

What is a 'Postcolonial Exhibition'?

Symposium

Amsterdam, Friday 25 May 2012

10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Venue location: 'De Nieuwe Liefde', Da Costakade 102

Doors open at 9 a.m.

The Stedelijk Museum and Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam proudly present the symposium 'What is a Postcolonial Exhibition?', an SMBA initiative organized as part of the program of Temporary Stedelijk 3 – Stedelijk @.

The current cultural and political situation in the Netherlands suggests that the postcolonial history here is a closed chapter before it has been written. The Netherlands is only now beginning to reflect critically on its colonial past. Art institutions and their strategies of classification, valorisation and display have, if at all, only half-heartedly been informed by postcolonial studies. Many institutions still do not seriously engage with what has often been categorized as ethnographic. Due to recent cuts in arts funding and populist cultural policies, these institutions lack the support to foster dialogues with art produced outside the traditionally defined artistic centres. At the same time, the paradigm of a globalized art impels them to offer serious responses to the legacy of colonialism.

This symposium seeks answers to this challenging situation, presenting a range of institutional practices and scholarly insights to examine a specific aspect of these practices: the exhibition itself and the exhibition strategies that go alongside it.

The program starts with a brief history of exhibitions at the Stedelijk Museum – some of which were made during colonial times, as well as more recent examples of the museum's ventures into art outside the 'centres'. Renowned anthropologist Johannes Fabian will talk about his book *Time and the Other* (1983) and the historic moment in which the timeframe of the modernist West became divided from the timeframe of the 'Other'. A subsequent interview will address its topicality for contemporary art exhibitions. Dutch artist Wendelien Van Oldenborgh will discuss her work, which addresses colonial histories and their legacies in everyday life today.

The symposium will also give voice to several institutions that try to incorporate the critical instruments of postcolonialism. Taking into account recent shifts in history-writing and geopolitical theories, their strategies reflect upon the uneven developed of modernity around the globe in order to reconstruct its discordant histories.

In her concluding statement Irit Rogoff, Professor of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London, will question the possibilities of periodization of colonialism and address the mobility of the concept itself. Is the postcolonial a model that can be utilized across different cultures? Should the task of the 'postcolonial museum' be to think beyond issues of compensation and redress?

The symposium's main ambition is to tackle key issues facing art institutions now that a new art world cartography has emerged. How do they translate their awareness of new geographies into exhibition policies? What histories are curated and what new narratives constructed? And ultimately, what is a 'postcolonial exhibition'?

Speakers and Program

Start (10 a.m.)

- Ann Goldstein, director, Stedelijk Museum: Welcome address

Mapping the field

- Elena Sorokina, art historian and freelance curator: Introduction to 'What is a postcolonial exhibition?'
- Jelle Bouwhuis, curator of SMBA: brief note on the Stedelijk's global art history
- Johannes Fabian, anthropologist: introduction to *Time and the Other*, followed by a public interview with Anke Bangma, curator at the Tropenmuseum

Positions 1 (11.30 a.m.)

- Wendelien van Oldenborgh, artist, Amsterdam
- Chris Dercon, director of Tate Modern, London
- Kofi Setordji, the Nubuke Foundation, Accra

Lunch break 1.30 p.m. (see below for lunchroom suggestions)

Positions 2 (2.30 p.m.)

- What, How and for Whom (WHW): 'Headlines and small prints'
- Jesús María Carrillo Castillo, head of Cultural Programs, Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid
- Abdellah Karroum, L'Appartement 22, Rabat and co-curator of 'Intense Proximity'

Tea break

Wrap up (4.30 p.m.)

- Irit Rogoff, Professor of Visual Culture at Goldsmiths College, London: 'Our Current Condition'

Closing remarks and drinks (5.30 p.m.)

NB: Each session will be followed by a Q&A with the audience

NB2: De Nieuwe Liefde does not serve lunch, see below for lunchroom suggestions

Organization

The symposium is organized by Jelle Bouwhuis, curator of Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam and Elena Sorokina, art historian and freelance curator. The symposium is held in the framework of SMBA's Project '1975' and presented as part of 'Temporary Stedelijk 3 – Stedelijk @', a public program of the Stedelijk Museum at various locations during the period that the museum building is closed for renovations. Hendrik Folkerts is the curator of the Stedelijk's public program. All necessary information can be found at www.smba.nl and www.stedelijk.nl.

