Globalization and Chinese Contemporary Art: West to East, East to West

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PART III: ART EAST AND WEST

CHAPTER 8

GLOBALIZATION AND CHINESE CONTEMPORARY ART

WEST TO EAST, EAST TO WEST

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ABSTRACT

In this article, Carter tells the weaving tale of the globalization of art and the interplay between eastern and western contemporary art. Carter sketches out the history of contemporary art in China with a keen eye towards the interplay between Chinese artists and the various western influences over time, such as the 16th century Jesuit artists, Impressionism, Cubism, Fauvism, and Dada to name a few. This history is marked by a ubiquitous tension as Chinese artists incorporated western innovations into their work, while also maintaining the poetic and literary foundation of Chinese art. Coupling that with the influence of the Cultural Revolution and Soviet realism on the Chinese art world, Carter discusses the tenuous boundaries upon which Chinese art has been and continues to be produced. After considering this history, Carter goes on to analyze the effect Chinese art has on the western art world—both how it shapes the western art world and how this globalization, in turn, shapes Chinese art. In navigating this boundary, Carter explains how Chinese artists find mediate appealing to a global audience while maintaining their Chinese roots. Carter concludes this essay by considering the economic
success of Chinese art in the west and drawing attention to the negotiations still taking place today between local culture/global culture, tradition/innovation, and authenticity/market appeal.

INTRODUCTION

In the past 20 years or so the flow of Chinese art into the West has drawn a great deal of interest in the form of media attention as well as gallery, and museum exhibitions. Private collectors in growing numbers as judged by the activity in the auction houses in the West and East have also found new interest in Chinese contemporary art. Hence, given this recent increase in the global mobility of Chinese artists toward western art centers in Europe and America, the effects of globalization must include the impact of their movement on contemporary Chinese art itself, as well as on the growing influences of Chinese art in the West. The presence of recent contemporary Chinese art in the West begins in the 1980s as artists such as Xu Bing, Ai Weiwei, GU Wenda, and others moved to New York, Berlin, and other western cities in search of greater freedom for their experimental works.

In previous essays on Chinese contemporary art, I approached global aspects of Chinese contemporary art mainly from the perspective of global influences moving from the West into China. The results of such previous studies have shown that, although contemporary developments in Chinese art have endorsed certain elements of western contemporary art, there remains a firm desire among Chinese artists to develop their art in ways that retain grounding in Chinese culture and art traditions. Further evidence of this direction is the fact that, despite growing awareness of Western art throughout the Twentieth century and beyond, Chinese artists did not succumb to western hegemony. This is not to say that Chinese art has not been influenced in important ways by western art, only to argue that the Chinese artists for the main part have persisted in their dedication to sustaining the identity of Chinese art as a distinguishable voice both within China and in global art.

In order to appreciate the current status of Chinese Contemporary art in reference to our subject here, it is necessary to look at these earlier East/West connections in reference to both art and aesthetics. The questions concerning both Chinese art and aesthetics today are
complex, and not so easy to answer for the present day Chinese artists and scholars. Corresponding to developments in Chinese art, there is indeed a rich tradition of Chinese aesthetics, which reflects the appreciation of nature as well as the arts of poetry, landscape painting, and music as well as other forms of the arts and everyday life. And it appears to me that this tradition remains at the core of Chinese art and culture even today.

Although our main focus in this essay will be on the effects of globalization on Chinese art, it is noteworthy that the developments in Chinese aesthetics also share a common pattern of global exchange between East and West. At least since the 1920s, some Chinese aestheticians have become increasingly familiar with the traditions of western aesthetics including European and American contributions.

These contacts include traditional western aesthetics from Plato through the nineteenth century European aestheticians such as Kant and Hegel. The connections between Chinese and western aesthetics in the twentieth century also include John Dewey, Marxist aesthetics, as well as more recent Anglo-American Analytic aesthetics and Continental European Phenomenology.

