

What “global art” and current (re)turns fail to see: A modest counter-narrative of “not-another-biennial”¹

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ABSTRACT

What is the scope of “global art” and who drives its framing within the current climate of ‘*corporate globalization*’ (Demos 2009:7, emphasis in original)? In what ways do the recent global turn and curatorial turn underwrite meaningful global inclusivity and visibility, and to what degree does this globally shared art constitute mutuality? Does “global art”, including the accompanying process of biennialisation, allow for local narratives in a way that seriously accounts for a geopolitical view of contemporary art in the twenty-first century? While the inclusion of “new art worlds”² in what Belting, Buddensieg and Weibel (2013) term “global art” is framed as a democratisation of contemporary art and the demise of the western art canon, it is important to raise questions regarding the blind spots of this supposedly global, post-1989 expansion. In this article I analyse the current discourse of “global art” as articulated in *The global contemporary and the rise of new art worlds* (Belting, Buddensieg & Weibel 2013), focusing on its origin, transcription, mapping, consumption and ultimately, I suggest, its emergence as a function of privilege. Challenging the charting of supposedly new art regions (Belting *et al.* 2013:100), which “writes-out” local narratives and counter-narratives, I argue for a logic of subtraction in place of a logic of addition. While the latter triumphantly implies that “new” art worlds have been added to the dominant core, the former is useful to a geopolitical perspective that strips away normative vision and actively seeks that which people often fail to see. In this paper I analyse the work of CAPE Africa Platform in South Africa, which, while briefly and erroneously used as “evidence” of biennialisation and global expansion in *The global contemporary*, was locally referred to as “not-another-biennial”. Discussing what some see as the shortcomings of the *Cape 07* and *Cape 09* exhibitions, I propose a reconsideration of measures of “success” and “failure”, suggesting that an embrace

1. Thank you to Dr. Alexandra Dodd for the insightful feedback she provided.

2. This term is used in the title of Belting, Buddensieg and Weibel’s 2013 book, *The global contemporary and the rise of new art worlds*.

of “failure” can enable new ways of seeing the privilege of the contemporary art world. It is only when blanks, failures and things presumed not to exist are carefully regarded, that the goal of achieving mutually shared art on a global scale might become possible. Only then does it become apparent that the global south³ can have a certain edge over what is viewed as the prevailing art world.

Keywords: global art; biennialisation; geopolitics; global south; counter-narratives; CAPE Africa Platform

Introduction

“Global art” is a term developed by Hans Belting and Peter Weibel in 2006 for the research programme *Global art and the museum* at the Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, Germany. This was followed by the exhibition *The global contemporary: Art worlds after 1989* (2012) curated by Andrea Buddensieg and Peter Weibel, as well as the 2013 publication *The global contemporary and the rise of new art worlds* edited by Belting, Buddensieg and Weibel. In the preface to this volume it is triumphantly announced that, ‘the era that witnessed the prevalence of Western canons in art history has come to a close. A global, contemporary art of diverse origins has now taken its place’ (Belting, Buddensieg & Weibel 2013:18). “Global art” is positioned within a ‘global turn’ as well as a ‘postethnic’ curatorial turn that registers the shift from linear art history to visual studies and curatorial studies (Belting *et al.* 2013:18; 184). Being ‘postethnic’ (by which I assume the authors mean post-particular in relation to, for example, region, nation, ethnicity, etc.), Belting (2013:184) argues that this does not result in a ‘new homogeneity of a “flat” world’ but ‘reveals a diversity of traditions that demand a similar diversity of local narratives ...’. No longer can we feasibly speak of one dominant art world, suggest Belting and Buddensieg (2013:28, emphasis added), for there are now plural ‘art worlds where art meets different conditions and cultural traditions’.

3. While the notion of the global south (or the “south”) is in many ways a social construct, there is still value in strategically using it to address dominant art systems that continue to be largely linked to the west and the “north”. I refer to this self-reflexive usage of the global south as a concept as “strategic southernness”. Although some scholars refer to the as the Former West (see <http://www.formerwest.org>), I assert that the ongoing privilege afforded western art institutions warrants continued discussions of the role of the “south” in challenging the west and the “north”. It is, I submit, only viable to drop the notion of the global south or the “south” when the ongoing privilege of the “northern” art world is eradicated, and, as I argue in this article, it is not sufficient for “northern” scholars to simply announce the end of this privilege.

Weibel (2013:21) argues that even though ‘globalization is, on the one hand, the result and the product of Western modernity, ... at this historical moment globalization is turning against the very author of globalization’. He suggests that possibly for the first time the ‘European-North American axis’ is no longer in control of who is included or excluded, ‘... creating unrest and anxiety in the West ... for it calls into question the West’s dominance over the entire world’ (Weibel 2013:20). ‘Thus for the West’, he writes, ‘globalization means applying the rule of inclusion/exclusion to itself (Weibel 2013:20).

In this article, I question whether Belting, Buddensieg and Weibel’s framing of “global art” does indeed allow for local narratives in a way that seriously accounts

for a geopolitical view of contemporary art in the twenty-first century. I propose that, despite positive aspirations toward globally shared art, there is a premature, self-assured tone to their notion of “global art” that poses a number of inter-related problems. The ‘prevalence of Western canons in art history’ (Belting *et al.* 2013:18) cannot simply come to a close without acknowledging the aftermath of the effects of Euro-American domination in the visual arts. Furthermore, it is less than convincing when authors steeped in this privileged art world announce its supposed demise, implying that they are willing and perhaps key agents of this apparent change.

On whose terms has art become global, if indeed it has, and on whose timeline do we pin “global art” and why? Who can appropriately declare or demand the end of uneven centre-periphery cartography in the art world when underlying the supposed ‘unity’ of the global age (Belting 2013:184)⁴ lurks the hushed-but-still-present assumption that “we” are now all equal because “they” have joined “our” camp?⁵ Who announces a global turn, a curatorial turn or a post-particular turn, and is ‘globalization, indeed a road of no return’ (Belting 2013:182)? How do we distinguish a forward-reaching turn from a repetitive (re)turn; a return to old habits and old ways of seeing? What does the rise of biennialisation associated with “global art” reveal about economic returns, and does capitalism clash or collude with the ideals of “global art”? How does a post-particular or ‘postethnic state of art’ (Weibel 2013:27) facilitate the plurality of art worlds and the call for multiple local stories? In whose books do we read these stories and in whose exhibitions do they appear? Finally, who writes about a need to rewrite art history, and who, then, (re)writes?

