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Exhibition Catalogues in the Globalization of Art. A Source for Social and Spatial Art History

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Exhibition Catalogues in the Globalization of Art. A Source for Social and Spatial Art History

Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel*
and Olivier Marcel **

Abstract

With the rise of global art studies, there has been a quest to find a common ground to compare different contexts, events or individual trajectories. The expansion of exhibition catalogues and the artistic, social, and geographical information they contain make them an exceptional source to establish and articulate patterns of artistic mobility. Stemming from antipodal and diachronic research fields, from the internationalization of modern art (1850-1970) to that of contemporary African art, we contend that exhibition catalogues give commensurable sources to trace the globalization of art on the long term, from its spatial, social, and economic dimension to the circulation of art pieces and the cultural transfers it implies.

Résumé

Les études mondiales sur l'art ont fait émerger les enjeux de la comparaison entre différents contextes, événements ou trajectoires individuelles. L'expansion des catalogues d'exposition et l'information artistique, sociale et géographique qu'ils contiennent en font une source exceptionnelle pour étudier et articuler les formes de mobilité artistique. Partant de deux terrains de recherche divergents, l'histoire de l'internationalisation de l'art moderne (1850-1970) et la géographie de l'art contemporain en Afrique, on montre ici l'intérêt de cette source pour une histoire de la mondialisation artistique dans ses dimensions spatiale, sociale et économique, aussi bien que pour l'étude des circulations d'art et des transferts culturels qu'ils impliquent.

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Among the wealth of artifacts produced by artistic activity, exhibition catalogues are a prime source for retracing the making of facts and knowledge within the art field. From their first appearance in the 17th c. (Salon de l'Académie, Paris, 1673)¹ to their contemporary usage amidst the peripheries of the global art economy, they have greatly varied in size, content, and purpose, to the point that it may seem audacious to think them as a unified source. However, we hypothesize that exhibition catalogues have reached such a level of ubiquity that they can serve as a transnational and transperiodical tool of commensurability. This is why the ARTL@S Project and its BasArt database of exhibition catalogues have been developed since 2009 (www.artlas.ens.fr): to gather and centralize the information contained in exhibition catalogues, over time, and on a global scale, and to provide scholars digital tools and methods to best utilize this source.

How, then, can catalogues be used to describe and analyze art beyond the uniqueness of a historical event, beyond the originality of an individual artist, and even of a single artwork? How can they become a source for global studies despite the complex, idiomatic transformations and adaptations of their literary form? Working in antipodal and diachronic research fields, from the internationalization of modern art from 1850 to 1970 to that of contemporary African art, we can see how studying exhibition catalogues quantitatively can contribute to the writing of a new kind of social and comparative art history, and to the sketch of a general history of artistic globalization. Reflecting on the benefits and the necessary precautions that such a generalization entails, this article presents possible approaches to trace the globalization of arts, from the geography and chronology of its flows, to the study of its social, economical, material, and aesthetic dimensions. We argue that the world-wide diffusion of exhibition catalogues, albeit in different ways and intensity, makes them an exceptional source to work on the circulation of

art at a global scale and on the long term, with a comparative and transnational approach. On the condition that the extracted information is identified, historically criticized or deconstructed, differentiated, and compared methodically. That is why our very different research fields engage in a heuristic dialogue. We want to assess the ways of reading between the lines of exhibition catalogues, while providing tools to interconnect them. In doing so, we outline some of our methods of analysis while uncovering some of the issues with working on global and quantitative artistic information—that is to say, working with big data in art history.

What is (in) an Exhibition Catalogue?

An exhibition catalogue is a book, usually printed, that describes or is supposed to show evidence of an historical event: An exhibition. It gives the title of this exhibition, generally mentioning a date and a venue. Most of the catalogues we know provide a list of all the artists or collectives exhibited. After every name of exhibitor, catalogues often add a list of artworks with their titles, sometimes the mention of their collectors, dimensions, price, localization etc. In many catalogues, exhibitors are listed with their nationality or place or birth, frequently the address of the gallery representing them, or even their own address. Academic Salons catalogues of the 19th century go so far as to specifying the name of the exhibitor's "master," and the places where the artist studied. Recent catalogues include biographies and critical texts (See Fig. 1 and 2).

Art historians are used to exhibition catalogues for finding very precise information, such as the name of an art piece, or the exact dates of a given exhibition. We can call this a monographic use of the source. But much more can be found in exhibition catalogues.

¹ According to Jules Giffrey (ed.), *Collection des livrets des anciennes expositions depuis 1673 jusqu'en 1800* (Paris : Liepmann Sohn & Dufour, 1869-1872).

- 621 DEMANCHE (M^{me} B.-M.), Rue de Chabrol, 18. — *L'heure heureuse.*
 622 DÉMAREST (A.-G.), H. C., rue de la Grande-Chaumière, 1. — *En bordée.*
 623 — « *Marché aux fleurs* ».
 624 DEMAY (P.-L.-H.-O.), rue Condorcet, 65. — *Montée d'orage à Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue (Manche).*
 625 DEMONT (A.-L.), H. C., à Montgeron. — *Temps d'équinoxe.*
 626 — *La terre promise.*
 627 DEMONT-BRETON (M^{me} V.), H. C., à Montgeron. — *Le colombier d'Isa.*
 628 — *Ismaël.*
 629 DEMONTS (M.), rue de Courcelles, 63. — *Circé.*
 630 DENET (Ch.), rue Jouffroy, 2. — *Les collets.*
 631 DENNERY (G.-L.), à Château-Gontier, rue Saint-Florentin, 10. — « *La toilette du dimanche* ».
 632 DEPRÉ (A.), rue d'Aumale, 9. — *Cueillette des olives en Tunisie.*
 633 DESAINT (A.), rue Caulincourt, 83. — *Au bords de la Loue ; à Montgesoye (Franche-Comté).*
 634 DESBROCHERS (A.), boulevard Magenta, 90. — *Vue de Royat (Puy-de-Dôme).*
 635 DESBROSSES (J.), H. C., rue de Lübeck, 20. — *Le glacier de la Grande-Casse ; à Pralognon (Savoie).*
 636 — *Le vieux pont romain ; à Saint-Germain-de-Joux (Ain).*
 637 DESCAMPS-SABOURET (M^{me} L.-C.), rue de la Présentation, 11. — *Poisson.*
 638 DESCHELLES (P.), à Saint-Dié, rue de l'Orphelinat, 3. — *Nourrices improvisées.*
 639 DESCH (A.), rue Saint-Benoît, 20. — *Portrait de M. A...*
 640 DESGOFFE (B.), H. C., rue Dutot, 1. — *Coupe agate, montures d'or émaillé, socle en tapisserie, buste d'Empereur, tête d'améthyste, etc.*
 641 — *Coupe de régate, cristal de roche et vermeil ; travail moderne.*
 642 DESGOFFE (J.), rue Fessart, 2. — *Le fat.*
 643 DESHAYES (E.-F.-A.), à Bouzaréa, près Alger. — *Alger, vue de Bouzaréa ; janvier 1896.*
 644 DESJEUX (M^{me} E.), rue Saint-Simon, 11. — *Remouleur.*
 645 DESMARQUAIS (Ch.-H.), boulevard Garibaldi, 90. — *Bord de la Seine, à Freneuse ; matin.*
 646 — *Bord de la Juine, à Lardy (Seine-et-Oise).*
 647 DESPAGNAT (V.), rue de Lévis, 96. — *Intérieur d'atelier.*
 648 — *Elle dans le désert, nourri par les corbeaux.*
 649 DESPLANQUES (A.), rue d'Assas, 60. — *Fait-divers.*
 650 DESSAR (L.-P.), à Étaples (Pas-de-Calais). — « *Elisabeth* ».
 651 DESTREM (C.) H. C., au Castelet Pinsaguel (Haute-Garonne). — *Super flumina Babylonis.*
 652 — *Symphonie fantastique.*
 653 DESURMONT (G.-Ch.), rue Madame, 49. — *Le bain.*
 654 DESVALLIERES (G.-O.), H. C., rue Saint-Marc, 14. — *Crépuscule.*
 655 DETANGER (M^{me} R.-A.-L.), rue d'Orsel, 32 bis. — *Diane de Poitiers ; salle Jean Goujon au Louvre.*
 656 DETENRE (P.-P.), avenue de l'Opéra, 37. — *La Seine, à Pont-de-Larche.*
 657 DETTI (C.), H. C., boulevard de Clichy, 69. — *Un concert.*
 658 DETURCK (H.-E.), à Coutances (Manche), rue Saint-Pierre, 33. — *Vieille Normande.*
 659 DEULLY (E.-A.-F.), H. C., rue de Vaugirard, 103. — *Après le bal.*
 660 — *Proposition délicate.*
 661 DEUTSCH (L.), rue de Navarin, 11. — *Garde du Palais.*
 662 DEVILLARIO (R.), rue Hégésippe-Moreau. — *Portrait de M^{me} H...*
 663 — *Fillette.*
 664 DE VRIENDT (A.), H. C., à Anvers, Académie des Beaux-Arts. — *L'institution de l'ordre de la Toison-d'Or.*

Figure 1. *Catalogue illustré du Salon...* / publié sous la dir. de F.-G. Dumas (Paris L. Baschet, 1896). Next to the name of the artists, an address is mentioned.
 Source : Bibliothèque nationale de France.

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Figure 2. Content page of *Trade Routes: History + Geography*, 2nd Johannesburg Biennale (The Africus Institute for Contemporary Art, 1997) 412. In this catalogue, we see the importance in volume and in symbolical hierarchy of the critical essays that precede the actual contents of the exhibition. For the authors convened in the book, most of who do not specialize in the study of art but rather in the broad theory of globalization, such a medium is a way to expand their audience. For the editors of the hefty volume, associating with highly recognized scholars is not only a way to branch into academic networks. Although they do not refer to the artists' or curators' works, those essays provide the scale of legitimacy that neither the hosting institutions nor the editor had.

A Testimony?

