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*Relocating Artists, Objects, and Ideas, 1910–1970*

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## Editorial

# Modernism in Migration: Relocating Artists, Objects, and Ideas, 1910– 1970

Gregor Langfeld and  
Tessel. M. Bauduin

Today, a majority of many populations worldwide view migration negatively.<sup>1</sup> In times of increasing xenophobia, with Europe's walls-up policy and a steadily growing amount of border walls (three times as many as during the Cold War), migration is regarded as a disturbing element in society.<sup>2</sup> Politics mainly focuses on stemming migration flows, often with cruel consequences. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, migration denotes the movement of a person, group, or people from one locality or country to another, often for the purpose of settlement.<sup>3</sup> Such a relocation can be permanent, temporary, or seasonal. More specific terms are used in migration research, such as exile, diaspora, and transmigration.<sup>4</sup> Exile and diaspora refer to the experience of persecution and forced emigration from a home country. Exile, unlike diaspora (e.g., Jewish or African), tends to be considered an individual and temporary experience. However, the distinction between these terms can be provisional; exile can become diaspora over time, if the desired return to the homeland fails to materialize. The term transmigration is applied to migrants who maintain relationships between their country of origin and country of residence. Unlike immigrants, transnational or transregional migrants do not leave their homeland behind; their sense of belonging is not limited to one place.<sup>5</sup> Certainly these distinctions tend to be imprecise, and must be determined with regard to particular cases.

The term migration is also used in relation to material and immaterial objects, forms, and ideas, which pass or are passed from one place to another.<sup>6</sup> With regard to art history specifically, it is strongly connected with Aby Warburg's concept of *Bildwanderung*, the migration of images, which are not bound by borders and can be appropriated, adapted, and transformed.<sup>7</sup> In this issue of *Stedelijk Studies* we employ a broad definition of migration—that is, the movement of people, objects, and ideas from one location to another—in our focus on developments within the arts between 1910 and 1970. We include both voluntary and forced migration, which cannot always be differentiated from each other clearly. Yet we do not wish to level out the varying forms of notably forced migration in their specific contexts, which are, moreover, always bound to the fates of individuals. The Stedelijk Museum exhibition *Migrant Artists in Paris* forms the impetus for this issue, yet we will look beyond Paris as a center alone.<sup>8</sup>

Migration can be considered a condition of processes of modernization. Consequently, it is also bound up with developments in modernist art since the late nineteenth century. The period under consideration is accordingly extremely well-suited for developing transnational and transregional art historical approaches.<sup>9</sup> Especially since twentieth-century artists, art agents, artworks, and ideas about art moved about on an unprecedented scale, and certainly not within Europe alone. Modernist movements, and in particular the historical avant-gardes, were international phenomena consisting of artists actively seeking collaboration across national borders. During modernism, artists moved to international art centers with vibrant art scenes, were educated at academies abroad, formed groups across borders, and organized international exhibitions, relocating works of art and ideas of artists from one place to another. Thus, we may view migration as a driving force of modernism. In her contribution to this issue, Sabine Eckmann teases out the relation between artistic exile and modernism. She points to similarities between the experience in exile and the notion of modernism as a reflection of crisis, between mobility and temporariness in exile and mobility and speed as symptoms of modern life, or the aspects of alienation, disorientation, and loss. She argues that the notion of the modern artist as an outsider living on the margins of society might be compared with exile as a state of being. According to Edward Said, exiles are always eccentrics who feel their difference as a kind of orphanhood.<sup>10</sup>

Migration and transnationality are connected with the question of when and where modernism and modernity took place. This draws attention to different geographies, speeds of development, and transformations during migration processes. One of our goals when conceiving this issue was to exceed the geographical limitation of Western Europe and the United States, and to address what Partha Mitter has described as “the historically uneven relation between center and periphery.”<sup>11</sup> Today this dialectical tension and the definition of center and periphery, which obviously depends

on who is talking and has the power to legitimize a specific understanding of it, is reevaluated. This issue therefore includes such diverse case studies as the transformations of cubism in Iran, artistic networks between India and Eastern Europe, cultural exchanges between Iraq and the Soviet Union, the Brazilian anthropophagy movement, and South African “settler primitivism,” among other contributions.

