ROUTLEDGE

# The Routledge Companion to Art and the Formation of Empire

Edited by Emily C. Burns and Alice M. Rudy Price

# THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO ART AND THE FORMATION OF EMPIRE

This companion comprises essays that analyze interactions between art and global imperial relationships from 1800 to World War II.

The essays in this volume expose and add to historical layers of meaning in their discussions of art and empire. Found across much of the globe, sites of sedimentary rock allegorize the dynamics of art and empire and frame the section structure for this book. Twenty-two authors unpack imperial layers in a variety of global and historical contexts through case studies that center art and visual and material culture. The authors show how art and aesthetics have operated as tools of empire. Interpreting a comprehensive array of media as well as inter-media dialogues, they analyze and intervene in how we remember and examine entwinements between empire and aesthetic practices. In this volume's attention to the role of art in imperial formation, as well as the legacy of colonization, the essays disentangle sediments of culture as they are moved and shaped by homogenizing forces of empire, showing that the aesthetics of empire inflect not only individuals, makers, and economies, but also practices of circulation and collecting.

The book will be of interest to graduate students, researchers, and professors and may be used in classes focused on art history, imperialism, and colonialism.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Solidifying as Rock: Enmeshed Layers of Empire

*Emily C. Burns and Alice M. Rudy Price*

### Layering Empire in Aesthetics

In the 1840s, a now anonymous Lahore miniature painter used layered strategies to engage imperial histories in *Maharaja Ranjit Singh in a Bazaar* (Figure 0.1). The portrayed ruler of the Sikh Empire, Ranjit Singh of the Sukerchakia Dynasty (r. 1801–1839), enters a busy, vibrant Lahore marketplace, depicted in glowing brilliant green, red, and orange. Ranjit Singh's Sikh ancestors steadily wrested control of the territory and resources of the Punjab province from the waning Mughal Empire; Ranjit Singh, "the Lion of Punjab," established a short-lived empire. As Maharaja, Ranjit Singh extended Sikh sovereignty north to Kashmir, west to Peshawar, and southwest to Multan.[1] The image-making participates in Ranjit Singh's imperial culture as sovereign over extensive domains and in his self-positioning as restorer of order and defender against encroaching British imperialism.[2]

This mode of painting with fine detail, vibrant colors, and high horizon line draws on miniature court painting traditions of the Mughal, Deccan, and Safavid empires. Ranjit Singh rides on an Asian elephant that lifts him above the bustling scene, his power signified through an animal that symbolized the maharaja's royal standing and was also historically used to execute capital criminals by trampling.[3] In keeping with Mughal precedents, both architectural framing and an unwavering forward gaze denote the monarch's elevated rank, along with the fly whisk, parasol, and nimbus as signifiers.[4] The small painting emphasizes Ranjit Singh's role as beautifier and builder, rejuvenating the city after a period of decline. The pictured city scene contradicts prevailing colonial narratives deeming Sikh architecture and culture as derivative, hybridized, and destructive of great Mughal monuments.[5] Lahore bazaar's fresh decorations signify the vitality of Ranjit Singh's new capital, as well as his improvements to roads and public safety that facilitated flourishing business and trade.[6] Floral motifs in the slender columns emulate the inlaid stone, *pietra dura,* of Mughal architecture. The artist depicts the bazaar as orderly, with columns vertically separating groups of artisans and merchants. The painting's scale and cropping imply engagement of the viewer's body, which might handle the small paper, an intimacy that invites them to witness and participate in the depicted foreground discussion.


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*Figure 0.1* Lahore artist (unidentified), *Maharaja Ranjit Singh in a Bazaar*, c. 1830–1840, opaque watercolor on paper, 18 × 21 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Howard Hodgkin Collection, Purchase, Gift of Florence and Herbert Irving, by exchange, 2022, 2022.252. Photo © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

This painting appeared in an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Indian Skies: The Howard Hodgkin Collection of Indian Court Painting*, in spring 2024. Because of its historical role in engaging with multiple imperial contexts and its decontextualized refiguring in a museum setting in 2024, we chose it as an anchor image for the volume. The selection augments its case studies geographically and investigates an imperial court often marginalized as a "minor" empire in contemporary scholarship. The representation and its historiography exemplify the entanglements authors raise in this volume. Its aesthetic practices, layering, political messaging, materiality, circulation, and exhibition beg historians and curators to carefully consider the painting's operations and politics.

Lacunae in the Metropolitan's short gallery label obfuscate the painting's stratified layers of empire. The text indicates and identifies members of a "diverse group of religious figures" in the scene as a Sikh, three Hindu *sadhus,* and a Jain Śvetāmbara monk.[7] Ranjit Singh's religious policies, however, were central to his authority in the region and embroiled in the aesthetics of the image. In a visual reclaiming of formerly repressed identity under the Mughals, the artist depicted Ranjit Singh's beard as uncut, the turban in the fashion

of his administration, with a comb (*khanga*) visible in its right foreground.[8] The Sikh, in yellow, is closest to the viewer and the most animated, in conversation with Hindu holy men. These three figures contrast in hair and clothing, skin tone, and orientation from the predominantly Sikh inhabitants. They face left against the visual flow; one smokes a hookah, against Sikh injunctions. Only the Jain ascetic, identified through characteristic white robe and walking prescribed by the sect's regulation, looks toward the viewer. The group's unusual placement encourages the viewer to notice and participate in their conversation, suggesting freedom of religious discourse under the Sikh leadership. However, Muslims are absent in this depiction of imperial Lahore, which by legend used the large seventeenth-century mosque to house Ranjit Singh's cavalry. Historians disagree about the Maharaja's policies regarding treatment of religious minorities after his conquest in 1799, but, as Robina Yasmin claims, Ranjit Singh showed generosity toward subject Muslims despite centuries of Sikh persecution by Mughals and Afghans.[9]

In contrast with Mughal royal representations, this depiction does not fully engage the viewer in animating Ranjit Singh's royal body, but rather as witness to his entourage.[10] Perhaps this is due to its unusual commission by General Jean-François Allard, noted in the Metropolitan text. A former Captain of Hussars under Napoleon who resided in 1830s Lahore, Allard petitioned, and then was vetted and appointed by Ranjit Singh to train his cavalry.[11] Allard's role as patron and advisor might be embodied by the man on horseback at the center. His disproportionate size, privileged placement, and evidence of discoloration suggest the artist may have inserted this rider into an already completed scene. The rider wears clothing of a Sikh courtier, perhaps a gift of Ranjit Singh, as opposed to the French army uniform he sports in an 1838 family portrait by Imam Baksh Lahori.[12] The painting might attest more to Allard's status in Ranjit Singh's court than as a royal communication.

