whose precise role it is to defend the rigorous divisions and criteria of hegemonic culture?

J-HM: In the art world, yes. But not among artists, who have generally responded with great enthusiasm and interest...

BB: Even if this project threatens to displace them a little bit from their centrality in the reception of contemporary art?

J-HM: I don't think they are worried about that – anyway, they don't have to worry. I believe that every creative individual is deeply interested in the activities of other creative individuals in the world. After all, an element of

curiosity and surprise is part of artistic experience in general. But over the last few years, as far as the international group shows were concerned, you didn't even have to see the list of participating artists in advance. You could pretty much tell beforehand who was going to be in these exhibitions. With our project, the situation is quite different. There will be many surprises, and the art world will not always like it. But they will certainly see things that they have never seen before. I am aiming at a much larger public. In fact, I have already noticed that when I discuss the project with people from outside our little museum-and-gallery world, it seems that this exhibition will really have something to offer which goes way beyond the traditional boundaries of our conception of contemporary visual culture.

BB: It sounds as though, among other things, your exhibition is also aiming at decentring the traditional social definitions of the art public as well?

J-HM: Absolutely. I want to exhibit artists from all over the world and I want to leave the ghetto of contemporary Western art within which we have found ourselves during the last few decades. Obviously, a broader public will realise that, for once, this is an exhibition that will be much more accessible to them – that it is an exhibition that operates on totally different terms. If we don't at least try to initiate this development, then we are really in trouble.

Our Bauhaus Others' Mudhouse¹ —Rasheed Araeen

This issue of *Third Text* comprises all but one² of the articles from the special issue of *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, Paris, which has been published to coincide with the exhibition 'Magiciens de la Terre'. Our own objective in publishing these texts in English is to inform our readers about this material, and we are doing this without necessarily agreeing with the position of *Les Cahiers* or with the views of all the contributors. What interests us primarily is the debate around this exhibition; and in view of the stated aims of the exhibition, to which most of the articles are in sympathy, we feel that it is necessary that these aims are examined.

Going through the texts I have become aware of the ignorance concerning the actual state of affairs vis-à-vis other cultures (save the articles by [Guy] Brett and [Jean] Fisher),³ let alone their modern achievements. The central concern remains the same old-fashioned debate about the relationship between modernism and the traditions of others. It is not perhaps generally known that the 'other' has already entered into the citadel of modernism and has challenged it on its own ground.

The question is no longer only what the 'other' is but also how the 'other' has subverted the very assumptions on which 'otherness' is constructed by dominant culture. The lack of knowledge of, or a reluctance to recognise, what has actually occurred, historically and epistemologically, has led to the perpetuation of the very same assumptions which the exhibition claims to question. Some of these assumptions, which form the basis of modern art history, have been questioned by Benjamin Buchloh in his interview with Jean-Hubert Martin,⁴ but the discussion remains entrenched in the liberal/humanist framework.

It seems that anthropology has also played an important role in the concept of 'Magiciens de la Terre'. The main preoccupation of anthropology continues to remain with the 'primitive', with what Buchloh calls 'the original "Other"'; and although recent work in anthropology has attempted to correct some of the earlier assumptions – particularly the notion that so-called primitive

¹ Editors' Note: This text was originally published in *Third Text*, vol.3, no.6, Spring 1989, pp.3–14. Reprinted courtesy of *Third Text* and by kind permission of the author.

² Lucy Lippard's text from *Les Cahiers* is not included due to a previous commitment of the English version.

³ EN: Guy Brett, 'Earth and Museum: Local or Global?' and Jean Fisher, 'Other Cartographies', in *Third Text* vol.3, no.6, Spring 1989, pp.89–96 and 79–82 respectively.

⁴ EN: A version of this interview, 'The Whole Earth Show: An Interview with Jean-Hubert Martin by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh', is reprinted in this volume, pp.224–37.

societies are static, and their artists anonymous, this correction is somehow misplaced. Moreover, the foregrounding of anthropological discourse in the context of the exhibition has somewhat distracted our attention from the fundamental issue of the relationship between the globally dominant Western culture and other cultures. If the relationship between the 'centre' and the 'periphery' is of inequality, is it possible for an equal exchange to take place within a framework which does not challenge this relationship? Why is there such an obsession with so-called primitive societies? Where are these societies? Are not most Third World societies today part of a global system, with a common mode of production and similarly developing social structures? Although countries like India and Brazil may not be as industrialised as those of the West, the mainstream of artistic production there has for some time been part of what Jean Fisher calls 'the paradigm of modernism'. It is true that there are cultures which somehow still operate outside the limits of Western culture, but can we say that they are not affected by modern developments? Their marginality has little to do with the nature of their cultures but with the extremity of their exploitation and deprivation resulting from Western imperialism. The main struggle of many of these cultures is for the recovery of their land, as pointed out by both Fisher and Brett, and their entry into the modern world is very much part of their struggle for self-determination.

The attempts of radical anthropology to question some of the old assumptions are not of much use when they relate them only to so-called primitive societies of the past and do not take into account the priority of present-day struggles and their challenge to the hegemony of Western culture. The thrust of its main argument is often displaced from the centre of struggle (modernism/modern art) to the 'predicament' of other cultures.

It is perhaps the recent shift towards the right in the art world, caused by the collusion of conservative, liberal and humanist forces, which has displaced the issue of power and status from the ideological struggle to cultural eclecticism. The idea of 'anything goes' is legitimised by the benevolence of dominant culture, creating a space in which the 'other' is accommodated in a spectacle that produces an illusion of equality.

'Magiciens de la Terre' is indeed a grand spectacle with a lot of fascination for the exotic. There is nothing wrong with a grand spectacle, but if it ignores or undermines issues of a historical and epistemological nature then we must not be bogged down by the excitement and fascination it has produced. However, exoticism is not necessarily inherent in the works themselves. It is in their decontextualisation, not only in the shift from one culture to another (which is inevitable), but more importantly, in the displacement from one paradigm to another; this has emptied them of their meanings, leaving only what Fredric Jameson calls a 'play of surfaces' to dazzle the (dominant) eye. The issues here are too complex to be confined to the mere domains of ethnology and sociology. Art history may be a limited context in which to deal with cultural issues, particularly when it remains firmly entrenched in

its eurocentricity, but ethnology and sociology can confuse basic issues concerning the function and status of art in advanced capitalist society. This confusion can lead us to believe that human creativity, aesthetics and art are the same things, legitimising self-expression where it is not transformed into a discourse related to the historical dynamics of its time, and where there is little recognition of the constraints and limitations of art as a professional practice. This makes it necessary to ask whether the status of art, its meanings and significances, are fixed within particular cultural or historical formations or whether they can be defined universally?

The term quality has been eliminated from my vocabulary, since there is no convincing system to establish relative and binding criteria of quality...

I will ... go by visual criteria alone, my vision and that of my colleagues...
Jean-Hubert Martin

Is the EYE enough to recognise what we appreciate to be art? If the mere creation of visual images (whatever the reasons for making them) and their attractiveness to the EYE are enough to recognise what is art, and that their significance is available to individual sensibilities, why do we need other discourses (art history, theory and criticism, among others) in order to legitimate them as Art?

In order to understand the function of art, and the privileges of its producers (artists), in our modern culture, we need to confront the fact that the production of the commodity is fundamental (both materially and ideologically) to the very historical formation of this culture. Therefore, is it not necessary that we address ourselves to the value of the commodity and to the role it plays in global domination, instead of becoming enchanted by humanist proclamations against its fetishisation? Is not the constant attempt of the bourgeoisie to humanise its dehumanised body, a condition which constantly requires s(t)imulation for its survival, creating a beautiful mirage of many colours? It will not be realistic to deny the magical effects of such spectacle, but we should also know that there is nothing magical about it.

The concern for mass participation in our contemporary culture is understandable and is laudable, but mass participation in capitalist society is an illusion which can mask its fundamental contradictions. In the carnival everybody is equal! But what happens when the carnival is over?

In the beginning it was modernism, modernism for everybody all over the world irrespective of different cultures. When the others began to demand their share of the modern pie, modernism became postmodernism: now there is 'Western' culture and 'other' cultures, located within the same 'contemporary' space. The continuing monopolisation of modernism by Western culture (particularly in the visual arts) is to deny the global influences of modernism, and to mask its function as a dominant force of history to

which peoples all over the world are increasingly subjected. If other peoples are now, in turn, aspiring to its material achievements and want to claim their own share, why are they constantly reminded of its harmful effects on their own traditional cultures? If the aspiration to modernity and modernism is detrimental to the creativity of other cultures, why is this concern confined only to the production of art? Can we separate the question of contemporary production of art from the dominant economic system and its global effects? The trap here is too attractive: the concept of 'others' as mere victims of dominant culture will be to deny other cultures their ability to question their domination and to liberate themselves from it. Why is the aspiration of other cultures for secularism and materialism seen as antithetical to their own traditions?

The shift from modernism to postmodernism does not absolve us from our responsibility to look into the history of modernism and to try and understand the implications of what it includes and excludes. What it excludes from its recognition is not only what Buchloh calls 'the plurality of cultures', or the continuation of past traditions, but also 'the objects of high culture' produced by the 'other'. The elitism of modern art is clear to all of us, and this is not the place to argue for radical alternatives. However, any challenge to modernism, as far as the Third World is concerned, must come from a premise which recognises its postcolonial aspirations for modernity. Of course, the conjuncture of postcolonial aspirations in the Third World countries and the neocolonial ambitions of advanced capitalism has produced new conflicts and contradictions, which in turn have necessitated the emergence of a critical discourse that rightly interrogates modernism's utopian/broken promises. Modernism for the 'other' remains a basic issue.

'Magiciens de la Terre' has brought to the surface, perhaps unwittingly, some of the questions which are fundamental to the understanding of this exhibition. It would be extremely difficult to discuss all the questions in detail in the space of a single article, let alone find some answers. But I feel compelled to deal with these questions after having seen the exhibition and felt terribly disappointed by the whole enterprise. One would normally feel obliged to be grateful when one is actually a participant in such an international exhibition, but it is also essential that the paternalism of power must constantly be questioned if we are not to be imprisoned by its benevolence.

My disappointment with the exhibition is not due to the quality of the work, or the display. In fact the exhibition looks very attractive; almost all the works are given equal space and are arranged in such a way that in some cases it is difficult to distinguish visually between the 'modern' and the 'traditional'. Having said all this I must also express my appreciation of some very beautiful works, particularly those of the Chinese, Chilean and Brazilian artists. My main criticism concerns the lack of any radical theoretical or conceptual framework that can justify the togetherness of works which represent different historical formations. It is claimed that all

the works, irrespective of their cultural origin, are presented 'on equal terms'. But is this 'equality' not an illusion?

How is this 'equality' achieved, if not by ignoring the differences of different works? Of course, the differences have been allowed to enter into a common space. But what is the significance of this entry? Is it possible for 'difference' to function critically in a curatorial space where the criticality of 'difference' is in fact negated by the illusion of visual similarities and sensibilities of works produced under different systems displacing the question of the unequal power of different works from the domain of Ideology to cultural aesthetics. No wonder the common denominator here is a presumed 'magic' of all works which transcends socioeconomic determinants. If Western artists sell their work for large sums of money, this is not due to an imperative of power which legitimates their work as precious commodities but the presumed magic of their work! Why does this magic not work in the case of non-european artists?

However, 'Magiciens de la Terre' is an extremely important exhibition. Not only for its physical scale – one hundred 'artists' from all over the world in an exhibition occupying both the top floor of the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Grande Halle de La Villette – but also for its global ambition; not only for its claim to represent many different cultures but also for its presumed intention to question those cultural distinctions which have divided the world. These claims take on a particular significance when viewed in the context of the bicentennial celebration of the French Revolution with its famous proclamation of LIBERTY, EQUALITY AND FRATERNITY. We know what has happened in the whole world since then. If the French Revolution inspired the peoples of the world to seek freedom and equality, it is also now a reminder of the constant failure of its aims. But it seems that the Emperor does not want to be reminded of his nakedness, not when he is actually wearing so many colourful clothes imported from all over the world. Shouldn't we in fact be grateful for an imperial benevolence (the project has cost three million pounds) that has enabled magicians from all over the world to participate in and celebrate something whose spirit relate to all peoples? Shouldn't we just do what is expected of us: entertain and not ask silly questions on such an auspicious occasion?

Are we being dogmatic or cynical in our attitude? Let us look at the exhibition again, to see what it comprises and what it claims to achieve, historically and epistemologically, before we pass judgement on it.

Jean-Hubert Martin, the Director of the Centre Georges Pompidou and the commissioner of the exhibition, in his statement of 1986 describes the exhibition as comprising the following sections:

1. Artists from the artistic centres: A representative selection of art today, showing the mature artists of the last twenty years most committed to the avant-garde; artists with links to non-Western cultures.

- *African and Asian artists living in the West whose work reveals elements of their own cultural roots. Western artists whose work shows a concern for cultures other than their own.*
2. *Artists who do not belong to these centres but to the 'peripheries'.*
- *Works of an archaic nature intended for ceremonies and rituals, linked to transcendental religious experience or magic...*
 - *Traditional works showing an assimilation of external influences (e.g. aeroplanes or motorbikes found on Nigerian geledé masks).*
 - *Works from the artists' imagination, sometimes marginal, reinventing or rediscovering a cosmogony or interpretation of the world.*
 - *Works of artists who have been trained in Western or Westernised art schools.*

The claims (paraphrased) are as follows:

- *'Magiciens de la Terre' is the first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art.*
- *It questions the false distinction between Western cultures and other cultures.*
- *And its main objective is therefore to create a dialogue between Western cultures and other cultures.⁵*

It is the 'super-empiricism' (as Yves Michaud, the editor of *Les Cahiers*, has phrased it) of Martin which has formulated the framework of the exhibition and one shouldn't object to it. All exhibitions, national or international, work around predetermined frameworks, which are often thematic or historical, and the limitation of the aims can be justified by the specificity of frameworks. But what is special about this exhibition is its extreme ambiguity, masked by the goodwill and dedication of its organisers. And yet it can be located within what is often described as colonial discourse.

Of course, 'Magiciens de la Terre' is a departure from the famous exhibition, 'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art' (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1984–85) since 'Magiciens...' does not deal only with objects from other cultures but includes living artists from these cultures on a basis which appears to be one of equality: the world is equally divided between Western and non-Western artists with equal participation. But what is the significance of this departure? Does the mere inclusion of non-Western artists in this exhibition question the basic assumptions on which past similar exhibitions were based? Are these not the same assumptions that privilege the Western artist (modern, white and male) and exclude the non-Western artist (the 'other') from the domain of modern art? This question can be dismissed on the basis that the exhibition's objectives are different,

p.10

⁵ EN: J.-H. Martin's curatorial statement from 1986 is reprinted in full in this volume, pp.216–22.

and it does not deal with the question of modernism or the history of modern art. But is this dismissal not based on the assumption that other cultures have not yet responded creatively to modernism and have only become victims of what Martin calls 'Western contamination'? The very use of the word 'contamination' echoes the essentialism of nineteenth-century racial cultural theories, according to which cultures belonging to different races must remain pure for their survival.

On the state of art outside the Western world Martin contemplates the imposition of Western codes of behaviour upon the Third World has destroyed or at least contaminated everything; and in our eagerness to chastise ourselves we failed to go and see what was really happening. I will not disagree with the question of imposition, but what are the results of this imposition? Its victims are everywhere, except for those who managed to keep themselves inside their own traditions? So Martin sends his men to Indian villages in search of 'what was really happening' by bypassing all that which had anything to do with modern developments:

I want to show individual artists, not movements or schools and in that sense I am trying to do exactly the opposite of what the Biennale de Paris has traditionally exhibited when it relied for its selection on the information provided by the cultural functionaries of the individual countries who are all more or less imitating mainstream culture of the Western world, the École de Paris or New York painting.⁶

Was the Director of Folk Art in Delhi not approached for his contacts and advice? Why was the 'functionary' of the Folk Art Museum more authentic than a 'functionary' of the Museum of Modern Art? By bypassing the institutions of modern art in India are we not deliberately ignoring its recent history? And in recognising only traditions, is one not reminded of the same old colonial game of promoting tribal/traditional structures in the perpetuation of imperial power?