4. According to Belting (2013:184), ‘Art history has divided the world, whereas the global age tends to restore its unity on another level’.

5. By this I am not implying that local art worlds are not producing work independent of the western camp or what remains to some degree the dominant art world. (McEvelley asserts, for example, that ‘Third World biennials are sprouting with or without Western attention; clearly they have audiences and cultural functions of their own, quite independently of their resemblance to Western art practice’ (McEvelley in Rojas-Sotelo 2011:156)). Rather, I am pointing out that, from the perspective of the still-dominant art world, places beyond its own axis are generally perceived to be on the road to being equal because they have entered or are entering the dominant system. In other words, what tends to remain is the rather condescending idea that “they” are catching up with “us”, without acknowledging that “they” might be ahead of “us” in some ways. Of course, entering a system does not necessarily mean that one can’t subvert it from within, and there certainly are examples of such instances.

Following the analysis of “global art” as espoused by Belting, Buddensieg and Weibel in *The global contemporary and the rise of new art worlds*, I argue that, in the process of writing, this discourse in fact “writes out” particular narratives. In order to counter this “writing out” I provide a local perspective of some of the complexities and contradictions that arose out of the *Cape 07* and *Cape 09* exhibitions organised by CAPE Africa Platform in Cape Town, South Africa, and focus on Lerato Bereng’s (2013:25) curatorial project, *Thank you driver* (2009), which purposely circumvented a ‘biennial art crowd’.

In *The global contemporary and the rise of new art worlds*, there are factual errors in the recording of the supposedly new art region of Cape Town, South Africa (Belting *et al.* 2013:100-105). Further, important local debates that took place regarding transnational biennials in the context of “global identity exhibitions” that problematically frame and construct a notion of “Africa” from without, are completely missed. In a

brief discussion of *Cape 07* – locally referred to as “not-another-biennial” and viewed by some as a “flop” (Simbao 2007:64) – and *Cape 09*, I argue for the value of opening up and reconsidering ways of measuring “success” and “failure”. While “global art” perpetuates a celebratory logic of addition, which implies that the (western) art world is now global because “new art regions” have joined the “core”, I propose a logic of abstraction that finds value in acknowledging what it is that people fail to see. I submit that an embrace of “failure” is what is needed to begin to shift entrenched privilege and to move towards art that is mutually shared⁶ at a global level.

The terms of the (re)turn

6. At present, the majority of art referred to as “global art” is not shared or viewed in a mutual way. For example, what is labelled as “contemporary African art” and is showcased on a supposedly global stage is seldom viewed on the African continent, and a very limited amount of art produced on the African continent is included in the discourse of “contemporary African art” that is largely driven by scholars and curators in the “north”. (South Africa remains an exception for problematic reasons linked to apartheid and to South African exceptionalism, but the work of the Centre for Contemporary Art run by Bisi Silva in Lagos, Nigeria stands out as a welcome exception).

7. I use this term in the way it is referred to in Higher Education in South Africa. See, for example, Lionel Thaver’s paper “At Home”, Institutional Culture and Higher Education: Some Methodological Considerations” in *Perspectives in education*. In post-apartheid South Africa there have been many attempts to transform Higher Education in order to move beyond the engrained racism of apartheid-era systems of education. More than twenty years after the official demise of apartheid it is evident that a simplistic demographic and numeric scheme of inclusivity is not only facile, but also at times even dangerous, for it can veil a lack of transformation and short-circuit genuine change. In this paper I question whether proponents of “global art” similarly short-circuit deeper change in triumphalist announcements of democratisation in the arts. (I am indebted to Louise Vincent for sharing academic sources on institutional culture).

Writing for *Creolite and creolization: Documenta 11, Platform 3*, Gerardo Mosquera (2003:145) asserts that he observes a certain amount of repetition and boredom in contemporary art that he describes as a ‘flat cosmopolitanism’. He observes that:

... the fact that a certain number of artists coming from every corner of the world are now exhibiting internationally only means, in itself, a (not so dramatic) quantitative internationalization. But number is not the issue. The question for these new subjects is agency; the challenge of mutating a hegemonic and restrictive situation toward active and enriching plurality, instead of being digested not only by the mainstream, but also by new nonmainstream establishments (Mosquera 2003:146).

Similarly, reviewing Okwui Enwezor’s *Documenta 11* exhibition, Kobena Mercer (2002) argues that ‘inclusivity itself has become increasingly commonplace in the art world’ and that ‘the situation is not one of multicultural normalization gone mad, but one in which perceptions of cultural difference are still subject to someone else’s spin’. As such, I submit that the greatest blind spot of “global art” is not necessarily an issue of inclusivity (for this base can be covered in facetious ways), but rather that the deeper question of whether the core “institutional culture”⁷ (Thaver 2006) of the dominant art system has changed sufficiently to tackle systemic forms of privilege and discrimination.

A critical measure of meaningful change, particularly in the face of ‘tokenist inclusion’ (Ogbechi 2005:86), is, as Mosquera suggests above, the amount of effective agency afforded subjects. Agency includes the right of artists, curators and writers who have been excluded from and/or disadvantaged by dominant systems to have a say in announcing when their disadvantage has ended, if indeed it has. It is of concern that the advocates of “global art” in *The global contemporary and the rise of new art worlds* mandate that systemic discrimination ought suddenly to be

8. In this book it is suggested that Peter Weibel's 1996 exhibition *Inclusion: Exclusion—art in the age of postcolonialism and global migration* attempted to draw up a new cartography and in doing so, '... demanded that the colonial situation of the Third World be overcome and the imperial discourse of the binarism of center and periphery be ended ...' (Belting *et al.* 2013:72, emphasis added).

9. In a section titled 'Trans-actions: The accelerated art world 1989-2011', which 'depicts the temporal and spatial development of the biennial system' (Belting *et al.* 2013:146; 148), it is stated that, 'Before 1989 the world had approximately 25 biennales; after this date their number grew to the present figure of 159. Today biennales are organized in all corners of the globe, rejecting any residual cartography of center versus periphery'. While artists and writers have for decades debated the cartography of the centre versus the periphery, the simplistic suggestion that the counting and mapping of post-1989 biennales proves that any residual of this problem has been eliminated needs to be more carefully considered.

10. It seems simplistic, however, to suggest that one conference, still organised by scholars based in the west, can be viewed as single-handedly changing the history of art history, partly because it was hosted in the 'south'. While the notion of the global south needs to be carefully navigated for it too is a construct, albeit one strategically embraced, it is important to consider that Australia's inclusion in the South is sometimes contended owing to its economic status. Furthermore, unlike many other parts of the South, Australia can still accommodate the dominant language of western art history, that is, English.