In the Sikh painting, other overlooked artisans engage in making. While a previous exhibition observed the craftsmen at the rear of the painting who "fashion gold and silver thread," the Metropolitan text overlooks this artisan and commercial activity. Silk brocade woven with gold thread was a prized gift for visiting dignitaries.[13] The materiality of valued and scarce metals presented Sikh lands as prosperous in contrast with the economic devastation inflicted by the East India Company (EIC).[14] EIC's economic management of Mughal provinces curtailed the considerable British imports of gold and silver bullion to Bengal.[15] Artisans working in silver demonstrated the Lahore regime's ability to commandeer supplies outside official EIC channels.[16]

Threaded artistic practices shaped by power and counters to it are suppressed by the painting's display in *Indian Skies*. The Metropolitan text claimed the artist lacked originality, "borrowing established figure types from other paintings rather than creating his own." Contrasting this description of the miniature as derivative, a museum press release praised the "inventive[ness]" and "innovation" within a special exhibit of Western commercial photography installed around the corner from *Indian Skies*.[17] The museum's "Rodin and European Painting" gallery, where the curation emphasizes "creative forces" and "individual expression," links these special exhibition spaces.[18] Such proximate juxtapositions of derivation and innovation or individuality speak to continued insidious privileging of modernist originality that veils the savvy politics of appropriation.

While the agency of the Lahore artist and artisans alike are suppressed, the exhibition reifies Howard Hodgkin's materials without contextualizing his ties with imperial collecting. The introductory text claims that the British artist "responded to art that embodies a heightened sense of imaginative freedom," and, in keeping with Western imperial and

capitalist-based aesthetics, held an "almost irreverent disregard for schools and styles" as he amassed "a collection created with an artistic vision, shaped by an astute aesthetic and an eye for the idiosyncratic."[19] Hodgkin, however, was an imperial tourist who spent most of his time in India acquiring new miniatures and sightseeing, an empowered position neglected in the exhibition text.[20] Hodgkin's collection extracted objects from their intended function and personal experience as held in a viewer's hands. Some works appear to be torn from albums or extracted from folios, a wasteful disruption impeding legibility as court objects and contrary to community practices of preservation.[21] Hodgkin's preference for an "Indian aesthetic" pre-dating EIC hegemony conforms to critical British historiography as likely taught in his formative art history course at Eton: a primitivist, "colonial belief that craft flourished in the idealized, archaic 'Indian village.'"[22] Museum curators and art historians must distinguish how such entanglements and layers of aesthetic interactions with multiple empires can operate in constructions of political and cultural identities. In Piotr Piotrowski's terms, they must think *horizontally* about visual relationships, materiality, power dynamics, and how temporal and geographical dislocations of twenty-first-century museums contribute to the homogenization of Eurocentric aesthetic systems.[23]

## Art and Aesthetics in the Age of Empire: Formation

The essays in this volume expose and add to historical layers of meaning in their discussions of art and empire between 1800 and 1950, an age of tremendous multi-directional imperialisms, as well as protest and anti-colonial activity. Twenty-two authors unpack imperial and counter-imperial layers in a variety of global and historical contexts. How does the visual field participate in empire-making and unmaking, and often both concurrently? How do art and aesthetics reflect and mediate imperialist actors and actions? The authors show how art has operated as a tool of empire and challenged its ethos, questioning the ethics of transnational domination, racial subjugation, and extractive economics. Analyzing a comprehensive array of media and inter-media dialogues, they intervene in how we remember and interpret entwinements between empire and aesthetic practices.

## Stratification as a Critical and Philosophical Structure

How can we identify, theorize, and explain the dynamic elements of culture entangled in formations of empire? As the Sikh miniature suggests, fungible and shifting meanings emerge between making and reception shaped by perspective. Its stratified layers of images and possible interpretations point to a wider framework to interpret relationships between art and empire. Elizabeth Edwards used the archaeological concept of stratification to describe the interpretation of photographs, drawing from contextual materials and analyzing text captions. The photographic image itself, the intentionality of photographer and, sometimes, the sitter become embedded, but also "stratified… beneath other meanings attributable to the image." Edwards concludes, "ideas extraneous to the picture itself thus give meaning to it, both for its original audience and for subsequent generations of interpreters."[24]

Found across much of the globe, sites of sedimentary rock allegorize the dynamics of art and empire and frame the section structure for this book. Empires, like sediment, covered most of the earth through direct conquest, resistance, or influence. Rock's foundational sediments can be likened to the loose aggregate of articulations of culture, or to, in Homi

*Figure 0.2 Photograph of White Pocket*, 2023, photograph by Dianne Kim.

K. Bhabha's framing of nations, "sites of narration."[25] Under pressure of imposed forces, such materials form layers that become stratified and, to varying degrees, homogenized.

A site such as White Pocket, in the Vermillion Cliffs National Monument in Arizona, on ancestral Diné, Hopi, and Kaibab Paiute lands, illustrates the metaphorical possibilities of this relationship (Figure 0.2). Like the layers of sandstone rock, both discrete and at times entwined due to tectonic shifting, wind erosion, and water carving, converging forces shape the relationships between the layers of art and aesthetics during the age of empire. Like geological sites, cultural layers reveal effects of visible pressure, continuing to be sculpted by weathering effects of wind and water. Furthermore, sedimentary sites exhibit clear moments of rupture, where layers break through each other and become entwined in visually disruptive and often surprising ways. Human activities shape such sites over millennia, with markings like petroglyphs, pictographs, and tourist graffiti and the scars and mounds of mining, extraction, and construction. Increased weathering in some areas due to climate change also shows human impacts on place through the environment. The array of forces that compact, impact, and destroy these rocky sites echo forces that shape and oppose empire. The simultaneously concrete and fungible environment offers a productive metaphor for thinking about relationships between aesthetics and empire; art is subject to and exerts forces, responding to both discrete and ambient pressures. This model is a metaphor, but not a yardstick. The comparison helps us to consider how art is embroiled in imperialism but cannot be used to measure or to predict representations or relationships.

