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Introduction

Since the Crystal Palace exhibition of 1851 in London, design has been a significant part of the globalization process. Yet in recent years, when the pace of globalization has accelerated dramatically, questions of design's implication in it have not been given sufficient attention. The editors of *Design Issues* are therefore pleased to devote a special issue of the journal to this subject. As our guest editors, Karen Fiss and Hazel Clark, point out in their respective essays, there is much at stake in studying how design contributes to numerous aspects of social, economic, and cultural transformation. Questions of national identity, tourism, cultural hybridity, and authenticity are all issues that the study of design in a global context can help to unpack. We are hopeful that this special issue will make a valuable contribution to the globalization debates and insure that design retains a central place in them.

Also included in the issue are reviews of two exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, one on the design uses of advanced technology and the other on modular housing. In both instances, the reviewers provide critical commentary that emphasizes the rhetorical nature of all exhibitions, even when they purport to be objective surveys or overviews of new objects and ideas.

Bruce Brown
Richard Buchanan
Dennis Doordan
Victor Margolin

Design in a Global Context: Envisioning Postcolonial and Transnational Possibilities

Karen Fiss

The essays in this volume of *Design Issues* examine contemporary developments in fashion, architecture, and industrial and graphic design in light of the evolving pressures of globalization. Taking as their starting point diverse examples from Africa, Greece, Barcelona, Shanghai, and British-era Hong Kong, the authors analyze the myriad ways that design cultures negotiate the space between the local and the global. They examine how design can exploit or subvert the commercial allure of the "exotic," and how it is called upon to reference national identity or recast the vernacular. They address the branding of place as a means of reinforcing cultural identity and expanding opportunities in international trade and tourism. And, finally, they highlight the political and social significance of the varying forms of cultural hybridity that have emerged out of our postcolonial and internationalized capitalist condition, suggesting that local design cultures are both challenged and enabled by the increasing globalization of the marketplace.

Ever since Marshall McLuhan published his vision of the "global village" in the 1960s, social and political theorists—mostly coming from a Marxist perspective—have associated globalization with the acceleration of time, the "annihilation" of space, and the expansion of authoritarian control. The priorities of transnational capital, driven by consumerism and neoliberal economic policies, have made the nation-state increasingly irrelevant and state-based democracy more vulnerable. This discourse of cultural imperialism further asserts that the rapidly expanding reach of technology and capitalism is producing a homogenous world culture primarily dominated by America and the West. Indeed, one of the major divides in studies of globalization today is whether increased international trade is imposing cultural homogenization or, in fact, working to enrich and preserve culture through expanded access to the Internet and increased cross-cultural contact. From the perspective of a free-market optimist such as Tyler Cohen, the sharp rise in global trade creates more entrepreneurial opportunities for producers of art and culture by "liberating difference from geography," making culture less about identifying with a particular region or location. This view entrusts that the consumer-citizen and not the multinational corporation ultimately succeeds in driving

these interactions. On the other hand, one also can argue that this deterritorializing of culture allows it to be "theme-parked," creating a type of cultural diversity that is merely a simulacrum, and that no longer has ties to any "authentic" origin. In addition, some cultures have access to stronger media infrastructure and greater economic and political resources, and thus can be marketed more forcefully. As Benjamin Barber asserts in his book *Jihad vs. McWorld*, the preponderance of Western culture globally is a major source of provocation for fundamentalist groups who see it as an "aggressive, secularist, materialist attack on their values."[1]

Nevertheless, over the last fifteen years, theorists have increasingly questioned the uniformly dystopian character of the imperialist model of globalization. They assert that it forecloses the possibility of realizing a more complex, multivalent understanding of our contemporary condition—one that takes into account hybrid forms of cultural expression that are not necessarily global or local, indigenous or imported, "Western or non-Western." Arjun Appardurai contends that the expansion of the global market has in fact allowed for culture and capital to flow from different centers, in different directions, and often with no clear center or periphery. His ideas have become influential within the field of cultural studies and globalization, and are evident as well in the essays included here. Appadurai proposes to replace the center-periphery model with a complex matrix of overlapping and disjunctive global cultural flows, which he terms "ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes." According to this model, the West becomes just one node in a field of interconnected imaginary landscapes, with "people, machinery, money, images, and ideas now follow[ing] increasingly non-isomorphic paths." Although Appadurai acknowledges that there always has been exchange and cross-fertilization between wide-ranging cultures throughout history, what is different in our current state of affairs is a question of magnitude: "the sheer speed, scale, and volume of each of these flows are now so great that the disjunctures have become central to the politics of global culture."[2]

Individuals moving within and between these landscapes—due to either forced migration or voluntary displacement—often find themselves belonging to more than one world. As Benedict Anderson suggests, a passport has come to signify permission to work someplace more than a connection to any essential collective identity or pledge of national allegiance.[3] Driving the growth of mobile workforces are a few dozen "megaregions" stretching over national borders to form "vast swaths of trade, transport, innovation, and talent."[4] Mobilization has made it even easier for related kinds of economic activity and innovation to collocate in specific areas. David Harvey contends that this type of "flexible accumulation" became necessary due to the failure of the Fordist model of centralized mass production. Fordism's rigidity and dependence on big business,

1 "Globalization and Culture," *Cato Policy Report* (May/June 2003): 8–10; Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World* (New York: Ballantine, 1995).

2 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1996), 37.

3 See Benedict Anderson's meditation on the evolution of nationalism from the nineteenth century to more current trends of immigration and long-distance nationalism. "Exodus," *Cultural Inquiry* 20:2 (Winter 1994): 314–27.

4 Richard Florida, "Megaregions: The Importance of Place," *Harvard Business Review* (March 2008): 18.

big government, and large-scale fixed capital investments led to a surplus of goods and high unemployment in the 1970s.[5] Today, business practices rely on flexibility in organizational structure, labor relations, and financing; all of which must adapt quickly and efficiently to shifting markets and patterns of consumption. Because of the current mobility and "unruliness" of transnational capital, along with increased migration and sophisticated connectivity, some assert that we have moved into a postnational era in which power is increasingly privatized, and identification with a particular nation is weakened to the point of obsolescence.

In a world characterized as diasporic, transnational, and deterritorialized, how does one understand the production of locality? Appadurai maintains that "locality as a relational achievement is not the same as locality as a practical value in the quotidian production of subjects and colonization of space."[6] What is understood as local depends on context: on the relationship between a particular social space and the larger matrix of power and cultural relations in which it is embedded, whether it is the more normative system of a "nation" or another postnational form of imagined community. From Appadurai's perspective, the local can be a source of potential political subversion, and for that reason it is fragile—subject to the pressures of normalization and control.[7]

In keeping with Appadurai's argument, the authors included in this issue unpack the problematic notion of "authenticity," particularly as it is applied to cultures viewed as exotic, passive, and potentially "endangered" by Western encroachment. Victoria Rovine, in her study of the popularity of African forms and motifs in early twentieth-century French fashion, scrutinizes the oppositional model of "tradition" and "fashion" as an empty cultural construction, useful only for reinforcing the dominance of the Western subject and the logic of the colonial enterprise. Non-Western dress historically has been considered costume and not fashion, and assumed to be timeless and tied to "primitive," unchanging group identities. Fashion, on the other hand, is assumed to be the product of "advanced" societies. Its cosmopolitan and whimsical nature is in constant flux to keep up with the rapid pace of industrial society. Yet the way the terms were employed by the colonizers reveals a paradoxical social hierarchy. On the one hand, the colonial empire undertook to "civilize" and advance African cultures; on the other, the infusion of a "primitive" and "exotic" frisson was seen as necessary to rejuvenate and enrich Western cultural production. The colonies were there to be mined for their raw materials, both literally and aesthetically. The French love affair with all things African—from beads and boubous to the animal prints and palm tree textiles invented to meet the exotic expectations of the French consumer—is still very much in play in contemporary fashion. The "Africanisms" employed by such French icons as Jean Paul Gaultier, with collections based on such inflammatory colonial stereotypes as the "Hottentot Venus" and "Fétiche" (Figures 1 and

5 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 141–51.

6 Appadurai, *Modernity at Large,* 186.

7 Other theorists find a similar liberatory potential in diasporic and cosmopolitan subjects who, in many respects, have taken the place of international workers in the traditional Marxist class struggle. See Aiwha Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 15.

Figure 1 (above)
Jean-Paul Gaultier, "Hottentot Venus," Spring-Summer fashion collection 2005.

Figure 2 (below)
Jean-Paul Gaultier, "Fetiche," Spring-Summer fashion collection 2005.

2) extend the exploitative and erotic imaginary landscape of French colonialism into the present.

Hazel Clark and Earl Tai, in their respective essays on Hong Kong and Shanghai, dissect another flawed binarism, that of East and West, which also relies on the myth of authenticity and essentialized identities. What does it mean to convey Asian qualities and characteristics through design? As Clark points out, Hong Kong represents a unique case study, being historically positioned as a site of exchange between Asia and the Occident. The agreement to transfer Hong Kong's sovereignty to China in 1997 provoked a crisis of identity for the territory, "a culture of disappearance." With the looming uncertainly about its future, Hong Kong needed a hybrid or "hyphenated" subjectivity that could negotiate the future complexities of globalization, while acknowledging its mixed legacies of colonialism, nationalism, and capitalism. The "authentic inauthenticity of Hong Kong, its unsituated situatedness"—its state of constant becoming—in fact helped to define the region's unique design opportunity.[8] The visual practices examined by Clark allow for such experimentation with hybridity, thus potentially giving shape and substance to a subjectivity that remains in formation. The designers she discusses engage a wide range of strategies, some deliberately exploiting the codes of Orientalism, exoticism,

8 Hazel Clark quotes Tony Fry from a previous *Design Issues*. See Tony Fry, "The 'Futurings' of Hong Kong" in Hazel Clark, ed., *Design Issues* 19:3 (Summer 2003): 72.

and nostalgia through self-parody and quotation. Others, such as G.O.D. (an interior and lifestyle products company), offer alternative approaches to designing for a hip Asian identity by making local and vernacular cultural forms and practices relevant to a larger global consumer context.

Tai's examination of Shanghai domestic interiors through the photographic lens of Hu Yang also counters traditional East-West narratives, rejecting the usual opposition of Chinese indigenous culture and Western colonial influence as insufficient for understanding contemporary Shanghai's complex visual culture. Tai shifts the weight of his analysis from production and design to the realms of reception, consumption, and modes of display. He examines how Shanghai's diverse residents construct their identities by looking at what they are "actually bringing into their spaces." Hu Yang's documentary portraits of Shanghai residents, all taken within the context of their own homes, cut across a diverse spectrum of social classes and cultural backgrounds. Some of the photographs demonstrate a strong desire on the part of Hu's subjects to connect with the tradition and cultural history of China. A French expatriate embodies an Orientalist fascination with China's classical past through his self-conscious collection of artifacts, decorative kitsch, and traditional garments. In contrast, a Chinese academic's reverence for classical literati culture is revealed more through her actions and engagement in traditional activities than through obvious patterns of consumption. In her simple quarters, she plays a classical zither on her bed, her skillful calligraphic exercises casually tacked to a wall behind her. But as Tai notes, her literati lifestyle is not fully steeped in a Chinese past—the compact disc player and a book about Audrey Hepburn lying on her bed point to a more multivalent passage through our globalized condition.

A major theme of Tai's essay is that the mere possession of goods identifiable as Western—a Shanghai school teacher's obsession with Harley Davidson motorcycle collectibles or the display of McDonald's advertisements in the spare home of a lower working-class family—does not automatically signify Western or neo-colonial cultural dominance. Rather, one can regard this situation as the result of "the pervasiveness of global culture simultaneously being enacted upon many stages, including Shanghai, with many agents and actors…"[9] Again, Appadurai reminds us that culture in a global context is a participatory, though at times uneven process, involving diverse individual agents and a plurality of "centers." The term "indigenization" refers to the fact that consumer goods, along with their attendant symbolic and ideological values, are not transferred in an uninterrupted and unmediated way to passive consumers. Instead, culture is continuously reterritorialized, resulting in the texture and experience of the local being altered through the unique interpretation and adaptation of external influences. Although Helen Tiffin proposes that the production of hybridity within a postcolonial

9 Quoted from the essay by Earl Tai, "Decolonizing Shanghai: Design and Material Culture in the Photographs of Hu Yang," included in this volume.

context can serve as a significant counter-discourse, as a manifestation of resistance, Tai argues that it also can occur without any "irony, angst, or conflict." By reading indigenization as exclusively a means of undermining dominant cultural forces, one only reaffirms the colonial paradigm.

Rovine similarly evokes the concept of "cultural authentication" in discussing women's dress of the Herero of Namibia and Botswana, which displays characteristics of eighteenth-century German clothing, and the absorption of European style into men's clothing among the Kalabari of southeastern Nigeria. These examples also demonstrate that the idea of cultural authenticity is an artificial one to begin with. Cultures always have been "inextricable hybridities"—the products of migration, exchange, and cross-fertilization—even before the advent of the colonial era. In view of Tai's historical example of the complex connections between Chinese and European porcelain centers; or Rovine's elucidation of wax print textiles by way of Indonesia, the Netherlands, and Africa; it becomes apparent that what ends up being considered traditional is not necessarily indigenous.

Another common thread running through many of these essays is the fate of nationalism, the nation-state, and regional/local identities in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world. Three essays in particular—those by Jilly Traganou, Viviana Narotzky, and Hazel Clark—engage the debates over nationalism, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism in light of specific case studies of national and regional identities in historic moments of transition. Traganou examines the Greek government's use of the 2004 Athens Olympics as a springboard for rebranding Greek national identity. She considers this design endeavor in light of Greece's inclusion in the European Monetary Union in 2001 and the country's continued conflicts over immigration and cultural difference. The Olympics presented Greece with an opportunity to rebrand itself as a modern, forward-looking state, ready to engage in international business alongside its European partners. The hiring of the Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava to design the Athens Olympic stadium seemed to signal Greece's embrace of a pan-European identity. Yet the debates that surrounded his design revealed just how extensively globalization was perceived publicly as a threat to Greek identity. As much as possible, Calatrava and the stadium were discursively reintegrated into a familiar Mediterraneanism and classical architectural legacy. The opening ceremonies held in the stadium celebrated Greece as the birthplace of civilization, and valorized Greek heritage and ethnicity as an uninterrupted march from Hellenic prehistory to the present. In order to uphold this national mythology, all histories of cross-cultural encounters and immigration were repressed. The seamless narrative was opened only during the closing ceremonies in which Greece's regional cultures and its distinct subculture, the Roma, were included in the festivities. The Greek public regarded the spectacle as

an unwelcome reminder to international audiences of Greece's close link to "Eastern" rather than "European" communities, and it was met with widespread disapproval. Traganou demonstrates, therefore, that Greece, like other Western countries, is anxious about the new terms of globalization and transnational migration—unnerved by the knowledge that it can no longer discipline and naturalize all of the people living within its borders according to what are now outmoded codes of nationalism and national identity. In a utopian gesture, Traganou suggests a form of "hijacking" of traditional international events such as the Olympics, so that they can instead serve as a means of promoting cultural heterogeneity and postnational forms of allegiances.

Viviana Narotzky's study of the "Catalan difference" also examines efforts to brand place in the wake of the European Union through visual markers that evoked modernity and technological competency. The transition to democracy in Spain offered Catalonia the possibility of legitimizing its claim to national identity, even though it did not push for separate political self-determination. The regional government extended the institutional reach of the Catalan language, which it promoted through successful radio and television broadcasting. The visual identity of Catalonia in the 1980s, however, was achieved through a confluence of factors that made its furniture and product design an international success. These design forms did not as a rule hark back to a vernacular iconography or cultural clichés—rather Catalan design spoke to a global market through the elusive values of modernity and creative heritage. In so doing, Catalonia was able to distance itself from Spain's largely negative image at that time of "siesta and mañana," establishing its own distinct economic profile and privileged market share.

Narotzky's analysis dovetails in an interesting manner with Clark's, for one could argue that strong brand and design identity materialized in both Hong Kong and Catalonia in lieu of real political authority, with both regions existing in a liminal space between dependence and independence. For Catalonia, the possibility of gaining visibility on the international stage opened up once Spain's fascist era came to a close. In the case of Hong Kong, identity become a crucial enterprise at the moment of the Sino-British Declaration, when its citizens feared that life as they knew it was about to disappear. Populations can empower themselves culturally and economically without challenging the ambiguity of their political status. Branding and design, favorably positioned between culture and commerce, are ideally suited for redefining identities that are circumscribed within these two realms.

I would like to join with Hazel Clark in thanking the authors for their vibrant contributions to this volume of *Design Issues*. Their essays point to new avenues of investigation in design studies that engage contemporary debates around globalization and take advantage of the field's transdisciplinary context. Before

concluding, we would also like to thank Marcelo Viana for his original and thoughtful design for this issue's cover. We extend our thanks as well to the editorial board of *Design Issues* and its managing editor, for their support and encouragement in bringing this volume to fruition. We hope that readers will find these essays thought-provoking, and we welcome any comments: kfiss@cca.edu and clarkH@newschool.edu.

Back to the Future, or Forward? Hong Kong Design, Image, and Branding

Hazel Clark

Footnotes for this article begin on page 28.

Introduction

It is now more than ten years since Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region of mainland China. Hong Kong was and is particular in its multiple identities as a British colony, a Chinese territory, and a global city; yet its heterogeneity is increasingly typical of the twenty-first-century urban experience. Consideration of design in the global context in relation to Hong Kong raises a number of issues. The most obvious and potentially the most interesting is the complexity of Hong Kong design's emerging and simultaneous relationship with at least two cultural contexts. One is the international culture of globalization and global products (which has underpinned Hong Kong's economy), and the other the local culture of Hong Kong itself and that of greater China and Asia which, given Hong Kong's colonial history, takes a distinct form. Yet to speak of a bifurcation of cultures (the old cliché of "East meets West") is too simplistic and essentialist to address Hong Kong and its recent history.

While internationally the dominant mode of universal global and design culture is still predominantly Western (and largely American), it has become more nuanced as Asia has become more influential as the world hub of manufacturing; and as locally and regionally inspired design from Asia penetrates international markets. Also, globally, new configurations are replacing the former dominance of the national. We can, for example, distinguish Catalan from Spanish design (see, for example, Viviana Narotzky's paper, page 62) and, of course, Scandinavian design successfully applies as a way of identifying a wide range of design qualities and values, where reference to the component nations would not. We also know that major global brands are highly complex by virtue of their production, consumption, and design. If, at this point in history, these brands still serve to represent the international dominance of Western culture and lifestyle, the design and conception of products themselves are beginning to shift closer to the manufacturing centers in Asia.

The issue of referring to at least two cultures simultaneously comprises the contemporary Asian experience. It can be seen as both a blessing and a curse. While it certainly offers opportunities for

manufacturers seeking to attract more diverse and wide-ranging consumer markets, it does not necessarily lead to the dissemination of cultural experiences through design, but to its opposite, the reinforcement of externally devised cultural stereotypes. Still, for designers in Asia who are not content merely to produce Western designs (that is where Western culture, values, and representation predominate), the identification of qualities and characteristics local to Asian cultures and their translation into product and image forms can enable experiments that bring about new, hybrid design identities. As the work of some designers is beginning to indicate, design can become a means of embodying or giving form to a new cultural identity—new in the sense that the identity draws upon the local and the global, and also new in the sense that the complex cultural *identity sought in or through design does not yet exist*. Design, after all, can function at that critical pivot between the cultural and the commercial. The task, therefore, is giving "expression" to something that already exists in a culture or, more interestingly, about designing as a way of unveiling a putative and very complex identity, which also might have more global resonances. Across Asia today, these issues are being played out in different ways in design. Certainly, it is apparent where design is revitalizing generic craft processes; for example, in countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and the Philippines; or with the redesign of products related to particular local and cultural practices such as food and eating.

This paper considers the role of a "cultural" based design in the formation of brand images and products relative to Hong Kong, one of the first Asian locations after Japan to address this task. The focus on the 1990s, the post-colonial decade which witnessed the "handover" of sovereignty in 1997 from Britain to China, was a time the financial, manufacturing, trading, and social stability; and the very identity of Hong Kong and its people was in question.

Background

A product of British imperial trading interests, and occupied after World War II largely by a refugee population (following the Communist takeover of mainland China in 1949), Hong Kong stands as one of the key exemplars of the rise of Asian economic power. Since the late-eighteenth century, the Pearl River Delta had been the center of China's export trade. Local techniques, material, and labor were used to mass-produce goods for the world.[1] Wonderful conceits resulted, particularly the Chinoiserie designs made in the delta for export to Europe. Adaptation and export orientation already were the models when Hong Kong began to establish its own manufacturing in the late nineteenth century, albeit under colonial dominance.

Hong Kong's peculiar geographical and political positioning between East and West has facilitated its role as an entrepôt, and underpinned its economy, but also created a crisis of identity. Being neither wholly Chinese, but clearly also not non-Chinese, was highly

problematic for local people who found it hard to define what Hong Kong is, or what it means to be a Hong Kong person. This question over the enclave's identity became a critical issue in the runup to the 1997 handover when Hong Kong, caught as it was between colonialism and the global economy on one side, and a broken legacy of Chinese culture on the other, became increasingly uncertain about its identity and also its future.

As it looked forward, Hong Kong needed to be something more than a bridge between China and the rest of the world: the place where "East meets West" and where all the resulting cultural tensions are played out. In the 1990s, there were increasing attempts to develop an identity representative of post-colonial Hong Kong.[2] This was evident in the arts, in popular culture, in politics (with the gaining in strength of the local Democratic Party), and also in design. The position of design as a point of local-global interface was not without precedent. History explains the colony's situation in the 1990s, and provides context for the potential and effectiveness of design in giving expression to a new cultural identity in the global marketplace.

The signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, followed by the Tiananmen incident of June 1989, confirmed a number of fears that the Hong Kong way of life, originating from its mixture of colonialism and democracy, was in danger of disappearing. The impending handover of sovereignty in June 1997 focused the colony's attention inwards and increased concerns over its imminent disappearance. In considering Hong Kong at the point of its handover, Ackbar Abbas has quoted Walter Benjamin's statement: "Anything about which one knows that one soon will not have it around becomes an image." Abbas observed in Hong Kong a change in the status of culture ("…from reverse hallucination, which sees only desert, to a culture of disappearance, whose appearance is posited on the imminence of its disappearance.[3]")The "imminence of the disappearance" post-1984, that is the disappearance of characteristic but often unrecognized aspects of Hong Kong's vulnerable identity, was echoed in divergent design trends. One, impelled by the economic imperatives of Hong Kong was in OEM (Original Equipment Manufacture), where manufacturers made export products for overseas customer companies that usually supplied the designs, was the existing direction "toward the expression of pure Western themes,"[4] that is design predicated entirely on market considerations.

Western themes underpinned the development of Hong Kong's manufacturing base, founded on OEM, which had its roots in manufacturing in the Pearl River Delta in the eighteenth century, characterized by "a labor-intensive system of serial or mass production … a strong export orientation; and … a process of adaptive design."[5] The process created no opportunity for the origination and development of design locally for, in effect, the

local market did not exist: the customers were overseas and they, in turn, set the "modern" taste locally. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, in an attempt to develop Hong Kong design and manufacturing, government intervention promoted, sponsored, and defined design education and dominated the discourse of Hong Kong "modernity" and "Chineseness." Imported modern, Western style designs were manufactured for expanding overseas export markets. In the process, "an Orientalist discourse was invented which equated Chinese design with fussy detailing and neo-Chinoiserie, and Hong Kong modern design with simulacra of current Western practice."[6]

The move to ODM (Original Design Manufacturing) and then OBM (Original Brand Manufacturing) in the 1990s as an "upgrading" of the OEM system, offered new potential for change. Old-style OEM companies moved towards higher value production by developing their own brands. For example, Fang Brothers, a clothing manufacturer, developed the fashion label "Episode." Others including the battery and electric products manufacturer Gold Peak and the electronics company Johnson Electrics generated their own designs, often resold under another label.[7] This change reflected a new self-confidence by companies in using original design, but the overarching style and image were Western and global rather than reflecting any particularity of Hong Kong, other than their contribution to the Hong Kong economy.

The next section provides a brief overview of the development of a Hong Kong design identity which was evident initially in graphic design, where the earliest designs were derived from Hong Kong/Chinese culture. Case studies from three companies; Vivienne Tam, Shanghai Tang, and G.O.D.; that have developed brand images based around a Hong Kong/Chinese cultural identity are presented. The final section considers the emergence of a new subjectivity in Hong Kong design.

Cross-cultural Graphic Design

Since the early twentieth century, graphic design in Hong Kong had attempted to synthesize local/Chinese culture with foreign design trends. Already in the 1930s, Hong Kong design revealed strong echoes of the Shanghai modern style that was particularly evident in print culture.[8] In common with Shanghai, the colony was a major center for the production of the popular calendar posters. But the lack of appropriate art or design education in Hong Kong prevailed against design development, as Siu[9] and also Turner have noted: "… by the 1960s, the designs of the early modern period of Hong Kong had begun to disappear as American markets and styles came to predominate."[10]

In the late 1960s, significant change began to occur, but it is hardly surprising that the impetus came from outside. One of the key instigators of a new form of graphic design was American Henry Steiner. Born in Vienna and raised and educated in New York, Steiner

Figure 1
Henry Steiner, annual report for the Hong Kong Mass Transit Railway's tenth anniversary, 1989, where the Chinese character for the number ten performs a double role. Reproduced with the permission of Henry Steiner.

moved to Hong Kong in 1961 and founded Graphic Communication Ltd. (now Steiner & Co) in 1964. He is generally attributed as the most influential of the overseas designers who began to arrive in Hong Kong in the 1960s.[11] Steiner states that, in Hong Kong, he discovered a "cross-cultural city-state undergoing the transformation from provincial outpost of an empire to international focal-point."[12] His response was to develop a method of "cross-cultural design" that incorporated Chinese cultural symbols and written characters into the Western grid. His visual language is based on contrast and double meanings in text and image via "code-mixing" where, for example, Roman letters of the alphabet are replaced with Chinese characters. (Figure 1)

Steiner's declared intention was to *transform* a new visual language, inspired by but distinct from the combining, mixing, and blending of characters, images, and icons which he saw going on in local design. The latter he describes as being akin to "yin-yang," the unique and popular drink available on Hong Kong street stands that combines tea and coffee (to produce a taste that Steiner describes as enhancing the worst characteristics of both beverages).[13] Visually and ideologically, his metaphor was the Yin Yang symbol, where the elements never merge but remain discrete yet complementary. His cross-cultural design process has three stages of evolution:

1. Quotation – where foreign images are used for their quaintly exotic flavor as decoration. (He notes how this stage is a form of appropriation precariously close to plagiarism; employing icons without necessarily understanding them.)
2. Mimicry – which involves working in the style or manner of an artist or school in attempt at understanding to some degree how and why the model was done. (The thrust is more towards re-creation than reproduction. An operative adjective is *influence*.)
3. Transformation – where the influence has been assimilated and the once foreign becomes personal and natural.[14]

Steiner demonstrated transformation through the device of bifurcation, where a symbol or icon from Chinese culture was paired with an equivalent "echo" from Western culture. For the 1980 annual report of the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation, "The Pearl of the Orient" was combined with the "Big Apple" in a symbolic and a visual pairing based on the circle. (Figure 2) The same publication likewise matched or "rhymed" scenes from Hong Kong and New York, such as the head of the Statue of Liberty with a Chinese opera character, to symbolize the bank's acquisition of the New York-based Marine Midland Bank. (Figure 3) Steiner attempted to address a major problem of self-representation or quasi-branding for his key clients, who were largely international/colonial companies, "working in or communicating to a foreign culture."[15] It is not surprising therefore that the designs he produced very

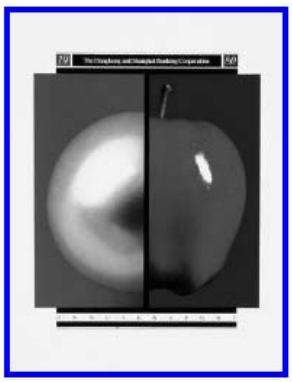

Figure 2 (left)
Henry Steiner, cover of the annual report for the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation, 1980. Reproduced with the permission of Henry Steiner.

Figure 3 (right)
Henry Steiner, an inside page of the annual report for the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation, 1980. Reproduced with the permission of Henry Steiner.

often employed the most basic cultural stereotypes and Orientalist tropes. While Steiner did achieve a form of transformation, it did not result in hybridity: the original image and the metaphor were always evident (for example, the pearl and the apple). Cross-cultural design for Steiner and others[16] implied a biculturalism, where both cultures are clearly represented through known typologies; and assumed an approach to design, where Western forms and images equal global, and traditional and stereotyped signifiers equal local. In this approach, Hong Kong/local equates with tradition and China.

Two other graphic designers who are considered pioneers in Hong Kong are Kan Tai Keung and Alan Chan, who each came to prominence in the 1980s. Both conceived distinctive transformations of Chinese characters and images, first into graphics and then into products in the 1990s. Their different points of departure from Steiner are evident in their graphic styles and imagery. Kan, for example, is a practitioner of Chinese brush painting; and Chan a collector of Chinese antiques. Both are well-respected designers in Japan, mainland China, and Taiwan.[17] In comparing their approaches in his doctoral thesis, Daniel Huppatz describes Steiner's style as "neocolonialist," Kan's as "Chinese postmodernism," and Chan's as "retro."[18] A series of posters based on Kan's practice of shuimo Chinese brush painting indicate clearly that his approach derives from Chinese culture and tradition; not as a form of representation, but as an understanding and assimilation that is then translated for contemporary audiences in its technique and use of "empty" space. (Figure 4) The style does, without doubt, place Asian visual culture as a point of departure for global design.

> Chinese culture does not only belong to China, but to the whole world. Culture lies in thought and not in form: the form is merely a vehicle. If you use a modernized, global language as a means of expression, people will understand, although not necessarily with a deep understanding of the culture.[19]

Figure 4
Kan Tai-Keung, Shui Mo poster, exhibited at the Hong Kong Arts Centre, 1985. Reproduced with the permission of Kan Tai-keung.

For Huppatz, it is Chan's work that "represents the best case for a local design style, fundamentally connected to global capitalism, in both historical references and its consumption" by virtue of drawing upon local/Hong Kong historical references.[20] Chan remains true to historical references and cultural signifiers. His designs for the Mandarin Oriental cake shop and The Optical Shop, for example, effectively revive old vernacular forms and images, but do not seek to transform them. There is always a dance between the aesthetic and the commercial, as Chan has commented:

> Melding East and West cannot be a blind pursuit. In so doing, I must also consider a client's needs. I hope to give every Chinese something to be proud of through my designs, and to give our best to others in the process.[21]

Chan's employment of nostalgia in the creation of consumer products and graphics reflects a global design genre in the 1990s that had particular resonance for Hong Kong design. As Appadurai has argued:

> Rummaging through history has become a standard technique of advertising, especially of visual and electronic ads, as a way to draw on the genuine nostalgia of age-groups for pasts they actually know through other experiences, but also as a way to underline the inherent ephemerality of the present.[22]

What more appropriate way for Hong Kong to be addressed than through styles that "underline the inherent ephemerality" of its present, highlighted in the decade of its change of sovereignty? Nostalgia (for China) is a key theme uniting the two luxury brands that will be discussed next: Vivienne Tam and Shanghai Tang.

