POST WAR REVISITED

A Global Art History

OKWUI ENWEZOR AND ATREYEE GUPTA, EDITORS

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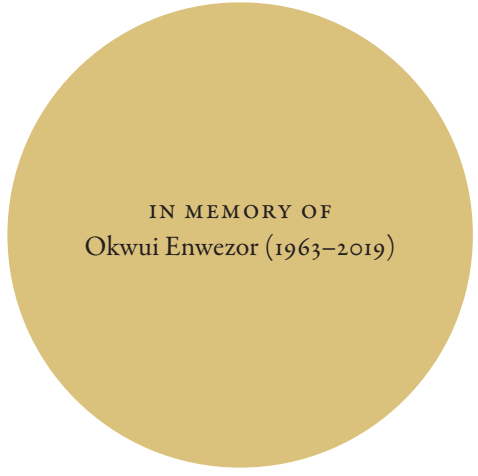

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Preface

The task of writing a preface for this book is complicated as much by the fact that it was a long time in the making as by its state of incompletion at the time of Okwui Enwezor's passing. *Postwar Revisited: A Global Art History* is the book that Enwezor referenced in an interview with Ulrike Knöfel published in *Der Spiegel* in the fall of 2018, shortly after Enwezor's separation from Haus der Kunst, Munich.[1] At the time, Enwezor and I were working unremittingly to complete the final draft of the manuscript for this book, a task that was disrupted by his faltering health and was completed after his passing. The ideas behind this book had emerged five years earlier within the context of Enwezor's research and exhibition project titled *Postwar: Art between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945–1965*, which began with a four-day international conference in May 2014.[2]

This was a conference that I—then the inaugural Goethe Postdoctoral Fellow at Haus der Kunst, with a newly minted PhD—coordinated and convened with Enwezor and the then chief curator, Ulrich Wilmes, at Haus der Kunst. Enwezor imagined the conference to be central to the research process leading up to the *Postwar* exhibition, which he cocurated two years later with Katy Siegel and Wilmes. The forty speakers who participated in the 2014 conference included Sam Bardaouil, Nicholas Cullinan, Iftikhar Dadi, Federico Deambrosis, Alessandro Del Puppo, Lara Demori, Burcu Dogramaci, Nikolas Drosos, Patrick Flores, Éva Forgács, Alessio Fransoni, Jacopo Galimberti, Walter Grasskamp, Boris Groys, Serge Guilbaut, Sohl Lee, Gregor H. Lersch, Vivian Li, Paula Barreiro López, Tara McDowell, Abigail McEwen, Armin Medosch, Gerardo Mosquera, Majella Munro, Alexandra Munroe, Susanne Neubauer, Chika Okeke-Agulu, Mari Carmen Ramírez, Amanda Katherine Rath,

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Dorothea Schöne, Nada Shabout, Devika Singh, Terry Smith, Ming Tiampo, Reiko Tomii, Isobel Whitelegg, Midori Yamamura, and Lingling Amy Yao. Just as he had hoped, the incredible body of intellectual ideas that the 2014 conference brought to the fore shaped Enwezor's own thinking about the 2016 *Postwar* exhibition in substantial ways; several conference participants also contributed to the sumptuous catalog that accompanied the exhibition. At the time, this book was imagined as a volume of conference proceedings, a companion piece to the catalog accompanying the *Postwar: Art between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945–1965* exhibition.[3]

But as is often the case with projects that evolve over time, this book, too, underwent several incarnations in the years that followed. Enwezor's own vision and aspiration for this book had shifted by 2018 as he confronted what he perceived to be a growing detrition in Germany and elsewhere of commitment to global dialogue, intellectual cultures of curiosity and openness, and the ethics and politics of diversity and inclusion.[4] For my part, I took up a tenure-track position merely months after Donald Trump became the forty-fifth president of the United States, began teaching at a time of rising xenophobia around the world, and, among other things, became increasingly invested in the conjunction of perspectives gained from postcolonial theory with debates on global modernisms in particular and global art history more generally. Thus, by 2018, some years after the 2014 conference and the 2016 exhibition, this book had assumed a very different task: standing in a politically embattled present, it sought to grasp *postwar* as a collective horizon in the time of decolonization and reassess its implications for a global art history in the present. It is this theme that the title of the book—*Postwar Revisited: A Global Art History*—also indexes.

To be sure, this book is not yet another revisionist attempt, nor did we aim to stop with tracing the simultaneous presence of many modernisms across the world. The foundations of the larger *Postwar* research, exhibition, and publication project to which this book belongs can in fact be traced back to an essay that Enwezor wrote in 2003 and repeatedly referred to in the course of our work on this book nearly a decade later. The essay in question was "The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition."[5] A lucid statement of Enwezor's curatorial philosophy, this essay had always struck me as simultaneously invigorating and challenging because the postcolonial condition that it invoked was not one that mapped onto the historical matrix of colonialism and decolonization in any simple sense. Categorically delineating the "postcolonial constellation" as "the site for the expansion of the definition of what constitutes contemporary culture," here Enwezor had

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sketched out a provocative picture of the twentieth century that emphasized the epistemological and hermeneutic violence that constituted global cultural modernity as such.[6] The artistic and intellectual "subjectivities that emerge directly from the convergences and proximities wrought by imperialism," Enwezor insisted, "direct us to the postcolonial," which annotates subterranean convolutions in the history of twentieth-century modernism as a whole.[7] His was an unambiguous indictment, not just of modern art history "with roots in imperial discourse" but also of contemporary curatorial procedures derived, as Enwezor saw it, "with the unambiguous sanction of [this] historical and imperial precedent."[8] What he instead insisted upon amounted to a dismantling of the epistemic Westernism of art history and its allied institutions of knowledge production. In this, the "postcolonial constellation" had an important role to play, as he conceived of the postcolonial not merely as the time after decolonization but as a necessary critical intellectual frame for understanding the "social and cultural temporality of late modernity."[9]

