On Aggregators

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The term *contemporary* has shifted from an adjective to a noun. Once a neutral descriptor meant to indicate recentness, *the* contemporary is now widely claimed as a period, composed of loosely related aesthetic tendencies, following and displacing modernism. In this regard, it enters a tradition of now discredited movements that includes "pluralism" and "postmodernism."[1] Unlike these predecessors, however, which took Euro-American art as their primary archive, *contemporary* encompasses the temporally coeval but geographically diverse expressions of a global art world—a point critics often emphasize by noting that the literal meaning of *con-temporary* is "with time," which in turn is sometimes poetically glossed as referring to "comrades in time."[2] A framework for global art is thus furnished through the undeniable and ostensibly value-free contention that work so designated occupies the same moment in time. There is, however, a paradox in rendering the adjective *contemporary* as a noun: When packaged as a period, *the* contemporary unconsciously reinscribes a model of temporal progression that was fundamental to modernism. While discussions of the contemporary typically emphasize its synchronic dimension—calling upon, as I've mentioned, the *con* to suggest simultaneity across different locations and perspectives—by definition it is always advancing. Like an avant-garde, the contemporary can only go forward, but unlike an avant-garde, the contemporary doesn't have an *avant*: Its forward movement does not carry the productive shock of being *in advance* or, perhaps more appropriate, of being out of sync with its time. In its discursive structure, the contemporary is a kind of blank or denatured modernism, one that is only ever "with" its moment. And this seemingly innocuous "with" masks the dramatically uneven development of globalization. For being together in time does nothing to redress economic disparity, as the victims of collapsed Bangladeshi garment factories producing inexpensive clothes for Western corporations can attest.

1. For two of the best accounts of contemporary art as a period, see Terry Smith, *What Is Contemporary Art?* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2009), and Alexander Alberro, response to "Questionnaire on 'The Contemporary,'" *October* 130 (Fall 2009), pp. 55–60.
2. See for example Boris Groys, "Comrades in Time," *What Is Contemporary Art?*, ed. Julieta Aranda et al. (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010), pp. 22–39.

OCTOBER 146, Fall 2013, pp. 3–18.

In their book *Anachronic Renaissance*, Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood argue that the artwork's temporal heterogeneity—its capacity to introduce both future and past into material form—began to be recognized and manipulated during the Renaissance. For Nagel and Wood, "No device more effectively generates the effect of a doubling or a bending of time than the work of art, a strange kind of event whose relation to time is plural."[3] Under conditions of globalization, where the critic's challenge must encompass acknowledging how economic profits and political gains are extracted from the "plurality of time" (as when labor in "underdeveloped" parts of the world is exploited to produce wealth in "developed" regions), the bland pluralism of the "contemporary" is not enough. Uneven development carries with it asynchrony, not contemporaneity.[4] This is due not only to wide disparities in life opportunities in general but also to the different local histories of modern and contemporary art across the world that have carried an artist from Germany, China, or South Africa, for instance, to the present moment.

Period, or International Style?

Sometimes, as in the theories of Suhail Malik, "the contemporary" is described with little if any reference to art practices themselves—an understandable, if to my mind problematic, move given the proliferation of biennials, art fairs, museums, and other exhibition spaces that marked the intensified globalization of the art world in the 1990s.[5] Conversely, critics and academic historians of contemporary art express consternation privately, and sometimes publicly, at its daunting scale. On the last page of his 2012 book, *What Was Contemporary Art?*, for instance, Richard Meyer voices his exasperation:

> In 2012, as this book goes to print, the culture of contemporary art seems to be burning more intensely than ever. But the glare of now-ism—of the latest international art fair, *e-flux* posting, hot young artist, and auction-house record—can be fairly blinding. The spectacular immediacy of the contemporary art world threatens to overwhelm our ability to think critically about the relation of the current moment to the past.[6]

It is precisely such fear of blindness in the face of "spectacular immediacy" that motivates the transformation of the word *contemporary* from a contingent adjective to

3. Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), p. 9.

