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Being a 'Global Artist'?: Ekaterina Shapiro-Obermair, Daichi Misawa, Golzar Hazfi and Mara Niang

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As part of the lecture series "Global Art History" a panel discussion with four artists was held at the Catholic Private University Linz in October 2015. Within this setting and the provocative question "Being a 'Global Artist'?", Ekaterina Shapiro-Obermair (Russia/Austria), Daichi Misawa (Japan), Golzar Hazfi (Iran) and Mara Niang (Senegal/Austria/Switzerland) deliberated upon artistic practices and self-concepts within the context of globalization and art. The conversation was structured in five parts. Initially, the artists presented a selected piece of art and discussed artistic production in the light of transculturality. Secondly, the topic of "Specificity as opposed to contemporaneity – the weight of the local and regional in contemporary art in a global scope" was examined. Then, under the heading, "Everlasting marginalization, the contemporary global scene and the peripheries" questions of inclusion and exclusion within the framework of an alleged "global art" were raised. In this connection, it was interesting to discover how the artists saw the role of the global art market with its opportunities and restrictions. Finally, the problematic and ironic question, "Being a 'Global Artist'?" was raised.

Ekaterina Shapiro-Obermair (Vienna/Austria) is a visual artist. She was born in Moscow/Russia and moved to Vienna in 2004. She studied at the academies of fine art in Nuremberg, Berlin and Vienna. She holds a diploma in sculpture (Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, 2009). Web: <http://www.ekaterina-shapiro-obermair.org>

Daichi Misawa (Kawasaki/Japan) is a visual and sound artist focused on interaction who was born in Kagoshima and raised in Kawasaki/Japan. After receiving a bachelor's degree in Tokyo and a vocational degree in Gifu/Japan, in 2015 he obtained a master's degree at the University of Art and Industrial Design Linz. Web: <http://www.misawadaichi.net>

Golzar Hazfi (Tehran/Iran) is a visual artist and film director. Born in Tehran/Iran, she received a diploma in movie editing at the International Academy of Design and Technology in Toronto/Canada. In October 2015, she was invited to participate in an artist-in-residence programme by the Atelierhaus Salzamt in Linz, Upper Austria. Contact: golavin@gmail.com

Mara Niang (Thiès/Vienna/Graubünden) is a visual artist. Born in Thiès/Senegal, he lives and works in Senegal, Austria and Switzerland. In 2009, he was awarded a degree in art and digital media (University of Applied Arts, Vienna). Currently, he is a PhD student at the University of Applied Arts Vienna and the University of Art and Design Linz. Web: <https://www.facebook.com/artimdienst/>

Subsequently, various statements from the artists are quoted in the order of the contributions during the debate.¹

Ekaterina Shapiro-Obermair

I was born in Moscow in 1980 and I immigrated to Germany in 1998, exactly 17 years ago. Therefore, one half of my life was spent in Russia and the other in German-speaking countries. I think the question that now arises is how can the situation of a Russian artist living and working elsewhere be described, and whether or not I still feel like a Russian artist. My Russian origins are very important for my work. However, the situation is more complex because I not only used to live in one country but in two, until 1991 in the Soviet Union and afterwards in the Russian Federation. My experiences during the 1990s in post-Soviet Russia are of special significance for me both as a person and an artist. Therefore, Russian, Soviet and

¹ A video recording of the entire panel discussion is available at: https://lisa.gerda-henkel-stiftung.de/being_a_global_artist?nav_id=5935 [accessed 28.04.2017].

One can compare my artistic work with a puzzle, which combines various and occasionally contrasting modular elements in order to attain a strictly balanced totality. In this regard, I would like to show you another work. This is an untitled painting from 2012, which is part of a series that was shown in my one-woman exhibition, *Us and Them* at Ve.Sch, Vienna (fig. 2). It refers to my conviction that visual occurrences are connected to political systems and to my ambition to create the most democratic painting possible. This approach is also inspired by a discourse dating from the French Revolution, according to which only technical drawings are democratic, because if people draw with their hands there are differences in terms of skill and quality. Therefore, only technical drawings can be of equal status. Naturally, this is merely an intellectual construction, but what is interesting is that when one seeks to produce a highly democratic painting, the result has an extremely hierarchical and even monumental appearance. Thus the initial idea is turned upon its head.

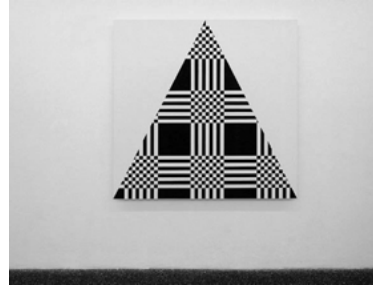


fig. 2: o.T. (*them and us*), 2012, gouache on wood, 150 × 150 cm. Photo: Martin Vesely

Daichi Misawa

1. Culturality²

Wrestling with a cultural boundlessness, *culturality*, has been my vital concern. I presented the notion of *culturality* in 2015 in my master's thesis for the first time and further discussed it in detail in a paper. Culturality is not a concept that solely belongs to me, for many books, educational systems and other resources have influenced my thought and behavior. Such books, educational systems and other resources had seemed to also have

2 "Culturalities" in *Transactions of the Virtual Reality Society of Japan* Vol. 21 (2016) No. 3 p. 423–436.

been influenced by other resources, etc. If source exists, what is source of source? I do not know whether the culturality is a concept or not and whether concepts exist or not.