Tellingly, Enwezor returned with alacrity to this "postcolonial constellation"—whose form, he had already acknowledged in 2003, was shaped by the "series of structural, political, and cultural restructuring since after World War II and which include[d] movements of decolonization, civil rights, feminist, gay/lesbian, [and] antiracist" positions[10]—in his tripartite intervention in the global history of modern and contemporary art, beginning with the *Postwar* project. *Postwar* was slated to be followed by two five-year research and exhibition projects: one focusing on the concept of the postcolonial, circa 1965–85, and the other focusing on postcommunism from 1985 to the present. Of the trio, only the first was completed during Enwezor's lifetime. Whereas postcolonial art has often been conflated with the story of newly independent nation-states, Enwezor had intended to shift our focus to the emergence of a revolutionary consciousness among nonstate actors in the face of repressive states, military dictatorships, and human rights violations in the second exhibition. He had provisionally titled this exhibition *The Postcolonial Constellation: Art, Culture, Sovereignty, 1960–1985*, as he had related to me during our conversations. Like Frantz Fanon, he understood that a revolutionary consciousness could sometimes turn toward violence to achieve its goals; the historical movements that he intended to think through in this exhibition therefore included the Italian Red Brigades, the Japanese Red Army, and the Indian Naxalites.[11] This exhibition was installed posthumously, in accordance with Enwezor's wishes, in an altered form at the 2023 Sharjah Biennial. To our loss, the third iteration of the magisterial trio of historically dense exhibitions that Enwezor envisaged is destined to remain unrealized.

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As for this book, Enwezor remained keenly involved in its structuring and organization, especially as our vision for the book evolved from a volume of conference proceedings to a reader on global postwar art. In the end, only nine of the fourteen chapters in this book were drawn from papers presented at the 2014 conference (by Iftikhar Dadi, Patrick Flores, Boris Groys, Vivian Li, Tara McDowell, Alexandra Munroe, Nada Shabout, Terry Smith, and Ming Tiampo), while five were contributed by authors who enthusiastically responded to our invitation to write chapters at a later juncture (Hal Foster, Atreyee Gupta, Elizabeth Harney, Jennifer Josten, and Jenni Sorkin). However, even though the editorial decisions that shaped the book were made together, Enwezor was no longer present at the time of this book's completion. *Postwar Revisited* then also conveys an unbearable intimacy with Enwezor's absence.

The Editors—these were the words with which Enwezor and I signed off an early draft of the introduction to this book on October 29, 2017. That introduction had taken a long time to craft; I would put together a draft, which Enwezor would edit and add to in between his incessant travels and numerous exhibitions. It is here that Enwezor's absence is also most palpable to me because the introduction, as it now stands, bears no resemblance to the one that we wrote together. This is because the present text of the introduction was rewritten in its entirety in response to generative feedback we received from the anonymous reviewers of the manuscript. I began writing the introduction in late 2018 in conversation with Enwezor at a time when he himself could no longer engage in sustained writing; I completed it long after his passing.

The words in the introduction are all mine. Nonetheless, the thrust of the argument grew out of the discussions that we had about this book between 2014 and 2019, and, by way of inserting Enwezor's voice without ventriloquizing, I have consistently tried to draw on his ideas as they are stated in his own writings. We had no substantial difference in opinion regarding the primary themes, but if anything, the text is now more invested in tracing an art historical genealogy for the postwar era than Enwezor perhaps had in mind. This is because I find it impossible to remove my historian's hat; Enwezor had the poetic imagination, the political will, and the intellectual acumen to transform the allegedly known and the proverbially familiar into something astonishing and revelatory in a matter of a few bold gestures, as I discovered in the process of writing with him collaboratively. For this reason, completing this book after his death has involved the agonizing realization that we will never know how he would have ultimately shaped it. And no words can compensate for this fact.

Many others played an important role in the making of this book. This book would have never seen the light of day if not for Ken Wissoker at

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Duke University Press, who greeted the project with enthusiasm when we first brought the idea to him in 2017 and whose support was even more crucial after Enwezor's passing. Also crucial was Chika Okeke-Agulu's support in his role as the executor of Enwezor's intellectual property. Equally crucial are the color illustrations without which this book would have been visually impoverished; these were made possible through Alexandra Munroe and Jane DeBevoise's unstinting generosity. Institutional homes are essential, and mine has been the History of Art Department at the University of California, Berkeley, for most of this book's making. I am tremendously grateful for the intellectual comradery of my colleagues as well as history of art graduate students.

This book is with Okwui, this book is for Okwui.

Atreyee Gupta
June 20, 2024
Berkeley, California

NOTES

1. Knöfel, "Es ist eine Beleidigung, ja."
2. For the video documentation of the conference, see Haus der Kunst, "Postwar—Art between the Pacific and Atlantic, 1945–1965," accessed September 1, 2022, http://postwar-conference.hausderkunst.de.
3. See curator's acknowledgments in Enwezor, Siegel, and Wilmes, *Postwar*, 17.
4. See Knöfel, "Es ist eine Beleidigung, ja."
5. Enwezor, "Postcolonial Constellation," 57–82.
6. Enwezor, "Postcolonial Constellation," 77.
7. Enwezor, "Postcolonial Constellation," 59.
8. Enwezor, "Postcolonial Constellation," 59.
9. Enwezor, "Postcolonial Constellation," 77.
10. Enwezor, "Postcolonial Constellation," 59.
11. See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, chap. 1.

