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Going Global: a series of questions with no answers

At the beginning of Wang Du's lecture at SFAI, he stated something like, "I am not an art critic, and I don't have much to say about the art that it doesn't already say for itself. To speak about it would be redundant." The thing that struck me most was that this artist who is evidently so much a part of the "Going Global" trend (exhibiting internationally, at this biennial or that, literally being from China and living and working in France) was, in a way, distancing himself from it. In contrast to this artist, the articles by Pamela Lee and Lee Weng Choy were clearly written by writers, critics or historians, *not* artists. It seemed plain in the language that they were talking *about* something and not from within it. The "art world" of which Pamela Lee speaks being the exact world from which she comes. And I began to think, from where does this issue of the Global arise? How much of it is due to artists consciousness and how much of it is just a reflection of the times? Is it indeed as significant a 'movement' as the critics are making it? A new reality for all artists to revere?

Back in the day before travel and trade were so readily available, if someone in a small rural American town had a tea pot that was made in China, it would have been exotic, and mentionable. It was out of the ordinary and worth commenting on and having interest in it. But today, with all the global trade, the internet, communications and consumerism being what they are, someone in a small town might have a tea pot also made in China, but bought from Wal-Mart which would be of no interest at all¹. This person from a small town is just following the times and is, in a way, no different from the small town-er from days past; he is no more interesting or worth recognition. It's getting a bit off track, but the parallel I'm trying to draw is this: is an artist who is trying to reach out to a Global audience really so different from artists in days past who were trying to reach a local one? Could it not be simply a sign of the times that this is happening, and not something so consciously affected? I suppose the question that follows is

Is it the artists responsibility to be more than peripherally aware of these issues? It seems to me that there are a certain section of artists who do speak about this issue in their work because it is what they do. Rikrit Tiravanija, for instance, does deal with these "Global" issues. Just as Hans Haacke deals with social/societal issues or Richard Long deals with Land and experience. Is there room for it all? Yes. Is it the responsibility of the artist to be more than peripherally aware of what is going on around them? I don't know. This all makes me think back to the concept of a Renaissance Man, a person who was supposed to be versed in everything, from art to medicine, philosophy to science. And, how this, in

¹ Not to say that globalization *necessarily* takes away from *all* object's ability to retain uniqueness.

our specialized world, would be impossible in today's day and age. Today, it is more useful to the social order that individuals concentrate on one thing, do it well, and thus make a specialized contribution to the world, knowing that others doing the same thing will balance it out. I feel a similar way about the art world. There are artists concentrating on many different things: There's political art, social art, personal art, religious art, every kind of art. That some of it is making its way into the arena of the global market, or global consciousness is access driven, globalism driven. It is, perhaps, simply a sign of the times. Is it important for it to be part of all contemporary dialogue?

Are issues like globalization important? Certainly. But are they any more important because they are a sign of the times? I don't know.