


Global turn in art history and methodological constellations on artistic circulation. Perspectives, ideas, and operational concepts¹

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ENG Abstract: This article is situated within the context of exploring transnationality, circulation, and mobility as methodological devices/operational concepts in analyzing artistic artifacts, artists, and knowledge in motion. It delves into the interaction between art history and the global configuration of the contemporary age, reflecting on the application of methodological proposals from the global turn in the social sciences to the analysis of artistic mobility. Within this broader exploration, the article delves into the multifaceted nature of the genesis of reflections that have led to the emergence of global art history as a constellated phenomenon. It argues that the questioning of paradigms and the introduction of new terminology into the discipline cannot be solely attributed to art history itself. Instead, it emphasizes the need to examine the close association between this approach and broader movements of thought and historiography. At its core, the article highlights the crucial need for reevaluating language, lexicon, and research practices within historiographical movements. It advocates for the deconstruction of existing narratives and the creation of counter-narratives through a reconsideration of the terminology employed. This process fosters imaginative exploration bringing artistic analysis closer to current debates and ongoing reformulations of research practices.

Keywords: Global art history; interdisciplinary approaches; methodological proposals; lexicon; artistic mobility; historiographical movements.

ES El “viraje” global en la historia del arte y las constelaciones metodológicas sobre la circulación artística. Perspectivas, ideas y conceptos operativos

ES Resumen: Este artículo se sitúa en el contexto de explorar transnacionalidad, circulación y movilidad como dispositivos metodológicos/conceptos operativos para analizar artefactos artísticos, artistas y conocimiento en movimiento. Profundiza en la interacción entre la historia del arte y la configuración global de la época contemporánea, reflexionando sobre la aplicación de propuestas metodológicas del giro global en las ciencias sociales al análisis de la movilidad artística. Dentro de esta exploración más amplia, el artículo se adentra en la naturaleza polifacética de la génesis de reflexiones que han llevado al surgimiento de la historia del arte global como un fenómeno constelado. Sostiene que cuestionar paradigmas e introducir nuevo lenguaje en la disciplina no puede atribuirse exclusivamente a la historia del arte. En cambio, enfatiza la necesidad de examinar la estrecha asociación entre este enfoque y movimientos de pensamiento e historiografía más amplios. En su núcleo, el artículo destaca la necesidad crucial de reevaluar el lenguaje, el léxico y las prácticas de investigación dentro de los movimientos historiográficos. Aboga por la deconstrucción de narrativas existentes y la creación de contra-narrativas mediante una reconsideración de la terminología empleada. Este proceso fomenta la exploración imaginativa acercando el análisis artístico a los debates actuales y a las reformulaciones en curso de las prácticas de investigación.

Palabras clave: Historia del arte global; enfoques interdisciplinarios; propuestas metodológicas; léxico; movilidad artística; movimientos historiográficos.

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Sumario: 1. Introduction: historicizing the global turn 2. Global art history and transnationality 3. Circulation: terms as analysis devices 4. Periodization, mobility, migration, liaisons routières 5. Conclusions 6. Sources and bibliographical references

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1. Introduction: historicizing the global turn

What are the methodological devices available today for analyzing the circulation of artifacts, artists, and artistic knowledge?² Is there a structured perspective for the investigation of dialogue between agents in different contexts of cross-cultural exchange? How does the discipline of art history communicate with the global configuration of the contemporary age? At stake in this article is a reflection on how art history interacts with the methodological proposals of the global turn in the social sciences and how these can be applied to the analysis of artistic mobility. Moreover, one of the intentions of the present study is to explore the terms transnationality, circulation, and mobility as methodological devices/operational concepts in analyzing artistic artifacts, artists, and knowledge in motion through a *longue durée* perspective.³ In this contribution, I argue that such devices can be used for research on artistic mobility regardless of the time framing and geographical area of reference. The idea is not so much to bring specific case studies on precise historical periods or spaces, but rather to bring to light a significant body of historiographical literature that, at least in the last two decades, has dedicated itself to solidifying the use of new systems of investigation on artistic circulation, while also integrating global methodologies.

It is not my intention through this writing to criticize the notion of globality as a trendy discourse in today's academic cultures. Yet, it is worth noting

from these opening lines the awareness that Conrad conveyed in the following way: "we must always be aware that [global historiography] remains primarily an academic domain of the industrialized and economically privileged parts of the world."⁴ Considering the given statement, however, it is possible to identify the ongoing transformative process within the discipline and apply the proposed new research conjectures.

