

Thinking through Denmark:

Connected Art Histories

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From an Anglophone art-historical perspective, Scandinavia is usually seen as being on the periphery of Europe. Of course, there is a well-embedded tradition of art-historical writing within Scandinavia but much is either parochial in purview or in languages regrettably not accessible to the broader academic world. For this and other reasons there remains a tendency to see Nordic art either as peculiarly local, even indigenous, or else as a belated response to Italian, French, German or other ‘mainstream’ European trends.

The purpose of this special issue of *Art History* is to reverse that perspective, to see art as if from Scandinavia and, more specifically, Denmark, at the crossroads of Scandinavia and ‘mainland’ Europe. As a polity, Denmark has a history stretching back over a millennium and, for the vast majority of this period, it lay at the centre of an empire or, better, a succession of empires. The earliest iteration, in the late Viking period, included present-day southern Sweden, most of eastern and southern England, Norway and the province of Normandy. By the early thirteenth century, the orientation had turned to the Baltic. The Danish-German boundary was pushed southwards to the river Elbe and the

Danish crown annexed Pomerania, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. Although this was a short-lived phenomenon, Denmark would remain enmeshed in German politics for centuries to come, especially through the twin Duchies of Schleswig-Holstein, fiefs of the kings of Denmark or of their cadet dynasties up until 1864. Even so, Danish imperial aspirations were equally turned northwards. By 1395 Queen Margrethe I (1353-1412) was also the *de facto* ruler of Norway and Sweden. Although again a short-lived empire, this engendered a union of crowns with Norway that lasted until 1814, with Denmark as the decidedly senior partner. As Norway came with its own empire – Iceland, Greenland and the Shetland, Orkney, Faroe and Spitsbergen islands – this gradually turned Denmark into a major European naval power, with key roles in the Baltic, the North Sea and the North Atlantic. Then, in the early modern period, trading bases were established in Bengal, the West Indies and on the West African coast. Thus, by the eighteenth century, Denmark-Norway was a major colonial power with a decidedly naval slant, deeply engaged in the Atlantic trade including the shipping of slaves. Much of this imperial venture ended in the decades after the Napoleonic wars but the last colony, Greenland, was only granted full rights of self-government in 1979. It remains to this day in a union of crowns with Denmark and the Faroe Islands.

This long and varied imperial past, which art historians have largely ignored, makes Denmark a helpful focus for studying Nordic art and its place in the world. As this history shows, it makes no sense to see Scandinavia and its art as somehow distinct from or peripheral to the rest of Europe, as has frequently been the case. Instead, studying Denmark and its various imperial ventures surely entails art-historical approaches profoundly sensitive to social, religious, linguistic, commercial and other forms of exchange. Thus, one aim of this special issue is to explore how Danish art functioned in, by and through pan-European and, eventually, global networks.

Our eight essays, individually and collectively, will certainly introduce unfamiliar material and histories, and will challenge assumptions about Danish art and Danishness. Nevertheless, our volume as a whole is not about simply adding Denmark to the map of world art, as the discipline currently tends to conceive it – far from it. Most emphatically, we do not subscribe to the idea of a continuous and identifiable Danish art tradition. In the second essay of this issue, Anders V. Munch discusses amongst other things *The Arts of Denmark*, an exhibition staged at the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 1960, which traced a putatively unbroken line of national culture from Viking ships to modern Danish design. Munch points out that this history is still being recounted in scholarship in design history, and that it persists elsewhere across

the cultural field. Of course, we do not deny that there are local traditions, forms of belonging, habitus and life, but the use of these as a hermeneutic framework all too often presents a wilfully partial history, reiterating nationalist or essentialist myths about culture. Such thinking still needs to be challenged, particularly at a moment of intensifying nationalism around the world. This leads to our greater ambition: in this special issue, Denmark is only really a case study, a convenient workshop, for thinking more broadly about the discipline of art history and its conceptions of place and time. This is why our project is not about art *in* Denmark but rather art *through* Denmark; and beyond that, it is about what it means to do art history through Denmark. To explain what this entails in more detail, we turn briefly to two case studies.

Art through Denmark: Albert Eckhout

The first of these is a painting currently held in the National Museum of Denmark (*plate 1*). This picture constitutes a helpful focal point for our argument precisely because it is not obviously Danish, at least not according to any conventional art-historical forms of categorisation. It depicts a West African woman and a child and was painted in 1641 by the Frisian artist Albert Eckhout (*c.* 1610-1665) for his patron, Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen (1604-1679), then governor-general of Dutch Brazil. The painting has been interrogated in detail by a number of scholars, perhaps

most thoroughly and perceptively by Rebecca Brienen.¹ Amongst other things, Brienen has pointed out how the hat and basket born by the woman are modelled on Congolese or Angolan artefacts. Meanwhile, the exotic fruits in the basket and the surrounding landscape reference the Brazilian coast and, to boot, the woman has a European clay pipe tucked into her waistband.² Moreover, the size and full-length format of the painting – together with African woman's pose, her hand on the head of the child – has some kinship with a set of conventions pertaining to early modern European portraits of high-ranking women. In this context, it is worth noting the earrings: both of the figures in Eckhout's painting wear the pearl-drops favoured by fashionable European women for most of the seventeenth century. In short, the picture is a conjunction, a bringing together of three different cultural and natural entities – West Africa, South America and Europe – albeit as visualised by one male European painter. This is reinforced by the fact that the painting was not made in Brazil but rather in the Netherlands, although the artist used sketches made *in situ*.³

That Eckhout's painting is best understood as a conjunction is further supported by an early copy – or rather an interpretation – in watercolour of Eckhout's painting or, possibly, of his original sketch, by the German notary and cartographer Zacharias Wagener (1614-1668), who also served as a butler to the governor-general of Dutch Brazil (*plate 2*). Here, the status of the West African woman

is much clearer. She is a slave, somebody's property, as indicated by the brand above her right breast. It may well be that she belonged to the governor-general, Wagener's and Eckhout's employer, as the brand is a crowned monogram consisting of an I and an M, which fits with Johan Maurits.⁴ Wagener's drawing is clearly a European statement about the ownership of a West African woman forcibly transported to South America.

