

# Is international Modernism national? Is global Postmodernism local? : Questions for art history

Autor(en): **Jones, Caroline A.**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Outlines**

Band (Jahr): **1 (2004)**

PDF erstellt am: **25.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-872070>

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CAROLINE A. JONES

## Is international Modernism national? Is global Postmodernism local?

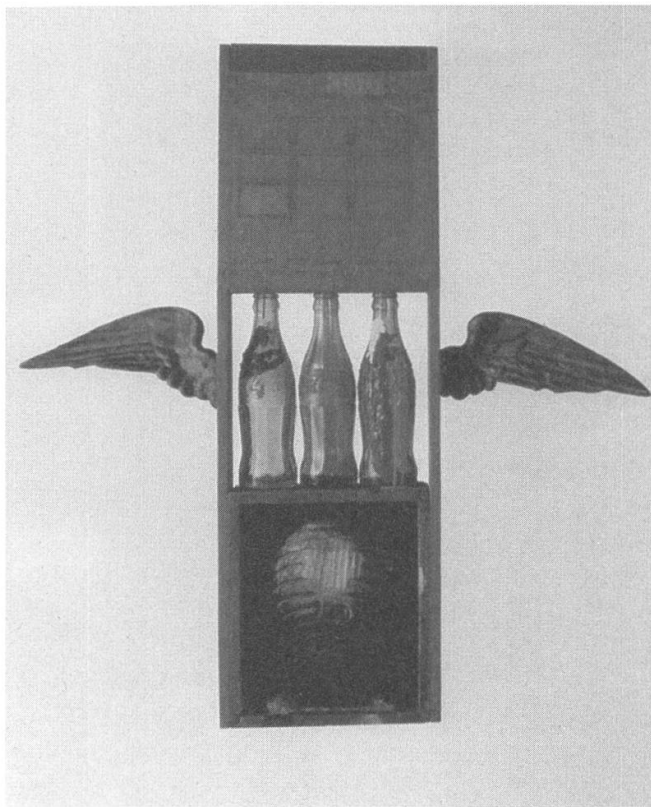
Questions for art history

### Staging the global<sup>1</sup>

Broadly speaking, two models of modernism prevail within art history, and also govern our present discourse on globalism. These models can be phrased as questions: is modernism a virus, or a chemical reaction? In related terms, does globalism ‘infect’ untainted cultures as an idea to be emulated (or despised), or is it a product of structural circumstances and social technologies that are generated within the culture in question?

My argument today will be that we can only answer such questions in local and specific terms – but we must also locate our data points within larger theories and systems. Both levels of analysis go back to the roots of our discipline. Historically, *Kunstgeschichte* emerged in Europe at a moment not unlike our own, in which places and cultures across the globe seemed newly accessible, the need to understand them was urgent, and sciences of information were extensive. W.J.T. Mitchell has observed that the new nation of Germany and its German-speaking neighbors compensated for their lack of actual empires with empires of the mind. They operated at a reflective distance from the perceived center, aiming to encompass the full span of human culture and master it in intellectual terms.<sup>2</sup> The art-historical discipline born from this moment is marked by genealogies that are philological, philosophical, political, and of course historical. Our collections of lantern slides, our professorial chairs, the dissertation topics we approve, and our journals of record are configured to reflect specific national/ linguistic/ and chronological categories, and we show our images in binary pairs organized around these very taxonomic groupings. Yet our restless ambitions have also driven a critique of this cartographic *Kunstgeschichtliche* mentality via *Bildwissenschaft*, a *sogenannt* ‘science of images’, and its looser Anglo-American analogue, visual studies. Taking up the unfinished project of a lost generation of German, Swiss and Austrian scholarship truncated by war, the *Bildwissenschaftlers* of Germany have looked to ‘visual studies’ or visual anthropology for reinforcement. But these discourses are no less contentious than our own.

How to adjudicate between the local specificity of art history, and the overweening ambition of ‘image science’? Here I will offer an analysis of specific instances in which a



1 Robert Rauschenberg, *Coca-Cola Plan*, 1958, mixed media, Giuseppe Panza Collection, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art

global icon has been radically destabilized by local readings. My argument is that we can work at both scales, as long as we acknowledge where to stake our analytical claims. The object I want to begin with was produced by U.S. artist Robert Rauschenberg (fig. 1). Called *Coca-Cola Plan*, it is about the size of a large trophy, and mimics that triumphant air. By 1958, when the piece was made, the shape of these bottles could be recognized, even in the dark, by a large fraction of the world's population. The bottles are commodities, intended to shock us by appearing in an artwork – but they are arranged in a soothing triumvirate, like a group of classical caryatids. Their repetitive fluted shapes are differentiated only by daubs of

*malerisch* paint. Below them, functioning metaphorically as the plinth of this programmatic prize, rests a carved sphere cast off from some abandoned building. Tilted slightly to produce the right orbital axis, its concentric indentations can be read as the latitudinal markings on a globe of the world.

