

British Art and the Global

University of California, Berkeley
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Abstracts

Panel 1

Jocelyn Anderson (University of Toronto), “Timely and expressive: Global turmoil and eighteenth-century British magazine frontispieces”

The second half of the eighteenth century witnessed seismic changes to the global political order, and in Britain, a key vehicle for news of these events was the magazine. The periodical industry was growing rapidly, and illustrations quickly became a fundamental element of magazines. The annual frontispiece for a magazine volume was particularly important: these illustrations were often specially-commissioned designs, and they were crucial to transforming magazines from ephemeral texts to volumes with enduring presences in libraries (both private and public). Because magazines were deeply concerned with current events, frontispieces were often intended to present a visual reflection on the year. At the same time, artists who designed frontispieces frequently deployed classical allegorical figures and motifs inspired by the contemporary fashion for the antique; in effect, they adapted an aesthetic closely associated with elite tastes for mass popular publication (magazines were sold at low prices, and thousands of copies were circulated in Britain, Ireland and overseas). Through a discussion of frontispieces published by some of the most prominent British magazines in the eighteenth century (including the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the *London Magazine* and the *Universal Magazine*), this paper will examine how magazines brought together conventions of allegorical compositions with reflections on the victories, crises and defeats Britain faced overseas. It will demonstrate that artists working for magazines developed a highly flexible and resilient style, one which could represent everything from the triumphs of the Seven Years' War to the defeats during the American Revolution. Ultimately, frontispieces presented readers with strong symbols of British power.

Julie Codell (Arizona State University), “Multiple versions, multiple markets, multiple meanings: The global trade in British autograph replicas”

In this paper I argue that global trade in art works generates, revises and invents multiple cultural and national identities, while creating real and imaginary relationships between countries involved in these transactions. My focus is on the para-industrial production of Victorian autograph replicas and their trajectories and dissemination abroad, with a focus on the transatlantic trade of Victorian artists' autograph replicas to America where they were highly valued. Autograph replicas, variations on artists' works produced by those same artists, were originals, not copies, and often cost more than first versions. In this production, British artists continuously redefined their national and individual cultural identities, and American collectors redefined the nature of American culture through their voracious acquisition of autograph replicas. Autograph replicas became a vital source of global art collecting, as, foreign buyers willingly paid more for them than their value on the British art market, reflecting the relationship between cost and desire that characterizes cultural exchange. The results were the largest collection of Pre-Raphaelite art outside of Britain in Delaware, many British (and French) autograph replicas in Harvard's Fogg Museum and Baltimore's Walters Museum, and replicas throughout East

Coast and Midwestern American museums. Shaping American desire for autograph replicas was the emerging art history at Harvard that defined history as linear influences of artists on one another. I examine case studies to explore global trajectories and multiple meanings and valuations attributed to replicas through the new lens of art history, as American collectors erased European notions of national schools and appropriated European art into a narrative about American culture.

Panel 2

Eleonora Pistis (Columbia University), “How the temple of Bacchus at Baalbek travelled to Britain”

At the dawn of the “global eighteenth century,” Henry Maundrell (1665–1701), an Oxford academic and a clergyman, served as a chaplain to the Levant Company of England in Syria. His travel from Aleppo to Jerusalem in 1697 was published by the Oxford University Press in 1703, followed by a third edition in 1714. Among the major changes introduced in the new version of the book was the addition of prints illustrating the Temple of Bacchus at Baalbek, side by side with the temple-church of St. Paul in Covent Garden by Inigo Jones, the “Vitruvius of Britain.” These enigmatic plates were the design of the renowned architect Nicholas Hawksmoor (1661–1732), who, as far as we know, never left the British Isles. This paper uses the history of this publication project as a case study in order to show how, from its very beginning, the shaping of British architectural identity went hand in hand with the expansion of the geographical horizons of architectural knowledge. By analyzing how the Temple of Bacchus became “portable” and “travelled” across different media, scales, and hands from Baalbek to Oxford, and later to London, I will draw broader conclusions about what happened when “absent” objects were replaced by fabricated images that were shaped by the needs, skills, and wishes of their users. I will also show how it was not only the knowledge of faraway architecture that shaped current discussions of architectural praxis, but also artistic practice that shaped the image, and the making of knowledge, of distant lands.