In contrast, Eckhout's painting has no such clarity. First, although it has the format of a high-status portrait, the woman seems generic, more of a type than an actual individual. At the same time, the painting insinuates the woman's status as a chattel, in part through the suggestively positioned cob of corn held by the male child, an obvious evocation of ready sexual availability, and in part through her stark nakedness from the waist up, which helps to subvert the high-status format. But it remains a moot point as to whether she really is a slave and thus wholly open to sexualised fantasies of possession. It would be wise here to have recourse to Virginie Spenlé's perceptive phrasing; for her, Eckhout's painting is an 'unlikely combination of studied allegory and empirical observation.'⁵ This is helpful, because allegory is never straightforward, always about something other than itself. Overall, then, this is a work of art that defies uncomplicated description, even as it stages and allegorises a profoundly discomfiting colonial encounter.

As already suggested, some excellent scholarly work has been done recently on Eckhout's painting. For example, Brienen's detailed analysis has much to commend it, not least because she is sensitively attuned to the undercurrents of racial, sexual and class-based violence that trouble this ostensibly serene but in fact deeply disturbing picture. But scholars like Brienen focus mainly on Eckhout's experiences as a court painter to the Dutch governor-general in Brazil. They have little to say about how the painting ended up in Copenhagen and about what it might be doing there. As is customary in art history, the moment of production remains the privileged point of analysis; it is how we habitually anchor works of art in time and place.

That, in our view, is a problem. Eckhout's painting is more than a picture of a possibly enslaved, probably trafficked, partially anonymised and certainly uncomfortably sexualised black woman. As if that were not enough, the picture itself is also a transported object. It forms part of a set of twenty-three paintings of Brazilian motifs given in 1654 by Johan Maurits to King Frederik III of Denmark-Norway (1609-1670), who used them to decorate a whole room in his newly established *Kunstkammer* in Copenhagen. The making of that gift, in turn, has to be understood as a political act: in the wake of the Thirty Years' War, Johan Maurits, something of a soldier of fortune, had become the governor-general of a group of territories now under the jurisdiction of Brandenburg-Prussia but

abutting Lower Saxony. In this period, the kings of Denmark-Norway were also princes of the Lower-Saxon circle of the Holy Roman Empire and, as such, took a close interest in this area.

As is usually the case with diplomatic gifts, Johan Maurits's Brazilian paintings, with their seamless combination of empiricism, exotic sexual allure and allegory, were likely meant to draw Frederik III into a complex power-relationship of mutual respect, obligation and co-operation.⁶ Ostensibly acts of homage from a minor nobleman to a reigning monarch, they were also investments – or perhaps one should say bribes – made in the expectation of political gain. So the painting of the transported black woman is not just a transported object, it is also transactional, intrinsically about exchange, whether commercial, political or social.

To be explicit, in the early modern period alone, Eckhout's painting can be related to at least six distinct transactions: the kidnapping, transport and sale of a West African woman; her subsequent depiction by Eckhout for his patron Johan Maurits, possibly her owner; and then, finally, his gifting of the image to Frederik III, as well as its journey to Copenhagen. If anything, the painting ought to be defined as an ambiguous but also sexualised object of exchange. It may be an allegory, but if so, it is one trading in and on desire.

In Copenhagen, the painting of the West-African woman hung in the royal *Kunstkammer* for more than a century and a half,

until 1825. In one of the earlier inventories, it is noted that Eckhout's whole set of Brazilian paintings decorated what is merely described as an antechamber, situated between the 'East India chamber' and the 'cabinet of medals'.⁷ So the painting remained, if not fully transactional, then at least liminal, interstitial. As part of the set, it served as one spatial and conceptual link between a room with a display of exotic objects from both the East and the West Indies, and another, containing European objects of both political status and straightforward monetary value. This, at least, had the virtue of drawing attention to the painting's complex 'inbetweenness', to the fact that it is a conjunction, combining direct observation with European pictorial habits pertaining to allegory, and to the sexualisation of women. On the other hand, at some point somebody added the mendacious inscription 'fe[cit] Bresil' [made in Brazil] to Eckhout's pictures, thus increasing the sense that this image is first and foremost rooted in Brazilian reality.⁸

Even so, during this part of its life-cycle, Eckhout's painting was not really about Brazil as such, neither about the maker nor original patron. Instead, in the royal *Kunstammer* it staked a claim to the world-encompassing masculine prowess of the Danish-Norwegian monarchy and, especially, to the relationship of that monarchy to a specific nexus of powers encompassing the Nassau-Siegen dynasty as well as the East and West Indies, Brazil, the

Netherlands, Brandenburg-Prussia and Lower Saxony. Such claims could only have been intensified as Danish-Norwegian kings and merchants grew rich on their colonial investments, including those in the West-African slave trade. And, as was often the case, these claims were at least in part staked through pictures of semi-naked, sexualised women.