This is no random concatenation of urban detritus. Make no mistake about it: this is an ambitious, calculated little package. Riding on the crest of an increasingly global wave of American commodity culture, its south Texas author seems ready to take over the world. Whether we could agree as to his ultimate success, we can say that Rauschenberg's cheerfully global ambitions were almost immediately endorsed by the Italian who collected *Coca-Cola Plan*, Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo. What I have mapped in such exchanges is akin to what Benedict Anderson has called an 'imagined community'.<sup>3</sup> But as an art historian, I configure this concept in visual terms. *Coca-Cola Plan* was produced by an artist operating at the crest of the *pax Americana*; it was collected by an Italian eager to escape his own nation's recent inglorious past. Its ironic commentary was staged from one privileged vantage point and relocated to another.

The very concept of the vantage point reiterates the question of scale and perspective that is crucial to my argument regarding the global icon. We need two different levels of magnification to explore such objects of visual culture. One is local and detailed; the second is extensive and dispersed. Because it is not bound by language, the visual can drift well beyond its point of origin, and its signs can be detached from their moorings to float freely on the *Bilderflut*. This non-verbal aspect produces the conditions of possibility for visual culture's global distribution. On the other hand, the inherent global potential of the visual is always tethered by the local. It is *people* who must retrieve the image and endeavor to parse its meanings – people who are saturated and constituted by language and locality, but claim their own individuality within broad subjectivating regimes. The situated recipients of visual culture experience their readings as specific, and in fact they *re-localize* the object in each new context of reception. In this sense, visual culture is always microscopic in its detail, even when global in its distribution. To summarize this scalar paradox: the visual can float beyond the local, but the local is the only site at which the visual can be understood.

*Coca-Cola Plan* was born from fragments of architecture and commodity culture found in the streets of New York, a city expanding dramatically after the Second World War. Rauschenberg was still young, but he was doing his best to transcend the scale of local oblivion, and to achieve the global distribution of fame. The man who would collect the work a few years later, Giuseppe Panza, brought other localisms into play from his base in the Italian hilltown of Torino. Both men needed the power of art dealer Leo Castelli to succeed. This Italian-born impresario ran a gallery that showed European artists to America and, through its European affiliates, showed American artists to Europe. Such triangulations of the local and the global were visualized effectively by Castelli's own map (fig. 2) – produced as an advertisement in 1964 and clearly aimed at securing his own piece of the international pie. Castelli's map revealed what art historian Laurie Monahan calls 'cultural cartography'; revealing a vision of conquest that met with dramatic success when Rauschenberg, and the United States, won first prize at that year's Venice Biennale – shortly after Panza purchased *Coca-Cola Plan*.<sup>4</sup> The adver-



2 Advertisement for Castelli Gallery artists exhibiting in Europe, 1964

tisement we see here is thus another kind of ‘plan’ that both endorsed Rauschenberg’s little ‘plan’ and played a role in getting it into Panza’s collection.

Rauschenberg’s combine, with its wings unfurled, seems to celebrate the moral equivalent of war’s victory – postwar *bricolage* made analogous to the triumphant Hellenistic Nike from Samothrace that crowns one of the Louvre’s most exalted vistas.<sup>5</sup> But rather than celebrate a battle won with the help of the gods, Rauschenberg’s little votive is an imagined monument to a future takeover (or a future monument to an imagined takeover – in any case, a *plan*).

There were many other plans in the air, of course. Marshall plan, marketing plans – both connected to *Coca-Cola Plan*, and to other images of this increasingly global drink. Tied to colonial enterprises as surely as coffee, this coca bean and cola nut soda dates back to its origins as a Southern pharmaceutical in the 1880s – even as early as 1919, it was a winning formula, and ownership of the Coca-Cola company was transferred for \$25 million US dollars (equivalent to almost 300 million Euros in the present economy).<sup>6</sup> The company had been internationalized as early as 1900, when plans for bottling-plants were begun in England, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines<sup>7</sup> – a virtual tracing of the U.S. colonial map. By 1940, this international refreshment with its top-secret proprietary syrup had bottling-plants in 45 countries; in June of 1943, Allied forces commander Dwight D. Eisenhower requested an additional 10 bottling-plants to service the thirsty troops overseas. Rumor has it that the founding charter of the U.N. was written with a special provision for this pre-eminent cola corporation, protecting its access to raw materials from the southern hemisphere.<sup>8</sup> As Rauschenberg’s own Plan notes, the indicated dimensions of its proposed ‘takeover’ will be grander than its own modest frame might initially suggest – a grandness acknowledged when it joined Panza’s collection, where it was installed next to the sweeping curves of a Baroque bench. If the Plan’s instructions were to be followed, the resulting canvas would be more than three meters in width and two and a half in height. Structured as a triptych (as are, of course, the bottles of the combine itself), the painting plotted by the Plan would thus court sublimity in both its dimensions and associations – comparable to the monumental, often religiously inflected paintings by Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Franz Kline that were then touring Europe in the Museum of Modern Art’s ‘New American Painting’ show. The image intended for the Plan’s canvas remains unknown – but we could amuse ourselves by imagining one of Warhol’s *Coca-Cola* paintings from 1962 filling the bill. Coca-Cola (and its near competitor, Pepsi) had already conquered the visual culture of Rauschenberg’s generation, and news reports of the time discussed how the two cola corporations would divide up the globe, one taking China and the other Russia. Famously, Warhol declaimed in 1963 that products such as Coca-Cola provided the class leveler that Communism never