11. Ogbечи refers specifically to the artworks on view at the final platform of *Documenta 11* in Kassel, which was curated by Okwui Enwezor.

removed⁸ without a substantive acknowledgement of potential complicity, and declare the end of problems⁹ that they still, in fact, benefit from. Despite the suggestion that "global art" denounces the west's privilege, problematic terms such as 'non-European' and 'non-Westerner' (Belting *et al.* 2013:73) continue to be used, defining people by what they are *not*, when this very notion of what they are not is linked fundamentally to the system that discriminates against them. Artists once excluded (or still excluded) from exhibitions in Europe and America are defined as either having a 'nonpresence' or 'copresence' (Belting & Buddensieg 2013:28), as if the west were the only meaningful measure of presence or visibility. Missing are the questions: Nonpresence or invisibility in relation to *whom*, and, more importantly, what was present *elsewhere* that the west failed to see?

Facile transformation appears to rely on forms of visibility, for what is *seen* on the surface can *pose* as meaningful change. While metaphors for 'thinking, knowledge, and truth' are linked to seeing, such as 'illuminating, casting light on a problem, being enlightened, insightful, clear, distinct, or brilliant' (Elkins 1996), language used to write about and critique privilege often relies on metaphors of seeing too. Referring to the 2008 Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art (CIHA) conference in Melbourne, Australia, Belting (2013:183) suggests that this meeting reveals that the west has now given up 'the idea of the privileged viewing point'.¹⁰ In contrast, Sylvester Ogbечи (2005:83) contends that an 'Occidental Gaze' of 'scopic regimes' in the art world persists, using 'ubiquitous technologies of surveillance'. Continuing with metaphors of vision, Ogbечи (2005:88) argues that, even when curators appear to be inclusive, artworks are often 'judged by a system of aesthetics based on an occidental world view that effaces Africans and other non-Western artists from its purview'.¹¹

In her article 'Reflections on the appropriate use of unjustly conferred privilege', Sally Matthews (2013:31, 34, emphasis in original) asks, 'How do privileged people come to see properly ...?', for 'privilege continues to distort their way of seeing and being in the world'. Further, drawing from the work of Shannon Sullivan (2006), she argues that 'ingrained ways of seeing and being in the world' (Matthews 2013:33) create unconscious habits that are fed by privileged environments. Habits formed in privileged environments render the privileged not only blind to their own privilege, but blind to their own blindness too. Deeper change, however, requires one to become fundamentally aware of one's own blindness – one has to *feel* blindness beneath the skin, so to speak.¹² To *feel* blindness beneath your skin suggests that one is affected profoundly by one's blindness to such an extent that one cannot simply forget it or brush it aside. As Matthews (2013:38) suggests, one needs to be 'comfortable with being discomfited'.

In the following section I argue that, while the promoters of “global art” in *The global contemporary and the rise of new art worlds* position this art as being inclusive (acknowledging that it was exclusive), *The global contemporary* project does not allow for a long enough pause for individuals operating within the dominant discourse of the “north” to be ‘comfortable with being discomfited’ (Matthews 2013:38) by the acknowledgement of this exclusivity and the implication of their complicity. Instead, the socio-political and socio-economic world changes that occurred in 1989 are used, to some degree, to reposition Euro-American dominance in the arts by upholding an authorial voice that narrates a *particular* version of this global change. This “northern” tale of “magic” assumes ownership of global shifts, becoming blind to events and stories, particularly in the global south, which were present prior to 1989.

Beyond the “magic” of 1989

[T]he year 1989 signified the end of the Western monopolies (Weibel 2013:21).

With the Paris *Magiciens* show, *global art* made its entry into the art world (Belting 2013:182).

12. It is interesting to think of sight (and by extension blindness) in relation to the rest of the body and the other senses. Elkins (1996:178) argues that looking is a strongly tactile bodily experience. Similarly, in this volume, Baasch explores the notion of “looking with the skin”, emphasising corporeal experience that is multi-directional (for skin is semi-permeable), and that is slower and more experientially considered than a simple look.

13. In the case of South Africa, for example, Mandela was released from prison in 1990; the first democratic elections took place in 1994, and 21 years later the painful process of decolonisation and the elimination of the effects of apartheid’s racism continues.

14. This can be translated as *Magiciens of the earth*. The exhibition was mounted at the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Grande Halle at the Parc de la Villette, and consisted of ‘100 artists, half from Europe and the United States and half from the rest of the world’ (Brenon 1989).

15. At the time Jean-Hubert Martin was the director of the Pompidou Centre.

The Revolutions of 1989, or the ‘Autumn of Nations’ (Nedelmann & Sztompka 1993:1), including the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), the end of the Cold War (1985-1991), and the beginning of the “end” of apartheid in South Africa (1989-1994), contributed to the emergence of new economies, different ways of viewing the world, and altered cartographies. While 1989 certainly was a significant point in world history, it is important to understand the above events as evolving processes among many, rather than isolated events pinned to a specific timeline.¹³ One needs to be cautious of using a singular date as a grand framing device for multiple complex events, especially when other relevant events or chains of events are underplayed or even ignored. Narrative framing devices prioritise certain historical facts, promote particular interpretations, and tend to discount contradictory information while appearing ‘natural and inevitable’ (Norris 1995:2-3).

A western European/north American framing of the events of 1989 is used by the editors of *The global contemporary and the rise of new art worlds* to explain what they view as the rise and legitimacy of “global art”. In particular, they position the exhibition *Magiciens de la terre*¹⁴ curated by Jean-Hubert Martin¹⁵ in Paris as the key art event that instigated the worldwide rise of contemporary biennial exhibitions and gave birth to “global art”. As Belting and Buddensieg (2013:28) write,

The concept of a global production of contemporary art was discussed for the first time in the Paris exhibition *Magiciens de la terre* in 1989. Its date coincided with the end of the Cold War which also meant the emergence of the New Economy with its multinational corporations. In subsequent years the spread of worldwide biennales changed contemporary art's geography forever.