The emergence of the global turn has fundamentally challenged the field of social sciences by interrogating established narratives and interpretative frameworks.⁵ Epistemologically, this *rappel à l'ordre* stemmed from the recognition that "modern" social sciences (from the 19th century onwards) exhibit "birth defects".⁶ These imperfections can be identified as the prevalent product of methodological nationalism on one hand, and the adoption of analysis paradigms characterized by a marked Western-centric bias on the other.⁷ Based on these assumptions, since the beginning of the 21st century, global turn also crossed (and crosses) the practices of art history. Initially, the question has been posed as to:

what forms art history takes in the world, how it is becoming global, whether there are conjunctions wherever it is practiced, but above all whether methods, concepts and aims of Western art history can be adapted to art outside Europe and North America. And if not, are there compatible alternatives to existing approaches to art history?⁸

² Regarding the device, it is considered preferable to refer to the relevant bibliography and philosophical debates. In the context of this discourse, the device is understood, in line with the "discussions" of Foucault, Deleuze, and Agamben, as a new regime of enunciation, within which new forms of discourse are produced. A historical-artistic analysis device is a theoretical and methodological approach that considers art and aesthetic experience as intimately connected to power, knowledge, and historical dynamics. This analytical device focuses on understanding that artistic practices are not merely individual creations, but are influenced by controlling, normative, and discursive devices that shape expressive possibilities and their effects on the audience. Furthermore, it is worth noting that in the text there is a close association between: analysis devices, operational concepts, and terms. Giorgio Agamben, *Che cos'è un dispositivo?* (Rome: Nottetempo, 2006); Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1986); Gilles Deleuze, "Qu'est-ce qu'un dispositif?" in *Michel Foucault philosophe. Rencontre internationale. Paris, 9-11 janvier 1988* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), 185-195; Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits 1954-1988*, vol. III. 1976-1979 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994).

³ For *longue durée* perspectives: Fernand Braudel, Immanuel Wallerstein, "History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Durée." *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 32, no. 2 (2009): 171-203. But also: Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, *Circulations in the Global History of Art* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 184. It should also be noted that one of the specificities of these collective studies is precisely that they embrace flexible spatio-temporal coordinates, and there are examples of putting the methodologies they advocate into practise.

⁴ Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 215.

⁵ Conrad, *What is Global History?*, 3. The ongoing study here proposed, in terminological affinity with the studies examined in the text, the term "turn" is employed together with "global" as an umbrella formulation to bring together studies that focus their attention on phenomena on a global scale, problematizing the practices of methodological analysis characterized by the defense of national identities. The author is aware that this formulation could be spinous as new expressions such as global shift, global challenges or, more generally, global studies have been introduced. Some recent studies analyzed this issue in relation to art history: Irit Rogoff, "Turning". *e-flux journal*, #00, (2008): 1-7; Claire Farago, "The "Global Turn" in Art History: Why, When, and How Does It Matter?". In Daniel Savoy, *The Globalization of Renaissance Art*, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 299-313. Joshua I. Cohen, Foad Torshizi, Vazira Zamindar, "Art History, Postcolonialism, and the Global Turn". *ARTMargins*, 12, 2, (2023): 3-17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸ James Elkins, *Is Art History Global?* (New York-London: Routledge, 2006).

Another point of interrogation involves considering not only how art historians trained in the “West” approach objects from different educational geographical areas, but also how to interpret artistic phenomena, objects, movements of people that arise from the interaction between agents belonging to different visual cultures in geographical areas that can be both those normalized as Western but also those outsiders of them. In what way can the alternation of micro and macro approaches (e.g., social-cultural-geopolitical) affect the restitution of an investigation of the artist that is not aimed at the construction of a narrative erected on the authority of European/Western culture? Firstly, it is important to consider the answer to these questions as multifaceted. Indeed, a first exercise is to understand the genesis of the reflections that led to the flourishing of these interrogations as a constellated phenomenon. The idea of a constellated genesis arises from the assumption that the questioning of the paradigms and the entry of a new terminology into the art-historical discipline cannot be relegated to the latter alone. It is true that today global art history, after years of debates, seems to have achieved its own solidity and “autonomy”, but when discussing the genesis of this approach a good exercise is to begin by relating it to movements of thought, historiographic movements that are closely associated with it.

Taking a cue from the views expressed by Aruna d’Souza and Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, it emerges that the impact of post-structuralism and postcolonial studies has played a significant role in consolidating art history on a global scale.⁹ Post-structuralism, along with postcolonial studies, has supported the notion that power dynamics are constructed and perpetuated through language, discourse, and disciplinary practices.¹⁰

From this principle arose the field known as visual studies, which aimed to challenge the binary divisions prevalent within art history. While not directly addressing geographical aspects, visual studies

sought to break down dichotomies such as West versus non-West, art versus craft, and high art versus low art. In doing so, it opened new possibilities for research and proposed alternative methodological approaches.¹¹ This critique of binarism is also a pivotal aspect of postcolonial studies, particularly regarding the notions of “us” and “them”, and it is closely intertwined with the critique of Eurocentrism, which is also a focal point of global art history.

