Emerging Canon, Contested Histories

Global Art Historians in Conversation



Francesco Gusella and Meha Priyadarshini (eds.)
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With contributions by Sussan Babaie, Anna Groundwater,
Elsje van Kessel, José Ramón Marcaida López
and Catriona Murray

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This roundtable discussion is the edited version of an online event, *Critical Globalism: Perspectives from Early Modern Artistic Networks*, held on 12 October 2020 in collaboration with the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH) and the Edinburgh Centre for Global History, at the University of Edinburgh. The conversation aims to highlight fractures and disconnections within the field of Global Art History. The combined engagement of academics and curators with diverse disciplinary backgrounds contributes to the questioning of the methodological foundation of global art history as a field and serves to problematize interrelated issues in research, teaching, conservation, and exhibition practices. The scholars gathered are all early modernists but are engaged in a discussion of how the history of a period of intensifying global connections is remembered, taught and displayed today.

In the first part, speakers introduce themselves by outlining their professional trajectories and the way their work has intersected with the global turn. This is followed by a critical discussion of "mobility" and "interconnectivity" as analytical concepts. Special attention is given to issues of conflict and restricted interaction and how to efficiently transfer these historical discontinuities to the audience (classes, exhibitions, readership).

In the second part, speakers are asked to focus on the hegemonic implications of the emerging global canon, for instance, the rebranding of artistic heritage in a global perspective and its role in re-fashioning national identities through a global outlook. The discussion suggests alternative ways of visualizing geography and spatiality, divergent methods of analysis, risks and opportunities represented by digital humanities, and the role of institutions and individual agents in establishing more inclusive policies and collaborations.

Francesco Gusella is an historian of South Asian art with a focus on Portuguese and Indo-Islamic courts from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. He received his PhD from the Italian Institute of Oriental Studies, Rome, in 2019, and later joined the Cluster of Excellence Religion and Politics, University of Münster, as postdoctoral researcher. His works deal with material and visual culture, especially decorative arts, carvings, and miniature paintings.

Meha Priyadarshini is Lecturer in Early Modern History at the University of Edinburgh. She specializes in global history, material culture studies, and the connections between colonial Latin America and Asia, topics that were discussed in her monograph *Chinese Porcelain in Colonial Mexico: The Material Worlds of an Early Modern Trade* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2018). Her current project traces connections between India, colonial Mexico and the Caribbean through textiles.

Sussan Babaie is Professor in the Arts of Iran and Islam at the Courtauld Institute of Art. Her research interests include the early modern Safavid period, topics on urbanism and empire, sexuality and social habits of 'seeing', transcultural visuality and notions of exoticism. She has also taught extensively in the US as well as having curated several exhibitions there. She is the author of *Isfahan and its Palaces: Statecraft, Shi'ism and the Architecture of Conviviality in Early Modern Iran* (Edinburgh University Press, 2008) and the co-editor of *The Mercantile Effect: On Art and Exchange in the Islamicate World during the 17th and 18th Centuries* (University of Chicago Press / Gingko Library Art Series, 2017).

Anna Groundwater is Principal Curator in Renaissance and Early Modern History at National Museums Scotland, responsible for the Scottish collections for these periods. She previously lectured at the University of Edinburgh on Scottish and British history, digital humanities and cultural history. Her research interests include early modern material culture with a special focus on Scotland and its global entanglements. She is the author of *Scotland Connected: A Timeline for Scottish History in the Wider World* (Luath, 2017) and *The Scottish Middle March, 1573 – 1625: Power, Kinship, Allegiance* (Royal Historical Society, 2010).

Elsje van Kessel is Senior Lecturer in Art History at the University of St Andrews. Her research and teaching focus on art and material culture of early modern Italy and the Portuguese world, with specific attention to questions of viewing, use and display. She is the author of *The Lives of Paintings: Presence, Agency and Likeness in Venetian Art of the Sixteenth Century* (De Gruyter, 2017). Her current research project examines the circulation of art objects within the Portuguese maritime empire, in particular as impacted by piracy and privateering.

José Ramón Marcaida López is Lecturer in Art History at the University of St Andrews. He works on the intersections of art and science in the early modern Hispanic context, with a focus on artistic production, circulation, and collecting cultures. He is the author of *Arte y ciencia en el Barroco español: Historia natural, coleccionismo y cultura visual* (Marcial Pons Historia, 2014) and co-author of *Logodaedalus: Word Histories of Ingenuity in Early Modern Europe* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019).

Catriona Murray is Lecturer in Early Modern Visual and Material Cultures at the University of Edinburgh. She is a historian of British visual and material culture with a focus on the intersections of art and propaganda during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In particular, she is interested in the exchanges between ruler and subject, exploring how images of authority were promoted and received. She is the author of *Imaging Stuart Family Politics: Dynastic Crisis and Continuity* (Routledge, 2016).

