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1

A Global Field Approach to Art and Culture

In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property.

> - KARL MARX AND FRIEDRICH ENGELS, THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, 1848

GLOBALIZATION IN THE ARTS is not a recent phenomenon. For centuries, cultural flows across borders have been omnipresent and fundamental for the development of the visual arts.¹ Beyond the mundane sale, exchange, or even plunder of artifacts, the circulation of artists and aesthetics between distant places has inspired numerous cross-cultural innovations.

If we merely look at the story of Western art, for example, during the Renaissance, artists across Europe flocked to Rome and Florence to familiarize themselves with the technique of central perspective being refined there, and they brought the essential technology of oil paint with them from the North to the South.² Later, the no-less-revolutionary movement toward abstract painting among the French Impressionists was inspired by Asian woodcuts of the Ukiyo-e School that had flourished in Japan between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.³ Perhaps most famously, African tribal arts heavily influenced Picasso and Braque's invention of Cubism in early twentieth-century Paris.

More recently, the history of New York's postwar ascendance into an international art capital would be unthinkable without the forced migration of numerous European artists and intellectuals.⁴ Their presence contributed to the growth of transatlantic networks that, in the 1960s, influenced the rise of "contemporary art," a type of visual art production that expanded beyond

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painting and sculpture to include transgressive practices like performance, conceptual art, land art, and Pop art, among others.⁵ Such contemporary art practices came to circulate in an international field—that is, within a transatlantic space that connected North America and western Europe—and enabled more intensified cultural exchanges between the two continents.⁶ Traveling exhibitions wandered from museums in Europe to the US and back, communicating and promoting major artistic developments beyond the boundaries of national fields.⁷ Galleries on both sides of the Atlantic collaborated to foster the acceptance and sale of works by emerging contemporary artists.⁸ And yet up until the 1980s, vast parts of the world did not frequently participate in this international field, and contemporary visual art from outside Western countries remained in a highly marginalized position, hardly considered at all. In fact, the body of work that emerged as the postwar canon of so-called international contemporary art consisted almost exclusively of American and western European artists, most of them white and male.

Over the following three decades, however, a new phase of globalization considerably transformed the contemporary art field. A whirlwind of changes—including the worldwide proliferation of international art biennials and museums, the far-reaching expansion of art fairs and auction houses, and the rise of global discourses and new internet platforms—combined to establish a global art field that now includes places in Oceania, Asia, Latin America, and Africa in qualitatively new ways. In contrast to previous eras, art scenes in these regions are no longer just gold mines for one-sided aesthetic appropriations. Nor are they simply distant sites for random cultural encounters.⁹ Rather, this new, distinguished phase of globalization has witnessed the rise of an expanded institutional framework that allows for more sustained forms of global exchange and competition around shared artistic practices and stakes. Artists, intermediaries, aesthetic idioms, and histories of visual art from around the world have become entrenched within a common global field, one marked by expanding relations, extended communications, and the mutual quest for recognition and success on a broader worldwide stage.

The Global Rules of Art is an attempt to examine the complex dynamics that have led to the formation of this global field, illuminating its emergent structures, brokers, and some of its changing cultural practices.¹⁰ From this deepened historical perspective, I also shed new light on a central debate among scholars of globalization—namely, if processes associated with globalization lead to increasing cultural homogeneity or diversity.¹¹ In the contemporary art field, we can think about the question of diversity versus homogeneity in terms of the aesthetic features of artists' works or their national backgrounds.¹² My study focuses on the latter aspect, exploring whether or not the latest wave of globalization has challenged the one-sided dominance of cultural producers from a handful

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of Western countries that characterized the earlier international field.¹³ As the emergence of a global art field entailed extraordinary cross-border flows and the growing transcontinental mediation of art, have these dynamics led to the expanded dominance of artists from a few countries that are largely in the "West" and, in this sense, to cultural homogeneity?¹⁴ Or have they enabled artistic creators from a more varied set of "non-Western" contexts—countries in eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, or Africa—to attain greater global circulation and recognition, thereby increasing cultural diversity?¹⁵

This question—whether and why the most recognized artists have become more diverse while the art field's institutional context has globally expanded dovetails with a second and even broader problem: namely, the making of global cultural canons. Ideas around "world art" have animated thinkers for decades. But after the new millennium, when global cultural circuits materialized, allowing artifacts to move across borders in unprecedented ways, it seems time to shift such ideas from being figments of the intellectual imagination to being questions that undergo actual empirical scrutiny. In other words, we can explore how the "intellectual creations of individual nations" could indeed as Marx and Engels phrase it so colorfully in this chapter's epigraph—melt into worldwide "common property."

As a sociologist, I abstain from joining current debates among art historians and cultural theorists about how to properly define "global art," how to depict its distinctive aesthetic and historical features, or who can rightly claim to belong to it and why.¹⁶ Rather than engaging in aesthetic judgement or valuation, I step back to understand the broader historical-institutional context in which valuations take shape, and how they play out. Like a second-order observer—in the sense used by Niklas Luhmann—my approach thus pursues a complementary perspective on questions surrounding global art and its canons.¹⁷ It explores the contextual factors that give some valuations more weight than others in the globalizing art space, and it broadens that view to incorporate the wider social, cultural, and economic forces influencing how some artists rise to the top—and thus become part of the evolving "global canons" of contemporary art—while others do not.¹⁸

With this contextual focus on valuation, as an entry point into the questions how globalization affects canons and the diversity of their artists, this study joins a longstanding line of scholarship in cultural sociology that examines how new ideas, artifacts, and their creators become recognized and valued as important.¹⁹ Within this extensive line of research, Bourdieu's fields theory has been particularly influential.²⁰ In his now-classic work *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu discusses the ways an artist's recognition is not merely the product of their individual genius and their work's intrinsic aesthetic features. From a sociological perspective, that recognition is also shaped by the historical

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interplay of the structures, meanings, and specialized agents within a shared field of cultural production, which represents a relatively distinct social universe. Bourdieu furthermore suggests that cultural fields are internally divided between two main subfields, which are either oriented according to the judgments of cultural experts or according to commercial logics. Using the metaphor of the "rules of art," he emphasizes that the dynamics involved in the valuation of artists in these two subfields are far from random but instead follow distinctive patterns that sociological analysis can illuminate.