From 19th c. Parisian Salons to the contemporary African art field, the literary format of exhibition catalogues has always answered a need: list things, exhibitors, artworks, name them, keep a track of them. Listings, omnipresent in catalogues, also reveal of a testimonial way of thinking: “Who and what is– or was *there*?” We can distinguish at least three common degrees of information that run across their pages: factual, discursive, and relational information. First, exhibition catalogues are supposed to provide a documented account of a historical event and of the encounters of people, ideas and artworks that are constituent of an exhibition. As such, they give (or are supposed to give) factual elements about the participants, their names, sometimes their nationality, their address, their age, etc., and about the works exhibited—titles, formats, medium, date of the work of art, a mention of their gallery, etc. Second, since exhibition catalogues are generally authored by the organizers or even the participants of the exhibition themselves, they are thus invested by these actors as a means to communicate indirectly to the rest of what Howard Becker called the art worlds – and especially to the art market.² Catalogues can therefore be seen as multi-layered documents in which factual information is embroidered with ideological or situated views on art’s geography, sociology, economy, theory, and history. A third thread of information, the relational one, stems from editorial, pictorial or lexical choices. Indeed, while developing their own views of the artistic scene, the authors of catalogues may also give away their position and ambition within it. They take part to the production of aesthetics and ideas, classifications, works of art, and as well as to the constitution of representations and interpretation schemes. Power relationships, market, journals and other media, critique, importation and translation, networks of sociability, teaching institutions, art market, dealers and curators, etc., the whole field of art is also present under the lines of exhibition

catalogues, to quote Pierre Bourdieu’s conception of the art scene³. Not only dominations and filiations (“pupil of that Master from this Academy”), but also power abuse and revolts can be felt. Such meta-information lies not only in social information (name of a master, or of a collector mentioned in the catalogue), or in the mention of groups and affiliations, but also in subtle and sometimes subconscious distinctions between scales, toponyms, ethnonyms, or chrononyms. Political issues can also be felt. For instance, some 19th c. Salon catalogues mention artists coming “from Poland” whereas Poland did not exist actually on the world map at that time, as claiming Polish nationality was a clear political act against Russian and German imperialisms. Same political position taking can be found about “Alsacian” artists mentioned in many French Salon catalogues. These “Alsaciens” were supposed to be German since 1870 and the German takeover of Alsace, but refused it.

The three types of historical information that can be found in exhibition catalogues — factual, discursive, and relational — can be scattered in diverse lists, section titles, and statements, or condensed in seemingly insignificant annotations such as the declared national or ethnic identity of an exhibitor, often inconspicuously placed in between brackets.

The formal pact offered to the reader – that the list accounts for presence, and that the catalogue accounts for the actual exhibition – can be a trap for researchers. Indeed, do catalogues reproduce the exact list and form of exhibitions?

For instance, were the artworks exhibited? On the catalogue of the first Modigliani retrospective in 1920, Paris, that is kept in the archives of the Musée d’Art Moderne in Villeneuve-d’Ascq, France, a handwritten inscription indicates that the piece number 14 was not actually displayed in the exhibition (Fig. 3).

² Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

³ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*; translated by Susan Emanuel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

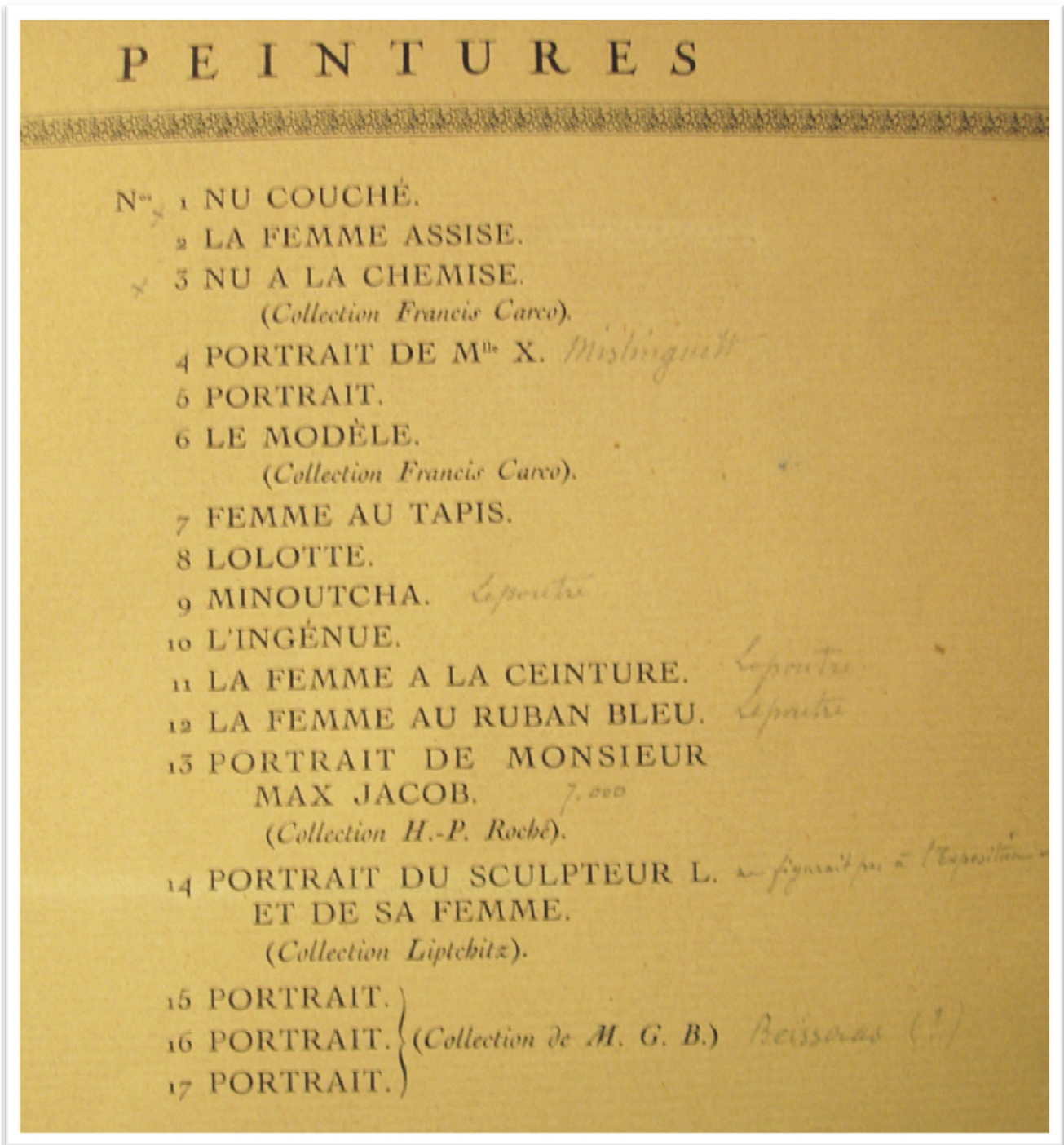


Figure 3. Page of the *Exposition rétrospective à la Galerie Montaigne des œuvres de Modigliani*, (Paris : Galerie Montaigne, 1920). Hand written, the name of « Mistinguett », subject of the portrait N. 4; or the name of "Lepoutre", a collector who lent some of the art pieces. Number 14 is commented: "ne figurait pas à l'Exposition" (was not in the exhibition).

Who is right, thus, the catalogue, or the visitor? Similarly, were the works of art displayed in the exact same order as listed on paper? Do the illustrations represent the actual objects exhibited? Lists have an authoritative value and catalogue lists in particular claim a testimonial evidence: “these people, these artworks were present” certifies the institution or gallery stamp. But like any other historical document, the reality-effect provided by the form can be treacherous. Information must be checked, and crossed with other historical documents.

Beyond Aura

The reflex to take catalogue information for granted certainly comes from the aura this historical source has gained through the ages. Indeed, the modernist canon and its historiography have gradually highlighted a small selection of exhibitions that have been increasingly considered as milestones in art history.⁴ Their catalogues have become key to the history of modernism. Gaining the status of relics of high symbolic value, they have also reached considerable market value.

Today, exhibition catalogues have proved to be part and parcel of global contemporary art. In a controversial paper on postcolonial curatorial practices, art critic George Baker gives a derisive description of the swelling in size and ambition of today’s exhibition catalogues. According to him, the universal scope of catalogues is now inversely proportional to their social impact:

“[...] mega-exhibition catalogues mock the now quaint scope of even biblical narrative by calling themselves simply *The Book* – I refer, of course, to the catalogue for Documenta X, a book by the way too large for many to be able to afford to purchase it (in fact, with a book this size, you don’t own it, you only glance at it in libraries, in other

institutions, which seems a telling destination to me).”⁵

To speak of “*The Book*” underlines how faith is required from the user of exhibition catalogues today, but also that literal reading cannot be the best way to use exhibition catalogues: much may not be true. It also indicates that exhibition catalogues, as a literary form, have become a way to tell a story, to create a fictional universe which the reader can dive into. The names of artists and the titles of artworks listed below each name have the function of evoking “art.” In numerous catalogues, additional illustrations contribute to the making of a form itself dedicated to a world of forms, enticing the reader to imagine their contours. Often, an introduction provides the keys to this world, of which the reader becomes the observer, possibly the admirer, the ultimate experience being to have the catalogue open on the very site of the exhibition. Catalogues are objects designed to depart from reality and “change life,” in the words of André Breton. They embellish, amaze, shock, disgust, deceive or rally to a cause, according to the artists’ choices. Catalogues can therefore be seen as a sort of replica, albeit in a miniaturized version, of the exhibition for which it accounts. Now, what reality does the catalogue document? Does it tell us about a past exhibition, or about the effect the book actually has on us as present readers?

In 1947, the luxury edition of the Paris International Surrealist Exhibition was covered with a female breast - with the mention “*Prière de toucher*” (please touch!). Marcel Duchamp, who designed this cover, already saw the magical function of the catalogue in the international art market, and the ambiguous desires and culpabilities they can trigger, consciously or not. There can be a kind of superstition in the use of an exhibition catalogue. Our position is that exhibition catalogues must not be taken as relics, but on the contrary that it is worth touching them, collecting and gathering them without giving any special catalogue more importance than another.

⁴ Such events include the 1863 Exposition du Salon des Refusés, the first impressionist exhibition in 1874, the 1905 Salon d’Automne in Paris, the 1912 Sonderbund in Cologne, the 1913 Armory Show, the Sao Paulo Semaine d’art moderne in 1922, the Exposition internationale du Surréalisme in 1938 and 1947, the Gutai exhibition in 1955, or Warhol’s Campbell Soup Cans exhibition in 1964, etc.

⁵ George Baker, “The Globalization of the False: A Response to Okwui Enwezor”, *Documents* n°23 (2004): 21.

A Situated Discourse, Oriented Towards a Globalized Art Market

While working with exhibition catalogues, we must be aware that we work on a specific segment of the art worlds, that is to say on marketed signatures and art pieces. Indeed, historically, the appearance of exhibition catalogues matches the development of the art market and, from the beginning, this market was international. Acting as gateways, exhibition catalogues became the decisive link between artists and collectors. That is why early exhibition catalogues included details such as artists' precise addresses. Some rare catalogues also display prices. In many archives, we can find catalogues where collectors interested in buying artworks mentioned themselves the prices of the works listed, or the names of the owners, as seen for instance in the Modigliani catalogue mentioned above (Fig. 3).