In practice, this theoretical attitude can be translated, for example, into the circulatory approach for the study of artefacts promoted by Kaufmann, Prunel, and Dossin in which precisely through the circulatory logic one can take “into account “others” without shutting them inside the prison of the notion of alterity or dismissing them as peripheral”.¹² Still within this reasoning and in search of an understanding of how the global shift entered the discipline, there are scholars who do not hold the stimuli of post-colonial studies as solely responsible. Prunel criticizes the periodization linked to the de-colonial turn, arguing that it lacks analysis. In her opinion, moreover, the global turn of art historians was more affected by the globalization of the contemporary art scene and the art market. In Prunel’s idea, world art history finds its global methodologies in comparative neuroscience, anthropology, and philosophy.¹³ The scholar proceeds to note that although post-colonial theory was taken into account, the focus of art history in the 1990s appeared to prioritize accommodating Marxism, psychoanalysis, and women’s perspectives, rather than critically questioning its inherent Western-centrism.¹⁴

In their research of the global turn in art history in the United States, Caroline A. Jones and Steven Nelson consider that although post-structuralist theories have had a strong impact on contemporary thinking regarding globalization, there had been comparative studies on a global scale in the United States long before the 1980s. The idea behind these contributions was to demystify the relationship

⁹ Aruna D’Souza and Jill H. Casid, *Art History in the Wake of the Global Turn* (Williamstown, Massachusetts: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2014), ix; DaCosta Kaufmann, Dossin, Joyeux-Prunel, *Circulations*, 28. The inclusion of “not only” highlights the significant impact of post-structuralist theories on research practices in the humanities, particularly in the field of history. These theories have prompted extensive introspection and meticulous analysis of research methodologies. This is also the reason why this article alternates a lot of methodological texts on global art history with post-colonial studies, in accordance with the assertion that global studies also emerge from post-colonial reflections.

See: Jason Gaiger, “Hegel’s Contested Legacy: Rethinking the Relation between Art History and Philosophy.” *The Art Bulletin* 93, no. 2 (2011): 178-194;

Jonathan Arac, “Post-Structuralism and the Contexts of History,” *American Studies* 36, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 105-114; Hans Kellner, “Narrativity in History: Post-Structuralism and Since,” *History and Theory* 26, no. 4 (December 1987): 1-29. The relationship between post-structuralism and historical practices comes from a critique of the procedures associated with positivistic analysis. From this there is also a fierce critique of Hegel especially by that post-structuralism declined in post-colonial studies, to explore further: Simon Gikandi, “Post-structuralism and post-colonial discourse”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Post-colonial Literary Studies*, ed. Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); M. A. Rafey Habib, *Hegel and Empire: From Post-colonialism to Globalism*, (Cham: Springer International Pu, 2018).

¹⁰ Souza and Casid, *Art history in the wake*, x. Some references for post-colonial theory: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow Sacrifice,” *Wedge* 7, no. 8 (Winter/Spring 1985): 66-111; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Sarah Harasym, *The Post-colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (New York: Routledge 1990); Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Post-colonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

¹¹ On the links between post-structuralism and visual studies: Whitney Davis, *A General Theory of Visual Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); James Elkins and Kristi McGuire, *Theorizing Visual Studies: Writing Through the Discipline* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

¹² DaCosta Kaufmann, Dossin, Joyeux-Prunel, *Circulations*, 2. Although controversial within the methodological apparatus of this writing: Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg, “Centro e Periferia” in *Storia dell’arte italiana*, vol. 1 (Torino: Einaudi, 1979) 287-352; Francesca Trivellato, “Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?” *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011).

¹³ Joyeux-Prunel, “Art history,” 17.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 429.

between West and non-West.¹⁵ Nevertheless, like Conrad, Jones and Nelson trace the interest in the global back to the years after the Cold War, even defining globalism as an obsession. Moreover, in their opinion art history “becomes” global in the wake of neoliberalism, World Bank development policy, biennial culture, and contemporary artistic nomadism.¹⁶

A key contribution to understanding the link between the global turn and art history is the book *Is Art History Global?* edited by James Elkins.¹⁷ One of the main reflections in this volume is related to the search for global and common methodological practices for art history: namely, the focus on what practical attitude to adopt towards the subjects of art history. In order to apply such attitude, it is fundamental to maintain a certain awareness that a global art history is first and foremost a question of global research practices and thus of non-hegemony of paradigms of analysis.

