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# On the 'Objectscape' of Transculturality. An Introduction

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One of the major challenges facing art history in recent decades has been the issue of globalization and its cultural implications—with regard to both retrospective historical narratives and contemporary methods. As art production, art audiences, and scholarship on art and visual culture are becoming more and more internationalized—and, indeed, transcultural—a (self-)critical analysis of disciplinary standpoints seems more important than ever and is at the center of ongoing discussions within and beyond academia. Over the past decades, a significant and extensive body of literature has been published on issues of art history in times of globalization and accelerated cultural exchange (see e.g. Elkins 2007; Zijlmans and Van Damme 2008; Casid and D'Souza 2014; Bachmann et al. 2017; Dornhof et al. 2018). Research initiatives, projects, and institutions tackle the major challenges facing art history and related disciplines by reconsidering historically conditioned Eurocentrisms from a critical postcolonial perspective and focusing on transcultural processes in the field of art. This anthology is rooted in a project that was developed in close connection with such initiatives: the Max Planck Research Group "Objects in the Contact Zone. The Cross-Cultural Lives of Things"—which was carried out at Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz—Max-Planck-Institut between 2011 and 2018.

Like most research initiatives with transcultural agendas, "Objects in the Contact Zone" has operated within a limited time frame, and the question remains how critical transcultural approaches will become established and institutionalized in the coming years and how they will be reflected in art history curriculums. Empirically and methodologically, the "map" of transcultural art history still has many blank areas and the transcultural paradigm is far from being standard. There is, by now, a critical mass of scholars who have been trained in—often temporary—programs on transcultural art history. Many of these scholars are still in the early stages of their careers, yet aspire to rise in the ranks of their respective faculties. Hence, there is much to suggest that in the not too distant future transcultural approaches will be normalized and productively integrated into the humanities.

Far from claiming to provide a comprehensive survey of the field of "art history in a global context," or a historiographic introduction into transculturality in art history (see e.g. Bachmann et al. 2017; Juneja 2018),

this volume follows a “hands-on”, object-based approach, as it assembles a wide range of case studies to create a compilation of readings of paradigmatic objects developed by the individual research projects of the research group’s fellows and students. Complementary to this, a set of “key terms” provides an instrument to introduce important concepts for the study of transcultural visual cultures and art histories, reflecting the dynamic moment of ongoing debate. The publication is intended to exemplify a format of interaction between advanced academic research and emerging scholars. It shows how advanced students can be involved in research projects and develop their own perspective, thereby actively shaping future developments in an evolving field. As such, this approach is very much in line with the rise of research master programs and graduate schools that promote reciprocity between teaching and research.

## Mapping Transcultural Art History

We consider transculturality as a cultural phenomenon, thus as a subject for study—but not in the sense of an unconditional fact as it were. Rather, we want to look at the “concrete modalities of processes and the dynamics inherent to it” (Bachmann et al. 2017, 15; with a reference to Flüchter and Schöttli 2015). Accordingly, transcultural research is associated with a multi-layered approach. It links various regional, cultural, and historical contexts and, in the process, draws on a wide range of scholarly approaches and insights. It aims to leave behind national, civilizational, or disciplinary principles. In the traditional, academic study of art and artistic practices from so-called other cultures, such principles can constitute a form of “epistemological violence” that often works in the context of asymmetric power constellations of colonialism (Bachmann et al. 2017, 15). A perspective that considers transculturality both as a subject for study and as a critical method allows a more nuanced, differentiated, and reciprocal understanding of exchange and encounter, and it takes into account multiple factors and constellations of power. It thus seeks to unravel processes of transfer, appropriation, adaption or also rejection and allows us to tell art histories across space and time, as the travel of objects and ideas always adds new layers of significance (see Juneja 2011, 2012, and 2018). Such a reciprocal understanding of transculturality avoids the trap of naïve and primarily affirmative notions of mobility or even entanglement (as recently criticized by Gänger and Osterhammel 2020) that are often still informed by Eurocentric notions of progress and expansion. Methodologically, we thus aim at a set of methods, transgressing national or disciplinary boundaries and conventional research areas. This does not mean that local or regional expertise become obsolete or secondary. On the contrary, associated competences (language skills, intimate knowledge of the field, etc.) are necessarily of eminent importance, but regional expertise should not be understood and practiced as an unconnected entity. In line with

this, the model of scholarship put forward by transcultural research is not based on comparison, but on a relational perspective. It focuses on transfers between cultural spaces, always placing the object in relation to its specific local and historical context of perception. This includes processes that can be read in terms of appropriation, creolization, or a range of concepts linked to the observation that cultural spaces are not homogeneous entities but in a constant process of exchange and therefore share inextricably interwoven histories.

