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Exhibiting Prints: The Role of Printed Matter in International, Large-Scale Exhibitions

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Exhibiting Prints

The Role of Printed Matter in International, Large-Scale Exhibitions

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Editorial

Prints, artists' books, posters, multiples, printed ephemera have been displayed, sold and collected in international, large-scale exhibitions. Alongside paintings and sculptures, they were—and still are—regularly exhibited at the Venice Biennale, São Paulo Biennale, Documenta and in several other perennial exhibitions. Regardless of their continuous presence and vitality, there have been few studies about the role of prints and artists' editions in the context of these exhibitions. *OBOE*'s third issue, *Exhibiting Prints: The Role of Printmaking in Large Scale Exhibitions* guest edited by Jennifer Noonan, intends to redress this lacuna while shedding new light on the manner in which printed matter has been vital for the life and fortune of large-scale international exhibitions.

Works on paper have often played a pivotal role in disseminating artists' works to an international audience. As multiples, they are more accessible, and have a lower production and distribution cost. They are easier to transport than painting or sculpture, but also to collect, which led several art museums of distinguishable importance to acquire prints from international large-scale exhibitions. Notably, when Alfred H. Barr launched MoMA Activities, he almost immediately established a Print Cabinet and enriched it over the years with purchases from large-scale exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale. It is no coincidence that even today major art fairs like TEFAF in Maastricht devote an entire section of the commercial show to works on paper and prints. Furthermore, at the beginning of the 20th century, printed editions were one of the preferred strategies to advertise these exhibitions. They served to bolster cultural tourism and to emphasise the value of exhibitions.

Over the 20th century, prints and editions also acquired a strong political component, and not just in an attempt to disrupt the uniqueness of the canonical artwork. The use of the medium as ephemera, for propaganda, posters, cards, manifestos, political statements, and leaflets of performances is quite renown. In 1969, for instance, *Contrabienal*, the counter exhibition organized as a protest against the XI São Paulo Biennial, made use of a book to spread the boycott. In the other cases, prints have acted also as means of democratization. In the 1970s at the Venice Biennale, for example, printmaking ateliers were organized both in the Central pavilion and at the United States pavilion at the Giardini. In both instances, the open ateliers established a relationship with the viewer by making them aware of and taking part in the process.

From the first perennial of the Venice Biennale in 1895 with the Sale del Bianco e del Nero, to the most recent documenta 15 (2022), in which even the making of prints through the Lumburg Press was part of the exhibition, printed material has always held a specific, if not shifting, place. The exhibition of prints and artists' editions within these venues has provided opportunities for national representation and the dissemination of ideas, even in times of changing regimes and difficult economic circumstances. For this reason, to understand the constitutive role of prints it is necessary to incorporate various perspectives on cultural tourism, dissemination of the avant-garde, bourgeois collections, taste-making, democratisation of art, institutional critique, as well as politics. This issue, therefore, is necessarily cross-disciplinary, gathering together a group of scholars and researchers with varied methodologies and approaches. Examining the production, presence and circulation of printed matter in biennial-type exhibitions from its origins to the present moment will expand histories of printmaking and will enrich the body of literature on large-scale, international exhibitions.

For this special issue, we have been assisted by a specialist on this topic, Jennifer Noonan, who has edited this issue selecting the papers of Alessia Del Bianco, Maeve Coudrelle and Camilla Pietrabissa. The issue begins with Noonan's overview of the history of prints at the Venice Biennale between the 1930s and the 1970s. The essay argues that the prints displayed during this timeframe offer a picture of the artworld and reveal the shifting aesthetic, cultural and political contexts in which they were situated.

Alessia Del Bianco takes a step back in time in an attempt to outline the history of the graphic arts sections of the Biennales of 1899 and 1901. Within these two iterations of the Venetian show she examines the background, proposals, organisation and selection of artists, as well as considering their artistic reception.

With Maeve Coudrelle the focus moves to Chile and the Bienal Americana de Grabado between 1963 and 1970. By contextualizing the Bienal in relation to other large-scale exhibitions in the region, the essay argues that—in the midst of the Cold War period—the accessibility and affordability of prints allowed the Bienal to promote a network of exchange and collaboration, while also foregrounding Latin America's contribution in the medium of prints.

The special issue ends with Camilla Pietrabissa's essay on Aleksandra Mir's postcard project at the 53. Venice Biennale in 2009. The ephemeral nature of Mir's work is used to discuss the ability of the postcard to problematize the memory of place as well as the close link between the contemporary art world and the economy of tourism in late capitalism.

In addition, in the section *Miscellanea*, the issue hosts Jacob Lund's essay "Exhibition as Reflective Transformation". Taking Forensic Architecture's project *Triple-Chaser* as its point of departure, Lund theoretically explores the role of exhibitions in contemporary aesthetic and artistic practice. Finally, Adelaide Duarte and Lígia Afonso provide us with a meticulous review of three books, published between 2020 and 2021, reflecting on the mutual histories and shared aspects of contemporary art fairs and biennials. This is the first time that *OBOE* offers a book review, but we hope to publish many more in the future!

Jennifer Noonan

Prints and Printmaking at the Venice Biennale, 1930s-1970s

Abstract

This article examines the exhibition of prints at the Venice Biennale between the 1930s and the early 1970s. Drawing upon recently discovered archival material, this essay argues that the prints displayed and awarded prizes during this period offer a picture of the art world, biennial culture and its socio-political milieu, including the ebbs and follows of nationalism and internationalism. Part of this study, therefore, includes an assessment of how the print exhibitions reveal the shifting aesthetic, cultural and at times political world in which they were situated. This essay also provides an extended analysis on the role graphics played at the 1970 Venice Biennale in the Italian and United States pavilions and will argue that the organisation and installation of these exhibitions mirrored contemporaneous, ephemeral aspects of avant-garde art and, in fleeting moments, transnational exchanges.

Keywords

Nationalism, Internationalism, *Chocolate Room*, Print workshop, Lois Bingham

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Prints and Printmaking at the Venice Biennale, 1930s-1970s

Jennifer Noonan

In 1895 etchings by Dutch artists Jozef Israëls and Anton Mauve were displayed at the inaugural *Esposizione Internazionale di Venezia*. From that point and through the 20th century, prints continued to be shown and occasionally highlighted in special exhibitions. The ongoing presence of graphics may have had something to do with the nature of the medium: as multiple objects they are more accessible, more affordable, easier to ship and cheaper than paintings and sculpture to insure. Beyond the practical considerations, print exhibitions also reflected an increasingly widespread, popular interest in the medium. Alessia Del Bianco has noted as much in her essay on etchings in the *bianco e nero* salons of 1899 and 1901, arguing that they advanced an interest in graphics in the first quarter of the 20th century.[1] This study picks up with an examination of print exhibitions at the Venice Biennale in the 1930s and continues through the early 1970s. The prints displayed and awarded prizes during this period offer a picture (or imprint) of the art world, biennial culture, and its socio-political milieu, including the ebbs and follows of nationalism and internationalism.[2] This essay will also provide an extended analysis on the role graphics played at the 1970 Venice Biennale in the Italian and United States pavilions and will argue that the organisation and installation of these exhibitions mirrored contemporaneous, ephemeral aspects of avant-garde art and, in fleeting moments, transnational exchanges.

1
Alessia Del Bianco, "Le sale internazionali del bianco e nero, 1899-1901: The Debut of Graphic Arts at the Venice International Art Exhibition", *OBOE Journal* 3, no. 1 (Summer 2022): 19-37.

2
The language used in this analysis refers to, and expands upon, Caroline Jones' language regarding the foundations of Biennale and World's Fairs, and their capacity to offer a picture of the world. Jones posits that "the biennial is an enlightenment project that secures a kind of nationalism in the very act of transcending it" and continues, "the events stage themselves as pacifist alternatives and engagements that aim to make war less likely", surmising they are "politics by another means". Caroline Jones, "Biennial Culture: A Longer History", in Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, Solveig ØVsebø (eds.), *The Biennial Reader: An Anthology on Large-Scale Perennial Exhibitions of Contemporary Art* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2010), 76-77. For an analysis of the different types of prizes awarded during the early years of the Biennale see Maria Mimita Lamberti, "International Exhibitions in Venice" [1982], *OBOE Journal* 1, no. 1 (2020): 26-45. https://doi.org/10.25432/2724-086X/1.1.0004

"Where Il Duce Once Walked Barefoot"[3]

The display of prints at the Venice Biennale in the early 1930s did not conform to a single form or movement. The governing body, the Ente Autonomo (Count Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata was the newly elected President, Antonio Maraini was the Secretary General, and a few additional government officials formed the group) selected works in a myriad of styles, including the *italianità* aesthetic—a vague and multivalent term for cultural forms that display classicising tendencies of past Italian art forms—the works of Il Novecento movement, works of the futurism Aeropittura group and abstractions produced by the Concretisti.[4] In 1930, for example, Bruno Marsili Da Osimo's woodcut *La Litanie Laurente* shared space in the *bianco e nero* rooms with Fabio Mauroner's *Mattino a Rialto (Morning on the Rialto)*. The former reveals the artist's interest in frontispiece book design rendered in imaginative, enigmatic symbolist forms while the latter offers a clear, luminous view of the Rialto bridge from Venice's Grand Canal. Such diversity of styles also meant that exhibited works did not always reflect the best of international graphics.[5] Though the woodcut revival was passé in Western Europe by the 1930s, for example, it continued to flourish in Italy and hence as just one among many styles displayed at the Venice Biennale.[6] This inclusivity may be a holdover from the 1920s when Mussolini's government was focused on centralising political power rather than culture, thereby leaving the door open to artists of different inclinations.[7] Yet it may also have something to do with the presence of Margherita Sarfatti on the Biennale committee. The poet (and one time mistress of Mussolini) championed Il Novecento, which for her meant exhibiting the best artists of the day rather than those who adhered to a single style, and her voice may have allowed for variety in the Biennale including those that did not always display the most progressive developments in printmaking.[8] The plethora of styles, or "aesthetic pluralism" to borrow Marla Susan Stone's term, reflected diverse tendencies in Italy and abroad but those selections may have ultimately been governed by policy requirements rather than avant-garde aesthetics. In more specific terms, the Ente Autonomo supported Italy's connection with European styles in an effort to: extend their cultural profile throughout Western Europe, expose Italian intellectuals to the latest in foreign trends, potentially convert visiting intellectuals to fascist ideology, revitalise the tourist industry and lastly to assert the prominence of fascism on an international stage in order to compete with the authoritarian regimes of Joseph Stalin and later Adolf Hitler.[9]

A pivot away from plurality and internationalism toward nationalist imagery that valorised Italian civilization, as scholars have noted, occurred after Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in 1935 (for which he was sanctioned by the League of Nations) and allied with Adolph Hitler under the Rome-Berlin Axis in 1936 (later

3
"Where Il Duce Once Walked Bare-Foot: Prints in the Venice Biennale", *Art Digest* 13, no. 1 (October 1, 1938): 24.

4
Aeropittura emerged in the late 1920s from the second wave of Futurism and was shaped by the Italian military's buildup of the aviation industry. Marla Susan Stone, *The Patron State: Culture and Politics in Fascist Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 43.

5
Martin Hopkinson notes that "the representation of international printmaking at the Biennale was deleterious, as countries tended to be conservative in their selection of artists, though some years were [an] exception", Martin Hopkinson, *Italian Prints: 1875-1975* (Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, 2007), 25.

6
Hopkinson, *Italian Prints*, 21.

7
For example, Hopkinson writes that Mussolini declared all tendencies should be admitted to the 1931 Roman Quadriennale. Hopkinson, *Italian Prints*, 21. Stone notes that the amalgamation of styles provided the "glue" between the regime and elites. Stone, *Patron State*, 69.

8
Hopkinson, *Italian Prints*, 25.

9
Stone, *The Patron State*, 25-94. See also Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 11-12, 35-36.

formalised as the Pact of Steel in 1939).[10] That union marked the end of efforts to promote Italian culture and ideology within the context of developments in Western Europe and ushered in attempts to impose Italy as leader of the new order in Europe.[11] With the establishment in 1938 of the National Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (Istituto nazionale per le relazioni culturali con l'estero, or IRCE) came the directive to disperse Italian culture abroad with the aim of showcasing how other cultures had benefitted from Roman traditions. The Venice Biennale, and other state-sponsored exhibitions, showcased nationalist, *italianità* and *romanità*—an aesthetic of *Romanness*, which stressed idealized forms inspired by imperial Rome but used to extol life under Fascism—styles to advance those goals.[12] Fabio Mauroner's *Il podere dei Mussolini (The Mussolini's Estate)* [fig. 1], displayed in 1938, was one among many prints that combine Italian Renaissance and Imperial Roman traditions to showcase life under fascism. This image of where Mussolini romped as a young boy employs perspectival traditions and chiaroscuro techniques codified in the 16th century, but here they serve to glorify the land and the leader. Maraini, Secretary-general of the Venice Biennale, supported images of "collective life of the nation" drawn from Italian artistic traditions, and with the establishment of prizes in 1938, an international jury of ideologically aligned individuals rewarded such efforts.[13] Though the prints were often out of step with advanced international styles, their subject matter conformed to the aesthetics championed in Fascist Italy.

fig. 1
Fabio Mauroner, *Il podere dei Mussolini (The Mussolini Estate)*, 1938. Etching. Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte 1938. Foto: Giacomelli, © Courtesy Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia – ASAC.

10
Stone, *The Patron State*, 176-221. Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 11-12, 35-36. See also, David Forgacs, *Italian Culture in the Industrial Era* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1990). See also, Benjamin Martin, *The Nazi-Fascist New Order For European Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016). See also R.T.J. Bosworth, *Mussolini and the Eclipse of Italian Fascism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021).

11
Martin, *The Nazi-Fascist New Order For European Culture*, 75-144.

12
Stone, *The Patron State*, 136, 203.

13
Antonio Maraini, "XXI Biennale", *Le Tre Venézie* 13, no. 6 (June 1938): 183.

Mario Delitala's graphics bear witness to this development. He exhibited at multiple Biennales and in 1938 he received the top print prize, the Premio Presidente (so named for Ente President Count Volpi, who offered two prizes of 5,000 lire to one Italian and one foreign engraver), for his prints in the *italianità* style. The woodcut *Gente del 1938*, *Aratori (People of 1938*, *Ploughmen)* depicts figures leading oxen through the landscape of Barbagia, the inner region of Sardinia.[14] Delitala was born on the island and knew the people of the region, thus conveying what Maria Luisa Frongia has described as "a strong sense of belonging to a proud people".[15] The chiaroscuro present in the women and men moving animals through the fecund lands as light skims the horizon conveys nature's bounty reaped through the daily hard work of the Sardinians. *Il padre contadino (The peasant father)* sets a similar, ennobling tone but here colour enriches the agrarian scene. Delitala's formal techniques recall Ugo da Carpi's innovative chiaroscuro woodcuts, yet they reflect their time because the woodcut embodied connotations of the proletariat.[16] Giuseppe Bottai, in his remarks at the exhibition opening, praised works of this ilk, noting that they "stem from a tradition [...which] reached maturity at that moment [... conveying] a poetic universal spirit well understood by the masses who live it".[17]

In the last two Biennales before World War II, the *italianità* and *romanità* styles remained prevalent. Marcello Boglione (an etcher associated with the *I 25 della Campagna Romana* group) won the Premio Presidente in 1940 for his ethereal, delicate etchings of the Italian countryside and cityscapes, including *Torino – Piazza s. Giovanni (Turin—Square of St. John)*, which recall 17th- and 18th-century Italian *vedute*.[18] The top print prize for the foreign engraver went to Maurice Brocas of Belgium whose engraving *Paesaggio d'Italia (Landscape of Italy)* contains similar characteristics and a comparable tone.[19] Generally speaking, prints made a strong showing that year: the Belgian and USA pavilions, for example, both focused on the medium. However, artists from the United States protested Italy's role in the war and eventually withdrew.[20] Younger, less established artist were allotted space and some competed for prizes given to artists who best "illustrated the words of Il Duce",[21] as evident in Arturo Cavicchini's *Il Duce fra il popolo (Duce among the people)* and Tosca Scano's *Virtù fasciste (Fascist virtues)*. In the last edition before the war, Luigi Bartolini won the top prize for his etchings of the life and landscape of Italy, as seen in *Pescatore d'acqua dolce (Freshwater fisherman)*.[22] These prints reflected the ethos of Italian governing bodies rather than international art trends, but that would change in the post-war exhibitions.

14
They were part of a larger prize system; Mussolini offered two prizes, one to an Italian and one to a foreign painter of 25,000 lire each and the City of Venice sponsored awards for an Italian painter and sculptor of 25,000 lire each.

15
Maria Luisa Frongia, *Mario Delitala* (Nuoro, Italy: Ilisso Edizioni, 1999), 248-249, http://www.sardegnadigitallibrary.it/mmt/fullsize/2008122013490300475.pdf., accessed April 2021.

16
Frongia suggests Delitala's religious imagery recalls Tintoretto. See Frongia, *Mario Delitala*, 248-249.

17
Giuseppe Bottai quoted in Giuseppe Marchiori, "La ventunesima Biennale di Venezia", *Emporium* 87, no. 522 (Giugno 1938): 291.

18
For a history of this group see Renato Mammucari and Federica Acunto, *I XXV della campagna romana: 1904-2004* (Napoli: LER, 2004).

19
The Belgian pavilion also contained a principal retrospective of the Vaes Walter's engravings. The President of the Society of Graphic Art in Holland, H. Van Der Stok selected forty-six printmakers whose graphic work reflects "wisdom and passion". H. Van Der Stok, "Padiglione Dell'Olanda", *Catalogo XXIIa Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte* (1940), 268.

20
"Withdrawn from Venice", *Art Digest* 14, no. 18 (July 1940): 24.

21
Antonio Maraini, "Introduzione", *Catalogo XXIIa Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte* (1940), 8.

22
Luigi Ficacci, ed., *Luigi Bartolini alla Calcografica* (January 15-March 2, 1997), exh. cat. (Roma: Edizioni de Luca, 1997).

A New Spirit After the War

Giovanni Ponti and Rodolfo Pallucchini, respectively the Extraordinary Commissioner and Secretary General of the Biennale Board, described a new spirit in their 1948 catalogue essays; Ponti wrote of "individual voices" joining together in a "universal chorus" of colour, line and volume to convey a new "spiritual intensity".[23] Pallucchini, meanwhile, detected the emergence of a new European "spirit" in the climate of freedom.[24] Abstraction, as their words suggest, was the vehicle to liberate this new vitality, and thus they championed it and its origins in order to revitalise the exhibition, expunge nationalist rhetoric and align Italy with Western European traditions. In essence, they advocated a return to internationalism, and this commitment appears in the retrospectives of modern art that foregrounded their shared history and culture.[25] Yet other members of the Biennale Board, particularly Roberto Longhi, promoted contemporary realism.[26] Those board members, including Longhi, who championed realism sought to mirror and thus align themselves with communist ideologies that advanced Social Realism. This position led to conflicts with other board members, such as Ponti and Pallucchini, who endorsed abstraction in order to gesture toward gestural abstraction that flourished in Western Europe, and in so doing, sought an alliance with international, democratic states.[27]

This duality emerges in the exhibitions between 1948 and 1958. The first two editions after the war balanced realism and abstraction through numerous historical and international retrospectives as organisers sought to rectify the isolationism of the Fascist era.[28] A democratic character also materialises in the *bianco e nero* and personal shows. Fabio Mauroner, who died in 1948, was honored with a retrospective and his realist etchings hung alongside comparable prints.[29] Similarly, Mino Maccari won the Italian prize in 1948 for his engravings rendered, according to Robert Longhi, in a style "accessible to all".[30] Though not reflective of innovative styles, Maccari's satirical prints parody authority and human foibles and in so doing display the liberal tenet of free expression which post-war Italy valued as an antidote to restrictive fascist rhetoric. Still other prints staged more recent trends in modern art, including Giuseppe Viviani's metaphysical, surreal print *La gamba (The leg)*; two years later he won the Premio Presidente.[31] This balance also manifests in the print prizes offered by private entities in 1950; Giovanni Barbisan received an award for his sensitively rendered suburban scenes, *Verso sera (Towards evening)*,

23
Giovanni Ponti, "Prefazione", in *Catalogo XXIVa Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte* (1948), x.

24
Rodolfo Pallucchini, "Introduzione alla XXIV Biennale", in *Catalogo XXIVa Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte* (1948), xii.

25
Enzo di Martino notes that the retrospective exhibitions began in 1948 because they were "clearing a back log that had accumulated during the Fascist period". Enzo di Martino, *The History of the Venice Biennale, 1895-2005: Visual Arts, Architecture, Cinema, Dance, Music, Theater* (Venezia: Papiro Arte, 2005); Pascale Budillon Puma, *La Biennale di Venezia dalla guerra alla crisi, 1948-1968* (Bari: Casa Editrice Palomar, 1995), 90.

26
For a seminal text on the exchanges between Rodolfo Pallucchini and Robert Longhi, see Maria Cristina Bandera, *Il carteggio Longhi-Pallucchini: Le prime Biennali del dopoguerra 1948-1956* (Torino: Charta, 1999).

27
See Nancy Jachec, *Politics and Painting at the Venice Biennale, 1948-1964: Italy and the Idea of Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.

28
Rodolfo Pallucchini, "The world's art at Venice", *ARTnews* 47, no. 5 (September 1948): 20.

29
Giulio Lorenzetti, "Fabio Mauroner", in *Catalogo XXIVa Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte* (1948), 40-41.

30
Roberto Longhi, "Mino Maccari: Mostra Personale", in *Catalogo XXIVa Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte* (1948), 145.

31
See Giuseppe Marino, *Giuseppe Viviani, incisioni e xilografie* (Rome: Edizioni Art Center, 1991).

while Arnoldo Ciarrocchi's semi-abstract etchings, including *Paesaggio (Landscape)*, claimed another prize.[32]

The two styles jockeyed for primacy in the following three editions, albeit with less vehemence than before. In 1952, abstraction and strains of Western European modernism triumphed over realism.[33] That year's graphic prizes went to Emil Nolde and the Italian artist Tono Zancanaro, whose quick line work captures a figure's essence. Realism prevailed in the 1954 and 1956 Venice Biennale's due in part to changes in the Biennale administration, in the government, and as a result of international events, but tensions remained.[34] Angelo Spanio replaced Ponti in 1954 and during his tenure realism enjoyed a strong showing even though those who championed abstraction pushed back, most notably Pallucchini.[35] The tension between the two is perhaps most evident in the 1954 print prizes, when the Premio Presidente went to three artists, instead of the usual two. Joan Mirò won the prize for best foreign artist while Paolo Manaresi and Cesco Magnolato shared the Italian print prize. Manaresi's realistic engravings, such as *Visione notturna n. 2 (Night vision n. 2)* [fig. 2], counter Cesco Magnolato's abstract etchings, including *Gelsi (Mulberries)* [fig. 3], that are composed of active energetic lines, compressed spaces,

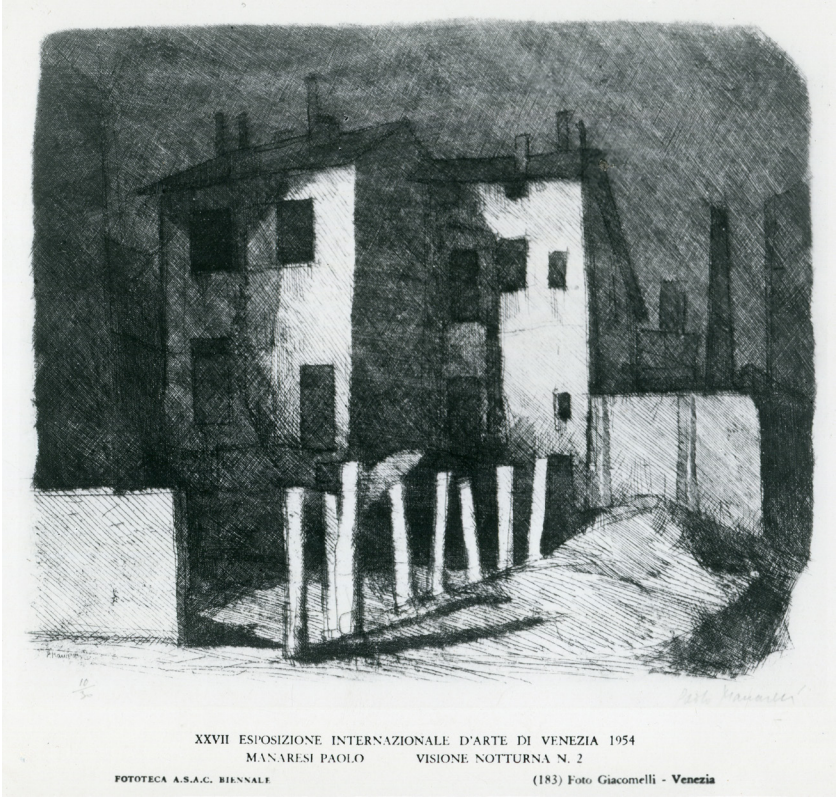

fig. 2
Paolo Manaresi, *Visione notturna n. 2, (Night Vision n. 2)*, 1953. Etching. Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte 1954 Foto: Giacomelli, © Courtesy Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia – ASAC

32
For a list of prizes see "Premi" in *Catalogo XXVa Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte* (1950), 22.

33
Nancy Jachec has argued the restructured Biennale board limited the power of realism. Nancy Jachec, "Anti-Communism at Home, Europeanism Abroad: Italian Cultural Policy at the Venice Biennale, 1948-1958", *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 2 (May 2005): 206-207, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20081256, accessed May 2021. Stefania Portinari has discussed the presence of the abstract-concrete tendency of the Group of Eight exhibited at the Venice Biennale of 1952. See Stefania Portinari, "Santomaso: l'opera grafica", *Saggi e memorie di storia dell'arte* 33 (2009): 493-512.

34
Ponti became the Minister of Tourism, Sport, and Spectacle. For an explanation of the politics see Jachec, "Anti-Communism at Home, Europeanism Abroad", 203-217.

35
Rodolfo Pallucchini, "Introduzione", in *Catalogo XXVIIa Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte* (1954), xxv-xxxviii.

and overlapping forms.[36] Awarding the top prize to one Italian artist working realistically and the other abstractly, foregrounds the debate among the Biennale's Board about which style was most suited to reinvigorate the Venice Biennale and which best bore the hallmarks of a new "spirit". The struggle raged on in 1956, and Pallucchini again vocalised his dismay at the "backward" choice to grant the large retrospective to Delacroix, with Gris and Mondrian receiving smaller, personal exhibitions.[37] However, it is important to note that the year's top prize went to Anton Zoran Mušić, whose bold abstractions, as seen in *Motivo dalmata (Dalmatian motif)*, radiated the "new spirit".

fig. 3
Cesco Magnolato, *Gelsi (Mulberries)*, 1954 (perhaps reprinted in 1959. Etching. https://museodelpaesaggio.ve.it/autore/cesco-magnolato/

Under Ponti and Gian Alberto Dell'Acqua (Segretary General installed in 1958 after Pallucchini resigned) the "new spirit" and internationalism emerged in Arte Informale (or Informalism). Ponti celebrated the expressive lines, material and vibrant colours employed by artists who matured in the post-war period, including Wols.[38] The display of Informalism in Venice, as Nancy Jachec has argued, communicated that the international exhibitions would be in "rapport" and competitive with contemporary, Western European culture, signaling Italy's renewed alignment with pro-democratic European states.[39] Exemplifying this direction, Great Britain displayed the work of vanguard printmaker, Stanley William Hayter. That year's Premio Presidente further evinces this commitment: Fayga Ostrower won the international prize while the Italian prize went to Lojze (Luigi) Spacal. The latter gained prominence after World War II for his woodcuts of bold, geometric shapes and flat expanses of colour that yield an abstracted landscape, "nourished by [the]

36
After meeting Morandi in the 1940s, Manaresi actively took up engraving. Manaresi became chair of Engraving at the Academy of Bologna in 1958 after Morandi retired. See Renato de Roli, ed. *Mostra antologica di Paolo Manaresi* (January 12-February 19, 1978), exh. cat. (Bologna: Compositori, 1978). Magnolato's Gelsi was shown in the 1954 exhibition, but he may have pulled another edition in 1959.

37
Rodolfo Pallucchini, "Introduzione", in *Catalogo XXVIIIa Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte* (1956), xxv-xxxiii. See also Jachec, "Anti-Communism at Home, Europeanism Abroad", 211.

38
Giovanni Ponti, "Prefazione", in *Catalogo XXIX Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte* (1958), lxii.

39
The "European Idea" aimed to establish a European economic community, and Italy's commitment to it signaled a unity with European nations. Jachec, "Anti-Communism at Home, Europeanism Abroad", 213-217.

popular primitivism of his homeland".[40] Fayga Ostrower (the Polish-born, Brazilian-based engraver) received the other prize for her wood engravings populated with prominent lines, geometric forms and lyrical washes of colour, as evident in *Forme in Grigio, Marrone e Rosso (Shapes in grey, brown and red)* [fig. 4].[41] Her mark-making most certainly matured during her time in Stanley William Hayter's atelier in 1955.[42] Ostrower became the first female artist to win the top printmaking prize, yet she was but one among many working to capture the "new spirit".

"The Strength of New Expressions (in Printmaking)"

fig. 4
Fayga Ostrower, *Forme in Grigo, Marrone e Rosso (Shapes in grey, brown and red),* Untitled (5826), 1958. Color woodcut on rice paper, 40 x 60 cm. XXIX Venice Biennial. Collection of the Fayga Ostrower Institute www.faygaostrower.org.br © Fayga Ostrower heirs. Image courtesy Anna Leonor Ostrower.

Informalism populated the 1960 and 1962 editions, though realism remained. In 1962, the main pavilion housed a group show of Italian Symbolist graphics, forty-two prints by Luigi Bartolini, and several abstract prints, including that year's prize winner Antonio Virduzzo, whose etchings teem with microscopic particles that clump and disperse across the composition.[43] A greater struggle was brewing about revisions to the Biennale statues, which were awaiting approval from Parliament in 1960. Tensions mounted in 1964 with Robert Rauschenberg's grand prize win, the arrival of American Pop art in Europe and Paris-New York rivalry.[44] With all

40
Massimo De Grassi cites the critic Giuseppe Marchiori, noting "The characteristic motifs of Spacal's perfect engravings belong to the reality of countries in which the artist lives [...] and the engraved images appear as symbols of a simple, elementary world, seen with candid eyes [...] rooted in an authentic popular tradition and in a culture that justifies it". Massimo De Grassi, "Pallucchini a Trieste: occasioni mancate", in *Saggi e Memorie di storia dell'arte* 35 (2011): 124, https://www.jstor.org/stale/43140563, accessed June 2021.

41
See Anna Paola Baptista and Vera Beatriz Siqueira, *Encontro de colecionadores: core de Fayga* (December 1, 2016 - May 20, 2017), exh. cat. (Rio de Janeiro: Museu da Chácara de Céu and Museus Castro Maya, 2017).

42
See Christine Weyl, *The Women of Atelier 17: Modernist Printmaking at Midcentury New York* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019).

43
Michel Seuphor described the "thousands of eyes looking at us from behind the same pupil". See Michel Seuphor, "Antonio Virduzzo", in *Catalogo della XXXIa Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte Venezia,* 2nd edition (1962), 73.

three came charges of corruption, the imposition of American imperialism and crass commercialism. The printed images in Rauschenberg's *combines* reflect another shift, namely an interest in and experimentation with printmaking. That same year, Angelo Savelli was rewarded for his innovative, ink-less (white-on-white) reliefs and two years later, in 1966, Ezio Gribaudo won the top prize for his inkless prints. While the emphasis on texture and surface echoes Lucio Fontana's slashed painting, the forms also reveal innovations and experimentation occurring in graphics. At that moment, a print renaissance was well underway in Italy, the United States and elsewhere.[45] Indeed, by the end of the 1960s, artists seeking alternatives to painting and sculpture, including those not formally trained as printmakers and who were working in various styles, tried their hand at working a stone or plate. Those who had begun to challenge the conventional status of the art object, to decentre the artist's authority, and to question institutional power found the print studio offered space to exchange ideas, flesh out concepts and pull prints in large numbers so that they were affordable and could circulate beyond the rarefied spaces of art. As a democratic, cooperative medium it offered a means to address the crisis within the Biennale which culminated in 1968.

Scholars have articulated various reasons for the protests surrounding the 34th edition of 1968, but utmost among them (and pertinent here) was the desire to renew the exhibition through, among other actions, eradicating commercialism and revising the restrictive, Fascist-era statutes.[46] For example, Chiara di Stefano has argued that protestors attacked the Biennale to decouple what they perceived as an "unholy alliance of art and money".[47] Others have noted that protestors sought the elimination of bourgeois culture and the politics of colonialism, seeking instead a new structure that would allow "social forces" to "participate democratically" in the planning and management of a large public institution.[48] After the police left, the protests ceased and tensions died down, the Biennale reopened (though some pavilions remained closed or half-installed) without the usual fanfare. Shortly before closing, prizes were awarded; it would be the last time until they were resumed in 1986. Just one artist received the print prize, which went to the German artist Horst Janssen for his representational, yet fantastically rendered, etchings that evoke the energetic linework and colour washes of Egon Schiele's portraits.[49] Disruptions at the 1968 edition and the long-sought revisions to the Biennale statutes shaped the 1970 edition.

In the wake of the protests and at a March 1969 meeting, the Working Committee of the Assembly of the Biennale discussed ways to revise the show while waiting for Parliamentary approval of the new statutes. They suggested that the show would benefit from focusing on experimentation with "consultation and collaboration from representatives of the art world", freeing the exhibitions from diplomatic influence, restructuring admission fees, eliminating the competitive nature most obviously demonstrated in juries awarding prizes and removing divi-

44
Philip Rylands and Enzo di Martino, *Flying the Flag for Art: The United States and the Venice Biennale, 1895-1991* (Richmond, Virginia: Wyldbore & Wolferstan, Ltd., 1993), 139-150.

45
For more recent histories of the print renaissance in the United States see Monica Rumsey, *Elizabeth Wyckoff, and Gretchen Wagner, Graphic Revolution: American Prints 1960 to Now* (November 11, 2018-February 3, 2019), exh. cat. (St. Louis, MO: St, Louis Art Museum, 2018). See also Susan Tallman, *The Contemporary Print: From Pre-Pop to Postmodern* (NY: Thames & Hudson, 1996). For a history of the revival in Italy see Hopkinson, *Italian Prints*, 81-82.

46
Lawrence Alloway, *The Venice Biennale, 1895-1968: From Salon to Goldfish Bowl* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, Ltd., 1968), 24-25; Clarissa Ricci, ed. *Starting from Venice: Studies on the Biennale*, trans. by David Evans, Vincent Marsicano, and Bridget Mason (Milan: et al. Edizioni, 2010).

47
Chiara Di Stefano, "The 1968 Biennale. Boycotting the exhibition: An account of three extraordinary days", in *Starting from Venice*, 130-133.

48
Di Martino, *The History of the Venice Biennale*, 60-62.

49
For more information on the artist see, Claus Clément, et al., *Horst Janssen als angeber X: flegeleien und verneigungen* (Bielefeld, Germany: Kerber, 2012).

sions deemed inappropriate in light of the increasing interdisciplinary character of contemporary art.[50] These shifts would be more responsive to the needs of artists in light of recent artistic developments as well as social and cultural unrest. The following autumn specifications were provided when the foreign commissioners gathered at the headquarters of the Biennale at Ca' Giustinian.[51] Gian Alberto Dell'Acqua (Extraordinary Commissioner) intimated to those present that the Biennale Board had considered postponing the show while waiting for approval of the new statutes, but they concluded that this fraught moment should be highlighted in the Biennial of Visual Arts as had been done with music, cinema and theatre that year.[52] What also proved successful was the abolishment of divisions and competition, focusing instead upon "the participation of authors rather than the nations to which they belong".[53] Emphasis on creative experimentation, Dell'Acqua added, could serve to renew the institution long term but more immediately it would guide the 1970 Visual Arts exhibition, which would be titled *A Proposal for an Experimental Exhibition: Criticism, Research, and Experimentation*.[54] This revitalised Biennale would be integrative: its ateliers staffed with Italian and foreign artists, period exhibitions, applied arts and new mass communication technologies. Dell'Acqua encouraged similar in the displays themselves. Dr. Zorn Krizisnik, commissioner from Yugoslavia, indicated that their pavilion could run a tapestry workshop, but many others thought that there was not enough time to develop such a project.[55] The United States Commissioner, Lois Bingham shared her plans to exhibit prints and run a printmaking workshop.