As Said has underscored, the difference between earlier exiles and those of our time is scale. “Our age—with its modern warfare, imperialism and the quasi-theological ambitions of totalitarian rulers—is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration.”<sup>12</sup> During the twentieth century, repressive regimes such as National Socialism implemented art policies based on extreme forms of “racial purity” and exclusion, forcing more than 10,000 writers and artists into exile in the German-speaking regions of Europe alone.<sup>13</sup> The first articles in this issue focus on that regime. In the opening article, Sabine Eckmann describes how exile studies emerged in the late 1960s, in the wake of an increased interest in the Third Reich and the Holocaust.<sup>14</sup> She uncovers how this research area developed different and sometimes contradictory perspectives. Often such studies have a biographical character.

Burcu Dogramaci’s article about group portraits of artistic exile in New York is closely related to the opening text by Eckmann. Dogramaci discusses a genre of art that has received little attention in exile studies so far. She focuses on community and belonging in the work of the painter Arthur Kaufmann (1888–1971) and the photographer Hermann Landshoff (1905–1986), showing how their portraits expose displacement—the shared experience of persecution and expulsion from the homeland—as a process of group formation and self-perception within the group, or as one of connection and seeking inclusivity within a foreign artistic and cultural community.

Obviously the migration of people is inextricably bound up with the migration of objects and ideas. Some contributions in this issue therefore discuss all three, albeit with different emphases. Eva-Maria Troelenberg reframes migration by tracing the itinerary of an object: a photographic portrait of Therese Graf, the mother of German novelist Oskar Maria Graf (1894–1967), who emigrated to New York in 1938. The travels of that photograph testify to her son’s exilic migration. While scholarship on Graf’s literary oeuvre has dealt with the narratives of vernacular history “from below,” Troelenberg’s discussion of the journey of this particular photograph offers a complementary visual perspective by way of its iconographic context. Even as the photograph itself speaks of an itinerary of change as much as of loss, its entanglement with histories of modernity and migration furthermore points towards the function of photography constituting, as Troelenberg argues, a “strong history” of migration.

The photographic theme is continued by Christina Wieder. She discusses the work of the Jewish photographer Grete Stern (1904–1999), who fled Nazi Germany in 1933 and later settled in Argentina. Wieder focuses on the photomontages Stern produced between 1948 and 1951 for the women’s magazine *Idilio*. These photomontages not only played an important role in the modernization of Argentinean photography and feminist art but also encouraged dissemination of psychoanalysis in Argentina. They are analyzed in the context of the exilic experience as well as of Peronist visual culture at the time, when severe restrictions dominated artistic practices in Argentina.

Throughout this issue, Europe repeatedly serves as a point of reference. One reason for this is that, until World War II, Paris served as a main center of attraction for artists and art agents from all over the world, not only from within but also from outside Europe. Several contributions touch upon this development in particular. Firstly, Annabel Ruckdeschel discusses the *École de Paris*, a label for foreign artists who moved to the French capital. She focuses on the transformations, relocations, and interpretations of this ambivalent label by analyzing exhibitions about the *École de Paris* in Italy, Brazil, and the United States. Ruckdeschel makes clear how, within the transregional dynamics between Paris and other sites of modern art, different meanings, oscillating between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, were attributed to the “School of Paris” by actors involved in the art scene.

Camila Maroja redirects the conventional understanding of modernism as radiating out from Europe to the rest of the world, in this case taking South America as her subject. She analyses the transatlantic travels of the Brazilian painter Tarsila do Amaral (1886–1973), who was instrumental in shaping the anthropophagy movement together with writer Oswald de Andrade (1890–1954). Anthropophagy, which was inspired by the country’s colonial history, allowed local intellectuals to self-represent as “cannibals”; instead of being devoured by Europe, Brazilians would devour Europe, taking what was most culturally nutritious and in the process inverting power relations between center and periphery. Additionally, Maroja reconsiders predominant understandings of primitivism and persistent concerns about the derivativeness of Latin American art.

In several contributions to this issue alternative perspectives on modernist movements, as well as their time frames and locations, are explored. Katrin Nahidi discusses how experiences of migration and transcultural processes of translation shaped the development of modernist arts in Iran. She focuses on the painter Jalil Ziapour (1920–1999), known as the “father of modernism” in Iran, and specifically on Orphic cubist theory, translated in the Iranian context through Sufi metaphors and at the same time reflective of the politically engaged climate in the Middle East, beyond its perception through Western orientalist painting traditions.