could: 'It's happening here all by itself without being under a strict government, [so] why can't it work without being Communist?' He later explained: 'What's great about this country is that [...] the richest consumers buy essentially the same things as the poorest. You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you can know that the President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and just think, you can drink Coke, too.'<sup>9</sup>

The expansion of this 'imagined community' soon became global. By 1961, Coca-Cola was sold in 115 countries at the rate of more than 65 million servings a day; the U.S. news magazine *Time* had recognized this ascendancy as early as 1951, when the editors broke precedent to feature this commercial product on their cover, reasoning that '[Coca-Cola provides] simpler, sharper evidence than the Marshall Plan or a Voice of America broadcast that the U.S. [has] gone out into the world to stay.'<sup>10</sup> Already by the late forties, Coca-Cola's ad campaign had incorporated the slogan 'Coca-Cola [...] along the highway to anywhere.' Increasingly, 'anywhere' meant *anywhere on earth*.

One British art writer, staging Coke's takeover in the standard terms of its affront to *European* civilization (although its reach spread much farther), put it this way in a 1964 London *Times* article titled 'Art in a Coke Climate': 'The point is not whether Coca-Cola culture is wiser and nicer than wine culture: the point is that it is a culture – a set of tribal tastes and customs which implies certain values and attitudes and a conception of what life could ideally mean [...]. More people having a good time than have ever had a good time before. A taste for vicarious pleasure as well as vicarious cooking. Brand advertising everywhere. [...] A Promethean faith that nature is conquerable. [...] expendability [...] standardization.'<sup>11</sup>

European fears of what German speakers called '*CocaColasierung*' were justified, for the coke bottle was seductive, a reimagining of European heritage that could seem comfortably familiar although its contents were new. Since the earliest decades of the 20th century, the bottle shape had remained consistent. As Warhol's and Rauschenberg's compositions each reveal, the '*classic*' Coke bottle was just that – a morphing of ancient banded columns (developed from the Egyptians' bundled papyrus) into seductively curved caryatids, the whole branded with the registered trademark of the company's 19th-century bookkeeper's cursive script. As witnessed by the corporation's decision to patent the bottle itself in 1960, the move was from *narrative* publicity based on family names or product descriptions to *pure icons*, from representations to abstraction, from signs to spectacles. Like our own 21st century fantasy of pure visuality, the idea was that such icons would need nothing more to function than their own fulsome presence in the mind's eye.

Why wasn't Panza put off by this Coca-Cola culture? Perhaps he liked its echoes: Rauschenberg's composition called up caryatids and triumphant Nikes, as we've seen –



## Segni e immagini di Franz Kline

di Achille Perilli

Quando si vorrà dare un'immagine sintetica ed elementare di questa nostra civiltà, di questa nostra vita in continua tensione, con i suoi angosce e antiche aspirazioni e nuovi miti in formazione, e con esse impervie e disperazioni profonde, avrà una precisa direzione e sarà una semplice, unitaria, con la sempre maggiore coscienza del dovere di essere ormai concetti d'immagine: e il risultato, quasi l'ossessione, la lotta, il successo, di nuovi miti di immagine, forse tra i versi di Dylan Thomas e i versi di Pound, tra qualche fotografia di Stieglitz e i collage di Schwitters troveremo anche il vero e il bianco, il segno nero, compatto e dinamico di Franz Kline.

L'attrazione della forma contrattoria, unita alla attrazione del colore, a mantenere la purezza del colore, la bellezza, nato dall'equilibrio del contrasto e dall'armonia fra i colori, è sempre sospesa in rapporto al bianco che rappresenta uno spazio infinito, quindi la calligrafia è arte del bianco e nero, più che arte del nero e del bianco.

