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Is Art History Global? Responding from the Margins

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### Authors

Ray, SUGATA  
Gupta, A

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# Is Art History Global?

EDITED BY  
**JAMES ELKINS**



University College Cork  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

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# CONTENTS

	Series Preface	v
SECTION 1	INTRODUCTION	1
	Art History as a Global Discipline	3
	<i>James Elkins</i>	
SECTION 2	STARTING POINTS	25
	Notes on Art History in Latin America	27
	<i>Andrea Giunta</i>	
	On David Summers's <i>Real Spaces</i>	41
	<i>James Elkins</i>	
	The Modality of Spatial Categories	73
	<i>Friedrich Teja Bach</i>	
	Is a Truly Global Art History Possible?	81
	<i>Ladislav Kesner</i>	
SECTION 3	THE ART SEMINAR	113
	Participants: Friedrich Teja Bach, James Elkins, Andrea Giunta, Ladislav Kesner, Sandra Klopper, and David Summers	
SECTION 4	ASSESSMENTS	177
	Ralph Ubl	177
	María de Los Angeles Taberna and Humberto Valdivieso	179
	Barbara Maria Stafford	184
	Matthew Rampley	188
	Chika Okeke-Agulu	202

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Keith Moxey	207
Suzana Milevska	214
Atta Kwami	222
Dan Karlholm	227
Romuald Tchibofo	232
Suman Gupta	236
George Intsiful	247
Shigemi Inaga	249
Craig Clunas	279
David Carrier	286
Kitty Zijlmans	289
Hans Dam Christensen	298
Jorgelina Orfila	310
Charlotte Bydler	316
Frank Vigneron	322
Carol Archer	341
Heie Treier	344
Atreyee Gupta and Sugata Ray	348
Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann	357
Sandy Ng	364
Mariusz Bryl	365
Ekaterina Degot	371
Leonard Bell	376
SECTION 5 AFTERWORD	403
Globalizing Art History	405
<i>Shelly Errington</i>	
Notes on Contributors	441
Index	451

## SERIES PREFACE

It has been said and said that there is too much theorizing in the visual arts. Contemporary writing seems like a trackless thicket, tangled with unanswered questions. Yet it is not a wilderness; in fact it is well posted with signs and directions. Want to find Lacan? Read him through Macey, Silverman, Borch-Jakobsen, Žižek, Nancy, Leclaire, Derrida, Laplanche, Lecercle, or even Klossowski, but not — so it might be said — through Abraham, Miller, Pontalis, Rosaloto, Safouan, Roudinesco, Schneiderman, or Mounin, and of course never through Dalí.

People who would rather avoid problems of interpretation, at least in their more difficult forms, have sometimes hoped that “theory” would prove to be a passing fad. A simple test shows that is not the case. The table below shows the number of art historical essays that have terms like “psychoanalysis” as keywords, according to the *Bibliography of the History of Art*. The increase is steep after 1980, and in three cases — the gaze, psychoanalysis, and feminism — the rise is exponential.

Another sampling shows that citations of some of the more influential art historians of the mid-twentieth century, writers who came before the current proliferation of theories, are waning.

national aspects. By contrast, in the Finnish (Kaitavuori, Vanhala) and British (Rampley) context, the avant-garde has gone unformulated for some obscure reasons yet to be identified.

The most interesting outcome of this survey is not that the universalist model of treating art often turns out to be a myth but that both the inherent logic and the ambivalence of different cases become apparent in great detail. Every respondent is right within his or her perspective, but that does not preclude intense and lengthy debates.<sup>200</sup>

**Atreyee Gupta and Sugata Ray**  
*Responding from the Margins*

Over the last twenty years, scholars writing in, and on, the non-West have all too often lamented the “inequality of ignorance” that marks the production and dissemination of knowledge in the West.<sup>201</sup> One is tempted to revisit Dipesh Chakrabarty’s now oft-cited critique:

That Europe works as a silent referent in historical knowledge becomes obvious in a very ordinary way. ... Third-world historians feel a need to refer to works in European history; historians of Europe do not feel any need to reciprocate. ... “They” produce their work in relative ignorance of non-Western histories, and this does not seem to affect the quality of their work. This is a gesture, however, that “we” cannot return. We cannot even afford an equality or symmetry of ignorance at this level without taking the risk of appearing “old-fashioned” or “outdated.”<sup>202</sup>

It is therefore with great hope that one greets projects such as David Summers’s *Real Spaces* and James Elkins’s grievance that Western universities never employ art historians working on the non-West using non-Western interpretive models, but, on the contrary, consider the ability to explain the non-West through Western paradigms as “good” scholarship.<sup>203</sup> The non-West thus becomes a mere shadow, a replication of the Western

master-narrative. As an alternative and a corrective measure, Elkins proposes the use of non-Western methodologies within the Western academy to write “a *genuinely* multicultural world art history.” The Art Seminar is a definite step toward this *genuine* “multicultural world art history.”