Then, in 1825 the painting became part of the newly founded National Museum of Denmark, where it was redefined as a work of ethnography. That it was also understood as such is clear from Alexander von Humboldt's 1847 description of Eckhout's works in the National Museum as 'examples of physiognomic representation from nature'.⁹ From that moment to the present day, the painting of the black woman and child has formed part of the Ethnographic Collections; it has not been classified as a work of art for nearly two centuries. In many ways, this has radically changed the nature of Eckhout's picture, from a conjoining and interstitial object of currency to something masquerading as empirical observation; this may tally with the mendacious inscription, but not the actual pictorial format. As such, Eckhout's work now proclaims the political prowess of the Danish state, its ability to command and preserve historical and cultural resources from across the globe – this being the rather dubious line of argument pursued by many European museums to whitewash their colonial heritage. That the museum now registers a certain ambivalence about the whole set of

objects is evident in the stridently hyperbolic claim on its website: ‘Eckhout’s paintings are a unique Brazilian testimonial and play an exceptional role in Brazilian perceptions of identity’.¹⁰ If that is so, why are the paintings in Denmark at all? And why does the National Museum of Denmark think it has a right to serve as a guardian of Brazilian identity? It is interesting, in this context, that Eckhout’s picture of the West African woman is not on display at the time of writing. It can be found neither with his other paintings in the Ethnographic galleries of the National Museum, where there is not even a removal slip acknowledging its existence, nor in the section that ostensibly revivifies the royal *Kunstkammer*, where the whole set would surely sit more comfortably, nor is it anywhere near the excellent ‘Voices from the Colonies’ exhibit, where it could also play a useful role. Even today, the transported black woman in the transactional and interstitial painting is, perhaps, just too powerful a reminder of colonial violence, especially but not exclusively of the sexual kind. That is to say, the painting must perforce still work as a kind of currency, only now so troublingly powerful that it has to be disavowed. The ambiguously present allegory of trading in desire has become conspicuous by its absence.

In sum, Eckhout’s painting begins to demonstrate how art travels to and through Denmark, and also the frequently perturbing economies of exchange, desire and power at stake when tracing

such journeys. This is why the present volume cannot subscribe to comfortable and comforting notions of identity and nationhood.

Denmark through Art: Aka Høegh

The task we have set ourselves for this special issue goes beyond challenging such notions, although it is important to do so. Our goal is also to understand how, in a sense, Denmark travels through art. That is, rather than thinking of Denmark, or indeed any particular place, as a fixed node in a network – as the stable point marshalling the movement of objects and their conceptual freight – it makes more sense to conceive of Denmark itself as mobile.

An excellent example of this is the project *Stone and Man* by Aka Høegh (b. 1947), which also offers some lessons for art-historical practice about what artefacts can do when they are not made to serve as illustrations of pre-formed historical narratives (plate 3). *Stone and Man* is a set of sculptural works in the Greenlandic town of Qaqortoq made by eighteen artists from Nordic countries between 1993 and 1994. Together, these works constitute a kind of sculpture park or art gallery in public space, including both free-standing objects and works made from and in the landscape. Such a straightforward description, however, underplays Høegh's ambitions in organising the project. She invited sculptors from Iceland, Norway, Denmark, the Faroe Islands,

Sweden, Finland and Greenland to create works, using local materials, which might redefine the space of the town and its use.

In *Stone and Man*, it is not Copenhagen, the former colonial metropolis, that lies at the centre of the art world – or indeed of any world – but instead Qaqortoq. The gathering of artists from across the Nordic region reconfigures that particular network of people, institutions, and nations. So, if this special issue, in part, considers Denmark as an overlooked yet also troubling colonial centre, it also explores how that centrality is itself contingent; in Høegh's project a different centre for Nordic art is decisively asserted. That is clear enough. What may be less clear is how this relates to the idea of mobility. Indeed, it may seem at first glance that *Stone and Man* is the very opposite of Eckhout's painting. Rather than objects that have moved around the globe, and which draw together north and south, white and black, the sculptures in *Stone and Man* are fixed, often immovable, and embedded in the space and culture of Greenland. In particular, in the case of the works by Høegh and Lone Larsen (b. 1955), a Danish-born artist working in Sweden, the sculptures are literally part of the landscape (*plate 4*). This may produce a different map of centre and periphery but, in doing that, is this not the very opposite of mobility? Does it not make sense to stick to art-historical orthodoxy and engage with the sculptures from the perspective of place of production?

This, however, would be mistaken. Again, it would demonstrate the limitations of the art-historical insistence on the primacy of place and date of production, as well as the limits on how place and date are conceptualised.¹¹ For in *Stone and Man*, movement (and particularly movement *through* Denmark) is everywhere. The viewer is asked not only to consider the single point of each sculpture *in situ*, but also the journeys, temporal and spatial, embodied in the objects. There are, as one would expect, connections with Denmark, most significantly the Baltic island of Bornholm, the location of important granite quarries and, consequently, a centre for stone carving. Bornholm was where Høegh learned to carve, working with the sculptor Svend Wiig Hansen (1922-1997). Yet it is important to move beyond the narrative of her training and her making of a reputation in Denmark, to think instead about the ways in which her memories of Danish granite are now somehow embedded in the Greenlandic rock. Indeed, Høegh wanted her chosen artists for the project to ‘see what their imagination could elicit from Greenland’s primeval rock’.¹² Her own contribution to *Stone and Man* – and the very title of the project is symptomatic of this – reveals the finding of the artwork in the landscape itself through bodily action, the act of carving, the physical heft of hammer on chisel on rock.

