With the expansion of free trade and financial deregulation since the 1970s—globalization—the word *global* has increasingly replaced *international* to describe phenomena taking place on a planetary scale: *global warming, global war on terror, global modernism*. The word *international*, on the other hand, has a longer history tied in particular to the concept of the nation-state. The conference Art, Institutions, and Internationalism, organized in March 2017 at the Graduate Center (CUNY) and the Museum of Modern Art, highlighted how the logic of institutional coalition building between nations in the postwar period—internationalism—rather than smooth cosmopolitan exchange, dominated the transmission, display, and production of art during the midcentury, especially outside Europe and North America.

The conference’s plenary roundtable, “Legacies of Internationalism,” has been reproduced in part following this report. Moderated by art historian Claire Bishop, the discussion interrogated the impact of internationalism on writing art histories of the postwar period. The roundtable participants—including architectural historian Lucia Allais, art historians Chika Okeke-Agulu, Olga U. Herrera, and David Joselit, and artist Naeem Mohaiemen—defined internationalism through the specific networks and apparatuses by which art was disseminated around the world, whether this be through exhibitions, publications,
or the travels of individual artists and collectors. The first day of the conference mirrored this tendency in three panels formed following an open call: “Internationalism in Photography and Print,” “Individual Networks and New Spheres of Influence,” and “World Exhibitions.” In terms of its periodization, the conference connected the inter- and post-war periods, beginning in 1933, the year of Hitler’s rise to power, and arguably the worst year of the global Great Depression. It also took into account the simultaneous rise of anticolonial movements, including the rise of the Civil Disobedience Movement in India and the rise of Négritude and Pan-Africanism during the 1930s.

However, the importance of 1945 as a major turning point in the history of internationalism became increasingly clear as the project progressed. In the postwar period, internationalism reached its apogee in institutions such as the United Nations, UNESCO, the Non-Aligned Movement, and diplomatic institutions such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the British Council, which played a key role in hundreds of artists’ careers during the period. While the focus of the conference was decidedly not on art production in the United States, several papers dealt with the role of individual artists, collectors, and institutions in developing international networks that rubbed against the grain of American cultural imperialism during the postwar period. For example, on a panel entitled “Individual Networks,” Amy Rahn explored how Joan Mitchell’s work and life in Paris resisted triumphalist narratives of American painting, while Sarah-Neel Smith examined the travels of collector Abby Weed Grey in Turkey and Iran and her uneasy relationship with sponsoring organizations such as the United States Information Service. In “Internationalism in Photography and Print,” Naomi Kuromiya discussed how the Japanese calligraphy collective Bokujin-kai provided a novel argument for the world relevance (sekai-sei) of their work through Western abstract painting, particularly the monochromatic work of the American Abstract Expressionist Franz Kline.

Exhibitions proved to be the central objects of analysis. Both Yang Wang and Nikolas Drosos, whose papers are included in this special issue, used exhibition histories to complicate the binarism of US versus Soviet internationalism in the post–World War II period. Nisa Ari’s paper was the only one to delve into emerging ideas of nationalism and internationalism before World War II, analyzing how Arab Palestinian activists produced art fairs in Palestine during the 1930s to assert their
own “national character” under the conditions of British colonialism and Jewish state-building. Alise Tifentale, who in this special issue introduces an article by Brazilian photographer José Oiticica Filho, analyzed how the first biennials of the Fédération Internationale de l’Art Photographique in the immediate postwar era employed discourses of universalism to present photography as a universal visual language. Dina Ramadan spoke about how the Alexandria Biennale in Egypt utilized both the nationalist rhetoric of Nasserism and cosmopolitan tropes about the Mediterranean to assert Egypt’s position as a cultural leader in the region, while Delia Solomons delivered a paper on the first American biennials with a truly worldwide scope: the Guggenheim and Carnegie Internationals in the 1960s. Abigail Lapin Dardashti presented on the participation of Afro-Brazilian abstract painter Rubem Valentim at the first World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar in 1966. She underscored how his participation in the exhibition became a catalyst for his own painting practice and for the Brazilian dictatorship’s promotion of its government as progressive and multicultural. The World Festival of Negro Arts—the black diasporic cultural platform established in 1966 by Senegalese president Léopold Senghor—gave the conference’s timeline its closing date. Demonstrating the importance of culture to regionalism, multilateral institution building, and national independence narratives, this festival reflected the sweeping historical and cultural changes brought by the postwar, decolonial Cold War period as well as representing the height of overlapping concepts of internationalism, from Senghor’s espousal of Négritude to UNESCO’s role as a sponsorship partner operating under the auspices of “world heritage.”