But with hope comes trepidation and a postcolonial unease with the burden of genuineness, authenticity, and purity that is here demanded of the non-West. “Genuine” world art history, a project by and for the West, is a meticulous “mining” (in Elkins’s word) of representative concepts and ideas from indigenous knowledge pools, in order to negotiate, in Summers’s words, “differences between the *modern* West and *other* cultures ... between the modern West and its own foundational institutions as well as its own historical consequences.”<sup>204</sup> While “a simple return to the premodern is not an option,” Summers’s *Real Spaces* betrays its obsession with originality, purity, authenticity, and authorship.<sup>205</sup> This obsession allows Summers to discuss spatiality in premodern non-Western contexts, for example in Elephanta, Ming portraits, and Hokusai, but not in the 1970s reinvention of narrative space in India (the Baroda School) or in the 1920s reassertion of inkbrush painting in China.

The non-Western modern, the Creole, the hybrid, and the *mestiza* do not find any space in Summers’s *Real Spaces*. His attempt to “put the world in a book” (as Elkins says) unfortunately remains lopsided — perhaps the contemporary non-West is *not yet* a part of this “world”?<sup>206</sup> The “modern world picture” (*Weltbild*), after all, is not a disinterested or “objective” picture of the world, but, as Martin Heidegger puts it, “the world conceived and grasped as a picture.”<sup>207</sup> It is the modern subject who observes, manipulates, and orchestrates his “picture” of the world. As Heidegger reminds us, “[w]herever we have the world picture, an essential decision takes place regarding what is, in its entirety.”<sup>208</sup>

It is then not surprising that while world art history invites the West to celebrate multiculturalism through an unabashed

embracing and appropriation of the non-West (thus tainting and enriching the traditional Western narrative exemplified by Gardner, Stokstad, and Janson),<sup>209</sup> “we,” the non-West, are asked to perform “our” pure Chineseness or Indianness “based on their [‘our’] interpretive methodologies from the culture they [‘we’] study.”<sup>210</sup> A case in point is Elkins’s critique of post-colonial scholars, for example Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Geeta Kapur, as “concerned with multiculturalism but unwilling to forgo certain Western interpretive models.”<sup>211</sup> The fact that Spivak draws her methodologies from Derridean poststructuralism and Kapur from Lyotard is sufficient to mark them (for Elkins) as fundamentally dependent on “Western interpretive models.” Kapur and Spivak’s potent critiques of Euro-American imperialism are lost in Elkins’s quest for a “multicultural” world art history. Similarly, Elkins considers current scholarship on Chinese painting too “Western” because it pays more attention to “[Chinese] politics, [Chinese] identity, and [Chinese] patronage” rather than to Confucianist methodologies — and is therefore inadequate for “a genuinely multicultural world art history.”<sup>212</sup>

“Western interpretive models” (informed through the Enlightenment, history, and rationality) are colonial bequests that have violently shaped the postcolonial. As Thomas B. Macaulay, the head of the Indian Law Commission, infamously proposed in his 1835 *Minutes on Indian Education*: “We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.”<sup>213</sup> The British education system that was imposed in the nineteenth-century colony was but a manifestation of this imperial desire. One is here reminded of the tragic figure of the Malagasy in Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967): “the Malagasy alone no longer exists ... the Malagasy exists *with the European*. The arrival of the white man in Madagascar shattered not only its horizons but its psychological mechanisms.”<sup>214</sup> How then can

“world art history” ask the non-West to feign amnesia and return to a past “untarnished” by the West? For whose benefit?

Despite its best intentions, then, this project is dependent on a territorialized binary: the (multicultural) “West,” contained within a geopolitical space called Euro-America, and its Other, a (monocultural) “non-West,” that is, the rest-of-the-world. A corollary to this binary is the idea that the Enlightenment (with history and rationality as its handmaidens) is a privilege of the “West” (as a geopolitical space), while the authentic “non-West” (again a territorial space) *lacks* history. Thus, history-writing as practiced in the contemporary non-West is seen as merely derivative. The non-West’s prerogative remains premodern models exemplified by the sixth-century *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* or Qādi Ahmad ibn Mir-Munshi’s sixteenth-century *Calligraphers and Painters*. But of course, Western art history, according to Elkins, “is a history, and theirs [the non-West’s] are not.”<sup>215</sup> The contemporary non-West is here trapped in a peculiar bind where any attempt to write history is marked by the ultimate sin of the provincial — that of derivativeness. But then, nothing else qualifies as history.