4. As this article was going to press, a special issue of *Texte zur Kunst* (September 2013) was published on globalism, in which questions of asynchrony and the global art world are extensively addressed, especially by Susanne Leeb. Unfortunately, because of timing, I cannot take these arguments into account.

5. In a series of four lectures at Artists Space in New York during the summer of 2013, Malik developed a theory of the contemporary that intentionally avoided any inductive analysis from practices of contemporary art. According to him, the two fundamental structures of contemporary art include its anarcho-realism (a desire to escape the confines of the art world and make a difference in "real" life) and its fetishism of the present.

6. Richard Meyer, *What Was Contemporary Art?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), p. 281. It must

a stable container. But this blindness is self-imposed. We must—and I think we can—sketch a historical framework through which to see contemporary art. It is urgent to do so, if only because the art of our time is so deeply imbricated in the accelerating economic inequalities of a world shaped by globalization. I have grown convinced that the concept of an "international style" may be of use in such a project. This category, typically associated in the Anglophone world with the dissemination of modern architecture in the 1920s and '30s, is now largely out of favor, not least because the very notion of a style has long been eclipsed in the visual arts by the logic of avant-garde movements (and more recently, as I have asserted, succeeded by the placeholder "contemporary" in lieu of an identifiable movement). The distinction between a "period" and a "style" may sound purely academic, but there are important distinctions: Periodization suggests a succession of visual languages, a string of new paradigms, whereas an international style encompasses the adoption and adaptation of an existing idiom by a culturally and geographically diverse, even unlimited, array of producers. Put slightly differently, an international style accommodates a wide variety of utterances *within* an existing language. What's more, an international style arises when a visual language has reached a point of saturation, when its dissemination has allowed it to become legible throughout a global art world.

It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's *International Style* was published in 1932, during a time when the avant-gardes of the previous two decades had lost their momentum, and innovation given way to a proliferation of styles, including genuinely international styles such as Surrealism.[7] It would be quite possible—though beyond the scope of this essay—to demonstrate that the history of modernism, whose art-historical accounts have been so heavily biased toward innovation, proceeded instead according to a dialectical opposition between avant-garde innovation and the enunciations of international styles. If we begin to disable our impulse to value innovation above all else, then the products of such international styles will no longer appear static or derivative, but rather as so many effects of modernism's becoming global—its asynchronous dissemination beyond the West, where so many of the modern formats were invented.

One of the great impediments to an understanding of global contemporary art is the vexing problem of the "derivative." From a perspective that overvalues innovation, it is difficult to credit works of art that "speak" in idioms invented elsewhere. But this is what much art made outside of the West, not to mention the preponderance of art made in the West, has done since around 1980, when strategies of appropriation and postmodern pastiche entered American and European art. From the perspective of an international style, the "derivative" is no longer a problem since what matters is not the invention of a visual idiom or style but how rhetorically effec-

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be said that the purpose of Meyer's book is not to describe contemporary art but rather to demonstrate how "the contemporary" functioned already in debates around modern art during its institutionalization in the United States. This passage, however, gives the impression that the move to historicize is directly related to contemporary art's perceived annihilation of history.

7. For an inspiring new take on this period, see Devin Fore, *Realism After Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).

tive it is in its particular utterances. Listen to Hitchcock and Johnson in their introduction, titled "The Idea of Style":

> There is now a single body of discipline, fixed enough to integrate contemporary style as a reality and yet elastic enough to permit individual interpretation and to encourage general growth.
>
> The idea of style as the frame of potential growth, rather than as a fixed and crushing mould, has developed with the recognition of underlying principles such as archaeologists discern in the great styles of the past. The principles are few and broad.[8]