The stratification metaphor builds on archaeological and geological models, and philosophical theory extends the concept. Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's theorization of stratification helps elucidate relationships between art and empire. They note an almost infinite divisibility between particulate and layers of strata, which might be read as entwined elements of culture.[26] These constantly operate dynamically and dialectically with each other, "continually moving, sliding, shifting and changing… the unity of the composition of a stratum."[27] Their model points to cultural production as fractal, with individual and

collective motivations and practices occurring simultaneously and iteratively. Deleuze and Guattari articulate how both center and periphery shape each other simultaneously.[28] Layers and strata, such as those at White Pocket and in imperial relationships, constantly operate upon each other with circular relations rather than progressive or unidirectional movements.

The concepts raised by sedimentary rock and theorized through stratification offer rich metaphorical possibilities for approaching empire as shaped not only by colonizers, but through interwoven political, social, and aesthetic conversations that form cultural production through pressures and counter-pressures. As Sumathi Ramaswamy observes,

> Does the empire not only speak and write back but also look back in unexpected ways, and at whom and with what effect? Does subaltern seeing extend imperial ways of looking even in the course of countering it, does it produce an alternative emancipatory vision, or is it a haphazard mix of both?[29]

Is it a paradox to write about empire in art history, a field entangled with histories of global power relationships, without reproducing imperial dynamics? Charlene Villaseñor Black and Tim Barringer challenge, "How… can we write about art and empire without replicating imperial ideologies and hierarchies, naturalizing the historical subjugation of colonized people, or reinscribing empire's own organizing principle of center and periphery?"[30] What methodological tools are needed? As Tatiana Flores, Florencia San Martín, and Villaseñor Black assert, beyond "inclusion," the field requires "a radical rethinking of concepts, values, and attitudes we take for granted, making visible heterogeneous forms of being and doing, and their capacity to materialize alternate worlds."[31] In this volume's attention to the role of art in imperial formation, the essays unpack and disentangle sediments of culture as they are moved and shaped by empire; the aesthetics of empire inflect not only individuals, makers, and economies, but also practices of circulation and collecting.

The volume offers methodological diversity and multivalent perspectives from scholars working in various contexts. While we sought global representation of scholars and topics across the volume, we were mindful not to re-enact imperial collecting. We noted the problematic nature of complete comprehensiveness, as well as its impossibility, following decolonial thinker Aníbal Quijano's observation that "the idea of totality is a product of colonial/modernity."[32] We recognize that many scholars working on or from formerly or continually colonized or suppressed populations or from places that did not emerge as dominant global powers carry a disproportionate load in representing places and peoples who have been de-centered or ignored. We tried to avoid imposing Western academic editorial models, seeing a pressing need to be open to multiple forms of knowledge situated in many ways of being, researching, and writing and heeding Quijano's call "to liberate the production of knowledge, reflection, and communication from the pitfalls of European rationality/modernity" toward "epistemological decolonization."[33] As contributors Erin Hyde Nolan and Emily Voelker enact "the methodological possibilities of working in a relational, transcultural modality," collaborative approaches also warrant further application in interpreting imperial histories. We note that there are innumerable means to access histories of art and empire, equally valid, from the individual, to the relational, to the material, to the natural, to the national, as well as emergent approaches yet undefined.

Where do we find empire? What models enable us to perceive and understand it? Some texts organize around a singular, tentacled, and insidious political imperial identity like

the British, French, or Russian.[34] Much of the scholarship related to empire and art has focused on vision and visuality as mechanisms of power through control, arbitration, and speculation. For instance, Valerie Kivelson, Sergei Kozlov, and Joan Neuberger propose the term "imperial pictosphere" as a fluid and capacious concept to recognize the mobile "space of the visual world represented in images made by human hands or technology" as signifying empire; Jeffery Auerbach uses the term "imperial picturesque" as a force of Victorian imperial homogenization; and Anna Arabindan-Kesson analyzes representations of the cotton trade through the lens of "speculative vision" to link perception, power, and commodification.[35] Others have traced materiality as an organizing principle for accessing empire, analyzing, for instance, food, cotton, or silver.[36] Scholars have attended to domestic environments, analyzing archives to follow the policing of intimate relations which reveals the racialized hierarchies that travel with empire and that shape everyday lives; for instance, historian Ann Laura Stoler's work on intimacy and American empire tracks how imperial systems become embedded in society.[37] Other projects have centered movement as a mechanism of empire, from Jodi A. Byrd's analysis of trafficking of images of Native Americans as signifiers of empire to Kivelson's, Kozlov's and Neuberger's assertion that empires are often characterized by insistent mobility of people and material goods through "an interactive, dynamic sphere that crosses conventional social and political boundaries" concurrent with imagined or imposed immobility in colonized spaces.[38] These concepts—imperial pictosphere and picturesque, speculative vision, intimacy, the transit of empire—are foundational to this volume.

The project builds on and amplifies crucial work by colleagues largely from outside of the Euro-U.S. academy to critique histories of modernism as limited and fundamentally Euro-U.S.-centric in reproducing colonial power relationships. A chorus of voices including Partha Mitter, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Bhabha from India; Piotrowski from Poland; Nkiru Nzegwu, Chika Okeke-Agulu, and Olu Oguibe from Nigeria; Eugene Y. Wang from China; and Quijano from Peru, to name several examples, have all pointed to the West claiming its own modernist practices as universal—a naturalized "unmarked case" in Mitter's terms—relegating modernisms outside the regions to derivation or irrelevance.[39] They reveal the Eurocentric terms that defined modernism and its basis, as Quijano argues, in responses to technological and industrial modernity and Enlightenment beliefs in rationality and totality. Many concur that modernism is framed too tightly as an aesthetic that explores abstract visual strategies. Modernist aesthetics were often used as tools of subjugation. These scholars push for greater recognition of the positions we write from, the implications of methodological decisions, and care with claims of influence. Replacing narratives of unidirectional influence, Mitter insists on context-driven analyses and "a more heterogenous definition of global modernism," to show that, rather than a "waterfall of ideas from the West forever flowing downwards to the rest, … confluence and multiple cultural streams has been a known fact of history."[40] Relatedly, Elaine O'Brien proposes a "planetary perspective… past the borders of nations, continents, and bounded cultures to the movement of individual artists and objects of visual culture along the imperial trade routes of the Age of Europe" to enable us to see "ever porous and mutating" national boundaries and movements of art practices that produced "ever-multiplying translations, ever-original hybrids."[41]

