Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism

The 'war on terror' distributed the spectacle of war and the spectre of fear into almost every feature of everyday life, and also provided the justification for new forms authoritarian control over public debate. From the outset artists and other public figures complained that the 'war' was fought without public dialogue and consensus. As the public was being told that it could not be fully informed of the events, there was a feeling of resentment that the suspension of democratic principles was compromising the place of the individual in the public sphere. It was also a critical juncture in relation to the status of the image. In the age of ambient spectacles and networked society, the relationship between image and event became entangled in the fluid processes of production and feedback. Hence, it compelled artists like Liam Gillick to proclaim that these events marked the need for new aesthetic and political models.

> Much postmodern theory was based on how to understand a globalised environment of relativism, subjectivity and simulation. We are now facing a situation of specificity and desperate rationalisation in Iraq and elsewhere. Art became more and more diverse throughout the 20th Century. The Iraq war is an example of one of the many clarifications that may appear to render art more and more irrelevant. The US army has reconvened and prays to its God for strength. The factions in Iraq pray to theirs. Everywhere we see the routine obscenity. For artists, the combination of piety and pragmatism from politicians on all sides is not worth showing back to them. Documenting the increasing piles of body parts is pointless pornography. What artists can do is occasionally step outside of their normal practice and stand as citizens against the delusions of their leaders. This is an exceptional moment, where it is necessary for some to suspend their normal work in order to make a direct statement. In this context, the ICA exhibition is not an answer, it is a melancholic and sullen response. The idea of creating a memorial to something that is still taking place is an honest concession. It is no good looking back to some earlier moment of apparent cultural consensus. We have to look instead towards art as a carrier of differences and a perfect form for the revelation of paradox.[1]

Similar attitudes and responses could be found in a wide range of artistic responses to the 'war on terror'. In the description of his recent project for the New Museum in New

[1] http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/artblog/2007/may/22/isthereanythingforarttosay

York, *It Is What It Is,* (2009), Jeremy Deller stressed that "it is not an anti-war piece, it is already too late for that, it is about the war". In one sense this may sound like a clever ruse to escape the dismissive label of mere protest art. However, it also echoes Gillick's comment on the problematic function of the place of the artist during a time of war. How can an artist respond after it has already begun? The war itself is a hideous limit point of human violence that beggars explanations and justifications. If you cannot stop it, does this mean that you are forced into either, silent submission, or reportage of the horror? Deller's project takes a different approach. It was an installation that included the banner with the title in English and Arabic, a map of both the United States and Iraq in which various cities had been twinned with each other[2], photographs from Iraq, the remnant of a car that was destroyed by an explosion in Baghad, and a comfortable and open space in which visitors to the Museum could, at different times of the day, speak to either a soldier who had served in the war, an academic, refugee or a UN representative. After its first installment at the New Museum in New York it toured throughout the United States. This project was not offering an answer to the war, on the contrary, it presented the opportunity to discuss the event with someone who had direct experience or knowledge. The banner makes a strong declaration, the photographs have a disturbing documentary function, and the car has enormous metonymic associations to the bodies of war. However, Deller adds that, the purpose of displaying these objects is to use them as 'prompts' for new discussions and he stresses the "project is about people meeting each other… my role is as a facilitator."[3] Hence, we could surmise that the point of the project was not confined to the symbolic meaning or formal properties of the installation, but developed in the interplay between the objects and the creation of a small public sphere.

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[2] It is worth comparing this use of the banner to the more disjunctive use of this form by Thomas Hirschhorn. Thomas Hirschhorn created an 18-meter long banner that was composed of images of dead bodies from the Iraq War. The images were all drawn from the most proximate of sources – the internet – and yet his title of this work, *The Incommensurable Banner* 2008, suggests that by putting these images together, he has not necessarily helped make sense of the event.

[3] The research that was involved in the preparation for this project, interviews with the participants, maps of the journey and video from the different points of the journey are all available on a website. I would argue that the exhibition comprises the totality of this process. See http://www.conversationsaboutiraq.org/ Dellar's practice involves collaborations with individuals and groups. His attention is directed towards the ordinary and habitual systems of belief and his aim is to bring together groups who would not otherwise connect but may find value from being in dialogue with each other.

The function of art in the mediation of public dialogue, that was made explicit in Deller's project, was not purely the result of a revolt against the 'war on terror'. It also drew on an emergent set of aesthetic practices that utilized the form of social encounters and collaborative processes.[4] For instance, artistic collectives like Stalker were primarily concerned with the construction of events in nomadic settings. Similarly, Rirkrit Tiravanija often turned a gallery into a temporary soup kitchen. He used the experience of preparing and serving food as instruments for 'sculpting' hospitality. Tino Sehgal, an artist who invites performers to improvise from his "constructed situations", is also insistent that the experience of the 'here and now' should be the pre-eminent effect of his work.[5] Francis Alys project *Bridge* 2006, in which he organised scores of local fishermen in Florida and Cuba to link their boats to two chains that head towards each other's horizon, furnished a poignant image of the yearning for connection and the perils of the crossing. *Superflex*, a Danish collective that tackles the unequal power relations between centre and periphery by developing innovative links between local organizations with global technology experts, are also as much concerned with the feedback of social effects as they are with the formal qualities of their aesthetic proposition.[6] In Mike Parr's performance *Close the Concentration Camps* (2002), the artist sewed his lips and eyelids together, as a gesture of solidarity with the refugees. Before the performance, art critic David Bromfield dismissed the idea as 'false realism' and questioned the vicarious motivation. Writing to Parr, he remarked: 'We both know that it is no good simply

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[4]Critics like Nicolas Bourriaud and Gerald Raunig who have divergent views on the politics of art, nevertheless share the view that the emergence of artistic practices that do not result in the production of visual object, and in more general the revision of the avant gardist 'shock tactics', is symptomatic of a more collectivist vision of art that goes beyond the frame of authorial intention and becomes entangled in the open-ended process of collaboration. Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, translated by James Gussen & Lili Porten, Lukas & Sternberg, New York, 2009, p 161. Gerald Raunig, *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century*, translated by Aileen Derieg, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles, 2007. See also Erkia Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, translated by Saskya Iris Jain, Routledge, London, 2008, p 18.

[5] "There are no photographs, no videos of his works – they are saved exclusively in the memory of the participants. It is possible to buy a "Sehgal" – but only in the presence of a notary, with whom one negotiates how and where the piece is to be executed." Sebastian Friezel, "Ceci n'est pas le vide", www.signandsight.com/features/203.html

[6] For instance in relation to the development of Biogas, a recyling and energy generating project in Africa, the critic Lars Bang Larsen concludes: "It is rather a matter of simulating some social structure to the point of the simulation becoming reality, aiming to stretch the concept of art and explode the objet d'art so that overall, cultural discussions may be involved and reflected in the sphere of art." Lars Bang Larsen, *Superflex: Art and Biogas*, 1997, www.superflex.net/text/articles/art_and_biogas.shtml

becoming a glorified stand-in for a camp inmate'. Parr replied that doing something 'bad' might have a greater social effect.[7]

But how do we make sense of such artistic experiments with the experience of the journey, the meal, the dance with strangers, or even the encounter between fellow fishermen? Furthermore why do artists like Lida Abdul keep returning to sites which have been devastated by war, and why does Tania Bruguera keep putting her finger into the wound?[8] It would be all too easy to read a general activist intent into these projects only to then either dismiss them as, either aesthetetic gestures that fail to produce real social change, or, just as worse, to grant them the title political art in order to reject any consideration of aesthetic merit.[9] This of course misses the point of art. When artists, such as Hans Haacke, Steve McQueen, and even the collective Multiplicity confront political questions they do not abandon aesthetic forms.[10] Art is not justified by adopting an activist stance. However, if an artist decides it is necessary to serve as a host, organise chance meeting with strangers, or even redeem the fragments amidst the ruins of war, this should suggests that some other kind of appeal, witnessing and symbolic register is being summoned. The artist is not simply becoming a chef or an archaeologist. They adopt these roles and return to these sites because the act of imagination and inquiry has something in common with hospitality and violence. The imagination approaches the space of the other and passes over the ruins and asks, 'have I been here before?' These relatively traceless practices are in one sense speaking directly to the condition of precarity - the social experience of living without certainty, the fear of loosing moorings, the dread that a life's labour will suddenly vanish without a trace.

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[7] Adam Geczy, "Focussing the Mind through the Body: an interview with Mike Parr", Artlink. Vol 23, No 1, 2003, p 45.

[8] Nikos Papastergiadis, "On Being Here and Still There", *Lida Abdul / Tania Brughera*, exhib. cat. FRAC Lorraine, 2006, p 54 -63

[9] For a critique of the failure of the artworld to engage with the interplay between the aesthetic and political dimensions of Documenta XI see McEvilley, Thomas, 'Documenta 11', *Frieze*, Issue 69, September, 2002, p 82.

