

Transregional  
Academy  
17–24 Jul 2016  
São Paulo

## Call for applications



Tarsila do Amaral, *Opérarios*, 1933. Acervo do Governo do Estado de São Paulo. Ói auf Leinwand, 150cm x 205cm.

## Modernisms

### Concepts, Contexts, and Circulation

The Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien and the German Center for Art History in Paris (Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte, DFK, part of the Max Weber Foundation – German Humanities Institutes Abroad) invite applications from doctoral and postdoctoral scholars of art history and related disciplines to participate in a Transregional Academy in São Paulo on the topic of modernisms. The academy will take place from July 17-24, 2016 at the Universidade Federal de São Paulo (Unifesp) and the Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo (MAC-USP) and will conclude with a conference, open to the public, on July 23.

**Application deadline: 28 November 2015**

**For more information: <http://academies.hypotheses.org>**

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## Modernisms: Concepts, Contexts, and Circulations

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The goal of the academy is to facilitate an exchange on concepts and variations of modernism across nations and regions. In the spirit of this kind of transregional perspective, the objective is to compare the modernist debates in Latin American countries with those occurring in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America and to locate them within a global context. In doing so, questions arise concerning appropriation and distinction, as well as revisions and translations of developments and processes that manifested themselves in terms such as “colonial art,” “independence,” “originality,” “primitivism,” and “nation building.”

Terms like “modernism,” “avant-garde,” and “modernity” are not only ubiquitous in popular scientific publications and at such events. Like “false friends,” these concepts are also mistakenly used interchangeably in intellectual-academic discourse as a minimum basis of understanding, particularly in the emerging context of “world art history.” This is even more the case when historiographical perspectives are involved that suggest the existence of a common definitional and epistemological basis upon which a global discourse could be constructed. By contrast, the idea of plural or multiple modernities or competing modernisms has made new theoretical approaches possible while raising new questions. They invite us to discuss the long-established diversification of modernity, antimodernity, conservative or reactionary modernity, and alternative modernisms within a transregional and, by implication, transcultural perspective. In this process, the terms themselves—“modernity,” “modernism,” “avant-gardism”—will first be questioned; their historiographical rooting in their respective cultural and historical contexts will be discussed; and temporal and spatial settings will be considered.

The Transregional Academy will be led by a group of scholars: Thomas Kirchner (DFK, Paris), Lena Bader (DFK, Paris), Margit Kern (Universität Hamburg), Hannah Baader (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz/Max-Planck-Institut/ART HISTORIES AND AESTHETIC PRACTICES, Berlin), Patrick Flores (University of the Philippines, Manila), Thierry Dufrêne (Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense), Anne Lafont (Institut national d’histoire de l’art, Paris, INHA), Jens Baumgarten (Unifesp, São Paulo), Ana Gonçalves Magalhães (MAC-USP, São Paulo, USP), Gabriela Siracusano (Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, UNTREF, Buenos Aires), and Diana Wechsler (Museo de la Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, UNTREF, Buenos Aires). They are actively involved as experts in research projects and networks dedicated to questions of

Rather than merely describing and contrasting artistic tendencies, our aim is to discuss the various cultural creative processes, strategies of appropriation, modalities of translation and of comparison in transregional and transcultural perspectives. In the process, the following topic areas can be debated: terminology and discourses, history and tradition, art and politics, centrality and peripherality, publicity and popularization, institutions, mobility, media, and myths. The paths of transmission within Latin America as well as those between Latin America and the other regions of the world will also be taken into account.

### **Terminology and Discourses**

“Modernity” is a key term in the analysis of intercultural processes of mobility. But can we understand it as a global phenomenon—a universal concept—or only in its plural form, constantly bearing in mind the plurality of historical and cultural contexts? Depending on which modernity we have in mind, the temporal, spatial, and even personal parameters will differ. Our objective is to critically assess a variety of concepts in transregional and transcultural perspectives in the contexts of historiography, discourse analysis, and art criticism.

### **History and Tradition**

As a temporally defined object, modernity (or discussion of it) derives its topicality from its complex relationship with history and tradition. A simple dichotomy of tradition vs. modernity belies the interplay of appropriation of and distinction from earlier developments and processes. Alternative historical-theoretical models, however, are useful in investigating the historical continuum, in which past, present, and future are inextricably intertwined.

### **Modernity and its Political Implications**

The question of the relationship between politics and modern art movements also arises, not least in reference to the process of nation building and the rise of nationalistic, totalitarian regimes or related phenomena, such as the nativista discourse in Latin America. What role does modernity play in the self-conception of emerging nation-states? How does it affect emancipatory movements? What value do the various countries place on a dirigiste arts policy? How do art forms develop in relation to—and as distinguished from—state institutions and political actions?