“How to write art histories of this period?” was the key question of the conference roundtable, of which we present an edited transcript below. Participants were invited to consider the following question on art historical methodology:

The growing field of “global modernism” has been dominated by two extremes. One approach argues for the importance of an art object by demonstrating its broad socio-political context. A second approach privileges the singular object (or singular artist) as aesthetically important apart from its context and works to assimilate this art into an existing art historical canon. How does your work navigate these approaches?
In his response, Okeke-Agulu asserted that this question is not exclusive to writing modern art histories outside Euro-America. Rather, the tension between art and context rehashes well-established art historical debates about formalism and social art history, albeit with new objects of study. The real question, he argued, is whether any given artwork intersects with structures of power that are international or global. To fold the former into the latter, as histories of “global modernism” often do, risks losing the complexity of how those artworks moved through various regimes of production and distribution historically.

The roundtable concluded with a request to participants to identify the point when the “international” and the “modern” gave way to the “global contemporary” in their own scholarship. The respondents suggested a variety of dates and rationales: the 1970s and the advent of postmodern architecture, according to Allais; around 1980 with the end of colonization in Africa, according to Okeke-Agulu; or the 1960s and the rise of a new, internationally mobile group of artists in Latin America, according to Herrera. Ultimately, the shift outlined by the participants moved from a logic of internationalism to one of economic globalization as the dominant model of political organization around the world, along with concomitant changes such as the increasing, though unequal, physical mobility for artists and artworks, as well as a renewed interest in regionalism and local identity as branding mechanisms in the global marketplace.

ROUNDTABLE

Lucia Allais, Olga U. Herrera, David Joselit, Chika Okeke-Agulu, and Naeem Mohaiemen, moderated by Claire Bishop

Claire Bishop (CB): Let’s start with a very simple question. How do legacies of internationalism play out in each of your current research projects?

Lucia Allais (LA): As an architectural historian, I address the spatial legacy of internationalism, and the spaces we imagine when we hear the word internationalism today: world fairs, art fairs, and biennials; but also boats and planes, the studios of exiled artists, and perhaps a few international headquarters. And to these spaces, I add dispersed monuments. Unlike cosmopolitanism, which takes the city as its
model, or globalism, which conjures up the earth, internationalism does not cohere in a single spatial substrate. The spatial metaphor usually offered for internationalism is the network, so I study the making of networks of monuments as a temporal, institutional project, a project that gave liberal internationalism a global footing. Though it inherited governing principles and structures from previous centuries, this internationalism hoped to stabilize the world order not only in space but also in time, through highly structured institutions and events. The League of Nations, for example, was meant to regularize the rhythm of international relations through an ongoing schedule of conferences held in idyllic locations that forced nations into regular dialogue. This regularity was inextricably linked with publicity. In contrast with the old diplomacy, which was secret and bilateral, this new diplomacy would be publicized by taking place in front of the press. I argue this pairing of regularity and publicity gave rise to what we now call world heritage: a spatially diverse and dispersed network of monuments that helps to anchor a new species of cultural diplomacy.¹