Hong Kong Image and Branding

VIVIENNE TAM

The upmarket fashion brand Vivienne Tam developed a substantial international business in the 1990s. Named after its designer, the label became associated with designs that drew liberally on Chinese and Asian cultural references and on exoticism. Tam was born in Canton and educated in Hong Kong, but her business always has been based in New York, where she moved in the 1980s, although her manufacturing base is in southern China. Her international success began in the mid-1990s following the development in 1993 of her "signature" Chinese-inspired designs. Her most visually distinctive and best-publicized garments were the Mao collection for spring/summer 1995, (Figure 5) and her Buddha and Kuan Yin (the Buddhist goddess of mercy) printed dresses for spring 1997.[23]

Tam has used what Steiner refers to as "quotation" in her work as a very self-conscious design strategy. When the cultural references are clearly derivative their translation has included

Figure 5
Vivienne Tam, Spring/summer 1995 Mao collection. Reproduced with the permission of Vivienne Tam.

parodies, such as the t-shirt featuring the image of Mao with pigtails or with a bee sitting on his nose. (See Figure 5) She has assimilated references from Chinese culture and combined them with prevailing modern Western shapes, which make garments desirable in Hong Kong and in the global marketplace. (The Kuan Yin dress, printed on netting, for example, was one of her best-selling pieces ever.) Tam's design hybridity has become very successful commercially. The brand is stocked in more than a hundred retail outlets across the United States, including the flagship store in Manhattan, as well as at seven boutiques in Hong Kong, one in Shanghai, stores in Japan, plus licensing and distribution agreements. Her international following can be described as global, extending as it does to Europe, Canada, Brazil, Indonesia, Taiwan, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines; and including movie stars and celebrities.[24]

Nostalgia for her Chinese roots was endorsed in her 2000 publication *China Chic*, a richly illustrated and colorful coffee-table book that induces the reader to share Tam's fascination with Chinese history and culture. Tam's exoticized "signature," which resonates with Hong Kong's search for identity, emerged at a time when global fashion and style also were looking to Asia for references. The late Richard Martin, curator at the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, described Tam as being in possession of an "idealistic globalism that transcends politics and offers a more

enchanted, peaceful world."[25] Tam continues to be invested in Chinese culture and to employ cultural references in her work, although the self-exoticization has become subtler. According to Lise Skov, self-exoticization may have been the only design strategy that Tam could employ to create a commercially successful brand. In conversations with younger Hong Kong-based fashion designers in the 1990s, Skov noted that:

> There was general agreement that the way to realize ambitions in international fashion was to "do something Chinese." For them, this was the only conceivable way to turn their distance from the fashion centers into a competitive edge that could be exploited in the international marketplace. Rather than emphasizing Hong Kong's technical expertise in the manufacturing of street fashion, for example, ambitious designers felt pressured to buy into an old Orientalism strangely at odds with the culturally neutral modernism that otherwise counts as good fashion in Asia.[26]

So design sits, increasingly awkwardly, not just at the interface of the local and the global, but also alongside technique, culture, and commerce. How much then was nostalgia and Orientalism a conscious choice for Tam or, following Skov's argument, the only choice? To look further into this question I consider two other Hong Kong brands, Shanghai Tang and then G.O.D.

SHANGHAI TANG

Launched in 1994 by entrepreneur David Tang Wing-Cheung with a shop in central Hong Kong, Shanghai Tang began with aspirations to become a global brand. Today, just over a decade later, under the ownership of the French luxury goods company Richemont, it has emerged from some uncertain early years as a distinctive label internationally "… as the first global luxury Chinese brand."[27] Tang's ambition was to interweave traditional Chinese cultural elements with contemporary, twentieth-century style. The image of the Hong Kong flagship store and its later offshoots mimic the interior of the 1930s style China Club, the exclusive private club opened by David Tang in Hong Kong in 1991. A wealthy businessman, importer of Cuban cigars, co-owner of the Hanart TZ art gallery, friend of celebrities and socialites, Hong Kong born, British public school educated Tang is a flamboyant personality very much at home socially and commercially in both Chinese and Western cultural contexts, and able to politically toe the line of both. His self-style has been compared to that of the nineteenth-century comprador, well-versed in both cultures.[28]

Shanghai Tang's image is both nostalgic and retro, referencing emotional longing for the past tinged with contemporary cynicism and detachment. The use of nostalgia and retro in this way in the

Figure 6 (above left)
Shanghai Tang's original logo, declaring that the merchandise was "Made by Chinese." Reproduced with the permission of Shanghai Tang.

Figure 7 (above right)
Shanghai Tang, waving Mao and Deng watches, late 1990s. Reproduced with the permission of Shanghai Tang.

retail sector parallels similar global brands, such as the British Paul Smith and American Ralph Lauren (both named after their founders in the same way Shanghai Tang plays on David Tang's name). Like the original Paul Smith and Ralph Lauren stores in London and New York, respectively, located in "historic" buildings, Shanghai Tang's flagship is in one of the few older buildings in central Hong Kong, the 1920s Pedder Building. The style of the retail interior acts as a theatrical backdrop to merchandise that originally declared on the label it was "Made by Chinese (Figure 6). Featuring clothing, gifts, and interior accessories, the designs reinvented utilitarian Chinese clothing and artifacts in expensive materials and bright colors such as gold, hot pink, lime green, and blazing red. Gifts and novelties were staple items, which parodied Chinese cultural signifiers and icons, for example, wristwatches depicting either Mao Tse-tung or Deng Xiao-ping with one arm waving back and forth to the movement of the watch (Figure 7).

The visual key to the brand image was 1930s Shanghai at the height of its internationalism and trading power, presented as the nostalgic other of Hong Kong.[29]

Added were references from the Qing dynasty, the Maoist period, and contemporary Chinese pop art. The self-Orientalization that imbued the flagship store and its merchandise was intended to attract domestic and foreign consumers, especially from cultures that have a long association with the Orient either through political domination or cultural contact. (From its outset, the Hong Kong store appealed mostly to Japanese and European tourists, and to expatriates.)[30] One of the only authentic aspects of the brand was its Imperial Tailor department that custom-made garments according to tailoring traditions established in Hong Kong in the 1930s by Shanghai tailors from the mainland after the Japanese invasion.

Reinforcing his global ambitions, David Tang opened a second store in November 1997 in New York on Madison Avenue in Manhattan. It received a blaze of publicity, but by the end of the

decade the store had moved to smaller premises further north on Madison Avenue (and in 2008 it moved again on Madison Avenue to a midtown location). The downturn in the global economy had made commercial speculation inadvisable, but also the company's lack of initial investment in design no doubt affected Tang's expansionist plans. Many of the original products were "outsourced," and bought in by merchandisers, rather than being designed in-house or specially for the company. Thus, by the end of the 1990s, the items for sale were beginning to look tired and dull and in need of revitalization in keeping with the pace of global fashion trends. (While Shanghai Tang was not a fashion brand dedicated only to clothes, as say Vivienne Tam, it certainly could not stand outside of the fashion system.)

As Shanghai Tang accepted that it was indeed in the fashion business, more designers were brought into the company including graduates from London's prestigious Central St Martin's School of Fashion Design. In October 2001, the company appointed Cesar Gaupo from the Philippines as its chief fashion designer. While well-known in his native country, Gaupo was little known outside. His work has been described as "...'unicasual' fashion—free-flowing, carefree clothing that also looks good at glamorous functions…. His silhouettes articulate Manilan sensibilities."[31] Gaupo moved to Hong Kong and regularly visited the Shanghai Tang stores (by now in London and Singapore, as well as in New York). He led the design expansion into more classic garment shapes. But the overall image continued to play in its Orientalism on mythic, cinematic images of China, such as the "Kung Fu" line, as well as on Western classics including the men's "Cotton-pique stand collar, short-sleeve polo with contrasting 'Double Happiness' embroidery on the back yoke and button panel" for summer 2005.[32]

The design identity rested somewhere between Steiner's categories of quotation and mimicry. It did not aim to achieve transformation through design in its early years. The design adaptations aimed at repackaging Chinese history and tradition. Ultimately, the economic strategy was to attract consumers in mainland China, once commercial success has been achieved elsewhere, as David Tang commented:

> My vision was always that, having established a foothold in the West and having established Shanghai Tang as a global brand, we should always go back to the mainland, as we Chinese say, "having been soaked in salt water." Even if you take the whole of Western Europe and North America, you are only taking about 500 to 600 million people, whereas China alone has 1.4 billion. And there's no reason why mainland Chinese should not be wearing more Chinese clothes.[33]

While this discussion has centered on the 1990s, it should be noted that Shanghai Tang has undergone substantial design development

Figure 8
G.O.D. storefront, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. Reproduced with the permission of G.O.D.

since then, still focusing on the assimilation of Chinese and Western identities into merchandise and brand image that has market currency and appeal (www.shanghaitang.com).

G.O.D. ("Goods of Desire")

Unlike Vivienne Tam and Shanghai Tang, the Hong Kong brand G.O.D. has not relied on self-exoticization or nostalgia, but has developed a design strategy based on local immaterial cultural practices and material vernacular objects. If Shanghai Tang can be compared to Ralph Lauren, then G.O.D. might be described as analogous to a Chinese IKEA.

Established in 1996 and cofounded by Hong Kong born, British educated architect Douglas Young, G.O.D. sells interior and lifestyle products that reference practices and vernacular objects common to Hong Kong. The brand name G.O.D. is derived from and is pronounced according to the phonetic sound of the Cantonese slang "live better" (*gee ho dee*), with a double entendre that plays on the biculturalism of Hong Kong (also translated as "Goods of Desire"). The brand's original mission was "To define a new Asian identity" for the local community and, ultimately, for a wider market. Young has declared "that by 'living better,' he doesn't want the residents of Hong Kong to simply buy G.O.D. products, but to build a greater sense of identity and culture together."[34] In 1999, the company mission was stated as:

> To improve living standards
> To be a Hong Kong-based world brand
> To define a hip Hong Kong/Asian identity.[35]

Following the precedent set by IKEA in Hong Kong, the first G.O.D. store was in a warehouse on the outskirts of town. It currently has three shops located in the antique district of Hollywood Road and the busy shopping districts of Tsim Sha Tsui and Causeway Bay. (Figure 8) The merchandise is characterized not by looking Chinese—that is, by reproducing stereotyped cultural signifiers—but by referencing local artefacts and everyday ways of doing things in Hong Kong.

The culture of the company is predicated on the global emergence of an Asian lifestyle, distinct from a Western lifestyle, as "a significant cultural presence in the world" of the twenty-first century:

> G.O.D. is a dialogue between East and West, for the most part of the twentieth century Asia has been under Western influence, G.O.D. now provides a credible counterpoint. Because our climate, diet, living space, and culture are all different from our Western counterparts, it is not surprising that the way we live is different too. With the emergence of Asia as a significant cultural presence in the world, we rise up to the challenge of defining a new Asian identity.[36]

For instance, a simple folding stool reflects the need for occasional pieces of furniture in the territory's cramped living spaces, but is equally appropriate to a small home anywhere. A folding Mahjong table was an innovative design created to accommodate a popular local pastime and small interiors that demand spatial flexibility. Dishes and cooking utensils reproduced those used traditionally in Hong Kong. Most of the products are designed in-house by a design team led by Douglas Young, or outsourced from mainland China and Asia. But while the merchandise derives from Hong Kong culture and lifestyle, it is targeted at a wider market, where it is already gaining success. One Hong Kong journalist noted:

> In many ways, G.O.D., Shanghai Tang, and Alan Chan are similar. All three profess a desire to build a Hong Kong brand, and all have gone international. So what makes G.O.D. different?[37]

Peter Smyth, strategic planning director at BBDO Hong Kong, says G.O.D. is closer to building a true "Hong Kong style" than any other brand. He thinks G.O.D. is one of the rare stores where both the local and expatriate communities feel at home on a regular basis. According to Smyth, G.O.D. has managed to tap into the two communities' shared love for the city's energy and possibilities, achieving what he calls a true "fusion of styles."[38]

Douglas Young's design concept stemmed from an insider's understanding of local culture, which enabled him to know and appreciate subtle distinctions that would remain obscure to the outsider. He mentions, for example, that "'the Pearl of the Orient' is [*sic*] Hong Kong's popular moniker up till the 1970s. In Cantonese, it sounds exactly like 'Eastern Spider'"[39] Young's designs indicate that he understands exactly what Abbas intended by Hong Kong's "culture of disappearance." He had t-shirts and other merchandise printed with Chinese characters taken directly from classified advertisements in local newspapers, where "the adult section features ambiguous words that allude to, but always stop short of outright lewdness."[40] The simple cloth "Bao Fook" bag was reinterpreted as a reversible accessory. Flip-flops, typically worn

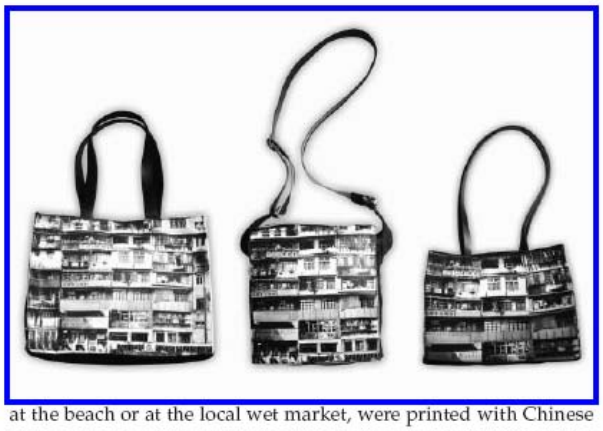

Figure 9
G.O.D. bags with Yaumatei print, 2004.
Reproduced with the permission of G.O.D.

at the beach or at the local wet market, were printed with Chinese characters or other motifs based on the facades of the densely populated area of Yaumatei. The latter also was printed on tote bags, a design which won an award at the Hong Kong Business of Design Week in December 2004. (Figure 9) The same print also has been used to upholster furniture, and on dressing gowns, slippers, visors, and flip-flops. Another print was based on the brightly-painted metal letterboxes that hang on the walls on common lobby areas or on the outside of older buildings in Hong Kong, and are subject to individualization by the owners. The "Live Chicken Tote-bag" (Figure 10) was designed around a practice that predates supermarket shopping in Hong Kong—the taking of a live chicken from the market in a bag as a gift when visiting someone's home. Quirky yes, humorous yes, reflective of local Hong Kong culture, yes; but also marketable beyond the territory.

G.O.D.'s design strategy has been credited in Hong Kong for its commercial success. In December 2004, the company won an award as one of the Top Ten Hong Kong Brand Names from the Chinese Manufacturers Association of Hong Kong. It was profiled as an example of Hong Kong design that embodies vernacular culture in *Designed in Hong Kong*, sponsored by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and the Hong Kong Design Centre (2004); and Douglas Young was featured as a design entrepreneur in a similar publication, *Very Hong Kong* (2007).[41] G.O.D. products are now exported to cities across the globe including New York, London, Sydney, and Singapore; and to department stores throughout Europe minus the brand name.

The success of G.O.D. indicates that self-exoticization and East meets West stereotypes are not the only creative strategies for developing a local Hong Kong-based design identity for a wider global market. G.O.D. attempts a creative translation of the vernacular; of the tangible and intangible, humble and everyday in Hong Kong; as opposed to the cultural references of Vivienne Tam or Shanghai Tang, which draw more on familiar Chinese cultural

Figure 10
G.O.D. "Live Chicken" tote bag. Reproduced with the permission of G.O.D.

signifiers. The success of their hybrid design is in enabling cultural references to be evocative to the local consumer, yet also universal enough to be interesting to a global market.

G.O.D.'s brand name does not play on nostalgia or on signifiers of Chineseness for their own sake. The name is well-chosen to resonate commercially in its ambiguity with established global brands such as IKEA, SONY, NIKE, and HSBC—names that only have meanings as brands (and are always capitalized), but which convey and represent an association with a local cultural identity translated for a global context as products and images that employ complex design strategies. What G.O.D. is showing is that nostalgia and Orientalism are not the only choices for a local Hong Kong-based design identity. G.O.D.'s relative success indicates, on the contrary, that the local and vernacular offer an approach that goes beyond representation and that recognizes Hong Kong's "culture of disappearance." The appeal of this approach reflects the development of a new subjectivity in Hong Kong design.

A New Subjectivity in Hong Kong Design

When Ackbar Abbas (1997) emphasized that the old cultural binarisms of "East meets West," "tradition" and "modernity" were not sufficient to establish a postcolonial identity for Hong Kong, his rationale was: "If for no other reason because the local and the global are becoming more and more intimately imbricated with each other."[42] Abbas developed the argument that what Hong Kong required above all, culturally and politically, was the creation of "a new Hong Kong subjectivity"; that is a subjectivity constructed not narcissistically but in the very process of negotiating the mutations and permutations of colonialism, nationalism, and capitalism.[43] Without this, Abbas forecasted the perpetuation of the predictable "Western images of Hong Kong this and that."[44] This subjectivity could emerge by the old imperialist cultural bearings giving way to the emergence of the newly decolonized "space of disappearance," where the former colonial city preempts the global city of the future. The negotiation of colonialism, nationalism, and capitalism indicates the complex challenges, but also the opportunities for Hong Kong-based design.

Abbas referred to three examples of creative practice: Hong Kong film, architecture, and writing; but many of his comments apply equally to design. He emphasized "the slippery nature of Hong Kong's cultural space,"[45] and how the continued representation of Hong Kong by the old East meets West binarism could result in Hong Kong disappearing as a subject. The new Hong Kong cinema took the urban situation as its subject; a place with ad hoc structures and problematic hyper density, already threatened by disappearance. In contrast, contemporary Hong Kong architecture presented "false images of power" (that echo global postmodern architecture) that ignore, and thus undermine, the vernacular.[46]

A new image or identity would be a hybrid, or to be more exact, a form of "hyphenation"; not a simple representation of things past, but more a recognition of a cultural condition locally that resonates with the complexity of the global. If we apply Abbas's words to design, it is self-evident that some practices are more concerned with the ephemeral, such as graphic communication, advertising, and fashion, and thus more subject to current market trends and client or consumer demands. Designs intended for greater longevity can be expected to have greater potential for a new subjectivity and the imbrication of the local and the global. The Asian Lifestyle Design lab at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, led by product designer and teacher Benny Ding Leong, for instance, "provides research services to and generates critical knowledge for designers and industries creating innovative, sustainable products and services for the Asian lifestyle." Their annual workshop encourages international and multidisciplinary design collaborations that investigate tangible and intangible culture as a means towards "new design solutions for sustainable product development in indigenous communities."[47]

In his own practice, Benny Leong has focused in recent years on establishing new design subjectivity for Hong Kong and greater China.[48] His method involves detailed understanding of Chinese history and culture; particularly ways of thinking and doing, and of transmitting culture into an objective design system. He designs from what he refers to as cultural-based knowledge and values. Confucian and Taoist principles and Buddhist aesthetics all impact his thinking. What is interesting, especially in the context of some of the examples discussed above, is that Leong's work does not reflect Chinese or Oriental stereotypes in its appearance. In fact, many of his pieces are electronic devices designed to resonate with social context, for example, by retaining family values and preserving memories through communication devices. "Gather," a responsive music player, for instance, is based on yin principles of passivity to bring the soothing qualities of music to the environment. Leong's designs are not simply *transformed* from source, but are generated from principles and ideas that attempt to address contemporary ethical dilemmas, rather than being predicated on the visual. Benny Leong's work is a powerful example of the possibilities of the emergence of a new subjectivity in design. But many of his pieces have remained in the prototype stage. Engaging the market is design's challenge, but not its only one. The new subjectivity can engage design beyond solely market-driven concerns. Design activism also has become evident in Hong Kong in the decade since the handover, usually as a means of protesting against the force of urban development.

One activist unit is the Community Museum Project, a small collective founded in 2002 that takes the concept of the museum as a method to represent the everyday life and values of Hong Kong. Its numerous projects have included a panoramic photographic

documentation of Lee Tung Street (the "wedding card" street), the location of many small print shops in the Wanchai district, before its demolition in 2005. Two years later, the group documented the work of crafts people located in Sham Shui Po, another area confronted with urban development. Makers of wooden carts, rattan furniture, and metal work; and seamstress and knitters; also were paired with younger designers to create new objects that were then exhibited to the public in two apartment blocks in the soon to be demolished Shek Kip Mei Estate.[49] Their work has provided new applications of design in Hong Kong, beyond the market, which also adds a further stage to Steiner's cross-cultural design process where local subjectivities reference the "culture and politics of disappearance" identified by Ackbar Abbas. As a model, it can be applied beyond Hong Kong. Some scholars have offered the view that the colonial city and Hong Kong, in particular, offer signposts to the future.

Anthony King has described colonial cities as "forerunners of what the contemporary capitalist world city would become."[50] Tony Fry's more specific view is that the paradoxes and juxtapositions of Hong Kong offer it a particular and valuable opportunity:

> … historically, architectural, industrial, graphic, fashion, furniture, and other design practices in the territory all exist in an identifiable condition of auto-negation—the place has never been able to be simply local. The authentic inauthenticity of Hong Kong, its unsituated situatedness, actually is more than just a part of the global fascination with the place—it is its design opportunity.'[51]

Parallels can be drawn with the development of critical regionalism in architectural practice where, as Kenneth Frampton notes, a local cultural strategy can have a universal impact. In the 1950s, Californian architect H. H. Harris called this a "Regionalism of Liberation," in tune with the emerging thoughts of the time:

> We call such a manifestation "regional" only because it has not emerged elsewhere…. A region may develop ideas. A region may accept ideas. Imagination and intelligence are necessary for both. In California in the late Twenties and Thirties, modern European ideas met a still-developing regionalism. In New England, on the other hand, European modernism met a rigid and restrictive regionalism that at first resisted and then surrendered. New England accepted European modernism whole because its own regionalism had been reduced in a collection of restrictions.[52]

In the years since Hong Kong became part of China, the economy and manufacturing capacity of the mainland has continued to develop at high speed but, at the same time, in Hong Kong a cultural subjectivity has been unfolding through commercial and noncommercial design. In parallel, the reality and complexity of how we

might define the "global" and the "local" also has changed. Hong Kong then, founded on the simultaneous existence of "two cultures," a place where the local and the global are embedded historically, also offers an example and even exemplars of the possibilities and challenges for the future roles of design.

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1 Matthew Turner, *Made in Hong Kong: A History of Export Design in Hong Kong 1900–1960* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1988), 7.

2 "Post-colonial" needs qualification; for Hong Kong did not achieve independence, as did other former colonies, but was "reunited" with a China from which it had become increasingly separated, culturally and politically, during the twentieth century. Ackbar Abbas also points out that, for Hong Kong, colonialism "is less an explanatory term than a term that needs explaining." See Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997), 2.

3 Ibid., 7.

4 Wendy Wong Siuyi, "Detachment and Unification: A Chinese Graphic Design History in Greater China since 1979," *Design Issues* 17:4 (Autumn 2001): 57.

5 Matthew Turner, "Early Modern Design in Hong Kong," *Design Issues* 6:1 (Fall 1989): 82.

6 Jonathan S. Grant, "Cultural Formation in Postwar Hong Kong" in Lee Pui-tak, *Hong Kong Reintegrating with China: Political, Cultural, and Social Dimensions* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001), 165, references Matthew Turner, "Ersatz Design: Interactions between Chinese and Western Design in Hong Kong, 1950s–1960s" (Unpublished PhD thesis, London: Royal College of Art, 1993).

7 *Made by Hong Kong*, Suzanne Berger and Richard K. Lester, eds. (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1997), 111.

8 Leo Lee Ou-Fan, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

9 Siu King Chung, "Redeveloping Design Education in Hong Kong?" in Hazel Clark, ed., *Design Issues* 19:3 (Summer 2003): 83–93.

10 Matthew Turner, "Early Modern Design in Hong Kong," *Design Issues* 6:1 (Fall 1989): 91.

11 Wendy Wong Siuyi, "Detachment and Unification: A Chinese Graphic Design History in Greater China since 1979": 53.

12 Henry Steiner and Ken Haas, *Cross-cultural Design Communicating in the Global Marketplace* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1995), 6.

13 Ibid., 9.

14 Ibid., 2.

15 Ibid.

16 In their book, Steiner and Haas provide "a cross-cultural anthology" of designers from different parts of the globe who also have employed the technique.

17 Wendy Wong Siuyi, "Detachment and Unification: A Chinese Graphic Design History in Greater China since 1979."

18 Daniel J. Huppatz, "Hong Kong Design: Culture Meets Commerce" (Unpublished PhD thesis, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, 2003): 113.

19 Kan Tai-keung in *Designed in Hong Kong*, John Heskett, ed. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Design Council, 2004), 29.

20 Daniel J. Huppatz, "Hong Kong Design: Culture Meets Commerce": 113.

21 Alan Chan in *Designed in Hong Kong*, John Heskett, ed., 45.

22 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 78.

23 The Mao print dress is in the collection of the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh and the Museum of the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. The Kuan Yin dress also is in the FIT collection. (www.viviennetam.com)

24 www.viviennetam.com

25 Ibid.

26 Lise Skov, "Fashion-Nation: A Japanese Globalization Experience and a Hong Kong Dilemma" in *Re-orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress*, S. Niessen, A. M. Leshkowich, and C. Jones, eds. (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003), 215–16.

27 *China Daily* (Hong Kong edition), (July 7, 2004): 16.

28 Huppatz refers to Yen-P'ing Hao to support his description of David Tang as a twentieth-century version of the nineteenth-century comprador: "As a bicultural middleman, the comprador in many ways exemplified the hybrid treaty port culture. Having professionally constant and intimate association with Westerners, he was easily exposed to Western influences. These influences ranged from his style of life to his intellectual outlook. But he was likewise certainly affected by Chinese culture in which he had been raised. Thus, although affected by both Chinese and Western elements, he was dominated by neither. He embodied both, but through a process of adjustment and modifications." Yen-P'ing Hao, *The Comprador in Nineteenth-Century China: Bridge between East and West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); 220 in Daniel J. Huppatz, "Hong Kong Design: Culture Meets Commerce."

29 Lee observes how an increasing nostalgia for "old Shanghai" became evident in Hong Kong in "a welter of consumer goods" in the 1980s, including reissues of old Shanghai songs, popular television drama series, and "old Shanghai-style" clothes. In the 1990s, in my experience, 1930s Shanghai also provided the design inspiration for theme restaurants. Lee cites Daisy Ng's interpretation of the popular image of old Shanghai as an obvious analogy to Hong Kong, and adds his own opinion that Hong Kong was in addition inscribing its own pre-handover anxieties onto a Shanghai of the past. Leo Lee Ou-Fan, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945*: 332–3.

30 Hazel Clark, *The Cheongsam* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press: Images of Asia, 2000), 61.

31 Douglas Bullis, *Fashion Asia* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 10.

32 www.shanghaitang.com

33 *China Daily* (Hong Kong edition): 16.

34 Adeline Chong, "Behind the Brand: The Triumphs and Tragedies: G.O.D. Divine," www.brandchannel.com (accessed September 20, 2004).

35 G.O.D. Press Release, 1999.

36 Ibid.

37 Adeline Chong, "Behind the Brand: The Triumphs and Tragedies: G.O.D. Divine."

38 Ibid.

39 Douglas Young, "Hong Kong Special Cultural Region (dress code)," Hong Kong, G.O.D. Ltd, 2003 (unpaginated).

40 Ibid.

41 *Designed in Hong Kong*, John Heskett, ed. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Design Council, 2004) and *Very Hong Kong, Design 1997–2007*, John Heskett, ed. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Design Centre, 2007), 162–63.

42 Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, 11.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid., 20.

46 Ibid., 89.

47 www.polyu.edu.hk/web/Research/AsianLifestyle (accessed August 5, 2008).

48 Benny Leong and Hazel Clark, "Culture-based Knowledge: Towards New Design Thinking and Practice—A Dialogue" in Hazel Clark, ed., *Design Issues* 19:3 (Summer 2003): 51.

49 www.hkcmp.org (accessed August 5, 2008).

50 Anthony King, *Global Cities* (London: Routledge, 1990), 3.

51 Tony Fry, "The 'Futurings' of Hong Kong" in Hazel Clark, ed., *Design Issues* 19:3 (Summer 2003): 72.

52 Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance" in *The Anti-Aesthetic, Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Hal Foster, ed. (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983), 22.

Decolonizing Shanghai: Design and Material Culture in the Photographs of Hu Yang

Earl Tai

In considering the current state of design in Shanghai, particularly in relationship to the question of globalization, it would be easy to fall into the traditional binary East-West narrative that sets up inherent tensions between a native Chinese past and Western influences ushered in by the colonial era. Remembering the significant imprint left on Shanghai culture through the partial occupation by Western nations of France, Great Britain, and the U.S. from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries, one can sympathize with the many scholars, critics, and popular commentators who have promoted such readings. After all, even the physical composition of the city, with its distinct historical Chinese and colonial districts, serves as a daily reminder of Shanghai's complex political and cultural past. The dichotomy is further accentuated by the metropolis's present role as one of China's main entry ports of business and cultural exchange with Western nations. In these early years of the twenty-first century, however, prudence should compel us to reassess whether the single East-West narrative, with its accompanying subtexts of center and margin, colonizer and colonized, remains sufficient for describing the complexity of the milieu of design and visual culture of contemporary Shanghai.

In addition to questioning our conceptual framework, we also must address the issue of source material when dealing with design in Shanghai. A natural and common approach is to undertake a survey of the design products available on the Shanghai retail market. From this, one can easily construct a narrative about the types of cutting-edge global design products available in Shanghai today. However, while this type of product survey offers information about market availability, it remains one step removed from the consumer, showing what is available for sale, but revealing only marginal information about actual acquisition and the behaviors of Shanghai consumers and their cultural predilections towards design and visual culture. Also, while this type of approach may indicate something about the values of a limited subset of the Shanghai population, it tells us little about the pervasiveness of these values, and nothing about the values of those outside of this group. What are the people of Shanghai actually bringing into their spaces? What is the spectrum of their sensibilities concerning design? In what

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ways do Shanghai households embrace global culture? How do they view and construct their identity through their products and environments?

Shanghai photographer Hu Yang's recent *Shanghai Renjia* collection offers a useful medium external to the product market through which to consider some of these issues. A look at his photographs reminds us of the limitations of a simple East-West gaze. We are encouraged to look at alternative narratives that embrace a more complex notion of global culture and cultural hybridities in order to ground our understanding of contemporary Shanghai sensibilities concerning design and material culture.

Hu Yang's collection of five-hundred photographs entitled *Shanghai Renjia*, promoted under the English title "Shanghai Living," is undoubtedly the most extensive and revealing visual study of Shanghai households in recent years. This collection of portraits of people living in Shanghai, shot within the contexts of their own homes and possessions, and made from January 26, 2004 through the end of February 2005, offers a compelling glimpse into the private material lives of contemporary denizens of Shanghai. The interior spaces, furniture, household objects, architectural details, fabrics, and clothing selected by the subjects of the photographs give insight into the cultural complexity of a place like Shanghai.

Hu Yang's work finds its roots in the reportage and documentary photography traditions that emerged in China toward the latter decades of the twentieth century after the end of the Cultural Revolution. The photographers of this period were heavily influenced by the nineteenth-century European social realism and the early-twentieth-century Russian Socialist Realism that dominated state-sanctioned Chinese visual representation from the 1950s through the Cultural Revolution. Although their ideological aims might have differed from their predecessors, photographers such as Liu Xiaodi, Zhang Xinming, Lu Yuanming, Zhou Hai, Zhang Dali, and Yang Yong continued the tradition of documenting conditions affecting the peasant and working classes, including industrialization, the rise of urbanism, and the migration from rural to urban life. Even though growing from the same representational soil, Hu Yang's work, with its constructed stance of cool objectivity, differs from photographers such as Zhou Hai, who take a more overt social position as in the work of early photojournalists Riis or Hine.

Hu Yang's work shares an affinity with the portraiture work of Liu Xiaodi, Jiang Jian, and Lu Yuanming. Hu Yang makes his distinct mark, however, by bringing his exploration of portraiture fully into the architectural interior and by foregrounding the relationship between self and personal surroundings. Lu Yanming's work in the collection entitled "Shanghailanders" from 1990 to 2000 operates in a similar format. But Lu focuses more narrowly on the theme of the subculture of an old Shanghai caught in the midst of transition, while Hu Yang addresses more diverse social and cultural

concerns across a broader spectrum of classes.

As is common within the traditions of portraiture painting, the environment and the products in Hu Yang's photographs become an extension of the bodies of the subjects. In fact, although the figures provide focal points in the photographs, they are frequently overshadowed by the context because the figures are relatively small in scale, are usually off-center, and are frequently only partially visible. In many cases, only the background objects appear in discernable focus because the slow exposures of the shots reduce the moving figures to a blur as they cook, eat, type on laptops, play games, pluck musical instruments, and smoke. Possessions become transformed into surrogates for the individual corpus.

