Foreword

Globalization, a term ubiquitous in today’s industrialized countries, is ancient. Consider the movement of early peoples out of Africa, the travels of Venetian merchant Marco Polo, and the conquering of territories by the Romans and Genghis Khan. While the Silk Road served as a means for the trade of goods, religions, philosophies, technologies, and diseases (Bentley, 1993), early explorers in the Americas sought gold, silver, and spices to carry back to their native countries. The slave trade brought people from Africa to Europe and the Americas. These early agents of globalization sought to improve life (often at the expense of other people), luxuries, and food; were interested in what lay over the mountain, plain, or sea; wanted to spread a belief system such as Buddhism or Christianity; or sought land, goods, or power owned by others. The term “globalization,” created in the 1960s, indicates “the melding, borrowing, and adaptation of outside influences” (Yale Global, n.d.), making it part of the human experience.

Today, “new actors have emerged to replace the traders, soldiers, missionaries, and adventurers of years past” and they are over 60,000 multinational corporations, NGOs, UN agencies, the WTO, the IMF, and the world population,” with “the difference between globalization then and now . . . in the speed and volume of transfers and in the changing power balance” (Chanda, 2003). Depending on your political location, experiences, and views, you might consider these players in an optimistic, an undesirable, or a disinterested light. Its positive casts include the foods we eat: imagine a Europe without tomatoes, potatoes, and chocolate—all foods tied closely to distinctive culinary traditions (the “Mediterranean diet” and marinara sauce, for example, or “Belgian” chocolate) and even historical events (e.g., the potato blight). Life would be dull indeed without spices, traded for thousands of years. It’s also the sharing of ideas. The concept of 0 originated with the Babylonians while the first symbol for the concept came from India. Early Persian mathematician Al-Khwarizmi provided an accurate and comprehensive overview of algebra, parts of which had been previously worked on by Babylonians, Indians, Egyptians, the Chinese, and the Greeks. Today’s calendar was reformed by Arabian scholars. Trefoil and arches, important to Christian and Tudor architecture, were borrowed from Islamic architecture. Yinka Shonibare’s work highlights the import by the Dutch of batik from Indonesia to Africa, with which it is often associated. The blues associated with Chinese ceramics originated in Persia, porcelains were developed in China, the term “porcelain” comes from the Italian “porcellana” referring to the translucence of cowrie shells, and the material named “china” from the English (a concept Gertrude Stein played when she wrote “In China china is not china it is earthen ware. In China there is no need of china because in China china is china” [1998, p. 379]). While today’s world is made closer by the digits 0 and 1 and satellites, before them came that same sense from steam engines, the telegraph followed by the telephone and the FAX machine, radio, TV, and film (Chanda, 2003, n.p.). These bring enrichment to cultures and individual lives that art and visual culture educators have celebrated since at least the days of Pedro de Lemos’
writing and editing of many articles on world cultures in School Arts magazine in the first half of the 20th century. Yet there are adverse casts to globalization. I was, for example, a vocal opponent to NAFTA before it passed, knowing that it would hurt farmers and small businesses in the country I had grown close to as a foreigner, Mexico. And some of that has proven true: “trade is not on a level playing field [for] rich nations’ farm subsidies hurt poor farmers in the developing world” (Chanda, 2003), GMOs outlawed there still infiltrate crops, and jobs and lifestyles evaporate, forcing migration. Global colonization is the object of educators as well as protestors and poses problems for the role of citizenship in democratic societies (Garber, 2010).

As this collection of essays goes to press, there is no shortage of publications on globalization. In the field of art education, these include Delacruz et al.’s 2009 collection Globalization, Art, & Education and jan jagodzinski’s (2010) articulation of the importance of art as antithesis to capitalist consumption. As Ryan Shin notes in his preface to this volume, in today’s world, “we face intense and pressing issues such as educational, economic, cultural, and political conflicts.” The nuances of globalization in today’s world and how visual art educators are approaching them conceptually and in practice are represented in the chapters you are about to read. With contributions about educating in and/or from the perspectives of Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Taiwan, and the US, the authors address issues that affect teaching in today’s world, sharing their educational responses toward global civic learning and engagement. They suggest a wide girth of interconnected ideas about and approaches to acts of educating: complexity thinking, feminist mapping and eco-feminism, sustainability, remix, cultural border crossing, narrative pedagogy, critical pedagogy, teacher agency, the use of satellites and GPS to extend our understanding of place, attentiveness to the local, community-based and place-based practices, developing communities of practice, service learning and civic engagement, interdisciplinary learning, collaborative learning, global competency, global citizenship, and cognitive dissonance and relational aesthetics for developing empathy and understanding. They include student responses made through craft, art, public art, mapping, digital making and videogames, the creation of virtual worlds, the use of found objects, installation, cyberperformance, and farming as it relates to the handmade.

These essays should help educators from all fields widen their understanding of what globalization means to those they teach, offering approaches in the visual and material arts that the authors have taken. Convergence of Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Global Civic Engagement offers significant contributions to education conversation about globalization and a broad array of ideas about helping students meaningfully engage in these conversations.

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REFERENCES


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