The structure of essays in this volume is oriented horizontally rather than vertically, leading to unfamiliar juxtapositions. Piotrowski argues that horizontality challenges prevailing center-periphery narratives which treat historical actors as passive subjects, relegate

the field of art history to irrelevant impotence, and perpetuate culturally inflected biases.[42] Noting that locations of making and of writing are always relative and never universal, Piotrowski suggests that taking "horizontal cuts" spanning geography and culture across pivotal years can produce nuanced and non-hierarchical results.[43] While his structure has been critiqued as restrictive, case studies in this volume take broad stratigraphic cross-sections that reveal in cultural practice representations of and counters to empire operating in multiple directions simultaneously, moving past one-way narratives of influence. With a similar ethos, Stoler calls for comparative methodology, urging scholars to investigate "the governing strategies of colonial regimes or 'the regimes of truth' that informed colonial cultures in different times and places."[44] This anthology's mingling of essays promotes horizontality and comparative histories, enabling readers to see patterns of practice, such as the ways that stylistic choices signaled imperial relationships and the mimicry of them; the role of gender as a tool for reproducing state narratives; and how objects and images translate in nonlinguistic terms, as well as singular layered histories.

## The Sedimentary Structure of the Anthology

The volume is organized into three sections framed by sedimentary rock as a metaphor for assessing how art and aesthetics operated within and between empires between the late eighteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. These parts relate to geological phases, and will be followed with a second, forthcoming volume focusing on disruptions to and layering of cultural narratives, the *Routledge Companion to Art and Challenges to Empire*. The first section, "The Dynamic Elements of Place," interrogates identifiable cultural sediment. The second part, "Exchange and Conflict," examines forces like wind and weather that have moved the sedimentary particles of art and aesthetics. The final section, "Forces of Homogenization," considers how visual culture during the age of empire becomes the dominant, if not exclusive, narrative, or the rock itself. None of the case studies fit neatly into a single section or volume; they each—internally, through juxtaposition, and across parts and volumes—speak to evident and invisible layers and complexities, capturing the fluid shifting of the sedimentary layers of empire in micro and seismic scales.

Sedimentary rock appears fixed and unmoving as the visitor beholds a site like Arizona's Vermillion Cliffs, but the formation at White Pocket resulted from dynamic processes that continue to reform the site. As author Emmanuel Ortega reminds in his case study, the terms historians use to describe and classify the art and aesthetics of empire must confront concepts that seem fixed like rock to investigate inherent flux and fluidity. Ortega identifies "Indigenized" as an unstable categorization that adapts as hierarchies change rather than a stable signifier. Building on the work of Kirsten Pai Buick and countering prevailing scholarly and institutional historiographies, Ortega reminds the reader that, ontologically, art actively "does," rather than being something still that "is."[45] Identity formation and cultural markers are fluid processes, not static and fixed.

### *Part I: Dynamic Elements of Place (Sediment)*

What do you see in a cross-section of a sedimentary rock? In undisturbed sequences the surface is the youngest layer, and many zones of intrusions, breaks, and inclusions build up from the key bed. *Dynamic Elements of Place* focuses on art and aesthetics as sediment, the elements exposed through different crosscut sections obscured by more recent imperialist

contact and systems. The case studies foreground and dissect obfuscated particulate in resultant new, transformed, or alien conditions, some of which may already have been in motion. The essays acknowledge the constant evolution and vitality of place and culture as represented and experienced through entanglements. Authors challenge how scholarly narratives have framed the canon and art's role in imperial systems.

How do materials participate in constructions of empire? The fez, the pineapple, and indigenous flora are framed as discrete particles affected by mobility and dynamism within empire's sedimentary structure. By tracing the production, marketing, and wearing of the fez, Marta Filipová describes how the headwear circulated transnationally within the Ottoman and the Austria-Hungarian Empires. Post-independence Czechoslovakia mimicked previous imperial strategies to construct its place in the global order. Shana Klein traces the domestication of the pineapple, a non-native crop, in service of U.S. imperialist expansion in Hawai'i, examining the visual politics of how food imagery displays shades of endorsing and resisting the missions of expansion. Emily E. Mangione describes socioeconomics and mobility as aspects of sediment evident in readymade glass houses ordered by suburban residents of Victorian England, where middle-class homeowners replicated imperial plant collection strategies of the aristocracy. While these cases focus on material forms that are discrete, Fatma Coşkuner treats more nebulous bodies of water as dynamic borderlands, sites where discrete cultural traditions coexist, overlap. She speculates on Ivan Aivazovsky's aesthetics and his repetition of the Black Sea motif, which conveys its vastness and significance. A prominent painter from Crimea, Aivazovsky shaped perceptions of the Black Sea as a crucial element in Russian territorial expansion, cultural identity, and naval supremacy. Even when folded into imperialism's aggregate, local art and artists were not primarily defined by the international sweeping forces of colonization but resist cultural aggregation; like rock-forming minerals, time, distance, and stability contributed to human resistance so that art objects retain identifiable threads of the individual, local, regional, or tribal.