Metaphors are important in the understanding of a complex reality. And here is one: Bowa Devi, one of the *magiciens*, a folk painter from Bihar, India, stands in front of her wall painting during the opening of the exhibition, accompanied by a man (perhaps her husband) and a boy (perhaps her son). Every time someone approaches and addresses them (they are unable to communicate verbally because of the language problem, but this is beside the point), they raise their hands together in the air and do *namaste* (the Indian way of greeting), in the manner of an Air India hostess. This is constantly repeated during the whole occasion. What better way than this to communicate!

⁶ EN: Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'The Whole Earth Show: An Interview with Jean-Hubert Martin', *Art in America*, vol.77, no.5, May 1989, p.158. Reprinted in this volume, p.232.

Perhaps Bowa Devi's response was not in itself a gesture of submission. It depressed me because it reminded me of an Indian stereotype: meek and humble, ready to salute as soon as the master is in sight. Moreover, the entire exhibition was conceived and arranged in such a way that it would minimise all differences and conflicts. In fact, the process of homogenisation worked so well in some cases that even extreme differences appear to be eliminated. Entering the Grande Halle de La Villette and looking towards the end wall, one immediately noticed a large work by Richard Long which covered the whole wall and overshadowed everything else. However, on approaching it, one then saw traditional works by Esther Mahlangu (South Africa) and by the Yuendumu Aboriginal community (Australia). All these works were placed in such a way that their 'similarities' eradicated their differences. It was revealing the way the question of the difference of status of the artists in the exhibition was discussed in the colloquium a few weeks later. It was argued by an official that there was in fact no difference because it was not evident in the exhibition.

fig.70-71

fig.78-79 and 84

If all the things are equal and same, why was nobody sent to the villages of Europe? Is there no folk or traditional art in Europe? If the purpose of the exhibition was to question distinctions between modern works of art and folk or traditional art, why was this not done also within or in relation to Western culture? It appears that the assumption is that Western culture alone has passed from one historical period to another and its contemporary creativity is represented only by modern art. Can one avoid an implication here that other cultures, in spite of their contacts with the West, do not yet have a modern consciousness? Or if they do, it is not important to their creativity?

Are we really breaking the distinctions or reinforcing the very same assumptions which divide the world into the West (modern/dynamic) and the 'Other' (traditional/static)? There is no point in repeating here that traditions do not necessarily represent static societies. The important point is that other cultures have already aspired to modernity, and as a result have produced modern works of art. Many of the artists from Africa, Asia and Latin America are now to be found living in the Western metropolis where they have been in the forefront of modern movements. Their work has very little to do with what Martin calls 'their own cultural roots'. Of course, their relationship with the Western society they live in is problematic, as much as their relationship with modernism, and in many cases this problematic has entered into their work. Is it not the actual presence of the 'other' in the Western society which has exposed many of its contradictions? Why are we so afraid to recognise these contradictions?

If, as pointed out by Martin, 'cultural functionaries' of Third World countries have failed to expose the best of their contemporary work, how do we explain the total ignorance about the achievement of non-European artists in the West? Why are they invisible? Look at any major gallery, museum or art journal, in the West and you would know what I mean. In spite of the claim to represent the world, it is the white artist who is everywhere.

How can we judge those works of art which have not been allowed to enter the international art market, and which do not have the privileged position of their Western contemporaries? Is it not paradoxical that Martin should speak from the very position which refuses to recognise the necessity of non-European artists entering the paradigm of modernism to question those distinctions he himself wants to destroy?

It is significant the way a distinction between Western artists and other artists living in what Martin calls 'artistic centres' has been made. Whilst African and Asian artists are identified by 'their own cultural roots', Western artists are recognised by 'their concern for cultures other than their own'. In other words, the relationship of African and Asian artists to their cultures is presumed to be 'natural', but it is not clear what connects Western artists to other cultures. Of course, we all know that the Western artist occupies historical space (read Hegel), and it is his historical mission to be 'concerned' with other cultures.

The difference between 'their own' and 'other than their own' is fundamental to the distinction between Afro-Asian artists and Western artists, and I would go further and say that it is this presumed difference which has prevented the recognition of modernity in the work of Afro-Asian artists whether they live in the West or in their countries of origin.

It would be a useless exercise here to cite the actual achievements of Afro-Asian artists vis-à-vis modernism, not only because prevailing ignorance will turn every argument into 'the victim syndrome' but in the face of prevailing attitudes and assumptions in the West it would face an intellectual blockage which would be difficult to break through.

Instead of recognising the problematic position of other cultures in relation to modernism, with all its conflicts and contradictions, Martin only sees pastiches and imitations of Western culture everywhere. And then he perhaps concludes that modernism is no good for other cultures. They better keep out of it (postmodern prescriptions?), by sticking to their own traditions. Martin's sincerity and good intentions are not in question here. He seems to be a very good chap and is genuinely concerned about the divisions which exist between different cultures and the resulting lack of dialogue. During our private conversation, he explained his position to me:

I do not make distinctions between objects in the museum of ethnology and the museum of modern art. They are all art, and I want to break those distinctions which keep them apart. All art objects, if they are beautiful and represent creativity, give pleasure; and this is my aim for the exhibition. I want people to look at these objects and enjoy them. I don't care whether they have any value or status.

Nobody would disagree with his concern about the 'distinctions', but it does not seem to deal with or question those structures which underpin these distinctions. There is no harm in one's idiosyncratic understanding of

things, but if it is not located, both theoretically and historically, within the specificity of the discourse called art, then one is not really serious about one's intentions.

The distinction between the modern and the traditional is not really false, because it is the result of a historical force which is dominant today. If we wish to challenge this distinction then it will have to be done within a context which challenges the dominance of Western culture. 'Magiciens de la Terre' has very cleverly confused this question by assuming that other cultures are facing some kind of spiritual crisis resulting from 'Western contamination'.

The crisis is in fact of Western humanism; its failure to come to terms with the modern aspiration of the 'other'. What happened in Iran, for example, is not the result of what Martin calls a 'search for spirituality', but a direct result of Western imperialism which frustrated the aspirations and struggles of Iranian people to achieve a modern, secular and democratic society in the postwar period. The Shah of Iran was not an Oriental despot but an imperial puppet for whom modernism meant imitating everything Western or American.

When, in 1972, a museum of modern art was built in Tehran, with American design and technicians, its administration was handed over to an American team; which, of course, spent millions of pounds (Iran's money) buying American works. As for Iranian artists, they were perhaps living in exile in London, Paris or New York and ignored on the basis that they were producing 'imitations' of Western art.

It is easier to be cynical and dismissive about modernism in Third World countries than to recognise not only those structures which are responsible for what is actually happening in other cultures, but also those assumptions which continually reinforce the marginalisation of the Third World.

The example of Iran is an extreme case, but it is meant to be a metaphor. The struggle in Third World countries is not for 'spirituality' but for independent societies, which are democratic, modern and secular, and contemporary art produced in these countries is part of this struggle. The question of socialism is extremely important for us but it does not supercede the present stage of anti-imperialist struggle to claim our independent place in the modern world.

The failure of 'Magiciens de la Terre' to take into consideration the present historical and material conditions of other cultures, their aspirations and struggles to enter into the modern world with all its conflicts and contradictions, and what they have actually achieved within these limitations, is to mystify the production of art and to remove it from the question of power and privileges. By this failure it has defeated its own stated objective to provide a viable framework which would break the distinctions and allow a dialogue among the diversity of contemporary art from all over the world.

**Fictional Histories: 'Magiciens de la Terre' –
The Invisible Labyrinth'¹**
—Jean Fisher

According to the Great Encyclopaedia, the first museum in the modern sense of the word (meaning the first public collection) was founded in France by the Convention of July 27, 1793. The origin of the modern museum is thus linked to the development of the guillotine.
Georges Bataille²

The slaughterhouse is linked to religion insofar as the temples of by-gone eras ... served two purposes: they were used both for prayer and for killing. The result (and this judgement is confirmed by the chaotic aspect of present-day slaughterhouses) was certainly a disturbing convergence of the mysteries of myth and the ominous grandeur typical of those places in which blood flows.
Georges Bataille³

Let us begin with a historical moment: the French Revolution, whose bicentennial commemoration was the pretext of the exhibition 'Magiciens de la Terre', and whose Terror constituted modernist Europe's first ritualised spectacle of human sacrifice: the symbols of the ancient regime had to be sacrificed publicly so that a new order of egalitarian citizenship could be instated – the king had to lose his head, as it were, to make way for the acephalous democratic state. Thus, one might say that the exhibition was a celebration of mass, popular revolt.

Let us now shift to a location: the Grande Halle de La Villette, the old Paris slaughterhouse, now cleansed of its bloodstains and converted into a museum space looking remarkably like an industrial Notre-Dame. In the context of the exhibition, it is not insignificant that the slaughterhouse is a kind of liminal space: an interface between 'culture' and 'nature', 'city' and 'countryside', the sustenance of 'life' and rituals of 'death'. This was the site of more than half the exhibits in 'Magiciens', the rest being located in the Musée national d'art moderne, at the Centre Georges Pompidou. Introduce into this context fifty Western artists and fifty non-Western artists whose work claims a space in the ritual life of its culture, and, in its conjunction of sacrifice, art and the museum, we have the making of a scenario worthy of Georges Bataille. Following Bataille's logic, one might speculate that the first museums, especially the ethnographic museum, figured a displacement of the sacrifice

¹ Editors' Note: This text was originally published in *Artforum*, vol.28, no.1, September 1989, pp.158–62. © *Artforum*, September 1989. It was reprinted in Jean Fisher, *Vampire in the Text: Narratives of Contemporary Art*, London: Iniva, 2003, pp.200–13. Reprinted here courtesy of *Artforum* and by kind permission of the author.

² Georges Bataille, 'Museum' (1930), *October*, vol.36, 1986, p.26.

³ G. Bataille, 'Slaughterhouse' (1929), *October*, *ibid.*, p.12.

of the colonised other (its actual or cultural genocide) onto the other's cultural expressions as fetishised collectibles, thereby satisfying the metaphysical and mystical nostalgia of a Eurocentric bourgeois culture that had relinquished its spirit to the inert gods of capitalist commodification and progress.

Bataille's heterology, notwithstanding its 'primitivist' undertone, addressed a non-rational aspect of French thought that, in the wake of the French Revolution and colonialism, contemplated the social and ethnographic implications of sacrifice in the elaboration of human subjectivity. Thus, in Bataille's discussion of the continuity and discontinuity of being, the death of the individual (the sign of its discontinuity) nevertheless confirms the continuity of life in the community. Hence in sacrifice, 'the victim dies and the spectators share in what his death reveals. This is what religious historians call the element of sacredness'.⁴ As Annette Michelson remarks, 'Bataille will claim that it is in the festivity of sacrifice and in its sacred violence that man attains the community in sovereignty which is lost in the social order founded on the primacy of production and acquisition'⁵ – the Western social order, in other words, and 'its culture, the discourse of reason ... In such an order, the rule of "homogeneity" is totalising, exclusive of "heterogeneity and excess"'.⁶ A historical precedent for Bataille's philosophical musings might be the self-sacrifice by which the African slaves of French Santo Domingo (later to be the independent state of Haiti) fought for and won their emancipation – a struggle that, as the late C.L.R. James so brilliantly described, was economically and ideologically instrumental in the formulation of human rights during the French Revolution.⁷

To have perceived the exhibition as a labyrinth of pure heterogeneity and contradiction might have created a potential to address art's relation not to 'magic' (an abused notion that bourgeois culture tried to eradicate), but to the psychosocial dimension of the sacred and the profane beyond the confines of Christian orthodoxy. The curators of 'Magiciens de la Terre', however, did not address the Bataille discourse, although it has been central to a postmodern evaluation of heterogeneity and difference. Moreover, in the first 'manifesto' they prepared on the exhibition, 'The Death of Art – Long Live Art' (1986),⁸ they speak of the recent history of Western art in terms of a formalist search for the 'absolute', making no mention of Surrealism (with which Bataille was, at least for a time, associated, and which was indebted to a 'Latin' American sensibility), or of any of the other anti-formalist movements, from Dada through the Situationists and Fluxus, to certain post-Minimalist and

⁴ G. Bataille, *Eroticism, Death and Sexuality* (trans. Mary Dalwood), San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986, p.22.

⁵ Annette Michelson, 'Heterology and the Critique of Instrumental Reason', *October*, *ibid.*, p.116.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.124.

⁷ See C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938), London: Allison and Busby, 1989.

⁸ EN: Jean-Hubert Martin, 'The Death of Art – Long Live Art', CGP archives, box 95026/168, p.5. Reprinted in this volume, pp.216–22.

Conceptual practices that have attempted to recover a collective responsibility for art. Had an examination of the collective rather than the individual been the reference point, a space might have opened for a deeper investigation, for a more appropriate juxtaposition of Western artists with those engaged elsewhere in communal ritual practices, and also for a re-examination of Western commodity fetishism and mass consumerism as forms of ritual.⁹ Sigmar Polke alone seemed to have grasped that the core of the debate lies in an *internal* interrogation of the global implications of the French Revolution, and of France's historical fascination with 'otherness' and 'exoticism', with the rational and the non-rational.

The discourse of this self-proclaimed 'first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art' opened a potentially fruitful internal reflection on 'the relationship of our culture to other cultures of the world' but then buried it under the obfuscating ahistorical and apolitical sign of 'magic'.¹⁰ If Bataille and Toussaint L'Ouverture, the Santo Domingan leader of 1793, were two spectres hovering over this sacramental feast for the eye, they must surely be joined by Frantz Fanon; one is mesmerised, in fact, by the sleight of tongue in which the exhibition's title invoked that of Fanon's *Les Damnés de la terre* (1961), without foregrounding the passion that made his book such a powerful argument for a collective and political struggle toward self-determination by colonised peoples. If Fanon's text remains an important document in critical cultural discourse it is not only because it witnesses a particular moment in history, a function we might also desire of art, but because the imperialist mindset interrogated by Fanon still inscribes the institutions of the West.

Into this context come two statements by the exhibition's chief curator, Jean-Hubert Martin:

*Successful and dominant countries impose their laws and styles on other countries, but they also borrow from them and so become permeated by other ways of life. The notion of cultural identity ... is the product of a static concept of human activity, whereas culture is always the result of an ever-growing dynamic of exchanges. We might even go so far as to say that 'acculturation does not exist'.*¹¹

And

*I oppose the idea that one can only look at another culture in order to exploit it. Our first concern is with exchange and dialogue, with understanding others in order to understand what we do ourselves.*¹²

⁹ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh makes this suggestion in an interview with the show's curator, Jean-Hubert Martin. See B.H.D. Buchloh, 'The Whole Earth Show: An Interview with Jean-Hubert Martin', *Art in America*, vol.77, no.5, May 1989. Reprinted in this volume, pp.224–37.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.155.

¹¹ J.-H. Martin, 'The First Worldwide Exhibition of Contemporary Art', exhibition statement, CGP archives, box 95026/168, pp.1–2.

What is important here is the manoeuvre around the concept of 'exchange', a manoeuvre parallel to that displacing the terms of the entire debate from the interior to the exterior. Martin's statements oppose exploitation in the same breath that they articulate it, they propose exchange at the moment they occlude it. 'Looking', 'imposing', 'borrowing': these are unidirectional strategies of domination by which 'others' have been culturally depleted without their acquiescence. Who are these 'others' we should understand? Postmodern debate has made it clear that the 'other' is an illusion of the West's own making: a phantasmic projection of its fears and desires which have never produced anything but a misrecognition and, in consequence, a fatal disruption of the cultures of other peoples. Rather than continue to insist that the 'other' reveal itself to our gaze for our purposes regardless of its own, we might first engage in serious self-reflection.