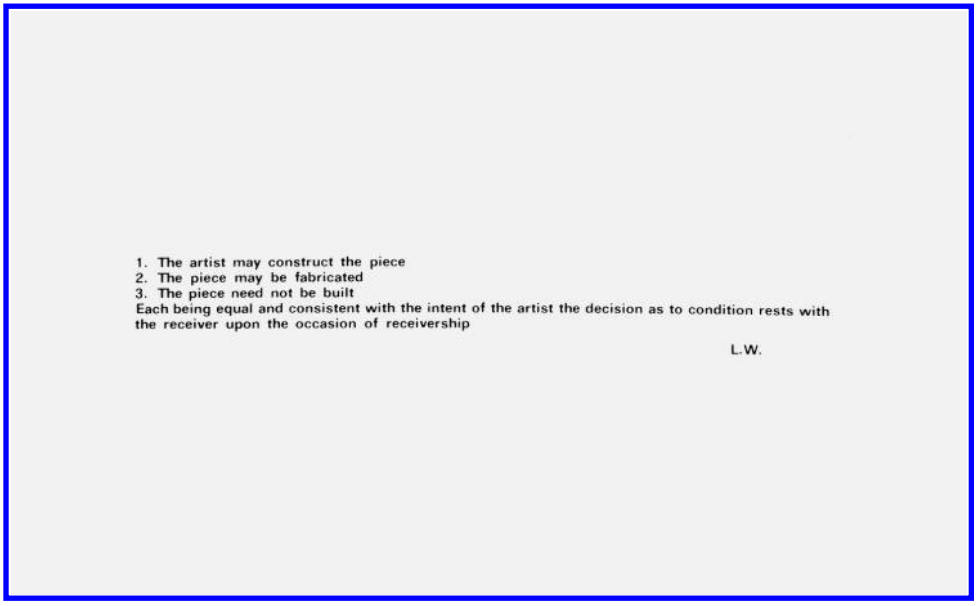
This short passage is intensely illuminating. It defines an international style as a "body of discipline," a finite language, but nonetheless as one that is capable of great elasticity. It is characterized by its openness to "individual interpretation and to . . . general growth." An international style thus implies neither an "anything goes" ethos like that of pluralism or the contemporary, nor the geographically and aesthetically homogeneous tendency of a movement. As Hitchcock and Johnson declare, style is a "frame of potential growth, rather than . . . a fixed and crushing mould." In other words, it need not matter where a particular aesthetic vocabulary was developed (that's the avant-garde fallacy); rather, what's important are the enunciations made within this language in relation to particular places and times: their rhetorical urgency, in other words, their eloquence, and even their beauty.

Our current international style draws its building blocks from Conceptual art. These include the proposition, the document, and the readymade.[9] Let me briefly define each in turn.

> *Proposition.* Conceptual art transferred aesthetic value from objects to propositions. When an artwork assumes the form of a proposition, as Lawrence Weiner has always insisted in the instructions that accompany his pieces, the work's

8. Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style*, (1932; New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), p. 36.

9. There has been much important work on Conceptual art beyond Europe and the United States, especially in centers such as Buenos Aires, Moscow, Tokyo, and Beijing. A very partial list of this rich literature includes: Luis Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation* (Austin: University of Texas, 2007); Andrea Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics: Argentine Art in the Sixties* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Ana Longini, ed., *Listen Here Now! Argentine Art of the 1960s* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004); *Total Enlightenment: Conceptual Art in Moscow 1960–1990* (Hatje Cantz, 2008); Matthew Jesse Jackson, *The Experimental Group: Ilya Kabakov, Moscow Conceptualism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); William Marotti, *Money, Trains, and Guillotines: Art and Revolution in 1960s Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); Doryun Chong et al. eds., *From Postwar to Postmodern: Art in Japan 1945–1989* (New York: the Museum of Modern Art, 2012); Gao Minglu, *Total Modernity and the Avant-Garde in Twentieth-Century Chinese Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press). For a groundbreaking early survey of Conceptual art worldwide, see *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s–1980s*, foreword by Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver, Rachel Weiss, introduction by Stephen Bann (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999).