Other authors emphasize the art and aesthetics of concealment in imperial visual depictions and narrative distortions in overlooked cultural matter. Focusing on Mexico, Ortega analyzes the five-century genealogy of nomenclature that erased processes that minoritized and oppressed Native peoples and that leveraged the artistic category of "Indigenous" as an ideology of discrimination based on racial characteristics. Clement E. Akpang similarly engages with the distortions of art historical language in his study of Nigerian painter Aina Onabolu. Akpang asserts that a relational, context-driven definition of modernism could, in certain instances, be figurative, repositioning Onabolu's key contributions to modernism. Thomas Busciglio-Ritter unpacks layers of migration in a painting of a Natchez, Mississippi plantation made by John Jay Audubon. Busciglio-Ritter identifies concealed patterns of movement, whether forced enslaved and conscripted laborers or intentional travelers, including the itinerant colonizer/tourist artist himself. Audubon's painting mirrored the cultural discourses of its local settler-planter class, and illustrates how a multiracial, cross-cultural, and contested area was turned into an environment framed solely for White enjoyment, naturalizing Euro-American presence in the region. All three of these authors trace systemic colonialist exclusions in art historiography or making.

### *Part II: Exchange and Conflict (Moving the Sediment)*

As water and weather move particulate, empires bring disparate art and aesthetic ideas into contact due to the intrinsic mobility of materials, visual objects, and their makers.

Contact between forms and people incites new relationships to land and place; Deleuze and Guattari characterize this as a process of de- and re-territorialization.[46] At fairs, whether national or international, empires and regions made spectacle of identity, performing for internal and global audiences. Government officials and industrial tycoons, architects and designers, painters and sculptors collaborated to build, ornament, and decorate temporary monuments displaying imperial aspirations and achievements. Especially in new or colonial cities, permanent urban structures functioned like canvases replicating narratives of competition and aggression. Non-elite artists had mobility contingent on empire or restricted by its demands, while inheritance or socioeconomic status enabled other privileged artists to travel freely; still others gained advantage and access due to systems required for the projects of colonizing or maintaining empire. Artists with limited means experienced travel vicariously through museums and ethnographic collections enabled through imperialist extraction networks. Essays in this section emphasize that representing or exhibiting land, whether in painting, cartography, architectural decoration, or book illustrations, reified constructed fantasies often implicating an imperialist gaze. Economic and strategic incentives driving imperialism erupted regularly in physical as well as cultural violence. Five of the eight essays center on empires outside of Western Europe, which through exchange and conflict constructed imperialist imaginaries.

Rafael Cardoso, Chinghsin Wu, and Roberta K. Tarbell examine functions of adaptation and copying. Cardoso and Wu challenge claims that art in Brazilian and Japanese empires of the nineteenth century might be characterized as belated or derivative. The Brazilian Empire (1822–1889), as Cardoso narrates, strategically used representations of the emperor and key historical moments to build a global system of cultural relationships. Wu argues that bird-and-flower paintings produced in Taiwan during the early twentieth century depicted an altered landscape, imposed by Japanese horticultural practices and complicated by previous introduction of foreign species by the Dutch and the Qing Dynasty. In contrast, Tarbell confronts the politics of derivation within U.S. modernist sculptor John Flannagan's appropriations of African and Costa Rican art. Grappling with historiographies of modernist primitivism, Tarbell considers the implications of the layered histories embedded in his sculptures' dialogues with artworks that were unethically acquired and displayed without contextualization.

John Webley, Mohammad Sakhnini, and Alexandra Solovyev interrogate fluid inter-imperial entanglements on the Indian subcontinent and the territories of the Ottoman Empire with the British Empire. Webley analyzes the Russian prince Aleksei Saltykov's lithographs and travelogue considering competitive Russian and British aspirations to forge political alliances with Indian courts. He focuses on Saltykov's encounters with several royal houses, Mughal, Sikh, and Coorg. Sakhnini complicates prevailing understandings of orientalism in depictions of the Holy Land and the Ottoman Court made by men who identified as Scottish ethnically, but also as citizens of the British Empire. Solovyev examines construction documents mapping potential British railway investment made possible by concessions by the Ottoman government to show that, as visual and political objects, these maps reveal the relationship between aesthetics and imperialism in the British production of knowledge about the Ottoman Empire.

Meagan Anderson Evans and Lucia Colombari investigate narrative fictions in decorative programs in built environments. Evans considers four bronze panels by Herman Atkins MacNeil installed in 1895 across the main entrance of Chicago's newly constructed Marquette Building. These reliefs entangled race and imperial ideologies with coded messages

about suppression of Native Americans intended to intimidate and quell labor unrest. Colombari investigates fascist Italy's self-presentation as a new imperial power at the 1939 World's Fair in New York through the interplay of architecture, art, and exhibition. Colombari offers a foreboding summation of tensions at the 1939 World's Fair, which aspired to project global peace and prosperity, while necessarily responding to the conditions of global conflict. Summarizing the disconnect between textual claim and visual representations, Colombari shows how "the display of industrial advancements and military equipment in the shadow of the war was at odds with the rhetoric of peace conveyed in the accompanying catalogue."

### *Part III: Forces of Homogenization (What Solidifies the Sediment into Rock)*

To become like solid rock, to become deeply ingrained in both makers' and beholders' imaginaries, deposits of discrete particles of art and aesthetics that have dispersed and resettled compact and cement with other debris. Essays in this section show that such solidifying forces may represent overt strategies attempting imperial homogenization. The authors demonstrate that the reification of imperial ideas occurs through the proliferation and distribution of imagery that obscures subtle resistance or distorts signifying context. Gender is a recurring concept. While the term "patriarchy" has long been used to convey male lineage of power, how are women participants in the visual culture that reinforces imperialist dominance, even while their depicted bodies are imprinted with imperial anxieties? Authors posit ways that photography, print reproduction, border surveys, art education, panorama, exhibition design, illustration, and genre painting function to solidify myths of imperial hegemony and homogeneity.

Hyde Nolan and Voelker's essay on the 1904 world's fair in St. Louis and Giulia Gelmi's discussion of the Russian Empire's exhibitionary practices indicate complex entanglements of orientalism with imperial identities. Developing a collaborative methodology to interpret transcultural exchange in the Ottoman and U.S. imperial contexts, Hyde Nolan and Voelker build a transatlantic conversation that problematizes Jessie Tarbox Beals's publicity photographs of Bedouins and Cheyenne families enacted within the racialized ethnographic spectacles of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. Hyde Nolan and Voelker characterize Beals's images as "maternal orientalism," unsettled documents of uneven interactions of power. Gelmi discusses the Russian Empire's bifurcated orientalism differentiating between a near east, including Siberia and far northern regions which it claimed, and a far east, referencing proximate East Asian empires and their territories. Gelmi interrogates how Konstantin Korovin's paintings and exhibition designs strategically promote a visual mythology of the Far North integral to Russia's image building at regional and international fairs.