Faced with an appropriating gaze, non-Western cultural identities are forms of resistance for those 'others' who believe, with justification, that their world view has as much to offer as the West's. That this resistant component of cultural identity may encompass the social, the economic, the political as well as the aesthetic was constantly glossed over in the commentaries of 'Magiciens'. But while we stopped to admire the aesthetic charm of a Wesner Philidor Vodun *vèvé*, we might also have remembered that it was Vodun that carried the call to unite for liberation throughout the slave communities of French Santo Domingo, a political reality masked by the Western myth of individual creativity. This tactic foreclosed on meaningful dialogue, revealing the curators' enterprise to be profoundly paternalistic – a serious matter, for it illustrates the extent to which Western institutions can appropriate the language of critical cultural discourse without fundamentally interrogating their own terms of reference.

fig.24-25

The Gnostic Map

I want to play the role of someone who uses artistic intuition alone to select these objects which come from totally different cultures ... I intend to select these objects from various cultures according to my own history and my own sensibility.

Jean-Hubert Martin¹³

Those objects which have a spiritual function for the human mentality, objects which exist in all societies, are the ones of interest for our exhibition. After all, the work of art cannot simply be reduced to a retinal experience. It possesses an aura.

Jean-Hubert Martin¹⁴

¹² B.H.D. Buchloh, 'The Whole Earth Show', *op. cit.*, p.155.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.152–53.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.155.

There is a surprisingly naïve and unreflective use of the term 'magician' in Martin's text especially since, as Guy Brett points out, in current art discourse it 'would be considered trite, a disempowering word that would weaken the relationship between the aesthetic and the social dimensions in the artist's practice.'¹⁵ Its introduction here is not difficult to understand, however, given the recent displacement of much industrial production (and dangerous waste) to the cheaper Third World labour markets, its severance from the site of consumption in the capitalist centres, which has emptied these centres of their 'content'. Furthermore, if we can say that during the progressive modernisation and concomitant fading of religious experience in Europe and North America the artist remained one of the few 'sites' or 'castes' in which a knowledge of both production and consumption was retained, then we can begin to see why the West invested its art with transcendental meaning. Perhaps this is why the exhibition tended to privilege traditional material processes; the fetishising of these processes as they are practised both in Western culture and elsewhere reflects the yearning for some lost pre-industrial integrity or cultural 'authenticity'. In any case, the 'magician' was always other – the possessor of a knowledge that was arcane, at least to those outside its cultural or caste formations. In the absence of any social or communal dimension to its debate, the exhibition returned us to the uncritical modernist fallacy of the sovereign subject. The works by Barbara Kruger and Braco Dimitrijević seemed particularly aware of this problem: Kruger's billboard asked, 'Who Are the Magicians of the Earth?' and listed a miscellany of professions as possible responses; Dimitrijević presented examples of a 'casual passer-by' monumentalised along with well-known iconic figures of Western culture, such as Leonardo da Vinci. Both works functioned as critiques of the valorisation of the artist, undermining the philosophy of the exhibition. Under the weight of the spectacle, however, they were ultimately reduced to mere rhetorical gestures.

fig.4, 5 and 7,
p.287; fig.2 and 47

The claim that artwork possesses a 'magic' or 'aura' that can be universally recognised beyond considerations of cultural context, and hence that its maker is a 'magician', is a proposition worthy of more serious philosophical reflection than to be simply conflated with the assertion that Martin's 'sensibility' or 'taste' was the arbiter in the selection of 'auratic' works for the show. About this latter confession one can have nothing to say, except to wonder what, in fact, was radical about it, since 'taste' has been the basis of most Western collections of art since Renaissance times. Such privileged subject positions have imposed calibrated values and meanings on the entire world, and it is precisely this history and taste that need interrogating. As to the former notion, we should not be misled into believing that the 'aesthetic' and the 'magical', or the 'spiritual', are one and the same thing, and that (Western) universal principles govern both; or that Martin's 'taste' guarantees either. The best we can say is that these are *terms in a relation* governed by

¹⁵ Guy Brett, 'Terre et Musée – local ou global', *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, no.28, Spring 1989, p.93.

local circumstances, and that to presume otherwise is to homogenise and to represent falsely the specificity of other peoples' worldviews: a familiar trick in the face of an incomprehensible heterogeneity.

What consistently appears as an overwhelming difference between ceremony-based work and Western art is that the former is participatory (to say so is not to render its producers anonymous but to emphasise their relationship to the whole) and hence functions as a unifying principle in culture, while the latter, with its valorisation of the commodity and the individual, renders all but the artist a spectator. Western artworks are a symptom of division. Entertainment is fast becoming the only role available to them, and if the art of others is defined in the terms of the Western aesthetic structure, it too is implicated as entertainment and loses its voice. The homogenising and universalising Western aesthetic is an alibi for refusing to hear the voice of the other, which is stigmatised as Babelian, incoherent, incapable of giving an account of itself.

The *commissaires* find it 'odd that our knowledge of world literature should far exceed that of the visual arts',¹⁶ seemingly unconscious that they speak from the very curatorial position that has, historically, sustained this ignorance through the contempt for non-Western visual culture long-held by the institution of art, and the common relegation of this work to the ethnographic museum. I do not wish to belabour the fact that, notwithstanding official apologies that the selection could not be 'inclusive', a legislating male voice thoroughly inscribes the institutional text; or that few *magiciennes* and no artists of the African diaspora – significant 'magicians' internal to the West – were unearthed in North America or Europe, while so many bare-breasted 'native' and black women were illustrated in the catalogue. Concerning other supporting material, the postcards notably focused on the exotic 'native' artist: the Yuendumu artist at work on his earth painting, Esther Mahlangu in her traditional costume painting her house walls. Catalogues have a historiographic significance, and once the Third World participants in the exhibition have faded back into their homelands, what remains legible is another entry in the genealogy of those predictable (mostly white male) artists consistently supported by major institutions. From this perspective, the theology of the 'magician' becomes no more than a means to reclaim a value for dominant Western art, to rescue it from its tired and debased status as a reified commodity in a capitalist market.

The Journey: Neither Here Nor There

'Magiciens de la Terre' has been in preparation for over four years, with a small team of curators, committed to very extensive travelling in order to discuss on site with artists, and able to make direct contacts, from the

¹⁶ J.-H. Martin, 'The Death of Art – Long Live Art', *op. cit.*, p.5. Reprinted in this volume, p.220.

far north of Canada and Alaska, to the deserts of western Australia and Arizona, from China and Japan to west and southern Africa, to central and south America.¹⁷

We have discovered that these artists enjoy showing their work to the outside world and not only because it brings in money for their art. A trip to Paris does not necessarily engender culture shock. Why refuse others the pleasures we also have in travelling?

Jean-Hubert Martin¹⁸

In numerous literary and oral traditions the journey represents a kind of rite of passage, but during the modernist and imperialist period it takes on less benign connotations. The journey or travelogue was a recurrent figure in the discourse of the exhibition. The La Villette display itself – organised like the space of a Christian cathedral – attempted to map a circuit of affects for the viewer. The catalogue was, in part, an ‘atlas’ – a mapping of points in space that measure the distance between the centre from which one sets out and the periphery from which one returns. It was in effect a means of maintaining that distance.

With *Boy's Own* enthusiasm, a catalogue essay by one deputy curator mapped the American South-West primarily through the white modernist artists who had settled there. The curator made barely a passing reference to the artistic productions of the diverse indigenous peoples of the whole Four Corners territory, although they were in fact the targets of his research. Having criss-crossed the ‘mid-West’ by jeep and plane (echoing Meriwether Lewis and William Clark’s nineteenth-century ‘exploration of the ‘wilderness’ by horse and canoe), he eventually tracked down a desired Navajo sand painter who had so far eluded his grasp (*‘avoir réussi à mettre la main’*) in a ‘suburb of Phoenix’¹⁹ – which, however, borders on a reservation, a fact likely to be of no small import to the artist concerned. Such inattentiveness to detail destabilised the rhetorical domain of the curators’ textual discourse; the *commissaires* went seeking the art of ‘others’ like ‘explorers’ in the grand nineteenth-century tradition of David Livingstone and Henry Stanley.

Thus, none of this is innocent; the lack of political context is redolent of the old colonial discourse of mapping ‘uncharted’ territory (uncharted by whom?) with all the accompanying resonances of naming, exploitation and possession. The European, armed with his global backpack, assumes the freedom to go anywhere uninvited, to violate the boundaries of ‘others’, and to claim their space for himself, for his religion, or for his art. This colonialist arrogance is perhaps exemplified by the working strategy of artists such as Richard Long, and the exhibition repeated the scenario when it sent a few Western artists

¹⁷ Press release for ‘Magiciens de la Terre’, January 1989, p.1.

¹⁸ J.-H. Martin, ‘The First Worldwide Exhibition of Contemporary Art’, *op. cit.*, p.2.

¹⁹ Mark Francis, ‘True Stories, ou Carte du monde poétique’, in J.-H. Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre* (exh. cat.), Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1989, p.14.

into 'marginal' territories: Long, for example, visited the Australian Yuendumu community, while Lawrence Weiner went to Papua New Guinea. Long's work was a very large mud circle applied to a black wall. References to the work's size recurred in the texts, as if this in itself were a value. The mud was from the Yuendumu's terrain;²⁰ but for this and its size, the piece was not substantially different from any other of Long's mud works. The artist's vertical ring dominated the perspective of La Villette like the rose window of Notre-Dame, a giant 'solar anus' that oversaw everything including the horizontal Yuendumu earth painting below it, rendering all the lateral exhibits on the floor as so many side chapels. Far from reflecting a dialogue between the two, the relationship replicated the juxtaposition of the colonised and the coloniser, between the West's manipulative relation to the earth and others' bodily association with it, and between Western neo-primitive aestheticisation of the signs of others' cosmogonies and the 'meaning effect' produced by their own work. The predominance given to Long's work betrayed the exhibition's rhetoric of equality, just as the Christian symbolism of the installation at La Villette betrayed the ritual and religious difference of other cultures and their historical struggle for survival.

fig.78-79 and 84

The "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art' show at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1984-85, gave priority to primitivist Western artists who appropriated the formal properties of non-European cultural expressions, although this was denied in favour of a rhetoric of no more than an 'affinity' between the tribal and the modern, which left European innovation superior, intact and essentially uncontaminated by outside 'influence'. 'Magiciens de la Terre' was an attempt to correct this perception, and yet fell into a similar error in its insistence on the notion of cultural 'authenticity' (as if there could be a culture not affected by exchange with its neighbours). Most telling was the general exclusion of works by non-Western artists 'contaminated' (the curators' term) by, or borrowing from modernist aesthetic strategies in favour of those maintaining 'authenticity' of seemingly traditional material processes. But assertions of cultural 'authenticity' or 'purity' are especially worrying in a climate in which discourses are subtly shifting from discrimination on the basis of 'racial' difference to discrimination on that of 'ethnic' or 'cultural' difference.

p.10

There is in all this a fundamental misunderstanding of the sophistication with which other cultures historically *internalised* Western culture and make modernism over in their own image; moreover, one might legitimately argue that modernism *arises* with the exchange between the West and the Rest, that the West has no privileged ownership of it, and that there are as many modernisms, each with their own local inflections, as there are sites of exchange. The incorporation of motorbikes into *gelede* masks, among other examples of the recycling of Western production and its waste, has a political, and not simply aesthetic dimension that 'Magiciens' seemed reluctant

²⁰ EN: In fact, mud from the River Avon was used, as Long did not actually make a visit to Australia for the exhibition.

fig.78-79 and 84

fig.51, 57 and 58

fig.107-08

to address. Most alarmingly, the emphasis in the curatorial selection of African exhibits of the 'folkloric' at the expense of modernist aesthetics gave the damaging impression that African modernism still doesn't exist. Similarly, although the Yuendumu earth paintings made the show, it was not mentioned that, as the late Australian anthropologist Eric Michaels has described, they operate a creative video-production-and-broadcast unit structured around aboriginal law. My contention is that 'traditions' are bound to a worldview, not to specific material processes, and for us to fetishise the latter not only reinforces our own nostalgic romanticism but blinds us to the subtle reinventions of language by which cultures seek to express their thoughts and feelings through a heterogeneity of representative codes and media. Some understanding of this appeared in the relation between the work of Nera Jambruk, from Papua New Guinea, and of Weiner. Jambruk's structure was a tall 'men's house' in the architectural style of his region; behind it stood Weiner's fence, inscribed with both his and (presumably) Jambruk's 'graffiti'. Both works were constructed from corrugated metal sheeting, a building material common in the shantytowns on the edges of colonial cities, and hence at least suggestive of a collaboration with some political resonance.

Despite the curators' well-intentioned desire to create such a two-way dialogue between cultures, the playing field remained far from level. What kind of dialogue can take place between affluent, gallery-based Western fine art and the folkloric object often made for a Western touristic market, when the economic gulf is so huge? Or with the shamanistic or ritual object, when 'other' religious practices continue to be assaulted by Christian missions (points alluded to in the work of Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles)? Perhaps more dialogue would have been possible had the exhibition indeed given more space to artists who use transcultural codes. Then we might have seen how cultural invention in the contemporary world has multiple pathways – not a one-way traffic from the West to the Rest, or the insularity of 'cultural authenticity'.

It seems as yet impossible to transcend a homogenising cultural vision that can do no other than represent its object in vague humanist terms. An exhibition cannot claim to be 'worldwide' – to speak in tongues – if the concerns it addresses are only those aesthetic values argued over in Western centres among a privileged few to whom the real-life concerns of 'others' are no more than background colour to their own dramas. We need, like Bataille, to examine other constructions of the self based on principles of community, to understand more fully art's productive role in the political and psychosocial dynamics of global society, rather than to remain trapped in an impoverished valorisation of a privileged Western subjectivity. This is the lesson to be learned from 'Magiciens de la Terre', in spite of its failures. What the exhibition demanded was an acknowledgement of the non-rational gesture that precipitated the French and Santo Domingo Revolutions – a gesture that momentarily made redundant all prescriptive theologies, one through whose terror and diabolical laughter the European world opened to the challenge of the other – both sacred and profane – in all its class, gender and racialised dimensions, and to

which Bataille, L'Ouverture, Fanon and the Third World are heirs. As Fanon says in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

*Leave this Europe where they are never done talking of man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their own streets, in all the corners of the globe. For centuries they have stifled almost the whole humanity in the name of a so-called spiritual experience. Look at them today swaying between atomic and spiritual disintegration.*²¹

*Postscript*²²

I first heard of 'Magiciens de la Terre' when one of the adjunct curators asked me if I could suggest Native American artists as the exhibition organisers had realised, rather belatedly, that they hadn't yet considered this constituency. I submitted a shortlist of names that included Jimmie Durham; however, the curators ignored these artists, providing the first clue to their understanding of the notion of 'cultural authenticity'. At the time of the exhibition I was a reviewer for *Artforum*, and as such was provided with a list of possible exhibitions to cover. 'Magiciens' was not even on its radar; but my unsolicited coverage of the exhibition was accepted and included at the end of their 'review' section.

During the mid-1990s, on a trip through Amsterdam, I passed a department store whose window display was based on South African Esther Mahlangu's decorated house, one of the 'other', folkloric exhibits in 'Magiciens'. 'Magiciens' was both symptom and institutionalisation of the trend towards the globalised supermarket display in which all difference is reduced to the equivalence of the collector – like a *Wunderkammer*, which, in fact, was how the curator described his exhibition. 'Magiciens' demonstrated that there was market and entertainment value in others' material cultures, generating a flurry of exhibitions of 'New Art from Elsewhere', which were essentially interchangeable, having little impact on centre-margin power relations, museum structures or curatorial self-reflection. As the Cuban critic Gerardo Mosquera often pointed out, such shows were usually framed by Western scholarship and funding, so control remained in the hands of the Western centres, disguising political and economic inequalities: there were 'curating' cultures and there were 'curated' cultures. Thus we had not yet extricated ourselves from the colonialist violence of subjecting 'others' to a discursive field not their own.

