POST-GLOBALISATION, SHIFTING ART PARADIGMS AND AVANT-GARDE GAMBITS: LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2017

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INTRODUCTION

Globalisation, and what this means to art and the art world, has come to feature as one of contemporary art's most significant conditions and fundamental concerns. Commentators widely acknowledge that contemporary art has been shaped by forces that continue to be dominated by international economic exchange. Enabled by globalisation, capitalist economies have nurtured and profited from a commodity-driven 'spectacle culture.' The excesses of the art market and the exploitation of art as a commodity have manifested in 'high art' and 'spectacularism.' This trend is supported by popular and social media and new technologies, connecting the lifestyle agendas of the élite 0.1% the new monied rich, celebrities, corporates and tourism dollars — to art. Sustained by the institutions, art fairs, major museums, nations and cities, art has become another means to economic superiority. As a result, contemporary art practice has been dominated by the 'high art' agenda.



Figure 1. Spectator and member of the press, with press bags, sitting in the gardens of the Giardini at the 57th Biennale di Venezia 2017. Photographer: Peter Burton.

In 2017 does a hegemonic explanation, a-one-size fits-all — that globalisation is the overriding, dominant force shaping the art world — provide an accurate account of what is happening to art in the world today? Does Terry Smith's explanation of "world currents" and a world in transition, the "contemporaneity" of difference and post-globalisation offer an alternative explanation of contemporary art today?

Since the 1980s, as late capitalism has evolved and globalised art values have spread, biennales have provided an alternative venue for art making and exhibition. They have challenged institutionalised art structures, provided forums for artists and curators to experiment and challenge the status quo, and kept avant-garde art alive.

Acknowledging the connections between world economies and social change and art, how were globalised art values presented at the Venice Biennale in 2017? Venice, the most institutionalised and the primogenitor of all biennales, has in the past showcased art from around the world, positioning art in relation to it. More recently, as with other biennales, it has morphed toward exhibiting crucial aspects of the most contemporary of contemporary art practice (Smith's "contemporaneity"). Parallel to this, with the dominance of high art and spectacularism, Venice has increasingly become the domain of the wealthy corporates, élite patrons and big-name artists. In 2017, did the Venice Biennale demonstrate that it can still provide platforms for artists to experiment, test the boundaries and challenge institutionalised art forums? Was there any evidence of avant-garde gambits that resisted the paradigms of globalisation and institutionalisation?

THE VALUE OF AN INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH - ACCOUNTING FOR COMPLEXITY

Smith argues for an art world in a state of transition, where there are parallel currents of evolving art-world development within parallel national economies, not all of which are dominated by globalisation. In considering the role of the Venice Biennale, Smith's taxonomies, especially his "world currents," and specifically the top-level current (high art), provide a useful context of how art worlds, as networks and hierarchies of players, operate as movements and within institutional frameworks. The notion of the "art world" and its constituent parts, including the art market, helps to contextualise an understanding of how biennales operate within it. These ideas also help to explain the institutional, economic and political forces at play when artists deploy avant-garde gambits to challenge the status quo.

The first of Smith's three currents comprises the global or top end of the art world and associated sub-currents. This is a mix of the spectacular and shock gambits, of re-modernisation and retro-sensationalism.⁴ The second current, labelled the postcolonial, is defined by diversity, identity and critique.⁵ The third refers to small-scale, modest, local and grassroots artist initiatives, encompassing the discreet counter-culture and counter-institutional artist-run collectives.⁶

The first current of contemporary art at the global level constitutes a definitive force in the art markets and the museums of the world's major art centres. The second current includes biennales and experimental art making. Since the 1990s, biennales have become a global phenomenon as art worlds have connected with each other. New communication technologies and escalating social media are continually shaping the future of contemporary art and expanding possibilities and opportunities. It is within the context of these first and second currents, the top-tier and biennales, that this paper considers the 57th Venice Biennale, 2017. Smith's taxonomies of first-current sensationalism and spectacularism help interpret the phenomenon of the biennales, including the Venice Biennale, past iterations of which have included spectacles like Marc Quinn's Alison Lapper Pregnant (2005) and Quinn's major exhibition on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice, for the 2013 Biennale.

In 2017, Damien Hirst's *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* upstaged Quinn. Exceeding anything that has gone before, Hirst's exhibition was more spectacular in the number of artworks, sheer size and material value of the sculptures on show. Overnice has long been a mixture of official, co-lateral and privately staged exhibitions. The Hirst-

Pinault machine, with the double-bill blockbuster at the Punta Della Dogana and Palazzo Grassi, deliberately slighted and subverted the time-honoured La Biennale di Venezia with a series of extravagant gala parties, some held weeks before the official opening event - and in so doing, slighted the Biennale's secretariat by refusing to celebrate the opening week, Beyond the micro-politics, this strategy positioned Hirst's exhibition as simply too significant to be dependent on the sanctions of the establishment. This is one facet of a multiple risqué gambit played by Hirst - that at least in theory, any artist can liberate their art practice from institutional curatorial dictates and, in this case, from the biennale's official approval. More significantly, by exploiting Venice, Hirst's ruse demonstrated that an audience can appreciate an actual aesthetic argument or 'counter-argument' indicative of a larger shift within the high art paradigm of contemporary art.

There has always been a distinction between the parallel art worlds of the art fairs and biennales. While this distinction is often thinly disguised, usually art fairs are the domain of commerce and openly supported by the art market; whereas biennales are considered serious-minded forums, the domain of experimental and art of substance, and supported by the art professions, institutions and foundations.



Figure 2. Damien Hirst, *The Diver*, 2014, bronze. Detail from *Treasures of the Wreck of the Unbelievable*, Punta Della Dogana, Venice 2017. Photograph: Peter Burton.

Sprawling throughout the two palazzos, Hirst produced 189 sculptures, brimming with extravagance, each in an edition of three plus two artist's proofs. By early May and the commencement of the La Biennale Vernissage, most, if not all editions, including the large museum cabinet displays of multiple gold- and jewel-encrusted 'artefacts,' had sold out. Reputedly, the artist has realised upwards of one billion dollars. The proclivity for precious metals and stones, size and excess, exuding the wealth and prowess of a rock-star artist-collector (Hirst), are central to the narrative of the mythical collector and fortune-hunter, Cif Amotan II.