The aesthetics of empire were often reproduced on a smaller scale, distributed as prints and illustrations rather than showcased as exhibits or fine art. Alissa R. Adams considers how the consolidation of France's North African imperial presence affected printed translations of Antoine-Jean Gros's *Plague House in Jaffa* (1804) for an illustrated history of the Napoleonic campaigns. The print by Nicolas-Toussaint Charlet altered Gros's ostensibly positive characterization of French and Arab interactions due to aspirations current during the July Monarchy: entrenched racist hierarchies, colonial imperial rhetoric, as well as commercial viability. Alexis Monroe examines Arthur Schott's drawings for the official

U.S.-Mexico Boundary Survey Report. This government publication documented the territorial divide, but as Monroe claims, Schott's contribution pointed to instabilities of border demarcation and helped manage the anxieties of slaveholders.

In service of imperial expansion, art and aesthetics could solidify perceptions of the exploitative potential of a U.S. colony in Cuba or erase pre-imperial evidence of cultural lineage in newly controlled Japanese Korea. Ramey Mize situates Winslow Homer's watercolors depicting Santiago de Cuba within debates over U.S. expansion, arguing that Homer's little-studied watercolors are not straightforward touristic views but are encoded with complex issues of race tied to annexation. Shin Min-jong unravels the cultural exploitation of Korea through the actions of Japanese settler artists, especially Shinichi Yamada. An initial step in Japanese artistic hegemony was systematic devaluation of traditional Joseon art, an erasure which cemented a path where Euro-Japanese aesthetics played a dominant role in Korean modernism. This text renders reverberating inter-imperial dialogues by considering Japanese relationships with Western power and aesthetics as imposed in a Japanese colonial context in Korea.

## Interpreting the Cross-Section

### *The Imperial Imaginary*

Shared traits of imperial imaginaries emerge through this juxtaposition of case studies: landscapes depicted as empty, manipulation of "in-between" spaces, and cooptation of the "picturesque," a nebulous and insidious aesthetic tool of empire. Many essays cite depictions of blank, illegible, or visually uninhabited landscapes, artificially void of culture and peoples, overly and overtly simplified through erasure and elision. This lack incentivizes economic exploitation and speculation in Homer's watercolors depicting Cuba (Mize) and Audubon's depictions of Natchez (Busciglio-Ritter), which, like Japanese artist colonizers (Shin), justifies expansion. Undefined or blank spaces on maps and models provoked several authors to investigate absences. Hyde Nolan and Voelker assert that the Ottoman Empire and the United States enacted cartographic erasures of often nomadic populations, Bedouin, and some Native American communities, as territories permissible to occupy.

Several authors engage with cartography as a practice of empire. Villaseñor Black and Barringer challenge art historians to "make empire visible, to engage with its processes and practices, and to square up to its tangible remains."[47] How land was represented and the opacity, clarity, and durability of media and supports factor into critical historical interpretation. Solovyev contrasts the dotted lines across undeveloped territory on early British-Anatolian railway maps with the later solid line indications of British expansion as published by the empire's military. Such maps were fugacious objects, likely seen by a handful of viewers and drawn on ephemeral paper. In contrast, as Colombari notes, fascist Italy incised maps into marble for display at a temporary pavilion erected at a New York world's fair. The durable materiality and the violence of incision to penetrate the marble surface falsely convey a sense that Italy's territorial expansion was solid and permanent, a contradiction allegorized by the ephemerality of the world's fair itself.

Some case studies indicate points of contact where there remained an "in-between" region or illegibility because of either slippage or resistance. Artists conveyed asynchronous equivalencies, as Sakhnini identifies between Scottish peasants and biblical figures from the Holy Land. Art visualizations perform geographic collapse, condensing huge noncontiguous

regions into a single display whether in Victorian glass houses (Mangione), a Russian exhibition pavilion (Gelmi), or colonized Taiwan (Wu). A similar interruption occurs through the juxtaposition of Bedouins and Cheyenne within a single walkable fairground, captured through Beals's publicizing commercial lens (Hyde Nolan and Voelker).

Attention to disparate geographies enables horizontal histories to emerge as readers track overlapping and divergent practices in distinctive imperial contexts, from British and French overseas empires to U.S. settler colonialism to regional empires such as Brazil, Japan, and various empires in South Asia. Additionally, multinational empires like the Russian, Ottoman, and Austria-Hungarian empires were composite sites where diverse identities retained their distinct art and aesthetic traditions although governed by the regulations and bureaucracies of larger, complex political entities. The new historiographic connections across these juxtaposed case studies build on O'Brien's call for scholars "to relocate modern art production on the world map so as to see it as a relational, transcultural enterprise… [and] … an interactive, extraterritorial paradigm."[48] The expansive and often inter-imperial scope of the case studies, as well as dialogues between them, model and map new histories within "global modernism's cosmopolitan network."[49]

Permutations of what Auerbach described as an "imperial picturesque" emerge through the intermingling case studies.[50] Busciglio-Ritter implicates picturesque aesthetics in U.S. borderlands as a form of asserting ownership by colonizers and erasure of enslavement and conscripted labor. Coşkuner suggests that Aivazovsky used picturesque vocabulary to aggrandize the Black Sea and to encompass its coastal territories into the Russian imperial imaginary. Case studies by Mangione, Adams, and Klein deepen our understanding of the commercial appeal of the picturesque. The aesthetic expanded from the primarily visual to the experiential, from viewed illustrations and paintings to sites where the viewer/user enters into a "picture-worthy" landscape in pavilions and greenhouses, panoramas and installations (Gelmi, Hyde Nolan and Voelker). As Wu explains, Japanese imperial horticulture went further as its imported flora transformed the island of Taiwan into a picturesque colonial paradise that glorified empire and signaled the island's economic potential.

