

editorial

Dis:connected objects

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This special issue of *static* is – in addition to other research and events at the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect – devoted to ‘dis:connected objects’. This was the title of a workshop held on 15 June 2022, organised by Anne Söll, an alumna fellow of global dis:connect and professor of art history at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum, together with Burcu Dogramaci and Hanni Geiger from the Centre. At the same time, *Dis:connected objects* is the title of a series that has had a fixed place in *static* since its first issue and has dealt with (research) objects and archival finds as a starting point for reflection on dis:connectivity in globalisation processes. The term leads to contemplation of how objects represent ruptures in memory, in displacements, in incomplete, globally branching histories.

Various case studies in our special issue covering different epochs and geographies examine and exemplify these considerations. They simultaneously test the analytical possibilities of research in art history and cultural studies within the ambit of a dis:connective understanding of global contexts.

We start from the premise that objects play an ambivalent role in the process of globalisation, which develops not only as a form of intensifying networks and a compression of geographic connections but equally through missing or missed connections and disentanglements. On the one hand, objects are symbols and metaphors for a seemingly shrinking world (for example, through global IT connectivity). On the other, they stand for the severe breaks, absences, detours and interruptions that are intrinsically



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linked to processes of globalisation, migration and exile (such as beloved family photographs that are brought into exile but also lost, dispersed or destroyed en route). Building on and extending research on the provenance and restitution of objects, our special issue of *static* focusses on the objects themselves. How are they dealt with in private collections and museums? How do they reflect, change, challenge and deconstruct our understanding of globalisation?

Our special issue shifts attention to the dis:connectivities in globalisation and how they impress themselves onto individual objects, their uses (or non-use) and functions in aesthetic and/or social as well as historical domains. How do objects represent the disruptions and diversions that are also results of globalisation? How do (art) objects change when museumised, and what new contexts and relations to other objects, politics or the history of the museum itself come into view? How do objects incorporate memories or exclude them? Taking individual objects as our starting point, we discuss how objects and the discourses connected to them negotiate the reciprocal, tension-laden global relationships. How do objects provide a complex, ambivalent or even controversial interface for complex processes of globalisation?

Imperial and colonial power structures that allowed scientists to extract objects and living beings from colonised countries, their landscapes, habitats and seas were a prerequisite for globalisation. Petra Löffler presents a case study on the journey of Ernst Haeckel's corals and shows how Haeckel extracted a vast amount of corals from their original habitats with the help of colonial infrastructure, transporting them to German museums, where they are now archived and have been objects of research and display.

Displaying objects in museums and exhibitions and the ensuing narratives of dis:connectivity is also the topic of Hanni Geiger's essay on the work of Israeli potter Hanna Charag-Zuntz. She argues that the complex visions of the Mediterranean as a space of dis:connectivity are lost in exhibits and catalogues that show Charag-Zuntz's work in a narrow national narrative.

Museum narratives are also at the core of Änne Söll's essay, which brings attention to an 18th-century birdcage that was donated to the Frankfurt Historical Museum by the exiled Jewish art historian Yvonne Hackenbroch (1912-2012). In the current museum display, which situates the birdcage at the centre of life in Frankfurt during the Nazi regime, she argues that tensions between the object as family memorabilia, a symbol of Jewish life in Frankfurt and a signifier of forced emigration and dislocation arise.

Another contribution that addresses the issue of exile is that by Burcu Dogramaci. She deals with the book *Eine Frau erlebt den roten Alltag* (1932), in which the paths and histories of a writer in exile (Lili Körber) and an artist (John Heartfield) meet. The book itself was condemned to the flames during the National Socialist book burnings.

Similar to Dogramaci, Nadia von Maltzahn's essay deals with an object made of paper: a letter by the Palestinian artist Vladimir Tamari exiled in Japan. Maltzahn shows how this letter, written on a McDonald's placemat, expresses the artist's struggles of living and working in a global world, forging ties and friendships under conditions of isolation and dis:connection.

Advancing research on dis:connectivity at global dis:connect, this special issue points the way for object-based research that explores questions of connections and non-connections in a global perspective as exemplified through works of art, natural objects, everyday objects and books.



Photos from top:
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