Since the art market is a place where value is negotiated rather than fixed in advance, exhibition catalogues can be seen as a tool to inflate the market value of a school or individual artist. The inclusion of collectors' names in exhibitions catalogues further indicates the interpenetration of the literary form with *economic and symbolic, or mimetic* logics: stating the owner of an artwork may trigger emulation and competition between potential buyers.⁶

Today, catalogues can be excavated from most, if not all nations' contemporary art scenes and markets throughout the world. However, while the perceived necessity of recording exhibitions may have begun as a manifestation of the art market, the motivations for creating catalogues in the peripheries of the global art market complicate the interpretations we may have of the uneven distribution of catalogue material on a global scale. Indeed, the process of making an exhibition

catalogue positions the participants within a given part of the art market – the international one.

The introduction of catalogues in the Kenyan visual art scene illustrates this logic. Stemming from the colonial export economy, Kenya's art market has been dominated by a model that favors "self-taught" artists and direct selling in the places of residence and leisure of the white bourgeoisie and the expatriates. Largely disconnected from the institutions and practices of contemporary art, this model has disregarded catalogues as a worthwhile medium for valorizing art. However, since the 1990's, development agencies have injected funding into institutions with the objective of "professionalizing" artists. The resulting mobility has branched into transnational contact-zones in which the profile of artists comes before the direct market value of their work.⁷ For the most educated and travelled artists, exhibition catalogues have therefore become an attractive communication tool, if not a necessary one.

Miriam Syowia Kyambi is one of the rare contemporary Kenyan artists to shore up the use of catalogues within the Kenyan art scene. Born in 1979 in Nairobi, she is a performance artist of mixed origins who grew up in the affluent outskirts of Nairobi. At age eighteen, she travelled to the United States and followed a course at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In the early 2000's she returned to Kenya and strived to depart from the economic model of her compatriots. One of her first art projects in Kenya included an artistic residency, followed by a 22 p. color catalogue (Fig. 4).

Kyambi's trajectory and the arguments she deployed to convince her fellow exhibitors of the importance of publishing a book in the process of the exhibition reveal of the situated nature of catalogues as a medium of communication. As she later explained, their "*mission was to represent [them]selves as a group of young and upcoming artists.*"⁸ Presented as a grassroots initiative, this

⁶ Such a logic can be seen in the years 1908-1912, in the internationalization of the careers of Matisse or Picasso, and the mimetic competition between collectors like Gertrude Stein, Ivan Morosov, Sergei Chtchoukin, or Vincenc Kramar. See Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, "¿Exponer al cubista sin cubismo? De cómo Kahnweiler llegó a convencer a Alemania —e incluso al mundo entero— del aura de Picasso mediante su pedagogía expositiva (1908-1914)" in: *Picasso. Registros Alemanes* (Malagá: Museo Picasso, 2015), 258-273.

⁷ Olivier Marcel, *Tracing Horizons: Geography of Art Mobilities in Nairobi, Kenya*, PhD thesis, Université Bordeaux Montaigne (2014)

⁸ Olivier Marcel, Interview with Miriam Kyambi, April 2013, in her studio in Nairobi.

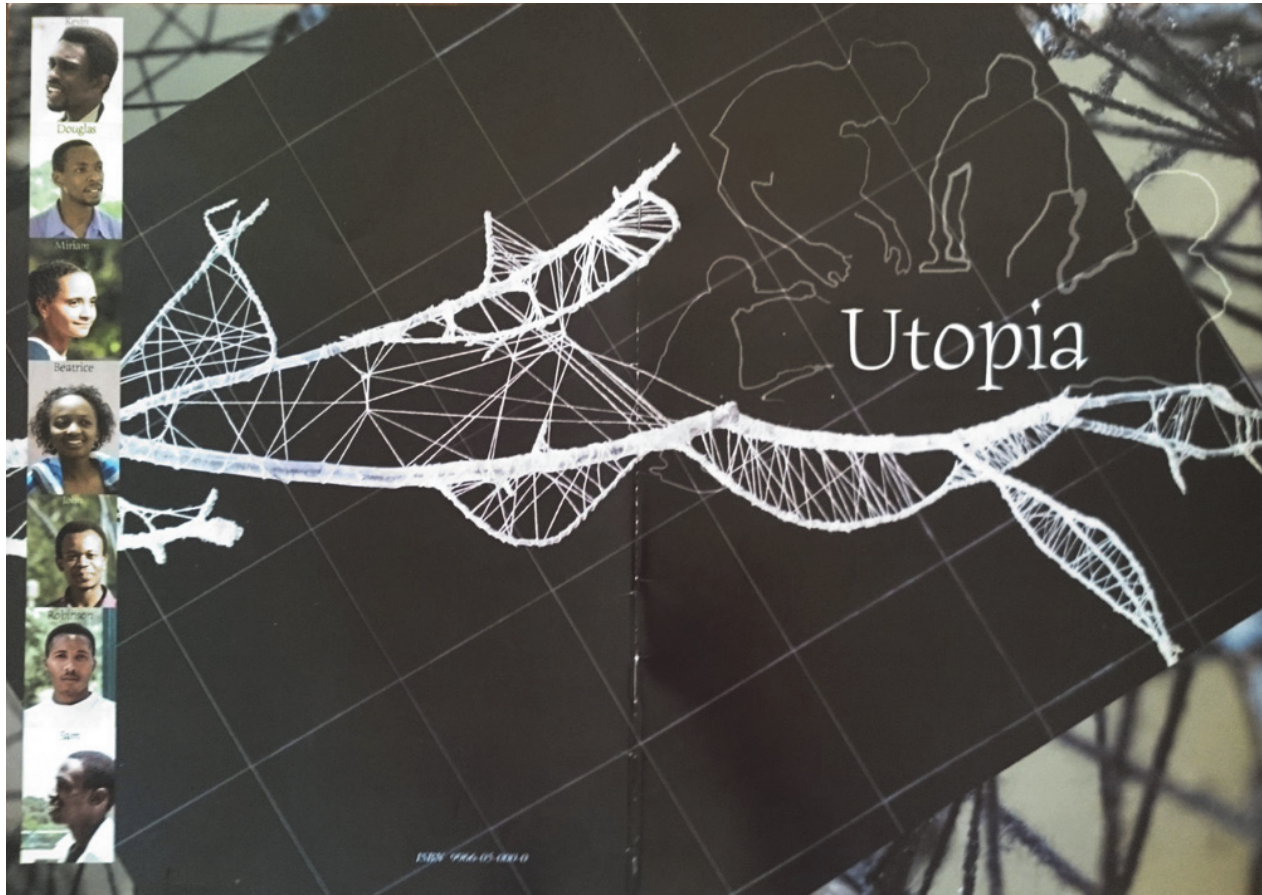


Figure 4. Exhibition catalogue cover: *Utopia : 7 Artists Seek a Place in the Kenyan Art Scene* (Nairobi, 2004).

project materialized both Kyambi’s know-how and strategy to appeal to more global market.

As opposed to most Kenyan artists, Kyambi was able to locate all of her previous artworks, although scattered across the globe (in Mali up to Mexico and Finland). While most other Kenyan artists were satisfied with vague references to international accomplishments, she scrupulously kept her *curriculum vitae* up to date, tracking the precise venues and institutions she worked with. Prior to the 2004 project, she struggled to convince her fellow Kenyan exhibitors that the big money spent on the publication of catalogues would benefit them on the long run. But the other Kenyan artists accusing her of wasting money, importing a distinction practice learnt in the US:

“As a function of inexperience or ignorance, a few of the participating artists have not taken the catalogue seriously enough to

volunteer information [...] Furthermore it took a lot of persuasion and cajoling to enlist some of the artists [...] It seems the publicity and historical value of these documents as well as the potential benefits including future fame and fortune (which they all need and want) did not register with some of the participating artists.”⁹

“Learning,” “experience,” “ignorance,” “understanding”: in Kyambi’s discourse, catalogues are the culmination of a set of required skills and agency to integrate a social and economic field perceived as higher in the symbolic hierarchy of the art field. The case of the Kenyan art scene shows how catalogues have become the testimony of a social *habitus* and the sign of membership to a well-connected and global artistic field. Between those who embrace, reject, or misunderstand Kyambi’s catalogue, there is not only diverging

⁹ Tabawebulla Kivubiro and Miriam Kyambi, *Utopia : 7 Artists Seek a Place in the Kenyan Art Scene*, (Nairobi: Kyambi/Kivubiro Publications, 2004): 1-22

practices, but also different knowledge, strategies, and networks. Exhibition catalogues can be seen as crystallizing that uneven access to artistic globalization. The confrontation of economic models ultimately introduces hierarchies and social distinction. In the Kenyan context, exhibition catalogues act as vectors of artistic transfer while serving international strategies of artists and their promoters.

The very act of producing a catalogue is a claim of membership to a common field or market. Whether effective or imaginary, this claim of catalogue authors engages their narratives on a same, comparable level. So, why not study them quantitatively, on a large scale and over long periods?

From the Individual to the Series: A Different Kind of Art History?

In no case can the art world be encapsulated in exhibition catalogues alone: they merely reflect an incomplete and often partisan history of exhibitions. Besides, we must remain conscious of the deceiving blankness of catalogues' uncharted territories: the abundance of catalogues or lack thereof can be an inaccurate mirror of artistic activity.¹⁰ Nevertheless, putting the information of catalogues in series has proven to be a plausible way to trace exhibitions beyond their idiomatic value, making them a tool of commensurability at a historical, social, and a global scale.

Going from the individual case study to a quantitative, serial analysis has never been a reflex in art history.¹¹ And yet, it can help the discipline go much further in terms of comprehending the main structures and evolutions of the art worlds from the modern times until today, especially when exhibition catalogues constitute a long-term, stable, commensurable and global source of information.

¹⁰ Olivier Marcel, "Filling the Blank Space of Global Art Peripheries: Measurements of Art Mobility and their Ambivalence in Nairobi, Kenya." *Art@s Bulletin* 2, no. 2 (2013): Article 6

¹¹ Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, "L'histoire de l'art et le quantitatif," *Histoire & mesure* (XXIII - 2 | 2008, 3-34): <http://histoiremesure.revues.org/3543>.

Serialization, the Hapax, and the Blanks

First, serializing catalogues facilitates the necessary task of cross-sourcing information, especially when other traces are scarce. Considering this information quantitatively, the uniqueness of exhibitions and the hapaxes of art history are drowned in the big data and thus are no longer representative. When visualized, exceptions can also float over the mass, and so be identified as such. In that sense, a quantitative approach works hand in hand with qualitative case studies. Moreover, some blanks that cannot be filled with archival work can be replaced by new information produced with the series connection of exhibition catalogues.