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Emerging Canon, Contested Histories: Global Art Historians in Conversation

FG: Francesco Gusella

MP: Meha Priyadarshini

SB: Sussan Babaie

AG: Anna Groundwater

EVK: Elsje van Kessel

JRM: José Ramón Marcaida López

CM: Catriona Murray

MP: To get us started I want to think about where we are all participating from, and where we are all located today. We have consciously chosen to have this conversation with scholars currently based in the UK, and mostly in Scotland, although we arrived here from places near and far. As a group we have not met before and do not necessarily share research interests, besides a general focus on the art and material culture of the early modern period, as such we have encountered and applied the global turn in our work in different ways. The idea is to have a more localized conversation about the issues facing the field of global art history amongst a group of people who have the responsibility of disseminating knowledge about the early modern period through teaching, curating and publishing.

We also want to think about how places and institutions have an impact on our research. We believe that the global academic market influences the kinds of projects we choose to do and the possibilities we have for carrying out research. As scholars working on the "global," mobility is important to our work in two ways: first, there is the very practical need to be able to physically move around to do our research, but there is also the issue of upward mobility, through the ranks of an academic career, which can provide different sorts of opportunities.

So, with that I am going to ask everyone to tell us a bit about their career trajectories and how the global turn has had an impact on their work.

SB: I come from a very nomadic, multi-centric kind of a background. London and the Courtauld is the last of a very long journey, and that is really important in the way I do research actually. I am an accidental art historian, and I embraced the whole disciplinary wealth that art history provides. I started with Renaissance and then switched to write a dissertation on a subject of Persianate and Iranian art in the early modern period. In recent years, I have taken advantage of the presence of colleagues whose specializations and interests synchronize with mine, working on a trans-Asian way of thinking in the early modern period. We are interested in thinking about art, artists and ideas in terms not of the nation-state and national art histories but through the lens of mobility and connections across Eurasia. Art and objects allow us to break away from the older models of art historical and historical thinking as they contain within their technologies, styles, forms and functions a host of information about the exchanges and intersections between peoples seemingly unrelated to one another.

AG: I am a public historian I would say, a cultural and social historian, and I come to this with two hats. One is my teaching hat. For nearly two decades, I taught in Scottish, then British History at the University of Edinburgh, but because of the job market, one of the things I ended up doing at Edinburgh was teaching methodological courses. It has forced me to look in ways at my own particular research interests with rather more cross-disciplinary hats. I would say particularly influential in mine is anthropology, sociology, and more recently some of the practices that have come with the digital humanities that encourage such collaborative work.

My second hat is now as Principal Curator of Renaissance and Early Modern at the National Museums of Scotland. Although we are a national museum and I am responsible for the Scottish collections, so everything I say here is through that lens, but obviously it is seeing them within a wider context and within a more fluid, perhaps porous understanding of what Scotland might mean in its different ages. I come to global from the micro, from the national, and then putting that within a slightly wider context.

EVK: I came to St Andrews from the Netherlands in 2012, trained as a specialist in the Italian Renaissance. When, in the early 2010s, I began to travel to Portugal often, I was struck by the way an Italy-focused art history had not prepared me at all for understanding the kind of early modern art and architecture I encountered there. This compelled me not only to begin to learn about Portuguese art and art history, and their inevitable connection with expansionism and colonialism. It also made me question the foundations of the discipline more fundamentally than I had done before and engage with global art history. My main current research project is about plunder at sea during the Portuguese maritime expansion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I look at the practical implications for objects but also at the theoretical perspective: how did the legally and ethically questionable practices of looting, smuggling, and destruction generate thought about objects and mobility in this period?

JRM: In broad terms, my work explores the intersections of art, visual culture, and science in the early modern Hispanic context. An important research interest of mine has been the visual representation of animals and plants as a knowledge-making tool, but also as a theme for artistic practice.

The global perspective has been really valuable as a means to complicate in productive ways the stories around these materials, including the role of naturalists, explorers, merchants, go-betweens and other individuals involved in the circulation of goods at a global scale. To give one example: I am very interested in the history of the first European descriptions and visual representations of the so-called "bird of paradise", a term used to designate a family of birds native to the island of New Guinea and other regions in Oceania (Fig. 1). Admired for their beautiful plumage and the stories surrounding their behaviour, the birds of paradise became prize objects of trade and collecting in early modern Europe. Interestingly these birds of the "East Indies" are often featured in natural histories of the Americas (the "West Indies"). But this association makes sense once we take into consideration the geocultural dimensions of the Spanish empire and the close connections between parts of the world like, in this particular case, the Moluccas (home to the bird of paradise), the viceroyalties in America, and the Iberian Peninsula (Padrón, 2020).


318 RERVM MEDICARVM NO. HISP.

De CERCOPITHECIS. Cap. VII.

Figure 1: Bird of paradise, woodcut, from Francisco Hernández, Rerum medicarum Novae Hispaniae thesaurus, Romae: Ex typographeio Vitalis Mascardi, 1651. John Carter Brown Library

FG: I am trained as a South Asianist with a strong Indological approach but the emergence of the post-colonial debate in the historiographical field of this area contributed to a shift in my interests to border zones and case studies that are difficult to categorize within a single disciplinary field. These contact zones are particularly visible in the early modern period, that's how I developed a research focus on missionary patronage and artistic exchange between European and Indo-Islamic courts in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.