Douglas Fordham (University of Virginia), “Methodological approaches to the illustrated travel book”

In 1956 J.R. Abbey published *Travel in Aquatint and Lithography, 1770–1860*, which catalogued 728 illustrated travel books that he had collected in the first half of the twentieth century. Now in the Yale Center for British Art, the Abbey collection of illustrated travel books points to a uniquely British conjunction of cultural forces. Travel books produced in these years reveal an expansion of global travel, a compulsion for “on the spot” sketching, an explosion of entrepreneurial book publishing, and the integration of empire into national consciousness. While impressive in its depth and quality, the Abbey collection has its own gaps, and the total surely rises into the thousands. Art historians have barely scratched the surface of this extraordinary visual archive. To be sure, these books have been mined for particular iconographic and thematic seams such as Indian temples, Orientalist ethnography, and African slavery. But what other questions might we ask of this material? Drawing upon the methods of critical bibliography, media studies, and art history, this talk examines methodological approaches that could open up new questions and new insights for our understanding of British art and globalism on the cusp of an “illustration revolution.”

Keynote 1

Mary Roberts (University of Sydney), “Traversing the frontiers of empire”

“About an hour this side of Albany is the Center of the world – I own it.”

Frederic Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, July 7 1869

Church’s hyperbole is about the property he had purchased overlooking a spectacular bend in the Hudson river. The Persian home he built and the extensive grounds he reshaped on what was formerly Mahican land was the landscape painter’s most absorbing work, a world he would spend the next three decades transforming. But Church’s dramatic claim in the possessive underscores that this world was accrued as well as created. The American landscape painter was a global traveller and the collections he formed of costumes, photographs and objects were part of this practice of worlding on the Hudson. What kind of world is this? And how does this world inflect our understanding of British art in its global dimensions? Recent scholarship has encouraged us to think of the connectedness of nineteenth-century British and American art – the way paintings anticipated their transatlantic journeys (Jennifer Roberts), and the pitfalls of a national chauvinism that occludes the Britishness of Thomas Cole, father of American landscape painting (Tim Barringer). So too Church’s world is transatlantically entangled. Even the property’s name, Olana, is derived from Olane, the treasure-storehouse and fortress on the frontiers of Ancient Armenia, recorded in Strabo’s world history, *Geographica*, and mediated for Church through the work of British philologists. But if Cole embodies the Britishness of American art, Olana, the Persian home of his student on the other side of the Hudson, demonstrates this transatlantic connection is but one vector in the multiple geographies of Church’s world. This lecture will map the house’s object worlds, its sightlines and its architectural translations of eastern ornament and, in so doing, explore the ways in which the centre of this world might be a productive frontier for British art.

Panel 3

Nika Elder (American University), “A taste for flesh: John Singleton Copley and the racial politics of colonial portraiture”

Though John Singleton Copley lived and worked well within the boundaries of the British Empire—both in the colonies and on the mainland—scholars have long considered him the first American artist. As such, his colonial portraits have been severed from imperial interests and yet understood as strictly obeisant to the British portrait tradition. Broaching Copley as a colonial artist, my project explores the ways in which the global economy and local culture informed the taste and demand for portraiture in the British Empire. This talk focuses on Copley’s paintings of members of the Royall family and situates them within the slave economy of Massachusetts in order to reveal how and why painting participated, if unwittingly, in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The Royalls were the largest slaveholders in colonial Massachusetts. But, as with Copley’s other colonial work, his paintings of them contain no visible signs of slavery or depictions of the enslaved. Instead, the paintings prioritize the sitters’ flesh and clothing. Through technical analysis of Copley’s paintings, verbal descriptions of the enslaved, and the ways in which these bodies of work intersect and diverge on the subjects of skin and dress, I argue that Copley’s Royall portraits render whiteness visible. Amid the persistent threat of slave rebellion, the Royalls fled to Medford from Antigua and, there, commissioned portraits that asserted the fertility and continuity of white family lines. By locating Copley’s colonial portraits at the intersection of local and global concerns, this project reveals the unconscious ways in which art has fostered empire.