However, while we have by now a rich body of sociological contributions on the valuation of culture in general and on art fields in particular, most studies have tended to focus on cities or countries within North America or Europe. The rare exceptions that go beyond this confined radius and look in more transnational or global directions outside the West have primarily explored eras before the new millennium.²¹ Thus, the current literature has paid less attention to how contexts and factors for cross-border valuation change under conditions involving more globally interconnected cultural mediation. So even as we have seen the obvious growth of global cultural circuits and increasing sources of artistic talent across the world, we still know comparatively little about the "global rules" governing why some of them have gained worldwide renown in times of accelerated globalization while others have not. We also know relatively little about the contextual forces that shape cultural canons at a global level and how those canons can expand and diversify. In a period in which the value of the most recognized creative producers is increasingly established across multiple continents, it is important to widen our analytical radius, advancing approaches that capture the construction of value and reputations at a global scale.

The contemporary visual arts seem to offer an ideal empirical site for exploring these issues. Unfettered from the need for literal translation, like novels or poetry, and tending to be unburdened from the necessity of local performance, like theater, the visual arts have grown into a particularly advanced globalized realm.²² At the turn of the century, observers had already suggested that "[in] almost no other sphere of culture is the shrinking of North and South, of East and West so intense as in the fine arts."²³ As such, looking specifically at contemporary art will allow us to throw these less explored sociological topics of the effects of globalization on cross-border valuation, the making of global canons, and those canons' diversity into particularly sharp relief.

To engage with these issues, this book expands Bourdieu's influential theory of fields of cultural production from a national to a global scale. By advancing a global cultural fields approach and by drawing from abundant research on the globalization of the art field and its leading artists, my study shows how the contemporary visual arts have become a more artistically global affair. However—and this is the crux of the *dual* global cultural fields approach I will

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develop—within the same emerging global field, changes have unfolded differently at its commercial and expert-driven poles. In other words, I establish that there are systematic differences in the dynamics and conditions of the recognition of artists from "non-Western" countries and diversity in globalizing subfields that are oriented around a logic of artistic prestige and charisma on the one hand, and those that are ruled by a commercial logic on the other. The same Chinese artists whose works have achieved multimillion-dollar prices at an auction house like Sotheby's and who have joined the global ranks of the world's most economically successful artists are unlikely to gain worldwide cultural esteem to the same extent. Conversely, "global artists" from Latin America, Africa, or the Middle East who have made inroads into major shrines of consecration seldom reach the highest echelons of the global art market.

With this argument, *The Global Rules of Art* moves beyond dichotomic accounts of globalization in contemporary art that have either claimed Western reproduction and artistic homogeneity on a global scale or prognosticated radical change.²⁴ Instead, my study advances an alternative, more intermediate perspective: whereas there have been transformations that have created more diversity beyond the older Western "international" canon, I also demonstrate that these historical dynamics unfolded in uneven and diverging ways within the global commercial and expert-driven subfields. Hence, to approach the questions of diversity and valuation across borders, it is necessary to pay greater theoretical attention to the institutional diversity of globalizing cultural realms themselves.

Lastly, from this argumentative angle, this book also challenges recent interdisciplinary accounts of the contemporary visual arts that have posited a growing convergence between the expert-driven and commercial spheres for the shaping of artistic value and careers.²⁵ According to this view, a number of historical developments that accelerated in the new millennium—including the rising power of art fairs and auction houses, the growing institutionalization of art as an investment, as well as the growing influx of media and financial elites—have entailed that the art market has gained unprecedented authority in setting values, while noncommercial art experts and their criteria of evaluation have lost influence and independence. As a result, there would be a growing overlap in the types of artists who are prized in commercial and aesthetic terms and, thus, the end of any dualism between art and money.

Most of the scholarship that has formulated this market-convergence thesis, however, has relied on single, highly visible Western examples, especially Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons, and Damien Hirst. I revisit the problem of art versus money from a more global perspective and a broader base of evidence. By tracing hundreds of the most successful contemporary artists from different countries in the global exhibition space and auction market over several years, I reveal that the historical period most closely associated with the rise of a

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global art market has not in fact led to a growing convergence among artists who are successful in commercial or cultural terms. Rather, and perhaps counterintuitively, the overall pattern is one of increasing divergence. Contrary to accounts that associate globalization with the unmitigated growth of market forces for determining artistic prestige across borders, my study instead posits that the contemporary visual arts have become fundamentally structured around a dual cultural world economy.

This alternative position should not be misunderstood as a naive refutation of strong commodification trends in the contemporary art market. Ironically, as I point out later, it is precisely the radicalization of market criteria—with the growth of new types of institutions, buyers, and financial logics—that has decoupled judgments about the value of certain artists in the art market from judgments among cultural experts in historically new ways. The divide of art versus money also holds because the influence of money has become so strong and globalized, which has pulled the commercial and specific cultural spheres farther apart within the emerging global field.²⁶

Ultimately, this book addresses a deeper and more enduring social difference—that of "status" versus "class," of symbolic valuation versus market valuation—showing how these divisions involve different and even inverse effects of globalization on the recognition of artists from diverse countries around the world. Uncovering such important differences, *The Global Rules of Art* offers the first substantially detailed, comparative explanation of how and why there can be divergent patterns of global change within the same social universe.²⁷ By examining the dual economy of an emerging global cultural field—and by charting its unique territories of circulation, interpretation, and valuation—I reveal the multifaceted forces shaping global artistic reputations and canons in a more interconnected world.²⁸

From Cultural Imperialism to Global Art Worlds: Three Models of the Globalization of Culture