Thus, a sense of embodiment, of individual experience, underpins her desire to connect Greenland to the world, or, perhaps

more accurately, to have the world extend from Qaqortoq. Høegh has explicitly stated her wish to make Greenland part of ‘the world community’, no longer a nation shaped by its peripheral status or colonial history. In this regard, she sees art as having a different function from other forms of communication technology, such as television, radio, internet or telephone.¹³ For her, these do not generate participation in an embodied manner; hence, the importance of the fixity of the artwork in the landscape itself, and the role of the body in making and viewing. Walking around Qaqortoq, inhabiting the same space as the art, has an affinity with other experiences described in the essays in this special issue: for example, that of the early modern visitor to Frederiksborg or of Nanna Dubois Buhl in the West Indies. In each case, the moment of phenomenological encounter is a transaction with historicity, a moment when the concrete is set against the flux of temporality.

One can find similar traces of movement elsewhere in *Stone and Man*: in the participation of Jun-Ichi Inoue (1948-2009), a Japanese sculptor working in Bornholm; in the use by Örn Thornsteinsson (b. 1948) of the pierced form, derived from Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore; and the looking back to Greenlandic traditions and precursors by the Icelandic artist Páll Guðmundsson (b. 1959) in the rune stone *Eric the Red* (plate 5). These works, too, are conjunctive and transactional, but instead of the hideous exchange of bodies in slavery, they manifest an exchange between

human and stone, and between past and present. They demand that we think beyond traditional notions of 'influence' or of paradigmatic styles being taken up by artists in peripheral locations. Instead, we should consider how these works, while made by particular artists in a Greenlandic town, have also been sculpted by global mobility, by the world moving through art.

Like the Eckhout painting, the sculptures embody acts rather than simply points of connection. It is helpful to note here that Høegh describes driftwood, which she often uses in her practice, as exemplary of this. She sees it as equivalent to Christianity, as something that has travelled across the sea to Greenland. Thus, this very material embodies and symbolises movement, and the work produced draws together the contingent and the intentional. Clearly, we ought to think of art history not simply as a chronicle, as moving from year to year, but as a palimpsest, where the works bear witness to this moving *through*, of the travels and mobilities in which they are implicated.

Indeed, the very town of Qaqortoq is, just like Eckhout's painting, a constantly shifting object. While formally founded as a Danish colony in 1775, and at that time named Julianehaab, the settlement has a much longer history, dating to the arrival of peoples from present-day Canada five thousand years ago. The remains of early cultures, such as the paleo-Eskimo Dorset culture (named after Cape Dorset in Nunavut), the proto-Inuit Thule culture

of north-eastern Asiatic origin, and Norse cultures from Europe, thus shared the space with the colonial buildings, originally made in Denmark and then shipped to Greenland for assembly. The transformation of Danish Julianehaab into Greenlandic Qaqortoq, with the ending of colonialism in 1953 and the arrival of home rule in 1979, also features here. In this case, identifying the place of production can be no more than a starting point. Høegh's concern for Qaqortoq's long history is evident in her desire for her collaborators to make 'modern petroglyphs', and that the ensuing whole should serve as what she calls an 'eternity project', positing the idea that the town always was and always will be a centre in its own right.¹⁴

The constitution in *Stone and Man* of a different centre and a different temporality (ones in which Denmark is displaced) is also a question of orientation. This is not simply the Nordic, but the North. What is required here is historical thinking that moves beyond a concern for mapping, with the concomitant marking out of these artists' domain as the Nordic, towards an analysis of mobility that locates this as the North, one of many points through which things and people move. Therefore, while it is important to reverse the telescope and look at art *from* Scandinavia, this is in itself a homogenising gesture and one that, while at times historically convenient, needs to be opened to criticism. The reorientation that *Stone and Man* enacts is very different from, say, the world as

mapped by Viking activity or that generated by the international success of Danish design.

There is inevitably a political aspect to this, not least because of Greenland's post-colonial status. This is not the place to embark on a detailed history of Danish colonialism, but one of the pressing questions in the history of Denmark and its empire is: was there ever decolonisation in Greenland? Or did the lessons of colonialism, learning to be Danish under a putatively benevolent rule, prevent Greenlanders from ever breaking free? Høegh is not an explicitly political artist, although she did participate in a performance outside Copenhagen Town Hall in the late 1970s with the radical performance group *Solvognen* (named after the *Sun Chariot*, an important early Bronze Age object in the National Museum). This performance re-enacted the Massacre at Wounded Knee and so connected indigenous American peoples to indigenous Greenlanders. This connective gesture enacted another reorientation of space, westward from Denmark through Greenland to North America and beyond, and of time, conjoining the histories of different native peoples. *Stone and Man* is not overtly radical and yet, like Eckhout's painting, it clearly alerts us to the political implications of this special issue.

Art History through Denmark

The two case studies discussed here, works of art by a dead Frisian and by a living Greenlander and her Nordic colleagues, have been chosen deliberately to challenge naïve conceptions of Danish art and Danish art history. Of course, Eckhout's painting is but one example of the kind of disturbing provenance and conflicted history of display that pertains to many artefacts in European museums. In a similar vein, Høegh's project might be seen as a pointedly local challenge to the globalising trends of contemporary art, as played out in the world of biennales, superstar artists, and high-theoretical critical discourse. Indeed, many of the essays in this special issue are concerned with distinctly local matters, with works of art or architecture made in Denmark for Danish audiences. At face value, this might seem to reinforce the framework of the national and, in the case of Denmark, validate a notion of Danish art as no more than a peripheral manifestation of major European developments, or as a Nordic detour from the highway of cultural history. But, as this special issue of *Art History* contends, in shifting our attention from art *in* Denmark to art *through* Denmark, the local becomes a means of challenging rather than affirming such frameworks.

