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Why Exhibition Histories?

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This special issue of *British Art Studies*, titled "London, Asia, Exhibitions, Histories", takes as its point of departure the idea that exhibitions provide an important lens through which to explore the entangled art histories of Asia and Britain. This proposition, perhaps uncontroversial in its own right, nonetheless reflects certain intellectual and methodological shifts in the discipline of art history during the past decade, most obvious among them, the expanded geography and relational perspective invoked by the coordinates "London" and "Asia". Another is the shift in focus away from the individual artist or artwork, towards the exhibition as a meaningful object of art historical inquiry. The discipline of art history has long attended to contexts of exhibition and display, evident in the historical study of museum collections and curiosity cabinets. During the 1980s and 1990s, the New Museology spawned all manner of more critical inquiry into exhibitions, collections, practices, and ideologies, fuelled by post-Marxist and post-structural theories of representation and spectacle. The twenty-first century saw the emergence of Curatorial Studies as another subfield of sorts, one that was quickly consolidated into a

professional track that has a close affinity to contemporary art. Finally, the self-described field of Bienniology, the study of international biennials, has also advanced discussions about globalization and these exhibitionary platforms, even as its contributors acknowledge a relentlessly diverse and shape-shifting field of activity. We might see all of these trajectories converging upon, and ultimately affirming and legitimizing, the intellectual investment in exhibition histories contained in this special issue of the journal.

"London, Asia, Exhibitions, Histories" thus provides an excellent opportunity to reflect upon and re-evaluate the significance of exhibition histories as a practice of knowledge and subfield within the discipline that has gained solid ground in the past decade or so. I consider myself an enthusiastic student of exhibitions, having researched and written on a number of such historical events, from the nineteenth-century colonial showcases in London, to the 1922 modern art exhibition in Calcutta that featured Bauhaus artists alongside painters from Bengal, to contemporary global exhibitions like *Century City*, which inaugurated the Tate Modern in 2001. I have also written about a site-specific exhibition at the Victoria Memorial Museum in Calcutta, and participated, although modestly, in exhibition-making as a cross-cultural endeavor from within the United States. In each of these projects, the exhibition emerged as a text woven from a great many threads belying multiple and divergent aesthetic assumptions, fraught historical investments, the inconsistencies of national ideologies, and self-conscious efforts of intervention staged as visual and curatorial arguments. And yet, somehow, I don't perceive myself as a person who "does exhibition histories", if we understand this to be an intellectual practice that is distinct from other kinds of knowledge practices. Which leads to my first set of questions: what is the nature of this knowledge pursuit? What are its investigative parameters, and when/how did it emerge? Do exhibition histories represent a specific methodology? An archival strategy? A conceptual approach? What is the relationship of exhibition histories to nations and canons, to post-colonial critique, and to the interdisciplinary terrain of cultural studies, more broadly? And finally, what is gained and what is lost by delineating exhibition histories as a separate field or subfield within the study of art history?

There is no doubt that the practice of exhibition histories has a synergetic relation to the question of the canon. If we understand canonization as a dynamic procedure of valuation based in a continuous process of consensus and contestation and—for better or worse—a hegemonic logic of inclusion and exclusion, then alternative stories of display and reception serve to challenge the status of the existing canon. As old canons become devalued and their authority destabilized, new canons and counter-canons actively take shape. Exhibitions and permanent collections have been crucial to this process of contestation and transformation, alongside other practices of art history such as scholarship, teaching, textbooks, and monographic studies. Hence, in the past few decades, the dominant canon of modern art from Western Europe and North America has been vigorously subjected to a spirit of revisionism and consequently shifted in response to its long-standing exclusions around gender, race, geography, ethnicity, sexuality, medium, and training, to name a few examples of the relevant criteria. This dimension of antagonism is crucial to the exhibition form and points to the productive aspects of visual arguments that have resulted in more fluid, entangled, and pluralistic understandings of art history and its canons. Exhibitions have thus been a crucial space through which the canon has been diversified—even globalized. However, exhibition histories have also produced their own canon of sorts in the past decade. We can see this in a spate of ambitious publications that aspire to open out the archives of key exhibitions, like *Show Time: The 50 Most Influential Exhibitions of Contemporary Art* (D.A.P., 2014) or the two volumes by Bruce Altshuler, subtitled *Exhibitions That Made Art History*

(Phaidon, 2008 and 2013). The latter, in particular, are carefully researched books presenting a tightly measured chronology: volume one is *Salon to Biennial (1863–1959)* and volume two, *Biennials and Beyond(1962–2002)*. However, these volumes also shore up a rather conventional Euro-American narrative about the development of art, and do little to challenge the enduring Eurocentricism of the discipline itself. By contrast, the *Exhibition Histories* series published by Afterall, which was launched in 2010 and which includes books about exhibitions of contemporary art "that have shaped the way that art is experienced, made and discussed", has sought to meaningfully expand the geographic frame. Each book in the series brings together archival, visual, and textual material along with newly commissioned essays to dive deep into a given exhibition as a discursive product in the Foucauldian sense, that is, as a text that initiates other texts.

Figure 1

South Court exhibition No. 4, representing India, reproduced in *Dickinson's comprehensive pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851 from the originals painted for Prince Albert by Messrs. Nash, Haghe and Roberts*, Vol. 2, plate V (London: Dickinson Brothers, Her Majesty's Publishers, 1852), 1854. Collection of the British Library (Cup.652.c.33., volume 2). Digital image courtesy of British Library Board.

The series has thus also helped shape an emergent canon of historically significant exhibitions, for instance, *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969), *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989), and the *Third Havana Biennial* (1989), while also fashioning a counter-canon of less well-known exhibition events in Moscow, São Paolo, Chiang Mai, and Lagos, to name a few. At times, in this broad spectrum of exhibition histories, the canon heralds innovation or influence. At other times, it registers fraught gambits and knotty entanglements that themselves open out onto new ways of seeing, though not as the curators may have intended (as in the case of MoMA's *Primitivism* show, or Hitler's 1937 *Degenerate Art*). Thus, a very peculiar aspect of the emergent canon of exhibition histories, as one author has observed, is "the fact that what is being canonized is itself an instrument in the process of canonization".[1] That this canon favours exhibitions from the 1960s onwards also reveals exhibition histories to be closely related to the field of contemporary art, or at least to the need to historicize our ever-changing contemporary. Exhibitions on ancient, medieval or early modern art—no matter how innovative, experimental, problematic, or fraught—have not generally been included within the identifiable frameworks of exhibition histories. So why, then, exhibition histories? What kinds of uses and abuses might be discerned in this

pursuit? How can exhibition histories go beyond or exceed current approaches in art history, or indeed the category of "art" itself? What is the role of new digital technologies and web-based platforms (like this one) to the methodologies of exhibition history? How do you perceive the past, present, and future of exhibition histories, and their relevance to geographies and canons? And what role *should* they have within the knowledge practices which we call art history?