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Introduction

ATREYEE GUPTA

I am not burying myself in a narrow particularism. But neither do I want to lose myself in an emaciated universalism. There are two ways to lose oneself: walled segregation in the particular or dilution in the "universal." My conception of the universal is that of a universal enriched by all that is particular, a universal enriched by every particular: the deepening and coexistence of all particulars.—AIMÉ CÉSAIRE, "Letter to Maurice Thorez," October 24, 1956

The term *postwar* in the book's title refers to the first two decades that followed the conclusion of the Second World War, a period that, in Okwui Enwezor's words, "inspired a profound reflection on how to assimilate the lessons of the war and the invidious statecraft of colonialism, while also recognizing, without equivocation, the quest of the colonized for the end of colonial empires and imperial dominions."[1] As such, the historical period under consideration is bookended by the conclusion of the Second World War and the emergence and consolidation of a tripartite world order in the backdrop of the Cold War in the first half of the 1960s. At the same time, the conception of the book remains embedded within the present, a time when old empires have been replaced by new ones. Relentless processes of globalization cohabit today with equally global calls to tighten borders and render national cultures distinct,

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mitigate freedom of speech and action with circumspect censorship, and reinscribe otherness onto bodies that are unlike and therefore deemed expendable.[2] If the repeated comparison of numerous contemporary political leaders to Adolf Hitler and the global return of fascism in a multitude of guises is a sign, then we have traveled the full circle.[3] This book is a return of a very different kind. Standing in an embattled present, a time that provokes a keen despair in many of us, but one to which we must not succumb, the book returns, with great urgency, to postwar as a historical period when the end of the Second World War and the eclipse of colonial empires precipitated efforts to reimagine the world in a future tense.

It is worth highlighting, at the very onset, that *Postwar Revisited: A Global Art History* does not seek to cast this historical period only in terms of an aftermath of war. Neither does the period between 1945 and 1965 figure here as a time of peace, precarious or otherwise;[4] nor does the book seek to resuscitate the story of the proverbial battle between abstraction and realism.[5] The collective will and cultural energies of decolonization that manifested in this period to shape something like a political aesthetic do not allow for such recursive gestures. Moreover, not only were the experiences and aspirations of artists in Axis nations and Axis-occupied territories and those in the Allied contexts distinct, but the connotation of the Second World War shifted in contexts of colonial recruitment. Likewise, the postwar decades signified something rather different in countries that had remained neutral in the Second World War and in Europe's peripheries. Given this dissonance, it necessarily follows that the story of the two decades after the conclusion of the Second World War must be sketched onto an expansive multimodal canvas if we are to confront the globality of the postwar years as a historical period. Ultimately, accounting for the vastly different territories of practice and politics within which artistic cultures unfolded produces an understanding of postwar as a collective horizon onto which new ideals of humanism, emancipation, and decolonization were projected.

As a discipline, art history has been primarily concerned with objects and artifacts produced through human labor, centralizing, in turn, the figure of the human—the human creator—as the principal protagonist of the story. To grasp postwar as a collective global horizon, it is then also essential to enter the postwar decades by way of the cultural and philosophical debates on humanism that the period engendered. In this regard, the argument between Jean-Paul Sartre, who posited his own take on existentialism as a form of postwar humanism, and Martin Heidegger is well known.[6] As is Theodor Adorno's

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condemnation of the traditions of post-Enlightenment humanism internal to his initial description of the act of writing poetry after Auschwitz as a form of "barbarism," which he subsequently qualified in relation to lyric poetry.[7] Reflecting on the origins of totalitarianism, Hannah Arendt, for her part, discerned that the convergences between the ideology of race and its management were "actually made on the Dark Continent. Race was the emergency explanation of human beings whom no European or civilized man could understand and whose humanity so frightened and humiliated the [European] immigrants."[8] Cosmopolitans of color such as Aimé Césaire, W. E. B. Du Bois, C. L. R. James, Mulk Raj Anand, and George Padmore also recognized Nazism and fascism not as an exception to but as part and parcel of the legacy of colonialism authorized by post-Enlightenment civilizational discourses. Writing from Paris in 1950, Césaire would thus insist that Europe "is morally, spiritually indefensible. And today the indictment is brought against it not by the European masses alone, but on a world scale, by tens of millions of men, who, from the depths of slavery, set themselves up as judge."[9]

Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*, we may recollect, was written shortly after the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948—the same year that W. E. B. Du Bois was dropped from the United States' delegation to the United Nations because he rejected an outline for a global government in which a substantial part of the world had neither agency nor rights.[10] Yet what Césaire proposed in *Discourse on Colonialism* was not tantamount to a wholesale rejection of the ideal of human rights as articulated in the Universal Declaration of 1948. Rather, for Césaire and others, the conclusion of the Second World War presented the very condition of possibility for the emergence of a significantly more profound humanism that they believed only decolonization could fully materialize. The figure of the human was inseparable from these deliberations, as a protracted traction between the abstract figure of a (European) universalism and the seeming provincialism of a (non-European) particularity remained implicit in postwar political and intellectual arrangements. As Césaire wrote by way of a response in 1956: "I am not burying myself in a narrow particularism. But neither do I want to lose myself in an emaciated universalism. There are two ways to lose oneself: walled segregation in the particular or dilution in the 'universal.' My conception of the universal is that of a universal enriched by all that is particular, a universal enriched by every particular: the deepening and coexistence of all particulars."[11] It is with these deliberations in mind that the book returns to the vexed question of the postwar in/and global art history.