One very interesting case in art history is the way Picasso's international reputation was produced in the 1910s. Picasso became the most recognized modern artist in Europe as early as 1914, through a process of cultural transfers and exhibition strategies that *avoided* Paris, whereas the priority of Picasso's contemporaries was to exhibit *first* in Paris prior to the rest of Europe.

Although sources coming from galleries are not open to researchers, the international circulation of Picasso's works can be traced with exhibition catalogues and with sources coming from the reception contexts of his exhibitions. The resulting maps reveal that Picasso's international career occurred outside of Paris after 1909, and was centered on a German network that progressively extended Picasso's reputation to Central Europe, Russia, and the USA.

Visualizing Picasso's trajectory in maps made with information from exhibition catalogues helps to reconstitute the strategies behind this anti-Parisian artistic circulation (Fig. 5 and 6), especially when the blind dots of the quantitative maps are crossed with the images of the art pieces actually exhibited. Daniel Henry Kahnweiler, who was Picasso's dealer after 1908, adapted Picasso's exhibition to foreign audiences. He first promoted the Blue, Rose, and Cézannienne Periods, and did not show cubist works to foreign publics until

autumn 1912, whereas Picasso had actually begun the cubist disintegration of forms a few years ago. Only after 1912, Kahnweiler dared to show Cubist works, always introducing them however with former pieces that proved Picasso had come to cubism progressively. In Germany and Central Europe, where Kahnweiler developed a good network of colleagues and collectors, Picasso was quickly recognized as an excellent painter whereas in France he was controversial. This foreign recognition triggered a mimetic desire process that was essential in the construction of Picasso's reputation. The reputation of the painter abroad increased his aura in Paris despite him not taking part in any exhibitions. More generally Picasso's European detour, as evidenced by the study of the circulation of exhibitions, provided Cubism with a foreign legitimization.¹²

In the case of Picasso, catalogues put in series helped reconstitute an international exhibition trajectory – more, an exhibition strategy. They helped complete missing historical information, and understand a precise historical exception within a larger context (here, the international market of modern art before World War I).

Catalogues in Series, a Tool for a Comparative and Social Art History

The relative constancy of the structure of the catalogue through time and space enables catalogue information to be translated into measurable values. Comparison is thus possible, which contributes to clarifying the path from political or aesthetic overdeterminations that have always been abundant in the study of art. The press and art criticism are indeed the most accessible and thus the most used sources in art history. Now, we need other sources beyond discourse to examine some of the polemics in art history. For example, a complex geography of foreign artists in Paris in the 1900s can be

reconstituted from the exhibition catalogues of the main Salons of the time – Artistes français, Société nationale des Beaux-arts, Indépendants, and Salon d'Automne. These enormous lists of addresses – thus social spaces – and nationalities can contribute to a social and spatial history of art that is still lacking. They also help verify some common preconceptions of art history: for instance, the idea that the Salon d'Automne was the most international Parisian Salon in the 1910s proves to be wrong; the idea that Montparnasse was a highly cosmopolitan art place proves to be true, but only after 1908; the idea of a melting pot in Montparnasse is rather false, since artists regrouped according to nationality (Fig. 7).¹³

The serial study of exhibition catalogues thus relativizes the interpretation of isolated textual sources that are often riddled by political overdetermination. This also helps the historian to distance him-or herself from the traditional values and frames of interpretation of art history—especially in modern art history where posterity has sided up with the avant-gardes and has crowned modernism with positive qualifications such as cosmopolitanism, internationalism, xenophilia, whereas “the traditional”, “the past” and “the academy” have always been supposed to be backward, traditionalist, xenophobic and nationalist. Another major benefit of using exhibition catalogues as a source for global art history is the broad spectrum of artists it embraces, not only the few paragons of modernism. Doing so can help nuance or contradict the usual *credo* of art history.

To illustrate and go against this *credo*, we can go back to Europe in the 1910s. In 1911-1913, a fierce controversy dawned in several countries against “artistic cosmopolitanism” and the presence of foreigners in modern art exhibitions.¹⁴ In Germany, the 1911 Vinnen case is among the most infamous: The argument of its polemicists was that the French presence was too overwhelming

¹²More details in Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, “¿Exponer al cubista sin cubismo? De cómo Kahnweiler llegó a convencer a Alemania —e incluso al mundo entero— del aura de Picasso mediante su pedagogía expositiva (1908-1914)” in: *Picasso. Registros Alemanes* (Malagá: Museo Picasso, 2015): 258-273.

¹³Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, “L'art de la mesure. Le Salon d'Automne (1903-1914), l'avant-garde, ses étrangers et la nation française,” *Histoire & mesure* (XXII - 1 | 2007, 145-182) : <http://histoiremesure.revues.org/2333>.

¹⁴For a general presentation of these polemics from Great Britain to Central Europe, see Joyeux-Prunel, *Les avant-gardes artistiques*.

and that German museums had bought more modern art from Paris than from Germany.¹⁵ In France, the case of the Salon d'Automne was debated up to the level of the Parisian city council and even the National Assembly where avant-gardes were called “apaches,” and denied the right to be hosted in a national palace (the Grand Palais). Looking at raw numbers, which is possible when working with exhibition catalogues of the time, forces us to contextualize the gaze, and to see that the xenophobes of the 1910-1912 polemics in France and Germany were also modern. It helps nuance binaries that were constructed in the press and cannot be taken for granted by historians. The Vinnen case is the testimony not of a German backwardness, but rather of the complexity of modernity. It was an opportunity for relegated artists who lacked international network to be noticed. Xenophobia was the ideal pretext. Interestingly, the sociological analysis of the nationalization of cubism in France, that countered the nationalization of futurism in Italy, is comparable. Whereas artists such as Picasso or Matisse who had got contracts with good galleries and benefited from the international networks of their dealers did not take position in the polemics, “Salon cubists,” who depended upon their own efforts and energy to exhibit and get known, joined the nationalist rush against foreign artists.¹⁶

Such an international comparison questions the sanctifications art history has so often guaranteed, and the way formalist approaches have completely desocialized and decontextualized modern art and its narrative,—what Pierre Bourdieu called *refoulement du social* or “repression of the social.”¹⁷ It also incites us to think of the so-called nationalist crisis against modernism as a structural phenomenon, and to think of the systemic dimension of local reactions to the

globalization of the market of symbolic goods—in this case, to the globalization of modern art.

A Reason for the ARTL@S Project and the BasArt Database

The scope of art history would be expanded if more art historians consented to use exhibition catalogues in series, thus opening their work to social, circulatory and quantitative and comparative approaches. We contend that the discipline would get out of its monographic reflexes which have always contributed to the hagiographical and geocentric canon that is currently so contested but contradicted so little by concrete, non-laudatory and non-monocentric studies. Not more than 200 artists are well known, and do we know much about their context? For the Modern and contemporary times, we mostly read studies on art produced in Paris or New York; but do we know as much about places like Rome and Beirut in the 1930s, London and Beijing in the 1920s, Lisbon and Sydney in the 1970s, Stockholm and Los Angeles in the 1950s, Madrid and Algiers in the 1950s, or Tokyo and Amsterdam in the 1910s? Why do we always study “modernism”, while “the modernists”, as can be seen in exhibition catalogues themselves, exhibited very often with “non modernists”, and did not think art to be this apartheid we see in modern art museums?

The reluctance of art historians to adopt quantitative approaches has both professional reasons—absence of quantitative training in academic curricula—and methodological, or even ideological ones. Indeed, the quantitative approach is often reduced to a sociological—some may say Marxist—blur, although the generalized defiance against numbers in art history can be linked to a laudable resistance to the symbolic violence of numbers.¹⁸ Now, the resilience of monographic, monocentric, and hagiographic approaches is also

¹⁵ See Barbara Paul, „Tschudi und die Auseinandersetzung um die französische Kunst im Jahre 1911: die Streitschrift *Ein Protest deutscher Künstler und im Kampf um die Kunst!*“ in Hugo von Tschudi und die moderne französische Kunst im deutschen Kaiserreich (Berlin, Mainz: Verlag Ph. von Zabern, 1993), 319-326.

¹⁶ Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, “L’art de la mesure. Le Salon d’Automne (1903-1914), l’avant-garde, ses étrangers et la nation française,” *Histoire & mesure* (XXII - 1 | 2007) : <http://histoiremesure.revues.org/2333>.

¹⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, « Sur le pouvoir symbolique » (1977), in Pierre Bourdieu, *Langage et pouvoir symbolique* (Paris: Seuil, « Points », 2001), 201-211.

¹⁸ Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, “L’art et les chiffres. Une mésestente historique ? Généalogie critique et tentatives de conciliation.” In *L’Art et la Mesure. Histoire de l’art et méthodes quantitatives*, ed. by Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel and Luc Sigalo-Santos (Paris: Éditions rue d’Ulm, 2010), 17-58.

due to the difficulty of accessing a large enough number of historical sources that would be comparable. With exhibition catalogues, art historians have at their disposal an impressive data collection that they can study and compare.

Aware of the importance of exhibition catalogues, some scholars, publishers, and libraries have invested time, energy, and money in reprinting and sometimes digitalizing catalogues of important exhibitions. Yet, this doesn't satisfy the needs of social, comparative, and transnational projects. Reprints have been published of the main Salons in Paris,¹⁹ of modern art exhibitions frequently viewed as seminal,²⁰ such as the catalogue of the Armory Show in 1913,²¹ or significant exhibitions in Germany.²² In this process, reprints have often been reworked differently than the primary source, even if an antique layout and mode of impression might lead to thinking the reprints are *fac-simile*.²³ Moreover, they represent a tiny proportion of all the existing catalogues. These publications reflect and maintain an everlasting tendency in the discipline of art history to limit study to the same countries. They may give the deceiving impression that these exhibitions were the most influential of their time, and discourage looking for further sources and events. A major stumbling block is that exhibition catalogues are scattered and difficult to access. They are not always available due to poor conditions of preservation or because they haven't been filed in public collections and archives. Digitalization projects have already greatly facilitated the work of art historians, and the efforts of institutions such as Bibliothèque nationale de France (www.gallica.bnf.fr), the

Gemeinsamer Bibliotheksverbund in Germany (www.gbv.de), the Smithsonian Institute (<http://www.siris.si.edu/>) and the Archives of American Art (<http://www.aaa.si.edu>), or the Digital Archive and Publications Project of the Museum of Fine Arts Houston (<http://icaadocs.mfah.org>) in the USA, have proved to be of critical significance. However, the catalogues that have been digitalized are only those kept by the best endowed institutions. Besides, the process of digitalization in art history has been mainly focused on magazines rather than on catalogues. Furthermore, digitalization is constrained by copyrights concerns. Proper remuneration of copyright-holders makes online-access far too expensive, in the rare occasions where all concerned right holders could be reached. Lastly, digitalized catalogues alone do not permit serial analysis. In order to be used and analyzed, data needs to be processed. This is why there is a strong need for a central, global, and digital database that would not be a digitalized storage of a selection of catalogues, but a global and relational database, in which all the information gathered from exhibition catalogues are collected, intelligently organized, edited, stored, and put at art historians' disposal for serial, geographical, and statistical analysis.