In what appears to be an attempt to legitimise western European/north American agency in the so-called origin¹⁶ of the global production of art, *The global contemporary and the rise of new art worlds* pinpoints *Magiciens*, as well as the 1989 'Global Issue' of the journal *Art in America*, as the key to the global turn in the arts. However, *Magiciens*, which was reviewed in the 'Global Issue', received much criticism: 'Denunciation of *Magiciens* was extensive, almost universal' (Kleeblatt 2005:61).¹⁷ While Belting (2013:182) views the exhibition as an important '*rite de passage*', Eleanor Heartney (1989:91; 96) argues that, despite attempts to 'forestall charges of Western ethnocentrism' and 'avoid the more obvious manifestations of paternalism, the exhibition remains suffused with the romance of the Other'. Writing for the *New York Times*, Michael Brenson (1989) argues that, 'The exhibition ... reinforces as many stereotypes as it challenges ... [and the west] appears restless [and] self-important ...'.

What is most conspicuous about the attempt to hang a single European-produced and largely ill-received exhibition onto the framework of 1989 world shifts in order to claim that it, principally, instigated comparatively grand changes in art's geography, is what else this perspective fails to see. There are patent omissions of numerous processes of engagement across the world that have, for a long time, been chipping away at and, at times, *deliberately ignoring* western-dominated cartographic myths and assumptions of power. Jean-Hubert Martin's claim to address the problematic situation in which 'one hundred percent of exhibitions [were] ignoring 80 percent of the earth'¹⁸ is, at best, relevant to a limited number of exhibitions along the western European/north American axis.

It is important that these glaring gaps in knowledge be filled with sustained research and the (re)writing of multiple narratives and counter-narratives, particularly by scholars in the global south. In 'Biennials of the South on the edges of the global' Anthony Gardner and Charles Green (2013:443, emphasis in original) argue that, 'the histories of biennials as they currently stand remain resolutely *Northern* histories – written predominantly by analysts of the North and reinforcing, even in their self-reflexive critique, a lineage of influence within and from the North – despite their claims to globality'. The authors analyse a 'second wave of biennialization from the 1950s onwards', claiming that many of these biennials sought 'viable modes of internationalism that departed from the Cold War binary' integrating 'the local within

16. The drive to pinpoint an *origin* is a modernist concept to begin with.

17. See also a special issue on *Magiciens de la terre* in *Third Text* 3(6), Spring 1989.

18. 'Magiciens de la terre' in *Former West*, <http://www.formerwest.org/ResearchLibrary/MagiciensdeLaTerre>. Accessed February 2014.

the regional' (Gardner & Green 2013:453, 449). These include, for example, the first *Biennale de la Méditerranée* in 1955; various biennials in Latin and South America from the late 1960s onwards; the Biennale of Sydney (particularly 1976 and 1979); the Arab Art Biennial established in 1974; and Bienal de la Habana that was established in 1984 and in 1986 incorporated artists from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Co-curator of the *Bienal de la Habana*, Gerardo Mosquera suggests that the 1986 biennial in Havana was 'the first global contemporary art show ever made ... [consisting of] more than fifty exhibitions and events presenting 2 400 works by 690 artists from 57 countries' (Mosquera in Zabunyan 2012:2). Addressing gaps in the history of biennials, Gardner and Green (2013:455) suggest, 'These socialist inspired internationalisms, and not the trajectory of North Atlantic capitalism, must be the primary reference points for re-visiting the biennales of the South'.

Many of these second wave exhibitions are ignored in analyses of internationalism, transnationalism and globalism in the arts, partly due to the west's lack of knowledge of events in the South (McEvelley cited in Rojas-Sotelo 2011:155), and partly owing to prejudice and exclusion in the dominant art system. According to Mosquera (cited in Zabunyan 2012:2):

Around the mid-1980s, segregation was an essential part of the visual art system. The periodic international art events already in place, from the Venice Biennale to Documenta, were far from global. This was not only because the participating artists were mainly from Western backgrounds, but because the events' ideas of art was restricted to the Western mainstream, and their organisers were not interested in exploring what was going on elsewhere. Thus the [Havana] Biennial created a new space, acting as a gigantic "Salon des Refuses" that involved most of the world, born from a spirit of action.

While awareness of other parts of the world has certainly increased and is evident in the west's keen mapping of "new art worlds", a tendency to gloss over details and local perspectives persists.

“Parachute curators” and a *fuku warai* approach to biennialisation

A number of contemporary art exhibitions and exhibition catalogues that explore processes of globalisation, such as *Flow* at the Studio Museum Harlem (2008), display a world map which pinpoints the cities of exhibition venues, or the origin and/or movement of participating artists. In *The global contemporary and the rise*

of new art worlds, a map of 'The Biennials and New Art Regions' plots 149 biennials in an attempt to register a global turn and demonstrate that 'the global age tends to restore ... [the world's] unity ...' (Belting 2013:184). 'Not only is the game different', suggests Belting (2013:184), but 'it is also open to new participants who speak in many different tongues and who differ in how they conceive of art in a local perspective. We are watching a new mapping of art worlds in the plural, which claim geographic and cultural difference'.

It is questionable, however, what value such plotting of "unity" adds, especially considering the factual errors that sometimes occur in the assimilation of such broad knowledge, effectively "writing out" local perspectives. For example, in *The global contemporary* book, CAPE – Cape Africa Platform is listed as a Cape Town biennial that took place in 2003 (Belting *et al.* 2013:105), whereas, in fact, there were two exhibitions that took place in 2007 and 2009 and were named *Cape 07* and *Cape 09* respectively. More importantly, though, organisers were ambivalent about naming it a biennial, and instead referred to it as a 'Manifestation' that was 'not just another biennale' (Pissarra 2005).

Such blind and inaccurate mapping that attempts to demonstrate so-called unity and democratisation of the arts reveals a *fuku warai* approach to mapping contemporary art. *Fuku warai* is a Japanese game played mostly by children that involves blindfolded participants pinning paper cutout facial features, such as eyes, a nose, a mouth and eyebrows to a blank face.¹⁹ Inevitably features end up in the wrong position, and playing on the humour of expected mistakes, spinoffs include an online version used for political satire.²⁰

Celebratory approaches to "global art" tend to turn a blind eye to the depth of knowledge found in local perspectives. While it would be insular to suggest that only local curators, writers or artists could talk about art in their respective locales, the 'travelling independent curator, who dedicates him or herself to a trans-national "biennale career"' (Belting 2013:149) resonates somewhat with what Norris (1995:10) refers to as 'parachute journalists' who 'jet from crisis to crisis, crisscrossing the globe, replacing the resident correspondents ... [providing] viewers with a more confusing ... image of the world'. While transnational curating that dips into multiple contexts doesn't necessarily result in a shallow production of knowledge (as curator Okwui Enwezor has shown to some degree), there is a tendency for the broad knowledge gathering of "parachute curating" to skim the surface of the local production and interpretation of art.