[10] See for instance, Hans Haacke, 2002 New York poster project commemorating 9/11, Steve McQueen's *Gravesend*, 2007, and Multiplicity, *Solid Sea 03*, 2003, in which they provide contrasting video footage of the journeys taken along the Israeli and Palestinian corridors that link Hebron to Nablus, needless to say the Palestinian route is via numerous checkpoints, along broken surfaces and takes five times as long.

In response to this diverse range of contemporary artistic practices critics have tended to point to the inheritance of formal strategies from situationism and conceptual art, while also noting the common theoretical concerns with feminist and post colonial thought. This has resulted in a rather strained effort to distinguish these artistic projects from activist practices, and thereby claim that artists like Liam Gillick remain "judiciously peripheral" to the critical discourse that intersect with his practice.[11] My aim is to offer a different perspective on the relationship between art and politics. I am concerned with the way artistic practice is a medium for constituting 'the social' in contemporary society. In particular, I am concerned with specific artistic tendencies that reground the modes of agency and experiment with the institutions that forge collectivity. However, as I focus on a wide range of artistic reactions to the 'war on terror' and the 'refugee crisis' I will not be making the claim that they represent a superior moral agency. Similarly, my reason for examining the work of artists is not based on the belief that they, as individuals, are the best commentators on the tensions in contemporary society, or that they serve as harbingers of the changes that have not yet arrived in full.[12] The realm of contemporary art is of interest because it offers a conjunctural space where aesthetic concerns over the invention of forms meet political debates on the vitality of the public sphere.

Contemporary art can be defined by this conjunction of critique and creativity in the context of global connectivity. Globalization is the given name for the contemporary situation in which there is a marked diversification of the trajectories and intensification in the rate of flows across of borders. The globalizing force of travel and communication technologies has catapulted artists into new networks, stimulated the exchange of ideas, and challenged the institutional boundaries of art. However, this does not mean that the formations of contemporary are merely by-products of globalization. There are distinctive cultural and aesthetic processes that transpire through globalization. I will

[11] Monika Szewczyk, *Meaning Liam Gillick*, MIT Press, London, 2009, p 29.

[12] Raymond Williams always retained the belief that art through the articulation of its own forms provided the first glimpses into emerging realities. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1983. More recently Georgy Katsiaficas has claimed that: "Contemporary cultural political movements comprising collectives, projects and individuals who assemble sporadically at conferences and act according to local initiatives might very well represent future forms that even 'normal' politics might take." Georgy Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics*, AK Press, Edinburgh, 2006, p 215.

adopt the general concept of cosmopolitanism to address the cultural attitudes and responses to a globalization.

Cosmopolitanism is usually understood as a descriptive term that refers to both metropolitan situations in which cultural differences are increasingly entangled, and as a normative concept for representing a sense of moral belonging to the world as a whole. More recently, the concept of cosmopolitanism has been applied to the political networks formed through transnational social movements, and the emergent legal framework that extends political rights beyond exclusivist territorial boundaries. In its most comprehensive mode the concept of cosmopolitanism also assumes a critical inflection whereby it refers to the process of self-transformation that occurs in the encounter with the other.[13] Cosmopolitanism thus captures a diverse range of critical discourses that address the shifts in perspectival awareness as a result of the global spheres of communication, the cultural transformation generated by new patterns of mobility, the emergence of transnational social networks and structures, and the processes of self transformation that are precipitated through the encounter with alterity. Across this wide spectrum of interpretations there is no specific condition or singular goal to which the concept of cosmopolitanism can be pinned. It appears more like a concept for representing a process of interaction that is based on the principle of openness and is leading towards the formation of a global public sphere.

As a refinement of this broad category of cosmopolitanism I will address globally oriented artistic practices and aesthetic discourses under the heading of aesthetic cosmopolitanism. In particular, I will relate the concept of aesthetic cosmopolitanism to five tendencies that are increasingly shaping the trajectories of contemporary art – denationationalization, reflexive hospitality, cultural translation, discursivity, and the global public sphere. I prefer to speak of tendencies rather than characteristics, because the practices and discourses are both moving along autonomous lines of possibility, and interacting with a range of dynamic inputs, as opposed to being shaped by external forces. These tendencies signal that while contemporary art operates in the context of

[13] Gerard Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009.

globalization, it also adopts as a specific mode of cosmopolitan critique. The artistic practices that I will focus on tend to incorporate a critique of globalization as part of its material production, and in many instances, also include feedback loops that extend the interplay between political discourses and the emergent aesthetic form. These globally oriented artistic practices have also necessitated a new aesthetic discourse that can make sense of the mediated forms of social connectivity and reflexive modes of subjectivity. It has demanded new analytic tools, conceptual frameworks, and a de-provincialization of the whole paradigm for representing the context of artistic practice.[14]

Aesthetics, as a discourse for determining the meaning of art, did not possess a 'readymade' conceptual frame that could address the cosmopolitanization of art. Art history, for the most part of the twentieth century, has been a provincializing discourse. In the late 1980s the discourses on post colonialism and globalization rocked the foundations of art history. Since then there has been a concerted effort to rethink the context of art and identify the multiple spheres of cultural influence in visual production. There is no longer any doubt about the increasingly hybrid forms of contemporary culture and subjectivity. As the flow of people and symbols accelerates and the patterns of interaction intensify across the globe, then it is inevitable that cultural practices and ordinary lives become more mixed. The positive status of cultural difference and the

[14] Of course, this problem is not unique to art criticism but also a challenge to the very foundations of the humanities and the social sciences. For instance, the sociologists Boltanski and Chiapello complain of the "the shortage of descriptions tailored to the uniqueness of this world that has hitherto prevented critique from being more effective … our work has frequently come up against an absence of data and information – partly because social statistics are in crisis, and the centres of expertise have been broken up; partly because some data is carried out in a format that renders the new relations of force invisible." Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiappelo, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Gregory Elliott, Verso, London, 2007, 535. See also Harald Kleinsmidts critique of methodological blindness towards mobility in the humanities. Harald Kleinschmidt, "Migration, Reional Integration and Human Security: An Overview of Research Developments" in Harald Klienschmidt (ed.), *Migration, Regional Integration and Human Security*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2006, pp 61-102. Ulrich Beck's outline of a methodological cosmopolitanism as a counterpoint to the methodological nationalism that prevailed in the social sciences. Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider, "Unpacking Cosmopolitanism for the Social Sciences: a research agenda", *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol 51, Issue 1, pp 1-23. Also Gerald Raunig claims that the concept of the transversal and the adoption of a mobilities paradigm is better suited to the "embodied nature and experience of different modes of travel, seeing them in part as forms of material and social dwelling in motion … hence undermining existing linear assumptions about temporality and timing that assume that actors are able to do only one thing at a time, and that events follow each other in a linear order." Gerald Raunig, *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century,* trans. Aileen Derieg, Los Angeles, Semiotext(e), 2007), p 13.

acknowledgement of multiple cultural identities within the institutions of art, as Kobena Mercer observed, has widened the frontiers of art.[15] It precipitated a shift in the paradigm for representing the status of cultural origins, the agency of artists, the validity of media and spheres of artistic engagement. The aim of this emergent global perspective on art is not to reduce it to being a symptom of either liberationist or corporatist ideologies, but to grasp the distinctive scope and drive of the artistic imaginary. This has lead to a surge of curatorial and critical attention to the way artists are engaged in border crossing and rethinking the forms of contemporaneity.[16] However, even with the discrediting of monocultural perspectives, and the meteoric rise in status of artists, curators and critics from every corner of the world, Mercer begrudgingly notes that the process of institutional transformation has been an "ambivalent and uneven affair".[17] In other words, while there is no shortage of diasporic people in positions of cultural authority, and despite the general recognition that culture is shaped by a complex mixture of local and global sources, this has not lead towards the commensurate construction of cosmopolitan institutions. This demonstrates that globalization and cosmopolitanism do not necessarily go hand in hand.

The institutional deficit between the globalizing context and cosmopolitan worldview has often provoked hyperbolic claims about the function of art in the new world order. There are claims that use art to demonstrate either the impossibility or the imminence of cosmopolitanism. Such predictions rest on the assumption that art is either embedded in a cultural code that resists translation, or that it provides an index of emerging social and

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[15] Kobena Mercer, "Introduction", *Cosmopolitan Modernism*, ed., Kobena Mercer, INIVA & MIT Press, London, 2005, p 7.

[16]Nicolas Bourriaud claims that in the current epoch, what he calls 'altermodern' the critical curatorial task begins in the rethinking of modernity from its emergence in the present throughout the globe. Nicolas Bourriaud, Altermodern, Tate Publishing, London, 2009. Michael Zimmerman also places the wide horizon of the globe as the field in which the art historian must operate: "To search beyond herself, that was the mission, the teleology of art history. The identity of art history is unstable within an essentially open structure, but if art history projects her continuing border crossing into a comprehensive, global horizon, the horizon *tout court* of man as such, structures are essentially closed." (172) However, Zimmerman argues that this closure is circumvented as art history shifts its perspective from the focus on the homogeneous history of the image to a differentiated accounted on visual production that retraces the complexity of cross-cultural exchanges and encounters, and from this position he optimistically concludes: "Even in a globalized world, the horizon remains open." (180) Micheal Zimmerman, ed., *The Art Historian: National Traditions and Institutional Practices*, Clark Studies in the Visual, Williamstown, 2003.