The “West’s” inability to accept as authentic what the “non-West” has in various ways done with *original* Euro-American discourses speaks eloquently of a privileging of the *original* in “Western” traditions. The result is a Euro-American claim to an exclusive sovereignty over products of its own discourses. Postcolonial scholarship has contested the validity of such Eurocentric claims, arguing for an “Enlightenment from below.”<sup>216</sup> Rather than a “wholesale rejection of the Enlightenment,”<sup>217</sup> scholars such as Rey Chow, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Dipesh Chakrabarty have attempted to use the project of Enlightenment against itself — to take the logic of Enlightenment to its radical extreme — and mobilize the “West” against itself. Spivak very succinctly terms this radical possibility as an “enabling violation” brought through the colonial encounter — “the enablement *must* be used even as the violence is renegotiated.”<sup>218</sup>

It is through Spivak's "Enlightenment from below" and the figure of Fanon's Malagasy that we address this roundtable. The risk of being labeled too "Western" or "dyed-in-the-wool postcolonial" (as in the Art Seminar) is something we perhaps cannot avoid — for, after all, our perspectives are inevitably framed through our Western-educated, Indian middle-class upbringing, and an experience of the discipline through a rigorously postcolonial art history department (at M.S. University, Vadodara) in India. However, we neither speak for the non-West nor ventriloquize for Indian art history — such "mastery" is beyond the prerogative of a response from the margins. And, for the sake of brevity, we take the liberty of focusing on only two of the many issues raised in this roundtable: "books and scholars who compose art history worldwide" and "concepts and terms that structure art historical interpretation."

1. "[B]ooks and scholars who compose art history worldwide." Even a cursory reading of the roundtable transcript gives an impression that (Western) art history textbooks are central in defining the global contours of the discipline. Thus the *lack* of a Chinese translation of Alois Riegl and the very recent ("belated") translation of Heinrich Wölfflin (in 1999) explains a certain *delay* in the "development" of the discipline in the non-West.<sup>219</sup> Despite Friedrich Teja Bach's insistence that Western textbooks (for example Wölfflin) are reinscribed with newer and different meanings by non-Western readers and Sandra Kloppner's observation that "there is no *need* for a textbook ... if one is not at the center," Elkins insists that the "structure [of textbooks] informs the structure of classes at higher levels, and those in turn inform the choices of postgraduate specialization," so that "textbooks can be formative for the discipline." Rather than an unproductive discussion on whether art history in the non-West is belated (or not), Bach makes the more useful suggestion that we engage with the discourses of the discipline as they are formulated at particular historic points. "It would be points where the discipline is working *with* [or against] Wölfflin or *with* [or against] Baxandall."

Using India as an example, we will briefly attempt to delineate the discursive framework of the discipline as it was shaped — now a hundred-odd years ago — in the margins. The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate that the genealogy of the discipline (at least in India) is formulated not through the lack or availability of Western textbooks but, as Bach suggests, through specific historic and political moments where the methodological tools of Western art history were consciously *used* even as its narratives were contested.<sup>220</sup> The strong anticolonial strand in Indian art history (and possibly in all ex-colonies) is rather insensitively ignored in Elkins's concern with when and where Wölfflin was translated.

Going beyond the binaries of (exotic) indigenous texts and models of dependency to understand non-Western art histories, we propose that it is within the discursive frameworks of modern disciplinarity that one finds its anti-Western strand.<sup>221</sup> Raja Rajendralal Mitra's *The Antiquities of Orissa* (1875) is such an example of a conscious rejection of the imperial master-narrative while retaining the language of the masters.<sup>222</sup> While Mitra's scientific drawings and mode of writing drew from earlier British accounts of Indian architecture, his analysis essayed a significant departure from his colonial predecessors. For example, while the overabundance of decoration in Orissan architecture was seen as "decadent" by the colonial antiquarian James Fergusson, for Mitra "it became a marker of 'grandeur,'" "the very soul of an architectural monument; it was what determined "India's place in the history of art."<sup>223</sup> Although Mitra was certainly not the first of what Max Mueller described as a native "scholar and critic in our [Western] sense of the word," it was probably the first time that (Western) history had been *used* to contradict the Empire's history-writing in India.<sup>224</sup> Not surprisingly, the Empire's wrath resulted in Mitra's removal from office.