RESPONSE BY
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Histories and Hagiographies

When Jacques-Louis David removed the deposed monarchs' bibelots from the Louvre, keeping only paintings and sculpture for the edification of the people, it was an act that declared the "exhibition" to be a newly hegemonic strategy (fig. 2). In other words, when the same artist had earlier charged admission to his own studio for interested viewings of the *Sabine Women*, it had none of the fraught significance that attended the opening of the Louvre: *les expositions* would now be understood to produce citizens out of former subjects, public space from princely cabinets, universal civilization from the motley hoardings of royalty. Napoleon would take up the task of further supplying works for this ravenous exhibitionary logic: his navy waited patiently for the Titian and Veronese paintings to be brought to them in crates, ransom against ransacking by troops waiting for the Doges of the waning Venetian Republic to allow their people to be "liberated" to the rule of the Napoleonic code. Likewise, as the British blockaded French ports against the export of Terror, the French organized what is arguably the first "world's" fair, presaging a century of gigantic "beaux arts" machinery that would, in turn, provoke the first Biennale in 1895. The nakedly national act of juxtaposing foreign goods—in the French case, the former Royal manufactories now arranged against foreign wares to stimulate competition and consumption for the home team—was part of the DNA of these exhibitionary complexes until the Venice Biennale was forced to banish its own market operation in 1969. The Western procedure of exhibition was always about capital, whether cultural, political, or fiduciary.[2]

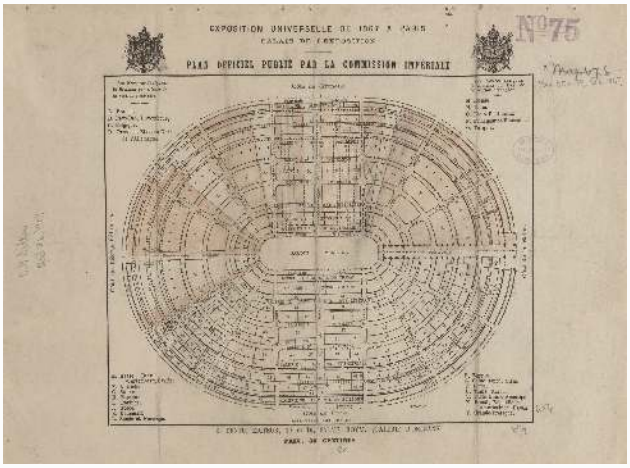

Figure 2

E. Dentu, Official Plan for the 1867 International Exposition Palace, Paris, (Paris: Imperial Commission, 1867). Collection of Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map Center. Digital image courtesy of Digital Commonwealth Massachusetts Collections Online.

As Mathur suggests, there is thus no exculpation from canonization for the modern exhibition—and no plausible history of "exhibitions" that originates outside of Western capitalism. Indeed, the most creative of its curators saw the artistry of this larger craft, subjecting their own works and ideas to a larger logic (or illogic) of the exhibitionary ensemble. The act of assembly could offer history—or hagiography, as in Sir John Soane's semi-public architectural academy that testified to his notably eclectic tastes, its chaotic jumble of fragments celebrated by the current museum's online tourist portal as "quite purposeful—each room a work of art in its own right".[3] If David would sublimate his personal aesthetic to the goals of a revolutionary collective, Soane bent the state to his own personal vision, persuading Parliament to pass an act guaranteeing the preservation of his collection in its exact configuration at the time of his death. Two exemplars of history, and hagiography, at work.

The threads of history versus hagiography can be found in our own contemporary historiographies of the exhibition form, which we art historians view correctly as a modern type of argument. Sometimes even the same exhibition can be read as the revelation of an epoch, or the gesture of an individual. Is the exhibition an anonymous speech act by state actors, as in the Victorian age Great Exhibition, the wartime *Family of Man*, or the 1970s Pepsi-Cola Pavilion in Osaka? Or should it be seen as an authored work by curators whose power and vision we are inclined to celebrate—Henry Cole in 1851, Eduard Steichen for the 1955 *Family of Man*, or the individual avant-gardists comprising "Experiments in Art and Technology" for Osaka?

In my own work in this domain, I have struggled with the behemoth of the archive (which exhibitionary complexes are designed to produce), in order to forward my own counter-arguments to the argument of the exhibition (and the hagiographies that can emerge in its wake).[4] In rebuttal to the general awe the literature holds for Harald Szeemann, for example, I offer the friction of local anti-tobacco activists, who saw his ready acceptance of US capital (in the form of sponsorship by Philip Morris) as just another component of Szeemann's wholescale importation of New York art world values and artworks into the canon and canton of Bern. *When*

Attitudes Become Form was the site of that contestation, as the "avant-garde" was revealed to be a wholly imperial formation, in the arguments of a local art instructor and former tuberculosis patient opposed to Szeemann's high-handed ways and poisonous corporate sponsor.[5] Similarly, I insist that we grapple with the discourse-production of the exhibitionary apparatuses and tackle the chimeras they spawn. Fairs, biennials, and the contemporary art market have partnered in producing the "Dutch Millet" and "Brazilian Rodin" of the nineteenth century, and the "Pakistani Picasso" of the twentieth century. I call this canonizing violence "Predicated internationalism"—the modified figure can be allowed in the world picture, but always with an asterisk enforcing their subsidiary status.[6] Particularly in the twentieth-century case of the Pakistani Picasso, for the Urdu-speaking artist now known simply as "Sadequain", much more remains to be done.[7] The only way to do it is in collaboration with scholars of multiple languages and contexts, well aware of the "Picasso manqué" syndrome on the one hand, and the extraordinary heroics of figures negotiating the ever-shifting Euro-Asian divide on the other.[8]

RESPONSE BY
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A Burden not to Belabor

The uneasiness that the term "exhibition history" elicits comes from the tendency of the formulation to cohere seemingly without difficulty, as if it merely derived from the disciplinal gravitas of art history or proceeded from the structure of the museum as either an institution or an industry. Further attentiveness to this rubric, however, enables us to glean more politics and poetics in the proposition. Exhibition implicates "curatorial" work, while history presupposes the imperative to "historicize." It should be more productive, therefore, to consider exhibition history within these acts that overcome the limits of object keeping and exhibition making—to say nothing yet of the idealizations of history. What does it mean to curate and to historicize? This is the question that must be asked to begin to demystify the endeavor called exhibition history: to exceed the exhibition via the curatorial and to complexify history through scrutiny around historicization. Without a thoroughgoing annotation of the curatorial and the analysis of the materiality of an event in time and space, exhibition history would merely be an inventory of fully formed efforts instead of a constellation of technologies and inquiries that makes it possible.

This being said, exhibition history continues to be burdened by the procedures of art history. Such burden does not have to be belabored. Rather, it must be turned into an opportunity to deconstruct exhibition history, to unhinge it from its theoretical investments and its "normative commitments" to, let us say, time, object, context, agency, among others. With art history still in play in the naming of exhibition history, the critical mediations of exhibition history must revisit the problematics of the aesthetic and of historiography, if the term under erasure were to be released into a vaster province of sensible life that is not reducible to art, its history, and the hegemonic formations of a discipline. As a consequence of the critique, the discipline has been so stirred to constantly swing its conceptual pendulum and has responded with the same intellectual intensity that had forged it to revise itself. Let it not be said that the fundamental post-colonial challenge against the autonomy of art and the sovereignty of its liberal subject has eluded art history as a living epistemic constituency. In fact, the schema of exhibition history may be a symptom of this facing up.

