Museum's Time in the Netherlands: Ethnology and art museums (dis)continued dialogue with non-Western art

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Abstract

Ethnology and art museums have, since their inception in the Enlightenment period, seemed to be separate and even obverse institutions. Yet, the civilizational divide that characterizes both types of museum has been challenged in the postcolonial period, prompting their growth in the form of a continuous conversation. Both institutions have performed acts of reassessment, bringing them toward an alliance. Both also share the role of housing humanity's material culture pertaining to the visual, the religious, the popular, and the erudite. In this article, I look at this continual cultural dialogue within Dutch institutions. In 2016, Dutch ethnology museums had recently undergone a substantial reform which would result in an integrated national collection. This article explores the contribution of Dutch institutions to the reassessment of the relationship between ethnology and art museums.

Keywords

art museums, ethnology museums, non-Western art, exhibitions' history, Holanda

Resumo

Desde a sua fundação no período iluminista, os museus de etnologia e de arte têm parecido instituições separadas e até opostas entre si. No entanto, a divisão civilizacional que caracteriza os dois tipos de museu tem sido contestada no período pós-colonial, o que tem estimulado o seu crescimento através de uma contínua conversa. Ambas as instituições têm-se reavaliado, levando-as a uma quase-aliança. Ambas instituições compartilham o papel de abrigar a cultura material da humanidade referente ao visual, ao religioso, ao popular e ao erudito. Neste artigo, analiso esse diálogo cultural contínuo nas instituições holandesas. Em 2016, os museus holandeses de etnologia haviam tinham sido alvo de reformas substanciais, o que resultaria em uma coleção nacional integrada. Este artigo explora a contribuição das instituições holandesas para a reavaliação da relação entre etnologia e museus de arte.

Palavras-chave

museus de etnologia, museus de arte, arte não-ocidental, história das exposições, Holanda

Introduction

Ethnology and art museums house much of humanity's material culture. The two institutions appear to the general public as antagonistic, mirroring the "art/culture" divide that has been recognized by numerous scholars, including American anthropologist James Clifford, and American art historians Anna Brzyski and James Elkins.[2] Art is made in the West, whereas the 'elsewhere' – to paraphrase Nigerian curator Okwui Enwezor – produced material culture.[3] This division is further enhanced by the fact that the great majority of exhibitions within Western ethnology museums (as well as theme parks and museums in the regions beyond the West's borders, e.g. the Asian Civilizations Museum in Singapore) does not include Western 'folk', 'archaic', or 'traditional' manifestations.

This text expands a 2016[4] blog post published on the Leiden Arts and Society Blog in which I interviewed Dutch contemporary art curator Anke Bangma (b. 1969) about the procedures she applied while serving the National Collection of the Netherlands.[5] I had met Bangma in 2013 on the occasion of the exhibition opening of Indonesian artist Maryanto (b. 1977) at Heden Gallery, in The Hague. Then, Maryanto was working on pollution and the exploitation of nature in the Indonesian province of West Papua. His work triggered Bangma's reassessment of the Tropenmuseum's photographic collection, of which she was curator, from a postcolonial revisionist perspective. As a result, one of Maryanto's works was purchased and integrated in the museum's contemporary art collection. In 2016, the Tropenmuseum had already fully merged with two other institutions: the Africa Museum, located in Berg en Dal, and the Museum Volkenkunde, established in Leiden.[6] Together, these institutions came to form the National Museum of World Cultures.

Bangma acts in the *now*, and her work as a curator contributes to our contemporary moment: by relating and juxtaposing the two – the archive and contemporary art work – she continues the Tropenmuseum's agenda of reassessing its colonial collections through modern and contemporary art, a practice that started in the 1980s.[7] Postcolonial revisionism is not exclusive to the Tropenmuseum; it is a prominent historical discourse in many formerly colonized countries and in the former world powers that colonized them. However, the debut of changing discourses in exhibitions at ethnology and art museums began in the early twentieth century.