These 'treasures' will now decorate the mansions of Russian oligarchs, the Chinese élite and global derivative dealers. Hirst's sculptures included the voluptuous bronze, *The Diver* (2013), made of patinated bronze and beautifully (but not credibly) covered in pink and blue coral, and other vividly coloured sea creatures. Early on in the vernissage the press reported that it was Jason deCaires Taylor's exhibition (Grenada Pavilion) that had provided the original inspiration for Hirst. This was another example of Hirst blatantly adopting Picasso's maxim that "great artists steal."

By returning to figurative, ornamental kitsch and heavily laden historical narrative, Hirst deliberately derided the conceptualism of the biennale élites. Further, having traversed much of the excess, Hirst's trajectory extended beyond poking fun at the art collectors who lined up to buy his sculptures, demonstrating their "unhindered opulence, indiscriminately poor taste, and capriciousness." At first glance, the audience was awestruck by the size of the exhibits, and the quantity and the grandeur of the venue. If they entered without any idea of what to expect, they sooner or later realised Hirst's ruse. While some were at first amused, others were offended by the extent of the intentional deception. For some, there was a sense of the emperor's new clothes when they eventually realised the artist's ploy and attempted to hide their gullibility.

Playing with the vacuity and banality of spectacle art is not new to Hirst. Nor is his willingness to challenge the art establishment. However, positioning his art as a Disneyland-like extravaganza, and as entertainment, was a bold and experimental gambit. The deliberately deceptive narrative, which faked authenticity and which simultaneously captivated while ridiculing his art and the audience, was a first for Hirst – and he did this at Venice. ¹³

Smith's institutional art theory approach is useful in appreciating what is happening here. Firstly, it provides a way to describe the social, economic and political conditions that make art what it is today. Secondly, it provides a framework for the analysis of art as encompassed by a complex field of forces that are not visible in the artwork itself. These forces provide the means or the conditions for art to emerge. Thirdly, it contextualises art — in this instance at Venice 2017 — its making, exhibiting and collecting, and its sub-currents like the art market, within a larger social and economic field of interdependent networks of participants whose relationships, exchanges and working agreements constitute the entire art world. While Gerry Bell¹⁴ and McNamara¹⁵ contend that Smith inadequately defines 'contemporary art' relative to (post)modern art, he nonetheless provides a compelling account of how art is produced, consumed and traded in the post-1990 period, the era with which contemporary art at the 57th Venice Biennale is concerned.

The art world's top tier manifests a monumental phase of modernism that has been usefully explicated by a number of commentators. Iain Robertson holds that it is the "tax havens" and the "free ports" which reflect the movement of global surplus capital that are determining which cities will become the future centres for contemporary art. If James Henry traces the world economy and private offshore wealth creation, with the vast amounts of untaxed income that it produces. This is the milieu that produces the collectors. They seek commodities with ultra-high price tags. Henry seeks to explain the rationale behind these tax havens, why they exist and why there is so much surplus cash available in the world to spend on luxury goods such as contemporary art: "A significant fraction of global private financial wealth – by our estimates, at least \$21 to \$32 trillion as of 2010 – has been invested virtually tax-free through the world's still-expanding black hole of more than 80 offshore secrecy jurisdictions." If

The distribution of wealth in a global economy is crucial to an understanding of why there are super-rich collectors who can spend so much money on art, build huge museum edifices and create high demand for contemporary art. Don Thompson provides an economic analysis of the art market and the branded artists, museums, collectors, dealer galleries, art fairs, biennales and auction houses that make up the élite art world.



Figure 3.Tracey Moffatt, *My Horizon*. Exhibition at the Australian Pavilion, Giardini, Venice Biennale, 2017. Photograph: Peter Burton.

ARTISTS' AGENCY

The global art world presents a hierarchical and institutionalised setting where the behaviours and actions of a few very powerful participants affect the opportunities available to artists at regional and national levels. The differences in power and cachet at the regional and national levels are magnified in global art world activities such as Venice. At stake are the economic rewards that take precedence over symbolic rewards, as seen in the kinds of culture that circulate in this world and the ways that rewards are produced and accessed.

Artists, along with other art practitioners, appreciative of this global context, have limited choices. Gene Ray suggests that there are three. ¹⁸ They can opt to participate and, depending on their levels of success, journey "back and forth between the inside and outside" as opportunities arise and allow. Artists may go several rounds before they give up. ¹⁹ There is a remote chance that they may be selected and become a branded artist. ²⁰ If they are selected, this will not be of their own making, nor have much to do with the quality and sincerity of their art making. ²¹ Alternatively, artists may choose to remain inside the art world (to a lesser or greater degree – depending on what they can achieve), and settle for adding more critically affirmative art to the quantity of commodity-driven international art styles. Thirdly, they can attempt to remain outside the system and operate in alternative nodes of art activity. ²² In reality, as artists lack any real self-determination over whether they are in or out, option one and two are the same. Eventually, these artists may realise that "working with the capitalist art system is necessarily a losing proposition." ²³

Options one and two reward only the branded artist, branded galleries and branded collectors. Artists such as Hirst, Jeff Koons and Takashi Murakami are entrepreneurs producing art priced to match the pockets of their collectors. They are more concerned with building their brand, their name and reputation (superstar status)²⁴ than with producing original work with their own hands.²⁵ They often direct the production of artwork which is undertaken by the large teams of artists and assistants they employ. The kinds of spectacular, wow-factor art they produce requires significant financial investment by branded galleries or collectors. These artists get to make what they like, choose which museum they will exhibit in, which branded gallery they will work with – or whether they will work with any – and, increasingly, which auction house they will access in order to sell directly to the public.

In a self-proclaimed collaboration with Rubens, Van Gogh and Leonardo De Vinci, Koons exhibited a line of bags at the Louis Vuitton department store in the central shopping area of Venice. Koons, a notorious appropriation artist, is infamous for turning kitsch images and objects into art. Here his gambit was to transform the canvas into handbags and backpacks, turning great art back into popular culture. Whereas Andy Warhol created screen prints of Renaissance art (for example, Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, 1482), Koons has turned old masters into must-have, expensive (\$4,000) fashion accessories.