### **Communication**

It is necessary to acknowledge the importance of the media and channels of transfer and transmission in general. Many of the avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century would have been unimaginable without the success of international art journals. The transformation of transportation and communication routes is also of significance. Passenger liners facilitated faster transfer between continents, establishing connections not only between Europe and Latin America, but also between these and Asia and Africa.

### **Centrality and Peripherality**

In examining modernisms, one is confronted with the discovery of hegemonic asymmetries. In the course of recent discussions about contact zones, hybridity, transculturalism, and affinities, the ideological implications of traditional hierarchies

have been the subject of serious criticism. These debates are of central importance to the discourse of modernity, not least because it is intimately linked to—and simultaneously shaped by—questions of centrality and peripherality.

### **Popularization of Modernity**

Modernity has closely pursued its own popularization through creative actions, technical innovations, and programmatic discourses. Mixing high and low art and achieving the permeation of all areas of life with art—even at the cost of being accused of being purely decorative—was the stated goal of many otherwise very dissimilar movements. The lifestyle magazines, fashions, designs, and murals with which modernists resolutely addressed a broad, even uneducated, public will also be examined. At the same time, it is necessary to consider the extent to which modernist forms and conceptions can be specifically reused for the purposes of socio-political criticism.

### **Institutions of Modernity**

Which institutions made speaking of modernity prevail? Which institutions created which modernities in order to create an adequate framework to also publicize themselves? Along with museums and genuinely modern forms of staging, such as the “white cube,” we will also discuss the role of galleries, biennales, and selected publication organs. In this context, the importance of an institutionalized system of artistic training at academies for modernity will also be examined.

### **Mobility of the Agents**

The internationality of modern art movements is also due in part to the mobility of its agents. Artists, art critics, and curators not only circulated within the boundaries of their own continents but also observed the changes taking place in other regions. Associated with this are complex networks and, in some places, almost paradoxical constellations that have yet to be explored.

### **The Art Market**

In recent years, the role the art market played in Western modernism and its distribution has been increasingly examined. It is a central element of artistic movement; without it, modernity in Europe and North America would not have been nearly as successful. What role did the art market play in other regions and in transnational networking? To what extent did it help bring attention to the regional and national modernisms on the other continents? In what ways may it have run contrary to them?

### **Modern Heroes**

Like no other art movement, modernism engaged in self-stylization. It constructed myths of origin and created father figures and heroes, or committed patricides. These myths were often regional or nationally informed. Could these myths, however, be transferred to other artistic regions or continents? If the myths were similar in their basic structures, could one go as far as to speak of global myth creation?

## **Requirements for Participation and Application Guidelines**

Transregional Academies promote intensive peer-to-peer dialogue and encourage new perspectives emerging from debates in small discussion groups. Participants actively contribute to the program's structure and content. They present their individual research and co-design thematic discussion groups. While much of the work is conducted in an intense, small-group atmosphere, the academy also presents its work in a concluding conference that is open to the public.

Up to 20 doctoral and postdoctoral scholars from different countries and various academic environments will be given the opportunity to present and discuss their current research in an international and multidisciplinary context. Participants will receive a stipend for travel and accommodation expenses. The program is aimed at scholars of art history and neighboring disciplines, such as postcolonial studies, literary and cultural studies, anthropology, architecture, history, political science, sociology, and media studies. The goal of the conference is to introduce ongoing projects in a comparative perspective in the context of the aforementioned questions. The research projects should be closely related to the topics addressed by the Academy; transregional, comparative approaches are especially welcome.

The working language will be English.

Applications, in English, must include the following documents:

- a letter of motivation (1-2 pages)
- a short biography in paragraph form (1,000 characters including spaces)
- an abstract of your current research project (max. 1-2 pages)
- the names of two university professors as references (letters of reference are not necessary)

Please submit all documents as **one PDF file** via e-mail by no later than **November 28, 2015** to: [academies@trafo-berlin.de](mailto:academies@trafo-berlin.de)

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The Transregional Academy is organized by the Forum Transregionale Studien in Berlin in cooperation with the German Center for Art History in Paris. Transregional Academies are part of the strategic cooperation between the Forum for Transregionale Studien and the Max Weber Foundation – German Humanities Institutes Abroad. They are supported by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF). The Terra Foundation for American Art sponsors two fellowships to facilitate the participation of scholars researching the question of modernism within the United States or as part of a broader international context up to 1980.

The Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien is a research organization that promotes the internationalization of research in the humanities and social sciences. It is dedicated to a research agenda that systematically links disciplinary approaches and the expertise of area studies by focusing on entanglements and interactions across national, cultural, and regional borders. The Forum is supported by the State of Berlin.

The Max Weber Foundation promotes global research concentrated on the social sciences, cultural studies, and the humanities. Research is conducted at ten institutes in various countries worldwide with distinct and independent focal points. Through its globally operating institutes, the Foundation is able to contribute to communications and networking between Germany and the countries or regions that host it.

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