[17] Mercer, p 16.

political trends. I reject both views. Obviously art is part of its political context, it draws on the unfolding energy of major social changes, and exerts its own power by revealing new forms of communication through the combination of elements that are otherwise foreign to each other. However, art is more than a 'response' to issues, a 'reaction' against events, nor is it just a document that reveals underlying social trends.[18] The links between the art and the politics are complex, and this relationship cannot be confined to an advocacy role for either the anti-globalization movement, or a new world government. Another view is possible.

In Classical Athens the person who showed disdain towards public life and refrained from putting forth his opinion into civil society was regarded an idiot. Today the positing of questions into the public sphere and the openness towards being moved by difference is not unique to artists. Jeremy Dellar's project *It Is What It Is* (2009) requires a commitment to engage with strangers. Participation in public dialogue is, of course, exposure to scrutiny, contestation and deliberation. The dialogue that is prominent in the scenes of contemporary art is not a vertical hierarchy of interpretation and disseminating, but a shuttling process of mediation. In a range of similar artistic projects we begin to witness a commitment towards a global public sphere. The global public sphere is not a material entity. It is more like an on-going and un-bounded conversation. The process that brings a global public sphere into view also presents a space for cosmopolitanism. However, before an individual can feel a sense of moral connectedness, organize new transnational social movements, and even explore the aesthetic dimensions of alterity, there must be an attendant mode for comprehending and assessing the cultural similarities and differences. This process, while it is often defined as a form of comparative and evaluative judgement, is ultimately an act of imagination.

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[18] The status of documentation in contemporary art practices, and the function of art as a document of its times has been the subject of considerable debate. For instance, Boris Groys has argued that documentary material is not divested of aesthetic force, and that it merits attention not because of it archival or salvific function – that is, its ability to salvage the partial memory of a past event – but through its capacity to generate an original narrative and construct its own structure for making meaning. If art is engaged in what Mark Nash calls a 'documentary turn', it does so not as a mere trace of an original event, but as a processes of gathering traces to construct its own historical and cultural meaning. See Boris Groys, *Art Power*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2008 and Mark Nash, "Reality in the Age of Aesthetics," Frieze 114 (April 2008): 119-124.

The justification for resorting to war and conflict is often represented as a breakdown in communication and a failure of the imagination. My aim is to focus on artistic projects that have been developed in the time of war and conflict. By contrast to the bellicose imaginary, I will argue that these artistic projects demonstrate a commitment to what I call the cosmopolitan imaginary. There can be no personal affiliation, social structure or aesthetic form that is globally oriented unless there is an image through which it gains shape and meaning. It is through the creation of an image of subjectivity and society that the interminable process of identification and substantiation of being and belonging operates. Globalization would be meaningless unless there was an image of a global order and the global self.[19] At some point this image was invented. The cosmopolitan imaginary is not confined to this dream of unfettered connectivity. It is, I would argue, born in the open conversation with others. Hence, a cosmopolitan imaginary is not an abstract ideal, a speculative vision of the future, nor even the necessary illusion that spurs contemplation of a better life. The cosmopolitan imaginary is the proposition of new forms of worldly existence. These forms are not bound by the outcomes imposed by the regulative mechanisms of globalizing forces, nor are they produced through the corporatised assemblage of transnational exchanges. The form of the cosmopolitan imaginary starts with the creative ideas and critical attitudes that artists and ordinary people use in their daily reflections and worldly engagements. Therefore in the beginning of globalization there is also a cosmopolitan imaginary.

Classical theories of Cosmopolitanism

The origins of the term cosmopolitanism are found in the maverick philosopher Diogenes's renunciation of the authority of the polis and his declaration – I am a citizen of the world. The idea that one could claim a moral connection to the whole world was passed on to Crates, and in turn he taught Zeno who developed a school that gathered in

[19] Barbara Creed, *Media Matrix: Sexing the New Reality*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest NSW, 2003, p. 193.

the stoa – the arcades that surrounded the agora of Ancient Athens. The eponymously named Stoics were the first to develop a cosmopolitan philosophy. They articulated four principles that continue to influence contemporary debates on cosmopolitanism. First, they rejected the polis as the absolute limit point to political belonging, and defined the idea of community through the incorporation of the whole of humanity. Second, they asserted that human rights were not constrained within geo-political boundaries. Third, they adopted a non-hierarchical vision of cultural value. Fourth, they encouraged an attitude of self-awareness through genuine curiosity and open exchange with the other. By pricking the narcissistic chauvinism that marveled at the existing political forms, encouraging an attitude of wonder and curiosity towards foreign cultural forms, developing a mode of cross-cultural comparison that was based on equal respect, the Stoics proposed a moral outlook that extended the principles of rights and obligations to all people rather than confining them to members of a community within a territorial boundary.

This cosmopolitan vision had a profound influence on Western philosophy and in the late nineteenth century Kant reinvigorated the pursuit of these goals.[20] However, unlike the early Stoics who saw the cosmopolitan ideal flowing from the animating force of love that is present in every person, Kant argued that the historical development of reason and its embodiment in Western legal-political frameworks, enabled the proposal of a more extensive form of civic obligation. He imagined a broad political and moral vision of a world order in which the respective nation-states were bound by common principles of freedom, equality and legislation. The progression from local to national and then international affiliation was in Kant's view a result of the historical developments in political organization. Kant also adopted a view on human nature that privileged the instincts for destruction and placed the collective capacity to share common feelings as a weaker and more fragile human quality that needed protection by political norms and legal regulations. Kant asserted that humans have common sentiments and have the capacity to communicate this sentiment of commonality. However, he also noted that the faculty of shared feeling and the principle of 'sensus communus' was never used as the

[20] Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View", 1784.

primary basis for establishing a political community. This reflection did not leave him with the conclusion that a cosmopolitan state may only remain as a perpetual aspiration. While also rejecting the view that 'universal civic society' could be developed from pure philosophical reflections on human interaction, he nevertheless argued that it could emerge as a consequence of the logical and historical unfolding of successive political formations. Hence, without the successive passage from primitive, to feudal and finally nation states, a new cosmopolitan order would be incomprehensible. Thus, Kant placed the historical process of development in political reasoning and rational deduction, rather than subjective feeling and aesthetic contemplation at the core of his philosophical discourse on cosmopolitanism. This approach influenced many of the modern innovations in international law and human rights and has served as the key starting point for almost all the contemporary approaches in the theories of cosmopolitanism.

Contemporary theories of Cosmopolitanism

In the past decade the term cosmopolitanism has gained greater public purchase as it has been adapted to address a wide variety of purposes and issues. It has become a key theme in debates on the shifts in the order of international relations, the powers of the nation state, the forms of cultural production, the social processes that are transforming the conditions of everyday life, and even the sense of personal belonging. It has also become a useful scholarly perspective that has been deployed by political theorists exploring the ideological impact of mobility, anthropologists that investigate the global patterns of cross-cultural affiliations, and in philosophical reflections on the forms of moral interconnectedness. [21] Cosmopolitanism has been used as a term to both describe the actual changes in the world, and as a normative challenge to feel global responsibility in terms of what Martha Nussbaum calls "concentricity".[22]

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[21] Gerard Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009

[22] "The challenge is to build concentricity in a way that really does extend outward rather than drawing the line somewhere, so that you demonise those who are outside the boundary." Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, New York: Routledge, 2001, p 348.

Political theorists such as David Held have proposed the concept of cosmopolitan democracy and global commonwealth to advance new norms and rules for transnational governance.[23] Bhiku Parekh has sought to challenge the national limitations of liberal multiculturalism by adopting a pluralist cosmopolitan perspective to re-examine the relationship between cultural minorities and hegemonic cultures.[24] Antonio Negri has also adopted a perspective on political struggle that resembles a cosmopolitan optic. In place of the national proletariat, Negri has argued that the key agent for resistance is an fragmentary and loosely affiliated transnational network that he calls the 'multitude'. The site of struggle has also expanded beyond control of national industries and is now situated on what he calls the 'commons', which includes both the material resources, institutions and utilities that are embedded in a local place, but also the immaterial tools for global communication and symbolic identification.[25]

In cultural studies and anthropology the concept of cosmopolitanism has been at the centre of the critical understanding of how ordinary lives are being shaped by the processes of global mobility and that everyone is now required to engage in some level of reflexive evaluation of how their own experiences are entangled in transnational networks of communication and attachment. Homi Bhabha argues that hybrid cultures are not only constituted in the border zones of cultural difference, but they are also producing a "cosmopolitan community envisaged in marginality".[26] Mica Nava also refers to this transformation of everyday life through the terms of visceral and ordinary cosmopolitanism.[27] One of the pioneers of this field, Nestor Garcia Canclini, has claimed that in the contemporary society "everyone translates".[28] In other words, everyone is to some extent living in a border zone, negotiating the flows of cultural symbols and

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[23] David Held, *Democracy and the global order: from the modern state to cosmopolitan governance*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995.
[24]Bhiku Parekh, *Rethinking multiculturalism: cultural diversity and political theory*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000.
[25] Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2009.
[26] Homi Bhabha, "Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism", in *Text and Nation*, eds Laura Garci-Morena and Peter C. Pfiefer, Camden House, London, 1996, pp 191-207. See also Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?,* Routledge, London, 2004. Jan Nederveen Pieterse*, Ethnicities and Global Multiculture*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2007.
[27] Mica Nava, *Visceral Cosmopolitanism*, Berg, Oxford, 2007.
[28] Nestor Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1995.

meaning of artifacts as they circulate across numerous cultural boundaries. Amidst these complex interactions people from all classes and backgrounds are involved in adjusting the given frameworks and simultaneously creating new interpretations of their experiences. In cultural studies, cosmopolitanism is not a 'top-down' perspective, but a term for referring to 'bottom-up' practices.