Globalization, when it is not focused on hegemonic cultural dominance, encourages scholars in aesthetics, both in China and in the West, to investigate common elements and differences in their respective aesthetic traditions. The availability of international conferences where scholars of East and West may meet and share ideas is most important to their arriving at mutual understanding. This development is a factor in contemporary unfolding of Chinese art and aesthetics, in China as well as in the West. Chinese scholars may well understand, better than some of their Western colleagues, the importance of mutual explorations of their respective traditions in aesthetics and the arts. The possibility of discovering common and complementary bases for aesthetics and the practices within the arts underlying cultural differences can only strengthen the importance of aesthetics and the arts in the cultures of both China and the West.

Globalization in art, as in other aspects of culture, consists of the movement or transfer of artistic, conceptual or practical enterprises developed in a particular culture to another culture that exists in some state of development. The aims of such transfers may be simply to augment already existing practices, or more likely, to influence change in the receiving culture. The main contributions of globalization to
art in China during the twentieth century appear to have been two-fold: the attempt to create an avant-garde art in China, mainly with influences from Paris and New York, and synchronization of the role of art with political aims as reinforced by the art of Socialist Realism as it had previously developed in the USSR. In both these instances, the focus appears to have been on cultural and ideological rather than economic interests.

Not all Chinese scholars in aesthetics, and certainly not the artists, will agree on one single path for the future. Indeed, a healthy respect for differences and alternative choices is necessary to grasp the full range of understanding required to interpret the current and future developments with respect to the arts, nature, and everyday life objects and activities.

GLOBALIZATION IN ART WEST TO EAST

In order to address the questions raised by globalization of Chinese art, it is necessary first to consider briefly the impact of western art on Chinese art across the twentieth century. A brief examination of the impact of globalization efforts from the West on the practices of artists in China will serve as a background for interpreting the current developments, as Chinese artists become a force in the West. As well, it offers an interesting contrast with current developments of the global movement of Chinese contemporary art into the West.

Beginning in the sixteenth century with the arrival of the Jesuit artists from Europe, the proponents of Western art have on various occasions attempted to influence the development of Chinese art. Such interventions in the past have resulted mainly from globalization efforts on the part of the West. Whether this phase of globalization was driven by western hegemonic aims intended to displace or change the direction of Chinese art, or is to be seen as benign efforts aimed toward producing mutual understanding of each other’s art and culture, is open to interpretation. In any event the successes of western art in China at best have been mainly held in check by strong and entrenched art practices already deeply entrenched in Chinese culture, and by the often tumultuous social and political conditions operative in China during much of the twentieth century.

Although some western pictorial means were known in China among professional commercial artists as early as the Seventeenth century, these developments had little effect on other aspects of Chinese
Western influences related to avant-garde art likely began with Chinese artists studying in Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century, and with the importation of Japanese teachers into China to introduce western art techniques as interpreted through Japanese eyes to Chinese students and artists. The success of Japanese artists in adapting western art to Asian culture attracted many Chinese painters to study in Japan as well as with Japanese teachers imported to teach art in China.

For example the Lingnan School of Chinese painting established by the brothers Gao Qifeng (1889-1933) and Gao Jianfu (1879-1951), who were introduced to western art thru Japanese teachers, was especially important to the creation of a Chinese avant-garde in the early twentieth century. One result was a new style of Chinese painting known as New National Painting. In conjunction with his roles as artist and educator, Gao Jianfu’s efforts included founding Zhenxiang huabao (The True Record), a magazine dedicated to promoting the new art and progressive social and political ideas. Through his efforts, Gao Jianfu’s art was influential in the advancement of western art ideas among other Chinese artists of the period. His aim was to create a new (for Chinese art Avant-garde) pictorial language based on a synthesis of Chinese and Western art. Gao applied techniques observed in western painting (portrait painting, lighting and shade, and linear perspective) to traditional Chinese ink brush paintings. In an effort to make the art comprehensible to the masses he focused on contemporary themes from all aspects of life including the political.

Additional sources of western Avant-garde art into China in the early to mid twentieth century came mainly from the European artists working in Paris. The types of western influences Chinese artists chose to bring back to China based on their experiences in Paris and elsewhere in the West varied considerably. Chinese artists including Mayching Kao, one of the Chinese artists working in Paris in the early part of the twentieth century, viewed “the individual styles of Manet, Monet, Cezanne, van Gogh, Derain and Vlaminck ...as a repertoire from which to pick and choose.”