With the new millennium, the prevailing art world rhetoric has been that the globalisation of art indicates a new inclusiveness: an abolition of boundaries and hierarchies. Undoubtedly, pressure from postcolonial debates

²¹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961, trans. Constance Sarrington), London: Penguin Books, 1985, p.251.

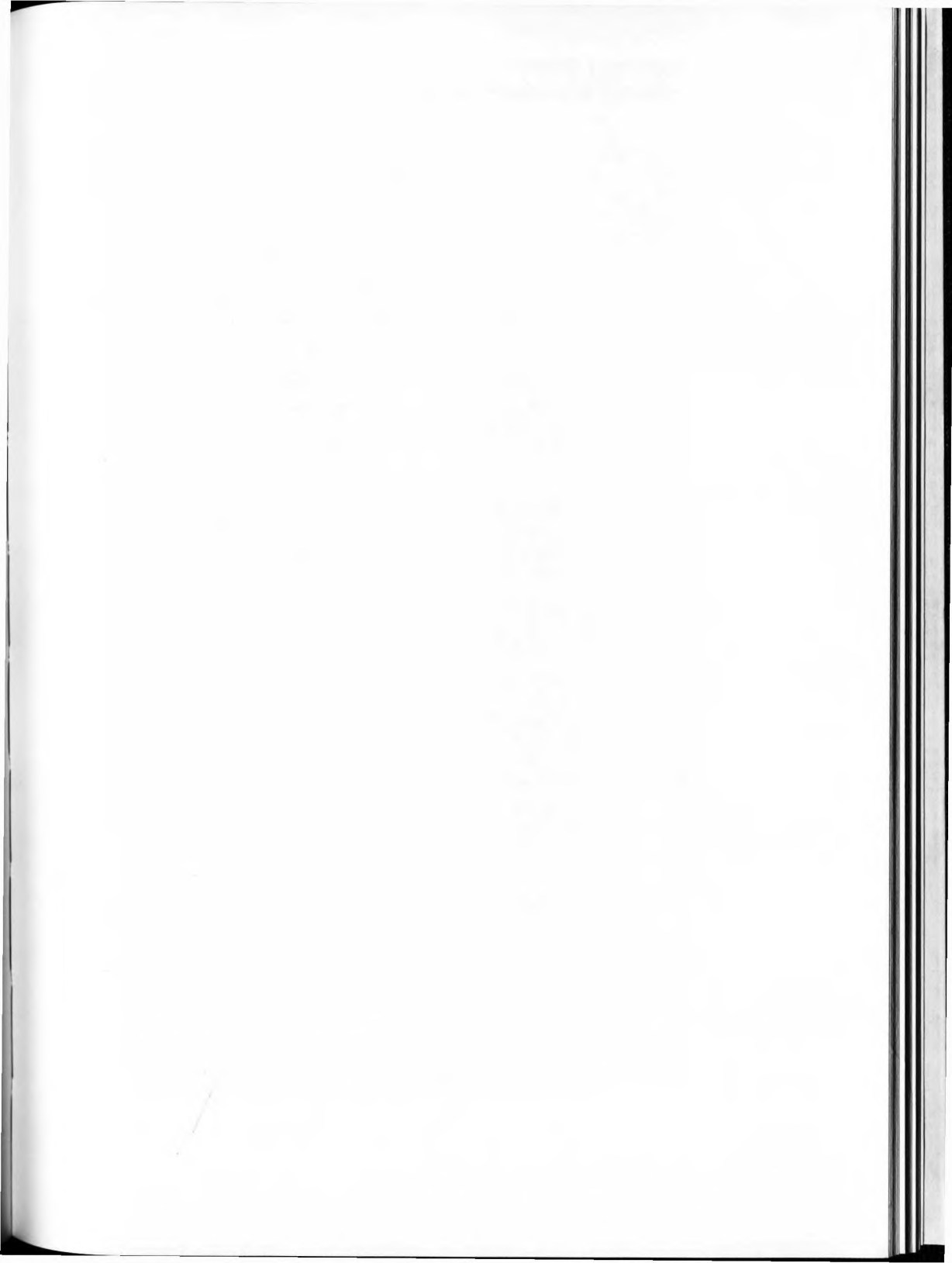
²² EN: The author wrote this postscript specifically for this volume.

forced an increased circulation of previously marginalised artists, and the incorporation of peripheral geographies previously excluded from an international art system centred on the North-North axis. Did this mean that the system was now free of cultural and ethnic bias, or merely that the range of actors had widened without substantially weakening the Northern axis's control of value, decision-making and the art historical canon? In a study designed to test art world claims of 'inclusiveness', the sociologist Alain Quemin concluded that, despite some modest diversification,

*while the discourse on globalisation, cultural relativism and mixing has allowed for the emergence of artists from a wider variety of countries, and from the Third World in particular, their recognition by the market remains very slight, the market being pretty much controlled by Westerners ... In general, non-Western countries play only a minor role and hardly ever have their say except, to a limited degree, in biennials of contemporary art.*²³

However, we have also seen re-emerging, notably in 'peripheral' geographies, artists developing alternative practices, networks, collectives and audiences that – at least in part – reject the market and its canonical terms of inclusion, and largely in disgust at neoliberal globalisation, which reduces all cultural expression to the commodity form.

²³ Alain Quemin, 'Globalization and Mixing in the Visual Arts', *International Sociology*, vol.21, 2006, p.522.



Looking at Others¹

—Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Everything, of course, has already been said. I am overwhelmed by the visual impact of this exhibition. Indeed, it seems too soon to speak. I do not know how to give plastic art 'meaning'. I am not unacquainted with our desire for significance and these last two days I have been compelled to acknowledge its presence in us. About these objects: we seem to have to repeat what they are, what they mean, or at least what they indicate. We seem to have to show them incorporated into various sign systems or to incorporate them ourselves, even if into a political meta-semiotics. We seem to have to read between what we imagine to be the curator's desire for the artists' desire, and ours, or at least, to quote Rasheed Araeen's phrase, 'in the crossroads of history'.² Yet, as I have walked amongst these silent or near-silent objects, I have felt more and more that there is no innocent gaze; that the space of the museum is a space that assigns us – to use a Gallicism, 'qui nous assigne' – and makes *us* visible, for we are necessarily unable to work with the structural possibility that every signification ascribed here is parasitical, beside itself.

It is under the sign of this parasitical near silence that I speak first of Hegel. We have heard a good deal about Hegel's predictions of the death of art.³ Most of us here know that *that* death, indeed *Aufhebung* or sublation, is not just the denouement of a story line; it is also shorthand for a moment in a morphology. Let us remind ourselves of it. The *Lectures on Aesthetics* offer us an epistemograph of the mind separated from its knowledge, slowly closing the gap between one and the other. Different varieties of art are the by-products of the mind's separation from knowledge. When the gap closes, art will no longer happen. In absolute knowledge, there is no art. It is well known that there is a misfit between morphology and narrative in Hegel. Absolute knowledge at the end, like absolute necessity at the beginning, cannot find narrative instantiation. What you find are manifestos announcing the death of art, works of art that can respond to the desire for *significance* by seeming to represent the immanence of death, death as absence, the unease of not quite not-death, programmed artificial intelligence in an empty room. Let us name Tatsuo Miyajima's *Counter Room* [1989], Louise Bourgeois's *Articul-*

fig.76

¹ Editors' Note: This text is a transcription of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's contribution to the two-day colloquium organised in conjunction with 'Magiciens de la Terre', which took place at the Centre Georges Pompidou, 3–4 June 1989. Published by kind permission of the author.

² EN: Spivak quotes from Rasheed Araeen's paper, delivered the previous day at the 'Magiciens de la Terre' colloquium, on 3 June 1989.

³ EN: Jean-Hubert Martin cited Hegel in his first curatorial statement in connection with his exhibition, produced in 1986 (and reprinted in this volume, pp.216–22); and then again in his preface for *Magiciens de la Terre* (exh. cat.), Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1989, pp.8–11. The subject was discussed intermittently over the two days of the colloquium.

ated Lair [1986], Marc Couturier's *Lin, verre, or [Linen, Glass, Gold, 1988]*, Enzo Cucchi's black painting with a light bulb [*Untitled*, date unknown], and other works such as Sunday Jack Akpan's brightly-coloured figurative sculptures [1989], Jean-Jacques Efiambelo's *aloalos* [1987–88] and Jimmy Wululu's mortuary poles containing the bones of the deceased [1988]. Thus does the philosopheme sometimes offer a system of self-representation that secures a cultural moment. But there is something else that happens with the extinction of art in absolute knowledge. Theology sublates into philosophy or, in another philosopher's version, religion proves to be a prefiguration of the moral law or the ethical imperative. Michel de Certeau has written brilliantly on the social substitution of ethics for religion, especially in France, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This access to the secular ethical imperative was very largely used as the ideology of imperialism. This, too, is the subtext of the surreptitious narrativisation of absolute knowledge.

fig.88
fig.13
fig.90–91
fig.103
fig.46–47

Turning now to the relegation of other arts to religion – in Hegel that relegation would be a normative deviation, fixed for the folks who are mere stages on the mind's journey. Those who think to supersede Hegel today rewrite this normative deviation as an especial grace. Yet the two positions legitimise each other. For example, because we the Europeans, it might be said, are secular ethical subjects, it would be extremely dubious and perhaps illegal for us to say that this exhibition is the temple of the living Christ. We can let it be the temple of other religions for a season because we know that those spirits are tamed. Thus does the philosopheme sometimes offer a system of the representation of the other that secures a cultural moment. We have not moved far from Hegel. Perhaps it is true that the visual arts in the West have not been globalised in the same way as literature or music. Our exhibition, then, marks the desire for a rupture. This is reflected in the beautiful title, 'Magiciens de la Terre'. But every rupture is also a repetition. I think we must acknowledge this by focusing not only on the word 'magiciens', but also on the word 'terre'. Our desire for a rupture with previous practice lives in the separation between two expressions: 'artiste du monde' and 'magicien de la terre'. Heidegger, in *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1937/50), claimed that 'a work of art worlded a world on uninscribed earth';⁴ it wrote a *monde* on a virgin *terre*. Please note the play of gender here – I will come back to it. The work of art, then, writes a world on uninscribed earth. Three things can be said about this. First, we may make the actual practical presupposition, all theoretical work to the contrary, that the new world is a *terre* rather than a *monde*, that it belongs to a previous practice that we so desperately want to annul. Second, that the single work of art worlds a world on an uninscribed earth may be valid as a morphological assumption, but if we assume this to be an empirical narrative, we are in trouble. As Peter Bürger reminded Jürgen Habermas, in quite another context,

⁴ Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (1937/50), in David Farrell Krell (ed.), *Basic Works: From Being and Time (1927) to the Task of Thinking (1964)*, San Francisco: Harper, 1993, pp.137–212.

art has already been separated from the *Lebenswelt*, and not only in the West.⁵ We cannot wish it otherwise by fiat, not even by the choice of so-called traditional art as metonymic of the entire nation. We have to remember that the geo is already graphed: there *is* geography. Every desire for a wholly new reinscription of the *terre* can only ever be a palimpsest. Third, this is staged for us in Alfredo Jaar's *La Géographie, ça sert, d'abord, à faire la guerre* [Geography Serves, in the First Place, to Make War, 1989]: the affirmative deconstruction of a postcolonial global cartography – not of a parahistorical uncharted earth or *terre*. The returned glance of the Other is not of the Africa – Roman proper name – inscribed on a bit of earth 'Libya', not of the Africa of magic, but of the naked and benignly ironic African child raised with the wisdom of the brutality of modern geography learned. I was assured that the photographs were not posed.

In our letter of invitation to this colloquium, we were asked to ponder a general topic from our own point of view 'Altérité, Identité, Métissage – Centre et Périphéries' ['Alterity, Identity, *Métissage*: Centre and Peripheries']. The subtitle comes from the very tendency or vector of theory that once again the curators want not so much to annul as to reverse. I sympathise with the wish, such as it is reflected in the world projected in the upper right-hand corner of each artist's page in the exhibition catalogue, where the centre of the given map marks the artist's country of origin. I cannot of course credit or honour the centrality of the creative spirit, individual or collective, as anything but a necessary survival technique most spectacularly seen today perhaps in political mobilisation, or in the kind of Atlantic appropriation described by Robert Farris Thompson this morning. If I had that time, I would develop this notion a bit further by way of that old term, 'species-being', *Gattungswesen*.

But let us turn instead to the main title, 'Altérité, Identité, Métissage'. First, identity. Names like Asia or Africa or Moldova or Nago or Svavberg are not anchored in identities. They are incessant fields of recoding that secure identities. The immediate need for identitarian collectivities must not take on truth-value by the monumentalising solemnity of our exhibition, which takes the identity of a phantasmatic West for granted. Some of the best efforts in the metropolis today are to make the West see that its identity – the proper word against alterity is, of course, ipseity – that the West's ipseity, then, is phantasmatic. I am referring to such revised proper names as 'Black Britain', or the 'Rainbow Coalition' in the United States. As Jean-Hubert Martin reminded us yesterday, all identities are fields of recoding in their different ways.⁶

Second, alterity. The English language has recently received the word 'alterity' from the French – I am not sure whether it is yet in the *Oxford*

⁵ See Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974, trans. Michael Shaw), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, pp.25–27.

⁶ EN: See Spivak quotes from J.-H. Martin's paper, delivered the previous day at the 'Magiciens de la Terre' colloquium (on 3 June 1989).

English Dictionary. In the human sciences this is perhaps through discussion of the work of Emmanuel Levinas. This has not always been recognised, so much so that Johannes Fabian, an anthropologist, wrote a book called *Time and the Other* (1983) using the same title as Levinas's *Le Temps et l'autre* almost forty years later, without being aware of the earlier book.⁷ One of Fabian's arguments is that anthropology posits distance in space as distance in time, and this hides an agenda. This line of thought has already been pursued in our discussions. Let me step back and consider one of Levinas's warnings. The wholly other, *le tout autre*, cannot be served or samed – it is not susceptible to ipseity or *mêmeté*. The face of the wholly other is without a name. The other that we narrativise or grasp consolidates the self through a kind of *stade de miroir* [the Lacanian mirror stage]. Thus, before a fundamental ontology or a transcendental phenomenology there must be an ethic of ethics. This, too, is an impossible requirement. It cannot be fulfilled, for example, by wondering what were the works – and here I quote the press release of January 1989 – 'which completely escape[d] our aesthetic categories and criteria', or works 'which we [could] not "see"'.⁸ This requirement for an ethic of the ethics of the *tout autre* can also not be fulfilled by thinking – and I now paraphrase Jacques Derrida – 'of all those places – cultural, linguistic, political, etc. – where the organisation of [an international exhibition] simply would have no meaning, where it would have been no more meaningful to instigate it than to prohibit it'.⁹

Let us turn from such impossible warnings to something more humdrum. Let us consider how the identity/alterity couple is being reversed in the so-called 'new nations' in decolonised space. As it happens, the only representative of such a space among those of us invited to speak at this colloquium is Jyotindra Jain, who is from the country of my own citizenship, India, which I moved away from some thirty years ago. In his innocent and confident defence of the curators yesterday, we saw a mark of that achieved reversal of representation, alterity/identity. As far as I can see, this reversal is being operated on two fronts, the one recoding the other. Of course, I am generalising, and misrepresentation is inevitable. The two fronts, then, are political and cultural. Politically, whatever our identitarian ethnicist claims of nativist or fundamentalist origin, the political claims that are most urgent in decolonised space are tacitly recognised as belonging to the old culture of imperialism, that is, at least, to the European post-Enlightenment, nationhood, citizenship, democracy, socialism, secularism and even culturalism. And I am not now talking about exhibitions; I am talking about what is going on in governments, why blood is being shed. Within the historical

⁷ EN: Levinas published *Le Temps et l'autre* in 1948.