## *Stratification of Privilege*

This amalgam of case studies resists binary identification of makers as either purveyors of empire or as oppressed through racial or colonial hierarchies, following Michel Foucault's assertion that "one should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination, a binary structure with 'dominators' on one side and 'dominated' on the other, but rather a multiform production of relations of domination."[51] Very few artists examined in this volume enjoyed the full benefits of empire, with its grants of financial and personal liberty to travel and unfettered access to privileged spaces. As Shin explains, Japanese settler artists migrated as required by the imperial government and infiltrated art institutions centered in Gyeongseong (present-day Seoul), hosting exhibitions and occupying key teaching positions at the academies. Although the son of wealthy merchants, as Gelmi notes, Korovin's access to the Arctic was funded jointly by government bodies and private investors who stood to gain from expansion into the "Far North." Some artists benefited indirectly from empire. Imperialists built apparatus for expansion, management, and defense that afforded opportunities to less-credentialed, poorly funded artists such as the Scottish painter Roberts (Sakhnini). The son of impoverished Irish immigrants, Flannagan's mobility was partly, if not mostly, the result of his wartime service in the U.S. Merchant Marine during World War

I, a branch of national security which directly supported the country's imperial aspirations (Tarbell).

Some women artists gained status through empire and perpetuated its aesthetic and cultural systems, but in imagery women were inscribed with new meanings arising from imperial art making. Webley raises Emily Eden, a White British author and painter with sufficient privilege to execute a portrait of a Coorg rajah undermining his authority through its visual coding. As Hyde Nolan and Voelker argue, Beals's access to intimate domestic spaces of Bedouin and Cherokee exhibition sites is evidence of her privilege and reinforces her "maternal gaze." Klein analyzes how commercial marketing normalized U.S. position in Hawai'i by picturing the pineapple as a domestic cooking staple used by White middle-class women. Shin demonstrates a different use of White women's bodies by artists in Korea as European female body often signified modernism in the territories of Japanese Empire.

The art and aesthetics of empire made possible the emergence of Parisian modernism, which depended on appropriations of aesthetic practices from outside Europe. It also consistently secured and maintained cultural privilege by visualizing and fixing perceived backwardness of cultural others as if stable. In Shin's study, Japanese beliefs in Korean belatedness justified instruction using Japanese-mediated European artistic practices. In contrast, Cardoso and Gelmi point to visual strategies used by Brazilian history painters and Russian exhibition designers to counter perceptions of the Brazilian and Russian empires as backward. As Akpang notes, drawing on Bhabha's writings, cultural time lag marginalized artists whose aesthetic priorities did not align with the formalist development of the Parisian avant-garde.[52]

### *Mirrors and Reflections: Copying, Adaptation, and Replication*

This anthology confronts longstanding hierarchies within histories of modernism, where biases continue to inflect narratives, academies, and exhibitions despite decades of scholarship demanding decolonizing and horizontal approaches. Many authors directly and indirectly implicate distorted privileging by art historians and aestheticians of modernism. Technical practices and historiographies inscribed power in various modes. Akpang describes a "colonial anti-modernity" in the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, where the British encouraged artists to retain ancestral practices in support of primitivist aesthetics. Instead of perpetuating Eurocentric definitions of avant-garde practice that have haunted histories of modernism, Akpang provokes, "We should read avant-garde as the creation of a new creative ethos within a given culture and as the politicization of art." Ortega points to emphasis on individuality and originality as a scholarly framework that consistently marginalizes artists and cultures where being avant-garde is not linked to the development of abstraction, flatness, or innovative facture.

Several essays raise the power dynamics embedded in the discourse around copying. European academic instruction and salon juries continued to encourage iconographical borrowing as an accepted practice in the early nineteenth century. Yet Cardoso explains that some claimed similar copying in Brazil as subservience to French imperial models. His attention to discourse around artistic plagiarism in Brazil teases out how the boundaries of originality and distinction were enforced within a system designed to promote affinity with the established centers of power in Europe. Likewise, Ortega stresses how the function of copying in colonial Mexico operated differently for "Indigenized" artists than the oft-assumed European mechanisms of power and influence. East Asian artists were also

encouraged to make copies inspired by revered masters, but not to "slavishly imitate." Especially in the Qing Dynasty, copying the "general manner" of muses was revered and necessary, held to improve technical skills through detailed observation and a steadier hand. However, copying also reflects the cultural values of profound historical understanding and transmission of acclaimed styles in East Asia.[53] The language of art and aesthetics suggests different signifiers and practices than in Brazil, Mexico, or Nigeria. Wu approaches copying in colonized Taiwan, tracing the evolution of bird-and-flower paintings from Song China through medieval Japan to a revival in Meiji Japan's Nihonga painting that resulted in a "new hybridized art practice." According to Wu's analysis, twentieth-century paintings of Taiwan depicted the island as "a valuable territory for capitalist extraction."

Cultural arbiters and institutions ignored the biased lens produced through the process of harvesting territories and the distorted and filtered understandings of the colonizers. Repetitive exhibitions of otherness and performances of empire at international arenas like world's fairs normalized art and aesthetics that relied on stereotypes and spectacle. Colombari and Filipová identify examples of how Italy and Czechoslovakia mirror similar tactics to bolster illusions of cultural superiority. Fascist Italy adapted strategies of exhibiting "Africanness" or othering in its display of the "Ethiopian Empire." Italy's showcases of extracted items, its decorative program, and didactic texts combined to lend false and superficial legitimacy to its military aggression. Filipová's essay points to the insidious ways that colonial mindsets were adapted by the Czechoslovak state; as Villaseñor Black and Barringer note, these appropriations participated in "replicating imperial ideologies and hierarchies."[54] These imperial antics, the essays show, make the rounds in various types of empires as leaders look to practices and conventions of concurrent power centers.

## Conclusions

What does this array of case studies from various imperial contexts across the globe bring to our understandings of art and empire? While cultural capital is essential to imperial hegemony, investments in it are multivalent and sometimes resisted. Multiple complementary and competing factors impact how an artist portrays their subjects, their stylistic choices, and the function of artworks, and audience do not neatly fit into frames defined by the political borders of nations or empires. The anthology points to different forms and types of making, experiencing, shaping, and embodying art and its imperial contexts.