Among the choices available for Chinese artists working in Paris at the beginning of the twentieth century was a range of then avant-garde styles—Post-impressionism, Cubism, Fauvism, Surrealism, Dada. Lin Fengmian (1900-1991) chose to follow the modernists Matisse and Modigliani in bringing avant-garde modernism to China. Not all of the
influences coming from the West could be considered avant-garde. For example, Xu Beihong (1895-1953) favored a conservative Eighteenth century romantic realism. He used western romantic realism to create landscape and portrait paintings in opposition to both Chinese traditional painting and the western modernists influences.

Given the availability of such a range of experimental arts contrasting with Chinese traditional art, one might assume that Paris would generate considerable influence toward the advancement of avant-garde art in China. Contrary to expectations, the Paris avant-garde had only limited success in China. This may have been a result of the resistance of Chinese artists, as well as the fact that the Paris avant-garde seemed less relevant to the changing social and political needs of Chinese society.

The first official National Art Exhibition featuring western influenced avant-garde art took place in Shanghai in 1929 and opened to mixed reviews. Similarly, the 1935 NOVA exhibition of the China Independent Art Association with paintings by Chinese, Japanese and other artists inspired by the Fauve and Surrealist movements was roundly criticized in the press, and ended NOVA. However, the editor of Yifeng magazine featured the exhibition and included a copy of André Breton's Manifesto of 1924.

Despite these and other scattered efforts to establish avant-garde western art in China, the challenges of absorbing the changes mandated by western Realism, let alone the various western avant-garde movements that questioned traditional western Realism, proved daunting. As Michael Sullivan has noted, without the support of scholarship, poetry and the literary culture on which traditional Chinese art was based, individual Chinese artists found difficulty in establishing their own way to create art in the new styles. Opening up of the subjects of painting beyond "agreeable or symbolic themes" grounded in social and aesthetic harmony created major problems for the Chinese artists. For example, nude models and the nude as subject were particularly uncomfortable for Chinese artists and art consumers. These factors and a general lack of support for western innovations in Chinese culture thus hindered the development of a vigorous avant-garde. Add to these considerations the fact that Chinese critics such as Chen Yifan believed that a Chinese modern avant-garde art must be inspired by a revolutionary democratic nationalism capable of advancing the social and political aims of China. It was not immediately clear to Chinese
engaged in the challenges of forging a new China, and dealing with the Japanese occupation, how the Paris avant-garde suited the aims of the social revolution taking place in China.

The story of globalization in reference to western influences on Chinese art continues thru the period of the Cultural Revolution but with a different focus. Western influences apart from those ensuing from Russian Socialist Realism were temporarily deterred. It was not until the 1980s that globally inspired avant-garde art was able to proceed with a greater openness.

**CHINESE ART AFTER 1980**

In 1985 Robert Rauschenberg’s Overseas Culture Exchange project brought paintings, installations, and mixed media arts incorporating found objects to the China National Art Gallery. Young Chinese artists began to exhibit installations following Rauschenberg’s introduction to these new art processes. At about the same time, the Chinese government established art journals with a western art agenda. Among these were 85 New Space, produced by the Pool society, and Fine Arts News published by the Arts Research Institute of the Ministry of Culture in Beijing. The aim of these efforts was to promote innovation and present world art to Chinese audiences. Despite alternations between moments of greater freedom and restrictions, contemporary art in China continues to develop as it seeks to define a new face within its borders. At the same time, Chinese contemporary artists began to reach out worldwide on a path aimed at creating a global stream of influence and successes extending into the western art world.