⁸ EN: In the press release these are presented as two of the three categories of work avoided when making the curatorial selection for the exhibition. The inability to 'see' a work is there associated with inseparability from context. See 'Première exposition mondiale d'art contemporain', press release, January 1989, pp.2–3.

⁹ See Jacques Derrida, 'The Ends of Man' (trans. Alan Bass), *Margins of Philosophy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. Derrida is specifically referring to 'a philosophical colloquium' rather than 'an international exhibition'.

frame of restoration – colonisation, decolonisation – what is effectively reclaimed is a series of regulative political concepts, the authoritative narrative of whose production was supposedly written elsewhere, in the metropolis. These concepts are being reclaimed as catachresis, in other words, as concept metaphors, for which no historically adequate referential may be advanced from their space. And yet these claims, the seriousness of these claims, cannot be ignored. This deep traffic, with rational abstractions, is incessantly recoded and reterritorialised by a highly sophisticated form of nativism, securing a national identity quite different from the static ethnographers' community, where every individual emerging out of repetition is to be elaborately congratulated. This still circulates in the European theatre, but that is not what is going on in those spaces: the rational abstractions are being reterritorialised by a highly sophisticated nativism. Here I think, in terms of available systems of cultural representation, Europe or the West is being othered, although in a more extended argument, I would have to show that this happens within the same discursive formation. It is Europe that occupies the space of alterity here.

It would be different to speak of the United States in this context, and I will not do so. Afro-America is neither a new nation nor *un métèque*. The extraordinary cultural exchange between Africa and Afro-America, which is to be matched in energy, if not in scope, only by the exchange between Palestine and Arab-America, is a different phenomenon. Neocolonialism and the heritage of colonialism must not be conflated or confused. There is a great deal to be said here, but there is only time to touch on it. Europe is our focus here and my point is that Europe is being othered in the particular situation of the decolonised 'new nations', and given political deep-traffic with certain kinds of catachrestical rational abstractions, regulative political concepts and their reterritorialisation by a highly sophisticated nativism both from historians and ministries of culture. And I am by no means denigrating this; I am saying we should be aware of it.

The phenomenon of reversal that I am describing here is by no means unknown by political cultural activists of the decolonised nations in Asia, the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa. It is especially hotly debated in Africa, where there are so many intellectuals involved that their names would fill a page, although none is here to speak at this event. Before I turn to the final word given in our title for today, *métissage*, I would like to step back, or take some distance, from this identity/alterity reversal operating in the new-nations of decolonised space. The event of political independence stands in the middle of colonialism and decolonisation as an unexamined good, which operates the reversal that I am speaking of. The new nation, as I have said, is run by a regulative logic derived from a reversal of the old colony, and thereby of secularism, democracy, socialism, national identity and capitalist development. There is, however, a space that did not share in the energy of this reversal – a space that had no established agency of traffic with the culture of imperialism. Paradoxically, this space is also outside of organised labour, below the attempted reversal of capital logic. Conventionally this space is described as the habitat of the subproletariat or the

subaltern. It seems to me that this is the space of the displacement of the colonisation/decolonisation reversal. This is the space that can become a representation of decolonisation as such. It is not uncontaminated by the West, and certainly not apart by collective social choice. This space is rather the non-personal arena of judgement of the reversal operated by politics, or culturalism, or reconstitution in museums. To this space, the logic of parliamentary democracy, or the logic of socialist planning, or yet the logic of cultural identity, is counterintuitive.

This is the space where the organisation or prohibition of exhibitions is meaningless. There is a great deal to be said about this displaced space, but I must pass on to *métissage*. I shall therefore say no more than that it is, for us metropolitan postcolonials, a space of anxiety. It is also the space of the genuine aporia of history. Both culturalism and the politics of the nation state will transform this ambiguous place, this ambivalent place. You cannot not bring the subaltern into citizenship, if and as you can, in the new nation. Ganga Devi, the Madhubandi painter celebrated by Jain yesterday, no longer lives in this space, and that is not all bad. It is the place of a genuine historical aporia, if you consider the entire political culturalist recoding rather than a simple undoing of ethnography.

With *métissage*, beginning from the migrant subproletariat, here we can go all the way to the postcolonial artist or academic, to those like myself. In different ways, this whole group is an embarrassment – to both Eurocentric and nation-centric visions of identity and alterity. Yet we are the children of the enabling violation of imperialism. Children produced by rape, by epistemic violation – and this is why we are an embarrassment. We should not be defined as having been to school in the West and thus disqualified everywhere. This amuses me: the entire project and adventure of the epistemic violation of imperialism is now rewritten as someone who went to school in the West. We have become a scandal. The resistant postcolonial has no place in this agenda. We should be used – and here I go back to an earlier point – to explain or make visible the ethical-political agenda in your tendency to conserve a centre that you can then cede only in a certain way. Certain artists in the exhibition ‘Magiciens de la Terre’ speak this loud and clear: John Knight putting uranium symbols in his work, referencing Navajo sand painting [*Leetsoii (Uranium)*, 1987]; Jean-Michel Alberola with his porte-bouteille [*Presque aussi facile que de pisser avec des gants de boxe...* (*Almost as Easy as Pissing with Boxing Gloves*, 1989)]; Rasheed Araeen has expressed this forcefully; and one look at Jeff Wall’s *Tran Duc Van* [1988], will suffice. This is a perspective that has already been ably elaborated by Homi Bhabha today.¹⁰ I want therefore to talk just a little about woman space.

fig.96–98

fig.45

fig.112

fig.27 and 29

In all these three theatres, *altérité*, *identité*, *métissage*, the coding of the woman’s body occupies a separate place – it is elsewhere. And I must believe

¹⁰ EN: Spivak refers to Homi Bhabha’s paper, delivered earlier that day at the ‘Magiciens de la Terre’ colloquium (on 4 June 1989).

fig.74

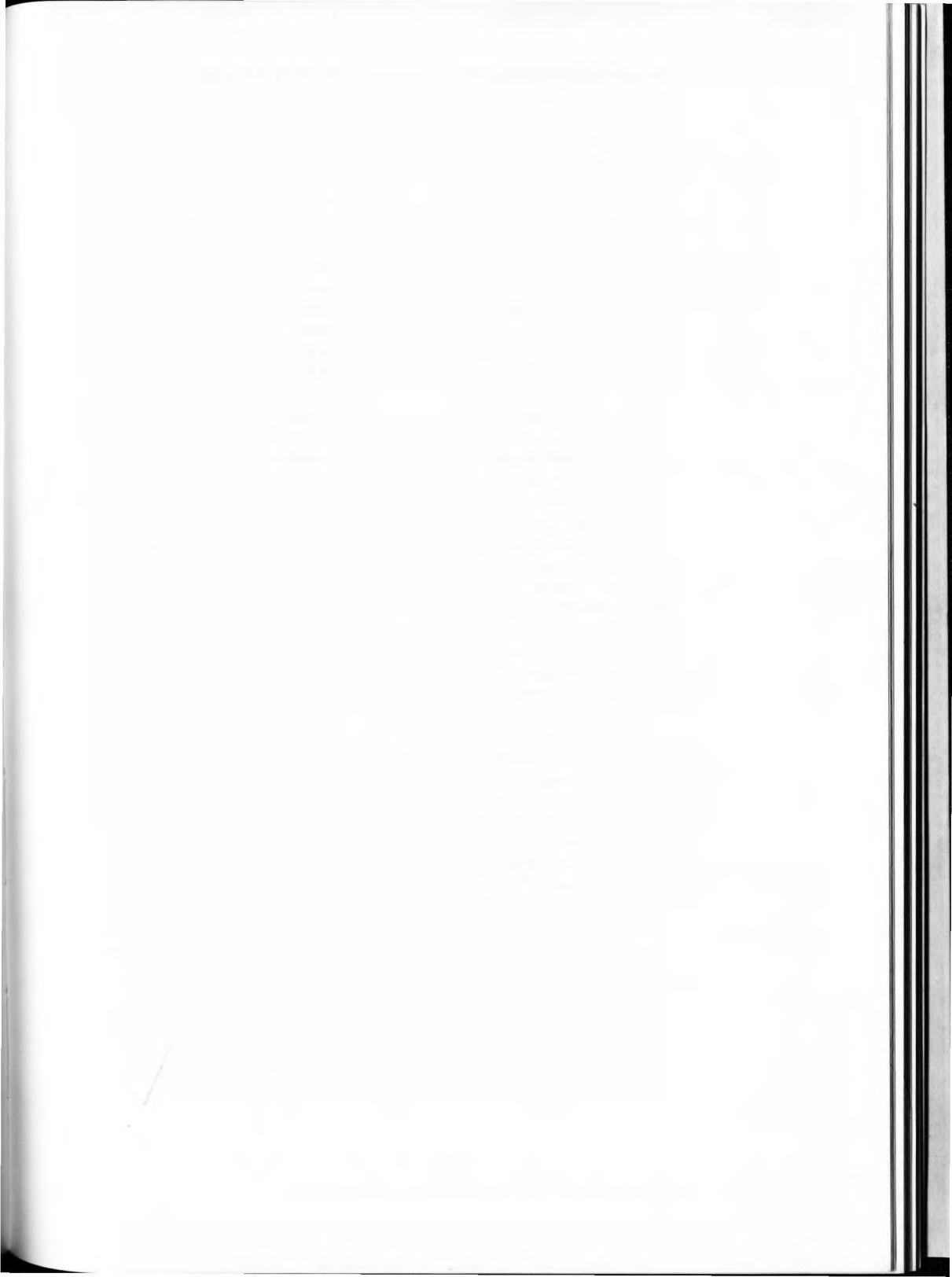
fig.113

fig.14

fig.50

that there is no such thing as the uncoded body. Even if, in the crisis of the armed or peaceful struggle, women seem to emerge as comrades, with the return of the everyday, the old codings of the gendered body, only slightly altered, seem to fall into place. The *terre* or terrain of the exhibition, as Homi Bhabha has pointed out, is quite effectively graphed. And, if I may offer a critique, I do not think that this careful deployment of space attends to the aesthetics of sexual difference. This is not a special pleading for a special interest. For some years now, that part of the women's movement that is not taken in by simple declarations of global sisterhood has been mobilising around the problematic of the ethics of sexual difference. A problematic exists because an ethical position entails a universal presupposition that must at the same time consider empirical cases. Is there such a common ground inscribed by sexual difference? From any exhibition tacitly celebrating the transition from *le monde* to *la terre*, an attempt at graphing an aesthetics of sexual difference is offered by the constellation of objects, and not through ethnographic research. As it is, woman remains, as usual, in the pores of the exhibition. Both Thompson and Bhabha have, already today, pointed at some of these porous presences. I am thinking also of the extraordinary fecundity figures of Seni Awa Camara from Senegal. In the few words she is quoted as saying, there is a witting or unwitting reappropriation of the subjectship of ethics: 'I reflect, I have an inspiration, I work.' On the other side, there is the violent misogyny of the male sexist state of Ashigaru, where the anti-Oedipus is again not constellated by spatial organisation; you have the play of gendering and postcoloniality in Chéri Samba's *Marche de soutien à la campagne sur le S.I.D.A. [Demonstration to Support the Campaign Against AIDS, 1988]*; and even the unacknowledged and eerie phallo-uterine mechanicity of Rebecca Horn's *Kuss des Rhinoceros [Kiss of the Rhinoceros, 1989]*. The woman viewer is obliged to put in there, somewhere, Shirazeh Houshiary's fire and water [*The Pole of the Sphere* and *The Geometry of Water*, both 1989].

I want to end, however, by invoking again the overwhelming pleasure of seeing so much. The first evening, jetlagged, I was full up with art or, if you prefer, magic. I kept waiting for James Coburn to reappear, wondering what movie, what sequence; a humble paradigm of the need for informational coherence – call it reason or mysticism, your choice. Another image, another message. Those postcards by Frédéric Bruly Bouabré, two on racial difference: one shows a human being and a termite, another a European and an African. If there is a universal principle it is in the incessant renegotiation of difference. Such a principle is an impossible starting point for anything. It is better to keep working away at the impossible than to make things seem possible by way of elegant polarisations. I end therefore, in spite of everything, with congratulations and thanks to the organisers. It is, for better or for worse, the moment for a step such as this exhibition, in this place. It is better to take this step than not to take it. Many of us hope that you will remember that first steps must often be taken again. We have offered you our participatory and persistent critique – the best sign of interest – in the hope of a new next time.



When asked why he wished to be buried upside down, Diogenes replied, 'Down will soon be up'.

p.10

'Writing before the exhibition', I remarked in the catalogue of the Centre Pompidou's 'Magiciens de la Terre' show in Paris last summer, 'I do not know (nor may I after) how well or badly it will fulfil its postmodern agenda.'² My essay was written three years ago. Now the exhibition has happened, occasioning a hail of mostly negative criticism rather similar in premise to the attacks (including my own) on the Museum of Modern Art's "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art' show in New York in 1984-85. One has to be sympathetic to the antihegemonic impulse behind this criticism of 'Magiciens de la Terre'. Still, in the end, I feel, it misses the point.

Like many viewers, I did have problems with the show. There were many distressing signs of residual colonialist attitudes. As various reviewers pointed out, for example, the title showed a romantic tilt toward the idea of the 'native artist' as not only a magician (with the term's suggestion of the pre-rational) but also as somehow close to the earth (not *magiciens du monde*, of the world, but *de la terre*), as if in some pre-civilised state of nature. The curators were understandably motivated by a desire not to use the word 'artists', in deference to the ongoing anthropological debate about whether so-called 'primitive' peoples have the ideology (essentially, in our terms, Kantian) that makes objects 'art' in our sense of the word. Still, an aura of Rousseau and of the Noble Savage clings round their title. And the word 'magicien' really does not express very precisely what Hans Haacke does, or Lawrence Weiner, or Barbara Kruger, or Chéri Samba, or many others in the show, both Eastern and Western – or Northern or Southern.

The tilt toward the cliché of the earthy native was also visible in the selection and installation of the works. Despite the fact that a number of artists in India are currently attempting to work out a thoughtful conflation of Indian and Western styles and themes, for example, the curators chose to exhibit primarily traditional, craftlike work from that country. Actually, most of the artists in 'Magiciens' who might be described as cool, intellectual and conceptual were Westerners (Weiner, Kruger, Haacke, Daniel Buren and so on); and in general (though not without exception), the artists whose work seemed most earthy and ritualistic were non-Western (Esther Mahlangu of South Africa, Cyprien Tokoudagba of Benin, Nuche Kaji Bajracharya of Nepal, Joe Ben Junior, a Native American sand painter, and so on). It would

fig.58, 4, 5 and 7;
42 and 41

fig.70-71

fig.81-82 and 21

fig.99-100

¹ Editors' Note: This text was originally published in *Artforum*, vol.28, no.7, March 1990, pp.19-21. © *Artforum*, March 1990. Reprinted courtesy *Artforum* and by kind permission of the author.

² EN: Thomas McEvelley, 'Ouverture du piège: L'Exposition postmoderne et "Magiciens de la Terre"', in Jean-Hubert Martin (ed.), *Magiciens de la Terre* (exh. cat.), Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1989, p.22.

not have been hard to reverse, or to balance, those categories, perhaps by placing more emphasis on work that attempts to bridge the gap. (But maybe that is another show, and the next stage in the postcolonialist process.) Indeed, the curators may have intended a gesture at such a balance through the huge Richard Long mud painting in the portion of the show at La Villette – the ‘earthiest’ piece in the exhibition, literally, and by a European artist. But, as many seem to have felt, the overriding presence of the Long circle, which dominated everything at La Villette, smacked of hierarchy. Even more unfortunate was the aboriginal sand painting lying on the floor beneath it, as if conquered or raped.