The photographs offer a great deal of information. Taken with a tripod and color film using a Contax 645 camera, a camera that offers increased sharpness due to its medium format and its vacuum system film back which holds the film perfectly perpendicular to the picture frame, the photographs capture tremendous detail. Natural realism is accentuated by the use of a narrow-angle lens with only on-site natural and ambient lighting. Accompanying each photograph are the names of the subjects, their professions, and their provincial origins or nationalities, if they are not Chinese. There also are short written statements of about 50–150 characters in which the subjects share personal comments about such topics as work, relationships, social status, hopes, regrets, and aspirations.

The sheer volume of Hu's photographs and the uniformity of his approach invite us to use his collection not only as works of art, but also as "readable" sociological documents. As Professor Lin Lu of Shanghai Normal University writes:

> These images open a door. As we enter in—whether we walk into a living room, pass through a study, enter a bedroom, or directly look upon a small empty space—we can see the brilliant diversity of the people of Shanghai. We can see that uniquely Shanghainese attitude toward life.... After you *read* these photos, perhaps you will have a better understanding of Shanghai.[1]

Hu Yang, himself, supports this view of his work, stating in an interview with Meng Tao, editor of *Chinese Photography*:

> I wanted to capture the natural flow of the lives of the people of Shanghai. Therefore, when I was shooting, I did not approach it from the standpoint of an artist: instead, I observed with a historical or a sociological perspective. If I had photographed from the position of an artist, then I would have produced subjective photographs. What I wanted was not fine art photography. Rather, I wanted a visual documentary of the people currently living in Shanghai.[2]

1 Lu Lin, "Cong Jingtou Yuyen Jieshi Hu Yang de [Shanghai Renjia]" Hu Yang, *Shanghai Renjia*, translation and emphasis by E. Tai (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Meishu Chuban She, 2005).

2 Meng Tao, "Yingxiang Difang Zhi" in Hu Yang, *Shanghai Renjia*, translation by E. Tai (Shanghai: *Shanghai Renmin Meishu Chuban She*, 2005).

Figure 1
Hu Yang, "Claude Hudelot," 2004

Reconstructing an Elusive Past

It is evident from the collection that for some of the photographed subjects, history, tradition, and continuity with China's past remain important lenses through which to shape the physical world of the present. This connection to the past is expressed by the possession of objects that visually reference Chinese cultural traditions: classical paintings, calligraphy, antique or reproduction furniture, architectural artifacts, and ceramics. In instances when these references are small in scale or limited in number, the products operate as curios, small general signifiers of the past mixed in among objects from the contemporary world without any apparent hesitation. In other cases, however, the volume and visual prominence of objects of antiquity within a space increase dramatically. The density of these references to history reveals a stronger conscious expression of a real or desired cultural connection to the Chinese past. At times, these objects even seem to gather syntactically to form emphatic and ideologically charged "statements" about the past.

The most salient example of this is the portrait of Claude Hudelot, a French diplomat who has taken the Chinese name Yu Dele (Figure 1). Photographed in his parlor seated in a seventeenth-century Ming-style chair, Hudelot is surrounded by his Chinese cultural artifacts: a wooden altar table, a blue and white covered porcelain jar, an orchid and three bonsai, a pair of hexagonal ceramic planters, a number of figurines of Chairman Mao, a silkscreen of Mao and Dong Biwu, a wooden birdcage, and photographs of old architectural details. To complete the picture, Hudelot himself has chosen to be photographed bedecked in a white Chinese tunic set, complete with matching socks and Chinese shoes from a past era. Hudelot, an avowed devotee of traditional Chinese culture, pays his respects to the culture by surrounding himself with artifacts of a bygone Chinese past from the Mao era and dynastic eras, even down to the garments enveloping his body.

If Hudelot strives for fidelity to a specific ideal historical cultural antecedent, his referent remains elusive, whether for lack of knowledge, for lack of economic capital, or for the near impossibility of his task. While the chair represents a classical late-Ming to early-Qing Dynasty design, the altar table is of an entirely different genre. Its combination of dark wood, everted flanges, and tracery of bamboo lattice evinces a late-Qing southern Chinese tradition. The pictures hang over the altar table in symmetrical pattern, but the bulky horizontal mass differs from traditional compositions. Where one might normally find an ancestral portrait, hangs a silkscreen of communist leaders Mao Zedong and Dong Biwu by contemporary artist Wang Ziwei. The bonsai, nondescript common specimens found in any market differ from the traditional art form with a history dating back to the second century. One of the plants, not a miniature tree at all, is merely a common asparagus fern planted *a la bonsai*. Tucked in a shadowy space on the floor, the birdcage is, counter to expectations for a traditional Chinese scholar's abode, only a decorative piece. His outfit references yet another social genre. The scene is a mélange of mixed metaphors, an array of signifiers plucked and separated from their original contexts of signification, with a generic kinship to "China" and "the past" as their only common denominator. Yet, on the whole, it is not a tasteless, kitsch collection of objects. Rather, it is merely a thoughtful foreigner's limited conception of an authentic China.

We are reminded of Edward Said's discussion of exclusions which inherently accompany all Orientalist enterprises.[3] In Said's case, Orientalists—limited by their fascination with classical periods and with a textual universe, partly because it was the only information available to them—excised other aspects of culture from their discussions. When these Orientalists encountered the actual contemporary cultures of the countries of their specialization, they responded with sadness at the abyss between reality and the historic "civilizations" they had studied. Hudelot and others like him are not the scholars about whom Said writes, but their personal biases are equally present. While their search is not for a single classical past embedded in a textual archive, they nevertheless retain a similar, albeit generic, search for signification in the past and its artifacts. In the process, actual histories, both from the present and the past, become muddled.

As sentimental and sincere as these contemporary Orientalists might be, their China is a constructed one existing only in an imaginary landscape, not an historical one. Their nativist passion, lacking comprehensive cultural knowledge, drives them to sample external signifiers of an elusive past with the abandon of a contemporary deejay musical artist. The past becomes aestheticized as artifacts become governed, not by intellectual content, but by a "decorator's eye" imposing an external ideal, such as a monochromatic palette scheme of beige, wood, and sepia earth

3 See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). See Chapter 2, "Orientalist Structures and Restructures."

tones. Even a contemporary lithograph must then fulfill the dual requirements of "agedness" and conformity to the decorator's brown palette.

Like Said's *Orientalist*, Hudelot encounters the real Shanghai and responds with a passion infused with undertones of activism. As he writes in his personal statement:

> The best part about living in Shanghai is being able to witness its development and change … like the traditional culture and contemporary art of China. I also like Chinese silk, Chinese clothes, and shoes. They are very comfortable. There are too many people in the streets, too many cars. It makes me nervous and gives me pressure.[4]

Though he speaks positively about being able to witness change, his statements and his possessions belie an undercurrent of resistance. Lamenting the presence of too many people and too many cars in the street, usual signs of progress and change, he instead avers his love for traditional Chinese culture, silk, clothes, and shoes. His embrace of these symbols of a mythical traditional China becomes nothing short of a moral act, an act of resistance against a rapidly changing Shanghai. It becomes his responsibility to save the "true," dying China. In a curious spin, ownership and consumption, extending even into the sartorial realm, become the primary weapons of revolution.

It probably is no coincidence that, in Hu Yang's photographs, interiors with strong overt historical references are rare and are almost all limited to the interiors of foreign nationals. In fact, the majority of foreign nationals in Hu Yang's photographs make a point of including significant visual references to the Chinese cultural past in their home furnishings. In the photos, native Shanghainese also include Chinese antiquities among their furnishings, but there is rarely the pervasive compulsion about the past seen in the furnishings of the foreign nationals, and certainly no attempts to don period dress to match one's furnishings. This is not to say that the foreign concern with the past does not include some creative twists, such as British fashion designer Simon Ma's (Ma Xingwen) portrait showing the top of a seventeenth-century Ming Dynasty folding bow-back chair humorously spliced onto a base fashioned after Gerrit Rietveld's Z-chair, designed in 1934 for the Schroeder House. Nevertheless, these examples show a propensity by the foreign nationals living in Shanghai toward a fascination with a Chinese past constituted primarily in visual form.

Figure 2
Hu Yang, "Wang Ying," 2004

In contrast to these examples, we see Wang Ying, a Shanghainese university professor who also has a reverence for tradition (Figure 2). However, her abode is simple: a wooden desk, a bed with a simple wooden headboard, and a plain wooden bookcase—nothing pre-twentieth century. Wang, out of focus as she plucks a zither upon her bed, is dressed in a simple buttoned shirt,

4 Claude Hudelot in Hu Yang, *Shanghai Renjia*, translation by E. Tai (Shanghai: *Shanghai Renmin Meishu Chuban She*, 2005), 114.

revealing very little through her personal appearance. One does not read Wang's connection to the past in her consumption habits. Instead, it shows up more subtly in her activities and interests, as revealed in some calligraphic sketches informally taped to a wall and a brush drawing of a horse taped to a closet. The archaic calligraphic styles and the brush painting patterned after the Tang Dynasty master Han Gan of the eighth century, coupled with the classical zither playing, demonstrate a traditionalist's inclinations. It is in these simple gestures that one reads Wang's persona, reinforced in her personal statement:

> I want my own personal courtyard where I can plant fruit trees for all seasons. I'd invite my good friends over and under the trees we'd try the fruits, taste wine, play the ancient zither, and appreciate painting and calligraphy.[5]

Like Hudelot, Wang looks to the past, but her ideal is the classical literati scholar, who, culturally and socially well-rounded in the arts of literature, music, calligraphy, and painting, enjoys these skills in the social space of the literati coterie, as immortalized in such classical pieces as the fourth-century Wang Xizhi poetic work *Lanting Ji Xu*, "Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection." Wang Ying's ideal is not demonstrated primarily by way of possessions, but in activities, interests, and a way of life. At the same time, it is not an ideal fully entrenched in the past, for strewn on Wang's bed are a book on Audrey Hepburn and a personal compact disc player, both hinting at comfortable engagement with a broader contemporary world. If Wang's values are expressed in her possessions, it is more through a general sparse simplicity, rather than through acquisition of specific objects. Even the non-scholar Shanghai natives in Hu's collection who express explicit nationalist or nativist sentiments do not manifest their ideology through possession of historic artifacts. There are no dynastic period furniture pieces, no early porcelains, and no early garments. Perhaps the contemporary Orientalists resort to such overt visual references to the past because these are more accessible; they can even be purchased.

To be sure, Hu Yang's collection also shows roles reversed in plays of "occidentalism," as seen in the portrait of Tang Zhenan, whose home is filled with reproduction European gilt-encrusted furnishings (Figure 3). Though Tang takes pride in pointing out in his personal statement that he enjoys "collecting Western artware," his possessions seem almost an unintentional parody of the past. A porcelain-enameled chandelier with pictorial medallions and bright gilt makes nodding references to the *gros-bleu* soft-ground porcelain pieces set in ormolu that emerged from the renowned French Sevres kilns starting from the mid-eighteenth century; but the curious integration and detailing of these elements in the form of a chandelier expose it as a twentieth-century product. Similarly, the clumsy fluting and proportions of a pair of Corinthian columns

5 Wang Ying in Hu Yang, *Shanghai Renjia*, translation by E. Tai (Shanghai: *Shanghai Renmin Meishu Chuban She*, 2005), 114.

Figure 3
Hu Yang, "Tang Zhen An," 2004

and the exaggerated scale of the relief frieze sculpture on a fireplace mantel lack the subtlety of past prototypes. Other furniture, gilt frames, and porcelain pieces are similarly awkward. Like Hudelot, Tang's possessions make references to another culture, age, and time, but not with historical accuracy. Operating within a circumstance of historical ambiguity, these individuals' attempts to represent a native ideal through material artifacts prove to be elusive tasks.

These Orientalist and Occidentalist examples would appear to justify the employment of an East-West matrix. After all, even the subjects themselves explicitly frame their cultural preferences in terms of the categories of "Chinese" and "Western." However, we should take care to temper this view by acknowledging the frequency with which similar phenomena occur within the "Western" context, as found in the many households in the U.S. and Europe that exhibit similarly clumsy attempts to recreate past Western styles. Has not Pottery Barn and Martha Stewart built their empires on the eternally elusive, yet sentimentally appealing, ambiguous historical referent? Perhaps it is not simply an East-West dynamic, but equally a contemporary phenomenon brought on by the fickleness and ephemerality of cultural memory.

Furthermore, the artificiality of an essentialist approach can be seen in the example of ceramics, a product prominently featured in both the Orientalist and Occidentalist spaces. With origins dating back to the fifth millennium B.C., early ceramics in the region which was later to become China, enjoyed a fairly independent beginning. However, by the first century of our era, when the trade routes west of China became more formally established, connecting China with the Roman Empire and the Parthian Empire, external influences began to exert themselves upon Chinese aesthetic sensibilities. Scholarship continues to debate the nature of those influences, including the incorporation of foreign-inspired metal designs into ceramics, but by the Tang Dynasty in the seventh to tenth centuries, the abundant explicit depiction of people with Western features in ceramics demonstrates the clear intertwinement with so-called

Western culture. Chinese porcelains entering Europe through Dutch and Portuguese traders in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had an enormous influence on European ceramic forms, and on the development of European porcelain centers in places such as Vincennes, Vienna, Meissen, and Paris. Conversely, this trade also influenced Chinese manufacturing as European tastes, themselves hybrids, were communicated back to China through custom orders. This is not to even mention the many other external influences on Chinese visual form such as the exchanges ushered in by Jesuit missionaries, including Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), Guisseppe Castiglioni (1688–1766), and Jean-Denis Attiret (1702–1768). Clearly, any attempt to align porcelain according to purely Chinese or purely Western taxonomies would be a problematic undertaking.

Infinite and Inextricable Hybridities

The main argument found in Hu Yang's photographs against the employment of a blanket East-West interpretation in the situation of Shanghai is the fact that overtly Orientalist or Occidentalist responses like that of Hudelot and Tang comprise only a minute percentage of the collection. Probably 99 percent of the subjects in the photographs demonstrate no such clear historical, nativist proclivities in their furnishings. Nor do their material artifacts seem to be explicitly divided or aligned according to the boundaries of China or the West. This runs true across the gamut, regardless of the socioeconomic class of the subjects.

Take, for example, Sun Chuanli, a Shanghainese technical secondary school teacher, whose abode could almost be in any urban center in the world (Figure 4). His living-dining room—painted chartreuse on one wall and dark carmine on the other, and furnished with a melamine laminate cubical shelf wall unit—manifests a contemporary aesthetic vocabulary common in the flat-packed retail market of young urban consumers throughout the world. Above a pair of matte aluminum metal folding stools and a table with a natural beech top is a recessed wall alcove with three glass shelves displaying framed pictures, two model motorcycles, and a collection of motorcycle helmets. A paper eagle kite is hung at the ceiling line of the room, while a Tang Dynasty tri-color reproduction horse and some miniature Han Dynasty reproduction bronzes adorn the

Figure 4
Hu Yang, Sun Chuanli," 2004

shelves. In front of a desk with a computer tower is an upholstered green floral-patterned chair draped in red and white print cloth.

Two observations stand out. The first, as mentioned, is the transferability of this space with other urban spaces throughout the world. Sun's attempts to express his individuality even as he adopts a generic contemporary vocabulary rings familiarly as a way people throughout the world today commonly seek to carve out meaningful material existences within the circumstances of postmodernity. This picture could be anywhere. The second observation is the apparent seamless harmony between items that might be coded as Chinese or Western. Sun, who indicates that he hopes to one day own a Harley Davidson motorcycle and to promote motorcycle culture, easily displays his U.S. motorcycle paraphernalia alongside his "Chinese" decorative wares. These items combine comfortably in facile coexistence in his world without any apparent irony, angst, or conflict.

Helen Tiffin describes a circumstance in the process of hybridization of postcolonial cultures in which "a dialectical relationship is created between European ontological and epistemological models, and local drives, to create independent identities,"[6] not unlike the struggle described in the work of Homi Bhabha. For Tiffin, it is through a process of rereading and rewriting, what she calls a "counter discourse," that the dominant hegemonic system is subverted. We may perhaps grant that Sun Chuanli's embrace of consumption products selling at the global scale could be considered participation in a dominant hegemonic system. But when we look further for the sort of counter discourse about which Tiffin speaks, we seem to be at a loss. The semantic choices in Sun's possessions may reflect vastly different etymological histories, but they seem to exist harmoniously within a new integrated language, as if it were a single discourse.

Stephen Slemon offers some mediation to Tiffin's concept of a resistant hybridity through his rejection of an automatic assumption of synonymity between postcolonial acts and resistance acts.[7] The former acknowledge ways in which one cultural group may adopt or integrate values of another cultural group; while the latter describes radical acts of resistance against a colonizing culture. For Slemon, local culture can be something other than resistance. This model seems to be more in keeping with Sun Chuanli's reaction to his cultural situation, for his response appears much more integrative rather than resistive. Insistence on the presence of a dialogue between East and West reaffirms the colonial relationship of center and periphery by assuming that every act of local culture is necessarily obsessed with the question of identity vis-à-vis a dominant center.

The example of Lu Chen, a Shanghainese civil servant, provides further insight into this topic. All of the furniture in Lu's portrait is from the global furniture retailer IKEA: an unfinished INGO pine table, STEFAN chairs, and LEKSVIK shelf and TV bench.

6 Helen Tiffin, "Post-colonial Literatures and Counter Discourse," *Kunapipi* 9:3 (1987): 17–34.

7 Stephen Slemon, "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World," *World Literature Written in English* 30:2 (1990): 30–41.

Graphic adornment on Lu's wall is comprised of a *Forrest Gump* film poster and a poster for an experimental theater festival in Shanghai. His decorative items include a statue of the Venus de Milo with her breasts bound with twine and a Russian nesting doll. Visible titles on his shelves include a *History of the People's Republic of China*, a Bible, and Asian rock music magazines.

There are two ways one could read this scene. On the one hand, one could interpret this as an example of the pervasiveness of Western commercial culture asserting its dominating will upon the passive subject, Shanghai. On the other hand, one also could interpret this as the pervasiveness of global culture simultaneously being enacted upon many stages, including Shanghai, with many agents and actors, including the people of Shanghai. It is this latter type of view that Arjun Appadurai maps out with his dissolution of traditional political and geographic boundaries, and his introduction of new global relationships in such arenas as ethnoscapes, technoscapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes.[8] Similarly, Simon Gikandi speaks of the presence in the global setting of infinite "conjuncture and disjuncture" and "hybridity and cultural transition," a "multiplicity of relationships" not seen in the world of the empire.[9]

In both Appadurai's and Gikandi's new understanding, it is upon the global stage that culture is created and undergoes evolution. Culture is not produced within a single national or geographic boundary only to be shipped out intact to a foreign subject. Instead, it constantly undergoes transformation in a fully participatory process by all players at the global scale. Such a view renders the center-margin, colonizer-colonized framework practically obsolete as globalization becomes the lens, not Westernization or Americanization.

Reading in this light, we would not see Lu Chen's Shanghai as existing in a marginalized cultural hinterland, where it passively

Figure 5
Hu Yang, "Li You," 2004

8 See Arjun Appadurai, *Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001) and *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

9 Simon Gikandi, "Globalism and the Claims of Postcoloniality," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100:3 (2001): 627–58.

receives the intellectual and material products of a dominant center. Instead, we would see Lu Chen's Shanghai as a locus of world culture as well, a territory that lends its space to the global arena of experimental theatre and popular cinema, and a territory that participates in the mass global market even as it interjects its own history, its own rock music, its own manipulations of iconic art figures, and its own understanding of faith into the global mix.

One may, perhaps, accept a global reading of the material possessions of people such as Sun Chuanli, Lu Chen, and Li You, whose contemporary furniture, sleek freestanding tub with lip-shaped headrest, and projection screen video system could easily fit into the spaces of people of similar social status in Paris, London, New York, or Milan (Figure 5). However, could the global lens extend to those of lesser socio-economic status in Shanghai? Are they not the disenfranchised, disconnected native *other*, with all the attendant connotations associated with such a status? Wei Yufang's portrait provides some clues (Figure 6).

Wei, his wife, and their four children, shown occupying their one room abode, are larger in scale than practically any of the subjects in other photos due to the close camera angle needed to capture the tiny room. Surrounding a bunk bed occupying about one-third of the room, the ceiling, walls, and front bedrail are papered with advertisements with both Chinese and non-Chinese figures, including Ronald McDonald and Hamburglar advertising characters for McDonald's. A small desk and table serve as a cooking and dining area, atop which sit a rice cooker, aluminum pot, and two plastic thermoses. On the wall, two adapted two-liter soda containers serve as a toothbrush holder and a spoon caddy. Above, on the wall, are three paper certificates of awards two of the children have won. Lighting from an overhead source and from a dangling naked bulb illuminates telephone numbers written across the walls.

Due to the Wei family's poverty, there are probably less than one or two hundred items the children will encounter on a

Figure 6
Hu Yang, "Wei Yufang" 2004

daily basis at home for the duration of their childhood. Of these items, aside from perhaps a rice cooker, some porcelain spoons, and chopsticks, almost none are categorically "Chinese" in nature. And even items such as chopsticks that seem Chinese have permeated the global sphere and are quickly becoming elements of world culture. True, the specific details of objects including the plastic thermoses differ from that of other places, but the basic colorful plastic forms share obvious kinship with thermoses elsewhere. Although this family lives at the lowest rungs of economic status in Shanghai, their bland standard issue twentieth-century products do not differ at a fundamental formal level from items outside of China. While it may contain no identifiable uniquely Chinese visual vocabulary, this scene definitively is Chinese, for these are the very material artifacts this family touches, sees, and encounters everyday within their lives in Shanghai. Even in this poor Shanghai household, McDonald's graphics are a casual everyday sight; a father's T-shirt sports a graphic of the U.S. flag; and the wall and the ceiling meets with the same stock carved-wooden cornice trim one might find elsewhere in the world. Notable is the banality and utter disregard for the orientation and positioning of the McDonald's graphics. They are not accorded any special siting or articulation as a revered "foreign" icon. Just as in generations past, these transcultural images and products will leave their imprint on these children's memories, not as a foreign visual experience, but as their own. If there is a gap between the artifacts in this photograph and artifacts in the West, it derives mainly from differences in economic status between the two places, not differences in East-West visual and material vocabularies.

This example falls short of the sophisticated global culture Appadurai envisions, but it represents a cross-cultural hybridization that goes beyond a unidirectional colonizer-colonized relationship. James Clifford acknowledges such a complex hybridity when he sees indigenous culture constantly operating in a mode of articulation that uses and rapidly alters the dominating cultural epistemology. Authenticity becomes moot because the search for a trans-historical authenticity is not available; for even before the colonial moment, culture was always a system of articulations and nods reflecting a broad range of influences.[10] Generations of Shanghainese have lived with just such a hybridity in which images of inextractable origin have been internalized and incorporated into their visual and cultural vocabulary. These are the forms that evoke childhood, past, home, and sentimentality for the Shanghainese. To try to go back and extract and categorize these visual mixtures into essential categories would be an artificial, not to mention impossible, task because the general, the ecumenical, and the global have become transformed into the local. While nativism seeks a nonexistent wholeness and cultural purity, the acknowledgement of an infinitely intertwined hybridity sees the cultural machine as one that is always messy, ambiguous, nuanced, and compromised.

10 James Clifford, "Indigenous Articulations," *The Contemporary Pacific* 3:2 (Fall 2001): 468.

Towards Integrated Global Narratives

Polarized, essentialist models of interpretation present severe limitations, because the expedient distillation of the diverse qualities of a place into the problematic categories of "East" and "West" requires extreme acts of exclusion and revision. At best, such characterizations overlook the complexity and variability of place and of responses to the dynamics of the colonial and postcolonial situation. At worst, they disguise and perpetuate dominant narratives by reinforcing hegemonic matrixes of center and margin.

The application of a model of globalization, or at least a complex inextricable hybridity, to the situation of Shanghai allows one to escape the problems engendered by a binary model. It permits distance from a narrative that locates Shanghai in a reified stagnant past with no place to go but backwards, even as the West is allowed to dominate the territory of modernity and remain an ever-evolving signifier of cultural progress. It allows one to avoid being cornered into the exaggerated aesthetics of seventeenth- or eighteenth-century Europe or China in the vain search for representations of an unadulterated essential culture. And it frees Shanghai from having to be subjected each generation to a new audit of cultural influences according to a specious, schizophrenic spreadsheet categorized in terms of self and other. Indeed, the design and material culture documented in Hu Yang's visual images compels us to jettison any simple binarisms of *East* and *West*, *Occident* and *Orient* and bids us to take on alternative narratives such as hybridity and globalism to describe the multivalences and complexities of Shanghai in the early twenty-first century.

Only within this framework can we begin to understand the state of Shanghai design and material culture, for Shanghai design can no longer be extracted into simplistic categories. It must be understood and embraced as a complex amalgam of infinite origins and influences.

Colonialism's Clothing: Africa, France, and the Deployment of Fashion

Victoria L. Rovine

> "… our natives, adopting the manners and habits of Europeans, are beginning more and more, especially in important urban centers, to dress in the European manner—in short, to follow our fashions"
> (from a pamphlet promoting the French Syndicate of Artificial Textile Manufacturers, Exposition Coloniale Internationale, Paris, 1931).[1]

> "It seems to us that [these African fabrics] can provide, each and every one, useful sources of inspiration. In every era, designers have turned to the Orient to revitalize their enthusiasm. Didn't Rabelais write (after Pliny): 'There is always something new out of Africa'?"
> –Henri Clouzot, *Tissus Nègres* (Paris: A. Calavas, 1931)

Clothing has long been an important medium for negotiating differences across cultural divides. Garments provide a means by which to absorb distant cultures into familiar frameworks, or to highlight cultural differences, often in order to reinforce cultural identity through contrast with the "other." Fashion, the realm of clothing that is characterized by self-conscious change, has long played an important role in the characterization of cultures and sub-cultures, providing a key means of marking affiliation or classifying people and cultures. An exploration of fashion across cultures offers an opportunity to trace the flows, intersections, and occasional collisions of forms and their associations as garments and images travel. An unexpected theme emerges from this exploration of the movements and transformations of garments and styles: the preservation, popularization, and transformation of "traditional" forms of adornment. The centrality of forms associated with tradition in these exchanges might appear to be an ironic circumstance, for fashion and tradition are generally considered to be at opposite ends of the cultural spectrum; one conservative and unchanging, and the other whimsical and transient.

What follows is a consideration of the intersection of fashion and tradition in early-twentieth-century France, where the construction of non-European cultures as "traditional" was one element of the colonial enterprise. This examination of fashion's

1 "La soie artificielle et nos colonies," *La Soie Artificielle à l'Exposition Coloniale Internationale de Paris* (Paris: Exposition organizée par le Syndicat Français des Fabricants de Textiles Artificiels, 1931): 25. (All translations from French by the author.)

role in cultural negotiations between Western and African cultures is focused on the 1920s and 1930s, when France's colonies were at their most extensive and, in turn, when the country was expending its greatest effort to maintain support for the colonial enterprise at home. The quotations above, both of which address the representation of French West Africa at the same 1931 French celebration of the colonial enterprise, attest to two simultaneous impulses: the desire to civilize (Westernize) colonial subjects, and to draw on their "primitive" practices in order to enrich French culture. These paradoxical reactions, which continue to inform interactions between Western and non-Western cultures, are vividly embodied by clothing.

My focus is on France's possessions in Africa, a continent that even today is still closely associated with traditional cultures in Western popular imagination. Africa also has a rich history of fashion production: styles of dress have long been the subject of innovation as new media and forms are absorbed and adapted. Rather than fashion production in Africa, here my subject is French fashion *about* Africa.[2] Not intended as a exhaustive survey of the vast array of French Africanisms of the first decades of the twentieth century, this exploration of Africa's presence in French fashion markets aims to provide insights into the ways in which the realms of tradition and fashion inform and shape one another. It also indicates the provisional nature of such classifications, as garment forms and styles shift between "traditional" and "fashionable." This investigation also sheds light on the power of fashion and the promotional elements that surround it (including fashion journalism) to communicate, and sometimes construct, popular notions of "traditional" African cultures and identities. Using documentation drawn from a number of sources including formal analysis of garments, as well as the language that surrounds and elucidates clothing, such as garment names, advertisements, and fashion journalism—what Barthes has characterized as "written clothing"[3]—I will examine here the diverse strategies by which French fashion and textile designers combined, adapted and, in some instances, invented African forms in response to the demands and expectations of their changing markets.

This exploration of the intersection of fashion and tradition begins with a consideration of the permeability of categories and identities, drawing from both past and present contexts to describe the centrality of clothing to the negotiations that take place at the intersection of cultures. I then turn to the early-twentieth-century adaptation of African forms by Western designers, using both stylistic and textual analysis to explore the motivations for, and implications of, these exchanges of forms.

Classifying Clothing, Categorizing Cultures

The imagined distance between Africa, associated with authenticity and adherence to tradition, and fashion's reputation for frivolity

2 *Elsewhere, I have addressed the work of African fashion designers, both in Africa and the Diaspora.* See *Bogolan: Shaping Culture through Cloth in Contemporary Mali* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); "Fashionable Traditions: The Globazation of an African Textile" in *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress,* Jean Allman, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); "Working the Edge: XULY. Bët's Recycled Clothing" in *Old Clothes, New Looks: Second-hand Fashion*, Alexandra Palmer and Hazel Clark, eds. (London: Berg, 2005); "Stylisme africain: réseaux globaux, styles locaux," *Africultures* 69 (2006).

3 Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*, trans. Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 3.

and quixotic change is succinctly characterized by Jennifer Craik: "Symptomatically, the term 'fashion' is rarely used in reference to non-Western cultures. The two are defined in opposition to each other: Western dress is fashion because it changes regularly, is superficial and mundane, and projects individual identity; non-Western dress is costume because it is unchanging, encodes deep meanings, and projects group identity and membership."[4] Because it is, by its very nature, capricious, fashion appears to be an inappropriate vehicle for the transmission of tradition, which is associated with stasis and predictability. Yet I will assert that it is, paradoxically, their association with tradition that propels particular forms and styles into international fashion markets. Thus, my investigation demonstrates the mobility and malleability of "traditional" forms, which travel and are transformed at least in part due to their reputation for conservatism. In fact, one might assert that tradition is the most valuable commodity in the movement and readaptation of forms by which much fashion is created. A closer look at the exchange between "traditional" African styles and "fashionable" Africanisms created by international designers indicates the degree to which these two realms construct one another.

The distinction between "traditional" and "fashionable" dress has important implications beyond the realm of fashion. In a parallel to the much-discussed division between "art" and "artifact"—the latter term describing African and other non-Western visual expressions before their influence on the work of Western artists validated them as "art"[5]—fashion serves as a measure of cultural attainment. Fashion is the setter of trends; in comparison, other clothing is functional and conventional, following long-standing and unreflective practice. High fashion, which might be considered sartorial "fine art," is visible to many, affordable to few, and a sign of elevated status. As Neissen has succinctly asserted: "Who has, and who does not have fashion is politically determined, a function of power relations."[6] Thus, designation of garments as fashion has profound implications, particularly where cultures intersect.

One objective of my discussion of African influence on Western fashion design is to complicate classifications of African and Western styles of dress, which are popularly conceived of as separate realms that only occasionally interact. Such categorization, like so many classification systems, over-simplifies complex networks of exchange and influence. In her discussion of the popularity of Japanese fashion in the 1980s, Skov described the limitations of such binary models:

> … if we celebrate 'Japanese' designers as 'speaking back at' Paris fashion, do we not then reduce complex changes in both the fashion industry and global consumer patterns to a simplified 'East vs. West' model?... in doing so, we ignore the rest of the world.…[7]

4 Jennifer Craik, *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 18.

5 The seminal exhibition and catalogue *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, William Rubin, ed. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984) documented the transformation of African sculpture from curiosity or artifact into art. Although the exhibition was criticized for its relegation of African and other non-Western art to supporting roles, the catalogue essays provide valuable documentation of the shifting connotations of African objects. Susan Vogel's exhibition and catalogue *Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections* (New York: Center for African Art, 1989) vividly explored how the exhibition and reception of African objects is transformed by these classifications.