A fourth possible option is where artists remain inside the global art system but attempt to resist or change – for ethical and non-artistic reasons – some of the control and influence exercised by super-rich patrons. A recent example of this is the nine artists who boycotted the Sydney Biennale 2014, forcing the resignation of director Luca Belgiorno-Nettis as the biennale chairman. They also forced withdrawal of the major sponsor, Transfield Services (owned by the Belgiorno-Nettis family), because of their contracts operating the controversial Manus Island and Nauru detention centres. For Julian Stallabrass, this corporate sponsorship—migrant link is driven by the globalisation of the art world.

Exploring these ideas through their art, the Korean National Pavilion at Venice 2017 featured works by Cody Choi and Lee Wan. Their joint exhibition, "Counterbalance: The Stone and the Mountain," explored conflicts and dislocation in contemporary Korean identity. Choi's contribution focused on social identity and dislocation in a neoliberal, global economy. Influenced by his upbringing in an era marked by social tumult amidst Korean modernisation, Choi's work has explored Koreans' relationship with the West from the perspective of assimilation and individuality. Choi and Wan are part of a younger generation of Korean artists examining the individual lives, traditions and global cultural phenomena exploited and shaped by global power structures in countries throughout Asia and beyond.



Figure 4. Cody Choi, Venetian Rhapsody – The Power of Bluff, 2016-17, neon, LED, steel, canvas, PVC. Day installation view at the Korean Pavilion, 57th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia. Photograph: Riccardo Tosetto (courtesy of the artist).

Expanding on Becker's²⁸ influential writing on art worlds and Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital,²⁹ Diana Crane explores the premise of two art worlds, one global and the other urban.²⁰ These differ in a number of ways – how they affect opportunities for artists, sellers and collectors; the characteristics of their participants; where art activities occur; the nature and production of the material that is created for display or sale; and in the reward systems that offer varying levels of symbolic or material rewards. Crane examines artist motivations in terms of symbolic and material rewards, hypothesising that power and prestige at the national level are magnified at the international level, where the global financial system dictates that economic rewards take precedence over symbolic ones.³¹

I define a global culture world as one in which a small number of organisations from several countries dominate the global production and dissemination of culture. Their activities affect the opportunities for creators, sellers and purchasers at the urban level. Global worlds need places where producers, sellers and buyers congregate and, in the process, develop a consensus about what they are doing and who is doing it best. 32

Smith's third current of "under the radar proliferators" provides a more positive alternative here. These are artists who actively reject domination and pursue agency outside of the globalised art world. Utilising temporary and alterative spaces, social media and the internet, their motivation is less about their artists, and more about experimenting and about their art practice.

BIENNALES

The global art world accentuates the importance of economic rewards over symbolic rewards. Powerful participants from a few countries dominate production, exhibition, sales and profits. Fuelled by increasing income disparity concentrated in fewer yet highly mobile hands, 'high art' has become a vehicle conferring cultural credentials, prestige and sophistication on the one-percenters, who form the economic hub of their respective countries. As art fairs have grown and proliferated to support high art's excesses and dominance, a corresponding development of biennales has occurred, with counter-exhibition activities that support another, parallel art world in international communities across the globe. "The tension between the homogenising and anti-homogenising forces of globalisation is captured in the biennial, as it foregrounds both international and local art, and highlights the complex relays between them." 33









Figure 5. Ann Imof, *Faust*, performers. German Pavilion, Giardini installation, Venice Biennale 2017. Photograph: Peter Burton.

Over the past 30 years, biennales and triennials have become a major force, evolving as a structural exhibition option in their own right. Smith describes a continuum of sites for contemporary art exhibitions, with biennales falling somewhere between institutionalised structures such as museums, more specialised exhibition venues such as single artist or period museums, university gallery or research collections,³⁴ and open-ended art projects like Oda Projesi – Room Project³⁵ or Pacific Sisters.³⁶The important point here is that with the more experimental structures undertaking exhibitions as part of their research, educational activities, temporary and virtual initiatives, the focus shifts – and the "event and the image prevail over the place and duration."³⁷

At one end of this spectrum, biennales offer an open-ended statement clear of curatorial control. They are experimental, radical and innovative, and they offer new directions for future art practices. The art they encourage is more likely to be critical, drawn from symbolic and expressive practices, and displayed via new technology, video, cinema and social media platforms (YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.). Biennales facilitate communication exchange and connectivity between local, urban and international communities dislocated and otherwise unknown to the global art world. They are less likely to be tied up by the dictates of high art and art market forces, imposed themes, definitive displays and strong curatorial control.³⁸

Some biennales, such as Venice,³⁹ and some Asian and Middle East biennales (such as Art Dubai), fall more at the spectacular, high art institutional end of the spectrum. Others, such as São Paulo, Havana, Manifesta,⁴⁰ Documenta and Gwangju,⁴¹ are formed around the interconnectivity of local and international communities. There are, however, complex, divergent undercurrents in the ways that biennales develop, deviate and evolve. Before 2000, Venice demonstrated greater global outreach and was freer from institutional bureaucracy to experiment with curatorial arrangements and exhibition structure than has been the case since;⁴² Gwangju 2010 took a step back, as prior to this it had been directed by younger, more philosophically, ethnically and geographically diverse curators; and in 2012 São Paulo, retreating from the influence of the international art world, moved from debating political and artistic questions (2010) to a 'safer' exploration of poetics.

However, as Smith notes, connections between formats "abound," and artists use biennales as gateways. It was evident at Venice, in 2017, that the high art agenda of Hirst, Koons and others stole the headlines, renewing the urgency and extremes of spectacularism. However, it was also palpable that, as the format of biennales evolves away from surveying art in the world and positioning local art in relation to the global, Venice is part of this evolving re-vitalisation and change. While the Central Pavilion continues to reach for a universal theme, and the national pavilions offer samplings of nation-state art making, there was evidence of experimentation in ideas and artworks – exhibiting critical aspects of art making in the world today and aspects of art in the world, as it is now and what it may be in the future (Smith's contemporaneity).