This returns us neatly to the problem at the heart of this volume: how can we think about global art history through Denmark, and Danish art history through the global? Addressing these questions is necessary if we are to challenge the sidelining of Denmark, and it involves considering in a little more detail the

specific models of art history that both produce and emerge from such marginalisations. In recent decades, global history has been the most significant development to emerge in historical thinking. It is a complex and contested field, taking many different forms. What underpins all global history, though, is that it stands in opposition to national history; that is, in a discipline that has been shaped by and overwhelmingly focused on the nation-state, global historians choose instead to consider exchanges, flows and movements, and cosmopolitan interconnections.¹⁵ The stranglehold of national history is, if anything, even greater in art history than in other historical fields. Indeed, despite many decades of critique, our discipline continues to depend on the old taxonomy of national schools, explicitly and implicitly, whether in museums, in the market, in journals and university departments, or in professional notions of expertise.

Yet a proper turn to the global does not necessarily entail a wholesale rejection of national history. Indeed, one might reasonably ask how this would ever be possible. As Richard Drayton and David Motadel have pointed out, ‘global historians are often keenly anchored in national history’.¹⁶ Rather than an eschewal of the nation, global history asks how we might move beyond conceptions of the nation-state as a stable framework for historical action. Thinking globally – ‘through’ rather than ‘in’ – provides a means of understanding better what that nation is, how it

emerged, and how fundamentally unstable it is, politically and culturally. The endlessly shifting borders of Denmark, geographically, politically and conceptually, as sketched at the outset of this introduction, make it an ideal case study for such inquiry.

One of the most influential models for global history has been Sanjay Subrahmanyam's notion of 'connected histories', which identify the interaction 'between the local and regional level on the one hand (what we could call the micro) and a supra-regional level that can sometimes be global on the other hand (what we could call the macro)'.¹⁷ These are not histories that directly link nations, as in accounts of, say, the effect of French Impressionism on Danish artists: Danish artists training in Paris and returning home with a style that mimics French avant-gardism, along with displays of French art in Copenhagen, and so on. That story would connect France and Denmark, and would track journeys made by people and paintings between the two, along with accounts of how French painting was judged by Danish viewers. However, in such a model, the two nation-states themselves are taken for granted, assumed to be fixed points between which things and people move. For Subrahmanyam, and many other global historians, connectedness is a rather more complex matter. The national is not a stable starting point, but emerges from the interaction of the local and the trans-regional. As is evident from some of the essays in this collection,

that trans-regional level may be cultural rather than geographical; that is, it might lie in royalty and status, or in religion, or in the practice of hunting. Either way, in Jeremy Adelman's neat formulation, nations are seen by global historians as 'more the products and less the producers of global interactions'.¹⁸ Nations too are produced by the processes of bricolage, translation and discovery. As Subrahmanyam points out: 'For the historian who is willing to scratch below the surface of his [sic] sources, nothing turns out to be quite what it seems to be in terms of fixity and local rootedness'.¹⁹

It is important to remember here that global history is not only about large-scale movements, such as great voyages, trading across continents, or structural political formations that operate everywhere. Global history is also concerned with the small scale and the local; indeed, it is at the level of micro-history that its advantages may be seen most clearly. Connectedness is acutely apparent in what Daniel Bell calls the 'small spaces'. As he argues:

'Small spaces' are not simply spaces that feel the *impact* of global forces. In some cases, they serve as profoundly intense, dynamic laboratories of change in their own right, and the processes of change that occur in them are much more than simple

reactions to the global forces that impinge
on them.²⁰

This process is certainly evident in the small spaces of our two case studies, Eckhout's painting and Høegh's sculptural project, and in those discussed in many of the following essays, including a church in Jutland, an avant-garde magazine, and a settlement on the west coast of Greenland. In each case, the analysis moves beyond a unidirectional history, one of global impact on the local, and explores the processes of change as identified by Bell.

This question of scale has a second crucial aspect. Discussing Subrahmyan's work, Caroline Douki and Philippe Minard indicate that to write such a connected history 'requires operating at the level of individuals, of actors and their strategies'.²¹ It is here, perhaps, that art history can make, and has already made, a significant impact. For we often operate not only at the level of the individual person, but also the individual work of art and the experiences that it generates. In tracing conjunctions in objects, and using objects to identify conjunctions, our discipline still depends much too heavily on two ideas: influence and similarity. Michael Baxandall brilliantly demolished the former, while Nelson Goodman's too rarely read discussion of the latter lays bare the profound problems of relying on such an untheorised notion.²² Accordingly, the eight essays collected in this special issue work

with alternatives, be it theoretical frameworks such as magical thinking and cultural translation, more complex models of exchange in medieval Europe and eighteenth-century globalisation, or critiques of the adequacy and conception of certain stylistic categories.

In this sense, we are working against the idea that artworks are fixed in time and space. While art history has, in recent decades, paid far more attention to the circulation of objects, to their reception in new contexts, and to historiographical study, there is still a sense that the place of production is an unproblematic datum, a stable point of reference from which more speculative interpretations can be launched. Eckhout's painting is but one example. As already suggested, much of the scholarship on this artwork comes with a particular blindspot, a lack of concern for anything other than the moment of making. Any subsequent history of such objects tends to disappear from view, and thus their increasing complexity and the significance of this is effectively suppressed. Moreover, as we argue here, whether explicitly mobile, as in the case of the painting by Eckhout, or site-specific and apparently fixed beyond doubt, as in Høegh's project in Qaqortoq, the place of production itself is created by trans-national forces.