6 Sandra Niessen, "Afterword: Re-Orienting Fashion Theory" in *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress*, Sandra Niessen, Ann Marie Leshkowich, and Carla Jones, eds. (New York: Berg, 2003), 245.

7 Lise Skov, "Fashion Trends, Japonisme and Postmodernism, or 'What Is So Japanese About *Comme des Garçons*?'" *Theory, Culture, and Society* 13:3 (August 1996): 136.

Similarly, the interactions between African styles and global fashion markets take place within an arena of multiple influences, motivations, and often misconceptions.

The histories of trade, colonization, and travel that link African and Western cultures have produced forms that shift between categories; the labels attached to them are more reflective of the nature of the markets in which they circulate than of any objective reality. In this environment, clear-cut oppositions melt into ambiguities: "African" or "Western" styles are points on a continuum rather than discreet categories. That the terms "African" and "Western" are more abstract than literal in their points of reference, reflecting conventions rather than realities, is dramatically illustrated in contemporary contexts by the internationalized realms of clothing manufacture, distribution, and marketing. The suits, T-shirts, and blue jeans associated with modern Western style may be designed, manufactured, and sold without ever entering a Western market. Wherever they are made, many such "Western" garments have been transformed into local styles. Eicher and Sumberg offer the terms "world fashion" and "cosmopolitan fashion" as alternatives to "Western", noting that "although a wide variety of tailored garments, as well as certain haircuts, cosmetics, and accessories, are often referred to as Western, many people in both Eastern and Western hemispheres wear such items of apparel. Designating items as Western for people who wear them in other areas of the world, such as Asia and Africa, is inaccurate."[8] Similarly, clothing styles that are broadly accepted as "African" may be produced elsewhere, as exemplified by the history of wax prints and other industrially produced textiles described below.

The travels of garments and styles provide insights into the shaping of cultural identities, although these exchanges rarely follow straight and predictable paths. In his discussion of modernity and the globalization of local cultures, Appadurai includes clothing among the commodities that might be expected to erase cultural distinctions but that, instead, may have the effect of reinforcing local cultures: "The globalization of cultures is not the same as its homogenization, but globalization involves the use of a variety of instruments of homogenization (armaments, advertising techniques, language hegemonies, and clothing styles) that are absorbed into local political and cultural economies…."[9] Appadurai characterizes global commodity consumption as a "contest of sameness and difference"[10] in which nations and cultures negotiate the adaptation of new forms and the reinforcement of the local. When clothing is the commodity in contest, cultural and personal identity are directly implicated, making fashion a particularly vivid illustration of the tensions surrounding cultural change and exchange.

Whatever the direction of borrowing and adaptation, dress elements that have their origins in distant cultures may be transformed into local sartorial conventions, even becoming symbols of

8 Joanne B. Eicher and Barbara Sumberg, "World Fashion, Ethnic, and National Dress" in *Dress and Ethnicity: Change across Space and Time*, Joanne B. Eicher, ed. (Washington, DC: Berg, 1995), 296.

9 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 42.

10 Ibid., 43.

indigenous cultures. Women's dress of the Herero of Namibia and Botswana, which is based on eighteenth-century German clothing styles, offers a vivid African case in point[11] although numerous others might be cited as well. Eicher and Erekosima coined the term "cultural authentication" to describe the incorporation of imported objects or practices into new contexts, a process they illustrate through the absorption of European styles into local men's clothing among the Kalabari of southeastern Nigeria.[12] In these and many other instances, separating foreign, imported styles from indigenous ones is no easy task in dynamic markets with long histories of interaction: "traditional" dress is not necessarily local dress.

As the identities associated with garments shift unpredictably, their associations may double back on themselves so that the local becomes exotic and the once-exotic is absorbed into local practice. In her analysis of modern revivals of indigenous Japanese clothing styles in Japan, Suga notes such a reversal of roles: "Today, the West does not denote an exotic concept or product in the Japanese consumer market, but an interest in the revival of Japanese tradition has evolved as the Japanese search for Japanese-ness."[13] Western fashion has been so thoroughly absorbed in Japan (as it has elsewhere, including many parts of Africa) that it is now Japanese style that is the object of "cultural authentication" in Japan.

The quintessential example of such shifting labels may be found in the multiplicity of identities layered beneath the vivid patterns of popular factory-printed textiles generally referred to as wax prints. The origins of these boldly patterned cloths is variously located in Africa, Indonesia, Holland, and Great Britain; and depending upon the context, they might be identified with any of these locations. The cloths' history began with Indonesian batiks, made by hand using wax-resist techniques, which were traded into West Africa by European middlemen beginning in the seventeenth century. The Dutch colonized Indonesia, creating the Dutch East Indies, in the early seventeenth century. The Dutch East India Company, created in 1602, facilitated trade between Dutch colonies in Asia and European markets. Dutch textile manufacturers, recognizing the large market for batik textiles, sought to imitate the cloths' distinctive style using industrial printing processes.

Although the imitation batiks had little success in European markets, textile firms found ready consumers in another region of growing economic interest to Dutch and other European merchants: West Africa. Factories in Holland, and later in England, began making reproductions of the early Dutch approximations of Indonesian batiks. Manufacturers sent their representatives to Africa to conduct consumer research so that European factories could produce specific patterns and colors to suit regional tastes. Finally, beginning in the mid-twentieth century, African textile factories began to produce cloth based on the Indonesian/Dutch/British prototypes. Known as wax-print, Dutch-wax, Imiwax, and by many

11 See Deborah Dunham, "Predicaments of Dress: Polyvalency and the Ironies of a Cultural Identity," *American Ethnologist* 26:2 (1999): 389–411; and Hildi Hendrickson, "A Symbolic History of the 'Traditional' Herero Dress in Namibia and Botswana," *African Studies* 53:2 (1994): 25–54.

12 Joanne B. Eicher and Tonye V. Erekosima, "Why Do They Call It Kalabari? Cultural Authentication and the Demarcation of Ethnic Identity" in *Dress and Ethnicity: Change across Space and Time*, Joanne B. Eicher, ed. (Washington, DC: Berg Press, 1995).

13 Masami Suga, "Exotic West to Exotic Japan: Revival of Japanese Tradition in Modern Japan" in *Dress and Ethnicity: Change across Space and Time*, Joanne B. Eicher, ed. (Washington DC: Berg, Press, 1995) 98.

other names depending on place of manufacture and quality, these textiles are now ubiquitous in many parts of Africa. Through these layers of influences, inspirations, and reproductions, meanings were made and remade, so that wearing the cloth may evoke a variety of national, regional, and cultural identities. Its Indonesian origins and the European mercantile impetus that propelled wax-prints onto international markets are no longer explicitly recognized in African fashion circles, for they have become African textiles, however complicated their histories.[14]

While innumerable traders, designers, technicians, and consumers took part in the transformation of Indonesian batik into African factory cloth, the identities associated with clothing styles and iconographies may also shift quickly as individuals interpret garments that move between cultures. Lacking historical documentation of such individual transformations of meanings in African contexts, I offer a vivid contemporary instance that demonstrates the transformation of meanings as clothing forms move between markets. In a brief article on his experiences as an American student studying at the University of Botswana, Nicholas Weinstock described an instance of dramatic misunderstanding that centered on a single garment's divergent meanings. In his exchange with a classmate, a baseball cap is a shifting signifier, absorbing new meanings founded in local histories: "The white 'X' on his black cap, a student replied to my feigned ignorance, stands for 'Christ—yes, like Xmas, you know.' I'd stumbled upon a clumsy game of Telephone, played by murmuring fashion fads across the Atlantic Ocean. The difference was that the resulting distortions were funny only to me. When I giggled, the good Christian with the 'X' cap punched me in the chest."[15] Thus, a single article of clothing contains possibilities for dramatic reinvention: from one person to the next, a baseball cap shifts from a symbol of the Nation of Islam in the United States to an emblem of Christian faith in Africa.[16]

While we can document style change in past African dress, historical records provide little information concerning the role of specific individuals in the transformation of meanings as garments and styles were absorbed into local markets.[17] The few published descriptions of pre-colonial clothing creativity in Africa only hint at the role of individuals in the production of new styles. Jean Comaroff offers one fascinating instance of individual sartorial innovation in mid-nineteenth century southern Africa. She considers a British missionary's description of Tswana chief Sechele, who "… in 1860, had a singular suit tailored from 'tiger' (i.e., leopard) skin—all 'in European fashion.'" [18] Comaroff describes how the chief's changes in clothing style responded to political exigencies: "… in crafting the skin, itself a symbol of chiefly authority, the chief seems to have been making yet another effort to mediate the two exclusive systems of authority at war in his world, striving perhaps to fashion a power greater than the sum of its parts!"

14 For elaboration on the history of this cloth, see Ruth Neilsen, "The History and Development of Wax-Printed Textiles Intended for West Africa and Zaire" in *The Fabrics of Culture*, Justine Cordwell and Ronald Scwartz, eds. (The Hague: Mouton, 1979); Kathleen Bickford, "The A.B.C.s of Cloth and Politics in Côte d'Ivoire," *Africa Today* (2nd Quarter, 1994); John Picton "Technology, Tradition and Lurex: The Art of Textiles in Africa," in *The Art of African Textiles: Technology, Tradition and Lurex*, John Picton, ed. (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1995); Anne M. Spencer, "Of Polomints and Alphabets: The Eicher Collection of African Wax-Printed Cloths" in *Cloth Is the Center of the World: Nigerian Textiles, Global Perspectives*, Susan J. Torntore, ed. (St. Paul: The Goldstein Museum of Design, 2001).

15 Nicholas Weinstock, "I Was a B.M.O.C. at Botswana U," *The Nation* 257:19 (December 6, 1993): 693.

16 The Malcolm X cap's transformation is particularly ironic: the Nation of Islam is an Afrocentric religion based in the United States, yet here its symbol returns to Africa only to be reinterpreted as a marker of Christianity, a religion that came to Botswana through European and American missionaries.

17 Two recent publications demonstrate the potential for detailed analysis of African dress in historical perspective: Bernard Gardi, *Le Boubou C'est Chic* (Basel: Museum der Kulturen Basel, 2000) and *South East African Beadwork, 1850–1910: From Adornment to Artefact to Art,* Michael Stevenson and Michael Graham-Stewart, eds. (Vlaeberg, South Africa: Fernwood Press, 2000).

18 Jean Comaroff, "The Empire's Old Clothes: Fashioning the Colonial Subject" in *Cross-cultural Consumption: Global Markets, Local Realities*, David Howes, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 31.

Such transformations of meaning and absorptions of new forms, past and present, illustrate how consumers draw non-local dress into existing cultural frameworks. The unpredictable twists and turns of baseball caps, factory-printed textiles, tailored suits, and other elements of dress illustrate Hendrickson's characterization of African dress as a medium for cultural exchange between Africa and the West: "… Africa and the West are mutually engaged in a semiotic web whose implications are not completely controlled by any of us."[19] An investigation of the intersections of France's colonial governance and its fashion production reveals that the web of meanings and the exchanges of forms on the Western side of this interaction were as complex, and as impossible to control, as they were in Africa.

The Early Twentieth Century:
Clothing, Colonies, and Expositions

French colonial rule in Africa created a setting for cultural exchange under conditions of dramatic political and economic inequality, dependent upon the colonizing nation's construction of a clear distinction between the metropole and the colonies. The interactions between France and its African colonies were broadly characterized by the assertion of French superiority and the presumed aspirations of African cultures toward the European ideal. The cultural distance and power imbalance between "center" (Paris and other Western cities) and "periphery" (African colonies) was visibly enacted in styles of dress. Clothing styles were employed in Europe—and in Africa—as measures of cultural advancement in an evolutionary progression from "primitive" to "civilized" status.

In his analysis of patterns of consumption in the former British colony of Belize, Wilk conceptualizes the distance between colonizer and colonized using a temporal metaphor: "colonial time."[20] The metropole—whether Paris, London, Brussels, or another European capital—was presumed to be on the cutting edge in every element of cultural expression, while the inhabitants of the colonies were deemed to be perpetually out of date; their cultures frozen in the stasis of "tradition," remote from the contemporary. The notion of chronological as well as physical distance is particularly germane to an analysis of fashion, arguably the art form most closely associated with the passage of time. Seeling's definition of fashion in *Fashion: The Century of the Designer* is typical: "Fashion comes from Paris, and one of its greatest characteristics is that it changes. No sooner is something 'in fashion' than it is 'out of fashion' again."[21] Time is crucial to the economy of fashion; success in the fashion world is dependent upon not only being up-to-date, but also predicting the tastes of the next season. Africa's geographical and cultural distance from Europe was elided with chronological distance, placing the continent's cultures in a different place and time, as exemplified by dress practices across the continent, which were frequently deemed

19 Hildi Hendrickson, "Introduction" in *Clothing and Difference: Embodied Identities in Colonial and Post-colonial Africa*, Hildi Hendrickson, ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 1.

20 Richard Wilk, "Consumer Goods as Dialogue about Development," *Culture and History* 7 (1990): 84.

21 *Fashion: The Century of the Designer (1900–1999)*, Charlotte Seeling, ed. (Cologne: Könemann, 1999), introduction.

to be out-of- date, out-of-touch, and therefore irrelevant to contemporary trends. As Wilk describes: "In colonial time, the colony is described using metaphors that blend the connotative meanings of time, distance, and cultural development. 'Primitive,' 'backward,' and 'underdeveloped' are such blending terms."[22]

The significance of fashion as a symbol of Africa's location in colonial time, temporally and spatially remote from the swiftly changing present moment embodied by French clothing trends, is encapsulated by a 1914 illustrated commentary on the French fashion scene entitled *Le Vrai et Le Faux Chic*. The folio, which was sold in a limited edition and was made more widely accessible through coverage in fashion magazines of the day, used Africa's ostensible lack of fashion as a foil for criticism of French fashion trends of the day. Written and illustrated by the prominent cartoonist Sem (pen name of Georges Goursat), *Le Vrai et Le Faux Chic* lampoons what Sem considered to be the frivolous and dangerously exotic fashions that were coming into vogue at the time. He presents a parable, introducing an unnamed Frenchman ("a Parisian man of good breeding, with delicate and sound taste"[23]) who went to Africa for ten years, where he was "completely isolated from the civilized world … completely ignorant of the evolution of modern life." Africa's ostensible remoteness is key to Sem's narrative: he needed a location his readers would have understood to be entirely beyond the reach of Paris fashion.

Returning to his home ten years later, the French traveler found that the elegant Parisian women he remembered have been transformed. Blindly following fashion has led them to absurdities that seem to emerge directly from "primitive" cultures that know nothing of Parisian elegance. Sem created prancing and posing caricatures to illustrate his vivid and highly racialized descriptions of these visions of fashion's folly: "… savage women adorned with gris-gris … Kanaks (an ethnic group from New Caledonia) wearing colorful mops, troglodytes covered with dangling animal skins …" and, most frightful of all "… a fuzzy-haired cannibal … wearing a bone through her nose." At this last nightmarish vision, the well-bred Frenchman "shuts his suitcases and takes the first camel bound for Timbuktu."[24] In her discussion of *Le Vrai et Le Faux Chic*, Troy notes the particular irony of the parable: "Paris fashions, Sem thus tells us, have become more savage, more dangerous, more threatening than anything one might encounter in deepest Africa, which, paradoxically, becomes a refuge for a sophisticated world traveler seeking to escape the irrational horrors of contemporary women's fashion in Paris."[25]

Troy's analysis of *Le Vrai et Le Faux Chic* is focused on the insights it provides into the shifting mood of the Paris fashion world, epitomized by the tension between two tendencies, each represented by a well known designer: Paul Poiret, whose exoticism was ascendant; and Jeanne Paquin, whose innovations were inspired by

22 Richard Wilk, "Consumer Goods as Dialogue about Development": 84.

23 Sem, *Le Vrai et le faux chic* (Paris: Succès, 1914), 4.

24 Ibid., 4.

25 Nancy J. Troy, *Couture Culture: A Study in Modern Art and Fashion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 183.

the European past. Sem blames Poiret's use of African and other non-Western influences for the "moral and material perversion" of French fashion.[26] In the context of the present investigation, Sem's critique provides a vivid example of the construction of Africa as the embodiment of fashion's opposite. He treats the presence of African and other non-Western influences on clothing styles in the City of Light as patently absurd; an inversion so disturbing that it sends an urbane Parisian packing for the remoteness of Timbuktu! Sem was likely disappointed by what was yet to come in French fashion trends, for non-European influences continued to gain prominence in the years after World War I.

The influence of African and other non-Western cultures on French fashion and textile designers during the first three decades of the twentieth century was largely mediated by the carefully constructed colonial expositions. These government-sponsored events, which celebrated national identity and achievement in a wide range of areas, were held in numerous European and North American cities, and occasionally in other countries within the orbit of Western influence such as New Zealand and South Africa. During the height of their popularity, from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, expositions were leading public events that attracted immense crowds and front-page headlines. France's largest expositions required the construction of entire districts—buildings, landscaping, monuments, and the infrastructure of a small city—as well as the mobilization of public relations efforts to reap the benefits of such immense efforts. The numerous expositions held in Paris in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century celebrated the city's dual roles as global fashion capital and as colonial capital.

France's African colonies were prominently featured at these expositions, often through reconstructions of African towns and villages, populated with people brought from the colonies to add drama and realism to these temporary African settings.[27] Many of the "Africanisms" in French fashion of the 1920s and 1930s were clearly linked to the colonial enterprise, and more directly to the representation of the colonies at expositions. Designers and fashion promoters gained access to imagery, objects, and people from the colonies at the expositions, and many sought to link their products with the immensely popular events.

The clothing worn by Africans at the colonial expositions was an object of European fascination, as indicated by the attention to African attire in one popular guidebook to the 1931 exposition: "We are soon plunged into Black Africa, in the Muslim city of Djenne, among the blue 'guinea' (cloth) of the Moors, the white burnous (cloaks) of the Senegalese, the raphia clothing of the natives of Dahomey and Côte d'Ivoire. Between the central tower and the lean-tos of the village fetishist—what a strange symphony of colors!"[28] In the same guidebook, descriptions of the pavilions of other colonial possessions focus on architecture and wild animals

26 Sem, *Le Vrai et le faux chic*, 3.

27 France was not alone in creating and populating reconstructions of non-Western cities and villages. Great Britain, Belgium, and the United States created similar "living dioramas" at their fairs.

28 *Guide Offert par les Grands Magasins Au Bon Marché*, Coloniale Internationale Exposition (Paris, 1931): 4.

(in Laos, Cambodia, Morocco, and the French Indies). The focus on clothing is specific to the sub-Saharan African section. Louis Valent, the official delegate from the colonial administration of Côte d'Ivoire to the 1931 exposition, also focused on the clothing of the African "residents" of the French West Africa Section in his description: "Two hundred indigenous people from the farthest provinces lent the whole of the Section a well-deserved note of exoticism which draws and holds the crowds." He notes in particular "the white boubous (robes) of the Senegalese, the blue coats of the Moors, the black robes of the Fulani."[29] The names alone—boubous, burnous, guinea cloth—match the "exotic" appeal of the exposition itself, although the entire scene was staged within the boundaries of Paris.

This clothing, with its "exotic" fascination for the European visitor, was clearly distinguished from the domestic clothing design prominently featured in a separate set of pavilions. As Steele notes, "All the international expositions … prominently displayed Parisian fashions and accessories, which attracted large and enthusiastic crowds."[30] Fashion production and colonial governance were celebrated in separate pavilions, and might appear to have few apparent points of connection. Fashion was the height of France's sophisticated metropolitan culture, while her colonial possessions were broadly characterized as but "primitive" societies that supplied raw materials for French industries and, after those materials had been transformed into French products, Africa became a potential market.[31]

Yet the realms of fashion and colonial possessions did converge at these events for, by the 1920s, French fashion and arts publications were touting the potential benefits of the expositions, which would encourage non-Western aesthetic influence on French artistic production. In 1923, French art critic Henri Clouzot's highest praise for African textiles (in particular the raffia cloth of the Kuba and related groups) was that it might serve to inspire French designers. After describing the "simple" beauty of the "bushongo velours" and the cotton fabrics of Upper Volta in West Africa which are "stamped, in black and red, with designs of such rare originality," he notes that "even the most primitive" civilizations have inspired French textiles. He encourages his readers to "… rejuvenate our decorative grammar … as if our climate rivaled the skies over Timbuktu or Haoï…."[32] Whether in Southeast Asia or West Africa, France's colonies were sources of styles and forms that would be absorbed and "authenticated" in the hands of French designers and artists. One article on the 1931 exposition noted: "A success as perfect as the Colonial Exposition … cannot help having ramifications in our life today." In fact, the author continues, "An infusion of exoticism is constantly necessary for our old West; our civilization regularly tries to rejuvenate itself by plunging into a bath of primitive life."[33] The colonial expositions brought this cultural bath conveniently into the streets and parks of French and other European cities.[34] Instead

29 *Le Livre d'Or de l'Exposition Coloniale Internationale de Paris 1931* (Paris: Librarie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1931): 85.

30 Valerie Steele, *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History* (New York: Berg, 1998), 149.

31 The importance of the colonies as markets for French textile production also was part of the 1931 exposition's celebration of French possessions abroad: "Already France Abroad [*France extérieure*] is the biggest client of France in Europe (*France d'Europe*) … a quarter of the total production of our cotton fabrics are absorbed by our colonies," *Le Livre d'Or de l'Expostion Coloniale* 1931: 9.

32 Henri Clouzot, "La Tissage à la Main dans les Textiles," *Renaissance de l'Art Français* (1923): 553–54.

33 "De l'Influence des Colonies," *Jardin des Modes* (July 15, 1931): 428.

34 Colonial expositions were held in other countries that had colonial possessions, including Belgium, England, and the Netherlands.

of going all the way to Africa for inspiration, French designers and other trendsetters simply made their way to nearby fairgrounds.

The importance of the African materials as resources for French artistic creativity also was acknowledged at the source: Africa. In one explicit example, a letter from Camille Guy, governor of the French Sudan, to his lieutenant governor in Bamako (capital of the colony), describes the importance of commissioning textiles for the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs in Paris: "We must place fabrics at the top of the list of manufactures. The textiles of French West Africa, in their variety and the surprising nature of their designs … have so amazed the specialists in this area that fashion this winter is clearly influenced by the examples displayed by our African colonies. We must therefore show as wide a variety of these fabrics as possible and ask the indigenous artisans to make them with the Exposition in mind, inspired only by their ideas and their personal taste."[35] The importance of untouched "authenticity" is clear, as is the governor's recognition that textiles provided a particularly potent source of "pure" African style.

An examination of Paris fashion at the time of the 1931 *Exposition Coloniale Internationale*, an exceptionally large event, indicates that, while French fashion and textile designers drew inspiration from the versions of Africa presented by this officially mediated event, their borrowing was located within a cultural narrative that reinforced French cultural superiority. Further, the influence of African and other non-Western cultures in the realm of French art and design was encouraged by colonial government officials, asserting that the artistic manifestations of the colonial system supported its economic and political interests.

Even as the 1931 exposition's displays of the arts and cultures of France's colonial possessions were lauded for their potential impact on French fashion and design, a group of dioramas in another portion of the exposition celebrated the disappearance in Africa of the very dress forms that fascinated and inspired artists and designers in the metropole. Hodier described these dioramas, which were located in the Musée des Colonies, a building constructed for the 1931 exposition:[36]

> The first window represented a barely clothed African student before the African teacher; the second display featured the same student, this time wearing a *pagne* (loincloth) at a French primary school; the third depicted the student wearing a *boubou* (robe) at a technical training school; and in the fourth and final display, the African pupil was transformed, dressed in pants and shirt, at a college-level technical school.[37]

In official representations of Africa, the betterment of the colonial subject was clearly marked by progress toward Western-style dress: the abandonment of "traditional" attire was presented as an

35 Camille Guy to Lieutenant-Gounerneur du Soudan, October 29, 1923, Archives Nationales, Bamako, Mali.

36 The building remained a museum of non-Western arts long after the end of official colonization. It changed names several times, from Musée des Colonies to Musée d'Outre-Mer to Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie. It closed in 2003, when its collections were moved to the Musée du Quai Branly.

37 Catherine Hodier, "Decentering the Gaze at French Colonial Expositions" in *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Empires*, Paul S. Landau and Deborah D. Kaspin, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 239–240.

achievement for Africa. Thus, two apparently conflicting responses to France's African possessions were on display at this government-sponsored event. Depending on where visitors to the 1931 colonial exposition looked, they might see African textiles and clothing as creative expressions to be emulated, or as symbols of the deplorable backwardness of the colonies.

The image of Africans "civilized" by French influence was intended to garner public support for the nation's colonial project. So too was the promise of African and other non-Western influence on France's arts and design industries. In her discussion of the *coloniale modern*, an aesthetic movement of the 1920s and 1930s that combined European design of the day with influences from the decorative arts of the French colonies, Finamore notes that promotion of the style had economic and political as well as artistic motivations: "When it was becoming more and more crucial that France defend its colonialist stance, the *coloniale modern* sought to assist the rationalization of colonial activity by promoting the colonies as a source of aesthetic inspiration and raw materials for consumer products."[38] She further notes that the expositions deployed the nation's famed fashion industry as an element of this strategy, for the colonial expositions linked France's fashion industry and the nation's colonial possessions: "France had always been proud of its luxury industry and its undeniable position as a taste-setter and, like the colonies, fashion was an important and viable commercial asset. The fairs helped ensure that the French populace understood and supported this."[39] In his analysis of the cultural roles of expositions and world's fairs, Rydell describes the *coloniale modern* as the French government's effort "… to make the modernistic dream worlds of mass consumption on view at fairs unthinkable apart from the maintenance and extension of empire."[40] The garments that resulted from these officially sanctioned interactions provide insights into the processes of transformation by which distant styles are domesticated. In addition to the forms themselves, the marketing that surrounded garments reinforced, or even created, their associations with Africa, even as distance was maintained from these non-Western sources of inspiration, and the cultural hierarchy always reinforced.

Adaptations and References: Modes of Influence across Cultures

Africa's impact on early-twentieth-century French fashion was manifested in a variety of forms, some readily recognizable, and others bearing little visible resemblance to their sources of inspiration. African influence was most readily apparent in instances of stylistic or iconographic adaptations, in which recognizably African forms and imagery were incorporated into French garments. In some instances, designers drew directly from aspects of African dress; adapting textiles, patterns, garment types, and media such as beads or raffia into their work. Designers also made reference to Africa through the incorporation of figurative iconography associated

38 Michelle Tolini Finamore, "Fashioning the Colonial at the Paris Expositions, 1925 and 1931," *Fashion Theory* 7:3/4 (2003): 348.

39 Ibid.: 349.

40 Robert W. Rydell, *The World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 62.

with the continent. Prominent among the iconographic references to France's non-Western colonies, which included Oceanic and Southeast Asian possessions as well as those in West and Central Africa, were elephants, palm trees, animal prints, and representations of African sculpture.

Elsewhere, I have discussed how similar strategies may be discerned in contemporary tourist art markets, where references to local culture are crucial to the marketability of textiles and other products.[41] I have labeled the former approach, adapting elements of African dress to Western design, "reproductive" and the latter, in which African imagery is depicted through clothing, "mimetic."[42] An article in a 1931 French fashion magazine, extolling the value of the colonies as sources of inspiration for fashion and textile design, made a similar distinction between these strategies: one "decorative" and the other "geographical or human": "It is not only the decorative elements strictly speaking that interest us, but also the geographical and human elements, the landscape where the great palm trees balance, where the cacti proliferate with their grimacing silhouettes, the familiar objects, the people themselves in their touching and simple complexity."[43] Two worlds of imagery thus were available to fashion designers and promoters: the media and imagery of African dress practices, and Africa itself.

Along with these two approaches, designers and fashion promoters have long made links to Africa through media that supplement garments as they enter the market, shaping their reception. These include textual references, such as the names assigned to specific garments or styles and the descriptions by which garments were marketed, as well as the illustration of garments, most notably through fashion photography. These various strategies provide a framework for analyzing Africa's diverse manifestations in French fashion design.

The designer who is most closely associated with non-Western sources of inspiration is Paul Poiret, the internationally renowned early-twentieth-century French fashion designer and tastemaker (whose work was caricatured by Sem). Poiret incorporated textiles, garment styles, ornaments, and marketing strategies that contrasted sharply with the prevailing practices of the day. He collected textiles and garments from around the world, designing his "Oriental-style" garments and theatre costumes "according to authentic documents."[44] While much of his work of the 1910s and 1920s makes reference to Asian and Middle Eastern precedents, Africa appears as well. Poiret employed both mimetic and reproductive approaches, drawing from images of Africa and Africans as well as from African textiles and garment styles.

In 1920, Poiret created a woman's dress closely based on the *akhnif*, a style of man's cloak from Morocco's High Atlas region. (Figure 1) In addition to the direct transposition of an African style—exemplifying the mimetic approach to cross-cultural influence—the

41 Victoria L. Rovine, *Bogolan: Shaping Culture through Cloth in Contemporary Mali* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 34–36.

42 In her analysis of African influence on textile design in early-twentieth-century Europe and the United States, Hannel proposes a different set of strategies by which African influence was incorporated: imitation, adaptation, and transformation. The first category consists of direct copies of African forms; the second African forms that are not copied directly but rather serve as sources of inspiration; and the third encompasses textile motifs that are based on stereotyped, often racist imagery. Susan Hannel, "'Africana' Textiles: Imitation, Adaptation, and Transformation during the Jazz Age," *Textile* 4:1 (2006): 68–103.

43 "De l'Influence des Colonies," *Jardin des Modes* (July 15, 1931): 428.

44 Troy (2003) citing Paul Poiret, *My First Fifty Years* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1931), 185.

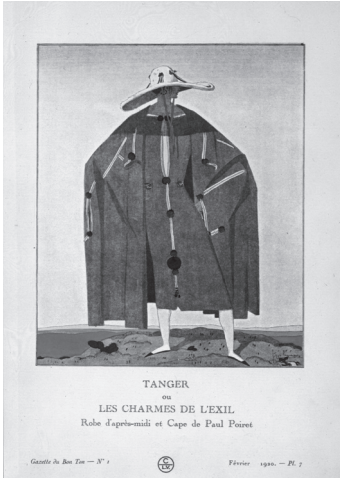

Figure 1
"Tanger ou les Charmes de l'éxil," woman's dress and cape designed by Paul Poiret, illustrated by Georges Lepape, from *La Gazette du Bon Ton*, no. 1, 1920. Courtesy of Les Arts Décoratifs, Musée de la Mode et du Textile, Paris. Photo Laurent Sully Jaulmes, collection UFAC.

garment's name, "Tanger," creates a textual link to the continent, underscoring its stylistic debt to Africa. Tangiers, a city at Morocco's northern tip just across the Straits of Gibraltar from Spain, was a particularly evocative name. Tangiers was the gateway to the romantic realm of North Africa for European visitors. By shifting the garment's gender associations, from male cloak to female dress, Poiret distinguished the garment from its African origins in order to make it his own. Certainly, Poiret's references to non-Western cultures cannot be separated from the power relations at work between colonizer and colonized; transforming a male African garment into a female Western one reverberates with the Orientalist discourse of the day, one element of which was a feminization of African culture. As Jones and Leshkowich have noted: "… Orientalism emerged in the colonial era as a mode of knowledge production that defined 'the Orient' as fundamentally 'other, feminine, and perpetually inferior' to the West in ways that supported colonial domination."[45] Poiret's dress, thus, embodies multiple aspects of France's construction of/use of the African "other."

In another reference to Africa, Poiret created an evening gown called "Nubian" in 1924. Here, his approach is not mimetic, yet the garment creates associations with Africa by other means. The primary connection is textual—the name of the dress resonates with the distant and the exotic. Nubian refers to a region and ethnic group in southern Egypt and northern Sudan, and likely more important for Poiret's purposes, to an ancient kingdom in the same region. Nubia, also known as Kush, was one of the earliest complex societies in the Nile Valley, predating Egypt's first dynasty. Westerners first became aware of Nubia in the 1820s, when it was heralded as a remnant of the Biblical past. Archaeological excavations that took place from 1917 to 1924—just as Poiret was naming his design—uncovered pyramids, dramatic sculptures, and gold objects. With these associations, the name "Nubian" would likely have evoked a generalized sense of the distant, exotic, and mysterious.