THE 1800s-1930s: from the colonial exhibition to the aesthetic exhibition

The extensive collection of artifacts during the colonial period had two intentions: first, to introduce Western peoples to the lives and cultures of colonized societies and second, to document and archive their ways of life. In most cases, objects were amassed without mention to their age (e.g. century

or decade). The absence of detailed information – most notably, the figure of the author – was paramount within ethnographic colonial exhibitions and would be maintained within most art historical and anthropological accounts produced during the twentieth century. Concepts such as animism, primitivism, and fetishism,[8] which were created by anthropologists to describe earlier human evolutionary developments, were taken as the totalizing reality of non-Western cultures. So, colonized societies were received as 'frozen' in bygone times and classified as traditional, primitive, or tribal. And, as Dutch anthropologist Harrie Leyten remarks, as a consequence "Europe's identity as the apex of human achievement in the nineteenth century" was invented.[9]

Provoked by European developments, things would soon begin to change. It is widely accepted that European modern artists were fond of the 'primitive' in art which, according to American art historian Robert Goldwater, they began to collect in 1905.[10] To him, the roots of their interest were found in the nineteenth century, given that artists like Gauguin had already sought so-called primitive sources and societies.[11] These artists, as American art historian Gill Perry advances, "were in fact opposed to the processes of modernization".[12] The early works of Spanish Pablo Picasso and German Max Ernst are said to have appropriated 'primitive' art from Africa with which they had contact: whether it occurred inside museums or through purchase is still under debate.[13] Clifford argues that the fact that Picasso and others noticed and appreciated African artefacts in the first decade of the twentieth century is significant because this was a time in which "some ethnologists themselves had begun to revise their low opinion of primitive art."[14] From here, ethnology museums – which had been founded purely for documentary presentations – turned their attention towards the aesthetic properties of their holdings. So, says Goldwater, it can be argued that it was not the museum that guided the artists tastes, but rather the reverse: it was the artists' appreciation of the primitive that lead to the museums' appreciation.[15] As a result, "[a]round 1920 *l'art nègre* was in vogue."[16] But, as Clifford observes, this was precisely the time at which Picasso *refused* to admit his familiarity with African art.[17]

American art historian Hal Foster considers that early twentieth-century appropriations by Western artists of non-Western aesthetics were influential in two prominent avant-garde movements: Cubism and Surrealism. Picasso and Ernst created some especially significant appropriations in which they used artefacts "as 'mediators,' that is, *as forms for use*".[18] In fact, the use of the references as 'ready-mades' is one of the avant-garde's hallmarks. Art history would come to understand that these artists' 'heroic' gesture was responsible for the elevation of these artifacts to the realm of 'art'.[19] This form of art-historical integration – through the avant-garde gesture[20] – has been widely criticized by Western and non-Western scholars of art history and anthropology alike.

Adding to these trends, art publications began to emerge: "The door to an aesthetic appreciation of objects in anthropology museums was opened

by Carl Einstein's 1915 [publication on African sculpture] *Negerplastik,*" affirms Dutch art historian Fieke Konijn.[21] In his study, African objects from twenty different countries appeared systematically photographed in one view (frontal or angled) and deprived of elements such as blades and raffia fabrics, resulting in an unified African sculpture.[22] After this publication – considered the foundational oeuvre of African Art History – during the 1920s, most European anthropology (or colonialist) museums were reinstalled along aesthetic lines. This led to the reassessment of the 'primitive' discourse, in which 'primitive' art was then "presented as yet another example of 'high' art."[23] African art reached the spotlight and, as Goldwater observes, by the 1930s, the Trocadéro had already "held numerous exhibitions which would have in effect been exhibitions of art".[24] In the Netherlands, the *Old Negro Sculpture* show at the Stedelijk Museum in 1927 is representative of this aesthetic tendency: African objects could be enjoyed for their inherent aesthetic qualities.[25] In 1935, the Stedelijk presented *Negro Art*: then, African artworks were juxtaposed with modern French painting with the vision that became paramount within art history.