As an early career scholar, this shift helped me to take advantage of opportunities in the recent agenda of global art history. At the same time, the more I deepened the analysis of such works, the more I began to realize that many examples of what might today appear as artistic hybridizations were in fact the result of the opposite tendency, namely the tension towards cultural uniformity and artistic conformism. The unresolved mismatch between these opposing tendencies and the plural, entangled, and continuously negotiated paths of art history, is what keeps my critical interest towards the discipline alive.

CM: I feel a bit of an interloper here as a historian of the North, but also, more specifically, an art historian of the British Isles. I am a specialist in British visual and material culture of the sixteenth, seventeenth and, partially, eighteenth century. I focus on the intersections between art and propaganda. I think it is fair to say my field isn't just a Eurocentric field but an incredibly Anglocentric field which has yet to fully embrace the global turn. My own research does seek to highlight transnational connections and exchanges and how they were critical to supporting royal dynastic authority and its representation, in particular with Denmark, the Dutch Republic and German principalities. Whether these networks could be considered "global" is an interesting thought. How did early modern audiences perceive geography, distance or foreignness? My instinct here is that, for all the Tudor and Stuart courts' apparent cosmopolitanism, it was similarity and affinity that resonated and reassured. So, while transnational contacts were promoted, their perceived authority lay, in fact, in their familiarity. It was the local rather than the global which, in propagandistic terms, had capital.

With regard to the departmental context of History of Art at Edinburgh, I can say that, in terms of geographical coverage, it is one of the more diverse art history departments in the UK. To a certain extent Edinburgh's focus on non-Western global art does mean that if you are a specialist in the local, you do have to defend your work against perceptions of it as parochial or insular. Just recently we have made a couple of new permanent hires. We advertised those in pre-modern art without a geographical restriction, but the vast majority of applications marketed themselves as cross-cultural, very few focused on one discreet geographical area. My feeling is that this is how art historians are having to market themselves right now, as sort of global enthusiasts.

These new hires are, I think, symptomatic of what happened over the summer, in particular as a result of our students' response to the Black Lives Matter movement, which really shed light on how our own perceptions of the department had differed from those of our undergraduates. We considered ourselves to have great geographical range and to have a really diverse offering.

It was clear that that was not reciprocated by our students and that we had to be much more active in promoting and developing our existing non-Western concerns.

MP: Catriona's comments are really important because when one imagines the "global" as being inclusive might not actually be perceived as such by someone else. These tensions are what we want to focus on next.

Terms such as "mobility" and "interconnectivity" can be problematic because they don't make obvious the asymmetrical relations of power that existed in these connections.

How do we make such differences and inequalities more visible if we are too focused just on the existence of the connection? In my own work I have touted the connection between Asia and colonial Latin America as it can be seen in crafts produced in colonial Mexico, such as the earthenware ceramics of Puebla (Fig. 2).

However, while this transpacific trade was a fairly important trade connection, producers in Asia or labourers in Manila did not necessarily benefit from this trade the way merchants and craftsmen in Mexico did. Moreover, implicated in the development of this new craft that symbolizes the global connections of the early modern period is also the disappearance of older pre-Hispanic ceramic traditions that were destroyed.



Figure 2: Chocolatero, tin-glazed earthenware jar with iron collar, Puebla, Mexico, ca. 1700, height 26 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art. 11.87.7

Where have you all encountered issues of conflict or disconnection in your work? How have these issues contributed to your understanding of cultural transfers or specific objects in relation to the networks in which they circulated? And also, since several of you have mentioned teaching, how do we convey these disconnections/discontinuities to the students?

AG: I use mobility and interconnectivity networks a lot in my work. But problematically they tend to flatten the complexity and changing nature or effectiveness of such networks. It assumes that whatever it is that you are using to establish those connections (a trading relationship or marriage relationship, kinship relationships) that they will always function in the same way and at the same levels.

The other thing I want to say is when we think about mobility as it has been articulated so far in the guidelines that we were given, was very much about the mobility of people. I am primarily concerned with the mobility of objects, and that may involve the mobility of people.

I am really more interested in these relationships between people who don't necessarily move, but the objects move between them, that's the thing that connects them. The object or the idea, if you are thinking about cultural exchange and circulatory systems and knowledge.

These can be very everyday objects – such as the Bartmann jugs that we have in the museum (Fig. 3).



Figure 3: Jug, Frechen, Germany, 17th century, stoneware, National Museums of Scotland, H1995.92.

Made in or near Cologne in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the face of the wild man of the European forests, they travelled along the rivers Rhine, Waal and Scheldt, perhaps to Veere in Zeeland, and were shipped to the Scottish east coast, one of which ended up in the west in Skye.

In contrast, the one pictured here never made it to Scotland, and was found on the seabed to the east of Eyemouth.

EVK: The way I address connectivity and mobility in my research is by focusing on *forced* object movements: objects that move through plunder, piracy, smuggling, embezzlement and theft.

The ideology of capitalism teaches us that trade thrives in freedom, but during the maritime expansion the circulation of trade goods was surprisingly often unfree.

This pamphlet (Fig. 4), printed in Zeeland in 1604, celebrates the capture of a Portuguese merchantman by Dutch privateers near present-day Singapore, and it is just one out of countless examples of the forced redirection of objects. In response to this incident, legal and political thinkers from various European countries argued for a *mare clausum* or controlled sea.

In other words, connectivity and mobility were just two elements of a much more complex situation.