The accessories worn with the Nubian gown in its best-known fashion illustration, from the May 1924 issue of the fashion magazine *Art, Goût, Beauté*, include layered armlets and bracelets, each plain and monochromatic, perhaps made of wood or ivory. The image calls to mind the bracelets worn in great profusions by famous Afrophile Nancy Cunard in her 1926 portrait by Man Ray, in which the layered bangles were a stylistic statement of her affinity for African cultures—one element of her controversial persona during that era. Ivory or wooden bracelets, worn in profusion, appear with some frequency in early-twentieth-century French representations of African women.[46] Distinguishing the influence of art deco style from that of the *coloniale modern* is difficult for, as Archer-Straw notes in her analysis of the fashion influences of *l'art nègre* (the fad for African music and art in 1920s France), "Once married with art deco, *l'art nègre*'s references in fashion were subtle but still significant. The

45 Carla Jones and Ann Marie Leshkowich, "Introduction: The Globalization of Asian Dress: Re-Orienting Fashion or Re-Orientalizing Asia" in *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress*, Sandra Niessen, Leshkowich, and Jones, eds. (New York: Berg, 2003), 6.

46 A survey of the African women depicted in French advertisements, many featuring stereotyped images of Africans, reveals that African women dressed in their "native" garb frequently wear more than one bracelet on each arm. Raymond Bachollet, Jean-Barthélemi Debost, Anne-Claude Lelieur, *Négripub L'Image des Noirs dans la Publicité* (Paris: Somogy, 1992).

Figure 2
Rodier display, Exposition Coloniale Internationale, Paris, 1931. From Excelsior Modes (summer 1931).

style encouraged the use of black and white as a color combination, the wearing of head-wraps and turbans, and the popularity of the ostrich feather, hanging earrings, chokers, pendants, and bangles."[47] Certainly the dress itself has an art deco sense of simplicity and geometry. In this instance, textual information surrounding the garment enhances its association with African identity.

Several of Poiret's African-influenced designs were created in fabrics the designer commissioned from the Rodier textile firm. Rodier, founded in the mid-nineteenth century, continues today to create luxury fabrics and clothing. Poiret worked with Rodier in 1912, and again in 1918 and 1921, to create a group of coats and dresses based on Moroccan textiles and garment styles.[48] Rodier created numerous other African-influenced textiles during the first decades of the twentieth century. A 1923 appraisal of colonial influences on French textile design provided a global tour of the company's sources of influence via the names assigned to the fabrics: "These names parade by like a dizzying fantasy. There are Moroccan fabrics, le *Marokaïa*, le *Djellaba* de *Ba Ahmed*, d'*Azemour*, d'*El Hajeb*, de *Khorasan*, de *Jaïani*; there's the crepe called *Togo*, the fabric called *Tougui*, which interpret Soudanic themes; there's the crepe *Majunga* and the *Djersador de Mampikong*, which borrow their designs from Madagascar; Asia, finally, so rich in beautiful decorative compositions, has provided its contingent: *Indina* gauzes, *Hindoussaïa* scarfs, *Angkor* scarves."[49]

Rodier's African-style fabrics employed both mimetic and reproductive approaches, augmented by these textual references to "exotic" non-Western locales. In 1931, the company produced a series of fabrics that were featured in a vitrine at the colonial exposition. (Figure 2) Along with adaptations of bold patterns that call to mind Polynesian tapa cloth, the vitrine features several mimetic references

47 Petrine Archer-Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 77.

48 Harold Koda and Andrew Bolton, *Poiret* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007), 79, 110.

49 Guillaume Janneau, "Le Mouvement Moderne: Nos Colonies Inspiratrices d'Art," *La Renaissance de l'Art Francais* (June 1923): 379–385.

Figure 3
Reliquary figure, Fang, Southern Cameroon and Northern Gabon, wood, metal, H: 42.5 cm (17"), The Stanley Collection, University of Iowa Museum of Art. Photograph by Steven Tatum.

to Africa—elephants and a pattern that appears to be abstracted masks. Most dramatic, however, is the textile featured prominently in the center of the vitrine: the length of fabric is adorned with a large figure, its arms and legs flexed, wearing a minimal loincloth, bracelets, anklets, and a necklace. The textile design is clearly a reference to the reliquary figures of the Fang and related people, of what was then French Equatorial Africa. (Figure 3) The figures already were icons of African sculpture; their smooth surfaces and elegant symmetry well suited to the tastes of the era. The textile is clearly the focus of Rodier's vitrine, and it was featured in a full-page spread on Rodier textiles in a fashion magazine that summer.[50]

The "colonial" designs of another textile manufacturer, Lesur, also featured a depiction of an African sculpture: "Finally, Chastel [the designer] has recreated for a subtle scarf a mask of those curious African divinities, sculpted from wood with a singular vigor of expression, despite the naivety of the technique."[51] Other designs feature figures bearing loads on their heads (called "Le Marché"), and palm trees ("Les Palmes"). The image of Africa created by the fashions and textiles of the era were clearly focused on the flora, fauna, and "primitive" religious practices of these distant cultures. "Tradition" is at the core of these representations—the wild, the distant, the untouched Africa. Meanwhile, in Africa, French and other colonial powers were working to reshape the cultures they encountered using images of Africa's "traditions" to garner public support for their efforts.

Conclusion: Plus Ça Change?

> 1931: "From Madagascar, we took this belt made of woven straw.… The large, chiseled silver bracelet was copied at the Angkor temple, the large hat comes directly from the Cameroon pavilion."[52]
>
> 2002: "Like a faint whiff of patchouli, the hippie spirit lingered over fall's collections, as designers made boho-inspired stops in Africa, Scandinavia, South America, and the Tyrol."[53]

While the era of colonialism in Africa is past, and the evolutionary model undergirding Western efforts to "civilize" Africans has been entirely discredited, Africanisms in French and other Western fashion design continue to emerge out of a globetrotting, decontextualized, and ahistorical practice of borrowing that differs little from early-twentieth-century practices. In fact, Africa recently has been the subject of numerous fashion designers' flights of fantasy. In 2005, Suzy Menkes, a leading fashion journalist, predicted that global fashion markets were on the verge of creating "a fashion first: a popular movement that sees the beauty and craft in sub-Saharan Africa."[54] In 2009, she again wrote of Africa's presence on the

50 "Quelques modèles des intéressants tissues de RODIER créés spécialement pour l'exposition coloniale," *La Renaissance de l'Art Français* (May 1931): 256.

51 Paul Sentenac, "Les Tissus coloniaux de Lesur," *La Renaissance de l'Art Français* (August 1931): 263.

52 "Des Bibelots Pris à l'Exposition Coloniale Orneront Nos Costumes de Plage," *Femina* (August 1931): 20.

53 "Globetrotting," Style.com (2002). (www.style.com/trends/trend_report/072902/index.html)

54 Suzy Menkes, "Next Stop, Africa." *The New York Times Style Magazine* (Spring 2005): 60.

runways, speculating about the relationship between fashion and politics: "And is the current design passion for Africa a recognition of Barack Obama's roots?"[55] Africa has appeared in diverse guises including Jean-Paul Gaultier's 2004 women's haute couture designs that were African-themed, with dresses named "Kilimanjaro," "Bambara," "Abidjan," and "Ashanti." In 2003, Donna Karan's New York runway show was an "Ode to Africa" that used the sound of a drumbeat on the soundtrack, and presented "red-brown colors, frayed hems, and broad-fringed belts that engulfed the short hems of draped jersey dresses."[56] Other designers who have made use of African images or themes since 2000 include Kenzo, Miguel Androver, and Dolce and Gabbana.

While the processes by which these and other designers make use of African forms and imagery differs little from past practices (although the garments that result are certainly not copies of early-twentieth-century Africanisms) a new layer of complexity is added through the presence of African designers in contemporary fashion markets. African fashion designers are themselves participating in the international sartorial discourse on Africa. In 2009, New York Fashion Week included the first major runway show devoted solely to African designers.[57] While not many designers from Africa have attained wide visibility outside their countries of origin, several have received international attention. Their expressions of their African identities vary widely, but all struggle to avoid being confined by the label "African designer." Many engage with, and sometimes subvert, the expectations that have been created by a long history of exoticism in Western fashion markets.

One of the best known contemporary African designers is the Anglo-Ghanaian designer Ozwald Boateng, who is based in London. He has received numerous national and international fashion awards and, in 2003, was named creative director of the French fashion house Givenchy's menswear division—a prominent position for any designer. In 2006, he became the subject of an American reality television show called "House of Boateng," which followed his efforts to break into the American fashion market. From his exclusive menswear shop on Savile Row in London, Boateng has worked to revive the British tradition of bespoke tailoring, in which clothing is made for each individual client without using a pattern. In many respects, his style is quintessentially British; he won the British Menswear Designer of the Year Award in 2001. Sharply tailored suits, morning coats, and jodhpurs—all typically European—are hallmarks of his work.

In 2001, Boateng created his first explicitly African line of clothing, called "Tribal Traditionalism." In one interview, he offered insight into the pressure an African designer may feel as international markets expect him to create distinctively African fashions: "Last season, I produced a collection called 'Tribal Traditionalism.' …. For the first time in my life, I felt ready to express my cultural

55 Suzy Menkes, "The Bright Continent," *New York Times Style Magazine* (Spring 2009): 118.

56 Suzy Menkes, "Color Lauren Rosy—The Collections: New York," *International Herald Tribune* (September 23, 2003): 7.

57 The designers were: Xuly.Bët, Stoned Cherrie, Tiffany Amber, and Momo. I attended the show, which featured Grace Jones as a runway model, as well as several well-known black models from Africa and elsewhere. The show received a good deal of attention in the New York fashion press. Guy Trebay wrote in *New York Times* of the show's potential impact: "For at least a half-hour, there was the sense that Western fashion might finally move toward integrating itself with the larger world." Guy Trebay, "Revealing New Layers of African Fashion," *New York Times* (February 14, 2009).

and ancestral spirituality in a collection. I allowed the spirit and colors of Africa to flow through everything that I created. At long last, I felt the confidence to do this without feeling stereotyped."[58] Boateng's designs present his own version of Africa—an urban, cosmopolitan style that does not depend on explicit reference to forms associated with traditional cultures. The name of the line, Tribal Traditionalism, seems to deliberately engage the long history of non-African constructions of African cultures. In 2004, Boateng again made explicit reference to his African heritage with a collection entitled "Ashanti Hip Hop" that also interpreted his own experience of African identity rather than drawing from symbols of African tradition.

From Poiret to Boateng, fashion design offers insights into the cultural construction of the African "other" and the significance of dress as a tool for negotiating shifting control over the power to define identities and traditions. This analysis of the deployment of fashion in French representation of the cultures of its African colonies reveals the struggle to absorb yet maintain distance from these cultures. More recently, the long history of clothing as a key signifier of a stereotyped African "other" has provided fodder for African fashion designers, who use the same medium to offer a counter-discourse. The apparent ingenuousness of fashion, which is widely perceived to be aimed at nothing more than a season of in the realm of chic, is arguably an important source of its power to make profound yet subtle cultural statements.

58 Nanabanyin Dadson, "Ozwald Boateng: Exclusive Interview," *Agoo* 1:2 (April-June 2002): 32.

Selling the Nation: Identity and Design in 1980s Catalonia

Viviana Narotzky

Introduction

The Spanish political transition from dictatorship to democracy was officially initiated in late 1975, at the death of General Francisco Franco. Within that context, there were two main elements that were highly instrumental in configuring the position of modern design in Barcelona and, more generally, the relationship between design, modernity, and regional identity in Catalonia. One of them was the process of urban regeneration that affected both the physical aspect of the city and the quality of the urban experience. The other one, which will be developed here, was the rise of the nationalist discourse that provided the main ideological context for cultural and political life in transitional Catalonia.

While the concern around issues of national and regional identity was paramount in transitional Spain and colored its political discourse throughout the 1980s and well into the 1990s, it was also of interest in international academic circles and a fashionable topic in design circles at the time. During the 1970s, countries such as Greece, Spain, and Portugal emerged from the twilight of dictatorship into the brightly lit stage of the European Union; and the breakup of the Soviet Union after 1989 provoked a renewed effervescence of Eastern European nationalisms. The resulting interest in the study of nationalism and the political transformations taking place in Europe led to the reemergence of discussions about the relationships between national identity and design. For design journalism, this revival of the national question provided for easy, if mediocre, copy and simple themes for exhibitions.

In the 1980s, contemporary design discourse became concerned primarily with finding and describing the formal characteristics that could identify a particular product as French, Japanese, Italian, or German. This approach often relied on comparative case studies in order to highlight different national styles; backing the use of product semantics with cursory historical analysis, and emphasizing the commercial benefits of product differentiation. For example, the 1985 exhibition *National Characteristics in Design*, held at the Boilerhouse in London abounded in stereotypes of German "efficiency" and English "heritage."

Journalist Hugh Aldersey-Williams's book *World Design*,

written just before the collapse of the Berlin Wall, centered on the role of local cultures of design in the face of an increasing globalization of products, markets, and systems of production.[1] Aldersey-Williams placed a strong emphasis on the economic benefits of product differentiation; an approach that reduced the expression of national identity in consumer goods to its effect on profit margins. In such an account:

> … the expression of national cultural identities by design could prove instrumental to the emergence of benign new nationalisms.… Such nationalisms would have to be compatible with technological progress and with free-market practices. They could encourage product diversity, stimulate market demand, and perhaps even do a little to improve mutual understanding among the peoples of different nations and cultures.[2]

This is a problematic claim. The recourse to "national features" as a marketing ploy more often than not ends up as an offering of national stereotypes for global consumption. As in the case of gendered products, it is a process that reproduces cultural stereotypes instead of challenging them, and therefore hardly represents the best way "to improve mutual understanding." Furthermore, the notion of "benign nationalisms" seems to imply nationalisms that are not based on ideology, but on formal characteristics: the kind found in shop windows displaying cute and colorful Japanese electronic goods or stylish Italian coffee-makers. By embracing free-market practices, nationalisms could become "benign" and "nonideological" in the author's view. But the wholesale adoption of a capitalist economic system can in itself mean the renunciation of an important part of a given nation's specific character, particularly in relation to the design, manufacture, and consumption of goods. It is more likely to lead to the disappearance of indigenous forms than to the appearance of new ones. The distancing of nationalism and ideology, and the former's reduction to commodity-led, business-oriented formalism, became the cornerstone of approaches to design and national identity, and even to the design of national identity itself throughout the late twentieth century.

By looking mostly at furniture design, this paper addresses issues of collective identity in the context of regional and national identity, responding both to the Spanish political context of the political transition in the 1980s, and to a growing international interest in local production. In doing so, it explores conflicting perceptions of national and regional character, and the varying roles played by individuals and institutions in the configuration of ideas of the nation.

Catalan Nationalism

Since the nineteenth century, Catalans have seen themselves as

1 Hugh Aldersey-Williams, *World Design: Nationalism and Globalism in Design* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992).

2 Ibid., 13.

providing the modernizing drive in an underdeveloped and inward-looking country; trying to open up a window to Europe that was repeatedly shut from Madrid. The strength of this drive was first materialized in "modernisme," a Catalan version of northern-European art nouveau. David Mackay, an English architect working in Barcelona since the 1950s, has defined it as: "Much more than a local variant of art nouveau, because it became a style identified with a total movement to affirm Catalan nationhood and cultural autonomy; differentiated from Spanishness and attuned to its advanced European counterparts."[3]

In its nationalism as much as in its preferred architectural style, the Catalan bourgeoisie at the turn of the century were in line with the latest European trends. The complexity of Spanish politics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—and especially the tense relationship between the underdeveloped center and the richer but politically subordinate periphery—turned this search for a Catalan national identity into a powerful and ever-present dynamic that has been the backbone of the region's cultural life to this day. Throughout the century, Catalan architects and designers have had to contend with the politics of place and memory; weaving into their work their individual response to modernity and tradition, and the collective tensions of a community that has been endlessly constructing its identity. Where the formal language that could express such an identity was to be found depended as much on current cultural trends as on what "being Catalan" was supposed to mean. For 1860s romantics, the answer was in representations of a glorious past; in the 1910s it was in the civic ideal of the City; for 1930s modernists in a better, rationalized future. The sediment of all those efforts provided later generations of designers with a rich heritage they could adopt and use.

At the height of European nationalism in the late nineteenth century, the search for a "national style" became a pressing issue.[4] Although the recourse to vernacular typologies was a common solution to that concern in its early stages, the rise of modernism added a layer of complexity to the expression of national character. That complexity only increased from the late 1970s with the development of postmodern approaches to architecture and design. The context of postmodernity not only transformed practitioners' relationships with local typologies and motifs, but also introduced a degree of ambiguity to their use that often led to confused interpretations of their meaning. The transition to a democratic government in Spain afforded the regions the opportunity to redefine their political status. In Catalonia, this involved intense campaigning on behalf of the Regional Government to establish the legitimacy of its claims to nationhood based on language, culture, and historical precedent. Rather than actual independence, these claims sought to validate the uniqueness of Catalan culture, known as "the Catalan difference," and the government was quick to find a place for design as one of

3 David Mackay, *Modern Architecture in Barcelona* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989).

4 See David Crowley, *National Style and Nation-State: Design in Poland from the Vernacular Revival to the International Style* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); Nicola Gordon Bowe, *Art and the National Dream: The Search for Vernacular Expression in Turn-of-the-century Design* (Blackrock Co. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993).

its distinctive elements. It also proceeded to successfully "rebrand" the region, an approach that became widespread during the late-eighties and nineties as economic changes pushed cities, regions, and nations to seek a higher profile in an increasingly competitive global market.

If the new Spanish political framework bound Catalonia to the realities and pragmatic acceptance of regionalism, the local discourse of identity definitely remained that of nationalism. As the *Generalitat*'s institutional campaign in 1992 was careful to point out to foreign readers of publications such as *The Economist* and *Time*, Catalonia was not a region, but "a country in Spain." In such a tightly framed environment, the role of design as part of the discourse of nationhood became especially significant. Although it might not have overtly adopted a nationalist formal vocabulary, it was used as a marker of local identity, and could not fail to become instrumental in a context so deeply saturated with these issues.

In strictly political terms, Catalonia is a Spanish Autonomous Community. The Constitution of 1978 states "the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation," but also "recognizes and guarantees the right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions of which it is comprised." The current Catalanist agenda, in place since the political transition, is based on the right to self-determination. Catalonia wants to see itself as a potential nation-state which chooses to remain an autonomous region. Jordi Pujol, President of the *Generalitat* from the first democratic regional elections in 1981 until 2003, always cautiously stressed his wish to serve the interests of Catalonia "within the framework of the Spanish state."[5] While that certainly was the case, it also is true that Spain's incorporation into the European Union in 1986 represented a golden opportunity to integrate Catalan national claims and material output into a structure that was greater than Catalonia itself as a region, but that could bypass the Spanish state. The passion with which Spain pursued its integration into Europe, seen both as a path to cultural modernization and to economic prosperity, provided its regions with the perfect environment in which to channel their nationalist aspirations.

Figure 1
Antoni Gaudi. Iron gate of the Finca Güell (1884–1887). Saint George the dragon-slayer, the patron saint of Catalunya.

Catalan Style and International Postmodernism

In Spain during the mid-eighties, a number of objects, particularly high-design furniture, self-consciously drew on national vernacular typologies and historicist motifs. There were, however, important differences between the product semantics of nationalism in early-twentieth-century *Modernisme* and *Noucentisme*, and in 1980s design. The *Modernista* art nouveau architects of the turn of the century did their best to turn Barcelona's *Eixample* into a baroque manifesto of brickwork, ceramics, iron, and stone. (Figure 1) In the 1920s, *Noucentisme*, with a more restrained vocabulary, was keen to convey its own version of Mediterranean classicism and the strength of the roots attaching the Catalan essence to the ancestral soil. However,

5 Paul Heywood, *The Government and Politics of Spain* (London: MacMillan Press, 1995), 161.

with the few exceptions discussed below, the designers and architects of the transition rarely incorporated into their work such literal and self-conscious references. It is true that the precedent of the modern movement, whose directives and priorities related to design practice precluded any recourse to extensive detailing or ornamentation, made it somewhat more difficult for Catalan designers to expose specific signs of local identity. But by the early eighties, the more generous tenets of postmodernity would have legitimized a playful menagerie of dragons, dragon-slayers, Madonnas, and other icons of local myth. However, whereas Catalanism at its beginnings sought to validate its historical lineage and to compile its own local iconography, the nationalism of the 1980s was in turn very much concerned with the construction, development, and expression of an image of the nation, both for internal and for external consumption. In that sense, it became less important to popularize specific formal icons than to convey more general ideas such as technological competence and Mediterranean creativity or modernity, as suggested by the numerous institutional campaigns run by the regional government through the 1980s. Accordingly, the objects designed during those years generally shunned all references to the vernacular. Rather than compiling a recurrent and distinctive formal vocabulary, Catalan designers combined a variety of resources in what looked like a personal and occasionally ironic expression of character. The coincidence of the political transition to democracy in Spain with the dissemination of postmodern theories in architecture and design had certainly very much to do with this "pick and mix" approach. But even though there were instances of direct historicist quotation in the Barcelonese designs of the eighties, they should be read with circumspection.

From the late 1960s into the 1980s, postmodernist theorists, particularly those involved in architectural practice, argued for a new approach to design. They sought to transcend what they felt to be the cold-hearted rationalism of the modern movement by incorporating into their work the sediment of history and local popular cultures, narrative, and humor. This was presented as a way to reclaim a sense of place, and to promote a closer cultural relationship with buildings and manufactured things, in the face of a growing and often stylistically reductive globalization. This recourse to local character in design and architecture, however, was not necessarily indicative of a will to present them as vehicles for the conscious expression of political values. Consequently, the reappearance of vernacular motifs in the 1980s was as ambiguous as could be expected in the context of late-twentieth-century postmodernity; both seriously addressing an increasingly complex reality and playful in its proposed solutions, ironic and earnest, local and global. This seemingly obvious localism, therefore, was not usually intended as an expression of national feeling, making the search for national characteristics in design an intricate and elusive task.

In 1986, the Spanish presence at the Milan International

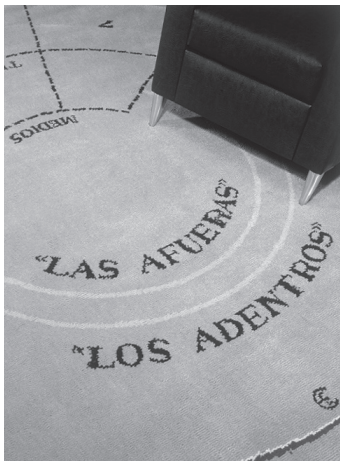

Figure 2
A las Cinco y Cuarto, wool rug by Eduard Samsó for nanimarquina, 1987.

Furniture Fair sent a ripple of excitement across the world of furniture design. The products of (mostly) Barcelonese design were praised as powerful newcomers, and the interest of the specialized press turned to the city where, so it seemed, design was "happening." The Italian magazine *Domus* published a special report on Barcelona. In one of the articles, the writers tried to cope with the diversity and composite nature of the local production: "These young Barcelona architects and designers are eclectic and fragmented, interested more in individual discovery and expression than in social perceptions.... The lack of any identifiable Spanish or national character in their work represents, not so much a loss of identity, as a spirit of the international age."[6] The editorial image that was placed opposite this text in the magazine to illustrate the article depicted a couple of flamenco dancers silhouetted against an evening sky—precisely the kind of cultural cliché most likely to make "young Barcelona architects and designers" deeply uncomfortable.

On occasion, Catalan designers responded playfully to the international craving for "Spanishness." Eduard Samsó's *Bregado* daybed of 1987 combined, with postmodern largesse, suede upholstery, a metal wire armrest, and an astrakhan-covered humped backrest: if it were Spanish, it had to be bullfighting. That year, Samsó made another, even more direct, allusion to the *fiesta nacional* with his design of a large round rug for Nani Marquina. Called *"A las cinco y cuarto"* (a quarter past five in the afternoon; the time at which the *corrida* traditionally starts) it reproduced the markings on the sand of the bullfighting ring. (Figure 2) While the 1980s witnessed an ongoing concern on the part of Catalan professionals and critics alike as to whether the objects that were being designed—particularly furniture—expressed a strong local identity, the answer to that soul-searching question was more often than not a lukewarm "possibly" with vague mentions of Gaudí and Latin exuberance. It seems only fair to say that most of the explicit references to the existence of a Catalan or Spanish style were articulated for the benefit of foreign design periodicals.[7] As Guy Julier has noted: "The notion of 'typical Spanish' in a Spain of autonomous regions, recuperation of regional languages, and de-centralization was, for many young Spaniards, both anachronistic and amusing."[8] Moreover, in the specific context of Catalonia, it would be naïve to assume that Samsó's expression of *Spanish* character was a deeply felt, non-ironic attitude. A report published in 1989 by the *Generalitat* revealed that a meager 8 percent of Catalans supported bullfighting; while 53 percent strongly opposed it. However much Samsó professed a sincere liking for the *corrida*—briefly fashionable in the early eighties as a tongue-in-cheek postmodern pastime—his two pieces mentioned above also should be understood as a pun intended for gullible "design tourists," as well as a Catalan private joke at the expense of the rest of the Spanish state.

But if the highly postmodern approach to stereotyped national identities cannot be taken for granted, the direct quotation of historical

6 Rosa Maria Rinaldi, and Patrizia Scarzella, "Report from Barcelona," *Domus* 669 (February 1986).

7 Hugh Aldersey-Williams, "The Catalan Connection," *ID* (May-June 1988); and Lucie Young, "Innovation to Autopsy," *Design* 469 (January 1988). As the debate on design progressed into the 1990s, local critics became more involved with the issue of defining the specific character of Catalan consumer goods. See Daniel Giralt-Miracle, "The Identity of Catalan Design," *Catalonia* 24 (May 1991). It should be noted, however, that *Catalonia* is a magazine published in English by the Generalitat and UNESCO, and therefore intended mainly for foreign readers.

8 Guy Julier, *New Spanish Design* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991).

Figure 3
Launch of the Gaulino chair collection at La Sala Vinçon, Barcelona. Designed by Oscar Tusquets for Concepta, 1986.

precedents can still be read as an authentic, if considerably mediated, expression of national character. In Barcelona, obvious sources for a formal vocabulary were the local design heroes, especially Gaudí. Oscar Tusquets's *Gaulino* chair was designed in 1986 as homage to 1940s Italian designer Carlo Mollino, as well as to Gaudí. (Figure 3) It quoted their formal organicism, and adopted their use of solid wood and local craft-based manufacturing processes. With his careful choice of mentors, Tusquets placed himself at the hub of what was felt to be the essence of Catalan identity: a world-renowned design heritage and a conscious participation in wider, more cosmopolitan cultural interests. In this respect, sociologist Lise Skov has noted that, in the world of fashion—and the same could be said generally of those commodities that are especially subject to fashion trends—"designers of whatever nationality more or less consciously address their design, not to national communities, but to certain enclaves of taste" which tend to transcend national boundaries.[9]

Not surprisingly, many of the studies that have looked for formal national characteristics have failed to find an ultimately defining "local style" in the goods produced by any particular country. Often this very search for national characteristics in consumer goods can be the cause, rather than the effect, of the designers' attitude towards their work. In an article on Rei Kawakubo's early 1980s collections, Skov developed a critique of the ways in which fashion garments had national identity "thrust upon them." The media's search for "Japaneseness" in Kawakubo's and Yoihi Yamamoto's work generated a high degree of self-consciousness, especially in the latter's case. Having at first admitted that his designs were essentially Japanese, he later said: "There is no nationality in my clothes.… But when I first came to Paris … I was pushed to realize that I am Japanese because I was told 'You are here representing *mode japonaise*.'" This leads Skov to remark that "…the search for 'Japaneseness' sprang from social confrontations in the fashion world, rather than from qualities in the designs themselves."[10]

Thus a discourse of national identity, which generally draws on pre-established cultural stereotypes, can be arbitrarily constructed "from the outside" around certain products, reflecting the global context in which they are created and consumed rather than their intrinsic formal or "essential" qualities. Such was often the case with the media's reception of Catalan design, but with two particularities. First, the stereotypes used by the international press to look for national characteristics in the objects reviewed were related to the idea of "Spanishness" and thereby often inaccurate when applied to Catalonia, as suggested above. Second, this foreign search for a national identity coincided in time with the region's own concern with the reconstruction of its political and cultural identity, thereby giving it a greater degree of resonance.

Moreover, postmodern readings of contemporary culture

9 Lise Skov, "Fashion Trends, *Japonisme* and Postmodernism, or What Is So Japanese about *Comme des Garçons*?" *Theory, Culture & Society* 13:3 (1996): 137.

10 Ibid., 141.

Figure 4
Xavier Mariscal, Garriri chair for Akaba, 1988..

have outlined the cross-pollination and transnational nature of global trends, as well as the shifting borders between high and low culture. They represent a real challenge to essentialist approaches that look for the "pure" expression of a national zeitgeist, and try to describe the local as the result of a closed-circuit flow of information. At the same time, the concern with globalization has generated a renewed interest for the local, reconfiguring the conceptualization of cultural expression as the tension between the local and the global. This late-twentieth-century dichotomy led to certain confusing readings of 1980s Catalan design. Some strongly postmodern qualities such as its eclecticism (as in the work of Oscar Tusquets), and its recourse to mass culture (Xavier Mariscal's use of comics imagery) and popular culture (Eduard Samsó's references to bullfighting) were all at some point simply interpreted as the earnestly sought-after Spanishness of Barcelona design.[11] (Figure 4) If there can be no doubt about the weight of local formal references in these designers' work, it is just as important to note that through them they sited themselves firmly within the international aesthetics of postmodernity.

On the whole, if there was a search for identity among 1980s Barcelonese designers, it was for a regional identity. Iconic Spanish cultural practices such as bullfighting or flamenco (both of them originating from Andalucía in southern Spain, and both of them actively promoted in the past by General Franco's government) were useful more as part of a dialectical approach to otherness than as an integral part of the Catalan self. There was no theoretical debate over the use of vernacular typologies or local craft techniques; and no call for designers to express the essence of their *catalanitat* through lamps, tables, buildings, or street benches. Nevertheless, they did. Art historian and critic Robert Hughes captured the unspoken kinship between the two main cultural undercurrents of 1980s Barcelona:

> Design consciousness pervades the city, in an irritated ecstasy of angular, spiky, spotted, jerry-built, post-Memphis, sub-Miroesque mannerism. Designer ashtrays, designer pencils, designer kitchen gear, designer food... Even children appear to have been designed.... They, too, will grow up to be designers, as their remote ancestors were encouraged to be Catalan secessionists."[12]

It might be difficult to pinpoint the specific Catalan characteristics of Barcelona design, but certainly easier to argue that modern design had become the closest thing to a national style. As the director of a gallery in Washington, D.C., that in 1997 held an exhibition of twentieth-century Catalan design put it to the press, it was the "registered trademark of Catalan culture."[13]

Rebranding and Nation-Building Agency

One of the goals of a national movement is "the development of a national culture based on the local language, and its normal use

11 Claudia Hart, "International Design: Barcelona" *I.D.* 31:3 (May-June 1984): 58–61; and David Redhead, "Spain Gets Serious," *Blueprint* 86 (April 1992): 31–34.

12 Robert Hughes, *Barcelona* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

13 "Washington exhibe una selección del diseño barcelonés del siglo XX," *La Vanguardia* 21 (February 1997).

in education, administration, and economic life."[14] Throughout the '80s and '90s, this process was high on the *Generalitat*'s agenda, placed under the heading "normalization." Such was the single-minded enthusiasm with which the *Generalitat* pursued this goal that, according to historian Josep-Anton Fernandez, it made "cultural normalization" the main cultural policy of contemporary Catalan nationalism. Its aim was to turn Catalonia into "a 'normal' society: that is, a society in which Catalonia's own language would be hegemonic; in which citizens would share a common sense of (Catalan) national identity based on their cultural traditions; and which would be comparable to any other modern European society in terms of cultural infrastructures, habits of cultural consumption, and the balance between high and mass culture."[15]

The idea of what is or is not "normal" is a highly debatable one, and the *Generalitat*'s long-term utopian vision of one nation, one language, and one culture is not only questionable as regards the increasing diversity of Catalan society itself, but even more so in the case of most contemporary nation-states that need to integrate the presence of large ethnic minorities and high levels of transnational migration into their definition of "normality." In the 1980s, however, ethnicity was much less of an issue in Catalonia. Rather, the main issue at stake was ultimately extending the use of Catalan in institutional communication and among the Spanish-speaking local population.