Awarded the Golden Lion for best National Participation, Anne Imhof's Faust (2017), exhibited in the German Pavilion, presented a unique combination of live art, installation, sound, painting and sculpture. This brooding set piece captured the anxious mood of contemporary times, where past freedoms once enjoyed and taken for granted are now threatened. Imhof's troupe — portrayed as hip, sexy and unique-looking youths — make intense eye contact with each other and their audience. Juxtapositioned with the experiences of contemporary life familiar to so many, the performers' attitudes, movements and interactions with the audience are full of angst, and are disconcerting. The artist's partner and muse, Eliza Douglas (an artist herself), performs as a dark beauty representative of the new Gothic-style youth of today — romantic, sublime, detached and disturbing.

Faust is a statement about contemporary life, about living lives exposed to social media. It is about our preoccupation with documenting every detail of life and how badly people treat each other, trapped in symbolic glass cages, where everything can be viewed, but nevertheless ensnared. It depicts the universal urban predicament of contemporary times.



Figure 6. Central Pavilion, Viva Arte Viva, curated by director Christine Macel, Venice Biennale 2017, migrants making artwork in the entrance to the pavilion. Photograph: Peter Burton.

A GLOBAL ART WORLD IN TRANSITION

Artist residences, crowd funding, new technologies and new gambits by institutions such as the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (Madrid) and the Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven) have been put forwards as examples of an art world in transition. Claire Bishop contends that along with initiatives such as "L'Internationale," a number of institutions – in particular Van Abbemuseum, Ljubljana's Moderna Galerija, Antwerp's MuKHA, Barcelona's MACBA and Bratislava's Július Koller Society – share their collections, question centralising master narratives of art history, and investigate new paradigms of translocalism, offering real alternatives. She argues that these institutions are asking the "big questions – regarding our relationship to history, our consumption of images, the production of meaningful connections between different generations and geographies, and the envisioning of new social and political possibilities." ⁴³

Describing themselves as nomads of contemporary art who travel the world from one residency to another, there are artists who exchange their services and art production for accommodation and a studio. Art residencies began to emerge in the 1960s as vehicles for artists to resist the exchange value of art. Given that these residencies mostly focus on the production of site-specific artwork, it is arguable whether they do not in fact form part of the global art world hierarchy. However, often residencies are linked to biennales or art projects. Thus, the status of the residency contribution as an alternative, according to Smith's spectrum of institutionalised infrastructures, to "open-ended inventiveness," will depend on which biennale, museum or project they are assigned to. 45



Figure 7. Francis Upritchard, Various works, 2016-17, mixed media, Arsenale, Venice Biennale 2017, Photograph: Peter Burton.



Figure 8. Mark Bradford, *Niagara*, 2015, video. US Pavilion, Giardini, Venice Bienanle 2017. Photograph: Joshua White (courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth).

In the Central Pavilion at the Giardini, Dawn Kasper's *The Sun,The Moon, and The Stars* (2017) presents a continuation of a body of work that involves her setting up a roving studio space as a work itself. For the VIP and press previews, she was spinning Marianne Faithfull vinyl and 'chilling with people,' surrounded by keyboards, a drum set, maracas, tom-toms, amps, mixing boards, recorders — and front and centre, the stately, fresco-topped Sala Chini. Kasper will be resident in the Pavilion for six months — the longest residency she's done yet. Whereas much of biennale director Christine Marcel's curated exhibition (in the Central Pavilion, Giardini and Arsenale) presents a mix of codes of contemporary practice with the figurative, traditional and historical (for example, Frances Upritchard/New Zealand, Juan Javier Salazar/Peru, Manuel Ocampo/Philippines, each offering political critiques of Euroamerican suppression of indigenous figurative traditions), Kasper's residency experiments with Viva Arte Viva, Marcel's curatorial theme.

But herein lies the biennale dilemma, elucidated by Smith – that it is a mistake to curate a specific, universal themed exhibition of this place and this time when the value of the biennale model is its node-like structure and its "reliable unpredictability." Not singularity, but open-endedness. As a result, the Central Pavilion (now spilling out into much of the Arsenale) "implodes into melancholy re-modernism." Experimentation, and any art with a semblance of the avant-garde, is more likely to appear at national pavilions in the Giardini or Arsenale or elsewhere, or in the co-lateral or unofficial exhibitions.

In contrast, new sculptures by Francis Upritchard, in The Pavilion of Traditions, addressed a world full of conflicts and shocks where art bears witness to the most precious part of what makes people human. Upritchard's sculptures

provided ground for reflection about freedom and other fundamental questions about contemporary life. At a time of global disconnection – economic, social and environmental – Upritchard has positioned her art making to embrace life, even if doubt inevitably supervenes. Within the framework of contemporary debates, the artist has assumed the role, the voice and the responsibility as something more crucial than ever before. The artist's voice is offered here to help shape the world of tomorrow, albeit with an uncertain note. Smith makes an essential point about biennales. By naming new technologies as a structural medium with subversive potential, is "this mistaking a medium for a subject?" Whether the medium is biennales or new technology, it is the substance of the art making that matters most and this includes the ability of artists (and other art practitioners) to gain symbolic and financial rewards other than those dictated by top-down globalism and high art.

Mark Bradford's exhibition, "Tomorrow is Another Day," commissioned by the Baltimore Museum of Art and staged at the US Pavilion in the Giardini, leverages biennale-like resistance to globalising forces and international-local exchange off predictable institutionalised art making. Bradford's art practice exemplifies Smith's "paradoxes of the present." As the excesses of late capitalism unfold, with particularly difficult and urgent issues emerging – increasing inequality, marginalisation, war, immigration, environmental destruction and so on – Bradford's art provides a practical proposition, a 'how to' for addressing some of these complex realities. When the problems of the world seem so dire, is it is asking too much of art to provide the answers, or come to the rescue? Smith may be right – that rather than wrestle with a "necessary determination," possible alternatives include living with capitalism (as it declines and implodes), and with the resulting paradoxes of crisis and resolution. Bradford suggests that art can – and should – address the art world and its global high art excesses, with a commitment to mitigate at least some of these.