A relational approach also reflects the premise that the past is no longer understood as one single story and the need to explore the ramifications and possibilities, in both cultural and social terms, of a horizontal historical landscape of multiple histories. Viewing historiography as more than the study of the writing of history and of written histories, the contributions in this volume reflect on both traditional and alternative histories of representation. The chapters look at displays, objects, encounters and remains that are not necessarily only text-based and fall within, outside of, and in between established canons. Accordingly, the notion of "reading objects" as spelled out in the title of this volume, is not limited to a logocentric understanding—it rather is meant to address historical and contemporary processes of performing, placing, and looking at a conceptually wide range of objects. One important objective of the research represented in this volume is to think about the ensuing contingencies of agency and perception. It looks at space, time, people, and things in visual and material terms—and reviews historical narratives, in order to question established ontological and epistemological categories and to explore contemporary methods of (re)thinking transcultural histories (for this premise see also Troelenberg and Chatterjee 2018).

## The Paradigm of the Case Study

The objects discussed range from antiquity to the present, while the frameworks of perception are predominantly modern ones, from the 1800s to present. This is based on the idea that methodological-theoretical perspectives in the field of transcultural art history need to be developed inductively drawing on an existing, broad, transcultural research practice. Rooted in art history and visual studies, this research centers the object and its visual and material impact. In order to fully grasp this impact or agency of the object, our work includes the methods and perspectives of neighboring disciplines from relevant area studies as well as museology, history, archaeology, or anthropology. It taps and critically questions both institutional and informal collections and archives and their conditions of perception: What is the difference between an image or an object we encounter in a national museum, and one we find in a forgotten suitcase? What is the range of intellectual and practical instruments we need in order to find, reach, and understand such different constellations

of encounter? Which questions can we answer with these case studies? Within the project “Objects in the Contact Zone”, some scholars were, for instance, initially interested in a certain material quality of an artwork, and they needed to understand the transcultural context in which it was produced, circulated, or collected in order to make sense of this material. Other scholars were interested in a particular historical moment of cross-cultural encounter, and they found that an object or an image might tell the story of this encounter—not as a mere illustration, rather as a material or visual source in its own right, whose ‘eloquence’ is always bound to a historical constellation as it plays out across both time and space. Lorraine Daston has described such epistemic processes in her study on “Things that Talk”: “[...] things in a supersaturated cultural solution can crystallize ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. These thickenings of significance are one way that things can be made to talk. But their utterances are never disembodied. Things communicate by what they are as well as by how they mean. A particular cultural setting may accentuate this or that property, but a thing without any properties is silent.” (Daston 2004, 20). In this sense, the book’s project can be seen as making a case for the contextualized case study and its potential to challenge, but also expand and develop the theoretical and methodological frameworks of art history beyond a linear, additive, or comparative history of techniques, styles, and iconographies. In that sense, placing objects in dynamic contact zones productively destabilizes conventions and academic cultures that, for a long time, were used to “read[ing] a ‘culture’ off a thing in a glass case” (Juneja 2018, 469).

The choice of examples in the volume altogether reflects the staggering presence of non-European objects particularly in European or North American collections. It thus hints at a historical and material reality which is directly linked to asymmetries of power during and in the aftermath of colonialism. While this does put heavy emphasis on so-called western institutions and agencies, the volume thus also represents a problem-constellation that can contribute to current debates on privileges of access and interpretation, on ownership, and restitution (Sarr and Savoy 2018).

