

Contemporary Non-Western Art
Art 244 Fall 2012

A perspective on contemporary Non-Western art:

1. Art around the world has common characteristics:
 - a. Art in any culture changes over time because of internal developments and outside influences
 - b. Those changes can be slow or fast, voluntary or imposed
2. The history of Western influences on Non-Western cultures
 - a. Began with Alexander the Great's travels through the Middle East to India
 - b. Continued with trade along the Silk Road (which also influenced Western cultures)
 - c. Accelerated with Portuguese and Spanish exploration of the 1400s
 - d. Had greatest impact with colonial rule beginning in the 1700s.

Three approaches to Non-Western art in the 20th and 21st centuries

1. Post-colonialism emerges when cultures regain home rule:
 - a. Recognizes the legitimacy of their culture's ancient traditions
 - b. Some artists revive and preserve traditional forms of cultural expression including visual and performing arts
 - c. Some artists synthesize, combining new forms from the West with traditional art forms of their ancestors
2. Post-modernism "decolonizes" art,
 - a. Takes a world view that embraces variety, discontinuity, disjunction and flux.
 - b. Questions the meaning of "originality" and "creativity" and the idea the Western art is "fine art" while other cultures have "crafts."
3. Internationalism began with Van Gogh and Picasso and now continues with artists from China, Africa, Japan, etc.
 - a. Rejects the idea of Non-Western art as "primitive" or "tribal."
 - b. Rejects the idea of Western art as pollution of the "purity" of Non-Western art and its religious foundations.
 - c. Accepts a dialogue between the past and the present in the spirit of pre-contact works that recognize the need to balance the past and the present, tradition and innovation.
 - d. Aims to look at art without a Western or Non-Western perspective.
 - e. Its goal is to draw strength and inspiration from any and every source of ideas and forms artists find around the world.

Sources: *Art Beyond The West*, By Michael O'Riley, Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 2002
Chapter 8