Conjunctions in art are not only spatial but also temporal. A concern for overlapping temporalities also runs through this volume, from religious encounters in Lutheran rituals and spaces, to

the experiences of the post-colonial Dane in the West Indies. This points toward another of art history's often unquestioned assumptions: that the moment of making is a fixed reference point that reveals the essence or truth of an object. Again, certain art-historical trends, such as histories of reception, museums and collecting, have mapped the journeys of objects and their re-interpretation in different contexts; but, as with place of production, the moment of making is given a privileged status against which other meanings are then calibrated. Different temporalities, and temporal experiences, are too often supposed to be supplementary to the authentic historical time of manufacture. But, for example, it would be counterproductive to circumscribe Eckhout and Høegh's activities by their locations in the Netherlands and Greenland, and the dates of production of the artworks in question, 1641 and 1993-94. Such a move risks suppressing the extraordinary historicity of both works, their profound relationships to a colonial past and to the cultures that both preceded and followed it.

In a similar vein, in the present volume, Lloyd de Beer's layered analysis of Hornslet church offers an exemplary account of how temporalities supervene: from the phenomenological moment of experience, through liturgical and ritual time, historical time, dynastic time, to death and eternity. While the moment and place of making are part of any object's history, and certainly not to be ignored by art historians, these things are, as Subrahmyan would

claim, not quite what they appear to be. The point here is not that Subrahmanyam's work is the overarching theoretical and methodological template for our special issue. Indeed, quite the reverse: our authors have a wide range of theoretical commitments and methodological processes, and there are marked differences in how we work. This is intentional; from the outset we wanted to address our core problem with a sense of pluralism, rather than prescribing a single approach. Nevertheless, the eight essays gathered here share a set of questions: about the interaction of the micro and the macro, and how these are condensed or crystallised in objects and experiences; and about how to offer a corrective to the idea of the Nordic as a belated form of European mainstream, or as supplementary, a merely local variation.

In the first essay, Anne Ring Petersen discusses video works by Dubois Buhl and Jeanette Ehlers, which in different ways mount postcolonial critiques of Danish colonialism in the West Indies. The two artists address this history in strikingly contrasting ways, not only in terms of their chosen subject matter but also in political terms. Thus Ring Petersen reveals that, rather than a consensus view of this dark episode in Danish history, there is an unfinished and contested debate about its legacy. The present is not the end point at which flux has been stabilised, and the vicissitudes of the past resolved; rather, to borrow a metaphor from Margit Thøfner's essay, it is a place from which we might look back to see the loose

threads and rough edges of the colonial legacy, not the tidy seams of a teleological national history. To emphasise this, Ring Petersen ends with a discussion of the post-migrant world, the point at which the meeting of local experience and supra-national mobility is most acutely and urgently evident at present.

In the second essay, Munch examines one of the towering figures of twentieth-century design, Poul Henningsen, and his shifting attitudes towards cubism. Originally, Henningsen had subscribed to the idea of Danish exceptionalism in its relationship to modernism: that is, that Denmark has its own distinctive design ethos, and one that had extended continuously from the Vikings to the present (a narrative that this special issue aims to undermine). But he changed his view in 1930, and aligned his thinking with internationalism. As with 'small spaces', this apparently minor incident opens up larger questions about the national and the global in design history, and with implications for other historical fields. For it is more than a mere shift in allegiance, as if cubism just came to 'influence' Henningsen and others, allowing them to renounce their Danishness and catch up with the cutting edge of European avant-garde art. As Munch points out, the exceptionalism to which designers then, as now, subscribed was in fact a 'self-exoticisation', the crafting of a Danish identity for foreign audiences, subsequently reabsorbed at home. Meanwhile, the turn to internationalism was more than stylistic mimicry, involving instead a translation of

international tendencies for a national context. As such, Henningsen's changing view of cubism constitutes a very clear example of Denmark as product, rather than producer, of global interactions; or, perhaps better, it can be seen as engaged in a continuous circuit of product and producer, one in which the national and the international are forever embedded in each other.

The history of colonialism and global trade, which underpins Ring Petersen's analysis of contemporary artworks, is addressed further in the third and fourth essays, by Michael Hatt and Josefine Baark respectively. Hatt discusses the many and rich complexities pertaining to the making and circulation of pictures in Greenland, the largest Danish colony, in the mid-nineteenth century. Hinrich Johannes Rink (1819-1893), the Danish governor, promoted picture-making as a means of salvaging the indigenous culture that colonial activity was destroying, but, in introducing new visual forms, he was actually a key-player in a process whereby Greenlandic culture was translated into a new colonial idiom. Strikingly, the images that he helped to circulate within Greenland depicted the globe, from Napoleon in Egypt to Arab, Maori and Chinese cultures. These global images were brought to bear on the small and local spaces of the Greenlandic colonies, enabling the world to be viewed from the Arctic. That world then provided a framework through which indigenous people could identify as

Greenlandic, a process of self-translation that both challenged and reinforced colonial power.

A different type of conjunction structures Baark's examination of an Indian palampore, an eighteenth-century textile meant for Danish royal consumption. Her analysis moves beyond a straightforward colonial history linking Denmark and Tranquebar, the Danish trading post in India. Baark's interpretative framework is provided not by other Indian objects but by chinoiserie, specifically by different kinds of chinoiserie in three royal interiors in and around Copenhagen. Thus she reveals a complex matrix of 'associative values', associations that construed difference, as played out in cross-cultural trade and collecting. But such associative values could also affirm sameness; in this case, the trope of hunting depicted on the palampore and its environments served as a transnational marker of shared status, conjoining elites in Europe and Asia. As she shows, the meanings of the palampore cannot be pinned down to any particular place and time, but shift as it moved through changing iterations of the local and the transnational.