This initial reassessments of the 'primitive' that took place throughout the 1920s and focused on the 'beauty' of objects – which I suggest naming 'the Nouvel Turn' – would be fully embodied by permanent exhibitions like those at the Afrika Museum, located in Berg en Dal upon its refurbishing in 1987, or by the Musée de Quai Branly in Paris upon its opening in 2006.[26] An exhibitionary tradition was created; objects are displayed with little contextual information attached, a policy that relies on the viewer to complete the object's signification – a quintessential procedure of art museums, not ethnology museums. This, as Leyten suggests, has enabled visitors to freely have their own, unmediated experience of the art during a visit to the exhibition. [27] While this is positive because the general public "is quite capable of assessing aesthetic criteria", it deprives the public of its own interest in knowing "the meaning of the symbols used in this art". [28]

The limitations of this curatorial method – which focused on aesthetics – would soon be understood: although it constituted a secure approach for Western curators who framed objects, says Leyten "in nicely lit showcases against serene backgrounds of attractive earth colours that were meant to represent Africa",[29] the museums that opted for this approach remained incomplete. Given that oral traditions were prominent in non-Western contexts and its insights were considered unreliable by European scholars, the framing of these objects as 'art objects' instead of 'curiosities' did not allow the public to gather an informed understanding of presentations.

The 1950s-1990s: the postcolonial 'discovery' of the modern and discourse change

After the demise of European colonial powers within the non-Western world as a direct result of WWII, ethnology museums were faced with a new

reality: they could no longer call themselves 'colonial'. Either they adapted, or they would become anachronistic, and would eventually disappear. Thus, a major aspect of the post-1950s era is the change of designation. The growing opposition by some curators to colonial terminology demonstrates that categories are fluid and change according to time and circumstance. Yet, as Leyten indicates, *renaming* does not solve the problem of *how* collections should be curated.[30] Consequently, exhibitions equally had to change: ethnology museums were obliged to embrace a new character. The Amsterdam Tropenmuseum was at the forefront of this new museological development. It began to focus on the relationships between "'them' and 'us'" wherein curators deliberately relegated their collections to the background.[31] This approach stemmed directly from Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski's proposal of long-term fieldwork. Exhibitions organized in this manner (with Leyten as African art curator of the Tropenmuseum) resulted in rational accounts of Indigenous thoughts and actions. Others, like the Afrika Museum at Berg en Dal, understood that their missionary inception had expired and reinvented themselves. In this particular case, the museum opted for a balanced approach that highlighted both an aesthetic presentation and the right amount of contextual information.[32]

Art museums also adapted to the times. Not needing to change their designation, they revised themselves solely in exhibitionary terms. Two fundamental types of exhibitions came to be: first, the art exhibition, which celebrated the affinity between Western and non-Western art, and second, the 'postcolonial show'. One significant example of the first tendency was the *The African Show* in the Amsterdam Museum in 1955. This model would be repeated in shows like *'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern,* by William Rubin in the MoMA in 1984, among others, which were always counterbalanced by the second type of show, the postcolonial. The postcolonial era (and its show) can be regarded as one which "seek[s] instead to sublate and replace all grand narratives through new ethical demands on modes of historical interpretation".[33] From that point on, questioning the supremacy of Western art over non-Western art became a locus of academic work. One major example of this tendency was *Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections*, curated by American art historian Susan Vogel in 1988. The curatorial proposition was to counter *Primitivism*'s thesis that African art had been 'liberated' by European modern artists. If *Primitivism* showcased Western art as performing authorial and individual creations – thus following the narrative of originality and rarity of the artwork – *Art/Artifact* demonstrated that non-Western art has not only continued to appear as anonymous and collective creations, but equally forwarded the ways that Western artists appropriate non-Western cultures at their disposal, while refusing the same move to non-Western artists.

These two antagonistic discourses have kept many art historians and anthropologists busy in the past century. The question remains: what can be done to overcome the prejudice and unequal institutional treatment of Western and non-Western cultures? As recently as 2018, on the occasion of the seminar *Changing Global Hierarchies of Value? Museums, Artifacts, Frames, and Flows*, which took place at the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen, Brazilian anthropologist and art historian Lilia Moritz Schwarcz recognized that within Brazilian institutions, classifications remain problematic because the country's reality remains the coeval of the 'primitive' and the 'modern'.[34]

Additionally, in the postcolonial momentum, former colonized nations realized how much of their material culture had been displaced. And, to their dismay, they soon noticed that much of what was taken had been poorly documented: colonialist expeditions tended to document solely provenance and date of acquisition, ignoring important aspects such as authorship and date of creation. One should, however, remember that the foundational moment of 'ethnography as a scientific research method', was only advanced by Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinosvky in 1932, and its inception between the two world wars meant that its application was deferred.[35] Malinosvky's research method is characterized by "[t]he use of long-term fieldwork, shared living with studied societies, and participant observation as the main tools".[36] Therefore, most of the early acquisitions that arrived at European museums in the colonial period contained little 'societal context' information attached to them. Consequently, the curatorial strategy was to use as many examples as possible of one artifact as a means to indicate their communal importance.