In order to tackle this problem-constellation, we adapt the notion of the “contact zone” and develop it further by linking it directly to objects. This idea initially started out from the premise that non-European objects, which are displayed and stored in museums or collections and reproduced, described, analyzed, and categorized through visual media and arts, are situated in a contact zone. Mary Louise Pratt introduced the notion of contact zones as places of asymmetrical, but potentially reciprocal spaces of encounter, negotiation, and also conflict. This was crucial for the understanding of a transculturalism which works in multiple directions, breaking up simplistic binaries of East and West or centers and peripheries, and thus questioning traditional linear narratives of history (Pratt 1992). While Pratt focused on textual analysis, the anthropologist James Clifford connected this reciprocal understanding of contact zones

into the realm of museum theory and practice (Clifford 1997). Museums, particularly those whose histories and collections were entangled with colonialism and imperialism, found a way to address their contested heritage by understanding themselves as contact zones. In a very practical, concrete sense, the museum as contact zone became a place for different stakeholders to meet, discuss and negotiate new, reciprocal practices and heritage policies beyond the colonial appropriation and representation of artefacts. At the same time, artefacts, interpreted in dialogue or translation between different communities, can be understood as materialized contact zones. Subsequently, the nexus between museum and contact zone also became a conceptual term of postcolonial practice—and, one could critically argue, over time it has become a topos which museums use to signal an attitude of collaborative, postcolonial self-critique. However, as has for instance been argued by Robin Boast, this can't undo the lasting "asymmetry [that] is built, literally and figuratively, into our institutions" (Boast 2011, 66). Any collection, display, and documentation of artefacts and artworks remains entrenched in power relations. It is for this reason that we work with case studies that first center objects or groups of objects, and then we expand the analytical gaze towards these objects' agencies and layers of meaning as they play out under shifting institutional, political, and historical conditions of representation. We thus ask, on the one hand: What does an object do, metaphorically speaking, by way of its intrinsic material and aesthetic qualities? On the other hand, we critically question the conditions of display or representation that may make an object speak, but also may silence, change, enhance, challenge, or obscure what it says or means. Accordingly, looking at "objects in the contact zone" for us opens a space to critically expound the dynamics at play in a multi-layered concept of transculturation.

## Object-driven

Objects as loot, gift, fetish, relic, commodity, work of art, and collection piece embody processes of exchange and social interaction between individuals, cultures, and societies. Their mobilization, de- and recontextualization, evaluation and presentation, appropriation and consumption materialize social relations. The high interdisciplinary potential of the notion of the object connects art history with anthropology, religious studies, sociology, economic history, museum studies, etc.

In his seminal volume *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (1986), anthropologist Arjun Appadurai draws on the research of his French colleague Marcel Mauss. In the now classic "Essai sur le don" (1923/1924) Mauss thoroughly theorized the notion of the gift pointing to the profound sociality of exchanging material objects. Appadurai developed Mauss' insights into an analysis of the flows of cultural goods in the globalized world. In a similar vein Nicholas Thomas (1991) has extended the

binary polarization of gift/ commodity to the model of a dynamic simultaneity of different concepts of object and ways of dealing with them. As Thomas has demonstrated, notions of value-making can be expounded productively through a context-based focus on materiality. Bruno Latour has extended the argument that to understand the relationship between humans and objects is to understand social relationships: he has proposed to profoundly rethink the notion of the object in favor of the theoretically more open notion of the "thing," arguing that the social is not exclusively a human affair but that it emerges as an actor-network that connects all kinds of entities, including humans, and objects (2005). This is of course against the backdrop that classical concepts of agency are based on the idea of an intentional subject, which is constituted in demarcation from passive objects. In questioning this distribution, objects and other entities are admitted to also have the ability to be active, to also become carriers of agency.

The notion of "object" that is shared in our group and the present case studies is informed by this academic debate around the status of materiality and its mobility, adopting it for the discipline of art history in a cross-cultural context. Considering materiality as a unifying element of the anthology, we effectively seek to question the "common distinction between works of art, artefacts and 'pure' material objects, goods or commodities," a distinction traditionally central to canonical Western concepts of art history (Saurma-Jeltsch 2010, 12). It is about tackling the question of how "[...] human and object histories inform each other" (Gosden and Marshall 1999, 169). Following Esther Pasztory's argument for a "cognitive interpretation of things," the approach transcends conflicted or historically charged notions of "art" and thus goes beyond a terminology that inevitably becomes contested when moving to the cross-cultural field (Pasztory 2005, esp. 4). It also transcends simple models of "stimulus-response" or "influence," and essentialist theories of "exoticism" or "Orientalism" by following a potentially asymmetric, but basically reciprocal or polycentric, working hypothesis of transculturation. In doing so, it seeks to move towards a concept of "migratory aesthetics" (Bal and Hernández-Navarro 2011).