Artl@s' goal has been to fill this gap: to develop a centralized database of exhibition catalogues for art historians and to add to this primary source a powerful query interface essential for research which would make serial, comparative, social, spatial and transnational art history affordable to art historians. Since the 17th century, the structure of catalogues has been constant enough in the inclusion of dates, titles, places, and names, to fuel a desire for comparison and convergence, even if every art historian recognizes the specificities of each case and each disciplinary perspective. The progressive recollection of exhibition catalogues covering a period of over 200 years, including comprehensive collections of the international art market (notably Salons, biennials, and art fairs) is bound to renew the horizons and even the

¹⁹Pierre Sanchez, *Dictionnaire du Salon d'Automne. Répertoire des exposants et liste des œuvres présentées, 1903-1945* (Dijon : l'Échelle de Jacob, 2006), 3 volumes; Gaïté Dugnat, *Les catalogues des salons de la Société nationale des beaux-arts, (Dijon : l'Échelle de Jacob, 2000-2005)*, 6 volumes.

²⁰Donald E. Gordon, *Modern Art Exhibitions 1900-1916* (Munich: Prestel 1974), 2 volumes.

²¹*The Armory Show International Exhibition of Modern Art 1913*, reprint, ed. Bernard Karpel, (New York: Arno Press, 1972) ; vol. 1, Catalogues ; t. 2, Pamphlets ; t. 3, Documents.

²²*Stationen der Moderne. Kataloge epochaler Kunstausstellungen in Deutschland 1910-1962*, ed. Eberhard Roters (Cologne: König, 1988), 10 volumes. Among them: *Erste-Internationale Dada-Messe*, Berlin, 1920; vol. 8: *Entartete Kunst*, München, Berlin, 1937; vol. 10: *Zen 49*, München, Central Art Collecting Point, 1950.

²³This is especially true with catalogues produced by Éditions l'Échelle de Jacob. Data of the main 19th and 20th Paris Salons, important galleries, and some Salons de Province are « reclassified » (so the website). These "reprinted" catalogues are systematically bought by museums and libraries, but give scholars non primary data.

objectives of art history. Comparative, transnational and circulatory methods provide a way to out pass the restrictive selection of roughly two hundred artists and their artworks that museums consistently promote. They suggest another history of artistic modernities, and their globalization.²⁴

Catalogues as a Source for Global Art History

In exhibition catalogues, lists of places associated with dates and identities constitute geolocatable data on the deeds and circulations of artists and artworks across the globe. This data is a useful source for a global approach of art history—an approach that many voices now incite to be *more materialistic* and *factual* before being deconstructivist.²⁵ Using catalogues for a globalized approach is justified by the fact that exhibition catalogues were a global phenomenon from their inception. Historically, they were notably promoted by artists or intermediaries that participated, or wanted to participate, in the international art market, and to be linked with internationalized societies or social classes. This is why transnational art history benefits so much from the global study of exhibition catalogues.

We propose to synthesize the main results of a transnational and quantitative study of exhibition catalogues, while highlighting its benefits compared to theoretic or monographic approaches to the globalization of art.

Rewriting the Canonical Narratives of Modern Art's Diffusion

First, on the monographic scale, serializing catalogues can give a new transnational dimension to a biographical approach. Tracing the

circulations of a single artist or artwork is now possible, with or without complete archives. And this canonical exercise of art history is now possible on a large scale. It can help a lot when reconstituting what anthropologist Arjun Appadurai calls the “social life of things”,²⁶ and better understand the successive contexts of a transcultural process. The landscape provided by the quantitative and systematic recollection of catalogues reveals the singularity of individual artists or artworks. It is then possible to compare several internationalization schemes, highlight the role of a mediator, a specific network, or to locate the trajectory of an artwork within a more general economical, social or geopolitical context. The case of Picasso’s internationalization is particularly revealing of the benefits of such an approach — as seen above—, as is the study of the so-called domination of US modernism all over the world after 1945.

Remapping the Hierarchy of Cities: Beyond the Paris/New York Model

Studying exhibition catalogues with quantitative methods has also brought evidence to challenge the dominant art historical narrative that “modernity” was a centralized process, with Paris and New York as its successive capital cities, and internationalism and anti-nationalism as its virtues, and that modern art evolved according to the international diffusion of a continuous progression towards abstraction and artistic autonomy.

The example of the international activities of European avant-garde networks between the 1850s and 1914 helps to explain how a “remote” point of view leads to very new conclusions regarding the hierarchies of cities. It is generally thought, and written, that what people identified at the time of “young,” “independent,” or “avant-garde artists,” appeared first in Paris where they found the best opportunities to work, discuss,

²⁴ Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, *Les avant-gardes artistiques. Une histoire transnationale. 1918-1945 and 1945-1968* (to be published Paris : Gallimard).

²⁵ See Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel (ed.), *Circulations in the Global History of Art* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2015). Especially Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, “Reintroducing Circulations : Historiography and the Project of Global Art History,” 1-22.

²⁶ Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1986).

exhibit, and sell their work, and that modern art disseminated from Paris all over Europe to Russia and the United States. However, studying what real opportunities this population had to exhibit in France and abroad, searching for what was shown or not, tracking the precise circulations of works, and highlighting artistic career paths, produces a very different idea of the international field of modern art before the First World War. In Paris, until 1914, innovation was relegated to the margins of the art market. Innovative groups had to exhibit abroad in order to come back with foreign legitimization and be accepted in France. The Parisian public finally approved a complex consecration that had been constructed in a back and forth between France and abroad. Over several decades, the initial hierarchies between artistic capitals, that had moved from a Roman centrality to a Parisian domination in the 1860s, were modified and the geopolitics of modernism were not centered on Paris but on several capital cities whose elite were often more open to modernity than in Paris. Foreign and international exhibitions became the best way to obtain the vanguardist label. Artists preferred to exhibit all over Europe than to focus only on Paris, even if Paris came first very often. Surprisingly, transnational and comparative analysis shows also that such a transnational vetting process depended upon a differentiated distribution and display of artistic innovation according to places, markets, and environments. This strategy allowed artists to remain avant-garde in one field while at the same time exporting in another field a more sellable kind of painting. On the symbolic level, especially, the proverb that “A prophet is not without honor save in his own country” legitimized the internationalization of the avant-garde’s careers, stirring European elites’ national, guilty consciences. The resulting outcome of a serial and transnational methodology achieves a broader understanding of the dawning of what is now understood as the first globalization of the modern art market, shedding light on an unusual

picture of the history of modern and avant-garde art.²⁷

Avant-garde artistic career paths developed in a changing transnational marketing network that cannot be reduced to the domination of Paris. In the wake of the First World War, the growth of modern art exhibitions slowed in Paris (Fig. 8). Even if Paris remained an essential center for modernism, the rise of German cultural capital cities and their attractiveness for avant-garde groups all around Europe (Parisian groups included), was a clear threat to the French capital city. Since 1910, Berlin threatened Paris in the geopolitics of modernism: “Leftist” tendencies from the Sezession had founded the “Neue Sezession,” and organized two exhibitions a year; the writer and musician Herwarth Walden opened the gallery *Der Sturm* in 1912, leading steady exhibition activity until the 1920s, even during the war; in 1913 the *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon* showed works from all over Europe, from the Italian futurist to the Parisian cubists, the German expressionists, the Russian avant-gardes and their Central European counterparts. Now it was clear that many centers were competing for the international modernist hegemony. After 1912, the tremendous circulation of vanguard art and the intensification of international artistic competition triggered an explosion of nationalism among a majority of modernist groups. In Dresden and Berlin with *Die Brücke*, in Moscow with the cubo-futurists, as well as in London with the Vorticists, or in various groups based in Amsterdam, in Brussels, or in Barcelona, the time had come for nationalism. The internationalization of European modern art markets and styles relied mostly on nationalism and even nationalist media logics that the avant-gardes accentuated. Modernist artists and their introducers in foreign countries used the “international” claim for local strategies, in such a way that “internationalism” became compatible with nationalism.

²⁷ Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, *Nul n'est prophète en son pays?: l'internationalisation de la peinture des avant-gardes parisiennes, 1855-1914* (Paris : N. Chaudun: Musée d'Orsay, 2009).

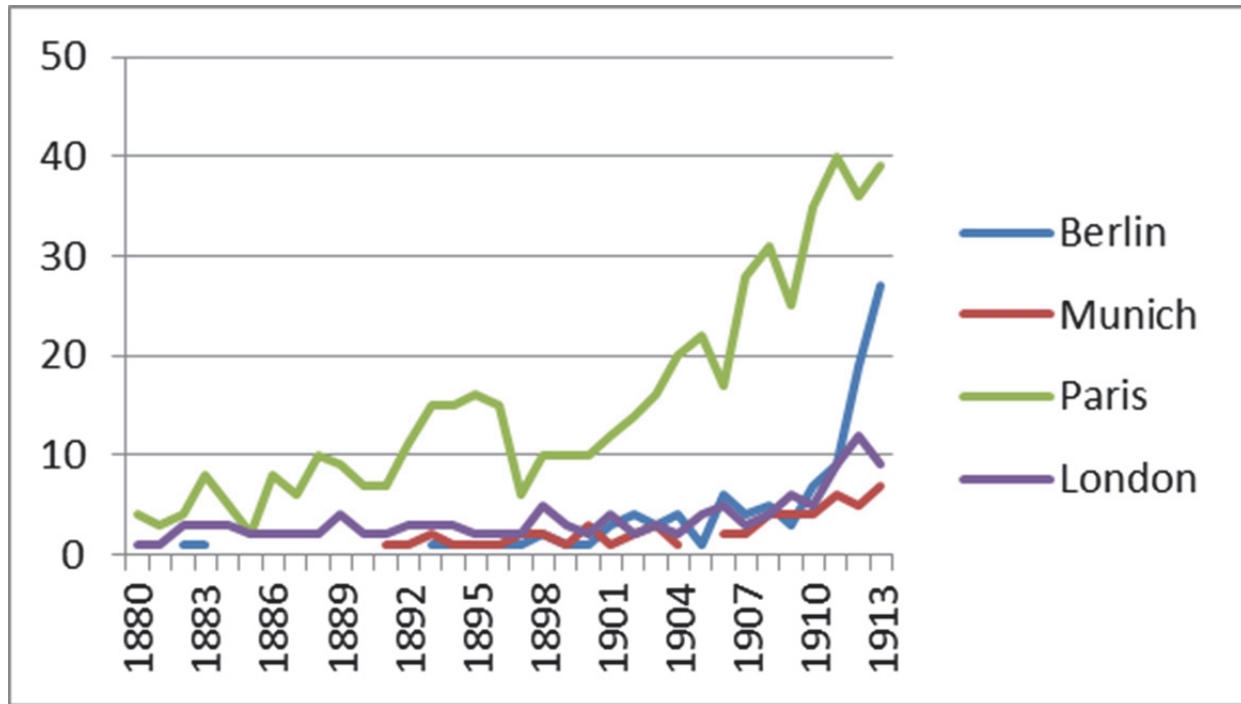


Figure 8. Estimate of the Annual Number of Modern art Exhibitions in Berlin, Munich, Paris, and London from 1880 to 1913.