Sociological scholarship about the globalization of culture deals with a subject that is complex and elusive.²⁹ This complexity might explain why relatively few theoretical frameworks about globalization in spheres of cultural production exist, especially when compared with the broad variety of theories about the global economy or world politics.³⁰ So far, the most important models that have applications beyond singular cultural realms include the political-economy model of cultural imperialism, the cultural flows and networks model, and the global culture/art worlds model.³¹ Each of these frameworks makes broader arguments about the emergence and structure of transnational or global realms of

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cultural production. Each one also implies a distinctive "scenario" concerning how accelerated globalization impacts the diversity of creative producers across borders.³²

Because I am suggesting a conceptual framework that is an alternative to these pioneering models, it is important that I first review them and highlight how they connect with established arguments about globalization in the contemporary art world. Only then will it be clear how the book's theoretical approach allows us to synthesize and advance aspects of existing perspectives. I have tried to make this discussion accessible to readers who are not specialists in this area, and I have purged quite a few overly technical details. However, if you are less interested in this background and more interested in the book's historical account of the art field's multiple global transformations, feel free to skip this theoretical discussion and jump straight to the end of the chapter, where I offer an outline of the rest of the book.

The oldest theory on the globalization of culture, which emerged in the 1970s, is the *political-economy model of cultural imperialism*.³³ It argues that postwar sectors of media and cultural production have developed parallel to the overall capitalist world-system—that is, toward single global markets structured around the dominance of a small number of core countries over a vast periphery.³⁴ Politically motivated and profit-chasing actors from these core countries—particularly the US—push for the opening and deregulation of national cultural markets around the world. In the process, players from core countries benefit from strong competitive advantages in political, financial, and technological resources. Their expansion goes along with highly unidirectional cultural flows from the core to the periphery as well as strong dependencies on the sites of peripheral agents. Hence, this framework associates the globalization of culture with the one-sided expansion and concentration of power by mediating actors and institutions from (Western) core countries. This in turn has led to the worldwide dominance of their media and cultural producers and, ultimately, to cultural homogeneity.³⁵

Although such expansionist arguments were originally applied to masscultural sectors, similar points have been made about contemporary art. Alain Quemin, for example, suggests that "a strong hierarchy of countries *controls* the organization of and participation in the international contemporary art world and market."³⁶ As he argues, "the art world has a clearly defined center comprising a small number of Western countries, among which the US and Germany are preeminent, and a vast periphery, comprising all other states."³⁷ Accordingly, visual artists from this small number of leading countries would overwhelmingly dominate the global arena.

The political-economy model of cultural imperialism productively shifted social-scientific perspectives about media and cultural production beyond the

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national level early on, and it correctly highlighted the important role macrolevel inequalities play in our understanding of the dynamics of global cultures.³⁸ But it *only* focuses on material inequalities in globalizing cultural production, such as economic-technical resources, patterns of ownership, or political regulations. These kinds of disparities are then tightly coupled with the logic and structure of the capitalist world-system overall.

The model also problematically equates a country's political and economictechnological power with its global cultural influence—two attributes that, in reality, can diverge greatly.³⁹ Consider, for example, Japan. One of the biggest economies in the world, it has become a central player in the capitalist worldsystem in the postwar era. And yet within the contemporary art world, relatively few of its artists enjoy a vaunted reputation on the global stage.⁴⁰ In view of this and other asynchronies,⁴¹ it seems safe to conclude with Ulf Hannerz that "center/periphery relationships of culture are not . . . a mere reflection of political and economic power."⁴²

Seeking to overcome the imperialism model's limitations, Arjun Appadurai's cultural flows and networks model rejected the idea that cross-border dynamics in the media and arts are tightly determined by an overarching capitalist world-system.⁴³ He claims that processes associated with the globalization of culture since the 1980s have not led to the one-sided dominance of the US or a few core countries but instead to greater decentralization and diversification. In particular, the increasing availability of "capabilities to produce and disseminate" various cultural goods "throughout the world" has stimulated the growth of regional "scapes"⁴⁴ that offset Western hegemony.⁴⁵ From this regionalist angle, Appadurai rejects an all-encompassing center-periphery model as no longer adequate for capturing the more complex configuration of a "new global cultural economy."⁴⁶ So whereas the cultural imperialism model suggests the rise of an ever more integrated global system with a few (Western) centers of control, Appadurai, along with other scholars who have explicated this framework for contemporary art, paint a diametrically opposed picture, one of growing global diversification—and perhaps even entropy—due to the proliferation of more regional cultural networks and flows.⁴⁷

Appadurai's model productively critiques the totalizing perspective of the political-economy model. However, its empirical scenario sets the global and the regional as exclusive entities when, in reality, they can coexist and be mutually influential. For example, as we shall see, the rise of regional art market centers like Hong Kong or Dubai in contemporary art did not override New York's powerful influence as a global art capital. I therefore must agree with Jan Nederveen Pieterse that it is most productive to circumvent any zero-sum conception and instead work toward an approach that accounts for the emergence of *global* meanings and structures in addition to regional ones.⁴⁸

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A third body of work, which I summarize as the *global culture/art worlds model*, addresses this gap in Appadurai's work.⁴⁹ Scholars that build on Howard Becker's sociological notion of an art world as "the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that art world is noted for" suggest that global culture worlds differ according to their expanded scope of participants and activities.⁵⁰ They are defined as communities of creators, gatekeepers, organizations, and audiences from diverse continents who collaborate on the "creation, evaluation, dissemination and reception" of a certain type of art or media across borders.⁵¹ Importantly, through such collaborations, global culture worlds develop shared conventions—that is, "shared understandings about what cultural products should be like . . . providing standards for evaluating and appreciating" them within a global context.⁵²