As a market star, Bradford uses the clout of his practice – generative of the paradoxes of world capitalism – leveraging off his formal practice with social action initiatives in alternative and unofficial sites. At the US Pavilion, Bradford's abstract art offers a discourse canvassing ideas of freedom from social definitions. Some of his art making, involving machine-sanding layers of street posters to make an abstract painting, has been described as mimicking Jackson Pollock's technical use of the 'drip.' His art has also been compared to Pollock's theatrical performance of aligning 'action' with painting, an art practice that became influential during the decades that followed.⁴⁸ The comparison suggests that Bradford has expanded painting by bringing the 'performance' of social practice into his studio, and also by tying his work as a painter specifically to his work with foster children and other at-risk communities.

In a storefront in the centre of the city, Bradford has partnered with Rio Teràdei Pensieri, a non-profit social cooperative that focuses on reintegrating incarcerated people into society. This collaboration, titled "Process Collettivo," provides support and employment opportunities to men and women prisoners. It is a six-year collaboration producing hand-crafted bags, accessories, and cosmetics made by prisoners in a temporary location in the centre of Venice, which are then offered for sale. Bradford's commitment to social engagement is anchored in his Los Angeles-based non-profit Art + Practice, an educational platform teaching practical skills designed to foster youth and local access to contemporary art.

Discussing resistance to the servility of the art world and the predicament of global art and institutionalised practices (involving museums, art fairs and some biennales), Julian Stallabrass argues that as long as capitalism is the dominant world system, art will be forced to toe the line.⁴⁹ In response, Smith optimistically poses the question, "Can curators best advance innovative art by investing their energies in creating new kinds of infrastructure?" He adds that late capitalism, or neocapitalism, is in the throes of breaking down in the face of "other world-shaping trajectories." In turn, Stallabrass argues that the material forces driving biennials are the same as those driving the expansion of museums and other global art world institutions. Spectacular cultural events and institutions compete globally for investment, sponsors and tourists. Dominant art forces prevail, and "[j]ust as business executives circled the earth in search of new markets, so a breed of nomadic global curators began to do the same, shuttling from one biennale or transnational art event to another, from São Paulo to Venice to Kwangju to Sydney to Kassel and Havana." like branded artists seeking celebrity status.

GLOBALISATION OR POST-GLOBALISATION?

In any discussion of art and the global art world, the term 'globalisation' inevitably requires some attention and clarification. Some theories take the perspective of transformation, others of collision. Weibel argues that economic and political forces have led to the hegemony of the West – the nation state and capitalism – being threatened from within by "creative destruction" and "innovation." Furthermore, he claims that globalisation is giving rise to the spread of a territorial system of nation states which, with the break-up of Western domination, will eventually be included (rather than excluded, as at present) in the contemporary global art world. This, he argues, is an opportunity – an alternative – for rewriting art, political and economic history on a global scale. ⁵³

On the other hand, globalisation theories such as those espoused by Negri and Hardt⁵⁴ hypothesise global domination with diminishing boundaries – and argue that the emergence of an international contemporary art world has erased the impact of geographical prerequisites as determining factors in the construction of an artist's success. Biennales serve as the medium of exhibition for this development (Smith,⁵⁵ Crane⁵⁶). The resulting global dissemination, and the evolution of the biennale model from an exhibition based on national representation to one emphasising invited artists, represents the internationalisation of the contemporary art world (Smith,⁵⁷ Weibel,⁵⁸ Belting and Buddensieg ⁵⁹). This alternative model covers all countries and enables widespread and non-discriminatory (on the grounds of race, nationality, gender, etc.) artist participation and recognition. Hans Belting sums up this model: "More than one hundred biennales, in which travelling curators operate as global agents, present packages of international plus regional art to cosmopolitan audiences in ever-new venues. This is the quintessential constellation of art's globalisation." ⁶⁰

lain Robertson provides a more nuanced view of cultural globalisation and its effects, one open to combining elements of the different theories and alternative viewpoints, making simple distinctions between the local and the global.⁶¹ He refers to the effects of urbanisation and mass communication, and stresses in particular the capacity of people today to transition between local-, national- and global-orientated levels and thus negotiate different spheres. Further, he questions the tendency to consider local and global culture separately and as being in conflict.⁶²



Figure 9. Cinthia Marcelle, *Chão de caça* (Hunting Ground), installation, Brazilian Pavilion, Giardini, Venice Biennale 2017.Photograph: Peter Burton.

However, as Crane, Stallabrass, Ray and others have argued, increasingly it is the economic power of wealth-generators such as Hong Kong,⁶³ free ports and tax havens ⁶⁴ and other storage centres for wealth (London, Dubai, Singapore) that determines which nations or cities can operate as Free Zones (for example, Beijing),⁶⁵ making themselves dominant centres for art-buying collectors.

Crane proposes four models of globalisation – cultural imperialism, cultural flows or networks, reception theory, and cultural policy. Each of these reflects a specific view of how globalisation has shaped the production, distribution, reception and consumption of culture over the last 20-25 years. 66 These four models reflect a contemporary approach to the cultural globalisation debate and usefully clarify and qualify the effects of globalisation on the contemporary art world as a whole.

James Henry explores the political and economic forces operating to expand globalisation, the macrocosm which envelops the globe and provides favourable conditions for supporting and expanding the global art world. The global art world does not operate in isolation. It is part of a much wider global economy which is, in turn, determined by global political forces supporting policies of wealth creation and distribution.

Smith introduces a new paradigm – beyond globalisation, here referred to as "post-globalisation." He maintains that Euroamerican-centric globalisation is no longer plausible and in decline (as explained above), and that it remains uncertain whether the new evolving economies (China, India, Brazil and others) shaping "international and regional" influences will be of the same kind. In support of his argument, Smith cites the not necessarily mutually supporting economies of liberal democracies (post World War II) and the unexpected consequences of their rise, including enormous costs to the environment and the breakdown of social cohesion, equality and peaceful cohabitation. These economies failed in their ability to regulate the worst excesses of neocapitalism and, in turn, the power influences that have shaped the globalised and high art world are also in decline.