Lawrence Weiner. Statement of Intent. *1969.*
Courtesy of Moved Pictures Archive, NYC.

integrity is unaffected by a receiver's decision of how to act on it. In other words, the proposition functions like a score, which can generate a profusion of enunciations or remain without issue, as pure potential. This performative dimension leads to another essential characteristic of the proposition: It locates a work's value in the character of its enunciations, which may be multiple, or even infinite. Propositions thus continue and even give discipline to the mid-twentieth-century tendency toward "liveness" pioneered by the inventors of Happenings, especially the artists and dancers associated with the Judson Church in New York and with Fluxus and video in Europe and the United States. Indeed, these persist to this day through the scored activities of Relational Aesthetics and practices such as those of Tino Sehgal. In this sense, liveness refers to a stress on the actual enunciation of an image as opposed to its physical construction and composition. It should be clear that what I'm calling "liveness" is not limited to performance art per se but instead should be taken as describing a condition of plasticity or transitivity in the action of images over time.

Document. In Conceptual art, the mediums of photography, film, video, and text began to serve the role of "documentation," whose status as an artwork is still often questioned—perhaps because documents are believed to capture content without explicitly composing it. In my usage, "documents" refers not only to the "documentary" (as a practice seeking truth) but also to the more general category of artifacts that store an event or experience that was initially durational. Thus, like propositions, documents have a distinctive temporal signature: They store time. It is consequently perfectly possible that by this definition documents may be fictional, or para-fictional, to use Carrie Lambert-Beatty's term, or that they may document the formal effects (such as resolution or degradation) of their circulation in the sense of Hito Steyerl's concept of a "poor image."[10] The document is what Bernard Stiegler, in a ponderous but nonetheless useful formulation, calls "tertiary retention," or the exteriorization of memory: "Becoming past, this passage of the present is then constituted as secondary retention, that is, all those memorial contents [*souvenirs*] which together form the woven threads of our memory [*mémoire*]. Tertiary retention is a mnemotechnical exteriorization of secondary retentions which are themselves engendered by primary retentions."[11] In other words, our various technologies allow us to exter-

10. See Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility," *October* 129 (Summer 2009), pp. 51–84; and Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," *e-flux journal* 10 (November 2009), unpaginated download (http://www.e-flux.com/journal/in-defense-of-the-poor-image; accessed 10/17/13).

11. Bernard Stiegler, *For a New Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), p. 9.

nalize, and store (and therefore lose intimate contact with) our own actions and thoughts. This is related to what Marshall McLuhan referred to as media prostheses, but whereas McLuhan understood the prosthetic as an enhancement of perceptual experience, tertiary retention alienates us from it. Stiegler goes on to argue that our unprecedented capacity to store information (what has been in the news lately under the category of "Big Data") actually proletarianizes us, by making us ignorant of our own intellectual/technical means of production.[12] The document, then, is a type of object that stores information captured over a certain duration, and thereby stores time.

Readymade Readymades of one description or another are now virtually ubiquitous in works of art. They are not necessarily used singly, or polemically, as Duchamp did, to chart the physical and conceptual distance between one meaning and another (from bathroom fixture to sculpture, in the canonical example of *Fountain* in and after 1917). Rather, they serve as lexicons—even palettes—of compositional elements that are already saturated with meaning and suffused with the aesthetic and technical procedures of commercial design. The readymade is a crystallization of labor, use-value, and desire. It thus multiplies the dimensions of potentiality that are implied by the proposition as I have defined it. It is anachronic in Nagel and Wood's sense since it holds together a previous use with a current one, a history of production with future-oriented and virtually unlimited scenes of consumption.

I am not claiming that "post-Conceptualism" or global conceptualism per se is our current international style.[13] Taking seriously the difference between an avant-garde and an international style means recognizing that the invention of new lexical formats such as propositions, documents, and readymades is the work of an avant-garde, but adapting and expanding the syntactic capacity of these forms once they attain saturation as a lingua franca is the work of an international style. International styles foster "local" as well as "standard"

12. For an influential account of Big Data see Viktor Mayer Schönberger and Kenneth Cukier, *Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013)