Sono stati molti da Truhen, Jelinek, i destini ad illustrare, opere dei moderni calligrafi giapponesi, ma che sembra un principio creativo, una scelta stilistica di ricerca, che è alla base del lavoro di Kline. L'attuale felice momento della pittura americana non è dovuto solo al successo di personalità come De Kooning o Pollock, o all'irresistibile sviluppo del mercato artistico o all'opera di quei grandi esponenti culturali che sono il Museum of Modern Art o la Fondazione Solomon R. Guggenheim, ma forse è soprattutto, alla possibilità che si è offerta all'arte americana di aprire una nuova via, la cultura post-davanti europea e quella orientale asiatica.

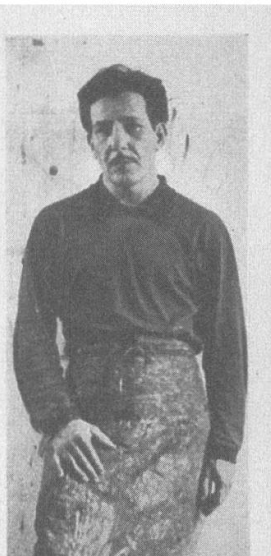
Essere alla confluenza di queste due grandi esperienze formali ha consentito agli artisti americani di trovare con maggiore libertà di molti loro colleghi europei. E il vivere in un paese, che è una affermazione del progresso tecnico e non ancora tradito e stabilizzato di antiche istituzioni, sta, se da un lato accresce la crisi drammatica del concetto estetico e non ancora tra la nuova realtà e l'arte, dall'altro offre la possibilità di un lavoro senza ricerca o timore, e pure.

Kline è riuscito a trovare nella questa calligrafia orientale ed europea moderna, libertà, spaziosità e dinamicità di contrasti in pochi tratti di nero su di un bianco.

Un segno tracciato con materia grigia e bruno, dal sapore dell'olio di macchina, su di un bianco inteso e luminoso: quasi una traccia lasciata casualmente da un pennello inteso di colpo su di un muro rotto dal sole. Talvolta l'immagine è incompleta, un rondello di una composizione poligonalizzata. Poi, dalla tela, un frammento di un mondo lontano. Altre volte il nero si dilata nel bianco, lo invade, si muove, si attardava, d'assalto per poi distendersi nuovamente, come se fosse il centro di una grande composizione o l'angolo di contemplazione di due diverse immagini.

Altre è una scritta, come discesa, non più riconoscibile, distesa sulle sue parti principali, con una lontana possibilità di essere discesa, non per merito di una semplice lettura, ma solo per una rapida intuizione. Ancora più cuore un'immagine schiettamente scomposta, difficile a riconoscere nella sua totalità, forse più in origine senza senso, solo struttura, della stessa voglia, degli tratti di Cézanne o dei quadri di Matisse. O anche un frammento d'azione tralasciato, senza un momento di tempo, ingrandito nella notte e anche allungando di un tratto di piuma, un angolo, un taglio fotografico e riportato in dimensioni gigantesche. O forse soltanto Kline, riconoscibile in ogni suo tratto, in ogni suo atto, in questa pittura. La quantità d'espressioni e di automatismi, immensa in questo stile, forse, è l'ultima, solo, di volta in volta, delle opere, forse dell'ossessione. « Non costruisco e costruisco » - scrive Kline - « e l'ultima l'ultima è per sempre una cosa buona come Kline di cui si possono raggiungere risultati quando, non si può far tutto, anche nell'arte e in questo, abbandonando per l'ordine, esiste, ma l'ordine non è sostituibile. E Kline, abbandonando ogni possibile legge, ogni norma tecnica e persino le vecchie abitudini formali, apre una nuova via, un nuovo modo di intendersi più libero.

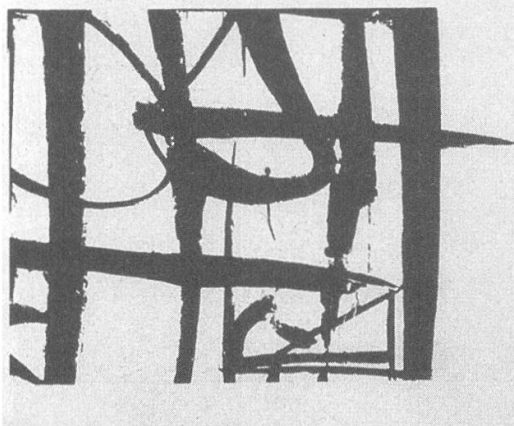
All'inizio delle sue pitture non sono difetti, quello che fino ad oggi erano considerati le normali direttive della visibilità moderna. Non l'impressionismo, non l'eclettismo, non il cubismo. Forse per una particolare, disponibilità spaziale, per una probabile sensazione di purezza e di quiete, rimane come un'eco lontana il neoplasticismo. Ma riparte invece una certa esultanza espressionista, e la carica drammatica di alcuni disegni degli ultimi anni di Kline, e l'armonia discesa delle macchie d'incisione di Picasso e dei collage di Arp e il morbido dilatarsi dell'incisione dei calligrafi