19. This game became popular late in the Edo period (1603-1868), and people began playing it as a New Year's game during the Taisho era (1912-1926). See *Kids Web Japan*, <http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/virtual/fukuwarai/fukuwarai02.html>, Accessed December 2014.

20. During the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries in the USA an online version allowed one to pick features for Hillary Clinton's face. See http://www.guzer.com/animations/guzer_hillary_clinton.php (accessed September 2013).

A post-particular turn (capitalism excluded)

While most discussions on globalisation wrestle with tensions and contradictions in terms of the universal and the particular, a notable buckle in the mapping of biennials in order to demonstrate the ‘postethnic state of art’ (Weibel 2013:27) is the commercial art world’s consumption of and perpetuation of particularity (be it “ethnic”, “national” or “regional”) for commercial gain, as well as socio-political examples of rising and/or resurfacing ethnocentrism. While Belting emphasises the potential unity that the global world creates, in his analysis of *Documenta 11*, Sylvester Ogbechi (2005:84; 85) argues that ‘in the era after the cold war ... [there was a] marked increase in ethnic and ideological conflicts’ creating, in fact, a ‘growing abyss between the West and the rest of the world’. Ogbechi (2005:85) asserts that critics of *Documenta 11*, ‘who raised the charge of identity politics, refused to acknowledge that the current American imperium (and the European colonial world order that preceded it) uses various strategies to maintain and sustain white privilege’.

While the particularity of identity is often shunned by the dominant art world, viewed as being, for example, ‘not adequately aesthetic ... highly political, and too didactic’²¹ (Kleeblatt 2005:62), and while according to Ogbechi (2005:85), ‘... *Documenta 11* argued that the neutral citizen of liberal theory was in fact the bearer of an identity coded white, male, bourgeois, able-bodied and heterosexual’, advocates of “global art” in *The global contemporary* book fail to complicate the way auction houses have, for example, returned to identity politics in a simplistic way in order to boost sales. In a section of the book titled ‘Branding: New art markets and their strategies’, Sara Giannini explains that Phillips de Pury & Company developed themes based on geography when mounting the “BRIC”²² sale, the “Africa” sale and the “Latin America” sale (Belting *et al.* 2013:138). Similarly, Christie’s and Sotheby’s boosted their sales by entering new markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, and introduced themed auctions such as “20th Century Chinese Art”, “Contemporary Asian Art”, “Middle East & India”, “Latin American Art,” and “Russian Art” (Belting *et al.* 2013:139). Further ignored is the flagrant condescension of New York dealer Michael Goedhuis who established the Estella Collection and, in his attempt to court a Chinese market, announced that he chose the name for the collection because ‘it was a name the Chinese could pronounce’ (Belting *et al.* 2013:142).

21. Kleeblatt refers here to initial responses to the 1993 *Whitney Biennial* and *Documenta 11*. He writes: ‘Some may argue that identity is a dated concept of little value in current exhibition practice. Yet the term continues to rear its complicated and confusing head’ (Kleeblatt 2005:62).

22. In economics, the acronym BRIC stands for Brazil, Russia, India and China. These countries are grouped together as they are viewed to be at similar stages of economic development as supposedly newly advanced economies. The related acronym BRICS includes South Africa.

A key problem in analyses of globalisation that, like *The global contemporary and the rise of new art worlds*, collate wide-ranging knowledge is that the complexities of what globalisation might be and how it might be interpreted are inevitably conflated. In ‘Moving images of globalization’, TJ Demos (2009:7) argues that the term ‘globalization’

is so ambiguous that it represents an 'empty signifier nearly meaningless today'. He proposes that '*corporate globalization* may well be the more apt term for recent developments ...' (Demos 2009:7, emphasis in original). The contradiction of a celebration of a "postethnic" and supposedly democratic art world, and the apparent condoning of a capitalist perpetuation of identity-based "ethnocentrism" generates the overwhelming sense that this framing of "global art" scrupulously functions in a particular direction, one which upholds old forms of privilege.

(Re)writing: the direction of the hand, tongue and eye

There is a direction to the acts of writing, speaking and viewing, and not all directions are equal. While Weibel (2013:20-21) argues that we need to rewrite accounts of art (where a 'theory of rewriting' refers to both literal and figurative forms of writing), and Belting (2013:184) suggests that 'The time has come to rewrite art history in the West', it is important to consider the *direction* of writing, which engages not only with who writes, but also with what audience is being addressed, what is being said, how writing is disseminated and how seriously others take this writing. "Global art" tends to valorise the crisscrossing of a "post-place", "post-particular" state of art (hence the proliferation of maps that "prove" that all the corners of the globe are reached), without sufficient cognisance of how *direction makes meaning*. In his response to the *Magiciens* exhibition, New York-based artist Alfred Jaar (1989:156) explains:

The boundaries between *here* and *there* have been disappearing little by little. When I read that we are dumping our garbage *there* – in Africa, in this instance – it was the ultimate proof that there were no more boundaries between *here* and *there*. At the same time, the boundaries between *there* and *here* are stronger than ever. Racial tensions are increasing, immigration laws are becoming more restrictive, not just here but everywhere ... So the way from *there* to *here*, from the non-West to the West, is closed although it is an open road from *here* to *there*. We send them our garbage, our poisons. What's next?

In Belting, Buddensieg and Weibel's framing of "global art" there remains a distinct direction – a direction toward the perpetuation of privilege despite attempts to be self-reflexive. As Weibel (2013:24, emphasis added) writes, 'New continents and countries, from the Asian to the Arab world, *enter the art world*. But with this attention shift, we experience not only a remapping of the cartography of art, but also a rewriting of art itself'. The idea of "new" places coming from *there* to *here*, entering "our" art world, links to Jaar's assertion that the movement between places can

be open in one direction, but closed in other ways. The ability to move in a particular direction should not always be interpreted literally, for open access to travel does not necessarily translate into an openness to see in another direction. While curators and writers from the dominant art world might regularly visit different parts of the world, seldom do they move beyond the terms of their own art world. As Martha Rosler (1989:86) argues, while the ‘culture[s] of peripheral areas ... [are] increasingly valorized,’ it is important to question whether this simply becomes a ‘source of mainstream cultural renewal’.²³

Mosquera (2003:145, emphasis added) asserts that, while we are going through ‘a fascinating period of transition and reshaping of the whole system of art creation, distribution, and evaluation at a global scale,’ we need to make sure that we cut the ‘global pie not only with a variety of knives, but also with a *variety of hands*, and then share it accordingly’. ‘What is called the international art scene and the international artistic language’, he submits, ‘reveals a hegemonic construct of globalism more than a true globalization, understood as a generalized participation’ (Mosquera 2003:145).