Venue location

The symposium will be held at De Nieuwe Liefde, a centre for study, reflection and debate located at Da Costakade 102, in the centre of Amsterdam. More information can be found at: www.denieuweliefde.com

Lunchroom suggestions:

Grand café Alverna, Bilderdijkstraat 104, 020-6124455
Brandstof, Marnixstraat 341 (corner Rozengracht), 020-4220813
Expressobar Tazzina, Bilderdijkstraat 140, 020-6185151
More lunch restaurants to be found down on Rozengracht.

Admission fee

General admission fee is € 12.50 for tickets ordered before the event; € 7,50 for students. Tickets can be purchased from De Nieuwe Liefde's website www.denieuweliefde.com or at the venue's front desk. Online tickets are available by Dutch Bank account I-deal money transfer only. A limited number of tickets will be reserved for purchase at the door on the day itself and cost € 15.00. Reservations for these tickets and all other inquiries through mail@smba.nl
Please also inquire if you want to purchase more than 4 tickets on one name.

SUPPORT

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Abstracts and biographies

Elena Sorokina (moderator)

Elena Sorokina co-organized the symposium and is moderator of the day.

Sorokina is a Russian-born curator and art historian, alumna of the Whitney Museum of American Art ISP in New York and is currently based in Paris and Brussels. She curated 'On Traders' Dilemmas' at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, 2008; 'Scènes Centrales' at Tri Postal, Lille, 2009; 'Etats de l'Artifice' at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 2010. Sorokina is presently co-editing *Newtopia: The State of Human Rights*, the catalogue that accompanies the upcoming exhibition project in Belgium, 2012. She has written for a variety of art publications including *Artforum*, *Flash Art*, *Moscow Art Magazine*, and *Manifesta Journal*.

Jelle Bouwhuis

Jelle Bouwhuis will give a brief overview of a lesser-known chapter in the history of the Stedelijk. In the 1950s, the museum addressed modern art as a universal phenomenon. During that time, which coincided with the Stedelijk becoming an institution exclusively dedicated to modern art and design, the museum regarded art as a global manifestation. In the late 80s, the collapse of dictatorial regimes roused a new interest in art beyond the Western art sphere, with various outcomes. He will end by touching on Project '1975' as a possibility for revitalizing a museum policy in terms of 'global art'.

Jelle Bouwhuis is curator at the Stedelijk Museum and head of the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (SMBA). The current two-year Project '1975' of SMBA addresses contemporary art in a postcolonial context. Bouwhuis has curated numerous exhibitions, including 'Monumentalism' at the Stedelijk in 2010, with the accompanying catalogue/reader. He was co-recipient of the Abraaj Capital Art Prize 2010 and co-editor of *Now is the Time. Art and Theory in the 21st Century* (2009).

Johannes Fabian

Johannes Fabian will give a short introduction to *Time and the Other*, and will specifically discuss strategies of the spatialization of time and the juxtaposition of time and the rhetoric of vision. He will elaborate on what he calls anthropology's 'denial of coevalness', meaning the differentiation between the Western time of the 'observer', and the time of the 'Other'. He will address the implications of his book for institutional approaches and exhibition strategies today, which will be further elaborated in an interview with Anke Bangma, curator at the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam.

Fabian is Emeritus Professor of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam. He is a provocative and self-critical anthropologist. Books include: *Time and The Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (1983), *Anthropology with Attitude: critical essays, Out of Our Minds, Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (2000) and many others. Fabian's work threatens traditional scholarly boundaries and brings fresh insight to central topics in philosophy, history, and cultural studies.

Anke Bangma

In a public interview with Fabian, Anke Bangma will discuss his views and research in relation to art institutional practices.

Anke Bangma is curator of contemporary art at the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam. Her recent projects include 'Erick Beltran: The World Explained', Tropenmuseum (2011-12); 'Rod Dickinson: Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How', Hannah Arendt Reading Room, Center for Curatorial Studies/Bard College, NY (2009); 'Performing Evidence', SMART Project Space, Amsterdam (2009); 'Resonant Bodies, Voices, Memories', Piet Zwart Institute/Revolver Publications (2008).

Wendelien van Oldenborgh

Dutch artist Wendelien Van Oldenborgh's practice concerns the afterlife of colonialism, which she addresses in moving image and still image projections. Her work is also informed by the avant-garde film movement of the 60s and 70s which responded to the then current processes of decolonization with new narrative languages. In her lecture she will explain the main drives of her artistic practice and show fragments from her seminal work *Maurits Script* (2006). As a frequent public speaker and exhibitor, she is particularly driven by the fact that society is largely ignorant and neglectful of colonial history and its consequences, which continue to impact immigration policies, latent racism, and invisible but insidious new mechanisms of segregation.