Olga U. Herrera (OUH): Although in the early years of the 20th century, ideas of internationalism—and what these meant for cooperation and international cultural relations—were mostly driven by the private activities of philanthropic foundations such as the Guggenheim Foundation and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Pan American Union, I look at the shift between this old model and a new hybrid private-public one guided by a planetary consciousness, brought about by the destructive forces of world wars and the threat of atomic power. This shift is not so much about internationalism as it is about a new regionalization, which divides the world in several geographic areas of action. Most recently, I have been considering the legacies of internationalism in the establishment of hemispheric art networks in the Americas at midcentury—in particular, exploring the intersections of culture, power, constructions of modernity, and national security through the ways the United States government in 1940–43 engaged the National Council of Defense and the Art Section of a war-preparedness temporary federal agency headed by

Nelson Rockefeller, to present a new modern vision of the cultural life of the United States to South America. This became the blueprint for Cold War cultural programs around the world.

**Chika Okeke-Agulu (COA):** There are two ways that I look at internationalism. One is to see it as a colonial enterprise or as the outcome of a colonial enterprise. The other is as a product or a form of agency within *anticolonial* practices. I’m particularly invested in the latter, specifically in the ways anticolonial internationalism produced a number of phenomena that we call Pan-Africanism, Pan-Arabism, and Négritude, and how these connect with cultural formations such as the magazines *Présence Africaine*, founded in 1947 in Paris, and *Black Orpheus*. Ulli Beier, a German resident in Nigeria who was teaching at the University College in Ibadan, began to publish *Black Orpheus* in 1957, and then in 1961 cofounded the Mbardi Artists and Writers Club as a space and platform for exhibitions, literary production, and artistic exchange from decolonizing or decolonized nations, including India, Brazil, the Caribbean, Africa, and even quite a few African American artists and writers. *Black Orpheus* and the Mbardi Artists and Writers Club produced the kind of international networks that are part of decolonization as a form of political and artistic emancipation.

**Naeem Mohaiemen (NM):** I’m in the middle of filming a project about the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and its power struggles with another organization that is not usually seen within the same frame, the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC). My initial focus was the 1973 Non-Aligned Movement meeting in Algiers. It’s one of the more radical NAM meetings, because it played out against the backdrop of the coming OPEC oil strike and also a Palestine resolution that becomes a rehearsal for recognition forays at the United Nations. Simultaneously, it is also a meeting where you can start to see the Non-Aligned Movement come apart as well. There is an extraordinary moment in the video footage where you see a very young, slim, recently come-to-power Muammar Gaddafi giving a speech. Watching that footage, I remember that by the end of that same decade Libya would

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be at war with two of the countries present at that meeting. That is one of the spokes I research: what was the internationalist promise, and how did it fail?

**David Joselit (DJ):** I’ve tried to think about globalization as opposed to internationalism as a trans-regional mechanism that cuts across national boundaries. For me, one major difference is that the nation-state, which is fundamental to an international perspective, is not an adequate unit of analysis for a genuinely global reading. We see the effects of globalization, for instance, *within nations*, as in cities of the West where neighborhoods largely abandoned in terms of basic services sit beside neighborhoods that are incredibly affluent. This is a difficult problem that I’ve tried to address by tracing a dynamic that I call “heritage and debt.”¹ *Debt* is shorthand for a neoliberal form of governance where civil and political decisions are made based on financial criteria. But *debt* is also a synonym of *heritage*, because the latter is what we have inherited from ancestors or more generally from the culture to which we belong—what we owe to them. Under neoliberal conditions, heritage accrues greater value as a mobile signifier of the local that can circulate globally. Heritage for me is therefore not limited to indigenous or “non-Western” expressions, but also refers, for instance, to how the legacy of the avant-garde now functions as part of the heritage of Europe and the United States. Making heritage contemporary solves a certain kind of global problem, by demonstrating how value can be grounded in a local situation and yet remain legible as it travels. I think heritage has the potential to literally and symbolically cancel (or repay) neoliberal debt.