Catherine Roach (Virginia Commonwealth University), “Hybrid exhibits: Race, empire, and genre at the British Institution in 1806”

Public exhibitions in Britain have long been a site for the construction and contestation of national and imperial identities. Such was the case in 1806, when the British Institution, a philanthropic arts organization run by elite collectors, staged its inaugural exhibition of contemporary art. Unlike the other major venue for contemporary art in the period, the Royal Academy, the Institution accepted previously exhibited artworks. As a result, the show in 1806 included many objects that had been created years or even decades earlier. It became a retrospective of the past thirty years that made visible two intimately related developments: the rise of hybrid genres and the rise of art about empire. Prominently featured paintings included John Singleton Copley’s *Death of the Earl of Chatham* (1781), Arthur William Devis’s *Marquis Cornwallis Receiving the Hostage Princes of Mysore Before Seringapatam* (1796–1805), Thomas Lawrence’s *John Philip Kemble as Rolla in Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s “Pizarro”* (1800), and James Ward’s *Liboya Serpent* (1804), which shows a man of African descent being attacked by a snake. As monumental works whose subjects fell outside the traditional definition of history painting, these exhibits raised questions about the hierarchy of genres. As images that directly or indirectly pictured the British imperial project through representations of South American, East Indian, African, and British protagonists, they raised questions about racial and social hierarchies. Close analysis of this exhibition installation reveals both the flexibility and the hard limits of ideas about membership in the British empire at the start of the nineteenth century.

Keynote 2

Tim Barringer (Yale University), “Global landscape in the age of empire”

This talk will examine the emergence of the panorama as a key form of imperial visual culture and will examine the implications of immersive viewing practices both for the representation of the territories of empire, but also in the promotion of imperial ideology among the viewing public.

Panel 4

Sam Rose (University of St Andrews), “Post-Impressionism: British, Universal, Global”

The “Manet and the Post-Impressionists” exhibition of 1910 is usually discussed for its role in popularising a particular kind of modern art in Britain, but in a broader sense it also had a primary role in the international codification of modern art as *post-impressionism*. One of Britain’s most consequential contributions to the development of modernism was not a material production, but instead a textual theorisation and account of the past and potential future of modern art. This paper tries to move beyond standard notions of the consequences, local and global, of this account of modern art as post-impressionism. In the hands of Roger Fry the account drew on histories of world art and international art historiography to cast modern art as putatively universal – not just a new development, but a *rediscovery* of a natural form of artistic creation. Pitched as universal, the account also had the potential to empirically go global – to have a causal role in the development of multiple international modernisms following its spatial circulation across the globe. Yet as Fry’s idea of post-impressionism was spread through (individual and object) travel, (textual) translation, and (largely colonial art) education,

the Britain-based “universality” of the account broke down as it was transformed and politicised in a variety of locally specific ways, a point explored with a particular focus on its transfer to and reworkings in China, Japan, Nigeria, and India.

Jiyi Ryu (University of York), “Imperial object lessons: Playing games and touring the British imperial world”

The British Empire Exhibition at Wembley (1924/25) was the first example of intra empire exhibitions during the interwar period. The Exhibition encapsulated postwar anxieties as well as imperial pride and inspired interwar propaganda activities, involving the visual arts. Whilst the Exhibition itself materialised a miniature empire and facilitated virtual travel around it, imperial games expanded the physical experience of the miniaturised empire to homes; from the public to the domestic. Games and models, relatively marginalised in art history and visual culture studies, offer a new way of thinking imperial and visual modernity in a broader context of the multi-sensory. In this paper, I return these playthings to discussions of the visual and material culture of the British Empire. I explore how imperial games interacted with the spatiotemporal politics of Britain and its empire as well as with British romantic landscapes and exposition architecture. Building imperial models and playing imperial games functioned as a means of empire object lessons, combining the methodology of self-activity and the hands-on with ideas of imperial tourism and imaginative geography. For example, in games such as Flying Round the British Empire, children enjoyed virtual travel and acquired geographical knowledge. In addition, children constructed the British Empire by completing dissected puzzles and made 3D models of the Exhibition as souvenirs. The paper will thus address a neglected period of British imperial art history—the 1920s; the later period of exhibition culture beyond the third quarter of the nineteenth century; and consider the experience of child protagonists, still a relatively underresearched genre of viewer within art history.

Panel 5

Alexander R. Bigman (Institute of Fine Arts at New York University), “Reconfiguring the microcosmic view: Gilbert and George in postcolonial London”