Reflecting on the notions of "object" and "thing," this project suggests a variety of connotations from the physical to the philosophical and from claims for objectivity (or objectivation) to entanglement that can be addressed by one and the same entity over time and space and from different constellations of perception (see, e.g., Pointon 2004). This approach allows distinguishing between a range of epistemic variations within a field of reciprocal exchange. Additionally, the emancipation of objects as agents opens up a perspective on more complex relations of the distribution of action and power that does not force itself into the dichotomy of active/passive and not to attributions such as human/thing, human/animal, animated/inanimated, intention/tool, perpetrator/victim, oppressor/oppressed, and center/periphery.

The contact zones that the objects of our research reside and move in create particular conditions of encounters, perception, and reception as

a result of the object's provenance or biography and the recipient's predispositions and intentions (Kopytoff 1986; Gell 1998; Osborne and Tanner 2007) as well as the object's own "aura" or aesthetic eloquence (Saurma-Jeltsch and Eisenbeiß 2010). Objects are understood as a fulcrum between material migrations and social relations. These observations may pertain to single objects, but they can also address more complex object constellations such as museum displays or urban structures that potentially shed significant light on the transcultural production of knowledge. All case studies are united by a diachronic perspective that considers the object itself and its historical setting on an equal footing with, and in relation to, its agency and reception history across time and space to the present day.

Our examples can be placed within and between various geographical contexts and thus map modern transcultural histories and pre-histories of our present globalized art world (Juneja and Kravagna 2013). They open up a geographically, temporally, and conceptually multi-faceted "objectscape" of transculturality (on this notion see also Juneja and Grasskamp 2018, 11). Connecting the idea of "scapes" (Appadurai 1990) to the analysis of cross-cultural object itineraries, we seize on the current heightened awareness of the destabilized and deterritorialized state of cultures as both a challenge and chance that can lead to a better understanding of alternative histories. Taking its cue from objects and their biographies, our approach opens up a very tangible dimension within a larger landscape of "cultural flows" (Appadurai 1990) and global connectivity. In this way, it addresses both the epistemic potential of the "aesthetics of difference" (Schmidt-Linsenhoff 2014) and the asymmetries and misunderstandings that can emerge when objects move and/or become transformed, thereby entering cultural contact zones (see e.g. Maihoub 2015).

The concept of the "objectscape" also allows us to respond more productively to the post-global condition and its spaces and networks. Within this condition, we operate with terms such as "cross-cultural" or "transcultural," "transregional," and "transnational." We use them to describe cultures of encounter, but also to locate us in a methodological field. In both respects, such terms do potentially still bear an echo of historically generated, politically motivated notions of difference and distance: the concepts of culture, region, and nation speak of closed or circumscribed entities and borders. Transgressing or crossing them, both as a lived experience and as an intellectual enterprise, will therefore understand borders and differences not in a limiting sense, but rather as landmarks of epistemic significance and potential. As Monica Juneja has argued with a particular eye on the discursive concept of "culture," "the prefix 'trans-' enables an emancipation from this concept" (Juneja 2018, 466). This appears related to a dynamic, epistemically productive dimension of "border thinking" (Mignolo and Tlostlanova 2006). The idea of the "object-scape" allows us to look at objects and images as a materialization of social relations which develop, shift, and indeed migrate across time and space. Placing objects in an 'objectscape' supports our relational perspective. It transcends any additive or comparative

understanding of 'global art history' which tends to include non-Western regions or cultures merely as an extension of the map and object-canon of an academic discipline, seeking to signal cosmopolitan virtues without fully acknowledging the need for a systematic reconsideration of canons, terms, and concepts (see e.g. Pfisterer 2008; for a deeper historiographic critique of such additive positions see also Juneja 2018, 464).