**LA:** Picking up on David’s redefinition of heritage: there has been heritage since there have been societies, but the idea of heritage as a historical motor is modern. The institutionalization of heritage on a global scale has taken place in soft institutions, such as UNESCO, where nationalism is much more diffuse than in its parent organization, the UN. For instance, Egypt in the 1950s—the quintessential nonaligned country—was very willing to play both sides of the Cold War in its own nation-building and nationalist discourse. With the East, it was nation-

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alist; but on the Western side, Nasser engaged in the universalizing cultural politics of UNESCO, because that institution seemed to neutralize national claims on heritage by operating along a different timeline. Often, UNESCO heritage projects appear to give nation-states the opportunity to operate in some kind of temporal suspension of overt nationalist discourse.

OUH: In the period of the 1940s, it is very evident that internationalism served a covert national agenda, along with an additional push from the private sector, to quietly steer hegemonic control of heritage and the idea of the nation through art projects. For example, the second exhibition that the United States government sent abroad (after MoMA’s Three Centuries of American Art exhibition in Paris in 1938), was Contemporary North American Painting, which traveled throughout South America in 1941 under the guise of a committee of museums that included MoMA, the Whitney, Brooklyn Museum, the Met, and the American Museum of Natural History. The individuals who made initial arrangements, such as Grace McCann Morley, and those who later accompanied the show, such as Caroline Durieux, Stanton Catlin, and René d’Harnoncourt, were contracted by the US government or by Rockefeller-MoMA funds, like Lincoln Kirstein’s intelligence-gathering art trip, to advance a national security agenda. They were sent to explain what the artwork was about, and to underscore the message that the United States had an American art independent from Europe. There is also agency in these regions; it’s not simply that the United States sent its art and culture abroad to be consumed and received very passively. Argentinian critics, for example, questioned the concepts of modern American art represented in the exhibition and felt it was an agglomeration of unsophisticated “back to the homeland” national trends. There is a countering to the American (inter)national agenda.

COA: Also during this time, the CIA covertly funded some of the major elite artists and writers in Africa through the Fairfield Foundation and UNESCO in Paris. There were additional moments when internationalism served a Western postimperial agenda—for example, in exportations of Abstract Expressionism to South Africa during apartheid. Clement Greenberg—and with him a number of American abstract
painters—went to South Africa in the 1970s when the apartheid government was struggling to garner international support. This can explain the pushback against, or skepticism about, these international organizations that serve as fronts for promoting and projecting Western socio-economic and political interests. We still see this today, when African countries pull out of the International Criminal Court because they see it as a sledgehammer designed to punish African and other so-called third world leaders, whereas their counterparts from the G-7 and their allies who have committed gross human rights violations are never charged.

**CB:** David, does this relate to your research, or are you really dealing with the problem of globalization rather than internationalism?

**DJ:** I have argued that during the period addressed by this conference, there were three distinct forms of modernism that were either ignored, unknown, or repressed in the West. One is very beautifully developed in Chika’s book, which describes the double bind of postcolonial modernism. Under settler colonialism, the colonized are explicitly discouraged from practicing indigenous arts, while also being blocked from studying Western forms of modernism. Second, there’s Socialist Realism in the so-called “second world,” such as China and the Soviet Union, which is a kind of modernism not based on innovations in form, but on the mass distribution of imagery (often reproduced from paintings) that creates a new media public sphere. Third, there are unofficial forms of modernism, where a strong modern tradition is repressed politically and goes underground, as in Eastern Europe and Latin America during the era of dictatorships. What happens in the late 1980s and 1990s is that these three modern genealogies, as well as the Euro-American canon, are synchronized to produce so-called global contemporary art. What you get in global, biennial exhibitions today are compendia of these contemporary synchronizations, with little or any sense of the histories that each work belongs to. I think that is one of the problems in focusing any account of globalization on biennials, because they tend to be radically ahistorical.