2. Global art history and transnationality

What can be inferred from the introductory considerations is that global art history can also be seen as a historiographical movement in continuous dialogue with other disciplines. The deconstruction of canonical art history narratives comes from a first major consideration, namely that traditional and Western history, is written based on systems of interpretation that are rooted in the implicit and explicit, introjected, or non-introjected advocacy of national identity. Starting from this consideration the topic of transnationality comes first in *Circulations in the Global History of Art*, the book edited by DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, which encompasses multiple theoretical devices for investigating artistic mobility through a *longue durée* perspective. The circulatory approach is supported by the concept of transnationality which is itself an operational concept used in global history. It is no coincidence that the historiographical *ex-cursus* of the above-mentioned authors begins with the German anti-nationalistic intellectual *milieus* and the writings of the Annales School.¹⁸ The idea behind these approaches is to assess the dominant nationalist model for historical narrative and to propose methods of analysis that look for social and cultural elements, and that go beyond the topographical limits of nation-state.¹⁹

In this regard, the words of Akira Iriye are clarifying; he in fact claims that: “L'émergence d'une

histoire transnationale suggère une prise de conscience que la nation n'est plus (si elle l'a jamais été) l'unique paramètre de l'identité humaine ou le cadre principal des affaires humaines”.²⁰ For Iriye, therefore, looking at history as transnational means attempting to write an “international” history no longer from the angle of relations between states, but rather showing how private or semi-private organizations, as well as international institutions, participate in the construction of a world order that goes beyond national and cultural borders. In this case, the main roles have been played by individuals, foundations, religious organizations, as well as non-governmental and non-profit organizations on the one hand and intergovernmental organizations on the other. These non-state actors maintained their own vision and sought to create a world based and built on postulates different from those defined by the great powers and sovereign states.²¹

The assumption that transnationality, as an operational concept in the methodology of investigation, is a form of overcoming the nation-state category has also led to a rethinking of spatiality and temporality in the art-historical discipline. In this regard, mention should be made of the work done by the ARTL@S project and even previously by Kaufmann in his book *Toward a Geography of Arts*.²² The theoretical foundations of the ARTL@S project explained by Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel are guidelines for understanding how space is part of researches that are positioned in global art history. In this discussion, space is understood to mean:

a multi-dimensional area in which individuals or groups as well as material objects are located. This area may be physically noticeable, in the way that we experience the presence of a painting in an exhibition, or not at all, as in the case of an artist in a given neighborhood, an exhibition in a metropolis, or the circulation of works of art around international circles. Whatever the case may be, a position in space is socially and politically visible and traceable, and our ambition is to analyze those implications at the core of artistic creation.²³

This definition derives from the spatial turn and the *Kunstgeographie*.²⁴ According to Prunel, since the 1990s Denis Cosgrove's work on landscape led art historians to consider space and time, thus bringing together the concerns of cultural geographers and geo-historians.²⁵ This method is based on the

¹⁵ Catherine A. Jones and Sarah Nelson, “L'histoire de l'art aux États-Unis et le tournant vers la mondialité,” *Perspective* 2 (2015): 99.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Elkins, *Is Art History Global?*, 9.

¹⁸ Although there are different positions on the genesis of global approach in art history, for example Zijlmans and Damme relate this to the dialogue with cultural anthropology and psychology: Catherine J. M. Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme, *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches* (Rotterdam: Episode, 2008), 70.

¹⁹ DaCosta Kaufmann, Dossin, Joyeux-Prunel, *Circulations*, 6.

²⁰ Isao Akira, “Réflexions sur l'histoire globale et transnationale,” *Cahiers d'histoire. Revue d'histoire critique* 121 (2013): 97. For a better understanding of the movements of transnational history: Akira Iriye and Pierre Yves Saunier, *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History: From the Mid-19th Century to the Present Day*, 2 vols. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

²¹ Christian Maurel, *Manuel d'histoire globale. Comprendre le “global turn” des sciences humaines* (Malakoff: Armand Colin, 2014), 100.

²² Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art* (Chicago: Chicago University Press 2004).

²³ Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, “ARTL@S: A Spatial and Trans-national Art History Origins and Positions of a Research Program,” *Artl@s Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (2012): 10.

²⁴ See: Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography*, 68-106, for an in-depth reflection on *Kunstgeographie*,

²⁵ Denis Cosgrove, *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). In an interdisciplinary sense, aspects brought from other areas such as Human Geography are also relevant, see: Henri Lefebvre, *La Production De L'espace*. (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1974). David Harvey, *Spac-*

notion that space is a historical construction and that aspects of the landscape are the product of processes that are both natural and social or cultural as well as natural. This spatial turn, which is closely related to the linguistic and later the cultural turns in the human sciences, had a significant impact on art history, particularly in how much attention it has given to both the issue of “places of art” and the representation of space.