Not all Chinese artists today fit easily into the categories which link art either to the avant-garde or to social and political objectives. Rather, like their seventeenth century Chinese ancestors (Shih-t’ao and K’un-ts’an), and their European avant-garde predecessors whose main concern was with the aesthetic, a notable portion of today’s artists look inward to the subjective as the source of their art. These artists focus their creative output on more personal aesthetic characteristics concerned with self-esteem, and possibly spiritual autonomy, as a wedge against oppressive societal struggles. For contemporary Chinese artists such as Jiang Ji’an openness of thinking toward the tradition of inkbrush painting as a fund of information for art being produced in the contemporary world enables tradition to take on living form.
Others among contemporary artists in China today externalize their subjective concerns through performance art using the body.

Currently, much of the internal development affecting the state of Chinese contemporary art is taking place alongside, or under the influences of worldwide globalization. In this respect, one can agree with art critic Wang Chunchen’s observation that, “The greatest influence that 20th century cast upon Chinese culture is a change in the relationship between China and the world, raising the question of how China can complete its modernization and become a prosperous and powerful country.” The future of contemporary Chinese art in reference to globalization must be understood in this context. Since the 1990s especially, Chinese artists have focused on the relation of China’s art to other world cultures, most notably on the relation of China’s art and culture to art and culture in the West. Current interest in the globalization of Chinese art follows heightened attention to global economic and political discourse taking place between China and the West.

GLOBALIZATION EAST TO WEST

This brings us to the central issue for the remainder of this essay: the shift in direction of the global art movement is now increasingly taking place from East to West instead of its historic west-east pattern. At the present time, questions relating to the globalization of Chinese art arise from a perspective opposite that of the movement of art from West to East. Among the questions to be considered in light of the shift in direction of global art westward from China is this: how has the flow of Chinese contemporary art into the West influenced Chinese art itself? Another question of key interest is: What will be the impact of Chinese art in the West?

The first question concerns changes taking place with respect to the shifting identity of Chinese contemporary art itself. For example, is the global movement of art from China to the West changing the way that Chinese artists alter their approaches in their art? For example, do the market opportunities available in the West demand a shift in taste or style of Chinese art to better accommodate “the western eye”?

The perspectives of the global art market and the international art world are more complex than artistic developments within a particular culture such as China. Global art thus requires a frame that will appeal to audiences beyond a particular national or local culture. It must
serve diverse audiences representing different cultures. This situation raises the possibility of some sense of universal art understanding.

The presentation of Chinese art in a western art world requires that the audience be confronted with the issue of cultural differences implicit in the transfer of art from Chinese culture to the western cultures of the United States and Europe. Aesthetic symbols or values understood in a Chinese cultural setting may not be understood with the same nuances of meaning in the West. It is thus a likely possibility that works of art created in contemporary Chinese society will assume new meanings when seen in the context of a western culture. For example, when the Elgin Marbles of ancient Greece were transferred from Athens to London at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they acquired new meanings drawn from their reception and interpretation in the culture of nineteenth century England. Taking another example, Pop art began in the West, but as it evolved in China it acquired a political dimension largely absent in its western culture of origin.

One solution to accommodating cultural difference would be for Chinese artists to simply anticipate the difference in understandings and create Chinese art “for the western eye” for presentation in the West. However, such an approach to Chinese art would undercut the art’s authentic Chinese character. If the intent is to preserve the authenticity of their art, Chinese artists must remain faithful to their Chinese roots while understanding that their art may take on new meanings in a western culture.

Despite any potential obstacles ensuing from cultural differences, Chinese art at the present time enjoys significant economic, as well as aesthetic success, in the western art world. Indeed, the current parlay of Chinese art into the West can without exaggeration be compared to Paris modern art’s invasion into the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. This claim is supported by its coverage in the media, the proliferation of art galleries in major western cities featuring Chinese artists, and museum exhibitions in the west showing Chinese artists. For example, contemporary Chinese artist Zing Fanzhi was recently exhibited in two prestigious London galleries: (Satschi, 2011, and Gagosian, 2012, 2013), to be followed by a solo exhibition at the Musée d’art de la Ville de Paris (2013).