Cutting the pie with a variety of hands, also means writing with a variety of hands, curating with a variety of hands and speaking with a variety of tongues in order to sever the one-directional tendency of “global art”. As Robert Storr (1989:88) astutely asserts, what is perceived as ‘periphery’ does not need “discovering”. It knows itself’. Instead, ‘what is needed is a willingness to follow the lead of the writers and curators who have been trying all the while to tell us what’s been happening ... [and] to be informed by those who *are* informed’ (Storr 1989:88). This would register a change of direction; from a dominant ‘Western society [that] never pays a cultural tax’ (Goldstein 1989:132) to a counter-movement that ‘moves against the tides of globalization’ (Julien 2003:150). As filmmaker Isaac Julien (2003:150) warns, ‘If one doesn’t read against the rules of representation as they are defined by the global networks, then those rules of representation will, as it were, rewrite you’.

Challenging an erroneous rewriting (or “writing-out”) in *The global contemporary and the rise of new art worlds*, I present a modest account of some of the local issues that were raised in the production of the *Cape 07* and *Cape 09* exhibitions in South Africa. This counter-narrative of “not-another-biennial” (Simbao 2007:64) that took place in Cape Town, South Africa in 2007 and 2009, goes against a triumphalist framing of “global art” that prematurely announces the end of systems of dominance, privilege and power.

23. While Rosler’s statement was made in 1989, it continues to ring true in many ways.

A modest counter-narrative, a different direction

I relay this story with a different spin, one that redraws calculations of addition and subtraction and asks why we are so afraid of “failure”. The above-mentioned discourse of “global art” appears to favour a logic of addition, in which other people, other art and other ways of doing things are added to what is predominantly known to the west, with negligible unsettling taking place at the core. A logic of subtraction, however, could reveal much more. What do we *not* see when we look? What do we recognise or fail to recognise when we strip away what we *think* we see? How do we benefit when what we thought was our right to see, to have, or to control is taken away? Elsewhere I have written about the whimsical emphasis on failure in the works of South African artists Athi-Patra Ruga and Anthea Moys,²⁴ and suggest that there is a lot to be gained by the acknowledgement that events don't always unravel as we expect them to, and some things might appear to happen that perhaps didn't happen or ought not to have happened.

Established in 2003 as a non-profit organisation, CAPE Africa Platform aimed to ‘forge new creative links between Cape Town, South Africa, Africa and the world’.²⁵ Initially the idea of a large-scale exhibition was framed as a “Manifestation”²⁶ rather than “just another biennial”, and in a deliberate move away from the discourse of international biennials the project was referred to at a press brief in 2007 as a ‘cyclical art event suitable for Africa – a process, something that is ongoing, and a shift from finished products to interventions and processes working from an affordable base’.²⁷ As such, it was positioned (to some degree and by some organisers) as a local counter-narrative that, as curator Koyo Kouoh (2007) explains, aimed ‘to contest the One World/One A-List formula of the international biennial system by creating an African-based platform to explore the multi-layered diversity of art and culture on the continent’.

Gavin Jantjes, who came on board as the Artistic Director in late 2005 but withdrew his participation before the first exhibition in 2007, similarly challenged mega-exhibitions produced in Europe and America that frame “Africa” and “African identity” in simplistic ways. He argued that these exhibitions of contemporary African art,

... fly in the face of what artists really want. So, for me the question is, are they important and relevant to the visual artist and do they offer a better understanding of contemporary art to audiences? As long as we can't answer that we need to ask ourselves why we are making large-scale identity exhibitions and start to look for other formats. I asked the question in London at a seminar when the recent *Africa Remix* exhibition was on. I asked: “Can anyone tell me why you'd make

24. ‘Site-situational performances in cosmological spaces: Athi-Patra Ruga and Anthea Moys’, presented at the Arts Council of the African Studies Association (ACASA) triennial, Brooklyn Museum of Fine Art, New York.

25. CAPE Africa Platform promotional material.

26. The notion of a Manifestation was an attempt to broaden the scope beyond the visual arts and traditional gallery spaces, and to include multi-disciplinary experiences.

27. CAPE Africa Platform press brief, 24 March 2007.

an exhibition called *Europe Remix* in 2005? What benefit would it have to the artists and what benefit would it have to European culture?” No one could answer that! We are treating audiences as fools by saying the only way you can relate to an artist is through his or her identity. You wouldn’t make an exhibition in Africa about African identity. Who would you do that for? We know who we are, we don’t need to be told! Rather we want to find out more about ourselves: How do we think? How do we feel? How do we love? What are our problems? Those are the things we want to talk about! (Jantjes cited in Hardy 2005:3).

In the process of CAPE Africa Platform’s development of exhibitions, constant slippages took place between the language of local resistance and the grandstanding rhetoric typical of the mega-exhibition race. Unfortunately, with the opening statement in the exhibition handbook – ‘CAPE 07 is South Africa’s first ever major contemporary African art event’ – *Cape 07* was added to the exhausting list of purportedly “first”, “biggest” and “best” exhibitions.

As Mario Pissarra suggests, after the end of the cultural boycott in South Africa a sense of euphoria sparked ‘an uncritical embrace of the dominant networks in place – networks that are connected to a colonial history’ (Pissarra in Gurney 2005a:14), skewing perceptions of internationalism. As he explains, most people in the South African art world fail to view engagement with Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe as international, and rather aspire to be part of the Euro-American art world (Pissarra 2005).

From the outset, many viewed the work of the CAPE Africa Platform as a failure. The three-day series of discussions (*Sessions eKapa*), which took place in 2005 and was meant to lead up to the first exhibition *TRANS CAPE* in 2006, was largely torn to shreds in the South African media.²⁸ The 2006 exhibition was moved to 2007 and was renamed *Cape 07*, and the team changed significantly, losing CEO Susan Glanville-Zini, Artistic Director Gavin Jantjes and Co-curator Khwezi Gule before the opening in 2007. Yet, taking all these problems and deviations in her stride, when I asked Curator Gabi Ngcobo what the highlight of the *Cape 07* experience was, she quickly answered, “The change!”²⁹

28. See for example, Bambalele 2005, Greig 2005, and Gurney 2005b. Some participating artists arguably contributed to the perception that *Sessions eKapa* was a failure.