Epistolary exchanges between Bingham, Dell'Acqua and Umbro Apollonio reveal that talks about revitalisation began during the vernissage of 1968.[56] They discussed the larger issues facing the Biennale and concluded that the international event should be as "pertinent" to the current "situation as the first Biennial was to its own decade".[57] Bingham suggested to Dell'Acqua that a workshop environment could transform the show, and that it could be precisely the democratic environment protestors sought. These ideas crystallised into a proposal that Bingham sent to Dell'Acqua in August of 1969. She noted that the "involvement of the people is as important as the display of art".[58] To that end, she proposed dividing the American pavilion into "two parts [...] a workshop and exhibition area".[59]

50
Working Committee for innovating experimentation of the organisation's activities, April 2, 1969, Record Unit 321 (hereafter RU), Box 176, Folder 70-03—Research and Planning (54 of 138), Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, DC (hereafter SIA).

51
Comitato di Lavoro dell'Assemblea del Personale della Biennale Di Venezia, November 15, 1969, Arti Visive serie, busta 166, fascicolo: Illumini Giardini. Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee, Venice (hereafter ASAC).

52
Lois Bingham, Notes from December 10, 1969 meeting with Gian Alberto Dell'Acqua, Apollonio, Bruno Orlando, Luigi Scarpa and commissioners from various nations, RU 321, Box 176, Folder 70-03—Research and Planning (54 of 138), SIA.

53
Professor Gian Alberto Dell'Acqua to U.S. Ambassador, August 23, 1969, Arti Visive serie, busta 169, fasciolo: corrispondenza con i commissari Stati Uniti d'America, ASAC.

54
It was a theme of sorts, the first of its kind, though not considered as such because official themes did not begin in earnest until 1972. La Programmazione Generale delle Attività della Biennale nel 1970, February 25, 1970, Arti Visive serie, busta 169, ASAC.

55
The representative from Denmark, M. Mogens Andersen, for example, claimed the proposal was too difficult to carry out in the time remaining. Bingham, Notes from December 10, 1969 meeting, SIA.

56
Lois Bingham to Gian Alberto Dell'Acqua, August 26, 1969, RU 321, Box 176, Folder 70-03—Research and Planning (54 of 138), SIA. See also Professor Gian Alberto Dell'Acqua to Lois Bingham, September 20, 1969, RU 321, Box 173, Folder 70-03, Correspondence (18 of 138), SIA.

57
Bingham to Dell'Acqua, August 26, 1969, SIA.

58
Umbro Apollonio was assistant Secretary General of the 1968 show and then Director in 1970). Bingham to Dell'Acqua, August 26, 1969, SIA.

This new structure would create a "magnetic point" where "creative experimentation would be emphasised", fulfilling "the desire of artists around the world [...] to become better acquainted with each other's techniques, philosophies and concepts of art".[60] Exchange of ideas and emphasis on process, rather than the end product, would be the ultimate goal. Dell'Acqua responded positively to the proposal, recognising the development of her earlier idea, but he could not give Bingham an official reply because the Working Committee at that point was mired in discussions about ways to renew the show.[61]

After the December meetings and with the official program set in January of 1970, Bingham began working with that year's curator, Henry Hopkins, to set in motion her proposal for a print exhibition and workshop, with a rotating roster of artists from the United States, Europe, the Mediterranean, Italy and Southeast Asia. Hopkins and Bingham also focused on the medium because of "the strength of new expressions in printmaking".[62] Bingham argued that "a lot of good artists who are not straight printmakers have become increasingly involved with the graphic arts".[63] Yet, more important than the display of new graphics was the inclusion of a print workshop. Artists could pull screen prints at the station outside the US pavilion or on the lithograph presses inside, where the newly installed large window created a theatre of lithography and allowed visitors to view printmakers at work [fig. 5]. The exhibition spread outside the Giardini to the former US Consulate located along the Grand Canal, where more lithograph presses and screen print stations were housed.[64] The organisers brought together artists from the United States and abroad to experiment, share philosophies and exchange ideas; the programme's success, they argued, depended upon those interactions.[65] For Hopkins, the format was new and idealistic, but not everyone was as optimistic.[66] Of the forty-seven artists selected, twenty-six refused to participate: they did not want the government (in the guise of Bingham) to use "their art as a cultural veneer to cover ruthless aggres-

59
Lois Bingham, *An Experiment Proposed for the XXXV Venice International Biennial of Art*, August 26, 1969, Box 176, Folder 70-03—Research and Planning (54 of 138), SIA.

60
Bingham, *An Experiment Proposed,* August 26, 1969, SIA.

61
Dell'Acqua to Bingham, September 20, 1969, SIA.

62
Henry Hopkins, Director's Statement, American Printmaking, June 15, 1970, RU 321, Box 175, Folder 70-03—Publicity (51 of 138), SIA.

63
Grace Glueck, "US Plans Shifts in Biennale Role", *The New York Times*, February 14, 1970, https://nyti.ms/3f6eSdk, accessed September 2017.

64
Most of the workshop production took place in the former U.S. consulate because the environment was less distracting, but also because it was cooler than the pavilion. Participant Bud Shark recalled that the sun radiating through the glass wall heated up the workshop, making it too hot to work in for most of the day during July and August. Bud Shark, interview by the author, January 4, 2018.

65
Henry Hopkins stated "It remains true [...] that the most public part, but not necessarily the most meaningful part of our participation, is an exhibition [...]. The most extensive and complex sections of our participation are the workshops in lithography and silkscreen. Workshop emphasis is to be placed upon experimentation and idea exchange rather than product". Hopkins, Director's Statement, June 15, 1970, SIA. See also Lois Bingham, Statement about the Venice Biennial Plan for 1970, May 8, 1970, RU 321, Box 174, Folder 70-03—Fundraising for the 1970 Venice Biennale, Summary of Activities (28 of 138), SIA. Joshua Taylor, Director of the National Collection of Fine Arts, stated the exhibitions aims: "We plan that the United States representation at the Biennial this year serve as the occasion for discussions and exchanges of insights among artists and between artists and the public. We hope that people from many nations will join us". This announcement was posted in the pavilion; it also acknowledges those who withdrew. Joshua Taylor, American Printmaking, 1970 35th Venice Biennale, June 15, 1970, RU 321, Box 175, Folder 70-03—Publicity (51 of 138), SIA.

66
Henry Hopkins stated the guiding principle was "to develop a manageable pilot project involving multiple image graphic arts which would include exhibition, participation, workshops in lithograph and silkscreen, communication and documentation, which would extend beyond national boundaries and which would reach toward the realm of creative interaction for the visiting public as well as for the invited participants [...]. Obviously, the results of this interaction are not predictable; yet it is our hope that it will open new avenues of approach and communication". Hopkins, Director's Statement, June 15, 1970, SIA.

fig. 5
John Dowell, Jack Damer, and Margaret Cogswell at the lithograph press installed in the US Pavilion, Summer 1970. 35. Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte 1970. Photo by author from Smithsonian Institution Archives. RU 321, Box 165

sion abroad and intolerable repression at home".[67] Many withdrew. The organisers eventually accepted their decision, noting their withdrawal with an asterisk in the catalogue and a sign in the pavilion, that read in brief: "We are in sympathy with the seriousness of their concern and respect their action, even though we regret it".[68]

Edward Ruscha considered withdrawing but changed his mind after his friend Henry Hopkins asked him to participate as the first visiting artist.[69] He worked with staff artists William Weege and Jack Damer to produce *Chocolate Room* [fig. 6]. Using twenty-eight tubes of Nestlé chocolate acquired at Venice's Standa supermarkets, the artists silkscreened the sticky substance onto sheets of paper and installed them in the front room in the left wing, a space that remained vacant due to the withdrawal of many artists.[70] According to Ruscha and others, people quickly began writing graffiti in the chocolate, "for peace or anti-Vietnam or anti-American slogans and also just vulgarisms".[71] Then came the flies followed by ants, climbing and, as one critic quipped, "buzzing with enthusiasm of [an] obviously avant-garde taste".[72] The destructive force of the ants, the visitors' gestures and the humid temperatures continually degraded the work of art; none of this upset Ruscha, who

67
Emergency Cultural Government, Call for An Emergency Cultural Government, June 8, 1970, RU 321, Box 172, Folder 70-03—Venice 35, Emergency Cultural Government Letter/Master File (14 of 138), SIA. For the most recent account see of the ECG activities, see Caroline V. Wallace, "'Show Opened to All Artists': The 1970 Liberated Venice Biennale and the Production of Dissent", *Oxford Art Journal* 44, no. 1 (March 2021): 125-145, doi:10.1093/oxartj/kcaa033, accessed October 2021.

68
Taylor, *American Printmaking,* June 15, 1970, SIA.

69
Ruscha wrote Henry Hopkins on June 12, 1970 "It looks like I'll see you on the 17th (Wed.) sometime. I've decided to can my idea of withdrawing from the exhibit". Edward Ruscha to Henry Hopkins, June 12, 1970, RU 321, Box 173, Folder 70-03—Correspondence (18 of 138), SIA. In an interview, Hopkins stated that Ruscha referred to the show as a "national scandal" but accepted the invitation as a favour and because of their "personal friendship". Henry Hopkins, interview by Wesley Chamberlin, October 24-December 17, 1980, Oral History Program, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. (hereafter AAA).

70
According to Hopkins, the chocolate's packaging looked like paint tubes. Hopkins, interview by Chamberlin, AAA.

71
Hopkins also witnessed people licking their fingers and wiping "dirty words and things" into the works. Henry Hopkins, interview by Chamberlin, AAA.

72
Dorothy Cameron, "Summer '70: The Crisis of Canada International: Part 2: Venice", *Artscanada* 27 (January 1971): 44. Lois Bingham also referred to the ants and suggested "a cremation ceremony". Lois Bingham notes to Bill Dunn, June 26, 1970, RU 321, Box 175, Folder 70-03—Miscellaneous (43 of 138), SIA.

meant for the work to be ephemeral, made for that space and time.[73] Temporary print installations by Weege, Damer, John Dowell, Bud Shark and visiting artist Romas Viesulas followed. Additional visiting artists included Lisa Mackie from the United States, Per Arnoldi from Copenhagen, Michel Fossick of London, Rena Tzolakis, Greek-born artist based in Paris, Ibrahim Hussein from Kuala Lumpur and the Italian artist Bruno Giaquinto.[74] Though not considered a critical success, the participants viewed the experience positively. For example, Rena Tzolakis wrote that "personal contacts with remarkable people, all contributed to an atmosphere of intense and rewarding creativity", and Michael Fossick reflected on how "everybody involved was both living and working together in the same building, which proved to be a good experience".[75] While all the interactions, activities and some two hundred prints produced cannot be detailed here, it's important to recognise that the collective activity and experimentation yielded "new expressions" in printmaking.[76]

fig. 6
Edward Ruscha, *Chocolate Room*, June 1970, U.S.A. Pavilion, Screen prints of Nestlé chocolate. 35. Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte 1970. Donation of Mary Anne Goley, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Photograph by Mary Anne Goley.

Ateliers in the main pavilion provided Italian and foreign artists with space to work together, share ideas and pull prints [fig. 7]. The medium proved to be a logical choice because of the abundant activity and interest in printmaking throughout Italy.[77] Additionally, printmaking's interactive process necessitates communication between artists across the space of a studio and therefore it offered the perfect vehicle to foster experimentation and exchange. Twenty-six artists, nominated by national commissioners and other experts, participated in the serigraph and plastics ateliers for a period of two to three weeks, rotating in groups of four.[78] Artists in the print laboratory included Alfonso Hüppi of Baden-Baden,

73
In an interview with Margit Rowell, Ruscha acknowledged that "after it was over, the room was destroyed". Margit Rowell, "Ed Ruscha et ses biennales de Venise", *Art Press* 13 (June 2005): 34-9.

74
William Weege and other artists working in the U.S. pavilion relied upon Fiorenzo Fallani's serigraph studio to print posters and help with other printing needs. Additionally, Stamperia 2RC Edizioni Grafiche in Rome lent a press and supplies, a vital component according Bud Shark. Bud Shark, interview with the author, January 4, 2018.

75
Rena Tsolakis to Peg Cogswell, April 5, 1971, RU 321, Box 179, Folder 70-03-Venice XXXV, Rena Tzolakis (109 of 138), SIA. Michael Fossick to Peg Cogswell, May 14, 1971, RU 321, Box 179 Folder 70-03-Venice XXXV, Michael Fossick (97 of 138), SIA.

76
They form the subject of a large project by the author, currently underway.

77
For a list of publishers and presses, see Hopkinson, *Italian Prints: 1875-1975*, 81-82.

fig. 7
Ricerca e progettazione, 35. Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte 1970 © Courtesy Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia – ASAC

Germany, Andrej Jemec of Ljubljana, Jean Lecoultre of Lausanne and the Italian artists Fernando De Filippi of Milan, Carlo Lorenzetti of Rome, Fabrizio Plessi of Venice and Ernesto Tatafiore of Naples.[79] Among the 631 prints produced is Hüppi's serigraph *Opera 2 (Palma Rosa)*, a minimalist composition containing an abstracted palm tree nestled between two earthen mounds.[80] Plessi created the serigraph *Mestificazione dell'acqua*, reflecting the recurring theme of water in the artist's oeuvre. During an edition's run, prints were placed around the atelier to guide artists and laboratory assistants, but they were also available for review and purchase by the audience. Laboratory coordinator G. Franco Tramontin observed that participants of "different stylistic approaches, of different tendencies, linked in their aesthetic convictions, have the possibility of an encounter, of an exchange of experiences both on the technological and on the critical level".[81] The dialogue, in Tramontin's estimation, "between operators and between the operator and spectator can inform not only the final part of the work, but also possible variations, creating a new experience, a new possibility to understand, to know".[82] The collaborative

78
Umbro Apollonio to Renè Berger, March 25, 1970, Arti Visive serie, busta 175, fascicolo: Produzione manuale e meccanica, ASAC.

79
For the full list of artists see, Arti Visive serie, busta 173, fascicolo: Biennale 1970. Produzioni grafiche ed oggetti: elenchi, ASAC.

80
Confortanti risultati della 35. Biennale di Venezia nella partecipazione del pubblico e nell'interesse della stampa, Arti Visive serie, busta 171, ASAC. For more information on the artist's prints see Thomas Hirsch and Rosa von der Schulenburg, *Alfonso Hüppi: Druckwerke mit einem Verzeichnis der Druckwerke 1953 bis 2006* (Köln: Salon Verlag, 2007).

81
G. Franco Tramontin, "Note sui laboratori", in Umbro Apollonio, Luciano Caramel and Dietrich Mahlow (eds.), *Ricerca e Progettazione: Proposte per una esposizione sperimentale* (Venezia: Ente Autonomo, La Biennale di Venezia, 1970), 121.

nature of the studio and the activation of the viewer allowed for an open and democratic environment and these aspects, according to Dell'Acqua, could help renew the Biennale.[83]

The focus on exchanges "of experiences on both the technological and critical level" among artists and audiences of varied nationalities in Venice parallel contemporary art practices that included the "dematerialisation" of the art object, but they also unveil moments of transnationalism. Transnationalism, according to Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in 1970 and more recently by Steven Vertovec in 2009, entails communication and interaction connecting people "across the borders of nation-states".[84] If we consider the pavilion as a microcosm of the nation state, then it is possible to conceive of the ateliers and the participating artists as working across borders, interacting and expanding their awareness and sensitivity to differing cultural and artistic conditions. Though not exactly planned or perhaps even sought by the organisers, the results of the interactions among participants and the prints created were certainly "pertinent" to that time and reflective of that day's "situation". After all, the removal of divisions and the activation of democratic and social forces through experimentation were the goals set forth by the Working Committee of the Assembly of the Biennale as they sought to renew the exhibition. After it closed, the prints produced on site were then shared with audiences in Milan, where graphics by twelve artists who had participated in the special ateliers were displayed at Rizzoli Galleria and were sold to "the interested public at deliberately low prices, in order to make them accessible to different social strata".[85]

The Legacy: Aspetti Della Grafica Europea 1971

Some individuals were sceptical of the organisers' ability to revitalise the exhibition through innovative programmes, in part because they were operating under the old statutes. In fact, a group of artists, writers, filmmakers, musicians and theatre personnel lead by Mario Penelope accused the administrators of not making changes and thus perpetuating authoritarianism, paternalism and bureaucracy.[86] In popular form, they protested and appealed to others to do the same.[87] Perhaps because of his actions, Penelope was appointed Special Commissioner the following year, 1971. Acting on behalf of the Biennale that year, he set about organising an exhibition of graphic art, *Aspetti Della Grafica*. Displayed at the Ca' Pesaro, the exhibition included both established and younger artists whose work demonstrated innovation, variety and a global reach.[88] Penelope also sought to include graphics that offered autonomous expressions, unique from their work in another medi-

82
Tramontin, *Ricerca e Progettazione*, 121.

83
Prof. Gian Alberto Dell'Acqua to Onorevole Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, April 15, 1970, Arti Visive serie, busta 170, fascicolo: Premi, ASAC. Visitors were invited produced a black-and-white image using the Xerox machine with the assistance of workshop staff.

84
Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., eds., *Transnational Relations and World Politics*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973). See also Steven Vertovec, *Transnationalism* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

85
Il lavoro degli Ateliers grafici della 35. Biennale esposto a Milano al Centro Rizzoli, Arti Visive serie, busta 176, fascicolo: Biennale 1971, Comunicati Stampa, ASAC.

86
Mario Penelope, Oggetto Manifestazioni della Biennale di Venezia, February 11, 1970 (Comitato Nazionale Italiano dell'associazione internazionale delle arti plastiche—Ente associato all'Unesco), Arti Visive serie, busta 166, fascicolo: Varie, ASAC.

87
This letter of protest, signed by Penelope, included a list of thirty-three individuals representing the visual arts as well as music, cinema and theatre. Mario Penelope, Oggetto Manifestazioni della Biennale di Venezia, ASAC.

um.[89] He invited five artists from each nation with a pavilion in Giardini (Biennale exhibition grounds) to submit two works of art for inclusion and dedicated a special section to works produced by Italian publishers and printers. The works of art were available for sale with the majority of the proceeds going to the artist or owner.[90] By the time the exhibition closed in November, seventy-nine works, by fifty-one of the ninety-five artists, had sold.[91] The exhibition, he surmised from press reviews and attendance records, had achieved a wide resonance.[92] Its success perhaps prompted an installation of experimental graphics for the press at the 1972 Venice Biennale, which included radical innovations and an international panorama of graphic research.[93] The following year the Italian Parliament approved the Biennale's new statutes, which were in place for the next Biennale. By that time, the renaissance in printmaking and the interest in special displays had subsided. Between 1938 and 1972, when prints had received special displays and awards, they offered a picture of the shifting aesthetic, cultural and at times political world in which they were situated.

88
Andrej Jemec produced serigraphs in the experimental atelier at the 35. Biennale and was one of five artists who represented Yugoslavia in *Aspetti della grafica*. Mario Penelope, ed., *Aspetti della grafica* (September 3-October 31, 1971), exh. cat. (Venice: La Biennale, 1971). Mario Penelope, Mostra della Grafica Europea Alla Biennale di Venezia, August 30, 1971, Arti Visive serie, busta 176, fascicolo: Biennale 1971, Comunicati Stampa, ASAC.

89
Enzo di Martino has pointed out the democratic nature of printmaking. Di Martino, *The History of the Venice Biennale*, 63.

90
The Biennale kept fifteen percent of the proceeds. Mario Penelope to Richard Lohse, Arti Visive serie, busta 176, fascicolo: Biennale 1971, Comunicati Stampa, ASAC.

91
Conclusa con successo la Mostra Grafica della Biennale (11/B/71), Arti Visive serie, busta 176, fascicolo: Biennale 1971, Comunicati Stampa, ASAC.

92
Conclusa con successo la Mostra Grafica della Biennale, ASAC.

93
Mario Penelope, ed., *Aspetti della grafica europea Grafica sperimentale per la stampa, Catalogo XXXVI Esposizione Biennale Internazionale D'Arte* (1972), 9.

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Alessia Del Bianco

"A Selection of Works by the Finest Modern Masters of *Bianco e Nero*": The Print Rooms at the Venice Biennale, 1899-1901

Abstract

In 1901, Vittorio Pica praised the organisers of the Venice Biennale for devoting "one or two small rooms" to "a selection of works by the finest modern masters of *bianco e nero*". The exhibitions organised in 1899 and 1901 presented—for the very first time in Italy—some of the leading names in European graphic art, building on the success of the sizeable exhibit of Dutch etchers in the 1895 and 1897 iterations, as well as of prints by James McNeill Whistler and Vittore Grubicy de Dragon. The sections dedicated to prints and drawings, starting in 1895, played a key role in sparking an interest in prints—and the international Etching Revival—in the Italian art world of the early 20th century.

This article attempts to outline the story of the graphic arts sections in the exhibitions of 1899 and 1901, examining the background, proposals, organisation, and selection of artists, as well as the artistic reception. An analysis of archival materials from the ASAC in Venice and of correspondence between Vittorio Pica and Secretary General Antonio Fradeletto helps identify their strategies and approach—which paralleled Pica's activity as a critic—to promoting the development of printmaking and public familiarity with the art. It sheds light on the pioneering role played by these first few Biennales in building critical knowledge of intaglio as an original language in modern Italian art, and in introducing a range of practical and aesthetic concepts that reflected the latest currents in contemporary printmaking. These early Biennales marked a turning point in the history of Italian graphic art, introducing an exhibition model that grew in popularity, spreading knowledge and appreciation of prints.

Keywords

Venice Biennale, Vittorio Pica, History of Printmaking, Exhibition Studies, *Bianco e Nero*

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"A Selection of Works by the Finest Modern Masters of *Bianco e Nero*": The Print Rooms at the Venice Biennale, 1899-1901

Alessia Del Bianco

Introduction

The fourth *Esposizione Internazionale di Venezia*, which opened on April 22, 1901, brought a significant new development in the field of the graphic arts. "After a rather long period of scornful indifference" that ignored all the work coming out of the Etching Revival, the Biennale decided to devote two rooms to international prints and drawings.[1] Vittorio Pica's pleasure at seeing these sections included in the show can be clearly felt in his presentation of them:

> Prints, both black and white and in colour, are once again being embraced by the general public in both Europe and America, while also sparking the enthusiasm of sophisticated connoisseurs and collectors [...] This rekindled esteem for printmaking and this ever more promising revival and dissemination of it ought to be helped along in every way, especially in Italy [...] The organisers in Venice should thus be commended for deciding that in every biennial exhibition, one or two small rooms should contain a selection of works by the greatest modern masters in this field: Israëls and Whistler, Zorn and Raffaëlli, Köpping and Cameron, Liebermann and Bauer, Maréchal and Storm's Gravesande, Klinger and Baertsoen, Redon and Ryssleberghe, Vogeler and Chahine, Rassenfosse and Witsen, Greiner and Zilcken, Nordhagen and De Los Rios, Conconi and Grubicy.[2]

1 Vittorio Pica, *L'Arte Mondiale alla IV Esposizione di Venezia* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano di Arti Grafiche, 1895), 164.

2 "Dopo un periodo abbastanza lungo di disdegnosa indifferenza, le stampe sia in bianco e nero sia a colori, ottengono di nuovo, così in Europa come in America, la simpatia del gran pubblico, riaccendendo in pari tempo gli entusiasmi dei buongustai raffinati e dei collezionisti[...] Tale ritorno di favore verso la stampa artistica e tale sempre più interessante rinnovazione e sempre crescente divulgazione di essa meritano di essere aiutate in tutti i modi, specie in Italia [...] Non è dunque da considerare come un merito trascurabile degli organizzatori veneziani quello di aver voluto che, in ogni mostra biennale, una o due piccole sale contenessero una scelta di opere dei maggiori maestri odierni del bianco e nero, da Israëls a Whistler, da Zorn a Raffaëlli, da Köpping a Cameron, da Liebermann a Bauer, da Maréchal a Storm's Gravesande, da Klinger a Baertsoen, da Redon a Rysselberghe, da Vogeler a Chahine, da Rassenfosse a Witsen, da Greiner a Zilcken, da Nordhagen a De Los Rios, da Conconi a Grubicy", Pica, *L'Arte Mondiale alla IV Esposizione di Venezia*, 164.

In the Italian art world of the early 20th century, the first event entirely focused on the graphic arts—and the only one of its kind—was the *Prima Esposizione Internazionale del Bianco e Nero* held in Rome in 1902, yet the earliest harbinger of a reawakened interest in prints was instead the Biennale, which from its very first exhibition introduced a new field that would attract growing attention over the years.

The *bianco e nero* ("black-and-white") rooms presented at the Biennales of 1899 and 1901—which, by convention, grouped together both prints and drawings—were initially limited to small spaces such as corridors or the veranda. Nonetheless, they were the only showcases in Italy that suggested a growing appreciation of the graphic arts. In those early years, the rooms came to play a crucial role in launching the revival of etching as an original language, in a milieu that was not yet up to date with what was happening across the Alps. The "successful example" of Venice, as Pica emphasised in an article he wrote for *Emporium* about the 1902 exhibition in Rome, familiarised these oblivious Italian viewers with the most creative and talented American and European artists working in intaglio, even "convincing" the board of the Società di Amatori e Cultori to mount a major international exhibition in Rome dedicated to modern prints, drawings, books, and illustrated magazines.[3]

Although there have been many studies of the Venice Biennale, its *bianco e nero* section, which I am looking at here specifically in regard to prints, has never been the subject of a systematic investigation. Examining these rooms in the two iterations of 1899 and 1901—that is, when Pica became involved in organising them—along with their underlying ideas, strategies, and proposals allows us to reflect on the Biennale's fundamental contribution to building critical knowledge of the graphic arts in Italy and fostering a sphere of public collection, as well as introducing an exhibition model that enjoyed growing success up to the eve of World War I.[4]

The organisers' decision to devote one or more rooms of each Biennale to *bianco e nero* can be ascribed in large part to the efforts of Vittorio Pica, a cosmopolitan intellectual who was an active literary critic and art critic, and wrote for many magazines in Italy and abroad.[5] He was also a connoisseur and collector of prints, which were unquestionably one of his main interests. Etching—that eminently aristocratic form of intaglio—was in Pica's view "the best testing ground for measuring an artist's modernity and ability to experiment, so it is not subordinate to painting, but intrinsically tied to its deepest concerns".[6] Even before he became

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Vittorio Pica, "L'Esposizione di Bianco e Nero a Roma", *Emporium* 16, 91 (July 1902), 22. *Catalogo della Prima esposizione internazionale di Bianco e Nero: Roma, aprile-maggio 1902,* Società degli amatori e cultori di belle arti in Roma (Rome, 1902). The story of the exhibition in Rome has already been thoroughly examined by Emanuele Bardazzi, *"Bianco e Nero" alle Esposizioni degli Amatori e cultori 1902-1929* (Rome: Galleria Campo dei Fiori, 2001); See also Emanuele Bardazzi, "Le sezioni di Bianco e Nero alla Secessione romana e altre vicende nella grafica primo novecentesca", in Jolanda Nigro Covre, ed., *Secessione romana 1913-1916: Tempi e problemi* (Rome: Bagatto, 2013), 112-136.

4
Emanuele Bardazzi, "La civiltà delle riviste e lo sviluppo della grafica", in Carlo Sisi, ed., *Motivi e figure nell'arte toscana del XX secolo* (Ospedaletto: Pacini, 2000), 56. There is no specific study of prints and the Biennale. The topic is introduced, and examined in some detail, in Martin Hopkinson, *Italian Prints: 1875-1975* (Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, 2007), 17-19, and Giorgio Marini "Emporium, le Biennali di Venezia e l'incisione", in Giorgio Bacci, Miriam Fileti Mazza, eds., *Emporium: Parole e figure tra il 1895 e il 1964* (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2014), 243-265.

5
Pica is a figure whose importance has been reappraised of late by scholars. Regarding the figure of Vittorio Pica (1862-1930), see the latest studies in Davide Lacagnina, ed., *L'officina internazionale di Vittorio Pica: Arte moderna e critica d'arte in Italia (1880-1930)* (Palermo: Torri del Vento, 2017); Davide Lacagnina, ed., *Vittorio Pica e la ricerca della modernità: Critica artistica e cultura internazionale* (Milan and Udine: Mimesis, 2016). See also the information related to Pica in the CAPTI database (http://www.capti.it), in addition to the pioneering studies by Maria Mimita Lamberti, "Vittorio Pica e l'impressionismo in Italia", in *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa: Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, series III, V, no. 3 (1975): 1149-1201; Ugo Piscopo, *Vittorio Pica: la protoavanguardia in Italia* (Naples: Cassitto 1982); Mariantonietta Picone Petrusa, *Il manifesto. Arte e comunicazione nelle origini della pubblicità* (Naples: Liguori, 1994) and Nicola D'Antuono, *Vittorio Pica: Un visionario tra Napoli e l'Europa* (Rome: Carocci, 2002).

6
"il banco di prova più alto su cui misurare modernità e capacità di sperimentazione di un artista, non dunque in subordine alla pittura ma in maniera connaturata alle sue più intime ragioni", Davide Lacagnina, "'Così ardito artista e così sagace critico d'arte': Vittore Grubicy De Dragon e Vittorio Pica", in Lacagnina, *Vittorio Pica e la ricerca della modernità*, 50.

deputy secretary in 1912, Pica's work as a critic and cultural advocate played an indispensable role in fostering a more open-minded approach to artistic choices at the Biennale.[7] From the very start of the exhibition, he was actively involved in encouraging new approaches and promoting certain artists, whose names repeatedly turn up in his correspondence with Secretary General Antonio Fradeletto.[8] These many letters—and recent studies examining the figure of Pica as a populariser of graphic arts—round out and bring into focus the ideas expressed in his articles, shedding light on certain key themes and overall tastes, and helping to explain some of the exhibition choices regarding prints.[9] After 1901, the print rooms became a regular feature of the Biennale and constituted pivotal steps toward developing a system of *bianco e nero* exhibitions: no longer as a sporadic initiative, but as an ongoing phenomenon.

A "*Véritable Révélation*": Context and Proposals Regarding Prints at the Early Biennales

The decision to set aside one or two rooms of the 1899 and 1901 Biennales for the greatest contemporary masters of *bianco e nero* was prompted by the success of previous experiments. The room of Dutch prints (*Sala di Acqueforti Olandesi*) presented at the first exhibition in 1895 proved quite popular in terms of both attendance and sales;[10] Alfredo Melani, in *Emporium*, called it "very interesting and educational" and said "the impression it made on me as a whole was quite extraordinary".[11] The first exhibition did not initially envision a room of prints. The Biennale regulations speak of paintings and sculptures; with regard to the graphic arts, they do mention drawings and various kinds of prints, but merely to note that "only superior works will be accepted, for the most part original ones".[12] This wording does not call for *bianco e nero* works to be either excluded or included, nor does it suggest specific guidelines for an overall commissioner for this area. The credit for the idea goes to Philippe Zilcken, who was appointed commissioner for etchings in

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Vittorio Pica was appointed deputy secretary of the Venice Biennale for two iterations (1912-1914) and secretary general for four iterations (1920-1926); see Davide Lacagnina, "Pica, Vittorio", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. LXXXIII (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2015), 122-127.

8
Pica's relationship with the Biennale has been examined in Paola Zatti, "Le prime Biennali veneziane (1895-1912): il contributo di Vittorio Pica", *Venezia Arti*, no. 7 (1993): 111-116 and in Giuliana Donzello, *Arte e collezionismo: Fradeletto e Pica segretari alle Biennali veneziane 1895-1926* (Florence: Firenze Libri, 1987).

9
Vittorio Pica's efforts to promote graphic arts have been studied by Davide Lacagnina, "Vittorio Pica, Art Critic and Amateur d'estampes", in Rosina Neginsky, ed., *Symbolism, Its Origins and Its Consequences* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 455-480; see also see also Hopkinson, *Italian Prints*, 19; Giorgio Marini, "L'incisione Europea dalle Pagine di Emporium: Vittorio Pica e la divulgazione per la diffusione della grafica del 'bianco e nero' nel primo Novecento", *Grafica d'Arte* 20, no. 80 (Oct.-Dec. 2009):12-17; Marini, "Emporium, le Biennali di Venezia e l'incisione", 243-265. The article by Marini (2014), highlights the relationship between Pica's activity as a writer in *Emporium* and the parallel development of the *bianco e nero* rooms in Venice.

10
The *Sala di acqueforti olandesi* is examined in Alessia Del Bianco, "Il bianco e nero alla prima Esposizione Internazionale di Venezia, 1895. Philippe Zilcken e la Sala di acqueforti olandesi", in Laura Fanti e Giorgio Marini, eds., *Noir & Blanc: La gravure belge et néerlandaise en Italie au début du XXe siècle* (Leuven: Peeters, 2021), 79-97.

11
Alfredo Melani, "Prima Esposizione Internazionale d'arte della città di Venezia", *Emporium* 2, no. 7 (1895): 72. See also Marini, "Emporium, le Biennali di Venezia e l'incisione", 243 and Del Bianco, "Il bianco e nero alla prima Esposizione", 90.

12
"non saranno ammesse che delle opere superiori e principalmente degli originali", *Lavoro preliminare per le esposizioni veneziane 1894-95*, in Historical Archives of Contemporary Arts of the Venice Biennale, *Archivio storico delle arti contemporanee* (ASAC), Serie Scatole Nere (SN), b. 1.

the Netherlands.[13] In an effort to promote Dutch art, Zilcken suggested a room of prints to the organising committee; to guarantee the success of such an exhibition at the Biennale, he proposed modelling it on the ones he had organised for the *Nederlandsche Estclub* in The Hague, Paris and New York. Allocating a room to the graphic arts was not a standard practice—actually, it was unheard of. Ugo Ojetti noted that "Exhibitions of black-and-white works are an unknown phenomenon in Italy", in contrast to what had been happening abroad, with the *Black and White Exhibition* and the *Salon en Noir et Blanc*.[14]

Yet Zilcken promised Riccardo Selvatico, mayor of Venice, "To my great joy, I will have the honour and pleasure of organising a section of Dutch etchings, as I did in Paris in 1889. I can assure you that this section will be an enormous success with connoisseurs, and I feel certain that in Italy it will come as a true revelation that this great national art of yore can flourish anew in our century".[15] The *véritable révélation* that Zilcken evokes more than once in his correspondence sums up the extraordinary importance of the theoretical and practical exploration of graphic art that was taking place in the international Etching Revival.[16] In Italy, however, the revival took a bit more time. A 19th-century decline in the technique had led intaglio to be seen as a discipline of reproduction and an academic exercise that was on its way out; chairs for etching instructors were eliminated in 1873, due to both a lack of students and the steady advance of lithography and photography.[17]

Aside from one brief, limited attempt in 1875 to promote printmaking in Turin (*Società degli acquafortisti*), the artform was only slowly regaining a foothold at the end of the century, through scattered initiatives in Veneto, Tuscany, Piedmont and Lombardy.[18] Although with some delay compared to similar manifestations of interest spearheaded by Théophile Gautier and Charles Blanc in France, the Biennale joined what was by 1895 an unmistakable wave of fresh enthusiasm for the creative potential of this technique, and agreed to the proposed room of Dutch

13
Charles Louis Philippe Zilcken was a painter, printmaker and writer who played a key role in promoting Dutch culture abroad, as Biennale commissioner for the Dutch sections. For a biographical profile, see Annie-Paul Quinsac, *Vittore Grubicy e l'Europa: Alle radici del divisionismo* (Milan: Skira, 2005), 294-295; and Jeroen Giltay, "De Nederlandsche Etsclub (1885-1896)", *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* (NKJ), *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 27 (1976): 91-125.