What is of particular interest here is the concept of normalizing certain "habits of cultural consumption." In that respect, the *Generalitat* was extremely diligent, not the least in its promotion of Catalan in radio and television. In 1983, the *Corporació Catalana de Ràdio i Televisió* was created to support and develop public broadcasting in Catalan. By 1989, it controlled four radio stations and two TV channels. This altered profoundly the composition of the Catalan audio-visual space, as Catalunya Ràdio and TV3, the main radio and TV stations, rapidly became popular. By 1987, TV3, competing directly with the Spanish public TV stations, was being watched regularly by 54.2 percent of the Catalan audience.[16] The main goal of "language normalization" also was promoted through uneven official support of the use of Catalan in publishing, the theater, newspapers, and cinema. But the success of TV3 achieved something else as well: it contributed to the creation of a visual language of identity.

Funded by the regional government, TV3 brought together a team of young media professionals and graphic designers who shaped the looks of Catalonia's first official TV channel. With its carefully designed studio sets and computer graphics with minimalist music, its newsreaders' choice of clothes and hairstyles, and its selection of furniture; the visual world it brought into more than 50 percent of Catalan households every day was a designer's world.[17] Using the same didactic insistence with which

14 Miroslav Hroch, "From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: The Nation-building Process in Europe" in *Mapping The Nation*, Gopal Balakrishnan, ed. (London: Verso, 1996).

15 Josep-Anton Fernandez, "Becoming Normal: Cultural Production and Cultural Policy in Catalonia" in *Spanish Cultural Studies*, Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 343

16 Joan Maria Corbella, *Social Communication in Catalonia: General Survey of the 1980s* (Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, 1988).

17 See Jordi Ambrós, Esther Casaldàliga, Beto Compagnucci, and Joan Sibina, "El diseño en televisión. La Dirección Artística de TV3" *On* 96 (1988).

Figure 5
Design in Catalogna travelling exhibition. Milan, 1988.

it was promoting a habit of cultural consumption in Catalan, it normalized a certain type of visual and material environment. "Normal" Catalans spoke Catalan, listened to Philip Glass, wore designer suits, and sat in designer chairs. How different they were from other Spaniards! One only needed to switch channels to see the proof. Contemporary design became the tool of choice for the construction of a visual world that would concretize the "Catalan difference," and it proved to be as efficient in familiarizing a mass audience with a certain aesthetic as dubbed soap operas were in diffusing the language.

Moreover, the *Generalitat* also saw the promotion and mediatization of local design as a pivotal aspect of its nationalist agenda. It recognized the value of design's privileged position at the point of articulation between culture and industry. As such, design was an ideal vehicle for the expression of a local identity; a powerful visual manifestation of many elements that were at the heart of the Catalanist discourse: the region's longstanding industrial preeminence in Spain, its internationally acclaimed architectural heritage,[18] and a bourgeois identity forged in the nineteenth century through commerce and manufacturing. Throughout the 1980s, mostly through a number of public exhibitions, many of them international, the *Generalitat* encouraged this merging of national identity and design as part of a concerted drive to reposition Catalan goods, and Catalonia itself, both at home and abroad.[19] (Figure 5)

During the last couple of decades, the relationship between the traditional/vernacular form and national identity, and that of national identity itself with the nation-state, has been shifting ground. It is not only the ways, but the reasons behind the ways, in which objects might seek to embody the collective aspirations, values, and self-image of a given national group that are being reconsidered. With a weakening of the nation-state brought about by the

18 That heritage already was part and parcel of the nationalist discourse, for there had been an obsessive debate in the late-nineteenth century—echoing similar concerns across Western Europe—around the idea of a "modern national style." See Angel Isac, "Eclecticisme i Nacionalisme Arquitectònic al Segle XIX" and Judith Rohrer, "Una visió apropiada: el temple de la Sagrada Família de Gaudí i la política arquitectònica de la Lliga Regionalista." Both are in *Gaudí i el seu temps*, Juan José, ed. (Lahuerta, Barcelona: Barcanova, 1990).

19 See Viviana Narotzky, "'A Different and New Refinement': Design in Barcelona 1960–1990," *Journal of Design History* 13:3 (2000): 227–43.

globalization of markets and the growing power of transnational political, military, and economic institutions, the very role of national identities has been reassessed. Some analysts have argued that "The core argument for taking a strategic approach to national identity is that it creates an economic premium."[20] This emphasis on the close links between the nation-state, national identity, and the national economy is certainly not a recent one. For the liberal national movements of the nineteenth century, economic development was such an important concept that small states were not considered viable if they could not have a self-contained national economy. As the German economist Friedrich List noted in the 1840s:

> A large population and an extensive territory endowed with manifold national resources are essential requirements of the normal nationality … A small state can never bring to complete perfection within its territory the various branches of production.[21]

With the globalization of production, the way in which that economic premium is extracted has changed. While, in the nineteenth century, the fostering of the national economy by the state involved the use of protectionist measures, in the late twentieth century, analysts have defended the use of a strong national identity to brand commodities and to position them favorably in the global market.

In Mark Leonard's *Britain*™, a 1997 paper by the New Labour think tank Demos, funded by the Design Council, the parallel with the use of corporate identity in business practice was made explicit. It literally designed an alternative national identity out of what it perceived to be the real strengths of contemporary Britain; replacing concepts that are seen as outdated, such as empire, industry, religion, language, and institutions with multiculturalism, creativity, tolerance, and global business. Thus, a new attitude towards national identity was being developed; one that somewhat incidentally put design practice at its center because it was primarily concerned with the successful marketing of goods and services through the use of a strong product identity. This approach made use of the techniques of corporate identity design to develop and implement a coherent national image that could enhance the appeal of those goods in the international marketplace. In his book *The Corporate Personality*, Wally Olins introduced the new concept in the late seventies by comparing it with a country's national identity.[22] By the early nineties, he was turning the argument around; describing how the new post-Soviet states could benefit from a thorough corporate redesign that would define their confused—and confusing—national identities:

> The Ukraine, for example … will need a national identity as powerful, clear, and distinctive as that of any other nation of a similar size—say France. It will need major international brands, and recognition for its cultural achievements, its style of living, its cuisine and traditions … until it does

20 Mark Leonard, *Britain*™ (London: Demos, 1997).

21 Friedrich List quoted in Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed.,1995), 175–6.

22 Wally Olins, *The Corporate Personality* (London: The Design Council, 1979).

> project a clear idea of itself, Made in Ukraine, Visit Ukraine, or Invest in Ukraine are likely to be idle invocations.[23]

And where could these new nations turn in their search for a successful model?

> Catalonia has allocated a massive budget to market itself as a recognizable political entity … nations, regions, and cities will, like Catalonia, project themselves professionally and powerfully as they fight for tourism, investment, and trading opportunities.[24]

The business community has been aware of the commercial benefits of this approach for a long time. In fact, it seems in many cases to have taken over the task of nation-building from politicians and academics. The practice of branding and rebranding whole nations currently has become an accepted idea, and the *Journal of Brand Management* devoted a monographic issue to it in 2002.[25] Place-branding, and especially the way in which cities and nations are competing for an international tourist market, is increasingly receiving attention both in terms of academic research and of business studies and marketing.[26] The notion that national identity—its upkeep, construction, and mediation—belongs to the realm of business at least as much as it does to that of politics or culture is now firmly established.

In his study of the role of Orientalist imagery in Japanese and Western advertising, Brian Moeran mapped the way in which certain cultural stereotypes have been used to promote goods and services.[27] His analysis revealed how their use in contemporary Japanese advertising derived from a shift in Japanese attitudes towards these reductive narratives. After the Second World War, a whole literary genre emerged in Japan, devoted to defining "the unique characteristics of the Japanese people." It relied on the same categories developed by the West (silence, ambivalence, inscrutability, emotionality, and uniqueness) to explain everything, from the Japanese business ethos to education or parliamentary democracy. But this introspective process was at first as wary of "things Japanese" as its Western Orientalist counterpart. "With the emergence of the Japanese economy as a major world force in the 1970s and 1980s [it] shifted in tone from criticism to positive eulogy."[28] While this is not the only case in which societies have turned negative stereotypes of themselves into what could be defined as "positive ethnic qualities," what sets the Japanese apart in Moeran's interpretation is the reason behind the shift. This appropriation of the Orientalist discourse, described by Moeran as "counter-Orientalism," was the basis for a new cultural nationalism that now sells cars and personal stereos:

> It has been educated *businessmen*, or "intelligentsia" who have been primarily responsible for this resurgent cultural

23 Wally Olins, "Mapping the Millennium," *Blueprint* 100 (September 1993).

24 Ibid.

25 "Nation Branding" *Journal of Brand Management* 9:4-5 (2002): 281–93.

26 Simon Anholt, "Foreword," *Journal of Brand Management* 9:4-5 (2002): 281–93; R. Bennet and S. Savani, "The Rebranding of City Places: An International Comparative Investigation," *International Public Management Review* 4:2 (2003): 70–87 and Guy Julier, "Urban Designscapes and the Production of Aesthetic Consent, *Urban Studies* 42:5-6 (2005): 869–87.

27 Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (Hardmonsworth Penguin, 1991); and Brian Moeran, "The Orient Strikes Back: Advertising and Imagining Japan," *Theory, Culture & Society* 13:3 (1996): 77–112.

28 Brian Moeran, "The Orient Strikes Back," 95.

> nationalism.… In other words, while Japan's earlier spate of invented traditions was conjured up by politicians and intellectuals for *political* purposes, post-war inventions … have been recreated by businessmen for *business* purposes.[29]

In the ruthless fight for markets and profits in the ever-expanding arena of the world economy, the concept of the nation-state as what Immanuel Wallerstein called "our primary cultural container"[30] seems to have much to offer. Its strength as a bearer of identity is still powerful enough to arouse the interest of the business community, shifting the focal point of nation-building closer to the world of goods, and giving a new depth to the role of commodities in the construction of collective identities.

Conclusion

Given that the nation-state currently remains the legitimate international norm, it is easier to achieve international credibility within that model or, barring that, as a national group that claims the right to be a nation-state even if it does not wish to fully implement it, as in the Catalan case. The recourse to strengthening the "national brand" therefore is still an obvious choice for any community that wants to compete successfully in the global world. However, while it is increasingly viewed as an integral aspect of institutional practices, branding countries or regions often disregards the relation of national identity to society, and artificially distances it from the realities that shape national movements and local cultural identity. "Rebranding" a whole country might seem like a good marketing idea. Viewed historically, it also sounds like a rather unlikely one. One of the main problems is often the necessary implementation of a simplified—not to say simplistic—understanding of national identity, drawing on shared stereotypes that gloss over the underlying complexities that constitute the rich breeding ground of local cultures.

It is worth taking into account, however, that this place-branding process took place in Catalonia before the notion of branding places became widespread in the late 1990s. As Guy Julier has noted in the specific case of Barcelona: "The range and extent of design activities was too varied and widespread for any centralist organization; being that they belonged to individuals, small companies, and professional associations as well as local government departments."[31] Their organic implementation reflected current cultural and political contexts, and generated a degree of "aesthetic consent" which placed contemporary design at its hub. For Catalonia, design offered that elusive symbolic value, bringing together industrial competence and creative heritage. The late seventies, and even more so the eighties, provided a very fertile context. The general rise of designer culture offered a particularly active and internationally coherent environment in which to integrate Catalan production in a field that enjoyed at the time a very high cultural profile. It suited

29 Ibid.

30 Immanuel Wallerstein, "The National and the Universal: Can There Be Such a Thing as World Culture?" in *Culture, Globalization and the World-System*, Anthony D. King, ed. (London: Macmillan, 1991).

31 Guy Julier, "Urban Designscapes and the Production of Aesthetic Consent": 869–887.

Catalanist aspirations perfectly, since they were historically mostly linked to expression through high rather than low or popular culture, and to an awareness of contemporary trends in European cultural production.

Whatever its weaknesses, the market-led approach to national identity appears to be a pervading trend, and in their bid to belong and "upgrade," many transitional countries have had to negotiate their own institutional relationship with it. In its previous incarnation as a totalitarian state, Spain's regional diversity can be said to have been "[h]idden behind a façade of cultural homogeneity," generated centrally and representing "at best … the oppressive maintenance of a hegemonic majority culture."[32] In Catalonia, the "redesign" of a national identity was masterminded to a great degree from within the renewed state institutions. But their greatest success was the ability to bring together and coordinate a whole range of activities and outputs, many of which were emerging from individual designers and civil society. Transitional Catalonia was particularly keen to distance itself from Spain and what were thought to be its negative international connotations: a fascist past and a culture of *siesta* and *mañana*. Although shaped to fit the context of the European Union, and expressed increasingly through the market, commodities, and the built environment, the new post-Francoist identities that emerged in Catalonia in the nineties—although shaped to fit the context of the European Union and expressed increasingly through the market, commodities, and the built environment—were deeply rooted in previous historical conflicts and in the more recent political tensions of the transition. In that sense, they emerged as much to address internal friction as to enable the economic success of a new southern European democracy in the world market.

32 Jurgen Habermas, "The European Nation-State: Its Achievements and Its Limits" in *Mapping the Nation*, Gopal Balakrishnan, ed. (London: Verso, 1996).

National and Post-national Dynamics in the Olympic Design: The Case of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games

Jilly Traganou

Footnotes for this article begin on page 90.

> We need to think ourselves beyond the nation. This ... is to suggest that the role of intellectual [and design] practices is to identify the current crisis of the nation and in identifying it to provide part of the apparatus of recognition for post-national social forms.
> –Arjun Appardurai, *Modernity at Large*[1]

Following Arjun Appadurai's call, this paper will attempt to pinpoint the "crisis of the nation" as revealed in the representation of a "new Greece"[2] at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games. Taking as a case study Santiago Calatrava's design of the Athens Olympic Stadium (Figure 1) and its use during the opening and closing ceremonies of the Games, I will examine questions of selfhood, otherness, and national identity in contemporary Greece as a means of proposing that alternative types of allegiances must be envisaged. As has been the case with most modern Olympic Games, Athens 2004 was conceived as a national rather than a civic event. The redesign of national identity was a conscious goal of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games organizers, who saw the Olympics as an opportunity to brand the look of a "New Greece." The aim of the organizers was to overhaul the country's outdated image as a nation caught between a glorious antiquity and technological backwardness, as well as convince the international community of Greece's modernity and Europeanization in both cultural and economic terms. The image of a "new Greece," it was thought, would stimulate new foreign and domestic investments and increase the country's prestige.

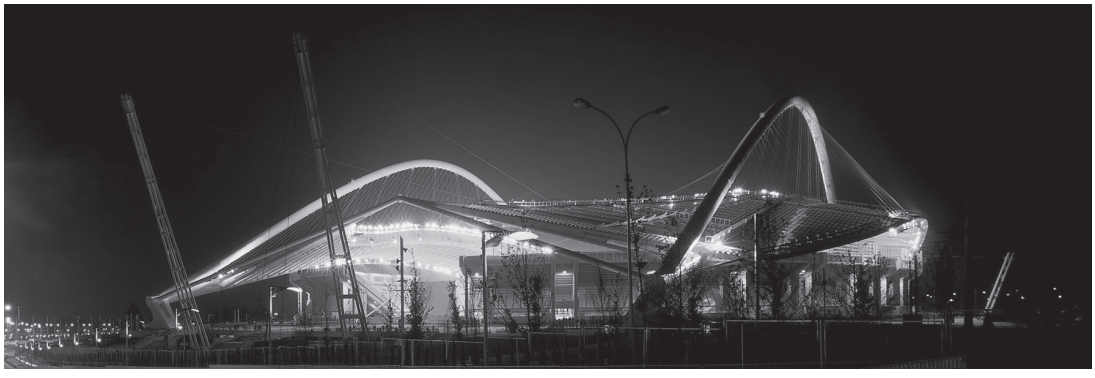

Figure 1
Athens Olympic Stadium designed by Santiago Calatrava, 2004, © Erieta Attali.

The very size and complexity of the Olympics, however, necessarily led to meanings and ideologies that the organizers could hardly predict or control. National identities are not always clear-cut: What happens when they are layered, disputed, or negated? Drawing upon Saskia Sassen's thesis on the unbinding of subjectivities in the global city, I will claim that a similar unbinding and reworking of identities is latent in the Olympic Games, even though such operations occur on a limited basis and in a non-prescriptive manner. Sassen writes:

> The global city is reconfigured as a partly denationalized space that enables a partial reinvention of citizenship. This reinvention takes the institution away from questions of nationality narrowly defined, and towards the enactment of a large array of particular interests.… I interpret this as a move towards citizenship practices that revolve around claiming rights to the city.… In global cities, these practices also contain the possibility of directly engaging strategic forms of power, a fact I interpret as significant in a context where power is increasingly privatized, globalized, and elusive.[3]

Finally, as an antidote both to the employment of design in ethnic "branding" and the insurgence of nationalism witnessed increasingly in recent years, I will claim that both intellectuals and designers should strive for a serious and committed engagement with what constitutes the category of the "other," as a means of questioning the myth of the nation-state and developing post-national forms of allegiance.

Despite the fact that they are awarded to cities rather than nations, the Olympics function as arenas that celebrate national character, subsuming under it individual or other achievements. Competition usually is inseparable from such celebrations. Indeed, nations see the Olympics as opportunities to exhibit their achievements in the international spotlight, often in contest with one another. This strong relation between the Olympics and nationalism is historically grounded. The very institution of the modern Olympics (together with other international gatherings, such as world expositions) was reinvented in the nineteenth century, a period coinciding with the dawn of the nation-state. According to the constitution of the Olympic Games as defined by their founder, Pierre Frédy, Baron de Coubertin, national attachment is at the heart of the concept of the games. Besides expressing human kindness and peaceful internationalism, most Olympic Games are anchored quite specifically to the nation that hosts them. Theorists of Olympic studies, such as Jackie Hogan, see the Olympic Games as "key sites in the discursive construction of nation" and as major representations that "constitute discourses of national identity"[4]—or what Stuart Hall has called the "narrative of nation"; that is, "a set of stories, images,

landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols, and rituals which represent the shared experiences, sorrows, and triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation."[5] In recent times, massive demographic changes and globalization have challenged the relevance of the nation-state as a dominant political model, leading to the search for new political forms that can better respond to such conditions. If national identity derives from belonging to a "people," then according to Dierdre Curtin, a professor of European and international law at the University of Utrecht, the "post-national idea is premised precisely on the separation of politics and culture, of nationality and citizenship," and presupposes that national (cultural) plurality can coexist alongside political unity.[6] The post-national obtains even greater urgency in Europe today with the process of European integration and the overall crisis of identity occasioned by large numbers of non-European immigrants and residents, especially those who are non-Christian. Today, almost every country in Europe is experiencing a crisis of identity in light of its numerous newcomers. This situation has led to various forms of conflict ranging from cultural tension to incidents of hostility and violence between "insiders"—citizens—and "outsiders" or "newcomers."[7] As an alternative to denying the processes of cultural heterogeneity and allowing ethnicity-based antagonisms to grow, geographer Ash Amin suggests that one option would be to "recognize the coming Europe of plural and hybrid cultures … and seek to develop an imaginary of becoming European through engagement with the stranger in ways that imply no threat to tradition and cultural autonomy."[8]

The Olympic Games clearly are capable of illuminating these entangled networks that expand far beyond the politics of a given place, whether that place is the host nation or a specific participant country. As cultural artifacts embedded in the societies that produce them as well as in those distant societies that become their consumers or, potentially, their judges, the Games are open to the diverse interpretations of their audiences and constituents. Citizens' involvement in the Olympic preparations, through volunteerism and public debates, often extends beyond the control of the officials and strengthens the premises of civil society, leading to criticism of or even resistance to the plans of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Thus, the Olympic Games, precisely because of the major public attention they attract, become arenas open to what media theorist Daniel Dayan calls "hijacking."[9] The Olympics are constantly being, or threatening to become, "hijacked" by a wide range of agents: local and global markets, governments, celebrities, activists, terrorists. As a result, the games fluctuate between becoming nationalistic and, at the same time, denationalized.

It is important to point out that Greece follows the "ethnic" rather than the "civic" model of citizenship; privileging ideas of nationhood that are centered on the belief in an archaic past uninterruptedly embodied in the present. Within this view of nationhood

as pure, continuous, and insular, "otherness" is reluctantly accepted, since "ideal" citizens are primarily those who partake in the national culture through continuous blood relationships. This deeply imbued idea of modern Greece's descent from antiquity has prevailed throughout the country's recent history, and is a major hindrance to the function of a constitutional regime based on citizens' equality. Minority identities, such as those of nonethnic Greek and non–Greek Orthodox populations, continue to be marginalized and excluded from the national narrative.

The following sections critically analyze two specific examples of design in the Athens 2004 Olympics. In the first case, by examining Calatrava's design for the new Olympic Center under the rubric of Europeanization, I question Greece's desire for "alterity" as a means of achieving "newness." In the second, I discuss the use of the Calatrava stadium for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Athens Games, and question the nature of inclusion: Who constitutes the nation, and what alliances and constellations emerge out of this mental territory in both its historical and geographical definition?

From Hellenism to Europeanism: Layers of Selfhood and Otherness Reflected by Santiago Calatrava's Redesign of the Olympic Center

It is significant that the design of the Olympic Athletic Center, the major landmark of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, was awarded to the Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, who was educated in Switzerland and has furnished major European cities with his work. Inviting an internationally renowned architect to design a national landmark has become a norm in contemporary times. In the case of Greece, one might ask, does the engagement of a non-Greek architect to design a building of national significance indicate that Greece has moved away from an ethnocentric conception of selfhood?

Calatrava's project was intended to "unite aesthetically"[10] the existing Olympic Athletic Complex through a series of building renovations and new constructions. The most important was the construction of a roof that became known as the "Calatrava roof," which was an addition to the existing stadium, and the landscaping of the surrounding Olympic park.[11] The project, both in its plan and morphology, is dominated by the shape of an arch, which Calatrava explained as an athletic metaphor: "like the way an athlete throws the javelin, or a long jumper jumps."[12] Following local criticism that the work was inappropriate within the landscape of Attica, however, Calatrava changed his rhetoric, describing the work in terms of Greece's architectural legacy. He referenced the Acropolis of Athens and the Byzantine church Aghia Sophia to convince the public that his project was continuous with the Greek tradition. The way in which the choice of color for Calatrava's roof was explained to the public also is indicative of such intentions. Calatrava initially announced that the roof glass would be tinted blue in homage to the

color of the Greek sky and sea. In subsequent interviews, Calatrava pushed his argument even further, interpreting his choice of colors as a direct reference to the Greek flag, thus providing his work with strong nationalistic nuances.[13] Yet despite these explanations, Calatrava's architectural language has almost always been based on arched forms, an approach that he applies worldwide, regardless of regional architectural languages. Calatrava's attempts to relate his architecture to Greek heritage and grand nationalist ideals are not uncommon. The need to feed the public such references is typical of nations based on romantic myths of purity and uniqueness. For example, Kenzo Tange's National Gymnasium for Tokyo's 1964 Olympics has been characterized as "a national shrine … a modern equivalent of Ise,"[14] Japan's sacred shrine, whose status is analogous to that of the Parthenon in Greece.

Despite Calatrava's explanations, the Greek public did not unanimously accept the building as its own. Many critics believed the scale of the Olympic stadium roof was inappropriate and out of proportion to the Attica landscape. The well-known film director Nikos Koundouros, for instance, described Calatrava's roof as completely extraneous to Athens:

> Whatever happens around us is not ours. The forged Olympic Games are not ours either. Calatrava and the monster he planted in Attica land are alien. And the other monster [a surveillance zeppelin (author's explanation)] that wanders in our sky is also alien.[15]

For others, the scale and expenditure of the work reflected Greece's obedience to the rules of globalization:

> Nowadays, all public works … obey the rule of gigantization, constructing various ziggurats, with the help of high-technology and postmodern aesthetics. This is the building of globalization that aims at … monumentalizing the unmatched magnitude of money.[16]

These voices were part of a broader discourse focused on fears that globalization would weaken Greek identity; and they were symptomatic of an increasing xenophobia that may be attributed to the growing influx of immigrants to the country since the early 1990s. But to what degree was Calatrava a foreigner to Greece? Is it true that his building carried a Spanish stamp, as was declared by a local journalist,[17] or that his project was the result of an "alien" invasion in Athens? It is no coincidence that Calatrava was presented to the Greek public not as a stranger, but rather as a fellow Mediterranean; a strategy that established a secondary level of discourse that emphasized affiliations with the broader geographic region. Modern Greek citizens, despite their competition with Spain for tourism, have been indoctrinated with ideas of geocultural determinism for more than a century, and the belief that Greeks share a common

Mediterranean temperament with Spain is quite well established. As Calatrava himself declared after the work was completed:

> There was a prejudice that the Greeks couldn't get this done.... My attitude was that they're fellow-Mediterraneans so there wouldn't be a real problem.... So I told everyone we'd finish in time.[18]

The invitation to a Spaniard was not surprising given Barcelona's success in hosting the 1992 Olympics. Greek organizers mentioned several times that Barcelona served as the model for Athens 2004 because of the City's symbolic and physical rejuvenation after the 1992 Olympic Games.

Presented as a modest student of "Greekness," linked to the Greeks though his Mediterranean affiliation but also as a connoisseur of European culture, Calatrava appeared as an architect whose work manifested both symbolic values and technical excellence. If the references to Greekness in the design of the roof confirmed New Greece's continuity with its past, the design of the surrounding Olympic park embodied Europeanization, hinting to the ideal future to which many Greek citizens aspire. The Olympic park was envisioned as a place for both Athens residents and visitors—an open, 100-hectare space accessible only to pedestrians, which included 2,500 new large trees, 8,500 smaller trees, and 160,000 bushes. The park is markedly different from the conventional public spaces of Athens, which typically lack greenery and are criticized by many Athenians as degrading and uncivil.

Most important, beyond cultivating greenery, Calatrava also wished to nurture new public attitudes in the city:

> In my opinion the Olympic Athletic Complex is a tool in Athens, a space for education and creation. And at the same time it is a constant forum. It brings to the city a space of dialogue, which is very important not only for the Maroussi district [where the park is located] and the northern suburbs.[19]

For Calatrava, the park was symbolic of "universalism," an ideal that he wished to see take root in the City of Athens beyond the end of the Olympics:

> Athens chose to show a work that is almost experimental, avant-garde and modern … and through this choice … the element of multiculturalism and universalism emerged, which is one of the most attractive elements of architecture. What I like very much is that this work has been made by Greeks, Italians, Spanish, Chinese people, Poles.[20]

To no surprise, Calatrava's commission within the context of an overall political scheme was intended to foster Greece's Europeanization process. Calatrava's origin and identity as a

European was instrumental. "Intended Europeanization" (in other words, modernization)[21] was an obvious priority for the Simitis (Pasok) administration, which was responsible for the major portion of the Olympic preparations and oversaw the successful inclusion of Greece in the European Monetary Union, or Eurozone, in 2001. In architectural and urban terms, this Greek idea of Europeanization combines rationalism and beautification in an attempt to counterbalance the disorder of the typical Greek city. The Olympics introduced to Athens the aesthetic unification of a disordered site, the advanced technology used in its buildings, and the very idea of a park—all marks of Europeanization. On the other hand, the choice of indigenous vegetation and the referential framework of Greek architectural heritage represented a renewed, branded version of particularism, embedded within the overall framework of modernization. Here, the old idea of European supremacy and political fragmentation peacefully coincides with the ideology of a new (in market terms only), economically unified Europe to which Greece belongs without compromising its ethnic purity.

Calatrava's mention of multiculturalism is at the very least contradictory, if not misleading, within the old idea of Europe. If multiculturalism is based on the principle of equality among different cultures, Calatrava's interpretation of universalism seems to be based on a Euro-centered notion of universalism; tied to the Enlightenment notions of civilization and progress, and a belief in Europe's superiority over the rest of the world. Calatrava, in his various statements, seemed to be content with the involvement of individuals of many different nationalities in the construction of the Olympic works, yet participation among them was not equitable. The unique 10-cm-thick steel used for the Olympic stadium roof was made in Germany; its large tubular members (3.6 meters in diameter), prior to final welding in Athens, were manufactured by the Italian company Cimolai; supervision of the overall construction was undertaken by various Greek contractors; and the actual laborers were immigrants of various ethnicities, mainly from the Middle East and the Balkans. This "multiculturalism," then, implies certain geopolitical hierarchies and remains an unresolved issue in contemporary identity politics in both Greece and Europe. The Olympic project, in terms of both its symbolic value and its construction process, reconfirms majority tendencies in contemporary Europe that tend to be highly exclusive of the many non–European cultures that now exist in the region as a result of the intense cultural and demographic flows of the last twenty years.[22]

Although architectural historiography usually ends at the point that a building is offered to its clients, it is important to counter a building's ambitions with the way in which it is actually used in its "afterlife," both as a symbolic and a material artifact. The following section discusses the identity politics that emerged during the open-

ing and closing ceremonies of the Athens 2004 Games at the Olympic Athletic Center.

Ethnic Origins and the Politics of Inclusion in Dimitris Papaioannou's Athens 2004 Olympic Ceremonies

As history has shown, a stadium, with its mammoth size and rhetoric of grandeur, is an ideal setting for national propaganda. According to Rubén Gallo, since the early-twentieth century, stadiums have become the perfect constructs for enacting what Walter Benjamin described as the "aestheticization of politics."[23] Borrowing a term from Gallo, we can argue that the "stadiogenic"[24] effect of Calatrava's design for the Olympic stadium—reinforced by incorporated mechanisms for improving televised images—reached its zenith on August 13, 2004, during the opening ceremony of the Athens 2004 Games when not only the world, but also Greek citizens, witnessed the very idea of "new Greekness" materialize before their eyes.

According to Olympic Studies scholar John McAloon, opening ceremonies are "rites of separation from 'ordinary life,' initiating a period of public liminality."[25] For the Athens 2004 opening ceremony, following the directions of the Greek avant-garde choreographer Dimitris Papaioannou,[26] architect Lili Pezanou's design converted the stadium's arena into an artificial lake (a major construction work that required 2,162 cubic meters of water) around which the spectacle unfolded. The opening ceremony marked a significant point of departure from the parochial spectacles of Greek folklore and military pageants to which modern Greeks are accustomed.[27] Despite Papaioannou and his team's[28] background in the alternative scene, the ceremonies, particularly the one that opened the Games, elaborated on themes reminiscent of the work of established—but at the same time slightly deviant—figures of postwar Greek art: composer Manos Hadjidakis and painter Yannis Tsarouhis. Papaioannou combined their work with cultural elements characteristic of the younger generation born in the 1960s. The director

Figure 2
Athens 2004 Opening Ceremony of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, Courtesy of Athens News Agency.

used an aesthetic language that fluctuated between minimalist austerity and sensuality (the last being in line with the mannerism of the old masters, Hadjidakis and Tsarouhis), at times celebrating Greek history and at others the bodily freedom one experiences in the water, which was the central motif of the show.

Two key segments of the choreography were titled *Allegory* and *Clepsydra*.[29] *Allegory* began with a kinetic sculpture shaped as a female *kentauros* throwing a javelin, which triggered a 17-meter figure, styled after the head of a Cycladic idol, to emerge slowly from the lake (Figure 2). The head opened up in Russian-doll fashion to reveal a figure shaped after a sixth-century *kouros*, and a fifth-century one nested inside it. Each of these figures broke up into numerous abstract forms (Figure 3), which then became platforms for a series of projections on a universalist theme. Subsequently, the fragments fell into the water, transformed into entities reminiscent of islands or vessels. A more detailed view of Greek art unfolded in the section entitled *Clepsydra*. A series of floats appeared on stage, loaded with tableaux-vivant representations of significant moments in Greek art. The sequence began with enactments of prehistoric art and continued with archaic, classical, Byzantine, Ottoman, and eventually modern art.