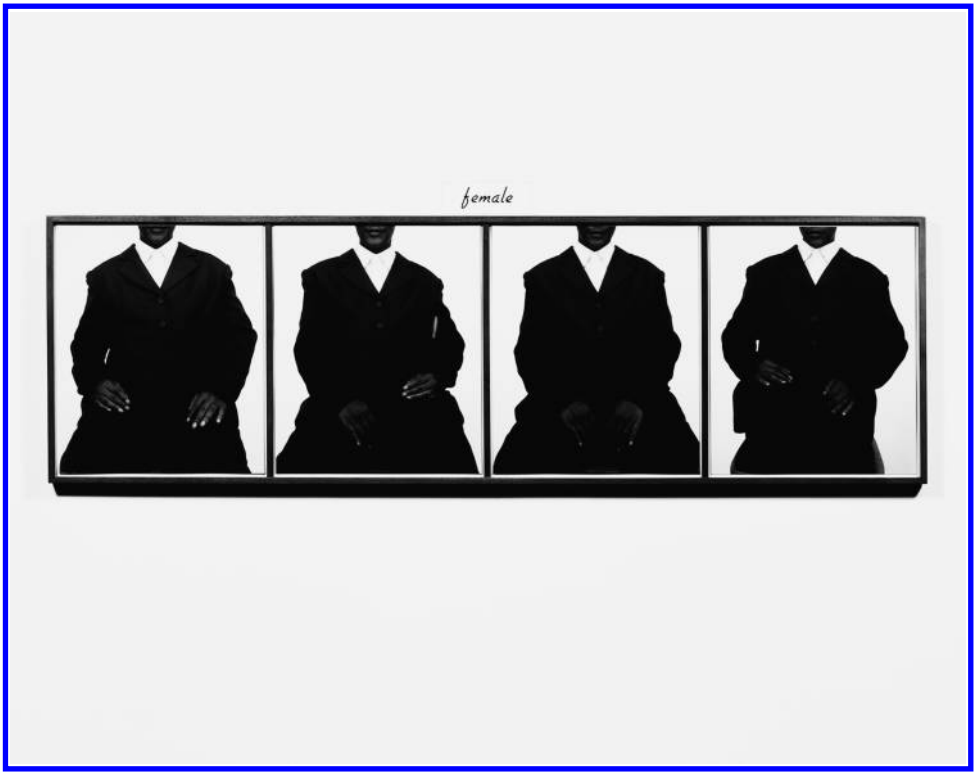
13. For Peter Osborne, "contemporary art is postconceptual art" (3). But the definition he offers in his latest book is based not on a systematic analysis of actual art but rather on philosophical grounds that at times verge on the tautological: "The reason that the idea of postconceptual art may be said to determine the contemporaneity of 'contemporary art' is that it condenses and reflects the critical historical experience of conceptual art in relation to the totality of current art practices" (53). Indeed, he dismisses much art-historical work on contemporary art at the outset to make way for his more abstract definitions, putting his project in line with that of Suhail Malik. See Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London: Verso, 2013).

dialects. American Conceptual works of the 1960s and '70s, for instance, tended toward the declarative, developing a rhetoric of administration that was nonetheless characterized by tautology and Kafkaesque absurdity.[14] The postmodern "dialect" developed from Conceptual art during the late '70s and '80s

Jenny Holzer. Protect Me from What I Want. *1985.*
© 1985 Jenny Holzer, member Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.
Photograph by John Marchael.

was couched in the rhetoric of advertising rather than bureaucracy (think of Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer as opposed to Hans Haacke and Lawrence Weiner), and it tended to appropriate existing commercial language rather than simulate bureaucratic or social-scientific languages. The identity-based dialect of Conceptual art that emerged so powerfully during the early 1990s merged genealogies of stereotypes with psychoanalytic theories of intersubjectivity (think of Glenn Ligon or Lorna Simpson), and so on. The most pervasive

14. See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990), pp. 105–43.



Lorna Simpson. She. *1992.*
Courtesy of the artist and
Salon 94, New York.

"global" dialects of the present moment, however, proceed from a different syntactic model: that of the aggregator. Aggregators are online services such as Contemporary Art Daily or e-flux that filter information for art-world consumption, making it possible, as a new generation of artists and critics has begun to assert, to shape vast flows and reservoirs of art-world information through the digital template of search algorithms and screen-based visual interfaces from laptops to smart phones.[15]

Contemporary Art Daily, accessed August 30, 2013.