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Postwar in/and Global Art History

The year 1945 had long prefigured in art history as a rupture, an ostensible break with the art of the past and the beginning of new modes of experimentation temporally and conceptually welded to the aftermath of the Second World War.[12] Marked out as early as 1958 in the edited volume *Neue Kunst nach 1945*, the first survey text on the postwar art of Europe and the United States, the idea of 1945 as a pivot in the trajectory of twentieth-century art was further concretized the very next year, during the second iteration of Documenta in Kassel, Germany, when curator Arnold Bode chose *Kunst nach 1945* as the exhibition's theme and subtitle.[13] Arguably, if the curatorial emphasis in the 1959 Documenta programmatically centralized postwar abstraction, the 1958 book edited by the influential German modernist art historian Will Grohmann made an analogous discursive move by conjoining an ideation of newness—*neue*—to art since 1945.[14] Indeed, most European and North American art historians and critics of the time conceded that there was something radically new about postwar as an art historical period. And, as Amelia Jones has noted, by the end of the 1970s, taking the postwar decades as significant in marking a key point in North Atlantic history, art history departments in Britain and North America also began to explore the possibility of teaching courses on art made after 1945.[15] Over the subsequent decades, "since 1945" came to be institutionally embedded within art history as a discrete epoch.[16] Although subsequent critics debated the extent to which the art of this period retained contiguities with the one that had preceded it, postwar's historical specificity as an epoch in art and history was never a point of contention.[17]

What was also not a point of contention was the period's geocultural delineation. Deliberations about postwar art both began and ended in the North Atlantic worlds—in other words, worlds shaped by the North Atlantic Alliance. As Terry Smith has observed, this would change only in the late 1980s, with the arrival of another discrete cultural field, called contemporary art, after modernism's formal energies were seemingly evacuated in the North Atlantic worlds and under pressure from neoliberal economies and globalization.[18] As art worlds expanded exponentially with the creation of international contemporary art biennials in formerly peripheral locations such as Havana, Gwangju, and Dakar, they also rendered distant places proximate.[19] Established geocultural frames of reference mutated in the face of rapid economic, political, and cultural globalization as artists, curators, and scholars both uncovered new convergences and divergences and excavated traces of historical flows and exchanges. "Where in the past such critical tools or paradigms as 'neo-avant-

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garde' or 'postmodernism' could illuminate or explain substantial aspects of Western contemporary art, now they clearly have little critical purchase in the crowded—and, one might add, resplendent—space that has become global contemporary art," wrote Chika Okeke-Agulu in response to the 2009 "Questionnaire on 'The Contemporary'" circulated by the editors of *October*.[20]

Paradoxically, it is precisely at this juncture of neoliberal globalization and disciplinary expansion that another art historical rift surfaced, one that marked the global out as the exemplary realm of ultimate alterity. Two distinct strands shaped this discursive delegation. Squarely appending the global to neoliberal globalization, the first strand demarcated contemporary art—defined within this discursive matrix as art produced in the age of post-1989 globalization—as the only proper domain of global art.[21] Hans Belting, for instance, affirmed that "global art" had "emerged, like a phoenix from the ashes, from modern art. . . . It is by definition contemporary." Global contemporary art, Belting also noted, "differs from modernity whose self-appointed universalism was based on a hegemonial notion of art."[22] However nuanced in its attention to the uneven cartography of twentieth-century art, such a positioning of the global nonetheless relegated modernism to North Atlantic frontiers, delegitimizing, in the process, postwar modernism's multimodal habitations, manifestations, and *créolité*. The unintended effect was the unconditional reinscription of a center/periphery model that once again posited Europe as the originating locus of modernism, the center from which modernism as an aesthetic discourse was transmitted to the rest of the world, traveling slowly, arriving late, almost inevitably marked by a temporal lag, a delay, and a certain belatedness that had allegedly been upended only in the post-1989 arena of global contemporary art. Is the post-1989 globalization then the only cipher for comprehending the global in art history? Arguably not.

The second discursive strand took seriously the countermodels through which the displaced—those formerly placed on the margins of European modernity—entered modernism by producing experimental cultures that engaged long histories of imperialism, colonialism, enslavement, and indenture. Many art history departments in North America and Western Europe did precisely this by instituting new faculty positions and initiating programs with a designated emphasis on artistic and cultural modernisms outside of North Atlantic traditions.[23] For the North Atlantic strands of art history, the "global turn" registered as something like a punctum signaling a crisis within the discipline itself.[24] University curricula changed and new readers appeared to address the discipline's expansion beyond Westernist frontiers; in some instances, new faculty lines for Global Modern Art or Global Modernism were also created.[25]

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Art history was finally alert to the demands of the formerly marginalized. Or so it appeared. But, ironically, this progressive move was weighed down by a Westernist conceptual hubris that seamlessly supplanted the "non-West," an older and much beleaguered descriptor, with the "global." In effect, this otherwise self-reflexive effort yet again ended up compacting "Western modernism" into a self-referential contained category, with "global modernisms" as its privileged mode of counternarration. By now ingrained within everyday forms of thought and expression, this conceptual collocation of the "global" and the "non-Western" seems to have acquired the fixity of common sense.[26] Was the North Atlantic modern *not* global? Is the global within the modern necessarily only a sign of alterity, of otherness, the *non*? Then what, the discerning reader will no doubt ask, is at stake in returning to *postwar* as a means of constructing a *global art history*?

If the second discursive strand outlined above reparatively marks non-Western modernisms as the proper domain of the global via delimitating geocultural binaries, the first positions post-1989 economic globalization as the sole arbitrator in the production of a global contemporary, disarticulating, with equal alacrity, the much longer ontology of the global already prefigured in the postwar decades. The resultant conceptual opacity is what underwrites with urgency the project of returning to the end of the Second World War to write a global art history. The global political processes of the postwar years had a profound impact on "art since 1945," the authors in this book collectively show, as artists across the world grappled not only with aesthetic and formal issues of artistic creation but also with debates on conformity or individualism, subjectivity or collectivity, and localism or internationalism in art. Dissimilarities abound, but what is important to underscore is the coproduction of the global that made the postwar decades distinctive from the post-1989 economic globalization, as economic and political histories have already shown.[27] We must begin again.