Exhibitions of Chinese contemporary art are now taking place in major western art museums and cultural centers with increasing frequency. For example, “Modern Chinese Ink Paintings” at the British
Museum in London (2012), the J. P. Morgan Library’s exhibition of Xu Bing’s “The Living World” in New York, (2011) and the Tate Modern Museum’s exhibition of Ai Weiwei’s Sunflower Seeds at the Tate Modern Museum in London (2010-2011) and his solo exhibition at the Hirshorn Museum in Washington, D. C. (October, 2012) offer recent examples of such museum exhibitions. Among other such exhibitions in the United States was the Boston Museum of Fine Art’s “Fresh Ink” (2010-2011), where works by ten contemporary Chinese artists created works to respond to classic Chinese paintings in the Museum’s collections. Taking a slightly longer view, the exhibition, “Inside Out: New Chinese Art” (1999) at the Asia Society in New York, and “On the Edge: Contemporary Chinese Artists Encounter the West” (2005-2006) presented at the Cantor Center for the Visual Arts at Stanford University and the Davis Art Center of Wellesley College, offer thoughtful inquiries into the place of Chinese contemporary art in the West.

Museum exhibitions of Contemporary Chinese art in the West are especially important as they allow a greater depth of investigation into Chinese art as it is able to be understood in a western context. For example, the exhibition “On the Edge...” at the Asia Society brings to western eyes the ten participating artists’ perspectives, often laced with ironic wit. The artists in this exhibition show how Chinese artists in the exhibition view the West. Similarly, the Boston Museum’s exhibition “Fresh Ink” brings to western eyes a Chinese perspective on the relation of Chinese contemporary art to Chinese traditional master works. Both exhibitions, when viewed by western eyes, contribute to a greater understanding of Chinese artists’ ventures into the West in a context of diverse contemporary western settings.

The increasing prominence of the biennale, a non-commercial international showing of artists typically featuring up and coming contemporary artists as well as a range of established artists, has been an important factor in increasing the awareness of Chinese contemporary art in the West. The Venice Biennale established in 1895 in Venice, Italy, is one of the oldest and most important. In 1999, Curator Harold Zeeman included 19 Chinese artists in the 48th Venice Biennale. The Chinese Ministry of Culture created the first official Chinese pavilion in 2005 for the 51st Venice Biennale and presented the exhibition “Virgin Garden Emersion” organized by Yu Jiang. Since that time, Chinese contemporary artists have experienced increasingly strong
recognition world-wide for their participation in the Venice Biennale, thus affirming the recognition of Chinese contemporary art as a leading contender in the global art world.

For example, artists participating in the exhibition “Pervasion of Chinese Flavors” shown at the 2011 Chinese Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, linked ancient Chinese philosophical concepts concerning the five elements intended to explain the origins of the world and its components. As developed by the Curator Peng Feng, this exhibition affirms the inventiveness of contemporary Chinese artists in offering to western audiences fresh reflections on Chinese art and culture. Although controversial at home, the 2011 Chinese Pavilion in Venice attracted notable interest among western audiences. At the 2013 Biennale in Venice, Wang Chunchen’s exhibition “Transformations” brought to western eyes a picture of the sweeping changes taking place in the Chinese art world as it engages in further interaction with the West and ponders its own changing relation to tradition.

What are some of the factors contributing to the successes of Chinese art in the West? Perhaps artistic pluralism characteristic of contemporary art in the West represents a fallow state of artistic innovation resulting in a shortage of new ideas and creative vitality. Another factor may simply be the increased awareness of Chinese art in the west generated in part through efforts such as the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Nowhere has the creativity of Chinese artists been more evident to western eyes than in the visual and performing arts as shown in the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. This event seen throughout the West represented to the world a standard of excellence in the artistic creativity of contemporary and traditional Chinese culture that has significantly awakened curiosity in the West concerning the current state of art in China. On the Chinese side, there is a desire to show to the global world the importance of the New China, which has embraced a modified capitalist system of economics. What better way to communicate the significance of the new China than through the excellence represented in the work of its global contemporary artists, alongside economic and other cultural achievements?