Another point of reflection by scholars who favor this approach is the relativization of the space-place binomial that has often led, in the history of art for example, to the creation of the style-place link and consequently to the strengthening of nationalist thoughts. In fact, looking at *Towards a Geography of Arts*, it is clear the attempt to formulate an approach that criticizes the concept of style linked to a certain “national school” or “regional school” by encouraging scholars to problematize concepts such as centre, periphery, capital. This book, as the author himself declares, is “about the place of art” by first questioning what has been said in the past about the effects of the environment, natural and cultural, on what humans have created.²⁶

What the author emphasizes is the importance of the coexistence of space-time categories in art historical investigation. A fundamental part of this book is also a critique of the historiography of the geography of art that has not questioned the concepts of identity and place and the role of place and time in contrast to ethnicity. Through this text, Kaufmann lays the foundations for a critique of the diffusionist methodology used in art history. This means that the method of analysis used “will be one in which geography is studied by historical example”.²⁷ What the author suggests is to approach the problems of geography of art through local instantiation, hence the use of local case studies, a research practice close to cultural geography as cultural-historical geography. This, therefore, translates into looking at general issues through localized and ecological investigation in particular circumstances.²⁸

Therefore, at this point, it can be asserted that approaches such as the transnational and geographical (which themselves become investigative devices) provide the framework for investigations into artistic circulation, disrupting research practices that are based on the logic of influence and passive reception, or a logic of diffusion. This implies that the examination process to be implemented does not

view moving artistic phenomena as closed and static entities, nor does it perceive migration as a simple transfer from point A to point B. This can be linked to Bhabha’s concept of “third space” that invites to re-imagine artistic mobility as a dynamic interaction of multiple exchanges, negotiations and creative possibilities that transcend fixed notions of origin and destination.²⁹

3. Circulation: terms as analysis devices

In this game of “turning point” and search for new configurations in the study of artistic mobility, the reflections by global art historians have heavily relied on rethinking new vocabularies and grammars to subvert “centric” and diffusionist narratives. Rather than revisionism, it is a matter of opening to new methodological constellations. In fact, in this line of reasoning, it is not a question about imposing or censoring the specific terminology that continues to be used; instead, the matter is about reformulating narratives. In this process of reformulation, the use of terms as positioning devices within one historiographical movement rather than another represents a kind of statement of intent. From this linguistic re-consideration emerges a new way of looking at the considered artistic objects.³⁰

In addition to transnationality, the concept of circulation can be considered as a second analytical device for studying artistic mobility. But what exactly does this concept entail? The statement of intent put forth by Catherine Dossin, Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, and Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann provides clarification from this perspective:

We advocate an approach to transnational, global history through the study of circulations in a historical materialist perspective for several reasons [...] The study of circulations as we envision it should not be confused with studies of diffusion or influence that often contributed to the definition of artistic national identities and claims.³¹

What is therefore clear is that when discussing circulations, the focus is not on diffusion. In this regard, the investigation conducted by Stefanie Gänger, who examines the usage of the term “circulation” by scholars of global history, is highly relevant.³² Gänger quotes scholar Kapil Raj to reinforce the difference between circulation and diffusion:

es of Hope, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), also: Jonathan Harris, “Art History and the Global Challenge: A Critical Perspective”. *Art@s Bulletin* 6, no. 1 (2017).

²⁶ DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography*, 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁸ *Ibid.* For theoretical references related to the “spatial turn”: Charles W. J. Withers, “Place and the ‘Spatial Turn’ in Geography and in History,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 70, no. 4 (October 2009): 637-658; Barney Warf and Santa Arias, *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2014).

²⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location*, 37.

³⁰ For further references on the relationship between language use and research practices, including the perspective of critical discourse studies: Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Routledge, 2015); Ruth Wodak, Ruth and Michael Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 2nd edition (London: SAGE Publications, 2009); Teun van Dijk, *A. Discourse and Power* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Lillie Chouliaraki and Norman Fairclough, *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999). The topic in itself is very broad, but I find relevant to give a little input on the importance of reformulating discourses as a form of “making noise”. I more specifically refer to the book: Brigitte Vasallo, *Lenguaje inclusivo y exclusión de clase*, (Barcelona: Larousse, 2021), 57.

³¹ DaCosta Kaufmann, Dossin, Joyeux-Prunel, *Circulations*, 1-2.

³² Stephanie Gänger, “Circulation: Reflections on Circularity, Entity, and Liquidity in the Language of Global History,” *Journal of Global History* 12 (2017): 303-318.

the value of ‘circulation’ lay precisely in that it served ‘as a strong counterpoint to the unidirectionality of “diffusion” or even of “dissemination” or “transmission”, of binaries such as metropolitan science/colonial science or center/periphery, which all imply a producer and an end user.’³³

Again, according to Stefanie Gänger, one can attribute the popularity of the term on the one hand to its “uncontaminated” appearance and on the other hand to the fact that it seems to refer to an independent entity while at the same time giving an idea of direction and liquidity. Furthermore, another aspect Gänger draws on is that the term is not only used in the humanities but is also primarily associated with economics, biology, anatomy, and physiology (in particular regarding the cardiovascular system).³⁴ These characteristics of the term have led scholars to use it precisely in accordance with its medical and economic meanings, namely evoking a circular and closed process.

