

ART CENTERS AND PERIPHERAL ART [A LECTURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAMBURG, OCTOBER 15, 1982]

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The title of my talk is “Art Centers and Peripheral Art.” The subject to which I have assigned this title touches several aspects of our discipline. I would briefly like to raise several questions which have led me to the discussion of this topic.

1. Naturally, the most important, most complicated question for us art historians, but I believe also for historians in general—a problem, by the way, which we shall never “solve,” but answer differently depending on our points of view—is the following: *how* and *why* does form change?¹ Which available *tools* or *means* make it possible for art historians to capture these changes?

I think that the point I am hinting at here with “art centers and peripheral art” touches on this question: in the *relationship* of center and periphery, in the effect of an art center, and in the dissemination of its production to the periphery. In inundating and overpowering the art production of the periphery, the history of art is *also* being made.²

1 This has been, no doubt, the central question at least of German-language art history since the end of the 19th century (Heinrich Wölfflin, August Schmarsow, Alois Riegl).

2 This, too, cannot be emphasized enough. The history of art is created from (among other factors) the (unequal) interrelationship of periphery and center. Just as misleading as it is to want to understand a history of art only from the point of view of the center (even if it is done with cultivated impassiveness), it would be exactly as misleading to understand the history of art as a static juxtaposition of center and periphery. However, what is being

2. A second question that arises from this subject is that of art geography: periphery and center, are they not also geographical terms?³

It is the purpose of my talk to plead for a revival and reorientation of art geography in the sense that a dimension should be taken into account which has received too little consideration until now, namely one that could be designated with the troublesome expression “political art geography.”

3. A third question, very closely connected with the earlier ones: the problem of *discontinuity* in history, for us, *in the history of art*.

I said that an art historian is constantly confronted with the question of historical development (which does not absolutely have to result in evolutionism).

I think that it would be helpful to consider the cases of discontinuity *alongside* attempts to access history by means of studying historical continuity, to search also *in the other direction*, in order to arrive at the same objective, which is capturing, grasping, the course of history.

And what would offer an easier access to this matter than the analysis of *the unequal relationship* of center and periphery, the consideration of the frequently *powerful* penetration of the art production of a center into the periphery?

4. The fourth question is already asked, by mentioning an unequal relationship between periphery and center: it is the question of the *resistance* to, and/or the *accommodation* of, art production in the periphery to the art production of the powerful center.

5. Which presents us with the fifth question, formulated in this way: is art produced in the periphery also a *peripheral* art, in the *derogatory* sense, as I formulated it polemically in the title of my presentation?

Viewed etymologically, the periphery may be a fringe subject,

pleaded for here is that we will one day (until the desired larger syntheses become possible) change the perspective and will also observe historical developments from the point of view of the periphery. One could, of course, pose the question of whether it makes any sense at all to demand of institutions or institutionalized art history of the center that they will abandon the point of view of the center. That is something we cannot really expect. One could plead for it nevertheless and convince at least a few individual researchers of the fruitfulness of such a change in perspective.

3 “Geographical terms” in the sense of a politically, sociohistorically oriented geography. Purely morphologically speaking, the globe does not have a “natural” “center” on its surface.

peripheral is that which is located at the fringes, upon which no value judgment is expressed for the time being. Still, the word has never been free of another meaning: that which was located at the fringes was also viewed as inferior. It is very obvious that the word *peripheral* does have this *double meaning*, and my reading of *Der Spiegel* after my arrival in Hamburg four days ago provided me with additional evidence.

In an article in the edition from October 11, 1982, about the efforts of the West German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, after and in spite of his reappointment as Foreign Minister in the Kohl government, “to play the old Genscher,” *Der Spiegel* wrote:

On the couch in the Maisonette Suite on the 29th floor of the UN Plaza Hotel, his face brightens up as soon as a colleague pays his respects in the glare of the TV floodlights. This is how he manages, in Genscher style and without any special effort, sixteen foreign ministers in thirty-six hours—among them Gromyko, the American George Shultz, China’s Huang Hua, and East Berlin’s Oskar Fischer. “Peripheral schedules,” Genscher instructs his diplomats, would have to be rejected or canceled. Among the things which do not contribute any splendor, and were canceled for this reason, was a dinner with six African foreign ministers.

Without doubt, the derogatory sense of *peripheral* is clear here: peripheral is that which has no splendor and, therefore, does not contribute any glamor, that which is relatively insignificant, second-rate, *provincial* in the derogatory sense. Naturally, that definitely includes African foreign ministers, because Africa, as everybody knows, is a European province.

6. A sixth problem, which belongs in this context, is undoubtedly the problem of Eurocentrism, or perhaps more correctly, that of Euro-American centrism.

When I talk about *art centers and peripheral art*, I would also like to touch on the following fact, namely the prevailing conviction in the United States and in Europe (here, the West and East are understood as one entity) that everything which is produced outside of these regions is simply inferior and, at best, could be viewed favorably as the artistic expression of mentally impaired adults or as “nice” folk art.

Can we apply the old relationship of capital (or metropolis) and

province to this world dimension?⁴ Could we say that Europe and the United States are for Africa or Latin America that which Berlin was for the Mark Brandenburg (Margraviate of Brandenburg) or Paris for Normandy in the second half of the 19th century?

7. Finally, a seventh question, which originates with the problems of art reception. During the past fifteen years, we have entertained very many thoughts about the reception of art and literature, particularly in the study of literature. Reception theory and reception history have almost achieved the status of fashion vocabulary. Today, the flood appears to have somewhat ebbed away.

I am convinced that the series of questions suggested by the term *reception* will play a groundbreaking role in the future for the development of art history as a discipline. Because in art history, we have not yet by a long shot made use of the approaches of reception theory and the possible models of reception history. If we consider what the prevailing tradition looks like inside the discipline, where the beholders of images are simply ignored as sociohistorical components of the images themselves, this is hardly surprising.