Again, a desire on the part of China to advance its artists in the global world to showcase the new China would not in itself be sufficient to account for all of the success of Chinese artists in the West. Perhaps the principal factor is the initiative of individual artists of great talent
and vision who first began to explore the possibilities for Chinese artists in the West in the 1980s and now carry forward their art increasingly into western venues. These efforts of the artists must be understood as a key element in the current successes of Chinese artists in the West. Indeed, the initiative of individual artists who turned to the west in search of greater artistic freedom, and perhaps greater economic advantage, has led the way for the globalization successes now being achieved on a grander scale.

GLOBALIZATION AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS OF CHINESE ART

What then may we expect from the future global movement of Chinese contemporary art into the West? One possible outcome is a continuation of successes for Chinese art in the West based on its novelty. However, novelty did not provide a satisfactory basis for implanting western art into China for the better part of the twentieth century. Its failure was an inability to establish meaningful connections in the changing cultural patterns of Chinese society. Western audiences may thus for a time be attracted to Chinese art because it offers fresh experiences and newness not accessible in the more familiar art currently being produced in the West. But this interest may be short lived unless there are some deeper grounds for finding meaning in contemporary Chinese art that western audiences can comprehend and appreciate. Interest in a particular approach to art, like fashion, can change rapidly depending on other emerging currents of culture and art. Hence, the future of Chinese art in the West cannot rely solely upon its novelty, or upon deficiencies in the art of the receiving culture. Unless there are some deeper grounds for finding meaning in contemporary Chinese art that western audiences can comprehend and appreciate, the current engrossment in Chinese art could diminish into a passing interest.

Apart from the issue of changing fashions in artistic tastes, as it relates to the movement of art from China to a western culture, is the matter of real differences in cultural perspectives. Art coming from China is already seated in complex cultural and rich artistic roots. Chinese art of today is grounded in a cultural history of many centuries, a history that is mainly not shared with the West, except for its occasional influences in European decorative arts and in modern art of the twentieth century and beyond. Hence it is not so easily accessible
to audiences in the West where art is grounded in another tradition. To effectively bridge the cultural gap that distinguishes artistic cultures of China and the West today, the art being shared will need to embrace a wider scope of artistic symbolism with attention to both diversity and the universal. A cultural framework defined solely by national predications will not be sufficient to bridge the differences in understanding.

At the present time, the success of Chinese art in the West is mainly confined to the high end of the art world consisting of galleries, collectors, auction houses, museums, and biennales that reach a small segment of the people who engage with art. Hence, there is not yet a widespread appreciation, or understanding of Chinese contemporary art among the western populous at large. Given the differences that exist between the cultures of China and the West, the current representation of Chinese art in western markets and cultural life of the West is in need of a population better informed on the cultural differences between East and West.

Operating from the best of intentions, Chinese artists seeking to find or create cultural symbols that communicate a meaningful rendering of Chineseness in their art, also accessible to western audiences, face a formidable challenge. Indeed, it is no easy task for contemporary Chinese artists to find visual languages both faithful to the traditions of Chinese culture, and also meaningful to people living in contemporary China, let alone a visual language that is also sufficient for communicating with western audiences. Of course, it would be a mistake for Chinese artists seeking to communicate with western audiences to succumb to the temptation to fabricate art embossed with symbolism intended to produce “Chinese art” for western eyes.

The presentation of Chinese contemporary art in the West may benefit from the fact that experimental art in China relies on the same new media and art practices being used by artists in the West. This development is in part a result of westernization of art in China, also a function of the rapid advancements in Chinese media technology. Chinese scholars Xu Xiang and Gao Shiming have argued that the employment of western devices by contemporary Chinese artists differs from post-colonial deployments of western artistic endeavors that resulted in anti-western sentiments. Rather, they argue, that Chinese artists’ employment of western art practices today serves mainly to enrich the art and culture of contemporary Chinese art. Following this
line of argument, the presence of western art practices in Chinese art may also facilitate understanding of Chinese contemporary art for western audiences. However, this practice also risks masking important cultural differences between Chinese and western art.

Among the changes of interest following from globalization of art and the corresponding movement of art West to East and East to West, is the emergence of increasingly nomadic contemporary artists. These artists include Chinese, as well as other Asian and western artists. They are nomadic in the sense that they participate in the seemingly endless stream of art biennials and art fairs held in the East and West. This development has prompted Noël Carroll to propose that we are witnessing the emergence of a unified international art world, "...something like a single, integrated, cosmopolitan institution of art."