With regard to the exhibition as a moment or an instance, exhibition history needs to move away from an interrogation that construes the exhibition as a collection of things. It should try to intuit it as a meshwork of the semiotic (representation, signification, a registration in the socius), the forensic (evidence of creative will, heritage, culture, or lifeworld), and the installative (experience, site production, experiment of feeling, authority of presenting). All this comes to conspire in the exhibitionary, and not the inert, privileged moment of the exhibition, which over time has dispersed across various modes of activating presence in space to include pedagogical and performative engagements with the civic milieu or public sphere, actual or virtual (fig. 3).

Figure 3

Balthasar Burkhard, John Dugger, David Medalla, *First Manifesto of the Artist's Liberation Front—Movement for People's Culture*, *documenta* 5, photograph, 1972. Collection of the documenta archiv (Inv. No.: docA MS d05-10010468). Digital image courtesy of documenta archive. Photo: Burkhard.

These are the demands of exhibition history. The question of course is: What kinds of intelligence and subjectivity can profess to the responsibilities of this task? Is it the reconstructed art historian? Is it the curator? Is it the ethnographer of the art world? Or an assemblage or relay of all of these? Concomitantly, the locus of the investigation shifts and emerging from this shift is not merely a counter-locus, but a different conception of the local or of locality altogether—a theoretical vernacular from which the work of exhibition history commences. How does exhibition history conjure the scene of this "local", with all its density and redistribution across coincidences of reciprocal encounters?

RESPONSE BY

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Enabling Entanglements

Saloni Mathur uses the verb "entangle" to highlight the difficult and often compromised relationship between the artist, who chooses to make a work *in situ*, and the curator, an institutional broker who selects and arguably produces the same work for an audience located elsewhere. To make sense of Mathur's provocation, this short contribution touches upon some of

the critical, material, curatorial, and logistical challenges posed by the work of fibre artist Mrinalini Mukherjee (1949–2015).

Mukherjee twisted, knotted, folded, and twined fibre into monumental sculptures for over twenty-five years in New Delhi, India (fig. 4). Working off the loom, it could take Mukherjee up to a year to produce a single piece. The heavy pieces (weighing up to 100kg), made matters of transport, display, and housing complex. For most of her career, Mukherjee was at pains to sell or showcase her work; her home and studio-garage were crammed with unsold sculptures. "There was no question of living with them", she states.[9] But Mukherjee's lamentation of the "exotic, lovely and spacious studios artists had in the west" was always underscored by her refusal to "quit" India.[10] "Environment" meant access to material, material such as hemp fibre (*shan*), dyes, and cheap labour, which she could not source easily anywhere else.[11] At home, peers dismissed Mukherjee's sculptures as "mythic", "exotic", even "twee".[12] Perhaps it is for this reason too, that Mukherjee repeatedly sought international audiences, securing ways to ship, display, and house her "pachyderm" works. Her sculptures were by no means ignored; included in major international exhibitions and biennales, a solo show was also dedicated to them at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford in 1994, curated by David Elliot. But it is only now, after her death, that her work is eliciting greater international attention.

Figure 4

Photograph of Mrinalini Mukherjee surrounded by her sculptures, date unknown. Digital image courtesy of Mrinalini Mukherjee.

Her 2015 retrospective exhibition at New Delhi's National Gallery of Modern Art, did much to advance her slightly wacky and singular body of work, generating the kind of awe and recognition which she had struggled to achieve. In June 2019, Met Breuer in New York staged her first solo show in the USA, *Phenomenal Nature: Mrinalini Mukherjee*. Only now are scholars reassessing her sculpture, since few thorough assessments were produced during her lifetime. Such belated appraisal for Mukherjee's materials and work process signals the need for a radical analysis across multiple registers, and in hindsight, an account of why she was relegated to the margins.[13] This analysis alerts us to Geeta Kapur's insight that time lags across global spaces; modernism and the process of modernisation do not unfold at the same speed across space and time.[14] Moreover, as Keith Moxey writes, more inclusive art-historical attempts have failed to account for those material and historical inequalities that are bound up with legacies of power struggles to date. Moxey asks,

What are the implications of such unequal power relations for historical narratives? Even if the historical record attempts to interlace the various narratives of global art in an effort to produce a richer tapestry of the past and the present, these threads will inevitably be woven together according to the idiosyncrasies of a particular loom.[15]

For Mukherjee, art residencies to work abroad were typically difficult to negotiate, given the labour-intensive and time-consuming nature of her work process. Going through the correspondence and Kafkaesque paper trail of Modern Art Oxford, one finds amusing anecdotes. In 1990, Robert Hopper, then director of the Henry Moore Sculpture Trust explained to Mukherjee that although they still referred to the space as a "studio", the practice of most artists that they worked with was to use it for the "display of work as opposed to actually fabricating it on site".[16] Henry Moore Sculpture trustees argued that due to the long period of fabrication required by Mukherjee, its potentially open-ended "contract with the future", the Trust had no infrastructure in place to support her. Moreover, to secure a visa for an Indian national complicated matters further; where would Mukherjee live and who would support her? What about her health insurance? Who would cover that? Hopper's letter clarifies what kind of makers and art practices the Trust could support and those it could not. Polite but firm in tone, Hopper advises that it therefore made more sense to ship the work rather than invite Mukherjee to make it *in situ*. But freighting the heavy and large sculptures to Dean Clough Studios, Halifax, would prove to be equally difficult. In a fax dated 14 April 1994, we read: "No carrier is willing to accept the airfreighting of these packages."[17] After numerous "dead ends", following an invitation by Modern Art Oxford to showcase Mukherjee's work in 1994, a single air company was willing to accept the airfreighting of Mukherjee's strange 6-ton crates and at a huge cost.[18] Curated by Elliott, the show *Mrinalini Mukherjee Sculpture* prized the craft-like and feminine qualities of Mukherjee's practice and advanced her work as part of a Third World modernism, securely removed in time and space. The show provoked debate as critics also repeatedly sought to tie Mukherjee's part vegetal, part animal fibre sculptures to discourses around ethnicity and identity, Third World feminine craft, and Hindu Vedic mythology.[19] Others picked up on the ambiguities and tensions provoked by strange feelers and tentacles protruding from the large biomorphic sculptures. The alien creatures "colonised the space from another reality-zone";[20] for one critic, they brought to mind the malignant and rapidly multiplying plants of the dystopian sci-fi novel *The Day of the Triffids* by John Wyndham (fig. 5).[21] Viewed in this way, Mukherjee's own tendrilled creatures become both a subject of exotic fascination as well as of potential fear, illustrating the difficulties around the creation of space for productive dialogue about her "modernist" sculpture. Today, Mukherjee's fibre sculptures continue to excite complex debates about modernism, third world art craft, and the role of women artists. Tentacular, from the Latin "*tentacle*" (tentative) meaning "to try, to have a feel for", these sculptures solicit debates around the struggle over what it means to be modern, who can claim it, and on what grounds.[22]

Figure 5

Film poster for *Day of the Triffids*, based on the novel by John Wyndham, directed by Steve Sekely and distributed by Rank, UK and Allied Artists, USA , 1962. Digital image courtesy of picturepalacemoveiposters.com.