Rajendralal Mitra, however, was an archaeologist, not an art historian. But then, the peculiar genealogy of art history in India can only be traced through the disciplines of archaeology, Indology

(including linguistics, aesthetics, and literary studies), ancient history (including paleography and numismatics), museology, and art history. This history of art history in India is yet to be written, but clearly the murmurs of anticolonialism that are found in Mitra's text reached a tumult in the early decades of the twentieth century, when the nationalist project of "imagining" India called upon art history, archaeology, and museology to produce an ancient "history" for the new nation-state. The Department of Ancient History and Culture was established in 1918 at Calcutta University under the guidance of Asutosh Mukherjee for this very purpose.

The publication of R.D. Bhandarkar's *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious System* (1913)<sup>225</sup> and T.A. Gopinatha Rao's multi-volume *Elements of Hindu Iconography* (1914)<sup>226</sup> were important steps in the establishment of art history in India — for, unlike the prejudices of earlier European studies on Indian religions, these were first attempts to systematically catalog and analyze the peculiarities of the multiarmed, multiheaded, "strange" gods of India. And by the 1920s, Stella Kramrisch, a Jewish *émigré* from Vienna, and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, a Sri Lankan geologist from London, further destabilized the art history conjured up by the Empire.<sup>227</sup> One could then trace a more nuanced genealogy of the discipline in India through precisely these moments of anticolonialism.

However, ours is not a nativist or atavistic attempt to produce an "Indian" art history. Coomaraswamy and Kramrisch's transnational interpolation in writing a persuasive anticolonial art history forecloses any possibility of a relativist argument or of reading art history in India as the product of a purely local (and hence more authentic) mode of knowledge-making. Further, like all "stories of art," the Indian anticolonial (nationalist) story is too fraught with omissions and deliberate erasures. It remains an upper-class/upper-caste (and mostly male) story, and in this regard, its problem is not unlike the omissions in the Eurocentric "story of art."<sup>228</sup> But by no means was this beginning a "capricious local invention," as Elkins says. And it was certainly persuasive as art history.

2. "[C]oncepts and terms that structure art historical interpretation." Although Summers's call "to abandon the Eurocentric idea of the 'visual arts'" is well taken, the move to "proceed from possible conditions of shared human spatiality to culturally specific — but not radically different — practices" seems at its best problematic and at its worst perilous. His thesis is based on an assumption that not only are there "conditions of shared human spatiality" across the globe, but it is possible to have an *equal* dialogue between the West and its ex-colonies, disacknowledging or disregarding the implicit politics of power that have created modern speech and still render it legible.<sup>229</sup> But, this is merely the problematic part.

What is perilous is Summers's insistence that "[t]raditional societies — including traditional Western societies — are more properly uniquely centered and bounded," and "the lives of the vast majority of people are shaped by traditional spaces." Moreover, in the Indian context, Summers asserts that it is through concepts such as *pradakṣiṇa* (circumambulation of a holy site) and *darśana* (beholding the divine) that we can better understand this experience of "traditional spaces" by "the vast majority of people." Further, *pradakṣiṇa* and *darśana* are but local manifestations of a more universal phenomenon — a variation of a universal way of experiencing space in "traditional societies."

Perhaps, *pradakṣiṇa* is the governing principle through which a "vast majority" of Indians experience sacred spaces — but then, it only remains an experience of the privileged "majority." After all, no member of today's Scheduled Castes could perform *pradakṣiṇa* or have *darśana* of the divine at any Brahmanical temple in premodern India.<sup>230</sup> Where does this experience of space (as opposed to upper-class/upper-caste experiences) figure in this notion of a "centered and bounded" traditional society? How does one even begin to think about *any* marginal experience if the central point of reference still remains the "majority"? At the risk of sounding dated, we argue that the category of experience



can only be explained through the contextual, the historical, and the sociopolitical, and not through a diffused universalism.

"Pilgrimage," as Summers points out, "is another [such] example." In India, the Dalits (untouchables), systematically excluded from actively participating in early-twentieth-century nation-building, now partake in ritualized pilgrimages which allow them to construct their own vision of a more inclusive nation-state.<sup>231</sup> This "pilgrimage" hovers somewhere between the religious and the political and is critical for Dalit community formation. But surely all pilgrimages are not the same. The *radical* disavowal of an exclusively upper-caste India through Dalit pilgrimages is annulled if one applies the conceptual universalism that Summers proposes. The political potency of differences, local interventions, and resistances are subsumed within this overarching tendency to universalize; by the same move, any interventionist attempt, even that made by Summers himself, loses its own radicalism and replicates the very discourse that it sets out to challenge.