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COA: There’s also another way of looking at what these biennials are about, which is how they advance national or regional interests and forge international networks and alliances. The Havana Biennial came out of the politics of the Cold War and the emergence of Cuba in the so-called third world. The Dakar Biennale was a carryover from Senegalese President Leopold Senghor’s Africanist-Négritude ideology, and even the Gwangju Biennale was established in recognition of the 1980 civilian massacres by the Korean military dictatorship. There are local histories behind these biennials, even as the biennials themselves announce their ambition to be international. One sees it now in the explosion of Chinese biennials, which must be seen alongside the emergence of China in international politics. But again, this is not so different from the original biennial, Venice, which was established in 1895 for Italian artists in celebration of their king’s birthday.

David, you’re right that there’s a dilemma for the curatorial agenda that is different from the political imperatives that give rise to and often still authorize biennials. The curators have to deal with the question of how differently their exhibitions are received by local and international audiences. The Second Johannesburg Biennale in 1997 was considered a success internationally but got a cool response from South Africans, who felt it had not quite addressed the needs of a country still emerging from the nightmare of apartheid.

CB: Let’s shift to the question of methodology. The organizers of this conference sent you a prompt, which identifies two tendencies in writing art histories of global modernism: one that emphasizes the place of the art object or exhibition within its broad sociopolitical context, and another that deals with the object or artist as aesthetically singular or autonomous and works to assimilate that art into an existing art historical canon. Do you agree with this characterization, and which do you ally yourself with?

LA: My answer to the question of broad context versus singular objects is that “context” is itself a specific singular spatial product, which had its own internationalist reification. Since the development of certain postmodern design practices, architects began to think of context as the space that surrounds an object or building, or within which it is possible to comprehend that object or building. And conversely, practices of museumification at the scale of the city, or the site, turned
“context” into a space that radiates outward from objects and buildings. For example, I’ve studied the “contextualization” of one of the most canonical objects of Western art and architectural history: the Great Pyramid of Giza. The fact that this pyramid is in a desert is integral to its being canonical: this desert may seem empty, but it has been intellectually inhabited by every philosopher in the history of Western aesthetics. In 1954, a boat was excavated by archaeologists in the space beside the pyramid, as part of digging for objects that would help “contextualize” pyramids as great monumental things. So the boat was found, and despite all the evidence that it had been ritually buried and was intended to remain buried, the Egyptian state and a variety of international organizations decided to hoist it and suspend it in a glass box, creating what you could call a contextual space for it. In this space, designed by the architect Franco Minissi, you are supposed to have visual contact with the boat (the contextually or socially significant artifact) but also to always see the pyramids nearby, with their ongoing universal value. Context, here, is designed with particular material and formal properties. So, to answer your question: my own methodology is to study how context is constructed through discursive, technical, and political structures, sometimes very literally. Perhaps this is the advantage of being an architectural historian.

COA: I don’t think these two tendencies are specific to the experience of the global. I think that this is what scholars of art history have grappled with forever! Whether to deal with the artwork as an autonomous aesthetic object or whether to see it as part of a wider cultural phenomenon; social art history versus formalism. What is at issue here is the difference between the international and the global. The international, as I said earlier, can constitute either a colonial or anticolonial enterprise, which can harden into methods. This is opposed to the global, which can account for the multiplicities of the experience of the modern. Part of my problem with earlier attempts at “global art history” or “global contemporary art” or “global modernism” is precisely the exportation of the international to the global, or of models that work according to difference rather than multiplicity. In other words, a “Let us see how others have tried to do it like us and then we can claim that that’s proof of the global dimensions of our experience” approach. What I think needs to happen even before we begin to think of “global modernism” is that we have to map it, that is to meaningfully understand
through careful documentation and research the manifestations of modernism within different parts of the world. There was a time when someone could make a quick trip from one corner of the planet to the other and come back and say, “Yes, I figured it out.” But this cannot be one person’s work.