At this point, I believe that the formulation of the problem of the relationship of center-periphery can be useful and productive. What we describe with the word *reception*, which sometimes sounds too *passive*, and what from a macroscopic and supra-individual perspective looks rather like a *struggle for the appropriation of artistic products* by various interest groups (whilst the ruling classes have the decisive word in this appropriation process), this phenomenon very often, though not always, contains two aspects which, as far as I know, have remained unnoticed by the literature about reception theory and which I would designate with the words *forced reception* and *suggested reception*.

4 As everybody knows, the contempt for the province belongs to the traditional common-places of metropolitan art critique of the 19th and 20th century. In a certain sense, my plea here also aims at a reassessment of the relationship province-metropolis in favor of the province. The embodiment of metropolitan arrogance is probably Sir Kenneth Clark's definition of the characteristics of provincial art: "These, then, seem to me to be the characteristics of a positive and independent provincial art: it tells a story; it takes pleasure in the facts; it is lyrical and it achieves a visionary intensity" (*Provincialism* [The English Association: London, 1962], 9). This implicit identification of "petty-bourgeois" and "provincial" is probably a fundamental condition for the middle-class or upper middle-class contempt of the provincial. As an example of a naive metropolitan approach to art in the English provinces, see Trevor Fawcett, *The Rise of English Provincial Art—Artists, Patrons and Institutions outside London, 1800–1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

This “forced reception” is also the one I mean when I refer to the *dependency* of the periphery on the center. On the other hand, “suggested reception” is probably the most prominent characteristic in artistic life, even inside the art centers, during the last forty years.

These are, in a few words, and viewed with a kaleidoscope, the main aspects of a subject which, in my opinion, is too important to continue being ignored by art history.⁵

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In the year 1836 (the Greek War of Independence had ended only a short while before), General Makriyannis intended to commission a painter to illustrate the fight for liberation of the Greeks against Turkish rule in a series of twenty-four paintings, of which four copies were to be made and presented to King Otto of Greece as well as the three rulers who were guaranteeing Greece’s independence, namely the Kings of England and France and the Czar of Russia.

How should he proceed to accomplish his goal? Let me read out the part from Makriyannis’s *Memoirs* which will lead us directly to several of the questions mentioned earlier:

... so I arrived in Athens and found a European painter [Makriyannis actually writes “a *Frank*”; during this time period, the word was used equally for all foreigners from Northern, Eastern, and Western Europe] and I commissioned these scenes from the wars of independence from him. I could not speak his language. He painted two-three pictures. They were not good. I paid him and he left. After I had sent this painter away, I sent the word and they brought me an old fighter from Sparta; his name was Panagiotis Zographos. He came to me and we discussed everything and agreed on the

5 The problem is exactly that these questions have been taken seriously in other areas in the meantime (anthropology, political sciences, art criticism, cultural policy, and historical research). It is only within art history that one has hardly dealt with them. In this context, I would like to refer to the important contribution by Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg (“Centro e periferia,” in *Storia dell’Arte Italiana, Parte Prima: Materiali e Problemi, Volume Primo: Questioni e Metodi*, Einaudi, Torino, 1979, 285–352; slightly modified and heavily shortened French translation in *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, no. 40, November 1981, 51–72), which unfortunately is limited only to Italy, as well as two personal publications (the catalog of the exhibition *Four Painters of 20th Century Greece*, Wildenstein Gallery, London, November–December 1975, 10–11; and “En torno al arte nacional,” Section V and VI, in *Plural*, no. 103, April 1980), in which I touched upon the problem formulated here under the aspect of a juxtaposition of “national art–imported imperialist culture.”

price for every painting. And he sent for his two sons, and I accommodated all three of them in my house while they were working on the paintings. This started in 1836 and ended in the year 1839. I took the painter along with me, and we walked up the mountains, and I said to him: “This happened at this point, that at the other point; this battle took place in the following way; the leader of the Greeks was that one, that of the Turks the other one.”⁶

We do not know the name of the painter from Northern Europe whose attempts earned the disapproval of General Makriyannis. Yet, it is characteristic of the Greek situation, as early as the middle of the thirties of the 19th century(!), that Makriyannis *first* called upon a non-Greek. As I said, we do not know who he was. But I believe that we are not wrong

when we imagine the works of the master, which Makriyannis disapproved of, as follows.

Here is a lithograph based on a study created by Peter von Hess in 1839. Hess, the painter of two known paintings at the Neue Pinakothek in Munich (*Arrival of King Otto in Nauplia on February 6, 1833* and *Reception of King Otto in Athens on January 13, 1835*), recorded the fight for the liberation of the Greeks in a series of thirty-nine sketches (today also at the Neue Pinakothek in Munich), based on which H. Kohler printed his lithographs in 1852.⁷

We see here his depiction of the conquest of Acrocorinth by Panurgias. This is approximately how we would have to imagine the rejected representations by the “Frank”: with



Peter von Hess. *The Conquest of Acrocorinth by Panourgias*, 1839. Lithograph by H. Kohler, 1852.

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- 6 Yannis Vlachoyannis, *Archive of General I. Makriyannis*, Volume II, Athens 1907, 349.
- 7 *Befreiung Griechenlands in XXXIX Bildern*, entworfen von Peter Hess auf Befehl seiner Majestät Ludwig I. König von Bayern, in 10 Heften a 4 Blatt, 1852–1854. According to Joseph Maillinger (*Bilder-Chronik der königlichen Haupt- und Residenzstadt München vom XV. bis in das XIX. Jahrhundert*, Munich, Publishing House of the Montmorillon Art Dealers, Volume II, 1876, no. 1359, 86 and no. 128, 14–15), the lithographs of Kohler and Atzinger are based on the “Original boards for the paintings executed in wax paints from modern Greek history by Nilson in the arcades of the Courtgarden in the years 1841–1844, drawn with chalk by P. Hess.” According to Stelios Lydakis (*Die Geschichte der neugriechischen Malerei*, Athens, Melissa, 1976, 461), the lithographs were produced based on the series of oil sketches, also designed by Hess, and now located in the Neue Pinakothek in Munich.