Another issue with regard to concepts and terminology raised in the roundtable is the possibility of assembling a compendium of "terms from various languages and contexts — from Yoruba to Japanese — which could perhaps comprise some list of critical or useful terms for art history," as Kesner puts it. Elkins suggests that this compendium could "raise art history's sensitivity to local contexts" while simultaneously providing "the potential use of non-Western or local concepts for Western or wider ends." But, as he himself also points out, such encounters between non-Western concepts and Western art history have failed to transform the epistemological frameworks of the discipline in any way.

That may be inevitable, for while *darśana* might be useful to understand the specificities of an "Indian" experience of the divine, it is certainly not a universal category which informs the experience of devotees in disparate cultures — from Nigeria to Japan. For that matter, one cannot even talk about one "Indian" experience of the divine. For example, the *darśana* practiced at

the sixth-century Śaiva cave at Elephanta is certainly not the *jhārokā-i darśan* (balcony of audience) at the Mughal court, or the *darśanic* gaze of the millions of devotees of Bollywood today.<sup>232</sup> Thus, while one greatly appreciates the Western quest for non-Western "useful terms," a laundry list is perhaps not enough to "raise art history's sensitivity to local contexts" — there remains a need to historicize these terms within their temporal-contextual usages. A disacknowledgment of the fluidity in meanings and practices not only effaces heterogeneities, contingencies, and alterations in (non-Western) cultural practices but also reinscribes an imagined purity/authenticity.<sup>233</sup> This essentialism effectively reproduces, *yet again*, a homogenous, timeless non-West.

The modern West's desire for its Other — the exotic, the pre-modern, the irrational — has repeatedly marked its understanding of the non-West. With the celebratory multiculturalism that Western globalization entails, the West today *again* desires cultural differences that only a "pure" non-West can offer. Anything different is seen as merely derivative and today's "native" post-colonial intellectuals are therefore "told that we are *too* Western."<sup>234</sup> Like Karim, in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), we too are chastised for not performing our Indianness better.<sup>235</sup> And, courting the risk of sounding tedious, we end our diatribe, *yet again*, resisting the West's desire for its "pure Other."<sup>236</sup> As Jimmie Durham, the Cherokee artist-activist, puts it:

[But] don't worry, I will not advocate. I'll not ask you to give up your God nor your Refrigerator, nor to switch allegiance. In turn I ask that you ask no stupid questions like, "Do you want to [or, why don't you] go back to your old ways?"<sup>237</sup>

**Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann**

*Is Art History Global?*

Is art history global? Art, however it be defined, has been created on all of the inhabited continents, and can thus claim to have a

183. Ying-hsiung Chou, "The Linguistic and Mythical Structure of Hsing as a Combinational Model," in *Chinese-Western Comparative Literature: Theory and Strategy*, edited by John J. Deeney (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1980), 60–61.
184. Chen Xiaomei, *Occidentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 84.
185. Yang Xin et al., *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press; Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1997).
186. *Zhongguo Meishu Quanji* 中國美術全集, 60 volumes, Shanghai Renmin Meishu Chubanshe 上海人民美術出版社.
187. Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 89–92, as quoted in Wen C. Fong, *Between Two Cultures, Late Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Chinese Paintings from the Robert H. Ellsworth Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 6.
188. Hal Foster et al., *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2004).
189. Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 1–42.
190. Antonio Conceição Júnior's article titled "Contemporary Art in Macao" provides a summary of Macao's main art institutions and artists' associations and their history, as well as introducing some prominent local artists ([www.arscives.com/antonio/contemporaryart.macao.htm](http://www.arscives.com/antonio/contemporaryart.macao.htm)). Not included in that article are the Old Ladies' House Art Space, and two additional associations that support artists and promote the arts in Macao — Macao Art Net ([www.macauart.net](http://www.macauart.net)) and Creative Macau ([www.creativemacau.org.mo](http://www.creativemacau.org.mo)).
191. In the absence of a uniform Macao-wide educational system, and hence the syllabus documents that would point to an overall picture, I am basing my comments here on discussions with teachers and lecturers. I have been told that art is generally not taught at all in high schools, although, in a few exceptional high schools, classes in practical art, rather than art history, may be offered.
192. The main tertiary education institutions in Macao are the University of Macau, the Inter-University of Macau, Macao University of Science and Technology, Macao Polytechnic Institute, and the Institute of Tourism.
193. I'm quoting a remark by Sandra Klopper in the Art Seminar, p. 129 of this book.
194. Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art* (London & Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1982), 66.
195. See Erika Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism* (Chicago, London, 1991); Anette Cox, *Art-as-politics: The Abstract Expressionist Avant-Garde and Society*, 2nd ed. (London: UMI Research Press, 1982).
196. In Estonian too, the word "national" easily evokes notions of "nationalist" and thus sounds pejorative. A historical investigation into the deprecatory use of the word in Estonian art would first of all have to study the Stalinist rhetoric of nationalism, and be aware of the persecutions it accounted for