Beginning in the 1970s, at the debut of the postmodernist movement, the travel experience and the ethnographic authority resulting from fieldwork started being criticized. Postmodern scholars highlighted that long-term observation implied delimiting the object of study (sometimes exoticized) and that this exercise was not exclusively narrative, but also "but also experience and process".[37] The concerns raised by postmodern critics, and more concretely postcolonial theorists – who generally distrust modern metanarratives – would result in another reframing of exhibitions after the end of the Cold War and the subsequent emergence of multiculturalism (discussed below).

Concurrently, in the West, a third development also occurred: the presentation of 'modern and contemporary African art'. After being elevated to the realm of 'art objects' in the 1920s, and viewed along aesthetic lines in the 1930s, African artifacts began to be displayed more prominently after the decolonization process .[38] Exhibitions in ethnology and modern art museums increased exponentially, but now covered the 'modern'. To contextualize artifacts on display, ethnology museums set out to provide as much information as possible – "too much for some" as Leyten observes[39] – because they began (re)investing in scholarly work according to Malinowsky's principles. Art

museums, in contrast, continued to show little interest in the social implications of the works they collected and displayed. In terms of collecting practices, the two institutions display a major difference: while ethnology museums began to acquire modern and contemporary art to revise and update their collections,[40] as Bangma did with Maryanto's work, modern art museums did not make acquisitions. As a result, when evaluating the Stedelijk Museum's collection of non-Western modern and contemporary art, curator Jelle Bouwois found a "gap in its collection".[41]

Since the 1950s, both the Stedelijk and the Tropenmuseum engaged in the presentation of non-Western modern art. Between 1950 and 1990, the Stedelijk presented *19 Painters from Haiti* (1950), and *Modern Art – New and Old* (1955), which incorporated a juxtaposition of anonymous artefacts and European modern artists; and *U-ABC* (1989) featuring art from Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile after the end of dictatorial regimes. The Tropenmuseum, in turn, "opted for slow-paced change, reinterpret the existing collections and complementing them with contemporary art, popular culture and intangible heritage".[42] These efforts were coupled with seminars, demonstrating the institutions' attempts to establish a connection with the current realities of non-Western nations. In 1985, the Tropenmuseum organized the seminar, "Studiedag moderne kunst in niet westerse landen" (Study Day for Modern Art in Non-Western Countries) in which ethnology and art museums "discussed the possibility of assembling a joint collection" of contemporary art from 'developing countries'.[43] The results were disappointing for the Tropenmuseum's curators, whose presentations of contemporary art produced in Africa and Asia "were met with skepticism and disdain".[44] Leyten recalls a discouraging remark by an art curator on this occasion: "If you show us good art, we will see what we can do" about displaying it.[45] Confronted with the fact that art museums found contemporary non-Western art inappropriate for their exhibitions – because it was aligned with the ethnographic objects that were not perceived as art, and thus belonged within ethnology museums – the Tropenmuseum persisted on a solitary journey towards the representation of modern and contemporary art from Asia and Africa.

The 1990s: The early days of globalization and heyday of multiculturalism

The emergence of post-1989 multiculturalism again shifted the circumstances surrounding the exhibition of non-Western art: as the aesthetic display was discredited in the 1970s because of its attachment to modern metanarratives, and the fact that many members of non-Western communities lived in the West – which in turn made it unacceptable to frame their material culture, including art, as rough and unsophisticated – notions of 'new' or conceptual, and 'old' or traditional, began to inhabit exhibitions.[46] This occurrence stemmed, as many authors have mentioned, from the exhibition *Les Magiciens de la Terre*, showcased at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris in