The Global in the Time of Postwar

When the word *globalization* entered general dictionaries around 1961, it did not carry the connotation of an integrated global economic market but signaled the emerging consciousness of an expansive, and interdependent, social whole, as economic historians have shown.[28] Writing in 1958 from New York, Arendt may have already sensed a thickening of worldly cultural interdependence when she described the emergence of an incipient postwar society "whose members at the most distant points of the globe need less time to meet

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than the members of a nation a generation ago."[29] Just four years later, in his visionary early work on postwar media technologies, the social theorist Marshall McLuhan predicted the future of the world as a global village, a unitary social structure connected by the electric synapses of media technology and inhabited by the typographic man.[30] McLuhan's prophetic vision for the future is eerily close to the digital present that we now inhabit, although the liberatory potentialities of cyborg life have not manifested in the time of late capitalism in quite the same way as the Canadian social theorist predicted. Arendt, in contrast, was not fundamentally invested in technology as the harbinger of a new human society. Rather, she had come to understand the most crucial Western developments of modern times, such as the rise of capitalism, imperialism, and totalitarianism, as paradigms that were fundamentally global.[31]

No doubt the political internationalism of the postwar decades left an impression on such global cultural imaginaries. If McLuhan and Arendt intuited the cultural contours of the postwar era beyond the strictures of West/non-West and center/periphery models, the intersecting histories of the United Nations and the Bandung conference of 1955 were yet another arena where the international dimension of postwar interdependence was amplified during the Cold War. Recollect that although the United Nations was formally established in 1945, the United States, the Soviet Union, China, Great Britain, and twenty allied nations signed the Declaration of the United Nations in 1942, well before the end of the war.[32] Plans for instituting the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were also initiated at the invitation of the United States in 1944.[33] However, the systems of international governance that the United Nations inaugurated were not yet available to close to half of the colonies and former colonies, whose leaders gathered in Bandung, Indonesia, on April 24, 1955, to lay the foundation for the principle of nonalignment and to speak about postwar international relations, sovereignty, universal human rights, and development from the perspective of the still marginalized.

Collectively, the Bandung contingent represented more than one-third of the world's population; "this was a meeting of almost all of the human race living in the main geopolitical center of gravity of the earth," in cultural critic and civil rights activist Richard Wright's words.[34] Their verdict, as documented in the "final communiqué," was unambiguous: "The Asian-African Conference having considered the dangerous situation of international tension existing and the risks confronting the whole human race from the outbreak of *global* war in which the destructive power of all types of armaments, including nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons, would be employed, invited the attention of all nations to the terrible consequences that would follow if such a war were

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to break out."[35] Explicitly, the communiqué interjected in debates unfolding in the United Nations. Implicitly, the conversations at Bandung centered on "the question of whether or how a global conversation of humanity could genuinely acknowledge cultural diversity without distributing such diversity over a hierarchical scale of civilization—that is to say, an urge toward cross-cultural dialogue without the baggage of imperialism," as historian Dipesh Chakrabarty has pointed out.[36] Both the Bandung conference of 1955 and the Non-Aligned Movement that it helped initiate in 1961 were replete with internal tensions.[37] Yet the political multilateralism launched at Bandung nonetheless rendered a deep fissure in the monopoly of Westernism, not just over the definition of the global but also in the discursive delineation of postwar humanism, as Wright was quick to discern in 1955.[38] It was a claim to the global that served as the ground from which to resist the epistemological violence of Westernism; it is also within this discursive and political matrix of the global that the idea of an intellectual Third World accrued definition as part and parcel of the processes of decolonization in the postwar world. The contending political and geocultural imaginations that emerged during the postwar decades through the intersecting histories of the United Nations and the Bandung conference of 1955 then unsettle any sedimentary conception of the global as either the exclusive domain of the non-Western modern or entirely buoyed by post-1989 economic globalization.

Proceeding with an image of postwar as a collective conceptual horizon within which a global was coproduced, this book takes up the task of remapping the postwar decades from within the field of art history. Mappings, of course, have always subtended art history's disciplinary unconscious, and we would do well to recollect cultural geographers Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift's words: "Maps are not empty mirrors, they at once hide and reveal the hand of the cartographer. Maps are fleshly: of the body and of the mind of the individuals that produce them, they draw the eye of the map-reader."[39] Even before the birth of art history as a discipline, maps legitimized the operation of power and allocated meaning within boundaries. And, in twentieth-century art history, maps separated proverbial metropolitan centers from alleged provincial peripheries, assigning artistic value on a hierarchical sliding scale of imagined civilizational fullness or lack. A project of critical remapping must then trace against this grain, with and through differences, dialectically projecting contiguities and disjunctures onto the very contours of the globe simultaneously. This book is concerned with such a remapping—within the practical compunctions of an edited volume—of postwar art history.

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The Book

The past two decades have seen a tectonic shift in scholarly approaches to art produced in the second half of the twentieth century. A complex picture of postwar American art has emerged in the aftermath of scholarly initiatives to read into the formal aspects of abstraction, minimalism, and conceptual art multivalent dimensions of artistic labor and civil rights struggles in the United States during the turbulent 1960s.[40] Seeking to provincialize Europe from within, scholars of European art, too, have both situated modernism at the intersection of metropolitan and colonial projects and brought into sharper focus precarious intersections between postwar political and aesthetic economies.[41] In tandem, new art historical scholarship on Asia, Africa, South America, and the Middle East has discursively stretched the field of postwar art far beyond its older, Westernist limits.[42] The deep-rooted heterogeneities that structure the global field of modernism have been substantially foregrounded with these transformations. Now, taking up the expansive possibilities offered by the framework of an edited volume and proceeding from the premise that postwar modernism was a worldwide, albeit heterogenous, phenomenon, this book undertakes a second and equally pressing intellectual work of *localizing* postwar—that is, the years between 1945 and 1965—through sketching out a series of encounters across an uneven *global* terrain by way of punctuating recursive histories with declarative disjunctures. The hope is that the attendant ruptures that materialize in the pages of this book will provoke new ways of thinking, engaging, and narrating a global art history of postwar.[43]

