

Jelle Bouwhuis

HOW FAR HOW NEAR

Or: where to locate global art within a modern art museum

The current 'global turn' in contemporary art, the limitations of the very terminology used (Global Art, World Art, Art World) notwithstanding, is often seen as a thread or challenge for the modern art museum. Historically speaking though, there are existing relationships between the modern art museum and the 'rest' of the world, which can be used to give the idea of the global turn a more specific concretization rooted in notions of the local rather than within the universalist aspirations that form the rationale of the modern art museum. It was only after World War II that the Stedelijk Museum became a Museum of Modern Art per se, but this transformation happened within a colonial framework that is typical of the Dutch local context. 'How Far How Near' is the title of the exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum that resulted from such critical research into the history and the collection of the museum. It aimed to showcase historic works from the collection alongside more recent acquisitions of contemporary art, and to break through the compartmentalization that traditionally distinguishes various disciplines within the institute, such as photography, graphic design and fine art. This also entailed a (re)politization of the collection and different angles to certain collection items.

The process of research and selection led to a much better understanding of what is called 'colonization of knowledge and the colonization of being' (Mignolo) within the internal operations of the modern art museum. It thus also revealed some of the formations of canonizations and sticky exclusivity standpoints in the museum's policies, whereas academia have gone further in analyzing such formations and in deconstructing modern art history.

Jelle Bouwhuis (1965, NL) is an art historian and curator at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, and heads its project space, Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (SMBA). Some of his exhibitions are 'Monumentalism. History and National Identity in Contemporary Art', Stedelijk Museum, 2010, and 'Spaces of Exception', Moscow Biennial 2013. He is co-editor of *Now is the Time. Art and theory in the 21st Century*, (NAi Publishers, 2009) and *Project 1975 – Contemporary art and the Postcolonial Unconscious* (Blackdog Publishers, 2014). He is currently head curator of the long-term project Global Collaborations at the Stedelijk Museum. See <http://global.stedelijk.nl>