A critical mechanism for the formation of global culture worlds is institutional infrastructures that connect people from around the world on a periodical basis. These include international trade fairs, international art biennials, and cosmopolitan art festivals. Diana Crane explains the importance of such events: "Global culture worlds require temporary settings such as intermediary trade fairs where cultural goods can be displayed to large numbers of creators, producers and sellers and where, most importantly, an unwritten consensus can be reached about the nature and direction of their activities."⁵³ Even in an age of enhanced communication technologies, direct personal encounters and frequent physical gatherings seem crucial for enabling the rise of global networks and shared cultural conventions in the arts or media production.⁵⁴

When it comes to contemporary art, one of the earliest and strongest formulations of the idea of a global art world, which resonates with the sociological model outlined above, comes from the US-American philosopher Noël Carroll. He argues that the proliferation of international biennials for contemporary art since the late 1980s contributed to the rise of an interconnected art world on a global scale.⁵⁵ Significantly, this transnational/global art world has also developed a "common art culture" that turned contemporary art into an "internally coherent practice" around the globe.⁵⁶ The new cultural configuration encompasses the use of similar artistic idioms—such as video art, installation, or performance art. It moreover involves the rise of shared cultural presuppositions and sense-making strategies to engage with artworks in similar ways across continents, which "can be mobilized in Shanghai, Sydney, Rio or Cape-town."⁵⁷

Carroll's argument about the emergence of a shared culture, which would feed into more cosmopolitan understandings of contemporary art, implies a scenario in which accelerated globalization enables a greater diversity of artists to circulate and become recognized on a global stage.⁵⁸

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In general, the global culture/art worlds model has made significant contributions in theorizing the global cultural arena as more than simply a onesidedly Western-dominated playground or a looser assemblage of diverse local and regional clusters. Nevertheless, it still tends to conceptualize cross-continental relations and meanings in a way that is too unified and harmonious. While I agree with its emphasis on shared institutional circuits and understandings that allow people to interact in globalizing cultural realms, I think it is important not only to look at what participants have in common but also at what may still divide them. Cultural agents from around the world can use the same label of "contemporary art" or the same artistic idioms, for example; and yet, they may still ascribe different meanings and values to those terms.⁵⁹ Moreover, such differences can remain contested within entrenched global power dynamics. By not acknowledging the possibility of different cultural perspectives, persisting inequalities, and the clashes that may result from them, the global art world model risks projecting an overly unified perspective onto "globalized art."⁶⁰ This is precisely where I believe the alternative of a global field approach can be effective and valuable.

Toward a Global Cultural Fields Approach

Each of the two more global models just outlined offers important insights for theorizing the dynamics of globalizing cultures. They both, however, take overly one-sided and unitary approaches to global cultural production . While the political-economy model of cultural imperialism focuses on structural inequalities, the global art worlds approach privileges cultural meanings.⁶¹ While the former emphasizes Western domination and related dependencies, the latter inverts that scenario by highlighting cosmopolitan interdependencies and collaborative consensus. Despite these stark differences, the models both imply that global cultures revolve largely around unifying commonalities, whether they are imposed through power or they emerge from more egalitarian interactions.

To move beyond these overly unitary either/or perspectives, I suggest working with the alternative of a global fields approach to contemporary art.⁶² This framework provides a fruitful starting point for synthesizing the analytical dimensions that fall apart in existing theories. Moreover, it enables us to account for both commonality *and* difference in globalizing cultures, thus offering a better-calibrated lens for examining historical global transformations and artistic diversity across borders. But because a global cultural fields approach extends and revises Bourdieu's fields theory from a national to a transcontinental scale, I should first clarify some of his most fundamental concepts, especially for those readers who are not familiar with his work.⁶³

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Cultural Fields, Forms of Capital, Habitus

Similar to the art worlds model, Bourdieu's theory portrays realms of cultural production as relatively self-contained universes. However, he considers competition, rather than collaboration, to be a field's driving dynamic.⁶⁴ Consequently, the mediation and valuation of contemporary art cannot be thought of as a process that operates through consensus in a (global) art world "community"; it must be placed within a contested arena where several artists, intermediaries, and institutions are competing for specific symbolic or material rewards and trying to influence the criteria governing what good art is and who should be considered a worthy artist.

Fields are based on distinctive meanings insofar as participants are oriented around a common type of cultural production (such as contemporary art, literature, music, or fashion), and they share a collective belief in the field's particular stakes and core issues (what Bourdieu calls the "illusio").⁶⁵ But they are also fundamentally affected by distinctive structures—that is, inequalities in power resources. Bourdieu famously pluralizes Marx's notion of *economic capital*, suggesting that the basic forms of power extend to include *cultural capital* (cultural wealth and competencies), *social capital* (social ties), and *symbolic capital* (specific symbolic recognition and prestige).⁶⁶ The historically specific distribution of a field's most significant forms of capital defines its structure of dominant and dominated positions. In turn, this structure influences the field's dynamics.⁶⁷ Artists and intermediaries may play with multiple cards (i.e., capitals) to advocate for their agendas, but how they play the game also depends on where they find themselves in a field's hierarchy at any particular moment.

More specifically, Bourdieu suggests that cultural fields are structured around two main axes with different stakes and power sources. The primary axis revolves around the polarity and tension between what he calls a *relatively autonomous subfield of restricted production* and a *heteronomous subfield of large-scale production*.⁶⁸ For the latter subfield, the dominant stake and form of power is economic capital. The competitive valuation of cultural producers is shaped by profitdriven criteria and foregrounds their commercial success.⁶⁹ At the other end of the spectrum, at the relatively autonomous pole, economic rewards are secondary, and this subfield is instead oriented largely around specific symbolic capital (i.e., cultural legitimacy). The evaluation of creators revolves around field-specific aesthetic or intellectual criteria that are relatively independent from, or even opposed to, commercial or other "profane" considerations.⁷⁰

A second structural axis runs through the autonomous subfield itself, setting up an opposition between *heterodoxy* and *orthodoxy*. The orthodoxy refers to the proverbial art establishment, those cultural agents who have reached dominant positions with high symbolic capital in the game. Heterodox factions, in turn,