Panagiotis Zographos. *First Battle of the Greeks against the Turks at the Bridge of Alamana*, 1836–39. Watercolor on cardboard, 50 × 63 cm. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

such an understanding of pictorial space; with the excessive attention that is paid to the main hero; with such an accumulation of figures full of local color in the foreground; etc. Obviously, Makriyannis did not want to hear or see anything of that nature.⁸

Let us take a look at what he preferred in its place: a watercolor on cardboard, 50 × 63 cm by Panagiotis (or more correctly: Dimitrios) Zographos (there is a long discussion about the identity of Panagiotis and the involvement of his sons in the completion of the four series; a debate which is not of interest to us at this moment⁹), which is preserved in the Gennadios Library in Athens. The title of the work is *First*

8 The specialist literature is divided into two large camps in the interpretation of the reasons for rejecting the “Frank” by Makriyannis. Many authors are of the opinion that “the work of the western artist leaves Makriyannis unsatisfied, for reasons that have nothing to do with aesthetic preference. . . . As far as Makriyannis was concerned, the paintings had to feature all the elements which would have been present in the reporting of a battle and, at the same time, all the military events of the fight for liberation would have to be mentioned,” which would practically rule out a collaboration with an academic artist from the thirties (Spyros Asdrachas: “Makriyannis and Panayotis Zographos—The History of Illustration of the Fight for Liberation,” in *The Greek Painters, Volume I: From the 19th to the 20th Century*, Melissa, Athens, 1974, 17–18). I prefer the second interpretation (which does see an aesthetic-culturally conditioned partisanship in the rejection of the paintings by the “Frank”), as it has already been championed categorically by Angelos Prokopiou, 1821 in *Folk Painting*, Athens, no year [1940], 16–17 and 211–229.

9 I believe that the research by Angeliki Fenerli (“The Painters of Makriyannis: Dimitrios and Panayotis Zographos,” in *O Politis*, no. 36, July 1980, 52–63) in the Greek National Archives has solved the problem in a convincing manner.

Battle of the Greeks against the Turks at the Bridge of Alamana and Death of the Commander-in-Chief Diakos, the Archbishop of Salona Isaias and Other Gallant Officers.

On the right, we see the city of Lamia with its castle, the Turkish army, infantry, and cavalry, no. 6 the hero Diakos, no. 7 the archbishop, etc.

A different scale of values prevails here: viewed from an art-historical *and* from a *West and Central European perspective*, we would say that the painter “was not familiar with the achievements of the Italian Renaissance”; that we are facing a mixture of Byzantine tradition and folk art. And yes, it could remind us of Persian and Turkish miniature painting. Drawing on cultural history, however, we would say that the recipients of such works would consider the greatness of the individual more in his deeds and less in the traits of his physiognomy.

To be stressed above all: Greece, the Orient, are not understood here as either picturesque or sentimental, characteristics which we find constantly in West European art carried by philhellenism with Greek subjects from the years 1820 to 1880.

Back to our problem: General Makriyannis judged the works by Zographos *better* than the representations “by the Frank.” It is, perhaps, the last time (with the exception of the highly intellectualistic movement of the Fotis Kontoglou group in the 1930s, in which the battle cry “Back to Byzantine painting—Down with European art!” was heard) that a modern Greek spontaneously preferred and supported a kind of painting that takes a different course than the West European pictorial tradition. *Resistance* toward West European tradition and complete affirmation of *one’s own tradition*, these appear in my opinion to be the conclusions to be drawn from the incident of the year 1836.

However, the periphery of Europe was soon inundated by the Central, West, and East European painting tradition.

In the case of Greece, one can read the phases of the country’s political dependency directly from the periods of the history of its painting.

A Bavarian was the first king and Bavarian was the first school of modern Greek painting after the establishment of an independent state in the year 1830—the “Munich School,” as it is called. For peripheral Athens, the center of “Western” painting was located on the Isar for half a century. Theodoros Vryzakis (1819–1878), trained in the Munich Academy, painted this scene in 1847, entitled *The Consolation* or *Solace*, which can be regarded as the emblem of Greek dependency on the European image of Greece.



Theodoros Vryzakis. *The Consolation (Solace)*, 1847. Oil on canvas, 44 × 57 cm. National Gallery, Athens. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Nothing is missing: national costumes, sentimentalism, the reference to antiquity; a cool, “romantic” landscape. The only thing which Vryzakis was probably missing was the knowledge that this painting technique did not have its center in Munich, but in Paris. The Greek took from his center, namely Munich, what Munich had taken from its center, namely Paris—the model which Gustave Schnetz and Leopold Robert had worked out in Rome during the 1820s.

The entire problem, to which I would like to direct your attention today, lies here: in the instinctive *resistance* of 1836 and in the conformity of 1847, in these two works which were created in a time span of eleven years, but which are actually separated by centuries. Let us rather say: they represent two worlds.

. . .

At the age of twenty-eight, in the year 1914, the Mexican painter Diego Rivera painted a picture in Paris which provides testimony for his friendship with Picasso and Juan Gris.¹⁰

An artist of the periphery paints the *Sailor at Lunch (Marinero almorzando)*, in the center, within the prevailing understanding of the

10 Primarily residing in Paris since 1908, Rivera started his cubist paintings at a time when “actual” Cubism was approaching its close and had started to transform itself into the “established avant-garde,” namely in the year 1913. Some of his works of 1912 (the year of “rapid expansion and internationalization of Cubism” according to Douglas Cooper) are referred to as “pre-Cubist” by the critics (e.g., Berta Taracena). For Rivera’s cubism in general, see Rita Eder, “El periodo cubista de Diego Rivera,” in the catalog of the exhibition *Diego Rivera: Exposición Nacional de Homenaje*, Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City, 1977–1978, 79–88.