Papaioannou created a spectacle that removed the emphasis from the political to the realm of aesthetics; evoking a wide range of emotions ranging from nationalist pride to universalist celebrations of humanity. The pride in technology and progress that was articulated by politicians in the discourse surrounding the Olympic stadium was, on August 13, transformed into a collective experience of awe. Papaioannou did not adopt a language that could be labeled as Greek: Greekness provided the content, not the form. But his use of technology and contemporary artistic strategies functioned synergistically with the content, and the ceremony indeed had the effect of "aestheticizing politics"; satisfying both those who looked for (achieved or intended) Europeanness, and those who sought

Figure 3
Athens 2004 Opening Ceremony of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, Courtesy of Athens News Agency.

(inherent) Greek uniqueness. This refreshed but otherwise textbook version of Greekness provided by Papaioannou, with its consciously apolitical language, could not but rely on established perceptions of Greekness that he and his domestic viewers have inherited and shown little interest in disputing.

The transformation of the stadium's stage into a nocturnal waterscape recalled, in my interpretation, a double birth: that of cosmos and nation. The evocation of a universal, cosmic space was identified with Greece's prehistory and the birth of Greek civilization. This implied a double-sided union: a cultural continuity from prehistory to the present in the specific geographical area of Greece (an historical inaccuracy);[30] and a restatement of the belief that the birth of Greek civilization coincides with the birth of the world's civilization (a national myth). The pluralism suggested by the portraits of people of all racial backgrounds projected onto the statues' fragments opened up the subject of universalism, although soon afterwards, the symbolism returned to Greekness, thus collapsing the open, universal cosmos with the specific topos of Greece. This identification of the cosmic landscape with the specific topography of the Greek archipelagos continues a tradition that emphasizes the Aegean as the Greek landscape par excellence, and Greece as the navel of earth. Thus the segment *Allegory*, as a rite of passage from cosmos to topos, acritically reaffirmed what was already known, at least for the Greek audience: that modern Greece is the natural descendant of the ancient Greek civilization which, according to the perception prevalent in Greece today, represents the beginning of European civilization. The sequential representation of Greek art in the *Clepsydra* series restated the belief in Greece's continuity from prehistory to the present.

In the opening ceremony we also witness the idea of Hellenism shrinking into a landscape that has been privileged since the 1930s: the Aegean Sea, which most audiences are familiar with through tourist iconography. By emphasizing the seafaring character of Greece, the mainland and particularly the mountainous areas of Greece are downplayed as the beholders of Greekness, even though in the premodern past it was precisely the mountain, with its associated notion of pastoralism, that was considered the stronghold of patriotism. Such an emphasis on the Mediterranean character of Greece also reproduces the mythology of Greece's separateness from its Balkan neighbors and assumes Western Europe as Greece's ultimate bond. As historian Christina Koulouri has described:

> While we would expect that the national identity (of Greece), the Balkan identity and the European identity are organized in a scheme of concentric circles, … this is not happening. The reason is that the cultural content and the cultural capital of Europe and the Balkans are defined in antithetical terms; therefore it is difficult for them to coexist as supplementary parts of the same sum. Greece therefore

> accepts its Balkan identity only within the framework of anti-Western positions.… Thus … even though the relevant position of Greece within the Balkans has changed from the 1990s, Balkan identity keeps representing a weak identity that is not a subject of negotiation.[31]

Although, on an aesthetic level, the ceremony appropriated the vocabulary of the Euro-American vanguard (Papaioannou has stated numerous times that Robert Wilson is his model), the ceremony's content reproduced an insular view of Greece in which both internal and external otherness were concealed, obscuring the influences of numerous cultural encounters and cross-pollinations in ancient and recent Greek history. Historian Angelos Alefantis criticized the ahistorical and hyper-aestheticized emphasis on the water as one that concealed the cultural pluralism integral to Greece's history:

> In the multiple symbolism of the ceremony … there was no interest in showing even a bit of earth where people lived and the dead were buried. And there were many types of living and dead in this corner of the world: Minoans, Mycenaeans, Pelasgians, Lelegs, Greeks, Galatians, Goths, Romans, Bulgarians, Turks, Saracenes, Arbanites, Slavs, Latins, Frankish, Venetians, Catalans, Vlachs, Cumans, Jews, Armenians.… If you want in half an hour to talk about 3–4,000 years, it is necessary that you will do a selective reading, there is no other way.[32]

This overarching identity of the Greek nation as a continuous entity that unfolds from prehistory to the present was counterbalanced by the closing ceremony of the Athens Games. If the opening ceremony celebrated archetypal or mythical figures, the closing ceremony presented distinct and recognizable cultures of contemporary Greece. The production began with a mock Greek wedding, which then became a platform for incorporating local celebrations from all regions of Greece. These festivities were followed by the Exodus concert, a live show by representatives of the contemporary folk music scene in Greece. Nevertheless, the diversity displayed at the closing ceremony, with its emphasis on the sub-national, was a rather safe one, because it simply corresponded to the regional divisions of Greece without revealing the country's true ethnic and religious diversity, especially considering the recent influx of immigrants. Here, the aesthetic language of the event was largely based on the ethnic, world-music genre, capitalizing on its contemporary popularity as an exotic commodity within the global market. On a musical and performative level, it might be argued that the closing ceremony nullified the opening ceremony's claim that Greece belongs to the West, as most of the closing ceremony references in fact tied Greece to the Balkans and the East rather than to the Mediterranean or Western Europe.

Even though the regional approach was a "safe" way of presenting internal diversity, the closing ceremony did take one unconventional step in the direction of answering the question of who is included in the Greek national body. Toward the end of the wedding section, in which recognizable segments of contemporary Greeks paraded and celebrated, a group of gypsies (Rom) joined the party (Figure 4). This provocative statement on the part of Papaioannou was met, however, with sharp disapproval by the majority of Greek citizens. As one journalist wrote, expressing such criticisms:

> My admiration for Papaioannou did not blind me. I saw that the closing ceremony … was atrocious. Tons of people were running disorderly on a plastic floor, and glamorous, ethnic gypsies were selling glamorous, ethnic watermelons.[33]

Beyond the obvious disappointment over what was perceived as a fall from high art to low culture, these comments hide a degree of shame for Greece having exposed its "dirty laundry" in front of an international audience.[34] Elements, such as the Roma and the overall endorsement of contemporary folk scene, allude to Greece possessing an "Eastern" rather than a "European" sensibility; a fact seen as incompatible with the ideals of modernization on which the other Olympic displays were based.

Despite the appearance of the Rom as indicators of internal "otherness," the ceremonies did not engage directly with the complex issue of demographic flow that prevails in Greece today. Yet, as part of an athletic event, neither could the ceremonies remain unaffected by this issue: sports in Greece today, as everywhere else in the world, bypasses all borders when it comes to recruiting and naturalizing foreign athletes; and has become a barometer of the new, complex ethnoscapes emerging worldwide. The flag-bearer of the Greek Olympic team, for example, was the Albanian-born weight-

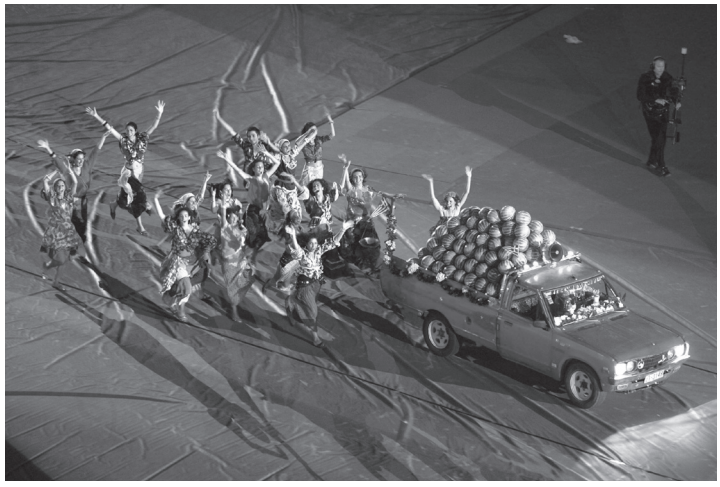

Figure 4
Closing Ceremony of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, Courtesy of Athens News Agency.

lifter and medalist Pyros Dimas, who immigrated to Greece in 1991 (he was known as Pirro Dhima until 1990, when he was competing for Albania). According to anthropologist James Verinis, the case of Dimas demonstrates that the "irregular, anomalous anti-hero may be well included and sanctioned through the ritual of the Olympics."[35] Verinis's commentary and Alefantis's criticism on the lack of cultural pluralism in the opening ceremony suggest the need to expand the Greek national narrative from an emphasis on roots and essence to the question of encounters. Despite a long history of crosscultural encounters, Greece has valorized endurance and continuity in its national narrative rather than change. An unconventional view of Greece's cultural history—one that searches for "contaminations" rather than "purities"—would instead reveal the influences of cultural encounters with others, both neighbors and conquerors, such as Italians, Turks, and various Balkan populations.

The idealized notion of Europeanization is clearly not the only issue at stake in contemporary Greece. Rather, the "apparatus of recognition for post-national social forms" suggests that Greece must also look toward the East—to the Balkans, southeastern Europe, the Black Sea, and the Middle East—following the trajectories of Greek immigration patterns in the past as well as the present in order to come to terms with its internal and external otherness. If, at least idealistically, Europeanization has been Greece's ultimate goal, the closing ceremony of the Athens 2004 Olympics clearly revealed Greece's much more complex ties. From a post-national perspective, the ceremony becomes an indication of the fragility of the normative at the very moment when what is repressed comes to the surface, undermining the grand national narrative and bringing the conventional national idiom into crisis.

Similarities can be drawn between "new Greece" and the "new" Europe that is emerging today as a site of transnational and trans-European attachments. As Ash Amin writes:

> Slowly, [Greece as the whole] Europe is becoming Chinese, Indian, Romany, Albanian, French and Italian, Christian, Islamic, Buddhist or New Age, American, Disneyfied, one-earth conscious, ascetic, or locally communitarian. It is becoming a place of plural and strange belongings, drawing on varied geographies of cultural formation. And thus it is constantly on the move in cultural terms.[36]

Hijacking International Events

It is questionable whether sports alone may be truly effective in initiating processes of inclusion and acceptance. Nevertheless, the public realm, as it unfolds from sport arenas to media spaces and street culture, requires assertive gestures that enact a shift from a nation-bound paradigm to one that is open to plurality and multiple belonging.

If the discourse that surrounded Calatrava's design

revealed the politics of selfhood and otherness that define Greece's views of Europe, the Olympic ceremonies exposed the politics of inclusion and exclusion within the national body itself. Despite the message of multiculturalism that Calatrava attempted to send, the Olympic complex in Athens is not a space that signifies an open city with porous borders that, unlike the closed nation-state, welcomes "otherness."[37] On the contrary, within this overall scheme the otherness that seems to be welcomed is solely that of the European—still an "other," the alter ego of the contemporary Greek citizen as personified by Calatrava, the European architect par excellence.

As this discussion has illustrated, Olympic design has the capacity to mobilize identity politics and reveal the "crisis of the nation" as it is experienced by both citizens and others. Ben Carrington, among other critics, has argued that the nationalist/internationalist constellation within which Olympism operates is problematic in terms of achieving a global civil society based on the principle of cosmopolitanism. While internationalism is a doctrine that operates within the logic and affiliation of the nation-state, cosmopolitanism in its neo-Kantian form, claims a global civil society within which individuals see themselves as world citizens united by a common sense of species connection.[38] I propose that the national basis of the Olympics—as well as of major international cultural events such as the Venice Biennale that have been, until recently, acritically received—must be questioned. The constituents of these events should interrogate rather than sustain the myth of the nation and perform a cultural "hijacking" of international events as a means of disputing established categories of nationhood and otherness, thereby promoting alternative types of allegiances across national borders. At the moment that, using again Sassen's words, "power is increasingly privatized, globalized, and elusive" what is needed is directly engaging forms of power and reinvention of citizenship which designers as cultural agents could help express and cultivate. Instead of resorting to ethnic or parochial glorifications of the nation and its myths, or conforming to the market's demands for ethnically identified design, designers should use their practice as a means

1 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 158. Words in brackets added.

2 The head of the Athens 2004 organizing committee, Gianna Daskalaki-Angelopoulou, presented the Athens 2004 Games as a celebration of the idea of "new Greece" in her speech at the opening ceremony on August 13, 2004.

3 Saskia Sassen, "The Repositioning of Citizenship: Emergent Subjects and Spaces for Politics," *The New Centennial Review* 3:2 (Summer 2003): 43–44.

4 Jackie Hogan, "Staging the Nation: Gendered and Ethnicized Discourses of National Identity in Olympic Opening Ceremonies," *Journal of Sports and Social Issues* 27:2 (May 2003): 101. 5 Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity" in *Modernity and Its Futures*, S. Hall, D. Held, and T. McGrew, eds. (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), 293. Quoted in Hogan.

6 Dierdre Curtin, *Post-national Democracy* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1997), 51–52.

7 Examples are the controversy that followed the publication of editorial cartoons depicting the Islamic prophet Muhammad in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005, or the murder of the Dutch film director Theo Van Gogh by the second-generation Dutch-Moroccan citizen Mohammed Bouyeri in 2004.

8 According to Amin, "in a multi-ethnic and multicultural Europe, a failure to give open publicity to the principle of empathy with the stranger, and all that it represents in shaping identities as well as ensuring cultural change, will play into the hands of ethno-nationalists and xenophobes—abundant in number in both majority and minority communities—interested in perpetuating the fiction of homeland cultural identities in Europe." Ash Amin, "Multi-Ethnicity and the Idea of Europe," *Theory, Culture & Society* 21:2 (April 2004): 4.

9 Daniel Dayan, "Narrative, Counter-Narrative and the Beijing Olympics: Hearts, Minds and the Projection of Modern China" lecture at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, November 28, 2007. Also see Daniel Dayan, "Beyond Media Events" in Monroe Price and Daniel Dayan, *Owning the Olympics: Narratives of the New China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 399. Monroe Price in his essay "On Seizing the Olympic Platform" in the same book (page 86) uses the term "hijacking" in order to describe the "hunger by a multitude of groups," in this case civil society advocacy groups, "to gain the extraordinary benefit of huge investments in platforms established by others and, in so doing, take advantage of elaborately created for and to advance political and commercial messages. Media events become marked by efforts by free riders or interlopers to seize the opportunity to perform in a global theater of representation."

10 The commissioners asked for the "aesthetic unification" of the Olympic Athletic Complex, which was built in a hodgepodge manner since the early 1980s.

11 The total cost of construction of the Olympic complex was 220,000,000 Euros ($320,000,000), out of which the cost of the Olympic stadium roof alone was 130,000,000 Euros ($190,000,000).

12 *Special Focus-Athens Olympic Sports Center 2004* (information kit) (Athens: Athens 2004, 2002).

13 Yannis Foskolos, "Olympiaka Erga, 'Empneustika apo tin arxaia kai byzantini paradosi sas.'" (Olympic Works: "I was inspired by your ancient and Byzantine tradition.") Interview with Yannis Foskolos, *Ethnos* 1 (June 2004). (www.ethnos.gr [home page], accessed June 1, 2004).

14 Philip Drew, *Tensile Architecture* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), 172.

15 Nikos Koundouros, "Mia gigantiaia kompina" ("A gigantic scum"), *Eleftherotypia* (August 7, 2004). (www.enet.gr [home page], accessed August 7, 2004).

16 Angelos Elefantis, "Oi Olympiakoi Agones kai h Aristera" ("The Olympic Games and the Left"), *I Avgi* (August 2004). (www.avgi.gr [home page], accessed August 1, 2004)

17 Filippos Syrigos, "Kampriole Calatrava" ("Cabriole Calatrava"), *Eleftherotypia* (February 22, 2004). (www.enet.gr [home page], accessed February 22, 2004)

18 Kerin Hope, "Classic Cool Santiago Calatrava, Architect of Athens' Ambitious and Stylish Olympic Complex, Refuses to be Drawn on the Question of Money," *Financial Times*, Weekend Magazine (August 14, 2004): 8.

19 Maria Daliani, "Santiago Calatrava: 'I Ellada Axizei ton Sebasmo olon'" ("Santiago Calatrava: 'Greece Deserves the Respect of All'"), *Ta Nea* (June 23, 2004). (http://ta-nea.dolnet.gr [home page], accessed July 23, 2004)

20 Ibid.

21 According to P. C. Loakimidis, in intended Europeanization, "there is a strong intention and thus a purposefully framed scheme by the political actors to transfer into their political systems the logic, dynamics, organizational traits, behavioural and regulatory patterns associated with European integration (governance patterns)." As a result, there is a purposeful action on the part of the political elites to copy the European model. P. C. Loakimidis, "The Europeanization of Greece: An Overall Assessment," *South European Society & Politics* 5:2 (2000): 73–94.

22 Gerard Delanty and Paul R. Jones, "European Identity and Architecture," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5:4 (November 2002): 455.

23 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illumination* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 241–242.

24 Rubén Gallo, *Mexican Modernity: The Avant-Garde and the Technological Revolution*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 201.

25 John MacAloon, "Olympic Games and the Theory of the Spectacle in Modern Societies" in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance*, John MacAloon, ed. (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984), 252–53.

26 Papaioannou founded the fringe dance company Ground Squad in the 1980s. After studies at the Athens School of Fine Arts, he received training at the La Mama Experimental Theater Company in New York, and in alternative theatrical forms such as Japanese Butoh dance.

27 Such were those of the Greek expatriate musician Vangelis Papathanasiou, whose "Olympian" music for the film *Chariots of Fire* was awarded an Oscar in 1981 for best musical score. Papathanasiou, however, was widely criticized by the Greek public for the extremely high budget (1.100.670.000 drahmas, approximately equal to $4,700,000) of his 2001 performance *Mythodeia*. His opening ceremony for the International Field and Track Championship in 1997, produced soon after Greece won the bid for the 2004 Olympic Games, likewise engendered embarrassment for displaying a new Greek kitsch. See Pavlos Agiannidis, "Vangelis Papathanasiou, 'I Mousiki einai h aylos Ylopoihsh tou Theiou'" ("Vangelis Papathanasiou: 'Music Is the Immaterial Materialization of the Divine'"), *Ta Nea* (June 23, 2001). (http://ta-nea.dolnet.gr [home page], accessed June 23, 2001)

28 The team was composed of Yorgos Koumentakis (Co-Creation and Music Concept Creator), Lili Pezanou (Production Design), Angeliki Stellatou (Choreographer), Eleftheria Deko (Lighting Designer and Director), Robert Dickinson (Co-Lighting Designer and Director), Sophia Kokossalaki (Costume Designer), Athina Tsangari (Video Director), Lina Nikolakopoulou (Ceremony Texts), Christophe Berthonneau (Pyrotechnic Design), Roula Pateraki (Narration Workshop Director), Alexandros Balabanis (Hair Design), and Petros Petrohilos (Make-up Design).

29 Every Olympic opening ceremony is required to follow a protocol specified by the Olympic Charter, as well as an artistic program open to its creative team, to present the culture of the host city/nation. The protocol includes the athletes' parade, three speeches (by the president of the organizing committee, the president of the International Olympic Committee, and the head of state declaring the Games open), the playing of both the Olympic and the host-nation's anthem, the entry and raising of the Olympic flag, the last stage of the Olympic torch relay culminating in the lighting of the Olympic cauldron, the symbolic release of the dove as a tribute to peace, and the oath-taking by a competitor and a judge.

30 According to Dimitris Plantzos, since the 1930s, prehistoric Cycladic art has become emblematic of Hellenic culture and its roots. From a historical perspective, this is inaccurate, since the Cycladic, being a prehistoric civilization, predates the conception of Hellenism and the appearance of Hellenic culture. Members of the Greek 1930s Generation (writers, poets, visual artists, and intellectuals such as Yorgos Seferis, Odysseas Elytis, Yannis Tsarouchis, Yannis Moralis, Nikos Chatzikyriakos-Gkikas, and others) were the early proponents of *ellinikotita* (Greekness) as an aesthetic native to the Greek land, but considered through modern aesthetics. This group rehabilitated the Cycladic "as a bona fide Hellenic form of art, endowed with all the basic qualities of what in the Classical period would become the glory that was Greece." Dimitris Plantzos, "From Here to Modernity: Cycladic Art as a Twentieth-Century Phenomenon," Alexander Papamarkou lecture at Columbia University, Program in Hellenic Studies, February 26, 2007.

31 Christina Koulouri, "Elliniki Balkanikotita h Balkaniki ellinikotita" ("Greek Balkanness or Balkan Greekness"), *To Vima* (October 10, 2004). (http://digital.tovima.gr [home page], accessed October 10, 2004)

32 Angelos Elefantis, "Simvola kai Theamata" ("Symbols and Spectacles"), *I Avgi* (August 29, 2004). (www.avgi.gr [home page], accessed August 29, 2004)

33 Lina Thivani, "Parti enilikiosis, As megalosoue pia, As…psihraimisoume" ("Graduation Party: Let's Grow up, Let's… Cool down") *Ta Nea* (July 9, 2004). (http://ta-nea.dolnet.gr [home page], accessed July 9, 2004)

34 In recent years (and during the pre-Olympic period in particular) Roma dwellings in Greece have been dismantled to make room for the construction of cultural or athletic venues. Such was the case in Athens, with the 2004 Olympic Games; in Patras, the Cultural Capital of Europe in 2006; and the Votanikos area, the site of a new soccer stadium in Athens. Despite efforts at improvement, the living, health, and sanitary conditions of the Roma in improvised settlements still remain a major social and humanitarian emergency. *Migration, Citizenship, Education*. (www.migrationeducation.org/23.0.html, accessed June 15, 2004)

35 According to Verinis, "the Albanian and Vlach/Aroumanian identification of his [Dimas's] name, rather than bearing connotations of the 'dirty' and 'barbaric,' embodies pure ethic qualities that set him apart from the corrupt, sedentary life of the ordinary modern citizen." James Verinis, "The 'Aftóchthonous' 'Pallikária' of the Hellenic Peninsula: Historical/Cultural Continuity, the Olympic Games, and the Immigrant Heroes of Greece," presentation at "Reconfiguring Identities in Greece and Abroad through the Athens 2004 Olympic Games" panel chaired by Jilly Traganou, conference of the Modern Greek Studies Association, Chicago, November 2005.

36 Ash Amin, **"**Multi-Ethnicity and the Idea of Europe": 2. Words in brackets added.

37 Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London: Routledge, 2001), 17; and Ash Amin, **"**Multi-Ethnicity and the Idea of Europe": 2.

38 Ben Carrington, "Cosmopolitan Olympics, Humanism and the Spectacle of Race" in *Post-Olympism: Questioning Sport in the Twenty-first Century*, J. Bale and C. Krogh, eds. (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 86–88.

Design and the Elastic Mind, Museum of Modern Art (Spring 2008)

Christina Cogdell

Footnotes for this article begin on page 98.

The exhibition *Design and the Elastic Mind* (February 12 through May 12, 2008) at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) received consistently positive critical acclaim for its inspirational message of progress through design allied with science.[1] Focusing primarily on works involving nano, genetic, and robotic technologies created by and implemented through computational tools, the exhibition offered its viewers a glimpse into "the future" currently being realized by eminent scientists and designers. Antonelli's selection of works succeeded in bringing to public attention many of the most recent trends in digital design conception and production. These include not only the seemingly magical powers of instant realization of complex virtual designs through 3D printing technologies, but also the very significant sharing of theories, tools, and methods across academic disciplines that is permeating research and product development based upon the design principles of complex adaptive systems, both natural and cultural. Despite continual references to avant-garde technologies and contemporary scientific theories, however, Antonelli's overarching narrative cast the works in a resoundingly familiar, problematic, machine-age modernist mold, one built upon strong faith in technological determinism and the "technofix" as keys to social and evolutionary "progress." This curious enfolding of twenty-first-century design and science within early-to-mid-twentieth-century ideology raises a number of issues that merit further exploration, particularly because her chosen narrative is itself the subject of questioning by a number of works that she included in the show.

Unraveling this heady multidisciplinary terrain is no small feat, as the more than two hundred works on display revealed. Doing so with clarity, precision, and depth, however, proved an even more elusive goal. In part, this resulted from Antonelli's choice to rely upon the usual short format for wall text and plaques, which did not offer enough room for in-depth explanations of the technologies and the scientific theories used or referenced by the works. This shortcoming unfortunately was not rectified by the accompanying Website, which overloads viewers with a dizzying abundance of tiny, faint, white-on-black text periodically obscured by floating graphic images. The Website does provide a link that lists the participants

at a number of salons co-sponsored by MoMA and *SEED* magazine throughout 2007 leading up to the show. These brought together significant architects, designers, scientists, mathematicians, programmers, and venture capitalists to discuss the cross-fertilization of design across the disciplines.[2] Undoubtedly, these salons sparked interesting conversations among experts which could have been, but were not, uploaded as videos to the Website for the benefit of all who could not attend in person.

The best explanations available to a broader public—although only to those individuals willing to pay double the twenty-dollar entry fee in order to procure the exhibition catalogue—were offered by outside specialists who contributed essays. These include Hugh Aldersey-Williams's partial history of crossovers between design and science in the twentieth century, Ted Sargent's descriptions of the goals and processes of nanotechnology, and Peter Hall's discussion of some of the critical problems surrounding visualizations of complex data.[3] However, the content of these essays did not appear on the walls of the exhibition or the Website. Rather, much of what viewers saw came almost directly from the text and themes of Antonelli's promotional marketing transcripts and the leading essay for the catalogue. Her words, therefore, shaped the show's predominant narrative of "progress"—so pervasive that it infuses design and life at every scale, a theme reiterated spatially through the layout of the exhibition.[4]

Upon entry, viewers moved from the micro-scale, through the human-scale, to the macro-scale in a procession that symbolized the infinite and universal reach of design and science, both within the natural world as well as in our daily lives. This figurative zooming out/zooming in, connecting the global to the local, is made possible through new technologies and routinized through the media of film and Internet tools such as Google Maps. It also is the chief characteristic of elastic: hence the exhibition's title, *Design and the Elastic Mind*. However, this seemingly neutral, out-and-back linearity took on a troubling symbolic significance when considered in relation to other discursive themes from Antonelli's texts in the show. It began to resemble the pattern of colonial ventures, Spencerian notions of evolutionary hierarchies, and ongoing mythic narratives of technological progress conquering new frontiers.[5] This teleological linearity was literally mapped down the walls of the hallway running east to west that formed the central axis for the public's procession through the show. Almost-parallel black partitions, inscribed with what appeared to be a computationally-generated algorithmic linear pattern, slightly converged at eye level on each side at the end of the central aisle.[6] This reference to the Western gaze and mastery over nature—epitomized by the Renaissance artistic technique of linear perspective, and metaphorically extended even further here through computational tools—is drawn toward an infinitely receding horizon, one that literally echoed the westward direction of manifest destiny.

In keeping with this theme of control of nature through science and design at all scales, the first rooms presented viewers with images made by atomic force microscopy of nanoscale happy faces made from strands of DNA; wedding rings grown from the human bone cells of each partner; a living, miniature "leather" jacket tissue-engineered from mouse cells; and an aluminum "bone chair" designed with optimization software that mimics biological growth processes under stress forces.[7] Further in, past the end of the central hallway, the "human scale" section displayed bejeweled nose plugs for sniffing the genetic codes of others (in order to "sniff out perfect mates"); toys for acculturating children to genetic and reproductive technologies (such as cows producing pharmaceuticals and spider silk, and human reproductive outsourcing through surrogacy); and robotic mechanical forms for various uses in the home (including a deployable, wall-like structure that folded and unfolded in response to external stimuli).[8] The "macro-scale" area at the very back featured video installations and complex data visualizations in the form of posters and screens, many of which demonstrated our reliance upon and ordering of information at a global scale, accessed through computer and satellite technologies, and subject to surveillance.[9]

The layout and the wall text repeatedly emphasized that scientists and designers are gaining control of information-based evolutionary processes of self-organizing complex systems at every scale, be it the molecular structure of DNA, the growth potentials of the cell, computational algorithms that mimic natural processes and come "to life" in three-dimensionally printed models or robots, or the fast exchange of all of this information and more via the Internet. Yet this idea of designer control is explicitly at odds with scientific understandings of self-organization, which by definition excludes all external influences, direction, or leadership imposed upon self-organizing systems.[10] Some of the most common examples of these systems in popular and academic texts are termite mounds, ant colonies, and beehives.[11] Hence the poignancy that arises from Antonelli's featuring of artist Tomás Libertíny's *Honeycomb Vase "Made By Bees,"* one of the first pieces viewers encountered which was, in fact, made by bees doing their usual work albeit within the constraints of a vase-shaped scaffold the artist created. Libertíny brilliantly harnesses the bees' creative power and natural beeswax to his own stunning artistic ends, fusing form with material with process. Yet like other sculptors throughout history who have worked with casts, he relies upon a very traditional method and is not fundamentally reprogramming nature from scratch to create his art.

His work is thus similar to that of Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr, who also use scaffolds to impart particular forms to their chosen natural artistic material, living cells. Their tissue-engineered *Victimless Leather* jacket was shown in the same room as Libertíny's piece. These artists therefore address contemporary scientific theories and processes, while intentionally questioning the depth to which

human control is rewriting the script of life. In their publications describing their work, Catts and Zurr specifically hone in on the problematic history and Western ideology of colonization inherent in the theory and practice of genetic technologies. However, the plaque next to their piece contained little mention of this. Rather, Antonelli's text uncritically positioned the adoption of living products as a sustainable "organic design" solution that would "curb our destructive consumerism" and prevent the slaughter of cattle for leather, thereby lessening the environmentally-damaging cattle industry. To the contrary, Catts and Zurr have pointed out in their various publications that the nutrient fluid that is a major requirement for keeping tissue-engineered entities "alive"—the red fluid that was in the beaker feeding the jacket at MoMA—is made in part from the serum of a calf fetus, whose mother and it are killed just for its procurement. Hence the irony of the piece's title, and the serious misrepresentation to viewers that occurred through Antonelli's brief, face-value description of it.[12]

As the inclusion of Libertíny's vase and Catts's and Zurr's jacket reveals, at numerous points throughout the exhibition a slippage occurred between *art*, which more often has a critical edge than design, and *design*, which is usually tied to production and less often openly ironic. Interestingly, this blurring sometimes occurred within individual pieces, such as when the artist's chosen form of vase or jacket was a utilitarian design that categorically could be mass-produced. A number of works made by faculty and students from the Design Interactions Department at the Royal College of Art that were included in the "Design for Debate" category fully pushed the boundaries dividing these artistic disciplines.[13] Their work drives home the idea that the distinctions between art and design are trivial given the recent collapse of culture into nature (Or is it the other way around?), living cells into products, the virtual into the material, and the imagined into the actual. Perhaps the blurring stems in part from ever-increasing academic interdisciplinarity, or arises because designers working with these new technologies and their potential outcomes have to cultivate a sense of irony to adeptly handle their subject and material.

At other times, however, the slippage was due to curatorial sleight of hand, as with the inclusion of works by artists in a design exhibition without making the effort to specifically call attention to the creator's self-identification as "artist" or to mention the ironic criticality of their work. Antonelli also decided not to differentiate, through either the accompanying text or display format, between *imagined visions*—virtual pieces, if you will, materialized for the exhibition through digitally manipulated photographs or videos—*one-off prototypes* seemingly ready for production, and *post-production designs*.[14] This display strategy obfuscates the real-world processes through which imagined designs become manifest broad-scale in the world beyond academia and the museum, where issues of their

materiality, production, market audience, profitability, and sustainability come into play. At the same time, it lent more credence to Antonelli's textual assertions of her technologically determinist faith: that design of the sort on display, achieved through combining design with scientific theory and avant-garde technologies, will become our inevitable blessed "future." Together, these display strategies effectively ignored or rewrote in the language of the faithful, the irony, and critique inherent within many works themselves.[15] They therefore appeared more strongly to support her belief that design as technofix can always solve the problems created by older technologies (as suggested by Mikael Metthey's piece *The Minutine Space*, but critiqued by Michael Burton's *The Race*), and that new "degrees of freedom" and the "evolution of society" do in fact result from technological design evolution (questioned by Burton's *Nanotopia*).