Culturality seems to be boundless, which seems to be derived from what is often interpreted by an analyst as a *tradition*. Today, one might be able to trace the origin of a culturality, if it exists, back to an ancient civilization in another cultural matrix. Figure 1 shows an audience member in my installation singing a "foreign" folk music. If specific entities existed, there would be no differentiation. Because culturality is not determinate, its differentiation seems to be observed. It might be said that one who have inherited *history* is making *history*.

One's engagement with culturality is one's own transformation into a lunacy or heresy toward dominant hegemonic systems of belief and value. One who is such a lunatic or heretic would not be able to avoid facing uneasy responses from those who adhere to the systems. Those who adhere might claim that they are left, right and so forth, referring to auto-privileged standards. With regard to this, one might be able to understand that their adherence is a sign of their anxiety, which is an eruption of their trauma, and what they fear is a revelation of original unfoundedness.

It rests upon one's attitude toward one's own life whether such engagement with culturality is a burden of life or something else.

2. Boundlessness

My works, which are in a way ecologically sound installations, provide a space for culturality analysis. These works include *Transparent Sculpture* (2012) and *Data Auditorio* (2013, fig. 1–2). Those who enter a space are those who constitute the space. Their behavior is a potential occurrence in the space, which is that which is hosted by the space like guests who come and go. *Transparent Sculpture* is a space for arbitrary performances, and *Data Auditorio* is for solo singing performances, filled with different computer-processed musical feedback loops. However, underlying fascination of my works might belong to culturality that is boundless.

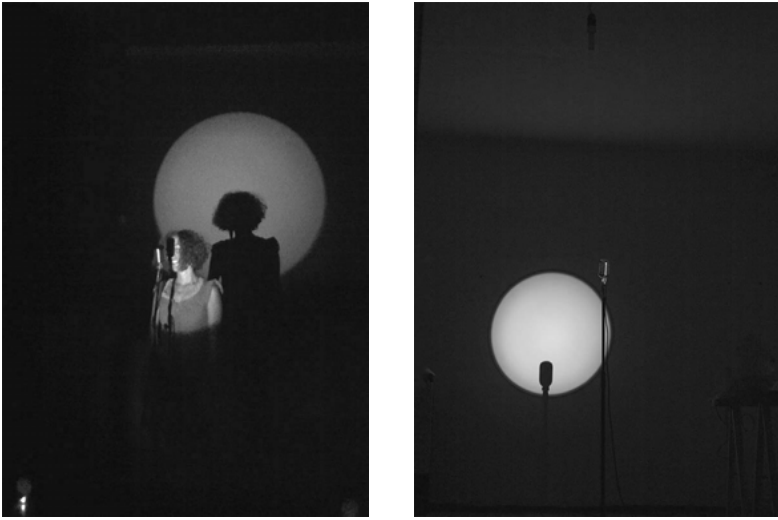


fig. 1–2: *Data Auditorio* (2013), performance and synthetic sound in the installation, Athens 2014 and Linz 2013. Photos: Daichi Misawa

A culturality seems to be that which waxes symbolic to a viewpoint of an analyst at times as an interpretation. As a *left* to one is conditional upon a *right* to one, or as a *left* to one is a *right* to the other or as a *right* to one is a *left* to the other, the symbolic seem to be illusions. In an analysis the moon may be a crescent moon and in another analysis a full moon, where *the moon* is both “a crescent moon” and “a full moon.” A question that could be raised here is whether the significance of an *analyst*, analyst’s nature, is already determined or not and how it has been blended through the agency of history if it has been done. If an analyst is blind, what is observed?

Similarly, some of the behavior in the space of my installations would appear to be explicit demonstrations of traditions, and others would not. Due to its explicitness, when an obvious reference to a tradition is observed, the culturality analysis would not be difficult relatively. Due to its implicitness, when an obscure reference to a tradition is observed, the culturality analysis would not be easy relatively. Tradition behind an implicit behavior is a hidden symbol, on which analysts might be asked to carry out a deep analysis by delving into unknown traditions in order to identify its source, as one enjoys the smell of the wind in a strange city and seeks its source. A question that could be

raised here is whether the significance of a *tradition*, tradition's nature, is already determined or not and how it has been blended through the agency of history if it has been done.

Like closing one's eyes, an effort to answer such issues regarding cultural flux may consequently lead to one's awareness of a certain unfathomableness. One would necessarily be asked to dare to doubt, at some point, existing boundaries that are apparently real, although some might criticize it. I would encourage one to let them be, for this would be a type of endeavor that would not be completed while drinking a cup of breakfast tea.

History is vast, which is spread out into countless directions as if it is endless. No one who is contemporaneous can be consulted about it anymore. I do not know, in fact, how many pages are required to describe it, whether it is possible or not and whether it is finite or not. However, had I not tried to grasp it—without learning from past arts with authors who have already departed—one would not be reading my statement about such vastness, the boundlessness of culturality.

May it not be read the wrong way.

Golzar Hazfi

I am an Iranian artist. I was born in Tehran during the revolution that ended the Shah's regime and established the system that currently exists. During my childhood a war took place that lasted eight years and only ended when I was nine-years-old. Therefore, I was subject to two formative experiences, namely my birth and childhood. I grew up in Tehran until my family decided to leave Iran in 2000. We immigrated to Canada and I started to study movie production and editing at the International Academy of Design and Technology in Toronto. After ten years, I decided to go back to my roots and I returned to Tehran. There I began to create video art in combination with installations in order to introduce an innovative method of showing video and film. One of my latest exhibition pieces deals with the topic of honour killing, which involves women being murdered by their own relatives owing to a belief that the victim had brought shame or dishonour upon the family.