For our purposes here, the question becomes this, how might such nomadic impulses affect the development of art within China, and its successes in penetrating into western culture? One possibility is the emergence of a global market place in which diverse eastern and western art thrive more or less independently of their particular cultural origins. To some extent this development is already taking place. Alternatively, another possibility is the homogenization of the diverse artistic cultures. This development represents one potential aspect of the overall globalization of art. However, the themes and strategies of artists cited by Carroll offer a very narrow slice of art as it is being practiced in the current global world. Carroll’s suggestion that contemporary art is coalescing toward a unified transnational institution of art seems substantially at odds with the pluralism that has dominated much of contemporary art since the 1980s.

To conclude this discussion of the impact of globalization on the flow of art between China and the West, I offer the following remarks. First is to note the importance of art, along with technological and economic developments, in the changes taking place between the cultures of East and West. Globalization raises a series of issues of importance to the future understanding of art in China as it reaches out to audiences across the western world. By focusing on the whole of artistic production world wide, including the changes affecting local art practices, globalization draws attention to the diversity that exists in art as it functions in different cultures. It also points to the changes that are taking place in an environment of increasing movement of art from one culture to another. Recognition of diversity and change
reinforces the need for an understanding of art that is broad and inclusive. This process may involve appropriation of ideas found in other art cultures resulting in changes in existing practices, as well as innovation resulting in entirely new approaches to the art of both China and the West.

It is not yet clear what other problems will ensue from the globalism of contemporary art. But one area to watch will be its effects on the future of museums and other cultural institutions charged with stewardship and the preservation of culture for future generations. For the most part, global art transactions taking place between China and the West, for example, are focused mainly on contemporary art exhibitions and the art market. Similarly much of the construction of new museums in both China and the West are focused on contemporary art.

Another area of concern that is unresolved is the effect of the new globalization on the development of local art cultures. Given the strength of established western art practices, there is little chance of colonialist type interventions. However, too much focus of Chinese artists on art for western audiences might well alter the historic connections of contemporary Chinese art to its own cultural roots. Whether recent advancements of global art will aid or hinder efforts to resolve long standing issues concerning the place of local art cultures remains to be seen.

What is clear, however, is that the contemporary global movement of art East to West has given new life to the international art market and expands the opportunities for innovative collaboration worldwide among the artists and cultural institutions. Similarly, global art increases the flow of ideas and art across cultural boundaries and invites collaboration in the efforts toward mutual understanding among the peoples of different cultures. It endows individual artists with greater resources to create, using ideas, visual forms, and materials irrespective of their particular cultural or geographic origins. This means that the artists now have available new possibilities for contributing to an evolving universal vocabulary of artistic resources along with significantly greater opportunities for collaboration with artists from other cultures. Artists may draw upon the cumulative traditions of their own cultures, as well as to seize upon innovations from other cultures in their creative undertakings. Similarly, audiences benefit increasingly from the rich variety of art that globalism continues to make available.
The prospects for an increased interest in global art will advance as the arts and culture take on a greater role in the global economy and are a greater concern for foreign policy.

It seems certain that Chinese contemporary art will have an important role in the on-going future globalization of contemporary art in the West. How Chinese artists address the issues affecting the movement of their art into the West remains an open question with room for innovation. On the other hand, there is the issue that not all Chinese artists or theorists would agree that the shift from the more insular aims of traditional Chinese art in pursuit of a global art focus directed toward success in the West is the preferred direction for contemporary Chinese art. Instead, some might argue that Chinese art benefits more in the long run by implementing a clear stamp of “Chineseness,” focused on creating contemporary art that carries forward the tradition of Chinese art and Chinese cultural values. At the present moment, there seems to be no clear agreement concerning whether, globalization, or a focus on “Chineseness,” will best serve the aims of present and future Chinese art. Can the aesthetic values that are grounded in a Chinese cultural understanding accomplish longer-term success in the West? This too is a matter that remains to be seen.