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often consist of younger aspirants with low symbolic capital. To make a name for themselves and move the field forward, they are inclined to challenge the orthodoxy via "distinction" by advocating for innovative artistic approaches or mediation strategies (such as new curatorial strategies, discourses, outlets, or forms of criticism).⁷¹ As such, inequalities in symbolic capital are a structural source for innovation at the pole of restricted production, fueling a kind of "permanent revolution" between newcomers and established players.⁷²

Yet to fully understand the dynamics of art fields, shared meanings and structure are certainly not wholly determinative, however. It is also critical to look at the properties of individual players to make sense of their strategies (i.e., their *position-takings*) within their field positions in a given historical context. To theorize such a micro-level dimension, Bourdieu introduced the complex and much-debated concept of "habitus." In basic terms, it denotes the set of embodied dispositions that people bring to the game, the ways of thinking, seeing, feeling, classifying, and acting that have been inculcated by their own social upbringing and educational or professional trajectory.⁷³ For example, it makes a difference if a contemporary art curator was raised in an academic household and educated in a theory-heavy program or if they grew up in a wealthy family of entrepreneurs and began their education with interior design before studying in a traditional art history program. Even if these two exhibition makers started out in similar structural positions as newcomers in the art field, they would probably carry different habitus that predisposed them to champion different kinds of artists and curatorial strategies.

In sum, cultural fields represent relatively independent universes of cultural production and mediation. Broadly speaking, valuation emerges out of the interplay of field-specific meanings, unequal structures, and the habitus of the game's players within a broader historical context. It is a complex interaction characterized by an ongoing dynamic of competition (and related collaborations), whose directions, in turn, influence who gains recognition as an artist, who sells the most, and who can claim the power to symbolically consecrate artists to begin with.

From a National to a Global Cultural Field: Three Mechanisms and Multiscalar Configurations

Bourdieu originally developed his conception of cultural fields using the nation-state, namely France, as his primary unit of analysis.⁷⁴ As I have explicated in earlier work, this original national orientation does not mean that his idea of the field automatically falls prey to (implicit) methodological nationalism.⁷⁵ In fact, though Bourdieu did not elaborate a global field analysis himself, he referred to international or global fields in his later writings.⁷⁶ There is also

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a burgeoning—though still scarce—literature that has recently applied his work to the study of transnational or globalizing realms of cultural production and beyond.⁷⁷ The earliest contribution was Pascale Casanova's superb monograph about modern avant-garde writers in the world literary space.⁷⁸ Other scholars have illuminated the transnational patterns of book translations, the global diffusion and hybridization of rock music, the globalization of the performing arts in Central Asia, the emergence of a European field for trade with television programs or the institutional recognition of authors in the transnational literary field.⁷⁹ These contributions demonstrate how Bourdieu's approach can productively illuminate the examination of a variety of cross-border cultural spheres.

However, existing case studies have remained fragmented with regard to articulating the theoretical elements that need to be revised when one extends cultural fields theory beyond national boundaries. We have not yet seen the crystallization of a clearly identifiable "global cultural fields approach" that can readily serve as an alternative to established models in the globalization literature, while also providing an integrative basis for a cumulative research program on transnational or global cultural fields.⁸⁰ By synthesizing insights from existing scholarship and by building on findings from my own research on contemporary art, I develop a framework that delineates distinctive conceptual elements of a global, rather than national, cultural fields analysis.⁸¹

In a basic sense, a global cultural field materializes when agents from different national fields extend their rivalry over specific forms of capital and interpretative issues within a domain of cultural production across several continents. In contemporary art, for example, ambitious curators traveled more extensively to realize projects across multiple locations and to stay abreast of art production around the world. Leading galleries participated in art fairs on several continents to forge connections, compete for sales, and advance the success of their own artists. And aspiring contemporary artists exhibited their work in territorially expanded circuits within a larger pool of peers from different world regions than ever before. In short, a global cultural field emerges when the scope and stakes of exchange and competition in an arena of cultural production have become redefined in global terms, when field struggles no longer unfold within one country but across a wide variety of different countries.⁸²

It is tempting to explain the rise of a global sphere of cultural production by using broader geopolitical, economic, or technological frameworks (like "the rise of the internet"). But if we think of contemporary art as a field, in Bourdieu's terms, we have to approach it as a universe that is relatively independent of the broader historical environment or any notions of technological determinism.⁸³ The key word is "relatively." External changes can and do affect

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the artistic realm, but they do so indirectly, becoming "refracted," like a prism, through the field's internal logics, structures, and historical state.⁸⁴ This idea of a *refraction effect* guards against seeing art's globalization as merely a passive reflection of wider political-economic or technological developments, a view that is still endorsed by several art theorists.⁸⁵

The "internal" historical processes involved in the formation of a global cultural field are, of course, multifaceted and complex. They involve growing relationships among national and regional cultural fields with very different structures and traditions.⁸⁶ And yet I suggest that there are at least three field-internal mechanisms that both reflect and support the emergence of a global field within a cultural domain, while also interacting with facilitating broader historical conditions.⁸⁷

The first refers to *global institutional circuits*, which refer to organizational infrastructures that support the transcontinental circulation of people, ideas, and artifacts. In contemporary art, two of the most influential circuits for the emergence of a global playing field have been the global biennial circuit at the autonomous pole and the global art fair circuit at the heteronomous, market-oriented pole. Over the past three decades, international art biennials and fairs have increasingly diffused across several continents. Moreover, they have come to form partly coordinated infrastructures for the circulation and valorization of contemporary art. Such circuits are important because they connect individual and organizational players from various national and regional fields on a more frequent, sustained basis. And while the global art worlds model underlines the significance of these institutions for the globalization process, a field perspective highlights how they lead not only to more cultural exchange across borders but also to extended competition.