The texts push us to recognize more than the visual field as a mechanism of power production, inciting us to address human experiences through multi-sensorial case studies. Authors frequently affirm art historian Henry Drewal's concept of "sensiotics," which he describes as "the crucial role of the senses in the formation of material forms, persons, cultures and histories, which a focus on bodily knowledge in the creative process as well as in reception by body-minds."[55] These engage bodies in empires traversing the built environment, heated up within glass greenhouses, touching material culture, hearing the sounds and smelling gunpowder demarcating borders between Mexico and the United States, tasting empire through the pineapple, wearing it through the fez, and experiencing violence as threats to humans and beasts in a night procession in Mughal Delhi or the oppressive humidity and press of crowds in Santiago di Cuba. Rather than visual empires, phenomenologies of empire crystallize across the case studies.

Reading this juxtaposition of essays in sequence allows scholars to identify agents in patterns of entwining, shifting, erosion, and shaping that emerge from different directions.

In many cases, often overlooked or under-scrutinized operators exerted control over where and how aesthetic ideas and objects circulated: real estate investors in Chicago and art educators in Nigeria; monopolies in Hawai'i and trading companies on the Indian subcontinent; manufacturing and distribution networks of the fez in Central Europe and illustrated histories in Orléans, France. A mix of religiosity and ethnic nationalism generated overlapping motivations for Roberts who identified with oppressed Scots while simultaneously bolstering British (and Christian) hegemony. Several influential actors were private individuals, like Savva Mamontov, the industrial tycoon/cultural patron who both collaborated with the Russian regional government and financed Korovin's travels to the Far North and subsequent decorative programs at national and international fairs. This volume's findings are significant for marginalized art makers and for what narratives are told and how.

Informed by the voices of the authors in this anthology and building on scholars invested in reshaping a more equitable field of art history, we reject hierarchical models shaped by imperialist and capitalist values and ignorant of various context-dependent functions of copying and adaptation. The visual, spatial, built, and material fields are uniquely positioned to challenge the hubris which distorts the landscape and disfigures populations in the service of imperial imaginaries. This anthology's juxtaposed case studies reach beyond linear narratives of aesthetic "progress" to rhizomatic and capacious questions that center multiplicities of perspectives rather than singular ones. We look forward to the new paths and topics of inquiry this research opens.

## Notes

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45 Kirsten Pai Buick, *Child of the Fire: Mary Edmonia Lewis and the Problem of Art History's Black and Indian Subject* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), xvi.
46 Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 47, 61–63.
47 Villaseñor Black and Barringer, "Decolonizing Art and Empire," 11.
48 O'Brien, "Location of Modern Art," 12.
49 O'Brien, "Location of Modern Art," 13.
50 Auerbach, "Picturesque and the Homogenisation," 47.
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# PART I

# Sediment

## The Dynamic Elements of Place

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# 1
# COLONIAL COMPLICITIES BEYOND THE EMPIRE
## Czechoslovakia in between Worlds and World's Fairs

*Marta Filipová*

A number of states that had never been colonized and never colonized anyone are often left out from the debates about the relationship between empire, colonialism, and visual culture. This is the case of countries in Central Europe where colonialism in the sense of territorial possessions of others did not develop and where external powers did not impose their rule on the locals. Yet, Central Europe—the region that I consider here as comprised of the historical territories of the Habsburg monarchy—actively participated in the colonial project in many ways.[1] The complicities ranged from thriving trade with overseas colonies and internal colonization to adopting social and visual stereotypes linked to imperial and colonial practices. This chapter focuses on the Central European contribution to colonialism which may not be linked to direct exploitation but can be found in the way countries in this region benefited from the colonial entanglements and adopted, accepted, and encouraged stereotypes of racial difference.

Examples of visual and material culture like book and newspaper illustrations, posters, toys, or decorative objects often embraced visual tropes of colonialism and had a wide public reach as they were mass produced, distributed, and consumed. They helped to establish and promote specific views related to ethnicity and race and to normalize them as part of the everyday experience. "Commodity racism" was a common practice as non-European people could be associated with trade and promotion of foreign and exotic products, such as coffee, tea, or cocoa.[2] These goods were often advertised using crude stereotypes. In Austria, for example, the so-called Meinl Moor designed by Joseph Binder in 1924 was a logo of the coffee house and seller Julius Meinl that featured a young Black man wearing a prominent round earring and a fez. Similarly in Czechoslovakia, Zdeněk Rykr's logo for a coffee-flavored chocolate Kofila from 1923 depicted a seated, Black person in turban holding a cup of hot beverage.

The colonial histories of coffee, tea, chocolate, and other food commodities like spices or sugar have been well documented and their links to furthering racial categories well explored.[3] Yet involvement in these power structures can also be detected outside the usual paradigms of colonialism. The headwear of the boy with the fez or the man in a turban could be seen as an orientalist marker of an exotic origin of the respective product. Hats

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*Figure 1.1* Display of fezzes and berets from Strakonice, late 1930s, glass plate negative no. 383. Archives of the Museum of Central Pootaví Strakonice.

may be seen as unlikely participants in colonialism until we look more closely at their cultural, economic, and social contexts. Many intimate links between the colonial enterprise and headwear made in Central Europe can be detected when scrutinizing their production, distribution, promotion, and use. Hats carry symbolic value in the political, religious, and cultural context in which they appeared and could be seen as an indicator of either modernization or archaic order.[4]

I identify these complexities as foremost materialized in fezzes, conical, brimless hats with a tassel at the top in variations of color, shapes, and embroidered decoration (Figure 1.1). In Central Europe, fezzes were produced in a small town of Strakonice, which once was a global producer of the headwear. Until 1918, Strakonice was part of Austria-Hungary, an empire ruled by the Habsburgs, who did not have any external colonies but were immersed in colonial trade with other imperial powers, like the French, British, and Ottoman Empires. In 1918, Austria-Hungary split into several successor states. One of them was Czechoslovakia, on the territory of which Strakonice was now located. The town and its textile factories played a significant role in the imperial histories and colonial relationships as part of Central European Empire as well as the new nation-state.

This chapter explores the entanglements of seemingly peripheral actors in Central Europe with colonial and imperial practices. I argue that Czechoslovakia, partly drawing on the legacies of Austria-Hungary, participated in economic as well as visual networks embedded in colonialism. The fez is a pertinent example of how producers, distributors, and artists adopted