The trajectories of such a project are necessarily replete with material and conceptual conundrums. On the one hand, there exist a range of postwar artistic practices in the former peripheries but limited critical history for these even in the present. It necessarily follows that the relationship to the intellectual and artistic gambits of the postwar period remains messy, incomplete, and unresolved, perhaps more in some parts of the world than others. The historical reality of artistic processes and their attendant archives in diverse parts of the globe then still require close analytic attention. As literary historians Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel have succinctly put it: "So much depends on which modernism, written when and why and from what place—which city, which hillside, which seat on the train, which new nation or colony, and before, after, or during which war."[44] On the other hand, a critical inquiry aligned along strict geographic or regional demarcations—Asia, Africa, America, Australia, and so on, or even studies of specific urban cultural ecologies of particular cities—cannot

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bring to the surface similarities and differences, elective affiliations and innate affinities, and singularities and serialities that dialogically unfolded along the axis of a global cross-hatching.

Among other possibilities, Enwezor and I considered recovering dialogic cross-hatchings by comparatively approaching clusters of themes, artistic movements, concepts, and terminologies that were well established within postwar Anglophone art history's critical vocabulary but accrued dissonant densities when mobilized outside it. Revisionist motives notwithstanding, such a comparative approach might have performed a codifying function at its best; at its worst, this could have served to recentralize Europe as the model for all histories once again. Both fell far short of the critical discursive work that we felt this book needed to perform. At the same time, the global artistic movements under scrutiny here not only flummoxed conventional geographic demarcations but also proved to be substantially more malleable than conventional art historical wisdom would have it. In the end, we opted to divide the book into four broad geocultural clusters that position postwar art within intersecting domains of practice and affiliations, both national and transnational, by way of holding together the many vital particularities that vividly contoured imaginations of postwar's globality in the years between 1945 and 1965.

The first cluster—"Europe in Transition"—traces political and cultural transformations in Europe, lingering in particular on fractures that render obsolete any sedimented notion of centers or peripheries as well as universalisms or particularisms. In the opening chapter, Hal Foster proposes we read the monstrous figures of Cobra—the collective whose name derived from the first letters of Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam, where the group's founding members lived—as creatures spawned by a crisis that rendered a deep fissure within Europe itself. Ming Tiampo's discussion on artists from Asia and Africa in the Slade School of Fine Art, in London, settles the proverbial peripheries at the very heart of metropolitan Europe. Here, the place of enunciation—Europe—matters as much as that which is enunciated, and we find that this sense of place hovers between belonging and dispersal.

The second cluster—"The Soviet Bloc and Communist China"—shifts between local complexities and global arrangements that unfolded across socialist and communist worlds. The symbolic economy of Soviet culture, Boris Groys writes, substantially shaped all forms of artistic practice, state supported and dissident, in the USSR. Consequently, movements such as Moscow conceptualism, too, must be situated within this matrix, compounding assumed distinctions between realism and conceptualism, Groys argues. We are still far more attuned to the abstraction/realism dialogic in postwar art as it transpired

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in the United States and the USSR. The recalcitrant trajectories of postwar China, however, open up a substantially different configuration of representation and politics in Vivian Li's focused discussion of the *Rent Collection Courtyard*. The instability of art historical categories also receives sharp emphasis in the *Rent Collection Courtyard*—the "atomic bomb of the art world"—as Li maps the art of postrevolutionary China onto the postwar axis, on which this artistic trajectory has largely remained absent. Collectively, the juxtaposition of discrepant local histories of socialism and communism alters the scale of analysis, bringing to the surface a shifting web of global relations, both representational and otherwise. Reading regional and transregional scales of geopolitics into art then offers one way to confront the multiscalar nature of the postwar global.

The focus of the next cluster—"Pacific Passages, Atlantic Oscillations"—is the parenthetical area of the bodies of water, the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, through which an art historical passage from north to south and east to west becomes conceivable. Spanning East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Americas, the chapters in this cluster traverse a vast cultural geography. Collectively, they foreground postwar's Pacific theaters as it stretched from Japan (Alexandra Munroe) to the US West Coast (Tara McDowell) and from the Philippines (Patrick Flores) to Australasia (Terry Smith). Connecting Europe to North America and North America to South America and Latin America (Jenni Sorkin and Jennifer Josten), chapters in this cluster also highlight cultural oscillations that emerged in the Atlantic through the circulation of objects, ideas, and people. Thus "Pacific Passages, Atlantic Oscillations" situates artistic practices within continuums and interregnums among prewar arrangements and postwar cultural networks. To be sure, the transatlantic movement of artists before and during the Second World War has received scholarly attention; we need only to recollect the primacy given to the migration of Bauhaus artists and architects to the United States in histories of European and North American art. The chapters gathered here, in contrast, significantly complicate "the traditional circuitry of the transatlantic movement of prewar ideas," to use Sorkin's words, embedding, in turn, cultural practices within the intricate web of political and socioeconomic forces that impelled them. To this end, the authors in this section take up different postwar motifs of trauma and transcendence, religious beliefs and political theologies, discrepant traditionalisms and processes of modernization, and Indigenous artistic productions and their appropriations. "The entire array of these interacting forces needs to be taken into account, and their relativities plotted," Smith writes, "if we are to develop an art historical approach that, while acknowledging the historical impact of the Westernist model, supersedes it."

