

Jacob Birken

When Transfers become Entanglements. Contradictory Sites of Artistic Production & Reception in a Globalized World.

Today's contemporary art practice unfolds against the backdrop of an increasingly globalized world. This, on the one hand, leads to a multiplication of different artistic positions and platforms; on the other, artists are confronted with very different socio-political realities and conditions under which their work is produced and received. 'Global Art' as a self-contained scene – with a specific market, specific institutions and as a near-hermetic sociotope – can cover up these differences; it, then, exists within a globally 'distributed' sphere amidst Biennials, international stipend programmes and conferences, but, more often than not, detached from local realities.

Yet, contemporary art can, and, by definition, might have to be art that discusses the very conditions of its own production and reception; in a next step, its self-reflection can be generalized and turns into a critique surpassing art's own discursive sphere. Since the 1960s, Institutional Critique or Appropriation Art tackled the 'Western' art system's dependencies on consumerism or authoritarian structures; in a similar sense, 'Global Art' can reflect its peculiar, often paradoxical 'identity' within today's world.

Art works allow for diverging interpretations – as many interpretations as there are viewers. Yet, is it possible to create works that already *imply* multiple interpretations, and turn this multiplicity into a statement? How does this relate to a 'Global Art', in which local or expert 'Gatekeepers' insist on their respective sovereignty over interpretation, while universal understanding remains an utopian ideal?

In my paper, I want to present art works that transform such situations into the matter and medium for representing the contradictions of a globalized world – when, for example, a popular Ghanaian drama is, at the same time, produced as a 'contemporary' project for an European art audience; when art is created within a (not necessarily smooth) 'translation' between the site of its creation and reception – and, by this, points towards the economic and socio-political discrepancies & entanglements that characterize our globalized age.

**Jacob Birken** (\*1978 in Katowice) is a writer and curator based in Karlsruhe, Germany. He co-curated the survey exhibition "The Global Contemporary" at ZKM Center for Arts and Media Karlsruhe in 2011, various exhibitions for the independent art space "Kunstraum: Morgenstraße" (2010-2014), and, most recently, the public arts project "Mémoires Perdues" for the city of Karlsruhe. In 2012-2014 he worked as a researcher for the project "Images of Disasters" at the University of Heidelberg, and is currently preparing a PhD thesis on the San Francisco 1906 earthquake & fires. Further research interests include the politics of contemporary art and concepts of historicity in (popular) culture.