The fifth essay, by Thøfner, presents a number of precious objects used by Anna of Denmark-Norway (1574-1619), queen of Scotland and England, and her mother, Sophia of Mecklenburg-Güstrow (1557-1631). Examining these objects, which include a medieval chalice and paten, and a pair of earrings, Thøfner

demonstrates how they acted in and upon the fluid polity of Denmark. But she also makes a broader theoretical and methodological argument, proposing that 'magical thinking' be taken seriously in art-historical inquiry. That is, we should pay attention to structures of thought and belief often suppressed by modern rationality, in order to recognise the categories and experiences by which historical subjects understood themselves. In Thøfner's analysis, such magical thinking reveals fluidity as a foundational quality of the world, and of people and things in it; it is not merely a temporary rupture in the ordered unfolding of history.

The idea of transnational status rather than national style as the framework for cultural analysis is at the heart of our sixth essay, Kristoffer Neville's discussion of Frederiksborg, the castle of Christian IV (1577-1648). Challenging conventional categories of art-historical inquiry, Neville argues that this building should not be analysed in terms of national or regional architectural styles, but through the typology of royal architecture. Such royalness is characterised by its materials and the consequent visual and spatial experiences that they engendered. Indeed, he also pays careful attention to the experience of the visitor, and the ways in which royal architecture as a typology is in part created by this; again, the individual is the point where the local and supra-regional coalesce. Rather than a backwater, out of step with, say, Italianate

developments in architecture, Frederiksborg is instead presented here as exemplary of early modern royal architecture, subsuming national differences under the category of kingship.

Just as Frederiksborg is revealed as a centre of royal architecture in Neville's analysis, so de Beer discusses Hornslet church in Jutland in the seventh essay not as peripheral or provincial, but as a centre around which systems of secular and religious beliefs circulate. He examines the church interior, the main focus of which is a re-cycled alabaster altarpiece, and what it reveals about the shift from Catholicism to Lutheranism in sixteenth-century Denmark. Alongside the materiality of the interior, de Beer explores the temporalities – experiential, dynastic, historical and eschatological – from the phenomenology of the individual's viewing of the alabaster to the Christian expectation of eternity, all moving through and overlapping in the church. As this shows, the shift to Lutheranism was not a simple replacement of one belief system by another; instead, it was a complex process of transformation in material and conceptual terms, a process in which the church does not simply register pan-European historical forces but, to use Bell's formulation, becomes a 'dynamic laboratory of change'.

The eighth and final essay, Sandy (T. A.) Heslop's analysis of the object known as *Gunhild's Cross*, is also about transformation, although over a longer period of one hundred and fifty years or so.

Focusing on an ivory cross from the early twelfth century, Heslop eschews a straightforwardly stylistic framework, and instead explores a complex set of cultural and political shifts, not least the change from Scandinavian paganism to European Christianity. Thus, like de Beer's essay, his analysis does not pin down the object's meaning through a stable sense of style and place or of religion, but instead discusses the cross as negotiating, and embedded in, political and theological upheaval. Denmark may have been the setting for the making and use of this artwork, but it neatly embodies the transformation of the national by the international, and *vice versa*.

Finally, in his afterword, Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann reflects on what it means to think of 'art through Denmark' in the broadest sense. He presents three brief case studies involving Danish entanglements in Asia, Africa and Europe, and uses these to demonstrate how the analysis of single objects can refute the naïve orthodoxy of the nation and its artistic geography: that the place of Denmark must not be constrained by such frames as Scandinavia or European hegemony or Nordic art. This requires a truly global perspective on Denmark (and by extension any other nation) in the world, a perspective that resists conceptual generalisations. Crucially, this involves a persistent and historically informed questioning of what exactly nationhood is, of how it is constituted and reworked within global exchanges rather than a being a given, a

precondition for these exchanges. Kaufmann's afterword thus affirms the approaches presented in this special issue but also alerts us to how we must develop these and, in the process, extend our understanding of agency, power and materiality in the geography of art.

As all of this indicates, the 'through' of our title is operative in each of the eight essays and the afterword, albeit inflected by the particular positions of each author. Each simultaneously describes and destabilises nationhood, offering a 'connected history' of Danish art, architecture and design via a range of theoretical frameworks, from post-migration, self-exoticisation, cultural translation and associative values to magical thinking, finding new typologies, or the history of experience. Each essay presents Denmark as neither exceptional nor marginal but exemplary in the way that its history articulates the conjunctive sense of 'through' and not 'in', and what this suggests for art-historical practice.

If the essays in this volume suggest ways of undertaking that task individually, however, they offer a yet stronger argument as a group. If we are to think seriously about flux and instability, and the view *across* history, we should perhaps think collaboratively, examining the spatial and temporal continuities and discontinuities of the *longue durée*. And this begins to explain the chronological range and ordering of our special issue: we are working backwards from the present, in a deliberate reversal of conventional

chronology, and covering nearly a millennium. In part, this is to underscore that a concern for the global requires a corollary concern for the very nature of temporality. This does absolutely not mean repeating familiar stories of national distinctiveness, such as the impossibly coherent account leading from the Vikings to Danish Modern. Instead, such easy narratives need to be disrupted, made discontinuous and, crucially, globalised. This can only be achieved by collaborative work across historical specialisms. Therefore, with this special issue, we want to challenge the idea of narrowly conceived art-historical expertise and, with it, the increasing amnesia about the past that governs much writing on contemporary art (and, one might add, much thinking about contemporary politics).