More could be said, and has been said by others, to indicate how the curators failed to arrive at a fully postcolonialist show. Not least would be the atrocious catalogue statements by the curators themselves, with their talk of spirituality implying universals they may not have intended, and their rather clumsy, gung ho enthusiasms. But for all this, it nevertheless seems to me that the generally negative press reaction to ‘Magiciens de la Terre’ was mistaken. (Though I wrote what the curators called the keynote statement in the catalogue, I made no curatorial contribution to the exhibition, and have no ongoing connection with the Pompidou. My defense of the show is based on my belief in its premises, not in the details of the curation.)

Part of the reason for the often hostile reaction to ‘Magiciens’ may have been the fact that it was not seen in the United States and the “Primitivism” show was not seen in Europe. One cannot really understand ‘Magiciens’ without thinking of what the “Primitivism” show meant in terms of history and society.

A sensitive exhibition defines a certain moment, embodying attitudes and, often, changes of attitude that reveal, if only by the anxieties they create, the direction in which culture is moving. The distance from “Primitivism” to ‘Magiciens’ suggests how much things have changed in the five years between them. Western culture as it enters the 1990s is somewhat inchoately seeking a new definition of history that will not involve ideas of hierarchy, or of mainstream and periphery, and a new, global sense of civilisation to replace the linear Eurocentric model that lay at the heart of Modernism. These issues rose into the foreground in the art world with the “Primitivism” show, which was widely perceived – here, in Europe, and indeed around the world – as an amazingly unconsidered display of neocolonialist mentality. It seemed to want to turn back the clock of history, anachronistically reaffirming the ideology of classical Modernism.

That ideology involved the Kantian aesthetic theory – which made claims for pure form, the absolute value judgement, and the universality of aesthetic canons – with the Hegelian myth of history, which held that history had an inherent goal. These two ideas worked together to justify European colonialist hegemony. The idea that history has a goal makes it plausible to imagine that some cultures may be farther along toward that goal than others. These, of course, would be the colonising cultures of the West, since this was a Western

myth. And if we were closer to the goal, the right to make the supposedly universal value judgement was ours. History, in this view, gave us the right to judge other cultures on our terms (never judging ourselves on theirs). It seemed to follow logically that it was the responsibility of Western civilisation to drag the rest of the world, for its own good, into history and toward the goal. Thus the Work (as Hegel called it) of history was the white man's burden, in Rudyard Kipling's phrase. Of course the white man was also burdened with the task of carrying back into Western coffers what an earlier English poet, John Milton, called 'barbaric pearl and gold'.

Increasingly since the late 1960s, this ideology has lost credibility. As postmodernism (or post-History, meaning post- the Hegelian view of history) dawned, it came to seem that in fact history had no inherent goal. It might go wherever circumstances drew it, and circumstances were too manifold, complex and subtle to be susceptible to extensive control. The distinction we had drawn between nature and culture seemed to be breaking down. That division, when it was first bruited (by the Greek Sophists, from whom Hegel took the idea), was based on the notion that we can't control nature but we can control culture. Nowadays the opposite seems true: it is culture that is out of control, nature all too vulnerable to human direction.

p.10

It was at this moment of attitudinal change that the "Primitivism" show appeared, like a holding action for classical Modernism. There was the Kantian doctrine of universal quality again; there was the Hegelian view that history is a story of Europeans leading dark-skinned peoples toward spiritual realisation; there was the sense of mainstream and periphery. The fact that so-called primitive art resembled Western advanced art seemed to be attributed primarily not to the incontestable fact that the Western artists had imitated 'primitive' works, but to the idea of an underlying affinity between Western artists and 'primitives' that demonstrated the universality of the modernist canon. The colonised nations were called upon to testify to the superiority of the colonisers. It was a kind of police action.

'Magiciens' was conceived in the midst of the widespread controversy over the "Primitivism" show. The hope it embodied was to find a postcolonialist way to exhibit the works of First and Third World artists together, a way that would involve no projections about hierarchy, or about mainstream and periphery, or about history having a goal. Works by fifty Western and fifty non-Western artists would be exhibited in a neutral, loose, unsystematic way that would not imply transcultural value judgements. The exhibition would be superficially similar to "Primitivism" in that it too would exhibit First and Third World objects side by side in a major Western museum. But where "Primitivism" had dealt with universals, 'Magiciens' would deal with particulars. Where "Primitivism" had left the 'primitive' works anonymous and undated, 'Magiciens' would treat them exactly as it treated the Western pieces. Where "Primitivism" had been Eurocentric and hierarchic, 'Magiciens' would level all hierarchies, letting the artworks appear without any fixed ideological framework around them. Where "Primitivism" presented 'primitive' works as footnotes to their Western Modernist imitations, 'Magiciens'

would choose each work by what appeared to its curators to be its interest as itself, not by its value at illustrating something other than itself. (The curators' taste, it seemed to me, functioned in the selection process as a kind of random element.) Where "Primitivism" came equipped with a huge, hectoring catalogue enforcing the curators' view of virtually everything in the show, 'Magiciens' just put the stuff out there unexplained, or, rather, untamed by explanation. As for the idea of a centre, 'Magiciens', at least in the catalogue, would make a gesture toward dismissing it. Each artist was given two pages in the volume; on each spread was a small map that showed the artist's home as the centre of the globe.

Perhaps the key fact is that the two exhibitions embodied radically different ideas of history. "Primitivism" was still based on the Hegelian myth of Western cultures leading the rest of the world forward. 'Magiciens' was the epitaph of this view, and of the Kantian idea of the universal value judgement. If history has no goal, then there can be no basis on which to claim that one culture is more advanced toward the goal than any other. Suddenly each culture is simply the most advanced example of its type. Each culture has an equal claim to be just where it is.

The "Primitivism" show was based on a belief in universally valid quality judgements, particularly those made by the curators. The 'Magiciens' show hoped to be able to acknowledge that value judgements are not innate or universal but conditioned by social context, and hence that they only really fit works emerging from the same context. This thought does not mark the end of the idea of quality, only its relativisation. When one walked through 'Magiciens', instead of automatically thinking 'this is good' or 'this is bad', one might be provoked to attend to the limitations of one's ideas of good and bad – to confront the fact that often one was looking at objects for which one had no criteria except some taken from a completely different, and possibly completely irrelevant, arena. The absence of a scholarly catalogue left the viewer confronted simply with the works and the bewilderment they might produce.

Criticism of 'Magiciens' came from both the Right and the Left. To rightist critics, the show seemed a destroyer of Modernism. The curators had given up the Western claim to being a more advanced civilisation; they had given up our long-claimed right to judge other cultures by our own standards, and to treat these judgements as somehow objective. This anxiety must underlie the unpublished remark of a prominent British critic that 'Magiciens' marked the end of Western civilisation – as if Western civilisation were constituted precisely by the claim to hegemony; as if yielding that claim, one yielded all.

Critics approaching from the Left expressed unhappiness at how depoliticised the show was. They questioned the motives of the institution, suspecting it, among other things, of attempting to recapture French cultural claims to global relevance. They brought up the tradition of French colonialism, sometimes implying that the show might better have transpired in Kinshasa

or Djibouti – places where, unfortunately, it probably would not have affected much the way the Western art world operates. They questioned the idea of introducing these artists into the Western market system, like innocent lambs being led to the slaughter. They questioned the imposition of bourgeois individualist values on these artists from supposedly communal societies. They spoke of 'Magiciens' as if it were "Primitivism".

The bone everyone has been picking – Right, Left or centrist – is the lame curation. The show didn't add up in so many ways, despite the good sense of its underlying premises. I don't argue that point. (In fact, I feel that the show's inconsistencies saved it from the rigidity of a single framework of value.) What I am defending is an idea that I think was never really in question and that I doubt anyone wants directly to attack. All the criticism of the show that I have seen fails to confront the monumental fact that this was the first major exhibition consciously to attempt to discover a postcolonialist way to exhibit First and Third World objects together. It was a major event in the social history of art, not in its aesthetic history. 'Magiciens' opened the door of the long-insular and hermetic Western art world to Third World artists. The question is not really whether the people who opened the door had gravy on their jackets, or slipped and fell as they were opening it. The question is this and this only: as we enter the global village of the 1990s, would any of us really rather that that door remain closed?

Some of the criticism of the show was honourably motivated by a compassionate concern for the Third World artists. This concern arises understandably from a scepticism about whether the door is really open, how far it is open, and how long it will stay open. It has happened before that the Western art market, seeking new goods, has elevated a previously peripheral group to the mainstream and, when it didn't work out financially, ejected them again. (One thinks, for example, of the Mexican muralists of the 1930s and of the graffiti artists of the early 1980s.) The composition of such international exhibitions as the forthcoming Venice Biennale and of the documenta two years hence will be most revealing about the question of whether the door is really open. Meanwhile, I have heard that African artists from 'Magiciens' are having one-person shows in Paris and New York galleries. The Center for African Art in New York is preparing a show of contemporary art from Africa. Down will be up. It may be that the deck of cards of Western art history has been thrown into the air – that there are unknown elements in the game now, elements not yet under any particular control.

Statement on 'Magiciens de la Terre'
— Frédéric Bruly Bouabré

Frédéric Bruly Bouabré was born in Zéprégühe, Côte d'Ivoire and lives and works in Abidjan. He describes how, in March 1948, he had a revelatory and transforming vision, where he 'became Cheik Nadro: he who does not forget'. In a drive to preserve and transmit the knowledge of the Bété people, he invented an alphabet of 448 monosyllabic pictograms to represent the Bété language. Bouabré also gathered his research on the arts, traditions, religion and philosophy of the Bété in manuscripts. In the 1970s, he began making small drawings in postcard format. These drawings are now gathered under encyclopaedic titles such as *Connaissance du monde* (World Knowledge) and *Le Musée du Visage Africain* (The Museum of African Faces). Recent solo exhibitions include Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (2007). Significant early shows include Portikus, Frankfurt; and Ludwig Museum, Cologne (1993); and a two-person show, 'Alighiero Boetti & Frédéric Bruly Bouabré: Worlds Envisioned', Dia Center for the Arts, New York and American Center, Paris (1994–95). A one-room display of his work was recently shown at Tate Modern, London (2010–11). Group exhibitions include: 'Africa Remix', Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf and touring (2005–06); 'African Art Now: Masterpieces from the Jean Pigozzi Collection', Museum of Fine Art, Houston (2005). His work has also been shown in the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale (1997–98), the 10th Biennale of Sydney in 1996 and Documenta11 in 2002.

fig.33 and 34

Frédéric Bruly Bouabré: I used to want to be a poet; I was bewitched by Victor Hugo. But it was Picasso who showed me the way. I became a draughtsman – completely. On hundreds of small cards I drew everything that I observed of the world around me. I invented nothing. Then André Magnin appeared at mine one day, early one morning in 1987. I showed him what I was making with my feeble hands and he seemed charmed. It was in this way that I was invited to France. I was so pleased when Magnin borrowed five hundred of my drawings to be exhibited. Thanks to Magnin, I entered the pantheon of Picasso.

When I learnt the name of the exhibition was 'Magiciens de la Terre' I thought it was like a prophecy. For me, seeing myself as a prophet, I thought that the title revealed many things.

I was drawing every day. I was copying nature: picking up upon everything I found interesting around me, everything before me and between the earth and the sky. I made numerous drawings and showed these to Magnin who said I must come to Paris. I went and when I saw my work exhibited I loved and admired it as never before.

Through profound necessity – my work is my whole life – I have always stayed in my corner of Abidjan and kept drawing. I didn't know that one day I would be invited to Paris to exhibit. I have always worked alone and I wasn't familiar with any other artists – none in the Côte d'Ivoire, none in



Frédéric Bruly Bouabré,
Les Grandes Figures
 (Great Individuals), 1987–88,
 in 'Magiciens de la Terre',
 Centre Georges Pompidou,
 Paris, 1989
 © the artist
 Photography: Deidi von Schaewen

Africa, none elsewhere. I knew neither the artists nor the works of art that were gathered for the exhibition.

I walked gently through the show. I was happy and thought: this is paradise.

Isn't paradise wonderful? You Europeans take notes in exhibitions but not me, I wrote nothing down. I simply looked. I looked a lot, without bothering with the names of those responsible and besides I wouldn't remember now, since age and white hair has caught up with me. I simply retain a memory of paradise.

Exploring the exhibition I was amazed by the diversity and beauty. We artists are preoccupied with this beauty. All people admire it. I would say that art marches in the first rank of civilisation – at the forefront of the progress of humanity. In 'Magiciens de la Terre' I saw that mankind was good and that we could contribute to this necessary progress. The artist must dazzle. Beauty fascinates the gaze and goodness attracts people. And there, in the exhibition, I felt spellbound. It was paradise.

I cannot say what the strengths and weaknesses of the show were. Artists cannot judge themselves. But many people saw my work, and the work of the other artists, and I am happy with that.

I would say that 'Magiciens de la Terre' was the beginning of my celebrity. All artists seek viewers and this exhibition allowed people to see my work and perhaps to like it. That was what I sought.

Frédéric Bruly Bouabré's response to a set of questions posed by Lucy Steeds via André Magnin on 26 April 2008. Brouabré's statement translated from French by Lucy Steeds.

Interview with Alfredo Jaar
— Francisco Godoy Vega

Alfredo Jaar is an artist, architect and film-maker who lives and works in New York City. He was born in Santiago de Chile. He has participated in the Venice Biennale (1986, 2007, 2009), the Bienal de São Paulo (1987, 1989, 2010) as well as documenta in Kassel (1987, 2002). A major retrospective of his work took place in summer 2012 at three institutions in Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst e.V. and Alte Nationalgalerie. Other important solo exhibitions include: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; Whitechapel Art Gallery, London; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Rome; and Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Jaar has realised more than sixty public interventions around the world. In 2012 he completed two important public commissions: *The Geometry of Conscience*, a memorial located next to the newly opened Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago de Chile; and *Park of the Laments*, a memorial park within parkland sited next to the Indianapolis Museum of Art. More than fifty monographic publications have been published about Jaar's work. He became a Guggenheim Fellow in 1985 and a MacArthur Fellow in 2000. In 2006 he received Spain's Premio Extremadura a la Creación.

Francisco Godoy Vega: When did the curatorial team of 'Magiciens de la Terre' first contact you? Who approached you and did they visit you in your studio?

Alfredo Jaar: Jean-Hubert Martin sent me a letter. I think he contacted me two years before the exhibition took place [1987]. At that time there was no internet, and it wasn't easy to make international telephone calls, so I replied in writing, accepting his invitation. At the end of that year I met with Aline Luque in Santiago, where I was spending Christmas. We had a meeting there and I believe we agreed on how to move forward. But these are vague memories now...

FGV: Do you think their interest stemmed from seeing your work *Gold in the Morning*, based on your experience at a gold mine in Brazil, presented at the Venice Biennale [1986] and *I+I+I*, an installation that dealt with the politics of representation of poverty in El Salvador, presented at documenta 8 [1987]?

AJ: I actually never asked them about this, but I imagine that it was at least one of these works that created a strong enough impression to trigger the invitation. At the time there were very few artists working on the subject of what was not very correctly called the 'other', and much had been written about the fact that I was one of the very first artists dealing with this subject.¹ I arrived in New York in 1982 and worked as an architect – I had trained as an architect, and never studied art – and during my first years in the city I lived almost as a kind of cultural anthropologist, trying to under-



Alfredo Jaar,
Gold in the Morning, 1986
42nd Venice Biennale, 1986
© the artist



Alfredo Jaar, *1+1+1*, 1987
documenta 8, 1987
© the artist

stand the New York art scene with the goal of becoming a player in it. As an architect, it was very natural for me to first try to understand the scene in order to act. In fact, this is the formula that I have always used in my work: in order to act in this world I must understand it.