RESPONSE BY

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A number of exhibitions in the past few decades have attempted to address the histories of exclusion referred to by Saloni Mathur. A notable example was the 2015 Tate Britain exhibition *Artist and Empire: Facing Britain's Imperial Past*, which included an artwork of mine. While an exhibition might speak to themes of the global—and include artworks by "other" makers—this by itself does not make for a radical activity that undoes the canon. To be antagonistic towards histories of imperialism, through an exhibition, involves a dismantling of the institution itself. The language of exhibitions, the architecture, the methods of classification and display continue the formulas of the historical expositions, such as the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London's Crystal Palace or the Garden Palace in Australia in 1879, to name just two. These imperial exhibitions emerged to show off the products of industrialisation and colonisation, including the people and estates of colonised countries in purpose-built buildings of great ambition. In museums and galleries today, objects continue to be separated from their kin and put on display, framed in neo-classical or modern architecture, and classified according to systems that cannot begin to account for all their meanings.

Museums also share a language that has empowered colonial actions and ways of seeing, in the way that bodies are made active or passive in gallery spaces. This language continues to influence how we see the "other" and each other. In many cases, cultures outside of the imperial exposition mandate are still looking at our own bodies and cultures through ideas such as the noble savage. Romantic visions of the primitive still divide, putting into doubt who is the "authentic" Aborigine or African, and contributing to lateral violence.[23]

I was glad, and very curious, that my artwork *Island I* (2008) was included in the 2015 exhibition *Artist and Empire* and to contribute to a dialogue about the legacies of British colonisation (fig.

6). However, I was deeply disappointed that, in the main, the contemporary art was displayed in an end room and could not directly engage with, or be used to question, the genre of history painting which dominated the exhibition. Moreover, the exhibition was one-dimensional, with literal representations of collected dead animals and people everywhere, but no new thematic arguments about what is "imperial".

Figure 6

Brook Andrew, *The Island I*, 2008, mixed media on Belgian linen, 250 × 300 × 5 cm framed. Collection of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge. Digital image courtesy of Brook Andrew.

The exhibition might have challenged some visitors' perceptions of British colonial history, with the cumulative effect of the numerous history paintings. However, the bloody battles and the vastness of the imperial massacre were glorified and the indigenous body objectified. The genre was not challenged because the comparative artworks were invisible or placed in the back closet. The visitor's gaze was hostage to the usual monotonous routine of standard heights or the "Queen's height" for hanging pictures. I don't see why a history painting or two couldn't have been hung upside down for some kind of "gaze leverage".

Artist and Empire did not manage to *face* Britain's imperial past or disrupt its dominant narratives.[24] I would have replaced the history paintings in this exhibition with everyday British objects of the colonial expeditions like teacups, guns, photographs of exploited people, and pelts of extinct animals that were the real companions of the imperial projects. The juxtaposition of teacups with the (now broken) spear from the Gadigal people of Sydney Cove that Captain Cook stole on his first voyage to Sydney, in my opinion, would have created a level playing field of representation. Apparently, the spear was shipped to England in one piece but when it was gifted to the Museum of Art and Anthropology, the removalists couldn't fit it into the cart so broke it in two to make their job easier. It would have halted the romanticism and the continual violence of the colonial gaze which festered in the exhibition, particularly for audiences who do not understand its inter-generational effects. Like the excreted faeces of a devil serpent too busy drinking tea and ruling a fake heaven to atone for its own ignorance.

RESPONSE BY

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Asia Art Archive

Before he got his first camera in 1982, the late Hong Kong-based, self-taught artist Ha Bik Chuen (1925–2009) collected publications and printed matter from exhibitions he visited. Armed with his prized possession of a camera, Ha photographed not only the exhibitions that he was part of as an artist, but also almost every single exhibition that he attended. Ha documented over 2,500 exhibitions in Hong Kong and internationally, and kept prints as well as over 3,500 contact sheets made between 1982 and 1999. These photos—often filed neatly into dedicated albums, envelopes, and paper bags, hand annotated by Ha—and exhibition-related printed matter, accumulated over time to form a significant part of Ha's personal archive. His archive, which dates back to 1950s, was tucked away on the top floor of a walk-up building in the Kowloon district of Hong Kong until 2014, when the Ha family approached Asia Art Archive (AAA) to work on this collection of materials (fig. 7).

Figure 7

Former studio of the late Hong Kong artist Ha Bik Chuen, Collection of the Ha Family and Asia Art Archive. Digital image courtesy of Ha Family and Asia Art Archive.

In Asia, where I practise as a researcher and curator, exhibitions are one of the key vehicles through which the history of recent art is written, as some museums in the region and their collections are literally being built as we speak. This is perhaps especially resonant for the city of Hong Kong, where the Hong Kong Museum of Art reopens in a few months after three years of closure for renovation, the opening of M+ looms in the near future of the next year or so, and new institutions such as Tai Kwun and CHAT have freshly opened their doors. What AAA proposed and explored in its 2013 conference *Sites of Construction* continues to reverberate: exhibitions are sites where art meets its public, essays are commissioned and written, and both art-historical discourse and curatorial strategies entangle and unfold.

Ha's archive offers an exhibition history that, while egocentric and biased, is pregnant with possibilities. The materials he collected provide factual information as well as installation views of exhibitions. Some of these exhibitions are widely known by art practitioners here in Hong Kong, while some of them were completely unknown and/or had been unseen by us beforehand. If I were to put on *London, Asia* tinted glasses, Ha's archive of exhibition documentation and ephemera from 1950s–1997 is an instrumental repository of Hong Kong's *colonial* exhibition

history, as the territory counted down to its last days of being a British crown colony. One of the British artists that appeared in Ha's photo documentation quite regularly was Henry Moore, who showed in Hong Kong in 1965, 1970, 1974, and 1986 with the Hong Kong City Hall Museum and Art Gallery (a city-level museum by British standards, renamed Hong Kong Museum of Art in 1975). Some of the questions that could be asked include, why Henry Moore's work was shown so often by the official city museum? How did this frequent exposure of Moore affect the practices of artists in Hong Kong? Did Henry Moore become less attractive to show in Hong Kong after the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, when Hong Kong began its designated journey back to Chinese sovereignty?}

At the same time, Ha's post-1997 exhibition history materials reflect how Hong Kong's art ecology and its communities responded to its relationship with mainland China. As such, here in Hong Kong, exhibition histories may not be an alternative approach that counters mainstream art history, but a primary approach that art history must incorporate, if it desires to take root in the city. At AAA, we have been experimenting with this approach by including it as one of the key methods for a Hong Kong Art History course that we co-teach with the Fine Arts Department at the University of Hong Kong. Often, students, researchers, and curators alike learn from moments when Ha's archive connects diverse collections, such as when his ephemera supplement CVs from artist files in Hong Kong museums, or when his installation shots depict works by multiple artists whose personal archives are held by AAA. With its emphasis on linked archival materials, I cannot help but think that exhibition histories are the main platform where the diverse voices that drive the art world meet and negotiate, and find expression in fragmentary narratives.

The sheer volume of Ha's documentation beckons the question: Is there a "big data" approach to exhibition histories? The literary scholar Franco Moretti suggested the methodology of "distant reading", in which researchers would step back from a small canon and instead consider larger bodies of work to unearth patterns. Yet, it is unclear how machines would read visual art works, determine their cultural value, or represent their intellectual content. The digital humanities may offer solutions, but for now, I believe that exhibition histories are sharpest at a case study level. Storytelling—through weaving oral histories, archival materials, and works of art together—remains an indispensable way of making sense.