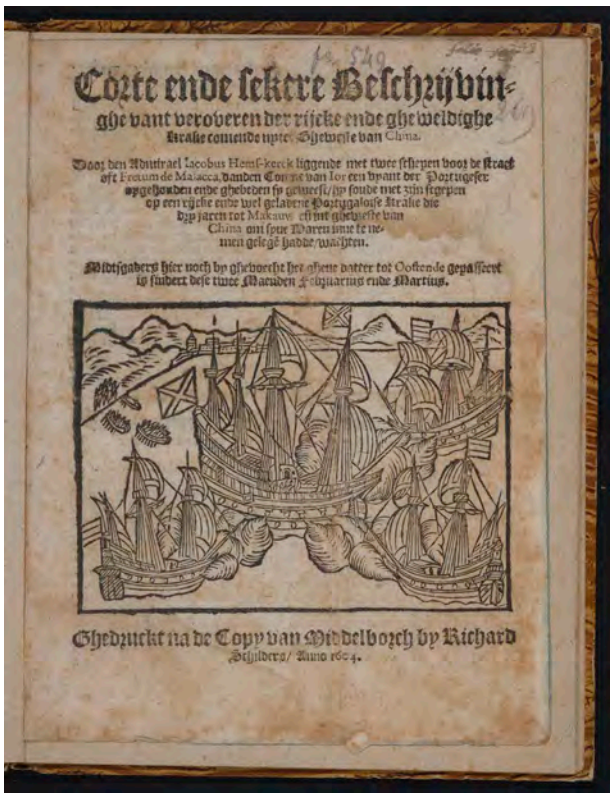

Corte ende sekere Beschrijvin-
ghe vant veroveren der rijcke ende gheweldighe
krake comende uyte gheweste van China.
Ghedruckt na de Copy van Middelburgh by Richard
Schilders/ Anno 1604.

Figure 4: Corte ende sekere beschrijvinghe vant veroveren der rijcke ende gheweldighe krake comende uyte gheweste van China, titlepage, Middelburg, 1604. Allard Pierson, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Pfl. K 26.

These considerations have certainly had an impact on how I teach this material as well; I am thinking particularly of a course I offer about the art of early modern Portugal and its empire. The first time I taught it, I was using words like connections and networks and exchanges as key analytical terms.

Partly in response to student input and to what has happened over the summer, I am now being more critical of such terms and have brought in more material about the violence Portuguese expansionists used from the very beginning of the imperial project.

To do this successfully it is important to look beyond the boundaries of art narrowly understood, by incorporating, for example, utilitarian building types like fortresses and so-called *padrões*, carved stones Portuguese expansionists planted in coastal areas in Africa and Asia to mark their presence and possession (Fig. 5). *Padrões* marked connectivity, sure, but the pertinent question is, who and what was connected and under what conditions?