14
Ugo Ojetti, *L'Arte Moderna a Venezia* (Rome: Voghera, 1897), 213. On this subject see also Catherine Meneux, "Les Salons en noir et blanc", *Histoire de l'art*, no. 52 (June 2003): 29-44.

15
"C'est avec le plus grand plaisir que j'aurai l'honneur et le plaisir d'organiser une section d'eaux-fortes hollandaises, comme je l'ai fait à Paris en 1889. Je puis vous assurer qu'auprès des connaisseur cette section aurà un vrai succès, et je crois être certain qu'en Italie elle sera la révélation qu'un très grand art national d'autrefois re-fleurit en notre siècle", letter from Zilcken to Selvatico, November 11, 1894, *Mostra speciale di acqueforti 1894-95*, Venice, ASAC, SN 1; See Del Bianco, "Il bianco e nero alla prima Esposizione", 79.

16
The phenomenon of the international Etching Revival has been addressed in Elizabeth Helsinger, *The "Writing" of Modern Life: The Etching Revival in France, Britain, and the U.S., 1850–1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); and, with specific reference to Britain and the US, in Emma Chambers, *An Indolent and Blundering Art? The Etching Revival and the Redefinition of Etching in England 1838-1892* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999). See also the recent book by Christian Rümellin, *L'eau fort est à la mode, 1840-1910* (Geneva: Pagine d'Arte, Musée de l'art et d'histoire de Genève, 2020).

17
This was part of post-Unification reform of Italian art schools by the Ministry of Public Education in 1873; as noted in the report presented to the ministry, "Dei nove istituti soli cinque hanno scolari, due ne hanno cinque, due ne contano tre, e uno ne ha un solo. Questa scarsità di studenti dimostra abbastanza la superfluità delle nove scuole". The nine schools had only seventeen students, costs were excessive, and "Quanto alla materia di questo insegnamento essa per varie ragioni, e specialmente pei progressi fatti dalla litografia e dalla fotografia, non ha nell'arte quell'importanza per la quale più non si bada alla spesa e al numero dei cultori", Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Roma, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Consiglio Superiore della Pubblica Istruzione, Atti del Consiglio, Prima serie (1849-1903), b. 77, *Giunta per le Belle Arti*, "Firenze, riordinamento e regolamento dell'Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze"; see Alessia Del Bianco, "La cattedra di Incisione e i suoi maestri nel primo Novecento: Emanuele Brugnoli, Giovanni Giuliani e Virgilio Tramontin" in Sileno Salvagnini", *Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia: Il Novecento* (Crocetta del Montello: Antiga, 2016), 205-228.

18
For a survey of Italian printmaking in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Giorgio Marini, "La reinassance de l'eau-forte en Italie (1870-1920): Entre régionalisme et overtures internationales", in Rümellin, *L'eau fort est à la mode*, 33-59. See also Hopkinson, *Italian Prints*, 8-23.

etchings.[19] In this Biennale, in addition to the seventy-five Dutch prints in *Sala L*, a collection of original etchings was also shown by Vittore Grubicy de Dragon. The only Italian to present a series of prints, he was as interested as his fellow *peintres-graveurs* north of the Alps in exploring the potential of this art form. Grubicy, like Pica and Zilcken, played a leading role in fostering curiosity about intaglio techniques, and after a period spent in The Hague, had become an ambassador for the many innovations of the Belgian and Dutch art scenes. It is no coincidence that his 1895 essay *L'Acquaforte nell'Arte Moderna* was published during this period of fervid interest in the graphic arts and that it seems to have been initially written for the Biennale catalogue as an introduction to the Dutch etching room.[20]

Recent studies focused on the important role of Belgian and Dutch graphic arts in the early 20th century have shown that the presence of prints from these cultures—starting with the first Biennale, and increasing in subsequent iterations—proved fundamental in rekindling interest in the graphic arts in Italy, as well as in shaping the taste and style of Italian artists.[21] The international dialogue sparked by the Dutch exhibit heralded the beginning of print rooms as an ongoing feature of subsequent Biennales. In 1897, the organisers once again allocated a room to etchings and lithographs from the Netherlands; alongside these, there were prints by Max Liebermann, Otto Greiner, Riccardo Los Rios, Albert Welti, nine etchings by James McNeill Whistler [fig. 1] and three lithographs by Odilon Redon, *Buddah*, *Des peuples divers habitent les pays de l'Océan and Oannès* [fig. 2] which "come from a series of wildly inventive drawings".[22] The only Italians were Luigi Conconi and Giuseppe Miti Zanetti, who exhibited some framed etchings.[23]

Yet despite the initiatives aimed at showcasing prints in the first two exhibitions, Pica was quick to point out that certain names were still missing. In two reports on the first and second Biennale, the critic made a series of suggestions aimed at giving future exhibitions an element of "particular originality" that would make it "have a salutary influence on our artists" and offer the public "a more complete and detailed idea of what art is now and what it is on the verge of becoming".[24] He proposed making room for the decorative arts, book design and illustration, and also urged the Biennale to show "frontispiece etchings by Felicien Rops, Fantin-Latour, Minne, Khnopff, or Toorop"; the "macabre, fanciful, or satirical lithographs of Redon, De Groux, Sattler, Wilette, or Forain"; and drawings by Raffaëlli, Tolouse-

19
As Théophile Gautier wrote, underscoring the aims of the *Société des Aqua-Fortistes*, "la Société des Aqua-Fortistes s'est fondée précisément pour combattre la photographie, la lithographie, l'aquatinte, la gravure dont les hachures recroisées ont un point au milieu; en un mot, le travail régulier, automatique, sans inspiration qui dénature l'idée même de l'artiste, et qu'ils ont voulu dans leur planches parler directement au public, à leurs risques et périls. Le succès a prouvé qu'ils n'avaient pas eu tort: le texte est toujours préférable à la traduction". Théophile Gautier, "Aqua-Fortistes: Un mot sur l'eau-forte", in *Société des Aqua-Fortistes, Eaux-fortes modernes* 1, no. 1 (September 1, 1862).

20
Regarding Grubicy see Lacagnina, "'Così ardito artista e così sagace critico d'arte'", 33-72; see also Quinsac, *Vittore Grubicy e l'Europa*; Flavia Pesci, "Certi effetti di sonorità misteriose e profonde: Teoria e tecnica nelle incisioni di Vittore Grubicy de Dragon", in Claudio Zambianchi and Ilaria Schiaffini (eds.), *Contemporanea: Scritti di Storia dell'Arte per Jolanda Nigro Covre* (Rome: Campisano Editore, 2013), 83-90.

21
Laura Fanti and Giorgio Marini, eds., *Noir & Blanc: La gravure belge et néerlandaise en Italie au début du XXe siècle* (Leuven: Peeters, 2021). This book brings together various articles about the activity of Belgian and Dutch printmakers in Italy and in relation to Italian culture. Regarding the massive presence of Belgian and Dutch printmakers in this country, see also Giorgio Marini, "Incisori belgi e olandesi alle mostre del 'Bianco e Nero' del primo Novecento", in Mari Pietragiovanna, ed., *Scritti in onore di Caterina Virdis Limentani* (Roma: Campisano editore), 265-271.

22
"appartengono a una serie di disegni di un'invenzione stravagante", *Vittorio Pica, L'arte mondiale a Venezia* (Napoli: Pierro, 1897), 146.

23
Seconda Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia: Catalogo illustrato (April 22 - October 31, 1897), exh. cat. (Venice: Carlo Ferrari, 1897), 35-40.

24
"abbia una salutare influenza sui nostri artisti" and offer the public "un'idea più completa e più precisa di ciò che sia presentemente l'arte e di ciò che essa si prepara ad essere", Vittorio Pica, "Lasciando Venezia", in *L'arte europea a Venezia* (Naples: Pierro, 1895), 186-88. See also Marini, "*Emporium*, le Biennali di Venezia e l'incisione", 252.

fig. 1
James McNeill Whistler, *Traghetto, First Venice Set*, 1879-1880. Etching / drypoint, 23,5 × 30,2 cm. *Seconda Esposizione Internazionale di Venezia*, 1897 "Sala Internazionale - Passaggio attiguo alla Sala B" Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
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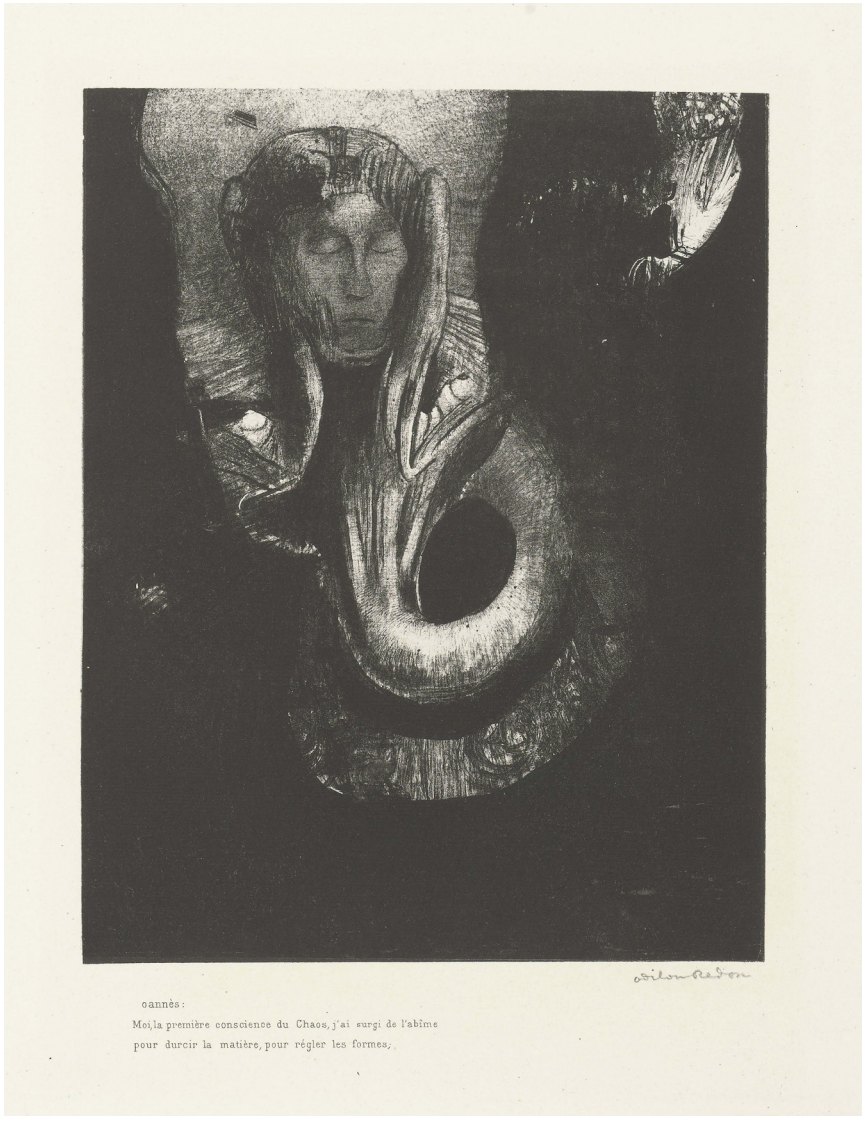

fig. 2
Odilon Redon, *Oannès: Moi, la première conscience du Chaos, j'ai surgi de l'abîme pour durcir la matière, pour régler les formes*, 1896. Print (lithography), 27,9 × 21,7 cm, *Seconda Esposizione Internazionale di Venezia*, 1897 "Sala Internazionale - Sala M" Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
© courtesy of Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Lautrec, Ibels and Legrand.[25] He pointed in particular to Belgium, where the art of etching had been "roused from its slumber" in the 19th century by the "highly original and highly skilled" Felicien Rops.[26] Pica continued, claiming "A truly deplorable flaw in this section is the utter lack of works that represent the entrancing art of the burin", and arguing that it should include Costantin Meunier's lithographs and James Ensor's "bizarre, caustic" etchings, as well as work by François Maréchal and Armande Rassenfosse.[27] Also missing was the Swedish artist Anders Zorn and the most original representatives of the noble art of printmaking in Germany: Max Klinger and Joseph Sattler.[28]

Pica's comments reveal his predilection for French, Dutch, and Belgian prints, which can also be seen in a series of articles he penned, starting in 1896, for a special section of *Emporium: Attraverso gli albi e le cartelle (Sensazioni d'Arte)* and later *Taccuino dell'amatore di stampe*. Centered on Symbolism and the graphic arts, in the dark, decadent vein of "macabre artists", they introduced readers to Odilon Redon, Fernand Khnopff, Henry De Groux and Felicien Rops; this is in keeping with an overall interest in Belgian modern art that turns up throughout Pica's work, from his first infatuations with Symbolist literature, to prints, to painting.[29] On other occasions, he examined posters, children's books, or Dutch etchings from the pages of *Il Marzocco*.[30] It was precisely due to Pica's efforts to promote and publicise them that the work of many Symbolist painters and printmakers reached Italian artists and the general public.

In 1897, Pica's dream of a room presenting the very latest in European graphic art had not yet come true, but from his notes one can already guess who would be featured in the *bianco e nero* sections in years to come. Pica's many letters to Fradeletto, echoes of which can be found in his articles for *Emporium*, also indicated those artists he would work to promote.[31]

Vittorio Pica and the International *Bianco e Nero* Rooms: Strategy and Organisation

In November 1898, Vittorio Pica wrote to Antonio Fradeletto, "I do hope you will devote a couple of large rooms to the fascinating art of *bianco e nero*, entrusting their arrangement to a person with special expertise as you did the first time, and as you would be wrong not to do the second time".[32]

25
Pica, *L'arte europea a Venezia*, 188-189.

26
Pica, *L'arte mondiale alla IV Esposizione di Venezia*, 167.

27
Its "risvegliatore" was the "originalissimo e sapientissimo" Felicien Rops. "Davvero deplorevole in questa sezione è la completa mancanza d'opere che rappresentino la seducente arte del bulino", Pica, *L'arte mondiale a Venezia*, 186.

28
Pica, *L'arte mondiale a Venezia*, 120.

29
Regarding Pica's relationship with Belgian and French Symbolism and its offshoots in Italy, see the studies by Lacagnina, "Vittorio Pica, Art Critic and Amateur d'estampes", and by Laura Fanti, "La gravure symboliste belge dans les revues et expositions italiennes (1895-1911)", in Fanti, Marini eds., *Noir & Blanc*, 15-36. See also Margherita Cavenago, "Au-delà des limites géopolitiques et linguistiques: la critique francophone de Vittorio Pica (1862-1930)", in Marie Gispert, Catherine Méneux, eds., *Critique(s) d'art: nouveaux corpus, nouvelles méthodes* (Paris: HiCSA, 2019), 157-187.

30
Vittorio Pica, "Attraverso gli albi e le cartelle: (Sensazioni d'arte), I. Redon-Rops-De Groux-Goya", *Emporium* 3, no. 14 (1896): 123-140; Vittorio Pica, "L'arte mondiale a Venezia, III: I pittori e gli acquafortisti Olandesi", in *Il Marzocco* 2, no. 17 (May 30, 1897); see also the column "Attraverso gli albi e le cartelle. (Sensazioni d'arte)" in various issues of *Emporium* from 1896 to 1898.

31
Vittorio Pica's efforts to promote printmaking in *Emporium* have been studied by Giorgio Marini: see the studies cited above in footnote 9.

32
"Spero poi bene che consacrerete un paio di sale grandi alla così affascinate arte del bianco e nero, affidandone l'ordinamento a una persona di speciale competenza come faceste il primo anno e come aveste il torto di non fare il secondo anno", letter from Pica to Fradeletto, November 4, 1898, Venice, ASAC, *Carte Vittorio Pica*. This letter is reprinted in Zatti, "Le prime Biennali veneziane", 113.

While the international sections were overseen at the time by a foreign commissioner, after Zilcken no one had been appointed to handle the printmaking sections, and this may have been due to the scant critical attention that this art received in Italy; it thus comes as no surprise that in these early years, the *bianco e nero* rooms seemed to be an unclaimed territory where conventional channels could be bypassed in order to debate and dialogue with new ideas. Pica, who hoped that the Biennale would become more open to less "official" figures, offered his input as a critical conscience,[33] as the very person with the "special expertise" to ensure that "in every biennial exhibition, one or two small rooms should contain a selection of works by the greatest modern masters" of *bianco e nero*. The critic embarked on a dogged, ongoing campaign to promote printmakers, both as a writer on the subject in the pages of *Attraverso gli albi e le cartelle* and *Emporium*, and as an advisor to the Biennale, yielding an intricate web of connections and echoes between the articles and the invitations that sometimes makes it difficult to establish which came first.[34] We can see this from the many suggestions that he made in his correspondence with Fradeletto, whether or not they came to fruition:

> In addition to the Dutch, who are the most impressive of all, you should not forget the Spaniard Vierge, the Swede Zorn, the Norwegian Munch, the Dutchman Toorop (these two should also be invited as painters), the Belgians Maréchal, Rassenfosse and De Groux (Constantin Meunier's drawings are also beautiful, and have been turned into lithographs I believe by his nephew), the Frenchmen Fantin-Latour, Braquemond, Legros, Redon, Steilen, Willette, Legrand, Toulouse-Lautrec, etc. I take the liberty of reminding you of these names because with all you have to think about, as the true force behind this amazing periodic art exhibition, some might accidentally slip your mind, and that would be too bad. As for Italian etchers of talent, aside from Signorini, Conconi, Turletti, Grubicy, the young Fortuny and Martini, I don't know who to suggest.[35]

In the months leading up to the opening he reminds Fradeletto:

> Two outstanding Belgian etchers are Rassenfosse and, above all, Maréchal: if you think it is a good idea and we are still in time, I could write to both. Just as I could perhaps obtain some paintings and etchings from Edouard Munch, the Norwegian painter who is the talk of Berlin and Paris. And has the Dutch artist Toorop been invited? People wrote to me from Vienna a few months ago that the collection of etchings by Zorn shown in the Secessionists' show was remarkable, and I can believe it, because I have had the opportunity to see several of this valiant Swede's beautiful etchings first-hand. I think you would have no trouble obtaining this collection for the show in Venice [...] Have you thought about doing an entire section of etchings, lithographs, colour lithographs and so forth? [...]

33 Leo Lecci, "Un *tambourineur* per la Biennale: Vittorio Pica e gli artisti francesi alle prime esposizioni internazionali di Venezia (1895-1914)", in Lacagnina, *Vittorio Pica*, 174. See also Zatti, "Le prime Biennali veneziane".

34 Marini, "*Emporium*, le Biennali di Venezia e l'incisione", 254-255.

35 "Oltre agli Olandesi, mirabili fra tutti, ed ai Tedeschi, non dimenticate lo spagnolo Vierge, lo svedese Zorn, il norvegese Munch, l'olandese Toorop (questi due andrebbero invitati anche come pittori), i belgi Maréchal, Rassenfosse e De Groux (bellissimi anche i disegni, litografati credo dal nipote, di Constantin Meunier), i francesi Fantin–Latour, Braquemond, Legros, Redon, Steilen, Willette, Legrand, Toulouse-Lautrec ecc. Mi permetto di ricordarvi questi nomi, perché nella quantità di cose a cui dovete pensare voi, che siete la vera anima di codesta mirabile periodica mostra d'arte, qualcuno potrebbe involontariamente sfuggirvene e sarebbe male. Di acquafortisti italiani di qualche valore, oltre il Signorini, il Conconi, il Turletti, il Grubicy, i giovani Fortuny e Martini non saprei chi ricordarvi", letter from Pica to Fradeletto, November 4, 1898, Venice, ASAC, *Carte Vittorio Pica*.

> 2nd P.S. For Munch, Meréchal, and Rassenfosse you can ask our friend Bezzi, to whom I showed an interesting collection of their etchings when he was in Naples just now.[36]

In 1899, at the third Biennale, the print section was housed in the *Sala U-Veranda*, though it was not yet called *bianco e nero*, as it would be in the iteration that followed.[37] The considerable number of Dutch etchers in preceding exhibitions had been reduced, to Pica's "great chagrin", to just Zilcken and Bauer.[38] The only Belgian was Albert Baertsoen, with prints of the Zeeland landscape [fig. 3]. The French artist Jean-François Raffaëlli showed twenty-five colour drypoints and was presented by Pica as one of the few truly new and interesting artists, who always ventured "bold innovations, aimed at capturing more clearly the manifold spectacles that the city and countryside offer the eyes of this keen observer".[39] There were also the Germans

fig. 3
Albert Baertsoen, *Vieux pont*, 1897. Etching / drypoint, 22 × 25,8 cm. *Terza Esposizione Internazionale di Venezia*, 1899 "Sala internazionale - Sala U" Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam © courtesy of Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

36
"Due acquafortisti belgi valorosissimi sono il Rassenfosse e specialmente il Maréchal: ad entrambi, se voi credete e se si è ancora in tempo, potrei scrivere io. Come forse potrei ottenere qualche quadro e qualche acquaforte da Edouard Munch, il pittore norvegese tanto discusso a Berlino ed a Parigi. E l'olandese Toorop è stato invitato? Da Vienna un paio di mesi fa mi scrivevano che la collezione di acqueforti dello Zorn esposte alla mostra dei Secessionisti, era mirabile ed io ci credo di leggiero perché ho avuto occasione di avere tra le mani varie bellissime acqueforti dell'ardimentoso Svedese. Credo che vi riuscirebbe facile avere tale collezione per la mostra di Venezia [...] Avete pensato a fare tutta una sezione di acqueforti, litografie, cromolitografie ecc.?[...] 2° P.S. Del Münch, del Meréchal e del Rassenfosse potete domandare all'amico Bezzi, a cui ho mostrato un interessante collezione di loro acqueforti, ora che è stato a Napoli", letter from Pica to Fradeletto, March 28, 1899, Venice, ASAC, *Carte Vittorio Pica*.

37
Terza Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia: Catalogo illustrato (April 22 - October 31, 1899), exh. cat. (Venice: Carlo Ferrari, 1899), 88-92.

38
Terza Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte, 83-92, Bauer showed twelve etchings of "Oriental" scenes; Zilcken showed a series of reproductive etchings.

39
"sempre innovazioni ardite, atte a riprodurre con maggiore evidenza gli svariati spettacoli che la città e la campagna presentano ai suoi occhi di acuto osservatore", Vittorio Pica, *L'arte mondiale a Venezia nel 1899: Numero speciale dell'Emporium* (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano di Arti Grafiche, 1899), 60.

Henrich Voegler, Richard Muller and Max Klinger, an artist with "such a powerful and tragic imagination, though he is not represented here by his most characteristic prints", Pica noted, but rather by eleven plates from his series *Dramen*.[40] The Italians Enrico Vegetti and Giuseppe Miti Zanetti presented samples of their etchings.

Pica's many suggestions to include avant-garde printmakers (such as Munch and Zorn) had been ignored and even though Klinger, Raffaëlli, Baertsoen, as well as a few Dutch artists were displayed, their presence was not enough to assuage the critic's desire for the Biennale to present a significant, cosmopolitan overview of the latest in graphic art.[41] Not coincidentally, in a note in the issue of *Emporium* devoted to the exhibition, he expressed his wishes for the next *bianco e nero* section: "Ensor's etchings and De Groux's lithographs are of the greatest originality and I hope to find them alongside those of Rassenfosse, Maréchal, Donnay, and Berchmans at the Venetian exhibition of 1901, in a separate room bringing together all the most interesting printmakers of our time".[42] In June 1899, Pica again asked Fradeletto, "And what can you tell me about the etching room? Have you been considering the names I suggested to you?".[43] The question of prints also had to be settled in the regulations, so he proposed adding the words "lithographs, colour lithographs, and intaglio on wood and steel" to the second paragraph of article I.[44] As one can see from the correspondence, Pica never received an actual appointment to organise the section of prints. His only assignment at the time was to help select works by French artists. Hence, if some of the artists he suggested to Fradeletto were left out, it was probably because Pica was only an "advisor" to the Biennale and would remain so until 1912. In one of Pica's many letters to Fradeletto, he proposed names, urging that new approaches be explored; he also contacted artists and arranged the acquisition of several works.[45] His suggestions, as we can see in the case of some of his favourite Italian and French artists, were not always accepted by the secretary general and his associates, and sometimes ran up against practical difficulties.[46] Nonetheless, Pica's proposals are the only indication of the parameters of taste being followed with regard to the graphic arts. Demonstrating his authority in the field, they made the print rooms one of the most original areas of investigation at these early Biennales.

In 1901, the fourth *Esposizione Internazionale di Venezia* included the *bianco e nero* rooms he had hoped for. This must have been no easy achievement for Pica, who put considerable effort into bringing it about. A few months before the opening, he wrote:

40
Pica, *L'arte mondiale a Venezia nel 1899*, 95.

41
Munch was included in the 1902 *bianco e nero* exhibition in Rome, but reached Venice only in 1910, with one lithograph.

42
"Le acqueforti di Ensor e le litografie di De Groux sono della più grande originalità ed io spero di trovarle insieme con quelle di Rassenfosse, Maréchal, Donnay e Berchmans alla mostra veneziana del 1901, in una sala a parte, in cui vengano convocati tutti i più interessanti incisori contemporanei", Pica, L*'arte Mondiale a Venezia nel 1899*, 67. See also Laura Fanti, "Vittorio Pica: l'incontro con l'opera di Henry de Groux e James Ensor", in Lacagnina, ed.*, L'officina internazionale*, 159-182.

43
"E della sala delle acqueforti cosa mi dite? Avete tenuto conto dei nomi da me consigliatevi?", letter from Pica to Fradeletto, June 7, 1899, Venice, ASAC, *Carte Vittorio Pica*.

44
"litografie, cromolitografie ed incisioni in legno in legno ed acciaio", letter from Pica to Fradeletto, June 7, 1899, Venice, ASAC, *Carte Vittorio Pica*.

45
As one can infer from the letters, though we have only those sent to Fradeletto and not vice versa; it is well established that the critic's papers have been scattered, see Davide Lacagnina, "Vittorio Pica *à neuf*! Un progetto di ricerca, un archivio virtuale, una raccolta di saggi", Lacagnina, *Vittorio Pica*, 16-18.

46
See Lecci, "Un *tambourineur* per la Biennale", 173-185; see also Zatti, "Le prime Biennali veneziane", 111-113.

> Dear Fradeletto, I do hope that you are not planning to suddenly give up on the exhibit of prints, which promises to be one of the finest attractions at the next Venice exhibition. I would look quite the fool, after the many letters I have written high and low, which all received a positive reply from the artists in question. Such reversals are the kind of thing one expects from the usual government and academic despots, not from you and the other members of the committee in Venice.[47]

He expressed his vexation again a few days later:

> No bitterness in my words, dear Fradeletto: I have too much affection and admiration for you, my friend, as the peerless organiser of an art exhibition that has done so much and can do so much more for our country. Some chagrin, however, at seeing such a fine dream go up in smoke, when everything made me think it was on the point of coming true: the dream of a rich, carefully selected section of modern prints, which would, in my view, have been among the finest attractions—for the most cultivated, sophisticated visitors, of course—at the next exhibition in Venice. If you have decided, at the last minute, that it must be sacrificed in homage to Whistler—a great painter who is also an amazing etcher!—then you must have had good reason and so it had to be. I will therefore take a step back and return, without any useless and unseemly recriminations, to my job as tambourineur.[48]

These fears proved groundless—the two rooms that were supposed to be allocated to Whistler never came about (the American artist was nowhere in the 1901 biennial, though the archival documents do not reveal why)— and so the section that was to be among the "finest attractions" of the Biennale was indeed presented. From an organisational standpoint, the room did not have its own commissioner, and the "many letters" Pica wrote to ensure its success suggest he was the one who first reached out to the artists, with Fradeletto only contacting them at a later point. This can be seen from the acceptance letters of Theo Van Rysselberghe and James Ensor, and subsequent correspondence with Armand Rassenfosse, Edgar Chahine and François Maréchal regarding the sale and shipment of artworks.[49]

47
"Caro Fradeletto, spero bene che non vorrai, d'un tratto, rinunciare alla mostra di stampe, che dovrebbe essere una delle maggiori attrattive della prossima esposizione di Venezia. Bella figura che ci farei io, dopo tante lettere scritte dovunque e che tutte sono state accolte dall'assenso degli artisti ai quali mi sono rivolto. Fare e disfare è cosa degna dei soliti sopracciò governativi ed accademici non già di te e degli altri componenti del comitato veneziano", letter from Pica to Fradeletto, November 22, 1900, Venice, ASAC, *Carte Vittorio Pica*. This letter is reprinted in Lecci, "Un *tambourineur* per la Biennale", 171-172.

48
"Nulla d'acerbo, mio caro Fradeletto, nelle mie parole: ho troppo affetto e troppa stima per l'amico impareggiabile organizzatore di un'esposizione d'arte che tanto bene ha fatto e tanto bene può fare ancora all'Italia nostra. Un po' d'amarezza sì, per vedere sfumare di un tratto il bel sogno, che tutto faceva credere prossimo a realizzazione, di una sezione scelta e ricca d'incisioni moderne, che doveva, a parer mio, riuscire una delle maggiori attrattive – naturalmente per la parte colta ed elevata del pubblico – della prossima mostra di Venezia. Se tu, all'ultima ora, hai creduto di doverla sacrificare in omaggio a Whistler, un gran pittore che è anche un mirabile acquafortista! - avrai avuto le tue buone ragioni per farlo e così andava fatto. Io rientro nelle file e vado, senz'altre inutili ed importune recriminazioni, a rioccupare il mio posto di *tambourineur*", letter from Pica to Fradeletto, November 30, 1900, Venice, ASAC, *Carte Vittorio Pica*. This letter is reprinted in Lecci, "Un *tambourineur* per la Biennale", 171; See also Zatti, "Le prime Biennali veneziane", 113; Zatti's article suggests however that the project fell by the wayside and was carried out only two years later.

49
Esposizione Bianco e Nero: elenco dei partecipanti, Venice ASAC, SN b.15. The folder contains only correspondence with the listed artists; one finds no other information about the organisational process.

From the catalogue, we learn that the organisers put aside two spaces for the graphic arts: the room *I Saletta Internazionale: Bianco e Nero*, which was a corridor, and the *Sala U-Veranda*.[50] The most significant group of printmakers was from Belgium. Armand Rassenfosse—a follower of Rops—showed six etchings "that certainly are not his best nor his most characteristic, except for a delightful little Salomé dancing with veils",[51] while François Maréchal was better represented by a series of drypoints of the Belgian landscape and Théo Van Rysselberghe by ten etchings of seascapes.[52] The Belgians also included Henri Meunier, with *The Angelus, The Night, The Dawn* and "his idealistic etching *Night and the Poet*, in which one senses a whisper of Puvis de Chavannes's austere inspiration". Fernand Khnopff, whom Pica called one of the foremost figures in the group of avant-garde artists leading the modernist movement in Belgium, showed *An Offering* and *Golden Ball*, which "are noteworthy for their exquisite grace in depicting mysterious, symbolic images of women".[53]

James Ensor, like De Groux, was among the artists who sparked Pica's enthusiasm, and one should not forget that this invitation to show his prints marked the very first of many appearances at the Biennale.[54] On the veranda, Ensor exhibited eleven etchings that drew attention for their "very original whimsy", and "particularly evocative among them are *The Cathedral* [fig. 4], *Death Pursuing the Human Horde* and *Christ's Entry into Brussels*, in which the comic and macabre are fancifully mixed with a touch of caricature and distortion, to pillory the sordid and ridiculous habits of humankind".[55] Anders Zorn contributed eight engravings of "male and female figures that almost seem", according to Pica, "to spring to life under our lingering gaze".[56] Alongside Zorn but differing in "inspiration and talent", Pica praised French-Armenian Edgar Chahine's "unique talent, which immediately earned him a place of honour among the printmakers of today". Pica singled out his series of the drypoints, arranged in two frames, of seductively elegant portraits of women, to "the main types among the lower classes, artisans, beggars, peddlers, and the Parisian army of vice".[57] Among the French artists, we once again find Raffaëlli, with two colour drypoints, and among the Germans, Friedrich Kallmorgen and Oscar Graf, as well as the Norwegian Johan Nordhagen.

The *bianco e nero* sections were a great success, as we can see from the records of public acquisitions. Starting with the 1899 Biennale, the City of Venice regularly purchased works for its Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna, as did the Ministry of Public Education at a later point for the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome. The Ca' Pesaro museum thus came to hold one of the

50
Quarta Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia: Catalogo illustrato (April 22 - October 31, 1901), exh. cat. (Venice: Giardini di Castello), 82-89, 166-170.

51
Pica, *L'arte mondiale alla IV*, 167; "non certo delle sue migliori né delle sue più caratteristiche, eccezion fatta per la deliziosa figurina di *Salomé* danzante tra i veli".

52
Pica, *L'arte mondiale alla IV,* 167.

53
Pica, *L'arte mondiale alla IV*, 172-173; "si raccomandano per una grazia alquanto preziosa nella figurazione d'enigmatiche immagini simboliche di donna"; See also Giuseppina Dal Canton, "Fernand Khnopff alle Biennali di Venezia 1897-1920", in Leo Lecci, Paola Valenti, eds., *Studi di storia dell'arte in ricordo di Franco Sborgi* (Genova: De Ferrari, 2018), 327-377.

54
Fanti, "Vittorio Pica", 159-182.

55
Pica, *L'arte mondiale alla IV*, 173; "fra cui in particolar modo suggestive sono *La Cattedrale, la Morte perseguitante il gregge umano e Entrata di Cristo a Bruxelles*, nelle quali così fantasticamente il comico ed il macabro si mescolano ad un deformatore senso caricaturale per mettere alla gogna le laidezze e le ridicolaggini dell'umanità".

56
"figure di uomini e di donne, che a noi sembra proprio di sentir vivere sotto l'insistenza dei nostri sguardi", Pica, *L'arte mondiale alla IV*, 175.

57
"più significativi umili, artigiani, mendicanti, venditori ambulanti, e del parigino esercito del vizio", Pica, *L'arte mondiale alla IV*, 173.

fig. 4
James Ensor, *La Cathédrale*, 1886. Etching, 31,9 x 25 cm. *Quarta Esposizione Internazionale di Venezia*, 1901 "Sala U -Veranda"
Civica Raccolta delle Stampe Achille Bertarelli, Castello Sforzesco, Milano.
© courtesy of Civica Raccolta delle Stampe Achille Bertarelli, Castello Sforzesco, Milano

world's most significant collections of modern graphic art, with a predominance of international works, due in part to Vittorio Pica's presence on the acquisitions panel. Among the works that were purchased from these Biennales, one should note Klinger's *Dramen* and etchings by Whistler, Bauer, Zilcken, Baertsoen, Ensor, Chahine, Zorn, Van Rysselberghe, Maréchal and Meunier.[58]

This iteration also included a small group of Italians, although their juxtaposition "with such powerful, original masters of *bianco e nero* could not help but be to the disadvantage of the Italian etchers, especially because their numbers did not include Fattori, Conconi or Grubicy".[59] Yet Pica had words of praise and encouragement for Emanuele Brugnoli, with his *Scene Veneziane*; for Giuseppe Miti Zanetti, with a series of etchings of Venetian alleyways and canals; Cesare Laurenti, with a portrait; Edoardo De Albertis, with four etchings in one frame; Telemaco

58
Registri delle vendite 1895-1901, Venice, ASAC. Pica was on the acquisition panel along with Ojetti, Pisa and Levi; see Flavia Scotton, ed., *I disegni e le stampe: Catalogo generale, Ca' Pesaro, Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna* (Venice: Marsilio, 2002), 7-8. Acquisition policies regarding Belgian and Dutch prints in the early Biennales have been examined by Giorgio Marini in "Presenze nordiche. Politiche espositive e acquisizioni pubbliche di stampe beghe e olandesi in Italia all'alba del Novecento", in *Noir & Blanc*, 51-77.