Furthermore, the formation of a global field depends on the construction of distinctive meanings—that is, unique modes of perception, interpretation, and belief. In this regard, a second globalizing indicator and cultural mechanism is *field-specific global discourse*, ongoing discussions and publications about globalizing dynamics regarding a particular cultural realm and its practices. For example, the rise of new ways of writing and debating about globalization in the contemporary visual arts since the 1990s has gradually helped redefine the boundaries of "international contemporary art" beyond a narrow Western perspective or a merely additive approach involving various national artistic traditions. What has emerged is a more integrative, *global vision* of contemporary art through which artists, mediators, and institutions from around the world have become perceived as being part of a shared cultural space, even though differing understandings of "contemporary art" or "global art" persist and remain contested. Field-specific global discourse both expresses and constructs new schemes of perception and belief that reenvision a cultural practice

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as a common worldwide phenomenon, thus contributing to the global field's *cultural* foundation.⁸⁸

Third, the formation of a global cultural field is bound up with the creation of *global institutions for consecration and evaluation* like the Nobel Prize in Literature or global art prizes and even artist rankings.⁸⁹ Such instances publicly contribute to the reformulation of the ultimate stakes of recognition in global terms. They are critical mechanisms for institutionalizing global principles of valuation and hierarchization within a cultural domain.

With these kinds of field-internal mechanisms, I am talking about much more than the diffusion of a particular cultural practice and its specialized institutions around the world. These three mechanisms are particularly important for the emergence of a global cultural field because they help progressively incorporate players from national or regional fields, which were previously more disparate, into a shared playing field.⁹⁰ By using the term "emergence," I also emphasize that a global field level is more than just the sum of various national arenas.⁹¹ As the three mechanisms suggest, a global field develops its own institutional infrastructures, discourses, and stakes that cannot be reduced to the logics of singular national (or regional) fields.

Likewise, it would be wrong to assume that a global art field simply supersedes the relevance and diversity of preexisting national art fields. Instead, it embodies a relatively distinct dimension that cuts across and connects them at a historically unprecedented worldwide scope. A global field *partially* disembeds *and* reembeds artists, intermediaries, aesthetic idioms, and histories of contemporary art from a (sub)national or regional into a transcontinental dimension for exchange and competition. This also means that participants can belong to the (sub)national, regional, and global field levels simultaneously, within a nested configuration.

One might draw an analogy with sports. The World Cup in soccer constitutes just one (and one might say the highest) level at which the sport unfolds. But there are still regional and national competitions—for example, the UEFA Champions League, the DFB-Pokal—and these events follow their own protocols and logics, though they can feed into what happens at the World Cup as well. Similarly, a global cultural field constitutes just one field level within a multiscalar structure in which national, regional, and subnational field levels maintain, albeit to varying degrees, their relative independence in infrastructures and logics.⁹² For example, while China has become more connected to the globalizing art field since the late 1990s, the Official Art Organizations (OAOs) in the country—that is, governmental artists associations and art academies—continue to exert considerable influence on the careers of visual artists domestically. And their work can look very different from that of Chinese artists who gained global visibility.⁹³

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Thus, a global cultural field can emerge out of a multiscalar configuration, whereby subnational, national, and regional field levels coexist relatively independently, although their dynamics also intersect and influence one another. Conceiving of a global art space in this way helps us move beyond a zero-sum conception of different scales in cultural production, as the regionalist scenario of Appadurai's flows and networks model implies. Instead, the field is one where regional and global circuits are simultaneously both in tension and partly intertwined with one another.

In sum, a global cultural field defines a space of cultural production in which agents (individual and organizational) have extended their competition over field-specific resources and interpretative issues to a transcontinental level. This space has developed its own infrastructures, discourses, and institutions for evaluation that operate relatively independently from (sub)national or regional field levels, without being completely independent of their influences.

Commonality and Difference in Globalizing Cultures

After having delineated defining characteristics and historical conditions for an emergent global cultural field, I would argue that using a global field lens offers a uniquely complex approach for examining dynamics of valuation across borders. It attends to structures, agents, and meanings and thus allows us to integrate analytical dimensions that the cultural imperialism and global art worlds models left unconnected.⁹⁴ More importantly, it allows us to theorize these dimensions in ways that overcome some of the prior models' overly unitary tendencies and thus to revisit the question of globalization and diversity in a new, more differentiating light.

Like the cultural imperialism model, fields theory pays attention to power structures, but it has two advantages. First, while the former is limited to the macro-level, when fields theory is extended to the global level, it differentiates between inequalities among individual players and those among macro entities (i.e., regions, countries, cities). The latter macro imbalances derive from the unequal distribution of field-specific forms of "macro capital," which constitute a "world structure" of more or less central and peripheral art fields with some semi-peripheral spaces in between.⁹⁵ In turn, cities with the highest concentration of field-relevant macro capital (e.g., the volume of prestigious art institutions) figure as the centers of the centers, so to speak. For example, Paris is the world capital in the geography of power for avant-garde literature, and New York is one of contemporary art's major capitals.

Distinguishing inequalities among a field's individual participants and the macro entities with which they are affiliated allows us to develop a more nuanced picture of the power dynamics marking globalizing cultural realms. It

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avoids treating macro entities, like countries, as homogeneous agents, which imperialism models have done at times when describing the US.⁹⁶ From a global field perspective, macro-level inequalities affect power dynamics among players at the meso-level, *without* being reducible to that level. A cultural agent's position within the macrostructure of countries and cities will have a "positive or negative *multiplier*" effect, but it will not fully determine their moves in a global culture game.⁹⁷