KLINE è nato, come dicono le concise indicazioni geografiche del catalogo « 12 Americans » edito dal Museo d'Arte Moderna di New York, a Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, nel 1910. Ha studiato al Girard College, Philadelphia, dal 1915 al 1925 per poi passare fino al 1935 alla School of Fine and Applied Arts dell'Università di Boston. Negli anni 1937-38 recatosi a Londra è stato alla Heatherly's Art School. Vive a New York dal 1939. Mostre personali: Egan Gallery, New York 1938, 1941, 1944; Margaret Brown Gallery, Boston 1952; Institut of Design e Allan Franklin Gallery, Chicago 1954; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York 1956; Taught at Black Mountain College, estate del 1952; Pratt Institute Brooklyn 1953-54; Philadelphia Museum School of Art 1954.

colori e proporzioni. Tutto però ormai risulta in una autonomia, prima e concreta con l'immagine, non retorica o letteraria. Una pittura che riduce l'immagine alla sua concettualità più elementare, tale da essere ricordata esattamente come la si è vista.

Nel gioco della nostra memoria, alle volte, per una qualche ragione, di un quadro si dimenticano quei colori che, ad un esame più attento, risultano essere poi effettivamente giusti: infatti alla primitiva intenzione, l'uso Kline, questo è respicibile. Tutto è talmente « funzionale » nel suo segno, da non consentire di superarlo. E' esattamente quel che vuole essere, una concezione letteraria o disprezzata formale e disprezzata scientifica. Fin dove queste immagini in bianco e nero possono giungere, quanto possono essere audaci e forti, dalla nostra realtà il fatto ancora presto per dirlo, ma che sono tempo nostro, nostra vita, nostra morte, questo è possibile riconoscerlo con piena sicurezza.



3 The Italian steel industry culture magazine, *Civiltà delle Macchine*, with Franz Kline's painting *Cardinal* (shown sideways), 1957

and it's certainly possible that the Futurists' connections with Fascism further poisoned that well.<sup>14</sup> To put it bluntly, Italians had few legitimate local outlets for dreaming of an international future. *Arte Povera* was no answer, with its abject rural *tableaux* that seemed to connect with some imagined primordia rather than the future envisioned by Italy's new managerial *élite*. Or at least that was Panza's conclusion: 'I saw a lot of work by the *Arte Povera* artists', he said. '[They] were interesting to me [...] they had an international value [...]. But [...] I decided to keep my attention concentrated on the Americans [...].'<sup>15</sup>

Panza's decision to put his global 'bets' on Rauschenberg and other American artists thus had many sources. His postwar view of the U.S. was forged in a local context, determined in part by an erudite Italian steel-industry magazine titled *Civiltà delle Macchine* (*Civilization of Machinery*; fig. 3). A devoted reader of this unique technocratic lit-

but also evoked Hermes, god of commerce, thievery, and trade.<sup>12</sup>

There were comforting religious echoes as well in the triptych and triumvirate of bottles, and in those angelic wings. Modern Italians had long struggled with their classical and religious heritage, which threatened to bury them in an eternal past; the *Futuristi* had announced in their early 20<sup>th</sup> century manifestos that museum specimens should be replaced by their own mechanomorphic analogues of speed and steam. Seeking, as they said: 'the beauty of speed [...] more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace* [...]',<sup>13</sup> their yearning for the power and the glory of a civilization in ascension took shape as a winged, propulsive form – resembling nothing so much as the despised Nike herself.

Panza recalled that by the 1930s 'there was very little interest left in [Boccioni-type] Futurism',

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erary journal, Panza encountered in its pages a 1957 article on 'Franz Kline's Signs and Images', and promptly decided to begin acquiring American art.<sup>16</sup>

Rauschenberg's *Coca-Cola Plan* came along a few years later, and functioned effectively as an emblem of that brave new international world. The new postwar Italy would need to wean itself from the poisonous cultural imaginary of a *localized* and *primordial* nation (what Futurist Marinetti had celebrated as the 'maternal ditch' of Italian factory effluent); the new, postwar Italy was to become itself, to Panza's way of thinking, only by merging with a *supra*-national entity known as 'capitalism', represented by the commodities that were styling themselves in newly global terms. Modernist art and capitalist business practices were constructed (however misleadingly) as democracy in action. For Panza this seemed the only way to rebuild a culture and economy for Italy after the war.