The sociological debates on globalization have also adopted cosmopolitanism as a key tool for addressing the impact of global mobility and the new modes of transnational communication.[29] Ulrich Beck has been at the forefront of utilizing the term cosmopolitanism to describe the erosion of nationalist barriers, the development of new forms of transnational governance, the emergence of cooperative social networks, as well as the perception that many economic and environmental issues can no longer be managed and regulated from within a nation centred view of the world.[30] Beck argues that the new cosmopolitan realities not only require a greater empathy for the dynamic specificities that are forged by the fluid processes of social transformation, but also a kind of spherical consciousness that grasps the new transnational alignments and global flows. This perspective is consistent with the general view that society and culture are undergoing radical transformation through the intensification and diversification of the processes of mobility and mixture. Hence, Beck claims that the concept cosmopolitanism is best used to refer to the processes that connect global forces to local structures, as well providing a new conceptual frame for defining the context of social investigation. Unlike the nation-centric approaches that directed social analysis throughout most of the twentieth century, Beck argues that the current predicament requires a new cosmopolitan methodology. The benefit of this approach is that it not only widens the scope for measuring social processes and extends the boundaries for mapping the social context, but it also encourages investigators to thematize the relational patterns between the local and the global. In short, Beck claims that this perspective is not only better suited to the new social movements but also provides an "epistemological shift" in the understanding of the inter-connectivities between local and global processes.

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[29] John Urry, *Mobilities*, Cambridge, Polity, 2007. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, editors. *Cosmopolitics: thinking and feeling beyond the nation*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998.
[30] Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2006.

Beck sees cosmopolitanization as the affirmative side of globalization. At the other end of the spectrum, the Marxist cultural geographer David Harvey takes a more pessimistic view on the relationship between cosmopolitanism and globalization. Harvey rejects the claim that cosmopolitanism can furnish a critical stance against globalization. For Harvey globalization is the driving socio-economic force that has deepened power differentials. He is dismissive of the use of cosmopolitanism as the basis for a universal ethic as he regards it as mere rhetoric that masks the exploitative logic and divisive social reality of global capitalism.[31] A similar stand off can be found in the debates over the impact of the discourse on cultural difference in the contemporary art institutions. Okwui Enwezor argues that the visual practices that emerged in the context of the debates on multiculturalism and postcolonialism were not only instrumental in radically revising the parameters of modernist subjectivity, but he also acknowledged that they played a key role in the reconfiguration of the museum as a platform for cross-cultural exchange.[32] By contrast Boris Groys argues that the emergence of the "postmodern taste for cultural diversity" was "formed by the contemporary market, and it is the taste for the market."[33] For me this is a bad case of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Groys has always celebrated the capacity of art to exert "an autonomous power of resistance", so why would artists that engage with cultural diversity only 'emerge' in order to fulfil the cannibalistic hunger of capital?[34]

The ambivalence towards cosmopolitanism is most pronounced in the philosophical debates that have examined its Eurocentric legacy and the reliance on a theory of

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[31] David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2009.

[32] Okwui Enwezor, "Mega-Exhibitions and the Antinomies of a Transnational Global Forum", *MJ-Manifesta Journal*, Winter 2003–Spring 2004, p. 102.

[33] Boris Groys, *Art Power*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2008, p 151. Groys is not alone in this reflex form of economic determinism in the face of cultural difference. The most influential essay in this field is still Slavoj Zizek, "Multiculturalism, or the cultural logic of Multinational Capitalism, *New Left Review*, no 225, Sept – Oct 1997.

[34]This question can only be left hanging on the twin hooks that have bedevilled art criticism, either all art that deals with cultural difference is merely epiphenomenal, or that all art is dependent on exclusive cultural codes. Either way the capacity for art to communicate across cultural boundaries or to retain its relative autonomy is utterly jettisoned.

universalism that is perceived as exclusivist and ethnically biased.[35] However, while the politics of the Humanist and Enligthenment theories of universalism have been subjected to thorough scrutiny, this has not entailed a wholesale rejection of the principles of cosmopolitanism. For instance, Paul Gilroy who has been a staunch critic of the complicity between western philosophy and slavery, is nevertheless an advocate of the need to develop a global framework for human rights and a platform for what he calls "planetary humanism".[36] Alasdair MacIntyre whose entire philosophical project has been a struggle with the pitfalls of both universalist and relativist truth claims has persisted with the aim of constituting a third culture as an ideal space for negotiating competing moral and cultural claims.[37] Gayatri Spivak, having demonstrated the utility of deconstructive methodology in exposing the semiotic multiplicity and radical difference in the narratives of origin, also asserts that all forms of representation have a necessary commitment to what she calls "strategic essentialism".[38] Political philosopher Etienne Balibar has also argued that universalism can no longer be defined as if it either possessed a singular cultural setting, or developed along a linear historical pathway. He proposed that "ideal universality" is always formed in the gap between theory and practice. Universalism is therefore not a fixed moral code but a critical perspective that is constituted in the gap between the principle of universalism and the consequential enunciations that invariably fall short of total inclusivity.[39]

While all these perspectives reject the presumption that a universalist viewpoint can be confined to either reflecting the cultural values of a specific point of origin, or operating according to a totalizing schema based on a pre-determined evaluative hierarchy, they do

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[35] For a more detailed account of the classical and enlightenment vision of cosmopolitanism see Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, W.W. Norton & Co. New York, 2006 and Gerard Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009.

[36] Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture*, Routledge, London, 2004, p. 28.

[37] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1988, p 9. This book can be seen as the sequel to his earlier investigation on the limits of relativism, specifically his most influential book, *After Virtue*, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, 1981. See also his discussion of translation and the production of third culture in "Relativism, Power and Philosophy", *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?*, eds. K Baynes, J. Bohmen, & T. McCarthy, MIT Press, Camb., Mass., 1987. For an extended critique on MacIntyre see Nikos Papastergiadis, "Philosophical Frameworks and the Politics of Cultural Difference", *The Turbulence of Migration*, Polity, Cambridge, 2000, pp 146-167.

[38] Spivak, Gayatri, *Death of a Discipline*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003.

[39] Etienne Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene*, Verso, London, 2002, p 165.

not amount to anti-universalist position. The point shared by these theorists is that universalism is both a necessary ideal but it is always contingent upon the specific circumstances and diverse needs through which it is articulated. Every attempt to enlarge the form of universalism will always re-inscribe a particularistic perspective. The aim of these theorists is thus not just to update or widen the categories for determining universalism, but to also sharpen the focus attention on the logic of exclusion. Walter Mignolo coined the phrase "diversality" to describe the project of rethinking universality through diversity and he identified this as the key task of a "critical cosmopolitanism".[40] This critical approach is in marked contrast to the ideological function that universalism has achieved in the context of globalization. The growing pressure to achieve global standardization in economic exchange mechanisms, political organizations, legal frameworks and even aesthetic forms is now well documented.[41] However, as Balibar argued, there is a clear distinction between the ideological versions of universalism that have invented new scales for measuring equivalence in order to perpetuate competition amongst rival identities, and the critical approach which seeks to address the terms of equality. By addressing universalism through its essential multiplicity, Balibar also stressed the function of dialogue. It recognizes that all claims start from some kind of 'essentialist' position. However, dialogue is stalled if this 'essentialist' claim is also locked into an absolute and fixed stance. The dialogue can only proceed if the essentialist claim is strategic – serving as a starting point, rather than the limit for the field of exchange. From this perspective universalist claims are situated within specific and context bound positions. It is through their mutual interaction that they forge an evaluative mechanism that enables both reflexive self-critique and a creative alternative. Hence, this universalist approach is not based on fixed foundations, but unfolds through the interminable process of cross-cultural dialogue. This revised version of universalism is key plank in a critical theory of cosmopolitanism. By moving the vision of universalism from a competition among rival claims, to a dialogue between alternate interpretations, it also mobilized an iterative process whereby cosmopolitanism is not conceived as a state that comprises of fixed categories, but the ongoing activity through