Aggregators

It is instructive to browse the definitions of "aggregate" in the Oxford English Dictionary. The first entry states that an aggregate is "constituted by the collection of many particles or units into one body, mass, or amount; collective, whole, total." In legal terms, an aggregate is "composed of many individuals united into one association," and grammatically it signifies "collective." In each sense, an aggregate selects and configures relatively autonomous elements.[16] It presents, therefore, an objective correlative to the concept of the multitude as developed by Paolo Virno, Antonio Negri, and Michael Hardt. The multitude, a resistant social force indigenous to globalization, is distinct from both national citizenship and class membership along traditional Marxian lines. Instead of

15. See Michael Sanchez, "2011: Art and Transmission," *Artforum* 51, n. 10 (Summer 2013), pp. 294–301.

16. As I am describing aggregates they are close cognates to Bruno Latour's notion of "assembling the social." See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2007).

founding a collective based on a unified *identity* (as American, for instance, or proletarian), a multitude constitutes itself from discrete individuals drawn from a variety of communities and locations in response to shared conditions or provocations. As Hardt and Negri put it:

> The concept of multitude, then, is meant in one respect to demonstrate that a theory of economic class need not choose between unity and plurality. A multitude is an irreducible multiplicity; the singular social differences that constitute the multitude must always be expressed and can never be flattened into sameness, unity, identity, or indifference. . . . This is the definition of the multitude . . . singularities that act in common.[17]

One need not subscribe wholeheartedly to Hardt and Negri's utopian claims on behalf of the multitude to recognize its exemplary structure. Like a search engine, the multitude aggregates heterogeneous entities (in this case, persons) through the action of a filter. That the multitude's filter is a common cause (such as immigration rights) as opposed to the algorithms and page rankings employed by Google makes the filters no less homologous. They are both mechanisms by which singular entities (persons and objects) may act in common.

Aggregators such as Contemporary Art Daily function as "curated" search engines. Their intentionality of selection is what distinguishes such services from Google's algorithmic automatism.[18] Moreover, this logic is present on many scales of the art world at once: from individual works whose procedures are aggregative, to communication circuits like Contemporary Art Daily and Art.sy, right up to biennials and art fairs. These last differ from conventional museum presentations in that their structures are aggregative: providing a common space for singular or autonomous pavilions and national exhibitions in the case of biennials and participating galleries in the case of art fairs. I will identify two syntactic structures that persist across all of these scales.

> *Asynchrony* The aggregate is a figure of uneven development, both literally and metaphorically, and this is why it exemplifies the deep structure of globalization. I've mentioned uneven development in terms of global divisions of labor, but there are at least two kinds of asynchrony specific to the art world. The first arises from the distinctly different chronologies that characterize modern art's introduction and adoption in different parts of the world. If in Europe avant-gardes were arguably devoted to representing and theorizing the unevenness of industrial modernization from the late-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries (including, importantly, mass urbaniza-

17. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 105.

18. Of course, Google searches themselves, like those of other search engines, are skewed by various efforts to increase Web-page rankings and also through paid advertising.

tion), in vast regions of the world—including many nations in Asia and Africa, where modern Western forms were introduced as belated, but hegemonic or neo-colonial languages as opposed to avant-garde protests—modern art is pressed into service as an *agent* of cultural and economic modernization rather than an *opponent* to its many devastating consequences. In this regard, it is no coincidence that booms in Chinese and Russian contemporary art accompanied these nations' market liberalization in the late '80s and '90s. A booming art market is a bellwether of full-fledged membership in a global economy. When we say "modern art" or "contemporary art," then, we are referring in drastic shorthand to a wide array of different dialects, each with its own genealogy: They may be mutually intelligible, but they nonetheless remain distinct and often contradictory.

The second species of asynchrony arises out of the enclave model of art-world development. Global art very often means little more than the installation of museums, biennials, or other cultural infrastructures by local elites who are seeking to consolidate global legitimacy in partnership with their opposite numbers in the developed world. These contemporary art enclaves often have little if anything to do with either indigenous art practices or forms of art that don't pass the threshold of a global international style (characterized, as I have asserted, by competence with a lexicon of propositions, documents and readymades, best learned in the art schools of the metropolitan West).