59
"Con simili possenti ed originali maestri del *bianco* e *nero* non può certo non risultare dannoso al gruppo di acquafortisti italiani, tanto più che tra essi non ritroviamo né Fattori né il Conconi, né il Grubicy", Pica, *L'arte mondiale alla IV*, 177.

Signorini, with etchings of Florence; and Francesco Vitalini, with colour prints".[60] In this regard, Pica observed:

> This return to vogue of printmaking, with the ever more promising revitalisation and ever growing dissemination of the art, should be helped along in every way, especially in Italy, where only in recent years have foreign models found a few courageous imitators, who struggle with still limited success against the sceptical indifference of an apathetic public, which has forgotten our country's glorious artistic traditions.[61]

The direct encounter with international graphic art had piqued a new curiosity about etching among Italian artists. For instance, Cesare Laurenti and Emanuele Brugnoli, who built upon the legacy of Whistler, used the technique to explore the theme of Venice.[62] The city became the first hub of the Etching Revival in Italy, where the American artist's presence from the autumn of 1879 to the winter of 1880 played a fundamental role in helping Venetian artists rediscover the various forms of intaglio.[63] In 1899, Giuseppe Miti Zanetti became one of the first Italians to exhibit a series of prints at the Biennale, with views of Venetian alleyways that were also inspired by the work of Whistler and Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo.[64] Other examples include Francesco Vitalini, who showed an affinity with the Dutch etchings and with Grubicy's monotypes, or Luigi Conconi, whose prints seem to parallel coeval ones by Klinger.[65]

At the turn of the century, the substantial contributions of Belgian and Dutch artists to the Biennale—along with the influence of Whistler—not only offered a touchstone, but proved essential to reawakening interest in the graphic arts among Italians.

"The Successful Example of Venice": The Reception and Exhibition of Prints in the Italian Art World after 1901

The "successful example of Venice" was followed by the *Prima Esposizione Internazionale del Bianco e Nero*, organised by the *Società degli Amatori e Cultori* in Rome; this was the first event exclusively focused on the graphic arts, and would remain such for at least a decade, until the *Esposizione Internazionale di Bianco*

60
Quarta Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte, 166-170.

61
"Tale ritorno di favore verso la stampa artistica e tale sempre più interessante rinnovazione e sempre crescente divulgazione di essa meritano di essere aiutate in tutti i modi, specie in Italia, dove soltanto da qualche anno gli esempi stranieri trovano qualche coraggioso imitatore, lottante, con successo ancora mediocre, contro l'indifferenza scettica del nostro pubblico indolente e dimentico delle patrie gloriose tradizioni d'arte". Pica, *L'arte mondiale alla IV*, 177.

62
Regarding the prints of Emanuele Brugnoli and Cesare Laurenti, see Alessia Del Bianco, "La rinascita dell'acquaforte a Venezia", in Sergio Marinelli, ed., *Aldèbaran III: Storia dell'arte* (Verona: Scripta, 2015), 217-242; Del Bianco, "Nota per Cesare Laurenti Incisore" in Sergio Marinelli, ed., *Aldèbaran V: Storia dell'arte* (Verona: Scripta, 2019), 179-196.

63
See Giorgio Marini, Maria Malni Pascoletti, Cristina Bragaglia Venuti, eds., *Una novella patria dello spirito: Firenze e gli artisti delle venezie nel primo Novecento - Opere dal Gabinetto dei disegni e delle stampe degli Uffizi* (Gorizia: Fondazione Coronini Cronberg, 2013); Del Bianco, "La rinascita dell'acquaforte a Venezia". Regarding Whistler in Venice see Margaret F. MacDonald, *Palaces in the Night. Whistler in Venice* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries 2001) and Alastair Grieve, *Whistler's Venice* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2000).

64
Giovanni Nascimbeni, "Artisti contemporanei: Giuseppe Miti Zanetti", *Emporium* 50, no. 298 (1919): 188-198.

65
The two works I am referring to here are Klinger's frontispiece for *Neuen Tannhäuser* (1885) and Luigi Conconi's *L'onda* (1896), see Giorgio Marini and Francesco Parisi, eds., *I Futuristi e l'Incisione: Il segno dell'Avanguardia* (February 23 - April 15, 2018), exh. cat. (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2016), 33.

e Nero in Florence in 1914.[66] The show in Rome, held in April and May of 1902, presented a vast collection of works on paper by French, Belgian, Dutch, Spanish, British, Scandinavian, Swiss, American and Russian artists for the first time, with a selection of cutting-edge prints, drawings, books and illustrations. The room included works, to list just a few names, by Klinger, Ensor, Toulouse-Lautrec, Vallotton, Khnopff, Chahine, Munch, Zorn and Rassenfosse. The Italians, once again, were put at a disadvantage, since their prints did not yet reflect the latest trends of the time—an observation that Pica had already made at the 1901 Biennale—and were simply reproductive works from the Regia Calcografia in Rome.[67]

At the 1903 Biennale, part of *Sala Internazionale H* and the small room next to the roofless corridor were put aside for the *Mostra di Bianco e Nero*.[68] These spaces once again housed a considerable number of etchings by Chahine, Baertsoen, Storm van's Gravesande, and Khnopff; the Italians included Fattori, Grubicy and Vitalini. It was a significant iteration, which showed continuity in its ideas and its selection of artists, yet suffered from comparison with the sizable Roman exhibition.[69] Though the show's success was less than clear, even in terms of its impact on Italian artists, in 1904 Francesco Vitalini published *L'incisione su Metallo*.[70] This book, for which Pica wrote a foreword providing a broad overview of contemporary European and American graphic art, was meant to serve as an initial guide to the new currents of theory and practice in intaglio, "a technical exploration of etching" spurred by artists keen to discover this overlooked branch of art; it is reminiscent of what Maxime Lalanne had already done in France with his *Traité de la gravure à l'eau-forte*.[71]

Though the *bianco e nero* rooms may not yet have constituted an established exhibition model, they spread familiarity with the most interesting work being done in the field; up until 1914—the last iteration before World War I—the Biennales were an excellent opportunity for visitors to learn more about international printmaking. The spaces allocated to the graphic arts gradually grew in prominence, becoming unmissable appointments every two years, due in part to Pica's constant proposals. The critic took every opportunity to remind Fradeletto that "There is so much still to be done with prints. As always, I am at your disposal".[72] A sampling of artists exhibiting at the Biennales from 1905 to 1914—necessarily a limited one, in this context—includes French, Belgian, Dutch, German, British and Scandinavian printmakers; it shows continuity in the selection criteria, with a slant that reflects Pica's suggestions for the first shows, revealing that in the absence of a commissioner for that room, the Neapolitan critic remained the most authoritative voice in the field. In this period and parallel to it, Pica intensified his efforts to popularise the medium in the pages of *Emporium*. A quick sampling of the various articles

66
See the studies cited in footnote no. 3.

67
Catalogo della Prima esposizione internazionale di Bianco e Nero: Roma, aprile-maggio 1902, Società degli amatori e cultori di belle arti in Roma (Rome, 1902).

68
Quinta Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia: Catalogo illustrato (April 22 - October 31, 1903), exh. cat. (Venice: Giardini di Castello, 1903), 59.

69
"I would advise the administration to do away with it in years to come [...] All the things that seem best here already appeared at the exhibition in Rome", in Mazzini Beduschi, ed., *Arte contemporanea* (Venice: Rosen, 1903), 249-250.

70
Francesco Vitalini, *L'incisione su Metallo* (Rome: Danesi, 1904).

71
Maxime Lalanne, *Traité de la gravure à l'eau-forte: Texte et planches* (Paris: Cadart et Luquet Editeurs, 1866).

72
"Quanto ci sarebbe da fare in fatto di stampe. Io sono come sempre a tua disposizione", letter from Pica to Fradeletto, August 29, 1906, Venice, ASAC, *Carte Vittorio Pica*.

reveals his opinion on "outstanding artists" like Ensor and Münch. Still others laud Dutch and Belgian printmaker, and the *Artisti contemporanei* section devotes attention to Zorn, Chahine, Zilcken, Raffaëlli, Khnopff, Toorop and Brangwyn.[73]

In 1905 we once again find prints by Baertsoen, Rassenfosse and Rops and a collection of Dutch prints collected and curated by Zilcken: a room quite reminiscent of the first successful one in 1895. The "curious and very original artist" Toorop also exhibited ten drypoints, Felix Vallotton presented woodcuts, and the Swedish artist Zorn had a collection of etchings.[74] The shows that followed showed a growing attention toward the graphic arts: in 1907 the British room housed a small collection of prints, including the section's commissioner, Frank Brangwyn's etchings and Joseph Pennell's prints of Toledo and London, while the international room included Chahine's *Impressions d'Italie*.[75] Between 1909 and 1910, international participation grew, with over a hundred prints by Besnard, Charlet, De Groux, Rops, Goff, Haden, Helleu, Israëls, Klinger, Kollwitz, Liebermann, Raffaëlli and Rodin, and a series of lithographs by Whistler, Munch, Nolde and Pechstein.[76] This expansion is perhaps most apparent in the extensive selection of prints in the new Belgian pavilion, an initiative that pleased Pica. He wrote to Fradeletto, "I am delighted that, as Fierens-Gevaert tells me, you have decided to devote more space this year to *bianco e nero* from Belgium, and I hope you will do the same for the other nations".[77] As a matter of fact, starting with this iteration, there were numerous prints not only in the Belgian pavilion but also in the newly created pavilions of Germany, Hungary and Great Britain, the latter having a section devoted to etchings, drawings and prints. In 1910, the Belgian pavilion displayed over sixty prints while the *Société des peintres-graveurs français* offered a collection of French graphics. Two years later, in 1912, a room was set aside for the lithographs from the Senefelder Club of London, in which both Brangwyn and Pennell showed their work. During this period, a series of solo exhibitions were organised: Zorn had one in 1909, the following year Pennell's etchings *Paesi Vecchi e Paesi Nuovi* were showcased, and in 1912 it was Chahine's turn.

The *bianco e nero* rooms at the early Biennales struggled to find a foothold, yet their early presence in first two decades of the 20th century eventually pried open space for a consistent, large graphics display in later years. One should keep in mind that at the same time, several *bianco e nero* exhibits were presented at the *Famiglia Artistica* in Milan, at the *Società degli Amatori e Cultori* in Rome—where the selection of artists seems to echo the canons of taste established by Pica—and, in 1913, at the first exhibition of the Roman Secession, which had sections for Italian and international graphic arts.[78] The spread of international "models" of printmak-

73
Marini, "L'incisione Europea dalle pagine di Emporium", 255-265. See for instance Vittorio Pica, "Artisti contemporanei: Fernand Khnopff", *Emporium* 16, no. 93 (1902): 172-188; Pica, "Artisti contemporanei: Jean-François Raffaëlli", *Emporium* 15, no. 88 (1902): 244-260; Pica, "Arte contemporanea: acquafortisti olandesi", *Emporium* 18, no 103 (1903): 2-18; Pica, "Artisti contemporanei: Anders Zorn", *Emporium* 22, no. 129, (1905):166-187; and Pica, "Artisti contemporanei: Edgar Chahine", *Emporium* 22, 128 (1905): 85-108.

74
Sesta Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia: Catalogo illustrato (April 22 - October 31, 1905), exh. cat. (Venice: Carlo Ferrari, 1905), 38-63.

75
Settima Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia: Catalogo illustrato (April 22 - October 31, 1907), exh. cat. (Venice: Carlo Ferrari, 1907), 70.

76
See the catalogues *Ottava Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia: Catalogo illustrato* (April 22 - October 31, 1909), exh. cat. (Venice: Carlo Ferrari, 1909); *Nona Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia: Catalogo illustrato* (April 22 - October 31, 1910), exh. cat. (Venice: Carlo Ferrari, 1910).

77
"Sono lieto che, secondo quanto mi annunzia Fierens-Gevaert, ti sia deciso a dare un maggiore spazio, quest'anno, al *bianco e nero* del Belgio e spero che farai lo stesso per le altre nazioni", letter from Pica to Fradeletto, October 4, 1908, Venice, ASAC, *Carte Vittorio Pica*.

78
For a look at Italian exhibitions devoted to the graphic arts in the early 20th century see Emanuele Bardazzi, *La Mostra del Bianco e Nero a Pistoia del 1913 e la rinascita dell'Incisione in Italia nel primo Novecento in Cultura figurativa tra le due guerre, Pistoia e la situazione italiana*, Carlo Sisi, ed., (Florence: IRRSAE, 1998), 31-52.

fig. 5
Lino Selvatico, *Signora del Manicotto*, 1910
drypoint, 502 x 347 mm,
Civica Raccolta delle Stampe Achille Bertarelli, Castello Sforzesco, Milano

fig. 6
Edgard Chahine, *Mademoiselle Lily*, 1905. Drypoint, 57,8 x 42,5 cm. *Quarta Esposizione Internazionale di Venezia*, 1905 "Sala internazionale - Sala XVII".
Civica Raccolta delle Stampe Achille Bertarelli, Castello Sforzesco, Milano

ing through exhibitions and publications[79] had encouraged Italian artists not only to rediscover the value of these techniques, but over the years helped build an early-20th-century graphic culture in Italy that, in relatively recent times, has attracted considerable interest from scholars.[80]

One example of this influence, among many, can be found in the Italian artist's references to Symbolist graphics. In the late 1880s Gaetano Previati made a series of works on paper inspired by the tales of Edgar Allan Poe; critics have noted their affinity with the work of Fantin-Latour, Klinger, Rops, Redon and other Symbolists, most of whom the artist was familiar with by that time.[81] Previati, after all, had his own room at the 1901 Biennale, with a large group of drawings including his *Via Crucis* series and the *Racconti* of Poe. Symbolist prints by Redon, Rops, Khnopff, Toorop and Ensor also served as a model for Alberto Martini.[82] He, too, tapped into Poe's popularity in Italy, making a famous series of illustrations for a collection of the author's stories. Martini brought both together in his drawing series *Conversazione di Eiros e Charmion* and *Hop Frog*. Pica favored the artist's innovations and thus displayed his work at the 1897 Biennale.

Additional evidence of this international dialogue, during the brief span from 1907 to 1910, can be found in the work of Umberto Boccioni and of Luigi Russolo, and their affinity with Belgian and French Symbolist graphics.[83] Or one might consider Pica's 1907 article *L'Italia nelle stampe dei moderni incisori stranieri*, an overview of "the etchings and lithographs that Italy has inspired in many of the greatest foreign printmakers of today".[84] They included analyses of prints by Whistler, Chahine, Graf and Zilcken, who were already regular exhibitors at the Biennale; nor should one overlook the powerful etchings by Brangwyn, which influenced an entire generation of artists. Roberto Papini, in an overview of the Florentine exhibition of 1914 for *Emporium*, identified Whistler and Brangwyn as the two landmark figures in etching from whom the entire concept of the contemporary landscape print had evolved, inspiring private, romantic scenes on the one hand and epic, dramatic vistas on the other.[85] These formal influences fundamentally shaped the development of a landscape and cityscape genre of etchings in Italy. To cite the handful of Italians in these Biennales, and a few other names, one should note the work by Francesco Vitalini, Bruno Croatto, Carlo Casanova, Giuseppe Graziosi, Fabio Mauroner, Guido Balsamo Stella, Umberto Moggioli, Benvenuto Disertori and

79
In this regard see Nicole Mocchi, "Canali di diffusione del simbolismo internazionale in Italia: esposizioni ed editoria d'arte tra 1890 e 1910", in *Stati d'animo. Arte e psiche tra Previati e Boccioni* (March 3 – June 10, 2018), exh. cat. (Ferrara: Ferrara Arte 2018), 292-305.

80
These studies focus in particular on Veneto and Tuscany; see Marini, Bragaglia, Venuti, eds., *Una Novella patria dello Spirito and Bardazzi*, "La civiltà delle riviste", 55-102; Alessia Del Bianco, "Incisori Italiani alle Biennali veneziane di Vittorio Pica, 1920-1926", in Giuseppina Dal Canton and Babet Trevisan, eds., *Quaderni della Donazione Eugenio Da Venezia* no. 23 (Venice: 2020), 217-235.

81
Flavio Fergonzi, "Gaetano Previati disegnatore", in Fernando Mazzocca, ed., *Gaetano Previati 1852-1920. Un protagonista del simbolismo europeo,* exh. cat. (Milano: Electa 1999), 76-83. See also Alessandro Botta "Il fantasma sorge immediato e potente. I disegni di Gaetano Previati per i Racconti di Edgar Allan Poe: genesi e fonti", *Saggi e Memorie di storia dell'arte*, no. 41 (2017): 194-221.

82
Alessandro Botta, *Illustrazioni incredibili. Alberto Martini e i racconti di Edgar Allan Poe* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2017).

83
Alessandro Botta, "Fonti visive per luigi Russolo Incisore, 1908-1910", *Ricche Miniere,* no. 3 (2015): 105-122 and Marini, Parisi, *I Futuristi e l'Incisione*, 37, 42, 47.

84
"le acqueforti e le litografie che l'Italia ha suggerito a parecchi dei maggiori incisori stranieri dell'ora attuale"; Vittorio Pica, "L'Italia nelle stampe dei moderni incisori stranieri", *Emporium* 25, no. 147 (1917): 200-219. See also Marini, "Emporium, le Biennali di Venezia e l'incisione", 258.

85
Roberto Papini, "L'incisione moderna alla I Esposizione di Bianco e Nero di Firenze", *Emporium* 50, no. 238 (1914): 264-279, 268-269; See also Bardazzi, "La civiltà delle riviste e lo sviluppo della grafica", 61.

the many prints coming out of Tuscany, as well as Lino Selvatico's [fig. 5] elegant drypoint portraits, influenced by Chahine [fig. 6] and Paul César Helleu.[86]

This progressive advancement of the graphic arts—concretely demonstrated by the foundation of the first two etching schools in Florence and Venice in 1912[87]—can also be seen in a letter from Ojetti to Fradeletto that mentions an *Associazione Internazionale per il Bianco e Nero*, which he hoped to launch at the Biennale.

> In London, Pennell told me that he, Zilcken, and others were planning to found an International Association of Black and White, and asked me to inquire whether you would allow this [illegible] association to make its Italian debut with three rooms in Venice in 1914.[88]

Though it was never carried out, the very existence of this plan is significant, showing the desire to create an international mechanism to receive and relay contemporary developments in European graphic art. In 1914, the Biennale instead presented, in addition to the usual international artists, an exhibition organised by the *Corporazione Italiana degli Xilografi*.[89] In the same year, the *Prima Esposizione Internazionale di Bianco e Nero* in Florence successfully brought together over a thousand Italian and international prints and drawings, striving to offer a more comprehensive vision of contemporary graphic art.[90] The Florentine exhibition marked the culmination of a rich period of dialogue between different visual cultures that had begun more than a decade before, in the *bianco e nero* section in Venice. In the years separating the 1901 Biennale from the 1914 show in Florence, these rooms provided an important opportunity for dialogue and discovery that aided the emergence of contemporary printmaking in Italy.

86
Giorgio Marini, "Il ritratto nell'incisione del primo Novecento", in Sergio Marinelli, ed., *Il ritratto nel Veneto, 1866-1945* (Verona: Banco popolare di Verona e Novara, 2005), 157-170 and the studies cited above in note 74. See also Sergio Marinelli, "Per un'altra mostra su Lino Selvatico", in Cristiano Sant, ed., *Lino Selvatico. Una seconda Belle Epoque* (May 14 – July 31, 2016), exh. cat. (Milano: LSWR GROUP 2016), 30-35.

87
Regarding the foundation of etching schools, see Del Bianco, "La cattedra d'incisione".

88
"Pennell a Londra mi ha narrato che con Zilcken e con altri stanno pensando a un'Associazione Interazionale di Bianco e Nero, e mi ha pregato di chiederti se tu accetteresti che la prima prova in Italia questa [illegible] associazione la facesse a Venezia nel 1914 in tre sale", letter from Ojetti to Fradeletto, November 10, 1912, Venice, ASAC, *Carte Antonio Fradeletto.*

89
Giuseppe Virelli, "Ettore Cozzani e la Corporazione Italiana degli xilografi", in *Ettore Cozzani: arte e letteratura* (Lugano, AGORÀ & CO., 2020), 21-56.

90
Catalogo della I Esposizione Internazionale di bianco e nero (May 10 - June 20, 1914), exh. cat. (Florence: Spinelli, 1914); the exhibition is examined at length in Rossella Campana, ed., *Il colore dell'ombra: Dalla mostra internazionale di Bianco e Nero: Acquisti per le Gallerie* (Florence: Sillabe, 2014).

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Maeve Coudrelle

The Imprint of Hemispheric Exchange: The Bienal Americana de Grabado, 1963-1970

Abstract

Throughout the 1960s, Santiago, Chile hosted the Bienal Americana de Grabado (American Print Biennial), a recurring Pan-American printmaking exhibition that set the stage for a regional boom in graphic arts biennials. This article draws on archival research to contextualise the Santiago Bienal in relation to other major exhibitions in the region, including the Bienal de São Paulo (Brazil), the Bienal Americana de Arte (Argentina), and the Bienal de Arte Coltejer (Colombia), analysing its structure, audiences and objectives through a comparative lens, and exploring its unique contributions to the "second wave" of biennials in the Global South. Using the device of selection committees to engage influential institutions, curators and artists from across the Americas, and bringing a wide variety of techniques and styles into conversation, the Santiago Bienal sought to foster hemispheric cooperation amidst the Cold War period. Its organisers resisted binary alliances and geopolitical power imbalances in favour of a horizontal Pan-American network of exchange. Drawing on printmaking's affordability and accessibility, the biennial promoted a rhetoric of collaboration and generosity, while also foregrounding Latin American contributions and new experiments in the medium.

Keywords

Bienal Americana de Grabado, Printmaking, Biennials, Chile, Latin America

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The Imprint of Hemispheric Exchange: The Bienal Americana de Grabado, 1963-1970

Maeve Coudrelle

Beginning in the 1960s, Latin America experienced a regional surge in print-focused biennials, which seminal critic Marta Traba links to a concurrent "boom" in drawing and the graphic arts.[1] The first of these biennials, the Bienal Americana de Grabado (American Print Biennial) took place from 1963 through 1970 in Santiago, Chile. Hemispheric in focus, the exhibition was held at the Universidad de Chile's Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (MAC), and later the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (MNBA). It was subsequently followed by the Bienal Internacional de Grabado in Buenos Aires, Argentina (1968-1972), the Bienal Americana de Artes Gráficas in Cali, Colombia (1970-1986) and the Bienal de San Juan del Grabado Latinoamericano (1970-2001) in San Juan, Puerto Rico.[2] With a purview that included North, Central and South American countries as well as the Caribbean, the Santiago Bienal wove a network of collaboration across the continent, strategically engaging influential critics, curators and institutions. This article explores its role in the "second wave" of biennials in the Global South,[3] contextualising it in relation to other contemporaneous exhibitions in the region, notably the Bienal de São Paulo in Brazil (est. 1951), the Bienal Americana de Arte in Córdoba, Argentina (1962-1966) and the Bienal de Arte Coltejer in Medellín, Colombia (1968-1972, 1981). I argue that the Bienal Americana de Grabado's network was closely intertwined with those of São Paulo, Córdoba and Medellín, and clear parallels can be made in terms of funding infrastructure and reception. Its contribution lies in its dedication to engaging the Western hemisphere in a horizontal dialogue that bridged Cold War spheres of influence, championing print's long history of promoting exchange, generosity and accessibility.

Upon the inauguration of the first Bienal Americana de Grabado at the MAC in November 1963, the museum's then-director Nemesio Antúnez wrote of

1 Marta Traba, *Dos decadas vulnerables en las artes plásticas latinoamericanas 1950-1970* (Siglo XXI Argentina, 1973).

2 The San Juan biennial was later relaunched as the Trienal Poli/Gráfica de San Juan, América Latina y el Caribe in 2004. Argentina also hosted the *Primer Certámen Latinoamericano de Xilografía República Argentina* at the Galería Plástica in Buenos Aires in 1960. Venezuela hosted the *Exposición Latinoamericana de Dibujo y Grabado* at the Universidad Central de Venezuela in Caracas in 1967. While these were not biennials, they were also large print exhibitions with a Latin American regional focus that emerged in the 1960s. Cities outside of Latin America that hosted print-focused biennials during this time included Ljubljana, Tokyo and Bradford.

3 Charles Green and Anthony Gardner, *Biennials, Triennials, and documenta: The Exhibitions that Created Contemporary Art* (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 10.

the organisers' effort to foster, "the embrace of Costa Rica with Uruguay and Cuba, Brazil with Canada and Paraguay, Colombia with Bolivia and Mexico, Canada with Peru and Cuba, Guatemala and Paraguay with Colombia, Argentina and the US with Brazil, Cuba with Peru and Nicaragua", ending with the phrase, "el grabado con

fig. 1
Catalogue cover. *III Bienal Americana de Grabado* (Santiago, Chile: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, 1968). Photograph by author.

todos y todos con Chile" (printmaking with all and all with Chile).[4] [fig. 1] Tellingly, Antúnez used the adverb "americanamente" (Americanly) to characterise the tenor of the desired encounters among participating countries. These opening remarks reflect the executive committee's enthusiastic commitment to the ideal of Pan-American cooperation. Amidst the backdrop of the Cold War, Pan-Americanism was coloured by the power struggle among the United States, the Soviet Union and their allies, which played out through cultural and economic diplomacy, as well as overt and covert intervention. The Bienal's first edition came two years after the establishment of US President John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, which aimed to foster economic cooperation and development throughout the Americas to stave off the spread of pro-communist sentiment in the wake of the Cuban Revolution. Within this complex relational field, the Bienal organisers promoted regional interconnection from a place of agency and strategic understanding, building international recognition by securing participation from acclaimed institutions and figures, while also reaching across Cold War spheres of influence by, for example, cultivating relationships with both Cuban and US entities.

The Bienal Americana de Grabado spanned three Chilean presidential administrations, with the first edition occurring under right-wing independent

4
Nemesio Antúnez, "Nace el Grabado", in *Primera Bienal Americana de Grabado* (Santiago: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Universidad de Chile, 1963), 3. Translation by the author. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this paper are my own. This statement by Antúnez is also highlighted by Valerie Fraser in her article, "Encounters in New York, Printmaking in Chile", *American Art* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 28-33.

Jorge Alessandri and the following three under Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei Montalva.[5] The Frei administration had the most direct and prolonged involvement with the Bienal, the nature of which will be addressed later in this article. The final Bienal overlapped with the election of the Marxist leader of the Unidad Popular coalition, Salvador Allende. The 1960s saw the beginnings of numerous transformations in the country, such as land redistribution, university and education reform and the nationalisation of the copper industry. In the cultural realm, the post-war economic boom brought profound changes to the arts and culture sector throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, and Chile was no exception. Several important Chilean museums, art schools and artist workshops were founded in the late 1940s and 1950s, establishing a robust institutional backdrop to support activities in the following decade. In Santiago, the Universidad de Chile inaugurated the Instituto de Extensión de Artes Plásticas (IEAP) in 1945 and the MAC in 1947, to pursue the dual goals of promoting an awareness of Chilean art abroad and educating the general public at home. Other developments included the founding of the important print-making workshop Taller 99 in 1956 and the art school at the Universidad Católica in 1959. The creation of these institutions not only fostered a thriving print scene, but also encouraged a flourishing of exhibition activities both domestically and internationally. The 1960s featured strong Chilean participation in biennials such as the Bienal de São Paulo, Bienal Americana de Arte and Biennale de Paris.[6] In Santiago, major recurring contests and exhibitions came to the fore, with the MAC holding the Compañía Refinería de Azúcar de Viña del Mar (CRAV) competition for painting, the Compañía de Aceros de Pacífico (CAP) prize for artists under 35 and the sculpture focused Bienal de Escultura. The MAC also hosted international touring exhibitions, including the well-attended *De Cézanne a Miró* exhibition in 1968, on loan from the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).[7] Within this field, the Bienal drew upon a well-established exhibition infrastructure and growing international network to organise a large-scale hemispheric event, on a par with the exhibitions that Chilean artists participated in abroad.

When Antúnez took the helm as director of the MAC in 1962, he stated his intention to transform the museum from a storehouse of artworks to a Museo Vivo, or live museum, focused on making art accessible to the Chilean people by circulating shows throughout the country and serving as a space for debate and learning for all ages.[8] In order to accomplish these goals, Antúnez sought outside financing to bolster the MAC's insufficient budget, creating the Sociedad de Amigos del Museo (Society of Friends of the Museum), a private organisation charged with raising funds, obtaining artwork donations and connecting the museum to international art networks.[9] The Sociedad was composed of supporters of the arts from private industry, including its President Flavián Levine, then-head of the Chilean steel company, CAP. Throughout the Bienal's lifespan the Sociedad's group of directors consisted of industrialists, media moguls and diplomats, among them: José Klein, owner of the Santa Bárbara mine, Germán Picó Cañas, owner of Radical

5
Jorge Alessandri, a former Finance minister (1947-50), was not affiliated with any political party. Nominated by the Liberal and Conservative parties, he served as President of Chile from 1958-64. Eduardo Frei Montalva, leader of the newly founded Christian Democrat party (PDC), served from 1964-70.

6
Of particular note is Chilean sculptor Marta Colvín's acknowledgment at the 1965 Bienal de São Paulo, where she won the top prize.

7
Milan Ivelic and Gaspar Galaz, *Chile Arte Actual* (Valparaíso: Ediciones Universitarias de Valparaíso, 1988), 98-115; Nemesio Antúnez, *Carta Aérea* (Santiago: Editorial Los Andes, 1988), 38; Nemesio Antúnez, "Una exposición para Chile", *El Mercurio*, May 23, 1968.

8
Antúnez, *Carta Aérea*, 38; Script of a dinner speech by Antúnez about his plans for the MAC, 1959, Folder 4B, "MAC", E661, Archivo Nemesio Antúnez, Santiago, Chile.

9
Script of dinner speech. *The Sociedad de Amigos del Museo* was later referred to as the *Sociedad de Arte Contemporáneo*, starting in 1968.

Party periodical *La Tercera de la Hora*, Agustín Edwards Eastman, right-wing head of *El Mercurio* newspaper, Gabriel Valdés Subercaseaux, Minister of Foreign Affairs under Frei and Sergio Larraín García-Moreno, dean of the architecture school at the Universidad Católica and later Frei's ambassador to Peru. The prominence of the figures involved and their array of affiliations indicates a high level of support for the MAC's activities across industries and the political spectrum.

In addition to supporting the MAC's larger mission, the Sociedad played a central role in the Bienal. The catalogues track the entity's progressive increase in responsibilities, naming it first as a "generous collaborator" in 1963, and later as the event's main organiser by 1970.[10] As part of this leadership role, figures from the Sociedad took part in an executive committee each year, tasked with coordinating the event's logistics alongside the host museums' staff and additional interlocutors. Antúnez served twice on the executive committees, in 1963 and 1970, playing a central role in establishing the Bienal, setting its tone and developing its connections with other institutions. As a dynamic figure who was at once a printmaker, an administrator and a diplomat, Antúnez was uniquely suited to shaping the event. From 1947 to 1952, he trained with Stanley William Hayter at Atelier 17 in Paris and New York, returning to Chile in 1953 to found Taller 99 shortly thereafter.[11] Between his stints as director of the MAC and then the MNBA, he was the Chilean cultural attaché under Frei, promoting Chilean and Latin American art in the US and forging connections with MoMA, the Brooklyn Museum of Art and the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop, each of which would eventually participate in the Bienal. Other figures involved in the executive committee include Brazilian poet and diplomat Thiago de Mello, who is credited with bringing the idea of the Bienal to Antúnez, Federico Assler, subsequent director of the MAC, mathematician and print enthusiast Emilio Ellena, and Pablo Llona Barros and Silvia Celis de Altamirano of the Sociedad.[12]

Funding for the Bienal came via the Sociedad, as well as private enterprises endowing many of the prizes for the winning artwork. Sponsors, some of which were linked to the Sociedad's directorship, included the periodicals *El Mercurio, Tercera de la Hora* and *Zig-Zag*, metals companies Minera Santa Bárbara, Armco, Madeco, Bethlehem and CAP, and the Inter-American Development Bank. Prizes were also awarded in the name of the IEAP, the University's fine arts department and the Ministry of External Relations. This mix of private and public funding indicates a certain confluence of priorities across industry, the Frei administration and arts entities during this period, with all three focused on bolstering Chile's hemispheric prominence and relationships through the device of cultural exchange.

Twenty countries participated in the Bienal over its lifetime, with the strongest showings from South and North America. Chile, as the host country, had (on average) the greatest number of works on display, followed by Brazil, the US, Argentina, Canada and Mexico. Central American countries, namely Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Panama and Nicaragua, were less well represented and did not consistently participate. Cuba and Haiti were the only Caribbean countries to take part, with Cuba contributing to three editions and Haiti to one. Archival correspondence indicates that the Bienal organisers reached out to more countries than those that ultimately signed on. Simultaneous outreach to diplomatic organisations and arts institutions led to some difficulties in securing participation due to confu-

10
Antúnez, "Nace el Grabado", in *IV Bienal Americana de Grabado* (Santiago: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1970).

11
Antúnez, *Carta Aérea*, 47.

12
Emilio Ellena, "Sobre las Bienales Americanas de Grabado, Chile, 1963-1970", in Emilio Ellena, ed., *Sobre las Bienales Americanas de Grabado, Chile, 1963-1970* (Santiago: Centro Cultural de España, 2008), 43. MAC directors throughout the life of the BAG included Antúnez (1962-1964), Oyarzún (1964-1965), Assler (1965-1968) and Alberto Pérez (1968-1970). "Directores MAC", Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Facultad de Artes, Universidad de Chile, http://mac.uchile.cl/museo/directores, accessed May 2021.

sion about who was ultimately responsible for selecting participants.[13] Nevertheless, by its final edition the Bienal featured more than 700 prints on view from fifteen countries across the continent. Of those works, around half were from Chile and the US and a quarter from Argentina, Brazil and Mexico.

Participating artists from each country were selected through what the catalogue refers to as "national committees".[14] [fig. 2] These were usually comprised of a single person, often the director of a national or modern art museum, head of a university Fine Art department, or a diplomatic official from the ministries of culture or foreign relations. While these designees shifted over the life of the Bienal, recurring figures included: Hugo Parpagnoli of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires; Miguel Arroyo of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Caracas; Carmen Portinho of the Museo de Arte Moderno in Rio de Janeiro; Mariano Rodríguez of the Casa de las Americas in Havana; Juan Manuel Ugarte Eléspuru of the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes in Lima; Eugenio Barney Cabrera of the Escuela de Bellas Artes at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá; José Luis Martínez Rodríguez of the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes in Mexico City; and Kathleen Fenwick of the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. The US selector changed every year, starting with Argentine artist Mauricio Lasansky, head of the University of Iowa printmaking department, followed by William Lieberman, Director of the Department of Drawings and Prints at MoMA, then Una Johnson, Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. In 1965 and 1968, Antúnez was also listed as part of the US national committee, attesting to his importance in coordinating these partnerships. In 1970, the subsequent Chilean cultural attaché Luis Oyarzún Peña also took on this role. The periodic change in US partners points to the Bienal organisers' ongoing efforts to cultivate relationships across different institutions, but also suggests that there may have been some difficulties in securing long-term commitments from these entities.