This leads directly to another critical question that deserves increased attention: To what extent are some projects of "global" art history still Eurocentric in themselves? And how, if at all, is global or transcultural art history relevant for scholars based in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, or for those working on indigenous cultures or First Nations in North America or the Pacific? As Pauline Bachmann et al. have pointed out when looking back to the early twentieth-century, pre-history of transcultural art history, "[w]ithout non-European agents and the relatively unknown interpreters, merchants, collectors, intellectuals, and artists, there would not have been any basis for transcultural exchange" to begin with (Bachmann et al. 2017, 12). Against this background, a diachronic perspective seems crucial: teleological models of art and cultural history typically lead up to a normative idea of modernism and contemporaneity and its agents—and even proponents of transcultural or global modernity tend to understand the present and the recent past as a culmination of cross-cultural exchange and connectedness. The distances between geographies, cultures and agents may thus appear 'smaller' today than they used to appear one or two decades ago—however, this hardly does justice to the complexity of standpoints and perception modes between past and present. Focusing diachronically on the 'lives of things' and their object-biographies across time and space allows us to tie in with a concept of transculturation which addresses the "specific dynamic between distance and proximity that operates within individual and different historical periods and different sites across the globe" (Juneja 2018, 470).

## Reading Objects in the Contact Zone

Against this larger theoretical and disciplinary background, the object essays in this volume are loosely grouped according to formal criteria such as media, material, or function. At the same time, our sections consider the dynamics between moments of production and perception in the itineraries of objects: What is the potential of an object, what response does it trigger in a certain context, how does it elicit shifting resonances over time? Bearing in mind the pitfalls of chronological/teleological, taxonomic, or geographical classifications, and hierarchies, we seek to avoid the curricular categories and genres of art history which are rooted in often static European concepts of art. For example, the term "sculpture" is not appropriate for a mask that was, in fact, part of a costume and, indeed, a whole performance involving dance and music. The juxtaposition of varied case studies in each section demonstrates both the conceptual potential and

the challenges of a transcultural art history seeking to productively expand traditional disciplinary categories.

## Economies of Photo-Objects

By understanding photographs as three-dimensional visual and tactile objects that are active in time and space (Bärnighausen, Caraffa et al. 2019), the essays in this section focus especially on notions of circulation, multiplication, and appropriation with regard to photographic practices. **Anna Sophia Messner** discusses "Migratory Memories: A Suitcase as Photo Archive" by reading it as a "lieu de mémoire" of the Holocaust. The suitcase and the photographs appear as a micro photo archive relative to the macro-historical context of visual culture and socio-political history in both Germany and Palestine/Israel, and at the same time as an archival object whose physical map(ping) constructs an autobiographical memory. In "*Portrait of Space*," **Katharina Upmeyer** analyzes "Lee Miller's Photograph as Surrealist Contact Zone" between Egypt, Europe, and the US by pointing to surrealist aesthetics and artistic practices as well as notions of appropriation, exile, and loss. And in "Two-Faced: Translations of a Portrait of Abdülhamid II," **Erin Hyde Nolan** examines the circulation, cross-cultural translation, and networks of exchange in imperial Ottoman portrait photography, demonstrating this genre's capacity to embody multiple and subjective identities when translated across material platforms and cultural borders. **Elahe Helbig** discusses the configurations of power based on the example of a "Photograph of Mozaffar al-Din Mirza from an Italian Mission to Persia." Asking about the construction of political iconography and the definition of dynastic-national identity through photography, she examines the interplay between visual spheres and social spaces and their multiplication.

## Utility and Representation

This section reflects on the cross-cultural transfer of aesthetics and motifs in an applied-arts context. Historically, such objects were often representative or, indeed, luxury objects that ended up in museums, i.e. in a space that opens up complex temporalities of perception. This is the case in **Theodore Van Loan's** essay "Multiple Temporalities and the Scene of Time: A Pair of Wooden Doors at the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo." Van Loan examines the role of time, duration, and visual perception, developing a historiographic critique regarding the (re)construction of the past lives of objects. **Maria Sobotka** analyzes "Displaying Cross-Culturality: A Water Basin from Mosul in Berlin," by focusing on notions of hybridity and the "masterpiece discourse" surrounding this piece in its modern museum context. At the same time, the Chinese and Mongolian imagery decorating the thirteenth-century northwestern Iranian water basin is illustrative of the historical transcultural

exchange between China and the Islamic world. **Matthias Weiß'** essay "Cytherian China" interprets an export piece produced in China for the European market as a case of appropriation that can be read as a reverse "Chinoiserie" or "Europerie" and, in doing so, offers an exemplary conceptual discussion of exchange processes and their trajectories and terminologies.