Currently based in Berlin, Wendelien van Oldenborgh has exhibited at numerous international events, festivals and venues including the Danish Pavilion at the Venice Biennial 2011, São Paulo Biennial 2010 and 2012, Generali Foundation, Vienna; the International Film Festival Berlin; Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; Muhka Antwerp; A Space Gallery Toronto, Art Sheffield, ICA London; Istanbul Biennial 2009. Recently her book *A Well Respected Man, or Book of Echoes* was published in collaboration with Casco, Utrecht and Sternberg Press, Berlin. The book revolves around a 1913 manifesto by the Indonesian thinker Soewardi Soerjaningrat, creating a polyphonic (re-)consideration of this anti-colonial text.

Chris Dercon

Tate Modern has begun experimenting with new forms of 'international programming and collecting', initially with a focus on Latin America, followed by the Middle East. The Tate recently secured funding to support a program concentrating on modern and contemporary African art, and further global diversification is on its way. Dercon will discuss what the Tate aims to achieve with this dedicated policy and how it will be embedded in the existing collection, collection displays and exhibition programs. He will also discuss the levels on which this diversification will be effectuated, how it differs from earlier policies, and will also discuss the Tate's international direction with regard to the specificity of the British postcolonial context. Additionally, Dercon will raise the issue of how major Western museums, which now also includes the Guggenheim, seem to have become involved in a 'scramble' to acquire international art.

Chris Dercon was appointed director of Tate Modern in 2011. He was previously director of Haus der Kunst in Munich where he was responsible for such exhibitions as 'The Future of Tradition – The Tradition of Future' (2010), and Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam, where he initiated the seminal exhibition 'Unpacking Europe' in 2001. Until recently, he was a board member of London based INIVA – Institute for International Visual Arts.

Kofi Setordji

Setordji will discuss the mission of the Nubuke Foundation against the background of indigenous art in Ghana. This non-profit cultural institution acknowledges the role of traditional arts in people's everyday lives, using this general interest to help develop Ghana's the creative industries by developing projects by artists from around the world working with master craftsmen to bring innovative ideas into the art scene. His personal involvement included working with Ewe kente weavers resulting in new uses of the kente cloth.

Kofi Setordji is one of the most prominent Ghanaian artists today. He gained wide recognition with his portable memorial of the Rwanda genocide. After initiating ArtHouse, an artist residency program intended mainly for African artists and situated in an annex to his studio in Accra, he co-founded the privately-run Nubuke Foundation in Accra. The Nubuke Foundation's educational mission seeks to raise awareness of Ghanaian history, vanishing artisan traditions and their possible revitalization through global

contemporary art, as well as staging exhibitions of contemporary art.

In 2009 Setordji was granted a Bellagio Creative Arts Fellowship by the Rockefeller Foundation.

What, How and for Whom (WHW)

Entitled 'Headlines and Small Prints', the curatorial collective WHW presentation addresses the complex relations between postcolonialism and post-socialism and their conceptual differences. The talk will be based on the eponymous exhibition at Gallery Nova in 2012, which featured work by the artists Andreas Fogarasi and Maryam Jafri. While Jafri dealt with the themes associated with colonial and postcolonial legacy of Afro-Asian regions, the work of Fogarasi reflected on Victor Vasarely's exhibition in Budapest in 1969, the first exhibition of abstract art in Hungary. This juxtaposition aimed at encompassing the spaces of fissure in representation and interpretation of historic events, while indirectly dealing with the spaces of creating and undoing the cultural and political identities and the historically generated and geographically bounded divisions.

WHW is a curatorial collective formed in 1999 and based in Zagreb, Croatia. Its members are curators Ivet Ćurlin, Ana Dević, Nataša Ilić and Sabina Sabolović, and designer and publicist Dejan Kršić. WHW organizes a range of production, exhibition and publishing projects and directs Gallery Nova in Zagreb. Among WHW's recent exhibitions are: 11th Istanbul Biennial 'What Keeps Mankind Alive?', Istanbul, 2009; 'Hungry Man, Reach for the Book. It Is a Weapon', Printed Matter, New York, 2010; 'Ground Floor America', Lakeside – Klagenfurt and Den Frie – Copenhagen, 2010; 2010 (co-curated), the Croatian pavilion for 54th Venice Biennial 2011 – Tomislav Gotovac and BADco., and others.