1989. Despite the positive outcomes of this show – namely the juxtaposition of representatives from the entire world in one show at a renowned Western institution – works displayed demonstrated that curators looked for the 'purity' of each tradition. According to American art historian Thomas McEvilley, "works that attempted to conflate various traditions – Indian and European for instance – were not included; only works that arose directly from their own tradition, without external elements were shown […] This had the effect of reconstructing or reinforcing old boundaries that are now dissolving".[47] It seems, the debut of the globalization era maintained discursive practices and dichotomic distinctions between 'us' and 'them'. A good example to understand institutional resistance toward reception of non-Western art within Western institutions pertains to the retrospective exhibition of Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica (1937-1980) in Rotterdam in 1992. In this event, as British art historian Jean Fisher retells, "an European art critic was overheard commenting that Oiticica's work was 'incoherent' since it covered a plurality of practices and thus 'wasn't art'".[48] Oiticica, as she adds, is renowned as a white, male, and Western-oriented artist that can be partly situated in the "neo-Duchampian/Dadaist gestures of the late 1960s and 70s"[49] who infused his conceptual work with local Brazilian traits. It was this notion of 'local' that was received as 'derivative', not 'purely' Western nor 'essentialy' Brazilian.

The indecision of how and where to exhibit modern and contemporary non-Western art is further enhanced by the fact that both are urban phenomena, distant from the 'traditional' societies' ethnology museums were founded to showcase.[50] Yet, art museums remained oblivious to represent these growing developments, and have shown little interest in incorporating modern and contemporary art from non-Western countries in their shows and collections. The Stedelijk ventured in a new project aimed at providing a platform for Amsterdam artists and curators: it opened a project room, the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (SMBA), extinguished in 2016 amidst controversy.[51] The SMBA's inclusion in the main institution – the Stedelijk Museum – provided it with financial stability, while curatorially it served as a 'laboratory' for contemporary local art, including that of its multicultural minorities.[52] Meanwhile, Dutch anthropologists noticed that the Stedelijk remained detached from the discourse of modern and contemporary art and grasped the momentum. They advanced social realism and the work of younger contemporary artists as a means to distance their curatorial approach from the stereotypes superimposed on 'the modern' originating in non-Western locations.[53]

In 1992, the Tropenmuseum organized another seminar: "Hoe hang je het op? De museale presentatie van eigentijdse niet-Westerse kunst" ("How to Display It? The Museological Presentation of Contemporary Non-Western Art"). Once again, discussions revolved around the pertinence of cross-collaboration between anthropology and art museums.[54] The symposium asked: when exhibiting art of 'the other', should explanations of each piece be

provided? In short, the Tropenmuseum was trying to understand if the art museum's exhibition model, which provides little contextual information, was more suitable than the ethnology museum's model. Responses were mixed, as expected, and the institutions continued to work separately yet in greater dialogue by means of object loans, which ultimately enabled ongoing theoretical exchange.

2000s onwards: museums (re)configured

The debut of the second millennium brought with it new circumstances that led to novel understandings of non-Western peoples' roles in the world. Inspired by post-1989 globalization,[55] museums of ethnology and art changed once more. To different degrees, both institutions have engaged in advancing the currency of non-Western art within Western institutions. And once again, Dutch museums showed signs of pioneering the shift. One important aspect of the Dutch contribution to these discursive practices was the acquisition of non-Western contemporary art to complete and process the renewal of anthropological collections, which remained object-centred. By acquiring contemporary art and exchanging objects, the two institutions continued to dialogue. Now, with ethnographic and art objects starting to be exhibited together, stories gained further prominence. For example, the accompaniment of Maryanto's contemporary works and archival photographs, has allowed a wider understanding of both art and ethnological legacies and their mutual reinforcement. The curatorial strategy of placing contemporary art in the exhibition space alongside artifacts and coupled with discussions of artists' works, not only provides a comprehensive view of artists' motivations to make works merging art and ethnography, but it also advances the ethnology institution as an art institution, thus contributing for the meeting of the two.