The Bienal jury was typically composed of a Chilean critic, a representative from the host museum and one or more individuals from other parts of the hemisphere. Its configuration often overlapped with the executive and selection committees, signalling the importance of the Bienal organisers and their international partners not only to the event's coordination, but also its awarding decisions. This also demonstrates the intertwined nature of the Bienal's network, with individuals and institutions often playing multiple simultaneous roles in the event's administration. In 1963, Parpagnoli, Portinho and Uruguayan architect and critic Luis García Pardo served alongside Victor Carvacho, the representative of the Círculo de Críticos de Arte de Chile (Circle of Chilean Art Critics). Parpagnoli participated again as a jurist in 1965, joined by Ugarte Eléspuru, Oyarzún, and the important critic and historian of Chilean art, Antonio R. Romera. In the Bienal's final two editions, international participation in the jury moved from engaging several South American jurists to foregrounding US involvement. In 1968, joined by Romera, Assler and Ellena, Elaine Johnson, Associate Curator in the Department of Drawings and Prints at MoMA, served as president of the jury. Her 1964 MoMA exhibition, *Contemporary Painters and Sculptors as Printmakers*, was displayed at the MAC in 1966, with the catalogue translated into Spanish by Antúnez. In 1970, Una Johnson became the jury president, with Antúnez replacing Assler as the host museum representative, and otherwise the same jury composition. Una Johnson—not to be confused with

13
For example, Haiti, Honduras, Costa Rica and El Salvador were invited in 1965 but did not participate. Correspondence from Jorge Páez Vilaró indicates that he was assembling the Uruguayan selection when he learned that the Comisión Nacional de Bellas Artes also received an invitation and would be taking over the country's selection. Invitation letters from Pablo Llona Barros and Luis Oyarzún to art museum directors, heads of art schools and diplomatic officials, April-May 1965, Box 9 "COR 1965", Folder 3, Fondo de Archivo Institutional, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Facultad de Artes, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile (FAIMAC). Letter from Jorge Páez Vilaró to Pablo Llona Barros, October 11, 1965, Box 9 "COR 1965", Folder 16, FAIMAC.

14
Primera Bienal Americana de Grabado, 8.

fig. 2
Eduardo Vilches. *Untitled*, woodcut, printed in *III Bienal Americana de Grabado* (Santiago, Chile: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, 1968), 53. Photograph by author.

her predecessor on the jury, Elaine Johnson—previously served as the US selector in 1968. By the fourth Bienal, she had moved on from the Brooklyn Museum of Art to a new position as director of the Storm King Art Center. During her tenure in Brooklyn, she organised the National Print Exhibition from 1947 to 1968, along with important monographic and survey exhibitions on US printmaking, such as *The American Woodcut: 1670-1950*, and a book on French art dealer Ambroise Vollard's print publishing activities.[15]

The Bienal regulations established no specific restrictions for the prints on display, declaring: "There are no limitations in style or technique. The only criterion that takes precedence is the quality of the work and the professional seriousness of the artist".[16] Styles spanned from gestural abstraction, Expressionism and Surrealism to Op and Pop art. The large technical range included woodcut, etching, aquatint, drypoint, silkscreen and lithography, as well as mixed media experiments incorporating impressions of found objects, collage elements, and sculptural plaster reliefs and embossments. The selections featured established artists, many of whom were of international renown, as well as emerging artists who would later have notable careers.[17] Artists awarded prizes throughout the life of the Bienal include Rodolfo Abularach, Josef Albers, Eduardo Bonati, Roser Bru, José Luis Cuevas, Roberto De Lamónica, Pedro Millar, Louise Nevelson, Julio Le Parc, Liliana Porter,

15
Roberta Smith, "Una E. Johnson, 91, An Expert on Prints Who Led a Museum", *The New York Times*, May 5, 1997, https://www.nytimes.com/1997/05/05/nyregion/una-e-johnson-91-an-expert-on-prints-who-led-a-museum.html, accessed May 2021.

16
Primera Bienal Americana de Grabado, 5.

17
Ellena, "Sobre las Bienales", 44.

Robert Rauschenberg, Eduardo Vilches and Daniel Zelaya. While the catalogue's lack of extensive illustration and precise captioning makes identifying the specific winning prints difficult, the identities of the awardees show a range of nationalities, and the limited reproductions reflect stylistic tendencies from hyper-realism, to geometric abstraction, to explorations of colour theory. [fig. 3]

fig. 3
Santos Chávez. *Untitled* woodcut, printed in *III Bienal Americana de Grabado* (Santiago, Chile: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, 1968), 59. Photograph by author.

By 1968, the Bienal became sufficiently established that a spate of additional programming sprung up around it, such as conferences, affiliated exhibitions and salas especiales (special rooms), which included displays at the host museum honouring previous grand prize winners alongside prominent figures in the history of Latin American printmaking. For the third edition, these activities consisted of two offerings with the president of the jury Elaine Johnson: a talk on the history of printmaking and a roundtable with Romera, Ellena, Vilches and Bonati, both at the Instituto Chileno-Norteamericano de Cultura (Chilean-North American Cultural Institute). Affiliated exhibitions included a Taller 99 retrospective, a student show from the Universidad Católica, and monographic exhibitions on the prints of Antonio Frasconi, Mario Toral, Zygmunt Grocholski, Fernando Krahn, Minna Citron and Santos Chávez. In addition, the MAC hosted a concert and a meet-and-greet with cultural attachés from across the continent. For the following edition in 1970, the inaugural salas especiales were dedicated to Albers, winner of the 1968 grand prize, José Guadalupe Posada, Rufino Tamayo, and a show of Chilean popular prints by early 20th century illustrators. At that edition, Una Johnson gave a talk on contemporary US printmaking and Ellena spoke about Joaquín Torres-García. The Instituto Chileno-Norteamericano de Cultura hosted a show on North American posters, and the nine monographic affiliated exhibitions were dedicated to Bru, Millar, Vilches, Zelaya, Carlos Hermosilla, Carlos González, Simone Chambelland, Miguel Bresciano and Juan Bernal Ponce.

Foremost among the Bienal's major goals was a desire to connect the Americas, advocating a spirit of collaboration and generous artistic interchange. Printmaking was seen as an ideal medium in pursuit of this objective, given its multiplicity and relative accessibility. This functioned as both a helpful conceptual framework for the Bienal, as well as an important practical element, given the medium's less expensive shipping, insurance and acquisition costs. In the introduction to the second catalogue in 1965, the organisers identify the central problem that they would set out to solve; namely, in their minds, that countries in the Americas could not unite in any lasting way without cultivating more intimate knowledge of one another, including in the cultural realm.[18] Oyarzún's essay for the following edition in 1968 explains why printmaking was chosen as the appropriate conduit through which to rectify this lack of continental interconnection. Since its origins, he explains, printmaking brought together individual pursuits with collective themes by operating simultaneously as a mode of mass communication and individual self-expression.[19] For Antúnez, printmaking was the most democratic of artistic media, due to its characteristic ability to be reproduced, allowing for the unlimited distribution of an original design at an affordable price point within reach for a larger portion of the population. Moreover, as founder of Taller 99, Antúnez lauded the space of the print workshop as one that embodied the ideals of collaboration and knowledge-sharing.[20] In this manner, the choice of printmaking as the Bienal's sole medium bolstered its rhetorical commitment to democratic exchange, unity and generosity of spirit. It also conveniently offered an inexpensive means of exposing Chilean artists to international trends and promoting local artists on a larger scale, both domestically and globally.[21]

Given its presence on a local and international stage, the Bienal received much praise, but along with it came some targeted criticism. At the 1968 opening ceremony, attended by Frei, Minister of Foreign Relations Valdés and Minister of Education Máximo Pacheco Gómez, Valdés affirmed the administration's support of the Bienal, which it viewed as an important player in the integration of the Americas and the creation of a shared cultural community.[22] That same year, Elaine Johnson, interviewed in *Ercilla*, asserted that the Santiago Bienal, alongside the print biennials in Tokyo and Ljubljana, was one of the most important in the world.[23] Una Johnson, in a 1970 article for the *Print Collector's Newsletter*, observed that contemporary printmaking was becoming increasingly experimental, incorporating new materials, venturing into three dimensions and embracing multimedia possibilities. She celebrated the Bienal's role in bringing these new developments to a broad audience, stating: "Large and extensive exhibitions, such as the Santiago Bienal, have brought to the 20th century print a large public exposure that has been possible in no other art medium".[24] She also reported that, despite the MNBA's ongoing renovations at the time, the galleries were crowded and teemed with

18
Segunda Bienal Americana de Grabado (Santiago: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, 1965), 33.
19
III Bienal Americana de Grabado (Santiago: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, 1968), 5-7.
20
Antúnez, *Carta Aérea*, 17.
21
Fraser, "Encounters", 30.
22
"Entrega de Premios en III Bienal de Grabado", *El Mercurio*, April 17, 1968.
23
"La señora presidenta", *Ercilla*, April 24, 1968, 55.
24
Una Johnson, "Bienal Americana de Grabado", *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 1, no. 4 (September–October, 1970): 84.
25
A critic for *El Siglo* was not so forgiving, complaining that the Bienal should have been located elsewhere, as the display suffered from being squeezed into a narrow space to avoid the construction area. "IV Bienal Americana de Grabado", *El Siglo*, August 21, 1970.

excitement.[25]

Local and international critics generally expressed enthusiasm for the Bienal, with Romera in 1963 affirming that it was one of the most acclaimed events of the year.[26] Peruvian critic Carlos Rodríguez Saavedra noted that the Bienal was part of an uptick in exhibitions devoted to Latin American art, and he championed the sense of regional unity these displays fostered, in addition to the international attention they garnered. He also observed more broadly that biennials on the one hand promoted exchange and exposure to new concepts, but on the other could lead to a certain artistic standardisation, although he did not single out Santiago in particular on this point.[27] In a cover story for *El Mercurio*'s *Revista del Domingo*, Graciela Romero wrote that the 1970 Bienal accomplished two commendable goals: elevating printmaking to the same level of legitimacy as painting, and creating a market for the work of previously-underappreciated Chilean printmakers.[28] The article, titled "Los demócratas del arte" (The democrats of art), featured a cover photo of the executive committee working around a round table, with the Bienal poster in the centre. This photo and caption choice reflect the collaborative and egalitarian ethos that the organisers attributed to printmaking. The poster in the photo, designed by Josef Albers, also showcased the exhibition's international reach by visually connecting local organisers with the German-born, US-based artist. In addition to highlighting the Bienal's emphasis on democratic dialogue and creation of influential hemispheric networks, the article quoted local gallerist Carmen Waugh, who affirmed the exhibition's positive impact on the Santiago print market: "People now buy [prints] even as wedding gifts", she stated, noting an uptick in business centred around the medium.[29]

Despite this praise, a shift in the political winds meant the next edition in 1970 was beset by protests, which played out in an anti-biennial exhibition of sorts. Five days after the Bienal's inauguration, a semi-oppositional display was mounted in a tent in the Parque Forestal outside the host museum, the MNBA. The exhibition of silkscreens by thirty artists was part of a larger effort entitled *El pueblo tiene arte con Allende*, a push by the Allende campaign to illustrate the Unidad Popular's platform and make it publicly accessible.[30] The exhibition was one of eighty displays mounted simultaneously, devoted to portraying Allende's Programa de Cuarenta Medidas—the forty measures that his government would implement once elected. By placing one of these temporary exhibitions outside the MNBA, the campaign created a juxtaposition between the enclosed and removed museum space and the open public space, making the former appear elitist by comparison. It also drew attention to the bifurcation between political printmaking—used for protest and information dissemination—and fine art printmaking, displayed within a seemingly depoliticised museum context. Silvia Dolinko notes, however, that several artists participated in both the *El pueblo tiene arte* display and the Bienal, indicating that the relationship between the two was somewhat ambiguous.[31] Ellena,

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26
Ivelic and Galaz, *Chile Arte Actual*, 103.

27
Carlos Rodríguez Saavedra, "Dos Muestras Continentales", *Expreso*, July 8, 1963. Folder 4B, "MAC", E786, Archivo Nemesio Antúnez, Santiago, Chile.

28
Graciela Romero, "Los demócratas del arte", *Revista del Domingo, El Mercurio*, August 2, 1970.

29
Romero, "Los demócratas del arte".

30
For more on the Unidad Popular's cultural program, see Rodrigo Baño, ed., *La Unidad Popular Treinta Años Después* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2003).

31
Silvia Dolinko, *Arte plural: El grabado entre la tradición y la experimentación, 1955-1973* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2012), 297.

looking back on this time, speculates that the political climate at the beginning of the 1970s became inhospitable to the Bienal's structure and funding apparatus.[32] Valerie Fraser, in an article examining the exhibition's impact, concurs, noting that it became unsustainable following the shift in power to the Unidad Popular. The main factors that garnered criticism were the Bienal's close ties to private industry, through its patron and organiser, the Sociedad, and the outsized influence of the US presence, through the latter's repeated representation on the jury and large share of works on view.[33] Archival documents also show internal strife between the Sociedad and the IEAP, indicating that the former had more power than its collaborators were comfortable with during the Bienal's first three editions at the MAC. Minutes from the April 23, 1968 meeting of the IEAP board of directors list a litany of complaints against the Sociedad, including discontent that it did not live up to its fundraising commitments and that, as a private entity, it exercised too much discretion in acting on behalf of the museum, establishing relationships with international organisations without first consulting the museum's leadership.[34]

While it was the first graphic arts biennial in the region, the Bienal Americana de Grabado was far from the only one operating in South America during this time, and its networks, objectives and reception closely intersected with those of the Bienal de São Paulo in Brazil, the Bienal Americana de Arte in Córdoba, Argentina and the Bienal de Arte Coltejer in Medellín, Colombia. [fig. 4] Across the board, these biennials pursued the dual goals of promoting their nation's artistic production on the world stage and exposing local artists and the domestic public to international art world trends. Like the Córdoba Bienal, whose purview was painting in the Americas, the Santiago Bienal was medium-specific and hemispheric in focus. Unlike its counterpart in Córdoba, Santiago featured a strong US and Canadian presence, not just in affiliated events, but also in the selected work.[35] Alongside the Ljubljana and Tokyo graphic biennials, the Córdoba Bienal's *Salón Latinoamericano de Grabado Universitario* may have offered a model for Santiago's print focus. Individuals on the Córdoba and Santiago selection committees and juries overlapped a fair amount, with Llona Barros, Romera, Ellena, Arroyo, Portinho and Parpagnoli serving as Córdoba selectors for their respective countries, and García Pardo, Romera and Ugarte Eléspuru as jurists.[36] Antúnez and Assler also appeared in Córdoba, with their artwork forming part of the Chilean contribution. Like the Santiago Bienal, the Córdoba and Medellín Bienales came to favour North American and Western European jurists. In Córdoba these included MoMA's Director of Collections (and former inaugural director) Alfred Barr, Jewish Museum director Sam Hunter, and documenta organiser Arnold Bode, and in Medellín, Guggenheim Museum director Lawrence Alloway and US-based critic Brian O'Doherty. To a lesser extent, the Santiago Bienal's individual and institutional collaborators also intersected with those of São Paulo. Oyarzún, who served as a jurist and selector in Santiago, organised the Chilean contribution in São Paulo in 1965.[37] MoMA played an important role across the region, through the efforts of Lieberman and Elaine Johnson in Santiago and Barr in Córdoba, which also hosted a MoMA print exhibition. Additionally, the New York museum prepared the US selection for

32
Ellena, "Sobre las bienales", 59.
33
Fraser, "Encounters", 32.
34
Minutes from a meeting of the IEAP Board of Directors, April 23, 1968, Box 15 "COR 1968", Folder 2, FAIMAC.
35
Andrea Giunta, "Strategies of Internationalization", in *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics: Argentine Art in the Sixties* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 189-241; María Cristina Rocca, *Arte, modernización y guerra fría: las bienales de Córdoba en los sesenta* (Córdoba: Editorial Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 2009).
36
Rocca, *Arte, modernización y guerra fría*, 341-343.
37
Ivelic and Galaz, *Chile Arte Actual*, 108.

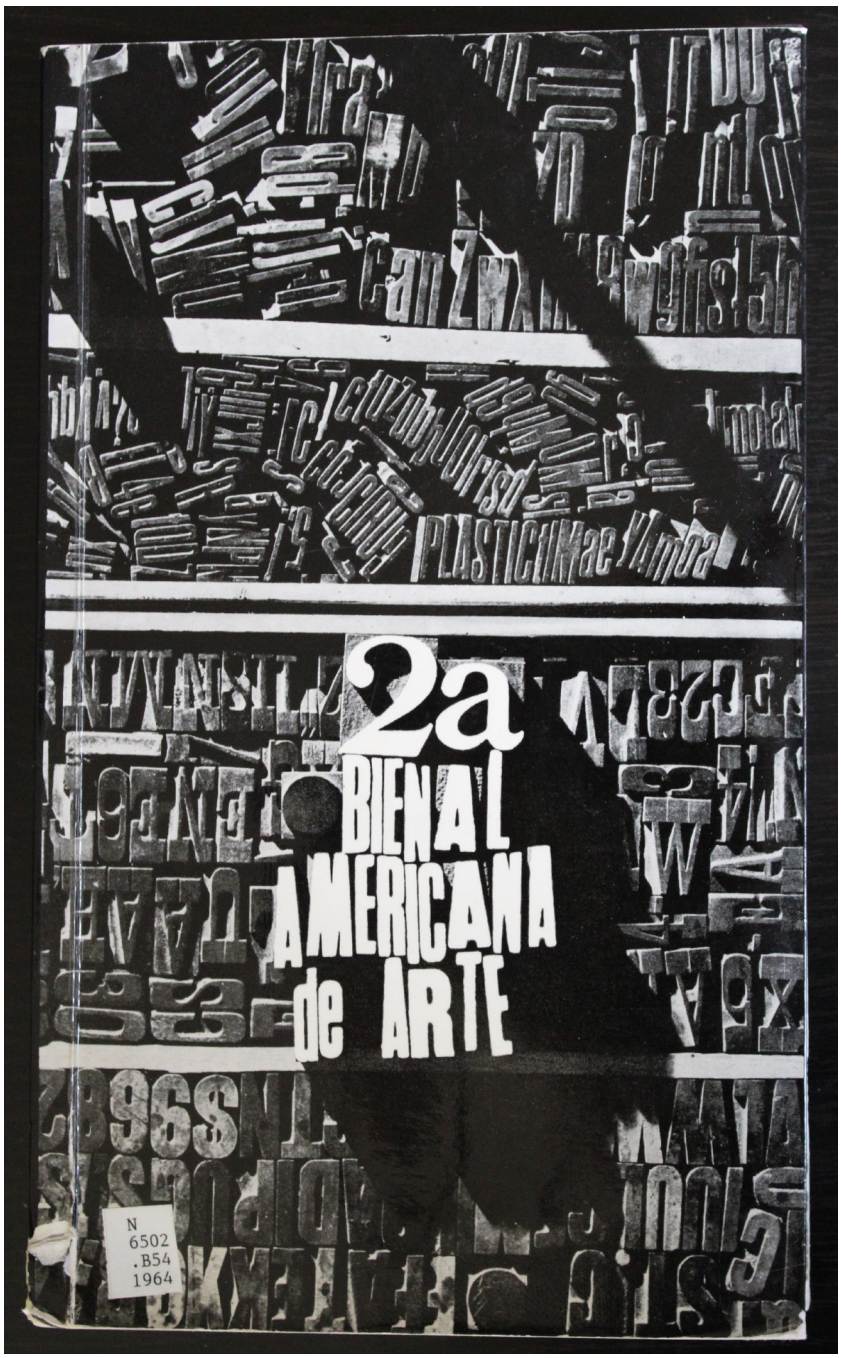

fig. 4
Catalogue cover. *Segunda Bienal Americana de Arte* (Córdoba, Argentina: Industrias Kaiser Argentina, 1964). Photograph by author.

several editions of the São Paulo biennial, as well as serving as the model for its host museum, the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo.[38] The Visual Arts Section of the Organization of American States was another sought-after partner for the Latin American biennials, with its own designated space in São Paulo, and an invitation for a similar arrangement at the Santiago Bienal, which it appears never came to fruition.[39] The reappearance of a select roster of individuals and institutions in events

38
Giunta, "Strategies of Internationalization", 208-209. Adele Nelson, "Monumental & Ephemeral: The Early São Paulo Bienals", in Mary Kate O'Hare, ed., *Constructive Spirit: Abstract Art in South and North America, 1920s-1950s* (Newark [NJ]: Newark Museum, 2010), 134.

39
Invitation letter from Pablo Llona Barros and Luis Oyarzún Peña to José Gómez Sicre, Director of the Visual Arts Section, Organisation of American States, May 5, 1965, Box 9 "COR 1965", Folder 3, FAIMAC.

across the region indicates that an enduring network both shaped and was shaped by these biennials. It also demonstrates that, to an extent, a recognisable coterie of critics, curators and museums had an outsize impact on the artists included in and endorsed by these exhibitions.

All four biennials were sponsored by industrialists, who were often motivated by a perceived interconnection between economic development and cultural exchange. While the Santiago Bienal's funding was funnelled through the Sociedad, the São Paulo Bienal was initially financed by its founder, industrialist Francisco "Ciccillo" Matarazzo Sobrinho; the Córdoba Bienal by Industrias Kaiser Argentina (IKA), a subsidiary of the US-based automobile manufacturer Kaiser Industries; and the Coltejer Bienal by Colombian textile manufacturer Compañía Colombiana de Tejidos (Coltejer). For IKA, the biennial served as part of a public relations campaign that promoted cultural ventures alongside business interests, to grow the company's reputation for modernisation and contribute to the region's development.[40] Similarly, Coltejer's president, Rodrigo Uribe Echavarría, viewed industry as the driver not only of economic advancement, but also political, social and cultural wellbeing.[41] Internal documents from the Santiago Bienal show a related mentality on the part of one of its prize sponsors, the Inter-American Development Bank, which stated that artistic dialogue and cultural integration were fundamental to the creation of a common conscience across the hemisphere.[42] In this manner, economic developmentalism was intertwined with the promotion of cultural ventures and regional dialogue in the Americas. For IKA, the latter was also overtly tied to anti-communist efforts, with the company promoting Latin American unity in part to combat Soviet influence in the region.[43]

Like the Santiago Bienal, its counterparts also gave rise to protest displays. Córdoba experienced its own anti-biennial exhibition in 1966, the *Primer Festival Argentino de Formas Contemporáneas*, which included objects and happenings by David Lamelas, Marta Minujín, Rogelio Polesello and Roberto Jacoby, among others. The event was organised in response to the perceived conservatism of the biennial, notably the fact that it overlooked new experiments in contemporary art such as those exhibited at the Instituto di Tella.[44] The final year of the Córdoba Bienal also featured mounting student and labour protests, targeted both at the Onganía dictatorship and at IKA, amidst massive layoffs and a fight for better working conditions.[45] Three years later, the censorship and repression of the Brazilian military dictatorship led to an important boycott of the São Paulo biennial by international artists and intellectuals.[46] Latin American artists living in New York organised a *Contrabienal*, consisting of a publication with contributions from artists across the diaspora.[47] Across the board, these protest displays intersected with larger movements and political concerns, demonstrating that the biennials became

40
Giunta, "Strategies of Internationalization", 199.

41
Gina McDaniel Tarver, *The New Iconoclasts: From Art to New Reality to Conceptual Art in Colombia, 1961-1975* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2016), 84.

42
"Premio Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo," n.d., Box 10 "COR 1965", Folder 18, FAIMAC.

43
Giunta, "Strategies of Internationalization", 200.

44
Jorge Romero Brest, "L'art actual de l'Amerique Latine en Argentine", *Art international* VIII, no. 10 (December 1964): 26-30.

45
Giunta, "Strategies of Internationalization", 226.

46
On Chile's participation in the boycott, see Amalia Cross, "Boycott Histories: On the Causes and Consequences of Chile's Participation in the Boycott of the 10th Bienal de São Paulo, 1969", *ICAA Documents Project Working Papers* 7 (May 2021): 6-25. https://icaa.mfah.org/files/asset/8aa0c89e475df7247c22c96e439af8981bb9c619.pdf, accessed May 2021.

47
Aimé Iglesias Lukin, "Contrabienal: Latin American Art, Politics and Identity in New York, 1969-1971". *Artl@s Bulletin* 3, no. 2 (2014): 68-82.

powerful springboards for other platforms, including oppositional ones.

The biennials also provided a forum for affiliated events, offering exposure and crowds for local museums, galleries, theatres and universities. Like the Santiago Bienal, which was accompanied by more than twenty satellite events over its final two iterations, the Córdoba Bienal spurred talks and conferences, shows of contemporary painting and sculpture by local artists and an experimental music festival. In addition, the biennials promoted emerging artists at the outset of their careers. Bernardo Salcedo and Beatriz González, for example, first became known in part due to the Coltejer Bienal.[48] In Santiago, emerging artists who received recognition included all three members of the experimental printmaking collective New York Graphic Workshop—Porter, awarded the IEAP prize in 1965, and Luis Camnitzer and José Guillermo Castillo, both of whom received honourable mentions in 1963, one year before the collective's founding. The exhibitions had a lasting effect on local publics, from increasing print collecting in Santiago to creating an education programme that shaped university curricula in São Paulo.[49] On a regional level, Jorge Glusberg, director of the Centro de Arte y Comunicación, lauded the productive encounters that the Coltejer Bienal made possible between artists and critics from across Latin America.[50] Alloway asserted the same for Córdoba, which he viewed as unique largely because it promoted exchange "on a grand scale", specifically among Latin American artists.[51] The praise lavished on these biennials echoes Rodríguez Saavedra and the Frei administration's statements discussed earlier, exalting the Santiago Bienal's contribution to regional exchange, as well as its importance as an international player in the emerging graphic biennial scene.

Comparing the Santiago Bienal to concurrent South American biennials reveals that its goals, sponsorship and reception were not necessarily unique. Its distinctiveness lies in its truly hemispheric purview of highly intertwined networks, with strong contributions from across the continent, together with its dedication to print, which the organisers poetically tied to an ethos of accessibility, generosity and exchange. By building strong ties with US figures and institutions, while also promoting a regional network that included Cuba, the Santiago Bienal enabled dialogue across Cold War spheres of influence. In so doing it paralleled other landmark exhibitions that, as Anthony Gardner and Charles Green have argued, often aimed to foster regional solidarity in the Global South through horizontal exchange, troubling Cold War binaries and geopolitical power imbalances.[52] The Bienal also demonstrated an approach to Pan-Americanism that included the US as only one actor among many, in a larger hemispheric network that did not centre them. In this respect the Bienal starkly contrasted, for example, the numerous traveling exhibitions of works on paper that MoMA's International Council circulated across Latin America focused mainly on US and Western European artists. In Santiago, for example, MoMA installed *The Family of Man* in 1958, *The American Woodcut Today* in 1960, *Abstract Drawings and Watercolor*s in 1963, *Jacques Lipchitz: Bronze Sketches* in 1964, *Josef Albers: Homage to the Square* in 1965 and *Lettering by Modern Artists* in 1966.[53] While these traveling shows demonstrated the power of works on paper to move easily across the hemisphere, they did little to promote local artistic production or transnational dialogue. The Bienal, meanwhile, seized upon the ability of prints to reflect the latest artistic developments from across the continent, foregrounding the

48
Tarver, *The New Iconoclasts*, 88.
49
Ana G. Magalhães, "Education for Contemporary Art in the Context of the Bienal de São Paulo", in *Making Biennials in Contemporary Times. Essays from the World Biennial Forum* (São Paulo: Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, ICCo, 2015), 138.
50
Jorge Glusberg, "II Bienal de Arte Coltejer de Medellín", *Goya* 97 (July–August 1970): 38-43.
51
Lawrence Alloway, "Latin America and International Art", *Art in America* 53, no. 3 (June 1965): 65-77.
52
Green and Gardner, *Biennials, Triennials, and documenta*, 85-93.
53
"Internationally Circulating Exhibitions", The Museum of Modern Art, https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/learn/icelist.pdf, accessed May 2021.

centrality of Latin American production within that narrative.

In addition to creating an internationally acclaimed space for printmaking, the Bienal Americana de Grabado's legacy lies in the series of later Latin American graphic biennials that it inspired. The 1960s witnessed a boom in biennials established in the hemispheric South, outside of Western centres. These amount to what Gardner and Green call the "semi-forgotten second wave of biennials of the South", stretching from the early 1950s through to the 1980s.[54] Print-focused biennials in Latin America form a subset of this wave, and the Santiago Bienal played a central role in establishing this phenomenon. The longest running of the ensuing graphic biennials, the Bienal de San Juan del Grabado Latinoamericano, continues to operate in the 21st century, reimagined in 2004 as the Trienal Poli/Gráfica de San Juan, América Latina y el Caribe. Attesting to Santiago's lasting impact and the deep interconnectedness of the exhibitions, Ellena served on San Juan's consulting committee early on and later juried for its second iteration.[55] These subsequent biennials presented an opportunity to promote the increasingly experimental nature of contemporary printmaking. Starting in the late 1960s, printmaking began to incorporate strategies of Conceptual art, elaborating upon the earlier innovations that Una Johnson noted, such as multimedia and three-dimensional elements.[56] Silvia Dolinko notes an instance wherein an early Conceptual work was exhibited in 1970 at both the Santiago and San Juan biennials—Camnitzer's *La Linea Ausente* (The Absent Line, 1969). In San Juan it was awarded a prize, while in Santiago it went unacknowledged.[57] An etching of the titular phrase with a colourless horizontal strike-through bisecting the text, the work is both a literal depiction of the title and a demonstration of it. The Santiago Bienal, which began in an earlier moment, was perhaps not ready to celebrate this new work. Going forward, prints engaging with Conceptual art would gain increasing recognition in Latin American graphic biennials, alongside continued attention to established master printmakers employing traditional techniques. The infrastructure first developed by the Santiago Bienal thus continued into the following decades, adapting to promote the ever-evolving development of the medium in the region. Combined with its horizontal approach to Pan-American exchange, the structures and networks that the Bienal Americana de Grabado set out, provided an enduring model for later print-focused exhibitions in the region to elaborate upon.

54
Green and Gardner, *Biennials, Triennials, and documenta*, 10. See also Caroline A. Jones, "Biennial Culture: A Longer History", in Elena Filipovic, Marieke Van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebø, eds., *The Biennial Reader* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010), 66-87.

55
Dolinko, *Arte plural,* 294.

56
Johnson, "Bienal Americana de Grabado", 84.

57
Dolinko, *Arte plural,* 293-294.

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Camilla Pietrabissa

Venice as the Archetypal Waterscape of the 21st Century: Aleksandra Mir's Postcards for the 53rd Biennale

Abstract

As an ephemeral, portable and disposable object, the postcard is a powerful medium for the global circulation of images and the creation of enduring collective imaginaries. This essay considers a project by artist Aleksandra Mir for the 53. Venice Biennale (2009), titled *VENEZIA (all places contain all others)*, which entailed the design, printing and free distribution of one million postcards. A visitor could mail the postcards on the spot, ensuring the global circulation to the project. The participatory and ephemeral nature of this postcard project is discussed in relation to the curatorial concept of that year's Biennale, the ability of the postcard format to activate a problematic memory of place, and the various iterations of the project from 2005 to 2018. Mir's use of the postcard format in the Venetian context stresses the close link between the contemporary art world and the economy of tourism in late capitalism.

Keywords

Aleksandra Mir, Postcards, Overtourism, Climate change, Waterscapes, Reproducibility.

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Venice as the Archetypal Waterscape of the 21st Century: Aleksandra Mir's Postcards for the 53rd Biennale

Camilla Pietrabissa

Water equals time and provides beauty with its double.
Joseph Brodsky[1]

1. One Million Postcards for Free

Visitors to the 53. Venice Biennale, held between June 7 and November 22, 2009, could pick up free postcards from various rotating stands placed outside of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni at the Giardini or from boxes installed in the main nave of the Arsenale [Fig. 1]. They were part of Aleksandra Mir's project entitled *VENEZIA (all places contain all others)* that consisted of designing, printing and distributing (free of charge) one million postcards.[2] Although it was part of the official selection for that year's curated section, the project's display was not limited to the main exhibition areas because visitors dispersed the cards throughout the city or sent them to friends and family all over the world. Its ephemeral nature resided in its distribution: during the preview days, 300,000 postcards were already taken away, as VIPs bagged them by the dozens, so that by the end of the Biennale the stands and boxes were empty.[3] Visitors could buy stamps in the exhibition area at the Giardini and mail the postcards on the spot, ensuring their wide circulation, from Venice to the rest of the world. As a 22-year-old student, I also picked up several postcards; some I mailed, others I kept at home in a box where I collect brochures and other miscellaneous printed matter.

Since the early 2000s, many artists have produced ephemeral artworks in the form of posters and postcards for international exhibitions.[4] On

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I am grateful to Aleksandra Mir, Matteo Bertelé and Camilla Salvaneschi for their help in preparing this essay. Feedback from Jennifer Noonan and the anonymous reviewers has helped greatly improve the text. The staff at the Biennale Archives provided useful material for my research.

1 Joseph Brodsky, *Watermarks, an Essay on Venice* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1992), 134.

2 The work was sponsored by and printed at the Ringier Pressehaus, Zurich.

3 On the postcards' dispersal, see the artist's statement in the Appendix.

4 For a history of the postcard in the field of contemporary art, and particularly its appeal for young artists in the 1990s and early 2000s, see Jeremy Cooper, *Artists' Postcards. A Compendium* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), esp. 9-12.

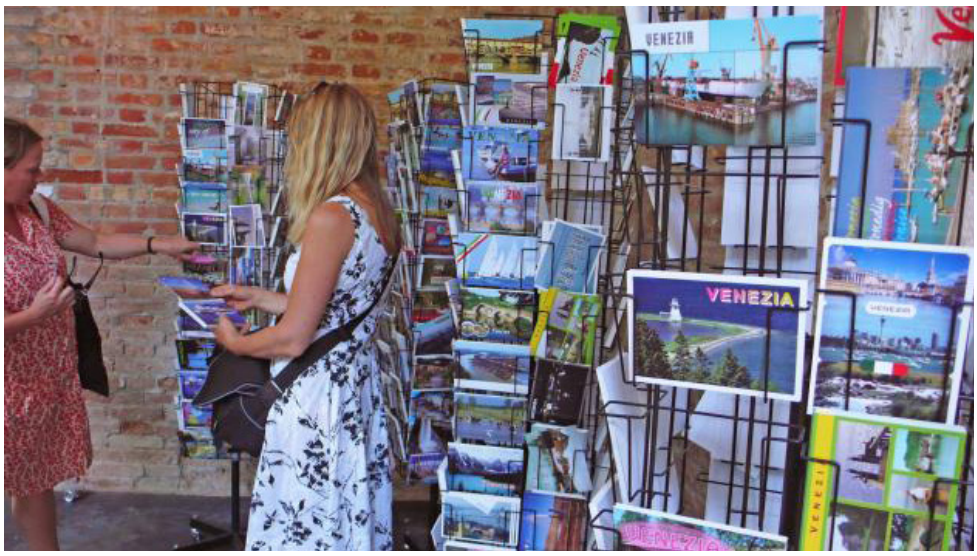

fig. 1
VENEZIA (all places contain all others), Installation view, 53rd International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, Giardini, Venice, 2009. Photo courtesy: aleksandramir.info

one hand this is due to the increasing accessibility of designing and printing technologies; on the other, the appropriation of branding and marketing strategies in museums, and the mass media promotion of contemporary art collecting, have contributed to the creation of an 'aura' for artists' ephemera. In an article for *Interview Magazine*, for example, Alex Gartenfeld noted that visitors "pocketed" Mir's postcards because "they're editions, after all", and further added that artists' postcards could be found at the Athens Biennial that year, thereby making it possible for North American visitors to send back home postal souvenirs from various European art events.[5] Like other similar paper works, therefore, *VENEZIA (all places contain all others)* invited different uses from participants, including mailing and collecting. Mir's idea to install a mailbox in the exhibition space—which ended up being the most difficult part of the production process—was meant as a provocation to the visitors, who had to choose whether they wished to capitalise on artistic value by collecting the free postcards, or to circulate them around the globe.[6] In so doing, Mir solicited questions about the value of art and the cultural role of the Biennale as a global exhibition and event.