RESPONSE BY
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London, Asia pithily inverts the idea of the city as containing the world. Instead, it places London within Asia, so that its histories can be seen as internal to the region, rather than as disconnected impositions from outside. The potential implications of this phrase are extensive: for artists, migration to London from Asia might not mean leaving behind a frame of reference for producing their work. Curators located in the West might no longer be viewed, in benign terms, as mediators and translators tasked with bridging cultural difference, or in the blunter language of older anthropological literature, "culture brokers" engaged in acts of arbitrage.[25] It could mean that works of art can find audiences and make meaning as easily in London as in any other city in Asia. *London, Asia* posits a fairly seamless network of circulation, in which differences between center and periphery, (erstwhile) metropole and (former) colony, are still recognizable but do not impede movement.

Exhibition histories are a point of entry into that network of circulation, one that emphasizes the cooperation between artists and curators in particular. As Mathur argues, they allow historians to draw attention to the acts of re-evaluation and revisionism that place particular artists and works of art in art-historical canons. A "dimension of antagonism is crucial to the exhibition form," she writes, in which the "visual arguments" that exhibitions pose can be productive of more "fluid, entangled, and pluralistic understandings of art history". Exhibition histories offer a parallel set of discursive events to production histories of works of art, while widening the frame of art history to acknowledge other art-world actors. Exhibition histories of *London, Asia* allow for a focus on particular discursive tactics, including the evolving ideas of Blackness, of post-coloniality, and of Asian solidarity that made possible the articulation of difference within visual art.

But exhibition histories, particularly those that privilege, methodologically, the textual and photographic records left by curators and critics, as well as those that focus on mega-exhibitions like biennials, can leave much of the potential of *London, Asia* on the table. This was brought home to me at a party in New Delhi, a number of years ago, when I joined a group of Indian commercial gallerists who were tittering over a television interview with a visiting British museum director, in which he declared that he had "discovered" a particular Indian artist. The idea that an artist whose work had been carefully cultivated for close to a decade by a complex network of for- and non-profit art institutions—art schools, galleries, residencies, scholarships—had been plucked from obscurity through the pure discernment of this powerful man was, to this group, incredibly hilarious. That moment—one of many—makes me wonder what exhibition histories might obscure, rather than reveal. It motivates me to advocate instead for a broader idea of art infrastructure, in which the object of analysis is the entire network that makes art, and makes art possible.

This idea of art infrastructure borrows from anthropological studies of power grids, road systems, or media, which themselves build upon the major insights of Actor-Network Theory.[26] Following their lead, art infrastructure can be seen as an assemblage of material and immaterial, human and non-human "actants", which have varying degrees of agency in the movement of people, things, and ideas across ever-expanding and shifting networks of circulation. To some extent, this is a call for more attention to art institutions, including the relationships between kinds of institutions that might seem to be quite distinct in their aims, such as commercial galleries and non-profit art centers. But it also prescribes the movement away from a focus on discourse and toward apprehension of materiality. As a method, it allows for analysis of the way that works of art are shaped—often quite literally—by the networks in which they circulate. Art infrastructure connects to and works within other infrastructural forms, like systems of shipping or finance capital, or supply chains for concrete or steel, or the media or political systems that control travel or the spread of images and ideas.

Attention to the connections between art infrastructures and broader infrastructures of circulation typically allows for deeper understanding of the constraints under which art is made and understood. But taking art infrastructure as an object of analysis is especially appropriate to a contemporary art that has always already been global, and that resists separation from context. Curators of canonical exhibitions of the "aughts", including *documenta xi* (2002) and *When Latitudes Become Forms* (Walker Art Center, 2003), seized upon such work as it was being made. But to record the histories of those exhibitions—the visual arguments made by curators about contemporary art—would be to miss the place of these events within broader histories of infrastructural change. From my perspective as a historian of Indian contemporary art, it would

be to ignore how Sheela Gowda's work, shown in *Latitudes*, was amplified by feminist artists of color in London. And it would be to miss how Enwezor's storied inclusion of Indian documentary film in *documenta xi* was connected to the replacement of state film funding with international sources, like grants from the Ford Foundation and Channel 4.

The boundaries drawn around exhibitions as events are convenient, but false, and the materials they leave behind tend to obscure rather than illuminate the broader factors that shape their making. The conceptual and material form of exhibitions depends upon the construction of broader art infrastructures, often by actors who would never appear in historical accounts that privilege the curatorial voice. Further, those art infrastructures are themselves imbedded in broader systems that lie outside of the art world and are not terribly attuned to the needs of contemporary art. In short, exhibition histories alone cannot capture the infrastructure that places London in Asia.

RESPONSE BY
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Austrian Centre for Digital Humanities
University of Graz

Temporary exhibitions are ephemeral assemblages of objects, ideas, and people. Once the exhibition is over, the panels dismantled, the objects sent back to their lenders, and the rooms emptied, they cannot be experienced anymore. The exhibition catalogue may remain as the sole reminder of the curator's ideas. In the archives, curatorial notes and internal meetings minutes might shed more light on the exhibition's planning and execution, and how it told a story about a topic, a group of artworks, or an artist. Who was selected? How were the works presented? Newspapers articles—those of which the museum was aware and could collect in ledgers or folders—might remain as the sole testimony of the exhibition's impact and reception in the public sphere, at times complemented by a visitors' comments book. And, in the last two decades or so, an exhibition will also leave an increasingly significant digital footprint: the website, the blog, the social media posts by the organization and by the visitors, not to mention online press, and possibly online collection portals recording the presence of objects in these temporary assemblages.

The possibilities of digitization, alongside the digital footprint of most exhibitions today, require us to consider how digital technologies can shape exhibition histories. How can an exhibition's ephemera and multiple layers of curatorial, artistic, and public interventions be captured digitally? Can the perceptual experience of visitors be conveyed in a digital format? How can the digital lives of objects be represented? How can we avoid replicating in the digital counterpart structures of power embedded in the original exhibition? And how are digital methods and practices affecting the production of a canon of past exhibitions?

In recording and visualizing an exhibition with digital media, institutions can both preserve a record of this temporary event for research and study purposes and aim to enable visitors to "re-visit" past events. In doing so, the virtual exhibition keeps together objects that are now back in their original locations, whether different galleries in the same institutions or far away museums that had loaned them for a period of time. Temporary assemblages which the practices of acquiring, collecting, and curating had kept separate, but which had achieved an epistemological coherence in the temporary exhibitions, may continue to display their connections in the digital exhibition.

From the perspective of researching exhibition histories, this is a great opportunity to capture the messages and frameworks in which these objects have been presented at a given time and place, and to reflect on the status of knowledge at a given moment. However, as digital preservation extends the lifespan of a temporary exhibition, it also risks stretching and enhancing curatorial narratives in both unanticipated and problematic directions. In particular, since online reproductions of temporary exhibitions reflect their contemporary politics and social contexts, they may perpetuate, in a digital format, the inequalities and injustices of their source event. Questions of how to deal with stories, objects, and the contexts in which they have been presented should therefore be central to the digitization of exhibitions.