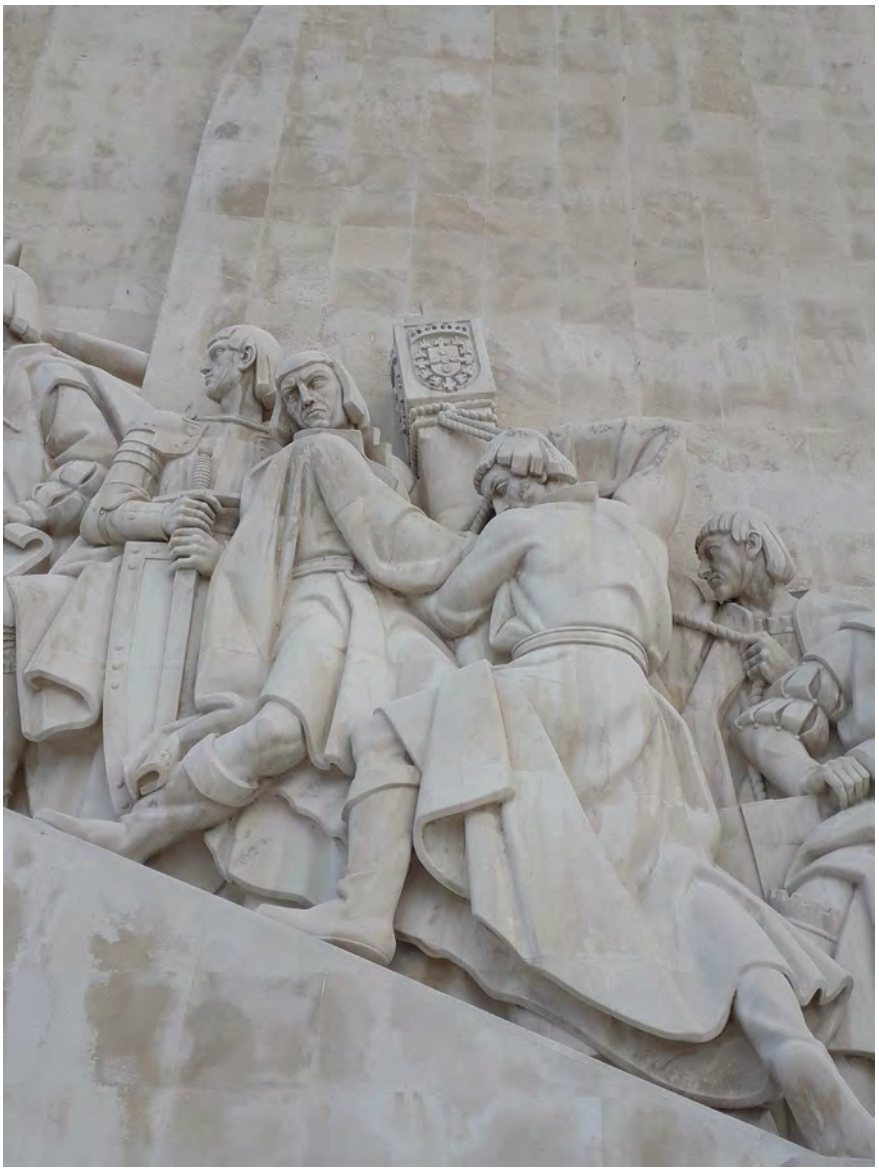


Figure 5: Padrão dos Descobrimentos / Pavilion of the Discoveries, detail, Cottinelli Telmo and Leopoldo de Almeida, 1960, Belém, Lisbon. Photo: Elsje van Kessel, May 2020.

CM: Your examples make me think about the recent tendency in considering mobility as an active status. I recently came across Journal 18's digital resource *Blackness, Immobility and Visibility in Europe (1600-1800)*. Zirwat Chowdhury's accompanying note considers issues of dispossession and displacement, conceptualizing that as a form of immobility (Chowdhury, 2020). We need to question power structures and agency when it comes to mobility, reflecting on diverse experiences and neglected narratives that show that movement was also passive and forced.

SB: One of the problems I have discovered, and this is my discovery over these years of course, is that globalization tends towards homogenizing tendencies, or at least that is what we expect in a modern context. All these uprisings against a global world that are showing political damage to us now, are related to that expectation of homogenization.

Over the years, I have learned from first anthropologists, and eventually through studies that deal with intellectual history, that transculturation is a model of approach that helps to think in terms of mixing permeation, co-dependence, and that in all of these, the object is the bearer of that process of transculturation. Things may be mobile, you may give gifts, you may trade in objects, you may send artists, or commission from somewhere else, collect from somewhere else, make your local artists make copies of whatever you have collected, but ultimately, what really matters is the time of gestation that has resulted in the way the object has made a transcultural statement.

To give an example, it is not uncommon in scholarship to suggest Persian painting in the seventeenth century is a by-product of European "influences", a deeply problematic model already thoroughly critiqued (Baxandall, 1985). In fact, artists of this early modern period demonstrate a wide range of visual, technical, and stylistic possibilities which include some fascination with European arts but also with Mughal painting (Fig. 6).



Figure 6: Mir Afzal Tuni, A reclining woman and her lapdog, Isfahan, 1640 circa, British Museum, 1930,0412,0.2, (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

So, instead of such deadening of argument, I want us to linger on and understand the local artistic and cultural terrain within its own terms of reference, scales of valuation, or range of expectations, in order to excavate the motivations for receptivity or rejection of ideas from elsewhere.

MP: What you're saying, Sussan, is important because I think that the global has fetishized the longer distance, or the "farther away." It also brings up this question of when does a network become global, how far does it have to extend before it can be given this title.

JRM: There seems to be a lot emphasis on the idea of circulation as a *sine qua non* of the global and less attention on the process itself. Thankfully there is a lot of interesting scholarship to use in the classroom and address this problem. I am thinking, for instance, to the work of Bethany Aram and Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla (2014), and the one by Daniela Bleichmar and Meredith Martin (2016), and more focused research on the specifics of transportation and preservation in transit, as in the case of natural historical projects among many examples (Constantino and Lafuente, 2012).

The question of how not to overlook the geocultural differences and hierarchies prevalent in the early modern period in relation to, for instance, objects and places of origin. More specifically, I am thinking about the question of how early modern Europeans compared American products to those originating from other parts of the world. For example: was the *materia medica* from the Americas comparable to the remedies traditionally used in the "Old World", many of which originated from Asia, as in the case of products like roots, balsams and natural objects like bezoar stones? In other words, in a context of global exchanges and constant motion, specifics like origin and locality mattered too (Pardo-Tomás, 2007).

CM: I really do think we need to be careful of *presentism* and of overstressing mobility during this period. Our own sense of geographies, distance, frontiers and borders are quite different from those who lived in a world where the stagecoach from London to Edinburgh might take around 14 days. I'm also picking up on this idea of the "fetishization" of distance, and from a British perspective I do wonder what did the global mean in seventeenth-century Britain.

Indeed, to use an example from my own research, when Charles II's Portuguese bride, Catherine of Braganza, arrived in England in 1662, celebratory poems and panegyrics repeatedly labelled the match strange and exoticized the Iberian princess. Despite her European origins, her singularity and difference were as marked as if she had come from Bombay or Tangier – the ports she brought to the marriage as her dowry.

It is undeniable that transcultural contacts sparked curiosity in foreign cultures, but there is also a negative side of that, which was/is intolerance and xenophobia. I think foreignness wasn't a homogenous concept, it was layered with diversity, it was a catch-all for those who couldn't conform in an age that was not particularly open to difference and in which the local was part of everyday life and the global was much more distant. English national identity and the

Protestant state was deeply suspicious of the "other", whether that other constituted Europe or the New World.