The idea of a closed system then leads back to the idea of movement within a network as a structure, as a transfer that occurs within delimited spaces and systems that have their own morphology, or as Arjun Appadurai put it, as “flow” along established circulatory paths, shaped, and governed by “circuits or networks”.³⁵ According to Appadurai, it is necessary to distinguish circulation problems from connectivity problems and to look at the various periods as characterized by different levels of circulation. Following this logic, the scholar returns to the relationship between the circulation of forms and the forms of circulation, where by forms he means “a family of phenomena, including styles, techniques, or genres, which can be inhabited by specific voices, contents, messages, and materials”.³⁶

In turn, Monica Juneja considers circulation as a significant entry point that challenges to elevate investigation to a different level, in order to find precise language for theorizing the various forms of relationality that emerge from mobility and encounters. This requires integrating macro-perspectives by delving into the complexities of specific localities, including urban and rural areas, past and present contexts, and central and marginal regions, where the dynamics of real encounters involving diverse actors, practices, and temporalities unfold.³⁷

Circulatory logic includes at the same time the idea of the presence of movement and more precisely of migration or multiple migrations; therefore, it is also advantageous to reflect on the idea of forms

that move, even if reflections in global art history, as seen on the basis of the analyzed authors, have extended beyond forms and include the movement of people, knowledge and objects. In this dynamic interaction, the logic of circulation reveals its relevance as a mechanism that transcends the boundaries of disciplines.

The operational concept of circulation extends not only to physical and material movements, but also to virtual ones. As an example, to contemplate the wide applicability (also in the digital environment) of this analytical device, one can consider its relevance to the mobility of images, widely explored at the intersection of visual studies and global art studies. Although this specific topic is extremely broad to investigate here, it is nevertheless considered to shed light on the *Visual Contagions* project, led by Professor Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel of the University of Geneva (Switzerland). The project investigates the global circulation of images from 1890 to the early years of the Internet, examining how images and styles circulate through time and space. This exploration uses digital methods to study visual contagions, delving into the visual dimension of globalization.³⁸ The research examines the circulation of images, both as material artefacts (paintings, sculptures, engravings, etc.) and as reproductions (in illustrated periodicals, photographs or online), examining the channels of circulation (cultural, geographical, political) and the visual logics that guide their dissemination. The work shows the innovative potential unleashed by deep learning and artificial intelligence algorithms applied to images, shedding light on the epidemiology of visual dissemination.³⁹

In conclusion, circulatory logic emerges as a liquid concept, applicable to different movements. Amorphous in its uses and protean in its semantics, circulation encompasses a spectrum of movements, from circular paths within closed systems to open, unidirectional diffusion. While polysemy is natural for words, it poses a challenge for a concept that aspires to be theoretical in the jargon of global historians. Precise and contingent concepts are essential for a functional terminology for global studies.⁴⁰

4. Periodization, mobility, migration, liaisons routières

Considering artistic practices, artistic knowledge, artists in motion within the framework of circulation and space as a paradigm, one can conceive of a research methodology that, as suggested by Antonella Romano “investigates the spatial configurations that

³³ Ibid., 309.

³⁴ Ibid., 307.

³⁵ Arjun Appadurai and Pierre Sicard, “Savoir, Circulation et Biographie Collective,” *L’Homme* No. 156 (Oct.-Dec. 2000): 29-38. Arjun Appadurai, “Circulation ≈ Forms,” keynote lecture for ‘Loose Canons’ conference, New York University, Department of Media, Culture and Communication, September 28, 2007.

³⁶ Arjun Appadurai, “How Histories Make Geographies: Circulation and Context in a Global Perspective,” text based on a lecture delivered at the opening ceremony of the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context” at Heidelberg University on October 20, 2008, 9.

³⁷ Monica Juneja, *Circulation and Beyond – The Trajectories of Vision in Early Modern Eurasia*, in DaCosta Kaufmann, Dossin, Joyeux-Prunel, *Circulations*, 60.

³⁸ <https://www.unige.ch/visualcontagions/project>, last visited on 18th January 2024.

³⁹ Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, “Visual Contagions, the Art Historian, and the Digital Strategies to Work on Them,” *Artl@s Bulletin* 8, no. 3 (2019): Article 8.

⁴⁰ Gänger, *Circulation*, 318.

legitimize knowledge products as “sciences”.⁴¹ The idea of movement and mobility brings to the foreground not only the notion of movement in space, but also in time. For this reason, in studies of mobility and cultural exchanges, questions of periodization and systems of periodization also come into play.