197. Heie Treier, *Kobalisk modernsus kunstis: Eesti varamodernistliku kunsti teoreetiline ja ajalooline kontseptualiseerimine ning Karl Pärsimägi paradigmatõlmise perioodil* [Local Modernity in Art: The theoretical and historical conceptualisation of early Estonian modernist art and Karl Pärsimägi in the period of finding the paradigm] (Doktoritöö, Eesti Kunstiakadeemia Kunstiteaduse Instituut [PhD thesis, Estonian Academy of Arts, typescript]. Tallinn, Estonia, 2004).
198. Things change — Jonas Mekas represented Lithuania in the Venice Biennale in 2005.
199. Kahn's style has reportedly been influenced by the mediaeval architecture of Kuressaare, his hometown. For Udo Kultermann, Kahn comes from Estonia. "The very suggestion by Kultermann, that we might treat Kahn in the context of Estonia is telling. The fact that we cannot consider people from Estonia as 'Estonians,' testifies to one core category of constructing the Estonian national identity — the purely [imaginary] ethnical origin. The problem is the same with the 'nationally suitable' ideologies — the example of Klucis regarding the Latvians is particularly interesting." (Dr. Katrin Kivimaa in her review to my thesis, October 2004).
200. The essay was published in the *Journal for Northeast Issues* in Hamburg, Germany. Heie Treier, "An International Experiment," *Journal for Northeast Issues. Art and Related Disciplines* 4 (2005): 20–21. Edited by Projektgruppe Hamburg.
201. The phrase "inequality of ignorance" has been formulated by Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 28; see, for example, Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London and New York: Verso, 1992); Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); and Rustom Bharucha, *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking through Theatre in an Age of Globalization* (London: Athlone, 2000) for similar concerns in different contexts.
202. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 28.
203. Elkins, review of David Summers, *Real Spaces*, reprinted in this volume as a Starting Points essay.
204. The act of studying objects and cultures from across the globe as equal participants in the production of "world art" may indeed be a new and radical idea in the West. On the contrary, art history undergraduate courses in India, for example at the M.S. University, Vadodara, have always not only covered Indian art from protohistory to the contemporary but also included the histories of Euro-America, China, Japan, South-East Asia, and Australia among others. Further, alongside art history, undergraduate students take compulsory courses in both Indian and Western aesthetic theories. The quotation is Summers, *Real Spaces*, 25. Emphasis not in original.
205. Summers, *Real Spaces*, 25.
206. While Summers acknowledges that "other [non-Western] modernities" are not constituted through just "the spread of Western modernity, rather they are, in all cases, interactions and adaptations," his concern remains the modernity that "is more properly Western ... as part of a broader

Western culture." Is the non-West, so delightfully woven into the earlier parts of the text, then merely a device to "demonstrate familiar works and patterns of meaning [the Western modern] in different terms [through the non-West]?" Summers, *Real Spaces*, 549.

For example, the Rothko Chapel (1970) is here not only understood through Western architecture but also, the Ka'ba in Mecca, Sumerian and Hindu temples, and a Buddhist *stūpa*! Summers's 664-page *magnum opus* of world art culminates with, not surprisingly, homage to the Abstract Expressionist "master" Mark Rothko in whose works Summers sees a "historical or cultural construction, a use of historical forms at a remove from historical traditions, forms maintained in relation to forms of other traditions, the common term being human real spatiality." Summers, *Real Spaces*, 651.

One cannot but remember James Clifford's caustic comments on the "celebrated" exhibition "*Primitivism*" in *20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (1984–85): "The allegory has a hero, whose virtuoso work, an exhibit caption tells us, contains more affinities with the tribal than that of any other pioneer modernist. These affinities "measure the depth of Picasso's grasp of the informing principles of tribal sculpture, and reflect his profound identity of spirit with the tribal peoples." Modernism is thus presented as a search for "informing principles" that transcend culture, politics, and history. Beneath this generous umbrella the tribal is modern and the modern more richly, more diversely human." James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 191.

Or, Edward Said's critique of Europe's "desperate attempt[s] at a new inclusiveness" — a twentieth-century reaction to the vulnerability of the idea called "Europe": "When you can no longer assume that Britannia will rule the waves forever, you have to reconceive reality as something that can be held together by you the artist, in history rather than in geography. Spatiality becomes, ironically, the characteristic of an aesthetic rather than of political domination, as more and more regions — from India to Africa to the Caribbean — challenge the classical empires and their cultures." Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 189–90.

207. Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 115–54, at p. 129.
208. Heidegger, "Age of the World Picture," 130.
209. For examples of traditional Western narratives, see Helen Gardner, Fred S. Kleiner, and Christin J. Mamiya, *Gardner's Art through the Ages*, 12th ed. (Belmont CA: Thomson & Wadsworth, 2005); H.W. Janson, *Janson's History of Art*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2004); and Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2005).
210. See Elkins's review of David Summers, reprinted as a Starting Points essay in this book.
211. In the review, Elkins critiques Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) as "principally" derived from "Derridean poststructuralism and psychoanalysis" while Kapur's "sense of

modernity and its aftermath in *When Was Modernism? Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practices in India* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2000) draws on Jean-Francois Lyotard's discussion of the sublime and on Hal Foster's sense of the 'anti-aesthetic.'"

212. Kapur, *When Was Modernism?*, 378. Our critique is by no means a diatribe against Elkins. Rather, it is an attempt to respond to a recent tendency within the Western academy to criticize the "Westernness" of scholars working in, or on, the non-West. An arbitrary example of this tendency is David Carrier's recent review of Tapati Guha-Thakurta's *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004). Carrier writes: Guha-Thakurta's "way of thinking about art institutions, historiography, and political power owes nothing, so far as I can see, to any specifically Indian tradition... Perhaps a development of an indigenous Indian art history will lead some scholars to reject secularizing Western styles of interpretation." David Carrier, Review of Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories in caa.reviews* (3/14/2005) See [www.caareviews.org/detail.lasso?rev=Guha-Thakurta](http://www.caareviews.org/detail.lasso?rev=Guha-Thakurta). Date accessed: 01/10/2006. The assumption here is that a quintessential "indigenous Indian art history" should essentially be nonsecular (religious and/or nationalist). Any departure from this norm, then, becomes merely the "perspective of a frequent visitor to the West, a cosmopolitan feminist professor." Thus, Guha-Thakurta's critiques of mid-twentieth-century nationalist art histories and the rise of religious fundamentalism in India marks her, in the eyes of Carrier, as a "defender of our [Western] ways of thinking" — and therefore not Indian enough.
213. T.B. Macaulay, "Education Minute," (1835) in H. Woodrow, *Macaulay's Minutes on Education in India* (Calcutta: C.B. Lewis, 1862), 104–16.
214. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Charles L. Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 97.
215. Elkins, *Stories of Art* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 115.
216. Spivak, "Righting Wrongs," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103 no. 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2004): 523–81, at p. 565, n 3. Along with Spivak's attempts to problematize the notion of human rights as exclusively a "Western" discourse; see, for example, Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*; John Clark, *Modern Asian Art* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993); Chow, *Writing Diaspora*; and Bharucha, *The Politics of Cultural Practice*.
217. Spivak, "Righting Wrongs," 565, n 3.
218. Spivak, "Righting Wrongs," 524. Emphasis not in original.
219. Despite Friedrich Teja Bach's explicit comment on the problematic of the term *belatedness* to mark art history in the non-West, Elkins insists that "the principal subject has been the diffusion, not the re-invention of texts and textbooks. I think it is possible to study the genealogies of the narrative structures of textbooks, and to find lines of dependence."
 

E. H. Gombrich's *The Story of Art*, 16th ed. (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), the classic metanarrative of (Western) art, is cited by Elkins as the urtext of the discipline spawning innumerable "dependence, misunderstanding, abbreviation and expansion, and adaptation" both in the West and the non-West. Paradoxically, *other* stories, which have not fallen into the trap of (Western) narrativity, cannot be read, according to Elkins, as "art history."