By working on different scales, the standard history of Parisian avant-gardes before 1914 is thus consistently questioned and a very new idea of an essential period in modern art history can be produced. Finally, the art-historical question of locating the capital city of modern art proves to be treacherous, based on an unconscious nationalist premise that art historians do not question sufficiently.

In the 1910s, the most international modernist exhibitions were neither in Paris, nor in Berlin, nor in New York. Several cities could become the only center of the international avant-garde during a couple of months with the organization of a new form of exhibitions, art fairs: Here collectors, dealers and critics from all over the Western World would come to see a large display of modernist art. From the *Sonderbund* in Düsseldorf in 1910 and Cologne in 1912, to the *London Postimpressionist Exhibitions* in 1910 and 1912, to the *Moderne Kunstkring* exhibitions in Amsterdam, to the 1913 *Armory Show* in New York, Boston, and Chicago, to the *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon* in Berlin 1913, the international art

world had changed to a polycentric space where anyone could get a chance to get known, provided they chose mobility and internationality (which did not necessarily imply internationalism).

Similarly, the centrality of Paris in the Interwar international modern art field is often taken for granted. However, a comparative and transnational look at the trajectory of exhibitions reveals an important geographical shift with early 20th c. exhibitions. More specifically, interwar modern art branches into a Central-European network that no longer gravitates around Paris. Complementary sources such as magazines, letters, biographies or manifestos confirm this shift.²⁸ Notwithstanding the misinformed myth of the Roaring Twenties, the international avant-gardes were disinterested in Paris at least until the 1930's with the internationalization of Dalinism after 1934. Surrealism then won the symbolic battle with the networks of constructivism and abstract art, and become the flagship for avant-garde aspirers across the world. However, strictly

²⁸ Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, *Géopolitique des avant-gardes 1918-1939*, Thèse d'Habilitation à diriger les recherches, Paris, Sciences Po, 2015.

speaking, the domination of Paris in the formation of international careers was short-lived, and only lasted five years between 1934 and the outbreak of the Second World War.

This approach can be extrapolated to several decades, from the construction of realism to the international victory of New York Pop Art in the struggle of avant-gardes.²⁹ It sheds light on the transnational complexity of each and every chapter in the habitual history of modern art, and the conditions of access to these chapters within the art history canon. *Diffusion is thus no longer a valid hypothesis to write the global history of modernism.* Exhibition catalogues taken internationally and quantitatively, compared in the long term and on a large geographical scale, foster the truly “horizontal art history” wanted by Piotr Piotrowski, in which a global art history starts in Barcelona, Dublin, Prague, Mexico, or the suburbs of Tokyo, rather than assuming what occurs in Paris and New-York will eventually trickle down to passive peripheries.³⁰ Cities can no longer be considered in a gradual and univocal hierarchy, but rather like places that are simultaneously crossed by local and international logics, places that are valued differently according to origins, strategies and international alliances. It is time to provincialize “our” modern centers.³¹

Measuring the Globalization of Art: the case of Biennials

Through the distant and flattening lens of exhibition catalogue listings, globalization no longer appears as a homogeneous center univocally dominating its peripheries, but rather as a complex system of relations, in which actors use their capital to develop strategic alliances and ultimately promote or even change their position. The basis of this positioning game is the

interactions between actors that are both evidenced and advertised through exhibition catalogues. The use of the discourse of art globalization and its glossary can, by itself, be seen an act of positioning, of placing the pawns on a board that can be at the same time local, regional, and global, according to a broad variety of stakes. Biennials, since the first Venice Biennale in 1895 and the spread of the format up to “the edges of the global”³², epitomize this discourse on globalization.

The birth of a biennial is generally the result of an urban marketing strategy to integrate a city in an international field and progressively alter its image and attractiveness. It is also the result of local stakes that are resolved in the international arena. The Kassel documenta, initiated in 1954, was not only a means to develop a city situated on the margins of postwar Federal Germany, but it was at the same time a global exaltation of contemporary art, a key element in the liberal and democratic cultural strategy of the Cold War, and finally it was instrumental for the young Federal Republic to demonstrate that the Nazi page was turned.³³ The selection of artists, the statements and ideological direction of these events therefore can be tainted according to the changing combination of local and international stakes. Their catalogues, often designed as showcases of their successes, can also serve to read the logics of the organizers from one edition to another, and measure the reality of their claims.

The two editions of the Johannesburg Biennial, in 1995 and 1997, offered opposed conceptions of the globalization of art, even if both events were supported by the Johannesburg city council that was eager to claim its leadership within the emerging landscape of African cultural metropolises. The 1995 Johannesburg Biennale, titled “Africus”, occurred after the first free

²⁹ Catherine Dossin, *The Rise and Fall of American Art 1940s-1980s. A Geopolitics of the Western Art Worlds* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015).

³⁰ Piotr Piotrowski, “Towards Horizontal Art History,” in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *Crossing Cultures. Conflict, Migration, and Convergence* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2009): 82-85.

³¹ Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, “Provincializing Paris. The Center-Periphery Narrative of Modern Art in Light of Quantitative and Transnational Approaches,” *ARTL@S Bulletin*, 4, no. 1 (2015) : Article 4 ; <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol4/iss1/4/>

³² Anthony Gardner, “South as Method? Biennials Past and Present”, in Galit Eilat, Nuria Enguita Mayo, Charles Esche, Pablo Lafuente, Luiza Proença, Oren Sagiv and Benjamin Seroussi (eds.), *Making Biennials in Contemporary. Essays from the World Biennial Forum n°2 Sao Paulo, 2014* (Amsterdam: Biennial Foundation ; São Paulo : Fundação Bienal de São Paulo ; ICCo - Instituto de Cultura Contemporânea, 2015), 28-36.

³³ Hans Heichel, *60 Jahre Documenta. Die lokale Geschichte einer Globalisierung* (Berlin; Kassel : B&S Siebenhaar, 2015).

election and contributed to define the post-apartheid Rainbow Nation by hosting the entire world to the South African table. While the political significance of the event was acknowledged, the artistic dimension was belittled by international critics: too diverse, no guiding line.

On the other hand, the 1997 edition responded to those critics by recruiting the internationally acclaimed curator Okwui Enwezor. Entitled “Trade Routes: History and Geography”, it ostensibly covered up national reference, in line with Enwezor’s post-national scheme: the national identity of artists didn’t appear and thematic exhibitions replaced national pavilions. However, while the 1997 edition was this time applauded internationally for its artistic merits, it was deemed irrelevant to South Africa by the local art scene, rejected as an intellectual recolonization by some, boycotted by others, and eventually had to close a month early.³⁴

The cartographic reading of both editions catalogues (Fig. 9 and Fig. 10) provides a grounded understanding of this differentiated critical reception. These illustrations tend to show the first edition was a gathering of national scenes, whereas the second was a gathering of a transnational community summoned by a highly connected curator. For the 1995 edition, the map of exhibitors’ identity almost matches the one of their place of residence. The South African organizers initially favored sedentary artists over diaspora artists. Enwezor’s 1997 edition still embraced the idea of an inverse “Universal Exhibition”, performing the notion of a collapse of distance. However, looking at the place of birth and work of the exhibitors, the two key items provided by the catalogue, we can see the weight of New York, Paris, London and Berlin, places where Enwezor gained his influence.

This geography gives credit to some of the critics who accused the biennial of recasting in Johannesburg the domination of what has been

coined the jet-artists. Combined with the deflation of Southern African delegations (and interestingly also those of Eastern Europe, another margin of the global art market), this approach gives solid facts to better understand the controversy that surrounded Enwezor’s effort, and assesses the resilience of the “national” in the midst of a “post-national” discourse. Indeed, despite Enwezor’s ubiquitous ideology, social and political geography remain powerful interpretations of contemporary art as a localized and socialized practice.

In this case as in others, the claims and controversies of the art world, often relying on aesthetic or ideological arguments, find a rational social and geopolitical reinterpretation when looking at the information contained in their catalogues. The same approach can be applied for very different places and periods: similar passionate discussions on the activism of a global artistic jet-set occurred in Paris as well as Germany, Great Britain, or Belgium around 1911-1912, as developed above.³⁵

Probing the International of the Local

An event like the Dak’art biennial also tried to polish, taint or conceal its internationality, carefully avoiding the postcolonial critique of pervasive Western presence, while flattering regional solidarity.³⁶ This can be evidenced by looking at the information contained in the exhibition catalogues of several biennial editions (Fig. 11 and 12).

The 1992 Dak’art edition, the first one dedicated to contemporary art, showcased a large Senegalese exhibition combined with a strong Western presence. Looking into the details of the represented national identities, the organizers also stretched to South America, Asia, and most notably the Caribbean, performing Senghor’s intellectual heritage and the black internationalism he

³⁴ Marie-Laure Allain, « La Biennale de Johannesburg : chronique d’une mort annoncée », *Africultures* 73 (2008): 151-156.

³⁵ Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, *Les avant-gardes artistiques. Une histoire transnationale. 1848-1920* (Paris : Gallimard, coll. Folio Histoire, 2016).

³⁶ Thomas Fillitz, “Worldmaking : the cosmopolitanization of Dak’art, the art biennial of Dakar”, in *Global studies : mapping contemporary art and culture*, ed. Hans Belting et al. (Hatje Cantz, 2011), 382-416.

fostered.³⁷ Dak'art, an event that came to call itself the “panafrican biennial,” was built on this geopolitical imaginary. However, in the following editions of the biennial, the extra-African sections totally disappeared, exclusively promoting African national identities.

The organizing committees of the 1996 and 1998 editions also clearly focused on rebalancing African presence, striving to include delegations from East and North Africa. While those inclusions have tremendous repercussions on artists' imaginaries, opening the possibility of a new South-South circuit of artistic mobility, the quantitative analysis of Dak'art shows a large preeminence of French speaking countries, exemplified by the absence of almost any Nigerian artists.