First and foremost, the concept of mobility, when applied to the study of the circulation of artifacts and artists,⁴² can help transcend the limitations imposed by stylistic categories that have long been responsible for framing the circulation of artifacts and artists within a logic of influence. The conventional portrayal of the artist as a “germinator” who disseminates their own style is challenged by this perspective.⁴³ Statements such as the following make sense through a study positioned within the parameters of *Kunstgeographie*:

Treating objects or monuments according to categories including periods that are derived from considerations of western European art is obviously questionable when they must be related to different sorts of places both within and outside Europe. Forms, contents, and functions of art in Aztec Mexico, Momoyama Japan, and Renaissance Italy, are manifestly not the same. Labels such as Renaissance or Baroque do not describe the same phenomena when they are applied to Central Europe or Latin America and when they are used to account for supposedly similar phenomena in Italy, in regard to which such terms were originally derived.⁴⁴

This reasoning of overcoming stylistic categories as a paradigm of analysis thus can lead to look at other elements, and above all elements that allow a study of commonality. The problem of style as a paradigm is linked to the controversial game of periodization that, according to Kaufmann, lasted at least until the 1970s “as witnessed by the books originating in the popular series published by Penguin Books that was devoted to style and civilization”.⁴⁵

Thus, once it has been recognized that it is not style that circulates but concepts and ideas, also painters and other agents understood as physical persons, and that a process of re-adaptation is enacted in the place one encounters, it is possible to understand the importance of the parameters used

in global art history. It is precisely through the expansion of art history into a global dimension, in fact, that the trinomial style-time-space is being questioned along with the idea of influence. But what is there beyond style then? In the case of the circulation of artists, there are: geopolitical, social, material dynamics, the intersection of micro and macro-histories, and even the roads these people travelled. In this regard, Braudel advocated that “the importance of these connections becomes evident. They serve as the infrastructure for any coherent history”.⁴⁶ Not only the land routes, but also the sea routes, or other material and immaterial elements such as the institutions/networks to which artists were affiliated, are relevant. From these considerations, it is also possible to establish which sources are to be used in art historical research and, above all, to what extent theoretical positioning directs attention to certain data rather than others. The process of reconstructing the artistic activity of a painter, for instance, involves a thorough examination by cross-referencing of data. It extends beyond the traditional focus on frescoes and canvases and includes a significant emphasis on travel literature, for example (if the painter travelled or wrote about it). Additionally, letters and diaries of fellow travelers who shared experiences with the painter are considered precious sources. By incorporating these diverse perspectives, the painter’s work becomes interconnected with other individuals and the dynamics of the migratory process. This approach acknowledges the complexity and richness of the artist’s experiences, allowing for comprehensive understanding of their contributions.

When considering the term “artistic mobility” and its connection with the concept of circulation and the parameters of global art history, the works of Joachim Rees and Juliane Noth can be taken as a reference. With *The Itineraries of Art. Topographies of Artistic Mobility in Europe and Asia*, they propose a study based on a historiography of *longue durée* of routes seen as trajectories that cut across cultural geographies and periodization.⁴⁷ The volume’s contributors propose a methodological approach that begins by defining the spatial dimensions of artistic mobility at a conceptual level. The theoretical framework of the volume draws heavily from Tim Cresswell’s studies on mobility. This latter author seeks to operationalize the concept of “mobility” across various disciplines

⁴¹ Antonella Romano, “Des sciences et des savoirs en mouvement: réflexions historiographiques et enjeux méthodologiques,” *Diásporas* 23-24 (2014): 78.

⁴² The application of a logic of mobility raises the question of the exclusive focus on artists and their production. Therefore, confluent agents and catalysts of mobility, such as art dealers or historians themselves, who put the same artifacts into circulation, become subject of study. Not only the modes of transport and preservation during the movement are explored, but also institutions and diplomatic personalities enabling the movement, exhibitions, collections, books on the move. See page 7 when discussing Akira Iriye’s reflections.

⁴³ David Young Kim, *The Traveling Artist in the Italian Renaissance: Geography, Mobility, and Style* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 5.

⁴⁴ Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, “Malaise dans la périodisation,” *Perspective* 4 (2008): 599.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 597. For Kaufmann the first authors to question the periodization-style relationship were: George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962); George Kubler, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient America: The Mexican, Maya, and Andean Peoples* (Harmondsworth and Baltimore: Penguin, 1962); Jan Białostocki, “Das Modusproblem in den bildenden Künsten: zur Vorgeschichte und zum Nachleben des ‘Modusbriefes’ von Nicolas Poussin” (Cologne: Dumont, 1981), 2nd ed., 12-42.

⁴⁶ Juliane Noth and Joaquim Rees, *The Itineraries of Art: Topographies of Artistic Mobility in Europe and Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 9. For Fernand Braudel: Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1949), 259; Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, XVe-XVIIIe siècle*, vols. 1, 2, and 3 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1979). Pierre Braudel, “Les origines intellectuelles de Fernand Braudel: Un témoignage,” *Annales. Economies, sociétés, civilisations* 47, no. 1 (1992): 237-244.