ALTERNATIVE POST-GLOBALISATION OPTIONS

In his essay "This Way to Exit," Gene Ray considers Stallabrass's book Art Incorporated and concludes that, of the four options Stallabrass proposes as alternatives to participating in the global art world, it is the fourth that offers the most promise. The second and third options include political activism and the linked exploitation of technology and communication media to side-step the global art system. Ray contends that these are problematic. While biennales and exhibitions apply thematic and curatorial approaches that explicitly criticise neo-liberalism, they are invariably neutralised by the institutions which host them. If nothing else, the "conventions of passive and isolated spectatorship" neutralise them. While new technologies, such as the Internet, provide a medium to exit the gallery or museum, and have democratised artists' techniques of appropriation and displacement, they are not without their problems. They too can succumb to passive and isolated spectatorship, as well as consumerist activity contrary to politicised participation.

Ray redefines Stallabrass's fourth option as "to challenge the illusion of art's uselessness by producing works of explicit use." Here Stallabrass intends to attack art's autonomy, as upheld by institutional and global art world hierarchies, by reviving avant-garde options to relink art with the everyday. A revival of avant-garde, anti-capitalist struggle on a global scale is considered feasible given current resurgences of political and economic activism, aided by qualitative increases in global connectivity, such as social media. Stallabrass refers to Hardt and Negri's book *Empire* to support his hypothesis. Ray goes further, referencing Stallabrass's ideas to suggest organising an avant-garde movement to neutralise and resist art world institutions through "deliberate rupture." To

As Ray points out, this cannot be achieved by individual artists working in isolation. It requires collective action by artists (and other art world participants), and there will need to be a critical mass of support generated. Furthermore, a call to act collectively cannot be isolated to the art world. It must extend beyond and be linked to live struggles and social movements across the globe. Both Stallabrass and Ray are responding to the struggles that

have arisen worldwide in response to the 2008 global economic crises; collective movements and resistance that have arisen since then, such as the Arab Spring; and the use of technologies and social media to communicate and organise such activism.

According to Smith, negative descriptions of top-down globalisation and a neo-capitalist Euroamerican hegemony are too limiting and do not adequately describe all the alternative economic forces at play in the world today. In attempting to provide an overarching framework to explain present and future possibilities, and what biennales offer to contemporary art making, the term 'globalisation' is too limiting. He cites the emergent-dominant-residual paradigm developed by Raymond Williams⁷² – a continuation of the dialectical unfolding of human history as a process involving the continuous resolution of oppositions – to explain his notion of contemporaneity.

Contemporaneity accounts for the global forces and the political, economic and historical transformations of the world at work now, and in the future, that create the conditions for contemporary art. Although Euro-american hegemony is in decline, and the economies of countries like China, India and Brazil are commanding greater influence, the former will persist and is likely to take on new forms and alternatives to "late capitalism, along with many other world-shaping trajectories." While not mutually dependant, the three currents within contemporary art operate within this paradigm. With the second current, the biennale and present gestures of "friction" and "connection," Smith arrives at post-globalism.



Figure 10. Damien Hirst, Aspect of Katie Ishtar ¥o-landi, 2015, bronze. Detail from Treasures of the Wreck of the Unbelievable.

Punta Della Dogana, Venice, 2017. Photograph: Peter Burton.

CONCLUSION

Examining the shifting paradigms of biennales in general, and the 2017 Venice Biennale in particular, lends itself to an exploration of post-globalisation, rather than economic hegemony and domination by the global art world. In seeking to understand how the global art world works, the 57th Venice Biennale provides an exemplar of alternatives which artists and art practitioners can use to develop strategies to transition – not exit – a once dominant and institutionalised high art agenda. Paradoxically, experimental avant-garde gambits of art making are manifest at either extreme of the biennale continuum. While some extend the high, institutionalised art end of the biennale exhibition, others are helping to radically reshape the traditional biennale paradigm with new, more experimental art making. As Venice evolves, there is evidence that the art exhibited is becoming truly post-global. Once dominated by the high art agenda, Venice exhibitions now show the complexities of our age, the current predicament of the world – and of the 'worlds' in which it is contemporarily being made. Venice presents a "situation of contemporary art within contemporary conditions." More importantly, this potentially opens up the biennale as a format to be re-shaped, and in turn offers significant potential for the development of art.

Back to Venice, and *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable*, where Hirst juxtaposes his fantasy Hindu goddess Kali with the Hydra of Greek myth and contemporary icons of Mickey Mouse, model Kate Moss and a bust of himself. As Schachter points out, in Hirst's essay "Why Cunts Sell Shit to Fools," the artist "denounced the disingenuous (in any sector) who insincerely sell sub-standard art to the unsuspecting. Why? Because they can."⁷⁵

But contrary to Schachter's view, Venice is not an example of Hirst falling into the same trap without realising it. Far from it. Hirst's gambit is intentional and experimental; that he can make billions selling art to fools, "because the fools behave like they are supposed to – like fools." Hirst goes further. The art traders make fortunes from this foolishness, and the artist makes a 'killing,' which in turn creates a decline in quality. This is Hirst bragging about the lack of substance to his own art making. Hirst's experimental gambit is to employ a fantasy narrative, disguised as an historical account, and manufacture fake quality. In so doing, Hirst extends his discourse beyond Duchamp, Picasso, Warhol and his own previous gambits to ridicule the art audience and the art itself. Hirst sets up a Disneyland where art, art collectors and the audience participate in their own derision and demise as entertainment, the whole thing an unseemly, elaborate joke on the audience. Ridiculing the globalised contemporary 'high art' agenda, Hirst wears a tee-shirt to celebrate his own achievement – "Everyone's Filth." Filth."

Living in such dire times, the predicament of moving paradigms rests more with the context in which the Venice Biennale finds itself, rather than with the biennale itself. In the social and political conditions of today, it is a big call to expect biennales and the art they exhibit to present propositions on how to address reality. Faced with an unprecedented acceleration in the system of art, together with social, economic and political challenges that are more extreme and disparate – possibly more than at any other time in history – art curators and artists struggle to find a voice to respond. Is it possible that art can provide an answer to today's conditions? It might be a more realistic proposition that art helps to ask the right questions.

