

Barbara Lutz

Curating Transculturality. documenta 12 an the 'Migration of Form'

Since the late 1980s, the art field increasingly opens up to models and concepts of globalization. For one thing, the proliferation of biennials across the globe since the early 1990s has called traditional notions of culture into question and prompted new approaches to art history – for instance by including postcolonial studies. New perspectives on what has come to be called “global art”, however, affect not only the paradigms of art history, but also the field of art mediation. The complexity and contradictions of cultural and economical conflicts that accompany globalization processes have gained urgency. Thus the question of how to describe and translate this phenomenon is up for debate. The term “global art”, however, remains ambiguous for it neither grasps the multifarious approaches to contemporary art nor the dynamics of art itself. In this sense, the universalizing tendency of the term “global art” is highly problematic.

As an alternative and more differentiated approach to contemporary art, I would like to propose a transcultural perspective. The concept of transculturality, as it was formulated by philosopher Wolfgang Iser in the 1990s, emphasizes the fact that in the age of increased mobility and migration, people tend to identify with more than one way of life, language or tradition. Thus, this concept acknowledges that identity today is no longer linked to stable, monolithic categories of nation, class or race, but rather a dynamic matter of multiple cultural affiliations.

Taking transculturality seriously, it is necessary to disengage from a Western perspective on art due to its reliance on homogeneous nation states, which renders impossible an adequate analysis and understanding of art as an extremely heterogeneous phenomenon. Yet, transculturality does not only prepare the theoretical ground for a more reflective approach to art but also offers opportunities for dealing with subjects and objects in the field of curating. I will use the example of *documenta 12* (2007) and reflect on the concept and realization of the 'Migration of Form' as a transcultural practice in the field of art mediation.

**Barbara Lutz** is a curator and scholar based in Berlin. She studied Cultural Sciences and Aesthetic Practice with focus on fine arts at the University of Hildesheim. From 2009 to 2010 she participated in the training program Curatorial Practice and Exhibition Management at the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Hildesheim. Until 2011 she was a member of the interdisciplinary PhD program “Produktionsräume ästhetischer Praxis”. Focusing on *documenta 12* as a case study, her PhD thesis deals with transculturality in the field of curatorial practice. She was a lecturer at the University of Hildesheim and has worked for several international projects such as *Fotofestival Mannheim-Ludwigshafen-Heidelberg*, *1st Berlin Photography Festival* or the *Table of Free Voices* (Berlin).