The postcards' design was an ironic adaptation of the touristic image of Venice. Overlaid with a graphic that spelled out "Venezia", the front side depicted a variety of waterways around the world sourced from a commercial stock agency, but Venice was not among them [Fig. 2]. Those images include flamingos and rock cliffs, large beaches and the ocean, as well as mountain lakes, all of which clash with the image of Venice as the quintessential Renaissance city built on an artificial island, in the middle of a protected lagoon. Still other postcards feature landmark monuments of other cities built on a coast, such as Sydney [Fig. 3]. The only element that all these photos have in common is the prominent presence of water, paired with the printed word "Venezia". A short piece in the fashion section of *The New York Times* remarked that "Venice is the supermodel of cities, more prodigiously photographed than Kate and Gisele combined", but in Mir's postcards there was not "a Grand Canal in the bunch".[7] This comment captures well Mir's

5
Alex Gartenfeld, "Postcards from Europe", *Interview Magazine*, June 2009. Mir's project received wide press coverage, since it fit well with the overall curatorial concept of the Biennale, as discussed below. A list of the articles on the work can be found on the artist's website: https://aleksandramir.info/bibliography/, accessed May 2021. See also an article about Mir's work as a metaproject, Whybrow, Nicolas, "Venezia, Italia, fare mondi: doing and undoing (the myth of) Venice", in Johanna Ruohonen and Asta Kihlman, eds., *Machineries of Public Art. From Durable to Transient, from Site-bound to Mobile* (Turku: University of Turku Publications, 2013), 29-49.

6
On the part of the Biennale, Biennale's production assistant Paolo Cimarosti was instrumental in securing the Poste Italiane mailbox and collection on site, and also paid out of pocket to have stamps for sale in the bar. I wish to thank Aleksandra Mir for giving me this information.

7
Alix Browne, "Wish you were...here?", *The New York Times*, June 19, 2009.

fig. 2
Aleksandra Mir, *VENEZIA (all places contain all others),* illustrated postcard, 2009. Photo courtesy: aleksandramir.info

fig. 3
Aleksandra Mir, *VENEZIA (all places contain all others),* illustrated postcard, 2009. Photo courtesy: aleksandramir.info

sensibility regarding communication strategies, particularly in the form of printed matter, as well as her interest in popular imagery, partly a result of her education in media and communication and visual arts, as well as cultural anthropology. The postcard, in this sense, is a perfect medium to activate the imagery and practices of contemporary tourism. Made in series, illustrated with generic photographs, and produced cheaply, the touristic postcard encapsulates the notion of a perfect reproducibility of place—in the same way as early photographs encapsulated the reproducibility of the work of art.[8] The postcards' relational and ephemeral nature ultimately accords with Mir's interest in collective practices of communication through images.

In this article, the original meaning of Mir's postcards in the context of the 2009 Biennale will be considered in light of ongoing preoccupations with the future of a Venice tainted by the danger of heritage devastation and environmental catastrophe. Although the project fits very well within utopian and universalising claims for art as a global field of experimentation made by the curator of the 2009 Venice Biennale, it also addresses the urgency towards protecting waterway cities in the face of ecological hazards. Recounting the story of the project from 2009 to today shows the manifold implications of the use of the postcard format in the context of international art exhibitions, while reflecting on the possible afterlife of such ephemeral projects. Mir's postcards of Venice constitute a playful and participatory project whose cheerful design leaves behind a sour aftertaste.

2. Making Worlds: Play, Globalism, Accessibility

The curatorial claim of the 2009 Biennale was utopian in its ambition and contradictory in execution; many commentators regarded the concept as too vague and the event as insipid.[9] Daniel Birnbaum, the Swedish curator who was then Rector at the Städelschule arts academy in Frankfurt, chose a seemingly innocuous title, *Making Worlds*, whose meaning varies when translated into different languages. With this title, he wished to call attention to art as a way to devise a platform for cultural exchange across geographic distances, to create historical links with figures from the past, and to participate in processes of experimentation.[10] The notions of multiplicity and openness were important underlying principles for this utopian approach:

> Perhaps art can be one way out of a world ruled by leveling impulses and dull sameness. Can each artwork be a principle of hope and an intriguing plan for escape? Behind the immediate surface we are

8
On the history of the postcard see: Frank Staff, *The Picture Postcard and its Origins* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1966); Claude Frère and Aline Ripert, *La carte postale, son histoire, sa fonction sociale* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, (1983) 2001); the special issue of *Resources: an International Journal on Images and their Uses* 17, no. 4 (2001): *From Albums to the Academy: Postcards and Art History,* ed. Jordana Mendelson; David Prochaska and Jordana Mendelson, eds., *Postcards. Ephemeral Histories of Modernity* (University Park PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010). On postcards reproducing works of art, see Bertrand Tillier, "La carte postale, multiple documentaire du chef-d'œuvre", *Perspective* 2 (2019): 239-248.

9
Take, for example the following review: "Though Birnbaum escapes the traps of overcrowding and infinite corridors of video, his tendency towards restraint results in an exhibition that at times feels insipid. [...] If the measure of a biennial's success is that it's not loved, but rather is widely discussed and debated, then Birnbaum's 2009 iteration—like its recent predecessors—could be considered an achievement. The problem with that premise though, is that much like the concept of "making worlds through art", it's all too vague, even meaningless. Ultimately, the translation exercise doesn't quite translate", Gillian Sneed, "Lost in translation. On the Venice Biennale 2009", *Texte zur Kunst*, June 25, 2009: https://www.textezurkunst.de/articles/lost-translation-venice-biennale-2009/, accessed May 2021.

10
The title was inspired by and departing from Nelson Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978).

> many—together and individually, through the multiplicity of imaginative worlds we hold within.[11]

As in the case of previous biennials such as Harald Szeemann's *Plateau of Humankind* (2001), critical reviews of the 2009 show disapproved of such definitive statements on art and the human condition. On the pages of *Frieze*, Jennifer Higgie answered Birnbaum's somewhat naïve question about art's power to "plan an escape" by noting that "at the heart of this unwieldy and often—despite the chaos and exhaustion—joyful beast that is the Biennale lurks a curious contradiction", that of praising "creativity that seems resistant to change and, despite its apparent celebration of difference, is often mired in the worst kind of politics".[12]

This tension between the political structure of the Venice Biennale and the curatorial concept seems to parallel Mir's *VENEZIA (all places contain all others)* which, in principle, accords well with the show's celebration of creativity and experimentation, but which also questions the overall framework in which the event is taking place. In particular, three elements at the heart of the main show—playfulness, accessibility, and the global outlook of art—can be found at work in Mir's project. Playfulness can be detected in Birnbaum's definition of the works in his show as "things in the making", thus highlighting the ephemeral nature of art and emphasising process over product.[13] Several installations offered free items, such as Anawana Haloba's market stall, where visitors could take packaged, mass-produced candies from a small, artisanal kiosk. The design of the catalogue itself, made of recycled paper, presented the essays against a background depicting a working table of notes and cards. Playfulness and entertainment also characterised the three interior design interventions in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni: a new café designed by Tobias Rehberger (who won the Golden Lion), an educational space by Massimo Bartolini, and a bookstore by Rirkrit Tiravanija.[14] In this context, Mir's work, located at the show's perimeter at the Giardini, functioned as a threshold project which introduced the playful tone of the show.

The second element, accessibility, is tightly connected to the procedural conception of art, but it also calls attention to relational and participatory processes. Although Tiravanija's presence could be seen as a sign of the continuous appeal of the Relational Aesthetics of the 1990s, the curator tried to integrate his work (like that of other artists formerly associated with that approach) into a more generic participatory character.[15] Mir's work was only loosely connected to the tendencies of Relational Aesthetics, since the provocation and political implications of her work resided not in an interaction between artist and visitor, but in the materiality of the work itself, the accessibility of which was predicated upon the decision to give postcards away for free. As the artist has pointed out in our correspondence, the project's relational and ephemeral nature was more in line with the "generosity projects" of the 1990s and early 2000s. According to the late American curator and educator Ted Purves, at the time artists were beginning to undo "assumptions and

11
Daniel Birnbaum, "We are many", in La Biennale di Venezia. 53a Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte. Fare Mondi/Making Worlds (June 7 - November 22, 2009), exh. cat. (Venice: La Biennale/Marsilio, 2009), 187.

12
Jennifer Higgie, "Written on Water. The Highs and Lows of the 53rd Venice Biennale, *Fare Mondi Making Worlds*", *Frieze* no. 125 (2009): https://www.frieze.com/article/written-water1, accessed May 2021.

13
Daniel Birnbaum, "We are many", 187.

14
See the interview by Angela Vettese, Tobias Rehberger, "Was du liebst, bringt dich auch zum Weinen (Cafeteria)", in Paolo Fabbri and Tiziana Migliore, eds., *Quaderni della Biennale. Sulla 53esima Biennale di Venezia* (Milano: et/al edizioni, 2011), 42-53. On playfulness in the show's display, see also Pamuk Orhan, "Se la Biennale sembra un gioco come un bambino a spasso tra i padiglioni", *La Repubblica*, August 1, 2009.

15
On the critical debate around Relational Aesthetics, see Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", *October*, no. 110 (Fall 2004): 51-79.

ideas surrounding the 'gift' in the work of art and the innate 'generosity' of the artistic act", so as to involve the audience more clearly in the process and contribute to a critique of the capitalist system.[16] In an interview about *Making Worlds*, Birnbaum seems aware that the notion of generosity is a recurring motif of his show.

> TG: But how much work in the show actually employs that model of generosity?
> DB: Well, Thomas Bayrle, who has always been interested in mass production, contributes a very large pattern on the wall: it's wallpaper that is free and infinitely reproducible. Then there's Aleksandra Mir, who is making a million picture postcards of Venice; anyone can pick one up and send it back home. But here again, one can look back to history in order to find a way forward. There's also a room devoted to Gutaï, the Japanese avant-garde movement that was interested in multiples and activities and Happenings—things that are not about the original object at all but rather about a given activity in itself. And after all, if one is to take "making worlds" seriously, one must think of how a world is normally something shared, no? The world is inhabited by more than one person, and so "making" revolves around building something common.[17]

This passage is interesting as it tries to generalise the "generosity model" within the long history of contemporary art and globalisation.[18] Yet various commentators have noted the avoidance of crisis-laden rhetoric in favour of a hopeful approach, evident not just in the selection of works but also in the overall installation, marked by a playful aesthetic, as seen above. After all, the 53. Biennale was put together in 2008, the year of the subprime crisis which hit the global economic system and made evident its inherent fragility.

The third element, the show's global outlook, was therefore problematic from the start. Besides the historical link with Gutaï, Birnbaum's ideal of global interconnectedness felt somehow too idealistic and outdated—but the gesture was deliberate. In the catalogue essay, for example, the curator clearly stated that although "nobody believes in such simple remedies from society's pathology [as playful, idealistic artworks]", in the face of the time's "increasingly fetishistic visual industry and its demand for commodities [...] little is more relevant than insisting that the experience of art cannot be fully grasped in terms of possession".[19] The cartographic approach of the show's display, where a rigorous itinerary had been avoided, disoriented the public in order to create unexpected resonances and interrelations between the works on view in a labyrinth of galleries. By addressing globalisation from the angle of a touristic imaginary, Mir's postcards similarly

16
Ted Purves, ed., *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), X. A revised version of the book was published in 2015, with a slightly different title, which includes examples from Aleksandra Mir's work as exemplary of the ongoing interest in the generosity model and productive collaborations with audiences.

17
Tim Griffin, "New beginnings", *Artforum* 47, no. 9 (May 2009), online at: https://www.artforum.com/print/200905/tim-griffin-talks-with-curator-daniel-birnbaum-about-the-53rd-venice-biennale-22616, accessed May 2021.

18
The misleadingly idealistic tone of this argument resonates with Caroline Jones' account on the historicity of the global model of art exhibitions: "If one focuses on the emergence of a contemporary biennial, one quickly realises that the key structures of the current exhibitionary complex, the undisputed foundations of contemporary display, were put in place more than a century ago", Caroline A. Jones, *The Global Work of Art: World's Fairs, Biennials, and the Aesthetics of Experience* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), XI. See also Hans Belting, Andrea Buddensieg and Peter Weibel, eds., *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds* (Karlsruhe, Germany, September 17, 2011 - February 19, 2012), exh. cat. (Cambridge [MA]: MIT Press, 2012).

19
Daniel Birnbaum, "We are many", 187.

question the meaning of global interconnection from the viewpoint of estrangement and disorientation. The catalogue entry written for the project, however, stressed its fittingness within the optimistic narrative of the curatorial vision: "In the same way that the water of the city's lagoon is part of a continuous global cycle of exchange, the postcards will be circulated by the public to every part of the world as mementoes and evocations of a non-standardised experience" so as to "amplify the meaning of the artwork across time and space".[20] But isn't this wide circulation, as Mir's disorienting images seem to suggest, marked by cultural misinterpretation and possibly delusion? And aren't the accessibility and playfulness of the postcards the mark of a superficial, infantile attitude to travel—an uncaring commodification of place?

3. Waterscape Souvenirs

Mir's understanding of place matches a contemporary sensibility for composite notions of cultural identity. Partly a result of a peripatetic life, her anthropological approach draws attention to the kaleidoscopic nature of identity formation as a result of travel—of objects, people and imaginaries.[21] In her statement on *VENEZIA (all places contain all others)* she writes that

> The idea of waterways as a supranational entity mirrors patterns of globalisation: travel as a matter of course rather than exception, the erosion of the nation-state, and, conversely, its re-emergence as a brand to be marketed. Cultural identity as an effect of global movement rather than static nationality. Politics as pollution rather than border control.[22]

Flipping the catalogue's argument that the flow of water may connect the whole of humanity, the artist's words point to the analogy between waterways and the flow of tourists travelling to favourite destinations, along with the flow of capital and its undercurrent, the process of commodification in the form of city branding. Venice, one of the world's primary touristic destinations, becomes paradigmatic of the contradictions of late capitalism in that it reinforces international relations while strengthening urban identity in the name of branding.[23] In this context, as Joseph Brodsky's famous essay suggests, Venetian identity and history reside in its relation with water: "By rubbing water, this city improves time's looks, beautifies the future. That's what the role of this city in the universe is".[24] From today's perspective, then, Mir's focus on "supranational identity" may refer more clearly than in 2009 to urban ecology and the future survival of the city itself—Venice being a paradigm of all cities in danger, but particularly those built on water. Mir's postcards, in this sense, become a token of memory—*a souvenir*—not of the city's eternal history, but of a period of fragility. The selection of pictures from a stock of generic photos serves to

20
Claudia Battistella, "Aleksandra Mir", in *La Biennale di Venezia. 53a Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte,* 112.

21
On the impact of contemporary global mobility on artistic work, see Anne Ring Petersen, *Migration Into Art. Transcultural Identities and Art-making in a Globalised World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017). More generally, on the philosophical and political opposition between local and global, see Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climate Regime* [2017], trans. Catherine Porter (Medford [MA]: polity, 2018).

22
See the artist's statement in the Appendix.

23
Among the vast number of volumes on the role of Venice in the global economy, see the collective project, published in 2009, Wolfgang Scheppe, ed., *Migropolis. Venice/Atlas of a Global Situation*, 2 voll. (Berlin and Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2009).

24
Brodsky, *Watermarks*, 135.

disrupt the meaning of the postcard genre and call attention not to obvious monuments or points of interest but to the possibility of irreparable damage and loss. The imaginary of Venice within Mir's postcard ruptures when "Venezia" is transplanted to a foreign city: the act of collage cleaves the signifier from the signified and in so doing hints at its potential demise. While the postcard is usually intended to celebrate place, these postcards hint to the fact that the place may one day disappear. In other words, these postcards activate a problematic memory.

To prove this point, we may note that *VENEZIA (all places contain all others)* was the second iteration of a project conceived in 2005 for an exhibition at the Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst in Bremen which reflected on urban identity at a time of fundamental structural change.[25] The eight postcards produced on that occasion play on the effect of estrangement between place and its touristic stereotypes [Fig. 4]. The option of mailing the postcards on the spot—which would become so important at the Biennale—was not available since the project was conceived for a local audience rather than for masses of international tourists. In any case, the idea to reflect on collective imaginaries, and the way in which objects of everyday consumption may strengthen their creation and reproduction, had initially been formulated in Bremen.[26] By looking at the artist's longer career, one realises that an

fig. 4
Aleksandra Mir, *Bremen,* illustrated postcard, 2005. Photo courtesy: aleksandramir.info

interest in touristic imagery which deployed disruptive juxtapositions was already at work in *The Concorde Collages*, a series started in 2004 (the year in which the Concorde was retired) and made of cut-out photos of the airliner glued onto posters depicting popular icons, masterpieces of European art or tourist destinations.[27] In a 2004 interview for *The Believer*, Mir explained her use of mass-reproduced photos,

25
A Lucky Strike. Kunst findet Stadt (September 9 - October 30, 2005), exh. cat. (Bremen: Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, 2005). See also Cooper, *Artists' postcards*, 9-10.

26
On the political use of the postcard in creating collective imaginaries, and the intermedia relation between the postcard and other images in the interior space, see Matteo Bertelé, "La cartolina illustrate come modello dello spazio quotidiano sovietico", in Matteo Bertelé, Angela Bianco, Alessia Cavallaro, eds., *Le Muse fanno il girotondo. Jurij Lotman e le arti. Studi in onore di Giuseppe Barbieri* (Crocetta del Montello: Terra Ferma, 2015), 90-102.

27
See the publication which collects all the different iterations of the project, Aleksandra Mir, *The Concorde Collages* (Paris: Onestar Press, Galerie Laurent Godin, 2006).

such as the image of the Concorde or the portrait of Che Guevara, as an attempt to reply to the question: "How can two once so powerful ideas relate back to us in a productive way now?".[28] While in *The Concorde Collages* the cut-up and reproduced photos are simultaneously visible, in the postcards projects (in Bremen and Venice) the juxtaposition between photographs and script requires the viewer to activate their imaginary, calling to mind mental pictures of the real city (for those who have only seen photos of the place) or personal memories (for those who have visited it in the past).

Mir seems aware of a philosophical tradition which regards the memory of place, like memory itself, as a fragmented, blurred and deceptive faculty. In his musing on the postcard as a form of writing, Jacques Derrida argued that the immediacy and the public accessibility of the message in the postcard makes the text ultimately less important than the image, which is what remains when the card is resold in the antique shop.[29] Thus, the image is what ensures the postcard's afterlife, what carries it into the future. In contemporary art, the ability of the postcard to reactivate memories of place has been put to use by many other artists, including Tacita Dean, whose art commemorates the obsolescence of media and the relation between photography and time.[30] A work by Dean commissioned by dOCUMENTA (13) and exhibited in Kabul in 2012, for example, consists in a series of hand-coloured postcards of pre-war Kassel which produce a nostalgic reflection upon urban heritage [Fig. 5].[31] By contrast, Mir's postcards are not connected to a philatelic mania—although they may become collectibles or objects found in antique stalls in the future. *VENEZIA (all places contain all others)* refuses the nostalgic patina of

fig. 5
Tacita Dean, *c/o Jolyon, 2012,* Gouache on found postcards. Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery / Tacita Dean Studio

28
Christopher Bollen, "An interview with Aleksandra Mir", *The Believer,* January 1, 2004, https://believermag.com/an-interview-with-aleksandra-mir/, accessed April 2021.

29
A fragmented, literary work in itself, the postcard is a metacritical reflection on the impossibility of describing the self in anything but a discontinuous manner. Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* [1980], trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

30
On the importance of what Jeremy Cooper calls "manipulated postcards", see *Artists' Postcards*, 141-168.

31
The related publication was commissioned by dOCUMENTA (13) and the Goethe-Institut, Kabul and produced on the occasion of the exhibition at Queen's Palace, Bagh-eBabur in Kabul, Afghanistan. See Tacita Dean, *c/o Jolyon* (Kabul, June 20 - July 19, 2012), exh. cat. (Cologne: Walther Koenig, 2012).

old postcards and instead embraces the kitsch appearance of the cheerful tourist postcard to carry it into the future, and possibly question the very promise of that future. In this sense, Mir's work joins the history of the international exhibitions, which offered postcard souvenirs of the pavilions which visitors could collect in albums.[32] Instead of the memory of place, postcards of global shows carry the memory of locations which are "both specifically located and simultaneously diasporic", what Irit Rogoff calls "relational geographies".[33]

In this sense, Mir's work joined other meta-projects from the 53. Biennale. Escaping the naïve curatorial approach to globalisation, various works from national pavilions challenged the proposed model in subtle, clever ways. At the Giardini, Fiona Tan's film on Marco Polo in the Dutch pavilion, *Disorient*, and Steve McQueen's film for the British pavilion, *Giardini*, are exemplary of a strain of works which considered the spatial identity of Venice and the Biennale respectively.[34] More relevant in iconographic terms is the correspondence between Mir's work and John Baldessari's intervention for the main show, titled *Ocean and Sky (with Two Palm Trees)*, which played on the genre of the *veduta*. Baldessari had the façade of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni painted with an open view of an expanse of water, flanked by two palm trees, a reminder of California in Venice [Fig. 6].[35]

fig. 6
John Baldessari, *Ocean and sky (with Two Palm Trees),* Installation view, 53. International Art Exhibition, Giardini, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, 2009. Photo: Giorgio Zucchiatti © Courtesy Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia – ASAC.

32
See the example of the 1937 Paris world's fair discussed in Caroline Jones, *The Global Work of Art*, 76 (plate 21).

33
Irit Rogoff, "Geo-Cultures. Circuits of Art and Globalization", *Open*, no. 16 (2009): 114-115. For a critical history of the international exhibitions, see Anthony Gardner and Charles Green, *Biennials, Triennials and Documenta: The Exhibitions that Created Contemporary Art* (London: Wiley and Blackwell, 2016); and Elena Filipovic, Marieke Van Hal and Solveig Øvstebø, eds., *The Biennial Reader* (Ostfildern: Hatje Kantz, 2010).

34
That year was marked by projects about the Biennale: other similar works included Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's De novo and Haegue Yang's Condensation, as well as the work of Roman Ondak for the Czech/Slovak pavilion (Loop) and Doris Margreiter for the Austrian one (Pavilion), see Tiziana Migliore, "Steve McQueen, Giardini", in *Quaderni della Biennale. Sulla 53esima Biennale di Venezia* (Milano: et/al edizioni, 2011), 154.

35
From the catalogue entry: "Do we cherish the exuberance and sublime grandiosity of this misplaced vista in a city of vistas? Or are we astounded at the irreverence with which he has turned the façade of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni of the arts into a cheap, generic postcard?", Kim West, "John Baldessari", *La Biennale di Venezia. 53a Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte*, 6.

An unusually positive review described Birnbaum's "genial Biennale" as a show which "meanders around positions whose coordinates lie somewhere between the melancholy fog of Venice off-season and the photogenic glow of Venice Beach's shoreline", the latter being an allusion to Baldessari's work.[36] The mural painting's effect of displacement is well paired with Mir's work's effect of disruption, as both use water to reference Venice and create a collage of visual elements belonging to different locations. But while Baldessari's mural was quite minimalistic and inconspicuous, and was removed at the end of November, the postcards have a longer material afterlife, a fact which projects Mir's work into the future, eliciting anticipatory imaginings about the future for cities on water. From today's perspective, once the relational aspect of Mir's work has worn out, the theme of environmental risk is more easily readable than that of overtourism. Today, the ironic aesthetics of the souvenir which made the work so cheerful hand over to gloomier reflections about the future of coastal towns and the marine ecosystem on which these towns have depended for centuries. Ultimately, Mir's exploitation of the cheerful aspect of the postcard serves to posit Venice as the archetype of cities built on water, revealing that all sites depicted on the cards are equally at risk due to the global dimension of the economic and ecological crises.

4. Iterations and Afterlife

The story of Mir's work over fifteen years shows that postcard projects are less ephemeral than what the medium may have implied at first. While *VENEZIA (all places contain all others)* was an iteration of the original idea from 2005, a further iteration of the project reveals the fake waterscape postcard as a powerful device in contemporary art. Despite refusing all proposals to reproduce the project after 2009, in 2018 the artist accepted an invitation to make a third iteration of the project, using the same images she had used at the 53. Biennale, for an exhibition in Shanghai on the role of original and copy in contemporary art. Curated by Alessandro Michele and Maurizio Cattelan at the YUZ Museum, *The Artist is Present*, whose title replicates that of Marina Abramovic's performance at MoMA in New York in 2010, featured thirty-seven artists who either copied other artists, appropriated other works, or presented a new version of their own work from the past, as in the case of Mir.[37] For the Shanghai postcards, Mir recycled the same stock of images and the same design seen in the postcards for the Venice Biennale, but replaced the inscription [Fig. 7]. In Shanghai, the audience tended to take photos of the cards neatly displayed on narrow shelves and post them on social media rather than take away the cards themselves.[38] The digital postcard "posted" from another city built on water thus ensures, once more, the widest possible circulation of the problematic imagery of waterscapes. The ephemeral nature of the postcard as a disposable and insubstantial work on paper is contradicted once again by the endurance of the image in other forms.

36
Lynne Cooke, "Play Grounds", *Artforum* (September 2009): 237.

37
The format of the exhibition catalogue was referential in itself, being a "newspaper" called *The New York Times* with some articles on the ideas of the show.

38
"It has been ten years and I was curious to see how both time and geographical distance would change the work and the difference was radical. In Venice the VIP crowd jumped on the piece and 300,000 cards disappeared in the first 48 hours, while in Shanghai we had to explain to the more measured audience that it was OK to take one. A lot of people here photographed the work instead and spread it via social media, while that didn't even exist ten years ago", Jessica Xu, "Interview with Alexandra Mir", *Bazaar Men Style China*, December 2018, online here: https://aleksandramir.info/bibliography/xu-jessica-the-artist-is-presentq-a-with-aleksandra-mir-bazaar-men-style-china-shanghai-de, accessed May 2021.

fig. 7
Aleksandra Mir, *Shanghai,* Installation view, YUZ Museum, Shanghai, 2018. Photo courtesy: aleksandramir.info

More than any other medium, print is associated, since its origin in the late 15th century, with mobility and transience.[39] In this history, the postcard remains successful in conveying the power of print to travel. Its ability to reproduce popular imagery is predicated upon ephemerality. Even if today's internet environment has incorporated all previous media (as Marshall McLuhan had predicted), the particular format of the postcard may still convey the original illusion of straightforward communication through a photograph of place.[40] In an interview made on the occasion of the show in Shanghai, Mir discussed her prolonged interest in the traditions and technologies of printing, publishing and distribution: "I don't see those projects as less valuable than anything I have made in steel. In Venice I printed 1 million cards, which is the equivalent of 16 tonnes of paper, so it is actually a monumental piece of work".[41] Commenting on the nature of the postcard as a medium, she added: "Part of the trick is to make you believe that a postcard is something ephemeral, fragile and disposable, when in fact their combined volume and distribution might guarantee their longevity forever". The postcard format then raises questions about the visibility of contemporary art—often deemed as elitist and obscure—against more popular forms of collective "image-sharing". By virtue of its potential for reproduction and dissemination, in fact, the postcard has endured throughout the history of photography as a powerful vehicle for the discourse on memory and place. Mir's ephemeral work, thanks to its clever exploitation of practices of mobility and travel, turns out to have adapted well to the digital revolution which has occurred over the last fifteen years. Reinstating the power of the generic view of landmark sites to reactivate collective memories of place, Mir's postcard project in the context of the Venice Biennale joined a number of projects which have questioned the geographic situatedness of international art events and their contribution to the phenomenon of overtourism. At the same time, the large number of postcards printed in 2009 and the possibility of re-prints for other exhibitions questions the ephemeral nature of the postcard as an art form. The postcard is ephemeral—temporary and easily destroyed—only inasmuch as it is printed on a fragile support and it is cheap to produce, but turns into a truly monumental work of art when it exploits generic imagery and is diffused globally.

39
The literature on the origin of print as a medium to ease the circulation of images is vast. Among recent works on the topic, see at least Suzanne Karr Schmidt and Ed Wouk, eds., *Prints in Translation 1450-1750. Image, Materiality, Space* (New York and London: Routledge, 2017); Ruth E. Iskin and Britany Salsbury, eds., *Collecting Prints, Posters, and Ephemera. Perspectives in a Global World* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

40
Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964). For a recent take that considers the viral image in the internet era, see Valentina Tanni, *Memestetica* (Roma: NERO editions, 2020).

41
Jessica Xu, "Interview with Alexandra Mir".

Appendix

Aleksandra Mir, Artist's statement — received December 1, 2020

The project entailed the design, printing and free distribution of one million postcards, to be given away to the general public during the 2009 Venice Biennale.

100 Originals x print run of 10.000 each = 1.000.000 total.

Full color front / B/W back

The 100 motifs depicted a variety of waterways from around the world, overlaid with a graphic that spells out 'Venezia' in a variety of typical cheerful postcard styles. The generic photographs were sourced from a commercial stock agency and paid licensing for, and a graphic designer collaborated on the typeface. The work was sponsored by and printed at the Ringier Pressehaus, Zurich. This meant that two trucks had to deliver 6 tonnes of postcards to the exhibition venue in Venice, offloaded box by box and only accessible via boat, a logistical feat by the Biennale organisation.

The work also entailed the installation of a real Poste Italiane mailbox and the selling of stamps in the exhibition area, to provide an immediate tool for the physical diffusion of the work by the public to their relations around the world. (This was in fact the hardest thing to arrange as the postal service never had a fully serviced mailbox on the premises before).

Thus the canals of Venice extended out into the world's oceans, rivers, lakes, ponds. Venice in every molecule of the rain. The idea of waterways as a supranational entity mirrors patterns of globalisation: travel as a matter of course rather than exception, the erosion of the nation-state, and, conversely, its re-emergence as a brand to be marketed. Cultural identity as an effect of global movement rather than static nationality. Politics as pollution rather than border control.

The final objective of the work is as far reaching as where the public will eventually carry the cards. Venice is the world's most popular tourist destination and each visitor thus became a distributor, 'working' on behalf of the work. In time, 100 years from now, my hope is that a random flaneur will find a card in a shoebox labelled 'Venezia' at a bookseller on the Seine, and find themselves bewildered.

Because of the work's purely romantic ethos, I was also already well aware of the savvy and cynicism of a certain segment of the public. During the preview days 300,000 cards were already dispersed via the VIP audience, many of whom bagged them by the dozens. By September when the school trips started, the Biennale organisation was already portioning them out, and by October 1st was receiving hate mail from visitors who had read about the piece and couldn't find it any longer. Truth is, I could have printed 2-5-10 million, and they would have been gone as well. I don't mind the greedy accumulation, as sooner or later even these cards will disperse, as people get bored, clean house or die. But what happened next is more predictable. The cards became collector items and those who deemed themselves 'collectors' of the work started to hunt to complete their set to reach a full 100. I have received plenty of emails over the years, asking to complete their sets, or seen partial sets available on ebay. This is fine too, as I was ready so had made the decision on the outset of never having all 100 motifs available on any single day, strategically staggering the card distribution so nobody could ever have a full set. Instead, I held back a series of complete sets for myself, as a separate artist's edition, which after the original show cannot be repeated, has been collected with my sanction and exhibited as 'archive material' in showcases and behind glass at a number of museums, including MoMA, NY.

Over the years, I have also received numerous invitations by curators all over the world to remake the work for their location, France, Israel, LA, you name it... I always declined these offers as they didn't offer the work anything new and I effectively could be doing nothing for the rest of my career. In 2018 however, ten years had passed and I took up the offer by Maurizio Cattelan to remake a version for his show 'The Artist is Present' at the YUX Museum in Shanghai, a show that dealt specifically with the idea of the copy. I was curious as to how the work would operate in China, after the advent of Social Media and within a new generation. For this edition of the work, 300,000 cards were printed, 50 of the same 100 originals were used, the same graphic templates employed and the word just changed from Venezia to Shanghai: https://aleksandramir.info/projects/shanghai/

Note that one more much earlier version of the work exists, created with the BAWAG Foundation in Bremen, which holds one of the main artists' publishing collections in the world. I originally created 8 cards for an exhibition there in 2005: https://aleksandramir.info/projects/bremen/

END.

This statement has been updated.

Author's Biography

Camilla Pietrabissa is a postdoctoral fellow in the History of Art at Università Iuav di Venezia. She teaches the History of Early Modern Art at Bocconi University in Milan. She studies the representation of landscape in Western art, the visual culture of the 18th century, and the history and theory of drawing from nature. Her recent publications include an essay on landscapes in the catalogue *Quayola* (2021) and 'The eternal event. Urban void and image temporality from the Renaissance to 2020' (*Visual Culture Studies*, 2021), and she is a regular contributor of The *Burlington Magazine* and *Antinomie.it*. She is currently researching the visual culture of the *veduta* in Venice in relation to geographic knowledge and media technologies.

Jacob Lund

Exhibition as Reflexive Transformation

Abstract

Taking Forensic Architecture's project *Triple-Chaser* as its point of departure the article is a theoretical exploration of the role of exhibition in contemporary aesthetic and artistic practices. It claims that works of art are capable of producing a reflexive transformation of our non-artistic everyday lifeworld (cf. Juliane Rebentisch) and argues that the act of exhibition, of making visible or perceptible, is a decisive element in such a reflexive transformation of the non-aesthetic and non-artistic social reality that the art work addresses or in which it embeds itself. The act of exhibition makes something/the work present but, at the same time it creates a distance, precisely because the appearance of the work has been arranged and addressed to someone/us; what is exhibited is given as having been organised and deliberately made available to appear to us (cf. Tristan Garcia). This distance installs a difference, a pensive image in the language of Jacques Rancière, which is what allows for reflexive transformation. When Forensic Architecture, for instance, make use of reenactments in their investigations of human rights violations, real space is turned into a model of itself, and a negotiation of what it means can begin. An agency like Forensic Architecture, however, operates in a number of different forums to communicate and exhibit their investigations, of which the forum of art is but one as they consider each forum, i.e. place of exhibition, as a distorting lens of its own kind. A decisive aspect of what then still makes their work—and many other contemporary practices that expand their field of operation beyond the dedicated spaces of art—*aesthetic* is a certain mode of exhibition or exposition and address, which invites the addressees to take part in a process of sense-making.

Keywords

Exhibition, Aesthetic Practice, Artistic Practice, Political Aesthetics, Political Art, Forensic Architecture, Juliane Rebentisch, Jacques Rancière

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Exhibition as Reflexive Transformation

Jacob Lund

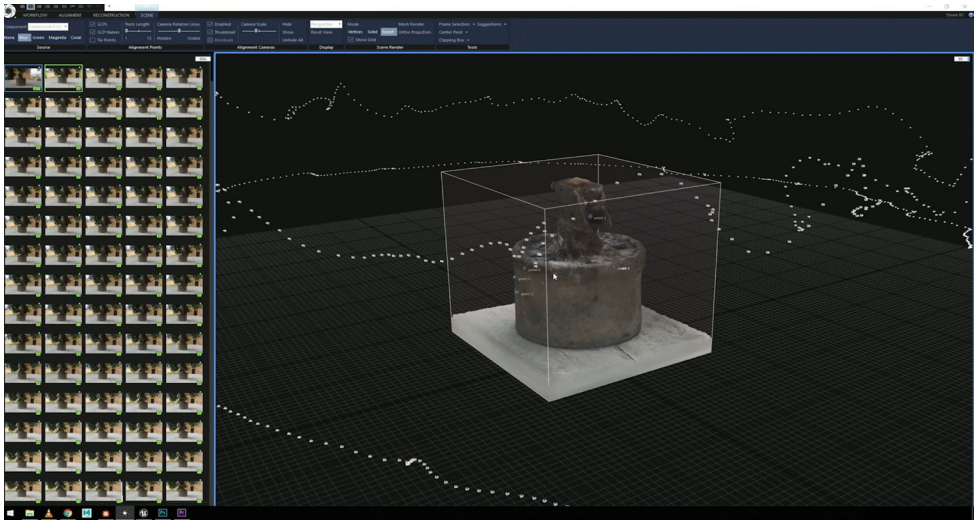
I.