The latter two beliefs pervade American history and constructions of the history of technology, having informed conquest narratives and their accompanying myth of the "second creation": that superior technologies turn nature's raw materials and "wilderness" to productive use (in the process, decimating indigenous populations and their land-use patterns, both of which are cast as "first creation").[16] Recent cultural critics have characterized this zealous, almost religious, version of technological determinism as "technofundamentalism."[17] Antonelli's reliance upon a "progressive" westward-leading teleology, which she combines with modernist evolutionary language to frame her presentation of cutting-edge technological designs, therefore is highly problematic. For example, she positions contemporary science, technology, and design on the forward cusp of a continually "progressive" evolutionary process, one that is rapidly evolving from "simplicity" toward "complexity" (to use both Spencerian and emergent complex systems rhetoric). "Progress," she asserts, is driven by the ever-increasing intelligence and technological inventiveness of a "few exceptional individuals," those at the helm who first master the ability to grasp complexity. Designers, who "stand between revolutions and everyday life," then mediate between this elite and "the masses." They span the divide through good design, which translates complex theories and novel technological capacities into accessible, useful, and efficient visualizations and material forms.[18] MoMA Director Glenn Lowry concurs with her positioning of today's designers. "In this era of fast-paced innovation," he writes in his Foreword to the exhibition catalogue, "designers are becoming more and more integral to the *evolution of society*."[19]

This evolutionary rhetoric pervaded most aspects of the show, including allusions within its title. In her definitions of elasticity, Antonelli repeats early-twentieth-century modernist arguments about the need for evolving increased intelligence to keep pace with the evolution of machines.[20] She writes in her introductory essay,

"Adaptability is an ancestral distinction of human intelligence, but today's instant variations in rhythm call for something stronger: elasticity. The byproduct of adaptability and acceleration, elasticity means being able to negotiate change and innovation without letting them interfere excessively with one's own rhythms and goals." The introductory wall text described "elasticity" as "the ability to grasp progress and make it one's own."[21] But how, she asks in her essay, can "the masses" grasp "fundamental concepts—such as the scope of the human genome or its comparison with that of other primates" that "remain ungraspable by most"?[22] Note her use of the word "grasp": "the masses" should "grasp progress" but "most" cannot grasp "fundamental concepts." Antonelli's answer is that "the masses" learn through the "visual design translations" graciously offered by their priest-mediators: designers … and curators. Recall Raymond Williams's famous mid-century statement: "There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses." This points to the importance of considering the vantage points of discourse, particularly "progressive" discourses about the elevation and evolution of society through exposure to "Culture."[23]

Prior to the opening of the show, the MoMA Website explicitly stated that a major goal of the exhibition was to "catalyze these technologies." Furthermore, the wall text and catalogue essays repeatedly stress the "urgency," "fast-pace," "acceleration," and "speed" of "progress," along with the belief that greater "degrees of freedom" and the "evolution of society" are "opened by the progress of technology."[24] In her reliance on an evolutionary narrative; in her unwavering faith in the inevitability of technological and social "progress" through her frequent use of the passive voice (a hallmark of manifest destiny and second-creation narratives); and through her elitist positioning of avant-garde scientists, designers, and curators in relation to "the masses" as the grateful recipients of good design; Antonelli restates the major creeds of modernism without even a hint of recognition of the *failures* of this dogma. It is as if World War II did not end with the catastrophes of the atomic bomb and the Holocaust; as if the postwar rhetoric of "social evolution" sailed right over the painfully turbulent 1960s and 1970s; and as if postmodernism and deconstruction never happened, or as if they were a sham that covered over a largely untouched modernist nugget inside—except for the facts that we find ourselves in a much more interconnected global economy, with greater disparity of wealth, with an abundance of new technological inventions, and new versions of unifying scientific theories.[25]

Antonelli's discursive frame ignores the numerous resounding postwar critiques of the underlying assumptions that fuel this rhetorical discourse of Western-dominated evolutionary and technological "progress." These critiques arose from diverse academic disciplines, including historians of science and culture, gender studies scholars, anthropologists, disability theorists, and art historians

among others. These have effectively deconstructed the hubristic Western ethnocentrism, sexism and heterosexism, class-ism, and able-ism of dominant evolutionary and eugenic paradigms, the myth of the scientific idea of "race," and the myth of technological determinism as inevitably resulting in "social progress."[26] Yet this postcolonial, deconstructionist, anti-"modernist" history hardly informed the exhibition's themes, spatial organization, or primary narrative. Rather, the latter acted as if solely because of new technologies, rather than through serious social and political activist struggle, the end goal of global social harmony is nigh.

Antonelli concludes the show with this specious supposition by entitling her final essay in the catalogue "All Together Now!" Its hyperbolic assertions of global harmony accomplished through nearly universal access to cell-phone technology (the Japanese mobile communications company NTT DoCoMo sponsored the exhibition) deconstructs her own persistent technological determinist discourse.[27] She writes, among other things, that cell phones have liberated women "in more conservative societies" by allowing them "more freedom to work by enabling a 'remote control' connection with their children, the elderly, and other household responsibilities."[28] The "degrees of freedom opened by the progress of technology" that foster the "evolution of society" are thus slight indeed (an assumption queried in different ways by Laura Kurgan and Eric Cadora's *Architecture and Justice Project*).[29] Similarly, after praising open-source software for its "harmonious, self-organizing structure," which implies democratic access and promotes "The Common Good," Antonelli then contradicts her assertions by stating: "We have known since Plato that democracy is not always the best governing model for humankind."[30] Through internal contradictions such as these—be it from her own words, or through the messages of some of the works in the show—and because of her use of an ideologically narrow, dated, and discredited discursive frame, the threads of her narrative of a technologically determined "progress" unravel and force us to turn to the works themselves to consciously consider, discuss, and decide the potential directions and applications of contemporary design allied to science and technology.

1 Thanks to Joel Dinerstein, Jeffrey Meikle, Dennis Doordan, Carolyn de le Peña, and Irene Cheng for comments on an earlier and much longer draft of this review. *Design and the Elastic Mind* was created by Paola Antonelli, Senior Curator, Department of Architecture and Design, and Patricia Juncosa Vecchierini, Curatorial Assistant. Previews and reviews of *Design and the Elastic Mind* include Paola Antonelli, "Design and the Elastic Mind: An Exclusive Preview to the MoMA Exhibition," *Abitare* 478 (December 2007-January 2008): 101; Nicolai Ouroussoff, "The Soul in the New Machines," *New York Times* (February 22, 2008): E1; Hadyn Shaughnessy, "Creative Impulse Key to Success in Fast Changing World," *The Irish Times* (May 19, 2008): 19; Tim McKeough, "Intelligent Design (By Humans)," *The Globe and Mail* (Canada) (March 8, 2008): L10; Todd Bracher, "Exhibition Design and the Elastic Mind Review," *Blueprint* (May 2008): 115; John Hockenberry, "Eternal Sunshine of the Elastic Mind," *Metropolis* 27:10 (May 2008): 194, 196, 198; Julian Bittiner, "You Say You Want a Revolution? Exhibition Review: *Design and the Elastic Mind*," *Visual Communication* 7:4 (2008): 503–08; John Schwartz, "Museum Kills Live Exhibit," *New York Times* (May 13, 2008): F3; Eyal Lavi, "MoMA Exhibit Dies Five Weeks into Show," *The Art Newspaper* Issue 191 (May 10, 2008), online at: www.theartnewspaper.com/article.asp?id=8413. Thanks to Peggy Chung for bringing the latter article to my attention.

2 The list of participants at the MoMA/*SEED* Salons is available at: www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2008/elasticmind/assets/pdf/DEM-SEEDMoMASalons2007.pdf.

3 Hugh Aldersey-Williams, "Applied Curiosity," 46–57; Ted Sargent, "Nanotechnology: Design in the Quantum Vernacular," 80–86; and Peter Hall, "Critical Visualization," 120–31; all in Antonelli, *Design and the Elastic Mind* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008).

4 Paola Antonelli's introductory essay to the catalogue is available as a pdf on the exhibition Website at: www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2008/elasticmind/assets/pdf/Design_and_the_Elastic_Mind.pdf.

5 Antonelli, "Design and the Elastic Mind: An Exclusive Preview to the MoMA Exhibition," *Abitare* 478 (December 2007-January 2008): 101; and Antonelli, "Design and the Elastic Mind" in *Design and the Elastic Mind,* 14, as well as the primary introductory wall text at the entrance to the exhibition.

6 Ouroussoff, "The Soul in the New Machines," noted that the trick of slightly converging the walls of a hallway began with Palladio in the sixteenth century.

7 For more information about any of the themes or objects discussed in this review, please see the MoMA Website: www.moma.org/exhibitions/2008/elasticmind/, which has links to the checklist, *SEED* Salons and other accompanying events and lectures, descriptions of the major themes and works, and much more information than was included in the exhibition itself. The works mentioned here, in order, are Paul Rothemund's *DNA Origami* (2004–5); Tobie Kerridge, Nikki Stott, and Ian Thompson's *Biojewellery* (2003–7); Oron Catts's and Ionat Zurr's *Victimless Leather* (2004, 2008); and Joris Laarman's *Bone Chair* (2006). For more information on these works, see also the exhibition catalogue by Antonelli, *Design and the Elastic Mind*, 82–3, 111, 115, and 71. Many of the artists, designers, and scientists have Websites of their own that provide much more information. These are easily found through online searches, but they are too numerous to include in this review.

8 Antonelli, wall text for section "Design for the Senses," in the exhibition described genetic technologies that would "revive our long-lost ability to sniff out perfect mates." Works here in order are Susanna Soares, *Genetic Trace, Part Two: Sniffing Others* (2007); Elio Caccavale, *MyBio* toy series (2005) and *Fertilitoys* from the *Future Families Project* (2007); Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, *Technological Dreams Series: No. 1 Robots* (2007); and Chuck Hoberman, *Emergent Surface* (2007). See Antonelli, *Design and the Elastic Mind,* 110, 31–32, 28, and 37.

9 Important works in the complex data visualization section at the rear included: Laura Kurgan, Eric Cadora, et al, *Architecture and Justice Project* (pdf available for viewing or downloading in the "Publications" section at: www.spatialinformationdesignlab.org/projects.php?id=40); MIT's SENSEableCity's *New York Talk Exchange* (2008) (available at http://senseable.mit.edu/nyte/) and *Real Time Rome* (2006) (available at http://senseable.mit.edu/realtimerome/); Ben Fry's *isometricblocks* (2002/2004–05); and Demetrie Tyler's *Hypothetical Drawings about the End of the World* (2006). See also Peter Hall, "Critical Visualization," 129–31, and Antonelli, *Design and the Elastic Mind*, 139, 142, 149.

10 Scott Camazine, Jean-Louis Deneubourg, Nigel Franks, James Sneyd, Guy Theraulaz, and Eric Bonabeau, *Self-Organization in Biological Systems* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 7–8, defines self-organization very clearly and repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of no external intervention or direction.

11 For examples of self-organizing termite mounds, ant colonies, and beehives, see Camazine et al, 59–60, 285–93; J. Scott Turner, *The Tinkerer's Accomplice: How Design Emerges from Life Itself* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); and Steven Johnson, *Emergence: The Connected Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities, and Software* (New York: Scribner, 2001).

12 The ironic words "curb our destructive consumerism" are Catts's and Zurr's and, as their publications show, they were meant to be provocative. And yet this irony, which is clear from their publications, was erased in the plaque accompanying their piece. Also, their work was displayed in the "Organic Design" room near the entry to the show. See Antonelli, *Design and the Elastic Mind*, 115; Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr, "The Ethics of Experiential Engagement with the Manipulation of Life" in *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism, and Technoscience*, Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Phillip, eds. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 125–42; Catts and Zurr, "Are the Semi-Living Semi-Good or Semi-Evil?" *Technoetic Arts: A Journal of Speculative Research* 1:1 (2003): 47–60; Catts and Zurr, "Growing Semi-Living Sculptures: The Tissue Culture & Art Project," *Leonardo* 35:4 (2002): 365–70. On sustainability, the cattle industry, and tissue nutrient fluid, see, "The Ethics of Experiential Engagement with the Manipulation of Life,"132–33, 141 n.19. The latter footnote cites a statement from the chief executive officer of the Australian Association for Humane Research, Inc., from June 30, 2006: "It has been estimated that around half a million liters of raw FCS (fetal calf serum) is produced each year worldwide, which equates to the harvesting of more than one million bovine fetuses annually. Some sources have suggested that the actual figure may be closer to two million fetuses per year."

13 Key examples of this boundary-blurring work, coming out of the Royal College of Art, include Susanna Soares's *New Organs of Perception* series, Mikael Metthey's *The Minutine Space*, and Michael Burton's *The Race* and *Nanotopia*. Antonelli included the work of many more members of this group in the show. See *Design and the Elastic Mind*, 43, 105, 197–08, and 110.

14 This continual intermixture reminded me of designer Norman Bel Geddes's mantra, "the imagination creates the actual," an idea he most famously embodied in his *Futurama* exhibit for General Motors at the 1939 New York World's Fair. See Christina Cogdell, "The Futurama Recontextualized: Norman Bel Geddes's Eugenic 'World of Tomorrow,'" *American Quarterly* 52:2 (June 2000): 235, 245 n.125, citing Geddes. See also the first few chapters of Colin Milburn's *Nanovision: Engineering the Future* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008) for further elaborations on the "back to the future" motif, whereby projections by scientists writing nanotech science fiction contribute direction to actual research and development. On religious motifs in nanotech that resemble some of Antonelli's descriptions of designers as priests/mediators, see Milburn, 14–15.

15 A few of the artists and designers who brought a critical edge to the ways in which technologies function, or might function, within culture and society, in addition to Libertíny and Catts and Zurr, are Michael Burton, Demetrie Tyler, SENSEable City Laboratory of MIT, Michiko Nitta, and Jon Ardern. In a few instances, Antonelli notes the criticality of the works, and her inclusion of the section "Design for Debate" also indicates her acknowledgement of this tension. The "Debate," however, does not happen within the exhibition's texts. However, perhaps realizing this oversight, her recent column in *SEED* magazine entitled "Of Design and Being Just: In Science Designers Find New Ways to Probe Questions of Ethics," *SEED* (April 2009): 21–22 addresses in much greater detail the works of Catts and Zurr, their critical message, and the ethical debates instigated by their work and its "death" during the show. She also mentions that the "Design for Debate" (aka "Critical Design") section was inspired by Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, who head up the Royal College of Art's Design Interactions Department. She quotes Dunne: "Design in that way can facilitate a debate about whether we want these futures or not."

16 See Michael Adas, *Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission* (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2006); Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); David Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994); and Nye, *America as Second Creation: Technology and Narratives of New Beginnings* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).

17 Siva Vaidhyanathan, *The Anarchist in the Library* (New York: Basic, 2004), xii, coined the term "techno-fundamentalism," which Joel Dinersterien fully elaborates in "Technology and Its Discontents: On the Verge of the Posthuman," *American Quarterly* 58:3 (September 2006): 569–595.

18 Antonelli, "Design and the Elastic Mind," 14–15. She writes: "A few exceptional individuals are already wired for change, and the masses have a tendency to either admire them as visionaries or burn them at the stake as witches and heretics. However, these individuals do not represent the majority.In order to step boldly into the future, the majority needs design. …Designers stand between revolutions and everyday life. …Without a visual design translation, many fundamental concepts …would remain ungraspable by most."

19 Glenn Lowry, "Foreword," *Design and the Elastic Mind*, 4–5. Antonelli uses the same phrase, "evolution of society," on page 24. Italics added.

20 Step back to the mid-1930s, when designer Egmont Arens argued that the fast pace of technology demanded a higher level of national intelligence, a goal eugenicists promised to produce. He said: "This age needs streamlined thinking to keep pace with its streamlined machines." See Christina Cogdell, *Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 144–47. Compare his statements with Antonelli's, "Design and the Elastic Mind," 14. On intellectual evolution, see Antonelli, "All Together Now!" in *Design and the Elastic Mind* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 154.

21 Antonelli, "Design and the Elastic Mind: An exclusive preview to the MoMA exhibition," 101; and "Design and the Elastic Mind,"14; as well as the primary introductory wall text at the entrance to the exhibition.

22 Antonelli, "Design and the Elastic Mind," 15. On 21, she writes: "If design is to help enable us to live to the fullest while taking advantage of all the possibilities provided by contemporary technology, designers need to make both people and objects perfectly elastic."

23 Raymond Williams, *In Culture and Society 1780–1950* , (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 300. He discusses "Mass and Masses" in detail in relation to the idea of democracy on pages 297–300.

24 On pace and acceleration in nanotechnology discourse, see Milburn, 10–11; Antonelli, "Design and the Elastic Mind," 22. For example, in the wall text for the 3-D Printing section, she describes how rapid manufacturing will become ever more rapid, cutting the time it takes to print a chair (now seven days) over the next few years down to seven hours, and then a few years later, seven minutes. Her emphasis on accelerating pace is repeated in her recent article "Core Principles: How Science Can Help Form a Theory of Design," *SEED* 20 (February 2009): 29. David Nye, in "Technology and the Production of Difference," *American Quarterly* 58:3 (September 2006): 598, elaborates the traits of technological determinism: belief that technology can "break down cultural barriers and bring world peace"; and when rooted in the free market, it is "as if a beneficent determinism were the inevitable outcome of 'the invisible hand' in laissez-faire economics." Historians of technology and culture have worked hard to take apart the myth of technological determinism, which posits that successful inventions and technological systems are the primary agents of social "progress." They have done so through close-up examinations of the particular contexts within which inventors and designers, out of their own agency and intention, create technologies that then, in combination with other socioeconomic forces, become revolutionary within society. See also Susan Douglas, "The Turn Within: The Irony of Technology in a Globalized World," *American Quarterly* 58:3 (September 2006): 623.

25 See Cynthia Henthorn, *From Submarines to Suburbs: Selling a Better America 1939–1959*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), on the continuity of the rhetoric of social evolution from before to after World War II. In her new column in *SEED* magazine, Antonelli recently stated: "Design is looking for a unified theory." See "Core Principles: How Science Can Help Form a Theory of Design," 29.

26 On the dissolution of the idea of "race" as a scientifically useful construct, see *The History and Geography of Human Genes* by population geneticists Luca Cavalli-Sforza, Paolo Menozzi, and Alberto Piazza (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Jefferson Fish, *Race and Intelligence: Separating Science from Myth* (Mahwah: L. Erlbaum, 2002), 1–28, 113–41.

27 Antonelli's final sentence of this final essay states: "For the first time in history, a crowd of billions of individuals will be able to unite the power of common sense and the imaginative vision of personal initiative with the most advanced principles of design wisdom." Antonelli, "All Together Now!" 159. For more on recent interpretations of the "global village" in communication studies, see Douglas, "The Turn Within," 619–38.

28 Antonelli, "All Together Now!" 156. For a critical history of the idea that new technologies liberate women from work, opening the door to a life of leisure, see Ruth Schwarz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technologies from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

29 Antonelli, "Design and the Elastic Mind," 22; and Laura Kurgan, Eric Cadora, *et al*, Architecture and Justice Project (pdf), 3.

30 Antonelli, "All Together Now!" 157.

Home Delivery, Museum of Modern Art (Spring 2008)

Sallie Hood, Ron Sakal

Edited by Harold Henderson

During its final two days in October 2008, we visited the Museum of Modern Art's visually rollicking exhibition, "Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling"—a multimedia salvo reviewing the intertwined histories of architectural modernism and prefabricated housing, complete with nine commissioned projects: four wall fragments and five full-scale houses.

Much of the exhibition lives on in a more linear, tranquil form in the published catalogue *Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling*, by curators Barry Bergdoll and Peter Christensen), and on MoMA's website (http://momahomedelivery.org, by Flat, Inc.), which includes a detailed timeline, still and moving images, and time-lapse views of the commissioned houses being fabricated and erected on their temporary site.

The website's three-and-a-half-month blog—featuring posts from the curators, the designers of the commissioned projects, and other exhibition participants—offers an inside view of preparations for the exhibition's July 20th opening. Now called "Installation Journal Archive," it includes much information not found elsewhere. How else would we know that designer Richard Horden of the commissioned Micro Compact Home (mch) is preoccupied with the number 26? (See his July 4 post.) Or that the website itself was originally modeled in chipboard and balsa wood? (See the June 14 post.) Unfortunately the blog is suffering from electronic decay: it can still be read, and the posts remain in order, but the 2009 calendar imposed on it has advanced their dates six days. As of late February, in order to retrieve the first post, made and dated March 24, 2008, it was necessary to click on the calendar date March 30, 2009. Posts are also accessible by topic.

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We are irresistibly drawn to model residences, and had intended to visit the five signature houses first. We glanced at them through the chainlink fence, but kept finding reasons to remain in the gallery hubbub. In retrospect, we may have been responding to their standoffishness. The five shared one lot, yet had no significant relationship with one another—the dominant tone was isolationist. No landscape. No curb appeal. No modernist village.

Were the curators trying to position the houses as provocative art objects? Or were they carefully avoiding any hint of New Urbanist generic-genteel aesthetics? We wouldn't blame them for the latter, but the result was incoherent and unwelcoming—and a missed opportunity to display edible, low-maintenance, drought-resistant landscapes. Was there no room in MoMA's budget to give the houses a setting that might make visitors want to live in them?

Inside the museum, the exhibit's overall effect—despite its jam-packed, dynamic presentation—tended to the funereal, with ashen grey walls, low-level lighting, and faded modernist artifacts. Many "Home Delivery" projects are old friends we've loved since they were new. They're why we became architects (we live high above the Chicago coast of Lake Michigan in a three-bedroom variant of Case Study House #26), why we design modest housing, and why we've long championed modular construction. We recognize modernism's urban design failures (and we design infill projects as restitution), but they haven't dimmed our affection for the fervent optimism of the movement's early days.

Working against the grain, we joyfully waked the formerly sleek and shiny creations of our youth, toasting Wright, Keck, Fuller, Prouvé, CSH #8, Quonset Huts (reminding us of the military's role in promoting prefab), the Lustron House, Suuronen, and Monsanto's House of the Future (present only in a film loop).

The film loops and installation videos on prefabrication themes by Joey Forsyte of Velocity Filmworks provided many high points. (See his June 7 blog post.) We would have loved a theater for comfortable, chronological viewing. The website includes many excerpts, and Google Video and YouTube fill some gaps (including Buster Keaton's "One Week" from 1920), but we yearn for a MoMA DVD.

Pop culture and high culture rub shoulders amicably in the catalogue (and did so in the exhibition), as they rarely do in real life. Back in the day, the catalogue notes, the popular Sears kit houses suffered "infamy" in architecture circles. The Lustron all-steel house (the show-stopper this time around) was vilified by *Time* magazine precisely for its modernist honesty in expressing its manufactured nature. And according to Robert Rubin, Jean Prouvé's Tropicale houses "were too strange looking for their intended buyers: the French colonial bureaucracy and business community."

This gap between modernists' good intentions and their customers' conservative tastes haunts the exhibition. Curator Barry Bergdoll takes it on in his introductory catalogue essay, "Home Delivery: Viscidities of a Modernist Dream from Taylorized Serial Production to Digital Customization." He poses a plaintive rhetorical question: "If factory production has made such a revolution both in the production of once hand-crafted objects such as clothes, shoes, and household products, as well as in modern mobility—automobiles, planes, and ocean liners—then why is the culture of building

so resistant to transformation?"

Of course factory production has already transformed building. Bergdoll himself notes that nearly one-third of American single-family housing starts are manufactured. (Who hasn't experienced traffic crawling as extra-wide housing modules are hauled down the highway?) It's just that outstanding designers, modern or otherwise, have had little to do with most of them, so the results tend to be routine, ugly, or both.

Modernism's failure to attract public acclaim is the subject for century-old cheap shots, but it is difficult to lead a revolution without followers from among those on whose behalf it is being led. The challenge for the designer of modernist prefabricated houses is to achieve minimalist elegance while striking that delicate balance between gemütlichkeit and kitsch (ably achieved by Heikkinen-Komonen's Touch House). Several practitioners now produce well-designed prefabricated houses in the U.S. (see Allison Arieff's "By Design" *New York Times* blog, http://arieff.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/09/15housing-the-universe) and in the UK (see Colin Davies, *The Prefabricated Home*). Their work might have answered Bergdoll's question, or rendered it irrelevant, but they were not in MoMA's exhibition, which nevertheless found room for popular products from Scandinavia and Japan, as well as dystopic visions like Zvi Hecker's Ramot Housing and Michael Jantzen's M-Vironments/M-House (disorienting even for Dr. Caligari).

Bergdoll calls the U.S. manufactured housing business "invisible to, and all but impervious to, design culture." True enough; but as his phrasing hints and the exhibition demonstrates, this knife cuts both ways: the design culture can be equally impervious to most people's reasonable desire for affordable firmness, commodity, delight—and community.

What would we get if we transformed on MoMA's terms? To use today's language, what kind of durability, usefulness, beauty, or neighborhoods could we expect if we put our houses into the hands of Bergdoll's handpicked exhibitors?

* * * *

Community? The word may not have made Vitruvius's list, but it's on ours, for both urbanist and environmental reasons. Taken one at a time, as they demanded, three of the commissioned houses are hard to imagine as compatible neighbors in a neighborhood, either of its own kind or with others—BURST*008, SYSTEM3, and the Micro Compact Home. At least the high-spirited BURST*008 doesn't even pretend to try.

SYSTEM3's entry façade was the only lovely element in an otherwise sober and austere residence. As compositions made up of multiple residences, SYSTEM3 recalls the failed social housing of the Khrushchovkas and Paul Rudolph's Oriental Masonic Gardens. A look at the designers' website (http://www.olkruf.com)—specifically their House Innauer (2002) in Dornbirn, Austria—confirmed

our unfavorable impression, given that design's imposition of a virtually blank street wall on the community.

The curators describe the tiny mch as "a bold statement regarding what is essential to life in the twenty-first century"—no books but two TVs—adding that it's "specifically geared toward single persons with a mobile work or leisure-oriented lifestyle." That seems like a narrow vision of life's essentials in a century when economics, ecology, and energy are pushing us toward more dense, compact, walkable, and interdependent neighborhoods. Like SYSTEM3, when mch becomes a composition of multiple residences, it also fails, becoming no more inviting than the Nakagin Capsule Tower.

The impulse to design minimal living spaces isn't new, of course, and given the global economy, may yet become the norm. The mch reminded us of Ken Isaacs's low-tech Living Structures—bigger than furniture but smaller than architecture (and with room for books), and easily made of plywood and 2x2s by do-it-yourselfers. He designed them in the 1950s and '60s to add variety and make use of "waste" space inside already tiny apartments. Throughout Chicago they proliferated in Ken's students' flats. They were sustainable before the word was invented, and designed for sociability, too, whether constructed inside city apartments or out in the woods. (There's a brief account at http://www.dwell.com/peopleplaces/profiles/6846577.html.)

We were able to imagine the two other commissioned works being neighborly. In the catalogue, KieranTimberlake Associates' disassemblable-and-reusable Cellophane House is portrayed in a hypothetical urban context. However, its plan and section struck us as pedestrian, and its insistence on translucent and transparent floors and ceilings was positively disorienting. The MoMA guard told us she liked the house but, when pressed, couldn't see living there: "There's no place to hide."

Larry Sass's incomplete Digitally Fabricated Housing for New Orleans (being built in summer 2009—our jury is out until then) is a shotgun house designed and ornamented to relate to its potential neighbors in that devastated city. For this thoughtful effort, Sass received a stinging rebuke indicative of modernism's ongoing difficulties in dealing with context. "When I first showed my ornate models to a few colleagues [at MIT], I had no idea that something so small could offend so many," he wrote in his June 5 blog post. "Some were appalled that my work did not reflect the modern movements in architecture." What appalled us was the use of exterior plywood in a climate where it would promptly delaminate.

* * * *

Instead of community, the commissioned houses revolve around various high-tech contraptions used in conditioning interior space and in computer-controlled fabrication. The Cellophane House, for instance, relies on a system of "operable dampers and minuscule

fans" which "anticipates internal climatic needs and eliminates the possibility for unwanted heat gains and losses"—that is, until one of those many moving parts malfunctions. High-tech is cool, but it's not green when passive solar design alone can achieve climate control.

At least BURST*008 was fun in itself (if only we might relocate the primary bathroom's too-public entry). Oddly enough, it was intended "less as a statement about prefabrication than...as a demonstration of what fabricated housing can achieve by mining the possibilities of the computer." Creators Jeremy Edmiston and Douglas Gauthier are "more interested in creating a system of production than in creating forms." Computer templates allow a design to emerge directly from client discussion; the architects' software formula then "explodes" the design into more than a thousand non-identical pieces; and another piece of software arranges them to be cut from more than 300 sheets of plywood "with minimum waste." The results are packed flat and sent to the site for assembly.

"Ingenious" is too weak a word for this scheme, generically known as CNC (computer numerically controlled) technologies. Yet the resulting intricate lattice of plywood underneath BURST*008 struck us as a maintenance nightmare and a world-class nesting area for social wasps. Here again, however fabricated, plywood seems a dubious material for exterior use.

Indoors, computer-aided design and manufacturing spawned the beautiful but high-maintenance walls. The Vector Wall was downright gorgeous. (If all we'd seen of SYSTEM3 was its entry facade, freestanding among the other commissioned walls, its array of tiny CNC-milled circular openings would have sold us.) But when architectural detailing in any style becomes a maintenance headache, it's a sign of ostentation overcoming common sense—especially in prefabricated housing aimed at affordability.

CNC fabrication may or may not conserve wood, but it does increase architects' control of the building process: instead of mere drawings, now we can produce (in the words of Marble and Fairbanks' "Flatform" proposal) "highly precise sets of instruction and data that drive manufacturing processes." Computer-controlled fabrication is a fascinating sub-discipline in itself, although we find it more appropriate for decorative work (as in the die-cut lights of Studio Tord Boontje) than for architectonic uses. But in any case, it is a tool—not a design principle, let alone a design philosophy. Is it enabling today's modernists to go overboard, creating elaborate patterns for their own sake? If so, isn't this the same kind of fussy excess proto-modernists rejected a century ago?

* * * *

MoMA's modernist conceptions and prototypes behind us, we visited the harsh reality of 1869 in the Tenement Museum—overcrowded, noxious, labor-intensive, and one impetus for the Modern Movement's commitment to good design for the many. Yet, our docent assured us, the tenement's residents enjoyed a tightly

knit, supportive community. Tenements are nothing if not grounded. By contrast, many of the designs at MoMA were as un-grounded as possible without dissolving into air.

Many, perhaps most, Americans, barely "see" design at all. If they can buy a reasonably priced, familiar-looking prefabricated house from a company employing no first-rate designers of any stripe, they'll make do with its infelicities (probably without even noticing them). The creators of "Home Delivery" have documented the difficulties past generations of modernists had with their would-be mass clientele. From what we saw, we fear that many present-day modernists may continue to do the same thing—designing impractical, unsociable prefabricated dwellings—while hoping against hope for a different outcome.

Yet one blaze of hope did emerge from the exhibit—from a designer who engages people where they are rather than from some self-absorbed aesthetic or computer-geek worldview. We weren't the only ones who stopped at Estudio Teddy Cruz's "Maquiladora" for the liveliness and color, and stayed for the infrastructure, policy, and community-building message. The "Maquiladora" is a scaffolding system that would allow Tijuana residents to assemble the leavings of wealthy San Diego into low-cost neighborhoods that are denser, more vertical, and more visually harmonious than what is there now. In general, having provided a scaffolding system for residents to use, "there is very little work that Cruz can or even wants to control"—the very opposite of computer-controlled fabrication. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXr9vEE7gaM)

In the end, it was Cruz's populist approach—not the show's celebration of digital fabrication—that inspired us as did the modernism of our youth. "Maquiladora" exuberantly expresses the individuality of residents within a harmonious but subtle community order. With ample spaces for residents to delight in both community and public life, "Maquiladora" reminds us of what must have been best about living in NYC's unwholesome tenements—a (very) close community.