29. Personal conversation with Gabi Ngcobo, Stellenbosch, 23 March 2007.

30. The Johannesburg Biennale only took place twice, in 1995 and 1997.

While the change of plans, change of people, change of direction and change of allegiances were viewed by many as “yet-another-flop” (Simbao 2007:64) following the demise of the Johannesburg Biennale,³⁰ I submit that a different reading of “change” and “failure” can potentially move our experiences of art beyond the simplistic measures of success endorsed by self-congratulatory versions of transnationalism, globalism and “global art” and beyond the notion of privileged art audiences being the sole recipients of public art interventions like this one.

Initially envisaged as *TRANS CAPE*, the exhibition was ‘conceived as a journey that uses public spaces and locates new site-specific and outdoor locations along a route that traverses Cape Town’s diverse communities, and challenges the hierarchical division between the city centre and its peripheral townships and suburbs’.³¹ The *Cape 07* audience, for example, could move from the opening venue – Lookout Hill in Khayelitsha – to Gugulethu and Langa (areas largely ignored by the white-dominated art world of apartheid)³² to the city centre and surrounding suburbs, and finally to Stellenbosch. The initial title of the exhibition, *TRANS CAPE*, referred to ‘the shifts, changes, disruptions and re-locations of people on the African continent, as well as in contemporary African visual culture’, for as Jantjes asserts, ‘Movement and change are significant to any understanding of Africa in our time’.³³

The ‘biennial art crowd’³⁴ left in the dark

The *Cape* exhibitions were branded ‘Contemporary African Culture’ (Figure 1) rather than “contemporary African art” as an attempt to broaden audiences and include viewers who might not typically attend art galleries. A key goal of the *Cape* exhibitions was to present art in alternative spaces including bed-and-breakfast accommodation, shebeens, train stations and “art vehicles”. This aim was, I suggest, successfully achieved in *Cape 09* by Lerato Bereng, who was part of the Young Curator’s Programme³⁵ and developed the series of site-specific yet on-the-move interventions titled *Thank you driver* (Figure 2). The title refers to the phrase used by commuters in Cape Town when requesting the driver of a taxi bus to stop, and signals the inclusion in the project of taxi drivers who regularly drive the pre-determined routes. Each artist was assigned a taxi (Figure 3) and the works performed included: *Taxi hostess* by Guguletive, *In living memory of what never happened* by James Webb (Figure 4), *F.U.N.* by Edwige Aplogan³⁶; *Taxi voices* by Isa Suarez and the New Teenagers Gospel Choir³⁷ (Figure 5), and Nastió Mosquito’s *Dreams and illusions* (Figure 6). Playing on the fact that taxi drivers expect front seat passengers to perform the role of the fare-collector (*Gaji*), calculating and handing out the correct change to passengers, Guguletive³⁸ provided an in-taxi host with a till machine and refreshments.³⁹ While this intervention became very popular as some commuters travelling from Cape Town to Gugulethu tried to track it down for the refreshments, Bereng proposes that notions of success or failure in these interventions were complex due to the unpredictability of the composition of the audience for each performance, as well as the unpredictability of what the audience might expect and how it might respond.

31. Press information for *TRANS CAPE*, presented by the CAPE Africa Platform in 2006.

32. Unfortunately these areas are in many ways still overlooked today in terms of the dominant art scene in South Africa. As David Koloane laments, in Gauteng, there is still no contemporary art gallery in Soweto despite the increase in galleries and alternative art spaces in recent years (Personal conversation, March 2015).

33. Press information for *TRANS CAPE*, presented by the CAPE Africa Platform in 2006.

34. Despite CAPE’s initial attempt to distance these exhibitions from the engines of biennialisation and to, instead, refer to these events as Manifestations, some people referred to the CAPE projects as biennials, particularly by the time of the 2009 exhibition.

35. Cape Africa Platform’s Young Curator’s Programme ran from 2008 to 2009, and included the following participants: Lerato Bereng, Bongani Mkhonza, Nkuli Mlangeni, Loyiso Qanya and Ntando Xorile.

Critical to the work was the fact that ‘to the great frustration of the biennale art crowd, they were not the target audience’ (Bereng 2013:25). As Bereng (2013:25) explains,

The audience that encountered these in-taxi happenings were unsuspecting, everyday taxi commuters who caught taxis from Cape Town station to the various destinations around the city and beyond including Sea Point, Gugulethu, Khayelitsha, Woodstock and Langa. It also meant that one could not plan to ride one of the taxis, instead the passengers were random. My aims were two-fold: to expand art audiences and facilitate a true engagement with the city and its current transport systems and commuters, and most significantly, to invert the stagnant ideas of art viewership. In this instance the exhibition was inaccessible to the art world, and those who persevered to see the show were forced to go to the Cape Town taxi rank on top of Cape Town station, which for most was a new experience.

36. Beninese artist Edwige Aplogan produced a series of newspapers dated 2060, which ‘became fictional predictions about economic and socio-political issues’ (Bereng 2013:27-28). A sculpture of a Perspex figure placed between the driver and the front seat passenger became the newspaper stand. A protruding penis attached to the figure referenced ‘the taxi rank scandal of the time where a young woman was harassed by Johannesburg taxi drivers because she was wearing a short skirt. The piece was created to invert the sexual exposedness and generate a discussion or forum for discussion around such issues’ (Bereng 2013:27). Bereng (2013:28) acknowledges that while an art audience would not find the figure’s penis objectionable the work’s ‘most significant failure however, was not taking into account its audience and the possible conservative views of those who encounter the generously sized phallus protruding from the sculpture’. The sculpture was removed from the taxi twice by two different taxi drivers and eventually went missing.

37. In this work, six choir members boarded the taxi and serenaded commuters. As Bereng (2013:28) suggests, what took place before and after the actual event was as important as the in-taxi event itself. The rehearsals and song-writing workshops involved ‘a non-art based performance team’, and the songs were later recorded at Milestone Studios and aired on Bush Radio in Cape Town.

38. Gugulective was formed in 2006 and is a collective of Cape Town-based artists, DJs, musicians, writers, rappers and poets.