FG: Your comment, Catriona, gives me the opportunity to introduce our next question. We would like to consider if the emphasis on connectivity and mobility that we discussed earlier, acts in a retrospective way by establishing a starting point in the development of the global order as we know it nowadays. If so, does the rebranding of art in a global way, play a legitimizing role by refashioning national identities on a global stage, or, by establishing new transnational hegemonies?

We believe that this issue is reflected in our approach to geographical patterns. The *local* and the *global* have become two complementary concepts in the most recent lexicon of early modern art history. Beyond this binary articulation we might consider alternative geographies that question the global/local framework. I refer, for instance, to South-to-South connections, and, more generally, considerations about spatiality including museums, collections and exhibition practices as physical/conceptual spaces influencing our understanding of art history.

SB: There are models like what Sanjay Subrahmanyam (2005) has done in terms of Indo-Persian networks or Nancy Um's work (2017) on coffee and aromatics and artistic networks where the Indian Ocean trade networks are increasingly at the forefront of our thinking. These models have become competitive as works of connectedness and connected histories. It is imperative for us to engage with such questions of mobility, and to turn students' attention towards these kinds of networks and geographies.

What you are talking about is really crucial in terms of decentering Europe, marginalizing Europe actually, and beginning to turn our backs to it quite deliberately, in order to promote these other ways of thinking about connected worlds and connected histories.

AG: One of the things that I am particularly interested in is where geographies in the sense of place and space intercept with time. I'm thinking of Philip Ethington's concept of *digital cartography of history* (Ethington, 2007). He creates a whole new cartography by going back through time, incorporating all the different individual acts that have occurred there and the involvement of that place with multiple peoples over multiple times in something that's become known as *deep mapping, thick mapping*. It results in an amazingly enriched cartography that allows for multiple histories, a layering of histories, located at the same geographical coordinates.

From a museum perspective, if we could visualize that idea of a multi-layered and peopled history in our contextualization of objects, we might then be able to suggest something of the complexity of object lives, afterlives, itineraries, mobilities, the changing nature of objects' functions and their interaction with humans, in the past and present. A thick mapping of the object rather than the place that helps to connect the viewer with the object's deeper, geographically diverse histories and the people historically associated with it.

The concepts of entangled histories and itinerant objects are particularly useful here: the intersection of the objects' trajectories with the lives and stories of the people they encounter, the events they are part of, throughout their histories (Bauer, 2019). How do you communicate a rich and entangled history in a museum space? You can communicate more complex messages with the targeted exhibition and I think that is one of the great ways we can approach big questions like this. These things are in active consideration right now. You already see it filtering through in some museums. I refer, for instance, to the Het Scheepvaart (Maritime Museum) in Amsterdam, where the maritime nature of their collections, the ships, the maps, the arts of navigation, necessarily need to be seen in the intersection of the micro and the global. How rich is the entangled history, for instance, of the contents of an eighteenth-century shipwreck? One such display case had objects connecting to multiple countries from Europe to Asia in the origin of the materials, their makers, their traders and consumers, and that intersection with the ship's trajectory, those people on board, and those affected by its trade at either end of its voyage.

FG: I agree, but at the same time I wonder whether these kinds of global geographies can also be used in an apologetic way to perform certain power identities. For example, I'm thinking of Eugene Wang speaking about the Chinese and Japanese sponsorship of the Silk Roads' scholarship during the twentieth century (Flood *et al.*, 2010, pp. 5-6). The exquisite objects that were produced within these far-reaching routes embodied a pan-Asian identity that was alternately traced back from Japan or China, as it was informed by imperialist or anti-colonial narratives. This is just an example of a global narrative with hegemonic ambitions that originated outside the Western space. In other words, these examples underline the conjunctural nature of the global approach which can be used to legitimize the national identity.

JRM: As a curiosity, I would like to mention today's date: 12 October, the national festivity of Spain now called *Fiesta Nacional*, formerly known as *Día de la Hispanidad*. It is important not to overlook the asymmetries inherent in the association of this festivity with the "discovery" of America and the celebration of an expansive but not unanimously shared sense of Hispanic identity. The Spanish-centrism of this festivity makes me think of issues of appropriation and self-entitlement around labels like "early modern" or "global", and the challenges of their periodization and localization.

There is another date that may be worth remembering too: the years 2019-2022, which mark the 500th anniversary of the first circumnavigation of the world, the so-called Magellan-Elcano expedition often invoked in narratives around the global. It is interesting to consider how this anniversary has provided a framework for countries like Spain or Portugal to project a carefully curated version of their involvement in this historical event. This is illustrated, for example, by the range of exhibitions and other public engagement projects devoted to this commemoration, whose titles are often rather revealing (e.g. the exhibition *Fuimos los primeros* [We were the first] at the Museo Naval in Madrid). It's interesting to consider the conflation of different agendas around these events: from issues concerning a given country's image or the contribution of the academic community, to questions about the promotion of national heritage or the engagement of the wider public.