One of the projects I’ve been involved in for many years now is the Multiple Modernisms project, which is a coming together of scholars from different parts of the world who for nearly a decade met every two years in different places to share research on modernism with scholars working in those places. That is a methodological decision. The problem with the way we have been thinking about the global is that we invite scholars from elsewhere to come to New York, London, or Paris to talk about their experiences, and you question them, “but why . . . but this . . .” But when you go to someone else’s house you don’t claim authority; and when someone comes to your house you will always be the authority. We work with this awareness of the need to be in the place to present the history of the place. Until we have a good picture of those histories, talking about “global modernism” as a singular or unified experience will be, you know . . . a joke!

**DJ:** I have been trying to determine how subjective or “internal” forces meet external social ones aesthetically, as one way of thinking about expressions of globalism in formal terms. For example, the *profile*, which one could associate with identity politics and self-representation on social media, but also with ethnic profiling, is a form that’s both generated from within and disciplined from without, and I think an artist like Kara Walker has given new meaning to that format. And then there are *archives*, which are also widespread in contemporary art practice, as the raw material for generating images or objects from information (including profiles). An archive is a resource for determining an historical account, but if you make such compendia of data the work itself, then the nature of how “truth” is produced is placed at the

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5 The Multiple Modernisms project was founded in 2007 by a core group of art historians, museum curators, and anthropologists based in the US, UK, Australia, South Africa, Canada, and New Zealand, but eventually it involved associate members from various countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The first of three planned volumes resulting from the multisite symposia organized by the group, *Mapping Modernisms: Art, Indigeneity, Colonialism*, was published by Duke University Press in fall 2018. For additional information, see http://multiplemodernisms.maa.cam.ac.uk/.
very center of the artwork. Throughout my career, I’ve been interested in ready-mades, and it’s quite striking how within global contemporary art the ready-made practice has become a kind of international style. This is because the appropriation of ready-mades allows both artists and audiences to make conflicting and overlapping claims over what that object means, and even to whom (or what culture) it belongs. One really interesting “global” example of appropriation is Aboriginal dot painting, made in Australia since the 1970s, which was derived from indigenous Aboriginal imagery, but transposed to the medium of painting through the mediation of a Western teacher. Here the same type of object can have several different claims made on it, and on its behalf. There are the claims of the museum on this kind of painting, and there are claims on behalf of the Australian state to whitewash their own genocidal history with the Aborigines, and most importantly, the claims of Aboriginals themselves for their painting as a form of traditional knowledge with contemporary legitimacy. This is how the very same work can become the object of several, often contradictory claims.

LA: It seems to me that the idea of heritage is itself a legacy of the West. In one chapter of my book, I describe the museums that empires left behind in Africa after decolonization, and the way UNESCO trained new state administrators not to destroy them as tainted, but rather to maintain them: “just keep the museums, keep the collections . . . keep everything, keep the organization of the collections. . . .” In this maintenance, a whole set of colonial and epistemic structures were inherited by new states: the provenance of objects by tribal affiliation, for example. It is in part in reaction to this history (where imperial heritage was all too easily converted into world heritage) that this new claim-based politics of heritage has taken off.

CB: Naeem, can you compare this to the South Asian context, specifically Bangladesh—do certain historical ruptures play a more determining role on art’s morphology than internal developments within art history?

NM: There are two moments that seem to separate Bangladesh from the larger subcontinent that represents a shared art history. The first is 1947, when half of Bengal becomes part of post-British independent
India and the other half becomes East Pakistan. The second is 1971, when East Pakistan has to reinvent itself as Bangladesh, which means the Pakistani part of this history has to drop out. I think one of the struggles of writing this history comes when considering the periods when artists from Bangladesh were in conversation with Indian artists before or after 1947, or with Pakistani artists (although technically they themselves were also Pakistani) before 1971. A lot of that history is now being superseded by the study of when certain artists went to Europe; and part of the reason for that is because there are more materials available in that context. The work of S. M. Sultan (1923–94), for example, straddles the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, but his short period in Europe has become overly important in the historiography because you can find documentation of it. A lot of writing about art in Bangladesh was not in English, but now there’s definitely a move to codify everything in English, which means that a lot of histories are disappearing because they haven’t been translated. There are two ways of looking at this development: one is that everything has to be translated, otherwise all these histories will get lost. The other way is that maybe the absence of translation allows something to remain undisturbed by an external gaze that would rapidly change that history. The amount of capital and power that Western art historians come with is a site of live struggle right now.