Subsequently, Olga Nefedova turns to the first Iraqi modern art exhibition in the Soviet Union, which took place in 1959, working from previously unknown archival material. This traveling exhibition was organized within the framework of a bilateral agreement signed between Iraq and the USSR promoting mutual understanding and cultural exchange. Nefedova sheds light on how the exhibition was perceived in the context of socialist realism, focusing less on migration itself and more on processes closely related to it, oftentimes prefiguring or following it, such as cultural transfer and diplomacy.

Lisa Hörstmann analyses how two artists, the painter Irma Stern (1894–1966), known as the “pioneer” of South African modernism, and the sculptor Lippy Lipshitz (1903–1980) laid the foundations for a South African “settler primitivism,” which was partly based in European appreciation for African art as well as in Carl Einstein’s *Negerplastik* (1915). Stern and Lipshitz migrated to South Africa early in their lives but kept close ties with their European origins. Largely neglected in Western art historical narratives is that the aesthetic appreciation for such objects returned to their countries of origin. In contrast to European artists, South African “primitivists” were in regular contact with those whom they portrayed as “primitives,” knowing that the ethnic tribal peoples they idolized were not representative of black South Africans at that point in time. The artists utilized traditional black culture to proclaim their own indigeneity, creating an art which was received as an expression of a new national culture while also furthering cultural differences.

Finally, Simone Wille discusses the Indian artist Chittaprosad Bhattacharya (1915–1978), whose fame and recognition, gained in pre-partition India, did not carry over into the post-partition era. Chittaprosad is best known for his visual reportages on the Bengal famine in 1943–1944. His dissociation from the communist party in 1948, along with the general atmosphere in postcolonial India with concerns for signatures of national-modern art, left little room for him, which instigated him to build on a network beyond the national frame. The artist came to be relegated to a discourse on art in India that existed parallel to the dominant one. Art promoters in Czechoslovakia became interested in his work, which increasingly circulated within a transnational network that was marked by solidarity with a socialist outlook and paired with a curiosity for traditional and folk arts. This dialogical field contributed to an alternative geography of modernism between the decolonizing and the communist world of the late 1940s up to the late 1970s.

This *Stedelijk Studies* issue unites a diversity of articles which demonstrate how fruitful the topic of migration can be within current art history. It moves away from the unsatisfying concept of national art history, addressing regional, transcultural, universalist, and cosmopolitan dynamics within artistic migration. Many of the contributions have, to a greater or lesser extent, connections with Western Europe. However, these connections are placed in

a global context, shining new light on the dialectical interrelationships between center and periphery. Other articles expand the geographies of modernism by focusing on relations within the Global South. With this issue we hope to provide a constructive contribution to current art historical challenges and a broadened view on modernism, characterized by a plurality of speeds, forms, contents, and localities.

Tessel M. Bauduin is an independent art historian associated with the University of Amsterdam. Her monograph, *Surrealism and the Occult*, was published in 2014. She has also published on modern art, surrealism, occultism and automatism, Hilma af Klint, and Hieronymus Bosch, among other things. She has co-edited *Surrealism, Occultism and Politics: In Search of the Marvellous* (2017); *The Occult in Modernist Art, Literature and Cinema* (2018); and a special issue of *The Journal of Art Historiography* on “The Canonisation of Modernism: Exhibition Strategies in the 20th and 21st Century” (2018). A laureate of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research’s VI-programme for Excellence in Research, her study of the reception of the old masters of surrealism will appear in 2021.

Gregor Langfeld is Assistant Professor in the History of Modern and Contemporary Art at the University of Amsterdam, and from February 2020 he will be Professor of Modern Art at the Open University (Heerlen). His books include *Duitse kunst in Nederland: Verzamelen, tentoonstellen, kritieken, 1919–1964* (2004) and *Deutsche Kunst in New York: Vermittler – Kunstsammler – Ausstellungsmacher, 1904–1957* (2011; English translation, 2015: *German Art in New York: The Canonization of Modern Art between 1904 and 1957*). In 2015 Langfeld edited the catalogue for the exhibition *The Stedelijk Museum and the Second World War* (also published in Dutch), which arose from his previous research on the provenance of the museum’s collection. In 2018 he edited “The Canonisation of Modernism: Exhibition Strategies in the 20th and 21st Century,” the feature section in *The Journal of Art Historiography*. He is currently editing the correspondence between George Grosz and Herbert Fiedler.