In response to an invitation to participate in the 2019 Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the London based research agency Forensic Architecture carried out a research project called *Triple-Chaser*, the story of which they presented in partnership with Laura Poitras' Praxis Films as a video investigation that premiered at the biennial.[1] In November 2018 US border police fired tear gas grenades at civilians. Photo documentation shows that many of those grenades were manufactured by the Safariland Group, which is owned by Warren B. Kanders, then also vice chair of the board of trustees of the Whitney Museum of American Art. *Triple-Chaser* is a Safariland manufactured grenade and the investigation of Forensic Architecture consisted in training computer vision classifiers to detect the canisters of this tear gas grenade among the millions of images shared on the internet, using digital models and photorealistic synthetic environments. As part of their research, they also exposed Kanders' connection to the violence committed by the Israeli military against Palestinians in Gaza, through the US bullet manufacturer Sierra Bullets, as well as—at the request of Decolonize This Place who led weeks of protest against Kanders' connection to the Whitney—the use of Safariland products by police during civil unrest in Puerto Rico in 2018. Due to the lack of action by the Whitney in response to the allegations against Kanders, Forensic Architecture withdrew from the biennial along with several other artists. Five days later Kanders resigned from the museum's board of trustees following the protests and Forensic Architecture rescinded their request to have their work withdrawn from the exhibition. A couple of weeks further on, when the Triple-Chaser tear gas grenade was used by police against Black Lives Matter activists across the US, Kanders announced that he would divest Safariland of crowd-control products divisions, including those that sell tear gas.

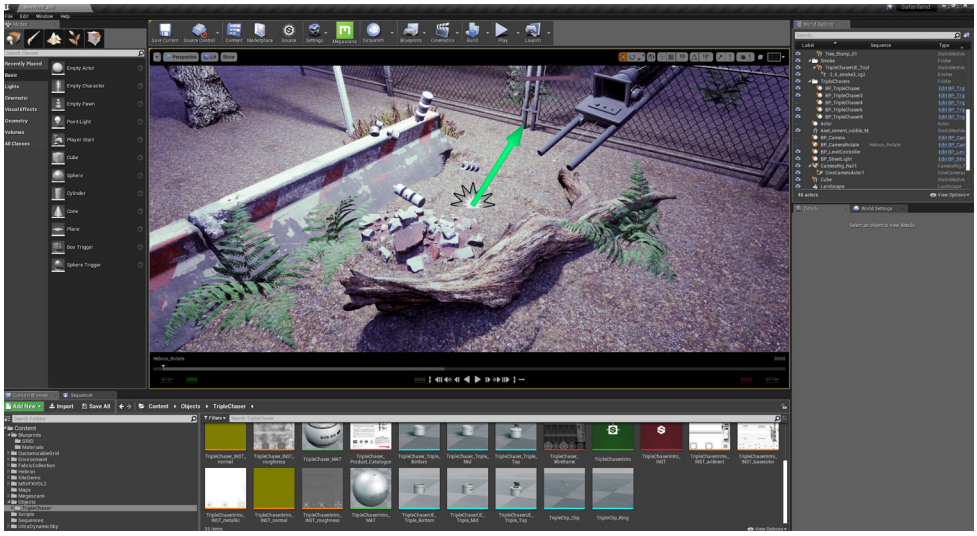
1 The video is publicly accessible at the website of Forensic Architecture where the project is also described in more detail: https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/triple-chaser, accessed October 2021. My description is lifted from the website which also links to the media coverage of the project.

Forensic Architecture, *Triple-Chaser*
During the process of training a 'computer vision' classifier, bounding boxes and 'masks' tell the classifier where in the image the Triple-Chaser grenade exists.

Forensic Architecture, *Triple-Chaser*
Using the Unreal engine, Forensic Architecture generated thousands of photorealistic 'synthetic' images, situating the Triple-Chaser in approximations of real-world environments.



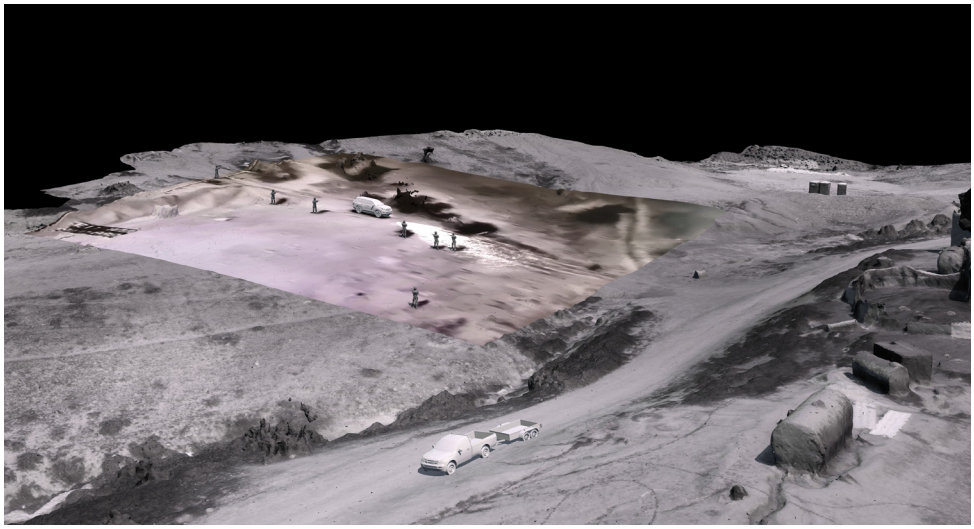
Forensic Architecture, Triple-Chaser
Forensic Architecture asked activists around the world to find, and film, examples of the Triple Chaser grenade. They used photogrammetry to turn those images into a precise 3D model.



Forensic Architecture, Triple-Chaser
The Unreal game engine allows Forensic Architecture to set parameters for variables such as sun position, camera focal length, and dirt on the grenade.
© Forensic Architecture/Praxis Films, 2019

Forensic Architecture, Triple-Chaser
Using the Unreal engine, Forensic Architecture generated thousands of photorealistic 'synthetic' images, situating the Triple-Chaser in approximations of real-world environments. Coloured 'masks' tell the classifier where in the image the Triple-Chaser grenade exists.
© Forensic Architecture/Praxis Films, 2019

Forensic Architecture, The Murder of Halit Yozgat. 77sqm_9:26min
A composite of Forensic Architecture's physical and virtual reconstructions of the internet cafe in which the murder of Halit Yozgat on 6 April 2006 occurred.
© Forensic Architecture, 2017



Forensic Architecture, Killing in Umm al-Hiran
Projecting thermal footage from a police helicopter establishes the spatial relationship of figures and vehicles, reflected in a photogrammetry 3D site model.
© Forensic Architecture, 2018

The *Triple-Chaser* case raises a number of questions about the relationship between art, aesthetics, society and reality in contemporary practices and the function of exhibition in this relationship. Forensic Architecture is an agency that does not identify itself as "merely" comprising artists but is composed instead of an interdisciplinary team of architects, filmmakers, artists, scientists, coders, journalists and lawyers. The practice of forensic architecture consists in the production of architectural evidence in the form of building surveys, physical or digital models, animations, video and maps of various forms, and in the presentation of this evidence in juridical, political and—as in the case of *Triple-Chaser*—artistic forums.[2] With reference to the etymology of the term "forensics" that originates from the Latin *forensis*, which means "pertaining to the forum", they regard their practice as a mode of public address.[3] It is also, as stressed by the founder and head Eyal Weizman, an *aesthetic* practice "because it depends on both the modes and the means by which reality is sensed and presented publicly".[4] Following Bruno Latour, the architect and theorist understands aesthetics as "the ability to perceive and to be concerned".[5] Even though Weizman calls each forum, including that of art, for instance the Whitney, a distorting lens of its own kind,[6] politically and socially engaged artistic practices as well as the kind of aesthetic practice undertaken by Forensic Architecture necessarily involve an exhibitionary dimension as part of their public address. What Forensic Architecture tries to avoid, however, is to be in the hands of a single one of any of these forums.[7] Therefore the Whitney exhibition was not restricted to the museum's dedicated exhibition rooms. Not complying with the structures set up by the Whitney as a platform for presentation, the exhibition took also place in the lobby, online and with Decolonize This Place friends demonstrating in front of Warren Kanders' townhouse in Greenwich Village.

II.

If the Western modern art museum was founded on the separation of its exhibits from their ritualistic and everyday functions, granting them autonomy by disconnecting them from the social reality surrounding the museum, then how are we to think of contemporary artistic and aesthetic practices like Forensic Architecture that constantly move beyond the forum of art and perforate its borders? A case such as *Triple-Chaser* seems particularly suited to lend itself to Lucy Steeds' suggestion—with reference to Walter Benjamin's notions of *Ausstellbarkeit* and *Ausstellungswert* in "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility"—to analyse art based on its exposability, understood as "its capacity to produce *sociopolitical entanglement*".[8] In contrast to most modern art works, a contemporary art work is often

2
Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability* (New York: Zone Books, 2017), 9 and 64.

3
Weizman, *Forensic Architecture*, 65. Apart from the etymological connection between forensics, forensis and forum, it is worth noticing that we not only use the word "exhibit" for an object that is shown to the public in a museum or gallery. It also designates a thing used as evidence in a juridical context.

4
Ibid., 94. The notion of aesthetics involved in the practice of Forensic Architecture is elaborated theoretically in Matthew Fuller and Eyal Weizman, *Investigative Aesthetics: Conflicts and Commons in the Politics of Truth* (London: Verso, 2021).

5
Ibid., 95. Not least Bruno Latour's article "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik, or How to Make Things Public", seems to have been a major influence on the conception of the overall project of Forensic Architecture, in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ZKM exhibition catalogue edited by Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2005), 4-31.

6
Eyal Weizman, "Forensic Architecture", online lecture as part of the series *Architectures of the New Curatorial* at the Royal College of Art London, December 10, 2020.

7
Weizman, *Forensic Architecture.*

8
Lucy Steeds, "Exposability: On the Taking-Place in Future of Art", in Tristan Garcia and Vincent Normand, eds., *Theater, Garden, Bestiary: A Materialist History of Exhibitions* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019), 75-84, in particular 75 (italics in the original).

distributed across different instantiations, elements and appearances. In socially engaged art practices, for instance, the events by which the work of art becomes public may be distributed across time and space: social interactions in physical spaces with and without an audience; online and offline texts, films, photos, interviews and different kinds of documentation that function as an integral part of the work rather than "extra-diegetic" re-presentations of it.[9]

As I will try to argue in the following, the moment of appearing, of becoming visible, is a fundamental part of the creation and the production of the art work. The ostensive, which entails the act of showing, displaying, exhibiting and demonstrating something, is an indispensable part of the manifestation of any art work—contemporary as well as modern—and hence a condition for its being perceived and experienced. This is not yet, however, what makes the thing being shown art or an aesthetic object, be it physical or not. What makes it artistic or at least aesthetic is a certain openness with regard to the meaning or signification of the thing that appears, which ignites a process of reflection that ultimately is a negotiation of the world and how we live in it. In other words, there is a decisive difference between exhibition as presentation of an object or phenomenon "as it is" (non-artistic) and exhibition as presentation of an object or phenomenon as an object of reflection that ignites a process of sense-making or renegotiation of the meaning generally attributed to the object. The latter is a socialising image practice which creates what Weizman calls an "open verification" where "[v]erification relates to truth not as a noun or as an essence, but as a practice, one that is contingent, collective, and poly-perspectival".[10]

We live in a time when artistic and aesthetic practices resist the categories of modern art theory, when traditional genres of art have been dissolved in all kinds of hybrid forms, and when art increasingly destabilises the border between art and non-art in endeavours to address urgent questions about climate change, migration, violence, human rights, decolonisation, racism, sexism, and so on.[11] The destabilisation of the border between art and non-art, between art and political reality, of course also involves the ways in which these practices are exhibited and our art theoretical notions of "exhibition". In Kim West's reading of Jean Davallon, "an exhibition creates a separate symbolic space, but one featuring 'real' objects rather than representations [...] the exhibited objects always retain a connection to their 'external' reality, transcending their adherence to the exhibition's symbolic dimension".[12] My point is that the double-articulation of the objects as real and symbolic through an exhibitionary act is a decisive element in making a negotiation of reality possible. The act of exhibition makes something/the work present but, at the same time it creates a distance, precisely because the appearance of the work has been arranged and addressed to someone/us; what is exhibited

9
See Kim West, "Concepts for the Critical Study of Art Exhibitions as Media", in *Theater, Garden, Bestiary: A Materialist History of Exhibitions*, 45-55: especially 48: "the complex of apparatuses in relation to which exhibitionary apparatuses today achieve their definition is the network of digital media, understood in a wide sense: as the matrix of ubiquitous, interconnected devices and platforms, which forms a global infrastructure of shared information standards and ideals, synchronised with the production models of contemporary capitalism, imposing its rhythms and demands on social, cultural, and political life".

10
Eyal Weizman, "Open Verification", *Becoming Digital*, e-flux Architecture (June 2019): https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/becoming-digital/248062/open-verification/, accessed October 2021. See also Eyal Weizman (in conversation with Jacob Lund), "Inhabiting the Hyper-Aesthetic Image", *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 61-62 (2021): 230-243: 236ff.

11
Oliver Marchart, for instance, states "[A]rtistic practices have emerged for which it is more important to be connected to political practices than to art institutions themselves, which in turn, necessarily changes our concept of the public sphere—and of the institution as well". *Conflictual Aesthetics: Artistic Activism and the Public Sphere* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019), 144.

12
Kim West, "Concepts for the Critical Study of Art Exhibitions as Media", 45. West's observations are based on Jean Davallon's *L'exposition à l'œuvre: Stratégies de communication et médiation symbolique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), 11.

is given as having been organised and deliberately made available to appear to us.[13] This making present of our distance to the object installs a difference and an indeterminacy with regard to its status and meaning. In the language of Jacques Rancière the object becomes a pensive image in a zone of indeterminacy between passive representation and active operation, between non-art and art.[14] The creation of such difference and indeterminacy is what allows for a reflexive transformation and questioning of the status quo, of hegemonic, authoritative narratives about the world and what is.

For a while now we have been thinking about exhibitions as events through which (most) art becomes known.[15] "[E]xhibitions of art are, by virtue of their visible prominence, structurally intrinsic and perhaps psychologically necessary to any full understanding of most art. Exhibitions can be understood then as the *medium* of contemporary art in the sense of being its main agency of communication—the body and voice from which an authoritative character emerges", claims Bruce W. Ferguson.[16] In addition, Kim West stresses that exhibitions are the media of art's public realisation: "as media, art exhibitions should be conceived of as *affirmative in their mediating functions*. They are the spatial and technical arrangements through which artworks are publicly realised".[17]

The question then is what constitutes an exhibition? Does it have to take on a more or less institutionalised form, in a space or at a site dedicated to art, like the ones Ferguson writes about? What is the relationship between the work of art and its exhibition? Are they still distinguishable? When does the exhibition of a work of art begin? When does a work of art become "an object of appreciation" (in the terminology of George Dickie's institutional theory of art)?[18] I am in many ways sympathetic to Ferguson's analogy between an exhibition of art and an utterance or a set of utterances and to his proposal to see the art exhibition as the speech act of an institution, but what I am after here is not "how art serves exhibitions as their very element of speech".[19] I am interested in 'the public realisation' of art both within and beyond the authoritative art museum institution as I see the work of art as being inescapably bound to an act of exhibition, a making-public. In other words, the exhibitionary element is an integral part of the very conception of the work of art. It is not something that is added later. It is produced through the work of art's mode and structure of address.

As James Voorhies remarks in relation to Carsten Höller's exhibition *Experience* at the New Museum in New York 2011-2012:

> Höller's exhibition demonstrates the fugitive position a critical attitude faces in the midst of globalised contemporary art, an industry that reduces the potency of critique through absorption and the need to produce experiences for generating capital. It also demonstrates that critique cannot ascribe such an obvious cause-and-effect rela-

13
Tristan Garcia, "Neither Gesture nor Work of Art: Exhibition as Disposing for Appearance", in *Theater, Garden, Bestiary: A Materialist History of Exhibitions*, 181-194: 183.

14
Jacques Rancière, "The Pensive Image", in *The Emancipated Spectator* [2008], trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009), 107-132.

15
Bruce W. Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg and Sandy Nairne (eds.), "Introduction", in *Thinking about Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996), 2.

16
Bruce W. Ferguson, "Exhibition Rhetorics: Material speech and utter sense", in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, 175-190: 176.

17
Kim West, "Concepts for the Critical Study of Art Exhibitions as Media", 45.

18
Cf. George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

19
Ferguson, 183-184.

> tionship to its intentions. It should arrest the spectator's attention by modeling situations of strangeness and confusion that disrupt expectations without literally instructing how participation transpires.[20]

While I largely agree with Voorhies in this analysis, I would perhaps be more careful about differentiating too clearly between art and its exhibition or being made public. For instance, when he describes an approach that prioritises the spectator, and that "utilises the exhibition as a productive way to explore and expand what, where, and how art reaches its public".[21] I argue that the exhibition-form is constitutive of the work of art as work of art—which is why "exposition" might be a more appropriate term than "exhibition" as the latter may be taken to refer perhaps to something pre-existing, i.e. a re-presentation or display. Any work of art has a structure of address—an *Appellstruktur* in the terminology of Wolfgang Iser—that informs the ways in which it can be received.[22] It is thus, in a fundamental way, addressing and exposing itself to a public of indefinite strangers.[23] Subsequently, the curator can make it address a public at another level and in any given context, but the first exhibitionary moment already occurs in and through the address of the work "itself"—a work of art always already involves an exhibitionary act in its initial address to someone: a you, an audience, readers, listeners, spectators, participants, collaborators. It is open to be "received" by anybody who is able to enter into its structure of enunciation, and who will actualise or concretise it.

III.

What, then, has happened to art, and what is it that still qualifies the politically and socially engaged practices—of which 2018 Turner Prize nominee Forensic Architecture is an example—as artistic?

The past 20-30 years have seen thoroughgoing changes within art that have made it difficult to recognise its works as works of art in modern terms. Art can no longer be placed in specific genres and categories belonging to particular art forms; often it is no longer expressed in a delimited work, and is hard to distinguish from its surroundings and what is not art. Modern ideas about delimited works, a shared project and a shared progressive history, are no longer valid, or at least they are no longer monopolistic as conceptual framework for the work of art.[24] The concepts and categories that were developed to describe and analyse modern art seem to have lost their explanatory force in relation to the art that concerns and speaks to our contemporary times, which is why we to a large extent have replaced the term "modern art" with "contemporary art" to designate it. The emergence of contemporary art therefore necessitates a paradigm shift within art studies where the very notion of art is at stake, including the ways in which it is exhibited and the ways in which it involves a public.

During the transition from modern to contemporary art the relationship between artistic practice, sense-making, and the sociopolitical reality, in which art takes place and by which it is nourished, has undergone substantial changes. In order to catch up with contemporary art the disciplines of art history and aesthetics therefore have to revise a number of their traditional notions concerning, among others, the historicity of art, the category of work, artistic autono-

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20 James Voorhies, *Beyond Objecthood: The Exhibition as a Critical Form Since 1968* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2017), 10.

21 Voorhies, *Beyond Objecthood*, 12.

22 Cf. Wolfgang Iser, *Die Appellstruktur der Texte. Unbestimmtheit als Wirkungsbedingung literarischer Prosa* (Konstanz: Verlag der Druckerei und Verlagsanstalt Konstanz Universitätsverlag, 1970).

23 Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics", *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 59-90.

24 Cf. Jacob Lund, *Anachrony, Contemporaneity and Historical Imagination* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019).

my and how these are interrelated. Such revision will help understand how contemporary artistic practices create meaning in relation to the non-artistic societal reality in which they operate, and how the otherwise highly diverse practices and works we designate as contemporary art function *as art*.

From the perspective of the theory, history and critique of art the social relevance of contemporary art is not only based on the urgent issues it raises: climate change, racism, human rights, and so on, but also on *how* these issues are raised and made public through an *artistic* generation of meaning. In contrast to a certain classical understanding of the avant-garde I do not see the aesthetic as becoming political through an art that lets itself dissolve in everyday life. The aesthetic is political precisely because of its ability to differentiate itself from the normally inconspicuous organisation of our everyday lifeworld and through such differentiation provoke us to critically reflect on this organisation—which is what makes a certain exhibitionary act of decisive importance.[25]

Contemporary works of art are difficult to recognise as art under the perspective of modern aesthetic theory because at a formal, objective level they can neither be included under the tradition of a particular art form, nor do they limit themselves to the traditional artistic media, but instead assimilate new technologies and industrial modes of production, among other things, in the artistic practice—for instance when Forensic Architecture trains an algorithm to detect *Triple-Chaser* tear gas canisters while simultaneously shedding critical light on that very technology.[26] When they not only evade comparison with art of the past but also seem boundless in relation to their non-artistic outside and the non-aesthetic lifeworld, it in many cases becomes unclear what forms part of the work and what does not. These boundless works, which in particular began to appear in the 1960s—performance, fluxus, minimalism, conceptual art, et al.—do not enroll in the developmental history of the traditional art forms and they are no longer given as something *objectively* defined.[27]

Given that open and boundless works have made it impossible to connect artistic autonomy to the category of work, we need to revise our notion of artistic autonomy if such an idea is to maintain any usefulness in a critical understanding of contemporary art.[28] I subscribe to Rebentisch's analysis that the art theoretical answer to the question of the continuation of artistic autonomy in contemporary art lies in the coupling of the boundless form with the effects of art. This means that we have to move our focus from the work as an organic, distinct unity to the ways in which it interacts with its surroundings and experiencing subjectivities, and that we have to consider the specificity of the aesthetic as characterised by a particular relation between sense-making subjects and objects open to sense-making that mutually affect each other. The contemporary work of art depends on the subjects who take part in it, and it is, so to speak, not until in and through this participation that it is realised as work. The spectators thereby include their contemporary social reality in the structure of the work. In the process of sense-making they make their own associations and dissociations based on their particular spaces of experience.[29] An example of how the work is linked to

25
Cf. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* [2000], trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), and Juliane Rebentisch, *Theorien der Gegenwartskunst – zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2013); Juliane Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art* [2003], trans. Daniel Hendrickson with Gerrit Jackson (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012); and *The Art of Freedom: On the Dialectics of Democratic Existence* [2011], trans. Joseph Ganahl (Cambridge: Polity, 2016). These and the following points are heavily influenced by Rebentisch's work.

26
Eyal Weizman (in conversation with Jacob Lund), "Inhabiting the Hyper-Aesthetic Image", 240.

27
Rebentisch, *Theorien der Gegenwartskunst*, passim.

28
For an analysis of autonomy and contemporary aesthetic practices, see also Sven Lütticken, *Cultural Revolution: Aesthetic Practice after Autonomy* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017).

29
Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 1-23.

the specificity of the political moment of its realisation could be Tania Bruguera's *political timing specific art*. According to Bruguera,

> Political-timing-specific art doesn't simply address the news cycle. It's also about understanding how, under certain circumstances, politics can define the aesthetic. This kind of art practice embraces the fact that the work will not have a stable meaning, because this is how politics operates—tackling perceptions as they unfold in real time and mobilising the emotional landscape these perceptions generate.[30]

The autonomy of art therefore has to be understood as something experiential: not to abandon the category of work but to redefine it as a dynamic process in which the aesthetic is no longer separated from the non-aesthetic as something objectifiably different, but where the aesthetic consists in a reflexive transformation of the non-aesthetic.[31] The work of art consists not only of its physical presence, but also of its senses and the values which are inscribed in it, and those in which it is inscribed. Politically-timing-specific it takes part in the unfolding of the present.[32]

Contemporary aesthetic practices thus also challenge the ways in which the sphere of art is traditionally granted autonomy. Discussing Rancière's philosophy of emancipation and the celebration of openness, indeterminacy and inefficacy in his account of the aesthetic experience, Sven Lütticken convincingly suggests that "the aesthetic is precisely the domain where a 'politics of the sensible' can unfold that is not to be judged exclusively or primarily by its degree of immediate social efficacy".[33] This, according to Lütticken, means that

> '[a]esthetic art' is aesthetic practice to the extent that it questions and challenges the relative autonomy of art. The aesthetic is the constant questioning of art and, more precisely, of claims for art's autonomy, counteracting its reduction from persistent problem to ideological given. This is why the comfortable assumption that art is structurally autonomous ultimately leads to aesthetic attrition, as in a lot of late modernist painting. The aesthetic thus understood always returns to haunt limited conceptions or forms of autonomous art. If the aesthetic problematises the relationship of autonomy and heteronomy, then this means that an act or, beyond that, a praxis can be termed aesthetic insofar as it lets autonomy appear sensibly as a problem in a world where subjectivities and objectifications are profoundly entangled, where different agencies coexist and collide.[34]

In the analytical approach to contemporary artistic practices, there is therefore also a need to revise what we understand by the formal aspects of the work of art. The formal does not merely relate to a compositional manipulation of a number of abstract visual or physical properties within a closed and purely self-referential system. Many contemporary aesthetic and artistic practices—including Forensic Architecture and for instance different kinds of socially engaged art—operate

30
Tania Bruguera, "Notes on Political Timing Specificity", *Artforum* 57, no. 9 (2019): https://www.artforum.com/print/201905/notes-on-political-timing-specificity-79513, accessed October 2021. See also Claire Bishop, "Rise to the Occasion", *Artforum* 57, no. 9 (2019): https://www.artforum.com/print/201905/claire-bishop-on-the-art-of-political-timing-79512, acessed October 2021.

31
Rebentisch, *Theorien der Gegenwartskunst*, 40-57, and Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics.*

32
Matthew Fuller and Eyal Weizman, *Investigative Aesthetics*, 221.

33
Sven Lütticken, *Cultural Revolution: Aesthetic Practice after Autonomy* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017), 13-14.

34
Lütticken, *Cultural Revolution*, 14.

through and with a highly complex formal system, which, in the words of Grant Kester, "is structured through somatic, social, physical and verbal interaction that is inter-subjective and also directed at specific institutional and discursive structures".[35] Contemporary artistic creations not only integrate or include thematic areas of the non-artistic social lifeworld, but also formally open themselves up to these areas—for instance Jakob Jakobsen's *Hospital for Self Medication*, an alternative to the official hospital that is open for experimentation in care and treatment—which means that the question of the relationship between art and non-art arises in a new way. The contemporary artistic practices in question here generate a special experience that relates reflexively to the experiences and perceptions that are attached to the different areas of our lifeworld in which they intervene or to which they relate.[36]

IV.

Challenges to conventional forms of presenting art and its ideas to the public, guided by ideologies of modernity, have become more and more fundamental since Robert Smithson's non-sites in the 1960s. We therefore need to revise some of the basic notions and categories through which we understand art, in order to bring our theories up to speed with contemporary artistic and curatorial practice. On the other hand, we should not lose sight of the exhibitionary aspect of art as that aspect is still, I claim, one of the defining characteristics of art: when dissolved in the lifeworld, at best, art becomes activism (caring for how we live together), at worst, it becomes entertainment (addressing consumers rather than what Jacques Rancière would call emancipated spectators). The Latin root of the noun "exhibition", exhibere, means "to hold out". I hope to have demonstrated that the exhibition and making perceptible of the work is crucial to its ability to create a reflexive transformation of the non-aesthetic and non-artistic spheres of the lifeworld in which it embeds itself or at which it is directed. The act of exhibition is simultaneously making present and creating distance. This distance installs a difference, which makes reflexive transformations of our shared reality possible. When Forensic Architecture, for instance, to return to our point of departure, make use of reenactments in their investigations of human rights violations—and address these reenactments to a public—real space is turned into a model of itself, and a negotiation of how this reality should be perceived, and what sense to make of it, can begin.

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35 Grant Kester, "The Limitations of the Exculpatory Critique", *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics*, no. 53 (2017), 73-98: 97.

36 Rebentisch, *Theorien der Gegenwartskunst*, 117f.

Author's Biography

Jacob Lund is Associate Professor of Aesthetics and Culture and Director of the research program *Contemporary Aesthetics and Technology* at Aarhus University. He is also Editor-in-Chief of *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics*. From 2015 to 2020 he was engaged in the research project *The Contemporary Condition* (funded by the Danish Council for Independent Research), which focused on the concept of contemporaneity and changes in our experiences of time as these might be seen to be registered in contemporary art. The spring of 2022 he embarked on a new four-year research project on *Artistic Practice under Contemporary Conditions* (funded by the Novo Nordisk Foundation). Lund has published widely within aesthetics, art studies, critical theory, and comparative literature on topics such as image-politics, subjectivity, memory, mediality, enunciation, and contemporaneity. His book *The Changing Constitution of the Present: Essays on the Work of Art in Times of Contemporaneity* is forthcoming with Sternberg Press in 2022.

Adelaide Duarte and Lígia Afonso

Triple Trouble: Biennials and Art Fairs Under Discussion. Reviewing Three Books

Abstract

There is a growing number of sources on the subjects of biennials and fairs. Reviewing three recently published books about art fairs and biennials presents us an opportunity to discuss fresh research on openly market-driven exhibitions (art fairs) and ostensibly less commercial ventures (biennials and the large-scale exhibitions). Arguing for the independence of biennials from the art market, and benefiting from a multidisciplinary perspective, the three publications add innovative knowledge to an issue that still arouses some criticism. *Double Trouble in Exhibiting the Contemporary: Fairs and Biennials* edited by Cristina Baldacci, Clarissa Ricci and Angela Vettese; *From Roman Feria to Global Art Fair, From Olympia Festival to Neo-liberal Biennial. On the 'Biennialization' of Art Fairs and the 'Fairization' of Biennials*, by Paco Barragán; and *Biennials. The Exhibitions we Love to Hate* by Rafal Niemojewski, will be here analysed in terms of their structure and their contribution to the subject.

Keywords

Art Fairs, Biennials, Biennialization, Exhibitions, Contemporary

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Triple Trouble: Biennials and Art Fairs Under Discussion. Reviewing Three Books

Adelaide Duarte and Lígia Afonso

1. The theme of art fairs and biennials

2022 is a remarkable year with respect to biennials, insofar as the pandemic forced some of the most relevant events of this kind to coincide in a single year following their earlier postponement: the Venice Biennale, documenta of Kassel, Manifesta in Pristina, Istanbul Biennial and the Berlin Biennial. These are all major platforms for the validation of the latest artistic trends in the midst of notable artworld agents and an international audience. If contemporary art lovers add the Art Basel fair, and the newest Paris + Art Basel to this grouping, we find an experience for travellers in search of iconic large-scale exhibitions not unlike the historical Grand Tour, following the original idea of the historical cultural education of the upper classes from the 17th century onward.

In addition to this bumper 2022 calendar are a growing number of sources on the subjects of biennials and fairs. This review of three recently published books about art fairs and biennials shows we are experiencing a period of prolific growth in their popularity. This presents us with an opportunity to discuss fresh research on openly market-driven exhibitions (art fairs) and ostensibly fewer commercial ventures (biennials and the large-scale exhibitions). These publications reveal new perspectives and theoretical outlooks that scholars and independent researchers bring to a wider readership beyond academics and students, examining similarities in the infrastructure underpinning these events, their strategies, formats and different features, and the 'blurred boundaries' between them. Theoreticians and practitioners have been compelled to reevaluate the inherent complexities of art fairs and biennials following the transformation of the contemporary art system over time, the advent of a global scale in the art world since the year 2000, and the general global dissemination of art fairs and biennials. This involves a recognition of the fluidity of the roles of the various actors in the market, the growing use of digital commercial tools, the circulation and reception of artworks and the spread of information: issues which have been placed in the spotlight through archival research, revision of primary sources and catalogues, and a reframing of history.

These three books offer an opportunity to dig further down into this topic. Arguing for the independence of biennials from the art market, and benefiting from a multidisciplinary perspective, the three publications add innovative knowledge to an issue that still arouses some criticism. *Double Trouble in Exhibiting the Contemporary: Fairs and Biennials* is edited by three scholars, Cristina Baldacci, Clarissa Ricci and Angela Vettese, who each have theoretical expertise in the field of

large-scale events. The volume gathers various academic contributions from an international conference in Bologna in 2018. *From Roman Feria to Global Art Fair, From Olympia Festival to Neo-liberal Biennial. On the 'Biennialization' of Art Fairs and the 'Fairization' of Biennials* is by Paco Barragán, a curator with substantial experience curating art fairs and in theoretical reflection through various published books and articles. *Biennials. The Exhibitions we Love to Hate* is by Rafal Niemojewski, a cultural producer and scholar of contemporary art and its institutions. As a specialist on the subject of the biennial, Niemojewski has been working in the Biennial Foundation since its inception and became the organisation's director in 2016.

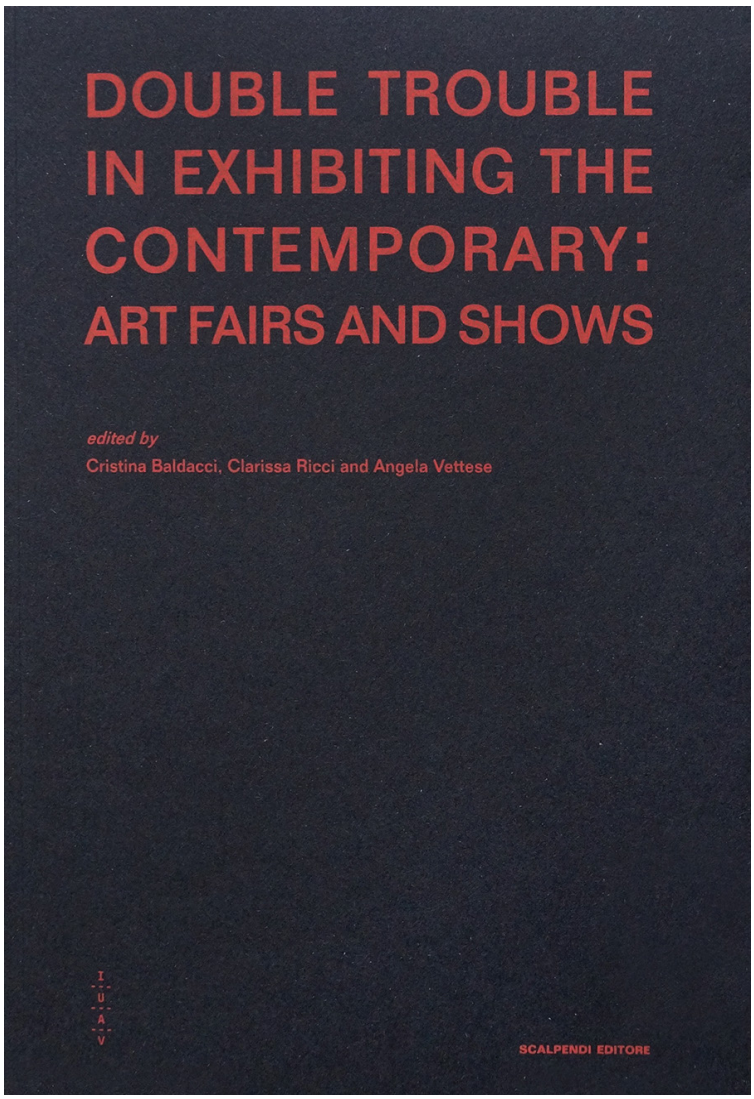
2. The Books' Structure

2.1 *Double Trouble in Exhibiting the Contemporary: Fairs and Biennials*

The book is organised into three chapters: the first two with three articles each, the last chapter with four. Contributions appear to be well balanced. The main focus is on the intersections between the art market and biennials and large-scale exhibitions, for which the authors use archival documentation, catalogues, academic papers, newspaper articles and a comprehensive chronologically assembled range of sources.

The book starts by examining an ambiguous feature of the current art system: the expected distinction between biennials and art fairs regarding market issues. The provocative question the authors raise – *Why then not go back to selling artworks openly as it was for early biennials?* – can be perceived as a guide to their chosen perspective, highlighting the historically distrustful relationship between the art market and the art exhibition as they grow increasingly alike.

Angela Vettese introduces the subject with the article entitled "Entre le Chien et Loup: Fairs and Life Cycle in Contemporary Art". The author assumes that the contemporary art fair is the main stage to forge an artist's path. Her argument begins at the art fair's role in promoting the artist's career, criticising the normalisation of permeability with regards to actors' continuously changing roles. The author stresses the dealers' initiatives in legitimising aesthetics that are not so "palatable", such as conceptual art or the Zero group, or even the market's effort to sell particularly challenging art such as Christo and Jeanne-Claude's environmental statements. Vettese underlines the need for an intersection between the market and other legitimising factors such as criticism or referential museum exhibitions to validate artists. Gerard Richter is the main example given by the author of the osmosis between market, exhibitions and criticism, an argument reinforced with up-to-date data. The author uses the idea of the "life cycle" to understand the interest art arouses, the innovation strategies followed, and the psychology of art consumers, concluding with a close reading that determines the "life cycle" of an artist. In closing, and apparently moving away from the theme of the intersection between exhibitions and art fairs, Vettese points the compass towards art fairs, questioning their chosen paths of development.