Diego Rivera. *Sailor at Lunch (Marinero almorzando)*, 1914. Oil on canvas, 114 x 170 cm. Museo Casa Diego Rivera, Guanajuato, Marte R. Gómez Collection, INBA. © 2020 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photograph by Museo Casa Estudio Diego Rivera y Frida Kahlo, Guanajuato.

center.¹¹ Undoubtedly, this is a *model* instance of what I am calling *adaptation*, *conformation*, or *accommodation*.

Approximately ten years later, after a successful bourgeois revolution in Mexico, Rivera, who has become a supporter of socialism by now, starts his fresco cycle in the Ministry of Education.¹²

The Embrace was one of the earliest frescos of this cycle, created around 1923. One could hardly imagine a more complete rejection of the art of the European center than here.¹³ This does not mean that the thorough studies of Italian fresco painting of the 14th and

15th century and the knowledge of contemporary art of the European metropolises do not shimmer through.¹⁴ It merely means that we are dealing with an understanding of volume, even of the *image* as such (not to

11 More likely: “in an art perception that in the meantime had come to prevail in the center.” Obviously, the entire question “What is an art center?” or “How is an art center structured?” or “Which are the mechanisms that reproduce an art center and maintain it?” is raised at this point. An art center can maintain itself only when it is constantly admitting elements of the periphery but transforms them at the same time. The art center itself has a hierarchically designed structure. The question of which elements play an important role on a permanent basis and which depend on the economic situation, how they differ from country to country and according to historic periods (the artistic milieu and its recruitment, private galleries, art criticism, state cultural policy, acquisition policy and organization of exhibitions at the national museums, patronage, etc.) can neither be posed nor be answered in the context of the present paper (see footnote 2).

12 A member of the communist party of Mexico since 1922, Rivera was granted the huge commission in the same year by Jose Vasconcelos, Minister of Education and Culture at the time, a commission that he started working on in 1923 and completely finished only in 1928. In collaboration with other artists (primarily Xavier Guerrero, Jean Charlot, Carlos Merida), 1,585 square meters of walls on three floors of the building were painted in frescos.

13 The transition appears to be formed by the fresco *The Creation*, painted in 1922 in the Bolivar auditorium of the National Preparatory School.

14 Jean Charlot attempted to answer the question “What were the reasons that brought about this sudden change of heart and radical change of style?” by arguing that it was precisely

mention the preference for monumental painting¹⁵), which intentionally turned its back on the “avant-garde” art that was prevalent in the center at the time.

This inclination toward monumentalism and surface quality can be found, by the way, both in the mural painting of the Aztecs as well as the Mayas, and the turn of the Mexican muralists toward pre-Columbian art is attested to from the beginning by their manifestoes. Rivera’s own obsession with collecting pre-Columbian art is well-known.

Let us briefly look at *Tropical Mexico and the God Xochipilli and His Votaries*, Rivera’s fresco in the staircase of the Ministry of Education, created around 1926. Despite all the adoption of elements from the art of the center (now and then influences from Gauguin, as is the case here; in other works adoptions from George Grosz, Otto Dix, even from Hodler),¹⁶ we can say that the model character of the art center



Diego Rivera. *Tropical Mexico and the God Xochipilli and His Votaries*, 1926. Fresco, north wall, Patio del Trabajo, Secretariat of Public Education Main Headquarters, Mexico City. © 2020 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photograph by Rafael Doniz.

Rivera’s trip to Italy in November of 1920 (which, by the way, was financed by Vasconcelos) to study Italian fresco painting (“Diego Rivera in Italy,” in *An Artist on Art—Collected Essays of Jean Charlot* (University Press of Hawaii: Honolulu, 1972), Volume II, 213–230). The argument was actually provided first by Rivera himself (“After I had roamed through the peninsula all the way to Sicily, I returned to Paris with 325 drawings. That was the material on which I wanted to base my Mexican attempts”; see the catalog of the exhibition *Kunst der Mexikanischen Revolution* (NGFBK: West-Berlin, 1974), 139). To a large extent, it certainly explains a work such as *The Creation* (see footnote 13), and perhaps a thing or two about the earliest frescoes in the Ministry of Education, but hardly Rivera’s new style as a whole or the phenomenon of Mexican fresco painting as such.

- 15 “We reject the so-called easel painting and the entire art of ultra-intellectual circles and praise the style of monumental art, because it is public possession and useful to the public” is declared in the manifesto of the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors, signed by Rivera (1923).
- 16 Can we imagine that Gauguin, who fled from the center to Polynesia, or that the colony of artists from the remote farming village of Worpswede, viewed from a Mexican perspective (and be it from the perspective of the Mexican art center), also represent the art of the center? We have to manage with such a paradox, among other things.

is breaking up or that its models are being productively remodeled, in this phase of Mexican history in which the country's economic, political, and cultural dependency is being contested by large mass movements (which unite the liberal bourgeoisie, the working class, and the immense peasantry).

Part of the periphery turns its back on the center and creates its own world. It becomes *independent* and its own center.¹⁷ But can we explain this art historical phenomenon of formal changes without referring to political and social events?

The crushing of the pro-French dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz and the parallel decline of the attractiveness of the French art center¹⁸—in what other way would it be possible for these undoubtable facts to enter into the discourse of the discipline of art history than by means of a political geography of art?

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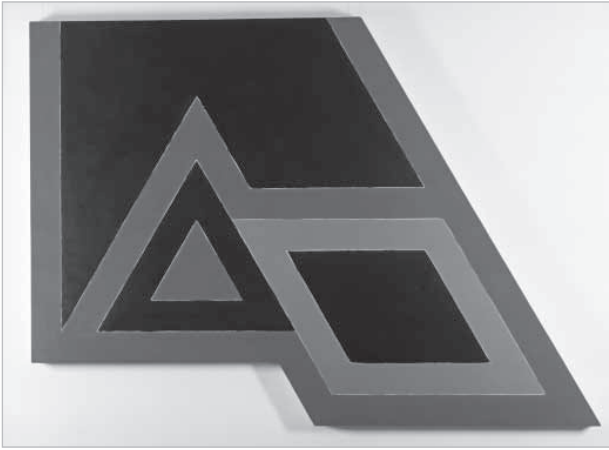
At the end of the sixties, beginning of the seventies, “hard edge” painting reached Mexico. Works by Ellsworth Kelly such as *Two Panels: Red Yellow* (created in 1971, acrylic on canvas, 227 × 203 cm, Westphalian State Museum, Münster); by Frank Stella such as *Sanbornville I* (from the “Irregular Polygon Series,” created in 1966, alkyd and epoxy color on canvas, 272 × 380 cm, National Gallery West Berlin); or *C* (painted 1964, acrylic on canvas, 177.2 × 177.2 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario) by Kenneth Noland became fashionable.