Those institutions once called 'colonial' or ethnography museums have gradually changed their titles: the designation 'Museums of World Cultures' which was popular in the 1990s was replaced by, as Clifford points out, 'World Art Museums' in the 2000s.[56] On the contrary, modern art museums have kept their names and made the avant-garde the sole category from which new inclusions – both in art history and museums – would be possible. And because art history has deferred the recognition of avant-garde gestures in non-Western locations,[57] art museums have mirrored the discipline's slowness in updating their discourse, their exhibitions, and their collections.[58]

Conclusion

As Dutch art historian Ernest van den Haag posits, "[t]he borderline between some collections and some museums is certainly blurred".[59] As two institutions that have emerged together in time, yet separate in space and discourse, ethnology and art museums have progressed – and sometimes regressed – together. Remembering their Enlightenment inception remains

important, because it supports understanding of how their collections originated: ethnology museums result directly from colonial encounters, while art museums were created in the aftermath of political changes that occurred during the Enlightenment period. The former derive from the 'cabinets of curiosities' that filled the houses of the colonizing elite in their home countries: collection of these 'rarities' signified prestige and thus were used to enhance the veracity of contacts with the 'Other', and later developed through an extensive collection of artifacts – many times looted – during the nineteenth century. Art collections, on the other hand, were born out of the repositories of many European palaces and religious institutions. This discrepancy, which is more geographical than temporal, and which results from different modes of collecting, has permitted Western nations to divide material culture between the two institutions, thus mirroring the divide between 'us' and 'them'.

Leyten provoking, posits that "the ethnographic museum is dead",[60] and thus the making of museums of world art continues. In fact, we could discuss that both 'art' and 'ethnology' are values: as such, moreover, they change according to the times. Because the West continued to live in an oblivious construct in which formerly colonized societies remained frozen in the past, and were represented as such through their colonialist collections, refusing to accept that colonial contacts also contributed to 'modernity', they could not immediately grasp that modern and contemporary art expressions emerging in former colonies resulted directly from these colonial contacts. Notions such as 'the individual' within art-making, and the making of 'art for art's sake' in non-Western locations were passed down primarily within the circuits of academia (although locally organized exhibitions must also be noted).[61] To this day, fine-arts curricula in non-Western nations follows the Western model which was transferred during the twentieth century. Yet, the local circumstances of 'living traditions' has meant that alongside what is recognized as fine-arts in Western terms, artists have embraced their own localized expressions of art-making, notably the traditional ones.[62] The resulting modern and contemporary art from these locations, as expected, reflected their lived reality. Thus, these practices enabled traditional arts to enter the discourse of 'high art' and contributes to the emergence of new constructs and new modes of making, which are paramount to avant-garde practices.

As demonstrated, both institutions of ethnology and art have shown, and continue to show, unease with their own names and agency. Since the debut of the avant-garde in Europe in the early twentieth century, both institutions have responded with new integrations, albeit in different rhythms. It is interesting that it was the emergence of modern art, and later contemporary art – imbued with non-Western elements – that sparked the debate.[63]

Notes

[1] In this article, I refer to ethnology museums; these institutions were once called anthropology museums, but slowly their designation changed. Anthropology and ethnology were, since their inception, formed as separate branches of learning: anthropology was concerned with the study of men, dealing with the question 'What is man?' – a blend of philosophical and physical concerns – whereas ethnology dealt with questions of difference between men. Anthropology was either a biological or a philosophical subject that came from life sciences and its professionals were physicians and anatomists. Ethnology was born out of history and thus, ethnographers were historians, geographers, and linguists. From here, it can be comprehended that ethnology was born separate from anthropology. A further distinction between ethnography and ethnology demands clarification: ethnography (*beschrijvende volkenkunde*), the early form of the discipline, was born during the first half of the eighteenth century (Early Enlightenment) and its purpose was to describe tribes. Ethnology (*volkenkunde*), its later designation (coinciding with the second half of the eighteenth century, or Late Enlightenment), aimed to study and acquire general knowledge of all peoples of the world. See Han F. Vermeulen, "Early History of Ethnography and Ethnology in the German Enlightenment: Anthropological Discourse in Europe and Asia, 1710-1808" (PhD dissertation, Leiden University, 2008), 271-76.

[2] See James Clifford, *Museum Realisms: What Does Realism Mean in Museum Contexts, Especially Those Concerned with Cross Cultural Translation?* (Leiden: Research Centre for Material Culture, 2016), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQL09kUTUes; Anna Brzyski, *Partisan Canons*, ed. Anna Brzyski (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); James Elkins (ed.), *Is Art History Global?* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[3] Okwui Enwezor, Rethinking Art with Curator Okwui Enwezor, interview by Quynh Tran, n.d., https://www.freundevonfreunden.com/interviews/rethinking-art-with-curator-okwui-enwezor/.