From a technical and technological perspective, the question is how to best present online an exhibition which took place in a physical space. On the one hand, it is important to appropriately record all the objects by digitizing them, and by enriching their records with metadata, preferably drawing on widespread schemata and standards. On the other hand, a robust online collection does not yet convey the contexts and narratives within which these objects were presented. For this, a visualization that allows one to glimpse the perceptual experience of visitors in the physical space would be more effective. However, the question is how to achieve such visualization: is a virtual tour which follows the conventions of Google Street View sufficient? Or do we need to design a virtual reality experience? And if a VR solution is chosen, shall we scan the galleries and the objects or shall we collaborate with game designers to virtually recreate the environment? Or is it better to simply digitize, and add alongside a record of the objects, secondary sources and documentary material on the exhibition? In planning for more immersive solutions, it is also important to keep in mind the obsolescence of our technology, which might affect the sustainability and long-term preservation of this virtual reproduction. Finally, in collecting user-generated content to document the subjective experiences of visitors, a series of ethical and legal questions on data protection and copyright arise—an area which is still largely unexplored.

The choice between immersive visualization and the creation of a digital archive implies prioritizing either public engagement and immediate impact or long-term digital preservation. Ultimately, any choices about the digital recording of an exhibition will affect the canon, which —as Saloni argues—is emerging as a question of pressing concern for the study of exhibition histories.

RESPONSE BY

Pamela N. Corey
SOAS, University of London

An exciting provocation of exhibition histories is what they might occasion as historical method. We primarily reconstruct past exhibitions through written accounts, often based upon first-hand experience or archival materials. The phenomenological dimension of the exhibition—that which cannot be recreated, if we want to see it as something contingent upon its specific temporality, publics, and milieu—is thus captured through writing as affective recollection or as research-based speculation. As stories, exhibition histories may be more connected to memory studies as much as art history. The story of an exhibition creates something else, an exhibition as memory that takes on a life of its own in distinction to the exhibition as lived experience. As such, how might exhibition histories help us better understand the historicity of historical imagination? What I mean by that is the way that exhibitions bring historical imagination into being, and how the exhibition's reincarnation as exhibition history also constructs an historical present.}

If the historical present narrates the past in the present tense, to create a sense of temporal and spatial proximity, the writing of exhibition histories may illuminate a sense of immediacy, impact, or even crisis. And this is where an anecdote in Benedict Anderson's *The Spectre of Comparisons* (Verso, 1998) comes to mind. Anderson describes hearing former Indonesian President Sukarno give a speech in which he ventriloquises Hitler. To impart a sense of exemplary national leadership, he exhibits in his voice the voice of another. Anderson describes the jarring experience as an invitation to see his Europe through an inverted telescope. To echo this spectatorial inversion, how might the study of certain exhibitions as correlates of one another reveal the inverted telescope through which one nation looks through another to look at itself? How might exhibition histories acutely bring this spectre of comparisons to light?

The Tate Britain and National Gallery Singapore iterations of "Artist and Empire" come to mind here. In both instances, the exhibitions live on as objects of critique. The original Tate Britain exhibition, titled *Artist and Empire: Facing Britain's Imperial Past* (2015–2016) was both lauded and criticised, the latter predominantly targeting the institution's belated and ineffective handling of what should have been a decolonial remit, with its offensively benign curatorial contextualisations of the various ethnographic and artistic objects on display. In striking contrast, several favourable reviews in national media were revealing of how much empire lingers as a cornerstone of British identity, and it is difficult to disentangle the exhibition's message from the pending 2016 Brexit referendum. But what is more interesting for me, as a scholar of Southeast Asian art, is the fact that such an exhibition travelled (in revised form) to a former colony on the merits, and promise, of the curatorial premise, and the problems arising from its reinterpretation. The National Gallery Singapore iteration, titled *Artist and Empire: (En)countering Colonial Legacies* (2016–2017), received criticisms for the lack of clarity of its curatorial vision, particularly given what might have been hopes that the institution could provide a sharper post-colonial perspective. But here too it appeared to fall short, with reviewers targeting the overreaching breadth of curatorial narratives, which included locating Singapore's place in the British imperial imagination, the formation of modern art and national identity as part and parcel of the colonial encounter, in addition to critical interventions staged by contemporary artists. Serious marketing mishaps (e.g. invitations to an Empire Ball, quickly renamed after a public outcry in which participating artist Yee I-Lann threatened to withdraw) underscored the institutional equivocation towards the post-colonial remit, gesturing to historiographic blind spots and biases at the scale of the national (fig. 8). Although one objective of the NGS exhibition might have been to give voice to the (Southeast) Asian perspective, which had been largely absent from the Tate presentation, by failing to accentuate a particular tone of response, the exhibition was perceived as ambivalent and disjointed in its counter-narrative.

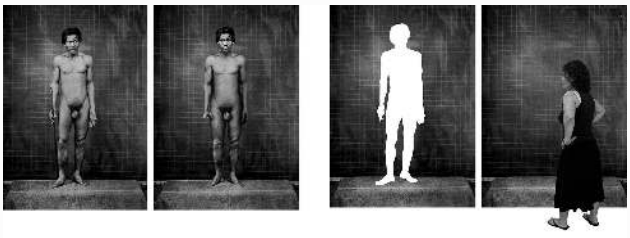

Figure 8

Yee I-Lann, *Study of Lamprey's Malayan Male I & II*, 2009, black and white digital print on Kodak Endura paper, diptych each 60 × 42 cm. Digital image courtesy of Yee I-Lann and Tyler Rollins Fine Ary.

Considering the two together makes it apparent how, at the level of institutional ambition, each was vaguely about a post-colonial (and certainly not decolonial) imperative, and more telling of how empire is imagined today to locate a sense of national self across time, and in vexed relation to an Other. But beyond showing how "empire" respectively serves the historical imagination, the two realisations of *Artist and Empire* revealed important fissures within their institutions and public spheres. Perhaps through the metaphor of the inverted telescope, exhibition histories could give form to such multiple senses of feeling afforded by the historical present.

RESPONSE BY
Lucy Steeds
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Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts, London

My work within exhibition histories—writing, editing, teaching, and curating—aims both to entangle and to open up art histories. I do not see the field in which I operate as demanding a shift away from the artwork, although this neglectful tendency is sometimes aridly apparent. Instead, I'd suggest an insistence on art seen in relation and in public. The practice of exhibition histories does not focus so much on the isolated, intact artwork but, rather, approaches it in conjunction and puts it into question. How does art develop dialogues with adjacent art—and non-art—with a host environment, institutional ideologies, and among geopolitically and historically particular publics?

I have previously written about the interdisciplinary field of exhibition histories as having the political potential of a "minor" mode that rears its head powerfully within the majoritarian registers of disciplinary art history (after Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure*, 1975). I still feel that this sets the bar high for what we aim to achieve when we commission and shape books in Afterall's *Exhibition Histories* series. However, as I have watched the field become more widely established over time, I perceive more conventional norms emerging in some quarters—at worst ossifying and commercialising past moments of radical practice.