### Destabilizations

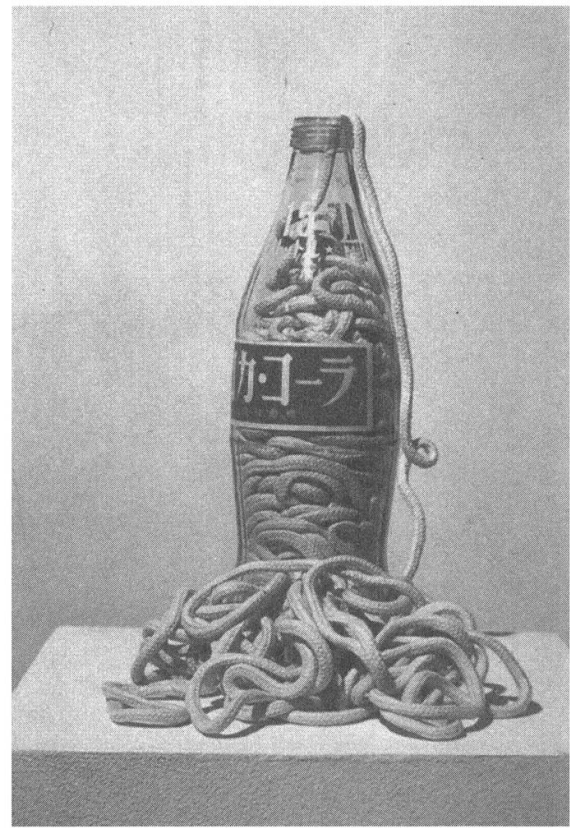
Panza and Rauschenberg's exchange was hardly the only cultural imaginary that could emerge around the global icon of Coca-Cola. Giuseppe Panza had explained his Americanophilia by observing that 'In some way the Second World War was the end of Europe',<sup>17</sup> and we have seen that Rauschenberg outfitted this cultural imaginary with its icon. But glimmering from that same moment in the 1960s, some saw the beginning of the end for systems of imperial inter-nationalism. And indeed, even Coca-Cola Incorporated had to alter its stance by the early 1990s, stating 'We are not a multinational, we are a multilocal.'<sup>18</sup> In a sense, this is the curious fate of all conquerors – in expanding their empire of signs, corporations, artists, and other globally-minded exporters begin to experience the mixing, the hybridization, and the transubstantiation between consumer and consumed.

For example, Venezuelan-born New York artist Marisol Escobar questioned the 'freedom' of the free market in her sardonic sculpture *Love* from 1962 (fig. 4). A year later, Japanese sculptor Jiro Takamatsu implied that Coke's achievement of an Asian market might be only temporary, doomed by the Asian body's rejection of the foreign invader, unspooling like a tapeworm out of its host (fig. 5). These clever artistic manipulations of the commodity icon are only part of the story, however. What is even more interesting are the conceptually-based artworks that interrogated the *systems* mobilizing commodity desire in the first place. Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles, for example, produced in 1970 a remarkably subversive conceptual artwork, in which an anti-capitalist message was attached to existing bottles of Coke via print transfer (fig. 6). Placed on the shelves with their new messages intact, the bottles circulated, revealing the systems of distribution on which they depended even as they dismantled the commodity's naturalization as culture. Meireles's compatriot, Hélio Oiticica, did even more to dis-orient the magisterial gaze.





4 Marisol Escobar, *Love*, 1962



5 Jiro Takamatsu, *The String in the Bottle*, 1963 (remade 1998)

Making line-drawings of snortable cocaine on images of American mass culture icons (as here in fig. 7, from a 1970s series he called *Cosmococa*), Oiticica shuffled entire decks of cultural signifiers. The black hero of electric guitar, Jimi Hendrix, seems to be ready to devour the omnipresent Coca-Cola logo. But the cocaine snorter, in turn, will imbibe the image and destroy the mask to reveal Hendrix's commodified face. This is the Latin American's cannibalistic approach to modernism, *antropofagia*, with a vengeance. Here we come back full circle to coca, that mysterious jungle plant at the colonial 'root', so to speak, of commodified Coke and around which these cultural imaginaries and meditations on nation have circulated. This mingling of South American narcotic, masked North American celebrity icon, commodified pharmaceutical beverage, and corporate logotype, produces a delirious amalgam. Yet each of these is configured as a movable sign of modern cultural capital to be contemplated, consumed, and incorporated in the viewer. We could even circle back again, to the historical moment in which cocaine was eliminated from the Coca-Cola product, and found itself removed to the status of smuggled stimulant, where it initiated the powerful shadow economy linking northern and southern American hemispheres and their transnational communities of