FG: Your point makes me think about the recent debate around Portuguese colonial heritage. The year 1998 was a very important moment in that context with the overlapping of Lisbon's Expo 98 and the celebrations for the 5th Centenary of Vasco da Gama's first journey to India. The celebration of the "Portuguese discoveries" was essential in rebranding the pioneering role of Portugal in the history of the global economy, and, consequently, in the way Portugal *re-entered* the global market in those very same years (Power and Sidaway, 2005).

More recently, Maeso (2016) has pointed at the cyclical return of this imaginary within touristic industry and public museums.

In this picture of the thematic park *World of Discoveries* in Porto, the arrival of Vasco da Gama in Calicut is represented according to a traditional iconography deeply rooted into the propaganda of the colonial regime (Fig. 7).



Figure 7: India hall in World of Discoveries Museu Interativo e Parque temático, Porto, Portugal, 31/03/2016 by Jose Goncalves (CC-BY-SA-4.0).

SB: What is interesting is something that you said earlier, Francesco, about the Chinese claiming the globality of Chinese power through casting China as a source of the silk roads. I am also grateful to José for bringing up *Columbus Day*. Those histories that we are talking about are entirely at odds with the kinds of identities or affiliations that would have been in pre-modern conditions. The nation status now claims and legitimizes its position vis a vis, either its global reach and its impact on the globe, be it in the modern Chinese government posture or the Spanish government or the Portuguese or the Americans, or, for instance, Turkey celebrating the conquest of Constantinople, that re-emergence of an Ottoman centrality.

It brings me back to what Catriona said about how an Englishman would have thought in the sixteenth century as himself being the centre of the world. This is true from any position, but at the same time there are also counter forces to consider. For every Persian poet like Hafez who never left Shiraz, there is a Persian poet Saadi who travelled the world. How do we make these balances come through is really the challenge of how subtle we are, how careful we are with our evidence, how we go from the personal (and the positional as much as the positionality of our institutional affiliations and research pedigrees) to these national identities. What really worries me is the national identification of such events in the end.

EVK: For me, a very helpful approach with which to look critically at this global/local interaction, is micro-history, which has the potential as an alternative approach to the global, because it allows you to avoid the pitfalls of nationalist narratives and is not bound to one particular place (Ghobrial, 2019).

At the same time, we need to talk about languages, especially for us as scholars who all operate in English language institutions and have in that sense quite a privileged position. I'm thinking of a recent article by Rafael Cardoso (2019), a Brazil based art historian, which highlights the language barriers for Portuguese speaking art historians. He emphasizes that oftentimes in Brazil (and I think this is true for Portugal as well) scholars might not have the same luxury as their colleagues in anglophone institutions as to just choose any research topic that they like – and this is partly a linguistic problem. When a Brazilian art historian publishes about a Brazilian artist, will they have the same credibility as a colleague in the UK? Will they be heard in the same way? Portuguese language art historians are condemned to a certain parochialism in this sense, whereas anglophone scholars can take up the study of alternative geographies and become exponents of a new art history. In other words, language as an opportunity but also as a barrier when it comes to engaging in types of global art history.

AG: I was thinking how we then move from the national to the global-transnational within cultural heritage, and how that has impacted on the way in which more globalized strategies and policies are evolved in heritage. How we run the risk when we make these more transnational and global policies that you run into other problems as well.

For instance, you have UNESCO World Heritage Sites and how they have developed their criteria for what is to be preserved, what is authentic, and the types of things that they think are worth preserving and how that has changed over the last 30 years to include more non-Western understandings of cultural traditions that are not necessarily tangible. In the early 90's there was a declaration at the Nara conference of the International Council of Monuments and Sites which asked people to think in non-Western terms about what should be preserved. UNESCO's operational guidelines have been repeatedly revised with this in mind (Labadi, 2010, pp. 66-84). We have got institutions such as the International Council of Museums trying to develop a policy which aims to enhance understandings of the world, contributing to "human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing", where they have explicitly addressed "epistemologies, world views and museum typologies". To quote from ICOM's

recommendations for the redefinition of a museum: "A museum definition should be rooted in a plurality of world views and systems of knowledge, rather than in a single, Western scientific tradition" (ICOM, 2020; See also Sandhal, 2019, pp. 1-9; Araujo et al., 2019, p. 1644).

Further, that the process instigated to respond to and build on individuality, specificity and diversity within the world risks imposing new sets of prescriptive globalized criteria, created by a global institution with roots in older western traditions. As problematic are the colonial and imperial associations of some of the collections of member institutions (Fraser, 2019).

Museums and museum science are considering, trialling different curatorial models that allow for the non-specialist voice, and are more responsive to current concerns (Coghlan, 2018, pp. 796, 806; Grincheva, 2020).

For instance, the use of more co-curatorial practices can help to break down that sort of Western hegemony over the way in which we categorize, display and narrate things. Similarly, interesting are participatory history practices where we include, listen to, a diversity of peoples in formulating our historical narratives, as well as those who are from our traditional audiences. Underpinning these kinds of initiatives is the influential work of such as Raphael Samuel (2013, p. 8, 11) on shared authority: for him, history "is not the prerogative of the historian … It is rather, a social form of knowledge; the work in a given instance, of a thousand different hands" (See also Frisch, 1990).