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The changes wrought by transitions to new forms of national institutions and new domains of living and belonging define the fourth cluster, "Decolonizing Constellations," which focuses broadly on Asia (Atreyee Gupta), Africa (Elizabeth Harney), and the Middle East (Iftikhar Dadi and Nada Shabout). Here, representation does not simply signal forms of creative practice but quite literally becomes the name for a political awareness of identity that compenetrates the formal field of representation. As a framework for analysis, the national then had a very specific resilience in decolonizing contexts. Yet artistic and intellectual projects "retained critical affiliations and differences from metropolitan modernisms that were not merely local or national but gestured toward imagining broader regional concerns that were aesthetic, as well as social and political," as Dadi writes. Attached to these are ideas of a postwar decolonized modernity that is bound up with notions of modernization, development, and progress, as Gupta shows. "Decolonizing Constellations" then prompts us to, in Gupta's words, "read the postwar archive against its grain, not only to open it up to plural desires but also to confront the art historical epistemic ruptures that such a reading necessarily engenders."

Individual chapters within the book's four sections address postwar from a single locale or through case studies. But the reader will discover that this address finds dynamic and often unpredictable equivalents in other chapters, in other locales, and in other practices. Vibrant political and artistic intersections fundamentally undergirded the years under consideration. But these remain invisible unless postwar is confronted as a global epoch. Take, for example, the intersecting histories of race, gender, representation, and the atomic. In art history, the question of race has rarely transected the question of the atomic. Yet race had always been internal to the atomic: in the atomic cities of the Manhattan Project, it was the question of race that presented the most complex challenges, not only undermining the military economy of obedience and efficiency but also threatening to subvert the very goal of weapon production, as Peter B. Hales has shown elsewhere.[45] Furthermore, in Munroe's chapter, the atomic accrues a different density as the author reads the postwar production of a "pacified, effeminized, and contemplative Japan" alongside the phenomenon of the radioactive monster Godzilla awakened from the depths of the ocean. It is as if the liberal humanist symbolic universe has met its absolute other, not just in the monstrous colored body redolent with atomic energy but also in the conflation of the racialized defeated body with effeminacy. The racialized effeminized body then layers Sorkin's reading of the feminist labor of weaving in Anni Albers's and Sheila Hicks's artistic practices by superimposing race and gender as intersecting categories of art historical analysis. Other

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points of global intersections are presented by institutions such as the Slade School of Fine Art, in London, which serves as the unpredictable, but critical, backdrop for scenes of decolonization for Dadi, Shabout, and Tiampo. These, of course, are only a few points of transversal reading that surface in this anthology; the reader will no doubt discover many others. Indeed, the editors hope that the material, conceptual, and methodological conjunctions and disjunctures a book such as this brings into view will open up horizons for future research, in turn inflecting the postwar global—"a universal enriched by every particular," as Césaire would have it—that we have inherited and continue to inhabit.[46]

NOTES

Epigraph: Césaire, "Letter to Maurice Thorez," 152.

1. Okwui Enwezor, foreword to Enwezor, Siegel, and Wilmes, *Postwar*, 13.

2. Donald Trump's presidency in the United States, the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom, the growing popularity of the Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident (Pegida) in Germany, and the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party's spectacular electoral victories in India are only symptomatic of the global rise of exclusionist nationalisms.

3. For an extended discussion on this analogy, see Snyder, *Road to Unfreedom*; and Banaji, *Fascism*. Some examples of news articles that explore this theme include Applebaum, "Warning from Europe"; Browning, "Suffocation of Democracy"; and Ross, "Frankfurt School."

4. Interpreting the *post* of *postwar* literally, art historians have often read the decades after the conclusion of the Second World War as a time of peace after war. As Hannah Feldman writes: "Whereas the field of modern European art history circumscribes these decades as being 'post-war,' their reality was anything but, especially in France. Indeed, it was during these decades that France fought the longest wars of the twentieth century, wars that were, not coincidentally . . . intended to preserve a dwindling colonial empire." Feldman, *From a Nation Torn*, 1–2.

5. For this history, see Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*.

6. See Sartre, *Essays in Existentialism*; and Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism."

7. Theodor Adorno, who spent the war years in Los Angeles, wrote: "Even the most extreme consciousness of doom threatens to degenerate into idle chatter. Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today. Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual progress as one of its elements, is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation." Adorno, *Prisms*, 34. For the qualification in relation to lyric poetry, see Adorno, "From 'Commitment,'" 71–72.

8. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 185.

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9. Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 32.

10. See Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*.

11. Césaire, "Letter to Maurice Thorez," 152.

12. See Belting, *Art History after Modernism*, 37–53.

13. See *Documenta '59*.

14. See Grohmann, *Neue Kunst nach 1945*. The book was translated and published simultaneously in Britain, France, and the United States. For the US edition, see Grohmann, *Art since 1945*.

15. See Jones, "Writing Contemporary Art," 3–16.

16. For a retrospective assessment of this history, see Siegel, *Since '45*; Meyer, *What Was Contemporary Art?*; and Blocker, *Becoming Past*.

17. Precipitated by the 1974 publication of Peter Burger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, the debate centered around the question of the avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde. See Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*; Buchloh, "Theorizing the Avant-Garde"; Krauss, *Originality of the Avant-Garde*; and Foster, "What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?"

18. "This shift," Terry Smith writes, "has been occurring since the decline of modernism in the 1980s and has appeared in institutional naming—of galleries, museums, auction house departments, academic courses, and textbook titles—which, however, tend to use contemporary as a soft signifier of current plurality." T. Smith, *What Is Contemporary Art?*, 701.

19. See Enwezor, "Mega-exhibitions and the Antinomies of a Transnational Global Form."

20. Okeke-Agulu, "Questionnaire on 'The Contemporary,'" 45. This questionnaire was specifically framed for scholars and curators working in Europe and North America, a fact that led the Asia Art Archive, one of the most prominent nonprofit research entities in the field of modern and contemporary art of Asia, to circulate a questionnaire to art historians, critics, and curators from South, Southeast, and East Asia. See "The And: An Expanded Questionnaire on The Contemporary." The questions, however, have persisted, and since then, several similar questionnaires on the idea of the global have been published. See, e.g., Joyeux-Prunel, "Art History and the Global Challenge."