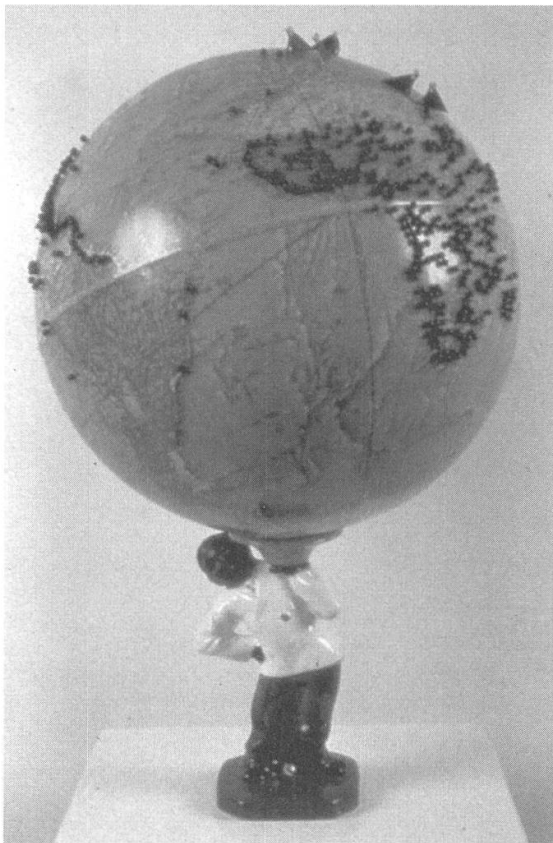
6 Cildo Meireles, *Insertion into ideological circuits*, 1970



7 Helio Oiticica (with Neville d'Almeida), *Cosmococa CC5: Hendrixwar*, 1973

wealth and poverty, junkies and users, crime and punishment. But that is another story. To summarize the present argument: as Rauschenberg, Panza and Oiticica each intuitively understood, the future was to be mapped not only as political territory, but as cultural imaginary – not as sacred ground, but as visual spectacle. But the question of who mobilizes that spectacle, and who consumes it, must be locally answered as never before. The gods may be crazy, but we still need to know where that Coke bottle came from.

In *Coca-Cola Plan*, Rauschenberg produced a powerful cultural imaginary of *interna-*tion to which Panza offered an approving, mirroring gaze. But by the end of the decade such mirrors came to seem warped and refractive. Oiticica and Meireles focused on the *systems* required for commodity exchange. And African-American artist Fred Wilson, in his 1995 *Atlas* (fig. 8), continues this trajectory. He inverts Rauschenberg's confident geography, using the commodified racist kitsch of a ceramic African servant to show the hidden labor undergirding all imperial triumph. In place of victory, there is work; in place of imagined instantaneous flight there is an incremental movement by capitalism's subalterns. The globe and its pins and flags, all emblems of conquest, here illustrate the



8 Fred Wilson, *Atlas*, 1995

importance of the local; specific sites where African culture and its diaspora continue to hybridize and thrive.<sup>19</sup>

Such art usefully dislocates art history's presumptions, as well as the viewer's role as *consumer* of imagery and the 'products' of art. Utopian globalism cannot be found in the old dreams of an imposed universalism; nor can it be built from the fragments of primordialist 'nations'. Our imaginaries can produce the transnational only by attending to the hybrid nuances of the local. There is still a dialectic between the scale of local reception and global distribution. Let us use it to limit and specify our claims.

1 This text would not have been possible without the support of the *Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin*, which gave me a fellowship in 2001–02 to apprentice myself (among other things) to the lively German discourse on *Bildwissenschaft*. Some of my thinking here is expanded or developed elsewhere; see, for example, my essay 'Coca-Cola Plan, or, How New York stole the soul of Giuseppe Panza', in

*Panza: Legacy of a Collector*, Los Angeles, 2000, the forthcoming 'Nationalism, Internationalism, and Globalism in Modern Art', in *History of Humanity*, Vol. VII, London, and another forthcoming essay 'Commodities and Others: International Imaginaries in Postwar Art', in Serge Guilbaut, ed., *Sixties Streets: Combative Images and Theories*, Durham. I am grateful to the Swiss Institute for Art

Research for allowing me the opportunity to develop some of these ideas and publish them here.