I discovered a great, exciting and challenging cultural scene, but what shocked me was realising that New York was a very provincial city that thought of itself as the centre of the world. There was no space to talk about or show the world beyond New York or the US. Most of the art being produced there referred only to itself – little or nothing was known about Latin America, Asia or Africa, about all the existing conflicts across the world. And also, the scene was very exclusive: at the time, an ‘international

¹ Editors' Note: See Dore Ashton, Thomas W. Sokolowski and Patricia C. Philips (ed.), *Gold in the Morning* (exh. cat.), New York: self-published, 1986, and Tzvetan Todorov, *1+1+1* (exh. cat.), New York: self-published, 1987.

exhibition' meant US artists and a handful of Germans. My impulsive response to that provincialism was simply 'to try to bring the world to this city'.

My project was very ambitious, but fortunately I was able to carry it out. In 1984 I applied for a Guggenheim grant with a proposal 'to bring the world to this provincial city and to research and photograph a gold mine, a Bruegel-esque site in Serra Pelada, in Brazil's Oriental Amazon'. In a way, without knowing it, I was already anticipating my *modus operandi* for 'Magiciens', because with this grant I travelled to Brazil, realised the project *Gold in the Morning* and presented it in Venice. It immediately attracted attention as there was nothing similar in the art scene – an artist who lives here but works with what is happening there, brings it here and places it in direct relation to what is happening here. The project was also presented in the New York subway, where I announced the price of gold in all the world markets next to those extraordinary scenes in Serra Pelada. So I imagine the curators thinking: 'this is the sort of artist that we need for "Magiciens"'. But this is speculation, I really do not know how it happened.

FGV: Why did you decide to make your work for 'Magiciens' in Africa?

AJ: I lived in Fort-de-France, Martinique, for ten years. At that time Aimé Césaire was the mayor of the city. I studied at the Lycée Schoelcher, which had been Césaire's high school, as well as that of Frantz Fanon and Édouard Glissant. I grew up in the cradle of *négritude*, the ideological and literary movement that Césaire had created together with Léopold Sédar Senghor and Léon-Gontran Damas. I grew up there, from the age of five until I was fifteen, with black Frenchmen – I was one of the few whites living there – and created very strong and emotional ties with the black race. I returned to Chile for another ten years and then moved to New York, where there have always been people from all over the world, but where the culture was very provincial. It was shocking to realise how absent, how invisible the culture of large parts of the world was. At the time I made the following diagnosis: Latin America and Asia were largely absent but Africa was completely ignored in spite of the Afro-American presence. I discovered that Afro-American culture and African culture were not really interested in each other. More recently things have changed for the better, but at that time there was total ignorance, similar to the ignorance existing between white American and Africans.

For my first international project my instinct had been to make work on Latin America and go to Brazil, it was a spontaneous decision. I did not think of working in Africa at the time. But Venice and documenta gave me a certain visibility, and when I received the invitation for 'Magiciens' I thought it was time to start working on Africa, whose reality was the great absence in Western visual culture. At that time, before the internet, I used to buy newspapers from all around the world, in French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and English. I used to go to a fabulous kiosk in Midtown where they had all the world newspapers. This is how I gathered small dossiers on various subjects. One of them focused on Italy sending its toxic waste to Nigeria.

And the 'Magiciens' invitation gave me the opportunity to travel there. That chance may have appeared anyway later, who knows, but it was this invitation that made it possible. In fact, the curators never suggested that I 'work with Africa', I think they were actually surprised at my choice.

FGV: Could you explain the research process, how the piece worked conceptually and also how it was installed?

AJ: I first travelled to witness, research, interview people, photograph, see for myself... I am a frustrated journalist and I have always worked with information. I am unable to create anything only from imagination; I have to create from a particular reality, and in order to do this I need to assemble what I call a critical mass of information. And my work is a creative response to that information. I even ended up in jail for a night, because the Nigerian soldiers didn't like what I was doing. Still, I managed to access the place where the Italian toxic waste was stored, and to photograph it.

I spent three weeks in Nigeria. Once I was back in New York I had enough time to formulate the project, which figuratively took the Western white audience to the harbour of Koko in Nigeria, in order to confront them with the horror that 'they' had created – a journey into hell. At that time I was still working as an architect, and it was very natural for me to propose an architectural environment: I created a spatial labyrinth containing five light boxes inserted in the walls. At the entrance, the title of the work was written next to a world map designed by Arno Peters, that shows each country according to its actual size. The title quoted a sentence by Yves Lacoste, 'La géographie, ça sert, d'abord, à faire la guerre' ('Geography serves, in the first place, to make war') both in French and the local language of that area of Nigeria. Then there was a first light box with an image of a group of boys playing, looking directly at the camera, among barrels containing toxic waste. In the foreground a smiling boy appeared to want to hit you, but looked powerless. At the end of a very long corridor a second light box was placed, with a much more threatening image of the same boy. On turning the corner you faced a third, larger light box, where one faced the full horror: the boys had incredibly sad faces that looked at the camera, at you, while rummaging in the toxic garbage. Opposite there was another small light box sitting on the floor, with a close-up of a map of Africa, in front of which there was a mirror painted in black in the shape of Africa. Reflected on the mirror the same boy appears, now smiling.

fig.115, p.280

FGV: This is a similar process to that used in your later works.

AJ: I agree. Architecture and cinema – my two passions.

FGV: And Africa... This installation was shown next to works by the Japanese artist Tatsuo Kawaguchi and the Russian artist Erik Bulatov. Do you remember the context in which it was shown? How did you see your work in relation to the rest of the display in the Grande Halle de La Villette?

fig.116 and 114



Alfredo Jaar, *La Géographie, ça sert, d'abord, à faire la guerre* (Geography Serves, in the First Place, to Make War), 1989, in 'Magiciens de la Terre', Grande Halle de La Villette, Paris, 1989
© the artist



AJ: La Villette is a gigantic space. Viewers entered my gallery from the central hall, and there did not appear to be a direct relationship with any other artists. Obviously visitors walked through the central public space to move from one gallery to the other, but I can't remember what was shown to each side of my installation. The only works that related visually to each other were the ones in the central public space. I remember very clearly how the works by Richard Long and Esther Mahlangu engaged in dialogue with each other; it was a very intelligent juxtaposition that provoked big questions.

fig.84

FGV: One of the strategies of the exhibition's curatorial discourse was to stress the inclusion of an even number of Western and non-Western artists: roughly fifty and fifty. Do you think that your work was considered as part of the Western or non-Western group?

AJ: I have no idea. No matter their intention, I imagine that I confused them completely, because I was born in Chile, I had a French education, I was living in New York and was making work about Nigeria, which was receiving toxic waste from Italy. And I was showing this work in Paris, and quoting Yves Lacoste. Where would you place me? I am intrigued by the discussion that they could have had.

FGV: This is why I believe you were an interesting figure in the show, because you triggered a friction in the discourse.

AJ: I have repeatedly caused this type of problem, because people never know where to place me. I have always tried to reject labels – they might be convenient but are absolutely useless.

FGV: What happened later with that work?

AJ: It has been shown elsewhere, including in a large exhibition in 1991 at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Virginia Commonwealth University, titled 'Alfredo Jaar: Geography = War'.² There I showed all the works related to toxic waste. And in 1992, I had a retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago,³ where the work was also shown. These works lived on well after 'Magiciens' and were shown in three or four prominent places.

FGV: Was it subsequently acquired by a museum or collector?

AJ: No, I still own this work. My work is generally difficult to sell, and this one in particular because of its content, its critical stance and the technical complexity of the installation: it contains five large elements and a whole architectural frame needs to be built to house it.

² EN: 'Alfredo Jaar: Geography = War', Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, 6 September–20 October 1991.

³ EN: 'Alfredo Jaar: Geography = War', Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 30 April–2 August 1992.

FGV: What were for you the significant ideas behind the curatorial project in the context of 1989?

AJ: My first reaction was to think that 'Magiciens de la Terre' was a very exotic and dangerous title. But when I saw the list of participating artists I realised that it was going to be a very important show and that I should take part. I felt that, in effect, it was going to be a crucial moment in what was being experienced in the contemporary art world. The resistance to the marginalisation of people from other countries was growing in the US, there were small revolutions everywhere and for me this was the show that said 'this is it!' The provincialism of New York and other large cities was totally anachronistic and unacceptable. It was evident that after 'Magiciens' there was no turning back. In my view, it was really the first crack in the Western art bunker. I suppose that some people felt threatened, as the door was opened to thousands of artists...

There should be a serious analysis of the criticism that appeared at the time. My impression is that the most negative reaction came from the US because they imagined that with such a gesture Paris attempted to recuperate the centre of the art world that it had earlier lost to New York. It seems to me that the North American critics resisted such perceived attempts; furthermore, they saw 'Magiciens' as tainted by the French colonialist spirit that the US believes itself to lack. But very few critics made the effort to ask artists such as myself, native of the so-called peripheral colonies, what 'Magiciens' meant to us.

I think that the French origin of 'Magiciens' slightly complicated the situation, but it was key in the history of contemporary art. In my view, the fact that it took place in Paris and was organised by a Frenchman caused much of the controversy; it would have been different had it been organised by a North American in New York.

FGV: What do you think about the idea of speaking about 'magicians' rather than 'artists'?

AJ: By coincidence, I had been myself a magician for eight years before becoming an artist. In my recent retrospective in Berlin we exhibited early works from my time in Chile in the 1970s,⁴ and amongst them was *Mago* (*Magician*), made in 1979. It was very funny to be called a magician, because I had myself been one, but I suppose it reveals that perhaps Jean-Hubert Martin was too shy and insecure to call us all artists, because this would have implied the acceptance and inclusion of the non-Western artists in the Western canon as equals. It is curious that he took the concept of the show very far, but that he didn't dare to do so with the title.

⁴ EN: 'Alfredo Jaar – The Way It Is. An Aesthetics of Resistance', Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, Berlinische Galerie and Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 15 June–17 September 2012.

FGV: I understand that the show had a great impact on you. What struck you the most? Was it the contrast between 'unknown' and 'well-known' artists? Was it specifically works by the 'unknown' artists?

AJ: Can you believe that I didn't see the part of the show exhibited at the Pompidou? I didn't have any money, so as soon as I finished installing I had to leave. I was struck by a new exhibition model that, living in New York, I had never seen before. The prevailing model at the time was to have a few white, Western artists. All of a sudden, an international show appeared that, for the first time, gave justice to the word 'international'. You could discover famous artists alongside other artists that you didn't know at all, from unfamiliar countries, and they were presented as equals, one next to the other. It was completely subversive, revolutionary and previously unseen. Beyond the quality of the works themselves or the dialogues that were established between them, it seemed to me that this was a draft of the operative curatorial model that was to impose itself on the contemporary art world twenty years later.

Now, even if substantial progress has been made since 'Magiciens', I am afraid that there is still a great deal missing: the art world continues to be racist and sexist, and this will only change when western institutional structures change and when non-Western cultural structures become more powerful. The fact that there are a few African, Asian and Latin American artists operating within it doesn't make the scene truly global. We are heading that way but we are not there yet. For the moment, artists like me, who are active in the global scene, have become models for young artists working far from the centres and at least they now know that they can achieve what we have been able to achieve. This is fundamentally important.

FGV: As an artist, did your participation in this exhibition influence you in any way?

AJ: I don't believe it had any influence on my practice but, if it did anything, it confirmed that I was on the right path, and I decided to continue exploring ways to challenge the art world's provincial insularity.

FGV: Did you carry on working with Jean-Hubert Martin? Did you receive any invitation to participate in another project because your work had been seen in 'Magiciens'? And did you keep in touch or work again with any of the artists who took part in the exhibition?

AJ: Jean-Hubert and I became friends, we have seen each other several times, and I recently worked with him at the 3rd Moscow Biennial in 2009 that he curated.⁵

⁵ EN: 3rd Moscow Biennale, 'Against Exclusion', Garage Center for Contemporary Culture, Moscow, 24 September–9 November 2009.

I have not collaborated with any artists from 'Magiciens', but I have bumped into them in many exhibitions around the world. Amongst all of them, perhaps the ones closer to me are Hans Haacke and Cildo Meireles, who became great friends. Both of them were my heroes. Up until then, Cildo practically did not exist in the art scene in Europe. He had participated in the exhibition 'Information' at MoMA in 1970,⁶ but I believe 'Magiciens' was his first important show outside the American continent.

FGV: To conclude, given your experience participating in many international exhibitions across the world since the late 1980s, why do you think that this exhibition is so significant, and in what respect is it different from others in which you have participated?

AJ: I believe that it changed the art world. I believe that there is a pre-'Magiciens' and an after 'Magiciens'. What makes it so significant is that for the first time it opened the doors to different cultures, to different modes of expression, to makers who were considered as artisans rather than artists. It posed many questions: what is art? Why do we consider certain things to be art and not others? Why do we consider certain practices to be exotic, primitive, artisanal, and others, which seem to be doing the same thing, as conceptual? This makes me think of John Cage who already in the 1920s had declared that 'Other People Think'.⁷ Sadly the Western art world did not think like that until 1989.

It also provoked a series of questions around the role that identity and nationality play in our little art world. These questions have been answered in the last twenty years by dozens of global exhibitions. Finally, I believe that with 'Magiciens', Western culture thought about the world for the first time, rather than about a couple of privileged countries, and this was absolutely revolutionary. If you did 'Magiciens de la Terre' today, it would make no sense. 'Magiciens' created a model to rethink the world at its time, and the world was actually rethought.

This interview took place on 3 October 2012 at the artist's studio in New York. Translated from Spanish by Helena Vilalta.

⁶ EN: 'Information', Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2 July–20 September 1970.

⁷ EN: John Cage delivered the lecture 'Other People Think' for the Southern California Oratorical Conference at the Hollywood Bowl in 1927.

Statement on 'Magiciens de la Terre'

—Barbara Kruger

Barbara Kruger was born in Newark, New Jersey and lives in New York City and Los Angeles. After a year at Syracuse University in 1965, she studied art and design with Diane Arbus at Parsons School of Design in New York, further developing her interest in graphic design, photography, fashion and magazine subcultures, poetry and writing. In 1966 she took a design job at Condé Nast Publications and later worked as a graphic designer, art director and picture editor in the art departments for various publications, including *Aperture* and *House and Garden*. During the early 1980s she became known for using cropped, large-scale, black-and-white photographic images juxtaposed with typographic statements printed in Futura Bold against black, white or red. She distributed the work widely as postcards, T-shirts, posters and soon extended her project, creating public installations in galleries, museums, public buildings and parks, as well as on buses and billboards. For the past fifteen years she has been making multi-channel video installations and public projects, the most recent being a bus and billboard project for the Los Angeles Fund for Public Education. The large-scale installation *Belief and Doubt* is currently installed in the lobby of the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington (2012–13), and she is working on an exhibition that will open at Kunsthaus Bregenz in October 2013. She is currently teaching at the University of California, Los Angeles. In 2005 she was awarded The Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice Biennale.

Barbara Kruger: The curator Jean-Hubert Martin visited me in New York. I found him to be thoughtful and open to ideas. I had problems with the methodologies of the exhibition and certainly with the title – I thought it was fraught with the conventional romantic notion of what art is and what it does. I knew that the only way my work could function productively within the exhibition would be to address the title and try to work critically in regards to it.

fig. 4–5 and 7

I requested a position near the entrance, where the title could be addressed as a preface to the exhibition.¹ My questions and criticisms did not extend to the actual work included in the show. On some levels the exhibition seemed prescient in terms of the inclusion of different threads of visual practice and its seemingly global overture. But to 'package' the project as 'Magiciens de la Terre' felt so unexamined. I actually found it to be kind of funny. But funny in a sad way, in that this seemingly expansive project was hung on such a stereotypical armature. And while the inclusion of difference, especially in terms of race, was a welcome addition to an exhibition with 'global' ambitions, somehow it all seemed a bit like escorting 'otherness' into the capital.

¹ Editors' Note: Barbara Kruger's work *Qui sont les magiciens de la terre?* (*Who Are the Magicians of the Earth?*, 1989) was installed at the entrance of the fifth floor of the Centre Pompidou (see also fig. 4–5 and 7).