Second, a global fields approach accounts for macrostructures in cultural production in a more multidimensional way. Extending Bourdieu's idea of multiple capitals, it is not only economic, technological, or political resources that are relevant but symbolic, cultural, and, as I suggest, institutional ones as well.⁹⁸ Casanova, for example, pioneered the concept of symbolic national capital, which refers to the worldwide prestige of a country's aesthetic production, such as the canonic works and artistic styles that it has originated.⁹⁹ Adding to Casanova's formulation, I differentiate an institutional dimension of macro capital that involves the volume of relevant institutions for cultural production and mediation, including flagship museums, exhibition spaces, art magazines, and galleries for contemporary art. When the topic of valuation is at stake, this institutional macro capital must be distinguished because it captures global inequalities between countries (or regions, cities, etc.) with regard to the cross-border circulation and consecration of cultural goods.¹⁰⁰ Since the types of macro capital that matter to the power structure of a globalizing field is an empirical question, the fields approach eschews the materially reductionist and totalizing outlook of the cultural imperialism model. Each globalizing field is structured around multiple and distinctive forms of macro inequality that cannot be reduced to the larger economic world-system in any uniform way. The center of the center in contemporary art (New York) is not congruent with that of the movie industry (Los Angeles), fashion (Paris), or theater (London).¹⁰¹

Additionally, while the imperialism framework myopically looks at structures, a global cultural fields approach remains sensitive to shared meanings among the field's participants as well. In contrast to the global art worlds model, however, it does so in a less unitary and more dynamic way. When we use a global field approach—with its stronger emphasis on competition and contestation—it is possible to relax any assumptions about cultural unity. What gives a global art field meaningful coherence is not the use of the same hermeneutical strategies in the interpretation of artworks or worldwide consensus on taste and aesthetic valuations. What unites participants most fundamentally is a shared vision of a cultural practice as a common global phenomenon—and thus a common symbolic battleground—as well as their belief in the value of the stakes involved in that practice. But such a vision of

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"global," rather than, say, Western, "international" contemporary art functions merely as a meaningful frame of reference. The interpretations of the term, how to evaluate it, or who the worthiest artists are within that field will perpetually remain open to debate.

For instance, as we shall see, in the global art field, the Venice Biennale represents a large-scale exhibition platform where more than eighty countries take part every two years. They share a belief in the institution's importance as a prestigious global instance for artistic visibility and consecration. Each national participant stages its own exhibition under the umbrella of the larger event, which also awards a series of global art prizes for national pavilions and artists who are chosen and declared as "the best." National participants at Venice traditionally exhibit artists from their own country or region, and they can feature quite diverse aesthetic perspectives on contemporary art that challenge the symbolically dominant—that is, Western—mainstream. Taiwan's past exhibition politics at Venice, for example, demonstrate how a relatively peripheral participant turned into a critical voice against the Western artistic mainstream. In 2005, Taiwan began staging group exhibitions that included artists from other countries in the Global South, seeking to create "cross-cultural alliances between suppressed and excluded groups" and to critique the "logic of cultural, political, and economic hegemony dominating the biennale" that was causing "Taiwan's own marginality."¹⁰²

This example underscores how important it is to keep an eye on the integrative role of certain global institutions and the participants' shared beliefs and investments, while at the same time curtailing any assumptions about cultural convergence that could easily become too reifying, if not Eurocentric. A global art field does not merely revolve around transnational conversations, cosmopolitan networking, and consensual conventions. It also constitutes a space of competition and struggle in which cultural differences are put into critical relation with one another rather than being dissolved.¹⁰³ In other words, global fields theory's attention to contestation—within a meaningful, shared space allows us to think about cultural commonality and difference simultaneously and dynamically. We can look at the ways Taiwan participated in a global institution that was dominated by Western players but also how it sought to subvert existing hierarchies through its heterodox exhibition strategies.

Finally, there is an even more fundamental way in which a global fields approach can uniquely capture the internal divisions of globalizing cultures. It builds on Bourdieu's proposition that fields of cultural production are structured around the tension between relatively autonomous and heteronomous subfields or "poles."¹⁰⁴ In the global art field, as table 1.1 lays out, the pole with greatest autonomy involves expert mediators who tend to be more oriented around field-specific artistic or intellectual values; they approach art primarily

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Relatively autonomous	Heteronomous market	
Experts	Commercial agents	
Curators, art critics, avant-garde	Dealers, auction houses, speculators,	
gallerists, connoisseurs, etc.	investment funds, etc.	
Symbolic capital	Economic capital	
Specific cultural pole	Commercial pole	
Artistic subfield	Commercial subfield	

TABLE 1.1. Two Main Poles of Mediation in the Contemporary Art Field

for the production of symbolic value (i.e., symbolic capital). At the opposite pole of heteronomy, by contrast, agents follow less specific, more "worldly" interests, especially when chasing material profits, that is, economic capital. In contemporary art, such a more heteronomous, market-oriented pole involves commercial dealers, profit-driven auction houses, speculative art buyers, and so on.

Existing global models have overlooked such divisions, and the book makes the case that we need to pay more attention to different logics of production and mediation in globalizing cultures.¹⁰⁵ Extending and revising the idea of a field's autonomy-heteronomy axis I examine how the historical formation of global infrastructures and discourses for contemporary art differ among specific cultural and commercial subfields. Moreover, I use this lens to discover different ways in which artists become valued on a worldwide stage *and* under what conditions such artists become more diverse.

To be sure, global cultural fields theory does not offer general predictions about the dynamics of artistic diversity because it is a framework that must be attuned to the historical specificities of each cultural realm. But advancing the distinction between relatively autonomous and heteronomous poles offers at least a *sensitizing* entry point for investigating how diversity is conditioned by internally varied field structures and meanings. The result is a comprehensive historical and theoretical account of how a divided cultural world economy has historically emerged and how it affects artistic reputations and diversities in remarkably different ways.¹⁰⁶

The book's account of a global field's autonomy-heteronomy divisions is not simply an upscaling of Bourdieu's modernist Western theory. The divided cultural world economy I introduce is embedded in quite distinct institutions global biennials, global art fairs, and global auctions—that Bourdieu did not consider. My study also reveals different logics of evaluation, looking at intellectual discursive logics rather than purely formalistic aesthetic principles; and it highlights financial speculative ones at the heteronomous, market-oriented pole. Moreover, I show how geographic factors are uniquely influential to valuation

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within a global, rather than national, cultural field—not just with regard to territorial location but also with regard to geographic meanings—and I explain why such meanings vary across the field's main poles.