39. This particular taxi became quite popular and as the word spread commuters tried to catch it on purpose.

From the perspective of most biennial art viewers, this series of interventions was to some degree non-existent and, perhaps, as such viewed by some as ineffective works of art. However, the fact that these fleeting, sometimes-blank and (to some) almost-non-existent events occurred in often-unpredictable and unrepeatably ways carried meaning in and of itself, moving art beyond the notion of an easily measurable end product. In Webb’s sound installation titled *In living memory of what never happened* (Figure 4), the message ‘Ladies and Gentlemen, your attention please. You are reminded that everything is fine’ was recorded in Xhosa, English, Italian and Mandarin and broadcast over an existing speaker system at the Langa taxi rank. The information of what might have happened before everything was fine was deliberately missing, potentially causing listeners to feel insecure or anxious. Further, owing to the fact that it was not expected that listeners would understand more than two of the languages, if one listened for more information in order to ease one’s uncertainty, there was a good chance that the message would be indecipherable, making it difficult to know whether new and perhaps important information was being relayed or not. By chance, the title, *In living memory of what never happened*, took on additional meaning owing to the fact that the speakers regularly malfunctioned, decreasing one’s chance of hearing, let alone understanding the message. In some ways, then, this work failed, but in other ways its very failure succeeded in pushing the key concept of the work further.

Reassessing “failure”

In her thesis, *Featuring simplicity: Jargon and access in contemporary South African art*, Bereng (2013:25) frankly discusses what might be considered the successes and

failures of these interventions in light of their aim to engage with a non-art audience rather than the 'biennial art crowd'. What is important about this series and Bereng's discussion of it is the way it wrestles with simplistic notions of what we expect from art, who we expect it to please, who has a right to assess it, and how we measure its success. Such an approach could significantly open up discussions around the *Cape* exhibitions that only survived two manifestations, moving away from reductionist ways of placing wagers on its "success" or "failure". In 'TRANS CAPE: Sink or Swim?' art critic Mary Corrigan (2007:3) wrote: 'TRANS CAPE's fate might be uncertain, but what is assured is the South African art community's need for this exhibition to succeed'. Why should there be a 'need' to succeed, and what would such success mean? Unless what constitutes success were measured in a very simplistic way, surely success would mean multiple things to different people?

In terms of (temporarily) shifting the geographic focus of contemporary art away from the formal commercial hub of Cape Town and predominantly white-controlled commercial galleries, the exhibition and opening event at Lookout Hill in Khayelitsha, which included a performance by Dinkies Sithole, played a significant role in what I view as the success of *Cape 07*, as did the fringe programme X-Cape.⁴⁰ Different measuring rods prioritise different things. In a *Frieze* review, Sean O'Toole (2009) referred to the *Cape 09* exhibition at Lookout Hill, which was curated by Loyiso Qanya, as 'slipshod' and unimaginative, reflecting the 'rough and ready' approach of *Cape 09* as a whole. Similarly, he viewed *A walk into the night* by Claire Tancons, Garth Erasmus and Marlon Griffith, which was a parade of school children that combined carnival, funeral procession and political protest, as 'transitory and slight' (O'Toole 2009).⁴¹ The tools chosen by this art critic to assess *Cape 09* are, I submit, sharpened by what typifies success in the dominant, but limited international circuit of biennialisation. However, rather than suggest we pretend to only see the good in *Cape 07* and *Cape 09*, I propose that a broader set of tools be employed globally, so that the shortcomings of typical measures of success are recognised too.

At a symposium at the South African National Gallery in 2010, curator Gabi Ngcobo questioned why we are so afraid of failure. As she relayed, someone in Berlin once asked her why she included her involvement in the *Cape 07* exhibition in her *curriculum vitae*, for the *Cape* exhibitions were declared by many to be a flop. In response, Ngcobo suggested that we need to consciously embrace our failures, embrace them to the point of writing a history of failure in South Africa. What would we see if we acknowledged and embraced failure on a much grander scale? In what ways would our very definitions of so-called failure change?

40. Venues in the CBD of Cape Town were still used, such as Iziko (the South African Gallery and the South African Museum), the Centre for the Book, the Michaelis Collection, the Slave Lodge and the Castle of Good Hope. The fringe programme, X-Cape, contributed significantly to the opening up of alternative spaces, and incorporated three main routes: 1) Langa, Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and Stellenbosch, 2) Foreshore, De Waterkant and the CBD, and 3) Woodstock, Salt River, Observatory and Rondebosch.

41. While the parade seemed, in some ways, rather disorganised, it was meaningful in the inclusion of young children, specifically in the particular site of the Cape Town Gardens near the Houses of Parliament, and in the way the carnival-like parade alluded to political marches.

While the *Cape* exhibitions might have failed in some ways, the (re)telling of their stories from local perspectives (and mine is just one of many local perspectives) generates a complexity and richness that is completely levelled in *The global contemporary and the rise of new art worlds*. In the formulation of and justification of “global art” in *The global contemporary* book, *Cape* simply becomes a dismembered “eye”, “nose” or “mouth” in a game of *fuku warai*, inaccurately pinned to a biennial map as one of many “new art regions”. Cape Town (and South Africa as a whole) is not a new art region as such, and its own internal complexity and history of dominance and inequality is extensive and unevenly recorded. As such, even local perspectives need to retain an edge that allows for multiple narratives and conflicting counter-narratives that are not ‘subject to someone else’s spin’ (Mercer 2002). While regions ‘on the edges of the global’ (Gardner & Green 2013) have largely been seen to be lacking by the dominant art world, if actors in this art world applied a logic of subtraction to their *own* ways of seeing, they could recognise that supposedly new art worlds have, in many ways, an edge over the prevailing, yet somewhat repetitive and at times boring (Mosquera 2003:145) world of contemporary “global art”.



FIGURE **N° 1**



Promotional material for CAPE Africa Platform in 2006, which highlights the branding of 'Contemporary African culture' rather than "contemporary African art". Photo: Alexandra von Straus.



FIGURE **N° 2a**



Thank you driver taxi bus, 2009. Photo: Lerato Bereng.



FIGURE **N° 3a**



Thank you driver taxi bus, 2009. Photo: Lerato Bereng.



FIGURE **N° 4**



James Webb, *In living memory of what never happened*, 2009. Courtesy of blank projects and Galerie Imane Farès. Multi-lingual public service announcements declaring, 'Ladies and Gentlemen, your attention please. You are reminded that everything is fine,' broadcast from speakers at the Langa taxi rank, Cape Town.



FIGURE **Nº 5**



Isa Suarez and the New Teenagers Gospel Choir, *Taxi voice*, 2009. Site-specific performance in an “art taxi” along the taxi route from the Cape Town Station to Khayelitsha. Photo: Lerato Bereng.



FIGURE **Nº 6**



Nastió Mosquito, *Dreams and illusions*, 2009. Site-specific installation in an “art taxi” along the taxi route from Cape Town Station to Mowbray and Wynberg. Photo: Lerato Bereng.

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