## Building Transcultural Modernity

The case studies in this section discuss ideas and theories of modernity, utopia, appropriation, and translation in the context of nation-building processes. In her essay on "The Weizmann House: Staging the Nation-Building Process of Israel," **Sonja Hull** examines the architectural design of the presidential residence against the background of Erich Mendelsohn's utopian idea of an "East-West synthesis" as well as the symbolic role of the building in the Zionist nation-building process. **Cristiana Strava** analyzes "Critical Appropriations of Modernity" based on the example of "Michel Écochard's 8 × 8 Meter Housing Grid, Hay Mohammadi, Casablanca." Against the background of anti-colonial movements in the 1950s, the *bidonvilles* (slums) of Casablanca served as a laboratory for modernist architectural utopias and experiments with new urban planning and architectural forms.

## Displaying Stories in the Contact Zone

This section focuses on the installation of objects in museum displays. The display as a research object in its own right concerns modes of (re)presenting objects and placing them in a (new) context. Each museum display reveals a decision—consciously or unconsciously—to tell a particular story. **Eva-Maria Troelenberg** looks at "A Lunar Sample Display in Al Ain, Abu Dhabi" as an example of "Constellations of Memory and Representation" that visualizes modern Arab identity as situated in between the global and local, tradition, and modernization. **Alison Boyd** analyzes "A Modernist Display at the Barnes Foundation" in Philadelphia that combines objects from various cultures and periods. Her essay focuses on the ways in which "foreign" objects are appropriated in this particular setting of reception and reads the display as a form of "Curating Formalism, Primitivism, and Democracy." **Westrey Page** asks how prehistory is translated in the 1937 exhibition of "Rock Painting Facsimiles in the Museum of Modern Art" in New York. She discusses the exhibition project as conceptualized straddling disciplines (art history and cultural anthropology) and identifies "empathy" as a central approach of the exhibition in presenting objects remote in time and place. **Lea Mönninghoff** discusses "*stazione* (2008–2009)," an artistic intervention by Palestinian artist Emily Jacir for the 53rd Venice Biennale, as "A 'Non-Existing Existence' in the Contact Zone" that highlights the diverse cross-cultural contact zones linking Venice to the Arab World.

## Figurative Objects, Trajectories, and Valuations

This section looks at four three-dimensional figurative objects whose individual provenances and histories of reception demonstrate how transcultural trajectories are connected to notions of economic and cultural value. **Frederika Tevebring's** essay "Baubo on the Pig: Travel across Disciplines" focuses on a small terracotta statuette most likely from Hellenistic Egypt that, today, is in the Altes Museum in Berlin. Tevebring looks at the object's modern afterlife and how modern interpretations have become ancient truths. **Felicity Bodenstein** follows "The Global Market Trajectories of Two Brass Leopards from Benin City (1897–1953)." Stolen during the British military expedition to Benin City in 1897, these pieces have a telling ownership, market, and display history and, today, are among the "masterpieces" of the Nigerian national collection in Lagos. Bodenstein investigates how the price development of the pieces has been linked to their trajectories. A figure representing the Vodun divinity Gou is the subject of **Kerstin Schankweiler's** essay "Double Trophy: *Gou* by Akati Ekplékendo." This sculpture is discussed as an example of a transcultural art history on three levels: that of the material of European origin used in creating it; that of its context of production and usage as a power figure against enemies; and, finally, that of the object's canonization in museums in France. **Rhea Blem** examines "The *Batcham Mask* and its Display at the Museum Rietberg in Zurich" and traces the mask's "Becoming a Masterpiece." Taking a critical look at the reception and display of African arts and aesthetics in contemporary "Western" museums, she asks how a shift towards a nonlinear understanding of art history might be achieved.