The German Pavilion rattled the cage in an edifying way. It endeavoured to ask the right questions. It made people uncomfortable about the moment of scrutiny, the moment of the Faustian pact – here with global capitalism – when subculture is no longer subcultural. Imof's art asked how can one sustain a subcultural voice without just becoming a consumer–product advertisement?

In the meantime, Venice will continue to provide a forum for high art of many forms, including Hirst-like extravaganzas and the spectacular gambits of rock star artists and traders. These will continue to test the boundaries of the extremes of monied art and the extent to which its audiences will engage and tolerate it. The value of the biennale lies in its ability to absorb the contradictions and morph its own paradigms as it is shaped and reshaped by a multitude of interactions, currents and sub-currents; this is happening as the world itself moves into an era of post-globalisation.

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- I Terry Smith, "Contemporary Art: World Currents in Transition Beyond Globalisaton," in *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*, eds Hans Belting, Andrea Buddensieg and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press for SKM, Karlsruhe, 2013), 190.
- Terry Smith, "Biennales and Infrastructural Shift Part I," Art Asia Pacific, 79 (July–August 2012), 3, http://artasiapacific.com/ Magazine/79/BiennialsAndInfrastructuralShiftPartI. Smith responds to Claire Bishop's review in Artforum, September 2011, where she argues that the Venice Biennale, at that time, had a "global reach and comparative freedom from institutional red tape and historical baggage to experiment freely."
- 3 The term "current" is a somewhat clumsy descriptor as employed here. The text would read more clearly if "current" was replaced by "trend," or more simply "section" within the contemporary art worlds.
- 4 Smith, "Contemporary Art," 188.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid., 189.
- 7 Smith, "Biennales and Infrastructural Shift Part I," I-2.
- 8 Smith, "Contemporary Art," 188-9.
- 9 Alison Lapper Pregnant, 2005, was a huge, purple, air-inflated sculpture that dominated the entrance to Venice for the duration of the 2013 Biennale. Quinn's solo show, curated by Germano Celant, including sculptures, paintings and other art objects, provided an extensive retrospective of more than 50 works, including 15 new works.
- The fantasy-narrative and carefully fashioned lie behind the exhibition relates to Cif Amotan II, the first-century freed-slave-turned-art-collector from Antioch whose ship, the Apistos (Greek for "unbelievable"), sunk into the Indian Ocean 2000 years ago, along with his colossal wealth of art and artifacts. In 2008, the wreck was discovered and his treasures were painstakingly recovered from the depths of the ocean. As the next stage in the story, Hirst and his team retrieve and restore these treasures and put them on display at Venice.
- 11 Kenny Schachter, "Is This Show Worth a Billion Dollars? A Few Thoughts on Damien Hirst's New Venture in Venice," Artnet, 24 April 2017.
 - https://news.artnet.com/art-world/kenny-schachter-on-damien-in-venice-934115.
 - See also Carol Vogel, "Damien Hirst is Back with an Underwater Fantasy. Will Collectors Care?," New York Times, 6 April 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/06/arts/design/damien-hirst-francois-pinault-palazzo-grassi.html?rref=collection%2Fbyline%2Fcarol-vogel&action=click&contentCollection=undefined®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection.
- 12 Janelle Zara, "One Man's Trash is Damien Hirst's Treasure: In Venice, the Artist Offers His Grandest Work Yet," ArtNews, 21 April 2017, http://www.artnews.com/2017/04/21/one-mans-trash-is-damien-hirsts-treasure-in-venice-the-artist-offers-hisgrandest-work-yet/ (accessed 25 March 2014)..
- 13 Ibid., I.
- 14 Gerry Bell, "Terry Smith What is Contemporary Art?," Cap's Crits, 15 July 2011, http://capscrits.blogspot.com.au/2011/07/terry-smith-what-is-contemporary-art.html (accessed 24 September 2014).
- 15 Andrew E McNamara, "What is Contemporary Art? A Review of Two Books by Terry Smith," Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art, 12 (2012), 252-8.
- 16 Iain Robertson, A New Art from Emerging Markets (Surrey: Lund Humphries, 2011), 192-6.
- 17 James S Henry, The Price of Offshore Revisited, July 2012, Revisited_1207226 (accessed 22 March 2014).
 http://www.taxjustice.net/cms/upload/pdf/Price_of_Offshore_
- 18 Gene Ray, "Avant-Gardes as Anti-Capitalist Vector," Third Text, 21:3 (May 2007), 241-55.
- 19 Terry Smith, "The Provincialism Problem," Artforum, 13:1 (September 1974), 57.
- 20 Thompson, The \$12 Million Dollar Stuffed Shark, 64.