Between 1976 and 1981, Gilbert and George avidly photographed the people and human traces of Spitalfields, controversially depicting the East End neighborhood’s growing South Asian immigrant population alongside the increasingly pronounced countervailing presence of the xenophobic, neo-fascist group National Front. The apparent equanimity with which Gilbert and George represented such charged subject matter in their multi-panel murals has drawn abundant censure as well as defense over the years, yet both responses have typically replicated the artists’ own presentation of their work as symbolic expressions of private (if shared) states of mind. Complicating such entrenched readings, this paper will argue that Gilbert and George’s representations of postcolonial migration and racial nationalism in working class London critically thematize an ideology that, far from being idiosyncratic, in fact runs back to the height of Britain’s imperial power; namely, the conception of London as a microcosm, containing within it all the peoples, customs and conflicts of the world by virtue of its status as a global trading post through which humankind’s commodities flow. That the artists were working with such a global and historically expanded optic is confirmed by their contemporaneous sculptures of Edwardian-era picture postcards. Key agents in the articulation of a popular British imperial identity, postcards and cigarette cards encyclopedically depicted the fruits of empire alongside their obverse—spectacles of British military might—for mass visual consumption. Forty years before Brexit, Gilbert and

George depicted a world in which ethnic identification and its aestheticized politicization had, with troubling irony, emerged as analogous objects of consumption, again reconfiguring Great Britain's image of itself and its relation to a wider world.

Jackson Davidow (MIT), "A diasporic virus: AIDS and the British Black Arts Movement"

Focusing on the innovative queer art and criticism to emerge from the so-called "Black Arts Movement" in Britain, this paper highlights the AIDS pandemic as one crucial force that pushed cultural practitioners to make work and, in so doing, to join in a transnational social movement. Through contextualization and critical analysis of selected texts and artworks by Isaac Julien, Kobena Mercer, Pratibha Parmar, Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Sunil Gupta, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, and Simon Watney, I contend that HIV/AIDS imprinted new meanings onto visual articulations of queerness and the black diaspora. It sharpened modes of identification, expression, and mobilization that were nascent in London in the early 1980s. Diaspora, queerness, and virus materialized as key intertwined theoretical terms that had both spatial and political undercurrents, concepts that also complicated notions of purity, origins, and essence. Collectively, the terms applied pressure to constructs of nation, nationality, and nationalism, exposing a global field of inquiry and longing. As cultural practitioners parsed these confluences of identity and experiences in the face of a pandemic, their work reflected the heightened stakes of survival, of the very possibility of imagining a future. In this way, the project of visually representing the history of the queer black Atlantic in global terms became inseparable from historicizing their contemporary local milieu. Besides providing a much-needed history of queer black art in 1980s London in relation to the AIDS pandemic, my paper suggests that these important historical debates continue to influence our visions of a global history of British art.

Keynote 3

Dorothy Price (University of Bristol), "Dreaming has a Share in History: Thinking around Black British art"

This lecture will reflect on recent developments in Black British Art with a focus on the work of Lubaina Himid and other artists of her generation. Over the course of a career spanning several decades, Himid has produced an extraordinary body of work in a variety of media in which the primacy of painting has remained to the fore. The use of colour, installation and collage in a re-address to history, to art history, to monuments, to time, to memory and to visibility, amongst other themes, are central to Himid's practices as an artist; a practice in which she wrests painting from its traditional function as an instrument for white western canon formation and re-deploys it in a dialogical relation to its origins. Such a Benjaminian concept of history – as a constellation between past, present and future in which re-interrogating the past in the present might produce the conditions for change in the future – is one of the enduring qualities of her artistic practice and will be explored further in this lecture as part of a wider reflection on the remapping of the boundaries of British art.

Panel 6

Margaret Schmitz (Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design), "Wyndham Lewis and Charles Sheeler: Cities in the 'Vortex' and the 'Vacuum'"

In this paper, I explore the similarities between Wyndham Lewis's Vorticist art and Charles Sheeler's early Precisionist paintings of New York. Lewis's Vorticist paintings and little-studied sketchbooks often depict abstract skyscrapers and architectural forms inspired by New York, highlighting that the American metropolis was a unique and adaptable point of reference for the metaphoric space, the 'vortex', that Lewis sought to construct in his art during this period. His creative manipulation of modern American architecture provides valuable insight into the dualistic relationship in his work between abstraction and reality. Related to this inquiry is Sheeler's own manipulation of the cityscape. I argue that Sheeler's struggle to capture and distil modern time creates, what he described as, a 'vacuum', and that this new space is not unlike Lewis's vortex. In his paintings, Sheeler's Manhattan becomes an ambiguous place as it draws further away from its local identity and his source photographs' signifying function, causing his paintings to come closer to Lewis's abstractions of the modern present. It would have been difficult for Sheeler to have avoided encounters with Vorticist theories and artworks, which were being disseminated through little magazines and the Vorticists' 1917 Penguin Club show in New York. Therefore, I explore the possibility that Vorticism was a catalyst to some degree in shaping Sheeler's initial artistic responses to the city. I will disclose the opportunities Sheeler had to confront Vorticism and highlight the visual and theoretical affinities between his work and Lewis's, as well as their areas of divergence.