Taken together, a global fields approach can capture a globalizing cultural realm as a kind of paradoxical entity that is both bounded and heterogeneous, one marked by power structures and meanings, commonalities and differences, exchanges and ongoing conflicts, and specific artistic and economic values—in short, as an entity of "institutionalized anomie."¹⁰⁷ As such, it offers a fertile theoretical framework for investigating the rise and dynamics of a global contemporary art space without exaggerating its level of unification or consolidation, staying attuned to ongoing frictions, new contestations, and the persisting heterogeneity of art practices around the world.

Overview

The Global Rules of Art examines globalization in the contemporary visual arts in three parts that foreground different yet complementary perspectives: (1) the macro-level global expansion of the art field; (2) the meso-level of the careers of worldwide leading artists and their diversity; and (3) the micro-level of the trajectories of individual artists, cultural brokers, and those who symbolically or materially appropriate art.

Comparative analyses run through each of these parts. Systematic studies concerning the globalization of art and culture are still rare, and when they have appeared, they are often based on the unit of the nation-state. This study pursues a more unusual comparative methodology, since it does not take countries as its main units for comparison, but the different cross-border subfields (or poles) of a globalizing field.

Empirically, the book draws on a vast array of quantitative and qualitative data as well as a mixed-methods research design (including hierarchical clustering, historical analysis, content and interpretative discourse analyses, and a biographical case study method), which I explain in the appendices. Given my data's global scope—and the risks of assuming a one-sided West-centrism—a high degree of reflexivity and methodological meticulousness was critical for approximating a solid empirical foundation for the book's arguments. Yet detailing all the methodological decisions I made to avoid the many pitfalls that came up along the way simply goes beyond the scope of this chapter. Here, I only add that the research was designed so that it draws from converging empirical sources across the book's three parts.¹⁰⁸ In this way, the book's chapters can mutually enlighten and inform one another, making it possible to forge connections between the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels, which is something I pursue further in the conclusion.

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Part 1 (chapters 2 and 3) focuses on the macro-level of global transformations in the contemporary art field, especially those that have occurred since 1945. Drawing from archival research, numerous institutional histories, a discourse analysis of around eight hundred art publications, an examination of nearly thirty-nine thousand public and commercial art institutions across 155 countries, and a genealogy that covers the rise of global instances of consecration and evaluation, I argue that the twenty-first century has seen the emergence of a global art field in which the logic governing contemporary art's circulation and valuation has become increasingly redefined in global, rather than international, terms. I additionally demonstrate how the specific cultural and commercial subfields for cross-border mediation have followed divergent historical and territorial trajectories of institutional globalization.

Part 2 (chapters 4 and 5) engages with the consequences that these global transformations have had on the recognition of artists from different parts of the world and in this sense for the field's homogeneity or diversity. While the global art market has seen relatively rapid changes for artists from countries with growing wealth, especially China, the global exhibition space has tended to privilege artists from poorer world regions, especially African countries. Chapter 5 argues that these divergent patterns of diversity are not historically contingent. They are bound up in how the autonomous and heteronomous poles of the globalizing field affect the valuations of artists differently. By analyzing the trajectory patterns of nearly two hundred worldwide leading artists, I reveal a dualistic structure of symbolic and market recognition that is upheld not only by distinct types of institutions and evaluative logics but also by differing geographies of artistic migration and flows. Taken together, by uncovering key determinants for leading careers across continents, part 2 establishes that the emerging global art field is fundamentally structured around a dual cultural world economy. And it argues that this twinned configuration has had important ramifications for varying historical dynamics of diversity among globalizing artistic elites.

To illuminate how the global art field's distinctive forms of recognition unfold for artists from outside the traditional Western centers, part 3 (chapters 6 and 7) develops qualitative case studies of the biographies of two artists, Gabriel Orozco from Mexico and Yue Minjun from China. Orozco has reached worldwide symbolic recognition, while Yue temporarily became a superstar in the global auction market. The case studies ask how these artists, despite coming from historically peripheral countries in contemporary art, were able to arrive at dominant positions within the globalizing field. With abundant secondary source material and numerous interviews with artists, curators, critics, private collectors, and other art professionals in Europe, Asia, and North and Latin America, the chapters chart the two artists' careers, reconstructing

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how these "peripheral" artists navigated different gatekeepers, power dynamics, and discursive forces in their journey toward global success. Their stories illustrate the shifting dynamics for establishing artistic recognition and art prices through the lens of two lived experiences. At the same time, the comparative juxtaposition illuminates how Orozco's and Minjun's global trajectories at the autonomous and heteronomous poles were influenced by divergent micro-level factors, particularly regarding artistic habitus, criteria of interpretation and evaluation, and transnational networks.

The conclusion synthesizes key insights from the macro-, meso-, and micro-level analyses, providing an integrative picture of the emerging global art field and its divided economy. Similar to a Cubist painting, which portrays the same object from multiple perspectives, I return to the main puzzle at the center of this study and summarize how the internally differentiated cultural economy has influenced the recognition of artists from different world partsand, in this sense, cultural diversity—in contradictory and complex ways. I also single out one specifically fascinating theoretical facet: the pronounced role that geography plays for field dynamics in a global context. I foreground how geographic situatedness, classifications, and meanings have become intertwined with the valuation of artists across borders in fundamental ways, which demands new understandings of artistic distinction and value beyond Bourdieu's mainly temporal parameters (e.g., new versus old, innovation versus tradition). The conclusion closes by discussing how the global field model could be extended to other spheres of art and culture, before an epilogue takes up more recent events involving the pandemic. In addition to developing critical knowledge about major transformations in contemporary art, this study advances a promising global fields approach that could be used for understanding the multifaceted and contradictory forces that affect the production of culture in our contemporary world.

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