As early as the mid-seventies, *Geometrismo Mexicano* was officially celebrated in Mexico.¹⁹ It is a “typical Mexican achievement” of which I would also like to show three examples: a work by Eduardo Vazquez Baeza, *Quiebre Cuatro* (created in 1973, acrylic on canvas, 150 × 100 cm); *Composition* by Roberto Real de León from the year 1973 (typographical

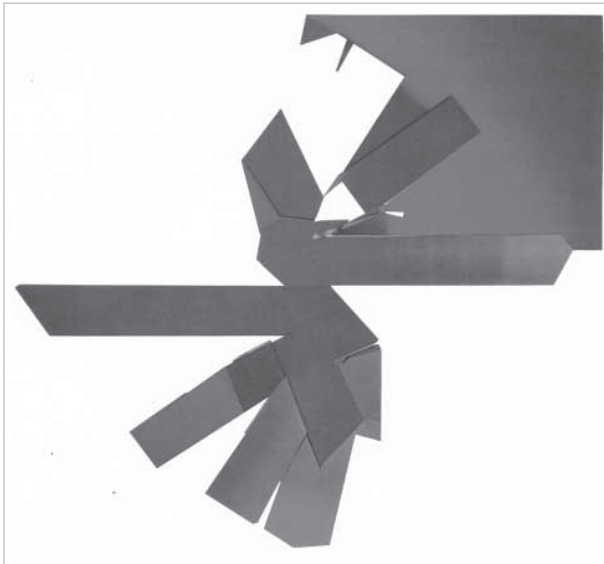
17 See also Julia Elena Soto Martínez, *La escuela Mexicana de pintura y su influencia en Latinoamérica*, PhD, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City, 1977, typescript.

18 As is well known, this ranges from the self-confident reference to “our remarkable autochthonous civilization” (manifesto of the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors of 1923) up to the vehement denunciations of West-European art and particularly the Paris School. The examples, in which Rivera ridicules “the pitiful imitations of art of the European metropolises,” and “pseudo artists who are still suffering from endemia which turns them into lackeys of the Europeans,” are numerous (see *Diego Rivera, Arte y Política*, Raquel Tibol ed. (Editorial Grijalbo: Mexico City, 1979)).

19 Above all, I am thinking about the exhibition *El Geometrismo Mexicano; Una Tendencia Actual*, which opened its doors in November 1976 in the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City. Representative in the same way is the publication of the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas of UNAM, *El Geometrismo Mexicano*, with texts by Ida Rodríguez Prampolini,



Frank Stella. *Sanbornville I*, 1966.
Alkyd and epoxy paint on canvas,
371 × 264 × 10 cm. Staatliche
Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie.
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Photograph by Jörg P. Anders
/ Art Resource, New York.



Roberto Real de León.
Composition, 1973. Typographical
ink on cardboard, 240 × 220 cm.
Image courtesy of the artist.

ink on cardboard); finally *Composition* by Francisco Moyao (painted in 1976, acrylic and lacquer on wood).

Once again, representative examples of a total adaptation to the model of the powerful center whose reception is being mediated by a skillful, well-balanced cultural policy.

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Juan Acha, Xavier Moysen, Jorge Alberto Manrique, and Teresa del Conde (Mexico City, 1977). The latter also contains an extensive bibliography. In this connection, I would like to point out that the exhibition and its catalog as well as the publication from 1977 consolidated phenomena under the heading of “geometrism” that are way too different, even incompatible. For example, what does the fantastic fountain of Fernando Gonzalez Gortazar in Guadalajara have to do with “geometrism”?

My last example concerns the relationship of center and periphery in the Soviet Union. I would like to put debates about realism, critical realism, and Socialist Realism aside at this point and raise the question of the relationship between Russian and Soviet-Russian art on the one hand, and the art of the Soviet Republics of Asia on the other hand.

Russian painting of the end of the 19th and the early 20th century, as represented by painters such as Isaac Levitan (in his work since 1890) and Valentin Serov, is primarily committed to French Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism despite the continuance of its own traditions. In a second phase, the achievements of Cézanne, the French Fauves, and also of the German early expressionists are adopted (Larionov, Bakst, Jawlensky, Kandinsky undertake such adoptions until 1910, indeed up to World War I). The art collections of Russian enthusiasts, such as Shchukin and Morozov, contributed their share to this development in Russian art. The key figure for the Russians is, without doubt, Henri Matisse. This change of direction toward French art was also continued by Victor Borissov-Mussatov who passed away at an early age, by Konstantin Korovin (died in 1939) and by Igor Grabar (died in 1960). Korovin's *Coffeehouse in Jalta*, from 1905 (oil on canvas, 44.5 × 71.5 cm, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow), is a good example of the application of a French-“Mediterranean” point of view in the Russian south. After the Revolution, especially since the thirties, a *mixture* of these elements with the academic tradition of Ilya Repin (which Serov had fought against successfully) has been increasingly operative. Today, this mixture is viewed as one (although not the only one) “healthy” alternative to West European and local decadence (Kandinsky, El Lissitzky, etc.) and is sometimes qualified as “Russian realism.” The works of Arkady Plastov from the fifties and sixties, which are often referred to as “the heights of socialist realism,”²⁰ are perhaps more accurately seen as embodying a second alternative. Nevertheless, it was this mixture that was *exported* after the October Revolution, specifically from the Russian SSR to the other socialist Soviet Republics of Asia.