21. See, e.g., Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated*; Harris, *Global Contemporary Art World*; and Zarobell, *Art and the Global Economy*.

22. Belting, "Contemporary Art as Global Art."

23. See Jones and Nelson, "Global Turns in US Art History." Notably, the critical and intellectual unfolding of the global described in this introduction is specific to art history. In the domain of literary studies, the trajectory has unfolded differently. See Wollaeger, introduction to Wollaeger and Eatough, *Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*.

24. As Aruna D'Souza noted in her introduction to an edited volume published in conjunction with the 2011 conference at the Clark Art Institute "In the Wake of the Global Turn": "For art historians and art history departments in North America, there seems a particular urgency to 'deal with' the reality that the twenty-first-century world seems much bigger than the one our discipline has imagined for itself since its formation in European universities at the turn of the last century." D'Souza, introduction to D'Souza and Casid, *Art History in the Wake of the Global Turn*, viii. The perceived disciplinary "crisis" also led to the publication of several edited volumes on the subject, including Elkins, *Is Art*

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History Global?; and Zijlmans and van Damme, *World Art Studies*. In the process, the term *global art history* became a subject of debate. For critical positions in this regard, see Davis, "World without Art"; Carroll, "Art and Globalization"; and Juneja, "Global Art History and the 'Burden of Representation.'" The perception of "crisis," however, was specific to a North Atlantic art history. For a perspective on the discipline from outside the North Atlantic context, see Gupta and Ray, "Is Art History Global?"

25. See Chiem and Colburn, "Global Foundations for a World Art History" and Nelson, "Map of Art History."

26. Consider, e.g., a review of the exhibition *The Progressive Revolution: Modern Art for a New India* at the Asia Society, New York, in September 2018. Writing in *Art in America*, critic Prajna Desai observed: "Yet even as the show provided an opportunity to reflect on the mirage of India's secular multiculturalism—ratified at Partition if discredited in later years—the presentation equated the works' aesthetic complexity with a diagnosis of national conditions. This thesis hewed to the common expectation in Euro-American contexts that global modern art histories are first and foremost narratives about nation and identity rather than formal propositions about the processes and practice of art, that they are always practice before theory." The substance of Desai's critique notwithstanding, the taken-for-granted sliding of "global modern art histories" into modernist practices outside of Euro-American contexts only highlights the place that the "global" has come to assume within "modern art histories." Desai, "Other Than Nation," 50.

27. Reflecting on globalization from the vantage point of 2014, Paul James and Manfred B. Steger write: "After a few tentative and disparate uses across the mid-twentieth century, it erupted in the 1990s with explosive energy in both public and academic discourses that sought to make sense of momentous social change." The post-1990s usage of the term, however, was quite distinct, for in the postwar decades, the term "did not mean the extension of economic relations across the globe, as Europe remained the focus," as James and Steger show. Contemporary globalization is a period "like no other in human history," Enwezor, too, had observed in 1997. James and Steger, "Genealogy of 'Globalization,'" 426; Enwezor, "Travel Notes," 12.

28. This point is discussed extensively in James and Steger, "Genealogy of 'Globalization.'"

29. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 257.

30. McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 31.

31. See Benhabib, *Reluctant Modernism*, 78.

32. See Hoopes and Brinkley, *FDR and the Creation of the U.N.*, 45.

33. See Steil, *Battle of Bretton Woods*.

34. Wright, *Color Curtain*, 12.

35. C. Lee, "Final Communiqué of the Asian African Conference," 100 (emphasis added). For a discussion on what the "global" signified for the Bandung contingent, see C. Lee, "At the Rendezvous of Decolonization."

36. Chakrabarty, "Legacies of Bandung," 75.

37. See Hongoh, "Asian-African Conference (Bandung)"; Prashad, *Darker Nations*; Westad, *Global Cold War*; and McMahon, *Cold War in the Third World*.

38. See Wright, *Color Curtain*.

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39. Pile and Thrift, "Mapping the Subject," 48.

40. See, e.g., P. Lee, *Chronophobia*; Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*; and English, *1971*.

41. See, e.g., Feldman, *From a Nation Torn*; Mansoor, *Marshall Plan Modernism*; Medosch, *New Tendencies*; López, *Avant-garde Art and Criticism*; and Galimberti, *Individuals against Individualism*.

42. See, e.g., Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow*; Shabout, *Modern Arab Art*; Dadi, *Modernism and the Art of Muslim South Asia*; Tiampo, *Gutai*; Kee, *Contemporary Korean Art*; Okeke-Agulu, *Postcolonial Modernism*; Tomii, *Radicalism in the Wilderness*; and Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt*.

43. This makes the present anthology both analogous to and dissonant from edited volumes such as *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* and *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity*, which remain grounded in the methods and methodologies of literary studies and include discussions on art and cinema only by way of intersections. Wollaeger and Eatough, *Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*; Doyle and Winkiel, *Geomodernisms*. Likewise, the temporal frame used in this volume makes it conceptually analogous to but materially distinct from the four groundbreaking anthologies exploring alternative modernisms that were published in the series Annotating Art's Histories: Cross-cultural Perspectives in the Visual Arts, edited by Kobena Mercer, which broadly examined the period from the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. Another major intervention was *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*, which took up the question of the contemporary. See Mercer, *Exiles, Diasporas and Strangers*; Mercer, *Pop Art and Vernacular Cultures*; Mercer, *Discrepant Abstraction*; Mercer, *Cosmopolitan Modernisms*; T. Smith, Enwezor, and Condee, *Antinomies of Art and Culture*.

44. Doyle and Winkiel, introduction to *Geomodernisms*, 1.

45. See Hales, *Atomic Spaces*.

46. Césaire, "Letter to Maurice Thorez," 152.

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