In order to address the "London, Asia" topic in this special issue of *British Art Studies*, I want to elaborate my thoughts further via Afterall's work to revisit and analyse *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Postwar Britain* (1989–1990). This show, curated by artist Rasheed Araeen for the Hayward Gallery in London and a UK tour, united art which had largely been overlooked by the white British establishment at the time. A modern-and-contemporary art survey—foregrounding those usually left out of such shows on racist grounds—it met a mixed critical

reception at the time: in outline, conservative authors proved dismissive, if not derisive, while those convinced that anti-racist cultural change was badly needed defended it strongly. The exhibition's art-historical achievements are easy to see in retrospect, with works by many of its participating artists more recently getting the consideration long awaited, including steps—albeit falteringly—towards entering into the British national canon.

In the ten years since we commissioned Jean Fisher to reappraise *The Other Story* in 2009, the need to assert an internationalism and transnationalism within British culture—against a hostile, exclusionary nationalism—has only become more urgent. In response, we have initiated a microsite dedicated to online reconsideration of the exhibition. For us, this is an exciting first venture into the digital mode for exhibition histories: a modest exploration of what is possible in a virtual environment rather than on the printed page. Specifically, the microsite is populated by such interrelated elements as installation photographs, gallery plans, and audio-clips read from contemporaneous reviews—all positioned alongside critical reflection. Amplifying the ambitions for our books, we have started work online to: (1) mobilise archival traces of *The Other Story* into a visuospatial, kinaesthetic, and situated proposition;[27] and (2) examine the socio-political implications of that proposition, in its place and time, from plural perspectives in the here and now.

My own essay on the microsite is constructed as an exhibition tour.[28] It argues for the hang of the show on the upper floor of the gallery (in contrast to that below) as challenging the teleological thrust of traditional art history; and for its intensifying the anti-imperial address made possible through bringing artworks together. Moreover, in the context of symposia staged to accompany more recent exhibitions, I have sought to articulate how the specific display circumstances for *The Other Story* shifted on travelling to Manchester in 1990, with implications for our understanding of works by Rasheed Araeen[29] and Li Yuan-chia,[30] in particular (figs. 9 and 10).

Figure 9

Works by Li Yuan-chia (foreground) and Rasheed Araeen (background) exhibited in *The Other Story*, Hayward Gallery, London, 1989–1990, photograph. Digital image courtesy of Rasheed Araeen.

Figure 10

Works by Li Yuan-chia (foreground) and Rasheed Araeen and David Medalla (background) exhibited in *The Other Story*, Manchester Art Gallery, 1990, photograph. Digital image courtesy of Manchester Art Gallery.

In these and other moves I have made under the banner of exhibition histories, I have pursued methodologies responsive to the situations under study, rather than following something prescribed. My ambition is not only for rigorous research and criticality, but also for exploratory

indiscipline—with an address not only to art historians but also, and equally, to artists, curators, and indeed all of art's wider possible publics.

RESPONSE BY

Chanon Kenji Praepipatmongkol
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University of Michigan

One of the greatest contributions of the exhibition history boom in recent decades has been to address instances of artistic display and reception whose intensity *exceeds* and *eludes* prevailing institutional mediations. Scholars have highlighted ways that exhibitionary forms share the qualities of festivals, rituals, ceremonies, theater, and protest—modes of collective gathering and performance that, in their affective excesses, trouble the propriety of museum and gallery spaces.[31] Much attention has also been given to how discourses around exhibitions emerge and circulate through modes of everyday and intimate social exchange—whether storytelling, rumor, gossip, or scandal—that fail to coalesce into rational discourse, and that elude registration in familiar archival modes of curatorial notes, catalogues, reviews, and photo documentation.[32] Against stable mediating institutions, exhibition histories have alerted us to the hunger for immediacy, for embodied experience, for the presencing of the political, and for other allegedly irrational relationships to objects and persons that fall out of alignment with a traditional conception of the bourgeois public sphere (fig. 11).

Figure 11

Sunthorn Meesri, *Bot bat sommut (role play), Tha Pae Gate, Chiang Mai*, 1993, photograph. Digital image courtesy of Uthit Atimana and Gridthiya Gaweewong.

In this anti-normative guise, exhibition histories have the potential to dislodge the primacy of the generic liberal regime of mediation that has long served as the standard against which modernities of the Global South are compared. This decentering of the "free world" is most clearly exemplified in scholarship that takes seriously art produced under conditions of

authoritarian rule or strong religious persuasion. Attuned to the excesses of populist sentiment, scholars like Patrick Flores, Sohl Lee, and Karin Zitzewitz have foregrounded the charismatic, erotic, and emotive energies brought to the ritual of viewing.[33] On the side of elusion and fugitivity, Joan Kee, Tina Le, Anneka Lenssen, and Chika Okeke-Agulu have redeemed the situated integrity of artistic displays that are often too readily dismissed as populist, propagandistic, fundamentalist, corrupt, cynical, or merely instrumental.[34] This growing body of research denatures the liberal norm of medial transparency and its attendant values of autonomy, agency, free speech, and direct communication.

If, as I have implied, the study of exhibitions should attend to the limits of conventional forms of institutional mediation, we may wish to register the sheer diversity of media ecologies and sociologies of art worlds within which instances of artistic display are embedded. But we should also resist sliding into simple empiricism that treats exhibitions merely as a class of primary sources for an ever-expanding global art history. The point, rather, is that nothing about exhibitionary form is self-evident. With the discipline moving towards narratives of artistic modernities that are assembled and imagined across multiple medial scales, clinging to a Eurocentric model of the exhibitionary complex—centered on the public museum, private gallery, and independent criticism—becomes increasingly untenable (fig. 12).

Figure 12

Jose Maceda, *Cassettes 100*, Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1971, photograph. Collection of the UP Center for Ethnomusicology, University of the Philippines. Digital image courtesy of UP Center for Ethnomusicology, University of the Philippines. Photo: Nathaniel Gutierrez.

The sense of urgency that attends to the creation of new types of institutions and new modes of mediation today tells us that established norms and forms of museology are already faltering.[35] Several trends can be observed. Experiments deeply rooted in the specificity of urban and rural formations in the Global South run apace, whether in the likes of the artist collective ruangrupa, which revels in the chaotic energy of Jakarta, or the folkloric museum Arna Jharna, which opens itself up to the sacred ecology of the Thar Desert.[36] Impact investing and social enterprise drive the long-term development of alternative artistic infrastructures, such as the multi-disciplinary platform of the Dhaka Art Summit and the grass-roots business network of Économusées.[37] Finally, digital technologies afford object lessons that break down barriers between the singular artifact and the wisdom of indigenous communities, as with Te Papa's and Vanuatu Cultural Centre's initiatives to unsettle property claims of the (settler-)colonial state.[38]

What these contemporary instances of unruly and unprocessed museology have in common is an optimism that the exhibiting of art will find a vital place at the heart of communities and publics. Perhaps it is in this spirit that exhibition histories should be carried forth: as a study that is less enamored by art and the institutional mediations of the art world as we know it, and more curious and more caring about the *people* for whom art matters.

About the author

Saloni Mathur is Professor of Modern and Contemporary South Asian Art, University of California, Los Angeles. Her areas of specialty include the visual cultures of modern South Asia and its diasporas, colonial studies and postcolonial criticism, museum studies in a global frame, and modern and contemporary South Asian art. Professor Mathur has received awards/fellowships from the Creative Capital/Andy Warhol Foundation, the Getty Grant Program, the Clark Art Institute, the Getty Research Institute, the University of California Humanities Research Institute, and the Yale Center for British Art.