[40] Walter Mignolo, "The many faces of cosmo-polis: Border thinking and critical cosmopolitanism", in *Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Carol A. Breckenridge et al., Duke University Press, Durham, pp 157-88.
[41] Stefan Jonsson, "The Ideology of Universalism", *New Left Review*, No 63, May/June 2010, p 115.

which multiple identities communicate with each other within an arena of mutual recognition.[42]

Re-grounding the Pathos of Cosmopolitanism

While these contemporary approaches towards cosmopolitanism have revised the Eurocentric bias and reconfigured both the scope and relational process of universalist claims that underpinned the Kantian vision, one crucial aspect has escaped its due scrutiny. Kant's vision of cosmopolitanism inscribes a fundamental hierarchy between logos and pathos. Unlike the Stoics who believed that cosmopolitanism could develop through the animating force of love, Kant promoted the alternative view that it was the historical product in an evolutionary chain of reasoning. This vision asserts the necessary triumph of logos over the faulty, fleeting and flighty genius of pathos. It has also confined the debates on cosmopolitanism to the deliberative dimensions of socio-political transformation. More recently there has been attention to the visceral aspects of cosmopolitanism: the emotional forms of attraction and identification with otherness.[43] I believe that it is not only important to acknowledge the role of unconscious desires and feelings in the social expression of mutuality and civic conviviality, but also necessary to explore the place of cosmopolitanism in the aesthetic imaginary. Or to put it more directly, it is worth considering whether the concept of cosmopolitanism can also illuminate the dialectic between movement and difference in the imagination.

Cornelius Castoriadis never spoke directly to the concept of cosmopolitanism. However, his account of the link between creativity and the potential to grasp universality offers a powerful framework for re-grounding the pathos of cosmopolitanism. At the crux of Castoriadis's writing is the link between being, the void and creativity. It is through creativity that the existence of being can generate new forms, otherwise existence is an

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[42] On the distinction between a formal conception of universalism that covered all claims and iterative process, see Michael Walzer, *Nation and Universe: The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, Delivered at Brasenose College, Oxford University, May 1 & 8, 1989, www.tannerlectures.utah.edu/lectures/documents/walzer90.pdf. Accessed 5 July 2010.

[43] Mica Nava, *Visceral Cosmopolitanism*, Berg, Oxford, 2007, p 8.

"abyss, chaos, groundless".[44] For Castoriadis creativity is neither the reconfiguration of existing elements, nor the assemblage that results from external pressures. Creativity is the form through which a paradigm of being is distinguished from the multitudes of forces that exert influence on it. Hence being is constructed in and through the imaginary. Therefore all the social institutions of our daily life can only exist insofar as they have been invented as a form that can define, govern and give order to our existence. The form of these institutions commences in and survives through the imaginary – the constant effort to identify ideas, norms and values, and thereby mobilize them into specific modes of organization. However, while social institutions furnish a worldview that enables the individual to deal with the flux of life, it also tends to produce a sense of belonging that is experienced through the feeling of enclosure and exclusivity rather than an exposure to the world at large. Hence, while Castoriadis argued that social institutions are viable only insofar people find them meaningful and are willing to uphold them, he also noted that this freedom to question the utility of social institutions, and the general capacity to assert an autonomous forms of identity was rarely exercised.

I imagine that Castoriadis would have been skeptical, if not downright dismissive of many of the platitudes and ideals that are usually invoked in the name of cosmopolitanism. He expressed grave doubts as to whether ordinary people could understand strangers, or even develop a genuine interest in other cultures. Castoriadis stated that most people did not look at other cultures with open curiosity, but due to the "cognitive closures of the institution" they are not only unable to understand a foreign society, but they tend to judge them as inferior and a threat to their own. The few that do gain insight achieve this under "very specific social, historical and personal preconditions". While Castoriadis frequently expressed such haughty views, he never adopted the stance that presented cultural differences as ultimately insurmountable, or social barriers as intrinsically immutable. On the contrary, he claimed that ideas that are strong enough to shape the lives of one group people, could, in principle, be re-imagined by somebody else. These rare glimpses point to what he called the "potential universality

[44] Cornelius Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, edited and translated by David A. Curtis, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1997, p 3.

in whatever is human for humans".[45] But where does this 'potential' for mutual understanding come from, and what motivates the openness towards cross-cultural influence, is it logos or pathos?

Castoriadis asserted that the preconditions that enable the understanding of universality do not refer back to the progressive development in the forms of rationality, but stemmed from creative imagination. Hence, against the tradition in philosophy, which runs from Aristotle to Kant, and argues that truth is correlated to reason and the sensory impressions or imaginative processes are but faulty mechanisms that at best produce opinion, Castoriadis asserted the primacy of creative imagination, and believed that society is inconceivable without the creation of ideality.[46] Imagining alternatives - the grasping the cosmos through an "unceasing and undetermined" image of humanity[47] - is a permanent and explicit feature of social life. Castoriadis central claim was that social institutions are formed through the social imaginary. It is by imagining and taking responsibility for specific modes of social organization that a given form of society comes into existence. Creativity and imagination are therefore the foundations and the fibre through which society is formed. Furthermore, Castoriadis argued that creativity is not confined to a reconfiguration that is the result of the interaction between existing entities and concepts. He claimed that innovation is more than the process of recombination between distinct and separable elements. Castoriadis stresses that these social institutions are created "ex nihilo". While they are not created without constraints, it is only through imagination that it is possible to go beyond merely reproducing and prolonging the already existing forms. For Castoriadis, the definition of culture, "which manifests itself with the most striking clarity in art", is the constant struggle with the founding experience of groundlessness, the effort to give form to the "Chaos through our thought, our action, our labour, our works, and therefore this signification has no 'guarrantee' external to itself".[48] Creativity

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[45] Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Castoriadis Reader*, translated by David Ames Curtis, Blackwell, Oxford, 1997, p 270.
[46] Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Castoriadis Reader*, translated and edited by David A. Curtis, Blackwell, Oxford, 1997, p 379.
[47] Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, translated by Kathleen Blamey, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1997, p 3
[48] Castoriadis, *The Castoriadis Reader,* p 343

is therefore the effort to produce form out of the struggle with the groundlessness, the abyss, the void from which being arises.

Those people who traveled beyond their own society and witnessed the organization of other societies have often been at the forefront of the process of creative adaptation and social transformation. However, this does not allow us to conclude that creativity and criticality is the inevitable by-product of mobility. The opportunity for travel and the disposition of openness toward foreign cultures can expand one's experience of the world, but it does not always modify the modality through which this experience is interpreted. A critical and creative outlook also requires a reflexive mode of evaluation and transcoding. Castoriadis stressed that creativity is central to the formation of social imaginary and this gives new grounding for grasping the aesthetic dimensions of cosmopolitanism. Much of the theoretical discussion on cosmopolitanism has proceeded within a deliberative paradigm. This has privileged attention towards the force of reasoned argumentation and material transformations. Even when artistic and cultural practices have been the centre of analysis there has been a reluctance to link the relationship between affects and aesthetics to the social imaginary. A crucial step has been missed, and as a consequence, the significance of aesthetic cosmopolitanism has been under-estimated. By extrapolating Castoriadis's theory of creativity and autonomy into the field of contemporary art, I believe that it can strike up a more vibrant appreciation of the relationship between aesthetics and politics. In particular, I will argue that the following tendencies in contemporary artistic practice, denationalization, reflexive hospitality, cultural translation, discursivity, globally oriented public sphere, are expressive of a cosmopolitan imaginary.

Cosmopolitan tendencies in Contemporary Art

The inquiry into the cosmopolitan tendencies in contemporary art does not end with the test that artists have attained the state of cosmopolitan agency, or that they have produced a cosmopolitan social order. Such utopian claims are easily spoiled. Nevertheless, while

utopias are impossible, artists like Liam Gillick have revived interest in the "utopian impulse', and collaborated with other artists and major cultural institutions such as the Venice Biennial to produce new kinds of "utopia stations" and "micro-utopias".[49] With all seriousness Gillick compared the effect of his art to "the light in the fridge door, it only works when there are people there to open the fridge door. Without people, its not art – its something else – stuff in a room."[50] The influential theorist Chantal Mouffe endorsed the view that the radicality of art was found not in the clean break with all institutional relations, but in the disarticulation of conventional discourses and practices that uphold existing authority. This process of engaging the public is, according to Mouffe, not an antagonistic competition amongst mortal enemies, but more like the development of an agonistic relations between adversaries. That is, people who need to share a common space but also must find a framework that facilitates the interaction and exchange of different perspectives. In support of Gillick she also noted:

> At a time when neoliberal pragmatists dismiss as utopian all movements, artistic or political that do not operate within the terms of contemporary capitalism, I share Gillick's belief in the necessity of recovering something of the utopian impulse, but of doing so without falling into the authoritarian traps that are associated with the term "utopian", understood as something impractical and postulating a harmony that needs to be enforced on people against their will.[51]