- 21 Ibid., 58. "Those who have broken the bind have done so largely because the system is structured so that several artists every few years have to break the bind."
- Diana Crane, "Culture Worlds: From Urban Worlds to Global Worlds," paper presented at ESA Research Network Sociology of Culture Midterm Conference: Culture and the Making of Worlds, 14 October 2010, 2, http://ssrn.com/abstract=1692092 (accessed 27 June 2014). Whereas Crane (referencing H Bathelt and N Schuldt, "Between Luminaires and Meat Grinders: International Trade Fairs as Temporary Clusters," Regional Studies, 42:6 (2008), 853-68, at 864-5) refers to "nodes" with respect to trade fairs, in terms of "a temporary microcosm of an entire industry" Smith applies the term "nodes" to areas of activities where artists make their accommodations, adapting and trying to survive outside the global art world. Smith, "Contemporary Art," 186-92.
- 23 Ray, "Avant-Gardes as Anti-Capitalist Vector," 254.
- 24 Thompson, The \$12 Million Dollar Stuffed Shark, 64-5 and 80-91.
- 25 Crane, "Culture Worlds," 7.
- Mike Seccombe, "Biennale of Sydney Patron Luca Belgiorno-Nettis under Fire," *The Saturday Paper*, 28 February 2014, http://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/society/2014/02/28/biennale-sydney-patron-luca-belgiorno-nettis-under-fire/ (accessed 21 July 2014). "In one day this week, Luca Belgiorno-Nettis made more money than most of us will see in a lifetime. The share price of Transfield, the company his father started, soared almost 25 per cent. The spike on Monday followed the announcement that the company had won a \$1.22 billion, 20-month contract to take over the running of the Manus Island immigration detention centre, in addition to its existing contract, entered in 2012, for the centre on Nauru."
- 27 Julian Stallabrass, Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4. "The daring novelty of art, with its continual breaking with convention, is only a pale rendition of the continual evaporation of certainties produced by Capital itself, which destroys all resistance to the unrestricted flow across the globe of funds, data, products and finally the bodies of millions of migrants."
- 28 Howard S Becker, Art Worlds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 25-30.
- 29 Pierre Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 74-
- 30 Crane. "Culture Worlds." I-2.
- 31 Ibid., I.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid., 3.
- 34 Examples of single artist collections are the Eastern Southland Gallery, Gore (Hotere collection), and the proposed Len Lye Museum in New Plymouth. Also foundations which include exhibitions as part of their research or artist programmes, such as the University of Otago's Hocken Library, the Wellington City Art Gallery and the Dowse Art Gallery, which specialise in exhibiting changing and special travelling and co-shared curated exhibitions.
- 35 A collective of women who staged community art projects between 2000 and 2005 in Istanbul.
- 36 Pacific Sisters was a collective of Pasifika artists who staged events and art projects in Auckland between 1998 and 2004.
- 37 Smith, "Biennales and Infrastructural Shift Part I," I-4. Smith uses as an example Oda Projesi's Room Project, a collective of three Istanbul-based women artists who have staged 30 shows since 2001.
- 38 For example, Massimiliano Gioni's preference for definitive and theme-curated exhibitions as director of the Venice Biennale 2013 and Gwangju Biennale 2010.
- 39 The primogenitor of biennales, the Venice Biennale, was first held in 1889. Over the period since its inception, Venice had offered a global reach and a degree of freedom from institutional red tape and historical baggage. However, critics observe that since 2005 Venice has become more institutional in its approach. Over the past three decades, the other biennales (and triennales) that have followed in Venice's steps departed from the grand and spectacular national, collateral and private events that now sprawl across the city of Venice for the biennale's six months duration.
- 40 Terry Smith, "Biennials and Infrastructural Shift Part II," Art Asia Pacific, 79 (Sept–Oct 2012), 2, http://artasiapacific.com/Magasine/79/BiennialsAndInfrastructuralShiftPartII (accessed 11 May 2014). Manifesta is a nomadic biennale, changing location from one event to another, as it is intended to engage countries at the volatile borders of the European Union.
- 41 Founded in memory of the repression of the Gwangju Democratisation Movement in 1980, when over 3000 people were killed, wounded or went missing, the Gwangju Biennale has had a mixed history as one of the more experimental biennales (with innovative curators such as Charles Esche, Hou Hanru, Yongwoo and Okwui Enwesor). Gwangju, like Havana, Taipei and Istanbul, takes place on the margins, "where the economic stakes are lower but where the intellectual and the political stakes have never mattered more."

- 42 Claire Bishop, "Venice 11: Safety in Numbers," Artforum (2011), 1-3, http://artforum.com/inprint/issue=201107&id=28835 (accessed 23 July 2014).
- 43 Ibid., 3.
- 44 Belting et al. (eds), The Global Contemporary, 432-5.
- 45 Smith, "Biennales and Infrastructural Shift Part II," 4.
- 46 lbd.. 3.
- 47 Smith, "Biennales and Infrastructural Shift Part I." 3.
- 48 Andrew Goldstein, "Mark Bradford is our Jackson Pollock: Thoughts on his Stellar U.S. Pavilion at the Venice Biennale," *Art News*, 11 May 2017, https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/mark-bradford-is-our-jackson-pollock-thoughts-on-his-stellar-us-pavilion (accessed 8 August 2017).
- 49 Stallabrass, Art Incorporated, 193-5.
- 50 Smith, "Contemporary Art," 190.
- 51 Stallabrass Art Incorporated, 33.
- 52 Peter Weibel, "Globalisation and Contemporary Art," in Belting et al. (eds), The Global Contemporary, 20.
- 53 Ibid., 27.
- 54 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Empire (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).
- 55 Smith, "Contemporary Art," 189-91.
- 56 Crane, "Culture Worlds."
- 57 Smith, "Biennales and Infrastructural Shift Part I," 3.
- 58 Weibel, "Globalisation and Contemporary Art," 20-1.
- 59 Belting et al. (eds), The Global Contemporary, 28 -9.
- 60 Ibid., 29.
- 61 Ibid., 53.
- 62 Ronald Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity," in *Global Modernities*, ed. Mike Featherstone et al. (London: Sage, 1995), 34. As emphasised when discussing cultural flows theory, new cultural forms may emerge as a consequence of the mixing of global and local culture, called hybridisation. The two notions sometimes overlap and represent what is referred to as the particular in the universal. As an example, Robertson refers to the nation state, which is universal in its organisation, yet clearly marked by its unique or particular features. Accordingly, Robertson proposes considering globalisation as "glocalisation," in which the global and the local are combined.
- 63 Robertson, A New Art from Emerging Markets, 193-4.
- 64 Ibid., 194-5.
- 65 Ibid., 195-6.
- 66 Diane Crane, "Culture and Globalisation: Theoretical Models and Emerging Trends," in Global Culture: Media, Arts, Policy, and Globalisation eds Diana Crane, N Kawashima and K Kawasaki (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1-25.
- 67 Smith, "Contemporary Art," 190
- 68 Stallabrass, Art Incorporated, 188.
- 69 Gene Ray, "This Way to Exit: On Julian Stallabrass's Art Incorporated," Third Text, 21:4 (July 2007), 392.
- 70 Stallabrass, Art Incorporated, 195.
- 71 Ray, "This Way to Exit," 394.
- 72 Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," *The Left Review*, 1:8 (1973), 3-16; repr. in *The Raymond Williams Reader*, ed. John Higgins (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 158-78.
- 73 Smith, "Contemporary Art," 190.
- 74 Ibid., 192.
- 75 Schachter, "Is This Show Worth a Billion Dollars?," I.
- 76 Damien Hirst, "Why Cunts Sell Shit to Fools," 2004, http://www.damienhirst.com/texts/2004/jan--damien-hirst (accessed 24 July 2017).