This linguistic pattern is further evidenced looking at the places of residence, and even more so the places of education of the featured artists. Looking at the 1996 edition, we see European influence was concealed by the discourse of the organizers, and also by the national logic of the catalogue's listings. Again, the dispassionate information contained in those very lists and the biographies appendix allows changing the focus from reputations and ideologies to effective ties and circulations. In that perspective, the condition of emergence of contemporary African art appears as a fragile process of networking through which artistic projects draw upon the complex economical and geopolitical relations that pertain, in this case, to the situation of 1990's Senegal. Dak'art can then be read not only through the binary vision of the authentic panafricanism vs. the imperialist francophony, but as a place that is negotiating the terms of its internationality.

Finally, the strategic dimension of categories such as “international,” “national,” “local,” or “cosmopolite,” should not be clouded by a sustained process of naturalization of “isms,” as described by Anna Boschetti.³⁸ Indeed, the

categories used by the actors of art should be clearly differentiated from the effective circulations, influences or interactions that quantitative and cartographic measurements expose.

Conclusion

To conclude, catalogues taken quantitatively can help reconstitute the spatial, both social and global logics of artistic circulation. The information displayed in exhibition catalogues describes and establishes a geography of places, introducing economic and symbolic values to specific venues, neighborhoods, cities or entire regions. The names and institutions listed by catalogues materialize the social networks that structure the field of art and help to pass on reputations and market values. Catalogues can therefore be seen as a strategic tool used by the actors of the art world to circulate ideas and names, develop a favorable discourse, build reputations and ultimately exist beyond boundaries. Using catalogues serially can also reveal a history of tastes and art marketing strategies, a substantial field for future research. Taken quantitatively, at a large scale and comparatively, they help better understand historical and social processes and get out of the national, monographic, and non-social approaches, and away from the naturalized, binary idea we have of art as a battle between bad and good, nationalist and internationalist, local and global.

Exhibition catalogues taken internationally and quantitatively, compared historically and on a large geographical scale, foster the truly “horizontal art history” wanted by Piotr Piotrowski, in which a global art history starts in Barcelona, Dublin, Prague, Mexico, or the suburbs of Tokyo, rather than assuming what occurs in Paris and New-York will eventually trickle down to passive peripheries.³⁹ Diffusion is no longer a valid hypothesis to write the global history of

³⁷ Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960–1995* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

³⁸ Anna Boschetti, *Ismes. Du réalisme au postmodernisme* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, coll. « Culture & société », 2014).

³⁹ Piotr Piotrowski, “Towards Horizontal Art History,” in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *Crossing Cultures. Conflict, Migration, and Convergence* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2009): 82-85.

modernism. Cities can no longer be considered in a gradual and univocal hierarchy, but rather like places that are simultaneously crossed by local and international logics, places that are valued differently according to origins, strategies and international alliances. It is time to provincialize “our” modern centers.⁴⁰

Ultimately, working with the big data of exhibition catalogues invites us to turn towards a different idea of art history – what we like to call a “total” art history, a history that would look at the local and the global jointly, and that would not reduce art history to a repetition of artistic stories, but rather think of art history as a synthesis of social, spatial, and geographic approaches. Less passionate than traditional approaches of art history, this program is nonetheless engaged in the collective search for more “ecological” knowledges.⁴¹ As the big numbers of quantitative analysis and spatial approaches to exhibition catalogues also favor the small, they can contribute by providing scholars with access to “peripheral” sources, and to reconsidering the importance given to the so-called center of art history, thus contributing to an effective decentering of our narratives. We hope the Artl@s Project will be a part of this decentering, with the idea that writing a Global Art history cannot come to fruition without a collective and participatory work.

⁴⁰ Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, “Provincializing Paris. The Center-Periphery Narrative of Modern Art in Light of Quantitative and Transnational Approaches,” *ARTL@S Bulletin*, 4, no. 1 (2015): Article 4; <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol4/iss1/4/>.

⁴¹ See Boaventura de Sousa Santos, « Beyond abyssal thinking. From global lines to ecologies of knowledges », *Eurozine.com*. published 2007-06-29 (<http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-06-29-santos-en.html>).



Figure 5. Picasso's Exhibitions from 1896 to 1908.
Cartography : Julien Caverro, 2015, ENS / Labex TransferS (ANR-10-LABX-0099, ANR-10-IDEX-0001-02 PSL)

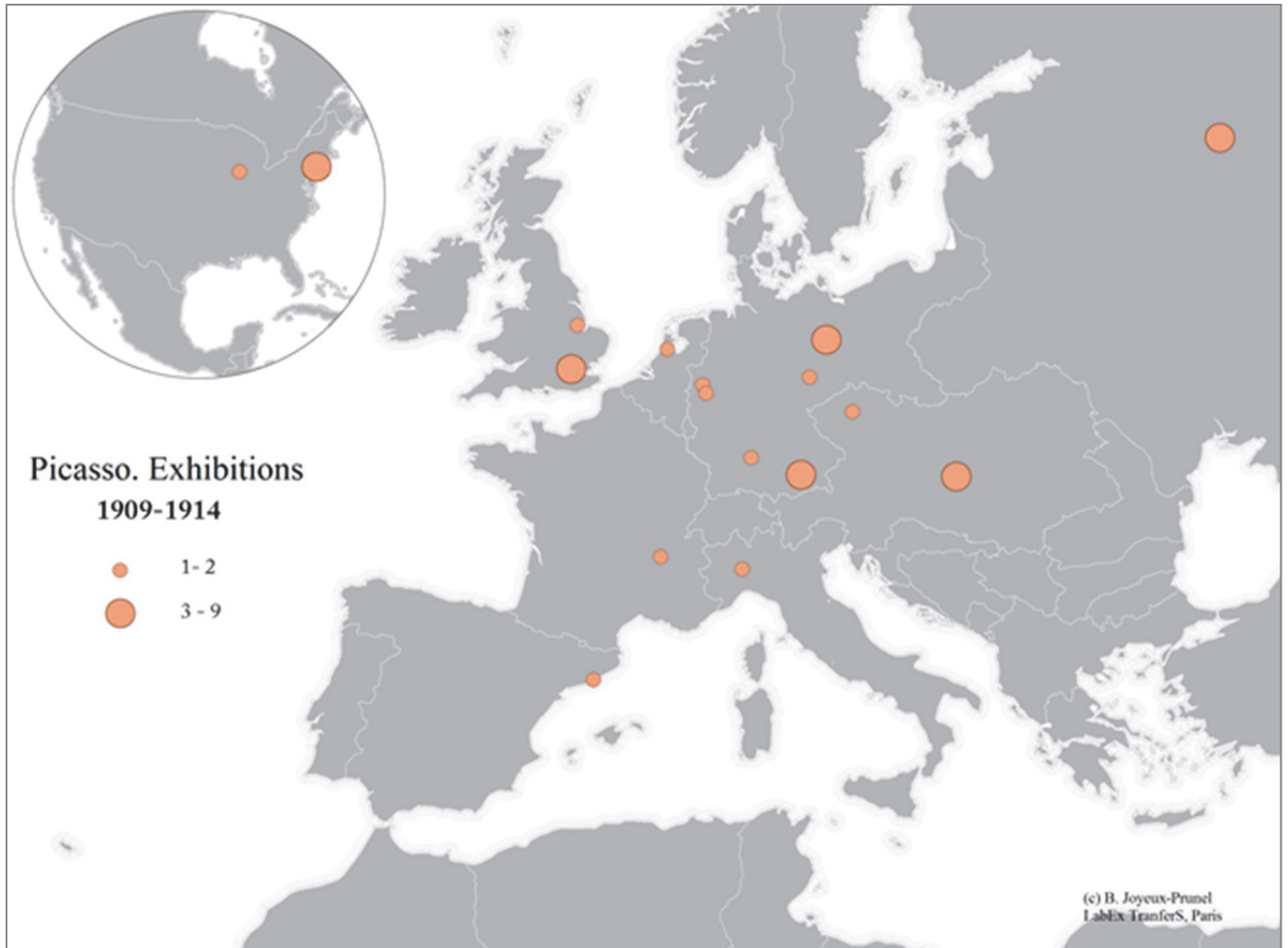


Figure 6. Picasso's Exhibitions from 1909 to 1914.
Cartography : Julien Caverio, 2015, ENS / Labex TransferS (ANR-10-LABX-0099, ANR-10-IDEX-0001-02 PSL)