Who is a cosmopolitan? Does it require the total renunciation of the polis, the ability to step beyond cultural narcissism and embrace humanity as a whole, and finally a willingness to judge with equanimity? Such a cosmopolitan figure is not a man or a woman. Only a saint can reach this goal. The horizon of cosmopolitanism that I am evoking is more like a tendency – an activity that is continuously heading towards an ideal, rather than the proposition of an ideal state that can be achieved once and for all. Rather than searching for evidence that artists have developed a cosmopolitan state

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[49] Will Bradley claims that these interventions stimulate "a renewal of the sphere of art as a sphere of free expression and experimentation" and provides a space for "the impossible dream of a life outside of capitalism". Bradley, W. (2007) Introduction. In: Bradley, W. & Esche, C. (eds.) *Art and Social Change*. Tate Publishing in association with Afterall, London, p 22. See also Marcus Verhagen, "Conceptual Perspex", *New Left Review*, No 46, 2007, pp 154-160.
[50] Liam Gillick, *Renovation Filter: Recent Past and Near Future*, Bristol Arnolfini Gallery, 2000, p 16.
[51] Chantal Mouffe, "Politics and Artistic Practices in Post-Utopian Times", in *Meaning Liam Gillick*, ed Monika Szewczyk, MIT Press, London, 2009, p 94.

within their subjectivity, or constructed a cosmopolitan world in their artworks, I am seeking to identify a number of tendencies in artistic practice that are giving form to an imaginary order that is not simply the reconfiguration of the elements mobilized by globalization.

There is already a significant body of writing that has explored the link between the socio-economic and geo-political transformations of globalization and the emergent forms of artistic practices that range from the engagement with the everyday and non-institutional spaces, utilization of interactive media and performative techniques, adoption of agonistic forms of political struggle, and participation in tactical / multi-disciplinary collaborative networks. For instance, Will Bradley argues that the origins of the current shift in artistic practice lies in the ruins of the "relative defeat of the 68 uprisings".[52] He cites Immanuel Wallerstein's observation that the failure of the left to make a decisive social transformation in this period lead to both a loss of faith in vangardist forms of organization, and the emergence of new social movements that created non-hierarchical structures. The aim of these new social movements shifted from being a spearhead formation that opened the way for liberation at some point in the future, to being mediators that produced situations in which the imagined forms of emancipation were embodied in everyday practices. This heightening of the function in mediation can be witnessed right across the cultural sphere. From the most venal advocates of the culture industry, to the idealistic promoters of net activism, there is an unequivocal emphasis on the use of 'artistic' strategies to empower ordinary people. However, while there is a clear link between the aesthetic strategies developed in say, Situationism and the recent corporatist innovations in participatory identification to extend the symbolic life of commodities, and there is no doubt that the precarity generated by new labour conditions is a driving force behind new forms of collectivist art movements, this identification of a symbolic repertoire and representation of the prevailing circumstances, does not fully furnish the answer to the nature of the relationship between politics and aesthetics. My pursuit of this question heads in another

[52] Bradley, W. (2007) Introduction. In: Bradley, W. & Esche, C. (eds.) *Art and Social Change*. Tate Publishing in association with Afterall, London, p 20

direction. In the following outline of five tendencies in contemporary art I am seeking to demonstrate the way that the experimental tendencies in aesthetic cosmopolitanism are the material embodiment of a cosmopolitan imaginary.

For Marcel Duchamp leaving home was a positive act of disentangling himself from the feeling of being rooted in one place. He enjoyed being away from Europe because, as he said towards the end of his life, it allowed him to 'swim freely'.[53] From this seminal figure in history of modernism we can witness a cosmopolitan tendency that starts from a process of subtraction – it begins in de-nationalizing subjectivity and proceeds towards the development of what Amit Chaudhuri calls "worldview as angularity". The self-defined cosmopolitans of early modernity, such as the avant garde artists and revolutionary intellectuals, often spoke of belonging nowhere, eschewed any fixed or authentic attachment to their origins and adopted a kind of "inner exile". [54] They were never quite at home with themselves and their culture. While challenging the familiar social norms and seeking to cut themselves free from the aesthetic codes of their past, they sought to give form to ideals that were visible but not fully declared in the horizons of everyday life.

The exilic tendency of early modernism is now also complemented by reflexive hospitality. In the contemporary context the practice of hospitality is more than a process of receiving strangers and adopting the protocols of hosting. According to Daniel Birnbaum the understanding of alterity and the principle of hospitality amounts to an epistemic revolution. For instance, in Olafur Eliasson's artworks, Birnbaum observes the construction of a scenario in which the viewer, is not only aware of the process by which he or she sees the work, but he also note that "a kind of inversion takes place – you are seen by the work".[55] By adopting an active role in shaping the whole environment, the viewer's subjectivity is in turn shaped by the experience of giving in to it. This shift in perspective towards the object of the artwork, and the heightened attitude towards the

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[53]For a detailed discussion of the thematic of exile in Duchamp's life and practice see TJ Demos, *The Exiles of Marcel Duchamp*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2007.
[54] Amit Chaudhuri, "Cosmopolitanism's Alien Face", *New Left Review*, 55, Jan-Feb, 2008, p 96.
[55] Daniel Birnbaum, *The Hospitality of Presence: Problems of Otherness in Husserl's Phenomenology*, Sternberg Press, New York, 2008, pxii.

consciousness of the viewer in the artwork, also amounts to a re-distribution of agency. It stimulates a relationship of co-production. The viewer is no a longer passive and detached observer. Given the vigorous interplay between subject and object, and the fundamental role of alterity in defining the intentionality of the viewer and the form of the artwork, this tendency recasts the relationship between self and other as a form of reflexive hospitality. A more explicit articulation of this tendency can be found in the numerous artistic collectives such as, "No Is Illegal" and "Fadait Temporary No-Border Media Laboratories". These collectives aim to create a "mirror space" that reflects back the transnational movements of people and stimulates the coming into being of community that is based on universal human rights.

The proliferation of non-western artists within the institutions of contemporary art has also prompted critical attention towards the tendency of cultural translation. For many critics when faced with the sheer volume and diversity of art that now appears in Biennales, there is the instant reaction of horror – how to judge the merits of so many different works, what model can address both the cultural specificity of the artwork's context and elucidate the capacity of art to transcend cultural differences? This desire to establish either a new hierarchy or a universal code misses a more vital point concerning the function of art as initiator of its own cosmopolitan language and community. For instance, the challenge of grasping both the specific cultural references and the more general claims towards contemporaneity, is neatly outlined by the Iranian born but US based artist Shirin Neshat.

> At one moment I am dealing with Iranians who know the sources of my material, and then I am dealing with an audience who has not a clue. To me they both have their advantages and disadvantages. With Iranians, I can never fulfil their expectations because I am outsider; with foreigners I can never fulfil their expectations because I am Iranian and they are Westerners. And I can never really break down the cultural context of the work.[56]

This neat separation between Iranians and foreigners obscures one crucial fact: the artist that is an outsider to this polarity is neither alone, nor unique. I would suggest that Neshat

[56] Quoted in Chin Tao Wu, "Worlds Apart: Problems of Interpreting Globalized Art", *Third Text*, vol 21, Issue, 2007, p 724.

makes work for a new constituency – composed of Iranians who are in dialogue with the contemporary world, and all the foreigners who know what it means to be outside of a culture but still attached to it, or what Naoki Sakai calls a "non-aggregate community".[57] Obviously not everything becomes clear to a foreigner, but this does not mean that the artist - as a virtual cosmopolitan - is not able to communicate something.[58] And furthermore, the available points of common reference only expand and deepen through the very acts of translating specific cultural material into a foreign context. Hence, we could begin to see the formation of a cosmopolitan imaginary not just through the interplay of these various cultural translations between the global and the local, but also in the moment communication proceeds without a known addressee. It would enable us to see the cross-cultural traffic in visual production not as a classificatory problem for the great archives of contemporary art, but as another tendency that is transforming the bounds of culture and subjectivity, aesthetic and politics.

Since, the 1990s a great number of artistic projects took a "discursive turn".[59] They were mostly organized as participatory events that included meals, games and symposia, and involved a mixture of social activism and aesthetic collaboration. While modest in form they also adopted a broad set of discursive tendencies that ranged from examining the gaps between the processes of modernization and the cultures of modernism, exposing the shortcomings in modernity, challenging the commodification of culture, and encouraging new forms of communal activity. This discursive turn was also evident in curatorial practice. Curators such as Okwui Enwezor, Hou Hanru, Maria Lind, Charles Esche, Claire Doherty, Nick Tsoutas, Vasif Kortum, Nina Montmann, Gerardo Mosquera, and the curatorial team that work under the name Who, What, How redefined

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[57] Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p7.