The Common Aggregates furnish platforms where semi-autonomous elements come together. Since these elements are not integrated into a coherent structure (whether it be composition, construction, or non-composition) but rather have their conceptual unevenness heightened, aggregates raise the question of the common. The aggregate differs from two of its close modern cognates: montage and the archive. In montage, individual elements are subsumed within an overall compositional logic; even if the source of its constituent elements remains apparent, these components don't typically maintain the disarming quality of independence characteristic of an aggregate, which seems always in danger of falling apart. An archive's principle of selection is inclusive with regard to a theme, institution, period, or event. It serves to collect, preserve, and even constitute evidence as a pillar of epistemological stability. Aggregates, on the other hand, proceed from an obscure principle of selection, typically staging confrontations among an array of objects that embody entirely different values or epistemologies.

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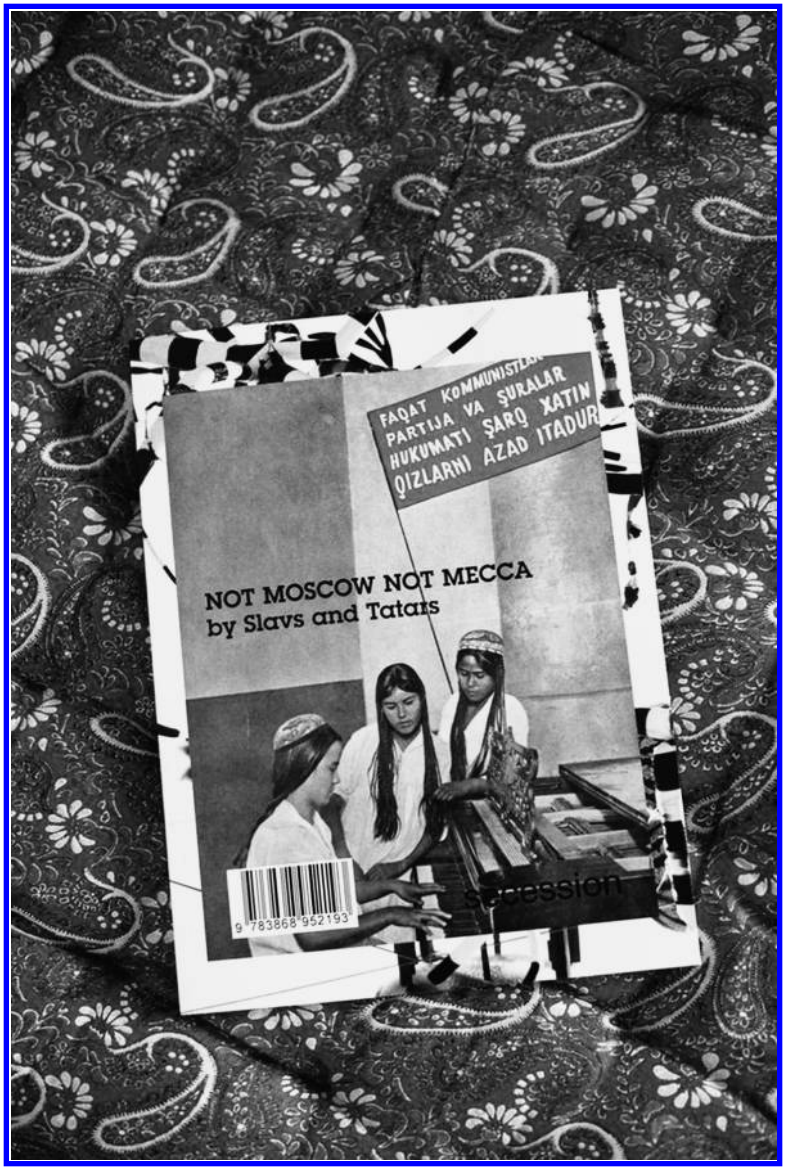
I will adduce just one example of the logic of aggregates in practice. Slavs and Tatars is an anonymous collective whose work addresses an often overlooked geopolitical region, the area east of the Berlin Wall and west of the Great Wall of China, which witnessed one of the epic ideological contests of the twentieth century, between Islam and Communism. Through texts (transmitted in books as well as in artifacts in exhibitions) and objects, Slavs and Tatars explore, among other themes,