In conclusion, using Denmark as a particularly useful case-study, our aim with this special issue is to stimulate more and better debates about what is entailed in 'global art history'. We contend that it cannot be confined to specific places or moments in time nor can it continue to operate with standard definitions of what constitutes 'centre' and 'periphery'. To state it somewhat polemically: an art history that operates with clearly delimited temporal and geographical specialisms – such as British Modernism, Ming China or Central European Baroque, for example – needs to open itself up to a deeper engagement with connectedness, with conjunctions, and to destabilise notions of

fixity and rootedness. At a moment when the national and the global are themselves profoundly unstable, and when the cosmopolitan is increasingly called into question, we need to learn how to study objects and phenomena that are in a constant state of flux, one of radical spatial, temporal and experiential instability.

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Notes

¹ Rebecca P. Brienens, 'Albert Eckhout's *African Woman and Child* (1641): Ethnographic Portraiture, Slavery and the New World Subject', in *Slave Portraiture in the Atlantic World*, ed. Agnes Lugo-Ortiz and Angela Rosenthal, Cambridge, 2013, 229-255.

² Brienens, 'Albert Eckhout's *African Woman and Child*', 247.

³ Virginie Spenlé, "'Savagery' and 'Civilization': Dutch Brazil in the Kunst- und Wunderkammer", *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art*, 3: 2, July 2011, DOI: 10.5092/jhna.2011.3.2.3. See especially paragraphs 6 and 12 and notes 10 and 27.

⁴ Brienens, 'Albert Eckhout's *African Woman and Child*', 241.

⁵ Spenlé, "'Savagery' and 'Civilization'", paragraph 6.

⁶ Spenlé, "'Savagery' and 'Civilization'", paragraphs 17-18.

⁷ For a helpful overview of the history and organisation of the royal *Kunstkammer* in Copenhagen, see Jørgen Hein, ‘Learning versus status?: Kunstkammer or Schatzkammer?’, *Journal of the History of Collections*, 14: 2, November 2002, 177–192.

⁸ Spénlé, “‘Savagery’ and ‘Civilization’”, paragraph 12.

⁹ ‘Beispiele physiognomischer Naturdarstellung’. Spénlé, “‘Savagery’ and ‘Civilization’”, paragraph 23 and note 59.

¹⁰ ‘... Eckhouts malerier et enestående brasiliansk vidnesbyrd og spiller en helt særlig rolle for den brasilianske identitetsforståelse’. <https://natmus.dk/historisk-viden/verden/syd-og-mellemamerika/eckhout-malerierne/> (last visited 9 September 2019). Intriguingly, this text is not translated into English or Spanish, unlike other parts of this website. Perhaps there is a desire to shield international visitors, including those from Brazil, from such dubious claims.

¹¹ Methods for accounting for the spatial and temporal mobility of objects have emerged, most importantly perhaps in archaeology and anthropology. Elizabeth Rodini has used the former’s differentiation of ‘provenience’ and ‘provenance’, meaning the archaeological find site and the documented history, in order to address fixity and displacement: Rodini, ‘Mobile Things: On the Origins and the Meanings of Levantine Objects in Early Modern Venice’, *Art History*, 41:2, March 2018, 246-265. In anthropology, the notion of the ‘object itinerary’ as a mobile alternative to the ‘object biography’ has been propounded in, for example: Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie, eds, *Things in Motion: Object Itineraries in Anthropological Practice*, Santa Fe, 2015, pp. 3-20; Hans Peter Hahn and Hadas Weiss, ‘Introduction: Biographies, Travels and Itineraries of Things,’ in Hahn and Weiss, eds, *Mobility, Meaning and the Transformations of Things*, Oxford and Oakville, 2013, pp. 1-14.

¹² ‘Se hvad deres fantasi kunne lokke frem af Grønlands urfjeld’. Ivars Silis, *Sten og Menneske*, Nordisk Ministerråd, 1995, p. 9.

¹³ Aqqaluk Lyngé, *Inuunermi aqqusaarnek: Aka Høegh-ip silarsuaanut alakkalaaneq. – Life's Guest: Aka Høegh's Universe*, Nuuk: Atuakkiorfik, 1998, p. 73.

¹⁴ 'evighedsprojekt'. Silars, *Sten og Menneske*, p. 56.

¹⁵ For an invigorating recent debate about the nature and future of global history, see: Richard Drayton and David Motadel, 'Discussion: the futures of global history', *Journal of Global History*, 13:1, March 2018, 1-21, which is followed by responses from Jeremy Adelman and Daniel Bell. For an important art-historical discussion, see: Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, 'Introduction: Reintroducing Circulations: Historiography and the Project of Global Art History' and Thoma DaCosta Kaufmann, 'Reflections on World Art History' in Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, eds., *Circulations in the global history of art*, Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2015, 1-22, 23-45.

¹⁶ Drayton and Motadel, 'Discussion: the futures of global history', 3.

¹⁷ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories: Notes towards a reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia', *Modern Asian Studies*, 31:3, July 1997, 745. See also: Sanjay Subrhmnyam, 'Par-delà l'incommensurabilité: pour une histoire connectée des empires aux temps modernes', *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine*, no. 54-4bis, 2007, 34-53.

¹⁸ Jeremy Adelman, 'What is global history now?' *Aeon*, 2 March 2017: <https://aeon.co/essays/is-global-history-still-possible-or-has-it-had-its-moment> (last visited 14 August 2019).

¹⁹ Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories', 745.

²⁰ Daniel Bell, 'Replies to Richard Drayton and David Motadel', *Journal of Global History*, 13:1, March 2018, 17.

²¹ Caroline Douki and Philippe Minard, 'Global History, Connected Histories: A Shift of Historiographical Scale?', *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine*, no. 54-4bis, 2007, xiv.

²² Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures*, New Haven and London, 1985, 58-61; Nelson Goodman, 'Seven Strictures on Similarity', in Nelson Goodman, ed., *Problems and Projects*, New York, 1972, 23-32.