- 2 Mitchell's formulation comes from his current project on 'Totem/ Fetish/ Idol'; I'm grateful to him for sharing this work during his 2002 residency at the American Academy of Berlin. I have elsewhere called such productive distances 'McLuhan-lengths', in honor of the Canadian philosopher of mass media located at a strategic remove from the center of commodified television culture in the U.S. See my review of Peter Lunenfeld's books on new media, at [www.caareviews.org](http://www.caareviews.org), 19 July 2000.
- 3 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd rev. ed., London, 1991.
- 4 Laurie J. Monahan, 'Cultural Cartography: American Designs at the 1964 Venice Biennale', in Serge Guilbaut, *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945-1964*, Cambridge [Mass.], 1990, pp. 369-416.
- 5 It is likely that Rauschenberg knew the Nike from his year in Paris studying at the Académie Julian in 1948.
- 6 As of 2002, € 296,750.
- 7 Electronic mail communication to the author, 22 Sept. 1999, from Rosalyn Murphy, Industry and Consumer Affairs, the Coca-Cola Company. According to Ms. Murphy, '[...] products of The Coca-Cola Company are served all over the world, in nearly 200 countries, and the management structure of our Company truly reflects this. Our Company is divided into five geographic operating groups: the North America Group, the Greater Europe Group, the Latin American Group, the Middle and Far East Group, and the Africa Group.'
- 8 See the personal scholarship represented in 'The Coca-Cola Story', available online as of 1999 at <http://xenon.stanford.edu/~liao/cokestory.html>. Per the artist Jimmie Durham (conversation 3 Feb. 2002), the UN preserved Coke's 'right' to continue importing cocaine, otherwise forbidden by the new international proscriptions against trading in drugs. This may well be one of those 'urban legends', but its circulation proves the potency of Coca-Cola as an icon of pervasive, global power.
- 9 See Warhol interviewed by Gene Swenson, 'What is Pop Art? Answers from Eight Painters, Part 1', *Art News*, 62, Nov. 1963, no. 7, p. 26, and Warhol [with Pat Hackett and Bob Colacello], *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (from a to b and back again)*, New York, 1975, pp. 100-01.
- 10 Cited in Sidra Stich, *Made in U.S.A.*, Berkeley, 1987, p. 93.
- 11 David Sylvester, 'Art in a Coke Climate,' *The Sunday Times*, Colour Magazine section, pp. 14, 17. Spelling Americanized.
- 12 My thanks to Reinhard Bernauer, who pointed me to Hermes and forced me to think about many other connections thematizing global exchange.
- 13 Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, 'The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism' (1909), anthologized in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, *Art in Theory: 1900-1990*, Oxford, 1992, p. 147.
- 14 Panza recalls the Futurists, in particular, as seeming entirely irrelevant to the future of culture during his childhood: 'Most people considered Futurism a strange idea, there wasn't much interest in it anymore.' Giuseppe Panza interviewed by Christopher Knight, in *Art of the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies: The Panza Collection*, New York, 1986, p. 27.
- 15 Panza to Knight, in *ibid.*, p. 41. The history of *Arte Povera* in Italy is only beginning to be written. Here my interest is in what Panza, as a collector living near Turin (the movement's home base), may have made of its complex relations with international art movements. Significantly, he seems to have determined that he would not participate in the development – perhaps because it was too home-grown? For an interesting view of *Arte Povera*, its history and Germano Celant's writing of same, see Dan Cameron, 'Anxieties of influence: Regionalism, *Arte Povera*, and the Cold War', *Flash Art*, May-June 1992, no. 164, pp. 75-81.
- 16 Achille Perilli, 'Segni e immagini di Franz Kline', *Civiltà delle Macchine*, 5, May-June 1957, 3, p. 33. *Civiltà delle Macchine* begins publication in 1953, under the auspices of the 'Gruppo Industriale della Società Finanziaria

- Meccanica FINMECCANICA, Roma,' which seems to have been a trade group or consortium of Italian industries. Just before the issue with the short essay on Kline, the publisher switched to IRI, the Industrial Reconstruction Institute. It would be very interesting indeed to learn whether any Marshall Funds or other foreign development monies supported this publication.
- 17 Panza, interviewed by Kerry Brougher in October 1984, published in *The Museum of Contemporary Art: The Panza Collection*, Los Angeles, 1985, unpag.
  - 18 There is no citation for the quotation, provided by Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, 'Introduction' to their edited volume, *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, Durham, 1996, p. 2.
  - 19 My arguments here are indebted to Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Public Worlds-series, Vol. 1, Minneapolis, 1996.

### Summary

Embroided in issues of globalism and 'biennial culture', present-day art historians need to attend to the localisms that still govern art's reception. Useful in this regard are historical analyses that re-examine earlier periods, most notably the post-war epoch in which commodity culture was given global impetus from reconstruction programs such as the US Marshall Plan. This paper takes as its starting point the exchange of a small sculpture: Robert Rauschenberg's *Coca-Cola Plan*, which was produced in one context (New York in 1958) and acquired by Giuseppe Panza in another (Turin in 1963). The Panza/Rauschenberg exchange, mediated by the powerful Italian-American art dealer Leo Castelli, is an exemplary instance of a shared international cultural imaginary. Cosmopolitan, ironic and urbane, it also had specific local meanings that resonated differently for Rauschenberg and Panza, from each individual's desire for an escape from provincial isolation, to their very separate associations with Coke bottles and winged victories, to their particular relations to commodity capitalism. Following this in-depth case study, the paper reviews some other responses to Coca-Cola's iconic commodity form. Venezuelan émigrés, Japanese assemblage artists, and two important Brazilian conceptualists can all be seen to critique the stability of US commodity-based art with projects emphasizing the *system* of commodity exchange and its disproportionate impact on so-called 'third world' societies. Art historians can draw lessons from this aesthetic turn, understanding that visibility produces the conditions of possibility for global exchange, but reception and transmission can only be examined at a local and micro-historical scale.