[4] In this regard, the National Ethnology Museum in Lisbon constitutes a notable exception. There, material culture from rural parts of Portugal are exhibited alongside Portuguese anthropological collections from former colonies and those added to the initial collection by donation or purchase. See http://www.patrimoniocultural.gov.pt/pt/museus-e-monumentos/rede-portuguesa/m/museu-nacional-de-etnologia/.

[5] Anke Bangma is currently Artistic Director of TENT in Rotterdam, a position she had already been appointed to at the time of our interview. At the National Museum of World Cultures, Bangma was curator for Photography and Contemporary Art. Before that, since 2011, she served as Curator for Contemporary Art at the Tropenmuseum.

[6] The merging of the three museums took place in 2013-2014. The curatorial team began their work in Leiden in 2015.

[7] Harrie Leyten, *From Idol to Art, African "Objects with Power": A Challenge for Missionaries, Anthropologists and Museum Curator* (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2015), 273.

[8] See Anthony Alan Shelton (ed.), *Fetishism: Visualizing Power and Desire* (London: South Bank Centre, 1995).

[9] Leyten, *From Idol to Art*, 285.

[10] Robert J. Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Painting* (New York: Harpers & Brothers, 1938), 9.

[11] Ibid, 1.

[12] Gillian Perry, "Primitivism and the 'Modern,'" in *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Gillian Perry, Francis Frascina, and Charles Harrison (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 3.

[13] Perry, "Primitivism and the 'Modern'," 4; James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 147-48.

[14] Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 148; Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Painting*, 7.

[15] I agree with Foster that Goldwater's discourse positions modern artists as "the heroes of the show" who took 'primitive' art from obscurity. This discourse would be continued in the *Primitivism* show in 1984. See Hal Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art," *October* 34 (1985), 56.

[16] Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 148.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art," 48-64.

[19] The avant-garde contains two streams: the 'heroic' and the 'anarchic'. They are distinguished in relation to the artist's role: while the 'heroic' artist is considered an individual thinker who works in isolation, the 'anarchic' artist is envisioned as a 'spokesperson' who voices the concerns of his community.

[20] In the last century, art historians have demonstrated interest in expanding its theory and scope. Yet, it has only considered disciplinary expansion when an 'avant-garde' gesture occurs; the avant-garde is known for changing the way art is made, shown, and received. Meanwhile, the discipline has accepted and slowly accommodated the art of non-Western peoples but resisted identification and validation of their avant-garde gestures. This has been a major preoccupation when proposing a Third Avant-Garde for the non-Western world. See Veiga, "The Third Avant-Garde: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia Recalling Tradition" (PhD dissertation, Leiden University, 2018), https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/62200.

[21] Fieke Konijn, "A Universal Language of Art: Two Exhibitions of Non-Western Art in Dutch Museums of Modern Art," in *Art, Anthropology and the Modes of Re-Presentation: Museums and Contemporary Non-Western Art*, ed. Harrie Leyten and Bibi Damen (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 1992), 25.

[22] Z. S. Strother, "À La Recherche de l'Afrique Dans Negerplastik de Carl Einstein," trans. Camille Joseph, *Gradhiva* 14 (2011), 32.

[23] Leyten, *From Idol to Art*, 288.

[24] Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Painting*, 6.

[25] Kari-Anne Stienstra, "Discussing 'Global Art' and the Role of the Museum: Museological Challenges of Global Contemporary Art in the Tropenmuseum and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam" (Master's thesis, Leiden, 2015), 39.

[26] Leonor Veiga, "The Nouvel Turn: Architecture and Cultural Framing" (Collecting Geographies, Amsterdam: unpublished, 2013).

[27] Harrie Leyten, "Foreword," in *Art, Anthropology and the Modes of Re-Presentation*, 11.

[28] Ibid, 9.

[29] Leyten, *From Idol to Art*, 288.