- For a critique of Elkins's very limited notion of art history, see Parul Dave-Mukherji, "The Other's Stories of Art in the Age of Multiculturalism," *American Council for Southern Asian Art Newsletter* 64 (Fall/Winter 2005): 10–13.
220. The situation in India seems to be very similar to the genealogy of the discipline in Latin America as described by Andrea Giunta during the Art Seminar roundtable.
221. In context to Indian art history, for a more detailed discussion, see Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); Guha-Thakurta *Monuments, Objects, Histories*; and Pramod Chandra, *On the Study of Indian Art* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).
222. Rajendralal Mitra, *The Antiquities of Orissa* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1875).
223. Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories*, 105.
224. Max Mueller (1876), cited in *Sahitya Sadhak Charitmalā*, edited by Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay (Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, 1943). As cited in Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories*, 96. For Mitra's career and the controversies regarding his scholarship, see Guha-Thakurta *Monuments, Objects, Histories*.
225. Bhandarkar, *Viśṇovism, Śaivism and Minor Religious System* (Strasbourg: K. J. Trubner, 1913).
226. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography* (Madras: Law Printing House, 1914).
227. While British archaeologists and antiquarians had unanimously marked India through a *lack*, the nationalist counter-discourse sought to challenge this. According to colonial discourses, Indian philosophy was essentially degenerate and the Hindu mind "feeble" — the notion of *māyā* (illusion) led to irrationality. Ananda Coomaraswamy, in *The Dance of Śiva: Fourteen Indian Essays* (New York: Sunwise Turn, 1918), reversed this rhetoric by proposing that *māyā* was not illusion but *śakti* (creative energy). In defense of the nonmimetic nature of religious art in India, he suggested that artists were not concerned with naturalistic representations but aimed to re-present the transcendental body. This theory of transubstantiation was further elaborated by Stella Kramrisch in *Indian Sculpture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933). The anticolonialism in both Coomaraswamy and Kramrisch's writings has been discussed by many scholars, for example, Chandra, *On the Study of Indian Art*.
228. For a critique of the nationalist project of art history writing in India, see, for example, Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories*; Annapurna Garimella, "Engendering Indian Art," in *Representing the Body: Gender Issues in Indian Art*, edited by Vidya Dehejia (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1997), 22–41; Sonit Bafna, "On the Idea of the Mandala as a Governing Device in Indian Architectural Tradition," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 59 no. 1 (March 2000): 26–49; and Padma Kaimal, "Shiva Nataraja: Shifting Meanings of an Icon," *The Art Bulletin* 81 no. 3 (September 1999): 390–419.
229. Dave-Mukherji poses a similar critique of Elkins's *Stories of Art*. She writes: "Is it possible to place the two unequal halves [the West and the non-West] within the dialogic space of encounter while avoiding a lapse into cultural relativism? If we assume with Elkins that the dialogic encounter is only

- possible if and when the two halves meet as equal partners, our basic premises of understanding the modern are at stake. As amply demonstrated by Timothy Mitchell, modernity and modern forms of representation would have been unthinkable without its close relationship with Orientalism and the construction of a colonial order." Dave-Mukherji, "The Other's Stories of Art," 12.
230. Article 341 and 342 of the Indian Constitution specifically recognizes certain low castes and tribes that have traditionally been economically and socially disadvantaged and therefore entitled to protection and specified benefits under the Constitution. These marginal groups, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, were until very recently excluded from worship in most Brahmanical temples and in some cases still remain illegally excluded.
231. Gary M. Tartakov, "A Geography of Dalit Pilgrimage" (paper presented at 34th Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI, 10/07/2005).
232. For Mughal use of *darśana* as a political strategy, see Catherine B. Asher, *The New Cambridge History of India 1:4 Architecture of Mughal India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). For the *darśanic* gaze of Hindi film-viewers, see Madhava M. Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Philip Lutgendorf, "Ramayan: The Video," *The Drama Review* 34 no. 2 (1990): 127–76.
233. In fact, there can be differences in cultural practices at any given moment. For example, while it is generally assumed that the *pradakṣiṇa* of sacred monuments in premodern India was always clockwise, the iconographic program of the sixth-century Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh (Uttar Pradesh) suggests that devotees performed a counterclockwise *pradakṣiṇa*. For a more detailed discussion, see Susan L. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1985). This suggests that the practice of *pradakṣiṇa* in premodern India varied according to ritualistic requirements, localized traditions, or for reasons that are no longer apparent.
234. Spivak, *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, edited by Sarah Harasym (New York: Routledge, 1990), 8.
235. Karim, the south London-accented protagonist of Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (London: Faber & Faber, 1990), had to smear himself with brown polish and practice his Indian accent to play the role of Mowgli (of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*) for his London audiences. The analogy between Karim and the postcolonial scholar is drawn from Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 127.
236. Spivak, *The Postcolonial Critic*, 8.
237. Jimmie Durham, "Belief in Europe," in *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading*, edited by Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2002), 290–93, at p. 291.
238. For instance, a scholar such as Wen Fong, whom Elkins singles out elsewhere as somehow Confucian in his approach to art, certainly scoffs at this idea himself: he was trained by Kurt Weitzmann (among others at Princeton), and if one reads his earlier theoretical pieces carefully, he was fully informed by and cites such Viennese scholars as Riegl and Hans Sedlmayr.