1. This is the result of a survey which Ipsos conducted in twenty-five countries around the world: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United States, Serbia, Peru, and New Zealand. However, the study reveals significant differences between countries. “Global Views on Immigration and the Refugee Crisis,” Ipsos Immigration and Refugees Poll (September 2017), accessed November 4, 2019, [https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2017-09/ipsos-global-advisor-immigration-refugee-crisis-slides\\_0.pdf](https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2017-09/ipsos-global-advisor-immigration-refugee-crisis-slides_0.pdf).
2. Sixty new border fences, walls, and barriers have been erected since 1990, or are currently planned or under construction.

- During the Cold War there were only nineteen, ten of which still exist. Currently most borders have the explicit objective to exclude migrants. Marc Engelhardt, ed., "Willkommen in der Ära der Mauern," in *Ausgeschlossen. Eine Weltreise entlang Mauern, Zäunen und Abgründen* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2018), 9–14, 9–10.
3. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Migration," accessed November 4, 2019, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/118324?redirectedFrom=migration#eid>.
  4. Jenny Kuhlmann, "Analytical Concepts in Migration Studies," in *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*, ed. Matthias Middell (London: Routledge, 2018), 392–399.
  5. *Ibid.*, 396.
  6. For example, for documenta 12 (2007), Roger M. Buergel and Ruth Noack developed the programmatic concept of "The Migration of Forms." Documenta, "documenta 12," accessed November 4, 2019, [https://www.documenta.de/en/retrospective/documenta\\_12](https://www.documenta.de/en/retrospective/documenta_12).
  7. See, for example, the Bilderfahrzeuge ("image vehicles") project, accessed November 4, 2019, <https://iconology.hypotheses.org/uber>. Migration in relation to the arts is currently a growing topic of study in our field. For instance, there is an increasing number of calls for papers for conferences about artistic migration in specific parts of the world, such as Latin America, Iberia, and Central and Northern Europe, about designer and architect emigrants, and about émigré art historians, to mention just a few examples. Furthermore, the 2020 world congress of the Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art (CIHA) in São Paulo will be dedicated to migration. See the CIHA website, accessed November 4, 2019, <http://www.ciha.org/sites/default/files/files/CIHA-MIGRATIONS2020.pdf>.
  8. See *Chagall, Picasso, Mondrian and Others: Migrant Artists in Paris*, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (September 21, 2019–February 2, 2020), <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/exhibitions/chagall-picasso-mondriaan-and-others-migrant-artists-in-paris>.
  9. See, for example, James Elkins, "Afterword," in *Circulations in the Global History of Art*, eds. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), 203–229; Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, *Les avant-gardes artistique: Une histoire transnationale*, vol. 1: 1848–1918, vol 2: 1918–1945 (Paris: Gallimard, 2015 and 2017); and the Artl@s project, accessed November 4, 2019, <https://artlas.huma-num.fr/en/>.
  10. Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, eds. Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cornel West. *Documentary Sources in Contemporary Art 4* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, [1984] 1990), 357–66, 363.
  11. Partha Mitter, "Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery," *The Art Bulletin* 90, no. 4 (December 1, 2008): 531–548, 542.  
Currently in migration studies a reorientation towards more global (and also contemporary) approaches takes place. See, for example, Burcu Dogramaci and Birgit Mersmann, eds., *Handbook of Art and Global Migration: Theories, Practices, and Challenges* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019).
  12. Said, "Reflections on Exile," 357.
  13. Claus-Dieter Krohn, Patrick von zur Mühlen, Gerhard Paul, and Lutz Winckler, "Einleitung," in *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933–1945*, eds. Claus-Dieter Krohn, Patrick von zur Mühlen, Gerhard Paul, and Lutz Winckler (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998), 925–930, 925.
  14. Eckmann has edited, together with Stephanie Barron, the catalogue of the seminal exhibition *Exiles and Émigrés: The Flight of European Artists from Hitler* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1997).