Jesús María Carrillo Castillo

A member of the Red Conceptualismos del Sur research team since 2007, and currently on the staff of Museo Reina Sofia, Jesús Carrillo will discuss how an institution of a former colonial metropolis deals with a Latin American research network. A network that was specifically created to protect local memory and immaterial heritage from expropriation and spurious interpretations in the global art world. He will also touch upon why and how the museum initiated a curatorial process which brought about an exhibition such as the Potosi Principle, which challenged the very principles of the museum as an emblem of Western modernity. In his argument, these cases are not exceptional 'postcolonial' items in the general discourse of the museum, they are vital to the definition of Reina Sofia today.

Jesús Carrillo is a Professor of Contemporary Art History at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and Head of the Cultural Programs Department of the Reina Sofia Museum since 2008. He combines an analysis of contemporary culture and cultural institutions with a critical reading of art historical narratives. He has published, among others, *Arte en la Red* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2004) and on artists such as Douglas Crimp (2005) and Martha Rosler (2008). The Latin American network to which it belongs is currently curating an exhibition on art activism under dictatorial regimes and opens later this year.

Abdellah Karroum

Karroum will discuss his curatorial practice at L'appartement 22 in Rabat, Morocco, in the context of the experimental 'Expeditions' Le Bout Du Monde, initiated in 2000 in the Rif Mountains and organized at different places world-wide. How does it affect developments in the artistic realm there, and how does L'appartement 22's global orientation foster local activities and artists? How can the project space exist as a micro artistic institution in the context of a major social crisis? Karroum will also elaborate on his role as curator of the current La Triennale 'Intense Proximity' in Paris and presents the curators' new strategies and curatorial approach outlined in the curatorial statement: "Fundamentally, the goal of the project is to shift from the idea of national space, as a constituted physical location, to a frontier space that constantly assumes new morphologies and new models of categorization (local, national, trans-national, geo-

political, de-national, pure, contaminated, etc.)". He will also talk about the 7th Dakar Biennale, when the official directives prioritized 'contemporary African artists'.

Abdellah Karroum (b. 1970) is the founder of L'appartement 22, a space for encounters, exhibitions and artists' residencies, established in 2002 in Rabat. He was Assistant Curator at the capcMusée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux (1993-1996). His PhD at the University of Bordeaux was titled *Nomadic works: toward a post-contemporary aesthetics?* He was the Curator of 'A Proposal for Articulating Works and Places' at the 3rd International Marrakech Biennale 2009 and the 'Working for Change' proposal for a Moroccan Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale 2011. Karroum is Associate Curator of La Triennale of Paris, 2012 and Artistic Director of the International Prize for Contemporary Art of the Prince Pierre Foundation, Monaco and the upcoming Benin Biennale 2012. He is also a member of the research group at EHESS Paris on 'Biennials and Large scale exhibitions in Africa'.

Irit Rogoff

'Our Current Condition'

As we can no longer think of the postcolonial as a condition of exception that relates exclusively to past colonial histories and to the awkward dimension of unease felt around current migrations into Europe, we need instead to recognise it as our current condition. In the context of the symposium in Amsterdam, this means that declaration of good intention that seeks to redress past wrong by strategies of visibility and representation are not really acceptable ways of dealing with the situation. It is only in understanding the multiple registers of periodization, of the movement of models of postcolonial critique around the world, of the roles that exhibitions might have in saturating the field of vision with an 'ordinariness' of the colonial present, with a rewriting of what 'contemporaneity' might mean: that we can grasp the postcolonial beyond a series of particular histories and into a continuous present.

Irit Rogoff is a theorist, curator and Professor of Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths College, London.

Rogoff writes extensively on the conjunctions of contemporary art with critical theory with particular reference to issues of colonialism, cultural difference and performativity. She is author of *Terra Infirma - Geography's Visual Culture* (2000), editor of *The Divided Heritage: Themes and Problems in German Modernism* (1991) and co-editor, with Daniel Sherman, of *Museum Culture: Histories, Theories, Spectacles* (1994). Rogoff is director of an international AHRB research project 'Translating the Image: Cross-cultural Contemporary Arts' housed at Goldsmiths College.