⁴⁷ Noth and Rees, *The Itineraries of Art*.

and perspectives. He introduces the idea of “constellations of mobility”,⁴⁸ which involves understanding the historical existence of fragile senses of movement, meaning, and practice, encompassing political and regulatory aspects of mobility. According to Cresswell, constellations of mobility are transient patterns of movement, representation, and activities that can be roughly estimated in terms of their distribution in space and time. He builds on Walter Benjamin’s constellation theory, which suggests that elements of future constellations are already present and that seemingly outdated constellations from the past may reemerge unexpectedly in the present. These constellations should be seen as dynamic, as not all changes in these force fields can be solely explained from a historical perspective.⁴⁹

Additional reinforcing reflections on the logic of artistic mobility can be found in the episodic approaches of Tim Brooks.⁵⁰ These approaches commence by examining local circumstances and regional references, with a subsequent shift in focus towards exploring the integration of these experiential spaces into artistic labor through an iterative process. Simultaneously, these spaces undergo transformation as geographic mobility evolves into pictorial movement.

The concept of “*liaisons routières*”⁵¹ in Braudel’s sense serves as a conceptual entry point for the diverse array of images, objects, and texts that, through their material composition, media, and narrative, mediate between physical movement along plausible routes and their production and perception in an iconic manner. Furthermore, these route links act as organizational components for constellations of mobility, which can be understood as sequences of “mobilities and anchorages”.⁵² A diachronic perspective is introduced with the aim of shedding light on the long-term nature of long-distance interactions, at least in an illustrative manner. It is important to contemplate the contemporary genealogy of our interest in knowledge, considering the critical discourse on the politics of mobility and space that has gained prominence in art studies since the 1990s.⁵³

5. Conclusions

All the historiographical movements converging in this writing seem to share a common thread, which is a reconsideration of lexical, grammatical, and research practices. The author also believes that the use of certain terms over others is a form of positioning within a specific methodological framework. However, it is essential to approach the definition of terms as devices with care. This article argues that

the deconstruction of narratives and the creation of counter-narratives can begin by rethinking the words used. This process should not become an interpretative cage but rather an imaginative effort to explore new formulations.⁵⁴ These new constellations bring the analysis of artistic objects and practices closer to the reality in which we live, engaging in a dialogue with it.

Today, art history, like other humanities and social sciences, is going through a significant conceptual fervor. Through the ongoing negotiation of research parameters, the discipline advocates for fundamental themes such as gender equality, inclusion/exclusion issues, geography and spatiality, and transnationality. In this theoretical enthusiasm, we witness the discipline breaking free from academic orthodoxy and opening new perspectives. Thus, global art history emerges as a historiographical paradigm, while maintaining a dialogue with other approaches and disciplines.

Moreover, we face a multitude of reflections on why we study certain phenomena in specific ways and, above all, what the epistemological and theoretical roots of these approaches are. For example, there is a questioning of why visual studies are given greater prominence in certain contexts compared to others, or the emphasis on *connoisseurship*, as highlighted in the volume *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks*.⁵⁵ These reflections seem to lead to a more pronounced adherence and a specific position within certain approaches compared to others.

Through a critical analysis of the intrinsic links between art and politics, the discipline seeks to investigate the complexity of globality and the dynamics of circulation, migration, and movement of art, artists, and artistic objects. It invites profound reflection on the relationships between culture, power, and identity, opening new horizons of interpretation and providing critical tools to understand the complexity of the contemporary world.

As a final question and an invitation for future research: is there still room for the image in the global turn?⁵⁶ The concepts of mobility and circulation discussed in this article are approached from a materialistic rather than speculative perspective, focusing on the movement of people, practices, paper, and objects rather than images. Without delving into the definition of the image, the article leaves open the exploration of how devices of transnationality, circularity, and mobility can be applied to this concept, leaving the answer to this potential new methodological constellation for future reflections.⁵⁷

⁴⁸ Tim Cresswell, “Towards a Politics of Mobility,” in Mari Hvattum, Janike Kampeveld eds., *Routes, Roads and Landscapes* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 163-177.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Timothy Brook, *Vermeer’s Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2006).

⁵¹ Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1949), 259.

⁵² Noth and Rees, *The Itineraries of Art*, 15.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Juneja, *Circulation and Beyond*, 61.

⁵⁵ Matthew Rampley, Thierry Lenain, Hubert Locher, Andrea Pinotti, Charlotte Schoell-Glass, and C.J.M. (Kitty) Zijlmans, eds., *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks*, vol. 212/4 (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

⁵⁶ Page 11 of this writing, note 39, on *Visual Contagions* project as an example of this dialogue.

⁵⁷ The beginning of this problematization can be found in: James Elkins, *Visual Studies: A Skeptical Introduction* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2003).

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