

Contemporary Art and Globalization

I was intrigued by this week's readings and the way the authors broke down, analyzed and discussed contemporary artists and art practices and the relationship contemporary artwork has with globalization. Julie Marshall, in her chapter, *Globalization and Contemporary Art*, discussed several artists that I felt I had a strong understanding of their artwork prior to the reading, such as Takashi Murakami, Do Ho Suh, and Sui Jianguo, but I had never considered the content of these artists' work in conjunction with and reaction to globalization. As an artist and art teacher I find myself exploring the methods of art making that Marshall discusses as well, especially *fusion*, *layering*, and *employing the meaning of materials* (p.90-92). When contemplating globalization and its manifestation in contemporary art, Marshall states, "...contemporary art that addresses global realities provides fresh insights into the world and how others perceive and live in it. This art, therefore, can be a powerful tool for seeing issues from others' perspectives, thinking more deeply and diversely about planetary concerns, and for fostering [a] global consciousness" (p. 96).

Other contemporary artists that reflect the global realities of today in their art, that come to my mind immediately include, Hung Liu, Cao Fei, Gimhongsok, Mark Bradford, Laurie Hogin, Jenny Holzer, Catherine Opie, Lia and Dan Perjovschi, Tomas Saraceno, Walid Raad, Zheng Guogu, and street artists Banksy, JR, and Supakitsch and Koralei...the more I think about it, the list goes on. Laurie Hogin is an interesting artist to discuss *fusion* and *employing the meaning of materials*. Hogin is an American painter that received her BFA from Cornell University in 1985 and her MFA from SAIC in 1989. Her paintings fuse traditional Baroque methods of painting with a contemporary palette of colors and socio-political issues. From addiction to prescription pills, to the consumption of fast food and ties to obesity, to the obsession with materialism, consumerism and the human capacity for greed, Laurie Hogin explores what humanity has evolved to be and our global realities. Her use of monkeys and animals refers to raw animal instinct and the lack of the human ability to control emotions and impulses. She uses the traditional formalism of painting to discuss contemporary issues as a way to elevate status and the severity of the socio-political content of her art. Another artist I will highlight from the list of contemporary artists above is Korean born artist, Gimhongsok. I was fortunate to be exposed to his work at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, MN, when they hosted the exhibition *Brave New Worlds* in 2007. By far, this showing of artists from all over the world has affected me as an artist, teacher, and individual more than any other art exhibit I have seen. This art show and Gimhongsok's piece, *Boat* (200-2007), was perhaps the first art that really got me contemplating globalization and art. *Boat*, is a collaborative sculpture that evolves and is reinvented with each location it is displayed. When at the Walker Art Center, employees at the museum were instructed to bring in objects and food items that they cannot live without and define who they are. The result was a collection of CDs, snack foods from Asian markets, clothing, and a random assortment of paraphernalia. When the viewer approaches the sculpture, they can discern that the boat is that of a refugee; similar to a boat that would be handcrafted in Haiti, as unfortunately we are familiar with seeing washed up on our coasts of Florida. In this refugee boat though, the viewer has to make sense of the assortment of commodities represented. The viewer immediately starts to put the pieces of the puzzle together trying to identify the cultural background of the refugee boat, but it is impossible. The collection of goods is too diverse and is a representation of our global identity. No matter where the boat travels, the items it collects makes it impossible to fully identify because our consumer culture has expanded beyond borders in light of globalization.

As an artist, I find myself incorporating more layering, more fusion, and placing a higher emphasis on the materials I use and the implications and meanings that are inferred. When I was a student of art in college, I fell under the spell of formalism and believed that being an outstanding figure drawer and oil painter was what gave me my talent and right to be a successful artist. I now realize I was a kid and had a lot to learn. Although I place a high emphasis still on the understanding and application of formal techniques and craftsmanship, I have fully embraced the post-modern art expression of today and place a heavy emphasis on conceptualism, use of materials, and communication to a particular audience in my classroom practice. I show more contemporary artwork in my classes because my students and myself can relate to the content and we glean the formalist tradition through the rich development of each of these contemporary artists backgrounds as they discovered their voices as artists. I have found myself abandoning my oil paints and exchanging my rich color palette to that of the equally rich colors of dyed fabrics and yarns. As an adult, I realized that I can paint and draw as well with my love of knitting, sewing, beading, and handcrafting... in fact, I can do it better; it is less of a fight and more pure enjoyment. It feels good to paint with yarn. Perhaps this development in my art making is related to *glocalization*. Growing up in the Midwest and in a traditional family that modeled the traditional roles of women in the household, I learned to knit, sew and craft. I definitely can see how my local cultural background helped aid in the development of such a passion for traditional women's crafts. As a contemporary artist, I am always considering themes of identity, place, time, spirituality, and humanity, which are all relative themes to globalization. I am inspired by contemporary art that dissects and connects and creates a dialogue with our human experience as it exists right now, in the moment we are living today.



Laurie Hogin, *Way of Life* (2005)



Laurie Hogin, *Pharmaceutical Guinea Pigs: The Most Heavily Marketed Hypnotics* (2008)



Laurie Hogin, *Habitat Diorama with Painkillers* (2008)



Gimhongsok, *Boat* (2000-2007)