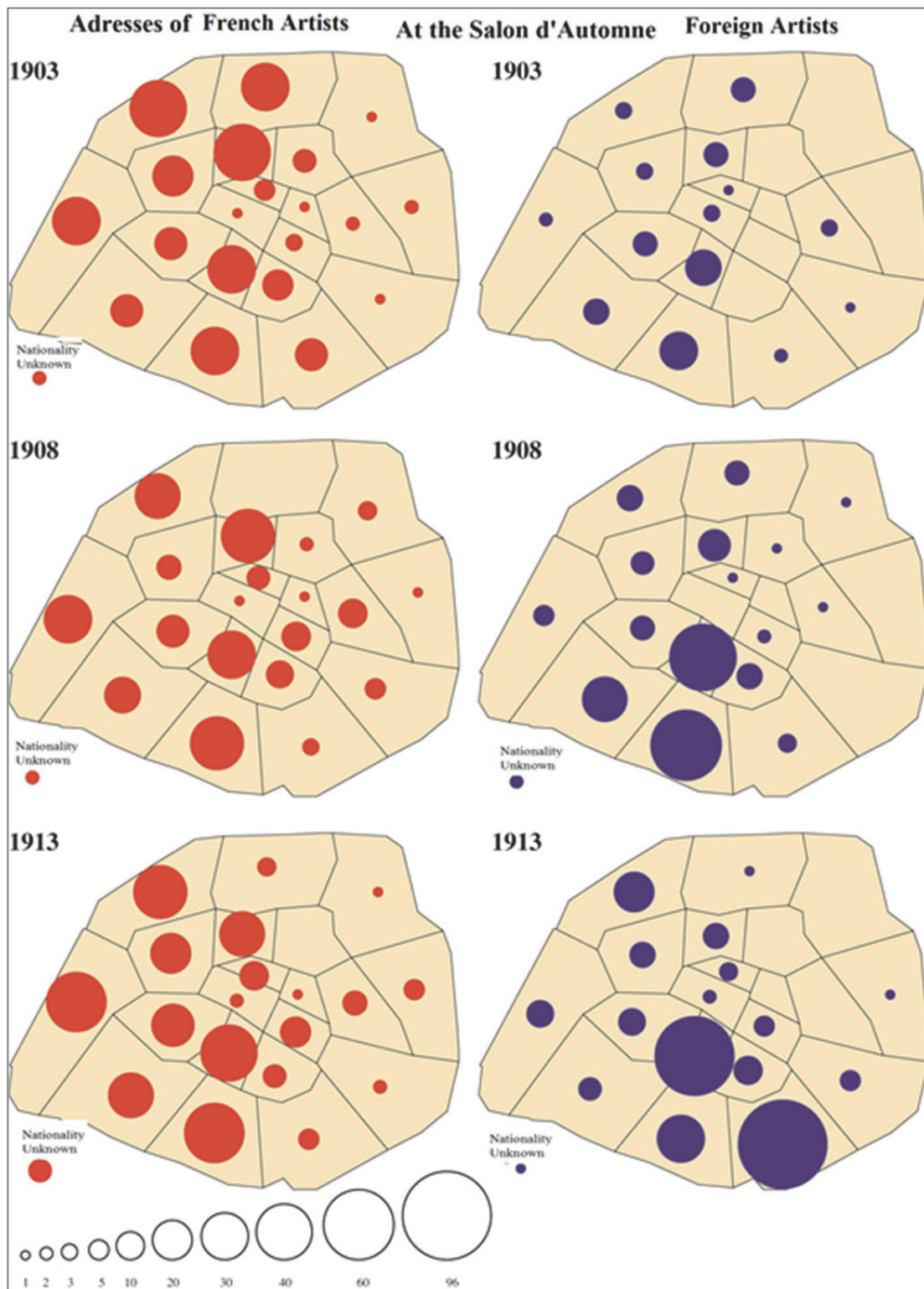


Figure 7. Adresses of French and Foreign Artists Exhibiting at the Paris Salon d'Automne in 1903, 1908, and 1913. Cartography : Julien Cavero, 2015, ENS / Labex TransferS (ANR-10-LABX-0099, ANR-10-IDEX-0001-02 PSL)

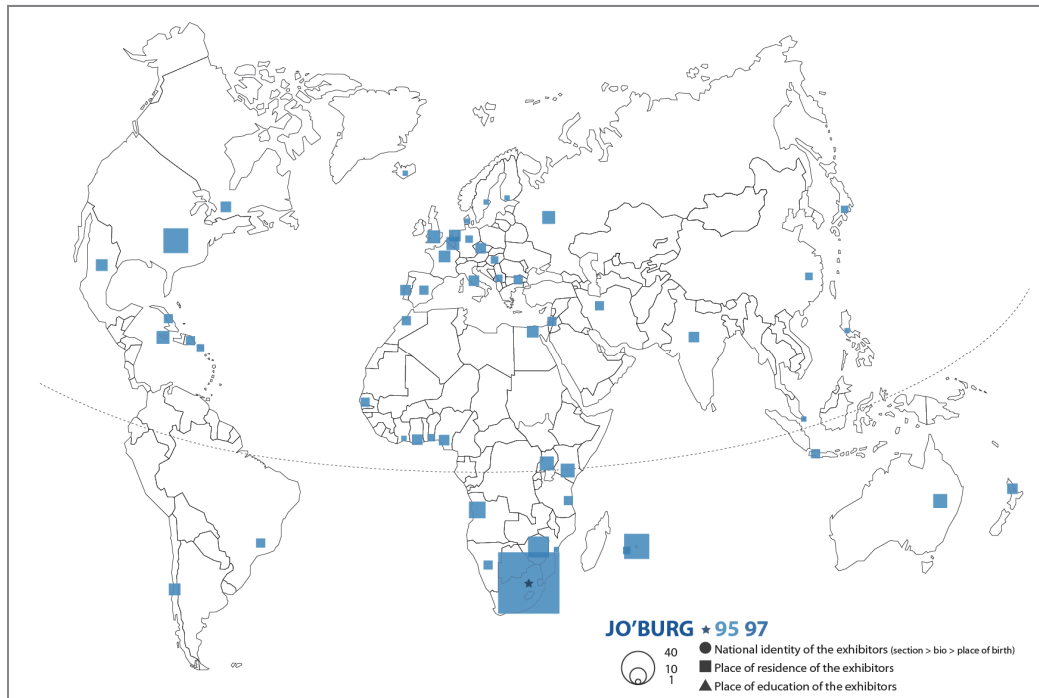


Figure 9. "Locals", "cosmopolitans" and the "West" in Johannesburg's biennials. Place of residence of the 1995 exhibitors. Cartography: Olivier Marcel

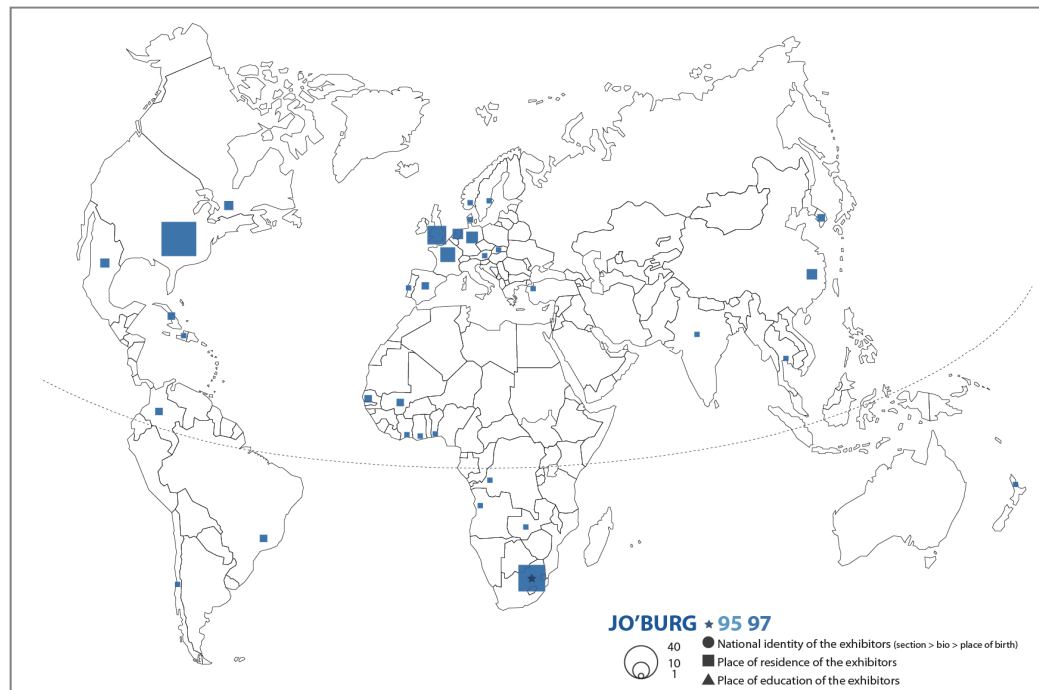


Figure 10. "Locals", "cosmopolitans" and the "West" in Johannesburg's biennials. Place of residence of the 1997 exhibitors. Cartography: Olivier Marcel

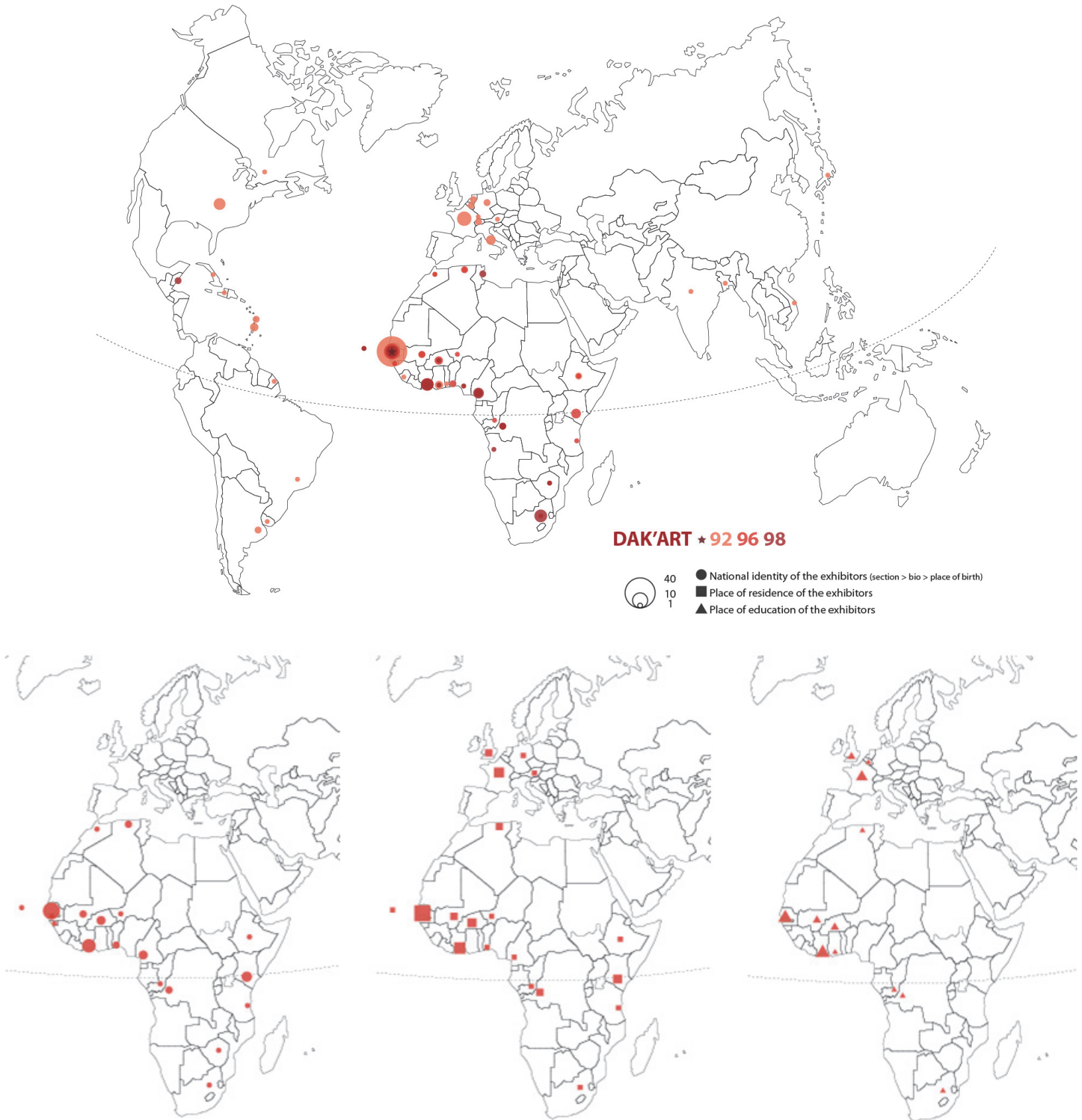


Figure 11 and 12. Bilateralism and regionalism in the “panafrican biennial” and the case of the Dak’art biennial.
Cartography: Olivier Marcel