Footnotes

1. Felix Vogel, On the Canon of Exhibition History, in Ruth E. Iskin (ed.), *Re-Envisioning the Contemporary Art Canon: Perspectives in a Global World* (London: Routledge, 2017), 189–202.
2. See Caroline A. Jones, *The Global Work of Art: World's Fairs, Biennials, and the Aesthetics of Experience* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016).
3. "Our History", website of the Soane Museum, https://www.soane.org/about/our-history (accessed 30 June 2019).
4. While I value the useful Afterall series, for example, I am more critical of the projects on which they report, seeking as I do the unique tensions between expats or experts and the "local" players. Most of the Afterall books valorize the expats and experts, in my analysis.
5. "When Attitudes became Norms", Jones, *The Global Work of Art*, 171.
6. Jones, *The Global Work of Art*.
7. This research on Syed Sadequain is in preparation with Sarah Rifky and will be published in the *Canonicity* volume resulting from the symposium of that name at Wesleyan University in February 2019.
8. For the "Picasso manqué syndrome", see Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1922–1947* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), 7. Mitter continued this theme in "Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery", *The Art Bulletin* 90, no. 4 (December 2008): 531–548, and as late as 2014 with "Collapsing Certainties", *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs* (Summer 2014), online at: https://www.thecairoreview.com/essays/collapsing-certainties. For another variation on this theme, see Simon Gikandi, "Picasso, Africa, and the Schemata of Difference", *Modernism/Modernity* 10, no. 3 (September 2003): 455–480.
9. Mukherjee quoted in Lekha J. Shankar, "Using a Unique Medium", *Hindustan Times*, n.p.
10. Mukherjee quoted in Shankar, "Using a Unique Medium".
11. Mukherjee, "Knots: Interview with Marjorie Allthorpe-Guyton and William Furlong" (1993), File 1, Archive of Modern Art Oxford (MAO), no page.

12. M. Ramachandran, "Oriental Reflections on Sculpture", *Arts & Review*, *The Statesman*, 2 October 1995, 27; Bharati Chaturvedi, "Sensuality in Hemp", *Indian Express*, 15 October 1995, n.p.; and Ranjit Hoskote, "High and Popular Art in Proximity", *The Times of India*, 15 February 1996, 10.
13. Emilia Terracciano "Urpflanze: The Probing Sculptures of Mrinalini Mukherjee", in Shanay Jhaveri (ed.), *Mrinalini Mukherjee* (Mumbai: Met Breuer and Shoestring Publishers, 2019), 161–175.
14. Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (New Delhi: Tulika Press, 2000).
15. Keith Moxey, *Visual Time: The Image in History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 16.
16. Robert Hopper, The Henry Moore Sculpture Trust. Letter to Sushma Bahl, The British High Commission, British Council Division, New Delhi, India, 23 July 1990. File 5, Archive of Modern Art Oxford (MAO).
17. Air Packers, New Delhi, India. Fax to Mr Jaideep Balial Ganguly, The British High Commission, British Council Division, New Delhi, India. 14 April 1994. File 7, Archive of Modern Art Oxford (MAO).
18. Air Packers, New Delhi, India. Fax to Mr Jaideep Balial Ganguly, The British High Commission, British Council Division, New Delhi, India. 14 April 1994. File 7, Archive of Modern Art Oxford (MAO).
19. See for example, Mukherjee. "Knots: Interview".
20. Deanna Petherbridge, "Mukherjee's Modernism: Deanna Petherbridge Gazes at Sculpture from Outer Space", *Women's Art Magazine*, September–October 1994, 26.
21. Tania Guha, "Mrinalini Mukherjee: Labyrinths of the Mind", *Third Text* 8, nos. 28–29 (1994): 165–168. It is useful here to recall that *The Day of the Triffids* was published four years after the independence of India and the formal dissolution of the British Empire. The novel shed light on the fraught nature of social collective consolidation as the basis of modern British democracy. This prompted legislation like the 1948 British Nationality Act, which delineated colonial "subjects" from British citizens, in part by making ethnicity, culture, and territory markers of national belonging. See Erik Brice Jaccard, *Speculative Fiction, Catastrophe, and the Devolutionary Imagination in Postwar Britain*, unpublished PhD dissertation submitted to Washington University, 2017, 69. For more on the British Nationality Act, see Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 7–14; and Allan Hepburn (ed.), *Around 45: Literature, Citizenship, Rights* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 11–16. For how these debates played out in the realm of post-war British sculpture in relation to Anish Kapoor's sculpture, see Paul Overy, "'Lions and Unicorns': The Britishness of Postwar British Sculpture", *Art in America* 79, no. 9 (September 1991): 105–110.
22. Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 31.
23. For a discussion of the Australian context and the lived effects of race theories, see Marcia Langton, 2013. "Indigenous Exceptionalism and the Constitutional 'Race Power'", in Helen Sykes (ed.), *Space, Place and Culture* (Melbourne: Future Leaders, 2013), accessed 4 June 2019 http://www.futureleaders.com.au/book_chapters/pdf/Space-Place-Culture/Marcia-Langton.pdf.

24. Annie Jael Kwan's review of the exhibition also describes how the exhibition continues the marginalisation of indigenous perspectives, "Empire of Whom?", *ArtAsiaPacific*, no. 100 (September/October 2016): 73–74.
25. While the term is older, it speaks to an approach that was rejuvenated by James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988) and George Marcus and Fred R. Myers (eds), *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995).
26. Traceable to Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, Catherine Porter (trans.), (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). The anthropological literature is helpfully contextualized in Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42, no. 328 (2013): 327–343.
27. See www.afterall.org/exhibition-histories/the-other-story/hayward-gallery-1989.
28. See https://www.afterall.org/exhibition-histories/the-other-story/retelling-the-other-story-or-what-now.
29. See http://baltic.art/whats-on/rasheed-araeen-a-symposium.
30. See https://www.paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk/whats-on/forthcoming/the-lyc-museum-art-gallery-and-the-museum-as-practice.
31. Vali Mahlouji, *Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014); David Murphy (ed.), *The First World Festival of Negro Arts, Dakar 1966* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016); Simon Soon, "Images Without Bodies: Chiang Mai Social Installation and the Art History of Cooperative Suffering," *Afterall* 42 (Autumn/Winter 2016): 36–47; David Teh, *Artist-to-Artist: Independent Art Festivals in Chiang Mai 1992–98* (London: Afterall, 2018).
32. Paisid Aramphongphan, "Real Professionals? Andy Warhol, Fred Herko, and Dance," *Performing Arts Journal* 110 (2015): 1–12; Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948–1963* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Alpesh Kantilal Patel, *Productive Failure: Writing Queer Transnational South Asian Art Histories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
33. Patrick D. Flores, "Social Realism: The Turns of a Term in the Philippines," *Afterall* 34 (Autumn/Winter 2013): 62–75; Sohl Lee, "Images of Reality/Ideals of Democracy : Contemporary Korean Art, 1980s–2000s," (PhD dissertation, University of Rochester, 2014); Karin Zitzewitz, *The Art of Secularism: The Cultural Politics of Modernist Art in Contemporary India* (London: Hurst & Co., 2014).
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