First, I show you two works by an artist of the Kyrgyz SSR, Semyon Chuikov, who had been trained in Russia.²¹ You see *Daughter of Soviet Kyrgyzstan*, painted in 1948, now located in the State Tretyakov Gallery

20 For example, S. Kusnezowa, in *Arkady Plastov* (Aurora Art Publishers: Leningrad, 1974), 41.

21 His personal case illustrates in excellent fashion the national problem as well as the question at hand of passing on Russian traditions into non-Russian republics. “Soviet-Kyrgyz painter, born in Frunse in 1902, living in Moscow” according to Hans Vollmer’s *Allgemeines*

in Moscow, and his *Kyrgyz Landscape*, from 1946 (oil on cardboard, 52 × 82 cm, also in the Tretyakov Gallery). Chuikov, a full member of the Academy of Arts of the USSR, and Lenin Prize winner, studied in Moscow during the twenties and was a student of Robert Falk, whose work is closely connected to French painting. In this manner, a “Kyrgyz” painter in Russia during the twenties learned to see his country, and a European vision of the Soviet South and Orient has been constructed on this basis.

A look at a landscape of the Armenian painter Mger Abegjan, who was also trained in Moscow, such as his *Valley of the Ara Mountains* (oil on canvas, 80 × 95 cm, collection of the artist) of 1961; a landscape by the Mongolian painter Badamjavin Chogsom, *In the Gobi Desert* from 1967 (oil on canvas, 200 × 140 cm); and two works by Chingiz Akhmarov, Artist of the People of the Uzbek SSR: his *Portrait of Rakhima* from the year 1960 (oil on canvas, 100 × 80 cm) and his *Girl with Fruits* from the year 1962 (tempera on canvas), show this intrusion of the West into the Soviet East.



Semyon Chuikov. *Daughter of Soviet Kyrgyzstan*, 1948. Oil on canvas, 120 × 95 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Photograph by the State Tretyakov Gallery.

Lexikon der bildenden Künstler des XX. Jahrhunderts, Volume VI (Leipzig: VEB Seemann, 1962), 453. By comparison, Chuikov belongs to the “Russian school” and was born in Moscow in 1902, according to Bénézit’s *Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs*, 3rd edition (Paris: Gründ, 1976), Volume X. The latter thesis is also repeated by the catalog *L’Art Russe des Scythes à nos jours—Trésors des Musées Soviétiques* (Paris: Grand Palais, October 1967–January 1968) and by François Eryz in *Peintres contemporains* (Paris: Mazenod, 1964), 452. The bio-bibliography *Semyon Afanasyevich Chuikov*, published by the Ministry of Culture of the Kyrgyz SSR (Frunse, 1965), does not mention Chuikov’s place of birth in the biographical section, but this section tells us that his father was a Russian and a writer in the army. On the other hand, we can read in the short introduction: “The Russian painter is the first one in Kyrgyzstan who was honored with the high decoration of national painter of this republic” (p. 3). Kyrgyzstan is also mentioned as the republic “where he was born” (*ibid.*).

I have the impression that a European vision of the Orient and the exotic South that was prevalent in the Russian SSR is also being disseminated in the Asian Republics of the Soviet Union by the *center* (by means of art academies, publications, commissions, medals) and that the “maintenance of the national cultural heritage” is otherwise reduced to a more or less sterile understanding of folk art and the national tradition. We can see this, for example, in the fresco paintings for the Yulduz Teahouse in Samarkand by the aforementioned Chingiz Akhmarov, dated to 1970.

Which political interests are being represented by such a cultural policy (if my observations reflect the main tendency)? This is an important question that ought to be posed and answered.

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At this point, let us not attempt to reduce these disparate elements to a common denominator, since they are too different, but let us use them to shed some light on the series of questions outlined at the beginning.

With respect to my central thesis: these phenomena can be captured by a traditional auxiliary discipline of art history, namely art geography, under the condition however that it undergoes a substantial reform.

Art geography has fallen into disrepute. And rightfully so. Because for far too long, it has been the tool of nationalistic and racial monomaniacs. In Germany, based on Friedrich Ratzel’s (partially concocted) anthropogeography, it concentrated primarily on the question of art landscapes and tribal peculiarities within a national territory (often with the idea of justifying its given borders or their expansion).²² The fight for the borders of Alsace and Lorraine,²³ the fight for the nationality of the “Gothic,” the question regarding Germany’s eastern frontiers, the search for the *German character* in art,²⁴ these were the questions which art geography had pursued for three decades. And in the name of these interests, all cultural, social, and political aspects of art geography were ignored.

After World War II, it is true that the importance of social and polit-

22 Of the type “Westphalia as art landscape” or “The art of German tribes and art landscapes.”

23 Walther Zimmermann, “Zur Abgrenzung der Kunsträume im Elsass und in Lothringen,” in *Elsass-Lothringisches Jahrbuch*, Volume XVIII (1938), 123–142.

24 For the last three points, see the pamphlet by Pierre Francastel, *L’Histoire de l’art instrument de la propagande germanique* (Paris: Librairie de Médecis, 1945).

ical factors for art geography were recognized. For example, Reiner Hausherr wrote in 1970: “Even in cases where a connection to social and political factors does not immediately become recognizable for art history, it is frequently present.”²⁵ However, these findings were seldom applied. Harald Keller’s publications on the art landscapes of Italy and France²⁶ are actually still representative of the status of German-speaking art geography after World War II.²⁷

This is even more surprising at a time in which geographers themselves are opening new avenues, whether it is the school of “social geography” around Wolfgang Hartke in the Federal Republic of Germany²⁸ or the group around Yves Lacoste and the magazine *Hérodote* in Paris, which endeavors to overcome traditional geography (which primarily attended to population distribution and the morphology of the earth)²⁹ and which at the same time pursues an economic, social, and political geography.³⁰