[58] Partha Mitter defines the virtual cosmopolitan as a "native of the peripheries, but who intellectually engaged with the knowledge system of the metropolis … proficient in their own language and who had no lack of confidence in tackling the whole of the world of the intellect". Mitter stresses the aspect of virtuality in cosmopolitanism, because he believes that participation in the debates and formations of culture and knowledge do not presuppose actual encounters between like-minded people. Partha Mitter interview with Kobena Mercer, "Reflections on Modern Art and National Identity in Colonial India", in *Cosmopolitan Modernism*, ed., Kobena Mercer, INIVA & MIT Press, London, 2005, p 38.

[59] The term "discursive turn" was proposed by Bruce Ferguson, for an extended discussion see Meredith Martin and Nikos Papastergiadis, "The Biennale as Platform", *Festivals*, edited by Gerard Delanty, Routledge, London, in press.

the function of institutional art venues as "spaces of encounter"[60], and adopted a method of representation that was sensitive to the spirit that Manray Hsu described as "decentralizing cosmopolitanism".[61]

Critics such as Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, also shared the view that contemporary art is engaged in the production of a new global public sphere. They stress that as contemporary artists adopt collaborative and collective techniques that embrace 'fluctuating identities', hijack the uses of new technologies, and establish provisional communal structures, they are also producing fleeting social forms that are 'unleashed from geo-political and instrumental norms'.[62] At present it is impossible to correlate this tendency with a concrete version of the global public sphere. It has no territorial location, it lacks any administrative entity, and there is not even a coherent community that would claim ownership over the idea. Within the conventional geo-political categories the global public sphere does not exist. And yet, within the republic of texts and images that circulate in the net, in the gatherings of people from across the world at events such as Art Biennales and Social Fora, there is a communion of ideas and actions that is developing a new cosmopolitan perspective. In the rustling flow of exchanges that flicker within these 'weak ties' and between such temporary events there is as, Immanuel Wallerstein claims, the beginnings of a cultural and political imaginary that is moving away from an absolutist and nationalist ideology on cultural identity.[63] While outlining the neo-conservative strategies to control the spectacle of fear, which the Retort

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[60] Okwui Enwezor, 'A Space of Encounter', interview with Victoria Lynn, *Art and Australia*, Vol 46, No 2, 2008.

[61] Manray Hsu, "Networked Cosmopolitanism on Cultural Exchange and International Exhibitions", in Nicholas Tsoutas ed., *Knowledge + Dialogue + Exchange: Remapping Cultural Globalism from the South*, Artspace, Sydney, 2005, p 75 and p 76.

[62] Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, "Introduction", in Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, (eds.), *Collectivism After Modernism*, MIT Press, Minneapolis, 2007, p 4-11. This position has been subject to considerable debate. For instance, Susan Buck-Morss struck a more pessimistic note when she expressed the fear that artists were 'hired to assemble publics', that they merely 'provide atmosphere for the barren planet of finance capital'. Susan Buck-Morss, *Thinking Past Terror*, Verso, London, 2003, pp 85, 133. Claire Bishop also sought to debunk the warm and fuzzy side of art that is based on social encounters, and took particular exception at the apparent lack of criteria for defining the success or failure of artwork in this genre. Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and relational aesthetics", *October,* No 110, 2004, pp 51–79. While there are numerous examples of naivety and opportunism, this does not leave us with the conclusion that all new practices which defy the criteria of previous aesthetic categories are seeking to evade any form of evaluation, or that the artists who host events that appeal towards the formation of communal bonds are only using art to camouflage social tensions.

[63] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Decline of American Power*, New Press, New York, 2003.

collective rightly claim is a "complex of enforcements and exclusions – devoted to the suppression of social energies", they also stressed that it also inspired the unanticipated:

> appearance on the world stage as something like a digital 'multitude', a worldwide virtual community, assembled (partly in the short term over the months of warmongering, and partly over the preceding decade, as various new patterns of resistance took advantage of cyberspace) in the interstices of the Net; and that some of the intensity of the moment derived from the experience of seeing – of hearing, feeling, facing up to – an *image* of refusal become a reality.[64]

I think that the Retort collective is right to stress that the visuality of the conduct of this war on terror, that is, the global witnessing of its mode of representation was crucial in provoking a global protest. However, just as crucial is the cascading effect of witnessing the formation of a global resistance. It is in the interplay of these two processes that they also claim a 'premonition of a politics to come'. This vague definition of the locations, form, constituency and dynamics of this new politics is echoed further on in their text when they claim that: 'something is shifting in the technics and tactics of resistance'.[65] These new alliances are by nature fragmentary, ephemeral and loose, often operating beyond, or on the margins of institutions, and in opposition to formal structures. These flashes of creative resistance do not offer simple or even unified solutions. On the contrary, they often take us deeper into the messy complexity of everyday life. They also remind us of a fundamental principle, that these days seems to have been pushed to the side of political discourse, that is - when people, whose worldview is formed in different civilizations,[66] encounter each other, they do not necessarily erupt into a violent clash, but

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[64] Retort, (Iain Boal, T.J. Clark, Joseph Matthews, Michael Watts), *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle In a New Age of War,* London, Verso, 2006, p 4.
[65] Retort, p 12.
[66] Of course, the 'clash of civilization' thesis is imbued with anthropomorphic capacities, but these attributed characteristics of movement and collision are not just a case of misreading the inherent cultural content of say the Muslim civilization, but part of an essentialist strategy to impute that the other possesses a self contained and unified identity as well as a fixed moral boundary between us and them. There cannot be a clash between elements unless they are already positioned as discrete entities that are set apart from each other, and driven by antagonistic forces. Hence, the adoption of the 'clash of civilization' thesis was an effort to cleave apart elements that were already caught in each other's orbit and a denial of a long history of mutual interdependence and co-existence. It is my contention that the so called 'problems' between different cultures is not so much a product of their absolute distance from each other, but their proximities and entanglements that generate disputes over the meaning of fundamental questions on being and living together. If we are to recognize that there are differences between neighbours, does this imply that they are inevitably looked in an antagonistic battle of mutual destruction, or is there always another

can also utilize their respective intelligence to understand each other and create a dialogue about what is possible and necessary.

I am not so naïve as to rest my case on such faint claims about the potentialities that occur within transitory gatherings. Neither am I so cynical as to assert that art and activism is incapable of making any difference. Between these two extreme points is the more demanding task of teasing out emergent forms and probing the shape of reconfigured structures. Art materializes thought in all its contradictions. It does not always make the meaning of things more clear. At times, it just comes out the way things are being lived, with anachronisms still glowing and anticipations not yet reached. If, the "global public sphere", as Okwui Enwezor suggests, has become both the destination of art and the focul point for shaping the politics of human life, then the topology of cosmopolitanism will be found somewhere in the intersections of art and politics.[67]

Cosmopolitan Topologies

Spatial and mobility metaphors abound in moral philosophy. The place for desire, virtue and obligation is customarily defined along the anterior / posterior axis. Similarly, the distinction between private and public, the degrees of proximity towards friends and strangers, and the conjunction of the pursuit of happiness with the project of a good life are marked in terms of the interplay between inner and outer worlds. Paul Ricoeur described the geometry of justice, the fragile equilibrium between taking and giving in civility, and the progression of private ethics to public virtue as "the search for a just distance in every situation of interaction."[68] However, unlike the moral philosophers who see this flow in mono-directional terms – that is, what is anterior must "reveal, expose and unfold itself by passing successively through the filter of moral judgement and the test of practical application in determinate fields of moral action"[69] – artistic practice

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option that through their agonistic negotiations new forms of settlement in which both parties can not only survive but also develop fresh understandings of each other.

[67] Okwui Enwezor, "Documentary / Verite: Bio-Politics, Human Rights and the Figure of 'Truth' in Contemporary Art", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, Vol 4/5, No 1, 2004, p 14.

[68] Paul Ricoeur, *Reflections on the Just*, transl. David Pellauer, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2007, p 5.

[69] Ricoeur, *Reflections on the Just*, p 3.

suggests a more ambiguous terrain and multi-directional flow. It is neither by coincidence nor expediency that artists have chosen to work in and on abandoned, ruined and conflicted sites. They are drawn to these sites because the topology of 'in-betweeness' resonates with the mode of aesthetic criticality.[70]

Cosmopolitanism was also conceived in an ambiguous topology. The Stoics gathered at the *stoa* arcades of classical Athens. Why the stoa, and not the home, agora, or parliament? Between the private space of the *oikos* home – where personal needs and interest could be expressed freely, and the public space of the *bouleuterion* parliament – which was a deliberative venue in which community defined its collective norms and structures without being beholden to any private interests, there was the *agora* – a relatively open space of presentation, speculation and exchange. The stoa exists alongside the agora. It is therefore at arm's length from the sites of privacy, commerce, and deliberation. It was from this liminal site that the Stoics developed an outward vision of being and belonging. The stoa was a shelter from the sun and rain without becoming an enclosed room. It was an in-between and transitional space, neither outside nor inside. Departures and arrivals are signalled in a vague manner within the stoa. One could hover, browse, eavesdrop, rub shoulders and move on. In the stoa you can meet your friends and also gaze at strangers. Conversations could commence through casual interruptions. The stoa was the site of gossip, rumour, information and to this day the stoa is the favoured place for drinking coffee and meeting people in Athens. I imagine the stoa as a spatial metaphor for the emergence of critical consciousness and the principle of openness to difference. It is a space for criticality without the formal requirement of political deliberation, and sociality without the duty of domestication. The stoa is the pivot point at which private and public spheres interact and from which the cosmopolitan vision unfolds.