Slavs and Tatars. Not Moscow Not Mecca, *installation view, Secession, Vienna, 2012. Photo courtesy of Secession/Oliver Ottenschläger.*

syncretic expressions of Islam developed in Central Asia under Soviet policies of religious suppression. Often Slavs and Tatars heighten the asynchrony of this ideological collision through the citation of medieval scripture as a means of drawing out mystical strands in modern and contemporary art through a logic of what they call "substitution." Indeed, they describe their work as explicitly aggregative: "The collision of different registers, different voices, different worlds, and different logics previously considered to be antithetical, incommensurate, or simply unable to exist in the same page, sentence, or space is crucial to our practice."[19] This desire to bring

19. "The Shortest Length Between Two Points: Slavs and Tatars in conversation with Franz Thalmair," in Slavs and Tatars, *Not Moscow Not Mecca* (Vienna: Secession, 2012), p. 15.



Slavs and Tatars. Not Moscow Not Mecca. *2012.*
Photo courtesy of Secession/Christine Wurning.

"different registers" onto the "same page, sentence, or space" is what I have identified as the aggregator's impulse to furnish a platform where unlike things may occupy a common space. In their exhibition *Not Moscow Not Mecca* at the Vienna Secession in 2012, for example, the group generated an exhibition based on the trans-regional histories of fruits in Central Asia, which they wittily called *The Faculty of Fruits*, and which included the apricot, the mulberry, the persimmon, the watermelon, the quince, the fig, the melon, the cucumber, the pomegranate, the sour cherry, and the sweet lemon. A book was produced that documents the fascinating histories of how

Slavs and Tatars. Not Moscow Not Mecca, *installation view, Secession, Vienna, 2012. Photo courtesy of Secession/Oliver Ottenschläger.*

these fruits grew out of and into various Central Asian cultures, both agriculturally and through myth and legend. The gallery presentation included arrays of ready-made (or seemingly readymade) fruits distributed on mirrored platforms in a cross between veiled allegory and blinged-out cornucopia. Each of the three formats that I mentioned at the outset is deployed in this aggregative syntax: the *proposition* (how does fruit embody the historical asynchronies of Central Asia?), the *document* (through an account of each fruit's geographical migration and cultural associations

published in the artists book), and the *readymade* (manifest in "real and imagined" fruits arrayed on the platforms). But the syntax of the work established asynchrony among adjacent things; their physical co-presence and conceptual unevenness raises the question of how a common space may be imagined, thus making *Not Moscow Not Mecca* aggregative according to my definition.

Don't Accumulate, Aggregate!

In *The Society of the Spectacle,* Guy Debord gives a definition of images that is as influential today as Clement Greenberg's association of modernism with flatness was in the mid-twentieth century. With stunning brevity, Debord declared in 1967: "The spectacle is *capital* accumulated to the point where it becomes image."[20] The partial truth and poetic power of this slogan tend to veil how reductive, even caricatural, it is. For if we reduce images to the epiphenomena of brute accumulation it is certainly time to give up on art. In fact, modern art developed many alternate means of understanding accumulation, including but not limited to collage and montage, which introduce jarring visual disjunction into conditions of media accumulation, the readymade, which undermines the identity between a commodity and its image; and more recently the "archival impulse," by which formations—or multitudes—of images can produce alternate epistemologies.[21] In these strategies, *modern art renders the unevenness and precariousness of accumulation articulate.* Unlike "the" spectacle, it does not totalize. In our current moment, it is the aggregator that makes hyper-accumulation eloquent by causing asynchronous objects to occupy a common space. Aggregators filter a world saturated by commodified information, making the unevenness of globalization plastic and visible. Aggregators speak in tongues.

20. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), p. 24. Italics added.
21. See Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110 (Fall 2004), pp. 3–22.