Thanks to the Spanish conquest of the largest part of Latin America, baroque (a “metropolitan style” par excellence according to Sir Kenneth Clark³¹) became the dominant architectural style of the

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- 25 “Kunstgeographie—Aufgaben, Grenzen, Möglichkeiten,” in *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter*, Volume 34 (1970), 170.
- 26 Harald Keller, *Die Kunstlandschaften Italiens* (Munich: Prestel, 1960), and *Die Kunstlandschaften Frankreichs*, Proceedings of the Scientific Society at Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt/Main, Volume 1, Year 1962, No. 4, Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1963. See also Keller’s theoretical foundation of his understanding of art geography in “Kunstgeschichte und Milieutheorie,” in *Eine Gabe für Carl Georg Heise zum 28. VI. 1950* (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, 1950), 31–54.
- 27 In this case, the exceptions prove the rule again. See the excellent discussion of the term “art landscape” by Herbert Beck and Horst Bredekamp in the catalog of the exhibition *Kunst um 1400 am Mittelrhein: Ein Teil der Wirklichkeit* (Frankfurt/M.: Liebighaus, Museum alter Plastik, 1975), 30–40.
- 28 See, for example, *Zum Standort der Sozialgeographie—Wolfgang Hartke zum 60. Geburtstag, Münchner Studien zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeographie*, Volume 4 (Kallmünz/Regensburg: Verlag Michael Lassleben, 1968) (with important contributions by M. Derruau and H. J. Keuning).
- 29 Naturally, the forebears of such regeneration attempts reach far into the 19th century: I am thinking particularly of Elisee Reclus.
- 30 “One of the main characteristics of university geography since its existence in France, for almost a century, is the elimination of political phenomena from its field of vision. Contrary to all the evidence, the corporation believes that they do not have anything to do with geography, and that their consideration would result in the negation of a scientific approach. The term *geopolitics* is viewed as tarnished because one is still insisting on not recognizing anything else in it but arguments that justify the expansionism of the Nazis [. . .]. Eliminating the political is the central epistemological problem of university geography” (Yves Lacoste, “Editorial,” in *Hérodote*, No. 22 (1981), 4–5).
- 31 Clark, *Provincialism*, 3–4.

17th and 18th century south of the Rio Bravo. With the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other, they plundered, tortured, evangelized, built, and painted. At every location where there was once a temple of the Mayas or Aztecs, they erected a baroque church.

This “forced reception” of the baroque in Latin America forms a long chapter that cannot be overlooked by any art historian.

I believe that the partially “forced,” partially “suggested reception” of the New York School after 1945 is a chapter that is just as important. Because, in the end, the meeting of the Red Army with units of the US Army in the year 1945 at the Elbe river opened a decisively new chapter in the history of art. A certain variant of Socialist Realism became prevalent in Bucharest, and a certain variant of “abstract expressionism” or photorealism in Teheran or Munich.

. . .

In the book *Amerikanische Kunst von 1945 bis heute* (whereby *American* is understood as the possession of the United States of America, and Canadians and Argentinians may, by all means, protest against such a seizure of the entire continent), which serves as the catalog for the exhibition *New York in Europa* in the West-Berlin National Gallery (1976), we can read some valuable statistical data concerning the dissemination of art of the United States in Europe after 1945.

It features a list of European museums that purchased works from artists from the United States between 1945 and 1976. The usefulness of such statistics cannot be stressed enough. However, the phenomenon of “suggested reception” would have been captured more completely if one had also recorded statistically magazine articles and books, exhibitions by artists from the United States in public museums and private galleries *and* European artists of action painting, color field, and conceptual art during the same period. A world map of the dissemination of art from a center, let’s say, by decades, would not only be informative. It would be an indispensable tool for any art history that takes itself seriously.

Why do we not have a cartographical recording of the dissemination of “action painting” during the fifties, from New York to Buenos Aires, from London via Madrid to Cape Town, yes, even to Hong Kong and Sydney?

It is obvious why we cannot reach a consensus on the *explanation* and *evaluation* of art historical phenomena. Because art historians are

just as divided into schools and tendencies as literary historians, architects, or any other professional group. Could we at least agree that such a cartographical determination of facts can be helpful to everyone? Then we could argue better about the explanation of the facts.

• • •

I hope that the complexity of these problems has become clear, despite the heterogeneity of my examples, or better, because of them. Now, let me briefly defend the legitimacy of my plea.

First, a word about *resistance and accommodation*. The term *resistance* has been used earlier to draw attention to the *nonobservance of a model*. In 1958, for example, Jean Bony published a longer study, entitled “The Resistance to Chartres in Early 13th Century Architecture,”³² in which he attempted to explain the resistance against a new architectural conception, a new model, in this case embodied by the Cathedral of Chartres.

But aside from its earlier usage, how else besides the use of the term *resistance* and its complementary term *accommodation* should one describe the phenomenon of *conscious rejection or acceptance of an imported art ideal*? Can the phenomenon of colonial baroque be viewed differently than as the embodiment of accommodation by the conquered Indian peoples of Latin America to the art of the conquerors and its simultaneous transformation? Because accommodation—allow me to emphasize it—is far from being *passive imitation*. Naturally, that also exists. But, of course, it does not cover the variety of types or forms of accommodation.

• • •

Another comment of a general nature. During the last one hundred years, especially after 1945, one element, which we can discern latently at least since the 16th century, has become extremely important: *the role of the culture industry* and its connection with *governmental cultural policy*.

When Adorno and Horkheimer used the term *culture industry* forty years ago,³³ some considered it excessive. Today, everybody speaks about

32 *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, Third Series, Volume XX–XXI (1958), 35–52. Castelnuovo and Ginzburg emphatically pointed to Bony’s essay in their aforementioned study (“La resistenza al modello” and “Modello e nuovo paradigma,” 325–328) whereby they exaggerated their flirting with the terminology of T. S. Kuhn (whose theory of the structure of scientific revolutions they are directly referencing).