EVK: To add to Anna's point, I think it is really interesting what you are saying about UNESCO and the categories and criteria it uses, what is deemed worthy of protection. One thing we can do as historians based in the west is to historicize those categories and criteria, to examine how they came about, for instance by looking at ancient Roman and Greek thinkers who already thought about heritage protection, and early modern thinkers who went back to those categories and revised them (Miles, 2008).

In the early modern period, Europeans would define heritage to be protected in terms of (classical) temples, sculptures, and other things that are inherently Eurocentric. I think that's at least one thing we can do, to reconstruct and expose the historically and geographically contingent origins of problematic categories.

JRM: I think that it is important to consider the potential risk that a kind of *canon of the global* may emerge out of differences in digital culture- and digital technology-related resources across countries and institutions. For example, the capacity of certain museums to create and disseminate digital content around their collections can contribute to the promotion of a particular notion of what the global entails.

The academic community can help counteract this canonization effect by shedding light on other materials and contributing to a more diverse and multifaceted account through research and collaboration.

CM: Francesco, you talked about rebranding art in a global way, and again I am going to have voice caution here in saying that we need to be careful in how we pinpoint those global connections. We should also be mindful not to over-emphasize the global or to mis-recognize evidence of cultural exchange.

The example that I want to talk about is from the introduction of Gerritsen and Riello's excellent book, *The Global Lives of Things* (2016, p. 17), in which they talk about the knife (Fig. 8) as a hybrid object which captures the connection between India and England in its material shape. They describe the blade as having been made in England and stamped with the mark of the Cutler's company of London, meanwhile the ivory handle was carved in Goa. The authors contend that it represents a lady in Indian dress.



Figure 8: Vigo (cutler), knife, Sheffield (blade) and Goa (handle), 1660-1680, steel with carved ivory handle, 21.7 x 3 x 2 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, 522-1893.

To me though, the figure on the handle is wearing Northern European fashions of the mid-seventeenth century with a low bodice and lace collar, her gown hoisted over her petticoat, similar to that represented in Wenceslaus Hollar's engraving, *Summer* (Fig. 9).

Now, I am not denying that this is a global object and that we can rebrand it in global ways, but we do need to be careful of what those messages and those layers of the global are. What we have here are even deeper exchanges and linkages than if the handle was, in fact, a representation of a lady in Indian dress. The Goan craftsman who fashioned it was not carving a local woman - a familiar female form attired in local dress - but an alien figure, wearing fashions foreign to him, and reflective of the European export markets for which the knife was destined. This object, therefore, speaks to more complex processes of translation than have been acknowledged. In the process of making it, borders were blurred and distances diminished.

Global encounters then could be characterized by multiple, overlapping points of contact and exchange.



Figure 9: Wenceslaus Hollar (1607–1677), Aestas – Summer, *engraving, 1643-1644, 0 3/8 × 7 1/16 in. (26.3 × 18 cm), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2018.846.2*

FG: I agree, the Europeanized dress of the figure really captures this global web of complexities, although I believe that for a Goan craftsman of the mid-seventeenth century this lady dressed in baroque fashion was not necessarily so alien. After more than a century of Portuguese domination in Goa, local artists were accustomed to European models such as this. What's striking to me is that the Goan production of similar handles (some of whom even depict British rulers) occurred in a period of changing relations between the Portuguese and the British Crown. These items show the agency of the carvers in redirecting their earlier production of Catholic devotional ivories into a new and more competitive market, which is a further level of historical translation of the objects.

MP: This tension that Catriona and Francesco are describing regarding what is "global" and what is "local" and for whom and according to whom is one that is pertinent for what is happening here currently. We are in an interesting moment in Scotland as Britain is preparing to leave the EU. Locally, Scotland's relationship to the rest of the world starts to feel different if its union with England is privileged over its participation in the EU. There is fear that perhaps a new type of parochialism will set in after Brexit, which of course has implications for the academic environment.

SB: We all have to acknowledge that art history is a Western European discipline. It has been invented in Western Europe, has been developed as such, and we are all bound by it. Even if we come from elsewhere, as I do. That acknowledgement is not a matter of complicity, it's a matter of knowing where we are coming from and how we can go about addressing our issues.

One of the ways we can shift gear in a more productive way is to encourage and in fact demand knowledge of languages other than European languages in order to develop the kinds of skills that one needs in order to look from inside out. I always wonder what postcolonial studies would be like if the records of the colonial power in South Asia, which many of them are also in Persian, were addressed through knowledge of Persian as well as the English language documentation. This applies to all kinds of places and linguistic zones, to think in terms of how we limit ourselves by starting from European languages and always being handicapped by that.

And this is connected to the sort of disciplinary walls that we have raised over in universities, institutions, museums where people from the global South are not often welcome because they don't speak the same lingo. We don't adjust in order to be able to communicate and to allow for those other ways of thinking and speaking about our subject areas. Perhaps digital opportunities would allow us to partner with people, for instance, in Nigeria or in Syria and try to take us to those places so that one can actually create. We don't have that kind of physical spatial and visa requirements, as it were. The funding for people to move around, the border lines and restrictions, all of these come to perhaps be crossed now in ways that we could never do in the past.

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