[30] The Colonial Museum in Amsterdam was named *Tropenmuseum*; the Museum of Geography and Ethnography in Rotterdam was named the *Wereldmuseum*. See Leyten, *From Idol to Art*, 263.

[31] Ibid, 265.

[32] Leyten, "Foreword," 11.

[33] Okwui Enwezor, "The Black Box," in *Documenta 11_ Platform 5: Exhibition Catalogue*, ed. Heike Ander and Nadja Rottner (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 45.

[34] Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, "Art and Craft; Primitive Art and Academic Art. Dancing with Classifications in Brazil" (Changing Global Hierarchies of Value? Museums, Artifacts, Frames, and Flows, Copenhagen, 2018).

[35] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (London: Routledge, 1932).

[36] Walter Imilan and Francisca Marquez, "Urban Ethnography," ed. Anthony Orum, *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Studies* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2019), 2.

[37] Ibid, 2.

[38] In this regard, there is a clear distinction from art and artifacts from Asia. Africa, which is considered 'developing' today, was once regarded as 'primitive' (up until at least the 1980s). In contrast, Asia was simply regarded as 'traditional' and thus 'unchanging'. Places like India, Java,

Japan, and China were, already during the colonial era, considered 'civilized'. The clarity and sharp distinction that allows for a Africa/Europe dichotomy of 'us/them' that the African example suggests does not exist for Asia.

[39] Leyten, "Foreword," 9.

[40] It is generally accepted that contemporary art starts in the 1970s, with the emergence of postmodernism.

[41] Stienstra, "Discussing 'Global Art' and the Role of the Museum," 37.

[42] Mirjam Shatanawi, "Collection Discourse: Contemporary Collecting," in *Tropenmuseum for a Change*, ed. Daan van Dartel (Karlsruhe: KIT, 2009), 63.

[43] Mirjam Shatanawi, "Contemporary Art in Ethnographic Museums," in *The Global Art World: Audiences, Markets, and Museums,* ed. Hans Belting and Andreas Buddensieg (Karlsruhe: Hatje Cantz, 2009), 368.

[44] Ibid., 368.

[45] Leyten, *From Idol to Art*, 273.

[46] Konijn, "A Universal Language of Art," 24-26.

[47] Thomas McEvilley, "Exhibition Strategies in the Postcolonial Era," in *Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions*, ed. Apinan Poshyananda (New York: Asia Society, 1996), 3.

[48] Jean Fisher, "The Syncretic Turn: Cross-Cultural Practice in the Age of Multiculturalism," in *Theory in Contemporary Art since 1985*, ed. Zaya Kocur and Simon Leung (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 233-34.

[49] Ibid, 234.

[50] Frans Fontaine, "Contemporary Art in the 'Mexico City' Exhibition in Amsterdam," in *Art, Anthropology and the Modes of Re-Presentation*, 37.

[51] Leonor Veiga, "A Little *Documenta* in Arnhem," *Leiden Arts and Society Blog*, 18 August 2016, https://www.leidenartsinsocietyblog.nl/articles/a-little-documenta-in-arnhem.

[52] Stienstra, "Discussing 'Global Art' and the Role of the Museum," 44.

[53] Fontaine, "Contemporary Art in the 'Mexico City' Exhibition," 38-39.

[54] See Leyten, *From Idol to Art*, 8; Shatanawi, "Contemporary Art in Ethnographic Museums," 368.

[55] 1989 can be considered a hinge year for several reasons: first, the fall of the Berlin Wall and second, the invention of the internet by English scientist Tim Berners-Lee would trigger globalization as we experience it today.

[56] Clifford, *Museum Realisms*.

[57] For more on this subject, of the introduction of new art forms in the art museum and within art history, see Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993).

[58] Veiga, "The Third Avant-Garde."

[59] Ernest van den Haag, "Art and the Mass Audience," in *Museums in Crisis*, ed. Brian O'Doherty (New York: George Braziller, 1972), 66.

[60] Leyten, *From Idol to Art*, 283.

[61] Veiga, "The Third Avant-Garde."

[62] While Western nations have transferred their academic models to their former colonies, they refused to recognize the value of non-Western modern and contemporary art expressions until recently. While this is certainly an important aspect of the relationship between the emergence of modern and contemporary art within ethnology collections, these considerations stretch beyond the scope of this article.

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