
This publication is an ambitious, scholarly response to the exhibition The Global Contemporary: Art Worlds After 1989; editors of this publication and several other art professionals who contributed essays looked to retrospectively trace the end of the dominance of Western art in the last quarter of the twentieth century and to describe the emergence of global contemporary art on display in its multivariate venues of exhibitions such as the landmark Magiciens de la terre in Paris in 1989. The works in the exhibition, located in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, or by artists from these regions, appear at the end of the catalog with commentary. However, to provide a framework for the exhibition, the editors crafted a series of sections organized to guide readers through the complexity of global, local, political and economic trends in art. Given that these worlds are nascent to the Western art community, the authors discuss the shedding of old terms and outline historical concepts to present the current context of global art and suggest maps for future consideration. Drawing differences between modernist and contemporary criticism, the authors point out how modernist criticism relies upon its colonialist tinges in contrast to contemporary criticism that simultaneously expresses the global and local.

In addition to the global perspective, several of the essays review art and its markets in countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea. With the recent success of the contemporary Asian art market, there have been a number of publications broadly addressing this subject. Other publications, notably Versions and Inversions: Perspectives on avant-garde in Latin America, use a similar strategy as this catalog to address the plurality of a region conceived as predominantly singular in the twentieth century. Global Contemporary adds to the literature on local art by examining its development in several countries and by including discussions with global art professionals. One such piece is Buddensieg’s essay on Rasheed Araeen and his journal Third Text in which the artist and critic claims an early territory of global art to assert a redefinition of artists and their work that is neither European nor American. It is one example of the fresh voices in this publication.

In addition to the essays, other sections include a color-coded “Room of Histories,” which reveals the multiple art trends of the last twenty years, and an appendix with biographies of the authors. The catalog offers a nice balance of text and images. It is an excellent addition for academic arts libraries with collections on contemporary art.

Beverly Mitchell, Art and Dance Librarian, Hamon Arts Library, Southern Methodist University, bmitchel@smu.edu