33 [Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno.] *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Amsterdam: Querido Verlag, 1947).

the culture industry. Terms such as *culture war*, *fight for cultural hegemony*, *cultural imperialism* have become self-evident. Even the French Minister of Culture has recently denounced cultural imperialism during a UNESCO conference!³⁴ We have at our disposal the studies by Max Kozloff³⁵ and Eva Cockcroft,³⁶ who have shown that the dissemination of the New York School all over the world was a main objective of the cultural policy of the United States during the fifties and sixties, and that exhibitions and publications abroad were systematically financed by foundations under government control in order to reach this objective.

In his contribution “Die Aufgaben der Kunstgeographie,” which he presented at the 13th International Congress of Art History in Stockholm in 1933, Paul Frankl wrote: “It is obvious that a map of the dissemination of Islam or Christianity also says something about art geography. In the same way, art is dependent on the political borders and those of the administration (dioceses). But this connection with the remaining cultural factors may be taken up only after maps of the art groups, that is style groups, have been established.”³⁷

I believe that this is still the prevailing position today. Politics is limited to state borders, Christianity or Islam are “cultural factors” that have nothing to do with politics, and everything must wait anyhow until we have established maps of the influence of art groups!

• • •

This leads me to another point: the taboo on politics in art history.

We, art historians, have the habit of ignoring the implications of politics and the political power in our area on the one hand, or even deny its existence; on the other hand, and unfortunately much too often, we have the habit of serving the respective ruling powers with our art history.

I would like to transpose the old motto “Everybody talks about the weather, we don’t” into “Everybody talks about politics—except us, the

34 Jack Lang in Mexico City on July 27. *Le Monde* published excerpts from his speech on August 7, 1982.

35 Max Kozloff, “American Painting during the Cold War,” *Artforum* (May 1973): 43–54.

36 Eva Cockcroft, “Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War,” *Artforum* (June 1974): 39–41.

37 XIII Congrès International d’Histoire de l’Art, Résumés des Communications présentées au Congrès, Stockholm, 1933, 87.

art historians.”³⁸ In the middle of a massive economic crisis, facing a possible World War III; in a time of decrees against radicals, when we are constantly looking for a scapegoat, it has to be said loud and clear: moral responsibility, including that of art historians, is considerable. To assume it today also means to take the political dimension of our field into account. For example, we cannot hear talks about the North-South dialogue on a daily basis and not undertake anything in our own discipline in this sense. In doing so, we allow the alleged dialogue to turn into a farce. In this sense also, an “art geography of dependency” amounts to an urgent task.

The price, which we would have to pay for it, is naturally high: we have to stop viewing *power balances as quality balances*. Eighty years after the release of Riegl’s *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*, we can no longer speak of “advanced civilizations” and “primitive cultures” or of the “monuments of higher culture” (as Dagobert Frey was still representing systematically in his work “Geschichte und Probleme der Kultur- und Kunstgeographie,”³⁹ published in 1955); we also have to give up the idea of progress in art, let alone based on linear development.

Am I allowed to say in a city, which claims to safeguard the heritage of Aby Warburg, that it would certainly mean to be true to his spirit if one were to finally abandon the haughty overvaluation of European art? To ensure that the commitment to Warburg does not turn into lip service,⁴⁰ would it then not be necessary to also ban Eurocentrism from the curriculum of the university?⁴¹ We say “art history” and today, in 1982,

38 For example, do we have an equivalent in art history to D. Perrot and R. Preiswerk, *Ethnocentrisme et histoire: L’Afrique, l’Amérique indienne et l’Asie dans les manuels occidentaux* (Paris: Anthropos, 1975)?

39 *Archaeologia Geographica*, Year 4 (December 1955), 90–105.

40 I am far removed from wanting to create a Warburg cult. There is too much that separates me from him, from a theoretical and methodological point of view. Still, the question remains whether one should not actually draw the full consequences from his famous plea of 1912 “in favor of a methodical boundary expansion of our science of art from a substantial and spatial viewpoint” (“Italienische Kunst und internationale Astrologie im Palazzo Schifanoja zu Ferrara,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, B. G. Teubner, Volume II (Leipzig and Berlin, 1932), 478), instead of constantly quoting the sentence on the one hand and publishing the photographs of Warburg among the Pueblo Indians on the other hand. For example, is it possible, more than half a century after Warburg’s death, that only a few books about photography have found their way into the libraries of the art history departments (and then not even as the result of an expansion of the concept of art, but as a result of the trade which now, after the trade with “original graphics” would like to do business with photography) and that film literature seems still to be denied entry?

41 For example, if we look at the Hamburg curriculum of the last five years, that is, since the 1978/79 winter semester, with the exception of two seminars whose subject was

we still mean *European art from the Carolingians to today + art of the United States of the 20th century*.⁴² That is not simply absurd. It is the testimony of an irresponsible politics. No doubt, it would be in the best traditions within our discipline, and it is also a moral and scientific obligation, that we confront the facts which have shaped the art of the 20th century in a significant way. Whether we designate the study of these facts with the general term *political art geography* or simply *art geography* is unimportant. It is important that we take the existence of this fact into account and search for and find suitable means for this type of study.

TRANSLATED BY DIETER WÄLTERMANN

non-European art ("Brazilian Architecture after 1945" and "The Reception of Mexican Fresco Painting in Germany"), it is apparent that all other courses and lectures were dedicated to the art of Europe, or more correctly: to the art of the NATO countries (with one exception: "Architecture and City Planning in Leningrad and Moscow"), whereby 99% of the attention was addressed to the art of the "cultivated" nations of the Occident (Germany, Italy, France). Even if the titles of the courses and lectures by themselves are certainly not sufficient to be able to draw undeniable conclusions, they are still representative of an existing tendency.

- 42 One piece of evidence for this claim: the library of the art history department of the University of Hamburg, which contains several thousand volumes, has hardly more than four hundred publications about the whole field of non-European art, of which at least half has the art of the United States as its subject.