2.1.1 Chapter 1, "Raising the Common Ground", gathers three articles with historical perspectives that ontologically question the dichotomies between art fairs and biennials, the art market and the avant-garde, and the coincidence between the end of sales at the Venice Biennale and the beginning of the Bologna art fair. The chosen title suggests a shared stage to both structures, besides their idiosyncrasies.

The first contribution belongs to Terry Smith, "Biennials/Art Fairs in the Exhibition Complex". Adopting the perspective of an overview, the author interrogates the way future research will observe issues relating to the biennials and art fairs of today, which some theoreticians stress as "*the* defining factor in making contemporary art contemporary" in "the artworld". Questioning which is dominant between the art fair and the biennial, the author points to the growing number of both phenomena, their global character and their historical concentration in Western European capitals and the USA. The main point would seem to be measuring the impact of these "structural components", considering other exhibition platforms for visual art, their influence on "shaping local artworlds", and the institutional "settings in which art is made, seen and interpreted", according to their different formats. Smith critically challenges the distinction between biennials and art fairs, namely their "core constitutions": the fair being "orchestrated around the point of sale", and the biennial aimed at "showing how art made in many parts of the globalised world today is negotiating its necessary distance and its necessary implication in that world". He concludes that the blurring of the distinction between both "depends on where you are standing, and what you want to see when you look", highlighting the relevance of perspective.

Bruce Altshuler, in "The Art Market and Exhibition of the Avant-Garde", also refers to the blurred boundaries between the "commercial artworld" and the "so-called not-for-profit realm of museums, large-scale international exhibitions and other art institutions", stressing that it is "naïve" to view a separation between them. His argument is rooted in the major motivation for artists to organise exhibitions, with many of them, since Impressionism, exhibiting in commercial art galleries. The author analyses modern art exhibitions, from the Blaue Reiter artists to Malevich, Picasso and Rauschenberg, pointing to the complicity and involvement of art dealers, an essential player even in museum exhibitions. He finds a parallel between the modern period and the influence of the market in artistic value, stressing the need for an "ethical questioning of this relationship".

The last article of the first chapter is by Clarissa Ricci, "Between a Fair and a Biennial: Comparing the End of Sales at the Venice Biennale and the Beginning of the Arte Fiera in Bologna". Here, the author analyses the years the Venice Biennale changed its "proto-fair system" of financially supporting artists into a "contemporary biennale format" (1968-1972) focused on being a "platform for art production" as much as a place for contemporary art discussion. The first art fair in Italy, the Arte Fiera, emerged at this same time. The author mentions that despite the closure of the sales office at the Venice Biennale, Bologna had the commercial infrastructure to create an art market, showing from the outset a desire for public education through art and the need for contemporary art to find legitimation through the creation of collateral cultural programming, a strategy that has since become popular.

2.1.2 Chapter 2, "Fading the Line Between Exhibition and Artwork", investigates the "life cycle of artworks". The authors engage with the nature and connections of the exhibition's narrative today, offering a complementary perspective on the complexity of the relationship between art fairs and biennials.

In the first article, "Dematerializing in the Contemporary Present", Jacob Lund mentions the historical context of the dematerialisation of the material supports of art in the conceptualism of the 1960s to further analyse the "contemporaneity" of the present. He critically explores the "complexities of the digital" in a global capitalist society through media and computational technology, using artistic examples such as Hito Steyern's video piece to argue for its contribution towards transforming contemporary art into the "immaterial aesthetically perceptible".

John Rajchman, in "Lyotard's 'Résistance' Today", goes further in the discussion of the transformation of the artworld post-1989, summarising the main changes with the dissemination of biennials, art fairs, auction houses and private museums, and questioning "resistance" and exhibition practices today through a critical discussion of art forms within that context. The author questions today's "curationism" and strategies of presenting things in light of Lyotard's notion of resistance (including the exhibition *Les Immatériaux* he curated at the Centre Pompidou in 1985, and his articulation of the postmodern condition as the exhaustion of "grand narratives") as a point of theoretical reference for understanding contemporary society's drift towards "de-globalization".

The last contribution is by Cristina Baldacci, "Re-Edit, Re-Enact, Remediate: The Exhibition as Time-Based Artwork (Philippe Parreno)". The author analyses the "impermanent artwork" of an exhibition as a "work of art in itself", or as "pure mediality" through the participation of visitors. Her argument is based on the study of Parreno's artistic work, considered here as a follower of "the legacy of the avant-garde movements in joining life and art", and for whom Lyotard's *Les Immatériaux* was seen as an exhibition model. She stresses the relevance of the performance of the body as a contribution to the "endless 'hypotheses'" of perceptions and interpretations of the "time-based exhibition".

2.1.3 Chapter 3, "Unfolding Globalized Reception", focuses on the reception of audiences to exhibitions and underlying factors such as media, criticism, sales and buyer behaviour. Provenance research enlightens an opaque history of exhibition, and the dissemination of art fairs and biennials provokes the figure of the "exhausted

spectator". The function of art periodicals is also highlighted in the chapter as a way to legitimate and make artworks and artists visible, using examples such as Frieze and the Venice Biennale catalogues.

In "The Brief Impact of Art Fairs on Prices", Jean Minguet recalls the art fair's relevance as a marketplace and exhibition space, as well as its role in providing opportunities for galleries to present and promote their programmes and artists. The main point of the chapter, however, is the (non)disclosure of the prices of artworks, which keeps the prices charged at international art fairs from being understood. Dealers also do not reveal the prices of private transactions. Although this situation is well known, it is relevant not only from a financial point of view but also concerning the lack of transparency in the art market itself. The author stresses the importance of auction sales as "the best source of information to conduct research on the art market" and uses a comparative analysis between auction catalogues and art fairs to note a high volatility in prices in the former, particularly in the case of masterpieces. Minguet concludes by arguing for the omission of information concerning the provenance of artworks previously purchased at art fairs in auction catalogues, suggesting this would not be positive information (in the sense of protecting the confidentiality of the seller). At the same time, he also suggests that auction catalogues may be a source of relevant information to legitimise artworks in the market and that art fairs seem to be primarily mercantile events.

In "The Exhausted Spectator: Criticism Amidst Mega Exhibitions in the 21st Century", Jörg Heiser examines the diminishing role of art criticism among large-scale exhibitions, events that, along with art fairs, have grown immensely since the new millennium. Besides the effect of attracting "more visitors, more artists, and more moral authority", the author emphasises the advent of the "exhausted spectator" in light of the "sheer volume" of artworks offered by these mega exhibitions, pointing to the issue of a lack of criticism amid curators concerning matters such as globalised diversity, inclusion, representation and the need to discuss curatorial choices.

In "Between Page, Market, and Exhibition: Art Magazines in the Context of Art Fairs and Biennials", Gwen Allen gives attention to the function of art magazines in determining the value of art, noting that magazines are just one type of publicity. The author seeks to understand the power of art magazines amid the rise of biennials and art fairs, the "fairennial complex" and their impact in transforming information into economic and "cultural capital", while exploring the role of art criticism in this context. Allen argues that art magazines are at the very centre of the artworld, "where the buying and selling of art meet its critical evaluation and interpretation". Indeed, there are specific booths featuring publications at most art fairs and biennials. But at the same time, the author points to a change in the format of the art magazine, offering a more quantitative perspective over qualitative work, shifting from in-depth interpretative and analytical contents to a progressive erosion of criticism in the pursuit of new audiences. Using frieze magazine as example, Allen underlines that "as art writing has been instrumentalised and integrated into the market, the critical evaluation of art becomes more and more subservient to it, and the power of the critic has declined". Nonetheless, the author concludes that art magazines operate "as both promotional, commercial forms of publicity and critical, experimental sites of display and critique".

In the last contribution, "Magnifying the Margins: Art Magazines in the Contemporary art System", by Camilla Salvaneschi, the author examines several examples of art magazines published in recent decades, noting their intensified role in the "contemporary artworld by participating in the market and its institutions". She points out how magazines "have been manipulated by art institutions and serve to legitimise galleries, art fairs, museums and biennials" in order to gain visibility. The author then takes a historical perspective, examining the first magazine published by a biennial (from the Venice Biennale) at a time when Venice was both a fair and a biennial, historically testifying to the relationship of both purposes from early on. Other biennials soon followed Venice's example, creating magazines to record the "discursive exhibition". The author presents *documenta X documents* as a magazine that is less commercial, launched as a theoretical volume to explore the process

of research which aimed to fill the gap between iterations and make documenta "a durable institution". The author reveals similarities between biennials and magazines, namely their periodical formats, the need for criticism to guide audiences to understand curatorial choices, and for the purposes of legitimation. She concludes that the magazine is a "promotor of events of international and local resonance and a vehicle to legitimise its parent institution".

2.2 *From Roman* Feria *to Global Art Fair, From Olympia Festival to Neoliberal Biennial. On the 'Biennialization' of Art Fairs and the 'Fairization' of Biennials*

On the 'Biennialization' of Art Fairs and the 'Fairization' of Biennials

Paco Barragán

With Artoons by Pablo Helguera

This book is organised into four chapters. The first two are devoted to fairs and biennials respectively; the latter two present a mixture of the features of both events that had previously distinguished them. The author underlines the fluidity of the concepts 'Biennialization' and 'Fairization', which have undergone some cross-pollination in contemporary thought. While Paco Barragán has already contributed theoretically to linking the rise of the art fair with the rise of the curator, in this volume he goes deeper, using a comparative method which moves between art fairs and biennials to recover their historical roots and understand how they converged in the late 1980s.

In the introduction, Barragán presents the theme through a cartoon by Pablo Helguera showing a man who faces a dilemma within the contemporary artworld: choose the documenta path of exhibition; or pick the Basel art fair path. Barragán seeks to expand the dilemma to a distinction between two antagonistic paths, suggesting audiences face an opposition between art history and the art market. He appropriates the irony and metaphors that Helguera encapsulates so brilliantly throughout the entire volume.

2.2.1 Chapter 1 is entitled "A Genealogy of the Art Fair: From Roman *Feria* to Global Art Fair" and aims to trace the origins of the "fair", underling its development and connections with trade. While, according to the author, "it is more than wise to trace the origins of our fair to pre-modern times [...] as it goes hand in hand with the origins of religion, trading, traditional markets, market economy and money", in introducing the fair's typologies the author fails to explain why it is necessary to go far back in time when fairs and the trade in artworks are such distinct phenomena. A proper contextualisation would be desirable to clarify its distinctiveness, and most of all, its contribution to our present understanding of fair and art trade.

The four subsections of the chapter constitute the substrate of the genealogy of the fair, which is Barragán's distinctive contribution to the subject. He divides the typologies into macro-historical categories, thus creating the illusion of a successive line of facts and empty spaces between them. The last, "The Art Fair: From the Salon via the Modern and Contemporary to the Global Art Fair (1884-1989)", with its descriptive title, covers a century and corresponds to the point where the author examines the art fair proper.

Barragán shows the key moments from the French *Salon des Indépendants* to the contemporary Global Art Fair, tracing distinctive features such as the idea of an annual exhibition and artist run activities until the Modern Art Fair (1913), with this last based on the Armory Show in New York. The Armory Show also used an artist's run model, with curated sections, an international focus, and an innovative communication strategy. Although held but once, the author notes the exhibition left a "lasting impression" in the North American artistic milieu. The author then focuses on the Contemporary Art Fair model, which shifted focus from the artist to the art dealer-manager, who took on an increasingly central role working on the booths. This model emerged with Art Cologne and Art Basel (1967-79), with the former losing primacy to the second "because they basically catered for galleries from Western Europe and the United State", a characteristic not so distinct from the previous Modern Art Fair Model.

The last category covered by Barragán's text is the Global Art Fair (post-1989), where the curator plays a central role and closely collaborates with dealers and collectors to create the "core of the new system". The fair is organised by curatorial sections, discussion panels and conferences. The theoretical programme features the participation of international art professionals and parallel activities such as museum openings, special receptions, and visits to collectors' houses. Management is a key element of success and represents "the paradigm of the 'economy experience'", meaning that art fairs offer both the expected artworks and new experiences to audiences. The ARCO fair of Madrid is a leading example of this last model, as it "invented [...] what other art fairs [...] were [...] obliged to copy".

2.2.2 Chapter 2, "A Genealogy of the Biennial: From Olympia Festival to Neoliberal Biennial", replicates the subsections of Chapter 1. While the former chapter presents a historical path up to the 'global art fair', the second, the genealogy of the biennale, arrives at a 'neo-liberal' context for the same post-1989 period, presenting the designation of typologies of a mostly psychological and behavioural nature (such as experiential, traumatic, resistant, and so on).

Before specifying its various typologies, the chapter begins with an account of the origins of the biennial, with Barragán pointing out its beginnings

in classical antiquity with the Olympia Festival (782 B.C.E.) and culmination in the Grand Tour of the 17th century. Over this long arc of history, he posits that various shared ideas underpin both Olympia and Venice: "competition, patriotism, prizes", and "glory and fame". He understands the Old Master blockbuster in Italy as a "vehicle that positively affected the emergence of the Venice Biennial" due to the idea of the spectacle of the exhibition and to the creation of an "ephemeral museum". He also observes the Grand Tour, underlining its aim of disseminating knowledge and improving taste among the upper classes as much as the stimulation of an art market for antiquities. Barragán later identifies the "modern origins" of the biennial in the Salons from the 17th century and exhibitions like the London Universal Exhibition (1851), the Paris Impressionist exhibition (1874), and the Munich Glass Palace (1886, 1888).

Barragán examines the biennial typologies in four subsections, seeking "to convey the working field" and to present the, largely academically unknown, Spanish-speaking biennials, in addition to referring to the iconic events of Venice, documenta and Manifesta. In so doing, Barragán first systematises the scholarship of other authors regarding the organisational structure of biennials, considering the conditions in which they were founded and the phases of their development, while referring to four concepts to reveal their motivations and history (*experience*, *trauma*, *resistance and neo-liberalism*) and claiming that certain biennials fit into more than one category.

The first, *experience*, examines the pioneering Venice, São Paulo and Sydney biennials (1895-1970) as a "field of cultural production", "determined by [...] experience and experimentation". The author revisits the chronology of biennials, criticising the dominant narrative that leaves behind several initiatives such as the 1st Hispano-American Biennial, which took place almost concurrently with the São Paulo biennial, in 1951.

The second, the *trauma* biennial, is "steeped in the dialectic art-politics", particularly in the cold war context, a concept Barragán takes from Okwui Enwezor when he referred to biennials as a "response to traumatic historical events". documenta, for example, was a tool of "rehabilitation" for the "post-war German public [...] with international modernism". The Hispano-American Biennial created during the Franco dictatorship, the Gwangju Biennale launched after the massacre of students in the Korean city of Gwangju (1980), and Prospect New Orleans are other examples of the trauma biennale as remedy for social and historical trauma.

The third category is the *resistance* biennale, a category appropriated from Marta Traba's concept of resistance art. The idea is of a resistance to "colonisation" taken from a "global South" perspective, an alternative to the "Euro-centric, internationalist Venice and documenta". The Havana Biennial is offered as an example of a "counter-narrative to the Western biennial exhibition", as are the Asia Pacific Triennale and the Berlin Biennale.

The last category is the *neo-liberal* biennale, which Barragán frames as "corporativist culturalist" due to interference from private corporations in publicly funded events. The author's purpose is to identify the origins of today's global biennials and their features, including the "collective authorial curatorship" model, international artists and audiences, the predominance of "conceptual and new media art", the "white cube" exhibition model, collateral activities, an education programme, and an evolution under the umbrella of neo-liberalism. Barragán takes the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale, curated by Okwui Enwezor in 1997, as an example, an event which brought South Africa, and Africa in general, into focus around a discussion of globalisation as a "point of departure", reflecting on topics such as post-colonialism, multiculturalism and bringing attention to non-mainstream artists. This theoretical path was supported by other biennials including documenta 11—also curated by Okwui Enwezor—which "became *the* model for today's global neo-liberal biennial", Manifesta and other examples launched from 1989 onward.

In the following two chapters, Chapter 3 "On the 'Biennalization' of Art Fairs" and Chapter 4 "On the 'Fairization' of Biennials", Barragán continues his previous research (*The Art Fair Age*, published in 2008) by underlining the cate-

gorical ambivalence of art fairs and biennials and examining how their distinctive features and functions have grown increasingly intermixed in order to make them more attractive.

2.2.3 In Chapter 3, Barragán explains the concept of "biennalization" as a "generic term that embraces the ongoing neo-liberal symbiosis of art fairs and biennials in today's artworld". Art fairs have developed strategies and forms of art representation similar to those of the biennial working process. This shift from dealer to curator of the global art fair began in 1994 with ARCOmadrid Country Focus, particularly with the invitation of documenta curator Jan Huet to curate a special section with galleries from Belgium. This was the first step of a new era in art fair methodology that valued "artistic respectability", including professional curators, critics and historians in the management staff.

2.2.4 In Chapter 4, Barragán explains the concept of "fairization" as the "ongoing 'commercial' and 'commodified' nature of biennials whose performance was more aligned with art fair's strategies, directed towards the market and sales". He argues that the biennial goes hand in hand with sales, city branding and cultural tourism. He cites how the Venice Biennale's erstwhile sales office was converted into a more sophisticated form of transaction in recent decades. He also mentions the hybrid origins of documenta, stating that before it became the "most important platform for sanctioning art trends and aesthetic attitudes" it engaged in correspondence with the art market through the presence of art galleries. In closing, he points to the curator's role in the process of commodification and characterises the global neo-liberal biennial, noting a hybridisation of both events.

The author finalises his thoughts by comparing the widely disseminated concepts of global and contemporary art, arguing they represent a "nostalgia for the present". At the same time, he concludes that the neo-liberal context of biennials and art fairs demands a cohabitation between commodification and the "aura" of the artwork.

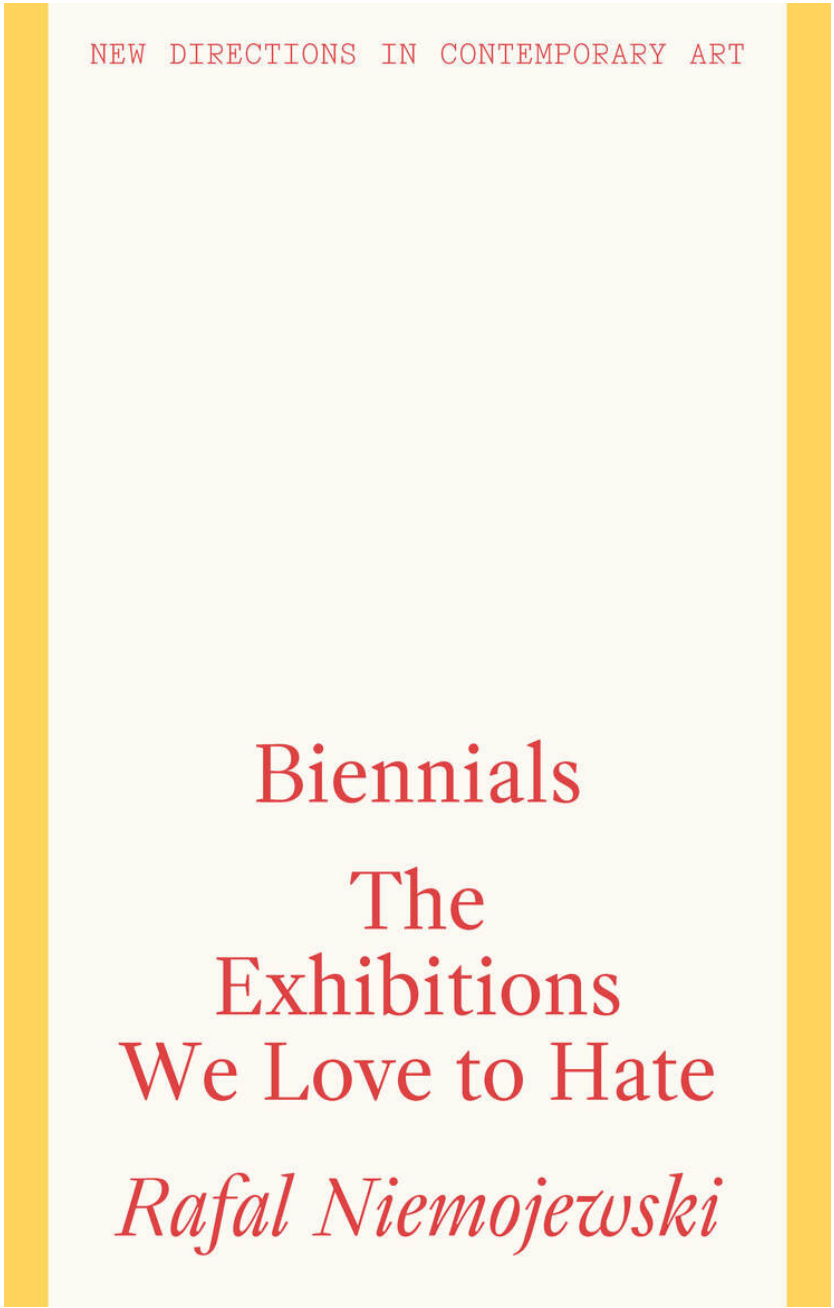
2.3 *Biennials: The Exhibitions we Love to Hate*

Written by Rafal Niemojewski, *Biennials: The Exhibitions We Love to Hate* was published in 2021 by Lund Humphries as the first book of its New Directions in Contemporary Art series. The book examines the proliferation of biennials and their historical inscription in the contemporary world, from the 1980s to the outbreak of the pandemic. Didactic and accessible, the book offers a summary of biennials and their most important concepts and transitions, illustrating these with well-known case studies and providing a comparative analysis of the words and critical positioning of their advocates and detractors. Examining the contradictory critical, curatorial and political discourses surrounding biennials, unlike the two preceding texts, the book avoids comparing biennials with other cultural phenomena such as art fairs.

The title of the book is an unstated reference to the artist, writer and musician John Miller's essay "The Show You Love to Hate – a Psychology of the Mega-Exhibition", first published in the journal *Texte zur Kunst* (Cologne, 1992), then in the fundamental anthology *Thinking about Exhibitions* (Routledge, New York, 1996), and, more recently, in the manual *MIB – Men in Black: Handbook of Curatorial Practice* (Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin and Revolver–Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, 2004).

Miller's text diagnoses and critically discusses the ideology of the mega-exhibition as an institution, exemplified by the reception of Jan Hoet's documenta 9 as an anachronistic and predictable ritual, sustained by the media phenomenon of generating expectation, disappointment and rejection, a negative and cynical condition that, he contends, has become chronic. Avoiding his own scepticism, however, Miller calls for action to transform the factors of dissatisfaction, suggesting we change the rules of the game to address the problem.

Niemojewski, however, evinces a clearly corporate perspective, with the aim of dismantling the polemic and controversy in which contemporary art biennials have been sceptically framed, long preceding, but witnessed most intensely, since the turn of the millennium, with their format, relevance and sustainability being systematically called into question and fashionably criticised. After all, his job as director of the Biennial Foundation—an organisation he claims functions as an independent observer—is to solve the biennials' continuing existential crisis by avoiding, for example, negative theorisations which define them as neo-liberal commodities (such as Barragan's "fairization").



2.3.1 In Chapter 1, 'Biennialization and its counternarratives', Niemojewski surveys the pros and cons of the proliferation of biennials, highlighting their role in the development of theoretical debates on contemporary art, in their absorption of terminologies and concepts from other disciplinary areas, in the promotion of artistic practices that are difficult to frame in a museum, in stimulating the mobility

of artists and works, and in the complexification of the work of the curator. He also claims that they have weakened traditional artistic practices and disturbed the art market value chain, since value is no longer solely aggregated to museums.

Arguing that biennials reshaped contemporary art, whose calendar became as much oriented by them as by the art fairs and major exhibitions in main museums, Niemojewski defines a chronology for this transition. First, in the mid-1980s, when pre-globalised biennials appeared in non-hegemonic territories, such as La Habana, Cairo or Istanbul, and challenged the Western status quo and dominant power relations based on a world cartography inherited from modernity. Then, from 1989, when biennials proliferated with the new world order that resulted from the fall of the Berlin wall and spread from South America to Asia as legitimising and competing instruments of the newly globalised and growing economies and cities.

Niemojewski then points to "the strange case of arithmomania in the art world", which emerged from the intense scrutiny of this exponential growth and which intensifies critically at the turn of the millennium. Biennials are criticised by authors such as Carolyn Christiv-Bakargiev, Joshua Decter, Jana Reena, Robert Nickas and Glenn Lowry, who point to the division between bored critics ("does the world really need another biennial…?") and professionalised curators (who will soon also bemoan an inevitable, and fashionable, "biennial fatigue" or "biennial burnout") when discussing the "biennialization" phenomenon. The judgement will be based mainly on the concomitance between the role of biennials, the political agenda of cities and the leisure industry; the role of the biennial as a mechanism of homogenisation and dissemination of the Western canon given the recurrence of particular works, artists and curators; and the production of biennials as spectacles of liberalism, engines of a specifically produced biennial art: monumental, media-friendly and intended for immediate consumption. The "biennial is dead", stated Daniel Birbaum in 2007, before curating another, even as they began to decline with the onset of the global economic crisis.

Niemojewski remains, however, an unyielding defender of the format, embracing a model that, based on the display of locally based production, also reveals high profile international artists. As some of the most successful in balancing these two strategies of diversity and particularity, he highlights the Johannesburg Biennial of 1997, by Okwui Enwezor, and the 9th Istanbul Biennial, by Charles Esche and Vasif Kortun.

2.3.2 In Chapter 2 – 'Biennial fatigue', Niemojewski quotes Laura Cumming from the Observer newspaper in 2020, who stated that there are "too many" biennials and that "they all look the same", citing also a persistent sense of regret, worry, exhaustion and frustration during visits to biennials in light of the impossibility of seeing and absorbing all works. In a series of brief sub-chapters, Niemojewski introduces the general reader to several key concepts and questions for understanding the typology of biennials, from the diversity of their models, strategies and audiences, to the specifics of their spatio-temporal frameworks. In 'They all look the same', he seeks to dismantle the supposed similarity of the set of proposals; in 'The Biennial Clique', he argues against simplistic methodologies that sustain the discourse of their homogenisation; in 'The Curatorial Framework and display strategies: site-specificity', he addresses the different levels of context-responsiveness, dividing biennials into categories of phenomenological site-specificity, social/institutional site-specificity, and discursive site-specificity; in 'Curatorial frameworks and display strategies: time-specificity', he proposes the biennial as a place for the "discovery" of the new, of the up to date, diagnosing rare historically oriented biennials (excluding here some more recent biennials that mix historical works with recent production, and that, according to the author, follow the genealogy of Catherine David's revisionism); and finally, in 'Is there such a thing as Biennial Art?', he underlines the populist temptations that result in the production of icon-works and symbolic images for the press, confusing art with entertainment and mass tourism. On this last point, Niemojewski considers that this fashion for the spectacular and the experiential has been also absorbed by museums, galleries and

even art fairs, seeking to create an urge to travel to a particular place for a first-hand experience. Noting that these kinds of works are often co-produced by museums, the author states that it is therefore difficult to establish whether biennials are mirroring global fashions or, at is commonly and sceptically said, driving them.

2.3.3 In Chapter 3 – 'Biennials and art-world hegemonies: from resistance to conformity and back again', Niemojewski underlines that, since it is impossible to have direct experience of the hundreds of biennials that take place and recur around the world, academic articles, press reviews and institutional narratives are key resources for understanding them and establishing their reputation, identity and personality. He then outlines three possible generic identities for biennials, proposing a case study for each. First, the oppositional biennial, or the so called "biennials of resistance" —cynical, provocative and disruptive—whose rhetoric challenges hegemonic narratives, taking as his case study the creation of the La Habana biennial. Secondly, the aspirational biennial, a biennial instrumentalised as an economic engine and an instrument of soft power, exemplifying it with the case of the simultaneous occurrence, in time and space, of the Singapore Biennial and the Showcase Singapore Art Fair, a coincidence that challenged the boundaries between general public and buyers, openness and exclusivity, and cultural and commercial exchange, making what are usually only implicit phenomena explicit. Lastly, he posits the biennial which reaches beyond the aspirational, the engineered biennial instrumentalised to serve non-artistic interests from the moment of its planning, referring to the Abu Dhabi project—genetically assembled by managers and economic consultants for a Biennial Park simulacrum of the Giardini (whose structure is already obsolete) —and the Desert X franchise from California to Al'-Ula.

2.3.4 In Chapter 4 – 'Biennials after the social turn: the unfulfilled promises of social betterment and exhibitions by other means', Niemojewski contextualises this turn in the mid-1990s, when contemporary art production began to embrace social concerns more than aesthetic ones, and many artists, notably Tania Bruguera, Jeremy Deller and Francis Alys, moved from representing society to wanting to intervene in and transform it. Sceptics would say that this socially engaged art has been absorbed by biennials, which are themselves unproductive platforms for political intervention insofar as they are essentially directed at the market and non-politicised institutions. Joshua Decter even questions the ethics of this integration, pointing out that directors and curators set expectations that biennials simply cannot meet. The role of the international curator then becomes pejorative: a cosmopolitan without an independent ideological or political point of view, working in alliance with the homogenising forces of globalisation. Niemojewski illustrates this with the contradiction of Ralph Rugoff, whose pragmatism, attested to in his statement that "any radical statement the curator makes usually ends up as a headline rather than an actual political proposition", is encapsulated by the insertion of the work *Barca Nostra*, by Cristhoph Buchel, in the edition of the Venice Biennale Rugoff directed. The artist brought to the biennale the fishing boat that sank between Lebanon and Sicily with hundreds of emigrants on board, exhibiting it without any context or framing, a gesture of displacement that was widely criticised as a controversial, offensive and inappropriate work commemorating a tragedy.

The author invokes as case studies well-known self-critical projects born out of growing scepticism about the relevance and effectiveness of responding to urgent social and political issues. Often dealing with crises, censorship, self-censorship and boycott, these projects even purport to negate and dematerialise their straight exhibition format, transforming themselves instead into places of debate. First, by means of a political rally, which declared the context of the Berlin Biennale suitable for socio-political actions, and highlighting the 2012 edition directed by Artur Zmijewski as the most ambitious in validating the biennale's potential not only for presentations of social practices but as a platform for political intervention, it was the biennale most criticised by sceptics and enthusiasts alike. Secondly, by means of an art school, presenting the project proposed for

the 6th edition of Manifesta in Cyprus, the most engaged of biennials, which was conceived as a temporary art school with references to the Black Mountain College and the Bauhaus. Envisioning some 90 participants over 12 weeks in Nicosia, then Europe's last divided city, the utopian and radical project failed legally, with its outcome formalised under the terms of the judgement that led to its cancellation. Thirdly, by means of a reconnaissance, as in the proposal for the Riwaq Biennial in Palestine in 2005, where, in response to the hostile environment and the absence of infrastructure, Charles Esche curated the Gatherings programme, a series of visits to cultural sites and studios which brought international guests into contact with the territorial fragmentation of the region and the assumption of unrestricted mobility by contemporary art agents. Fourthly and finally, by means of a void, when Ivo Mesquita proposed, with a radical curatorial gesture unsupported by later official censorship, an exhibition pause, a quarantine that emptied the space of the biennale, framed as an institution in need of a total re-evaluation, both locally and globally.

2.3.5 Chapter 5, titled 'fermata', addresses the interruption to the calendar and organisational dynamics of biennials on account of the COVID-19 pandemic. The suspension forces Niemojewski to rethink their purpose, with the author accepting biennials as too big, too fast, too populist, too diplomatic, and as having often served to naturalise and amplify existing social inequalities rather than address them. For the first time in the book, the author draws a parallel between the proliferation of biennials and the more recent proliferation of fairs, pointing out that the boundaries between the two have become dangerously blurred, with an excessively short circuit between production and absorption. The author uses the case studies presented to argue that, while they cannot solve the dilemmas of globalisation, biennials can nevertheless be vigilant and innovative, by adopting a dynamic of trial and error. He argues that most new biennials rightly choose the hyper-local, using this deep contextualisation to argue that there are too many biennials, and that we should seek to develop events with less travel, less homogenisation, more sustainability and more social impact. Finally, he proposes a change to both the meaning and tone of the discourse on biennials, with fewer sensationalist, emotive, exaggerated, cynical and sarcastic arguments.

3. Concluding Remarks

Double Trouble discusses the main features of the art market, biennials and their traditional field of interaction, deconstructing them in the process. It particularly emphasises the common ground both have been able to develop, by highlighting intersecting characteristics that previously distinguished them. It is a very rich volume, well documented, with challenging perspectives and new insights that contribute to blurring inherited historical and sociological boundaries. This helps us to understand the mistrust art dealers have held since the 19th century in promoting artists, an image that needed several decades to change, and the strategies artists used to promote themselves, instead. It also helps us to learn about the mechanisms of legitimation that were developed and that exist behind exhibitions, "with and without commercial scope", measuring the artist's success and fostering the market economy. The volume offers an opportunity to further debate the expansion of art fairs and biennials globally, complementing the scholar's recent literature on the subject.

Within this common ground, blurring distinctions between fairs and biennials, lies the centre of analysis in the volume authored by Paco Barragán. *From Roman Feria to Global Art Fair* is a book on the genealogy of art fairs and biennials and their heterogenous contemporary statuses. The author supports his narrative with an up-to-date bibliography. In addition to its colloquial tone, his writing becomes somewhat odd at times when addressed directly to the reader, and even impolite on the occasions where he uses an unfriendly undertone to refer to 'academia', particularly in the phrase 'Western academia'. With the investigative

enthusiasm of a Sherlock Holmes, Barragán denounces misused terms like 'biennial' in recent scholarship, incorrect concepts and other mistakes. It is, however, odd that such a critical voice suffers from an absence of rigor itself, undervaluing the relevance of sources, particularly primary ones. Pedagogically, the contribution of Barragán could be stronger if the author explained his choice of subjects to analyse over such an extended chronological period, suffering, as it does, from some significant gaps. His narrative is reduced to a linear succession of (handpicked) events, reducing historical complexity to a commonplace. We may ask what happened in these gaps between centuries and geographies? Wasn't there an interest in art circulation, in the art market, in acquisitions, or even in commissions? Such a comprehensive spectrum runs the risk of being analysed superficially. In any case, however, the book provides a timely critical overview of a hot topic, framed within a perspective that helps decentralise the mainstream narrative.

Finally, in his broad overview of the Biennial Culture of the last 30 years, Niemojewski takes up the term biennialization to characterise the proliferation of biennials, drawing attention to their essentialist, reductive and stereotypical usages, and seeking to dismantle and complexify these. Examining both positive and negative aspects, he summarises that enthusiasts see biennials as decentralising and pluralising cultural circulation, introducing new topographies and non-Western artists; while sceptics question the integrity and relevance of these changes, pointing out dilemmas primarily in relation to the art market.

In the introduction to the book, Marcus Vernhagen, the author of *Flows and Counterflows: Globalisation in Contemporary Art* (Stenberg Press, 2017) and senior lecturer at Sotheby's Institute of Art, begins by pointing out the commonplaces and contradictions of the art world and international biennials, emphasising the importance of the local versus the risk of homogenisation. However, he fails to diagnose the generic stability and consistency of that exhibition format in writings on biennials, which Carlos Basualdo addressed so well in 2007 in The Unstable Institution. Aligned with both, Niemojewski condemns the simplification of the phenomenon of biennials through blind quantification, while defending their irregular, complex and idiosyncratic characters. He thus sustains their incomparability on a global scale and advocates the impossibility of a total understanding outside of their specific inscriptions in given contexts or local communities. The hyper-local, he argues, can have an effective and positive social impact.

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