CB: My last question concerns how the moment of international modernism has become what we today refer to as the global contemporary. Chika, the book you coauthored with Okwui Enwezor periodizes contemporary art in Africa from 1980 onward. How do we bridge the gap between postcolonial modernism and contemporary art? And is this contemporary art necessarily a “global contemporary”?

COA: I’m not sure I’m qualified to do any work individually on global contemporary art, as it requires joint effort. I’m presently working on a book project titled *African Art in the Age of the Big Man*, which looks at a number of artists in the context of the emergence of dictatorships. It’s not only military dictatorships, which is why I’m calling this authoritarian figure the “big man.” It’s also the boss, the civil servant,

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or the imperious professor in the classroom. In other words, it’s about the relationship between art and power in the 1970s and 1980s, once the euphoria of independence wore off; it looks at the period between Postcolonial Modernism and Contemporary African Art since 1980.

**CB:** But why 1980 for the beginning of contemporary art in Africa?

**COA:** That was the year Zimbabwe became one of the last countries on the continent to earn its independence. It’s also the year that a number of other political events took place that shaped the life of the continent in the late 20th century, beginning with the structural adjustment of neoliberal economies across the continent and the effect that had on cultural production, and the phenomenon of “brain drain” that brought people like me to teach at Princeton rather than in my home country, Nigeria. 1980 was also the beginning of the decade that witnessed the emergence of African artists in the international scene.

**CB:** Lucia, in architecture the periodization of the contemporary is not fretted over in the same way as in art history, because we all (think we) have a clear idea of contemporary architecture—as opposed to modern or postmodern.

**LA:** That is true—and much of it is museums’ architecture! Interestingly, most modern museums were not built in the midcentury, and most midcentury museums were not modernist. By the time the museum became a kind of global building type in the 1980s, the architectural avant-garde had moved on to postmodernism, but they still clung on to a high-modernist internationalism in their philosophy of art. For non-museum architecture, however, certain strands began to develop in the 1970s, where vernacular architectures were made contemporary again. This also coincided with a shift from international politics to nongovernmental politics in cultural management. New kinds of actors from private foundations and regional prizes became important—think of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, which started in 1978. These actors began to play a role in a moment where architecture got valued for being “regional.” It is also at this time that a more fully mediatized culture industry gets deployed onto architecture. In order for an architectural object to enter into a global heritage economy, it must be amplified by other forms of media. I recently wrote a
short text on the Timbuktu mosques which were first targeted for attack by Ansar Dine and later carefully rebuilt by heritage advocates in collaboration with local inhabitants—in large part because they had already been designated as a “heritage of humanity” and recorded as such in the global media.7

CB: Olga, when does contemporary art begin in Latin America, and how does it relate to the period of the dictatorships?

OUH: It depends on the definitions of modernity and modern. The idea of the contemporary is a moving target in terms of when and where categories and periods are used and at what moment in history. For example, in the 1930s and 1940s the term contemporary was the same as modern: it was used interchangeably. But the shift from modern to contemporary can be generally pinpointed in Latin American art to the end of the 1960s, with the rise of dictatorships and a new generation of artists who were recognized internationally, moved easily between the major art centers in Europe and the United States, and worked in the newest modes of expression such as video and happenings—modes that were incompatible with the certain kind of mid-century modernism promoted by art critic José Gómez-Sicre. The mid-1960s saw a shift in the construction of Latin American art in the United States, with the end of the anticommunist agenda of the Alliance for Progress as well as a new political interest in the region through funding for smaller biennials such as those in Córdoba, Argentina, and Cuenca, Ecuador. Then there is the notion of the global contemporary as the present, beginning back in the 1990s as the neoliberal project for Latin America, with the rise of the art fairs and an expanded art market.