If we are to grasp a cosmopolitan sense of being and belonging from the vantage point of the stoa, then we must re-think the topology of identity and society beyond binary categories of inside and outside. The critical perspectives on cosmopolitanism proposed

[70] Nikos Papastergiadis, *Spatial Aesthetics*, Rivers Oram Press, London, 2008.

by Beck, Urry and Delanty suggest that a new paradigm on mobility and difference is starting to emerge. However, the point of these sociological approaches is not to claim that borders have been suddenly rendered obsolete, or that all forms of solidarity are sundered by the restless flows of mobility. Similarly, the cosmopolitan tendencies in contemporary art are not declarations that art is immune to cultural contradictions that arise from the twin forces of structural globalization and institutional nationalism. Aesthetic cosmopolitanism is formed in reaction to external forces but also arises from an internal drive. While these imaginative expressions are often formed in dialogue with other discourses and social processes, they are not simply reducible to mere illustrations.

From this perspective we can see that art is not just a decorative or fanciful representation, and cosmopolitanism is not a dilettantish fascination with exotica. The significance of contemporary artistic practices, and the theoretical debates on cosmopolitanism draw from a common desire to evaluate the actual present and propose alternative images of the better life. The cosmopolitan imaginary is therefore not just a zone of pure fantasy and aloof speculation. It is part of the realm of representation that is constantly criss-crossing both the real conditions of existence and future-present forms of possibility. I agree with Dan Graham when he declared: "All artists are alike. They dream of doing something that's more social, more collaborative, and more real than art."[71] Graham's claim to a utopian impulse, as opposed to the utopian ideal, demonstrates that, like the principles of cosmopolitanism, art proceeds from the position that aesthetic feelings are, to some extent, shareable with others. It commences this journey without the prior assurance that art is underwritten by universal agreement, but it nevertheless draws energy from the effort of translating its own singularity into the form of universality. This willingness to engage in dialogue does not, as the Kantians would argue, rely on a moral imperative that subordinates the capacity to imagine the possibility for cooperation and mutual understanding, to the principled position that one should act in this manner regardless of the evidence of actual sharing. I prefer the view exposed by Ranciere as he explicated Jacotot's belief in the inherent capacity for dialogue:

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[71] http://www.artsconnected.org/collection/107477/dan-graham-beyond?print=true#(1) accessed 20 July 2010.

> If men didn't have the faculty, an equal faculty, they would soon become strangers to each other; they would scatter at random throughout the globe and societies would be dissolved … the exercise of that power is at once the sweetest of our pleasures and the most demanding of our needs.[72]

How little do we know about curiosity – the sensation of attraction towards difference - and the function of mobility - the action through which form emerges - as drivers of the imagination and cosmopolitanism? Without an imaginative reach towards the other, there would be no basis for grasping the democratic notion of equality, or the qualities of cultural difference with others, and it is through our imaginative explorations with the other that we also determine ethical paths of conduct. When this happens, the practice of art is no longer confined to the production of an object of esteemed value, and cosmopolitanism is not just an utopian impulse, but more like an unbounded medium that brings forth the understanding of moral connectedness in the experience of pleasure and wonder. Looking back at the proclamations made by Liam Gillick we can now see that his critique of the conventional aesthetic and political models reflects a radical transformation in the topology of art. It takes place within the totality of global culture, but in doing so, it also reverses and splits the claim of global homogenization and standardization. It emerges from the territory of a specific community but it pricks the narcissistic feelings of completeness and security. It forces the viewer / participant to reflect on the way they are placed in the world, and imagine another world that can exist through their journey in everyday life. The place of art is thus both a reconfiguration of the materiality and modes that makes the here and now, and the imagination of forms whose anticipated reality cannot be compared to the illusory ideals of utopia. These spatial oscillations and perspectival switching amount to more than jumping from either the local to the global, the private / *oikos* to the public / *bouletrion,* or even the singular to the universal It is not simply a matter of alternating between the separate domains but taking the bigger leap into what Thierry de Duve calls the "singuniversal".[73]

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[72] Jacques Ranciere, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, translated by Kirsten Ross, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1991, p 72.

[73] Thierry de Duve, "The Glocal and the Singuniversal: Reflection on Art and Culture in the Global World", *Third Text*, Vol 21, No 6, 2007, p 684. However, while I qualify the extent to which the notion of aesthetic cosmopolitanism can be applied to politics I do not share de Duve's general presupposition that aesthetics is a monstrous and illegtimate footing for a cosmopolitan state simply because there is no

Outline of Book

This is a book about the way artists expose the politics of fear and in more general terms respond to the global condition of precarity. I focus on artworks that range from conventional media such as painting and prints to videos, installations and projects that resemble a social encounter. Discussions, meals, journeys are now part of the material vocabulary of contemporary art. They have close connections to other artistic events and productions such as, tactical manifestoes, ephemeral exhibitions, social sculptures, and found objects. At a time when the political context is marked by the violence of terror, the scapegoating of refugees, the normalization of torture, the suspension of civil liberties, the cataclysmic repercussions of systemic risk in capital, and the corpratisation of the public sphere, this book explores the interplay an oppositional critique to the politics of fear and the articulation of cosmopolitan ideals of openness, equality and freedom.

This book is set out in four parts. It commences with an account of the artistic responses and theoretical debates on the politics of fear. In particular I explore the representations of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 and the concurrent politicisation of migration debates. In the wake of these events ordinary people increasingly felt as if the political landscape was defined by fear. There was a growing sense that the enemy was no longer on the other side of a boundary, but possibly someone who is beside them. I describe this phenomenon as 'ambient fear' and this section of the book is dedicated towards examining how it was established in the aftermath of 9/11, and then considering its implications on the place of art in contemporary society.

In the second part I will address three key concepts that inform the debates on cosmopolitanism – mobility, hybridity and cultural translation. In the aftermath of 9/11

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evidence of proof. Such a burden of proof never hindered any social imaginary from being founded and defended.

world leaders addressed the nation as a body under threat and hastened in new policies to bolster border protection and 'securitize' immigration. While the terrorist attacks cast new forms of public attention on the risks posed by mobile agents, the link between national security and regulating migration has always been at the forefront of the constitution of the nation state. Despite this persistent anxiety towards the social impact of migration and the status of people on the move, a more general understanding of mobility is not only missing in public debates, but has been a lacunae in the social sciences. What is mobility – a state, a force, a set of shifting co-ordinates? How does the definition of hybridity shape social attitudes and personal experiences? What are the ways in which people are engaged in cultural translation? The second part of the book examines the use of organic and mechanistic metaphors that have underpinned the classical paradigm for understanding social change. It argues that the global patterns of migration, the contemporary forms of hybrid subjectivity, and the complex modes of cultural translation call for a new approach towards understanding cosmopolitanization of the social world.

In the third part of this book I will examine artistic practices that have occurred since the 1990s to argue that the turn towards collaborative and 'community based' forms of artistic practice, while drawing from earlier art historical experiments, provides a new kind of forum within which artists take an active role in the mediation of new social meanings. I will examine whether the shift from the position of the artist as producer, to the artist as a collaborator in the construction of social knowledge, not only leads towards consensual representations of other people's reality, but also redistributes agency to all the participants. Drawing from Jacques Rancière's concept of 'the equality of intelligences', and George E. Marcus's recasting of the relationship between the anthropologist and the native as 'epistemic partners', I will propose that contemporary artists are also engaged in a process of generating democratic dialogues. This part of the book aims to re-think the philosophical and political dimensions of cosmopolitanism by relating them to the new collaborative practices by artists. The objective is to 'rescue' the account of artistic practice from the extreme version of quasi-mystical universalism and dogmatic political activism. It also seeks to argue that the abstract principles of

cosmopolitanism are not just fuzzy, warm, social ideals, but also the key starting point in the artistic innovations in participatory methodology.

The final part of the book provides an overview of the social and cultural changes wrought by the politics of fear. It provides multiple snap shots of conflict. I argue that the marginalisation of the ancient ideal of hospitality not only buckles and warps the promises of social integration, but has also produced a new form of social subjectivity – a kind of zombification of the other. However, even from this apocalyptic setting and without seeking to gloss over the grim words of the refugees, I also seek to extend the insistent pleas for a renewal of human rights to the articulation of a cosmopolitan imaginary. Ultimately, this book explores the challenge of being cosmopolitan at a time when a seemingly endless war on terror inspires ambient fear, border politics renders mobility as the most serious threat to national integrity, and globalization is imposing the imperative of differentiation as the mode competitive survival. Today the challenge of cosmopolitanism is paradoxical, it requires a greater commitment towards openness and an appreciation that differences really matter.