Richard Johns (University of York), "Riley in Cairo"

In the early 1980s, Bridget Riley produced a series of vertical stripe paintings distinguished by the use of the same five colours. Though visibly related to the hard-edged black and white works that had propelled Riley to fame in the 1960s, as well as to more recent experiments with colour, these new works represented a change in the artist's methods by combining an intuitive arrangement of colour with a simpler, strictly defined compositional framework (the stripe). This new direction was soon attributed to the landscape of the Nile Valley, and especially to the painted tombs that Riley had encountered during a visit to Egypt in the winter of 1979–80—filtered through memory and the formal conventions of modernism. While the works are determinedly abstract, their imaginative origins are registered in many of the titles: *Ka* (1980), *Ra* (1981), *Luxor* (1982), *Winter Palace* (1981). The so-called "Egyptian palette" has been invoked ever since to explain Riley's output from this period. This paper reconsiders Riley's touristic experience of Egypt and her exacting studio practice within a longer history of encounter and exchange between Britain and the Arab world. First, it situates the stripe paintings alongside the chromatic abstractions of nineteenth-century orientalist painters, including William Holman Hunt and Edward Lear. Second, it locates the display and reception of the stripe paintings within a more recent history of conflict and cooperation following the Tripartite Aggression (Suez Crisis) of 1956 and the end of decades of British occupation. Doing so places Riley's work at a crossroads between colonial and postcolonial ways of seeing.

Panel 7

Sayantana Mukhopadhyay (University of California, Los Angeles), "Fighting while dreaming: Rasheed Araeen's radical utopianism"

Rasheed Araeen was born in a newly independent Pakistan and moved to London in the early 1960s, where he has lived since. His apotheosis as an artist is concomitant with his rise as a prominent activist, whose work as a writer, curator, and editor has always run parallel to his practice in the visual field. It has been a longstanding commitment, in his position as a person of color speaking from the very center

of former empire, to highlight ways artists from the postcolonial world are systematically excluded from institutions and from critical discourse. There is a seeming rupture, however, between Araeen's outspoken activism and his sculptural practice. While his writing has always militantly addressed the problems faced by artists on the periphery (particularly within a post-war Britain growing increasingly cosmopolitan), his sculptures have been experiments in geometricism, often composed of simple lines made into repeating cubic forms. The question remains as to whether there is a way to bridge the apparent gap between Araeen's formal work with his politicized rhetoric. This paper wishes to understand Araeen's sculptures in a Post-Marxist mode as objects that engage ideas of utopian futurity. I will argue that they provide a necessary and complimentary response to his struggle for the visibility of artists of color by supplying microcosmic models for social equality and justice, imagined and evoked through the aesthetics of minimalism.

Catherine Spencer (University of St Andrews), "The violence of representation: Northern Ireland, abstraction and the documentary trace"

During the 1970s and 1980s, Rita Donagh produced one of the most sustained bodies of work to address the Northern Ireland conflict and its international representation in the press, exploring how colonialism and neo-colonialism have long fissured the construct of the 'United Kingdom'. Donagh's response to the so-called troubles combines the abstracting mechanisms of mapping and diagramming with collaged images from newspapers and television. This is exemplified in a series inspired by the 'H' block architecture of HM Maze Prison, where Irish Republican detainees staged dirty protests and hunger strikes to widespread media attention. Donagh's work has polarised critics: Edward Lucie-Smith argues it is 'very little if at all concerned with commenting on the Irish situation specifically', achieving only 'a generalized, elusive melancholy.' By contrast, others have accused Donagh of political partisanship. Neither provides an adequate assessment of her work, which combines documentary with abstraction to explore the complexity of violence and its mediation, particularly via mass media transmission. Situating Donagh's Maze Prison works in relation to Conrad Atkinson's *Northern Ireland 1968 – May Day 1975* (1975–6), the photographic practices of Clive Limpkin, Paul Graham and Paul Seawright, and activist films including Cinema Action's *People of Ireland!* (1971) and the Berwick Street Film Collective's *Ireland: Behind the Wire* (1974), this paper takes Donagh's practice as a starting point to consider how reinventions of the documentary trace enabled artists during the 1970s and 1980s to grapple with Britain's global histories of imperialism, empire and conflict in relation to Northern Ireland.