Clockwise from left: Barbara Kruger, *Qui sont les magiciens de la terre?* (*Who Are the Magicians of the Earth?*), 1989; Mike Chukwukelu, *Ijele* mask, 1989, in 'Magiciens de la Terre', Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1989
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Exhibitions are most frequently reflections of the ideas, preferences and tastes of their curators. They speak of affiliations, networks and ideational allegiances. They are reflections of their time, but also of the anthropologies of the art subcultures that construct and contain them. In the US, many museums are in a crisis of funding. Without state support, the curatorial ambitions of many institutions are marginalised and become reliant on private funding that frequently favours big name monographic shows and 'blockbusters' over rigorous and complex curatorial projects.

Barbara Kruger's response to a set of questions posed by Lucy Steeds by telephone on 17 March 2008, updated by the artist in November 2012.

Authors' Biographies

Rasheed Araeen is a civil engineer, artist, writer and inventor. He began working as an artist in 1953 and continued to pursue art while studying civil engineering at NED Engineering College in Karachi. He left for London in 1964 and has since lived there. After having been active in various groups supporting liberation struggles, democracy and human rights, he began to write in 1975, founding and publishing the art journals *Black Phoenix* (1978), *Third Text* (1987) and *Third Text Asia* (2008). He has also established online versions of *Third Text Africa* in Cape Town, South Africa, and the Spanish language *Tercer Texto* in Lima, Peru. He has curated several exhibitions including 'The Essential Black Art', Chisenhale Gallery, London, 1987 and 'The Other Story', Hayward Gallery, London, 1989; and is a recipient of three honorary doctorates from the universities of Southampton, East London and Wolverhampton. He has published a number of books, including *Making Myself Visible* (London: Kala Press, 1984); and *Art Beyond Art/Ecoaesthetics: A Manifesto for the 21st Century* (London: Third Text, 2010). His texts have mainly been published in *Third Text*, but also in publications in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, Germany and Spain. While still living in London he also spends time in Karachi, where he has now re-established his studio in order to produce new work.

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh is the Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Modern Art at Harvard University and the author of numerous books of criticism, including *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays of European and American Art from 1955–1975* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2001) and *Formalism and Historicity: Essays on Models and Methods of Twentieth-Century Art* (forthcoming from The MIT Press, 2013). A co-editor of the journal *October*, he recently edited a collection of essays on Gerhard Richter for the *October Files* series. In 2007 Buchloh received the Golden Lion of the Venice Biennale for Contemporary Art History and Criticism.

Jean Fisher studied both Zoology and Fine Art, subsequently becoming a freelance writer on contemporary art and post-colonialism, and has worked closely with artists and scholars from Ireland, Native America, Cuba, Mexico, the Black British diaspora and Palestine. Whilst resident in New York she co-curated exhibitions of contemporary Native American art with the artist Jimmie Durham. She is a former editor of *Third Text*, editor of the anthologies *Global Visions: Towards A New Internationalism in the Arts* (London: Third Text, 1994), *Re-verberations: Tactics of Resistance, Forms of Agency* (Amsterdam: Idea Books, 2000), and co-editor with Gerardo Mosquera, *Over Here: International Perspectives on Art and Culture* (London and Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004). Recent commissions include an essay for the Sydney Biennale catalogue (2012). She is Visiting Professor in Contemporary Curating at the Royal College of Art, and Professor Emeritus at Middlesex University, both in London.

Francisco Godoy Vega is a researcher and writer based in Madrid, and a PhD candidate of the Department of Art History and Theory at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. He regularly contributes to art magazines and books with essays related to the histories of exhibitions, publications and institutions of Latin American art and the modernity/coloniality debate. He recently co-published *Discourses and Practices in the Visual Arts of the '70s and '80s in Chile II* (Santiago: LOM editores, 2012) and *With the Tongue Out* (Santiago: Territorios Sexuales, 2012), and curated the show 'Not Ready', Roomartfair, Madrid, 2012. He has collaborated with the Departments of Exhibitions and Public Programs of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid on projects related to these topics since 2009.

Pablo Lafuente is a writer, editor and curator. He is currently a Series Editor for the *Exhibition Histories* series and an Editor for *Afterall* journal. He is also the Associate Curator at the Office for Contemporary Art Norway in Oslo, and he was curator, with Marta Kuzma and Peter Osborne, of Norway's official representation for the 54th edition of the Venice Biennale in 2011. He is the editor of, among others, *Whatever Happened to Sex in Scandinavia?* (with Marta Kuzma; Oslo and London: OCA and Koenig Books, 2011) and *Gerard Byrne: Images or Shadows* (Dublin: IMMA, 2011). He has contributed to monographs on the work of artists such as Hilary Lloyd, Hito Steyerl and Goshka Macuga, and periodicals including *Parkett*, *Philosophy of Photography*, *Radical Philosophy* and *The Wire*. Together with Lucy Steeds, Lafuente is the Pathway Leader of MRes Art: Exhibition Studies at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London.

Thomas McEvelley is an art critic, poet, novelist and scholar. He was lecturer in art history at Rice University, Houston, Texas (1969–2005) and founder and former chair of the Department of Art Criticism and Writing at the School of Visual Arts in New York City. McEvelley has been a contributing editor of *Artforum*, editor in chief of *Contemporanea* and has published articles, catalogue essays and reviews in the field of contemporary art as well as monographs on artists including Yves Klein, Leon Golub, Jannis Kounellis, Dennis Oppenheim and Anselm Kiefer. Other publications include *Sculpture in the Age of Doubt* (New York: Allworth Press, 1999), *Art and Discontent*, *Art and Otherness* (New York: McPherson & Co., 1995) and *The Exile's Return: Toward a Redefinition of Painting for the Post-Modern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). He has published scholarly monographs and articles in various journals on early Greek poetry, philosophy and religion, as well as on contemporary art and culture. In 1993 he was the recipient of a Fulbright Grant and was awarded an NEA critic's grant and the Frank Jewett Mather Award for Distinction in Art Criticism by the College Art Association. In 2008 he retired from teaching, and now lives in New York City and in upstate New York.

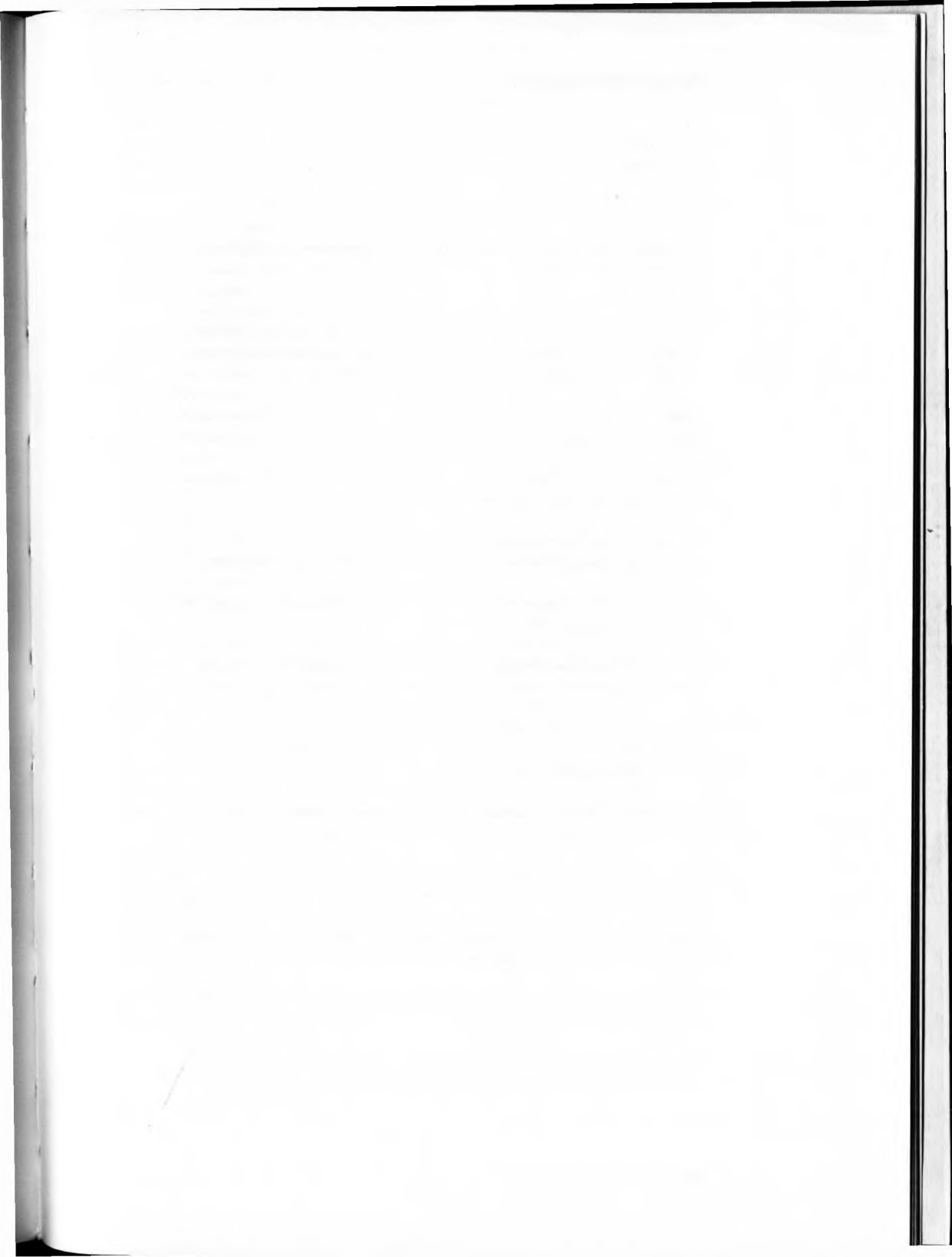
Jean-Hubert Martin was curator at the Musée national d'art moderne, Paris from 1971 to 1982. A programmer for the Centre Georges Pompidou from its opening in 1977, he worked on both modern and contemporary art exhibitions, such as 'Francis Picabia' (1976), 'Kazimir Malevich' (1978),

'Paris–Berlin' (1978) and 'Paris–Moscou' (1979). During his directorship, from 1987–90, he curated the exhibition 'Magiciens de la Terre' (1989). As Director of the Kunsthalle Bern from 1982 to 1985, he organised the first solo exhibition of Ilya Kabakov. From 1991 to 1994 he assembled a collection of international contemporary art for the Château d'Oiron. The Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie was renovated under his direction from 1994 to 1999 with a programme of traditional and contemporary art, mixing artists of the whole world ('Galerie des Cinq Continents', 1995), and he directed the Museum Kunst Palast in Düsseldorf from 2000 to 2006. He curated the Biennale de Lyon 2000, 'Partage d'exotismes' and the Moscow Biennale 2009, 'Against Exclusion'. An anthology of his writings, *L'Art au large*, has recently been published (Paris: Flammarion, 2012).

Jean-Marc Poinsot is professor of history of contemporary art at Rennes 2 University and director of the Doctoral School Arts–Lettres–Langues. He has published the writings of Daniel Buren and written extensively on art within exhibitions, including *Quand l'œuvre a lieu* (Geneva and Paris: Mamco/Les presses du réel, 2008). He originated the research programme on art and architecture within globalisation when he was the head of the research department at INHA (Institut national d'histoire de l'art) in Paris. He is the founder and president of the Archives de la critique d'art.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is University Professor at Columbia University. She has written numerous books, including *Myself Must I Remake* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Company, 1974), *In Other Worlds* (New York: Methuen, 1987), *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (London: Routledge, 1993), *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), *Other Asias* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2005) and *An Aesthetic Education in the Age of Globalization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012). She has been an activist in rural education, feminism and ecology since 1986. She received the Kyoto Prize in thought and ethics in 2012.

Lucy Steeds specialises in the history and theory of recent exhibitions of contemporary art. She is a writer, teacher and editor, and manages Afterall's *Exhibitions Histories* book series while sharing the post of Pathway Leader for MRes Art: Exhibition Studies at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London, with Pablo Lafuente. Six years at Arnolfini in Bristol introduced her to exhibition making and catalogue production in the field of contemporary art, and her previous teaching experience includes lecturing in art history and theory at the Ruskin School of Art, Oxford. She has a doctoral degree in cultural studies from Goldsmiths College, University of London.



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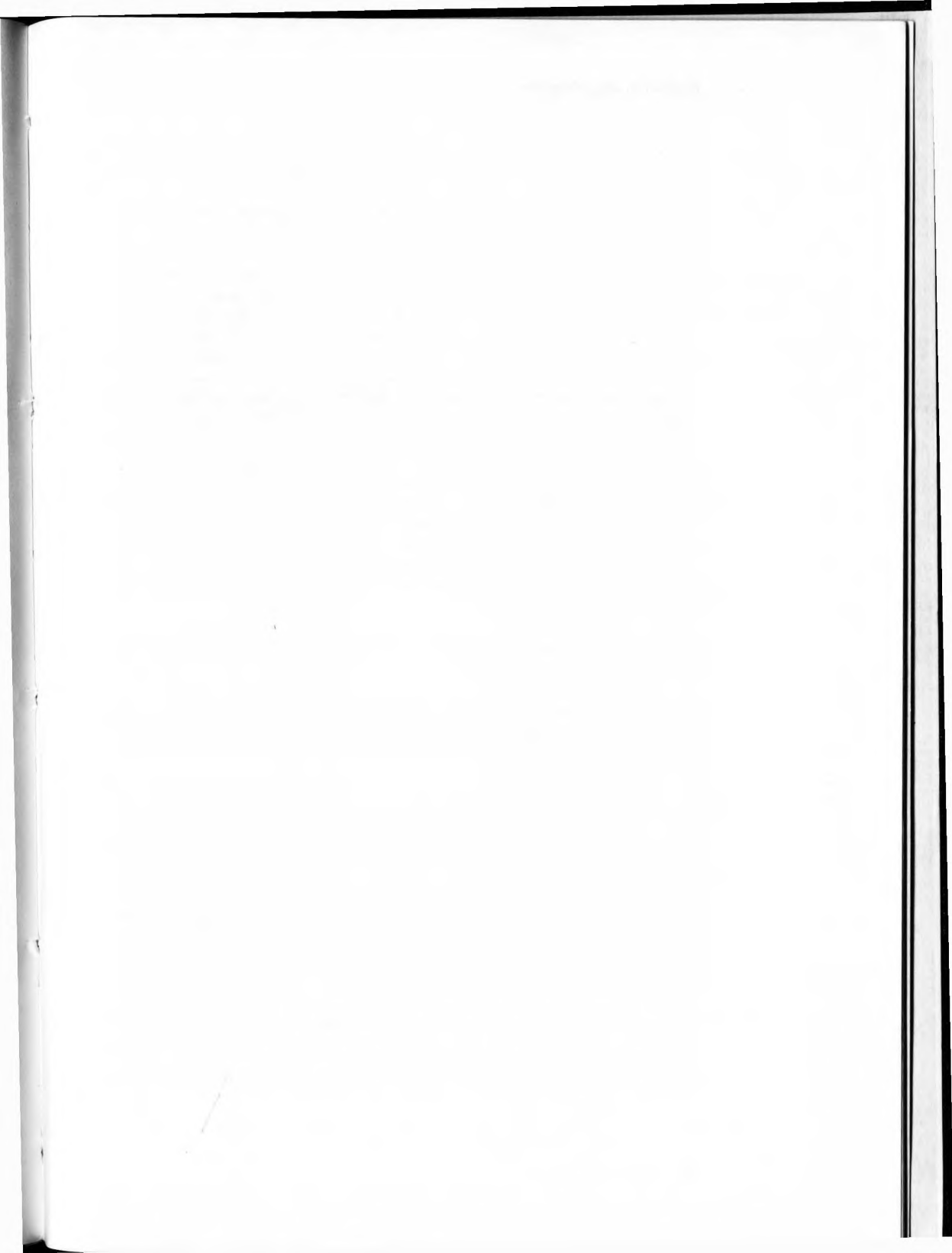
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