## Iconographies of Encounter and Translation

This section looks at cultural flows and agencies embodied in iconographic choices and, in doing so, examines the epistemic value of figural painting from a cross-cultural perspective. **Lisa Heese** analyzes "*The Camposanto in Pisa* by Leo von Klenze: The Encounter between a Classicist Architect and an Islamic Artwork" by pointing out how the inclusion of an Islamic bronze griffin into an idealized classicist exhibition ensemble resulted in its artistic transformation. Based on the example of Muhammad Hasan's *Mother and Child*, **Janna Verthein** discusses the iconography of a painting alluding to the visual formula of a Madonna against the background of the beginning cultural shift in nineteenth-century Iran. Taking up a Christian subject, yet giving the mother and child facial features and clothing that met Persian standards of beauty, the painter did not simply translate the subject of the Madonna into Qajar painting, but, in fact, endowed it with new meaning. In her essay "Portrait of Ali Pasha: Cultural Mobility on the Periphery of Empire," **Emily Neumeier** describes "micro-movements" across imperial boundaries as relevant to the formation of taste in Ottoman borderlands. In a context

which might at first sight be deemed peripheral we thus find trajectories, triangulations, and entangled experiences that transcend binary notions.

## Perceptions between Image and Text

The contributions to this section discuss examples where the cross-cultural and the cross-medial intertwine. In her essay “The Arts of Science in the Contact Zone: A Satirical Picture,” **Sria Chatterjee** examines a print by Gaganendranath Tagore from a portfolio of “satirical pictures” published in 1921 and titled “Reform Screams.” Beyond the general context of political feeling and social reform in pre-independence India, this specific print addresses the presence of environmentalist thinking and thus reveals a contact zone that is not just geographic but also connects human and nonhuman worlds. **Tom Young** focuses on “The Behar Amateur Lithographic Scrapbooks” that were produced in the context of colonial India. He reads these albums as materializations of the social relations between British members of the Behar School of Athens and local Indian artists. They tell the story of a social practice through which colonized and colonizing individuals engaged with one another, creating a conceptual space where ideas about who should be enfranchised within colonial civil society could be put into question. **Isabella Kraye**’s essay “Between the Visual and the Aural: Elias Canetti’s *The Voices of Marrakesh*” concludes the series of object essays with a rather unusual object for art historical research: a book without illustrations. The novel is based on a trip Canetti took to Marrakesh in the 1950s and describes a European traveler’s encounter with a foreign culture within a colonial context. Throughout the book, however, the visual and the aural are continually foregrounded and placed in tension with each other, displaying a keen awareness of the cultural pitfalls of sight while simultaneously offering a countermodel.

## Towards a Map of Terms and Concepts

Taken together, our case studies can bridge the theoretical space between cross-cultural studies and visual culture phenomena and inspire critical reassessments of established narratives, categories, and terms.

For this reason, the volume also includes a collectively prepared section that contains key-terms for cross-cultural visual studies. They outline critical concepts that were applied, developed, and consolidated in relation to the respective fellow’s projects and thus can function as a glossary to the object essays. Each object essay contains cross-references to its relevant key-terms. Most of these terms—for example, “hybridity” and “appropriation”—have been coined in related fields of research and theory. They have been discussed as key concepts, for instance in postcolonial studies or art history (Ashcroft et al. 2013; Nelson and Shiff 2003). What we aim for,

however, is to introduce these concepts even more pointedly into the field of transcultural art history. Hence, they not only provide practical definitions but also outline the relevance and usefulness of the concepts as critical terms for writing art and visual history across cultures. In some cases, this has led to shifts of terms or, indeed, to new coinages, such as “object ethnographies.” Given the dynamic, transformative character of the overall perspective, it is not a closed list of terms, but rather open-ended, inspiring further elaboration, expansion, or new extensions in various directions. As the key-terms have been developed in the context of concrete, case-based transcultural research, they—together with the object essays—form an interconnected conceptual field that gives contour to an academic practice of a transcultural art history.

Apart from presenting the results of a six-year research project, we hope this book will be especially valuable as a teaching instrument that goes beyond the scope of common periodic or regional categories. As a whole, the mosaic of object histories in this book provides an exemplary survey of approaches for the practice of a transcultural art history in relation to neighboring disciplines, i.e. in a productive exchange with, for example, anthropology, area studies, literature, and historical studies. It is our hope that this reader will encourage research discussions and further increase the visibility of innovative transcultural approaches and of the study of phenomena and processes of cultural exchange within the academic community.

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